

# Nurture Translators, Too



*Consider how you can nurture and develop translators, especially if you use more translators than you do writers.*

by Kim Pettit

A friend once asked me to submit a translation sample to an author she knew was self-publishing a book on taxidermy. I was one of a dozen candidates to submit translation samples. A week later, I was hired. Though other candidates shared my fluency in the language, my paragraphs were more readable. This was important, because the material was a textbook for beginners.

Translating ideas from one language to another requires skill. Words and concepts in one language are nonexistent in another. For example, try translating “politically correct” into Spanish. It is practically impossible. Or, decide how you will translate one of the famed 16 Aleut words for “snow.”

Some languages pack a lot of meaning into a few words. Communicating all that is intended may require twice as many words in the other language. Or, the sentence structure of the original language may permit many more modifiers than the target language permits without confusion. At other times, the original work may itself be unclear, and a translator may need to ask the author to explain what he or she meant so that it can be translated appropriately.

Translators face difficulties in capturing the feel of the original piece. They agonize over sentences and paragraphs, reading aloud to test the flow. They consider whether the language in the translation is as age appropriate as the original work. Funny parts are read to their friends, to see whether the humor works. The meters and rhymes for poetry and song are tested. Translators work hard.

Despite the recent advances in translation software, no machine can effectively replace a translator. Why? Because translators are writers, too. Appreciate their talent and hard work. And, just as you nurture writers, consider how you can nurture translators:

1. Provide translators with more opportunities to use their skills. Give them assignments. Refer others to them. Help them devote themselves fully to translation, if that is how they earn their living.

2. Compensate translators appropriately for their work. Christian publishers tend to pay far less than secular companies. It may not be possible to match the rates offered elsewhere, but do the research and calculate what can be offered. Use other forms of compensation when available.

3. Provide appropriate tools. Purchase good dictionaries and other reference works for your translators.

4. Help translators to maintain fluency in the other language. Provide a gift subscription to a general interest newspaper or magazine written and published in the foreign language, so they can keep current with slang, word usage and new terminology. In addition, encourage translators to become

members of a local professional translator's association.

***Appreciate your translator's talent and work.***

4. Help translators to understand the subjects to be tackled. Provide assistance in contacting the author or in finding answers where the meaning of the original work is unclear. See whether an overview that sheds light on the technical material is available.

6. Recognize translators. Give them credit in the books published. Offer them copies of the final product they can share with others.

7. Encourage their ministry. Share how the works they translated have blessed readers. Tell them about the author's excitement in seeing the work reach a wider audience.

Consider how to bless translators. Implement these suggestions and you may be thanked in several languages. ❖