



How to Spot a Pro: Hiring the Right Subtitle Translator for Your Project

Subtitles can make or break your content's global impact. A great subtitle translator doesn't just translate words – they translate **meaning**, **nuance**, and **intent**, all while juggling space, speed, and screen constraints.

But how do you know if someone really knows what they're doing?

Here's what to look for when hiring a professional subtitle translator – plus a free checklist to make the process smoother.

◆ 1. They're Translating for the Screen - Not Just the Language

Literal translations don't belong in subtitles. A skilled subtitler will question EVERYTHING:

"Yes", "Yeah"? or "Yep?", "Nope" or "Not really"... what's the character really saying?

They'll preserve tone and voice, while editing down to match screen time and reading speed.

◆ 2. They Use Professional Software

A professional subtitler uses industry-standard tools (think: Subtitle Edit, EZTitles, Ooona, etc.) to calculate:

- Reading speed (characters per second)

- Line breaks and segmentation
- On/off timings (to the frame!)

They'll also be able to work with your .mp4 file and deliver clean .srt files (or other formats you need).

◆ 3. They Ask the Right Questions

You'll know they're a pro by the questions they ask *before* starting:

- **What's the target language variant?** (UK English ≠ US English ≠ Aussie English?)
- **Is this an English template or just an English subtitling file?**
- **What tone or audience are we aiming for?**
- **Is there a script/reference file available?**
- **Do you need SDH (Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing)?**

Subtitling isn't just pressing play and typing. It's a **collaborative process**, and your translator should absolutely want to understand your project inside out.

◆ 4. They're Clear on Pricing (and Why It Varies)

Subtitlers may charge by:

- **Audiovisual minute**
- **Per subtitle**
- **Project/hour/day (for tricky or technical content)**

Rates can go up for:

- Word-heavy or jargon-rich scripts
- Tight turnarounds (rush fees apply!)

- Additional feedback rounds outside of the agreed terms

Industry averages? Up to **100 minutes a week** for subtitle translation, or **20-40 minutes a day** for English-to-English intralingual work - again, depending on the complexity.

◆ 5. They Know the Industry - and Can Prove It

Look for:

- Accreditation (like membership in Subtle, AVTE, CIOL, ITI, ATA, etc.)
 - Native fluency or translation into their native language
 - Experience with similar projects (documentaries, series, conferences, etc.)
 - Willingness to share references or a portfolio (Just remember: their latest work may be under wraps due to client confidentiality—but they should still be able to show past projects or testimonials.)
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☑ Free Checklist: What to Look for in a Professional Subtitle Translator

- Are they translating meaning, not word-for-word?
- Do they ask about language variants and tone?
- Do they use subtitling software (not Word or Google Docs)?
- Can they calculate and respect reading speeds and character limits?
- Can they deliver in .srt format and work with your video type?
- Do they explain their pricing structure clearly?
- Are they transparent about feedback rounds and extra charges?
- Do they have professional accreditations or references?
- Are they native in the target language (or proven experts)?

- Do they communicate like a collaborator, not a robot?
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Bottom line?

A good subtitler is part translator, part editor, part technical wizard. When you find one, hang onto them - because they'll help your content shine across borders and platforms.