Writing for Translation

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Topics

- Overview of Translation Process
- Global English
Overview of Translation Process
Definitions

Globalization (g11n) - Activity that brings together cultures and economies of different nations.

- **Internationalization (i18n)** - Corporate strategy of designing products/services to expand to multiple nations.

- **Localization (l10n)** - Adapting products/services to a specific culture/market following a i18n strategy. Can include translation.

- **Translation** - Converting the text related to products/services into languages of native speakers in other countries.
Translation Memory (TM)

- A linguistic database that accumulates translated text (in source and target language pairs) so you can reuse words and phrases consistently
- Guarantees that you never have to translate the same sentence twice
- Ensures that all types of text (e.g., user guides, websites, UI strings) are consistently translated

As you build a TM, subsequent translations become faster, less expensive, and more accurate.
Machine Translation (MT)

- **Rule-based MT** - Old Google Translate. Non-scalable. Accuracy up to 40%. Suitable for internal docs when readers only need the “gist.”

- **Statistical MT (aka Natural Language Processing)** - Complicated probability theory. Syntax-based, translate sentence by sentence.
  - 60-80% accuracy at best.
  - Doesn’t perform well with difficult sentence lengths and word orders.
  - Same word used twice in a sentence can be translated differently depending on sentence structure.
  - Pictograph (Asian) languages are particularly problematic.
  - No TMs available. Those that are adaptive can’t discern garbage from valuable input.

- **Neural (or Adaptive) MT** - Codes language, words, and syntax as math.
  - 80-90% accurate, learns from data (training) to improve decoding.
  - Predictive. Can be trained with industry-specific terminologies.
  - Best ones are not free. SDL requires license for Trados (~$3000 per seat).
  - Still requires LSP to review for readability, so no real savings.
Steps for Translation

1. You provide glossary and terms lists.
2. You provide training on your products.
3. You upload docs into portal or ftp.
4. You provide explanations about images, files, expectations, how you want them to return the files.
5. LSP comes back with questions about terms and concepts. You provide answers.
6. LSP does DTP on images as needed.
7. LSP does final review to correct formatting and assure all changes are incorporated.
8. LSP returns translated files per your parameters.
9. You review and publish.
Best Practices

- Reuse as much content as possible via your TM.
- Don’t change translated content unless it’s incorrect.
- Use a single language service provider (LSP), but keep a backup.
- Ask for translators with domain knowledge.
- Develop a good glossary, terms list, and style guide.
- Provide well-edited content and apply Global English.
- Reduce the number of images.
**Cost of Translation**

Whatever you budget, expect to double it!

- LSP needs to see your content before they can give an estimate
- Plan on $0.30 to $1.00 per word, with romance languages being less expensive than pictograph languages
- Images (DTP) are charged by the hour
- Reduce the cost of translation with good writing practices and building an excellent TM
The Basics

- Write simple sentences: subject - verb - object - modifier.
- Favor active voice. Easier to translate and fewer words.
- Say it once and say it well. Try to avoid writing a single concept multiple ways because doing so increases translation costs and reduces string reuse.
- Avoid humor and colloquialisms.
- Add comments and background info for translators. For example, flag a change in formality or audience.
- Plan to work closely with your translation team, especially at the beginning.
Using Global English
What is Global English?

English text is optimized for a global audience:

- Eliminates ambiguities that slow the translation process
- Eliminates colloquialisms and complicated grammatical constructions that can cause problems for non-native speakers
- Uses explicit sentence structures that allow for better analysis and comprehension
- Eliminates unnecessary inconsistencies
- Leads to documents that are easier, faster to translations
- Saves $$$ because it creates more accurate translations

Global English doesn’t impose severe restrictions on constructions or terminology (as Controlled English does), so it works for all kinds of technical documentation.
Articles (a, an, the)

The article *the* occurs more frequently than any other word in English, yet it is often used incorrectly even by professional writers.

- **the** = definite article
- **a/an** = indefinite articles

- I want to see *a* movie. (Any movie is acceptable.)
- I want to see *the* movie. (I want to see the one we already discussed.)

- This can be helpful when *the* user accesses a report. (Do you really mean just one user?)
- This can be helpful when *a* user accesses a report. (Everyone can access.)
Auxiliary (Weak) Verbs

Avoid using get, have, and make to mean “to cause or force someone to do something” or “to cause something to happen.”

- Customers who download the software will have the software activated during registration.
  
The software is activated after you download and register it.

- You get a “500 - Internal Server Error” if the following conditions are met.
  
The following conditions generate a “500 - Internal Server Error” message.

- Instead you will need to make the append step add a transform.
  
Instead, update the append step to add a transform.
Be very clear about pronouns. Replace “it” with a noun wherever possible.

- If you type text in the field, *it* doesn't change. *(the text or the field?)*
  
  *If you type text in the field, the text doesn't change.*

- Set *it* to true.
  
  *Set the value to true.*
The modifiers *specific, related, dependent, or oriented* are especially difficult to translate because they can modify a single noun or multiple nouns.

- The input engine combines the information with some *data platform related variables* in the output data set.

  *The input engine combines the information with other variables in the data set that are related to the platform.*

- Other options, specific to a particular file format, are documented in the file *format-specific* chapter.

  *Options that are specific to a file format are documented in the chapter for that file format.*
Gerunds (-ing)

Try to avoid adding -ing to verbs in a way that turns them into nouns (gerunds) or adjectives (participles) or adverbs.

- **Buying** on the Internet is easy. (*verb as a noun*)
  
  *You can easily buy products on the Internet.*

- Product X has a *reporting* tool. (*verb as an adjective*)
  
  *Product X has a tool that creates reports.*

- The program shut down *saving* the report. (*verb as an adverb*)
  
  *The program shut down and saved the report.*

https://www.geist.com/writers/writers-toolbox/gerunds-and-participles-avoid-ing-words/
Hidden Subjects (There, It, Here)

If possible, avoid hiding subjects with expletives (unnecessary words, like *there*, *it*, and *here*). Start with the subject.

- There are some row limits in ServiceNow.
  *ServiceNow has several row limits.*
- There is an action item for you.
  *You have an action item.*
- It is a limitation of the program.
  *The program is limited by the lack of destination file.*
- Here is an explanation of how Product X works.
  *Product X works as follows.*
Interrogative words

Be aware that interrogative words (*what*, *how*, *where*) can cause confusion in sentences that aren’t questions.

- In addition, provide the relationship of which geographic legal entities that provide what services to what legal geographic legal entities, and what transfer pricing mechanism is used in each case.

  *In addition, provide the names of each geographic legal entity and the relationships between them, the services they provide, and the transfer pricing mechanism used in each case.*

- Explain why you are getting the error and how to work around it.

  *Explain the reason for the error and the workaround.*
Interruptions

Avoid interrupting sentences with code snippets, adverbs (however, therefore, otherwise, etc.), or phrases (if necessary or if required). Move to the beginning or end.

- Use a WHERE statement to include the rows in a plot. The following plot, for example, displays the rows that exceed 15.

  Use a WHERE statement to include the rows in a plot. For example, the following plot displays the rows that exceed 15.

- The table below lists the data sets and data elements, if required, for Product X.

  The table below lists the required data sets and data elements for Product X.
Invisible Plurals

Invisible plurals are two-noun phrases (noun + noun) where the first noun is unclear about whether it’s meant to be singular or plural.

- **program update** - an update of one program or a general procedure for multiple programs?
- **file retrieval** - retrieving a single file or multiple files?
Use complete sentences to introduce lists.

- Navigate to the source table and view:
  - The name of the table that contains the matching Map Columns step
  - The last time the table was changed

- Navigate to the source table to view *the following information*:
  - The name of the table that contains the matching Map Columns step
  - The last time the table was changed
Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is separated from the word it describes, or the word it describes is not present at all.

- *Having set permissions* for certain roles, *the report* is duplicated for those roles.
  - *The report is duplicated based on the permissions and roles you set.*

Modifiers like *just* and *only* can dramatically change the meaning of a sentence based on their position in a sentence.

- Developers *only* need to apply for one token
- Developers need to apply for *only* one token.
- Developers need to *only* apply for one token.
Noun Stacks

Avoid using long strings of modifiers and nouns.

What does this sentence mean?

- The *default column pointer location* is column 1.
  1. The location of the default column pointer is column 1. [Wrong]
  2. The pointer location of the default column is column 1. [Wrong]
  3. The default location of the column pointer is column 1. [Correct]
Exercises for Noun Stacks

- data bound control table row action links
  *data-bound control-table row-action links*

- failed password security question answer attempts limit
  *limit for security-question attempts*

- reduced minimum OS partition space available requirement
  - *reduction in the requirement for the minimum space that is available on an OS partition*
  - *reduced OS-partition free-space requirement*
  - *reduced requirement for free space on an OS partition*

Strategies for disambiguating noun stacks:
[https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style_probs/noun_stacks.html](https://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style_probs/noun_stacks.html)
Phrasal Verbs

Phrases that contain a verb + one or more modifiers (usually an adverb or preposition) can have multiple meanings. By themselves, the verbs often have altogether different meanings.

- ran into - crashed or met?
- look up - search or look to the sky?
- make up - invent a lie or comment on the way something is constructed?
- find out - look for or determine?
- take down - write a note or deconstruct?
- go ahead - walk in front or proceed with an action?
Redundancies

Remove one side of “and” pairs, if possible:
- straightforward and to-the-point
- design and layout
- summarize and understand
- implement and maintain
- user and role management
- optional and needed in specific situations

Remove redundancies:
- exact same thing as
- close proximity to
- software programs
- newly created
- sum total
- mix together

https://grammarist.com/redundancies/
Symbols

- Ampersand (&) - Use *and* instead.
- Slash, such as *and/or* - Rewrite to indicate the exact meaning.
  - *You can choose the green one, the blue one, or both.*
- Plural(s) - Rewrite to indicate the plural. If it’s important to indicate both singular and plural, use *one or more*.
  - Add the necessary program(s).
    - *Add one or more programs.*
Use present tense instead of future tense. Avoid using *will* and *will be* whenever possible.

- The server *will* send an acknowledgment.
  
  *The server sends an acknowledgment.*

- If selected, Auto Calculate *will be* active when users log in to a project.
  
  *When selected, Auto Calculate is active when users log in to a project.*

Also avoid “temporal” language (such as *introducing* and *now*) whenever possible.
Usage and Capitalization

- Inconsistent word usage and capitalization can cause translators to think that you’re referring to different concepts that require different translations.

- Follow capitalized terms (object names, models, roles, ATUM IT towers, cost pools) with their generic “type” to help differentiate the capitalized terms from lowercased, generic terms.
  - Hardware cost pool instead of Hardware.
  - Admin role instead of just Admin.

Avoid abbreviations whenever possible. If you must use abbreviations, spell them out the first time.
Use Words as Intended

Use nouns as nouns, verbs as verbs, adjectives and adjectives. Some bad examples:

- To *action* this report, go to...
- The *import* of the data is simple...
- This section explains how to change the *pop-up*...
- Feature X will *obsolete* all other functionality...
- We *partner* with our customers...

- (noun as a verb)
- (verb as a noun)
- (adjective as a noun)
- (adjective as a verb)
- (noun as a verb)
Once setting permissions for certain roles to view a particular report, the report is duplicated for the amount of roles that are allowed to view it in a tree format.

The report is duplicated based on the permissions and roles you set.

If there is more than a year's worth of data, then the prediction is made by applying the shape of last year's spend (% spend by month) to the rest of the current year to predict the remaining period spend as well as total.

If more than one year of data is available, the predicted annual total and remaining spend are calculated by applying the trend of the previous year (percent spend per month) to the remainder of the current year.
Questions?

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