How to ensure you don't get
...Lost in translation

Getting a document ready for translation can be a tricky business. So, to help you, we've put together a list of 10 things you may want to consider when creating a document you want translated.

It's not exhaustive, so if you have any tips of your own you'd like to pass on, or if you have any questions, just **click here** to send us an email.

We're in the business of making translation as simple as possible for everyone, so feel free to pass this document on to your friends and colleagues or use any or all of these tips wherever you want.

All we ask is that wherever you use it you tell people it originally came from **Applied Language Solutions**.

That's enough waffle, here are the tips.

1. Edit, Edit, Edit

Don't use 200 words when ten will do. The simpler your document the more accurate the translation will be. And because translation is usually charged by the word you'll save money as well.

2. Use plenty of white space in your documents

Copy which is translated often ends up being longer than the original version. This is particularly true when translating into the Romantic languages such as Italian or Spanish. So leaving white space in your document should ensure that the overall design doesn't need amending for the translated version.

German text is on average 30% longer than an equivalent English text.

3. Think about how you're designing graphics

Translating text contained inside graphics can be costly and takes time. To translate copy in graphics translators will have to open the file in the programme it was originally designed in and save it back again once the translation is completed.

If your graphics do contain text, try to create it in the page layout or word processing software you've used. That way only one document will require translation.

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4. Choose your typefaces carefully

Some languages use special accents and characters and some of the more outlandish or ornate typefaces don't have those characters designed in to them.

5. Write with an international audience in mind

Don't use slang, local phrases or analogies in your documents. These are very hard to translate and the meaning will almost definitely get lost.

*Imagine trying to translate Toad in the hole!**

6. Think about colour

Colours can have huge cultural references in differing parts of the world. Not taking note of these before translation may mean disastrous results once you publish your document.

The Chinese are particularly superstitious about colours:

- Red is the color of blood or life and will bring happiness, wealth, fame, and good luck.
- Black is associated with evil, disaster and bad fortune.
- White symbolises moderation, purity, honesty and life and balances red and black.

7. Ensure your design is flexible

If you have designed your document using templates, ensure it can be adapted for the target language you want to translate into. For example some languages don't read left to right so you may need to review the running order of your document.

8. Develop a glossary of frequently used terms and phrases

If you have a long technical document or you know you will have frequent need for translation make a glossary of frequently used jargon or terms specific to your field this will ensure they are translated consistently throughout your document.

9. Explain acronyms

If your text uses acronyms make sure you explain it's meaning the first time it appears. That way even though the words which make it up have been translated the English acronym can remain throughout.

For example:

The common English acronym RAF means Royal Air Force when translated into Dutch is "koninklijke Luchtmacht" if you've explained your acronym the letters used for the shorthand can stay the same e.g. RAF.

10. Use professional translation

Computers are clever things, they can remember what words mean in different languages. But, they can't read and understand the context of sentences. Leaving your translation to a computer will mean you'll get a very literal translation, which could give you some very alarming results.

While computer translation can give you a good idea of the meaning of a document, it's never going to be as good as a human translator.

Even the mighty Google can't compete with a human. In recent tests Google's translation software's got **49% of the translation wrong.**

And finally, one more free tip

11. Contact Applied Language Solutions for a free translation quote.

Just click here or call +44(0) 870 172 000 if you're in the UK, or +1(800) 579 5010 if you're in the US.

We're experts in translating all kinds of documents from contracts to large technical documents for specialist **Medical**, **Legal**, **Financial** and **Marketing** companies, including whole **websites** and printed **catalogues**, into over **140 languages**.

We use translators who live in-country and are specialists in their field. Hundreds of organisations trust us to get their translations right, including **UEFA**, **Sony** and **Morgan Stanley** and so can you.

*Note: Toad in the hole is a British dish where sausage is cooked inside a Yorkshire Pudding. Type it into a search engine to find a recipe. It's lovely.

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