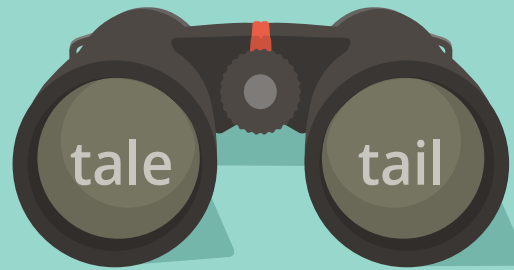




#9: Homophones, homographs and homonyms



These terms cover sets of words that are pronounced or spelled in the same way, but mean different things. As a result, they often cause confusion and Gengo's Senior Translator team frequently encounter mix-ups when reviewing translations. So in order to give our customers the best quality translations (and keep those quality scores high!), it's a good idea to keep an eye out for these troublemakers.

So what are they, and how do the three sets differ from each other?

- **Homophones** are words that are pronounced the same, but have different meanings. For instance, tale (a story) and tail (of an animal) are homophones.
- **Homographs** are words that are spelled the same, but have different meanings. For example, they include bow (and arrow) and bow (to take a bow).
- **Homonyms** are a combination of both homophones and homographs. They are therefore pronounced and spelled the same, but have different meanings. Think, for instance, of right (correct) and right (opposite of left).

When it comes to translation, homophones cause the greatest trouble in the target language: readers will notice any errors because they are spelled differently. Conversely, you will need to pay more attention to the other two groupings in the source language, as any mistakes here will affect the meaning of your English translation.

Common Homophone Mix-ups

Our Senior Translations find that the following pairs cause frequent confusion:

- Accept/except
- Brake/break
- Complement/compliment
- Die/dye
- Hole/whole
- Hear/here
- Lead/led
- Stationary/stationery
- Two/to/too
- There/their
- Your/you're

Further Resources

You'll find fuller lists of homophones and searchable homophone dictionaries at various sites on the internet, such as:

- www.homophone.com
- www.homophonesdictionary.com
- legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/homophone.htm

Posted by Daniel Harper,
German to English ST

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Other Lessons

To talk about the lesson or ask questions, join our discussion in the [Translator Forums](#).