

# Creating multilingual and multicultural training

A whitepaper on e-learning localization



## Executive summary

Modern-day enterprises are not just workplaces. Employees often view them as places where they can constantly hone their skills and keep themselves updated in their respective professional domains.

Companies must also train their staff in industry practices now and then to ensure compliance and safety, among other things.

For these reasons, training employees becomes a regular business process. With global companies, the training needs to be multicultural and multilingual.

Localizing a training program for employees around the world comes with certain challenges. In this whitepaper, we'll look at:

- What is e-learning localization?
- Why do you need it?
- Trends in e-Learning
- Best practices for e-learning localization
- Tools to use for efficient localization



## What is e-learning localization?

Let's first look at what e-learning is and why it's important. When companies do business internationally, their workforce, too, is global. While they can easily train their employees at headquarters through in-person sessions, the logistics of doing so at the global level becomes a little complex.

Enter e-learning, which allows companies to train their staff based anywhere in the world and bring them up to speed on the latest practices and rules and regulations in their industry as well as in the company. It helps in onboarding new employees quickly so that they become conversant with the workflow and start contributing to the team's efficiency.

E-learning gives companies a lot of freedom and creativity in how they can design their training program and implement it. It also saves a lot of time and money for companies that would otherwise be spent on travel, accommodation, and other logistics.

The training program can be delivered completely online or in conjunction with any offline classroom sessions.

It can be asynchronous, meaning the student can take the course at their own pace. Or, it could be run according to an established schedule.

The content can be fixed and all the students take the same course, or it can be adapted to the needs of the individual learner. The program can also be designed to be interactive, allowing the student to communicate with the teacher.

## E-learning localization

E-learning localization is the process through which the training program is rendered in the language of a specific locale and tailored to the students' requirements. Consequently, it is more than just translation.

A well-localized training program takes care of many smaller details such as the right currency, date and time format, culturally acceptable themes, images, colors, body language, and so on. It does not in any way feel alien to the learner.

A training program includes text, user interface (UI) elements, video and audio, and different interactive elements. To localize it seamlessly, many different professionals have to come together: translators, editors, reviewers, project managers, subtitlers, dubbing professionals, and of course, developers.

## Why must you localize your training program?

A localized training program is critical to international employee development for three important reasons:

### Employee safety

In some countries, training programs must be in the language of the learner by law. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the United States Department of Labor requires employers to “instruct its employees using both a language and vocabulary that the employees can understand.”

When staff understand safety and usage instructions better, the number of accidents go down. It is especially important in industries such as mining, manufacturing, and aviation, to name a few. You need to warn and alert employees of hazards before it happens, give instructions on what to do if an accident happens, reporting instructions on the accident as well as what to do immediately after.

A properly localized training program uses terms that are understood clearly in that locale. It does not import terms from the source language if they might mean something different or make no sense at all. For instance, some languages may have words that sound the same but mean quite different things. The Spanish word *intoxicado* means poisoned, while the English word *intoxicated* means drunk or affected by some drugs. An expert linguist will know the difference, translate accordingly, and avoid potential accidents.

Clear and in-language safety instructions can save employees from injury, even death in some cases. It provides the company several benefits such as lower insurance premiums, avoiding productivity loss, greater employee confidence and satisfaction, and protection from liability suits.

As employees also become knowledgeable on how to use the machinery or follow safety processes better, it can result in minimal damage or wear and tear to equipment too. Take for instance the usage instructions for nuclear medicine involving equipment used to provide proton therapy. You can well imagine the risk in not translating the usage and safety instructions for such a machine. Nothing should be left to chance. We cannot assume that everyone who is using the machine has understood all the details, when the instructions are not in their mother tongue.

## Better engagement, better learning

The students are more engaged when the study material is in their own language. They can understand and digest information faster and retain it better when they can learn in their native or preferred language.

It increases the accessibility of the learning program. The training content does not remain limited to the speakers of one language.

Localization allows you to create region-specific assessments if need be. You might be testing the employees in different locales on different things, or they may prefer a different assessment style.

## Building a strong corporate culture and employee loyalty

A localized training program makes it more culturally acceptable. As localization does not stop at translation, the program will be attuned to the cultural and social norms of a locale. For instance, a thumbs-up sign might be perfectly acceptable in the United States but may make no sense in other places around the world. Or even worse, it can be considered rude in some cultures in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, West Africa, and Asia.

International employees may appreciate the fact that the company has taken the effort to translate the course into their language. This might motivate them to take the program seriously and achieve the goals.

It builds a strong corporate culture, as international employees become more aware of the company rules and ethics and understand the processes better. They also come to possess the same level of skills and knowledge as the employees at the company's headquarters. It helps the employees feel more engaged and empowered.



## Trends in e-Learning

Some irreversible trends have entered the e-learning industry. Being aware of these trends will help you build engaging learning content.

- 1. Mobile learning (M-learning).** Learning on the go is here to stay, as more and more learners prefer to take courses on their mobile. Responsive design, hence, becomes mandatory.
- 2. Micro-learning.** The ever-shorter attention span, not wanting to add further to the employee's to-dos, and taking up less memory space on the device are all factors that have spurred micro-learning. But this doesn't mean that you take the existing content, chunk it up, and serve it separately. Micro-learning means that you create small learning nuggets that are complete in themselves but are also connected with a larger theme.
- 3. Increased accessibility for all online learners.** Some accessibility features such as transcripts and narration tools are great for every learner, regardless of any disability issue.
- 4. Gamification or game-based learning:** Incorporating games into e-learning increases retention and learner performance. It adds fun to the learning experience and provides a sense of satisfaction upon completion of tasks and levels. It reduces distractions during learning.
- 5. Personalized learning:** Learning is becoming highly individualized and interactive through the use of artificial intelligence (AI).
- 6. Virtual conferences:** They have gained traction during the pandemic but have developed into a trend that is unlikely to go away as they are very convenient and save travel time and organization costs. If invitees are unable to attend, they can always turn to the recording.
- 7. Collaborative e-learning:** It promotes interaction and facilitates networking.
- 8. Video-based training:** Most people watch videos on their smartphones. Take advantage of this habit and deliver your learning content via video. Video learning allows the student to be in control of the pace. It engages the learners better. Learners can also be encouraged to create their own videos and upload them on a common learning platform.

## Best practices for e-learning localization

E-learning localization can be a complex task. Planning will make it more predictable, eliminate errors, and improve and sustain quality.

Below, we list some recommendations to localize your online training materials in an optimum way:

- 1. Localization needs to keep up with the course development.** That way, localization takes the least amount of time, effort, and money. If localization is only added as an afterthought, at the very least it can take more time to complete. At worst, you might even have to re-do parts or all of the program. For instance, if you have used a theme in your e-learning course and woven the entire course using that theme. If this theme makes no sense in the target market, you'd then have to re-do the entire program.
- 2. Get inputs from stakeholders.** Identify your audience and understand their learning needs. What format would they prefer the learning modules to be in? On what skills would they like to be trained? How about the length of the course? Which language would they prefer the training to be in? On which device would they take the course? It's best to get their inputs when beginning to develop the course, so as to ensure maximum engagement.
- 3. Determine your translation approach.** Translation can be done in three different ways: entirely by a machine, by humans, or with a hybrid approach where humans work with machine output and improve it. Usually, for e-learning, it's either completely translated by professional translators or a hybrid approach is adopted. A pure machine translation (MT) approach may not be suitable and is not recommended.
- 4. Select your translation technology tools.** The translation tech landscape is nowadays very diverse and complex. Choose the tools that would work best with the learning management systems (LMS) that you might be using. See next section for more details.
- 5. Work with an experienced and knowledgeable language services agency.** The agency must be available to provide all the services required for e-learning localization, and not just translation. E-learning might take many forms, including virtual conferences. Here, additional services such as automated transcription and voice over would be required. The agency must be able to handle the services that are required for media localization, work with efficient tools, and provide round-the-clock project management.

## Tools to use for efficient localization

LMSes have now evolved to adapt to localization requirements. Here we mention some of the widely used tools in the industry.

**Articulate StoryLine:** With this tool, you can create one course with multiple languages. One way it does this is the branching method where the learner is asked for their language preference at the start of the course. The other method is to use layers so that you can offer different languages in a single StoryLine file. StoryLine can be very efficiently used to translate PPTs, edit audio, and hold multilingual virtual training sessions.

**Crossknowledge Mohive:** It's an e-learning authoring tool that features multi-language translation through XLIFF exports and imports. The translators are able to see the context of the words, thus enabling more accurate and faster translation.

Other tools that are great with learning content localization are Adobe Captivate and Trivantis Lectora, to name just a few.

Several translation technology solutions are either built into these tools or need to be plugged in. Some solutions are important to control budget, increase speed, and maintain quality.

**Translation memory:** This is a tool that saves all previously translated sentences (strings) in a database. As new content comes up for translation, this tool instantly recognizes words, phrases, or sentences that may have already been translated and approved. It populates them on the screen, so that the translator doesn't need to translate them again.

**Terminology management:** You might have terms that are unique to your organization in your training content. Or maybe terms that are used uniquely and hence the meaning must be retained as such in the translated content. Perhaps you do not want to translate brand names. You might have to add new terms as your company launches new products or retire some terms when they are no longer relevant. All of this and more can be done through terminology management tools. However, a trained linguist must maintain the term database.

**Project management capabilities:** The LMS must be able to support several professionals working on the file simultaneously. The project manager must be able to assign different parts of the project to voice artists, translators, proofreaders, reviewers, video editors, graphic artists, image editors, developers, and so on. The project manager must also be able to easily see the progress, flag delays, and interact freely with anyone working on the file.

## Conclusion

Localization of learning content is often underestimated, even in the design phase. That's when things start going wrong.

However, if you plan for localization, you can greatly reduce the time and effort that might be required in re-working things. And, of course, stay in budget.

A training program that is localized with care and finesse will deliver lasting messages to your learners. Their learning is more efficient, and they will be able to achieve the objectives of the course. The money spent on the training then becomes worth every penny to the corporation. This way, everyone wins.



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EUROTEXTE SARL

Lexcelera

2 Passage du Cheval Blanc

75011 Paris | France

RCS registration number: 388 212 706

VAT registration number: FR64 388212706

Phone: +33 1 55 28 88 00

Email: [contact@lexcelera.com](mailto:contact@lexcelera.com)

