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Translation resources on the Web

A guide to accurate, free sites

In an international culture, more and more people are translating material for work, classes, and personal use. This includes people who are not professional translators but who have a high level of proficiency in a foreign language, as well as those who have little proficiency in other languages. The rapid growth of handheld translation devices—as well as sites such as Babel Fish (Alta Vista) and Google Translate, which translate not only phrases but also e-mail messages, full-text and Web pages into dozens of languages—shows that people want, at minimum, the gist of the content contained in foreign-language communications. Obviously the quality of these translations is far from being accurate because translation is an art that requires a great deal of human knowledge and judgment.

Both professional translators and competent amateurs need first-rate resources to select the exact word or phrase in context. Among library subscription resources are the excellent online Oxford foreign language dictionaries, which can be updated regularly and which have definitions by level of formality and geographic variants, as well as extensive Web links to other language resources. In addition, professional translators subscribe to networking sites that provide job support and expert consulting, and they invest in tools that have the ability to build and store searchable databases of accurately translated terms. Nevertheless there are many free Web sites that allow educated nonprofessionals to produce quality translations, if they are willing to dig into the wealth of the Internet and create their

own set of tools. Free—in this sense simply means that the amateur translator has access to forums that include experts as well as many online tools created by experts. Blogs are also a perfect place not only to aggregate these tools, but also to share them with others.

The following sites, listed here in English, serve as gateways to precise multilingual dictionaries and glossaries, as well as directories with access to professional tools. With the popularity of Google, do its search techniques still play a role in quality translations? They can. For example, after using preferences on Google to select a language in which to search, a translator can try out a phrase within quotation marks to get not only its context, but also a sense of its usage by observing the number of hits. In addition, the Google string searches for synonyms (the tilde), definitions (de ne:), and fill-in-the-blank (the asterisk) all work in foreign languages albeit with varying results. Now dig in!

Online dictionaries

There are hundreds of multilingual dictionaries on the Web. They translate single words and phrases as well as give synonyms, conjugation, contextual examples, pronunciation with IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet), and offer discussion forums.

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Acronym Finder. With more than 590,000 human-edited definitions, this resource is the world's largest and most comprehensive dictionary of acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms. One may search with an acronym and receive a list of definitions from many languages. There are tabs with search results by category such as military/government, business/nance, science/medicine. There is also relevance ranking, searching within the results, and Web 2.0 tags. *Access:* <http://www.acronymfinder.com>.

Alpha Dictionary.com. This site directs users to the best multilingual dictionaries. Unique items include an English/Finnish dictionary, a Chinese characters Web dictionary, and the English/Danish Glossary of Electronics Terms (<http://users.cybercity.dk/~nmb3879/elord.html>). *Access:* <http://www.alphadictionary.com/index.shtml>.

The Alternative Dictionaries. This resource focuses on slang, profanities, and insults from all over the world. There are 162 dictionaries that can be downloaded as PDFs. One selects a dictionary and then an alphabetized list of words appears. The heading of the selected dictionary gives the name of the language and the geographic region in which it is spoken. For example, the language Galician is spoken in Spain. The Galician word *lacazan* is slang for people who are lazy. The editors are constantly receiving contributions from individuals who register and supply information in the basic fields. It treats vulgar terms objectively with an eye to concision and reliability. Not all of the languages have entries yet. *Access:* <http://www.alternative-dictionaries.net/>.

Latin Dictionary. This resource at the University of Notre Dame translates English-Latin and Latin-English; allows searching by the stem of words; and includes a link to Words by William Whitaker, Latin to English with 39,000 entries. *Access:* <http://archives.nd.edu/latgramm.htm>.

Logosdictionary. Logos Language Service provides this multilingual dictionary,

which has entries posted by individuals. The entries are concise, neatly formatted, and correspond to multiple meanings. This service translates into dozens of languages and dialects and uses icons, such as flags, to designate the country where the language is spoken. Under each entry are color-coded buttons to do contextual searches in the Logos Library (which has excerpts from literary works or other specialized dictionaries) or by sound, image, Google, Yahoo, Accoona, Wikipedia, or video. Easy to use and has a slick presentation. *Access:* <http://www.logosdictionary.org/>.

Multitran. A dictionary that offers alphabetic, morphologic, and phrase searches for English-Russian and Russian-English. *Access:* <http://www.multitran.ru/DefaultE.htm>.

Verbix. A tool for conjugating verbs in many languages, although some entries are still under construction. *Access:* <http://www.verbix.com>.

WordReference. This site concentrates on translations of English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish as either the target or the source language. A search yields the word's pronunciation and definitions according to parts of speech, as well as phrases and compound forms. It also gives in context examples from Google News and Google Images. Its handiest tool is the language forum, where registered users discuss topical threads covering grammar, idioms, jargon (medical, legal, financial, etc.), affiliated languages (Latin, Catalan, Romanian, etc.), etymology, and cultural applications. Its 21,000 active users, who have identified themselves by skill level and country of origin, ask or answer the questions. The tone is friendly and helpful, and any skill level can join. While it is a good place to track down idioms alphabetically, one disadvantage is the multiple screens of phrases that have no index except for the Internet Explorer find command on each page. The discussion is often fascinating as it sorts out the meanings of words or phrases in multiple places, such as among Spanish-speaking countries. With diligence one can usually arrive at an

accurate translation. *Access:* <http://www.wordreference.com>.

your dictionary.com. In this portal site, select from 300 languages and search for a term in multiple languages or search for synonyms and antonyms for the term in the target language. These multilingual dictionaries have an overwhelming wealth of resources with hyperlinks to other bilingual glossaries on specialized topics, such as library science, gymnastics, computer terms, and wine. Notable are a link to a Spanish-English business glossary at www.andymiles.com, the Slavic language dictionary, and translations of Bible terms in different languages at www.bible.com. Note: not all the links are updated. *Access:* <http://www.yourdictionary.com/>.

Online translator services and directories

These resources are usually commercial sites that advertise the services of professional translators. They also include continuing education, discussion groups for professionals, and language tools, some of which are free to nonmembers.

Babel Port. This portal page for translators has many unique tools with useful customizable features for members. Within its many links are a dictionary of Australian slang, a German/English mathematical dictionary, a shery glossary in multiple languages, and an English/Russian speaking picture dictionary. *Access:* <http://www.babelport.com/>.

Go Translators. This site is a directory of translators in 30 languages, but also includes dictionaries, lexicons, glossaries, vocabulary lists, and mailing lists. The user selects source and target language as well as subject area. The languages are diverse, such as Cherokee and Hawaiian. Some of the notable resources include excellent multilingual technical glossaries (electronics and computer) and medical glossaries, which include the technical medical term along with the popular term. Unique items under

English/Spanish include a nautical dictionary and glossaries for ethology and U.S. Medicare. There is also a French fashion lexicon and a German glossary of guitar terms. *Access:* <http://www.gotranslators.com/>.

ProZ.com. This site has a directory of translators and also offers resources for translators. Its search engine retrieves terms from the many subject glossaries members have contributed, as well as from the postings of its sophisticated discussion forums. It is worth searching for newly coined terminology in business and academia that cannot be found elsewhere. *Access:* <http://www.proz.com/>.

Spanish Translator Services. This site is noted for its bilingual resources in English and Spanish, which include nancial and accounting dictionaries, glossaries, abbreviations and acronyms, tools that convert and translate temperature, metrics and currency, and a forum with 2250 active members. The forum threads focus on topics such as law, marketing, technology, medicine, nance and accounting, the use of translation devices (CAT and Trados), and membership in translation organizations. *Access:* <http://www.spanish-translator-services.com/>.

Gateways to glossaries

A number of academic institutions serve as mega sites for hundreds of free translation resources. Take the time to wander through these sites, visit their unique links, and incorporate them into your own language blog.

Beolingus. On this site from Chemnitz University of Technology is a German-English, English-German and German-Spanish, Spanish-German translation service. The translation of the word also offers example sentences, synonyms, Wikipedia entries, proverbs, and quotations. *Access:* <http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de/dings.cgi?lang=en;service=deen>.

Chartered Institute of Linguists. This site has links to 5,000 dictionaries and knowledge banks, such as Lexicool (www.lexicool.com/), where the search engine looks at target and source languages and

subject areas. For example, glossaries under the subject Paper/Plastic/Textiles include commercial terms for *footwear* or *rubber* in multiple languages. Subject areas include aeronautics, engineering telecommunications, etc. It also has a link to MedTrad (medicine and biology in English/Spanish), which contains dictionaries and glossaries for medicine. *Access:* <http://www.iol.org.uk/>.

Dyer Laboratories, Inc. This site offers advanced glossaries for scientific and technical translations, such as Chromatography, Microbiology, and Firearms in German and English and Optical Microscopy in French, English, German, and Spanish. *Access:* <http://www.dyerlabs.com/glossary/index.html>.

Greek and Latin Language Resources. This resource is on Bruce MacLennan's homepage at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville site. Resources include the University of Chicago Library's searchable Woodhouse English-Greek dictionary, useful ancient Greek phrases, and Latin wordlists. *Access:* <http://www.cs.utk.edu/~mclennan/OM/grk-lat.html>.

Health Information Translations. This resource, sponsored by several medical centers in Ohio, provides education and procedural instructions about health topics for patients with limited English proficiency. Search by keyword or language and retrieve a short document in English about that particular health issue followed by the translation of the article. Some documents have audio files. For example, the document on breast biopsy explains the different kinds of biopsies, the procedure the physician will follow and instructions for the patient, all in Spanish. This is a source for timely, accurate medical vocabulary as well as practical application, since the translation of common procedures and instructions into Spanish is ready to be handed out to the patients. Includes translations of disaster preparedness plans. *Access:* <http://www.healthinfotranslations.com/>.

Interactive Terminology for Europe (formerly EuroDicAutom Europa). At this site is the European Commission's glossary. Find

terms within politics, international relations, economics, law, or European communities in 24 source languages that are spoken in the European Union. Hits are accompanied by references and ranked for reliability. Terms are accurate and current. *Access:* <http://iate.europa.eu>.

Jergas. This site has Spanish slang terms from different Spanish-speaking countries. It is monolingual but is up-to-date with detailed explanations of the terms. *Access:* <http://www.jergasdehablahispana.org/>.

Language Links. This site from the University of Wisconsin contains links from language types or regions to dozens of dictionaries and glossaries. Unique items include a Kanji dictionary (Japanese) and an English/Portuguese glossary of commerce. *Access:* <http://www.langlink.net/>.

The Perseus Digital Library. The Perseus Project is an evolving digital library focused on humanities resources. This site includes Greek and Roman materials, such as the searchable Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek Lexicon, English-to-Greek and English-to-Latin word search tools, and the Lewis and Short Latin dictionary. *Access:* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_PersInfo.html.

UCLA Language Materials Project. This Web-based teaching guide has common, as well as less commonly taught, language resources. Examples include the Gaelic Dictionaries (www.ceantar.org/Dicts/) and Afrikaans online dictionary (dicts.info/dictlist1). *Access:* <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/>.

Blogs

Naked Translation. This translator's blog by Celine Graciet is not only full of useful sources and interesting linguistic tidbits, but also lists links to dozens of other blogs about translations. Some useful blogs for Spanish are: Colloquial Spanish speak like a Spaniard (www.likeaspaniard.com) and Into Spanish Blog (www.jb-translator.com/). A useful blog for Italian is Tacuino di Traduzione (massardo.splinder.com/). *Access:* <http://www.nakedtranslation.com>. ❧