



American Translators Association

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

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ATA Client Outreach Kit

Skills Module

Using examples effectively

Whenever you present to potential clients, you should stress that poor translations are a business risk. A hard-hitting example is one of the best ways to make this point—but examples of poor translations abound. How do you choose?

Here are a few points to keep in mind:

- Select examples that are **relevant to the audience** and are **translated into their language**.
- **Aim for a simple punch line** that speaks for itself.
- **Avoid examples that need explaining**. Make it easy to understand what went wrong.
- **Mention direct, specific consequences** such as diminished image, reprinting costs, or lost business opportunities.
- **Don't get into grammar** (“And here, the translator did not use the right past tense....”). Trust us: your business audience won't get it—and they'll drift off.
- **Don't criticize** other linguists; simply say that “being bilingual is not enough to work as a translator.”

Your own practice may be the best source of examples for your audience, but ATA offers several good sources as well:

Translation: Getting It Right brochure

www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php

Interpreting: Getting It Right brochure

www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right_int.php

"The Onionskin" column in *The ATA Chronicle*

www.atanet.org/ata_school/onionskin.php

ATA's collected images of poor translations

www.atanet.org/client_outreach/image_archive.php