



Ultimate Guide to Translating your MadCap Flare™ Projects

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Table of Contents

It's a Flare™ thing, we understand.....	3
Terms and definitions you should know	3
Internationalization	3
Localization	3
What Technical Writers Need to Know about Flare™ and Translation.....	4
Translators	4
Outputs	4
Writing	4
DTP	5
Images	5
Tables	5
Reviews	5
Let's Lingo™!	6
Translation Memory	6
Resources.....	7
Your Provider	7
Reading Material	7
Thank you!.....	8

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It's a Flare thing, we understand.



We are crazy about Flare because it streamlines the translation process. We know however that there are a lot of intricacies that go into translating your Flare projects. So here are the answers to everything you ever wanted to know about translation of Flare project files!



Let's clear up some terms first:

Globalization, Internationalization and Localization...do you know the difference?

Globalization is the adaptation of processes, products and content to be used across borders and to function regardless of local differences.

Internationalization is the process of transforming a product or text to remove locale-specific preferences or requirements. More information is below.

Localization is the adaptation of an existing product or text to meet the requirements & expectations of another market, making it appear as though it was created locally.

Internationalization is typically done to software products so that they can be easily localized. It is helpful if this is done to your Flare project during authoring, but if not, your translation vendor should be able to internationalize and prep your Flare files for localization after authoring. Changes are both linguistic and structural. Here are a few examples:

- Changing common nouns in variables & in-line snippets due to gender agreement & part of speech
- Applying all formatting through stylesheets
- Including a header tag of some level in each topic
- Allowing room for text expansion

Localization is done after internationalization in order to prep files for translation. A few examples of steps taken during localization are:

- Changing font styles (i.e. italics) for certain languages
- Adjusting table column widths to better fit the expanded text
- Creating layered versions of flat images that require translation
- Integrating translations into images, adjusting the font size, as well as the location/size of callouts or text boxes.

A few more terms:

Termbases are used for defining critical technical terminology up-front (prior to translation of all the content) in order to improve accuracy and consistency during translation.

Translation Memory (TM) is a database that stores source data for reuse (such as headings, titles, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or elements of a list) with its corresponding translation in language pairs ("translation units"). Each client has his own TMs which are built over time.

What Technical Writers Need to Know about Flare and Translation



Flare and Lingo officially support over 39 languages, including left-to-right (LTR) as well as right-to-left (RTL) languages. You should maintain separate projects for each language. If a global project is used, it can be translated along with the local projects, and the global content can be imported into the local projects just as you do in the source Flare projects.

Translators

Translators do not necessarily need to have Flare, as most translation service providers are able to translate the raw source files. However, some may not be able to filter the files into their translation tools correctly; the ease of doing so varies based on the tool they are using and the service provider's technical abilities. Whether or not you need to select a translation service provider that knows Flare depends on the level of Flare support you need and how comfortable you are working with, troubleshooting, and generating targets in other languages. For more information on language support, visit: http://webhelp.madcapsoftware.com/flare9/Content/Language_Support/About_Language_Support.htm

Outputs

If you would like the ability to output to different targets at will, then it is important to have a translated Flare project as opposed to just translating the output. Another note to consider is that by only translating the output you lose the ability to *easily* update the foreign language versions at a later date.

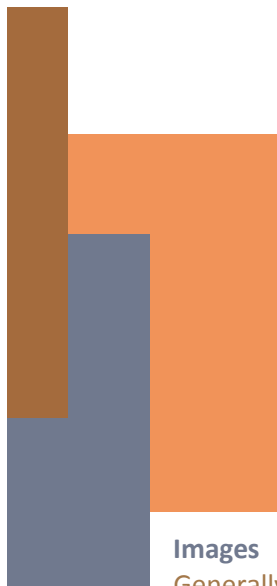


So who generates the final outputs? It depends. If you are not comfortable with or do not have the time to handle multilingual publishing, you may want to work with a translation service provider who understands Flare localization and can handle the entire process for you. On the other hand, if you prefer to manage your Flare projects directly, then you have the option of providing your translation vendor the raw content files only. Remember that this option puts the responsibility on your shoulders to provide ALL content requiring translation and to resolve any compilation issues.

Writing

When writing for translation (internationalizing your content), it is generally best to be concise. However, it is also important to ensure that your content is written clearly. So if more detail is required to ensure that the reader will understand the content (when writing critical instructions for example), then your content should be as long as necessary to relay the information properly.

When discussing the use of snippets you have the choice of creating a snippet for a whole sentence or for a paragraph. Using a snippet for a single word or a small phrase inside of a sentence can be very tricky. It should only be used with proper nouns (like the name of a product) or with the names of UI elements (like the name of a dialog box). These types of phrases do not change when inserted into a sentence. However, common nouns should be avoided in these types of small snippets, as they often need to change to fit the context of the sentence where they are placed.



Desktop Publishing (DTP)

Flare makes DTP manipulation much easier. Unlike most traditional DTP tools, you do not need to spend so much time fitting text or manually fixing paragraph-level formatting. After integration of the translations into Flare, DTP work is typically required at the level of a tidy-up; sometimes more work may be needed for specific languages or configurations in the Flare project. Depending on the project and the targets, there may be language-specific adjustments to make (such as object width or font size/style). Also, on occasion certain corrections such as additional text fitting in tables, rearranging tags or inserting missing tags, and repairing broken links needs to be made to the file.



Images

Generally, it is best to minimize the amount of text you place in images in order to reduce cost and time. When you do place text however, consider using numbered callouts in which the labels are listed in a tabular key outside the image. If that is not possible then be sure that all layered artwork is available and that all text layers can be duplicated.

You should also make sure that there is enough extra space to allow for languages that expand, taking up more room. You can save time and cost using MadCap Capture since the text is immediately accessible for translation via XML resource files and the text boxes can be adjusted easily. If you use Capture, be sure not to delete the .props files for any images needing localization.

Tables

You should use table styles whenever possible (whether that means the stand-alone TableStyles or whether that simply means setting up your own styles in the main stylesheet). Also, try to avoid using fixed-width columns or cells. If you do need to set the widths and it is a recurring table style, try to set the widths in the stylesheet, not locally, and consider using percentages to keep tables looking great in both WebHelp and PDF outputs. If that particular table style/type only appears once, it does not matter if the width is set in the stylesheet or locally.

Reviews

It is a good idea to conduct review before any Flare work actually begins because it is less expensive to implement changes at an earlier stage. One option is to review bilingual text in a table in Word. Another option is to have your translation vendor review the initial Termbase before translation.

For Flare projects, MadCap Feedback server works well as a tool for reviewing WebHelps output from Flare. It gives the reviewer the option to access both source (English) and translated versions of the topics, and to leave comments directly on the pages that need to be updated. Another option for review is to output to PDF, which can be marked-up with comments and text edits. Finally, there are some 3rd-party tools that allow online client review of the text in a bilingual format (with the English right next to the translation), but these can be quite pricey and will likely require some customization to support Flare files.

Let's Lingo!

If you are a Flare user, you may have questions about Lingo. While Flare inherently streamlines the translation process by making all content easily accessible and decreasing DTP time, Lingo helps technical writers manage the translation process.



The Update Project feature in Lingo enables translators to assess which content has changed or been added. Lingo re-leverages all the files with the Translation Memory, regardless of whether it has actually changed or not. It then reports on what has changed based on the segments that did not 100% leverage. So it essentially allows you to do your own leveraging. Lingo, along with other TM tools, does not identify changes in the underlying code or structure of the files; that kind of comparison must be done manually. When a Flare project is imported into Lingo, a translated Flare project can then be exported from Lingo. DTP work is still required to fix issues that the linguist noted, to identify problems in the build and project, to troubleshoot and resolve those problems, and to verify that the outputs are good.

Translation Memory

Lingo generates a statistics log that includes both a segment count and a word count. It will also report how much text repetition exists. If a translation memory is used during analysis, it will also report partial and full matches. When converting between tools, there is typically some match loss regardless of the TM tool used. Remember that every translation memory tool, including Lingo, will always generate a slightly different word count.

Lingo does not interact directly with third-party translation memory tools, but it can import translation memories from third-party tools using the TMX file format and it can export TMX files as well, for import into other tools. Also, Lingo's packaged files for translation can be processed through most XLIFF-compatible translation memory tools.



No Lingo?

If you do not have Lingo, don't worry! You can still get an effective and efficient translation done. Simply:

1. Hand off your complete Flare project to an experienced translation provider, and let them take care of the Flare work.
2. Provide them with all of the raw content files and do the multilingual troubleshooting and publishing work yourself.
3. If the other options are not possible, you can provide your translation provider with the output only for a one-time translation.

Resources



Your Provider

Your number one resource when it comes to translating your Flare files should be your language service provider. You should talk to your project manager or localization engineer to better understand the intricacies and nuances of Flare translation. If you are looking for a vendor, be sure to choose one that is recommended by MadCap, as that is a clear indication that they have specialized knowledge of the software. Chances are they are also a customer of MadCap; therefore, their commitment to understanding the software is much greater than your average translation vendor.



If your translation service provider is not familiar with Flare projects, you will have to take on more multilingual publishing duties yourself, including, all Flare, integration, correction, polishing and publishing work. You will also have to instruct your vendor the best you can with your own Flare knowledge because unfortunately, there is not yet any formal guide to translating Flare projects.

Reading Material

As the writer of critical material, one thing you can do to help yourselves understand Flare translation is to read up on some of the terminology from page 3. In addition, here are some recommended reading materials on TMs and termbases:



- Alcina, A. (2008). *Translation technologies: Scope, tools and resources*. *Target* 20(1): 79–102.
- Bowker, L. (2002). *Computer-aided translation technology: A practical introduction*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Quah, C.K. (2006). *Translation and technology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Somers, H. (Ed) (2003). *Computers and translation: A translator's guide*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Have more questions? Just ask us!

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