

Does Translation Software Work?

In today's technologically savvy world, there are a variety of translation methods used by businesses in attempt to communicate with clients and vendors who speak different languages. We live in a constantly changing global economy. The heavy influence of the internet and easy access to free software programs often colors the view of savvy professionals with regard to the complexity of Japanese language translation.

The illusion is that if I just simply copy and past my English letter into a box, today's technology toys will spit out an accurate translation for free. Truly bilingual individuals are all in agreement that while software may work reasonably well with Latino or European languages, even the most expensive translation software programs yield virtually cryptic results when attempting to translate the JAPANESE language.

A few years ago as an interpreter in the field I had access to one of the most respected software programs--a \$1400 translation program to aid work speed. Yet, even this best in the industry software on a Japanese computer made mistakes in nearly every line of translation. I almost need to learn a new way to write English to get the software to produce anything close to the real meaning executives wished to convey in Japanese. As my forte at the time was Japanese to English simultaneous interpretation, I was also quite fortunate in that I had a kind, bilingual, 70+ year old, vice-chairman who was always willing to check my drafts & offer editing wisdom.

While super agencies or mega-corporations may have super software out there, rarely are these available for the lay person or small corporation. Therefore, the bottom line is no matter how expensive the software, computerized translations from English into Japanese (and vice versa), the word by word approach which most free software rarely work successfully. Cultural context and situational experience by the machine is missing.



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