Birmingham Community Health Information Translation Project

Basic Principles of Translation

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Aims and Objectives

This presentation will explain the basic principles and processes of translation

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1. What is translation?
2. The purpose of a translation
3. Cultural aspects
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What is Translation?

A simple definition is the transfer of a message from text in one language to text in another language

The language being translated *from* is known as the source language, and the language being translated *into* is called the target language.

source language message → target language message

The Purpose of a Translation

The first thing to do when considering a translation is to think about why you are doing the translation. What is its purpose? What are the key messages that need to be communicated?

You should also think about other questions, such as:
Who will read the translation?
Where and when will they read it?
How will they read it?

Will they even read it? Maybe you want to translate a written message into a voice message or a video to share over social media.

Cultural Aspects

When you have thought about the purpose and type of translation, you should think about what that type of communication would look and sound like if it had been produced originally in the target language.

When you translate you might need to change the structure or the look of the text so that it fits the expectations of the readers.

They will be more likely to trust the message if it has an authentic look and feel to it.

The Translation Process

After having thought about the purpose of your translation, there are three main stages to go through.

1 **BEFORE you translate**

2 **DURING the translation**

3 **AFTER the translation**

BEFORE you translate

- Read the whole of the source text carefully.
- Make sure you understand the key messages.
- Identify any translation challenges in the text.

Translation challenges are elements of the text that might be more difficult to translate. For example, acronyms, place names, specialised terms. You will need to think carefully about the best solutions for these challenges and might need to do some research to find the solutions. We have produced another video to help you with this.

DURING the translation

- Translate the whole text
- Adapt where necessary to take cultural aspects into account.
- Make sure you include all the key messages.
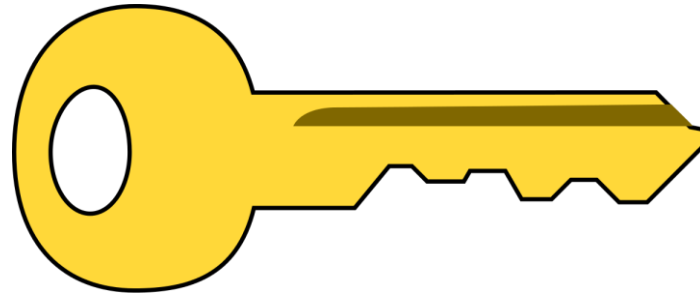
AFTER the translation

- Check the translation carefully
- Make corrections or revisions if needed to make sure it sounds like a natural text in the target language.
- If possible get someone else who understands the language to check it too.

Summary

- Translation is the transfer of messages from one language into another.
- Before you translate you need to think about the purpose of the translation, who will read it and how?
- You also need to think about cultural aspects relating to the language you are translating into.
- There are three main stages to the translation process: before, during and after the translation itself.
- It is really important to check the translation after you have finished and if possible get someone else to check it too.