

How to write in English as a non-native speaker?

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cognitas.
Wissen auf den Punkt gebracht



■ What you will hear about





What you will hear about

- Why English-language documentation is provided by non-native speakers
- How to get involved in English writing
- What non-native speakers must be aware of before starting to write in English
- Guiding rules for non-native speakers
- The way we see ourselves as non-native speakers
- Bibliography, literature, references



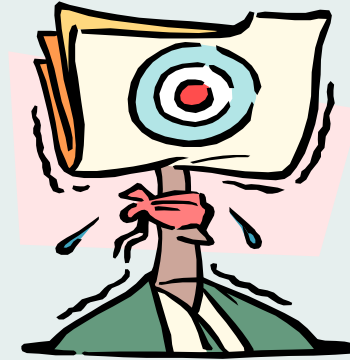
- **Why English-language documentation is provided by non-native speakers**



Why English-language documentation is provided by non-native speakers



Globalized Markets



Costs, Contracts,
Efficiency, Milestones



Input

Translation?



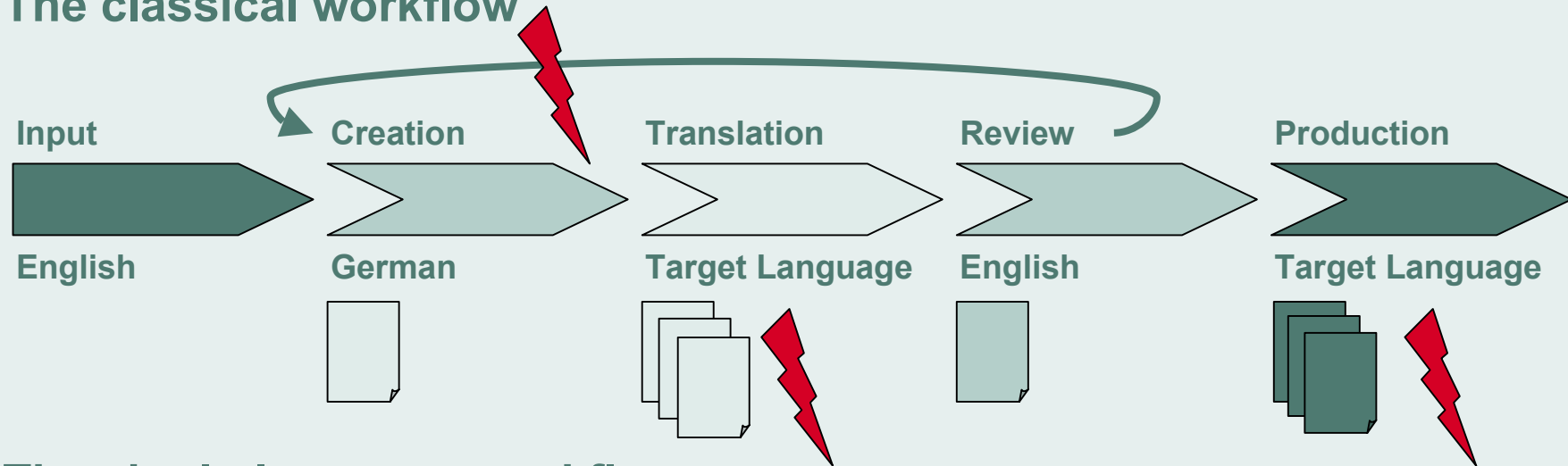
Time-To-Market



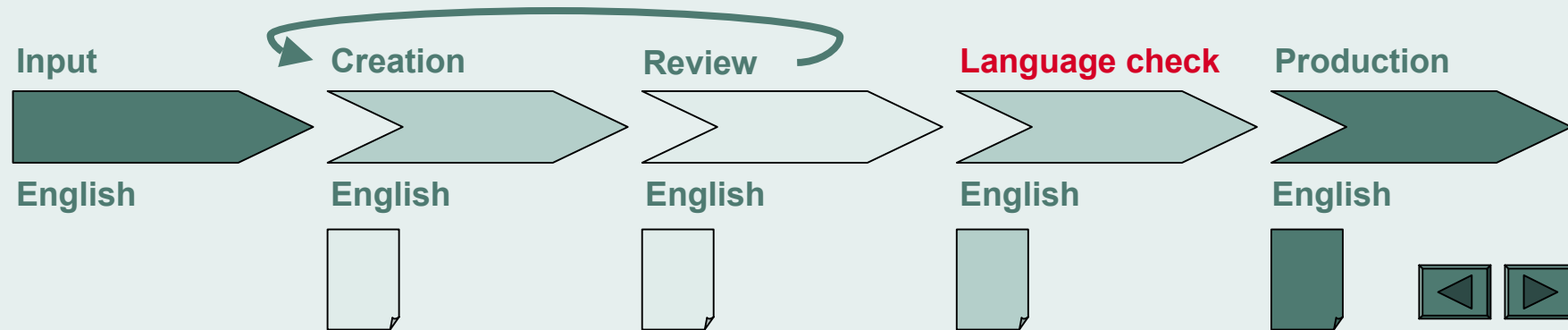
How to write in English as a non-native speaker

Why English-language documentation is provided by non-native speakers

The classical workflow



The single-language workflow



Why English-language documentation is provided by non-native speakers



That's why ...



■ How to get involved in English writing





How to get involved in English writing

- Range of projects
- Range of documentation
 - Alarm messages
 - User manuals
 - Assembly instructions
 - Service instructions
 - Electronic parts catalogues
 - Operating and maintenance manuals
 - Web-sites
 - ...

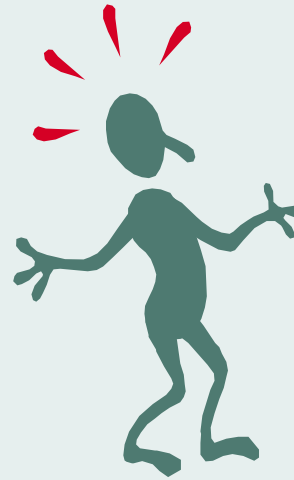


■ **What non-native speakers
must be aware of
before starting to write in English**



What non-native speakers must be aware of before starting to write in English

- The challenge
- The target group
- The requirements
- The basics

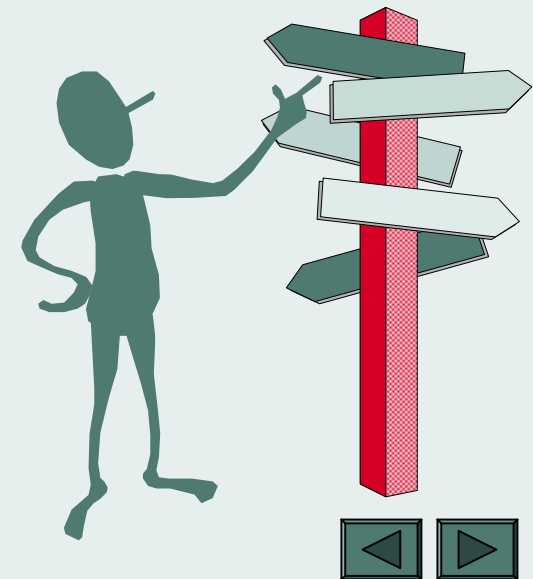


What non-native speakers must be aware of before starting to write in English

- The basics
 - Over the whole document, make average sentences of 15 to 20 words.
 - Use words your readers are likely to understand.
 - Use only as many words as you really need.
 - Prefer the active voice unless there's a good reason for using the passive.
 - Use the clearest, crispest, liveliest verb to express your thoughts.
 - Use vertical lists to break up complicated text.
 - Write positively as much as possible.
 - Reduce cross-references to a minimum.
 - Try to avoid sexist usage.
 - Use accurate punctuation.



■ Guiding rules for non-native speakers





Guiding rules for non-native speakers

- Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them
- Improve your knowledge
- Be careful with your input
- Use standardized phrases and terminology
- Ask native speakers
- Use a good dictionary
- Ease your daily work using the Internet





Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

The “top ten” of typical mistakes:

- Tone
- Style
- Nativisms and false friends
- Grammar
- Pronouns
- Prepositions
- Capitalization in captions
- Punctuation
- Misused words and phrases
- American/British/International English



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

Typical mistakes in terms of grammar:

- Tenses

- Subject-verb agreement

Incorrect: Each of the cars **were** going at top speed.

Correct: Each of the cars **was** going at top speed.

- Pronoun-antecedent agreement

Incorrect: If a student turns in an assignment late, **they** will be marked down for it.

Correct: If a student turns in an assignment late, **he or she** will be marked down for it.

Alternatively: If **students turn** in an assignment late, they will be marked down for it.

- Semantic agreement

Incorrect: **As for** the procedure, **it** sorts numbers.

Correct: **The procedure** sorts numbers.





Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

The “top ten” of typical mistakes:

- Tone ✓
- Style ✓
- Nativisms and false friends ✓
- Grammar ✓
- Pronouns ✓
- Prepositions ✓
- Capitalization in captions ✓
- Punctuation
- Misused words and phrases
- American/British/International English



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

■ Punctuation

The “comma-splice”

Incorrect:

Technology never exists in a social vacuum, it is embodied in products, processes, and people.

Correct:

Technology never exists in a social vacuum: it is embodied in products, processes, and people.

Alternatively:

*Technology never exists in a social vacuum **and** is embodied in products, processes, and people.*



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

Typical mistakes in terms of misused words and phrases (I):

- The “-ize” suffix
“utilize” > “use”, “prioritize” > “rank”, “finalize” > “finish”
- Intensified words
unique, essential, optimal
- The word “thus”
“thus” ≠ “therefore”.
- The word “only”
*I'm **only** working on my homework for an hour.*
*I'm working on my **only** homework for an hour.*
*I'm working on my homework for **only** an hour.*



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

Typical mistakes in terms of misused words and phrases (II):

- Verbs taking –ing or unmarked complement

Incorrect: We recommend to choose the first option.
This modification should make the system to function better.

Correct: We recommend **choosing** the first option.
This modification should make the system function better.

- Modal verbs

may, can, must, shall, should, could, would, will, might



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

Typical mistakes in terms of misused words and phrases (III):

■ Connectives

- Connective adverbs:
thus, however, for example, in particular, instead etc.
- Subordinating conjunctions:
since, although, if, rather than etc.

actually ≠ currently

after all ≠ finally

conclusively ≠ in conclusion

on the contrary ≠ on the other hand

particularly ≠ in particular

~~comparing to (with)~~

compared to

in comparison with

comparing *<object>* to

it in idiomatic *as* phrases



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Be aware of common mistakes and avoid them

- American/British/International English

	American English	British English
Idiomatic expressions:	<i>check the box</i> <i>watch your step</i>	<i>tick the box</i> <i>mind the gap</i>
Spelling:	<i>standardized</i> <i>color</i>	<i>standardised</i> <i>colour</i>
Vocabulary:	<i>movies</i> <i>railway</i>	<i>cinema</i> <i>railroad</i>



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

Improve your knowledge

Nobody is perfect but we can improve our abilities.

- Browse the Internet
- Read as much as possible
- Consult your company's style guide
- Join an in-house training
- Learn idiomatic expressions
- Invest effort to improve:
 - Spelling and terminology
 - Grammar and punctuation
 - Matters of style
 - American/British/International English
 - Vocabulary



Guiding rules for non-native speakers

- Avoid common mistakes ✓
- Improve your knowledge ✓
- Be careful with your input ✓
- Use standardized phrases and terminology ✓
- Ask native speakers ✓
- Use a good dictionary ✓
- Ease your daily work using the Internet



Guiding rules for non-native speakers Ease your daily work

Ease your daily work using the Internet

- Translation and dictionary resources:
<http://dict.leo.org/>, <http://www.linguadict.de/>,
www.uebersetzungsfallen.de, <http://www.tecnologix.net/laixicon/>,
<http://www.linguadict.de/>, <http://www.dictionary.com/>,
<http://wombat.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc/>, <http://www.onelook.com/browse.shtml>
- Plain English:
<http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/>
- Guidelines for writing English-language technical documentation for an international audience:
<http://www.intecom.org/>
- Tips for writing globally:
<http://on-site-english.com/article.html>,
<http://www.askoxford.com/globalenglish/>



- **The way we see ourselves
as non-native speakers**



The way we see ourselves as non-native speakers

- We do not have to... become great English writers or produce art and entertainment.
- We have to...form correct and understandable sentences and keep in mind, that some non-native English-speaking customers are better in grammar than the average native English **reader** and are quick to point out errors.
- We must...be consistent in our presentation, define our writing rules and stick to them, and ensure the quality of our writing.



■ Bibliography, literature, references



Bibliography, literature, references

■ Guidelines

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Thank you for your attention!



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Wissen auf den Punkt gebracht