

# TRANSLATING DOCUMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

As experts in organizations present and train to global audiences, they will often need to have materials and presentations translated. Here are tips for translating documents and presentations methods that have worked for others!

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## Translating Documents and Presentations

If presentations must be translated, much expense can be saved if they are designed with translation in mind. This means creating simplified wording as well as simpler graphics for translation later. We provide some tips for creating materials and presentations that will be easily translatable below. You will find that we mention this topic throughout the book. Our purpose here is simply to provide some general guidelines. Information specific to various countries is within the country chapters.

### **Use Caution with**

- Cultural or geographic references.
- Sports analogies that do not apply across cultures. Soccer references will be familiar in many cultures, but baseball in far fewer. (For example, avoid phrases like: “We need to hit it out of the park.”)
- Jargon, slang, and cliches. These are often not translatable. At best they are unclear, and at worst they are confusing. (For example, avoid: “It’s like looking for a needle in a hay stack.” If you have to explain a hay stack, it isn’t going to make your point.)
- Gender, geographical, or historical references.
- Acronyms and abbreviations.
- Homophones (same or similar sound, different meaning such as hear and here).
- References to the human body, animals, sex, alcohol, politics, or religion.

### **Tips for Making It Easier Later**

- Stick to six lines per slide, not full sentences. Chinese uses 50 percent less space, Spanish can take 50 percent more. Less slide reformatting will be required if the slides are designed with the end in mind.
- When writing documentation or content, use short and simple sentences. A more formal tone rather than a casual tone will work for all cultures.
- Use simple formats for slides, handouts, or documentation to make it easier to allow for expansion.
- Special fonts may make it difficult to translate. Also, video and audio clips will add more translation costs.
- Use the same term for things referred to repeatedly. A translating firm will likely create a glossary of unusual/industry terms, particularly if more than one project will be translated.
- Static graphics and pictures really help. They can help solidify and clarify. Use caution to make them appropriate for the audience. Keep graphics in separate files, rather than imbedding them.
- Only translate a final work product. Changes and edits after translation will cost additional time and money.
- Include translators in the project discussions. They can help you give them files in the most efficient manner. Make sure they know your audience.
- Check software and versions. Some Windows versions are more language friendly (particularly Chinese translations). You may spend a lot of money on a translated version and end up projecting boxes. Take printed materials with you, just in case you need them.
- Add time to training. Plan on at least a third more time for interpreting.
- Spanish isn't just Spanish. Are you presenting in Spain or Argentina? The same goes for other languages, including English.
- Target a specific reading level for written material.
- Include an editing review of in-country experts in the design and translation cycle.

Much can be accomplished and many issues can be avoided by up-front planning when developing and translating materials for audiences across the globe.

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Loving to travel, Renie has been to over 30 countries and enjoys getting to know new cultures. Her audiences have included people across the globe from Australia, Europe, China, India, Middle East, Latin America and North America.

She is the co-author of *The Essential Guide to Training Global Audiences*. This is a resource designed to help presenters and trainers when they are facilitating to a new audience for the first time. It has over 60 contributors and covers 30 countries. She is also the author of *10 Steps to Successful Teams* (ASTD Press), *Sales Training Solutions* (Kaplan), *Fortify Your Sales Force: Leading and Training Exceptional Teams* (Pfeiffer), and numerous ebooks. Renie is Adjunct Faculty for Roosevelt University, Chicago. She also consults on a wide variety of sales and learning initiatives and is a facilitator for American Management Association courses. She is a Certified Professional of Learning and Performance (CPLP) and has a Masters in Global Talent Development from DePaul University.

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