

A guide to multilingual typesetting

Midland Technical Translations (UK) Ltd

What do we mean by multilingual typesetting?

Multilingual typesetting is the process of placing, formatting, and arranging translated text within a pre-existing graphic or design layout. Multilingual typesetting may be required for documents and collateral such as manuals, brochures, leaflets, social media graphics, and large format print.

Generally, linguists do not work directly with graphic design software (i.e. InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop or, increasingly, Canva). If a source document was created using desktop publishing (DTP) or creative software and the translated document is intended for print or digital publication, the services of both a linguist and a graphic designer are usually required. The linguist will translate the text, then the graphic designer will flow the translated text into the original design template.

MTT can bring together a team of professional translators and graphic designers with the right set of skills and experience to create translated, production-ready artwork files that are ready for print or digital publication as necessary.

Alternatively, if you have in-house graphic design capabilities, you may wish to handle the typesetting process yourself. In this case, we strongly recommend a layout check by the translator, to take place post-typesetting, to ensure no errors have been introduced inadvertently.

This guide explains the process of multilingual typesetting for documents created in Adobe InDesign and how you will receive your translated files. See *Things to Consider* for information on other file formats.

The Process

For assessment and quoting purposes, we require an IDML file (a file format that can be exported from InDesign by your graphic design team or marketing agency) and a PDF. A PDF on its own is usually insufficient.

IDML: to analyse the document text in a format that is compatible with CAT tools.

PDF: to review the document layout and assess the typesetting requirements.

For a quote (as opposed to an estimate) this must be the **final, approved text and layout.**

Files are received at MTT, assessed and analysed.



MTT contact a suitable translator and graphic designer with the correct language/technical skill combination to estimate the cost and delivery timescale.

We only use professional, mother-tongue translators and professional, skilled graphic designers.



MTT provide a guaranteed fixed quote for your translation.
You know exactly what to budget, unless you make any changes.



You approve the quote and decide to go ahead!
Full or part-payment may be required in advance, please check the payment terms contained in your quote.

TRANSLATION AND TYPESETTING



Please send us the packaged-up InDesign artwork (the INDD, IDML and all links, images and fonts) via email or a file sharing application.



If any queries arise during translation, or typesetting we make a point of drawing your attention to them and requesting clarification – please respond quickly.



Once the translation, typesetting and linguist layout check are completed, we will return a PDF proof of each language for your review and approval.



Following your approval, we'll provide you with the final InDesign artwork.

TRANSLATION ONLY



Please send us the IDML and PDF. The translators will work from these files. You don't need to provide anything else.



If any queries arise during translation, we make a point of drawing your attention to them and requesting clarification – please respond quickly.



Once the translation is complete, we will return an IDML file to you which contains the translated text. Give this file to your graphic design team who will import the translated text back into InDesign and will adjust the layout.



For a final linguist layout check (optional) please share a PDF proof of the translated, typeset document. Our translators will carefully check to make sure that no layout errors have been inadvertently introduced.

Things to consider:

Files created in other packages:

If your artwork was created in a package other than MS Office or Adobe InDesign, please let us know and we can advise the best way of having it translated and typeset.

Increasingly Canva is being used to create marketing collateral. Unlike MS Office and Adobe, original artwork files cannot be exported and shared. Instead, the Canva accounts of you the client and MTT need to be linked, so that artwork can be shared and collaborated upon in the cloud. There's more information here about how this works: https://www.canva.com/en_gb/help/collaborate-with-anyone/

RTL Writing Systems:

Languages such as Arabic and Hebrew are read from right to left, rather than left to right. This means translating from English into Arabic (for example) will require additional typesetting steps, for instance: the entire document is mirrored from right to left including the front and back covers, all pages and page content along with any text, images and graphic elements.

Text expansion and contraction:

Depending on the source and target languages, the amount of text may expand or contract which can affect layout, design and pagination. Manually adjusting layouts to accommodate text expansion or contraction is a key part of multilingual typesetting. Typically, French and Spanish text can grow by 10-20%.

It is helpful when planning a multilingual design project if designers are briefed to create flexible design structures (i.e. the inclusion of extra white space) that can accommodate text expansion without recourse to reducing typography size.

FAQs

What is an IDML file and why is it important? It is a file format; a packaged version of an InDesign document that stores all the text, styles, and layout information in a clean, structured format. Translators will use the IDML to translate your text within a CAT tool, referring to the PDF for context. On completion, a new IDML that contains the target language (the translation) will be exported, ready for typesetting. The IDML file will preserve the layout, typography, styles and image placement, which saves the graphic designer time and reduces the likelihood of errors.

I only have a PDF. Why isn't that sufficient? We can sometimes convert a PDF to an editable format or can strip the text out of a PDF (into MS Word) and translate it that way. Conversion is not suitable for all files though, formatting is lost and text is typically highly segmented and impossible for a linguist to work with without substantial re-work. If you want the most cost effective solution, and want your translated document to 1) have the identical look and layout of the original PDF or 2) be production ready for printing or digital publication, then we will need the original artwork files.

How do I find out what application my PDF was created in? If you open your PDF in Adobe Acrobat you should be able to see the application it was created in (i.e. InDesign, Photoshop, Word, PowerPoint, Canva, Illustrator etc.) listed under Document Properties > Description.

Why do I need a PDF layout check? It's unlikely that the graphic designer working on your document is fluent in the target language. This makes it more likely that errors could be introduced unwittingly such as sections of text being missing or displaying incorrectly. By getting the translator to check over the typeset translated document, layout errors and missing text can be identified and corrected.

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