



**João Roque Dias**  
Technical Translator, CT (ATA)

Rua de Ponta Delgada, 56 – 1 Esq.  
1000-243 Lisboa – Portugal

Phone: +351 939 62 19 76  
Fax: +351 213 15 11 30

[jrdias@mail.telepac.pt](mailto:jrdias@mail.telepac.pt)  
[www.jrdias.com](http://www.jrdias.com)

## Frequently Asked Questions

These questions about my services as translator came from prospective clients and fellow translators like you. I hope you find them helpful and informative.

### What are your qualifications as technical translator?

First and foremost, I am a Mechanical Engineer and a certified Member of the American Translators Association (English-Portuguese). Then, since 1988, I have translated a wide range of technical and technical marketing materials into European Portuguese, including ads, brochures, catalogs, hardware/software documentation, company newsletters, installation, operation and maintenance manuals, press releases, slide presentations, video scripts and Web sites. I have translated on average 700,000 words per year. The subjects in these documents include mechanical and automotive engineering, engines, gear drives, heavy machinery and vehicles, high-tech medical instruments, hydraulic systems, machine and power tools, measurement and monitoring electronic instruments, motors, optical and surveying instruments, packaging, pumps, test equipment, turbines, military and defense equipment, quality assurance and many other technical fields. Some of my articles on terminology and style issues in technical translation have been published on the *ATA Chronicle*, the magazine of the American Translators Association, the *Translating Today Magazine* and *Confluências - Scientific and Technical Translation e-Journal*. I have also made **numerous presentations** at the ATA Annual Conferences and other translation conferences in other countries and I have been invited to address students of translation courses in Portugal about technical translation issues.

### JRD Translations. Is that an agency?

No. JRD are just the initials of my name – João Roque Dias. I'm strictly an independent translator and I do not send my work to others. Never!

### Why does a translator have to be a subject expert?

#### Words are words, aren't they? And they're all in the dictionary anyway...

Well... What's a "bus driver"? Are we talking transportation, or electronics? Two different things, two different translations. That "rotor" in your publication on automobiles, is that in the ignition system or in the brakes? Same word in English, two different words in other languages. That "screen" in your text, is it something on which you watch pictures, or a grid that keeps dust out of your machinery? Same word in some languages, different words in others. You don't want someone who doesn't understand the subject choosing the wrong one. That text of yours on spectroscopy, with the phrase "a red shift phenomenon." You need your translator to know right off the bat whether "red" belongs with "shift" or "phenomenon." If it's misunderstood and mistranslated as a result, guess who's going to end up looking scientifically illiterate? And, what's a "diamond cutter?" A person who cuts diamonds, a tool for cutting diamonds, or a tool using diamonds as the cutting edge? You're in the diamond-edged cutting-tool business – how much time are you going to waste with people trying to order tools for cutting diamonds, because of an amateur and misleading translation? "Replace the filter" – what do you mean? "Put the same filter back in its original place" – replace in that sense? Or "Throw the old filter away and replace it with a new one?" Again, you need a translator who is not only familiar enough with the subject to know which "replace" is meant (or to realize that there is an ambiguity and to check with you, the client) but also who is sensitive enough to language to look for a word in the target language which doesn't have the ambiguity of the English "replace." And you certainly don't want the translator misunderstanding the relationships between the words when your copy says "We are crude oil importers," now do you?! (by Peter Wheeler)

### And, what about the quality of your work...

Of course, I can't rule out errors altogether, but, in my primary fields of specialization, I come fairly close to doing a flawless job.

### What kind of translation do you do?

Given my education as mechanical engineer and my professional background, I only undertake translation assignments for which I can turn out top-notch jobs. Like every true Translator, I feel extremely uncomfortable translating subjects on which I have no or very little knowledge. Please, browse through the [Specialization Fields and References](#) and [Industries Served](#) pages for a quick look about my specialty fields.

### What kind of translations you DO NOT do?

Computers (software and hardware), localization of software, medicine, legal and arts and humanities, as well as any translations into English. Nuts and bolts (and virtually everything between the nut and the bolt head...) are my specialty!

### Is there anything else you DO NOT translate?

Yes! Any translation job where price is put before quality and specialist knowledge of the subject matter!

### I am an individual and I need my marriage certificate translated. Can you handle that?

Or maybe you contacted me through a free e-mail account (yahoo, hotmail, etc.)... Please, check the Yellow Pages and contact any of the independent translators or translation agencies listed there. I do not provide translation services to individuals.

### Do you translate into Brazilian Portuguese or "localize" translations in Brazilian Portuguese into European Portuguese?

No! I work exclusively into European Portuguese. The Brazilian and European versions of the language are quite different in terms of terminology, syntax and usage. Texts for the Brazilian market should be translated by native translators from Brazil, as those for Portugal (and Portuguese-speaking countries) should be trusted to native Portuguese translators (or from those countries). Text "localization" or "editing" between both versions (for cost reasons...) should be avoided.

### **Do you do editing and proofreading work?**

Given my usual workload in translation and because my Clients are kind enough to keep a constant flow of work into my mailbox, I DO NOT provide editing and proofreading work, especially for non-established Clients.

### **But, can you arrange for my work to be delivered fully edited/proofread?**

Yes, I can and I will gladly assist you in doing so. Over the years, I have developed very close relationships with other translators and proofreaders, accustomed to working with my jobs. This partnership has always yielded excellent results. One more thing: you, the Client, will have full discretion over the contractual dealings with the editor/proofreader. Not me.

### **Can you evaluate our translation or our new translator?**

No! I do not provide any analysis, revision and quality check services for the purpose of testing the proficiency or work of other fellow translators.

### **I need to compile, translate or edit a glossary. Can you do that?**

For some highly technical translation jobs, glossaries are the cookbook of the whole assignment and the true difference between a good and a bad translation. As I like to *sell the cake, not the recipe*, please don't ask me to compile (or edit) glossaries for jobs that I will not translate.

### **Do you use translation memory programs?**

Yes, I do. Given its wide acceptance in the translation world, I've selected TRADOS as my TM tool. I can create and develop my own translation memories or work with client-furnished memories.

### **Do you translate PowerPoint files?**

Yes, I do! Over the years I have developed quite an expert knowledge in handling and processing Power Point files (more than 6,000 slides translated so far). My fee for translating these files includes the rearrangement of the slide layout (which is a mess, after the translation of the text boxes...) and the translation of the notes.

### **My source document is in PDF format. Can you handle it?**

Yes, I can. Probably, you want me to convert the text within your PDF file into a file that can be processed by MS Word® or TRADOS®. Such conversion can be done with reasonable results (i.e., the resulting text will look quite similar to the original text within PDF), but some significant differences may also derive from the conversion, and you may have to rearrange the copy layout of my translation. Also, for some documents, I may have to spend a significant amount of time after the raw conversion, to render the output copy adequate for translation. Should this be the case, you may have to pay for such time. The best way is always to send me a Word or RTF file.

### **I need to send you this huge file. Can you handle it?**

I'm sure I can! My primary e-mail mailbox can hold 1 GB of data! My back-up e-mail mailbox can hold about 6 GB capacity. I can also retrieve you data by FTP from your server. For really huge documents, you can always mail me a CD-ROM.

### **Do you [really] keep deadlines?**

In one word: YES! As engineer, I fully understand the time requirements of the industrial and corporate worlds. If I cannot meet your deadline or if you cannot match your Client's requirements with my schedule, then I will not take the job. I could also tell you that I've NEVER missed a deadline, but why should you take my word for it?

### **And, what can I, the Client, do about deadlines?**

Just understand that my specialty work tends to lead to fairly large jobs, which will keep me busy for days (or even weeks...), in a row. So, plan ahead, allow as much time as you can (consider 1500 to 2000 words per day), and always check my availability before sending any work. After all, chances are that you, too, will need a fairly large job translated.

### **But, I live in a different time zone...**

That's all right! I will not wake you up in the middle of (your) night! Sometimes, living in a different time zone can be an advantage, because I can get a little more time to work on your job (if you are in a time zone ahead of me, i.e., to the west of Lisbon). With voicemail service in all my phones and my fax connected to a dedicated line, I am virtually always reachable. And, of course, my Web site and mailbox are open 24/7, year round...

### **What is your policy on confidentiality?**

Any job is kept strictly confidential. Period. Sensitive jobs are kept under lock and key with strong-encryption digital storage or in a high security personal safe. I can also sign a reasonable confidentiality agreement (see my [Confidentiality Statement](#) and my [Business Terms](#)), prior to starting the first job for a new Client.

### **I need to translate a text, but I don't own its copyright...**

I reserve the right of refusing the translation of any matter which, in my sole opinion, is or may be of an illegal or libelous nature. Where copyright exists in texts to be translated, the Client warrants that it has obtained all consents necessary for such translation to be made. I shall be indemnified by the Client in respect of any claims, proceedings, costs and expenses arising out of any libelous matter printed for the Client, or any infringement of copyright, patent or design or third party right. See also my [Business Terms](#).

### **How much is 50 pages of a not-very-technical text?**

I understand you may wish to obtain a quotation on a job before you give send me a firm order. But I can't answer questions like the above by phone, unless you can tell me how many characters (including blank spaces) there are in your document. At any rate, I prefer to see the whole document before I can quote for the job, so the best way to proceed is to send me the original text as an e-mail attachment. I'll respond quickly with a cost and turnaround time estimate.

***Translation prices range from 1 to 10, and while high prices do not necessarily guarantee high quality, we respectfully submit that below a certain level you are unlikely to receive a text that does credit to your company and its products.***  
– Excerpt from "Translation - Getting It Right"

### **I'm looking at your invoice. Did my original copy get bigger, i.e., with more words?**

When you translate from English to another language, there are almost always more words in the other language. English is extremely compact. For example, a sentence translated into European Portuguese will expand by perhaps 15 to 25 %. Of course, these figures are educated guesses: the subject and style of the material has a profound effect upon its expandability. Why does this matter? If you have a certain layout in the English document you want to duplicate, you will have to account for the expansion factor. One good approach is to start with a generous amount of white space in English, which will be correspondingly diminished in the translated version. Other approaches are to reduce margins and font sizes, steal white space from column gutters and graphical elements, or, as a last resort, expand the amount of paper used. Expansion is also a factor in pricing. I price my translation work per target word — that is, by the output unit.

### **What are your Business Terms?**

While I am not a Fortune 500 or a multinational company, I still have **my own Business Terms**. These are basic rules that you, the Client, and I, your Translator, should bear in mind whenever we deal with each other. And, no, my Business Terms are not engraved in stone and I can accept my Client's terms, provided they are fair and square for us both.

### **How can I pay you for your services?**

Besides payment by check or wire transfer, you may also **settle my invoices online** with your credit card, using the PayPal system.

**Rule no. 1: Your payment deadline should be as strict as my delivery deadline.** Usually, I request payment within 30 days from the date of my invoice. And, if you're from a translation agency, please, DO NOT ask me to be paid AFTER you get paid by your Client. Please, understand that I have no control over such payment and that I do not share the risk (or the profit...) of your business.

### **How can I call you, without costing me an arm and a leg?**

Besides calling my regular phone numbers in Portugal (landline and mobile), you can also call me via Skype or VoipBuster. And, when I am in the United States (as announced in my **AVAILABILITY** page), you can also call my T-Mobile cell phone. View my **Contacts** page for details.

### **I'm also a translator. Can I send you my CV?**

Please, don't! I do not act as an agency for other fellow translators.

### **Can you refer me to other fellow Translators?**

Yes, if you're an established Client or if your requirements are very specific to a particular fellow translator. For translation services into European Portuguese, please meet the **European Portuguese Translators Network**. For other languages, visit my **Translator Colleagues** page.

### **I'm from a translation company. Can we offer our services?**

Please, don't. You'd be wasting each other's time and everybody's bandwidth. I do not subcontract my work and I do not serve as an agency either for companies or for other freelance translators.

### **What do you expect from your Clients?**

There is something unique about every company and organization – the people, the products, the service, and the materials to be translated. It's never the same. I recognize that. Therefore, from each of my Clients I expect everything they should expect from me, as the person to whom they have trusted their translation work and their reputation in the marketplace. In brief: a professional and trustworthy relationship, with strict respect for each other's interests and expectations.

### **I still have other concerns or questions that were not addressed above...**

Please, **contact me**. I am only a phone call, text message, or e-mail message away!

### **Version discrepancies**

In case of discrepancies between the versions of my Frequently Asked Questions published in my Web site and the PDF version (i.e., this version) available for download on the Downloads Library page of my Web site, the version published in my Web site shall prevail.

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