

TOP 10 MYTHS

About Translation & Localization



← True False →



Proud motor mouths.™

If you're like us half your job is sifting through a lot of data and information in the course of doing business with others. For most of our clients, translation is just one thing of many that they need to manage and most have sporadic needs. So they don't have the time always to sift through all the data out there about translation.

So today we're going to do that for you.

MYTH #1

Automotive translators are an unlimited resource that can be found anywhere.

Fact: Ever wonder how many translators there are in the world? While there are no concrete figures, it's estimated that there are between 160,000 – 300,000 full and part time translators. Taking that even further, how many are automotive expert translators? According to our research there are somewhere between 20,800 – 39,000 translators in the world who really know cars and trucks. If there are maybe 30 major automotive markets in the world that means there are only 1,300 translators in a given language pair who translate automotive information. Since the number of translators is proportional to the size of the market and local population, a small auto market like Belarus only contains a handful of translators who know their subject matter.



As Puffs learned in Germany, the hard way, lack of subject matter expertise can lead to disastrous results.

MYTH #2

Beware the translation supplier that says “we have a network of over 10,000 translators”!

Fact: Think of the undertaking that this would require. Now we're assuming that recruiting, qualifying and negotiating activities actually took place. The average cost to recruit, interview, test and check references for a single translator is about \$100.00, that would mean that 10,000 translators would cost \$1,000,000.00. We guarantee that no translation company, still in existence today, has spent that much money on translators. So if a company says they have 10,000 translators unfortunately they likely don't know a lot about most of them. In that case you might be just as well off in submitting your project to one of those online portals where you choose your level of service.

MYTH #3

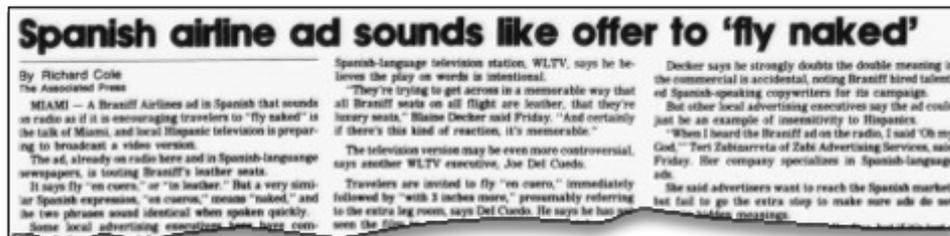
Subject Matter Expertise is not important.

Fact: Besides understanding how to compose sentences and how to write in the needed “style” understanding the topic and even having working knowledge of the subject matter is most important. It is very difficult to write about a subject matter you know little about. Asking us to prepare an opinion on different women’s purses would require more research than writing about the 2.0L turbo engine in our car. Not only is it easier for us to write about cars it’s also faster! We know what direct fuel injection is and the basics of how a turbocharger works. While the only thing we know about a woman’s purse is that they seem to hold an awful lot of stuff in them that we know nothing about.

MYTH #5

This headline can be translated for .15 per word: “When you’re pushed to the limit, drive something that will push back”.

Fact: At .15 per word that headline would only cost \$1.80. Assuming you have hired that inexpensive translator for \$15.00 per hour, they would only allocate 12 minutes and 36 seconds of time to understand, compose and write this headline! This is a case where “you get what you paid for” because you can get a “translation” done at that price, just don’t expect it to be something that will be publishable. Your in-market managers will likely be quite disappointed and vocal about it. Common sense alone should guide you here. Headlines with double entendres using clever local language requires advanced skills and more time to complete.



Did Braniff Airlines really say “Fly Naked” or was it just a clever double meaning intended to gain more attention?

MYTH #4

A cheaper translator is... well cheaper.

Fact: if you have sporadic needs; you only have three projects a year that require translation then... maybe. However, if you have ongoing needs in multiple languages, then a SME translator will outperform the inexpensive translator every time. You will get better quality, faster and you will get more 100% matches in your Translation Memory. We will take a good software engineer and one of our “expensive” translators against any inexpensive translator and we will produce better quality translations, faster and at a significantly lower cost. And we will prove it with numbers!

MYTH #6

One Translator can translate all our documents.

Fact: You can categorize translators like painters and writers. Some painters paint portraits, some landscapes and some garages. Translators are the same. Some are good at technical writing, others are good for general marketing text, while others know all the IT acronyms and terminology and actually know what it means! Matching the right translator to the right project is one of the key determiners of translation success. Expecting a mechanic to write Shakespeare is a recipe for disaster. Half of our translator management strategy is matching the right translator to the right project.

MYTH #7

The same visuals work everywhere.

Fact: One of the more memorable projects - for all the wrong reasons - was a series of brochures that we were asked to translate into French for Canada. The brochures were promoting a new technology at that time: sensors for the trunk of your car, intended to notify you if you mistakenly locked something living in the trunk of your car. In English this works perfectly because the word “trunk” means trunk of an elephant and trunk of a car. However, in French, that’s not the case. There is no one word that means both. Since translation is at the end of the cycle and we were not consulted on the original creative direction (hint!!) the client decided that it had spent too much money and invested too much time to change course. So their Canadian clients were left scratching their heads wondering why an Elephant would be sitting on the trunk of a car.

MYTH #8

All translation companies are the same and you get the exact same product and service.

Fact: As the translation needs have gotten larger there is more specialization than ever. Do you have large volume medical translation needs? There are several translation suppliers that would be a perfect fit for your needs. While companies like Microsoft, IBM and Apple work with translation suppliers that specialize in IT. And if you’re a motor vehicle company don’t you want to work with a supplier that tests and benchmarks their translators on their automotive knowledge? As translation requirements grow and technical expertise is exposed to be extremely important more and more smart companies are looking for translation suppliers that best fit their needs.



The Ford Pinto is a great example of a word that has a different meaning in another language. Works just fine in Spanish, not so well in Portuguese.

MYTH #9

Translation is a mechanical word-for-word process.

Fact: Effective translation requires the translation of meaning and not only just the words themselves. Since many words contain more than one meaning and industry jargon is its own language the ability to decipher the actual meaning of the words is vital.

MYTH #10

Anyone who speaks two languages is a translator.

Fact: While the ability to speak two languages is certainly an asset expecting that person to have the ability to translate a legal document or an advertisement is unrealistic. The majority of translators studied translation theory in college, undertook extensive writing courses and spent many hours honing their craft and learning the subject matter that they translate. In our case several of our translators were mechanics and some even studied law. A bilingual person can translate simple memo’s and communications but expecting them to be a technical writer with the ability to explain how an EGR system works can lead to higher costs and delayed deliveries or faulty service.

Language Arts & Science

333 West 7th Street, Suite 120

Royal Oak, Michigan 48065

P: 248-246-0475, F: 248-282-0433

Visit our website at www.languageartsandscience.com
for more information on how to get the
most from your translation needs!



Proud motor mouths.™