
10 Tips for a Successful and Cost Effective Audio Localization

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Introduction

While developing your multimedia content, you have probably noticed that audio recording can be an expensive proposition. It has to be done right the *first* time to help contain costs. The same is true with localizing audio; each mistake is multiplied by the number of languages. Here is a series of steps that help you streamline the process, reduce risks, improve overall speed and quality of your audio recording, and reduce the costs of your audio localization process.

1. Make sure you have an accurate as-recorded script

This is especially critical when dealing with video. While a voice-over usually follows the script, last minute edits to videos are common; a line cut or a sequence moved to another location in the timeline may cause the video's audio to deviate from the original script. Few people keep track of those last-minute edits. Therefore it is necessary to check that the transcript for localization matches the actual final video.

2. Format your script according to audio recording specifications

An audio script must strictly adhere to formatting guidelines in order to ensure that the recording proceeds smoothly and efficiently. Formatting scripts properly is not rocket science and not doing it right is a recipe for headaches. Your studio should provide you with an audio script template in order to format the recording script correctly *before* it goes into translation. Ideally the script is in table format and each row in the audio script corresponds to one audio file.

3. Create a character list

When you need several voices, provide a character list that includes the name, age, gender, and any other characteristics. This helps your studio cast the roles correctly, assesses the number of voices necessary in the foreign language, and avoid the mistake of having a female role recorded by male talent, or vice versa.

4. Limit the number of voices needed in a foreign language

You typically want to spend less on the localized recording than on the original product. Since voice talent has high minimum charges, limiting the number of voices is one way to lower costs. For example, a video showing 12 different interviewees can be well-served by two talents, male and female, to do all male and female parts.

5. Avoid audio files containing several different characters

In a perfect project, the process of recording audio is simple. The audio is recorded, the recording then reviewed by a native linguist for quality assurance purposes, then cleaned (the breaths and other noises such as page turns are muted), cut, files are divided as indicated on the script, and finally recording files are renamed. Having one audio file that contains several voice talents creates unnecessary complications. Because voice talents always record separately, audio files have to be split and recombined at the very last stage in the process. This introduces the possibility of error since engineers who perform these tasks are often dealing with languages they do not speak.

6. Prepare pronunciation guidelines

If you read a document out loud, you soon realize that some words can be pronounced in several different ways. This is typical of acronyms. For example should "FIG" be read F-I-G, spelling each letter out or just like the word "fig"? Foreign languages add a layer of complication. One of the most common issues encountered is whether letters in an acronym or an abbreviation should be read in English or in the target language. For instance, in France, "IBM" is said with French letters, while "GE" is said with English letters! Some of the rules for pronunciation come from common usage but some are company specific. Your studio should go over the original scripts and list any terms that could be ambiguous. Translators and reviewers need to answer these questions *before* the recording.

7. Leave space inside your video for language expansion

If you have ever localized any of your media, you have probably realized that English is one of the most compact languages. Written translations of Spanish, Russian, and Japanese—to name a few—can easily increase the content by 30% or more. If space is not left in the video to allow for expanded recording time, it is nearly impossible to fit foreign content into the video without the talent speaking abnormally fast or without cutting out too much of the substance of the original script during the translation phase. Both of these options risk distorting the message of the video. Moreover, on-screen visuals may not sync-up to the foreign audio, which can be confusing for the viewer and diminish the overall quality of the video. This is especially problematic for videos that can only be edited and lengthened at huge costs. The best option is to leave some buffer *inside* your video by leaving several seconds of silence wherever you can throughout the video. This allows for a more complete translation and a more natural reading of the script.

8. Provide samples of English audio

Your studio should ask for this, but make sure you provide them with samples of your original product so they can match the tone and style.

9. For Flash recordings, limit synchronization of on-screen text and voice

If you are producing audio for Flash recordings, try to limit synchronization of animations with audio. Each foreign language has a different timing so the animations need to be resynchronized by native speakers in each language—a significant cost.

10. Choose an audio provider that knows foreign languages and is familiar with audio localization

Working with foreign languages can be difficult, adding a layer of complexity to all steps of the audio recording process. Audio localization requires unique attention to detail and consistency in voice talent casting, script formatting, recording methods, linguistic quality assurance, and audio post production. Leaving your foreign language recording to a studio that records mainly English is the best way to find yourself with Korean audio instead of Chinese, retakes left in the final audio, or a word cut off by an editor who thought the end of a word was a mouth noise. When looking for an audio localization provider, it is important to choose a studio that can offer quality voice talent, directors, and expertise for all of your foreign language needs.

ENLASO's Multilingual Voice-Over Localization Solutions

ENLASO works with highly professional studio production teams and we only hire native voice-over professionals who are experienced in the specific subject matter. We have established proven multilingual voice-over solutions and can effectively assist you with any multilingual voice-over localization project.

Whether you are looking to deliver a corporate message to international audiences or to establish your corporate brand overseas, ENLASO supports your multilingual audio-visual localization requirements in over 100 languages.

For more information or to request a quote for a multilingual voice-over project, please contact us by phone at 303-516-0857 or by e-mail at marketing@enlaso.com.

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