

DITA Translation TC Best Practices

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Use of CONREF attribute:

Great care should be taken regarding the use of the 'conref' attribute. Although the conref attribute may appear as a very efficient artifice to allow for the simple substitution of product names etc. allowing for the runtime resolution of given parameters this can cause grammatical problems with highly inflected and gender sensitive languages such as most Slavonic and Germanic languages.

What works extremely well for English or French source text can result in ungrammatical text for given target languages. Such an outcome is generally undesirable as it will reflect badly on the documentation concerned.

As a general rule the safest way to use 'conref' is for the inclusion of grammatically complete sentences, phrases or complete block of text (those that can stand alone and do not rely on the surrounding context). For example:

```
.  
.
</steps>
<result>The call is ended</result>
<postreq>
<note conref="reuse.dita#reusablephrases/hangup"/>
</postreq>
```

Never use 'conref' to substitute common nouns or noun phrases such as for example 'hammer' or 'screw driver' etc. Never use:

```
<p>
Using a <keyword conref="tools.dita#ClawHammer"/> remove the CPU from its mount.
</p>.
```

Where the 'conref' is used for proper nouns, such as '*Ford Focus*' the the safest solution is to insure that the proper noun is always the main subject of the sentence, e.g.:

Do not use:

```
<p>
Driving the <prodname conref="models.dita#FordFocus"/> is an exhilarating
experience.
</p>.
```

Rather use:

```
<p>
The <prodname conref="models.dita#FordFocus"/> provides an exhilarating driving
experience.
</p>
```

The subject of the above sentence is in the nominative case and therefore does not normally require inflection.

The translators should also receive appropriate instructions to insure that the substituted proper noun is translated as the subject of the sentence.

In addition the translator needs to be provided with a composed version of the source text to see the context of the text. The translator will need to see a composed version of the translation with conref resolution so that the grammatical implications of the translation can be seen.

As a general point all standard text that can be reused in many places, such as a warranty disclaimer, within DITA should be handled via the conref mechanism. This guarantees that all translatable code can be handled via one XML translation process. Avoid holding translatable text in CSS or any other format such as entity references. If all of the translatable text is held within the standard DITA XML documents then only one process is required for their translation. If you hold translatable text in a variety of formats (CSS, entity declarations, property files) then you will need a separate process for each data type.