

10 Common Translation Mistakes Checklist

A Guide for International Businesses

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Introduction

This checklist helps international businesses identify and correct common errors when translating product materials from Chinese to English. Use this guide before publishing your content to ensure professionalism and clarity.

1. Article Usage (A, An, The)

Chinese does not use articles, making this the most common error in translation.

- Check if singular countable nouns have an article (a/an/the)
- Ensure “the” is used for specific items and “a/an” for general ones
- Remove articles before uncountable nouns (e.g., “information,” “equipment”)

2. Pluralization

- Verify that plural nouns have “s” or “es” endings
- Check subject-verb agreement (e.g., “The products are” not “The products is”)
- Watch for irregular plurals (e.g., “children” not “childrens”)

3. Verb Tenses

- Ensure consistent verb tenses throughout the document
- Check that past events use past tense and future events use future tense

- Verify that “will” is used correctly for future promises

4. Prepositions (In, On, At, To)

- Check if the correct preposition is used for time and place
- Verify prepositions in phrasal verbs (e.g., “depend on” not “depend of”)
- Ensure “to” is used correctly with infinitives

5. Word Order

- Verify standard English sentence structure: Subject + Verb + Object
- Place adjectives before nouns (e.g., “red car” not “car red”)
- Ensure time and place expressions are at the end or beginning of sentences

6. Chinglish Expressions

- Replace literal translations with natural English idioms
- Avoid “open/close” for lights/machines (use “turn on/off”)
- Check for “welcome to buy” (use “available for purchase”)

7. Tone and Register

- Ensure the tone matches the target audience (formal vs. casual)
- Avoid overly flowery or exaggerated language
- Check for politeness levels appropriate for English speakers

8. Vocabulary Choice

- Verify that words are used in their correct context
- Check for false friends (words that look similar but have different meanings)
- Use precise terminology for technical descriptions

9. Punctuation and Capitalization

- Ensure sentences start with capital letters

- Check that proper nouns are capitalized
- Verify correct use of commas, periods, and quotation marks

10. Cultural Nuances

- Check for culturally sensitive content
- Ensure measurements are in the target market's units (e.g., inches vs. cm)
- Verify that examples and references are relevant to the audience

Conclusion

By systematically checking your content against these ten points, you can significantly improve the quality of your English translations. For professional results, consider hiring a specialist editor.

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