

Different terms for different clients

Well over 90 per cent of the translations I do end up in high-register publications, be they trade journals, background documents for government agencies or corporate press releases. For the most part, the author of the source text assumes that the final reader will have a certain level of knowledge about environmental issues. One thing that I always try to be aware of is customer preferences about the use of specific terminology and register. For instance, the paper industry prefers to refer to waste paper as *recovered paper* because of efforts to have this material classified as a product rather than a waste. Moreover, one customer in the waste incineration industry specifically asks that their plants solely be called *waste-to-energy facilities* rather than *waste incinerators*. This preference is motivated by a desire to improve public perception of these plants and their role in waste management overall. Activists and [NIMBYs](#) generally call these toxic incinerators or burners.

As always, a great deal depends on who your customer is and what they intend to do with your translation. This statement is never truer than when working on PR materials for environmental activists and lobby groups, texts that are traditionally full of emotive language. Just take your average Greenpeace press release: hazardous waste becomes *toxic trash* and landfilling becomes *dumping*. Not to pick on Greenpeace at all: I still fondly remember when some Greenpeace activists ["returned" some of the waste from the Bhopal disaster to Dow's Dutch headquarters](#). Finding target-language texts from other lobbyists on the same issue is always my top priority when handling this text type. Another good route to go is to find tabloid newspaper articles in this area.

Translations of lobbyists' PR materials make up a very small percentage of my work. Environmental and other advocacy groups often rely on inexperienced translators and have little to no budget for professional translations, which is a real shame given the importance of adequately conveying their message. I have recently been toying with the idea of doing some volunteer translation work and am thinking of getting in touch with a smaller German environmental organisation and offering my services. While the financial reward would be negligible to non-existent, volunteering would not only look good on my resume, but also enhance my knowledge of these kinds of emotive texts, something that I am always interested in doing.