



João Roque Dias, CT

Technical Translator

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Technical Translation since 1988

Mechanical Engineer

Certified by the American Translators
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Frequently Asked Questions

First and foremost, I am a Mechanical Engineer and a Certified Translator (CT) by the American Translators Association (English-Portuguese) and an Industry Expert Language Service Provider (LSP) by Common Sense Advisory. Then, since 1988, I have translated a wide range of technical and technical marketing materials into European Portuguese, including ads, brochures, catalogs, hardware/software documentation, company newsletters, installation, operation and maintenance manuals, press releases, slide presentations, video scripts and websites. I have translated on average 700,000 words per year. The subjects in these documents include mechanical and automotive engineering, engines, gear drives, heavy machinery and vehicles, high-tech medical instruments, hydraulic systems, machine and power tools, measurement and monitoring electronic instruments, motors, optical and surveying instruments, packaging, pumps, test equipment, turbines, military and defense equipment, quality assurance and many other technical fields. Some of my articles on terminology and style issues in technical translation have been published on the ATA Chronicle, the magazine of the American Translators Association, the Translating Today Magazine and Confluências – Scientific and Technical Translation e-Journal. I have also made numerous presentations at the ATA Annual Conferences and other translation conferences in other countries and I have been invited to address students of translation courses in Portugal about technical translation issues.

JRD Translations. Is that an agency?

No. JRD are just the initials of my name – João Roque Dias. I'm strictly an independent translator and I do not send my work to others. Never!

Why does a translator have to be a subject expert?

Words are words, aren't they? And they're all in the dictionary anyway...

Well... What's a "bus driver"? Are we talking transportation, or electronics? Two different things, two different translations. That "rotor" in your publication on automobiles, is that in the ignition system or in the brakes? Same word in English, two different words in other languages. That "screen" in your text, is it something on which you watch pictures, or a grid that keeps dust out of your machinery? Same word in some languages, different words in others. You don't want someone who doesn't understand the subject choosing the wrong one. That text of yours on spectroscopy, with the phrase "a red shift phenomenon." You need your translator to know right off the bat whether "red" belongs with "shift" or "phenomenon." If it's misunderstood and mistranslated as a result, guess who's going to end up looking scientifically illiterate? What's a "diamond cutter"? A person who cuts diamonds, a tool for cutting diamonds, or a tool using diamonds as the cutting edge? You're in the diamond-edged cutting-tool business – how much time are you going to waste with people trying to order tools for cutting diamonds, because of an amateur and misleading translation? "Replace the filter" – what do you mean? "Put the same filter back in its original place" – replace in that sense? Or "Throw the old filter away and replace it with a new one?" Again, you need a translator who is not only familiar enough with the subject to know which "replace" is meant (or to realize that there is an ambiguity and to check with you, the client) but also who is sensitive enough to language to look for a word in the target language which doesn't have the ambiguity of the English "replace." And you certainly don't want the translator misunderstanding the relationships between the words when your copy says "We are crude oil importers," now do you?! (*I couldn't have put it better myself, so I borrowed these wise words from Peter Wheeler, Antler Translation Services, USA*).

About the quality of your work...

Of course, I can't rule out errors altogether, but, in my primary fields of specialization, I come fairly close to doing a flawless job.

What are your primary specialization fields?

Given my education as mechanical engineer and my professional background, I only undertake translation assignments for which I can turn out top-notch jobs. Like every true Translator, I feel extremely uncomfortable translating subjects on which I have no or very little knowledge. Please, browse through the *Specialization Fields* and *References and Industries Served* pages on my website for a quick look about my specialty fields.

What kind of translations you DO NOT do?

Computers (software and hardware), localization of software, medicine, legal and arts and humanities, as well as any translations into English. Nuts and bolts (and virtually everything between the nut and the bolt head...) are my specialty!

Is there anything else you DO NOT translate?

Yes! Any translation job where price is put before quality and specialist knowledge of the subject matter!

Do you want to join our team for this huge translation job?

I have not a 'yes' or 'no' answer for this question! Before I make any firm commitment, I demand some clear information about the set-up of the project: for example, are all other translators in the team experts in the field (or you just selected most of them for their cheap prices, hoping to have one real expert to clean up their mess)? Is there a real style manual for the entire project? Do you have a real editor on hand? If not, think again: would you have your custom suit made by 5 different tailors, none of them responsible for the measuring, cutting or fittings?

I need my marriage certificate translated? Can you do it?

Or maybe you contacted me through a free e-mail account (yahoo, hotmail, you name it)... Please, check the Yellow Pages and contact any of the independent translators or translation agencies listed there. I do not provide translation services to individuals.

Do you translate into Brazilian Portuguese or "localize" translations in Brazilian Portuguese into European Portuguese?

No! I work exclusively into European Portuguese. The Brazilian and European versions of the language are quite different in terms

of terminology, syntax and usage. Texts for the Brazilian market should be translated by native translators from Brazil, as those for Portugal (and Portuguese-speaking countries) should be trusted to native Portuguese translators (or from those countries). Text "localization" or "editing" between both versions (for cost reasons...) should be avoided.

Do you do editing and proofreading work?

Given my usual workload in translation and because my Clients are kind enough to keep a constant flow of work into my mailbox, I DO NOT provide editing and proofreading work, especially for non-established Clients.

But, can I arrange for my work to be delivered fully edited/proofread?

Yes, I can and I will gladly assist you in doing so. Over the years, I have developed very close relationships with other translators/proofreaders, accustomed to working with my jobs. This partnership has always yielded excellent results. One more thing: you, the Client, will have full discretion over the contractual dealings with the editor/proofreader. Not me.

Can you evaluate my translation or our new translator?

No! I do not provide any analysis, revision and quality check services for the purpose of testing the proficiency or work of other fellow translators.

Do you do glossary compilation/editing?

For some highly technical translation jobs, glossaries are the cookbook for the whole assignment and the true difference between a good and a bad translation. And, as I like to sell the cake, not the recipe, please don't ask me to compile (or edit) glossaries for jobs that I will not translate. Some of my Glossaries are available for purchase on my website.

Do you use translation memory programs?

Yes, I do. Given its wide acceptance in the translation world, I've selected SDL TRADOS as my TM tool. I can create and develop my own translation memories or work with client-furnished memories. Also, please, don't ask me to work with other TM (or I would end up using more than a dozen...), because a good TM (like TRADOS) is more than enough...

Do you translate PowerPoint files?

Yes, I do! Over the years I have developed quite an expert knowledge in handling and processing PowerPoint files (more than 7,000 slides translated so far). My fee for translating these files includes the rearrangement of the slide layout (which is a mess, after the translation of the text boxes...) and the translation of the notes.

Can you handle my source document in PDF format?

Yes, I can. Probably, you want me to convert the text within your PDF file into a file that can be processed by MS Word or TRADOS. Such conversion can be done with reasonable results (i.e., the resulting text will look quite similar to the original text within PDF), but some significant differences may also derive from the conversion, and you may have to rearrange the copy layout of my translation. Also, for some documents, I may have to spend a significant amount of time after the raw conversion, to render the output copy adequate for translation. Should this be the case, you may have to pay for such time. The best way is always to send me a Word (DOC) or RTF file.

I want to send you a huge file...

I'm sure I can handle it! My primary e-mail mailbox can hold 1 GB of data! I also have another back-up e-mail mailbox, also almost 8 GB capacity. I can also retrieve you data by FTP from your server. And, if nothing of this is enough, you can always mail me a CD with your files. Contact me for details about my email accounts.

Do you really keep deadlines?

In one word: YES! As an engineer, I fully understand the time requirements of the industrial and corporate worlds. If I cannot meet your deadline or if you cannot match your Client's requirements with my schedule, then I will not take the job. I could also tell you

that I've NEVER missed a deadline, but why should you take my word for it?...

And, what can I, the Client, do about deadlines?

Just understand that my specialty work tends to lead to fairly large jobs, which will keep me busy for days (or even weeks...) in a row. I can even work on weekends and do what I can to deliver a superb result under pressure. But there are limits. So please schedule enough time for my work, and always check my availability before sending any file to be translated. After all, chances are that you, too, will need a fairly large job translated.

I live in a different time zone...

That's all right! I will not wake you up in the middle of (your) night! Sometimes, living in a different time zone can be an advantage, because I can get a little more time to work on your job (if you are in a time zone ahead of me, i.e., to the west of Lisbon). With voicemail service in all my phones (blocked callers are automatically rejected...) and my fax connected to a dedicated line, I am virtually always reachable. And, of course, my website and mailbox are open 24/7, year round...

What is your policy on confidentiality?

Any job is kept strictly confidential. Period. Sensitive jobs are kept under lock and key with strong-encryption storage or in a high security safe (outside of my office premises) and unused or obsolete documents are destroyed using a high-security DIN 32757, Security Level 4 shredder. I can also sign a reasonable confidentiality agreement (see my Confidentiality Statement and my Business Terms), prior to starting the first job for a new Client.

What about the translation of illegal matters and copyrighted materials

I reserve the right of refusing the translation of any matter which, in my sole opinion, is or may be of an illegal or libelous nature. Where copyright exists in texts to be translated, the Client warrants that it has obtained all consents necessary for such translation to be made. I shall be indemnified by the Client in respect of any claims, proceedings, costs and expenses arising out of any libelous matter printed for the Client, or any infringement of copyright, patent or design or third party right. See also my *Business Terms*.

How much is 50 pages of a not-very-technical text?

Translation prices range from 1 to 10, and while high prices do not necessarily guarantee high quality, we respectfully submit that below a certain level you are unlikely to receive a text that does credit to your company and its products. – Excerpt from "Translation – Getting It Right"

I understand you may wish to obtain a quotation on a job before you send me a firm order. But I can't answer questions like the above by phone or e-mail, unless you tell me how many characters (including blank spaces) there are in your document. At any rate, I prefer to see the whole document before I can quote on the job, so the best way to proceed is to send me the original text as an e-mail attachment. I'll respond quickly with a cost and turnaround time estimate.

I have a job to translate and I'll pay you 5 denarii* a word...

Would you say that to any other professional? Like your lawyer, your dentist, or the architect for your new house? Or – as I bet you would – you'd describe your needs to him/her and, then, ask how much he/she would charge for the service? That's exactly what you should do with me (or with any other translator, for that matter...): tell me what you need, and when, and I will tell how much you should pay for my services. Then, it's entirely up to you to accept, or reject, my terms. *Denarii (sing. denarius), an old Roman currency unit.

I'm wondering whether my original copy got bigger, i.e., with more words?

When you translate from English to another language, there are almost always more words in the other language. English is extremely compact. For example, a sentence translated into European Portuguese will expand by, perhaps, 15 to 25%. Of course, these figures are educated guesses: the subject and style of the material has a profound effect upon its expandability. Why

does this matter? If you have a certain layout in the English document you want to duplicate, you will have to account for the expansion factor. One good approach is to start with a generous amount of white space in English, which will be correspondingly diminished in the translated version. Other approaches are to reduce margins and font sizes, steal white space from column gutters and graphical elements, or, as a last resort, expand the amount of paper used. Expansion is also a factor in pricing. I price my translation work per target word – that is, by the output unit, but exceptions to this basic rule may apply.

And, what about your Business Terms?

While I am not a *Fortune 500* or a multinational company, I still have my own Business Terms. These are basic rules that you, the Client, and I, your Translator, should bear in mind whenever we deal with each other. And, no, my *Business Terms* are not engraved in stone and I can accept my Client's terms, provided they are fair and square for us both.

How can I pay you for your services?

Besides payment by check or wire transfer, you may also settle my invoices by check or online with your credit or debit card, using the *PayPal* or *moneybookers* systems. Rule no. 1: Your payment deadline should be as strict as my delivery deadline. Usually, I request payment within 30 days from the date of my invoice, unless we specifically agreed otherwise. And, if you're from a translation agency, please, DO NOT ask me to be paid AFTER you get paid by your Client. Please, understand that I have no control over such payment and that I do not share the risk (or the profit...) of your business.

How can I phone me, without costing you an arm and a leg?

Besides calling my regular phone numbers in Portugal (landline and mobile), you can also call me via *Skype* (always on) or *VoipBuster*. And, when I am in the United States (as announced in my

Availability page), you can also call my *T-Mobile* cell phone. View the *Contacts* page on my website for details.

I'm also a translator and I want to send you my CV?

Please, don't! I do not act as an agency for other fellow translators, and I do not farm out any of my work. 'JRD Translations' is just one person, João Roque Dias, working as a sole trader. As such, there are no employees and that is not likely to change. Also, there are no employment opportunities with JRD Translations!

Can you refer me to other fellow Translators?

Yes, if you're an established Client or if your requirements are very specific to a particular fellow translator. For translation services into European Portuguese, please meet the members of the *European Portuguese Translators Network* or visit my *Translator Colleagues* pages on my website.

I'm from translation company and I want to offer you our services...

Please, don't. You'd be wasting each other's time and everybody's bandwidth. I do not subcontract my work and I do not serve as an agency either for companies or for other freelance translators.

What do you expect from your Clients?

There is something unique about every company and organization – the people, the products, the service, and the materials to be translated. It's never the same! I recognize that! Therefore, from each of my Clients I expect everything they should expect from me, as the person to whom they have trusted their translation work and their reputation in the marketplace. In brief: a professional and trustworthy relationship, with strict respect for each other's interests and expectations.

I still have any other concerns or questions that were not addressed above...

Please, contact me. I am only a phone call or email away!

Version discrepancies

In case of discrepancies between the versions of my Frequently Asked Questions published in my website and the PDF version (i.e., this version) available for download on the Downloads Library page of my website, **the version published in my website shall prevail.**

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jrdias.COM
technical translation

cta
certified member
english - portuguese