Wonder Words

How to localise your app?

First step: Set up a call with your app localisation specialist to discuss your objectives and how to achieve them. The app localisation specialist needs access to the app to enable him/her to have a detailed look at it and understand how it works before the process starts. Based on the details of your specific app, the app specialist will add to/amend the generic plan listed below.

2. Identify the most attractive markets

Analyse the global market to pick the most attractive markets for your app. In Wonder Words' experience, the largest app markets by revenue may not necessarily be the most suitable for your app.

- Look at the current breakdown of your users: The current breakdown of your users will reveal who your app appeals to and who you should be targeting in foreign/parallel markets.
- Consider income levels and affordability of potential users in the target markets: Once you have gathered information on your user base, you need to analyse income levels (GDP per capita) of the target market to determine if your product is within reach of potential customers.
- Gather information on the competition: Information on the experience of competitor apps in the target market will be very helpful for your own app localisation process.
- Information on the broad category may also prove to be helpful – for example, a new foreign market may not have a home decorating app, but other aspects like physical and online store presence of this category may be well developed, indicating that it may be the right time to launch a home decorating app.

3. A full or part localisation?

Decide on whether you want to localise all of your app's contents or start with just a part of the contents. Your budget and timeframe will also help you make this decision. It is quite common for companies to launch just a part of the app to test a new market. The new market may also not be ready for a paid version of the app, and a shortened free version may be more useful and relevant. This free version will also help you build a presence in the new market.

4. Timeframe

The localisation of a small app (less than 2 000 words) can be completed in less than two weeks; however, with more complex apps and apps with a large word count (greater than 10 000 words), the process can realistically take one to two months. As a rule of thumb, translators can translate about 2 500 words per day, and a proofreader can check about 1 500 words per hour. If the translators need to spend a lot of time figuring out the context, the words translated per day decreases. Allow sufficient time for planning and testing to make sure all errors are ironed out, and your app will be ready to go live without any errors which could damage your reputation.

5. Cost €€€

The cost will depend on the language and the complexity of your app and its contents. At Wonder Words, app translation is priced from 0.11 euro per word for a single language – this includes professional proofreading.

6. The translation process
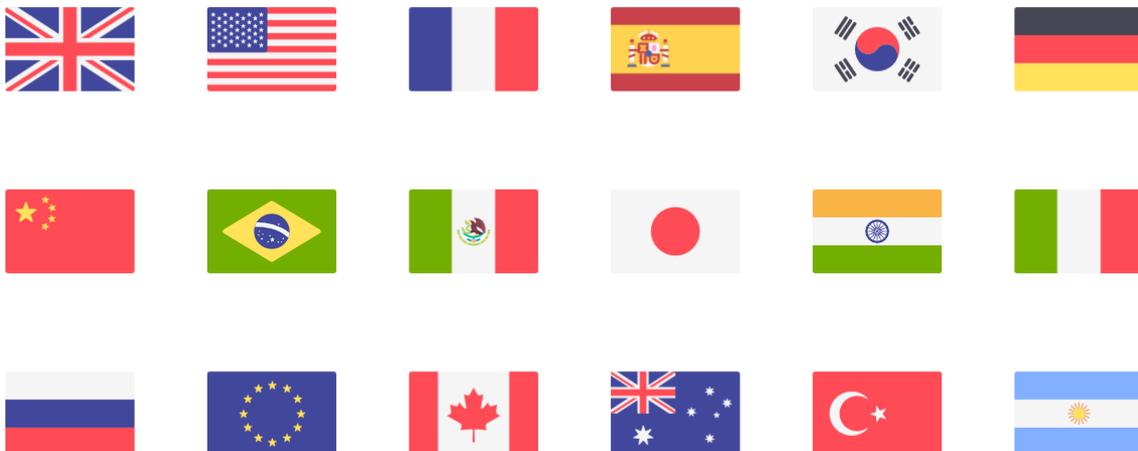
- You can either use a translation management platform or supply the app translation company with content via file (Word, Excel).
  - A translation management platform allows translators to work simultaneously on the project. This is especially useful if more than one translator is required to work on the project at the same time. A translation management platform also makes updating of the app easier.

- In comparison to word processors, most translation management platforms do not support the use of spell and grammar check tools. Proofreading on these platforms is also not as easy as compared to word processors.
- It is important that translators and proofreaders are selected based on their experience – for example, if you are translating a medical app, it is important that language professionals have a suitable background that will enable them to translate the subject-specific terminology. To ensure consistency, Wonder Words prefers to use the same translator and proofreader throughout a project.
- Everybody working on the localisation should have access to the app. It is important that the language professionals are given time to learn to use and understand the app. This makes the localisation process more efficient, because less time will have to be spent correcting the app and amending translations with context errors.
- Context and other reference material: In order for the language professionals to correctly translate the contents, they need to be given as much context-related information as possible.
    - Translation glossary: Before the project commences, it is important to compile a translation glossary with all preferred terminology. As the project progresses, it is necessary to add to this glossary. Keep a note of which names need to be localised and of trademarks that need to remain in their original form.
    - Style guides: Style guides usually refer to the guide of a particular format you would like the language professionals to follow (e.g. Microsoft style guide). Style guides also serve as reference for language, tone, register, target age group, etc.
    - A picture is worth a thousand words: Use screenshots or pictures to help the language professionals get a better understanding of the context.
    - Site maps are helpful to navigate around the app and also to help keep track of the various parts or levels.
- Assign a dedicated person or team to work with the translation project manager. This ensures that the communication is clear and prompt.
- User interface (UI) strings need to be localised for each language. UI strings comprise the functionality (login screens, help and error messages, and menu options). Each app store also has different rules regarding the format of the user interface.
- The various languages have different rules and characteristics. It may be required to adjust the original text to ensure that the translated text conveys the intended meaning. The points below illustrate how the differing rules impact the text.
    - Grammar rules across the languages differ: Functions that automatically create replies/responses from a series of commands will need to be assessed. Ensure the SVO order (subject, verb, and object) is correct for the respective language. The overwhelming majority of the world's languages are either SVO or SOV, with a smaller proportion using the VSO order.
    - Decide whether you want to translate in the noun/verb form: Many words function as both nouns and verbs in English, but this may not apply to other languages. This is best illustrated with an example of a game: In English, the noun form is "the jump", and the verb form is "to jump". In Spanish, the words change totally and the noun form is "salto" (the jump) and the verb form is "saltar" (to jump).

- o Be aware of number, case, and gender: Programs which automatically insert different words like pronouns into a text will work for the English language and its rules, but for the majority of languages, they won't. Many words in other languages strongly depend on the number, case, and gender of a sentence/text and need to be changed/amended accordingly. As an example, translating "his" or "her" into German and inserting into the text would most probably be incorrect, as German has six forms each of "his" and "her", unlike in English, where there is just one form each.
- Space: For some languages, a greater number of words may need to be used, and the translation may be longer than the source text. As an example, English translated into French ends up being about 15% longer. This can result in spacing problems, which is why it needs to be taken into account.
- All measurements and currency references need to be localised.
- Beware of graphics with embedded text, as these would need to be recreated in the target language.

7. The development process (post translation)

- Once the translation process is complete, the app developers can begin populating the new contents.
- Each app store has its own requirements for a translated app version.
- Wonder Words works with the app development team to ensure that the process is as smooth as can be.
- Some development problems are inevitable but are normally spotted in the testing phase.

8. App testing and correction

- Wonder Words ensures that localised apps are tested by native speakers on a smartphone or tablet as per the requirement. Each app tester receives detailed instructions and specific testing criteria for the app test.
- Common problems when localising an app include:
  - Missing words
  - Spelling mistakes
  - Space issues (e.g. part of a word or sentence is cut off)
  - Context errors

Untranslated words

- The location of the error needs to be recorded so it is easier to locate during the correction phase.
- Once the errors are recorded, the corrections are undertaken by the native language professionals.
- Depending on the complexity and size of the app, the testing phase may need to be repeated: It may be necessary to repeat the testing and correction steps a number of times for complex and long apps before we are comfortable that the app is functioning as it was intended. A range of testers may also be needed for certain apps that function at different levels of difficulty (e.g. games).

9. App store listing

- Your app store listing is the first point of contact that a potential user/purchaser has with your app – your app store listing needs to make a good first impression.
- Make sure your translated app store listing is ready before the date on which you plan to go live. Wonder Words can help you translate or update your current listing. Our copywriters can ensure that the essence of your app is captured in this short summary.
- Each app store has its own requirements as to what is allowed in the listing.

Your app has been localised and is now ready to go live!

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