# In-Country Reviews Ensure Quality Translation

**The key to a quality translation project is to follow well-structured processes for the four phases involved in content translation.**

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Vendor selection, content development, translation and quality-assurance reviews. Many technical communication organizations are familiar with a process for each of the first three phases. Vendor selection involves researching the company's skill set, technical capabilities, translation memory support, desktop publishing capabilities, technical support and cost structure. During content development, the technical communicator prepares content for the translator and follows guidelines to enable its more efficient and effective translation into target languages. When the content is sent for translation, it is prepared, translated, reviewed and formatted using the appropriate design software.

While you may be performing quality assurance reviews on your translations, you may not be performing an in-country review before the content is sent for desktop publishing. These translation reviews are too often overlooked especially when deadlines are looming—even though they can provide valuable feedback and save customers time and money on translation projects.

During an in-country review, a native speaker of the target language who works for you or has a business relationship with the client compares the source content with the translated version. The in-country reviewers' primary role is to ensure that the meaning is conveyed correctly and the terminology is precise.

## Make the Decision
While an in-country review is not required, you can apply some general criteria to help you decide if it's right for your project.

*Determine where your project is in the translation life cycle.* Previous reviews may have provided sufficient feedback that would have updated the translation memory. For a new translation project, or an update to an existing project for which an in-country review was not conducted, the review is always advisable. Note that the more you invest in reviews in the early stages, the less likely you will have to conduct them later.

*Weigh the benefits against project deadlines and costs.* When you need to deliver your project quickly, or when your budget does not allow for an in-country review, even a brief review of portions of the content can be valuable. Because the employee reviews the translation as one task of the project, and because distributors find it to their advantage to review translations for the products they sell, you should generally not expect to pay an in-country reviewer for the work performed. However, you will incur opportunity cost as a result of the review from the time you spend working with your vendor and the reviewer.

*Check your reviewers' availability and language skills.* If you are translating into multiple languages, ensure that you have at least one reviewer for each language. Make sure the reviewer is available to complete the review before the desktop publishing stage of the project.

## Schedule the Review
Once you decide to conduct an in-country review, work closely with your translation provider to determine the optimal time for the review. Having the reviewer evaluate the content after desktop publishing has begun is not recommended, as any changes will incur costly charges, particularly if you maintain your translations in a translation memory database. The best time to schedule the review is after a representative portion of the content has been translated and before desktop publishing begins.

For example, suppose your translation project involves translating five new installation manuals into three languages. If the introductory and safety chapters of each manual are similar and contain content that is representative of all the manuals, it may be advisable for you to conduct an in-country review after these two chapters are translated. That way, the memory can be corrected early on in the translation process, before identical or similar content is translated across all five manuals.

By taking the time to review your content for representative samples or similar content and scheduling the in-country review to coincide with

the initial translation of that content, you can save reviewer time and translation rework costs.

### Define the Approach
Your in-country reviewers can use several methods for commenting on translations.

*Manual markup.* The most basic method for entering reviewer comments is a manual review of printed versions of the source and target language documents. This method is not recommended for two reasons: first, handwriting is hard to read, especially in a foreign language; and second, all changes will have to be implemented post-desktop publishing and would also require the translator to manually input the changes in the translation memory. This method can be risky and inefficient.

*PDF file annotation.* Another frequently used reviewing method is the annotation of PDF files. If you and your reviewers decide to use this approach, your translation vendor should ensure that the PDF files are enabled for commenting and that your reviewer has a version of Acrobat software that enables commenting. The advantage of this approach over manual markup is that distributing the PDF file electronically can save time and communication costs, and is easier to read. However, it has the same pitfalls of the manual markup process as described above.

*Working directly in the bilingual files within the cloud-based translation management system.* The optimal method is to work with the bilingual file output from a cloud-based translation management system. Your in-country reviewers can work directly in the cloud by logging in with a user name and password from the translation agency. Working in the cloud-based system enables your reviewer to make edits directly in the document and post comments to the translator in real time. The reviewer can also look for specific words to be changed in batches.

Another advantage of this method is that any changes the reviewer makes are automatically updated in the translation memory. In addition, the reviewer can see the source language content alongside its translated version.

Although this method may require learning a new technology, this is the best approach to review files in terms of accuracy, cost savings and efficiency.

## Choose the Reviewer
When the customer who requested the translation conducts an in-country review, the reviewer is usually an employee of the customer's company or a distributor for its product or service. Identify those individuals who have the skills and availability to serve in this role early on in the review process. The in-country reviewer should:

- *Be a native speaker of the target language.* Experience shows that native speakers can more accurately understand the nuances of the language and can assess how your audience will receive and interpret your message.

- *Be able to review on schedule, before the desktop publishing phase.* Make sure your reviewer is available during the appropriate time frame, has the time to conduct a thorough review and can meet your specific deadlines.

- *Understand the grammatical structure of the target language.* Your reviewer must be familiar with the grammar of the target language, or you and the translator may spend time responding to comments that are not valid.

- *Know the subject matter of the content being translated.* To provide useful feedback, your reviewer should know the technical terms in the source and target languages. This quality can also yield valuable feedback for establishing standard terminology and translations of those terms, especially within a glossary. It might also be useful to have the in-country reviewer create a glossary with all of the most important terms both defined and translated.

### Conduct the Review
Here are some guidelines that you can ask your reviewer to follow when commenting on the translated content:

1. Compare the source content with the translated version to ensure that the meaning is conveyed correctly.

2. Mark changes using the process agreed to by you and your translation agency.

3. Verify that technical terms are translated correctly.

4. Avoid making content changes.

Keep in mind that you may incur additional costs if you make extensive stylistic changes during the in-country review. Caution reviewers not to modify the original content, remove or add content or ideas or make preferred stylistic changes. Such recommendations should be provided to the author for subsequent updates to the source content. If your reviewers believe that rewording the translation is necessary, they should ensure that the new proposed text does not omit any of the language from the source content.

Ask your reviewers to use discretion when deciding whether a change is really necessary. For example, changing "and" to "as well as" in the target language, while correct, may be unnecessary. Depending on the target language, a word in the source language may also be translated into multiple words. In Russian, for instance, "contact us" may be translated into a word that means, "to call" and another that means "to address" or "to consult," but each variant may be equally as valid.

## By checking the spelling and grammar in their new proposed text, your reviewers can make the process more efficient.

By checking the spelling and grammar in their new proposed text, your reviewers can make the process more efficient. Ask your reviewers to pay close attention to gender if the target language makes that distinction. Changing a noun without revising the article (masculine or feminine) when necessary is an easy mistake to make during an in-country review, and can cause the quality of your project to suffer if your translation vendor does not notice the change.

Following these guidelines for the in-country review phase, will ensure you and your translation vendor that your translation project will be of the highest quality and at the same time, help control your translation costs. **ICD**

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