



Top 10 Tips for Training & eLearning Translation

Drive user adoption, increase customer satisfaction and reduce support costs with strong multilingual training or eLearning materials

Localizing your training and eLearning materials can be daunting, no matter the language or the market. But with the right preparation, you can ease the translation process and create highly successful localized materials. Here are our top-10 tips to help avoid some common localization pitfalls when gearing up to take your computer-based training modules, classroom instruction materials or eLearning applications multilingual:

1. **Create translation-friendly content.** Thinking about translation while you write and/or create your materials will save you money and headaches in the long run. Examples of creating translation-friendly content include: Using bulleted lists versus lengthy paragraphs, avoiding slang and idiomatic expressions, and breaking up lengthy noun phrases.
2. **Implement best practices for images.** Keep text out of images (learn more in tip #3), reduce the number of screenshots, use culturally-neutral images, be careful when using metaphorical images (i.e. dollar signs for money) or pictures of people making gestures (such as a thumbs up).
3. **Avoid embedding text in graphics.** Text embedded in an image can't be extracted and therefore requires re-creating a new layered source file with the text restored as a separate layer. If text is placed on top of a graphic or photo, retouching might be required to restore the graphic background after removing the text, all of which means additional time and cost.
4. **Build on "Unicode."** All applications handling localizable content should support the characters of your target languages. We recommend implementing Unicode. Declare your files (e.g. HTML and XML) to use the UTF-8 character set to avoid text being displayed as so-called "tofu boxes" or question-marked diamonds.
5. **Avoid embedded text in scripts.** Don't embed localizable content throughout script code like Javascript or VBScript. Strings embedded in script code might require your localization provider to develop special parsers to identify and filter them out for localization. If you cannot avoid using text strings in your script, see tip #6 so that your localization partner can easily find the localizable text.
6. **Bundle your text strings.** If you must use text strings in your script, make sure your localization partner will be able to find them. You can either bundle them together as variables in an external "resources" file, or you can collect them at the top of your file as a collection of variables, flagged as localizable (e.g., `_LOC_[name_of_variable] = "Welcome to the course!"`).
7. **Be aware of expanding text.** Localized text tends to be longer than the English equivalent and can pose a challenge if the text container is not flexible. Check your design and code to ensure longer texts can be supported. Issue-prone areas are horizontal navigation bars, menus and any other text containers with limited space to expand.

8. **Avoid string concatenation.** Try to avoid language constructions that contain fragments of text combined with variables. Other languages might need to have those pieces in a different order, or the translation of certain pieces might be different depending on the variable. For example: "Page X of Y total page(s)", where "X" and "Y" are variables. Instead, try to use a construction like "Page: X/Y".
9. **Make font properties customizable per language.** For Flash applications, we recommend defining font properties in an external XML file (a "style sheet" or "settings" file). Using a settings file will allow you to define the correct font properties for each individual language in one central and easily accessible place. For web-based files, like XHTML, use external Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).
10. **Minimize complex content integration.** If possible, avoid integrating content that is created using a mix of different technologies, formats and tools, such as audio that is time-synched or video with on-screen subtitles. Generally speaking, the more complex the creation process of those elements, the more complex the localization process might be.

Following these basic tips – and partnering with a skilled localization firm – will help you navigate the cultural and technological challenges of taking your training and eLearning materials and projects across lines of language and culture. To learn more, please visit www.acclaro.com/training-elearning-localization.

About Acclaro: Acclaro is an international translation and localization firm that helps the world's leading brands succeed across cultures. We translate websites, marketing campaigns, documents and software to give clients an authentic voice in key language markets.

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