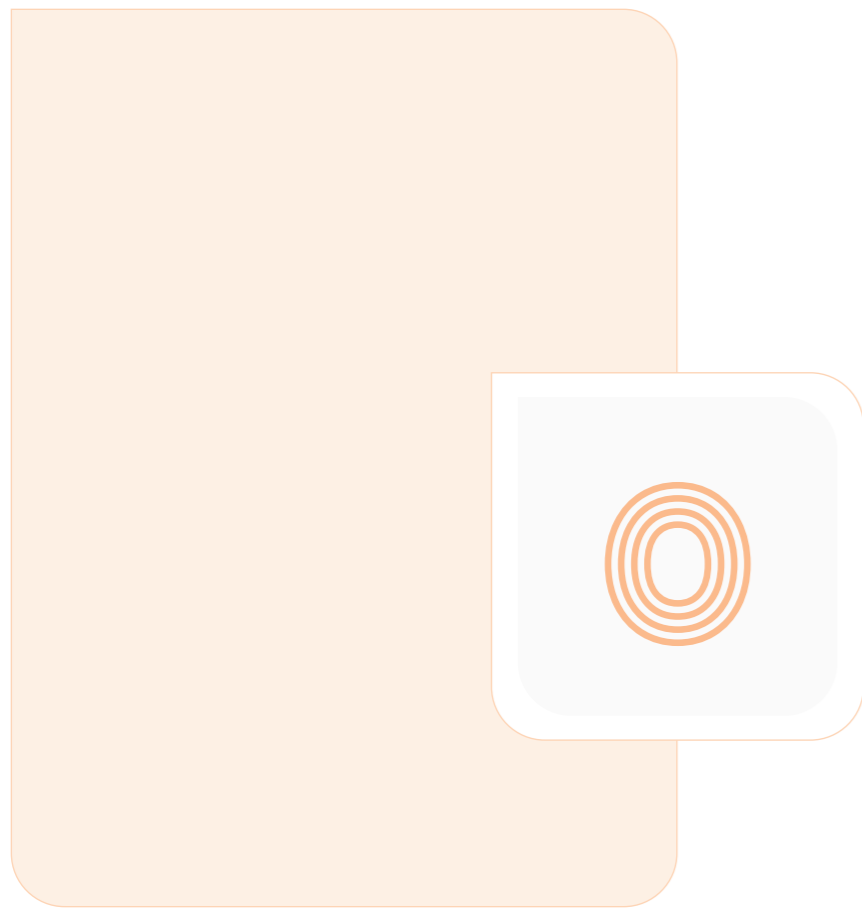




The Language Quality Solution

How Linguistic Quality Assessment
Drives Localization Success

 White paper



Introduction

Businesses with global ambitions know the value of localization, and they invest significant resources in their localization programs. Yet many of these companies lack a rigorous, systematic, and reliable way to evaluate and improve the quality of translations. This gap can lead to costly mistakes, reduce the ROI of localization, and interfere with key strategic goals.

Linguistic quality assessment, or LQA, is an essential solution to this challenge. In the following pages, readers will learn:

- What problems LQA solves for businesses that invest in localization.
- What methods and best practices drive a state-of-the-art assessment process.
- How a third-party solution can maximize the benefits of LQA.

Localization managers, organizational leaders, and other stakeholders can all benefit from understanding how LQA works. By adding this ingredient, businesses can take their localization programs to a new level of success.



Part



Why Invest in Linguistic Quality Assessment?





Why Invest in Linguistic Quality Assessment?

Linguistic quality is the single most important factor in successful localization. No matter how much a company invests in localization, it will struggle to meet its goals if the final product falls short of expectations.

Problems with linguistic quality can have many different impacts that undercut a company's strategic aims. For example:

- Localization bottlenecks and delays > Slower speed to market
- Failure to connect with customers and audiences > Reduced marketing efficiency and effectiveness
- Off-target brand messaging > Lower brand recognition or even brand damage
- Flawed or inconsistent customer experiences > Decreased customer satisfaction and loyalty

To avoid such problems, it is not enough to prevent glaring linguistic errors. Even subtle flaws can affect localization outcomes, especially if translators repeat the same mistakes again and again.



What Causes Problems with Language Quality?

While translation teams normally edit their own work, language quality remains a challenge even for mature localization programs. This is due to multiple structural problems that resist simple solutions.

Limited Knowledge

All translators can encounter gaps in their knowledge—especially when a project requires technical subject-matter expertise or specialized regional and cultural knowledge. In addition, nuances of messaging, voice, and style are often difficult to transfer from one language to another, even for experienced translators.

Personal Bias

No matter how skilled, translators and localization teams can struggle to find and correct flaws in their own work. They may hesitate to admit mistakes, or they may be unaware of their own biases and gaps in their knowledge. Without rigorous feedback they can easily understand and trust, they risk repeating the same mistakes again and again.



What Causes Problems with Language Quality?

(Continued)

Unreliable methods and data

Companies may try to vet their translators' work using informal, subjective assessments of language quality. However, such feedback can be challenging for translators to understand and implement, leading to miscommunication and time-consuming bottlenecks. Meanwhile, localization managers may have difficulty making timely decisions because they lack objective data and insights about linguistic quality.

Machine translation

While machine translation can make translation faster and easier, it also introduces new complications. Even the most sophisticated tools make many errors that require correction, and machine translation algorithms are only as reliable as the data used to train them.



What Causes Problems with Language Quality?

(Continued)

All of these problems lead to errors, even for the most experienced translators and the most advanced machine translation engines. Such errors will not simply go away with increased investments in localization.

To an extent, localization programs can manage quality issues through better planning and by implementing best practices early in the process. This may entail creating content with localization in mind, aiming for higher-quality content in specific languages, and making the source text more suitable for machine translation. Localization programs should also have procedures for classifying different types of content, along with different workflows and subject-matter experts for each type.

Nevertheless, such best practices cannot completely prevent costly errors from emerging during localization. To ensure a high level of quality, localization programs thus need a consistent, systematic process to find and correct errors after the fact, while improving outcomes over time. That is the purpose of linguistic quality assessment, or LQA.



Localization programs need a consistent, systematic process to find and correct errors after the fact, while improving outcomes over time.

What LQA Achieves for Localization Programs

LQA is a standardized process for detecting linguistic issues, classifying their type and severity, and measuring their overall impact on translation quality. Unlike more informal or subjective assessments, LQA provides localization teams and managers with consistent, statistical feedback and a big-picture view of language quality over time. LQA can also yield concrete suggestions that help translators improve their work.

LQA has multiple specific benefits for localization programs and managers:

1. Accuracy and speed
2. Insight into trends
3. Data-based decision making
4. Flexibility and customization



What LQA Achieves for Localization Programs

(Continued)



Accuracy and speed

Through LQA, translators gain quantitative, structured feedback they can easily understand and use, so they can work smarter, faster, and more accurately over time. By providing common standards and terminology, LQA also makes it easier for translators and quality reviewers to collaborate with each other, reducing bottlenecks and speeding up localization. In addition, LQA can provide valuable training data to improve the quality of machine translations.



Insight into trends

Using specialized QA software, managers can use the data from LQA to track overall trends in quality. For example, a dashboard might show how quickly linguistic quality has been trending up or down in the last six months, or what percentage of translations for different types of content have received passing scores. Localization managers and other decision makers thus gain a clear view of their program's performance over time.



What LQA Achieves for Localization Programs

(Continued)



Data-based decision making

LQA provides a single, consistent standard to assess and compare language quality across different types of content and tasks. As a result, managers and leaders can make faster, more accurate decisions about strategy and resource allocation.

Using the data from LQA, managers can identify weak spots in their localization programs and direct resources to fixing them. This is especially crucial if the localization team is processing diverse types of content or running multiple projects at the same time.



Insight into trends

Within a standardized assessment process, metrics and scoring methods can be customized to meet many different goals and requirements. The most up-to-date LQA frameworks can easily be adapted for a wide variety of needs, without sacrificing clarity or mathematical rigor.



What LQA Achieves for Localization Programs

(Continued)

A well-implemented LQA process prevents many errors and boosts the speed, effectiveness, and ROI of localization programs. For businesses, specific outcomes may include:

- Faster speed to market
- More accurate and cost-effective communication
- Stronger brand recognition and equity
- Higher customer satisfaction and loyalty

By improving linguistic quality, LQA can ultimately help companies achieve any of their strategic goals for localization. These may include increased sales, revenue, and growth in foreign markets, among many other possible goals.





Methods and Best Practices for LQA



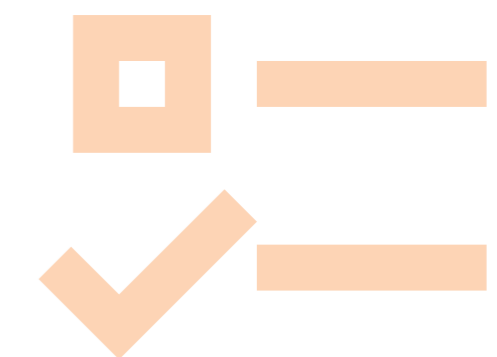


Methods and Best Practices for LQA

During LQA, language quality reviewers search for flaws in translated content, categorize any errors by type and severity, and generate a quantitative score of the translation's quality. The reviewers then share this feedback with the translators and localization management team, while making suggestions to improve linguistic quality.

This process can take place at multiple stages of localization—for example, immediately after translation, after editorial review, or after content has been released. By gathering metrics from each phase and aggregating quality scores, localization managers can understand quality trends at every step in the process and gain a comprehensive view of their program's performance.

Using customized metrics, LQA can be adapted to many different tasks, projects, or client workflows. Nonetheless, the same general procedures apply to any type of content, from marketing and legal materials to software and video games.



Read on to discover how each stage of a state-of-the-art LQA process works, and which best practices can help localization managers ensure success.



Goals and Requirements

Before assessment can begin, the localization program's leadership and the quality review team need to work together to identify essential goals and requirements. This means addressing questions such as:

- What is the business goal of the content?
- Who is the target user or reader?
- How will the content be used, and what effect should it have on its audience?
- What is the intended style and tone?
- Should the translation follow a specific brand voice, or other requirements unique to the business?
- What minimal level of quality is required for the specific task, product, or type of content?
- Should quality trends be tracked over time?

The answers to these questions may vary with the type of content under review, among other factors. For instance, a quality assessment will have different goals and requirements for a video game than it does for legal or technical documentation.





Methodology

In the next stage, the program leadership and quality review team must decide which overall method best suits their goals and requirements. There are two fundamental options:

Holistic

Holistic methods provide an overall score of how well a translation performs on one dimension of quality or another, without extensive analysis. For example, reviewers could rate a text's clarity or its emotional tone on a scale of 1 to 10.

Analytic

Analytic methods help reviewers find specific problems in a translation and assess their cumulative impact on its quality. A mathematical formula is used to calculate a quantitative score of the translation's quality, based on the number, type, and severity of errors.

Holistic scoring is relatively simple to use, so it can be a practical choice when using non-expert reviewers—for example, during user or audience testing. Holistic methods are often used for literary translations, but they can also work well for some types of business-related content, such as marketing materials with complex target audiences.



By contrast, analytic assessments require a higher level of expertise and are usually performed by language quality experts. Analytic methods excel at providing a more detailed, actionable, nuanced view of linguistic quality. As a result, they are the standard for most industries and types of content, especially when dealing with technical subject matter.

These methods are not always mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the same language quality program could use different methods for different tasks, types of content, or languages, depending on each project's goals and requirements.



Language Quality Frameworks

During initial planning, the localization program's leaders and quality review team also need to choose a language quality framework. Such frameworks provide standardized rules for evaluating errors and measuring their impact on language quality.

Multiple different language quality frameworks have emerged to meet the need for consistent LQA metrics and standards:

- I. LISA QA
- II. SAE J2450
- III. DQF
- IV. MQM-DQF



I LISA QA

LISA QA was a pioneering framework developed in the 1990s by the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA). LISA went defunct in 2011, but some translation and localization services continue to use LISA QA as a standard.

III DQF

DQF (Dynamic Quality Framework) was developed by the Translation Automation Society (TAUS) in 2011. DQF provided reviewers with flexible language quality metrics that could be adapted to different goals, types of content, and user requirements.

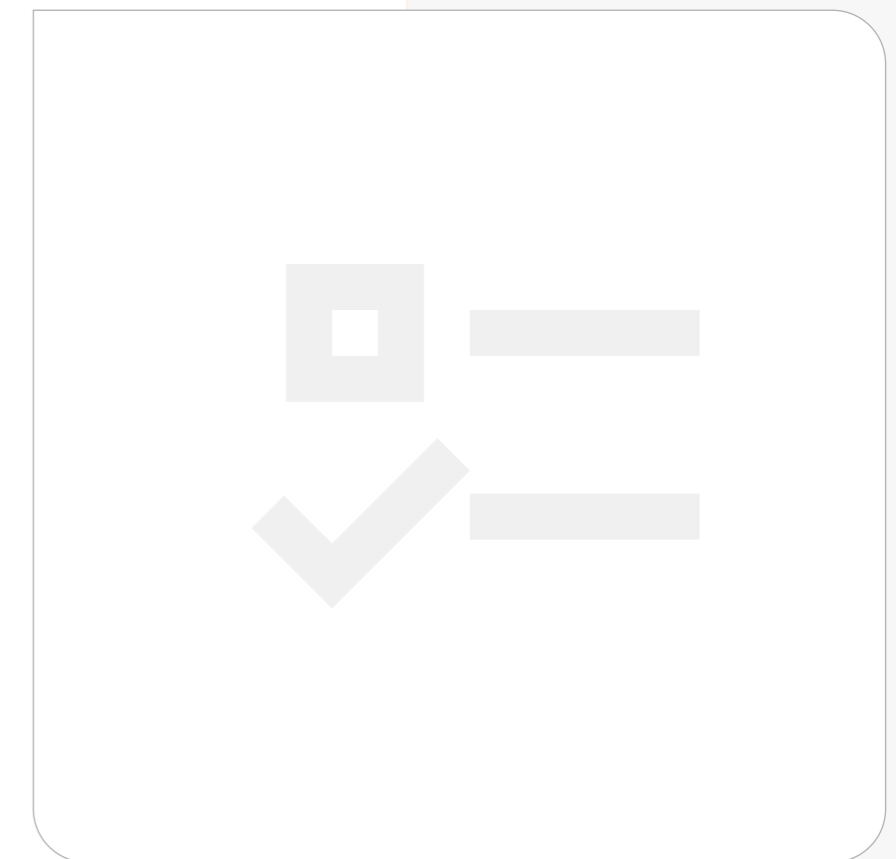
III SAE J2450

SAE J2450 was created by SAE International in the early 2000s to guide localization for the automotive industry. SAE J2450 is still used by car manufacturers as well as some translation service providers.

IV MQM-DQF

MQM-DQF evolved from both TAUS DQF and Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM), a system developed by QTLaunchPad, an EU-funded research initiative. In 2015, both of these merged to create a new, unified language quality assessment framework called MQM-DQF.

Thanks to its flexibility and versatility, **MQM-DQF has become the de facto standard for most of the localization industry. Many companies thus turn to some version of MQM-DQF to guide their quality assessments.**





Error Classification

Using a language quality framework such as MQM-DQF, reviewers can classify translation flaws and quantify their impact by measuring various dimensions of quality. These standardized metrics may require careful configuration and customization to meet program needs.

Within the MQM-DQF framework, three dimensions of quality are relevant to virtually every localization project. Each of these dimensions includes multiple subtypes of error, allowing language quality reviewers to make even more fine-grained assessments.

Accuracy

Accuracy addresses how closely the translation matches the meaning of the source material. A translator could make accuracy errors by adding or omitting meaningful elements, mistranslating words or phrases, or failing to translate some of the content at all.

Fluency

Fluency affects the linguistic structure and correctness of the target language. Fluency errors include issues with grammar, grammatical register, inconsistency, spelling, typography, and unintelligibility.

Terminology

Terminology covers the use of vocabulary specific to the domain or the organization. This could include words commonly used in a particular industry or scientific field, or listed in an internal term base.



Beyond these primary metrics, LQA may also include several optional dimensions of language quality, depending on the project's goals and requirements:

Design

Design refers to the physical presentation of the content. Design issues can range from inconsistent markups or missing graphics to problems with font size, margins, or text alignment.

Verity

Verity is the appropriateness of a translation for its target locale or audience. Verity errors could include unsuitable cultural references or language that conflicts with the country's commercial laws.

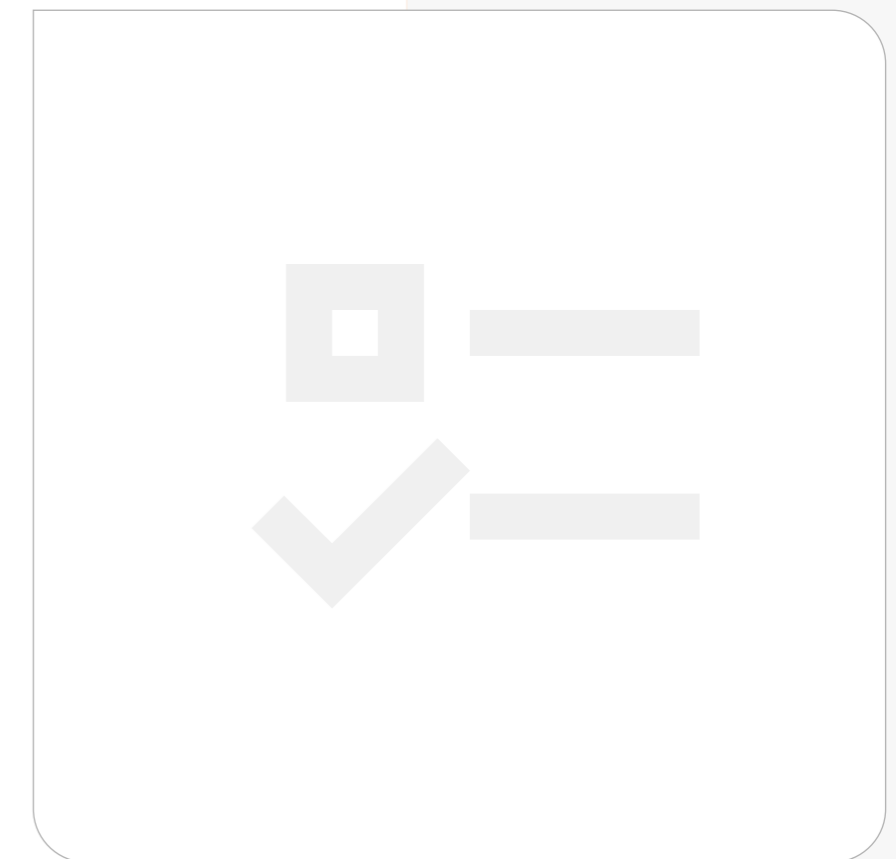
Style

Style covers nuances of linguistic usage beyond basic fluency. For instance, style errors could include inconsistencies with the company's style guide, or the use of slang in a formal document.

Locale Convention

Locale convention looks at how closely content follows formal rules specific to the country or region. Errors in locale convention may include problems with formatting numbers or dates, for example.

Using this error typology, a comprehensive assessment can provide insights into most aspects of language quality. Additional metrics may sometimes be needed to resolve problems with internationalization, compatibility with older metrics, and other issues.





5 Severity

Individual errors can have variable effects on localization quality. Some flaws have only a minor impact, while major mistakes can make the content unfit for use. Some types of error may also matter more than others for a specific project or task. In addition, a localization program may have different quality requirements for different kinds of content.

In the MQM-DQF framework, language quality reviewers typically choose one of four severity levels to quantify the impact of an error:



None

A reviewer may flag some items for further attention by the translator, but not count them as errors. This provides a way to highlight preferential changes, without affecting the content's final quality score.



Minor

A minor issue reduces linguistic quality, but does not make the translation less usable or comprehensible. An extra space between words is one potential example.





Major

A major error makes the language more difficult to use or understand.

A misspelled word, for example, could force readers to work harder to discern the meaning of the text.



Critical

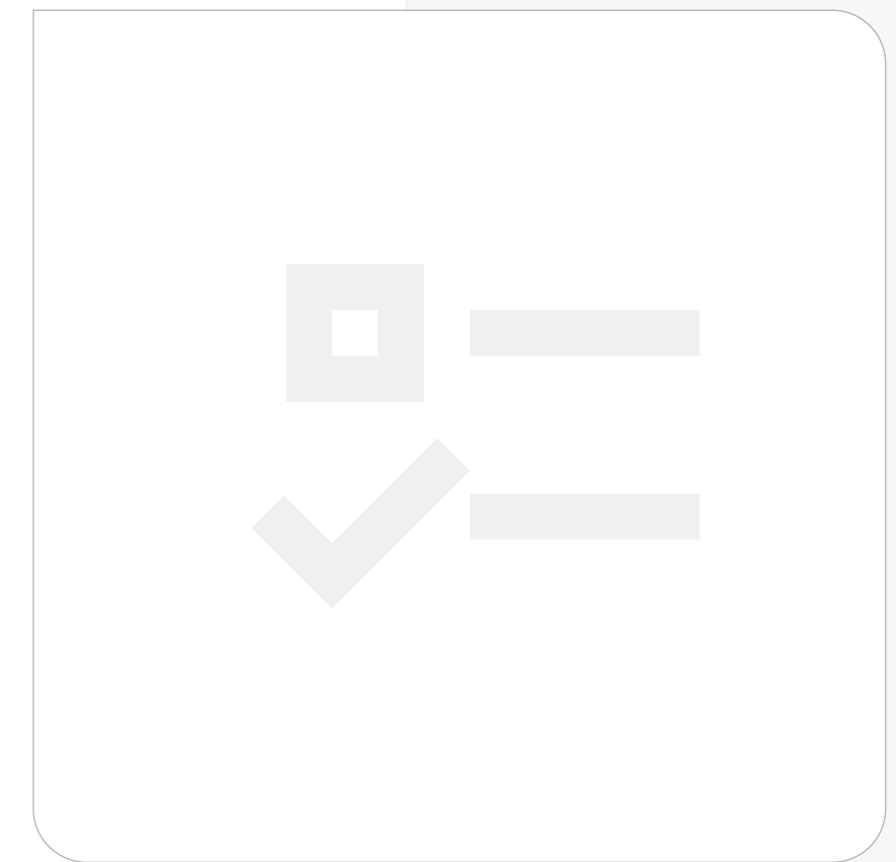
A critical error makes the translation unusable. For instance, a grammatical mistake may change the actual meaning of a sentence, or an incorrect word choice may make the language impossible to understand.

On a scale of 1 to 100, a minor error typically counts for 1 point, a major error for 5 points, and a critical error for 10 points. However, decision-makers can set these thresholds higher or lower if need be. A critical mistake could even receive a weight of 100—so that just one error of this severity level reduces the overall quality score to zero.

Such weights can also be adjusted to favor some dimensions of linguistic quality over others, depending on the type of content or project. For example, a company's localization program may consider correct terminology to be especially important when localizing a technical manual. As a result, errors in terminology could receive a higher severity weighting than errors in the other dimensions.

100

0





Quality Score

To complete their assessment, language quality reviewers calculate the translation's overall quality on a scale of 1 to 100. This score is typically based on a simple mathematical equation:

$$Q = (1 - A/B) \times 100$$

Q = Final quality score
A = The total number of quality issues weighted by type and severity
B = Total word count in the sample

Language quality scores are valuable because they provide a uniform source of data about language quality for localization teams, managers, and other decision makers. This eliminates guesswork and enables faster, more objective decisions about localization tactics and strategy.

Regardless, it is up to the localization program's leadership to decide exactly how to use quality scores, and where to set the threshold for success. Minimal standards may vary depending on the purpose, task, or type of content, even within the same program.

For example, one type of content could pass with a score of 80, while another might fail with any score below 99. Alternatively, the program leaders may opt for some other approach that does not rely on a simple pass-or-fail rating.



It is up to the localization program's leadership to decide exactly how to use quality scores, and where to set the threshold for success.

7

Reporting and Tracking

At the end of assessment, the reviewers send a report on their findings (including quality scores) to the localization team and program leaders. QA software tools can be used to export statistical data and graph the results, so managers and other stakeholders can view how translation quality is trending week by week, month by month, or quarter by quarter.

Through consistent reporting and tracking, localization managers can judge whether content is meeting minimal standards, how well translators are performing at various tasks, and how linguistic quality is evolving over time. Such insights allow them to make timely, informed decisions and improve the overall effectiveness of their program.

Meanwhile, LQA reporting also provides valuable feedback for members of the translation team. The quality of localization should trend upward over time as translators learn what mistakes to avoid. By updating style guides and other reference materials, the translation team can also integrate any lessons learned into its permanent knowledge base.



Best Practices: When in Doubt, Keep It Simple

A state-of-the-art LQA process offers great flexibility, with many possibilities for customization. By adjusting their metrics, localization leaders and managers can tailor their efforts to many different goals, projects, content types, and tasks.

Given these powerful tools, it may be tempting to fine-tune the metrics in search of the perfect solution. Even so, a high level of complexity can cause more trouble than it is worth. As variables are added and reports become more complicated, decision makers may struggle to compare and understand the results.

In many cases, the best approach is thus to use only a few variables and keep the math as simple as possible, especially in the beginning. The assessment process can and should evolve over time as decision-makers receive more feedback and insights. If they start out by erring on the side of simplicity, they can always adjust their approach as time goes on.





The Key to Success: Third-Party Language Quality Management





The Key to Success: Third-Party Language Quality Management

When implemented consistently, LQA can increase the ROI of a company's entire localization program. But how can localization leaders maximize the benefits of LQA and ensure high-quality assessments?

For most businesses, **third-party language quality management (LQM)** offers the optimal solution. Unlike a traditional localization agency, an LQM provider does not offer translation services. Its only role is to perform quality assurance and assist translation teams in improving their work. By outsourcing to a third-party provider of this kind, businesses can make the most of their investment in LQA.



For most businesses, third-party language quality management (LQM) offers the optimal solution.

Why Do Businesses Use Third-Party Language Quality Management?

To minimize the risk of bias, a company's primary localization provider can never have sole responsibility for evaluating the quality of its own work. Instead, a neutral party should perform all assessments and provide impartial feedback.

Who can play this role? In principle, a business could outsource quality assessments to another localization agency, or use its in-house staff to perform quality assessments. Both of these options have significant drawbacks, however.

Localization Agencies

Some localization agencies offer third-party language quality review, among other services. However, a traditional localization agency may have an interest in replacing the company's existing translation provider. As a result, the client can never have total confidence that its language quality team is providing unbiased assessments.

At the same time, the client's translation provider may resist feedback from a rival agency, adding friction to what should be a collaborative relationship.



Internal Staff

A company may have internal personnel with intimate knowledge of the target market and language. Nonetheless, these individuals are unlikely to have the specialized skills required to perform professional quality assessments. They may also lack crucial subject-matter expertise. Above all, they are likely to have other job responsibilities that take priority over language quality review, leading to delays and bottlenecks in localization.

A third-party LQM provider avoids all of these pitfalls, while offering a unique set of advantages to localization programs and managers:

Unbiased Quality Assessments

Unlike a traditional localization agency, a third-party language quality management provider has the sole objective of improving localization quality, not selling primary translation services. That means it can provide truly objective assessments and unbiased recommendations for the client's translation team.

Professional Feedback and Collaboration

A third-party provider never competes with a client's existing translation agency. Instead, it works closely with translators to provide structured, professional feedback and help them excel at their jobs.



Third-Party Insights

A third-party language quality management provider can contribute an outside perspective and help translation teams address their own blind spots. In addition, the right provider can often bring a fresh approach to the client's needs and brand.

Increased Efficiency and Accuracy

Third-party experts in language quality management understand LQA best practices. They use specialized workflows and tools to streamline the process, while providing timely, accurate feedback to keep localization projects on track.

A Focus on Client Needs

As an independent service, a third-party language quality management provider can focus entirely on the client's goals and needs. A capable provider works closely with the client's team to understand the brand and product and deliver a tailored approach.

With the right third-party solution, a company's localization leaders no longer need to wonder if their translation team's work is meeting the required standards. They can have peace of mind, knowing that unbiased experts are focusing on their language quality needs.





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Next Steps for Success





Next Steps for Success

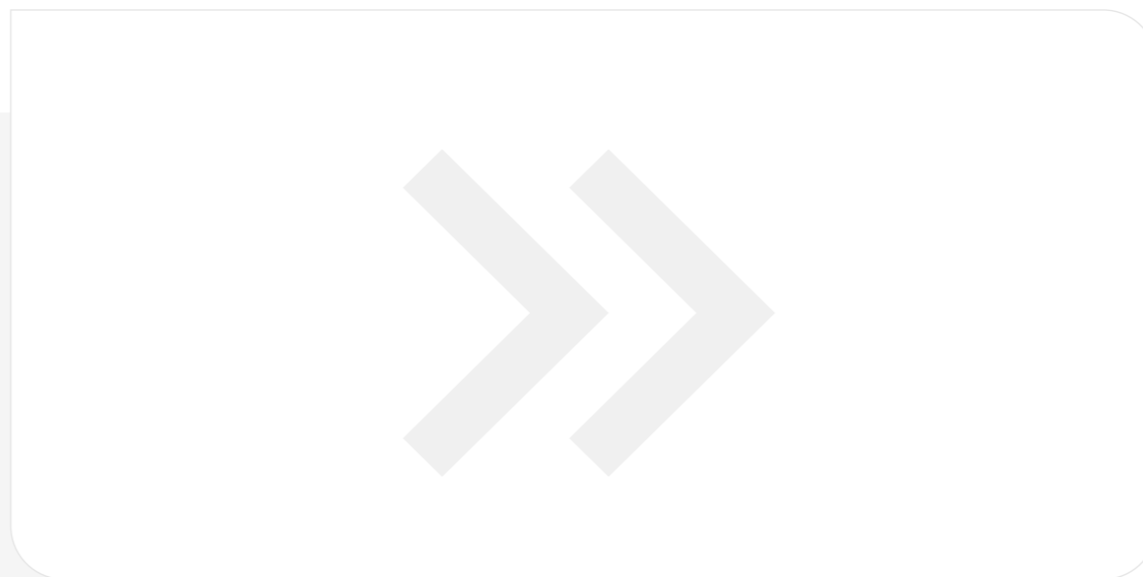
To succeed in LQA, businesses need to understand how the process works, research their options, and identify a third-party assessment service that meets their needs.

Ask the following key questions when evaluating a potential language quality management provider:

- Is the provider genuinely independent and unbiased?
- Does the provider specialize strictly in LQA and language quality management, without a competing interest in selling other localization services?
- Does the provider use up-to-date methods, frameworks, and metrics to assess linguistic quality?
- Does the provider employ specialists with deep knowledge of the target language, region, and subject matter?



- ➔ Does the provider's team have the experience and skills to ensure a smooth-running process and provide professional feedback to translators?
- ➔ Can the provider work with the company's LSP to improve translation quality? Is the provider able to manage the rebuttal phase of the review process?
- ➔ What workflows and tools does the provider use to ensure timely, accurate feedback and insights? Do they integrate easily and effectively with the company's existing workflows and tools?
- ➔ Will the provider's team work closely with the company's internal staff to create the right approach for its goals, product, and brand?



As a pioneer in third-party LQA, Beyont is the prototypical example of an independent language quality management provider.



As an independent third-party provider, Beyont works directly for the client, while also helping LSPs improve their results over time.

Beyont's language quality experts work as an extension of the client's team, approaching every project with a clear understanding of the client's brand and business needs.

Beyont specializes only in third-party language quality management, with a team that has deep roots in the localization industry.

As a result, Beyont's clients can count on unbiased, professional assessments, language quality reviews, and recommendations for improving the quality of translation.

Beyont's team has long experience in working with LSPs and in-house teams to enhance localization outcomes.

Its specialists use standardized processes to provide consistent feedback and help translators improve their own work.

Beyont matches every project with appropriate linguistic, regional, and subject-matter experts, using up-to-date methods and tools.

In this way, clients gain the specialized assistance and timely, accurate results they need.

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Resources

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Language quality management

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