

Valerij Tomarenko

Through the Client's Eyes

How to Make Your Translations Visible



Valerij Tomarenko

Through the Client's Eyes

How to Make Your Translations Visible

Weiterbildungs- und
Fachverlagsgesellschaft
Fachverlag



Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP Einheitsaufnahme

Valerij Tomarenko: Through the Client's Eyes
How to Make Your Translations Visible

ISBN: 978-3-946702-03-0

verlegt von der BDÜ Weiterbildungs- und Fachverlagsgesellschaft mbH, Berlin,
einem Unternehmen des Bundesverbandes der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e. V. (BDÜ)

© 2019 BDÜ Weiterbildungs- und Fachverlagsgesellschaft mbH, Berlin
Lektorat: Kasia Trojanowska
Gestaltung/Satz: Thorsten Weddig, Essen
Titelbild: Prostock-studio/stock.adobe.com
Druck: Schalungsdienst Lange oHG, Berlin

Für fehlerhafte Angaben wird keine Haftung übernommen. Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwendung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlegers und Herausgebers unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen. Gedruckt auf säurefreiem und alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier.

With meaningful differences difficult to find, prospects look for signals in seemingly trivial differences... In fact, much of effective service management can be described as the careful management of the seemingly inconsequential.

The first two rules of communicating about services: Make the service visible, and make the prospect comfortable.

People will trust their eyes far before they will ever trust your words... What do your visibles say about the invisible thing you are trying to sell? Watch what you show.

— Harry Beckwith, *Selling the Invisible*



L'admiration pour la forme passe avant toute compréhension du contenu.

— Kacper Kowalski, *Effets secondaires*

Foreword: A new outlook on typography, a new outfit for translators

Every translation must be made physically accessible, that is to say, in writing – whether on paper or in digital form on a screen. Both modes of presentation have this in common: our translations possess an intrinsically graphic nature. Even if your client just wants to deliver an intermediate product which will ultimately serve as a medium of target-cultural communication, and even if it will be converted to graphic form later by a graphics professional, you're still generally expected to deliver your translation in typographic form. More often than not, direct clients expect a translation to be in its final layout as a default.

Until the mid-1980s, the term “typography” was largely *terra incognita* in translation circles. This changed when the first desktop publishing programs and the WYSIWYG (“What You See Is What You Get”) software made it possible to display text in proportionally spaced font on screen and in print. This led to an increasing democratisation of writing, a development that had far-reaching consequences for today's culture. Typography became both a fourth cultural technique and the signature of our time.

By replacing the typewriter as a writing tool with computers and DTP, translators followed in Johannes Gutenberg's footsteps, so to speak. That resulted in a new end-to-end process and a fundamentally new product – a translation ready for print or publication, both in terms of verbal and visual content.

For the translation profession, this allows us to step outside the image of a pure “language mediator”, which the public associates more with simple recording and recoding of verbal messages – a future computer will mediate between languages almost as well, but also faster and more efficiently. This may afford translators the opportunity to tap into a more complex and nuanced career field in the production of target-cultural means of communication.

This means that the traditional understanding of the profession will have to be expanded. Translators will have to take into account that they are links in a production chain bringing together experts from different sectors who are dependent on each other while creating content. This also means that trans-

lators will have to arm themselves with the knowledge, skills, and insights they will need to consciously utilize visual elements that go beyond mere “typographic writing”. That approach is what Valerij Tomarenko is describing in this book.

What makes “good for print” good for translators? By reading the book, you will see the benefits in many ways. Among other things, a keen eye for typography helps the translator to highlight the quality of their work. To visibly stand out from competitors. But also, more importantly, to help their clients to stand out in the marketplace – through compelling, tangible communication.

Speaking of typography and communication... Typography can be regarded as a semiotic phenomenon. Elements of typography and their use are known to be culture-specific. Different meanings are assigned to typographic signs in different cultures, and different conventions govern how they are used.

So the layout and typography of source and target texts, or rather of source- and target-cultural means of communication, must always be kept in mind throughout the translation process, from the time the job is evaluated, through design and execution of the translation, and finally, its revision and “imprimatur” (“good-to-print”). Especially when producing the target-culture communication medium in the source culture or a third culture, the translator is responsible for compliance with the typographical conventions of the target culture and thus for the orthotypographical correctness of the translation – the new target-culture content.

I wish you new insights and enjoyable reading.

Dr. Jürgen F. Schopp
University of Tampere (Finland)

Author of *“Gut zum Druck?”: Typografie und Layout im Übersetzungsprozess*,
Tampere, 2005

Preface

A translator today may be overwhelmed by a plethora of advice they're offered. From quick answers to questions on online forums, to webinars, books and comprehensive CPD courses, the range of subjects covered includes both specific, translation-related topics and general business knowledge and tips. It is debatable what is more important for a translator's commercial success: the quality of her translation or her entrepreneurial acumen. Whatever the relationship between specialist expertise and more generally applicable skills, high-quality translation is a product of the mastery of the subject matter and writing excellence, but it cannot be achieved without communication skills and a problem-solving mindset.

Chris Durban, author of *The Prosperous Translator*, gave "the hottest tip ... for translators looking to build their business" that is ingeniously simple: "become a better translator". In the context in which this advice was given, it clearly refers to the competence of a translator as a producer, less a service provider, and least of all, an entrepreneur. But whatever the relation between the product of translation and the producer's soft skills, the quality of translation may not be immediately apparent to the client. The challenge of working directly with clients often comes down to this simple fact: none too often, your clients rely on factors extraneous to their judgement simply because they cannot judge the product quality themselves. That is, to a greater or lesser extent, true of any company that deals with partners and clients in a global market and has to communicate with them in multiple, to varying degrees unfamiliar, tongues.

Other factors cannot be justifiably termed extraneous, since they refer to the characteristics of translation as a project, not a product. Nevertheless, they determine to a large extent whether your clients are likely to take a favourable view of your work. These are the most demanding project constraints – time and cost – that don't necessarily relate to the quality of the translation (but do relate to the translator's service).

Being a better translator is not tantamount to being seen and valued as a better translator by your client. To a certain extent, this book attempts to show how to close this gap. Apart from hard facts, such as project constraints, and somewhat subjective quality considerations, your clients' perception of your work (and, obviously, its value) is largely influenced by your communication. There is a whole discipline devoted to this area, called customer relationship

management (CRM). However, it must not be the only source of your competitive advantage if you hope to combine your professional, quality-driven focus with the goal of commercial success. Your translation is meant to be a vehicle of communication for your client, but at the same time, **it also serves as a vehicle of communication for you, the translator.** The result of your work might be a duplicate of your client's document in another language, but it also bears your own specific mark. It is this mark that can convey your marketing message and help build a relationship with your client. The idea behind this book was to help **make the quality of your work as a translator more visible to your client.**

The vast amount of advice offered to translators means that some of it is repetitive. It seems to me that translators spend too much time talking to one another. Insights from other industries may at first seem like an unusual idea, but sometimes they turn out all the more valuable. Given that, as translators, we deal with communication in the broadest sense, what other industry can assist us better than communication design? My experience in working with and for publishing houses, as well as branding, marketing and advertising agencies has taught me a lot about my own business, not only in terms of producing better translations aimed at overcoming cultural and language barriers for my clients, but also in terms of improving my own business communication. If you believe that "customer orientation" is not just an empty phrase from business speak, greater insight into visual communication and graphic design can set you on the path to becoming a better translator.

They say the middle way is the only way that could fail to bring you to Rome, so this book doesn't aspire to provide a "middle of the road" approach. Instead, it can teach you to make better use of your available resources, including design software,¹ both for your clients' projects and for your own marketing purposes. What I hope for the most is that it can help you strengthen your sense of customer orientation by teaching you to look at your translation and your business through your client's eyes. "**Show, not tell**" might be the most important, if deceptively trivial, piece of advice that this book has to offer. But to apply it successfully, we need to stop seeing ourselves as "simply translators" and step beyond the confines of our job description.

1 Throughout the book, I recommend a number of programs and tools I consider useful in translation work. I am not invested in any of these tools and software, and all the references are based solely on my experience as a user.

Contents

	Foreword: A new outlook on typography, a new outfit for translators	10
	Preface	12
1	The verbal and the visual, or why bother	16
1.1	Is this book for me?	16
1.2	My share of Ps	19
1.3	At the airport, in flight, at a desk	23
1.4	Asymmetry and alignment	30
1.5	Eyes on the dots	35
1.6	Redefining design	40
1.7	Backstage	43
2	Working with words	47
2.1	Rules of typography	47
2.2	Setting type	49
2.3	There is no justification for (full) justification	58
2.4	For more depth in translation	73
2.5	Design in practice: real-life lessons	90
2.6	Make typography rules work for you	97
2.7	Make or buy	104
2.8	Going bilingual	110
2.9	If you start throwing stones at CATs, you may end up with ISO standards	124
2.10	What I think about when I think about signing	141
2.11	Templatise your Word: to each their own	158

3	Working with images	168
3.1	What this section is about	168
3.2	Translating charts	170
3.3	Charging extra for PowerPoint? Not until you read this	188
3.4	The burden of PDF	201
3.5	InDesign: an off-the-book tutorial	221
3.6	A job for Photoshop	252
4	On the need to translate differently: a word to critics	274
	Recommended reading	290
	Index	292

1 The verbal and the visual, or why bother

1.1 Is this book for me?

Translators today come in different guises. Apart from the differences in specialisation, they vary in terms of their place in the value chain.

Translators whose digital deliverables are **ready for publication**, for instance in the form of high-resolution PDF files for print or website content files, are rare, but they are probably the most knowledgeable in terms of both verbal **and visual** content. In fact, I think they already know a lot of what this book is about. Nevertheless, it will help them to structure their knowledge and brush up on some translation-relevant skills. If they outsource a portion of their translation work, such as for multilingual projects, and have to rely on colleagues they collaborate with, they can apply some of the tips in the book to better communicate across the whole production chain. An important component of their work is related to **editing**. This is not in the sense of rewording the verbal content of translated materials, but rather with a purpose of reconciling various idiosyncrasies in terms of typography and general layout in order to prepare the translation for publication or release.

Still, a vast majority of professional translators working for direct clients produce materials **ready to be used**. These translators deal predominantly with corporate documentation. For lack of a better term, I would classify all kinds of documents (on paper or in electronic format) that a company develops and uses in their daily communication and business transactions as “**corporate paperwork**”.

Corporate documents are business letters, contracts and agreements, prospectuses, press releases, financial documents and reports, as well as customer-facing newsletters, articles in professional journals or internal employee magazines. Most of these documents contain text *and* graphics. The more of the latter, the more marketing-oriented (more visual and less verbal) the communication. This is especially true of corporate brochures – many of them look like “image brochures”, not only because they are set to promote a company’s image in the metaphorical sense.

Nonverbal content, however, is not limited to marketing. Once chaste, **financial** or **business** reports increasingly incorporate figures (numbers) presented as figures (illustrations). A table with numerical data may be part of a supportive Excel spreadsheet, embedded in a Word or PowerPoint document as a non-editable image. Some workflows and techniques featured in this book will be especially useful for translators who regularly deal with PowerPoint presentations for their direct corporate clients.

On the other hand, **legal translators** who work on agreements and contracts totally stripped of any visual elements may also discover new ways around familiar software tools, such as Microsoft Word. Finally, even translators whose scope of work is limited to translating segments of texts via CAT (computer-assisted translation) tools, usually for **translation agencies** as clients, can benefit from developing a better understanding of the basic principles of design as well as grasping the client's perspective to improve their marketing skills and strategies.

No matter how different all these translator specialties are, one common denominator is certainly **professional competence**. On translators' forums I have come across several attempts to define a professional translator as "someone who has full command of translating technologies, the linguistic and cultural mindsets of their working languages, the knowledge of the specific subject matter they specialise in...", or as "someone with a serious approach to translation, who treats it like a business... who spends time, [and puts] money and effort into personal and professional development". That is all true, but at a risk of stating the obvious, I would like to define professional translators as those who **work for their clients**. This point is important, if we agree that customer orientation is key to ensuring professional success. In our case, customer orientation has much to do with understanding the client's views and concerns.

Translation buyers – our clients – need translators to bring the message across; to help them in turn to **communicate** with their clients, partners and target audience. Paradoxically, many translators who are brilliant communicators on behalf of their clients, seldom know how to use their communication skills to their own advantage. Sometimes, they can have "full command of translating technologies, the linguistic and cultural mindsets of their working languages, the knowledge of the specific subject matter", but show only lacklustre communication skills and lack ideas for promoting their own translation business.

That is why specific practices, recommendations and tips handled in this book go hand in hand with more general business and marketing advice. I have written this book for professional translators eager to improve their **methodical** competence along with their **technical** skills.



Some ten or fifteen years ago, a popular advertising slogan in Germany that for some reason often adorned the sides of moving companies' trucks was *Unsere Leistung ist unsere Werbung* ("Our work is our best advertisement"). I believe that a product indeed can promote its creator (or translator, in our case). What this book aspires to do is help a professional translator present her products in such a way that the translation itself, irrespective of whether the client can read or understand the language, will speak volumes about and for the translator. This isn't about delivering effective marketing pitches. In the words of Harry Beckwith, "the core of service marketing is the service itself".² The idea of the book is to help translators become more aware of how the client perceives and "reads" the translation, so that the translator can use the client's perspective as a competitive advantage, to stand out from the crowd and achieve greater success.

Nonverbal elements of a translation can sometimes reveal more about the value and quality of a translator's work than their language output itself. They can assist language professionals in becoming more expressive and articulate when communicating for and with their clients. However, effectively dealing with typography, layout and graphic design should not be an end in itself; rather, it should be a starting point for becoming a better translator.



² Harry Beckwith. *Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing* (Grand Central Publishing, 2012).

Valerij Tomarenko

Through the Client's Eyes

How to Make Your Translations Visible

Professional translators swear by the quality of their work. This is how they stand out, and why they are leagues better than machine translation. Yet clients may have difficulty seeing the value that translators add to achieve their communication goals and how translation services differ from each other.

If you're a serious, ambitious translator in the area of business communication, this thought-provoking guide will show you how you can make the quality of your work more visible and emphasize the added value that your service brings. The author believes this is something that translators can learn from graphic designers. Translation is about words, graphic design is about images, yet the purpose of both is communication.

This book offers a practical, experience-based approach. It shows you how to view translation from the client's perspective in order to see a bigger picture and go beyond simply converting "source texts" into "target texts". The aim of the book is to help you to become a better translator – teaching you step by step how to create a competitive advantage, break away from the pack and, ultimately, enjoy greater professional success.



Valerij Tomarenko studied English philology and linguistics in Russia. Since moving to Hamburg, Germany in 1991, he has been working as a full-time German-to-Russian and English-to-Russian translator, primarily in the fields of management consulting and corporate communications. Valerij is a member of the BDÜ (German association of translators and interpreters), aiic (International Association of Conference Interpreters) and tekomp, Europe's largest professional association for technical communication. He is a contributor to publications with a focus on translation quality and marketing for translators, and also writes on his own blog *Anmerkungen des Übersetzers* (Translator's Notes).

→ tomarenko.de

→ anmerkungen-des-uebersetzers.com



37,00 € [D]
ISBN: 978-3-946702-03-0



www.bdue-fachverlag.de