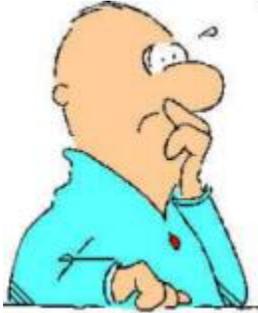


# No payment for “non-essential” words?

English translation by Heather McCrae



Some people don't really know how translation service costs are calculated. This lack of knowledge is not a failing and we professionals are always happy to explain in detail. But how can anyone think that specialist terminology costs more than essential words, while (non-essential) connecting words should be free of charge? Here is a real-life story:

Dear potential client,

I was delighted to receive your request as it shows me new ways to save money with regards to costs. But I would like to emphasise beforehand: Don't be ashamed if you don't know how translation services are calculated. I have no idea either how a baker calculates the cost of a bread roll or a hairdresser the cost of a haircut.

You want to have a text translated and you were kind enough to warn me about the specialist terminology it contains. I am very thankful for your help, because otherwise I might have had a shock, despite my 40 (forty) years of translation experience. You informed me that the specialist field is contractual law. Wonderful! One of my favourite specialist fields.

And then you asked the justifiable question about the price. Because, it is important – and I am not being ironic here – to know what costs you will be facing. But then you asked:

- *How much would the translation of the specialist terminology cost?*
- *How much would the translation of the “important words” cost?*

And then you go on to mention that “connecting words” such as “and/or/the” should of course not be included in the calculation.

Apart from the fact that a translator always needs to see the text first before saying anything about prices, I was initially pretty taken aback by your proposed breakdown of costs. But then I worked out several solutions that I would like to offer you here:

1. You could paste all the specialist terminology into one Excel file and all the so-called important words you have found into a second Excel file, then send me these files. My long-term experience means that I know men in particular are very enthusiastic about working with Excel, so I am delighted to provide you with this opportunity. I would then insert the French translation next to the German original version and send both Excel files back to you. You would only have to pay for the actual translated words. Would this be acceptable to you? I am sure a trainee or intern in your company can take over the job of

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<http://www.proz.com/translator/934453>  
<https://de.linkedin.com/in/hjmtechnicaltranslations>

pasting the French specialist terminology and those important words back into your text – this will not be at all difficult if you have prepared the text beforehand by highlighting all the specialist terminology in green and all the important words in yellow.

2. A second solution would be that you actually colour-code the text for me (again with specialist terminology in green and important words in yellow) and I just enter the corresponding French translations. I will then leave the rest untouched according to your specifications.

Neither solution is to your satisfaction? I'm very sorry to hear that.

Oh, you need the complete text translated into French, but you only want the specialist terminology and important words to be counted for calculation purposes? Your reason for this request is that "*connecting words*" such as "*and/or/the*", etc. are always part of every language and should therefore present no difficulty? Really? An interesting point of view.

Hmm, you have given me a great idea! As you know, I am French and the French are not chickens, i.e.: They don't eat seeds. When I go to my baker tomorrow to buy my two bread rolls, I am going to tell him that I will now only pay 56 cents per roll instead of the usual 70 cents each, because the seeds on the top of the rolls are *just* for decoration and I will as usual remove them before eating the rolls. I wonder if he will agree to this deal? After all, I would save around 100 Euro per year.

And, because I need to get a room in my cellar re-tiled, I will tell the tile layer that, as his prices are calculated per square meter, he need not bother to add the bits used for the corners, skirting and connecting pieces to the sanitary articles, pipes, etc. to his calculation. I am sure I will save lots of money.

I will even save money when I go to my favourite Italian restaurant: My favourite dish (Dover sole meunière), wonderfully created by my favourite chef, Alberto, is always accompanied by potatoes and broccoli. You need to know: I hate broccoli. Yes, I know, you are right, broccoli is very healthy, but I still don't like it. So, the two broccoli florets left on the otherwise empty plate are carried back to the kitchen where they then – shame on me – probably end up in the waste bin. I will simply tell Roberto the waiter, Alberto's brother, that I will in future deduct 2.90 Euro for the non-essential broccoli from the 24.90 Euro the dish usually costs me. Getting the talented chef Alberto to simply omit the broccoli is no solution as this splash of bright green is an integral part of the dish. Anyway, thanks to your suggestions, I can now easily save another 100 to 120 Euro per year.

Unfortunately, our house is fully furnished already and we also have plenty of clothing. Nevertheless, I think I will inform the various furniture and clothing manufacturers that I use about my proposal to deliver their products without screws or seams or buttons. The customers can get their own screws – plenty of DIY stores around. And, if you can't sew, simply take the unfinished clothing to the seamstress – she needs work too.

I am sure that your proposal regarding product and service minimalism will soon be taken over by all branches. It will be a great hit in these times of ever-increasing competitiveness! This is

why – and you will hopefully perceive my fairness here – I recommend you have this idea patented immediately. Oh, by the way, even though translation requirements for patents have just been newly regulated, the patent proprietor must still provide translations (during the transition period up to 2025) “as follows:

where the language of proceedings at the European Patent Office is French or German, the patent proprietor will have to provide a translation of the European patent into English;

where the language of proceedings at the EPO is English, the patent proprietor will have to provide a translation of the European patent into any official language of the European Union.”

<https://www.epo.org/law-practice/unitary/faq.html#faq-632>

I can recommend appropriately qualified colleagues if necessary!



What sounds like a rather funny anecdote I just made up actually landed as a query in my mailbox. Apparently, this idea of not adding the general words in specialist texts or even those empty spaces between words to price calculations is not entirely unknown, as some colleagues have confirmed. According to these colleagues, this is due to a “lack of knowledge about what words actually are”. I could open up another debate right here and say:

Of course we translate words.

And what they express.

Because words are more than just “words”.

Words alone are not enough ...

As a recommendation for everyone who needs translation services, here are two sources of information:

Written by me (in German): [Wie werden Übersetzungsleistungen berechnet](#)

Information brochure published by ADÜ Nord: Click [here](#) to download.

As translators, of course, we are always happy to help out by answering any questions you may have regarding translation.