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Teaching localization: 6 Practices that make a difference (Part I)

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This is Part I in a two-part blog from Uwe Muegge, Senior Director at Beijing-based CSOFT International and Coordinator of the MA program in Translation and Localization Management at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

The First Three Practices that Make a Difference

For more than ten years, I have been living a double life: Working full-time in leadership roles in the localization industry, and sharing this real-world experience with graduate students in the classroom. Below are the main principles I have developed for the primary courses I have been teaching since 2009, i.e. *Introduction to Computer-Assisted Translation*, *Advanced Computer-Assisted Translation,*and *Terminology Management*.

BRING THE REAL WORLD INTO THE CLASSROOM

I believe that the best way of preparing aspiring language professionals for a career in the localization industry is to expose students to real-world problems and solutions. As the vast majority of participants in my courses seeks in-house employment, I go beyond the translatable text and examine localization in the context of business transactions. These transactions typically involve roles other than that of the translator. In the Translation & Localization Management (TLM) Program, all instructors are working professionals with the majority working as full-time, in-house employees. *Note: I am a Senior Director with CSOFT International, a global localization service provider based in Beijing.*

Figure 1: The author (second from right, standing) as part of the CSOFT Team at Localization World Silicon Valley 2013 (Photo: CSOFT International)

FOCUS ON THE PRODUCT

One of the key differences between traditional translation and localization is the fact that in localization, there is typically a strong link between translatable text and a commercial product. When translating a newspaper article, context is important, but the text itself stands on its own. In a localization project, on the other hand, a given text is typically part of product launch or update. A product launch typically involves multiple texts and text types, e.g. user manual, tutorials, specifications, marketing materials, etc. Teaching product-centric translation means emphasizing the importance of consistency of a translation with other translations of the same launch, previous launches, as well as launches of related products. Needless to say that the only way of addressing

the consistency problem efficiently in the classroom – and in the real world – is through the effective use of translation tools. *Note: All translation exercises in my Computer-Assisted Translation courses involve product-centric texts.*

TAKE THE CLASSROOM INTO THE CLOUD

The cloud has had a dramatic impact on how I teach localization. Using cloud-based SaaS (Software as a Service) applications, my students now have access to the latest translation technology from any device, from anywhere. In other words: Students can use a laptop, tablet or smartphone that runs Windows, MacOS, iOS or Android in class, at home or from any place with an internet connection. And 24/7 access is not limited to software applications. In fact, I have moved all teaching materials to the cloud: Reading materials, assignments, instructor slides, exams (with instant feedback!), as well as student-generated content (groups capture their deliverables in wikis). And since most SaaS tools neither require a heavy up-front investment nor technical support from the educational institution's IT department, these cloud-based solutions can be rolled-out very quickly. *Note: In my courses, students work with cloud-based translation memory, translation management, terminology management, machine translation (rule-based and statistical), post-editing and translation quality assurance systems. Here is a brief video on how I use cloud-based translation tools in my classroom.*
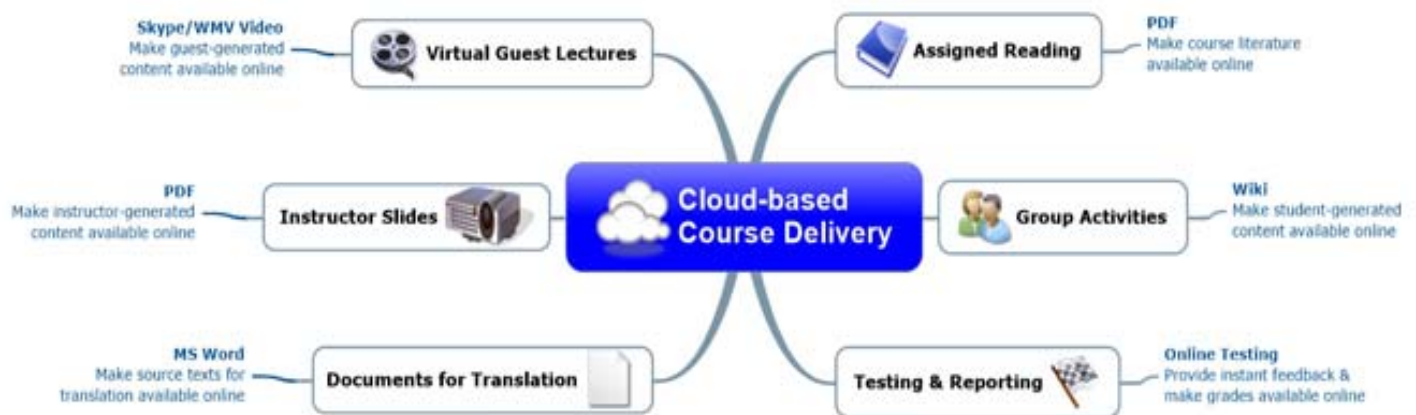

Figure 2: Content I currently deliver via the cloud in my courses

In Part II, Uwe will explore the final three practices that make a difference in localization training!

Uwe Muegge is a senior director at Beijing-based language service provider CSOFT International. He is also the Coordinator of the MA program in Translation and Localization Management at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and has served in national and international language standardization bodies. Uwe Muegge has over fifteen years of professional experience, having worked on both the vendor and buyer side of the localization industry.

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