

FEBRUARY 2011

◆ TRANSLATION 911, OR HOW WE FIX A BAD TRANSLATION ◆

We all know bad translations don't come with a 'CAUTION: This translation may be hazardous to your health – or wealth' sign, but somehow you just know (or we tell you!) that the translation you received from elsewhere is faulty. Whether done by incompetent, unprofessional people calling themselves translators or by computer translation programs, a bad translation is not only laughable, it can be costly



and even dangerous. Imagine instructions for handling ingested poisonous insecticides with a typo of "now" for "not"... or a lawsuit claiming four million dollars wrongly translated into French as *quatre mille* (really four thousand). Imagine your manufactured electronic piano is described as having 88 *llaves* (keys that open a door) in Spanish, instead of *teclas* (keyboard keys). Not to mention the regional dialect differences in every

language for such things as diverse as recipes, quality control surveys, labor relations guides, or car parts. Some company Web sites now feature colorful flags of foreign countries for you to click on to get an instantaneous, computer-translated version of the page. This may seem like a practical and cheap way to introduce a business to non-English readers or customers abroad, but more likely will backfire and show the company as careless and disinterested in getting it right.

GET IT RIGHT

Let us fix it! Although we professionals would much rather have done a clean translation from scratch at the outset, our repair team is comprised of natives to the target language who are experts -- not just in any particular field regarding terminology and correct up-to-date use, but also in punctuation, style, grammar and syntax. You can rest assured that the finished work will be professional, polished and accurate, as it should have been in the first place.



IF THEY KNEW NOW WHAT WE KNEW THEN ...

If you're unsure of a translation you already have, ask us! We'd have known that the Chevy 'Nova' wouldn't sell in Latin America because in Spanish, 'No va' means 'Doesn't go,' so who would buy such a lemon?! We'd have known not to use "Oil of Olay" in Germany because "Olay" in German sounds like machine oil, not exactly what you want to apply to your face!

◆ THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHT ◆

In less than one week, we delivered an 8,000-word translation into Italian of a technical expert's report on damage to an aircraft engine.



◆ FEATURE ◆ Lingua Quiz!

- The French name of which country gave its name to a leather or napped fabric?
 - Chad
 - Switzerland
 - Sweden
 - Sudan
- Which of these happen when you 'miss the boat' in a foreign language?
 - In French, you missed the bus (*rater le coche*)
 - In Spanish, you lost the train (*perder el tren*)
 - In Greek, the bird flew away (*πέταξε το πουλάκι*)
 - In German, you missed the connection (*den Anschluss verpassen*)
- Mix and match these languages and scripts:

(a) Sanskrit	(1) Kanji
(b) Japanese	(2) Devanāgarī
(c) English	(3) Cyrillic
(d) Kazakh	(4) Burmese
(e) Karen	(5) Latin



ANSWERS:

1. (c) "Suede" is the French word for Sweden.
 2: All of them
 3: (a) = (2); (b) = (1); (c) = (5); (d) = (3); (e) = (4)