



**aia**  
Translations

# A Buyer's Guide

Life Sciences Translation Services

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*A handbook for understanding how to plan  
and budget for translation projects  
- brought to you by aiaTranslations LLC*



## About Us:

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*aiaTranslations LLC is the leading provider of specialized life sciences translation. With a global network of medical linguists, aiaTranslations can provide translations for projects ranging from clinical trials through commercialization and market research.*

Use this guide to better understand the translation process. All of the strategies listed here will reduce cost, improve quality and streamline the process.



*“Look at your translation vendor as a partner and you will see long term quality and cost rewards.”*

## **Strategy:** Do we need to Translate This?

This may seem like a strange question, but before sending anything out for translation, you should be very clear on what needs translation and what does not. Does the entire 400 page document need to be translated or are there pertinent sections? Does the patient information section need to be translated or has it been done previously? Do you need the notes in the PowerPoint presentation in German or not?

Getting a firm hold on exactly what needs translation is truly the first step to managing the entire process.

Also, if you need a summary rather than a full translation, most agencies will do this for you as well.

## **Strategy:** Plan for Translation

If you are starting from scratch, then write for translation. Avoid plays on words and idioms that are tied to visuals. Try not to be wordy and use precise expressions and concise sentences. Ideally, send your piece to your translation partner for review BEFORE the document receives final approval. This way they can red flag any sections that are not translation-friendly before it is too late.

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## Strategy: What Will it Cost?

Translation pricing can range dramatically and while the most expensive rate may not guarantee the best product, as a buyer of a service, you need to look at the rate objectively. Vendors who are pricing themselves WELL below the competition should be suspect for several reasons. First, it is possible that they do not understand the scope of the work you require. Or, it is possible that they are subcontracting their work to countries where the rate is depressed. In this case, there is an issue of accountability from a buyer's perspective. You should be sure that your work is not being shopped around to the lowest bidder. Many large translation clearinghouses do this—they post work on an online board and then assign it to the translator who is willing to do it the quickest and the cheapest. This is hardly ideal when the translation will go on to represent your company or your product to an international audience.

The fact of the matter is that, in translations like many things, you get what you paid for. Your agency should be pricing themselves competitively, but you should also be sure of what you are getting, how you are getting it and where it is coming from.

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## Strategy: Comparing Bids

Great buyers know how to shop around. But the trick to this is knowing how to compare different pricing bids. First, know what is important to you—is speed more important than accuracy? Or is precision the most desirable? Once you know this, you can more evenly compare what an agency is offering.

Also, try not to compare the final price on an estimate. Because word counts and proofreading hours can vary, looking at the rates and the assumptions will allow you to compare apples to apples.

# Strategy:

## Components of Pricing

It is nearly impossible to compare quotes if you do not understand the components of a translation estimate. Use this section to familiarize yourself with the line items that may appear on your invoice.

# 1

### WORD COUNTS

Most documents are charged by the word for translation. The exceptions to this are those that fall under a pre-established “minimum” or certain types of advertising copy. Estimates will show the target estimated word count and the corresponding fee. All translations should then be checked by a second linguist. This proofreading fee is sometimes charged by the word—or also by the hour.

# 2

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT TIME

Some agencies break out their management fees or some incorporate them into the per word price.

# 3

### GRAPHICS

If graphics have to be recreated, you may also see a formatting charge.

# 4

### ENGINEERING OR DESIGN TIME

If the documents are created using a specialized design software, then you can expect to see a charge for creating foreign language pieces. This is the studio charge from the designer.

# 5

### REVIEWS

There may be an additional line item that reflects post-production proofreading or incorporation of client or regulatory feedback.

## Why does my document have 2000 words but my estimate is for 2800 words?

Great question. Most invoicing and billing for translation is done on the final target word count. Agencies that hope to give you estimates that will not be exceeded, will estimate the expansion of words in the translation process. Because of this, you will see a larger word count on the estimate. It is also because of this that you will see different word counts on your final invoice for different languages. The Spanish may say 2800 words, while the Italian may say 2200.



# Strategy:

## Choosing a Partner

Seeing your translation vendor as a partner is crucial to a long-term, successful relationship. Partners are invested and they understand strategy. They take on your goals as their own and work to make sure that they contribute to the success of each project.

Find an agency with a skilled set of project managers.  
Your agency partner should:

- Have low project management turnover
- Have a global network of specialized resources
- Be willing to work with your country teams to produce finalized documents
- Have errors and omissions insurance in case of a problem
- Be responsive 24 hours per day—7 days per week
- Operate legally for tax and employment purposes!



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