

LAUNCHING GLOBAL eLEARNING

FIRST STEPS FOR LOCALIZING TRAINING CONTENT



Achieve Engagement

As remote working becomes a fixture of our workplaces, eLearning is emerging as a solution to get employees the training they need, wherever and whenever they need it. eLearning videos, training modules and games offer opportunities to train employees, practice problem-solving, and teach new skills in ways that are convenient for employees and cheaper for businesses.

Translated content used to train employees, such as eLearning courses, videos, and manuals, needs to ensure that the end user is getting the most out of their learning experience. A lot of the effectiveness of eLearning courses depends on the quality of the language in the training materials. To encourage full comprehension and engagement, eLearning content should be available in each employees' native language.

Whether you're in need of new localized eLearning content or looking to optimize your existing content, we're here to help you produce the best eLearning content for your needs. We've collected best practices for preparing and localizing eLearning content. If you want a partner to help you produce eLearning content, we've also provided some guidance for choosing a translation partner and building a workflow that works for everyone.

With these tips and recommendations in hand, you'll be able to create strong eLearning content that you can localize to suit any need.

BEST PRACTICES

When localizing eLearning content, a little bit of planning goes a long way. You can design your eLearning content from the start in ways that will make it easier to localize. Thinking about your target audiences will help you craft content that translates across cultures and contexts with ease.

When writing for a global audience:

1. Keep content locale neutral

If your content will travel all over the world, it should be able to be understood all over the world. We call this “locale-neutral” content, and it refers to language that doesn’t contain references to one specific place, culture, country or ideology. For example, if you’re translating an employee benefits orientation, keep in mind that not every country has a 401(k), and that parental leave laws vary widely by country.

2. Avoid humor

If you’ve ever tried to explain why an inside joke with your friends or family is funny, you know that humor depends on context--and without that context, the joke isn’t funny. Humor is so culturally-specific that it’s best to avoid it altogether in localized eLearning content. What might be hilarious in your source content might end up simply confusing your employees in another country.

3. Avoid using colloquial language, such as jargon, slang, buzzwords

Have you ever overheard another generation using their slang and had no idea what they were talking about? That’s what employees in another country would feel like if you included today’s buzzwords in eLearning content to be localized. For a silly example, consider how you would localize “Ok boomer.” It’s so tightly tied to U.S. history (not every country experienced a baby boom after World War II) and a very specific cultural moment that it would be difficult to explain concisely. Slang and buzzwords change so quickly even in one language that it’s best to avoid them in multilingual content.

4. Avoid using abbreviations and acronyms

Like laws and cultural customs, abbreviations and acronyms have highly specific meanings based on location as well. It’s best to spell out the names of any organizations, governmental bodies, documents or processes in content that will be localized. For example, “IRS” might mean one thing to an American, whereas to your employees in France it could mean your company’s “International Research Services.”

5. Avoid cultural-specific references

What’s a bank holiday? When is President’s Day weekend? Even among speakers of English, these questions don’t have universal answers. Checking your content to ensure that it’s free from culturally-specific references to holidays, pop culture, history, media and politics will help keep your content clear to global audiences.



Preparing for localization:

Once you've drafted culturally-neutral or culturally-aware content you're comfortable with, here are a few more checks you can run to ensure that your content will localize seamlessly.



1. Avoid sentence fragmentation, keep sentences whole

High quality translations aren't word-for-word translations. To make sure that your entire meaning is coming across, you'll want to be sure that it's in complete sentences to begin with. Sentence fragments can cause problems down the road as translators struggle to figure out what the rest of the sentence should say.

2. Avoid using passive voice



While passive voice is a common way to write in a number of technical fields, it can pose problems in other languages. Passive voice upends the usual structure of English sentences and obscures the relationship between a sentence's actor and action. In some cases, it can cut out key information altogether. For example, "Your bicycle was left out in the rain and damaged" is grammatically correct, but leaves out the important fact of who was responsible for leaving the bike in the rain in the first place. When translating eLearning content, avoiding passive voice ensures that localized content will deliver the full picture.

3. Avoid noun strings



While your sentence might seem clear in the subject-verb-object sentence structure of English, keep in mind that different languages structure sentences differently. Avoiding noun strings, or several nouns next to each other that modify another noun, can keep the various parts of your sentences clear. Because even with clear context, phrases like "office chair cushion" or "production enhancement proposal analysis techniques" can be confusing!

4. Use consistent terminology



If you're working with a language services provider (LSP), they will typically take a first pass at developing a glossary and style guide that lists subjective, meaning-sensitive terms, and any proprietary terms with a range of meanings in your field. For increased effectiveness, you can solicit feedback from your employees to craft a list of preferred industry terms. A clear glossary will keep everyone on the same page when using language and increase clarity--so you're not calling it a "change notice" on one slide and a "change request" on another.

5. Use neutral icons for visual imagery



Using the right visual language can be tricky. Images or words that seem clear in one cultural context or that represent something special for one culture may have a completely different meaning to another. For example, the "Help" section of your website may be represented by a question mark. Certain languages do not use question marks though and you will need to use a different symbol in the translated version. Metric vs. imperial systems for measurement or the order of day, month, and year are other examples. Acronyms and slogans with culturally specific contexts that are hard to explain or translate into other languages will also cause issues.

6. Define content type



And finally, make sure that your content is finalized before sending it off for localization. It's good practice to have an English version of the content you want to use internationally completely nailed down, edited, tested and completed before moving on to localization. An error in the original content will lead to ballooning costs and the further along the localization process is, the worse it gets.





WHAT SHOULD YOU DISCUSS WITH A TRANSLATION PARTNER BEFORE SIGNING A CONTRACT?

When choosing a translation partner to localize your eLearning content, you'll want to make sure you select one that has the capacity to handle your particular eLearning genres. Before signing a contract, be sure to discuss these questions with your translation partner:

Are there voiceovers or subtitling to consider?

If your video contains talking heads, then subtitling is best. When translating subtitles into different languages, there are a few additional challenges to consider. Voiceovers can quickly get comical if the lip-syncing doesn't match up. For example, text for one language might be much longer and not fit the screen as well as its original source material. Additionally, as different languages may use an entirely different word order, a subtitle may be out of sync with the action on the screen. Discussing image design and content flow with your translation partner will help you make the necessary tweaks to your content--before it's added to any video content.

If your content features more screen capture without people on screen, then voiceover can be a good option to make the training feel more native to the viewer. Be sure to match the type of voice to the style, tone or brand that you want.

Will you require testing after implementation?

Often you need in-context review to make sure that all the text length, button names, and other features are correct. Does your translation partner have the ability to do this?

For our clients, Argos will often do the translation and then once the files are ready, log into the eLearning platform itself (with credentials provided by the client) to review all the content and make sure it is showing up correctly. We can even do a side-by-side review of eLearning materials in two languages.

WHAT DOES A GOOD WORKFLOW FOR AN ELEARNING TRANSLATION PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

To ensure that your eLearning localization workflow is as streamlined and efficient as possible, it's important to consider these key steps and processes:

1

Content ready for localization

Your content should be developed in English, using best practices for internationalization and localization. We've discussed them above, and we recommend producing a finalized version of the source content before moving into the following steps.

2

A plan for software internationalization

More than likely, your eLearning content will be built in Storyline or Captivate. Choose a software type that can easily be localized as well. If you have developed the platform yourself, then it's best to form a plan for translating and localizing that software during the development process. If you don't yet have that plan, no worries--a good translation partner will still be able to help, but it might add some additional steps.

3

All native files packaged and sent

It is best to provide all eLearning content in editable formats. This way, translations can be incorporated easily, and recreating the files from scratch is avoided. This applies to video, images, audio, interactive assessments, presentations, and any other files. Issues with text expanding or contracting can be easily tackled when the team has access to the editable source files.

If your eLearning resources rely on graphics and images, you should supply editable InDesign, Photoshop, or Illustrator files. Flattened PDFs or JPEGs can't be edited and would make applying the translated text more complicated.



4

Translation, voiceover and subtitling completed and integrated

Interactive content created with tools like Adobe Captivate support text exports and imports which make the localization process more straightforward. The text captions can be exported as XMLs or XLIFFs which can then be re-imported to the project ones translated.

5

In-country testing successfully completed

Before releasing training modules to your remote workers, it's a good idea to run a pilot test of the materials with someone who will actually be using them. Is the content clear, organized and engaging? You can run these tests either in a staged environment or via screenshots of the content.

6

Last steps: bug fixes and final delivery

Once you've fixed any bugs, misaligned content or out-of-sync subtitles, you're ready to send your content off to employees around the globe!





About Argos

Argos Multilingual provides global language solutions. With over 30 years of experience, we serve clients in the high-tech, life sciences, human resources, and financial industries.

We make it easy for businesses to grow globally and connect with expert talent anywhere in the world. With production centers in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, we follow a strategy of building robust programs for continuous translation and localization.

You can expect a long-term and transparent partnership, backed by innovative solutions around technology, AI & data, creative content, and quality assurance.

For more information and contact details visit our website at www.argosmultilingual.com