

The Real Value of Translation

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Introduction

“Too often, translation is treated like a commodity - like buying toilet paper or paying your gas bill. It's our job to help people understand it's so much more than that.”

*Eric Fixmer,
Rosetta Translation Ltd Managing Director*

It has to be said that - for the most part – the dark days of the economic downturn are behind us, and not just in the UK.

The world has never been more connected and, as far as many organisations are concerned, being able to trade outside of your own country is a valuable quality to possess.

Although such a strategy represents a risk - every business investment does - there can be significant rewards when it is done effectively, as demonstrated by China's £14 billion trade and investment deal with the UK government, signed in the summer of 2014[1].

Of course, when companies begin to explore the potential of moving into an overseas market, one of the first challenges they may face is the language barrier.

Whether it is French, Spanish, Thai, Chinese or another tongue, the problem of communication is one that, if an organisation fails to solve it effectively, could result in them falling at the first hurdle in their plans for global expansion. With this in mind, choosing a partner to carry out your translation services is a

decision that should not be taken lightly. Nor should it be viewed as an opportunity to cut costs by using the cheapest option. It is certainly not the case that all translation providers offer the same level of quality and service features.

The purpose of this white paper is to demonstrate the real value of top-end translation services, and how to recognise the risks - and potential hidden costs - associated with using some of the seemingly cheaper alternatives.

It is often said that you get what you pay for, so read on to find out why the translation industry is no different.



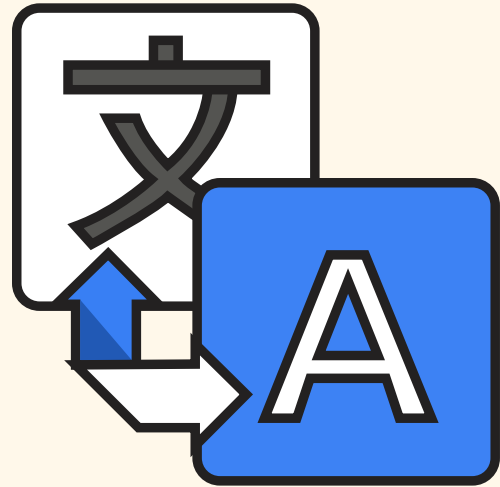
[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-china-agree-14-billion-of-trade-and-investment-deals>

Machine Translation

Google Translate is probably the most well-known form of machine translation, which is exactly how it sounds - translation not carried out by a human being, but by a piece of software.

This particular example uses a method known as statistical machine translation, which requires the program to scan through millions of online documents (already translated by real translators) searching for patterns that will help it find the best translation to 'intelligently' recreate the phrases that have been submitted to it in another language[2].

The main perceived benefit of this approach is that it costs nothing, at least as far as using Google Translate is involved, although there are programs that you can purchase and train to maybe do a better job.



But what is the real cost of using machine translation?

In reality, machine translation should never be exclusively used for business purposes. Anomalies such as language nuances and slang can often cause problems for the software, while it also regularly misinterprets how a sentence should be translated in the grammatical sense.

It is not uncommon for a business to try this approach to translation in the first instance, before using a third-party to double-check its accuracy prior to it being published. However, more often than not the end product they have as a result of using machine translation is of such poor quality that our own translators have no option but to start from scratch.

So, although Google Translate does not cost anything to use, for peace of mind it is always recommended to seek out the services of a professional translator to quality check the content that has been produced.

Of course, this raises the question of what the benefits are of using machine translation in the first place, especially if human translators still complete their work using the source material rather than Google Translate's output. If a business is on a deadline, then this delay could end up costing a company more than it bargained for.

Another element to bear in mind is one of confidentiality. Any information submitted to Google Translate can be used by Google as it pleases, automatically breaking any non-disclosure agreements that may apply to the document.

This implication could potentially kill off a business deal completely, while there could also be legal ramifications if sensitive information is unwittingly shared in this way.

While there could certainly be a future for machine translation depending on technological breakthroughs in the coming years, it is certainly not ready to replace real people just yet.

For the time being, its use is probably best limited to casual, non-business translations, but not where the text will be used in a professional capacity.

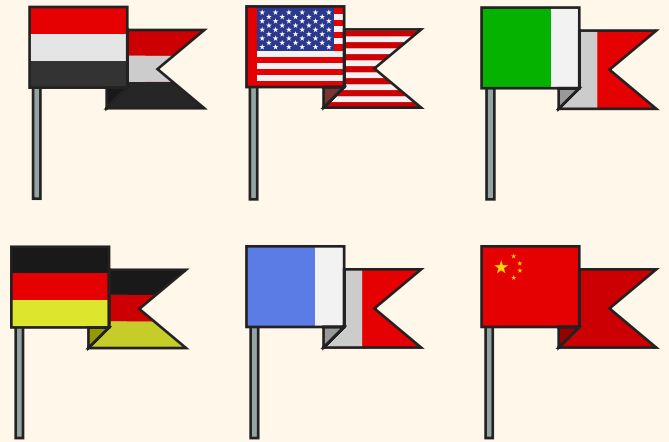
[2] http://translate.google.co.uk/about/intl/en_ALL/

In-house Translator

Some businesses may be lucky enough to have one or more multilingual employees working for them, so what would be wrong with taking advantage of their talents and saving money on using a fully-accredited agency instead?

One plus point is that they will probably know the industry they are writing for better than some professional translators.

Context is crucial in translation, as it is never just a case of copying sentences word for word and putting them back together in another language, so having your translator know what they are talking about is a big advantage, especially when the sector utilises lots of jargon or specialist terms.



In-house translation case study

What happened: We were asked to review a legal text that had been translated by a client's employee from Arabic into English. However, the end-product clearly needed a thorough rework for it to be considered of any use.

Our feedback:

“ Our reviewer was concerned that the content was too specialised for your translator. The employee that completed the translation might be okay to translate simple business letters, but would not be best suited to translate legal text.

“ The employee was also working into English and it was clear that this was not their native language - this was obvious in the wrong lexical choice being made frequently. For example, the standard legal term 'violations/infringements' was translated as something else, which was incorrect. ”

However, there are still risks to be considered when using this translation 'service', as this case study demonstrates.

The downside to in-house translation

Had the client in question not asked us to review their translation at all and simply used the text provided by their employee, there is a chance this could not only have delayed legal proceedings, but also cost the firm its reputation.

One of the problems with using in-house translators in this way is that although they have sector experience, it is unlikely they will also have the relevant experience of working in a professional capacity in both languages. As a result, while the terminology might be correct, grammar and syntax could suffer.

Depending on what sort of work is being carried out, having the social experience associated with another language is also vital. If, for instance, a company needs marketing material to be translated, it needs to know that the message it is trying to convey will still be received in the same way by its target audience overseas.

The main reason a company translates its marketing material into the target country's language is so the consumer feels more connected to that material and as a result, they buy from them or engage in their services. If they are reading something that does not make any sense it is likely to have the opposite effect.

Finally, in-house translation is not always as cost-effective as it may seem. For example, if a law firm has hired a multi-lingual legal assistant and is asking them to carry out legal translations, their time is being spent doing this work instead of the tasks they were originally hired to complete.

Therefore, the company must either hire another legal assistant to fill that gap or see the employee fall behind in their workload.

Additionally, it could be cheaper to pay a translation agency from the start, as the charge would likely be less per hour than the business would be paying its own employee to do a job for which they were not originally hired.

Why pay more for a service that might need to be reviewed by a third-party? It doesn't make sense.



Independent Freelance Translators

A third solution to a translation issue is to hire an external, independent freelancer to do the work.

Unlike the in-house option, these are trained - often accredited - professionals, who will have a background in working in languages, so a business should not have to worry about second-guess in the quality of what they are producing.

Similarly, they tend to be cheaper than an agency, as is generally the case when going direct to the person carrying out the service.

But is it as simple as that? It can be, but there are no guarantees. It is the same as anything else in life, if you want to feel completely safe that your investment is protected, you naturally turn to the trusted providers that come with a good reputation.



From a freelancer's point of view, one of the disadvantages of not having a team around them as they would in an agency is that there is more pressure on them to get the job done within the time constraints set by their client.

Stress, fatigue and translating outside of a field of expertise are all some of the factors that have been identified as reasons that could affect a translator's efficiency - over 60 per cent of professionals admit to finding it difficult to keep up with turnaround times as a result [3].

From a customer's perspective, unless they already have an established relationship with the independent freelancer, they have no real idea whether or not they will be receiving a high standard of translation until it is potentially too late.

It is also much more difficult for the client to source the independent freelancer that is best suited for the work they want, as they do not only have to consider the working languages of the translator, but also if any particular specialisms are needed. How can they be sure the professional they have approached will tick all the boxes?

“Independent freelancers can occasionally let people down. When we have tried new people who want to work for Rosetta, we have been let down - so to an extent our clients are shielded from that happening as these kinds of freelancers don't go any further with us.”

*Manchandan Sandhu,
Rosetta Translation Ltd Director of Global Strategy and Strategic Alliances.*

[3] http://cdn1.proz.com/file_resources/other/624ef9448c436b3256d99120d18fe1bd_ProZ.com%20State%20of%20the%20industry%20for%20freelance%20translators%202012.pdf

Specialist Translation Services

So, what can Rosetta Translation Ltd do that a business cannot get from the previous three examples?

For a start, it is important to recognise that when a customer uses Rosetta, they are hiring a team - a support network that includes an account manager, a project manager, a translator, a proofreader and a quality control department - to ensure their material achieves its maximum potential, wherever the target market is located.

Our account managers liaise directly with each client, so we understand their exact aims and requirements, before assembling a translation team with the necessary skills and experience to do the best job possible.

We work with our customers right from the start. If they are writing a report, for example, we like to get involved at the beginning, so even if they are producing

the original document in English they should consider how the style in which it is produced affects how it might be translated.

This is one aspect that surprises many of our customers when they use us for the first time - it is not just a case of taking a document, translating it and sending it back. Building a productive relationship is very much the basis of how we think the translation industry should be operated.

Any business understandably wants to limit its exposure to risk, especially when making an investment. Our quality assurance system is compliant with the ISO 9001-2000 standards, while the processes we use throughout are ISO 9001-2008 certified, which guarantees that our customers will not be let down in their deadlines or disappointed by the standard of work.

Our Clients



Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Our translators

Over the years, we have built up a network of over 500 translators, covering 150 different languages, so finding a professional with the skills to complete an assignment is never a problem.

Many of the translators that we work with have been with us since we first started operating over ten years ago, so we can personally vouch for the quality of the translations they produce.

However, that is not to say that we are complacent in maintaining standards. Some of the criteria that we demand of any new freelancers we hire include:

- **Proof they have been translating for at least five years**
- **Membership with an accredited body of translators/linguists**
- **Demonstrating they are native to the language they are translating into**

We also carry out stringent assessments and provide constant feedback - all to ensure the professionals we assign to any project are of the highest possible standard.



Why should I care this much about who does my translations?

The success of an organisation is built around its reputation, so any company that is lax with the quality of text it is producing for an overseas market is taking a significant risk.

As business is now a global affair, the need to get the message right first time - regardless of what language that message is in - is becoming increasingly important.

The average inward business acquisition involving a UK company between 1996 and 2014 was worth £5 million[4], which highlights exactly what a bad translation could cost a company if it causes a deal to break down.

2014's International Translation Day focused on language rights; the entitlement that everyone has to be able to communicate without being impeded by the language barrier. Translators play a key role in maintaining this right, and can often make a significant difference to a person's freedom, health and future prospects.

Translation certainly is not just a commodity to be bought and sold, it is an essential part of our global community and the industry as a whole has been guilty in the past of not doing enough to help organisations understand how important translation and language is within their business.

Treating translation like a service, not just a product

What we offer over other agencies is a team that will take the time to understand our clients and deliver something that is going to be fit for the purpose it was intended, ensuring the client has no difficulties once the translation process is complete. That relationship is crucial, and something we have maintained with many of our very first customers to the present day.

Because the translation market has low barriers for entry, there are individuals or small teams that can set up as a company, but who simply cannot match our guarantees for quality or our abilities to meet deadlines. Customers can have confidence in that we can offer a high quality, reliable service.



For a no obligation quote on how much you could pay for translation services of the highest standard, visit www.rosettatranslation.com or call **0207 248 2905**.

[4] <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/international-transactions/mergers-and-acquisitions-involving-uk-companies/q1-2014/sty-m-a-uk-companies.html>