



## ¡BUEN VIAJE!

*What every manager should know  
about Spanish translation*



COMMUNICATION. IN ANY LANGUAGE.

*An estimated 400 million people  
speak Spanish as a first or  
second language.*





## Bienvenidos al mundo de la traducción española

The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain fact that you are now responsible for producing accurate Spanish translations.

Good luck – or as the Spanish would say, *buena suerte* – because you're about to embark on one of the most challenging journeys in the world of translation.

To the unwary, getting from a well written English text to a seamlessly translated Spanish version is fraught with pitfalls. *¿Por qué?* Because Spanish is the third most spoken language in the world. Hundreds of millions of Spanish speakers communicate with each other via dozens of regional variations, some of which differ significantly.

*Por ejemplo*, if you mistakenly translate a brochure meant for the Madrid market into Mexican Spanish, you'll soon discover why the Spanish people have a reputation for hot tempers. Using the



wrong Spanish at the wrong time will not only ruin the quality of your work, it will insult your audience as well.

But look on the bright side. Discovering how to produce perfect Spanish translations is nowhere near as hard as it was for Columbus to discover America. In fact, all it takes is a few quick minutes to absorb the principles outlined in this guidebook.

So sit back, sip a glass of Sangria, and let everyone else spend their waking lives reading *Don Quixote*. You may find that mastering the art of translation management is just as interesting – and much faster.

## Castles in Spain. And just about everywhere else.

Spanish is spoken all over the world. An estimated 400 million people speak it as a first or second language, and authorities believe the number will continue to increase in the foreseeable future.

In addition to Spain, Spanish is the official language of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras,



Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela.

A member of the Romance language family, Spanish evolved from Vulgar Latin. It eventually became a broadly spoken and geographically diverse language in its own right, first appearing on the Iberian Peninsula in Southwestern Europe, and later spreading to the Americas and other parts of the New World.



For translation managers involved in commerce with Spain, it's a good idea to think of Spanish in the same way as Spanish speakers themselves do. Spanish-speaking people use the word *español* as the general term for the Spanish language, but they often say *castellano* – Castilian – to refer to the official language of Spain.



In fact, the Spanish Constitution actually declares Castilian to be the nation's primary tongue. Its constitutional status elevates Castilian's governmental position vis-à-vis three other co-official languages: Basque, Catalan and Galician.

## Diferencias importantes

Every year, in the early part of July, thousands of people flock to Pamplona, Spain to experience the city's world-renowned running of the bulls. The idea is for scores of runners to honor the city's patron saint, San Fermín, by staying safely in front of several stampeding bulls, all of which are running and raging dangerously close behind.

If you're anything like us, you would just as soon honor San Fermín by eating a plate of *paella* than by getting gorged by a bull that works out more than we do. The point, however, is that understanding cultural differences can play an important role in translation as well.

When working in the Spanish market, it's critical to demonstrate cultural respect for Spain's three "non-official" languages. If you do business directly in Basque, Catalan or Galician regions, in most



instances you should use these languages instead of Castilian. Below is a 10-second introduction to each one.

### *Basque*

The Basque language is spoken by about a million people who live in the autonomous Basque Country, located in the central part of northern Spain and southwestern France. Called *euskara* by the Basque people, the language isn't related to Spanish or other Indo-European tongues, but belongs to an isolated group whose origin is unknown.

### *Catalan*

The national language of Andorra, Catalan is a Romance language with about 5 million native speakers. Most Catalan speakers live in Spain, where it is a co-official language of the autonomous regions of Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia. In Valencia, the language is referred to as Valencian, but from a linguistic perspective, it's actually a local variation of Catalan.

### *Galician*

Concentrated in the autonomous community of Galicia, Galician is a Romance language primarily spoken by more than 3 million people in northwestern Spain, as well as in parts of Portugal. In fact, from a linguistic perspective, Galician is very similar to Portuguese.



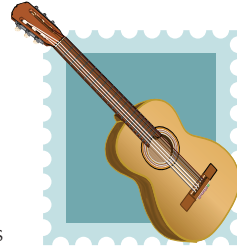
You certainly don't need to be an expert in any of these regional languages to produce the level of quality you want your translation to



convey. You do, however, need to work with a professional translator who is a native speaker of Basque, Catalan or Galician, rather than Castilian. If you don't, you might get gored after your translation is delivered – even if you decide to pass on the running of the bulls.

## Design/Layout Guidelines

Now that you're a full-fledged expert on Spain's regional languages, let's get back to Castilian. More specifically, let's discuss how standard Spanish compares visually to English. Below is an example of how an English paragraph looks after it has been translated into Spanish.



*Spanish is one of the few languages in the world that can truly be said to be global. With approximately 400 million speakers, it is the world's third most spoken language, surpassed only by Chinese and English. Although Spanish originated in the Iberian Peninsula, its influence today reaches far beyond its Iberian roots. Today, Spanish is the official language of 21 countries, including Spain, most of Latin and South America, and Equatorial Guinea in Africa.*

*El español es uno de los pocos idiomas que se pueden considerar realmente globales. Con unos 400 millones de hablantes, es el tercer idioma más hablado, únicamente superado por el chino y el inglés. Aunque tiene sus orígenes en la Península Ibérica, la influencia actual del español llega mucho más allá de sus raíces ibéricas. En la actualidad, es el idioma oficial de 21 países, que incluyen España, la mayoría de América Latina y Sudamérica, y Guinea Ecuatorial en África.*





As the preceding example shows, the Spanish paragraph requires one more line than the English version does. This is neither rare nor unexpected. In fact, Spanish translations are almost always longer – and sometimes rather significantly – than their English counterparts.

As a rule of thumb, you should expect your Spanish translations to require 20% to 25% more space than your English versions. As such, you should leave enough white space in your original designs to allow room for the extra copy your Spanish draft will require. Otherwise, you may be forced to create an entirely new layout – an extra step that could raise design and printing costs unnecessarily. By planning for the extra space requirements early-on, you'll save both time and money.

## **Success every time. *Triumfe siempre.***

Before we say *adiós*, we would like to leave you with a few final tips. By following these procedures and avoiding these common pitfalls, you can deliver seamless Spanish translations every time.

- We discussed it earlier, but it's so important that we'll say it again. Never use a translator from one Spanish speaking country to translate materials for another. If your business is in Spain, use a native Spanish translator. If you want to reach the Venezuelan market, use a translator from Venezuela. Always be aware of – and respect – differences in regional variations.



- Also be careful with Spanish plurals. Unlike English, Spanish articles are also used to designate the difference between singular and plural. For example, in English, if you want to refer to a single book, you would say, *the book*. But when you're reading more than one book, you're now involved in *the books*. In both cases, the same article – *the* – precedes the singular and plural nouns alike.

But in Spanish, the article changes along with the noun. As an example, the plural form of the Spanish word for book, *el libro*, becomes *los libros*. If you make a change from singular to plural (or vice versa) on your Spanish translation, always make sure to change the article along with the noun. Adding an extra “s” to the noun isn't enough.



- There is also an important difference between the Spanish and the English numbering systems. Spanish uses periods instead of commas to designate thousands, and where periods are used to indicate decimal points in English, Spanish relies on commas instead. See the numerical example below:

ENG	SPN
1,000	1.000
1,000,000	1.000.000
25,500.50	25.500,50
0.50	0,50



- Regardless of the project, anyone who believes that translation software can do the job without the help of a trained translation professional is more delusional than Don Quixote. Excellent English to Spanish software programs do, in fact, exist, but they're not designed to work in isolation. Without the hands-on involvement of a native speaker who understands the nuances of the local language, your project is virtually certain to fail.
- Finally – and most importantly! – always make sure your translation is proofed by an objective third party who not only speaks Spanish natively, but understands your business as well. When differences of opinion arise, they should be resolved to everyone's satisfaction before the final piece is produced.



For more information on Spanish translation, please contact your Conversis representative. Until then, *“¡Buen viaje!”*

