

# **Global eLearning: Bridging Language and Accessibility Gaps for Inclusive Training**

[00:00:00.44] SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you for joining today's session, Global eLearning-- Bridging Language and Accessibility Gaps for Inclusive Training. My name is Sofia and I'll be moderating today's webinar.

[00:00:12.29] Today we're joined by our panel, Mirko, who's the managing director of Modulo; Christian, who's an instructional designer at Fossil Group; and Natalie, the director of sales at 3Play Media, who will be moderating today. I'm eager to hear everyone's insight. We have a great panel assembled. So, Natalie, I'll hand it off to you to start us off.

[00:00:33.60] NATALIE TARSKI: Thanks, Sofia. It's a pleasure to be here today. As Sofia mentioned, I'm Natalie Tarski, Director of Sales at 3Play Media. Thank you, Mirko and Christian, for joining us. We're looking forward to hearing your localization and accessibility perspectives.

[00:00:47.63] Before we dive into today's discussion questions, could each of you briefly describe your role in its connection to Global eLearning? Mirko, perhaps you could start us off.

[00:01:00.00] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. So yeah. Thanks, Natalie. Thanks, Sofia, as well for organizing this. It's always good to be able to talk about these issues also sometimes outside the context of actually working on something concretely.

[00:01:14.62] So my background is I'm a proper localization kind of veteran, I guess, as people sometimes call it. So I've done quite a lot of different roles in the localization industry, in the software industry. I used to work for Translators Without Borders, so in the NGO world, and most recently in international organizations, so in the World Health Organization and currently also with World Meteorological Organization.

[00:01:41.88] My background is rather computational linguistics, but what I really care about is actually doing something with languages and that's meaningful for people. So this interruption, intersection between technology, and languages, and people is something I still find fascinating.

[00:01:58.30] So that's very briefly about my profile. I'm based in Switzerland.

[00:02:04.98] NATALIE TARSKI: Thanks, Mirko. Christian?

[00:02:06.99] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. Thank you guys for having me. I appreciate it. So my background is a little diverse. So this is about my fourth year in the instructional design space. A few years of that, I've been with Fossil.

[00:02:19.09] And then before this, I worked for a dental service organization, which essentially provides a business services part to dental offices so that they can be dentists and we can provide everything else for their office. So I have a bit of experience on the more technical side of

instructional design. And then I have a bit of experience on the more creative, retail-oriented side, which has been nice to see both sides of that.

[00:02:42.84] Before that, I had eight years of public education experience. I was a teacher. And that was amazing. So this concept, this talk around accessibility, that's near and dear to my heart because, as teachers, we have to make sure we access all our students, and make everything relevant to them, and make sure everything is understandable by everyone. That's just our duty to serve them in that sense. So this conversation, I'm excited about. I see lots of hearts. I don't know if there are other educators in the chat. It's exciting. But I'm excited to be here. I appreciate you guys having me.

[00:03:14.32] NATALIE TARSKI: That's great. Thank you. I'd love to kick off the conversation by asking each of you what you feel the key drivers that are pushing organizations to globalize their learning initiatives, whether it's for external education, or internal training, or something else.

[00:03:32.02] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. For me--

[00:03:32.96] MIRKO PLITT: Shall I start? Oh, sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead, Christian.

[00:03:36.37] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: For me, at least speaking on my current work with Fossil, we're really wanting to make sure that our guests in our stores are receiving a consistent experience no matter where they're at. So for me, localization plays a huge part in that in making sure that everything is consistent, inclusive, and relevant no matter if I work in Texas, Spain, China. Wherever my store, wherever my person is, I can find the content relevant and consistent and so that all of our people are equally and equitably trained the way they're supposed to be.

[00:04:11.36] I know at Fossil, our biggest thing is balancing our brand voice and making sure that's still center, but making sure on top of that, understanding the nuances between what we develop in English is still consistent, equitable, and digestible to all of our other languages for all of our other people from different backgrounds across our world globally.

[00:04:40.01] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. So from my perspective, so the main project, if you will, that I worked on for the last several years in the World Health Organization was actually an eLearning or a learning initiative, not just eLearning, although most of it was eLearning, called the WHO Academy.

[00:04:59.97] And there was, interestingly, a little bit of a fuzziness about what it was meant for, whether it was for training WHO staff, so for internal training, and/or for external training, so training the world's health workforce basically. And there were some conflicting-- this is kind of interesting. The people who were looking for funding for this academy kept a bit this fuzziness around depending on the audience, the pitch would change somewhat. And so that showed also a bit the different types of expectations you get from audiences, especially also internal audiences who maybe think more about employability often, and then also external audiences who think about their professional careers, how they can evolve.

[00:05:48.12] But on the other hand, then the interests of an organization, why they actually want to give people the opportunity to grow, be it internally or externally, or an organization like WHO, of course, with a public health mission, that's really important. So you basically have to find the intersection between all these things to achieve, in the end, an impact. It has to serve all these different interests. And to understand them in the first place is pretty key.

[00:06:13.84] Now there are, of course, also other aspects, especially in the health context, that come into consideration-- regulatory, for instance. There are sometimes there are certain areas where you simply have to offer training. Right now in Europe, I mean Switzerland is not part of the European Union so not directly concerned with European regulation in AI, for instance. But in the EU, there is now an obligation to train employees on the use of AI if they are exposed to using AI. So there's a big push to actually provide training. And again, there's an intersection of people being desperate to learn about how they can use AI, and on the other side, like an official pressure to provide that training. So it's also an opportunity. It's quite interesting to be at this, where these things come together.

[00:07:04.84] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. Those are great insights. And as you both know, localization goes beyond just simple translation. It involves adapting content to resonate culturally and linguistically with the target audience. Christian, what are some practical tips for managing the localization process for training content across a large number of organizations?

[00:07:25.39] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. I know for Fossil, since we are a global company-- for example, we just released our global training curriculum for all of our frontline sales associates in all of our stores globally. So right from the beginning, we involved our global training partners. That included both our L&D partners in the global field but also our store operations field.

[00:07:47.38] In all aspects of the business, we try to involve our global partners to ensure that we're all aligned on what the expectations are so that all of our employees globally can have an equitable experience. And it also comes down to, like you said, linguistically and culturally, but also for a company like Fossil, it comes down to the legal aspects as well, and understanding what those are, and making sure we're communicating those, and making sure everyone is on the same page. So that would be my biggest tip is to really utilize your teams. If you are in the global space, that's something that we really rely on. While our team is the global team, we still have regional partners that we use to assist us with it and making sure that they are partners beyond what we create because we aren't experts in their region and their field, so we really rely on them.

[00:08:35.71] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. I love that. Getting those partners' buy-in on what you're providing as far as training goes, and just making sure that it's resonating and appropriate is just so critical. Creating equitable experiences are really important to us at 3Play, having been in the accessibility space for so long.

[00:08:54.05] Question for you, Mirko-- you've worked on high stakes learning projects in global health. How do you ensure that language isn't just translate, but truly transfers intent across cultures?

[00:09:07.22] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. That's, of course, a big challenge. And it touches on so many different aspects of what you do, in particularly in eLearning. It can be even learning behavior. It can be culturally quite different.

[00:09:21.08] And so one of the key factors-- and I think it already came through in what Christian said-- is to involve your target audiences as early as possible. And I think for those involved, both with accessibility and with localization, it's a key aspect of our role is to make sure that these audiences are taken into consideration and that it's not an afterthought once, say, the English or American product is ready or course you know is ready, that then you start thinking about how can we adapt this to other markets or so but that these considerations are taken into account from the beginning.

[00:10:04.80] And that will naturally lead to certain aspects, sometimes pretty unexpected aspects, how courses need to be designed differently in order to speak to these different audiences. There isn't just a national audience and then a global audience, but the global audience itself is extremely complex. So an understanding of which of these global audiences you're targeting is really important, and early on.

[00:10:34.57] And I would say make that point also in particular for accessibility. And that's something that I've found in my experience working on the accessibility aspects of the WHO eLearning courses that we developed is to actually, rather than saying we take off some WCAG check marks and say we're AA, or AAA, or whatever, which is very abstract, to actually identify which are the audiences we can actually provide training that makes a difference to that audience, and what are their needs and what's realistic as well. And then let's focus on those types of needs that exist for these audiences.

[00:11:16.15] So this identification of the target audience and to take that into account early on, as early as possible really, that's key. And that's, again, it's a bit like, yeah, we're the advocates in our industry. We're the advocates for these audiences. And I would argue that that's a role that is probably not going to go away with AI. These advocates are still needed, will always be needed, or even more so.

[00:11:42.96] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. I love that framing. There's really a difference between just checking the boxes and really seeking to serve an audience, and I think stepping back and thinking really critically, how can I advocate and provide a really amazing experience for whatever audience that you're trying to reach.

[00:11:58.90] Christian, do you have anything to add on? How do you balance the need for consistency with the need for cultural adaptation?

[00:12:06.52] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. I think Mirko brought up a great point. And it reminded me. So while we were launching this global training curriculum for our frontline associates and we were having those conversations with our global partners, it was brought up that we wanted to avoid having a one-size-fits-all approach because not all training associates in all of our countries operate the same way culturally. Each guest is different than the next.

[00:12:31.10] And so it actually brought up a conversation around, particularly in our APAC region, our Asia and Pacific region, that we needed additional training for more of the soft skills associated with managing up and interacting with guests and whatnot. So through involving our global teams early, we were able to combat that and come up with additional training for that particular group who needed more of those skills to provide an equitable experience like we discussed earlier. Did that answer your question, Natalie?

[00:13:03.55] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Great example of getting those partners involved really early and making sure that what we're creating and distributing is ultimately going to be effective. Thanks for sharing that example.

[00:13:15.90] I'm sure you both have experienced many challenges in your professional careers. In your experiences, what are some of the most common mistakes organizations might make when attempting to localize their learning materials?

[00:13:29.76] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: I know for me, something that's very-- for our team, something that's very relevant and timely to now is, in this new era of AI and what all it can do, we've switched to an AI translation service.

[00:13:44.89] And I think a common mistake could be just using it as is and not involving a human element to that. So something that we've done, again, involving these global partners, whether you have the global partners to involve or making sure that you have external reviewers review the AI content that's done no matter what space you're in, I think that is very important. Because there's a lot of cultural nuance, tone, even engagement that's missed.

[00:14:11.10] And I know a tool that our team has used through and through-- it's been checked by our partners-- is a glossary and translation memory so that when we do have this AI translation, when we use these AI tools, it is using something that still uses our brand, our tone, but it has been vetted by our global partners and global external partners.

[00:14:30.47] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. I love that you brought up AI because it is a very hot topic right now. We are also firm believers in having humans and AI involved in workflows to ensure quality and accuracy. AI helps things go a lot faster. Humans make sure that the end product is actually usable and appropriate. Mirko, drawing on your experience in the software industry, what is your approach to implementing AI for large scale multilingual projects?

[00:14:59.73] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. I mean, so you're right that my background is the software industry. For the last, what is it now, maybe 10 years, I've more been working in the, say, how would you call it? I mean, sometimes people conflate that a little bit. The NGO world and the international organization is actually quite different, although they interact closely.

[00:15:25.47] So less than the software but something that struck me actually in the context of eLearning in particular is how little good or best practice in terms of software development is applied in eLearning development. I think there's quite a bit that the eLearning sector could learn from well-established independently from AI, from well-established software practice like

testing, for instance, and thinking of entire products and full experiences, full user experience that is not specific just to one, say, feature.

[00:16:02.71] Where I've seen most impact of AI so far in eLearning is actually relatively specific. It's specific features, particularly for accessibility. It's all the work-- all the progress that has been made with speech recognition, speech generation, subtitling, and so on, these types of aspects. The actual creation of courses, I think that's something that is starting to happen now.

[00:16:32.00] But from what I have seen so far-- but again, having worked for, say, the World Health Organization, but it's probably less the type of organization that has a technological leadership position, but it's not the sort of course that would just be created from A to Z automatically. I don't think that's where we are, at least in the context of public health. So that's not where you are. You still have people, experienced learning designers, who use this technology to create courses. In a way, I would expect, if not hope, that that remains that way, at least for some time.

[00:17:12.72] And yes, some of the expectations that I see around the feedback that I got also from internal stakeholders, for instance, in different types of organizations is that technology can do it all now. But we see that with languages. We've heard it so much. Why do you still need translators? Why do you still need a translation budget? Can't people just use Google Translate or whatever? So that's one thing where a lot of it is just fighting these types of perceptions.

[00:17:43.27] The other perception that is still very common and increasingly common-- and it's not about AI-- is that everyone speaks English. I've heard that more and more. I've been hearing that more and more, including from the countries-- from countries like Egypt, doctors who told me, in Egypt, everyone speaks English, or, in India, everyone speaks English. And then you ask him, does your mother speak English? No, not my mother, of course.

[00:18:10.51] So there's a certain perception that the people who matter speak English. And that's the people who you are targeting. And if you think about, I don't know in the private sector as much, but if you think about nurses, training nurses, pretty key in public health, they have different types of profiles where you can't generally expect that they just speak English. So there's some of these misconceptions that we seem to be fighting more of.

[00:18:40.35] And again, I think it's a key role of ours in our industry to set the right expectations. Understand your target audiences. It's not just the people who, for instance, study medicine in Harvard and/or Oxford or so. But it's the nurses who don't have access to that type of training. Anyway, sorry, I got a little bit off topic there, but yeah.

[00:19:05.58] NATALIE TARSKI: No. I think it's a great point. And I like that you brought up the idea-- this perception sometimes that everyone speaks English. You can just provide the materials in English. But particularly in eLearning, and I would say even in other types of content, when you're looking for engagement and understanding, everyone may not learn best in English even though they understand the language and they speak it. So it's an important consideration as we're thinking about scaling localization globally.

[00:19:34.80] And when we think of scaling, we often think of a one-to-many approach. Christian, can you share some ways we can avoid the trap of the one-size-fits-all localization that Mirko was talking about, especially when global audiences can expect hyperpersonalized, culturally fluent content?

[00:19:53.41] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. So it's kind of like I mentioned earlier. So and like Mirko said, in the private sector, it's a little bit different, especially in the sense of from coming from a retail perspective, since brand tone, and brand story, and storytelling is huge with Fossil in particular. So we, again, have to find a big balance between ensuring that our branding is going through, no matter what language it is.

[00:20:17.63] I mean, we are a Dallas-based company. So everything we make is naturally in English. However, when we do localize, when we move through our different global partners, we still have to make sure that that is being translated into our other languages that we support. However, also with that comes the cultural nuances and the localization that it needs to.

[00:20:41.29] But again, kind of like the example I had earlier, you really just have to listen to your global partners and what their needs are. There are so many different examples in Germany, for instance, where the one size fits-- even though we moved to more of a global structure, that one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. For Germany, in example, down to our cashier system doesn't work the same there. There's a little nuance there. We had to change that.

[00:21:06.57] When we were working with our APAC partners, like I mentioned earlier, there are certain soft skills just because, culturally, how we operate in America is going to be different than our global partners in Asia. So there are some soft skills that they express they needed to be able to communicate what we wanted them to communicate.

[00:21:22.85] So just listening to your partners, and being open, and, like Mirko mentioned earlier, being an advocate for your teams as an L&D expert, that's what we should be. And that's also, again, near and dear to my heart as a teacher. I still try and be an advocate for my learners, whether they're adult or children. So just again, listening to your partners, what their needs are, bringing that back to your leadership, and hopefully, we have leadership that's open to hearing that and working with this.

[00:21:47.09] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. We received a great comment in the chat that I wanted to share. One of our participants shares that language is becoming increasingly a huge barrier for us in South African higher education, where we get feedback from students whose first language is not English, demonstrating deeper understanding when learning is framed in their native language. So I think that's just like what a great point to illustrate what we've been talking about here.

[00:22:12.29] And we've also received a few audience questions I wanted to bubble up. What are some key characteristics you collect to help support your identified audiences? Question for either of you.

[00:22:25.67] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: I know at Fossil, whenever we start a big project, especially a global project, we have something called Fossil support groups. And so we have a regional group. We have a support group per region. And that group consists of all of the hierarchy rules we have.

[00:22:44.68] So we have all the way from a store associate to a store manager to a regional director to an area director, all up and down the ladder from every region that we have to ensure that our audiences, no matter what level they are, are being heard, and listened to, and their needs are expressed. And they serve as subject matter experts as well to help guide our curriculum, help guide our eLearning, and making sure that it is reaching what it needs to reach based off the goals that have been set for the eLearning.

[00:23:12.51] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. One other audience question-- what point in the course development workflow do you start working on localization? Do you start by translating assets or the course as a whole once it's developed?

[00:23:27.99] There might be a few different approaches that you guys have seen or taken over the years so feel free to share all of those stories.

[00:23:37.35] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. So I would say, again, I mean the thinking-- so that's one of the pitfalls, I think, in localization is, of course, to think of it, above all, as translation, a question of translation. And I think with the state that we've reached in terms of technology with machine translation and so on being now integrated in certain eLearning development tools, it seems like, OK, we're done. It's OK. We can translate this automatically. We're OK.

[00:24:07.14] And that generally just won't work because, as we said earlier-- and I think there's a certain consensus on this call-- that there's more to it than just the translation. So it's really key to start as early as possible really when you-- I mean, the earlier you can step in to ask the questions, what is your target audience, what is the-- for instance, the education level of your target audience in the different countries, regions that you target, because they're not necessarily the same.

[00:24:40.58] Something I've seen quite a bit, for instance, is that the gender distribution can be different for certain types of professional trainings in different parts of the world. There are certain professions that are much more female in the West than they are in, say, in Eastern countries, engineering professions. The fact that they're very male-dominated is more a Western challenge than an Eastern challenge, for instance.

[00:25:11.71] And then we come from a Western perspective, these assumptions, what our audience probably looks like. And they just don't hold when you go somewhere else. And you have to understand these things earlier on. It's not at a translation stage. The translation stage is, I mean, I wouldn't say-- I mean, that's when it gets also quite messy, of course.

[00:25:30.68] And despite AI and everything, you still have to deal with hundreds or thousands or whatever files, and evolving videos, and someone who forgot to keep the right version of the source project or whatever. But that's the easy part. Getting into it early on during the conceptual



part-- I would never say you can wait until, at some point, try-- if you're somehow involved with localization, try to get that taken into account as early as possible as part of identifying your target audience.

[00:26:09.26] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. And if I could add one other thing to that, when we think about localization, there's subtitling and there's dubbing or creating a completely new video asset in the target language. And there is a big difference in the way that some regions prefer to ingest that localization. Some regions prefer subtitles. Some regions prefer dubbing or voiceover. So it's another important consideration to take into account as you're approaching the localization process.

[00:26:42.30] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Absolutely. And I think, just to add on to that, I think it's important for organizations and L&D teams specifically to have a formal intake process and make sure that you do have that process established as a team, and whether it's through a playbook or an SOP, whatever it might be, just ensuring that there is an intake process. And in that intake process, that's where you involve that localization aspect and start on it early. Whether it's through listening sessions, feedback sessions, whatever it might be, just include that in the beginning to help guide your project from the answer.

[00:27:13.71] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. I know today's conversation is really centered on localization, but we'd be remiss to not acknowledge accessibility. So I'd like to shift gears a bit to ask some accessibility-specific questions, because not only is it a legal requirement but also a fundamental aspect of inclusive design.

[00:27:32.85] Christian, what are the key accessibility standards and best practices that organizations must adhere to when developing global learning content?

[00:27:45.27] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Sorry, can you ask that one more time?

[00:27:48.69] SOFIA LEIVA: In your opinion, what are the key accessibility standards and best practices that organizations must adhere to when developing global learning content?

[00:27:58.02] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yes. So I'll speak from my perspective at Fossil because this is an area we're evolving in as well. So I know for us, especially thinking about localization, too, some of the key things that we make sure we're doing is captioning all of our videos, using the alternative text on the imagery when it's necessary.

[00:28:21.01] I know when we're-- especially with the content that we have in our training can be very-- intense is the wrong word, but since it is so brand heavy and story heavy, depending on what we're teaching our learners, I think, visually, it's important to look at your training. And I know just coming from a teaching perspective, just looking at it, and is it accessible to all learners. I know, just personally, vulnerability here, like I'm someone who struggles with ADD so I'm someone who can get overstimulated depending on what I'm looking at. So I like to think of it from that perspective as well. Is there enough white space? Are the headings and the hierarchical structure of the text on the page easily digestible?

[00:29:04.06] Just looking at it from that lens as well I think is important. Especially, I think that's important from coming from a global perspective. How we read things in English, even from just an American perspective, is going to be different than maybe how Simplified Chinese is structured on a training, so making sure that there's breathing room, making sure that the hierarchical structure of the page is intact, and of course, things like captioning and whatnot. Mirko, I don't if you have more to add to that question.

[00:29:40.21] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. I mean, specifically about accessibility, for me, that was something I discovered in my previous role at WHO. We were actually relatively late adopters of good best practice in terms of accessibility. And something that we had to learn somewhat the hard, hard way was to look at things holistically.

[00:30:11.21] So for instance, we had issues with training on the use of tools developed by WHO. And the tools themselves were not accessible. So we developed learning material and made it accessible. But actually, the learners were not able to use the tools that they're being trained on. So this lack of holistic view of actually understanding how these things fit together is something that I found to be particularly important. That's not the question. But I know that was not the question about standards and best practices, although it's maybe best practice to think about these implications.

[00:30:56.96] But in terms of standards, of course, there is a bit this risk of-- I already mentioned WCAG, that people think of it of just ticking off some boxes and being able to say, so we're done with accessibility because we've done that, rather than thinking again about how does it all fit together. But there it's also-- I mean, I made assumptions-- I remember I went to a workshop, which was a great example of stepping in earlier, so a workshop on basic emergency care training at the World Health Organization.

[00:31:29.11] And we have representatives from all around the world. And then people said, oh, this training doesn't have to be accessible because it's about basic emergent care. No people with special needs will ever be involved in that. And then we had one participant in a wheelchair in the room and said, you don't know how often people with accessibility needs are actually involved in emergency situations. And don't make these assumptions.

[00:32:01.44] So it's really important in terms of best practice to check these assumptions that we make when we develop also eLearning. It's not just eLearning or not just learning, but it's definitely part of that. So I'll stop here.

[00:32:18.12] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. Absolutely. What you said, Mirko, made me think of a topic we were recently discussing at a conference. The conference was actually focused on localization. But with the EAA guidelines coming out and being put into practice later this year, folks in the localization industry are really starting to think about accessibility, I think.

[00:32:42.91] And there was a comment that was made that really resonated with me. And it was around how incorporating accessibility actually benefits everyone. Accessibility best practices like captioning, even if someone isn't deaf or hard of hearing and doesn't need that

accommodation for hearing purposes, that having captions is really helpful to people with ADHD, people with autism, all different types of categories of individuals.

[00:33:13.63] And when we're thinking about a really integrated, holistic approach to incorporating accessibility, I love the framing that you both laid out around how they really fit hand in hand together. It's really about understanding your audience.

[00:33:28.90] And someone shared in the chat, check assumptions, not boxes, with regard to accessibility. I love that.

[00:33:36.01] And we have another attendee question I wanted to throw into the mix. There's been a lot of talk lately about using AI voices or dubbing for training content. From a learner perspective, do you think that can ever fully replace a human narrator? Question for either of you.

[00:33:57.52] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: We actually ran into this scenario with our recent training launch and whether it should be used or not. While I don't think it could ever fully replace a narrator, an actor, or whatnot, that is more-- because obviously, best practice, right. We would love to have one of our team members in each of our countries, in each of our regions, help act in our trainings or provide that in our trainings.

[00:34:23.36] However, I do think if we don't have access to that, the next best thing might be dubbing, whether it's through AI or through another regional partner. So I think it's just all about what tools do we have access to as a company, as a provider, and what will best serve our audience. So I think it's just about trying to balance best practice with what tools we have and using what you can to make sure that your training is as accessible as possible.

[00:34:54.80] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. I think, in general, the call is out how we will also in the future want to interact with this type of technology. I think that general wisdom is that people care about interacting with people more than technology. But that might be not a monolithic wisdom. It depends also on maybe culture but also personality, maybe also in situations and on topics, the type of learning it is, the type of your emotional engagement as well, say with the topic. You may prefer to be interacting with an actual person rather than with some avatars.

[00:35:41.66] Yeah. Yeah. I think the call is out. I think something that is really important with all these technologies but also these options that increase is that we actually give the choices to learners as well. For subtitles, it's something that people kind of discovered. It's not just important to people with accessibility needs, but a lot of us, say when we're commuting or so, we're in situations where we cannot necessarily listen, I mean, nowadays with the earphones.

[00:36:15.33] But it's evolving as well. You have different types of situations that you can't necessarily predict where people will just enjoy or benefit from having different options of consuming media, including learning-related media. So rather than thinking we decide as those who create learning material, we decide how it should be consumed, we actually give more of these options to the learners.

[00:36:41.07] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. And we've been talking a lot about AI and how that's been involved in workflows and changing the landscape here. This is a question for you, Mirko. Are there other emerging technologies or AI applications you see as promising for advancing eLearning accessibility?

[00:37:00.84] MIRKO PLITT: So I am in touch with people who are-- I mean, we probably all-- who are working very actively on trying to develop courses with different types of AI tools. I think we definitely will see that.

[00:37:17.79] Another tendency in that context is as well that I think it becomes smaller and smaller, what is being developed, the units, this micro learning. I think that is something combined with AI. And so because of that, also much more rapid, say updating of learning material, so it's a much quicker response to evolving needs that you don't have to work on the development of a new eLearning course for whatever the time frame is that you're used to.

[00:37:55.81] Again, working in the World Health Organization, you can quickly talk about years of developing courses so that you actually-- that we will see much smaller units develop much quicker and adapt much quicker, so more just in time kind of learning that leverages AI technology to do that. So I think we will definitely see more of that.

[00:38:24.55] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. Fantastic. And some really great attendee comments in the chat, one on how captions really help with comprehension and another attendee that loves audio description when cooking because they still get very good context of what they're watching while not actually looking at the screen. So I love that.

[00:38:42.07] And that leads me to my next question. Are there any technical or cultural considerations or challenges that may be unique to video content specifically?

[00:38:54.97] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: This makes me think of, again, when we're talking about a global audience. And I know, just going to keep talking about Fossil, for example, our frontline sales associates, I think an important question to ask early on, again, in that formal process of developing curriculum or content is understanding the modality that's being used and how learners are receiving that content. Because I know in a lot of our stores, they might be on a Chromebook, and that's how they receive their training. I know in some of our more kiosk-oriented stores, they're receiving content through a mobile device.

[00:39:32.22] So I think it's really important, just like you asked about video content, how well is what we're developing received, no matter what technology, what modality our learners are accessing it through. And I think that's an important aspect to include when you're developing. And again, that's where those Fossil support groups or your global partners come in ways that they can let you know what is the reality of their situation, where they're located, and what they're accessing through.

[00:39:58.61] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. Just another way to think about the total experience of your end viewer and your audience, and just like another thing to add to the list, I think that that's important to consider as you're reaching these folks. Mirko, any thoughts on that?

[00:40:15.14] MIRKO PLITT: On the-- sorry, if you can just--

[00:40:19.38] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. So any technical or cultural considerations or challenges that may be unique to localizing video content specifically.

[00:40:32.40] MIRKO PLITT: So I mean, so something I've definitely seen consistently over in my experience working with eLearning is adapting visuals, the representation of audiences. But say, again, public health context to show-- rather than to show a US hospital, if it's meant for, say, an African context, that you actually show an African hospital.

[00:41:05.61] It's not necessarily just a question of skin color or so, but it's really show visually, show the context that people will actually be able to relate to and where they feel less invited or being let into something that comes from a different world where people are friendly and let you in but you're still kind of invited to do that, but to be there. Rather, make it something that actually talks about your context and you're part of it. I think that applies in particular to videos.

[00:41:37.85] So that also somewhat relates back to this idea of using generated voices. It's an interesting aspect. Should we have accents? I mean, I apologize for my accent. At the same time, they're part of our-- they tell a story about who we are as well. And I think using AI, for instance, to make it seem like we all speak fluent French or whatever it is you would like to be fluent in, I think it hides somewhat of that reality that we're interacting with real people.

[00:42:13.61] And I had the situation, again in an eLearning context, where we were generating audio content or voices for videos, using whatever, some AI tool. And we had this discussion about accents. And it was for a global audience in English. And I picked at the time a Nigerian English accent. And then our Indian learning designer objected and said, we want a proper-- no. It was not a learning design actually. It was a doctor. It was a subject matter expert. He said, no, we want a proper English accent. What that meant was Oxford's whatever, that sort of accent.

[00:42:52.43] So we had this kind of surreal debate of what's a proper English accent and all of us speaking with different accents as well. So AI opens great possibilities. But some of these questions won't just go away because you have a tool that can do things.

[00:43:10.60] NATALIE TARSKI: I think that's so interesting. And we hear a lot-- so when we're talking about AI voices, specifically for dubbing, there's two general approaches that you can take, selecting a native-sounding voice for the target language, so if you're translating into Brazilian Portuguese, having that AI voice sound like a native Brazilian Portuguese speaker, or rather matching as close as possible to the original speaker in the video that may be speaking English, for example.

[00:43:43.46] And people seem to have very divided opinions about what approach is best to take. But I love that comment, Mirko, around this. When you can select and choose whatever sort of accent you want, it removes the complexity of the world that we actually live in where we have lots of different speakers with lots of different accents. And removing that from the end result does have-- I think there is an interesting kind of complicated impact there that's worth exploring more.

[00:44:18.21] And Christian, you mentioned this briefly in your response to the last question but I'd like to expand on feedback loops a little bit more. How can organizations measure the effectiveness of their localized training programs and ensure that they are achieving their intended learning outcomes?

[00:44:33.19] Because we've talked a lot about gathering all the right data and understanding the audience before you localize and what inventory you need to take into account there. But on the other side, after the localization materials or the localized materials have been distributed, how can we continue that feedback loop with those audiences to ensure that we're continuing to just improve and make sure that our materials are ultimately effective?

[00:45:00.69] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. I think this goes back to making sure you have a formal process established within your team of what that looked like. And it might look different depending on the course or curriculum that's being worked on.

[00:45:11.86] But I know at Fossil, we have a specific feedback cycle that we go through. Like for example, with our last global training that was launched, we have a quarterly feedback cycle. And that exists in a few different avenues. That exist as a workshop call like we're doing now, where we have specific leaders around our regions and the Fossil support groups where it's different roles that are present.

[00:45:35.17] We also just have a general feedback form where learners can leave feedback on specific courses within the curriculum and specific aspects of the curriculum to make sure it's not just those that are on that workshop call that can provide feedback, but from anyone. So there's that.

[00:45:50.62] There's also built-in through the LMS, they can leave feedback for technical issues. I think it's good to have a few different modalities of how people can leave feedback so that we can reach everyone we need to reach. And then in tandem with that, we have that feedback cycle but it's also important to have an update cycle as well, and make sure that your learners are aware of that, and making sure as a team that you establish those tiers of what can we do, what needs to be done, and making sure that's communicated.

[00:46:19.76] I know for us, communication is huge. We're really trying to establish that as a team and how we're communicating with our learners that we are listening to them. We want this to work for them at the end of the day. So I think, again, just going back, making sure you have that established in your formal design process is important.

[00:46:35.29] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. Any thoughts there, Mirko?

[00:46:38.41] MIRKO PLITT: And of course, if you-- I mean, I guess I'm just going to repeat that of this feedback loop, of course, implies making that available in different languages. So it's not just a question of translating your material but actually having some processes, people, whatever, in place to actually engage.

[00:47:01.18] Part of the feedback loop is also to acknowledge what you hear and give some type of feedback back to the people who give the feedback, even if it's only to tell them thank you. Thank you for giving us this feedback. We'll do something about it and not just to give people that impression it falls into a black hole and nothing happens ever. And I think that often gets missed.

[00:47:24.86] I certainly have seen that where you have somewhat of a working feedback loop, maybe in English, maybe in a couple of other languages or so, your principal markets, but the others then they just disappear. And then in return, you sometimes get them from, say, the product managers or so, whoever's responsible for that. Well, we don't get feedback from these countries. Of course not. If you're not in a position to actually process that feedback, then you're not going to get much feedback in the end of the day.

[00:47:58.52] NATALIE TARSKI: And when we're talking about the impact that global training programs have, part of measuring that is the feedback that you're receiving from different regions. And that's probably very rich qualitative data that you can take back and fold into the process. But when we're thinking about certain metrics or quantitative data, how are you all measuring the impact from a quantitative perspective? Are there any metrics that you have around that?

[00:48:32.99] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Again, I think it kind of depends on the type of training involved. I know, for us, our goal is to have, obviously, different quiz functionalities built into our training, different scenario types as well. But we also like to involve the local leadership, as in our store managers, or their keys, our assistant store managers in this process as well. Our goal is to have an assessment, if you will, that's tied into the overall performance cycle, that we're getting not only that quantitative data from our actual training but also mixed in with qualitative and quantitative data from the assessment piece that the local manager is in charge of.

[00:49:16.33] And I think that's an important thing to talk about, because they are like-- they're experts in their stores, with their guests, with their people. And I think there's a trust there that is more available than coming from a global L&D person all the way over here in Texas. So I think, again, it goes back to that partnership and relying on the local leaders, the local experts, to help you through gathering that data, and how we can use that, and what's working, what's not working.

[00:49:46.59] NATALIE TARSKI: Mirko, what are your thoughts on that?

[00:49:49.74] MIRKO PLITT: Yeah. I mean, in the humanitarian sector, this notion of impact is very difficult. And it's something that people have started abandoning somewhat because it's so difficult really to establish the impact on whatever you do, not just learning.

[00:50:12.64] I mean, a lot of the practice I've seen is just surveys, and surveys, and surveys. Yeah. So I think this is going to remain a challenge to find also for specific learning offerings, the right way of measuring the impact of just that particular training. I don't think there is a generic answer, I'm afraid. At least I've not seen it. I've not come across it yet.

[00:50:47.05] NATALIE TARSKI: Yeah. A couple of other points that might make sense to raise here around metrics are things like engagement, to the extent that whatever platform you're using can measure how long someone is watching a piece of content, whether they've turned captions or subtitles on in their respective language. That type of data can also be really helpful to understand. And if you're on a public platform where there's ads, then you'll, of course, have that sort of data to throw into the mix.

[00:51:23.11] So we're getting to the end of our conversation. Like to wrap up with one final question for each of you. Maybe, Mirko, we can start with you. What's one strategy you've used that's made a huge difference in creating inclusive, global learning that you think more teams should adopt?

[00:51:42.40] MIRKO PLITT: So I mentioned earlier this workshop that I attended on basic emergency care was a fantastic experience. Was great to actually get people-- and that was at the conceptual stage of the course-- to actually talk with people from different countries.

[00:51:57.43] And I mentioned this example of a participant in a wheelchair, but we also had people there in that particular workshop from countries around the world. And there were these expectations about-- again, it's a public health context-- about how the infrastructure looks like in countries around hospitals and so on.

[00:52:20.01] And then one participant said-- I think he was from a Latin American country. And they said, we have one ambulance in our country. Stop talking about how to logistically manage ambulances with some software. We have got one ambulance, and it's typically our president who will use it when he has some health issues.

[00:52:43.64] So to have this dialogue, this exchange, this reality check early on, I think that really makes a big difference. Plus, it's fun actually to meet people, even be it only online. But it still is fun to have these perspectives early on in the design process. So that would be my number one.

[00:53:04.14] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely. Christian, what are your thoughts on one strategy that's made a big difference that you think more teams should adopt?

[00:53:15.42] CHRISTIAN MILLHOLLON: Yeah. So I'm just coming from the perspective of actually building eLearning content. And I think, again, going back to having a team playbook or part of that formal process, I think having one, like I mentioned earlier, a global glossary for all of your company's strongest vocabulary, the brand, the storytelling, whatever it might be, working with your interactive-- sorry-- your international global teams to making sure that it is accurate; it's inclusive; it not only tells your company's story, but also it tells it in a way that's reachable and digestible to anyone from any region, I think; to have templates ready to go where we can-- making sure we're reaching those more accessible on the accessibility side; making sure you have-- you're working with your vendors that you, like we would do our AI translations through or captioning, whatever it might be. I think just I keep going back to making sure you have those thoughts now about what's involved in the process, formalizing it out so that when



you actually get to that point in the project, it's not just something you're trying to figure out in the moment but you have it ready to go. You have those tools already established.

[00:54:37.80] NATALIE TARSKI: Absolutely.

[00:54:39.00] SOFIA LEIVA: Well, thank you so much, everyone. This was a really incredible panel. Thank you, Mirko, Christian, and Natalie for this great conversation-- a lot of really helpful nuggets and insights.

[00:54:50.64] And thank you to our audience for joining, and asking great questions, and contributing your insights. And thanks again. I hope everyone has a great rest of their day.