Types of Translation

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Because of the dramatic evolution of the [professional translation](https://www.onehourtranslation.com/?landing=blogpost) industry, there are currently new terms and words being used to describe translation service specializations that don't fall under general categories like [human translation](https://www.onehourtranslation.com/?landing=blogpost) or machine translation. This article intends to serve as a brief guide of sorts to some of the more common and basic of these recently coined expressions. Here are just some of them:

* **General Translation:**The simplest of translation types, a general translation allows a translator quite a lot of leeway because its source material mostly uses layman terms and ordinary, everyday speech. There's no need to understand special terminologies, and most translation work fall into this particular type.
* **Legal Translation:**As one of the more complex and complicated professional translation types out there, [legal translation](https://www.onehourtranslation.com/translation/benefits/industry-expertise/legal-certificate-translation-services) is best described as the translation of treaties, contracts, and many other legal documents. A translation service is responsible for both understanding politico-legal and socio-cultural context behind a legal text and translating it in such a way that a target audience with a different cultural/political/societal background could readily understand. Only a human translation agency that knows both source and target cultures could pull a decent legal translation job off. Nevertheless, even specialists like those tend to use professional legal assistance as well, because one simple slipup or mistranslation of a contract's passage could lead to disastrous consequences.
* **Commercial Translation:**Just like its legal counterpart, a commercial translation or [business translation](https://www.onehourtranslation.com/translation/benefits/industry-expertise/business-finance-translation-services) (not to be confused with advertising translation) requires a translator to have specialist translation skills and business jargon knowledge in order to translate a business's every report, tender document, company account, and correspondence. There's a bit of overlap between commercial translation and legal translation as well, in the sense that companies tend to handle legal paperwork alongside business paperwork.
* **Administrative Translation:**"Administrative" can mean many things, but in the context of translation, it merely refers to translating managerial texts used in different corporations, businesses, and organizations. This translation type also overlaps with commercial translation, but only in the sense that the vast majority of administrative translation can be considered commercial translation as well, but not all commercial translation is administrative in nature.
* **Literary Translation:**As its name suggests, [literary translation](https://www.onehourtranslation.com/) refers to translation done for literature such as poems, plays, short stories, and novels. Just as general translation is the simplest form and legal translation is the most difficult form, many people in the industry consider literary translation as the highest form of translation. The reason behind this is because literary translation goes beyond mere translation of context; a literary translator must be proficient in translating humor, cultural nuances, feelings, emotions, and other subtle elements of a given work. Conversely, there are those who allege that literary translation is impossible, as with the case of translating poetry.

Understanding the Different Types of Translations

**Translation** is a field that is seeing a lot of activity nowadays, thanks to the increasing *globalization of businesses*. International travel has also increased significantly – for both business and leisure. This means there is, at any given time, a large number of people in a country that don’t necessarily speak the local language well.

Of course, this augurs well for the translation industry. There are many **different types of translation**  that may be required, and each one is unique, with its own process and specific requirements. If you are a business with international business, it would be beneficial to partner up with an experienced professional, or a translation services company, who is capable of understanding your specific requirements and accommodating them. Experienced translation service professionals, whether working individually, or as part of a company, can provide exactly the kind of translation services you need, but also help you with things like creating a glossary, a [translation memory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translation_memory) (TM – when computers are used to speed up the process) and other assets. This becomes very valuable and assists in the creation of content that is consistent and can be reused – eventually translating into cost reduction, and saving time through the elimination of duplication of efforts.

On your part, it is important that you have a meeting with your service provider to apprise them of your exact needs – the more info you can give them about your business and your target market, the easier it will be for them to provide you with the best service possible. If you can, do try to specify important terms or jargon used in your industry, and a style guide; also provide some training sessions to familiarize them with the products or services you offer.

Translations can be broadly classified into two – Business related, and Non- Business related. However, some kind of overlap in both categories. So let us examine the most common types of translations that are performed.

**Literary Translation**

The name is pretty self-explanatory – *literary translation*refers to the translation of literary works like stories, novels, poems, and plays. It is often considered the highest form of translation because a literary translation is so much more than the mere conveying of the meaning and context of the document in the source language into the target language. It involves incorporating the appropriate cultural nuances, translating humour, feelings, emotions, and other subtle elements of a particular work. Many litterateurs believe that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to translate works of literature – especially poetry. Some examples of situations that could be very difficult are – rhyming words, puns, idioms, anagrams, and so on. Often, there are no appropriate translations in the target language, and the nuance is lost. Have you ever tried translating a joke into another language? If you have, you would understand this. Haven’t you felt, that it didn’t seem as funny when translated? Often, many subtle connotations the writer has hinted at are lost in translation. Then there is the matter of the individualistic writing style of the author – the translator has a tough job in attempting to convey that uniqueness.

**Software Localization**



Ofcourse, the main thing to translate is the*user interface*, but *software localization* does not end there. It includes error messages, system messages, help files and so on. Here too, the content needs to be adapted to suit the local (target) culture. At times, the translator may be faced with the prospect of [internationalization](https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/internationalization-I18N) – take a product like Coca-Cola, which is available almost everywhere in the world. The company will need to have their website in multiple languages, and rather than create multiple websites, which could cost a ton of money, it would make more sense to have the software handle several languages, and allow the user to translate the page into a language of their choice. If you go to[Wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org/) searching for info on anything, you will notice the choice of languages displayed on the left. The localized software may incorporate numerous practical and linguistic issues. Hence it is vital that it is thoroughly tested before releasing. Reputed translation services companies often have a multiple language testing centers to test localized software.

**Commercial Translation**

This type of translation necessitates a translator to possess specialized skills, like knowledge of the business jargon, and the industry to which the business belongs. The types of texts in the translation of commercial documents could include business correspondence, reports, tender documents, company accounts, memos and so on. Sometimes, this could overlap with legal translation if the company handles legal paperwork.

**Read More On** [Interpreter Vs Translator: What Are The Differences?](https://www.translateday.com/interpreter-vs-translator)

**Legal Translation**

This is one of the most complex translations, and involves [birth certificate translations](https://www.translateday.com/birth-certificate-translation/) and [marriage certificate translations](https://www.translateday.com/marriage-certificate-translation/), translating contracts, agreements, treaties, memorandums, wills, and so on. A good translator needs to understand the various underlying contexts of the documents and that of the two regions or countries for which the documents are intended – the socio-cultural aspects, and the politico-legal aspects as well. They would then need to translate it in a manner that the target audience easily grasps the text. Even if you are familiar with the cultures and other aspects and are highly skilled at translation, you may need to consult legal professionals so as to ensure that your translation is completely error-free.

**Technical Translations**



Any technical content that needs to be translated – user guides, manuals, online help text, instruction booklets, training materials and videos, marketing materials for technical fields like manufacturing, science or engineering – all of this comes in the ambit of technical translation. Formatting is an important aspect where the translation of technical content is concerned, as desktop publishing or DTP is required for it. Often the screenshots and even graphics have to be edited to make it suitable for the target language/s. Using a [content management system](https://searchcontentmanagement.techtarget.com/definition/content-management-system-CMS) or CMS will help you keep cost down. When choosing a translator, it is essential to check how well versed they are with the terminology and jargon used in your specific industry – if they are not as familiar with that stuff as you’d like but they are proficient in the translation as such, it would make sense to provide training for them to familiarize them with your industry in general, and your business in particular. As a translation service provider, it would be worth investing in an efficient TMS or *translation management system*; it can automate your project tasks and bring down your admin costs. By nature, technical content translation is complicated, and even a tiny error may result in a huge mistake at a later point; therefore, it is a good practice to check how stringent the quality control measures taken by the translation service provider are. Ideally, they should be ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 17100:2015 certified.

**Judicial Translation**

Yes, this type of translation is different from legal translation; the latter is about translating legal documents – which could be very old too. But when we talk about *judicial translation*, we basically refer to the activity of translating court documents like depositions, minutes of meetings, expert testimonies, witness testimonies, judgments, letters rogatory, interviews and more – basically, activities related to cases.

**Administrative Translation**

In the realm of translation, administrative refers to the translation of management texts we often see being used in organizations – whether huge corporations or regional businesses. Though pretty similar to commercial translations, it is not exactly the same. While administrative translation can be called a subset of commercial translation, all commercial translation is not necessarily administrative.

**Medical Translations**



Any medical content that is patient related, like labels, packaging, instructions, or software, and content that is product related, like research papers, clinical trial paperwork, quality management certificates and the like, usually needs translation. It is absolutely imperative that the translation service providers are experienced, have the requisite knowledge, and are in-country professionals. Translation of medical documents can also be very tricky as the requirements of translation can differ from country to country; a translator or company specialized in medical documents would be your best bet, as they would be familiar with the intricacies of all the different requirements. If you want the best translation service provider, who follows a high level of quality control, like a company with an ISO 13485:2016 certification. The general certifications that signify quality, like ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 17100:2015 are, of course, a must-have.

**Read More On** [Translation Problems and Solutions](https://www.translateday.com/translation-problems-and-solutions/)

**Website Translations**

We are of course talking about website copy, subtitles for videos on your web pages, and any documents you have there. Here you will also need to change things like currencies, address formats and layouts, so as to appeal to the different local audiences. You need to think about the languages you want your website to be translated into and localize only those pages which will apply to the target audience. Using a website*translation management system* to automate and ease the process if you have frequent updates to your website copy.

**Script Translation**

Many popular movies and TV shows that come out of Hollywood are dubbed into several languages and released worldwide; sometimes the film are from foreign languages and dubbed into English and other European languages – like the Telugu language blockbuster from India, Baahubali, which was released in Chinese and German, among other languages. The Harry Potter series was also released into dozens of languages. But for these releases to happen, the scripts have to be translated first – and the dialogues. You can say this is a type of literary translation, but it’s not exactly the same. It can be very dicey, as translating punchlines, jokes or catchy phrases into another language to make the same impact is very difficult. With more movies being released in multiple languages nowadays, this type of translation is very much in demand today.

**Multimedia Localization**

Videos, graphics, animations, GIFs, infographics – all this can be grouped under multimedia; and this is very important today, as more and more companies are creating multimedia content to widen their audience reach and keep them engaged. Localizing this content can get quite tricky though it may look simple from the outside – as it has to be appropriate for the local culture, and appeal to the customers in that region. If you don’t do it correctly, you could end up offending your audience – and drive them away.

**Financial Document Translation**



Financial documents like bank records, statements, account statements and more – sometimes need to be translated to make it easier for the target audience to comprehend. Here the actual content that you need to translate may be lesser, but it has to be done precisely; you may also be required to change the currencies – in which case, you would need to also convert the figures.

**Conclusion**

Of course, there are more translation types such as literary, legal, financial, etc. and there are all different kinds of processes and technologies that can work for the different types of translation projects. What makes sense for one translation type might not work for another.