



Tips for Desktop Publishing (DTP) of Multilingual Documents

Nowadays, many professional documents which require translation also require that the translation be put into a desktop publishing software for printing or publishing. This process brings its own challenges to the translation project. Luckily, there are ways to mitigate these challenges with improved knowledge about the multilingual desktop publishing process. The tips and tools provided in this document will help you to prepare, design, and deliver your documents in such a way that multilingual desktop publishing is easier, less expensive, and more successful.

Understanding the Process

Multilingual Desktop Publishing consists of 4 main steps:

- 1) **Extraction of English text for delivery to translation team**
(If the original English text is available in a standard translatable format (e.g., Word, RTF, or TXT format), the desktop publisher will not need to extract the text and it will be sent directly to the translation team.)
- 2) **Translation of original English text**
(This is of course done by the translator and proofreader, not by the desktop publisher.)
- 3) **Insertion of translated text into the foreign language version of the document**
(Because a multilingual desktop publisher doesn't necessarily speak all of the languages they work with, many DTP professionals will insert special symbols in the text extraction so that they know exactly where to place the translated text when it comes back from the translator.)
- 4) **Adjusting and formatting to match the original**
(With special attention to columns, alignment, images, flow, fonts, etc.)

Platforms and Softwares



Desktop publishing is currently done on either the Mac or PC platform, using one of the common DTP softwares such as InDesign®, QuarkXPress®, or PageMaker®. Documents that are created on one platform are not necessarily compatible with the other platform, even if they are done in the same software. For this reason, many multilingual desktop publishing professionals have access to both types of computers and a variety of softwares.

Unfortunately, certain language types (including Arabic, Chinese, etc.) may require specific versions of desktop publishing software, so it may be necessary to transfer

your original document to a different platform. Although this would limit your internal ability to modify the document, it is unlikely that this would be needed except in very rare circumstances. In these cases, PDF versions are commonly used for delivery of the final document and printing companies are able to handle both Mac and PC documents.

Some desktop publishing softwares are indeed compatible with both platforms, but other issues can arise, especially with images and fonts.

Interesting Note!

It is rare that translators use a Mac for translation because most of the translation tools are created and marketed exclusively for the PC platform.

Fonts

Macs and PCs use different fonts. If a change in platforms is necessary, there may be slight changes to the font or font family used.

Even on a single platform, there is no guarantee that the desktop publisher will have the same font that you used in your design process (specifically in cases where you are using a very unique or creative font). In those cases, you will be asked to send the font along with the document (as well as any images that need to be included).

In addition, some fonts do not have the full breadth of international characters required for multilingual desktop publishing. Although the font may be very attractive in the English version of the document, it happens that the font must be changed to allow for accented characters and symbols. In those cases, the foreign language versions will look slightly different from the original English. Desktop publishers, however, do their best to find a similar looking font when possible, to minimize any change in the appearance of your document.

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Document Setup

Many problems can be avoided if the graphic designer who creates the original English layout keeps in mind that the document may be later translated into other languages. Sometimes, an attractive and very professional design in English can be a nightmare when the multilingual desktop publisher has to insert the translation into the final files.

Therefore, here are some tips on how to prepare your English document to make the translation and desktop publishing process run as smoothly as possible:

Prepare for Text Expansion:

Expect to 30% expansion for many languages, including Spanish, French, German, etc. Languages as Japanese and Russian may require close to 50 % expansion. You might expect font size, character spacing, and line spacing to reduce slightly after translation to fit the translated text in the files provided. In general, if the designer is able to leaving enough white space for expansion, the foreign language document will not look overcrowded and will easily mirror the original. Furthermore, DTP designers will be able to leave graphics in place and keep the same pagination for the English and the translation.

When you consider that a document might need to be reformatted or repaginated due to text expansion, for not just one language but for five or twenty languages, the enormity of the task becomes clear.

Consider Hyphens and Column Width:

Allow only minimal hyphenation when setting your preferences, and eliminate narrow columns that might force awkward line breaks when translated into other languages. This is particularly true with German and Slavic languages; many words in these languages are quite long and narrow columns will force oddly justified or hyphenated words.

Limit Fonts:

As mentioned earlier, sometimes your fonts may need to be replaced with language compatible fonts during translation. Some of the fancy font families do not have even the simplest French or Spanish accented characters, let alone the more complex East European accented characters.

Arial
Times
Myriad Pro
Caflisch
决策

To avoid these difficulties, choose simple or standard fonts and keep the font effects (bold, italics, underlining, color, and shading) to a minimum. Italics and underlining may distort Asian characters.

Choose Icons and Images Carefully:

While it may be true that “a picture is worth a thousand words”, not all icons and pictures are understood in the same way by readers from different countries, cultures, and languages. Be careful to choose icons and images that are easily understood, because ambiguous icons can actually be more difficult to “translate” than a simple word or phrase. If you are not using industry standard icons, or if you have doubts, check with a translator or desktop publisher to see if the icon or image can be used effectively.



TIP! Limit the use off images that have embedded text.

It can be very difficult to replace the text inside an image for a translated document. If you must use text in images, keep the original Photoshop® or Illustrator® EPS document.

Send the Final Version Only:

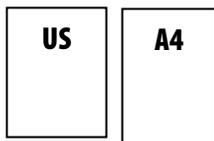
Desktop publishing professionals ask that the document submitted for translation be the finalized version, in order to ensure continuity and quality in the translation. Making changes to the source document can increase the cost of the translation or DTP (or both) as the text must be re-extracted and re-delivered for translation. In addition, changes made in the middle of the process introduce the slight risk for inconsistency in the final product, primarily because of the chance for error when a single change to the English document becomes 10 changes in the translation.

Provide a PDF:

Providing a PDF of the final English version will serve as reference material for the translators and desktop publishers. For example, translators can benefit from seeing how a document is organized and where the titles of sections appear, whereas desktop publishers can benefit from having immediate access to the original layout while adjusting for the new translated text.

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Don't Forget "Standard" Document Sizes:



The 8½ x 11 page size is standard in the US, but A4 is common in places such as Europe and India. If you will be sending documents to other countries for printing and distribution, adjust the layout to accommodate these differing page sizes before delivering for translation. You may also ask the multilingual desktop publisher to make this adjustment, but this can lead to additional difficulties if text begins to flow incorrectly.

Deliver All the Pieces:

When you have the final document ready for the translation process, you will need to supply all the pieces that make up the original, i.e. logos, pictures, graphics, fonts, etc. Only then can the desktop publishers accurately replicate the original document.



TIP! Use compression software to transfer files, fonts, and images.

Without the use of compression software such as WinZip® or StuffIt®, files that go between a PC and a Mac will usually become corrupted.

TIP! Save time and money by organizing a multilingual project beforehand.

Like other professionals, desktop publishers charge for their time, including the time it takes to decipher and organize the information provided for a project. There can be significant savings in having everything organized before delivering the originals for translation and layout. Depending on the scope of project, the charges may be per hour or per page.

The Review Process

Once the multilingual desktop publishing process has begun, there are key points at which you, as the client, will need to be involved before delivery of the final document.



Reviewing the Translation:

All reviews, changes, and modifications made to the translation must be completed before the layout process has begun. Changes to the original English file made *after* the layout has begun will have a cascading effect on time, effort, and cost. Make sure your internal reviewers (if you have them) are aware that the rest of the process cannot continue until the translation has been approved.

Reviewing the [Final] Proof:

Once the desktop publishers have completed the layout, they will provide you with a translated proof in PDF format for your final approval. This review is focused on the look, flow, and aesthetic of the document (e.g., font choices made by the desktop publisher), not the translation.

While suggestions to improve the layout to meet your expectations are appreciated and necessary, this is not the time to change the layout, substitute pictures, or "add a little section." These changes may involve reworking entire pages or sections, which takes time and therefore can impact the budget.

Mark the Proof Appropriately:

Desktop publishers will be provide specific instructions on how to best mark-up a proof using either (a) a handwritten version which is sent/faxed back, or (b) a PDF reader or editor. PDF capabilities allow for almost anyone to make comments appropriately, thereby ensuring the desktop publishers understand your suggested changes.

TIP! All comments provided to the desktop publishers must be in English. While it is likely that they speak another language (or 2 or 3!), they will not necessarily understand all languages.