

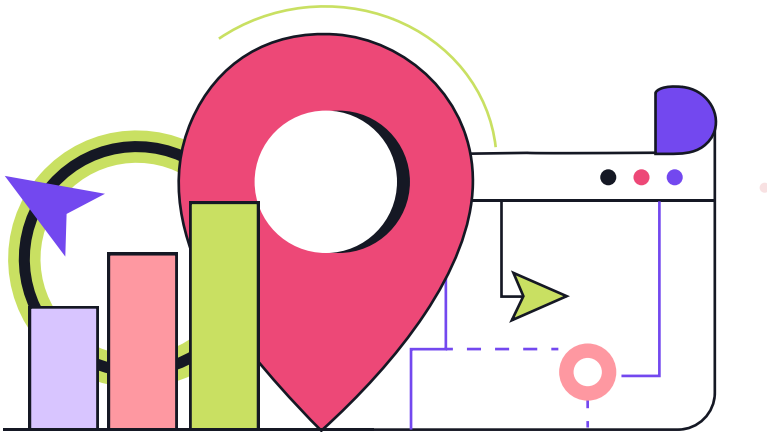
ELEARNING

LOCALIZATION

6

STEPS TOWARD EFFECTIVE MULTILINGUAL ONLINE LEARNING





Expanding into new markets is on the agenda for most businesses seeking growth. But this pursuit comes with the need to effectively train and educate a diverse, global workforce spread across different regions and cultures. This is where eLearning localization comes in to ensure that your training resonates culturally, adheres to local norms, and meets the learning preferences of employees and partners around the world. It's also a way to achieve amazing business outcomes like improved employee retention, higher learning ROI, and reduced time-to-market.

Use this guide to learn how to build a solid localization strategy for your organization from start to finish and discover the top eLearning localization practices in the industry.

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The what and why of eLearning localization

eLearning localization is the process of adapting online learning content to the cultural, regional, and contextual nuances of the target audience. You can think of it as a cultural customization of your courses, trainings, and other educational materials.

Despite what many people believe, **translation and localization are not the same**. Translation only deals with conveying words and their meanings in another language. Localization, on the other hand, covers visuals, symbols, measurement units, and other elements that may impact the cultural understanding and perception of content

Benefits of eLearning localization for businesses

So why localize? Isn't translation enough to make your online courses accessible to learners from foreign backgrounds?

The truth is, translation alone may make content understandable, but it does not ensure that it is culturally appropriate or relevant to all learners. Localized eLearning solves this problem and provides an array of other business perks:



Higher global competency and market penetration



Increased knowledge retention



Stronger company culture



Cost efficiency

- **Higher global competency and market penetration.** Localized eLearning allows businesses to effectively train employees in diverse global markets. This leads to an increase in their competency in local cultures and market dynamics, boosting the business' overall competitive advantage.
- **Increased knowledge retention.** eLearning achieves higher learner engagement and knowledge retention when it is culturally relevant because it resonates with learners' own experiences, values, and perceptions.
- **Stronger company culture.** Localizing eLearning promotes inclusivity and diversity within an organization and demonstrates to employees that their unique backgrounds and perspectives are respected.
- **Cost efficiency.** By providing localized learning programs, employers create scalable training solutions that reduce the need for multiple in-person training sessions in different locations, saving on travel, accommodation, instructor fees, and other costs.

To reap these amazing benefits, you need a well-thought-out localization protocol. Read on to discover how to build it step by step and start localizing your eLearning content for international learners.

1 Know who you localize for

Whether you're localizing for employees, partners, franchisees, or another group of learners, research your target audience:

- Look into their local cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices.
- Understand their preferred learning styles and content formats.
- Investigate local laws and regulations related to education and online content to ensure compliance. This is especially important for certifications and accredited courses.

Expert insight

You can hire **cultural consultants, localization experts, or educational researchers** specialized in your target region to conduct target audience research. If you have limited resources, an alternative strategy is to gather relevant input from **local employees or partners**.

Whatever you choose, it's good to have someone who comes from or at least has directly engaged with the target culture to guide you in the localization process.

Natalie Taylor
Senior eLearning Consultant



2 Strategize, don't improvise

Once you know your audience, you can take tangible steps to outline the localization process. It may seem that all you need to do is translate this and that course for this and that group of learners. However, you need to factor in other things that might need adjustments, like the design and layout of your eLearning content or examples and case studies used. A well-thought-out strategy prevents potentially costly mistakes and ensures a smoother, more effective learning experience.

Each new market or region requires its own localization approach. **Don't try to create a perfect one-size-fits-all strategy to localize your eLearning content.** Think of it as gardening in different climates. You can't simply plant the same seeds everywhere and expect them to thrive. Each region requires understanding its soil, climate, and what plants will grow best there.

Similarly, eLearning needs to be adapted to each audience's cultural, legal, and linguistic environment for it to truly take root and flourish. **Start with one territory and customize your strategy based on the target audience analysis data.** Down the road, you can use this initial experience as a strategy template, refining your approach and making necessary adjustments when expanding to more markets or regions.

To create a flexible yet reliable localization strategy for the chosen market, consider the following:



Content



Timeline



Budget



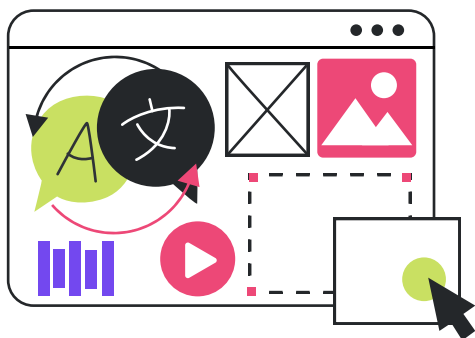
Human resources

- **Content.** Determine what eLearning materials you're going to localize (courses, training programs, video content, etc), the volume of the content, and what language(s) you're translating into.
- **Timeline.** Estimate how long the process will take and break it down into stages with tangible deliverables. For example, over a 3-month period, the localization process may include one month for cultural and legal research, followed by a month of content translation and adaptation, and concluding with a month for technical adjustments and Q&A.
- **Budget.** Think of what resources you need and how much they will cost. These can be translation services, cultural consultation fees, legal compliance review costs, technical adaptation expenses for eLearning platforms, and costs for Q&A and testing, etc.
- **Human resources.** Depending on the project scope, you'll need to assemble a team with various skills such as instructional design, translation, cultural expertise, and project management.

3 Make your eLearning globally adaptable

The best way to make localization quick and simple is to keep it in mind at the eLearning content development stage. Even if you're not planning to localize right now, creating localization-friendly courses can spare you a huge headache down the road if localization becomes necessary.

How to create eLearning for easy localization



- ✓ Use translation-friendly language
- ✓ Optimize course design

1. Use translation-friendly language

- **Use simple, concise sentence structures.** Complex syntax is not only a challenge for translators but can also hinder effective knowledge retention in learners.
- **Avoid slang, idioms, and jargon.** It's rarely possible to translate these language units directly into another language, which can result in the loss of intended meaning. Besides, some idioms and slang expressions are so culture-specific that foreign learners may simply find them irrelevant.

- **Be careful when using humor.** Humor often relies on cultural contexts and language nuances that might not translate well across different cultures. What's funny in one language can be confusing or even offensive in another. It's best to use humor cautiously.
- **Create a glossary for key terms.** A glossary of terms and definitions central to your eLearning courses is a great reference for translators to ensure consistency and accuracy of specialized vocabulary.

2. Optimize course design

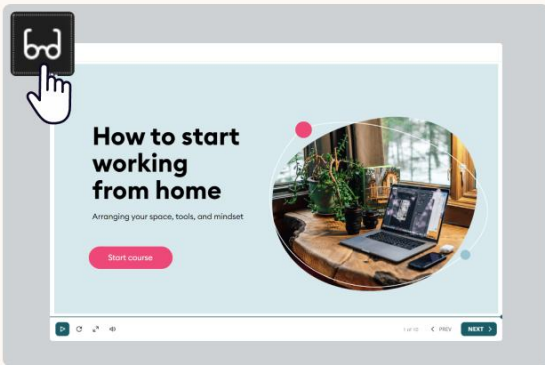
- **Incorporate culturally neutral interactive elements.** Use quizzes, role-play simulations, and interactive scenarios that do not rely on specific cultural knowledge. This way, all learners, regardless of their background, can engage fully with the material.
- **Avoid images with embedded text.** Text within images requires extra effort to extract and translate, which can lead to inconsistencies and higher costs. Use captions instead.
- **Use inclusive design principles in your courses.** Incorporate features like text-to-speech functionality, closed captions for videos, and keyboard navigation options to ensure learners with hearing, vision, or mobility impairments can effectively engage with the material.
- **Work with flexible templates.** Translation of content often results in text expansion – For instance, what fits in three lines in one language might take up five lines in another. To mitigate this, use responsive design templates that adjust automatically to varying content lengths.

Author localization-ready courses like a pro – with iSpring Suite

The right authoring tool can make the process of creating globally adaptable courses a breeze. iSpring Suite is a PPT-based tool that allows you to build courses with seamless localization in mind.

Try iSpring Suite for free

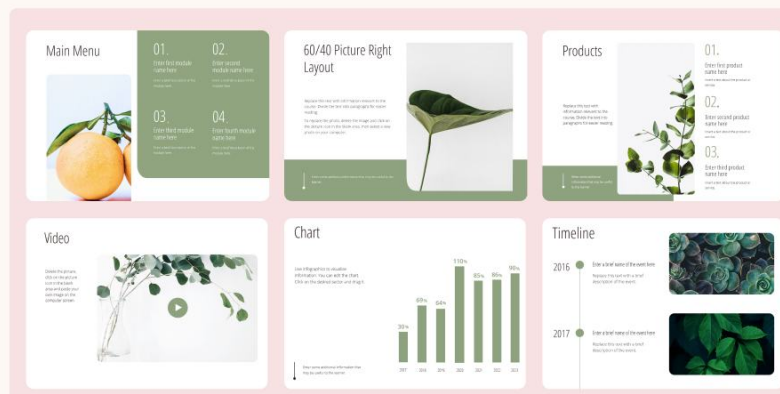
Reflect your learner audience and make content more relatable: **create and edit custom characters or choose from 380+ ready-made characters and locations.** Select your preferred appearance and clothing for your characters and instantly add them to course slides.



Enable the accessibility mode for your courses in just a couple of clicks. eLearning content created with iSpring Suite is fully compliant with WCAG and Section 508.

Create and localize courses even faster. **Choose from 2,300+ course templates, enrich your slides with backgrounds, icons, and unique UI controls** – all available in an extensive iSpring Suite Content Library.

[Explore Content Library](#) →



4 Translate from the ground up

There are three main approaches you can take to translate your eLearning content.

✓ Translate internally

✓ Hire freelance translators

✓ Hire a translation agency

No matter which way you choose, remember that translation is not just about working with plain text. On top of textual eLearning materials like information on your course slides, make sure your contractor (or your internal team) translates other course assets, including:

- **Images with embedded text.** If you cannot avoid using this type of media, make sure the text in images is translated separately and embedded into the image by a designer.
- **Multimedia course elements.** Chances are, you enrich your eLearning courses with video and audio materials and interactive components. Localize these as well, including subtitles or dubbing for videos, translated audio tracks, and culturally appropriate adaptations of interactive quizzes.
- **Handouts.** Handouts with quick references to key concepts, summaries, diagrams, and exercises, helping trainees review and apply what they've learned. Localize these assets to ensure all trainees can engage with the material regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.



Expert insight

Translating extra eLearning assets inevitably adds to your overall localization costs. So, if you're localizing on a budget, you might consider **prioritizing core course content** and interactive elements that directly impact learning outcomes while being more selective with supplementary materials like detailed graphics or optional reading.

To decide what to omit, evaluate each asset's role in achieving the course's learning objectives. Focus on localizing those with the highest impact on learner understanding, retention, and engagement.

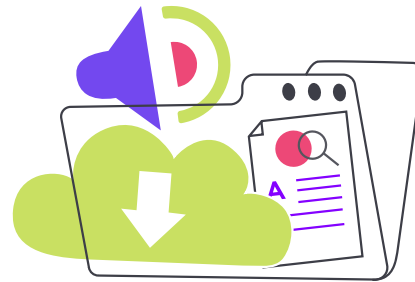
Natalie Taylor
Senior eLearning Consultant



Make localization tech work for you

To streamline the localization process, you can take advantage of three types of tools:

- ✓ Translation management systems (TMS)
- ✓ Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools
- ✓ Text-to-speech (TTS) tools



Translation management systems

A TMS is a type of software that automates translation. It is a centralized, typically cloud-based platform where you can store, translate, and edit your content in various formats as well as manage an entire localization project. A TMS often comes with an integrated machine translation tool like Google Translate to make the localization process even faster.

One of the biggest advantages of a modern TMS is that it allows you to **preserve eLearning course design**. Translated files retain the formatting of the original content, which eliminates the need to adjust layouts, fix fonts, or change page templates. This is possible thanks to the **XLIFF export feature**. XLIFF is a file format that simplifies data transfer between a TMS and other software for swift and convenient translation that doesn't affect course appearance.

TMS tools to consider: Lokalise, Smartling, Redokun.

Expert insight

Very few authoring tools come with a built-in translation tool, but XLIFF solves this problem.

Make sure the authoring tool you use to create eLearning content supports the XLIFF export feature for seamless localization.

With iSpring Suite, for example, the entire eLearning translation process takes three simple steps:



✓ The tool will replace your previous text with the new one automatically

Read a detailed [step-by-step guide on how to translate eLearning content with iSpring Suite](#).

Without the XLIFF export feature, you will have to extract the content for translation and manually embed the translated text back in the authoring tool. This will take extra time and resources, increasing your localization costs.

Anna Poli
Senior Instructional Designer



Computer-assisted translation tools

CAT tools are software designed to help translators work more efficiently and accurately. They have a host of capabilities that come in handy during eLearning localization:

- **Translation memory (TM).** TM allows translators to reuse translations for recurring phrases and sentences by creating a unique database. This feature is particularly useful for translating consistent learning terminology.
- **Machine translation (MT).** MT offers initial translations that human translators can refine and adapt, speeding up the translation process.
- **Glossary.** With glossary management features, translators can maintain and refer to specific terminology consistently throughout an eLearning course.

CAT tools to consider: Smartcat, Trados, XTM Cloud.

Text-to-speech (TTS) tools

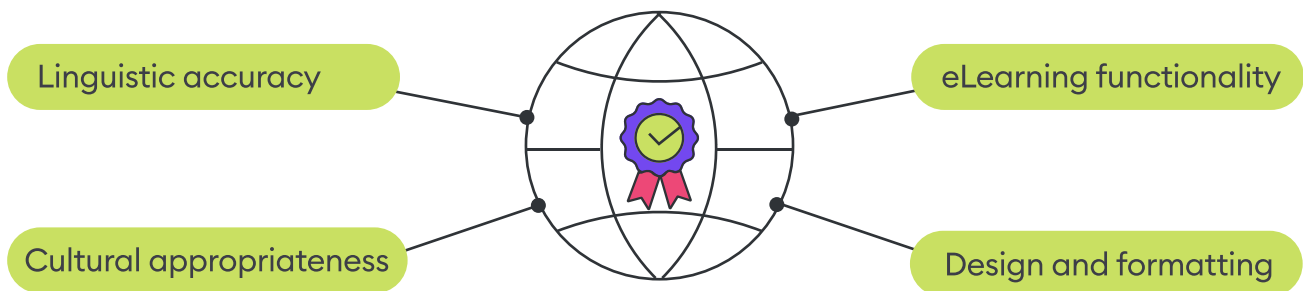
TTS tools convert written text into spoken words using AI-synthesized voices. TTS is a game changer for creating audio content in multiple languages without the need to hire professional voice actors. This helps you significantly reduce localization costs and eLearning content production time. Besides, TTS supports accessibility, making eLearning more inclusive for visually impaired learners or those who prefer auditory learning. More and more authoring tools like iSpring Suite now come with the TTS feature for easily generating voiceovers in various languages.

TTS tools to consider: iSpring Suite, Speechify.

5 Put together quality assurance and testing protocols

Localization quality assurance (LQA) is a must to ensure your localized eLearning content is correct, culturally appropriate, and effective for the target learner audience.

LQA for eLearning content typically includes:



- **Linguistic accuracy.** Editors and proofreaders verify correct grammar, spelling, and usage in the target language (including in voiceover and audio assets).
- **Cultural appropriateness.** Cultural consultants or SMEs make sure the content is suitable and respectful of the local cultural norms and values.
- **eLearning functionality.** Instructional designers or developers see if all course features work correctly in the target language.
- **Design and formatting.** Designers check that text and graphics are properly formatted and displayed, especially after text expansion or contraction.

When planning and conducting LQA, **involve native speakers who are not just experts in the language but also familiar with the cultural context of the target learner audience.** It can be L&D professionals, educational consultants, or local SMEs.

Test, then launch: Delivering your localized eLearning program

Testing is another process that helps you catch any inaccuracies or cultural missteps before you roll out your course to new trainees. Testing usually involves **creating a pilot version of a training program or online course and collecting feedback from a small, representative group of learners.** You can then use their insights to make necessary adjustments before a full-scale delivery.

Don't skip the testing phase – **it usually uncovers issues you might have overlooked** during earlier localization stages, like subtle cultural nuances that might be misunderstood, navigational difficulties within the eLearning course, technical glitches in interactive elements, or translations that don't convey the original meaning.

Pro-tip: If you deliver training via an LMS, test the localized eLearning course right on your learning platform. You'll see if the content integrates smoothly, functions properly across different devices and browsers, and maintains the right formatting and interactive features. The LMS will also enable you to gather learner progress analytics and assess the impact of localized eLearning right from the rollout.



Expert insight

Remember that the platform you use to host and deliver eLearning is as important to the learner experience as the content itself. With that in mind, **choose an LMS that provides a multilingual UI.** This allows learners from various linguistic backgrounds to navigate the platform in their preferred language.

iSpring Learn, a robust and reliable LMS, is not only perfectly compatible with iSpring's XLIFF-compliant authoring tool but also supports versions of the learning portal in 27 languages. This helps organizations cater to the diverse needs of international trainees and foster a more inclusive learning environment.

Anna Poli
Senior Instructional Designer



6

Localize, rinse, repeat: Continuous improvement and updates

The truth is that work is never quite done when it comes to localization, and eLearning is no exception. Your learning content will likely require adjustments and updates, and its localized versions need regular reviews to reflect these changes. Besides, as you maintain the feedback loop with your international trainees, you keep enhancing your eLearning courses to make them more relatable, relevant, and culturally tuned in to learners' backgrounds.

A simple yet solid protocol for continuous eLearning localization includes the following steps:

- **Analyze learner feedback and performance data in the source course and localized courses.** This helps you identify areas for improvement, highlight cultural misalignments, or spot outdated information in your localized courses.
- **Schedule regular content review sessions.** Based on feedback and other insights, establish a regular schedule for reviewing and updating your eLearning content. Once again, both the original course and its localized versions benefit from regular reviews.
- **Localize source content updates in a timely manner.** This is necessary to keep all learners on the same page and avoid knowledge gaps.
- **Communicate updates via announcements or newsletters.** Tell learners what changes have been made and how they enhance their learning experience.

Continue this cycle of feedback, review, update, and release to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of your eLearning courses over time.

eLearning localization checklist

Go over this printer-ready checklist to ensure you've established a reliable eLearning localization protocol:

Planning

- Research target learners' cultural norms, values, and preferred learning styles.
- Look into local laws and regulations related to education and online content.
- Develop a localization strategy considering content, timeline, budget, and required human resources.
- Identify eLearning materials for localization including extra assets like videos, audio, and handouts.
- Develop a glossary for key terms to ensure consistency across translated courses.

Source content optimization

- Use simple language, avoid idioms/slang, and be cautious with humor.
- Employ culturally neutral interactive elements, including quizzes and role-play simulations.
- Use inclusive design principles to cater to learners with special needs.
- Optimize template design to account for possible text expansion.

Content translation

- Ensure translation of all course assets, including multimedia elements and handouts.
- When translating internally, leverage translation management systems (TMS), computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, and text-to-speech (TTS) tools.
- Work with an authoring tool that supports XLIFF export.

Quality assurance

- Conduct linguistic, cultural, and functional checks for localized content, involving local experts and consultants.
- Test the localized eLearning course with a representative group of learners for feedback.

Delivery

- Choose an LMS with a multilingual UI to support diverse learner needs.
- Release the localized eLearning content on the selected LMS and monitor learner engagement and system performance.
- Analyze feedback, schedule regular content reviews, and update localized content accordingly.
- Inform learners about content updates and enhancements.

Got more questions about eLearning localization? Get in touch with our team of eLearning experts – we'll help you out and ensure your training hits the mark, no matter where your learners are in the world.

[Contact the iSpring Solutions team](#)

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