



## Blog Trekker

# What to Do When the Client Is Wrong?

Internet blogs are rich sources of information for translators and interpreters. They allow users to post questions, exchange ideas, network, and read news and commentary on a specific subject. The topics featured in this column are actual blog postings concerning issues pertinent to your colleagues in the field today. For more blog listings, visit [www.atanet.org/careers/blog\\_trekker.php](http://www.atanet.org/careers/blog_trekker.php).

(Posted by Tess Whitty on her blog, *The Business of Translation*, [www.swedishtranslationservices.com/blog/](http://www.swedishtranslationservices.com/blog/).)

**I have followed** a discussion on ATA's Business Practices group on Yahoo! ([http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/ata\\_business\\_practices](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/ata_business_practices)) these past few days with interest. The discussion is about when a non-native client insists on inserting grammatical errors into the target text. There can be other similar situations, but it all boils down to instances where a client wants you to change a translation that you know is correct to something that is no longer correct. What is a translator to do?

The first instinct might be to refuse to do it, and to tell the client that he or she is just plain wrong. After this, you might add an explanation of why the client is wrong. This is a natural reaction, but it might easily lead to hard feelings, and one of you will probably not want to work with the other anymore.

Another reaction might be to just accept the suggested errors and move on with your day. This is easier said than done for a translator, who is used to grammatical correctness, the beauty of a good text, and a quest for perfection in finding the right word. Accepting these errors might leave you with a gnawing feeling of dissatisfaction and a worry that someone might think it was you who inserted the errors into the translation.

So what are we to do instead? ATA members Chris Durban and Dee Shields offered some great suggestions in the Yahoo! discussion. Chris works with direct clients and often gets credited as the translator in their documentation. Her suggestions are:

- Listen carefully and pleasantly, and then explain, preferably in writing, why the suggested solution is not correct.
- Allow the client to save face by suggesting a second or third option.
- Accept certain suggested errors, but ask the client to remove your name from the credits.

Dee Shields says that the option of being credited as the translator is rare for her, and probably for many of us, and offers the following suggestion:

- Tackle each point in writing with an explanation of why you chose the term or wording over the one the client suggested. Document your choice with links and/or references to style guides, dictionaries, and such. The trick here is to leave

emotions out of it and not overdo the "proof" in the documentation.

The important thing is to remember that the client usually does not fully understand what it is that we translators do and how we do it. Once you give them some insight into that, they usually realize that you are the one possessing the expertise and that you most likely know more about the intricacies of the target language than they do.

You have to weigh the value of this particular client against your honor and reputation as a translator and tread lightly on the client's feelings if you do not want to lose their business. It can also come down to how much time and effort it is worth to correct the client. Whatever the situation or choice, it is always wise to step back and not let your emotions or pride get too involved.

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