



An Introduction to Translation & Localization for the Busy Executive



This whitepaper contains copyrighted material. Additional copies may be obtained at <http://www.acclaro.com/whitepapers>



Introduction

The localization process can be daunting for anyone stepping into a role with responsibilities for developing global markets for products and services. What initially seems like a simple “language conversion” can rapidly move into unfamiliar territory as you discover the cultural and technical complexities of localization.

To help the busy executive understand the localization process — and leverage this knowledge to oversee successful, cost-effective projects — we’ve created this overview of translation and localization. With a better understanding of the process, you’ll be able to not only get a good start but also avoid common pitfalls.

This white paper will help you:

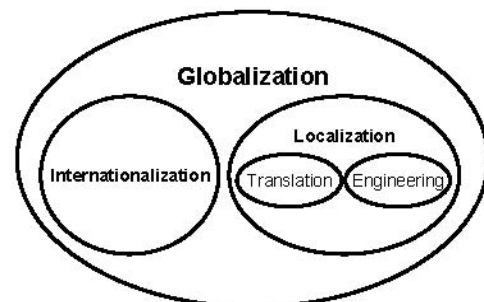
- Understand industry terminology
- Compare in-house versus outsourced localization Solutions
- Understand localization technology, quality and process
- Utilize five tips to start your project

Terminology and the Basics

Let’s begin with an understanding of the terminology used in localization.

Globalization: In our industry context, globalization is the process of developing software, products or digital content that are intended for worldwide markets. There are two components to the process: internationalization (technically enabling the product to be used without language or culture barriers) and localization (translating and enabling the product for a specific local market).

Internationalization: This process is primarily an engineering process where the software or digital content is developed and/or modified so that it can be localized into other languages and locales. For example, a properly internationalized software application has all of its translatable text externalized from the code to files that can be easily found and translated. It is also able to handle things like multi-byte character sets (e.g., Japanese, Chinese), text





expansion (some translated strings may expand by 30-50% over English), multilingual sorting patterns, currency denominations, and so on.

Localization: The process of converting a program, content or website for a particular or market such that all of the text is translated accurately and with the right style into the native language, and local conventions are used for sorting, formatting, currency, etc. A simple example is the need for resizing dialogues and controls of a user interface to accommodate longer character strings or different hot keys. Testing the translated application or site is also an important part of the task, as is editing graphics, reformatting documents and other final production steps after translation.

Getting Started with Localization

The first decision is deciding what to localize and into what languages. This is a marketing and business development decision driven by anticipated market demand, competitive analysis and/or large deals that require localized product. In addition to the product itself, localization of the pre- and post-sale information and all other customer touch points should be considered. Things that are typically localized for a product or service include marketing collateral and communications, the product itself, product manuals and user guides, marketing websites and support FAQ's. Of course budgets also need to be considered in deciding what to localize.

Since the cost of localization is usually far less than the original cost of developing the product, the ROI for localizing a product, based on the revenue from new global markets, can be quite attractive. However, localization is clearly not inexpensive. The cost can vary dramatically based on the size and complexity of the project, which is then factored by the number of target languages. A small application or website localized into a single language might cost \$5-10K while a large multilingual effort can run up to six and seven figures.

In-house vs. Outsourced Localization Solutions

There is a spectrum of solutions to choose from for localization. At one end is a totally in-house localization operation while at the other is a completely outsourced, turnkey model using a Localization Service Provider (LSP). In-house provides maximum control while outsourced offers maximum flexibility. For the right conditions, both solutions can provide high value and high quality but which works best is a function of volume, workload stability and a company's appetite for scaling internal teams. With enough volume, stable demand and a long-term commitment to the business model, an in-house model might be the right approach. However, low or variable needs are addressed with an outsourced model. Almost all companies will have some elements of both. Even companies with the greatest demand such as GE, Google, Microsoft and IBM outsource most of



their localization. In addition to the economics of outsourcing to specialized firms, companies often cite the benefit of keeping a cost center that is outside of their core business as a flexible on-demand service.

A Localization Service Provider can be thought of as translation agency on steroids. Besides language translation services, LSPs also offer a range of engineering, content layout and testing services that transform the translated text into final media for consumption. With software, this can mean things like adjusting the User Interface so it properly displays translated text. For documentation, it's reflowing translated text, applying adapted styles and formats and then re-paginating the layout to accommodate changes caused by expanded text length. With digital content or a global website, it might be interfacing with a content management system to ensure that translated content displays properly.

There are two types of LSPs. Single Language Vendors (SLVs) are companies that specialize in one target language or locale and they are usually found in the native country for that language. SLVs are generally focused on translation tasks that are unique to each language. Multi-Language Vendors (MLVs) work with multiple languages and will usually be responsible for the localization of a project into ALL of the target languages the client is looking for. MLVs also combine the process management and technical services that are common across languages with the language services of the SLVs. The advantage of this approach is that the client has a single entity coordinating and managing the entire project - and consistency of key elements across languages. Depending on their operating model, MLVs will work either directly with "in-country" translators in each target market, or they will "subcontract" one or more of the target languages to SLVs.

Using the SLV model means that the client is responsible for adding the centralized MLV components of management and technical services to the translation, and coordinating all of the activities between the various languages. This approach can be effective for companies that have a strong internal localization team and processes in place and who are dealing with a single or relatively few languages. Companies that are newer to localization, have many languages, or don't want to hire a large internal team, generally find the MLV model to work better for them.

Effective procedures for communicating and working with a service provider are some of the most important things a client should establish at the beginning of a project. Objectives should be discussed and documented including who will be involved in the project, who the decision makers are, what resources are available, what escalation processes will be used, etc.



Translation Quality

Of course the most basic component of localization is translation. Like any editorial effort, the outcome is based on the right combination of talent and process. Getting good quality translation starts with selecting the right language team. For the most part, these are professional translators and editors who reside in their country and work from English (and other languages) into their native tongue. Good agencies put these linguists through rigorous tests to qualify only the best, and then assign them to jobs based on their areas of expertise. A good process includes training the team, developing glossaries and style guides, having an editor review the original translation, and incorporating market preferences and feedback.

Maintaining Consistency

One measure of the quality of a localized product is the consistency of the language used within the product itself, across products within a suite or family, and across subsequent releases. There are two primary factors that help a company maintain that consistency. First there is the consistency of the people involved in the project. That is, not just using the same company, but the same translators across products or from release-to-release. The second is the use of tools and technology that allow translations to be “leveraged” from product-to-product and version to version. This helps insure that terminology and sentences are translated the same way in all occurrences.

Localization Technology and Process

There are several types of technologies or tools that can aid the process of translation and localization. Machine Translation (MT) is what most people think of when it comes to computers and translation. Its origins date back to military intelligence during the cold war era and it is software that programmatically converts one language into another. Although the quality of MT-generated translation has improved over the years, the successful use of it for localization has been limited to only a small group of companies. These companies have extremely large document translation requirements and a controlled authoring environment that restricts the way original content is written to make it easier to translate. For most others, MT is not a cost-effective near-term solution.

Computer-assisted translation (known as Translation Memory) is a technology for applying automation to the act of human translation. It is technology that parses and saves every translated sentence to a database in real time, allowing the translator to reuse previously translated material and focus only on the parts that are new or changed. This Translation Memory technology usually



includes Terminology Management for creating and reusing translated terms. Translation Memory is especially helpful for localization since software and websites tend to have a significant amount of repetitive text and are usually revision oriented with the ability to re-use translations from previous versions. Any localization solution you consider should use commercially available Translation Memory tools to ensure portability of these assets.

The localization process

A typical localization project ranges anywhere from one to four months depending on the size and complexity of the project. Since a translator normally translates about 2,000 words per day, it is not unusual to see a larger project require up to 20 translators and four editors or more per language working in parallel. And that is often the most straightforward part of the project — usually about one half of the overall effort. Localization of a software or web application has about 20 process stages to it beginning with engineering and glossary development tasks and ending with linguistic and localized UI testing. These are often proceeding in synch with the development effort so that the localized versions can be launched with the English.

Historically, localization has always been project oriented with a beginning and an end. And for the most part, that is still the way it is today including the first-time localization of a website. However, maintaining localized websites has brought about a new approach. Maintaining websites, especially those implemented using a Content Management System (CMS), need to be handled in a much more dynamic and granular fashion, e.g., frequent webpage changes vs. a new software version. To address this, several companies have brought Globalization Management Systems to market that interface with the CMS for the purposes of detecting change and managing the localization process as a workflow “stream” rather than a project.

Five recommendations for getting started:

In closing, here are five recommendations that will help companies that are new to localization getting started:

1. **Become a smart buyer.** Having read this you’ve perhaps got a good start going. The Localization Industry Standards Association (www.lisa.org) which has produced a localization primer that you can obtain here: www.acclaro.com/localization-white-papers. In the US, there is also the Localization Institute (www.localizationinstitute.com) which is a great source of vendor-neutral information and training. There is also a trade publication, Multilingual Computing (www.multilingual.com), which is a good source of timely information on localization issues.



2. **Assess your global readiness.** Are your products ready to be localized? Determining this up front and resolving any problems before you begin the localization process will save you some stress and much money downstream.
3. **Be leery of handing off the localization of your product(s) to distributors.** This always looks great at first since it appears to reduce your upfront costs. However, great salesmen and channel partners do not necessarily make good localizers. There are many stories of contract nightmares, switching fees, quality/consistency issues and missed deadlines with this approach.
4. **Compare your quotes.** Make sure you're comparing apples-to-apples when selecting a vendor and know exactly what is included (e.g., testing, number of reviews/revisions, etc.).
5. **Look for a partner.** Like remodeling your house, know that you're going to run into some surprises. Pick someone you can trust to help you weigh the issues and recommend solutions. You should feel confident that your project contacts can think on their feet and are empowered to act and keep your project on track.

Summary

Putting this information to use can make a difference to both the quality of your final product – but also to your team morale and budget. Preparing a solid localization plan with your provider sets the foundation for the effectiveness of the project. And, following your plan, including maintaining flexibility and a learning attitude, will go a long way to helping your project not only succeed but flourish in its new language market.



About Acclaro

Acclaro is an international translation and localization firm that helps the world's leading brands succeed across cultures. With its global headquarters in New York and offices and affiliates in Boston, San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Bangkok and Paris, the agency translates websites, marketing campaigns, documents and software, giving clients an authentic voice in key language markets.

Since its founding in 2002 Acclaro has grown rapidly while maintaining a customized, personal approach. Acclaro's global team of technical and linguistic experts has served as a trusted partner to industry leaders and global businesses.

For more information, please visit www.acclaro.com.

NEW YORK - BOSTON - SAN FRANCISCO - BUENOS AIRES - BANGKOK - PARIS

World Headquarters

3 West Main Street, Suite 203
Irvington, NY 10533 USA
www.acclaro.com

Phone: +1 914.468.0200
Fax: +1 914.478.3456
Email: info@acclaro.com