

## **Test Translations – A Brief Guide**

Test translations provide the translator and the client with an opportunity to simulate their planned cooperation, without any strings attached. The translator will get a better idea of the type of texts to be translated, and the client can check in advance whether or not the translator's style and competence meet the given requirements.

### **What type of text should be used for test translations?**

A test translation only makes sense if it is suitable for the above mentioned purpose. A client from the IT industry who intends to have various software manuals translated would be ill-advised to ask the translator for a sample translation of the client's latest patent application. Similarly, it is pointless to rip individual sentences, or even single words, out of context and then curiously await the translator's result – a translator is no psychic!

### **Should specific software be used for test translations?**

So-called CAT tools (Computer-Assisted Translation) are commonly used in the translation industry to ensure consistency in larger translation projects. These CATs are rather complex and require a brief training period. If a client tends to work with a specific CAT tool, it is recommended to include this tool in the test translation. This is particularly important if the client uses proprietary or in-house software that requires the translator to change his or her normal workflow.

### **What length is recommended for test translations?**

In general, 300 to 400 words will suffice to provide the translator with enough context and to allow the client to evaluate the translation style. Free test translations should never exceed this word count; paid test translations may be longer, of course.

### **Free or paid – is there a rule for test translations?**

The answer is no. There is no official rule. Many translators strictly oppose free test translations because they'd rather not waste their valuable working hours without getting paid – which makes sense. On the other hand, clients operate on tight budgets and prefer to get a first impression of the translator for free – similar to an unpaid job interview. This is reasonable as well.

If the translator is expected to demonstrate his or her skills under realistic conditions (with a CAT tool, a style guide, and other demands), common sense dictates that the test translation should be paid accordingly – realistic conditions do include payment after all!

However, this does not necessarily mean that translators willing to do free test translations should be considered unprofessional. Many translators include unpaid tests as a marketing activity in their budget calculations – similar to food companies, for example, that regularly offer free samples of new products. As a prerequisite for a free test translation, though, the requirements given in this guide should be met.

**An appropriate test translation comprises a text from the same field as the actual translations to be delivered in the future, it does not exceed 300 to 400 words (continuous text), and it may require the use of a specific CAT tool. The test translation may be paid, but this is not a mandatory requirement.**