



# **The Academic's Guide to** *High-Quality Language Services*

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**cademic scholars regularly find themselves in need of translation and editing services in order to publish their valuable research in a variety of academic fora, including articles, books, research proposals and conference lectures. This process is often fraught with frustration and disappointment because there are so many options and it is difficult to find someone with the right linguistic skills and background knowledge for your research.

I decided to write this guide after speaking to numerous scholars who struggled to publish their research due to problems with their level of academic English. Many of them had tried translation and editing services before but were unsatisfied with the result.

This book is an attempt to compile and summarize all of the ideas and insights I have had in my first five years as the CEO of Academic Language Experts and to share them with the greater scholarly community. I welcome any questions, comments or feedback you may have.



# CHAPTER 1

## What Makes Academic Translation & Editing Unique

**A**cademic scholars are generally among a limited number of experts in their field of scholarship. Researchers invest significant time understanding the various perspectives and approaches in their field and have an intimate knowledge of the history, language, terminology and other aspects of their discipline. Their research often refers to specific political, social and cultural contexts, requiring years of study and practice in the field to properly understand.

Taking an author's research from one language and applying it to another or editing a text that was not written by a native speaker is a challenging process. In order to successfully complete a translation or edit, the phrasing, terminology, and conceptual themes need to be made readily accessible to the target culture. This process requires meticulous, nuanced, and intelligent adaptation of a discipline's conceptual lexicon and structures into a clear and coherent text in the target language.



### TIPS

It is critical to work with an academic language professional who is not just an expert in both languages but also an expert in your field. Working with students or generic language professionals often results in poor work and [costs you valuable time and resources](#).



## CHAPTER 2

### Finding & Choosing an Expert Translator

#### Who is a Language Professional?

**A** language professional's craft takes many years to master, requiring both natural skill and experience. It may take a translator or editor a considerable amount of time to truly perfect their trade, and continued education and practice are critical to their success. Some language professionals have academic degrees in language studies. These studies help them gain both knowledge and expertise. Others do not hold a university degree yet are highly qualified experts nonetheless.

Before sending a document for translation, it is crucial to check that the translator or editor is indeed a professional, and not simply bilingual. While many people speak two languages and may have even spent significant time in different countries, those characteristics alone do not necessarily qualify the individual as a translator or an editor.

Academic translators and editors have experience working with manuscripts in specific academic disciplines that they have studied in depth. As a general rule, academic translators should only be translating into their native language and editors should only be editing in their native language in order to ensure the highest level of quality.



#### TIPS

Make sure not to get stuck with a translator who is experimenting with a new language.

Feel free to ask a language professional for their credentials and their native language.

## Generic vs. Expert Translation

Many language professionals claim that they can effectively translate and edit texts on any topic. However, most translators have a specific knowledge of between three and five fields, having only peripheral familiarity with others. Lack of familiarity with a particular field can significantly affect both the quality and accuracy of the translated text. Even professional language professionals will be unable to complete a project at a high level if they are unfamiliar with the subject material.

An intimate knowledge of your field is key, and skimping on paying for high quality often results in frustration, and even having to complete the project a second time. For example, if a translator knows what the term ‘distribution’ means in general but doesn’t know how it is used in the context of statistics, they will have trouble translating the word correctly.



### TIPS

Academics in search of language services should always attempt to clarify the translators’ areas of expertise and ask for documented proof of their credentials. If they avoid responding to these inquiries, or if they say that they are going to consult with a friend or colleague regarding the subject matter, it may be best to find another option.



*If you think it's expensive to hire a professional to do the job, wait until you hire an amateur.”*

- Paul Neal “Red” Adair,  
*American Oil Firefighter and Innovator*

# THE MULTIPLE VERIFICATION METHOD

In order to guarantee that your language expert is indeed a professional with specific experience in your field it is best to confirm their qualifications ahead of time using a variety of methods:



Ask for a sample translation or edit

Ask for their CV/ work history specifically as it relates to your field

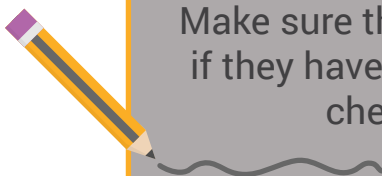


Check if they are familiar with the specific journal or style sheet

Check if they have reviews or testimonials from other scholars



Make sure they have excellent writing skills. See if they have projects that appear online or even check the text on their website



Be suspicious of translators with too many language sets



Check their ability and willingness to research new terms and concepts





# CHAPTER 3

## The Translation Process

### The Translation Process: From A to Z

It is important to prepare properly to make sure that you get off to the right start. Be sure to review your expectations and preferences with the language expert to ensure that they are understood. If you would like the text formatted according to a specific style sheet you must make this clear from the outset and not after the first draft has been completed. Also be sure to carefully define the intended audience (general academic, academics in your field, general audience) to make sure that the right linguistic register and tone is used.

If the text is going to be used in a specific location be sure to specify as much in order to ensure the correct use of local terminology and preferred spelling (US, UK, etc.). Even if your language professional is an expert in the field, it is a good idea to prepare a glossary of terms to avoid unnecessary revisions later on. Alternatively, you can insert the key terms into the article before sending it to the language professional or refer them to a dictionary they can use for help.

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*It is important to think about the process as a back and forth and not expect the text to conform precisely to your expectations after just one draft.*

It is a good idea to request that the language professional send the first few pages or paragraphs for your review before continuing to translate the remainder of the project. This will give you an early indication if there are any fundamental issues which need to be addressed early in the process.

After providing you with a strong first draft, the language professional must be open and available to respond to your comments, questions and requests. It is important to think about the process as a back and forth and not expect the text to conform precisely to your expectations after just one draft. When reviewing your text, be sure to [look out for literalisms](#), or phrases that sound as if they were translated and do not read smoothly in the target language. A good translation expresses the source but doesn't mimic it.

After you have completed your revision [have a colleague review](#) the translation or edit to make sure that it is written clearly in the target language. Once you have completed your revisions, the language professional should review your comments and amend the text accordingly. Keep in mind that assuming the translator or editor is an expert linguist, there is generally good reason for their specific choice of words or phrasing. Be sure to leave time for revisions so that you don't have to send in a rushed version of the text.

Editing always helps. One common misconception is that a text that is translated does not need to be edited afterwards. While a good translator reviews his work and proofs it for mistakes, it is always beneficial to have an editor review and revise when necessary. Much like writing a book, editing on a translation should be completed by a second individual who did not write the original text. Only an outsider can truly analyze the text in a critical manner in order to provide helpful feedback and comments.



Be sure to leave time for revisions so that you don't have to send in a rushed version of the text.

A good way to check if your text sounds translated is to send it to a native speaker who is unfamiliar with your research and see if they think it reads clearly.



## Preparation of Footnotes

There are many different sets of rules for footnotes, and often the language professional must adapt the footnote style in accordance

with the guidelines of a particular style sheet. Some of these style sheets are well known such as the Chicago Manual of Style and APA, while others are made up for specific volumes or collections. Most journals will not even consider a manuscript that has not been formatted according to their style sheet.

Be sure to receive a copy of the style sheet from the journal or publisher to ensure that you are working on the correct formatting guidelines.



### TIPS

It is important to clarify that the language professional is familiar with the specific style sheet before beginning work.

## Word Count

The number of target words in a translation can be up to 40% more or less than in the original text depending on the language. This is crucial to keep in mind when preparing a lecture or academic article, which may be limited to a specific word count minimum or maximum. Be sure to check the word count of your preferred journal before submission (or even better, before you begin writing!). It is preferable to avoid asking a translator to shorten the text, as the author knows the subject matter the best, and will be able to best determine which elements are essential and which are secondary.



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## CHAPTER 4

### Paying for Translation: Determining Pricing and Cost-Saving Tips

#### Pricing and Funding Sources for Translation and Editing Projects

**W**hen approaching a translator or editor for a quote, it is important to be aware that there are numerous methods for pricing translation and editing services. You should be familiar with the various types of price quotes, so that you can understand what you are paying for. The following are a number of key factors in determining the price of any given project:

- Number of words
- Complexity of the subject matter
- Language combination
- Amount of time required to complete the assignment

## HOW IS THE PRICE DETERMINED?

### PER SOURCE WORD:

The words in a document to be translated or edited are counted, and that figure is multiplied by the agreed-upon rate per word, the product of which is the total cost of the translation. The benefit of the per-source-word approach is that the total cost is known in advance.

### **PER TARGET (TRANSLATED) WORD:**

The number of words in the final translated document (rather than the source document) is used to determine the price. This can make the price higher or lower depending on the language pair (for example, it is often estimated that a translation from Hebrew will contain a target number of English words that is up to 40% greater than the number of source words). The disadvantage of using the target words for determining the price is that you cannot ascertain the final price until the project is completed.

### **PER CHARACTER:**

In some languages, it is more convenient to count characters than words. One example of such a language is Japanese, which generally has no spaces between words. For such languages, it is common to price based on character counts rather than word counts. The per-character approach is similar to the per-word approach in that it establishes a fixed rate tied to volume.

### **PER PAGE:**

Another approach is to set a given rate per page to be translated or edited, where a “page” is defined as a certain number of words, lines or characters. It is generally accepted practice to view one page as 250 words.

### **PER HOUR:**

In some cases, language professionals are paid by the hour, much like other service providers. This is generally the case when the amount of work cannot be determined prior to the start of the project.

## How Much Should I Expect to Pay?

Rates for translation range anywhere from 5 to 25 cents per word, while rates for editing range from 4 to 14 cents per word. It may be very daunting to invest a significant portion of a university stipend (or even personal funds) without knowing what separates one language professional from the next. Quality language professionals should spend considerable time preparing your text, conducting the background research and proofing their work for errors.

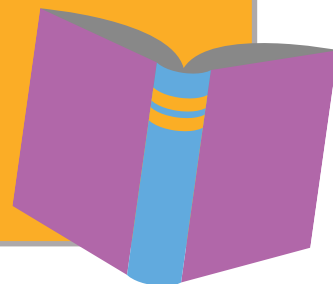
The amount of time needed for a careful and accurate academic project generally incurs a fee that is substantially higher than the bare minimum offered online. The difference in selecting an experienced translator over an inexpensive translator could mean the difference between the acceptance and rejection of your research into the journal or symposium of your choice.



*The difference in selecting an experienced translator over an inexpensive translator could mean the difference between the acceptance and rejection of your research into the journal or symposium of your choice.*

# TIPS FOR SAVING MONEY

Academic papers often contain citations and quotes from primary sources that do not need to be touched. Make sure to insert the quotes before you start and double check that the language professional does not charge you the same rate for them.



Prepare your work well in advance. Language professionals charge extra for last minute projects and the resulting work can suffer. In addition, last minute work leaves little time for revisions and changes by the scholar.

Make sure the source text is ready for publication. The more time and effort put into the source text, the smoother and less expensive the translation and editing process will be.



Check to see if your university has any funds or grants available to help offset the cost of translating or editing your text.



## CHAPTER 5

### Building a Long-Term Relationship

#### Feedback and Continuing the Relationship

**T**he first time working with a new translator or editor can often prove to be challenging. It is normal to get frustrated, and to experience growing pains. However, as time goes on and you develop a relationship with your translator or editor, they learn what you expect of them and how to approach each new project.

If they have satisfactorily met most of the criteria mentioned above, it may well be worthwhile to stick with them and build a long-term relationship. It is also advantageous to remain with a language professional who has worked on previous projects in order to maintain maximal consistency in terminology and writing style. Feedback and communication are critical and it is important for the translator or editor to know where they excelled and where there is room for improvement.

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# ABOUT ACADEMIC LANGUAGE EXPERTS

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This book is an attempt to compile and summarize all of the ideas and insights I have had in my first five years as the CEO of Academic Language Experts. ALE has assisted thousands of scholars publish their research in the most prestigious journals around the world by adhering to the principles outlined in this e-book. If you would like to learn more about our services, or to request a free sample, email us at [info@aclang.com](mailto:info@aclang.com) or visit our [website](#).

Thank you for reading through the entire e-book, I hope that you found it interesting and informative.



Sincerely,  
Avi Staiman