Chapter 14
Translating E-Learning Courses

Kara Tsuruta-Alvarez
CTS Language Link, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More frequently, universities and corporations are faced with the challenge of having e-learning courses translated into other languages for learners in other countries or for specialized groups. However, the translation process, especially for e-learning, requires several considerations before spending those dollars. In this resource chapter, a translation industry professional, experienced with quoting translation bids, offers tips on how to prepare content for translation and what to consider with respect to translating typical e-learning components, like video, voice over, etc. The author orients you to the project management side of translation - so you know what to expect from your language service provider (LSP), when, and why - and shares best practices that help you avoid common mistakes like trying to 'do it yourself'.

DEFINITION: WHAT IS TRANSLATION?

As a leading, full-service language services provider (LSP), the company I work for, CTS LanguageLink, offers both types of language services, so more often than not, it takes a few additional questions to determine what the actual, versus the perceived, customer need is. One of the questions most frequently asked is, "What is the difference between translation and interpretation?"

The two terms are often used interchangeably by those outside the industry. So, before we go any further, the following is our definition:

Translation *is the process of converting written text or words from the source language to the target language. An understanding of the context or meaning of the source language must be established in order to convey the same message in the target language.*

This may include the written translation of documents, such as letters, manuals, forms, bro-

chures, scripts, emails, as well as websites and software.

Interpretation *is the spoken transmission of a message from one language into another language. An understanding of the context or meaning of the source language must be established in order to convey the same message in the target language.*

This can be accomplished either in-person, as in a legal / court, medical, or conference setting (on-site interpreting), over the phone (telephonic interpreting) or by use of video (video remote interpreting).

Translation and interpretation require very different skill sets and training. Simply being bilingual does not mean that one is qualified to provide either translation or interpretation services on a professional level.

The focus of this resource chapter is on *translation services*. We will explore what is involved in translating a written document, website, or e-learning course, and describe our standard translation process, as well as review some of our Best Practices.

THE TRANSLATION PROCESS: WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Language is a subjective and dynamic art. There are endless ideas and opinions of how something should be phrased or conveyed, depending on the intended audience, subject matter, and the format in which the translated material will be used. Professional translators are skilled writers, first and foremost. They are trained at producing text to be read and utilized in their native language. The translator takes cues from the source text so that the translated version closely mimics the original with the appropriate style and terminology usage. So, while one translation may not be considered "correct" by another linguist, there are

many variables to consider, illustrating where the language "art" comes in to play.

For a translation to read as though it was developed in the native tongue, the linguist has the job of incorporating local flavor and nuances, while using terms as an industry insider would. It is obvious to a native speaker if a translation has been completed by someone without the proper linguistic skills, background or experience. That is why LSPs rely on a large resource pool of qualified, professional translators with diverse language backgrounds and industry specializations, who are able to provide a true and authentic voice that will best resonate with the material and the target audience. Subject matter expertise is essential if one is to render a polished and appropriate foreign language version.

In addition, there are unique concerns related to the translation of e-learning courses because of the different media and technologies used, the variations in language of the 'end-users' (learners), the tone and directness of words or recordings and how they are perceived by learners, and so forth. Thus, we gather additional information from clients related to end-users, technologies used, etc. We'll mention these in the appropriate sections.

The Process

When we first talk to the client, we ask about the targeted learners and the environment in which the course will be used because there are often cultural ramifications of which the client is not aware. In addition, we encourage clients to have a cultural audit conducted (pre-translation) because (a) it can identify possible cultural mistakes that could negatively impact the client or their learners, and (b) it can decrease the cost of translation by about 30%.

The first priority for any LSP is to translate the written material that matches the source material in meaning and style, while taking into account cultural context. This process is accomplished by having the document translated first by a qualified

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