



WHAT IS LOCALIZATION? HOW DOES IT WORK?

Localization (also abbreviated as L10n) is the translation and adaptation of material for foreign-language markets. It involves changing words from one language to another. It also involves analyzing the semantics in the new language to make sure the right thing is said, as well as making sure the product “works” (functionally and linguistically) in the intended culture.

It is important to remember that the target market is different from the market for which the product was originally developed.

The end result of localization is a product that:

- ➔ Is appropriate for the target locale’s business and cultural conventions
- ➔ Appears custom built for the end user’s cultural and linguistic background
- ➔ Does not change the original intended meaning

Localization is best performed by a company that specializes in linguistic services, i.e., a Language Service Provider (LSP).

How Does Localization Happen?

The phases and steps in a typical localization project are:

Preparation

- ➔ Assignment of key team members, including translators
- ➔ Review of project specifications by all team members
- ➔ Collaboration with the client to design a detailed production schedule
- ➔ Definition of the operational ground rules between the client and the LSP
- ➔ Client approval on the project plan
- ➔ Development of a contingency strategy for each identified risk factor

Kick-off Meeting

The LSP schedules a kick-off meeting to include key project stakeholders prior to the start of the project. This is an opportunity to resolve immediate technical and terminology questions. It also

facilitates ongoing collaboration between the LSP and the client.

Glossary and Style Guide Development

The LSP works with the client to develop glossaries and style guides. A glossary is a collection of terminology that helps translators ensure that each time a defined key term appears, in any language, it is used consistently and correctly. A style guide is a set of rules for how a company will present its material textually and visually. It contains company and language-specific guidelines. The main goal of a Style Guide is to provide future translators with the main and most important translating rules.

Project Execution

1. File Preparation

The LSP analyzes the source files to validate word counts, graphics counts, project scope, cost, and amount of time required. Next, it prepares English source files for translation by protecting all non-translatable text. The LSP will use translation memory tools to prepare the files for translation. The team also prepares a localization kit, which contains detailed instructions for the translators.

2. Translation Memory Preparation

The LSP sets up the TM in an online, secure repository. If one doesn’t exist already, a TM is created by doing an alignment of the English file with translation of that English file. The alignment creates segments in language pairs; each TM is two languages only.

3. Translation, Edit, and Quality Control

Translation begins once linguistic guidelines are established and glossaries are finalized and approved. Native speakers familiar with the terminology translate all of the content.

Different native-speakers then edit the translated text to ensure it is accurate and contextually and culturally appropriate. The goal of the editing process is to help achieve consistent content, especially when multiple translators have worked on the same project.

Proofreading by a third set of language professionals verifies the completed job conforms to the client’s instructions. It is a final check in the target language to ensure continuity and consistency of style and presentation.

4. Graphics Localization

When graphics localization is required, the LSP will recreate graphics using the client's original, editable graphics (Visio, Photoshop, CorelDraw, or Illustrator, for example). Where needed, the graphics team will make adjustments to dimensions.

5. Linguistic Quality Inspection (LQI)

Reviewers check a sample of files at an early stage in the localization process. They look for errors in:

- ➔ Accuracy
- ➔ Terminology
- ➔ Language quality
- ➔ Style guide
- ➔ Country standards
- ➔ Formatting
- ➔ Client-specific requirements

Reviewers provide feedback to the original translators who make any necessary adjustments before completing their translations.

6. Build or Desktop Publishing (DTP)

Depending on the deliverable, the LSP will create builds (for software or help files) or DTP (for documents and website).

For a build, an engineer will recreate the deliverable for each language, including compiling resource files, resizing dialog boxes, reintegrating text into graphics, recreating media elements, and integrating all pieces to create the final language deliverable.

The DTP process ensures that the target language follows the layout of the English master document(s) and ensures the font information is correct. The page count may increase, since some languages expand up to 30% over English.

Post Translation

1. File Engineering Quality Assurance

Once the content has been translated and approved, all files are submitted for a technical QA review. During this QA cycle, the LSP checks the files for their integrity, naming conventions, and completeness. It also verifies that elements or attributes that don't need translation have not been altered.

2. Language Validation by Client

Many clients validate their LSP's translations by sending them to in-country employees for review. The LSP's Language Lead can coordinate the review process, communicating directly with the local representatives. This process allows the Language Lead and market representative, who both speak the same language, to establish a working rapport and discuss any linguistic issues that may arise.

3. In-Context Review

For documentation localization, In-Context Review permits a linguist to view the translation in the context of a fully formatted document. Formatting issues often have linguistic implications. Only a linguist completely fluent in a language is capable of spotting and correcting issues caused by automatic text flow and integration caused by many common desktop publishing tools.

4. Testing

Linguistic testing is key to the success of any localization project since it is the first opportunity for a translator or linguistic specialist to review the translated product with all elements in context. This is especially true for website, help, and software projects.

A linguist will review the localized file side-by-side against the original English file. This is a structured process in which the testing team follows a detailed test plan, created by the testing lead. All translated content will be reviewed for:

- ➔ Translation accuracy
- ➔ Correct usage for the context (for instance, the tabbing order needs to be from right to left in right to left languages)
- ➔ Typographical and grammatical errors
- ➔ Truncations, display issues and incorrect formatting (such as a footer no longer fitting in the space provided)
- ➔ Consistency between printed documentation, on-line help, error messages, interface resources, and command-key sequences
- ➔ Language-specific settings and resources, such as regional defaults, spell check, speech engine, etc.

The LSP makes certain identified issues are corrected prior to final delivery of localized materials.

Final QA check

Once the content has been localized, the files undergo a final Quality Assurance check for layout and linguistic accuracy and completeness. This final QA is performed to verify formatting, links, and general functionality. The localized deliverables are checked once more to verify that all content is consistent with the original English source and that no errors were introduced during the production process. Files are checked for their integrity, naming conventions, and completeness.

What you Should Know

- ➔ Localization is a complex process with many steps.
- ➔ Localization should be completed by in-country, bilingual linguists who know intimately the language, customs, and cultural biases of the target culture.
- ➔ Localization involves sound technical knowledge of the deliverables themselves.
- ➔ Localization requires specialized expertise from a trustworthy, skilled partner; as with many services, you get what you pay for.

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge (Nasdaq: LIOX) is the leading provider of translation, localization, and testing services. Organizations in all industries rely on Lionbridge language and testing services to increase international market share, speed adoption of products and content, and ensure the integrity of their global brands. Based in Waltham, Mass., Lionbridge operates across 26 countries, and provides services under the Lionbridge and VeriTest® brands.

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