

Expert advice and guidance from the  
**Communications Sector**

# WRITING FOR TRANSLATION

## MEET OUR EXPERT

**Beth Burleigh**  
Translator and Trainer, Craftwork Translations Ltd



Beth runs Craftwork Translations Ltd, a translation and training company whose aim is to enable businesses to get the best out of their translation budgets.

As the world gets smaller and international trade increases, good translation is becoming ever more important. Drawing on her experience of translating for a diverse array of clients, Beth offers workshops to help companies work more efficiently with translators and write more effectively for an international audience.

[www.craftworktranslations.co.uk](http://www.craftworktranslations.co.uk)

Would you like to get involved with our Communications Sector? Do you have ideas for future events or expertise to share in a guide like this?

Please get in touch with Helen Bosett, Sector Co-ordinator at Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce on 01733 370809 or email [h.bosett@cambscci.co.uk](mailto:h.bosett@cambscci.co.uk)

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## Why Think International?

When you are writing a text for translation, simplicity is key. Making your document as clear as possible will help your translator to smooth over any difficulties and ensure everything makes sense to a foreign reader.

This is particularly important if you are translating into more than one foreign language. Each of these foreign languages will have different word lengths, word orders, sentence structures, grammar rules and formatting conventions, not to mention cultural understandings - and dealing with queries from a whole team of translators can be very time consuming!

By considering the differences between languages and cultures before you commission your translation, you will save money and help boost the quality of your translated documents.

“Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture.”

Anthony Burgess

## Top tips on how to write for translation

If you need to get a document translated, remember to write it with your international audience in mind. A well-written text will save you money by reducing the amount of research your translator needs to do and the time they need to dedicate to the project. It will also result in a more polished translation that will have a greater impact on your end reader.

- 1 Make sure your document is ready to be published**  
It may sound obvious, but remember to check the spelling and grammar in your text so that there are no errors to slow down the translation process. In addition, read it through thoroughly to make sure it makes sense. And, most importantly, avoid making any changes once you have sent it off to your translator.
- 2 Keep things simple**  
Short sentences and simple language will prevent the meaning from getting lost in translation. If your text is convoluted, your translator will have to spend more time reworking it into something your audience can understand. Lighten your translator's load for a faster turnaround time.
- 3 Let your translator know what you want to achieve**  
Who is the target audience? Where will the text be published? Do you need the translator to adapt the text in any way? If everyone knows the intended outcome to begin with, less time will be spent making amendments once the text has been translated.
- 4 Jargon and technical terms**  
Use them sparingly. If they are really necessary, make sure they are used consistently. If you use abbreviations and acronyms, it could be helpful to provide a glossary explaining what they mean because they will almost certainly be different in the foreign language.

- 5 Cultural references**  
Your marketing text may be so much more enticing with that clever cultural reference, but will international readers understand it? Your translator can probably help you find an equivalent that works in the foreign language, but remember that this may push back the deadline.

- 6 Formatting**  
Word order is different in different languages. Words and sentences can differ in length. Even things like the formatting of punctuation can vary dramatically. Although your page layout may look great in English, the text is unlikely to take up exactly the same amount of space once translated. You should therefore allow time for formatting the text after you receive your translation rather than scheduling this work in before translation.

- 7 Context, context, context**  
Remember to give your translator contextual information – be it websites, reference documents or images – when you send your document off to be translated. This is particularly important for the translation of individual words. Without providing contextual information you risk your translated text containing serious errors.

