

Metals and Minerals  
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 Journalism  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 Building and Public Works  
 Economy  
 Localization  
 Sports  
 City



# WHY TRANSLATION IS IMPORTANT

## A Guide for Translation Clients

Natural Sciences  
 Management  
 Law  
 Education  
 Urban Planning  
 Automobile  
 History  
 Tourism and I  
 Pulp and Paper  
 Advertising  
 ENERGY  
 Stock Market  
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## Why translation is important

### ◆ To increase SALES

Translation can open up new markets and help expand your customer base. It can also provide access to a broader range of suppliers.

### ◆ To improve your BRAND IMAGE

Communicating with customers in their own language through a text that is properly written and contains no mistakes shows respect for the people your business depends on.

### ◆ To increase PRODUCTIVITY and EFFICIENCY

Communicating clearly with your employees in their language, using just the right words that everyone understands, prevents miscommunications and lost time.

### ◆ To expand your REACH

If you are able to participate in national and international events and communicate with potential business partners from coast to coast and abroad, this can strengthen your reputation and could help you become the “go-to” reference outside your local market.



## Can a translator help me adhere to the Charter of the French Language (Law 101)?

Professional translators can help companies abide by the language laws by acting as an executive arm for decision-makers.

It is important to bear in mind that while translators can provide linguistic advice according to applicable legislation, it is up to companies themselves, and their legal advisors, to interpret the legislation and put any such advice into practice.

Translators can handle the linguistic aspect of putting the law into practice, such as translating documents and—together with a terminologist, if need be—building a glossary for their clients. Translators can also advise their clients on how to communicate effectively in the language or languages spoken by their employees and business partners.

Remember that in Quebec, as stipulated by the Charter of the French Language, French is the official language of communication and the “normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business.”

In the rest of Canada, the Official Languages Act has established English and French as the two official languages of the federal Canadian state, granting both languages equal status in Parliament, before the courts and throughout the entire federal administration.



Charter of the French Language



## Tempted to translate something yourself?

It's one thing to speak another language, but writing it is a whole different ball game. Speaking a language fluently does not necessarily mean you can write in that language smoothly and stylishly. Even if you're used to discussing business in another language, you probably won't be familiar with all of the rules for putting those words on paper. In fact, this is why professional translators generally only translate into their native language.

The quality of your writing is always important, even if price is your strongest selling point. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You might think that your own rough translation is charming, but your clients may well find it insulting. Few people take kindly to their language being butchered when you reach out to them, especially in writing. Any mistakes in your text are likely to draw far more attention than the message you are trying to get across.

To avoid these pitfalls—and many more!—always trust a certified translator who is a member of OTTIAQ (Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec). You can find a certified translator in the [OTTIAQ member directory](#).

## I can just use Google Translate or any number of online programs to translate something, right?

“Although there are applications where machine translations are appropriate (skimming for the gist of a document’s content, for example), machine translation is not appropriate in situations that require complete accuracy. It is usually more efficient for a human to translate from scratch, rather than edit the output of a machine translation.”

- Randall Sutherland, *Machine Translation vs. Translation Memory*, TopTenReviews.com

Essentially, this type of software can give you a general idea of the content of a text and deliver a very rough translation in another language, but the text may well be full of mistakes and bizarre formulations in the end-user’s language.

To learn more about machine translation, read certified translator François Abraham’s articles on the subject:

[Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#) | [Part 4](#)

## The limits of Google Translate

L'assurance collective : quand l'union fait la force

Google Translate: *Group insurance: when the union is strength*  
Professional translator: *Group insurance: strength in numbers*

Bonne épiluchette de blé d'Inde, et profitez bien des dernières semaines d'été!

Google Translate: *Good Indian corn roast and enjoy many last summer weeks!*  
Professional translator: *Have a great corn roast and make the most of these last few weeks of summer!*

Un hébergement en chambre d'hôtes au cœur de la ville de Québec

Google Translate: *Accommodation bed and breakfast in the heart of Quebec city*  
Professional translator: *Guesthouse accommodations at the heart of Quebec City*

Pour mousser votre entreprise auprès de votre clientèle cible, vous devez planifier avec soin vos activités de promotion et de publicité.

Google Translate: *To lather your company to your target audience, you must carefully plan your promotional activities and advertising.*  
Professional translator: *If you want to pitch your company the right way to your target market, you need to plan your advertising and promotional activities carefully.*

## I know someone who's bilingual. Can I ask him to translate my website?

Anyone who speaks more than one language can understand messages written or broadcast in those languages. However, this does not necessarily mean they can translate them properly—in writing or orally—into another language.

While there are some non-translators who are able to transpose a text into their native language, before you decide to use their services you should ask yourself these three questions:

- ◆ Do these people know all the finer points of the language in which the text to be translated is written?
- ◆ Will they know to translate not only the words on the page, but also the deeper meaning?
- ◆ When it comes to grammar, spelling, style, typography and other aspects of the language, have they mastered all of the rules that apply to their native language?

Just one translation error on your website could lose you customers or business opportunities, create problems for you or even expose you to a lawsuit. Professional translators are better prepared to handle all of these aspects.

### Couldn't I just get someone to revise a machine translation?

On principle, you should never publish a message that was translated by a machine. Your message might not make sense, or it could even be the object of ridicule. Of course, you can always ask a real translator to clean up a machine translation for you, but this might not turn out to be the most economical solution. Many professional translators find machine-translated texts so jumbled they say it's faster to start again from scratch.



## Coffee makers put to the test by Google Translate

Nous avons testé pour vous cinquante des meilleurs cafetières à capsules et machines espresso sur le marché canadien.

Google Translate: *We have tested for you the best fifty coffee and espresso capsule machines on the Canadian market.*

Professional translator: *We've tested fifty of the best capsule coffee makers and espresso machines available in Canada so you don't have to.*

Which translation would you rather read?



## Can professional translators translate into all the languages they know?

Professional translators usually translate into their native language.

There are so many different style, grammar, terminology, spelling, typography and other rules from one language to another that if a translator tries to apply them correctly in all the languages they know, he or she may well end up applying the rules for one language to another without even realizing it. Mistakes like these could be seen as negligence—not exactly what people are looking for in a professional. Of course, mistakes like these could also affect the client’s reputation as well as the translator’s.

However, there are some rare exceptions of translators who can work into a language other than their native language. In such cases, ask the translator to translate a sample of the work and then check it carefully, or better still, send it to the end user for a read-through. If the text reads well and the translator can promise the same quality for the rest of your document, go right ahead!

## Why should I spend time and money on translation?

When we read a poor translation, we tend to remember the mistakes more than the message itself. This can be funny if the consequences are only minor. In fact, poor translations can be an endless source of jokes (ever seen the French grilled sandwich Croque-monsieur translated as Crunch-mister?).

But when the information is essential to the end user (news articles, operating instructions, working documents, travel guides, etc.), a poor translation can seem useless and leave the reader feeling frustrated and disrespected. A poor translation may even give rise to legal action if harm is caused.

How many times have you bought a new piece of furniture or an appliance and scratched your head when you read the assembly instructions. Here’s an example from some machine-translated assembly instructions for a bookcase:

- ◆ French:  
“Soulever la bibliothèque et la mettre à son emplacement final. Attention : demander de l’aide pour cette opération, tant pour votre sécurité que pour éviter d’endommager la bibliothèque.”
- ◆ Machine-translated English:  
“Lift the library and put his final location. Attention: ask help for this operation, both your safety and to avoid damage library.”

Would you have known that the French word “bibliothèque” can mean a bookcase or a library, depending on the context? And more importantly, would you have been able to decipher these garbled instructions?



## What language do your readers speak?

Quebec French or European French? Canadian English, U.S. English or U.K. English? European Spanish, Mexican Spanish or Chilean Spanish?

Translators also know how to adapt your text to your target audience. Are you addressing healthcare professionals or the average consumer? White-collar professionals or blue-collar workers?

Professional translators speak your readers' language. They can put themselves in your shoes and see things from your readers' perspective, and will find the best approach to meet your needs.

Even if two countries speak the same language, the rules can vary from one to the other. For example, in France, accents are often not used on upper-case letters, whereas in Quebec they are always used. This means that some packages of soda crackers might seem more appetizing than others, depending on whether the contents are translated as BISCUITS SALÉS (savory crackers) or BISCUITS SALES (dirty crackers)! In France, if you're going somewhere—Paris for instance—you might say “on va sur Paris” (literally “we're going on (to) Paris”), whereas in Quebec you would say “on va à Montréal” (quite simply, “we're going to Montreal”). This can be an important distinction to make in Quebec, since if you say “on va sur Saint-Hubert”, chances are you're heading to Saint-Hubert Street in Montreal, whereas if you say “on va à Saint-Hubert”, you're probably on your way to the town of Saint-Hubert.



## Languages served by certified translators in Quebec

- Albanian
- Arabic
- Armenian
- Bulgarian
- Chinese
- Czech
- English
- Farsi
- French
- German
- Greek
- Hebrew
- Italian
- Japanese
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Russian
- Serbo-Croatian
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Tamil
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese





## When should I bring a translator into the process?

As soon as possible, perhaps even during the writing process itself. A translator's role is not only to translate the words on a page, but to help you communicate effectively with your target audience.

The earlier you involve a translator in the process, the better he or she will be able to advise you. Style, ease of reading, word choice, sentence length and quotations—even document formatting—are all factors that a translator can help you fine-tune according to the nature of your document and the audience who will be reading it.

There can be a real benefit to building an ongoing relationship with a translator. The more you work together, the better your translator will understand your way of thinking, your strategy and your products, and the better the translations will be!

If your translator isn't involved in the writing process, you should ideally wait until you have the final version in hand before sending a document for translation. Otherwise, sending multiple versions can overcomplicate the process for your translator and you might end up paying more for his or her work.

That being said, if your company has multiple departments that do not share a common language, it can be beneficial to have the draft versions of some important documents translated (such as an annual report, for instance) so that others can check the document and add their comments. This can help ensure all stakeholders have a hand in the process, no matter what language they use in the workplace.

## Can a translator give me language advice?

Yes. A translator's job goes much further than simply taking a text in one language and delivering the equivalent in another language. Translators are often asked by their clients for linguistic and technical advice outside the realm of a translation project.

Not sure about the past tense form of a verb? Want to check you're writing something the right way? Want to avoid using the wrong spelling? Struggling to find the right thing to say, and how to say it? A professional translator is here to help and may well have the answer you are looking for.

Want to standardize the terminology used throughout your company? Because a professional translator often knows your line of business inside out and keeps abreast of the latest trends, he or she can help you decide on the right word.

A professional translator can also explain any changes in terminology that may be required when new regulations come into force.

Wondering what the most efficient way would be to translate dozens of documents in a large project? Ask a professional translator for guidance.

This can give you an idea of the best way to approach and manage the project and the resources you might need (tools, software, reference material, teams, etc.). Asking a translator for a professional opinion could help you optimize your investment.

Remember, your translator is a dedicated professional who you can turn to for help with all of your language needs, just like you would turn to your accountant for help with your accounting or to your lawyer for legal guidance.



## What does an interpreter's job involve?

Going to China to meet with potential business partners? Have some investors coming over from Italy to visit your facilities in Canada? Need to give a presentation at an international conference to showcase your products and services?

If you want to communicate orally with people who speak another language, you'll need an interpreter. An interpreter will make sure your message gets through properly to your audience and help you avoid making any linguistic—or cultural—gaffes.

Interpreters practise their profession in a number of different contexts and work with many groups of people. In fact, there are several different types of interpreters, including conference interpreters, court interpreters, parliamentary interpreters and community interpreters. Interpreters must have a perfect command of the language they are translating into, as well as a strong general knowledge and cultural awareness of at least one other language. They must also have a high degree of physical and mental endurance, outstanding powers of concentration, strong mental agility, rapid mental assimilation skills, good elocution, and be able to express themselves easily. A pleasant voice can be an asset too.

Finally, interpreters must be flexible, patient and exercise tact and diplomacy to remain calm under pressure.

## What does a terminologist's job involve?

Are you looking to have technical documents translated, or draw up a list of terms specific to your company? Would you like to make sure your employees use the correct terms to describe your company's operations and produce documents that are linguistically standardized?

It sounds like you need a terminologist. A terminologist's job is to index terms specific to an area of activity, define those terms and find the equivalents in another language.

A terminologist can also define terms that are already in use by companies or in databases, glossaries, dictionaries and lexicons with a view to standardizing their use.

Terminologists have strong information technology skills, pay great attention to detail and enjoy carrying out in-depth research. Terminologists have extensive intellectual curiosity and a strong analytical mind.

The nature of a terminologist's work can be highly varied. A terminologist may be called upon to work with writers, researchers and specialists and is often asked to ensure quality control for texts. What's more, on the strength of his or her experience and professional relationship with various specialists, a terminologist can also play an advisory role in project management.

## How much does it cost?

To get a sense of the market price you can expect to pay, it can be a good idea to contact a few translators or translation firms and enquire about their rates.

Some of the factors that can influence rates are the deadline requested, the subject matter of your text and the language combination you need.

While the highest rate won't necessarily guarantee the best quality, you can probably assume that if you pay well below the going rate, the text you receive might not do justice to your message, or your image.

Before you choose a service provider based on price alone, ask yourself whether you'll be getting the quality you need. A poor translation could do you more harm than no translation at all.



## How can I make sure I get the best possible translation?

It's easier than you might think:

- ◆ Hire a certified translator.
- ◆ Ideally, involve your translator in the writing process.
- ◆ Check with your translator before setting deadlines.
- ◆ Only submit final texts for translation that are well written, unambiguous and properly formatted.
- ◆ Right from the get-go, provide your translator with any information that might help him or her to do a better job. For example, you might want to clarify the context, explain how a new process works, specify any new terminology, or explain who the target audience is.
- ◆ Designate a resource person to communicate with your translator.
- ◆ Ask your translator to read over the final copy of the translation once it is formatted before it goes for printing or is broadcast across social media.



## Why do business with a certified translator?

Because a certified translator's training and skills have been recognized by the Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues and interprètes agréés du Québec (OTTIAQ). When you do business with a certified translator, you benefit from the protection of Quebec's professional system, which exists first and foremost to protect the public.

## How can I find a professional translator?

Start by consulting the online [directory](#) of OTTIAQ members. You can search this list of certified professionals by language combination and areas of expertise.

You can also search for professionals who are qualified to translate official documents and certify them.

Of course, professionalism is another key aspect that certified translators can bring to the table.

- ◆ Certified translators have excellent knowledge of the language or languages they translate from.
- ◆ Certified translators have expert knowledge of the language they translate into.
- ◆ Certified translators know how to write.
- ◆ Certified translators know the translation process inside and out and use the proper tools.
- ◆ Certified translators know the areas of expertise in which they work.
- ◆ Certified translators have a university education or the equivalent training/experience.
- ◆ Certified translators have strong communication skills.
- ◆ Certified translators have broad general knowledge and take an active role in their ongoing professional development.
- ◆ Certified translators have strong research skills.
- ◆ Certified translators pay attention to detail.
- ◆ Certified translators can advise you on language and communication issues.
- ◆ Certified translators are responsible.
- ◆ Certified translators have leadership skills.

## What is OTTIAQ?

The Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec, or OTTIAQ, is the only association of professional translators, terminologists, and interpreters recognized by the Office des professions du Québec.

Because of its status as a reserved-title professional order, OTTIAQ has the exclusive right to grant its members the titles of Certified Translator (C. Tr.), Certified Terminologist (C. Term.), and Certified Interpreter (C. Int.).

OTTIAQ's principal mission, like that of all professional orders, is to ensure the protection of the public. The Order does so through its admission policy, Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Practice; by administering a professional liability insurance policy; and operating a continuing education program for its members.

OTTIAQ also seeks to promote the visibility of the language professions it represents by fostering an appreciation of their roles and contributions in specific target groups, highlighting the skills of its members and encouraging public and private agencies, companies and individuals to use their services.

## Do translators have specific areas of expertise?

You wouldn't think twice about hiring an advertising agency to create your product slogans and having lawyers draw up your contracts. That's why it's recommended practice to work with a translator who is a member of OTTIAQ and is familiar with the subject matter of the document you want to have translated.

A translator who focuses on a given field knows all the ins and outs of the vocabulary and turns of phrase specific to that area. And because the translator has a broad knowledge of your general area, chances are he or she will also be familiar with the specific topic addressed by your document, all of which makes for a clear and accurate translation.

A specialized translator will put his or her training, experience and curiosity to good use for your benefit. And with a little help from you, your relationship could soon become a rewarding partnership.

## What about confidentiality?

Translators who are members of OTTIAQ, like all members of Quebec's professional system, are bound by professional secrecy. They are required to follow a strict Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Practice and must refrain from disclosing any information and data to which they are privy in the exercise of their profession.

## How can I be sure to get a quality translation?

Since there are many different ways to translate the same text, translation is first and foremost an act of communication. To communicate is to formulate a clear message that is adapted to the recipient's language and culture.

Therefore, a quality translation must make sure your message gets across. And to do so requires the techniques, procedures and experience that only a qualified professional can offer.

By doing business with a certified translator, you can avoid the pitfalls that could cause you harm, such as damaging your image or your credibility.



## Can I have my translation by tomorrow?

Maybe, but it will depend on a number of factors. First of all, the translator will evaluate your text. As well as looking at the length of your document, the translator will also consider how technical and complex it is, who the target audience is, and the file format it is in. The translator will then suggest a deadline that takes all of these factors into account.

A professional translation requires as much care and attention as it takes to write the original document.

The document you want to have translated is clearly important to you. That means it's worth talking things over with the translator to agree on a deadline that will allow sufficient time to do a good job. If you insist on receiving the translation in an impossible time frame, you run the risk of ending up with either a poor translation delivered on time or a good job delivered late.

It can be easy to underestimate the time a translation can take. For instance, translating a slogan that contains no more than a dozen words can sometime represent several days of work for an entire team! What's more, documents in some file formats, such as PDF or HTML, or some graphic design software formats, will need to be converted, reformatted and checked prior to translation. Finally, translating a legal document from a country with a very different legal system and terminology that does not exist in the target language can require a huge degree of adaptation that a simple word count can never fully reflect.



## How do translators keep their skills up to date?

This is a question you should ask any current or potential translation service provider, since a commitment to professional development and continuing education is a true sign of professionalism.

On principle, the very fact of practising the profession means that translators never stop learning new things. Since many of the texts they translate cover the latest developments in their area of expertise, it's easy for them to keep their knowledge up to date. In fact, translators often learn news well before it goes public. And thanks to the new ideas their clients might develop, explain or convey, translators are forever adding new words to their vocabulary.

Moreover, the Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec (OTTIAQ) has developed a continuing education policy to encourage members to devote a minimum of fifteen hours per year to continuing education. In fact, OTTIAQ offers members a varied program of online and classroom workshops so they can improve their knowledge of the latest translation environment tools, keep their skills up to date in a number of areas, fine-tune their language skills and learn new ways to manage their business. A number of other organizations also offer courses for translators.

In fact, many translators choose to take professional development courses through postsecondary institutions, other training schools and even the certification bodies that oversee their clients' own professions. Law training, accounting courses and certificates in technical and scientific fields are just some of the examples of the continuing education professional translators choose to undergo. Some translators even have a degree in a subject other than translation and might just become your most valuable consultants.

## What happens after the translation is delivered?

The golden rule is to have the translator revise the proofs you receive from the printers or the printing department. And if a text is going to be published online, it is very important to have the translator review the final version the way it will appear on screen before you give the go-ahead to broadcast the text far and wide. It is not uncommon, in fact, for errors to creep their way into a translated text if the web developers are not familiar with the language of the translation.

Even if the translator has done a good job, the quality of your document could be compromised if any last-minute changes and additions (such as titles and captions) are handled by an unqualified person or if a printer or distributor applies the typographical rules for his or her native language to a text written in another language.

Consistency is important too, and can easily be ensured by asking your translator to do a final read-through. Take the English translation of the website for a major Quebec telecommunications provider, for example: over the space of four short lines, the secure area of the site is referred to as the "CUSTOMER CENTER" and the "Customer Centre". Neither of these are mistakes per se, but once you've chosen a spelling convention, it's important to stick to it.

One final point: beware of making the finishing touches to any translated document over the phone, since the risks of misunderstandings are just too high. It's always safer to confirm changes in writing.



## Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec

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### **In this series:**

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- ◆ A Guide for Members