# let Arabic into the brief.



01 / THE BOTTLENECK

# Find the decision that arrives late

A bilingual project can have excellent writers and still produce weak work. The decisive question may arrive after the photograph has been purchased, the edit locked or the English headline legally checked: can we change the idea? If nobody can answer, the Arabic writer inherits responsibility without the authority or time needed to exercise it.

This guide deals with that working arrangement. It does not ask every team member to approve every word. It asks the team to put consequential language decisions beside the other decisions that affect them. A producer needs to know when a different reading time could alter the edit. A strategist needs to know when an expression changes the promise. A client needs to know which questions are still open.

Invented teaching scenario: a neighborhood workshop called Open Bench is launching a Saturday furniture-repair class. Places are limited to twelve adults. Participants bring one small wooden object, and the instructor decides whether it can be repaired safely during the class. The team needs Arabic and English booking pages, posters and a short film. The example will turn that assignment into a usable brief, a review sequence and a small record of decisions. It will not assume anything about the audience's nationality or preferred language.

02 / THE BRIEF

# Give the writer a decision to solve

Start with the audience's task and the business's actual offer. 'Translate the approved English' is an output instruction. It cannot explain why someone should book, what could prevent them or which promises are available. Keep those distinctions visible in a short brief that both writers can challenge.

## Completed brief: Open Bench

+ Task: help an adult decide whether this introductory class fits their object, confidence and schedule.
+ Offer: one supervised Saturday session, twelve places, one small wooden object per participant. Exact time, fee and venue must be supplied by the organizer.
+ Useful promise: learn a repair technique while working on something you own. Do not guarantee that every object will be repaired.
+ Audience uncertainty: 'Will I bring the wrong thing?' is a working hypothesis to check, not a research finding.
+ Required action: view the accepted-object guidance, then choose a session and reserve a place.
+ Creative opening: make the first step feel clear enough to attempt. Either writer may propose a different headline, scene or explanation.

The brief also needs an explicit non-answer. We do not yet know whether the audience needs technical vocabulary explained, photographs of accepted objects, or both. Put that uncertainty into the work plan. Do not bury it beneath a finished-looking Arabic line and hope a final reviewer will discover it.

03 / OWNERSHIP

# Separate expertise from final authority

Name one person accountable for each decision, then name the people whose expertise that decision requires. Accountability is not permission to ignore them. Equally, expertise in one area does not confer authority over every other part of the project. This distinction makes disagreements easier to resolve without turning review into a vote.

01 The organizer owns offer facts: fee, timing, capacity and eligible objects. They must resolve uncertainty rather than ask a writer to make the offer sound safe.

02 The strategy lead owns the intended audience task and proposition. Both language writers can challenge whether the proposed execution communicates them.

03 Each language lead owns wording recommendations, register and ambiguity in their version. A non-speaker receives a meaning explanation, not the final say on linguistic naturalness.

04 The creative lead chooses the route, with documented language advice. The producer owns the feasible edit and layout after both versions have been tested in context.

05 The named client decision-maker approves the assembled release. Unresolved factual or comprehension problems return to their owner before that approval.

In a small team one person may hold several roles. Write the roles anyway; a freelancer can then see which hat the client is wearing. If a language reviewer can only flag problems and cannot commission a fix, identify who has that power and reserve time for them to use it.

04 / THREE REVIEWS

# Review while change is still possible

Use three moments tied to decisions rather than a ceremonial translation milestone. These are practical checkpoints, not a universal production schedule. A one-day social post and a filmed launch need different amounts of time, but each needs an honest point at which its major choices can still move.

## First: before route approval

Review the brief, rough image or scene, draft meaning in both languages and the intended next step. For Open Bench, decide whether the film follows an object or an instructor. Ask whether the proposed joke obscures the eligibility condition. The output is a selected route with unresolved questions recorded, not polished copy.

## Second: before production lock

Review actual words, spoken timing, button labels and the accepted-object explanation. English draft: 'Bring a small wooden object. Learn what you can do with it.' The Arabic writer may restructure that invitation while preserving its scope. Film both versions' required pauses before locking the shoot plan.

## Third: before release

Review the complete booking path in both languages at its intended size. Does the poster lead to the right page? Does the date agree with the booking system? Does a language switch preserve the selected session? Record corrections with an owner and deadline. This final review can catch mistakes, but it should not be the first opportunity to discover that the campaign's central promise changed.

05 / THE CHANGE NOTE

# Make consequences visible

A useful change request describes the problem, the proposed adjustment and the decisions affected. 'Arabic does not work' is too broad. 'Keep the approved layout' is too narrow if the layout causes the problem. Write enough detail for the team to decide without making the reviewer defend an entire language.

## Worked review note

Issue: the poster headline reads 'Fix it this Saturday.' In this class, an instructor may decide an object is unsuitable, so the line implies a result the organizer cannot guarantee. This is an offer problem in both languages, not an Arabic problem. Proposal: replace it with 'Bring it. Learn a repair.' Add 'Check which objects you can bring' beside the booking link. The language leads should refine their versions within that meaning.

Affected work: poster, opening film title and booking-page heading. Unaffected fact: twelve adult places. Organizer action: approve the accepted-object guidance today. Creative action: revise both headlines before the layout is locked. Producer action: allow a readable hold for the guidance link. Decision: the creative lead chooses the revised route once the organizer confirms the offer.

The note does not pretend that a gloss settles the writing. It makes the shared issue visible so each specialist can solve the right part. Keep the earlier wording in a dated decision log; otherwise an old approved file may silently reintroduce it later.

06 / PRACTICE

# Rewrite the assignment

Invented exercise: an account manager writes, 'English approved. Translate the page by tomorrow. Keep the same line lengths. Client wants local warmth.' The page advertises a shared workroom, but the opening hours are still unconfirmed. Spend five minutes replacing this message with a usable assignment and one escalation. Do not solve the problem by inventing an audience preference.

Model assignment: 'We need Arabic and English pages that help a first-time visitor understand how to reserve a workbench. The service lead will confirm hours at noon. Preserve the reservation process and fee; sentence length may change. Please flag any wording or layout that makes the process unclear. Bring one draft of the heading, booking instruction and cancellation note to a joint review at three.'

Model escalation: 'The page cannot be ready for release tomorrow unless opening hours are confirmed and both language layouts can be checked. We can prepare a preview with the hours marked unresolved. The producer will identify the last safe time to receive the confirmed information.'

Why this is better: it names the audience task, separates fixed facts from flexible expression and gives language advice a route into the layout. It also refuses to disguise missing operations as a tone problem. A smaller team can use a shorter message, but removing those decisions would recreate the same bottleneck in fewer words.

07 / WORKSHEET

# Plan the handoffs

Complete this for one real deliverable. Use names rather than department labels. A review date is only useful if the person who can act on the feedback is available afterward. Mark unconfirmed facts explicitly and keep this sheet beside the production schedule.

Audience task, real offer and intended action

Facts still missing, their owner and confirmation date

What each language lead may change and what must stay true

Route review, production review and release review: dates and decision-makers

How a late change is logged, resolved and carried into both versions

Circle any review placed after the affected choice becomes irreversible. Move the review, keep that choice provisional or agree the cost of reopening it.

08 / THE HANDOVER

# Close decisions, not conversations

A good handover lets the next person distinguish a settled choice from a placeholder. Deliver the approved brief, current language files, factual source, decision log and unresolved issues. A folder containing only two final-looking PDFs cannot show whether one version contains an older fee or a line that was meant to remain provisional.

+ Each important fact has a named owner and an agreed version.
+ Each language was seen in the actual layout or heard in the intended performance.
+ A meaning explanation accompanies any wording the approver cannot read, without replacing specialist review.
+ Comments identify a problem or decision; they do not rely on vague demands for local flavor.
+ The release owner knows which corrections are complete and which remain unresolved.

The workflow is deliberately modest. It cannot compensate for an absent qualified writer, an inaccessible client or a budget that excludes revision. Say so early, then reduce the scope of deliverables if necessary. Nor does involving one Arabic writer establish that a piece suits every market or audience. The brief must define the intended use.

Rumelt's focus on coherent action informs the alignment between brief and workflow. Catmull and Wallace's account of candid peer critique informs the space for useful challenge. Neither source prescribes this bilingual approval model. Leave with an assigned decision, a date and room to act on the answer; those are the practical improvements this guide can help you make.

READING / PRACTICE / CONTEXT

# Where the thinking starts

The methods, teaching scenarios, exercises and worksheets here are original synthesis. The books below inform particular decisions; their authors do not endorse this guide. Page references locate the supplied PDF editions and may differ from printed page numbers.

### Richard P. Rumelt / Good Strategy/Bad Strategy

PDF pp. 89-91

The distinction between diagnosis, guiding policy and coherent actions informs the relationship between a brief and its working plan. The review checkpoints are original practical synthesis, not Rumelt's model reproduced.

### Ed Catmull with Amy Wallace / Creativity, Inc.

PDF pp. 63-67

The discussion of candid peer feedback, hierarchy and non-prescriptive critique informs the review process. The guide does not equate a client approval structure with Pixar's Braintrust.

### Jon Steel / Truth, Lies, and Advertising

PDF pp. 13-18

The involvement of client, creative team and consumer perspectives informs the brief and its unanswered audience questions. A hypothetical uncertainty is kept separate from a researched finding.

## Make the tools your own

Read the worked example, try the exercise before its model response, then use the worksheet on a real assignment. Print the worksheet at 100% or annotate a copy digitally. Check your actual product facts, audience context and production conditions before applying the advice.

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