

How to

get the best from multilingual typesetting



How to series / 1FDSFFS

At Geo we're always striving to help you get it right. As part of our how to series we've decided to highlight some of the problems in multilingual DTP which you might want to consider when designing your document. We hope it helps!

1) Leave space

Some languages are just longer than others and the variation can be noticeable... up to 30% longer. You need to make sure there's enough space. You can't always reduce the font size as a way of coping with this... languages like Chinese, where the symbols are very intricate, can be illegible if they are too small.

2) Consider file size

If you are designing something to be downloaded, remember that not everyone in the world has

super fast broadband. Some people are lucky if they have electricity for part of the day. You need to think about how long it might take someone to download your file and consider whether you should strip out unnecessary images etc. in order to reduce file size.

3) Choose your fonts wisely

Some fonts don't support foreign language accents. Some fonts aren't compatible between Mac and Windows. Use Open Type Unicode fonts where possible and talk to us if you need help choosing.

4) Careful with columns

Some languages have very long words (e.g. German) which might take up an entire line or spread over several lines with several hyphens. A native designer wouldn't do this.

5) Cultural issues:

a. Use of colour

Always tricky. Colours have powerful associations, some are considered lucky and some not. White is considered clean and attractive in many Western cultures but is associated with death in China. Red, in Western Europe, is a colour of extreme emotion: we think of red roses and hearts for 'Love' and use words like "to see red" for 'Anger' and

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'Hatred'... but in Eastern Europe red is also heavily associated with communism. In China red is the colour of success (stock market reports show gains in red and losses in green). Green is the colour of money and the environment in the West but in the Middle East it is the colour associated with Islam.

b. Use of pictures

Always take care that pictures are appropriate for the target culture. Many cultures are deeply offended by pictures where people are showing too much flesh (and it doesn't have to be much!). Also be aware that some languages run from right to left and not left to right... if you have a document with a "Before" and "After" image this can cause major embarrassment if it isn't repositioned correctly.

6) Use style sheets

This will greatly speed up the work for processing the foreign languages when translated. Doesn't matter if you are doing this in house or subcontracting to your translation agency – it'll save you time and therefore money.

7) Consider workflow

You'll need to adjust the workflow if you are

typesetting things yourself. Get proofreading done after you have typeset.

8) Admin

Get all the fonts and images together in a file structure that can easily be understood by the person you are sending it to. It'll save time and money.

9) Saving money

If you are changing elements of your design for each language you can still save money at the printers. How? Keep anything that is going



to change on the black plate. If you do this the printer can keep the other three colour plates when you print the new language and you will only have to pay the cost of producing the black plates. If you were to translate a 2 page newsletter in 5 languages and you used this method, you would be paying for only 18 plates (the cost of the 8 original CMYK

plates, plus 2 black plates per translated language) instead of 48 plates. The more pages your design has, the more you save.

10) Check

Some languages (notably Arabic and Urdu) run from right to left and not left to right. You'll need special versions of your normal design software to cater for this.

Some other documents in the How to series:

- How to save money on translation costs
- How to use free translation tools online
- How to work with interpreters
- How to plan a multilingual meeting

See our website for all these guides and more.

Call us if you need help or advice.

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