

# HOW MUCH DOES TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION COST?

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## Pricing for Language Services

That's the question on everyone's mind when they are shopping – “how much is it”. We all want to get the best deal, yet we've also learned through experience that if something sounds “too good,” that maybe it's not going to meet our expectations for quality or reliability. So, we shop around, we compare prices, what's included, the quality, we look at reviews and ask for references, all in the hopes that we'll make a good buying decision.

When you're talking about [choosing a language services agency](#) to build your global business, of course, you'll consider cost, yet you also need to look at what the quote includes - are there any additional or hidden costs, what has been the experience of previous clients, how good is the quality and other variables. Just looking at and comparing the bottom-line dollar amounts may not give you the whole picture.

Take Rapport International for example. When our prospects compare a translation quote from us to one from other agencies, our price looks “high”, particularly if they just look at the per-word cost. To get an understanding of why our pricing seems so high, we commissioned an independent task force to conduct a blind research study to compare our pricing and value. What they found is that, in reality, our pricing is mid-range in comparison to our competitors, they just position their costs differently to make them look less expensive. We don't believe in this “tricky” pricing, we provide an all-inclusive cost to make it easy to understand, and we deliver the same attention and quality to every client.

Let's dive deeper into what language service pricing entails. We'll break it down by service, (1) written translation and (2) spoken interpretation, to give you a better understanding of what to look for so you know you are comparing apples to apples and that you are getting the best deal even if that means not choosing the agency that provided the lowest quote.



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## (1) How Much Does Translation Cost?

[Translation](#) is the conversion of **written** materials from one language to another. Traditionally translation rates are priced on a "per word" basis. Yet, there are several factors that will go into determining the per word price that you should consider. Some companies provide a low price per word then tack on these factors as additional costs. Others, like Rapport International, provide an all-inclusive per word price.

Here are 7 factors to consider when shopping for translation services:

1. [Quality](#) – higher quality translation will cost more.
2. Confidentiality and Ownership – often less expensive translation companies use crowdsourcing to perform the translations which means your information is out in cyberspace and is no longer confidential or secure.
3. Process – does the translation company have a set internal process you need to conform to? Or are they willing to be flexible and work within your company's process to get the project done?
4. Voice and Meaning – it's important, especially in [marketing](#), that the translation retains the same voice and meaning of the original materials. This requires a deeper understanding of the material than a simple word-for-word translation and will cost more. Read more about marketing translation in "[The Essential Guide to Translating Marketing Materials.](#)"
5. [Additional Services](#) – does the company offer additional services. These will often be above and beyond the per word price, yet it can be invaluable to have an expert layout your file or website in the new language to make sure it's culturally appropriate and that the word and sentence breaks are correct. Having all these services available from one provider makes the process more seamless and in the long run, will probably cost you less.
6. Cultural Adaptation – is this key component included, do they charge extra, or do they just not provide adaptation advice?
7. [Guarantee](#) – what kind of guarantee or assurance do they offer for standing behind their service?

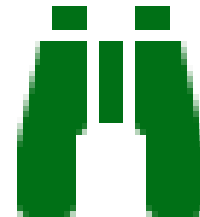
## Variables that Affect Translation Cost

Now that you've made some decisions about the key qualities you need in your translation project, it's time to research agencies and ask for quotes. When an agency receives your document(s) for translation, they will look at several factors and provide a quote based on these variables:

- The length of the document, specifically the number of words
- The target language (the language to translate the material into) – Character languages are more difficult, therefore have a higher cost
- [Turnaround time](#) – is it a rush or not
- Subject matter – more technical materials may require a translator with specialized training and experience
- [Add-on services](#) such as desktop publishing and layout, [audio/video](#) files, extensive layout, etc. will affect the price
- Graphics or images with built-in text
- Quality of writing of the original document
- File type - documents, graphics and visuals that are not easily editable or that need to be recreated may cost more

## Look Beyond the Per-Word Cost

The variables above are relatively standard amongst all Language Service Providers (LSPs). But not all LSPs price the same way. Because customers have become keyed into per-word pricing being the standard in the language service industry, some LSPs have adopted a very low per-word price to appear to be a bargain and win business. But if you drill-down into what that price includes, or more importantly what it does NOT include such as project management fees, proofreading fees, consultation fees, etc., you will often see that the full quote is much more than just the per-word cost.



Rapport International doesn't price that way. We provide quotes based on the factors above, but we include these benefits in our base price:

- [Linguistic Matchmaking for Consistency of Voice](#) – we match you with a translator (in each language) for continuity across all your projects. The translator develops a deep understanding of your needs and provides a consistent voice on all your translations
- [Dedicated Team](#) – we'll get to know you, you'll get to know us
- Efficiency Consultation – we discuss your project with you and offer areas to save you time and money on your project
- [Satisfaction Guarantee](#) – we offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee – if you're not happy we will work until you are
- Project Management – we manage the project every step of the way so you don't have to

- Cultural Adaptation of Message – when a message is culturally significant or difficult to translate, the translator will bridge the cultural communication for clarity
- Proofreading – our professional translators proofread their work to make sure it is grammatically correct, flows well, uses appropriate words, and conveys the right message
- Process Improvement Advice – we will work within your process while offering advice for making improvements to make the process run smoothly
- [Cost Savings Recommendations](#) – our goal is to build long-lasting relationships by being honest and suggesting ways to save you time and money on your project so you get the results you want at the lowest cost
- Consolidating small projects - although we have a minimum charge per language, we try to group your projects together to save you money whenever possible
- Quality Control of Versions – we keep records of your finalized versions for each language to make it easier for you to reuse translations later to save time and money
- File Management – we save your documents for future use and keep them organized so you always have the right language version when you need it

We specialize in finding efficient, cost-effective ways to handle your translation needs. And when we provide a quote, **what you see is what you pay**, barring any additional changes at your request once the project has begun.

Read more about our process in "[Successful Translation Management Starts with a Plan.](#)"

## Translation Discounts & Add-Ons

Basic pricing is not etched in stone. Some factors can result in discounts as well as additional costs that you should take into account when shopping for a translation service provider. When you get a quote from Rapport International these discounts and add-ons will be clearly explained and itemized for your review.

Discounts may be given for:

- High Volume Orders
- Large Projects
- [Retainer Services](#)
- [Special Packages](#)
- Loyalty Discounts
- [Referrals](#)
- Long-Term Commitments

Additional charges may be applied for:

- Rush Jobs
- Editing by Second Translator
- Complex Projects
- Localization
- Difficult Subject Matter
- Uneditable File Types
- [Website](#) Maintenance
- Transcreation
- Certified Translations
- Notarized Documents

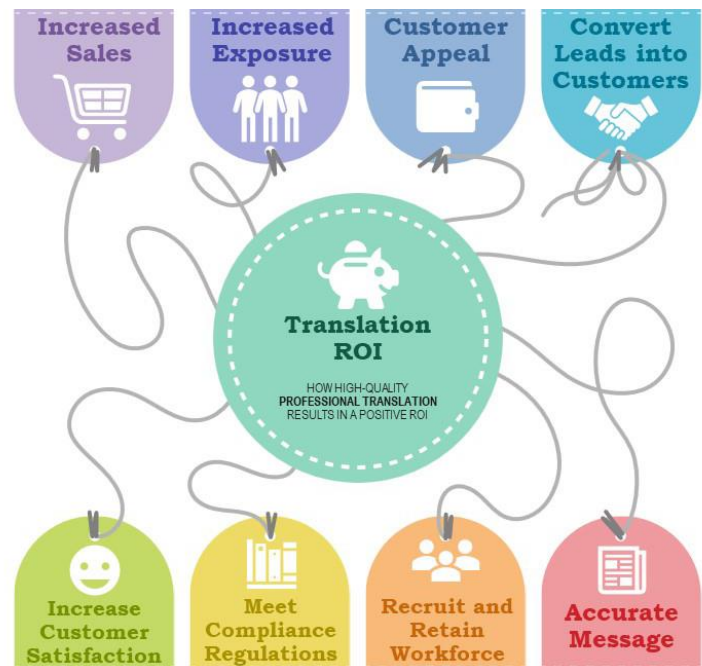
## Shop on Value Not Price Alone

*When comparing quotes, remember that cost alone does not define the value of the service. Make sure you consider all the benefits INCLUDED in the cost, and don't make the mistake of choosing a provider that will add on fee after fee until they end up costing well above the per-word price.*

## Measuring ROI of Translation

Once your translation project is done, how do you assess if the investment has paid off? ROI (return on investment) for translation is not an easy thing to measure. But there are 8 key factors for why translation is a good investment and can fuel the growth and success of a company.

1. Increased Sales – Probably the easiest metric to measure because numbers can be easily obtained.
2. Increased Exposure – Each language you translate your website, documents and marketing materials into opens whole new markets of potential customers.
3. [Customer Appeal](#) – “Speaking” in a customer’s native language not only appeals to customers, but more than 50% say that it’s more important than price when making buying decisions.
4. Convert More Leads – Translation helps companies convert up to 3x more website visitors from leads into customers.
5. Increase Customer Satisfaction – Having questions easily answered in-language and providing in-language instructions and documentation provides a much more positive customer experience. And happy customers are return customers.
6. Meet Compliance Regulations – Depending on the materials and the country you are exporting to; you may need to meet legal regulations. Professional translation services will help you stay compliant.



7. Recruit and Retain Employees – If you expand your workforce into a new market, as well as your goods and services, having in-language employee documentation and training will increase employee satisfaction and retention. Listen to [The Global Marketing Show](#) episode “[English is NOT the Global Language](#)” to learn more about winning employee loyalty by doing business in the native language.
8. Accurate Message – Don’t make the types of mistakes described in [Translations Gone Bad – Research Before Exporting](#), use a professional translation agency that understands the culture, not just the language, and who can culturally adapt your materials for the best campaign and message.

When you take all these factors into account, the expense of professional translation more than pays for itself in increased exposure, more sales, and happier customers and employees. And it fuels the growth of a company into new markets with millions more potential customers.

## (2) How Much Does an Interpreter Cost?

[Interpreting](#) is the conversion of one language to another in a speaking situation.

The [cost for interpretation](#) depends on the type of interpreting needed (simultaneous or consecutive), the length of the assignment/appointment, the location, equipment needs and travel expenses (including parking and tolls, etc.).

### Types of Interpreting

Each situation calls for a different type of interpreting and interpreters specialize in different situations.

- **Consecutive Interpreting**

If there is a small meeting such as a legal deposition, a doctor’s appointment or a small business meeting and the interpreter is going to repeat what the meeting participants are saying after the person talks, this is [consecutive interpreting](#) or community-service interpreting.

- **Escort Interpreting**

If a client wants to walk a trade show floor and have some interpreting at booths and explanations of what is happening at a conference, this would be “escort interpreting”.

- **Simultaneous Interpreting**

When there is a larger audience like at a presentation or seminar, or multiple languages are spoken by participants in the event, this typically calls for [simultaneous interpreting](#) or conference interpreting. Simultaneous interpreting takes a more demanding level of skill and multiple interpreters are often needed in each language. For an ongoing session, the interpreter has no breaks and no rest periods, and the interpreter needs to process hearing and talking at the same time. Since this takes hyper-focus and can be taxing, to combat fatigue, the interpreters in each language rotate every 15-20 minutes. As an example of this, think of the UN with the delegates wearing headphones listening to the interpreter.

- **Virtual “Zoom” Interpreting**

Recently, in the face of the pandemic, we’ve added services for live interpreters on video meetings such as Zoom. The interpreter can act as either a consecutive or simultaneous interpreter for your meeting and if you need more than one language you can schedule several interpreters for the same meeting.

- **Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)**

For in-person one-on-one meetings where an interpreter does not need to be physically present or the meeting/discussion is anticipated to be short we offer [video remote interpreting \(VRI\)](#) services. VRI can be accessed with any device with a camera, a Wi-Fi connection and the appropriate app. Read more about VRI in our blog "[10 VRI Questions Answered.](#)"

- **Telephone Interpreting**

Telephone interpreting is best for on-demand, immediate interpreting needs. This service allows you to call and request an interpreter in over 200 languages. Telephone interpreting is accessed with a telephone and an account number and is available any time of day or night.

- **Chat Bot and Live Chat Interpreting**

If you need to communicate with non-English-speaking customers on your website, there is a service called [Multilingual Live Chat](#) or conversational marketing. Either a preprogrammed bot or a live, trained representative can answer questions in the languages your customers speak.

Read more about the types of interpreting and their pros and cons on our blog [Stay Connected with Clients and Customers.](#)

## Interpreter Pricing

Interpreter costs depend on the service you need and the time of the appointment. Live interpreters are charged on an hourly basis plus travel expenses when necessary, telephone and VRI services are charged by the minute, and Multilingual Chat costs depend on the level of service (bot versus live), the languages needed and demand.



At Rapport International the following services/benefits are always included in the quoted rates – we never hide or tack on extra fees:

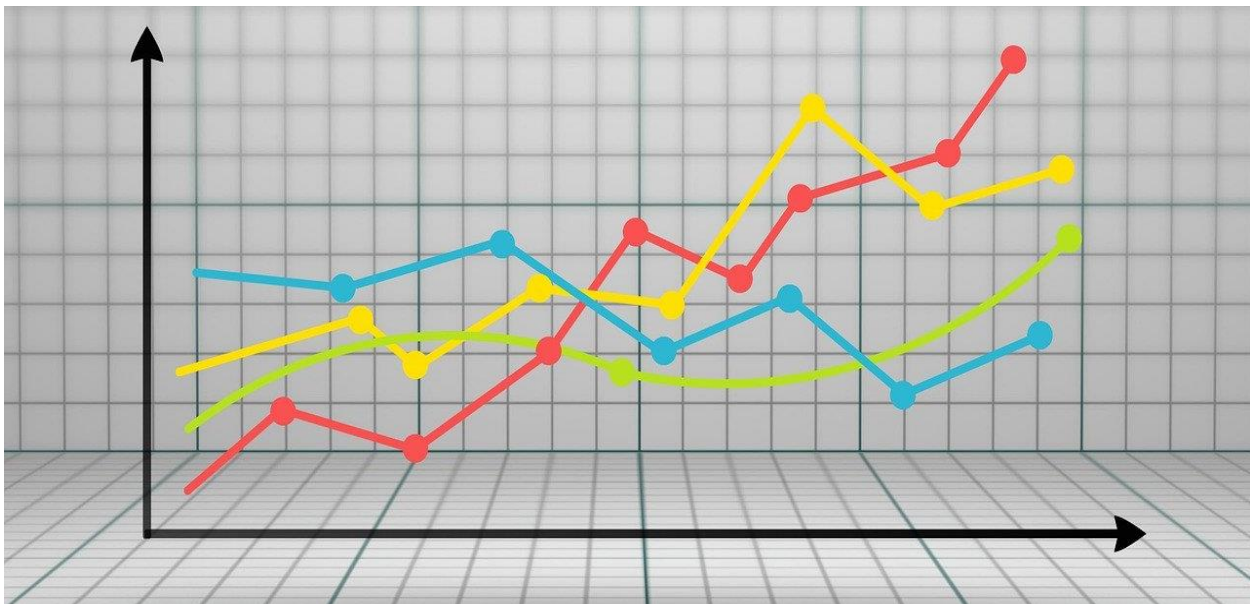
- Project management – we manage your projects, appointments and accounts to keep things running smoothly
- Dedicated team of schedulers – we get to know your needs and preferences, and you get to know us
- Free consultations – when you have questions, we’re here to answer them
- Flexible scheduling – either over the phone, via email or through our online self-service portal
- Access to the scheduling portal – you can view your upcoming appointments and request appointments to simplify the process
- Team training – we provide free training to your team members so they know how to utilize and request our services
- 24/7 customer service – we are available any time you need us
- Consistency of interpreters when possible – we strive to meet your requests to provide the same interpreter to your patients and clients to maintain consistency and build trust

## Variables that Affect Interpreter Pricing

Several factors affect the pricing for your interpreting services.

- **Did you schedule in advance?** For in-person interpreting, it is more difficult to find a qualified interpreter at the last minute. Most schedules fill up and it takes a concerted effort to find an interpreter at the last minute. Plus, it leaves no time for the interpreter to prepare in advance. For example, conference interpreters like to see the presentation, notes and any preparatory materials in advance so they are ready. Rush fees for last-minute scheduling may apply.
- **How long will the assignment be?** Most agencies have a minimum charge. Shorter assignments can be difficult because of the travel time to get to an appointment and not being able to schedule multiple jobs in different locations back-to-back in case the first one does take more time. Many agencies will offer a discount for a full-day or multi-day assignment, or for back-to-back appointments.

- **Stacking Appointments - Will there be unfilled time?** An interpreter is on the clock from the start time to the completion time. It's most cost-effective to have interpreting appointments booked consecutively so you do not have to pay to have someone sit around and wait for the next session/appointment or pay for multiple travel expenses. Stacking appointments or meetings keeps the interpreter busy, helps with scheduling and minimizes additional expenses.
- **Is the material highly technical?** If the meeting is about unique or esoteric material, you may need a bilingual expert in that area. A specialized or highly trained interpreter may be more expensive. But, it's better to have the right person rather than have an ineffective meeting due to communication problems.
- **Is it a long assignment?** Volume discounts often apply.
- **Is it an ongoing project?** If we know that you have a meeting or appointment on a regularly occurring basis and we can anticipate when to schedule and how long it will be, we can plan for it and discount the on-going work.
- **Do we have a relationship with you?** We have many long-term clients that have been with us for over 30 years. When they need an occasional rush, we try to accommodate them since we know their business. Of course, if it happens regularly, we might not be able to accommodate, yet we try.
- **Geography** – different regions in the U.S. charge less. For example, in Nebraska it will cost less for an interpreter than in Massachusetts.



## When Issues Arise

Occasionally, you might not like an interpreter, it may be personality, conflict of interest, a feeling, or a myriad of other reasons. When you work long-term with Rappport International you can provide feedback such as this and we will work to send the same person that you like or track those that you don't like. We will ask questions to understand the exact situation, figure out the best way to fill your needs and appoint the right person for the assignment. Our goal is to develop a partnership with you, so we know how to best work with each other on every project.



We work by the motto “We’ve got your back.” Quality is our top priority. If you’re not 100% satisfied with your interpretation services for any reason, neither are we. We promise to work until you are a raving fan -- that is our guarantee.

## Conclusion

When you need a reliable language service provider who will work with you to establish a relationship, get to know your business and its goals, will recommend efficiencies to save you money, and who will truly become your partner, then you need a company like Rappport International. At Rappport International we strive to provide fair and accurate quotes so that we can meet our goals of providing top-quality services, delivering on time without going over budget, and developing long-term relationships with clients.

Rappport International believes in quality work and lasting relationships, which is why cost alone cannot guarantee the successful growth or results that companies desire. When you work with Rappport International you can be confident that you are getting a high-quality service at a fair price. And as always Rappport International provides [free project consultations](#) and [free quotes](#).



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