

## Source Preparation for Cost-Effective Multi-lingual Versions

The Localization after-thought: “Oh, we need to also get this sales training eLearning Module into our global offices ... call our language vendor now!” Despite the pleas to involve us early in the Module’s source language design and development, we regularly receive calls from our clients who are in quite the rush to get their English eLearning module into another language *as soon as possible*. It’s OK, responding to this scenario for almost 7 years has made us very good and very fast at creating multi-lingual versions for our clients. Unfortunately, this scenario isn’t the best road to mitigating long-term localization costs.

For those who are true planners and are interested in saving time and money in localization projects, here are some trade secrets for a hassle-free localization experience that will lead to a budget-friendly outcome.

**① Extensibility.** This software engineering term is as appropriate to our Learning & Development industry as it is to the engineering world. It conveys the meaning that in all aspects of developing an authoring tool module, think about every piece of content as being editable and easily substituted. In other words, maximize content flexibility and the capability to expand. For localization purposes, content such as graphic designs should have editable text embedded so it can be easily manipulated.

- a) Graphic designs/images – all embedded text must be editable within source graphics.
- b) Video/Film #1 – subtitles should be overlaid and not burned.
- c) Video/Film #2 – video background scenes should not rapidly change; new language audio and/or subtitles will be longer in length/time.
- d) Tables of Information – these will expand in any new language – leave white space around in source to absorb the expansion in new language version.
- e) Length of presentation – because of text and script expansion during the translation process, the overall module will be 10-25% longer in length (and time).
- f) Authoring tool – ability of authoring tool to manage certain multi-lingual versions like Arabic (right-to-left orientation), Thai (double diacritics), and the specific fonts of character-based languages. Some authoring tools (e.g., Articulate Rise) are difficult to work with in integrating new language content within.

**② Early In-country review.** At Global eLearning, we advise our clients to get native language specialists to engage early to evaluate text, pictures, images, and video footage in order to recommend potential cultural road blocks that may turn the audience’s attention away if left alone. Our goal is to culturally neutralize all of the visual aspects of the presentation, or, substitute a culturally relevant graphic piece for the target audience. These in-country learning experts may well be client stakeholders or employees in the target culture. Global eLearning will engage these stakeholders early in the

localization process to determine if the source content is worthy of translation as is, or, if portions of content should be transcreated instead.

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**Instructional Design of Source.** The next steps aim at drilling down to what the Instructional Designer can do while creating the source content to enable a lower-cost localized product.

- Minimize text creativity. For some Instructional Designers and other content developers, this may come across as unnatural. Yet, translation costs are driven by the number of **new** words. The more phrases are repeated, previous translations of those phrases can be inserted at basically no charge. Harness the desire to creatively re-state the same idea and save some localization dollars – especially when 5, 10, or 15 languages are involved.
- Create white space. Independent of language pair, translation of content leads to an expanded number of characters or words. In the source language presentation, be sure to leave plenty of “white” space so that new translated text, with more characters, can be inserted with minimal impact to graphics and other text.

➔ *Note: some clients insist on limiting the translation through imposing character limitations on the translated version. This can be done, but may lead to more risk in capturing the true message.*

- Slide Complexity. Although animation and images should enhance the engagement experience of the learner, these complexities also add cost to the synchronization effort. If images are to be used, and they contain any text, be sure that the images have text boxes that are editable.
- Review of translated script. Your language services vendor should send the translated script before having the voice artist record in studio. Voice recording is often the primary cost driver of many localization projects. Therefore, to approve the translated script prior to the expensive recording sessions saves both money and time in completing the project.
- Voice Options. Professional voice actors recording within a studio environment is the industry standard for multi-media localization. Lower cost technologies are available: subtitling, synthesized voices, field (home) recordings, and text-to-speech software solutions. All of these options have side effects either in accuracy or in effectiveness, but they are technologies that may ease the budget issue, especially as technologies evolve.
- Final source content. Perhaps the greatest threat to keeping a localization quote as truly firm and fixed price is the fluid nature of source content. If the localization effort starts in the midst of changing source content, the vendor has no choice but to continually pass on its additional costs for modifying transcripts, slide translations, voice recordings, and synchronization efforts.

It is always a good idea to speak to your localization provider early in the source design process to gain some perspective on lowering your long-term localization costs. A localization company like Global eLearning, which is dedicated to the eLearning industry, will provide free consultation to those companies already committed to multi-lingual content.