

FROM FLUENT TO FANTASTIC

Hints, tips and tweaks from a native speaker to
propel your English and take it from fluent to
flawless

SARAH SILVA
CHEMICAL TRANSLATOR

How this will help

This easy-to-use guide covers a selection of terms and phrases used by German speakers when writing in English. They're the kind of errors that mark the author out as a non-native speaker even if they're fluent.

Unless you hire an editor, no-one is going to point out these mistakes. They may appear to be minor, but you want to present you and your company in the best possible light, and that includes the language you use to communicate with your international customers.

Let's get started

Channel your inner Brit. Just the language, not the politics. You've got time for a cuppa so get into the English vibe and check through your company website, image brochure, newsletter or scientific paper and make sure you've got the right wording.

You can also use these tips to speed up your English writing. It takes twice as long to write in a foreign language and you've got more profitable tasks to spend your time on, haven't you? Once you've identified the traps and know the native speaker alternatives, you'll get your English texts written confidently and in record time.

Contents / What's inside

- About us - writing company or personal profiles
- Comparisons and examples
- Results and figures
- Time
- Misused terms
- Useful hints to write like a native
- And finally. Make your call to action inspire action

ABOUT YOU

Writing about yourself and your company: profiles, personal bios and about us pages

Typical translation	German	Better translation
in the year 1953	<i>im Jahre 1953</i>	in 1953
stand for e.g. why we stand for strong links, our company stands for)	<i>stehen für (z.B. warum wir für starke Verbindungen stehen)</i>	represents / is synonymous with / our core value is / our company is dedicated to...
daughter company	<i>Tochterunternehmen</i>	subsidiary
homepage*	<i>Homepage / Website</i>	website home page = Startseite
are working at ABC company since five years	<i>seit</i>	have worked at ABC for five years
the company ABC	<i>die Firma ABC</i>	ABC You can often delete "the company". As you know, we don't capitalise nouns in English except for real names. Which means it's more obvious when you're talking about a company or product name.

*I've been confused before when a client asked for a homepage translation and then (luckily) referred to another page. We quickly figured out the misunderstanding.

Typical translation	German	Better translation
know-how	<i>Know-how</i>	expertise / skills / knowledge You can say know-how in English, it's just used much more rarely.
We are working together with	<i>wir arbeiten mit... (zusammen)</i>	We work with
regarding e.g. all activities regarding sales and logistics	<i>bezüglich / hinsichtlich</i>	relating to / related or even better, try to avoid it entirely and rephrase the sentence e.g all sales and logistics activities.

COMPARISONS, EXAMPLES

Comparing products, explaining technology, writing descriptions

Typical translation	German	Better translation
like, for example	<i>wie zum Beispiel</i>	such as
considered as	<i>gilt als</i>	considered to be / considered
different than	<i>anders als</i>	unlike
on the one hand, on the other hand	<i>einerseits, andererseits zum einen, zum anderen</i>	various alternatives: Firstly... secondly... ... for two reasons: x and y
there exists a	<i>es besteht, es existiert</i>	there is
belong	<i>gehören zu</i>	unless you're talking about a group – the subspecies x belongs to – which is perfectly correct, a useful tip would be to flip the sentence and use "including"
among others	<i>unter anderem</i>	e.g. factors including, or use "such as" at the start of a list
studies of scientists	<i>Studien von Wissenschaftler</i>	studies by scientists Studies of scientists suggests that the studies were about those scientists instead of written / performed by them

RESULTS AND FIGURES

Reporting results for clarity and greater impact

Typical translation	German	Better translation
100 g are	100 g sind	100 g (any specific measurement is singular in English)
1,5 ml	1,5 ml	1.5 ml you need a decimal point in English instead of a comma
1.500	1.500	1,500 you need a comma instead of a point – basically the opposite of German
pH-value	pH-Wert	pH value (no hyphen)
a good stability	eine gute Stabilität	good stability
missing	mangelnde, fehlende	lack of / absence of or simply "no xyz"
Purification of the samples was performed	Noun + wurde durchgeführt	the samples were purified, or better: "person x purified the samples" because it's always nice to know who's actually doing the work.
Investigations into x took place	erfolgt	Rewrite any sentence to delete any translation of "erfolgen" e.g. we investigated...
Further we...	ferner, darüber hinaus	in addition / we also / furthermore

TIME

Deadlines, dates, events. Make sure your readers know exactly when you mean.

Typical translation	German	Better translation
until e.g. I need that report until Friday	<i>bis</i>	by e.g. I need that report by Friday. You need to register for the event by 3 April.
by	<i>bis</i>	you have until Friday to do xyz
while e.g. while the consultation	<i>während</i>	during
in the last weeks	<i>in den letzten Wochen</i>	in the past few weeks
in the course of time we have	<i>im Laufe der Zeit</i>	over time
on the end	<i>am Ende</i>	at the end
nowadays	<i>Heutzutage, heute</i>	nowadays isn't wrong but more commonly we'd say: now / today / at present, depending on the context.

Reporting dates.

Decide if you are writing in US or UK English because the date format changes.

US English = Month/Day/Year UK = Day/Month/Year

To include both audiences and avoid any confusion write out the date in words if possible. 12th March 2019 or 12 March 2019 or March 12, 2019 are all correct, just different styles. Pick one and be consistent.

MISUSED TERMS

Don't be caught out by these traps

Typical translation	German	Better translation
mail	<i>Mail</i>	email mail is reserved for talking about physical post.
next to	<i>neben</i>	besides / in addition / also unless you're talking about physical location
respectively	<i>bzw.</i>	Check if one of these fit your context: and, or, each, relevant we very rarely use respectively
convincing	<i>überzeugend</i>	impressive. When you're convincing a person of something, you're persuading them to change their mind. When you impress, you go beyond expectations.
convince yourself of our products	<i>lassen Sie sich überzeugen</i>	Don't try and translate this directly. Rephrase e.g. Take a look at our products and ...
a software a feedback	<i>ein Feedback</i>	use the noun on its own e.g. software, feedback, information, advice
informations advices	<i>Informationen Hinweise</i>	Everything is singular whether it relates to one or many.

USEFUL HINTS

Hints, tips and tweaks for writing in English

Be active not passive

Active language is clear, personal and more conversational. At its best, active writing is energising and encourages you to read on, which is what you hope your readers will do. In comparison, passive is more formal and needs more thought to work out who is performing the action. For example, the latest sales figures were discussed... by whom exactly?

German uses the passive voice much more than English so this might feel a bit awkward at first. However, using an active voice will strengthen your writing. It's the equivalent of having a good strong handshake – you mean business and aren't afraid to take responsibility. And it makes you sound more like a native.

Passive: The products of ABC can be seen almost everywhere.

German: *Den Produkten der ABC können Sie fast überall begegnen.*

Active: Everywhere you look, you'll probably see one of our products.

Active+: Look around. You're probably looking at one of our products right now.

Certain phrases such as *Anwendung finden* or *erfolgen* encourage you to use the passive but resist in favour of a more engaging text.

Untangle your adjectives

I admire the German language for its ability to bundle multiple adjectives together. I mean, you can even incorporate them to make one gigantic noun (how about a *gemeinsamen Kennenlernkaffeetrinken?*), but sadly, it doesn't work as well in English.

Take a look at these examples I found:

- > The detected by microscopic examination particle =
The particle, detected by microscopic examination,...
or rephrase to avoid sentences getting too long.
e.g. microscopic analysis revealed the critical particle at 250 nm
- > a standard-setting key advantage = a key advantage,...., sets standards in the industry
- > the VOC-containing resin = the resin, which contains VOCs, is...

A few extra checks before you finish

- Keep sentences shorter than you would in German. English doesn't have the genders and multiple endings found in German and long sentences can get confusing.
- Make sure punctuation is translated too. On a PC you can use Alt + 0147 for opening “ and Alt + 0148 for closing quotation marks ”.
- Do a search for '-ion of' to hunt down those nouns and consider changing a few to verbs.
- Be consistent with the language variant. US English versus UK English means choosing aluminum vs. aluminium, specialty vs. speciality and the more obvious color vs. colour.

AND FINALLY

Make your call to action inspire action

Typical translation	German	Better translation
under website under Tel. no.	<i>unter www. / Tel. Nr.</i>	at www.yourcompany.com . or call us on +49 (0)
We'll be pleased to give you advice at [email address]	<i>Wir freuen uns auf</i>	send your question to xxx@xx and one of our team will respond asap. If you need any advice, please send an email to...
rounded off	<i>abgerundet</i>	completed e.g. our metallic pigments complete the range perfectly.
I wish you an enjoyable read	<i>Viel Spaß beim Lesen</i>	Enjoy! Though I would advise finding another phrase
have a good start in the week / wishing you a good start to the year	<i>guten Start in die Woche</i>	have a great week / hope your year has started well / have a great day
Thank you for your attention	<i>Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!</i>	We don't say this, sometimes presenters say "Thanks" - but you don't need this. Consider adding a call to action instead as your last slide needs to make an impact.

Now you're writing like a native

These tips will help you avoid some of the traps I see on websites and brochures written by non-native speakers. They'll help you inform and entertain your audience in the right way.

Mistakes can be amusing and tend to stick in your mind more readily, Eliminate these and you'll be remembered for the right reasons as prospective clients focus on your message and what they need to do next.

If you've benefited (not profited, that's another trap) from these tips or would like any more explanation on a particular point, please send me a message:

sarah@chemicaltranslator.com

Next level – freedom!

Take your English up a notch and unleash your creativity.

Give yourself the freedom to say what you really want to say instead of sticking to those tried-and-tested phrases you know are right.

You want to inject your personality and allow yourself to stand out from your competitors. And present your company in the best possible image. Not only is this harder in a second language, no matter how fluent you are, but it's also natural to feel restricted and resort to familiar phrases.

By partnering with a professional translator and editor (and native speaker of English), you can be as creative and daring as you like. When we work together I'll polish your text to a high-shine finish and add my native tweaks to create a fluent text with added flair.

About the author

Sarah Silva, Chemical Translator
Translating science into international sales

I've been working as a professional translator and editor since 2008. My clients – German companies in the chemical coatings, food and manufacturing sectors – rely on my expertise to help them grow their international business.

For more insights, check out my book: *Small Island Big Business, The Insider's Guide to Success in the British Market*



Sarah Silva MA BSc(Hons) MITI



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This easy-to-use guide will show you how to sidestep subtle traps, use native speaker alternatives, and take your writing to the next level. Using these tips you'll be writing your English texts in record time – and present you and your company in the best possible light.

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WWW.CHEMICALTRANSLATOR.COM