

HOW TO USE FREE ONLINE TRANSLATION TOOLS MORE EFFECTIVELY

There are a lot of free online resources available today that assist translation, making it not only easier but also faster. They are: machine translation (MT) services capable of handling large volumes of text quickly, dictionaries, thesauri, grammar checkers, spell-checkers, translation-related websites, forums and blogs, etc.

MT services such as *Google Translate*, *Online-Translator.com* from *PROMT*, *BabelFish*, *Bing Translator*, *SDL FreeTranslation service*, *WorldLingo*, etc, as a rule, provide translation of individual words, phrases, sentences, short blocks of texts, Word and PDF documents, e-mails and chats, websites and human speech. They support a considerable amount of languages at various quality levels.

However, the user has to apply some efforts to achieve acceptable results due to the fact that the quality of MT depends directly on the quality of the provided text. *Preliminary preparation* of a text can considerably simplify the job of both the machine translation systems and editors. To improve MT results it is necessary to follow certain rules: 1. Avoid misprints and spelling mistakes (special spell-checking programs are useful for this purpose). 2. Mind punctuation marks. Omitted or redundant, they may cause misunderstanding of a sentence structure. 3. Use diacritics correctly. As a rule, online translators cannot recognize words containing the Russian letter “ë” or words with emphasis marks. 4. Observe the case of letters. A lowercase letter in a word may easily be converted to a capital one, and it is taken into account when developing MT systems. On the contrary, a capital letter seldom becomes a lowercase one, and in most cases it relates to derivation of a new word. 5. Use simple syntactic constructions with direct word order. 6. Avoid omitting syntactic words (even if the grammar allows it). 7. Use only conventional abbreviations. 8. Avoid using slangy expressions. 9. Use infinitive verb forms instead of gerunds. 10. Use the active voice instead of passive voice. 11. Avoid compound sentences and

homogeneous parts of sentences. Each sentence should convey a single logical thought. This rule in particular, which applies to all languages in equal measure, is the most effective of all.

In most cases, MT requires *post-editing* by an editor, who normally has special training and is experienced in handling machine-translated texts. However, it can occasionally be omitted, especially when texts are translated for internal use, as a means to get the overall gist of the text or to locate and select specific materials. MT systems require complex customization and improvement, including “training” in a particular subject area, without which they inevitably fall short of expectations. It is therefore logical to use MT only on large volumes of similar texts.

An advantage of electronic dictionaries is their convenience, high speed of information processing, possibility to quickly import the equivalent of the searched for word into the text as well as compactness. Online dictionaries can be *monolingual*, *bilingual*, and *multilingual*. Besides, they contain information on word forms, pronunciation (often voiced by professional speakers), and word collocations. They may also include dictionaries in particular fields of science (applied mathematics, physics, biology, medicine, religion, engineering, etc.), idioms, slang.

Online grammar checkers and spell-checkers check writings for grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. To use these tools effectively it is necessary to know how they operate and to keep in mind their limitations. Thesauruses are dictionaries of synonyms and antonyms, but they are not always very complete and do not include guidance on differences between matched words.

Translation-related websites, forums and blogs offer opportunities for their members to network, collaborate on projects, improve their skills, and provide answers to difficult translation problems.

References:

1. How to improve the quality of machine translation [Online source]. – Access mode: <http://www.online-translator.com/Help/Tips/>.
2. Dictionaries and Thesauri [Online source]. – Access mode: <http://www.refseek.com/directory/dictionaries.html>.