

Translation

PESCHEL COMMUNICATIONS GmbH

www.peschel-communications.com

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Facts and fiction about translating

*“I’m fluent –
how hard can it be?”*

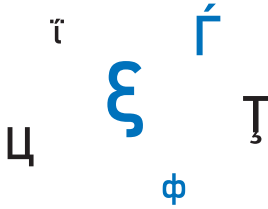
Foreign language skills have become a must in many lines of work, and more and more people have a strong command of several languages. But just as not everyone is a born writer, not everyone who knows a foreign language is automatically a good translator.

*“If you can speak two languages,
you can translate ...”*

Some companies ask bilingual employees to carry out translations – after all, they speak both languages. While being bilingual enables them to communicate in each of their languages, the ability to transfer one language into another is a different matter altogether.

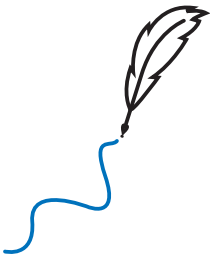
Translators are ...

... language experts



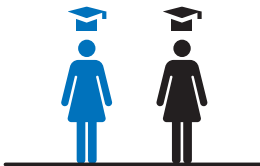
They need to have an impeccable command of their working languages, down to the finest nuances of grammar and vocabulary.

... authors



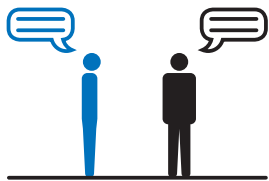
Translators must be able to write with the skill of an author in their native language, so that the translations they produce will meet the same standards as the original text.

... subject-matter experts



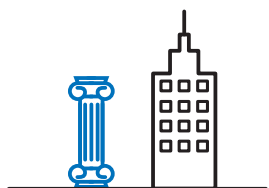
To produce an accurate, comprehensible translation of a specialist text, it's essential to have a thorough understanding of the topic. Many translators specialise in one or more fields of expertise.

... masters of communication



Translators have an instinctive feel for the spectrum of linguistic registers. A technical manual requires a completely different style to a marketing text or a work of literature. Translators know how to employ the phrasing and level of style which are best suited to a given target audience.

... mediators between cultures



The readers of a translation belong to a different cultural sphere than the readers of the original text. On top of linguistic skills, translators have the cultural knowledge needed to bridge this gap.

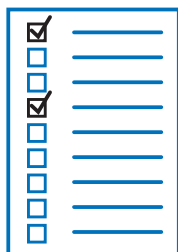
... qualified



“Translator” isn’t a legally protected title, meaning that anyone can in principle call themselves a translator. But for a translator to be truly qualified – i.e. equipped with all the necessary skills – a university degree is a must.

Choosing the right translation service provider

Define your expectations



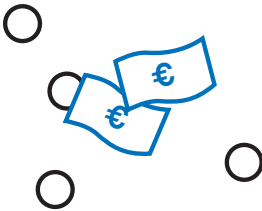
The same text can be translated many different ways. A translation service provider can help you define your requirements. Should the translation follow the source text as closely as possible, or can it (or should it) be relatively free? Do you just need to understand the content, or is the translated text going to be published? Should the style be inventive or precise? Are complex sentences or simple ones more appropriate? Would you like the translation to be proofread again in its final layout? Do you have existing texts in the target language that should be used as a guide for vocabulary and style? Does your business have a style guide or glossaries that may be relevant? Going through all these points with your translation service provider at the outset will save you time, money and hassle.

Agency or freelancer?



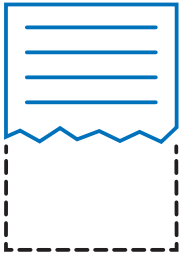
Around 70% of translators work freelance, while at the other end of the spectrum there are multinational translation service providers covering all the languages and specialist subjects imaginable. Ensure that the provider you choose is able to meet your requirements, such as fast response times, constant availability, established quality assurance processes, specialisation in a particular subject area, certain language combinations, etc.

Pricing



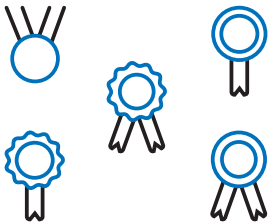
When comparing prices from different providers, make sure that the services being offered are also comparable. Is revision (by a second translator and/or subject-matter expert) included? Does the provider work with qualified translators? Do they guarantee consistent use of your company's terminology? Cutting corners is never a good idea, especially if you want to publish the text. Settling for a cheap translation can easily turn out to be a false economy if your colleagues abroad have to painstakingly correct the text before they can use it.

References / sample translations



To be certain you're choosing the right translation service provider, why not ask for references. While most providers won't offer a free sample translation, they will certainly be willing to provide you with a list of references and samples of their work. And for a larger project, it can be a worthwhile investment to begin by commissioning a single-page test translation.

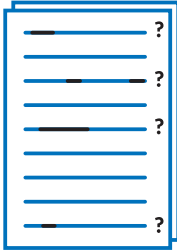
Qualifications



"Translator" is not a legally protected title, so there's no guarantee that everyone who calls themselves a translator has had the appropriate education or training. Recognised qualifications include an MA or MSc in translation or translation studies, the Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) or the German "Certified Translator" (staatlich geprüfter Übersetzer). Membership of professional associations can be an additional sign that a translator is committed to their profession.

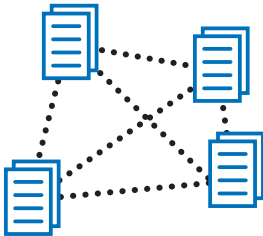
How you can contribute to translation quality

The quality of the original affects the quality of the translation



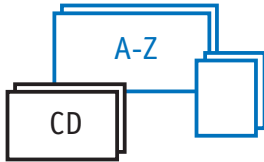
A well-written source text lays the foundations for a good translation. Unclear wording can lead to misunderstandings or time-consuming queries, while inconsistent terminology can cause confusion. Problems like this can be avoided by closely checking the source text, providing style guides and managing terminology. This stage of the project can also be supported by a translation service provider.

Context is key



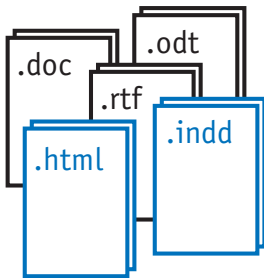
Brief your translation service provider on your target audience and the intended purpose of your text. Does the text you're having translated make reference to other documents? If so, send these to your service provider as reference material.

Internal documentation as reference material



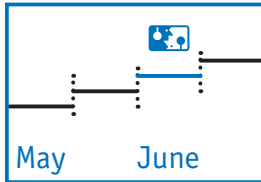
If your company already has glossaries, style guides or other relevant documentation, make these available to your translation service provider – and specify whether they must be followed to the letter or are just for guidance. This way, the translator can use your preferred terminology from the very beginning and ensure the text is adapted to your company’s style.

A note on file formats



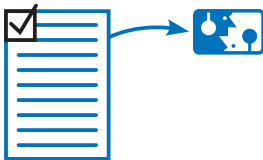
Wherever possible, send your translation service provider editable documents rather than PDF files. This avoids the need to spend valuable time manually reproducing the layout, and thus spares you from additional costs. Most translation companies are able to work with all kinds of file formats, from Office applications to InDesign or HTML.

Schedule sufficient time for translation



As a rule of thumb, you should allow one hour of translation time per standard page (consisting of 30 lines with 55 characters per line). Translation companies can divide up longer texts between several translators and still guarantee consistency. But to enjoy the best possible quality and avoid express surcharges, always keep in mind that a good translation takes time.

Only send a text for translation once it has been finalised



Once the translation is underway, changing the source text involves the risk that something will be overlooked, creating significant additional work.

Any changes have to be communicated to the project manager, who will then need to contact the translator or translators; everyone in the chain has to interrupt the flow of their work to address the changes. If this is unavoidable, you can save some time by clearly marking the points in the text that you've changed.



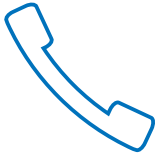
Name a contact

It's not unusual for a good translator to have a few queries about the text they're working on. This may be due to ambiguous phrasing (no one reads a source text as closely as a translator!), or a technical aspect which needs a little more context. The easiest solution is to put your translation service provider in touch with a specific person at your company who can answer these questions directly.



Internal revision

If you entrust an in-house employee with revising a translation, for example someone from an overseas branch, give them clear instructions and ask them only to make essential changes (e.g. to ensure preferred vocabulary is used, but not to alter the content). In some cases it can be worth putting this employee in contact with the translation service provider so that they can clarify any final questions.

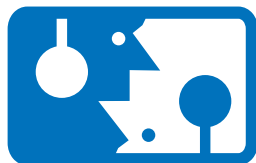


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Feedback

Feedback is extremely valuable to translators, as it will help them to ensure you are even more satisfied with the next piece of work they send you. Be sure to inform your translation service provider of any changes you make to the translation once it's been delivered, so that you don't have to make the same changes again for the next project.

ABOUT PESCHEL COMMUNICATIONS GmbH



Peschel Communications was founded in Freiburg in 1998 by Anja Peschel, a conference interpreter and translator. Today, our team consists of ten in-house staff members and a pool of about 250 freelance translators. Here at Peschel Communications we provide a diverse range of services, including translation and conference interpreting as well as proofreading, voice-overs, transcription, terminology management and the production of style guides. Peschel Communications serves an ever-growing international client base in the fields of renewable energies, medical technology, medicine and pharmaceuticals, mechanical engineering, law, economics, social sciences, politics, tourism and cosmetics, as well as in the public sector.

Peschel Communications is distinguished by a keen awareness of quality in conjunction with personal customer service. State-of-the-art tools help us to guarantee consistent results. All translations are carried out by native speakers of the target language and reviewed by a second translator. Our clients especially appreciate our quick response time, our flexibility and our friendly service. These qualities are underscored by our ISO 17100-certification and membership of several industry associations.

Contact

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