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During the first part of quarantine, eons ago when quarantines were young, I took up handcrafts I’d neglected for years. I saw others the world over doing the same thing: finding creative ways to combat the boredom. It was a way to connect digitally, and at the same time to combat the digital—turning to the tactile, and then sharing it with whoever tuned in. And then the months went on; 2020 gave us riots, protests across the globe, political uncertainty, financial shake-ups. Many of us abandoned our handcrafts, struggled to keep up with basic tasks, worked more, did more, got out less.

It’s an interesting time to be at the forefront of global trade, emerging healthcare, automation, geopolitics, and all of the other things localization professionals need to keep in mind every time they open their emails. And when I’m not too busy, I remember to still appreciate the tactile, as a way to tie me back to those early days of 2020, and the earlier centuries that have led us here.

Including reading material you can hold. So with the next issue, January/February 2021, we’re going back to print. As for the path forward, I’m reading more than ever—good ideas can shape us all.
About the Cover:
A woman in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, hand paints a batik silk design.

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**Featured Reader**

**Would you introduce yourself?**
Carol Jin (some people know me by my real name, Shuang Jin). I’m a software engineer at LinkedIn.

**Where do you live?**
Sunnyvale, CA.

**How did you get started in this industry?**
I graduated from MIIS in 2012 and had been in the working in an multilanguage vendor until 2018. Later I moved to a new role in machine learning and engineering, on an AI team at LinkedIn.

**What language(s) do you speak?**
Chinese, English and some programming languages — Java, Python, Scala, etc.

**Whose industry social feeds (twitter, blog, LinkedIn, Facebook) do you follow?**
These days I spend most of time following new natural language processing papers.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**
I listen to a lot of podcasts in Chinese in a wide range of topics, like physics, the economy, and psychology.

**Do you have any social feeds of your own? Twitter handle, blog?**
Not yet. I just started writing about AI for the language industry. Perhaps you’ll see articles of mine soon!

**Why do you read MultiLingual?**
MultiLingual is the go-to magazine for the industry. Who doesn’t read it?
Would you introduce yourself?
Mimi Hills, director, Global Information Experience at VMware, which encompasses the Product Globalization and Information Experience (Technical Publications) teams. I'm retiring in mid-October and will stay involved in the localization industry.

Where do you live?
Half Moon Bay, California.

How did you get started in this industry?
I was working on technical publications for Apple (remember those beautiful four-color manuals?) and was sent on loan to the localization team in Cork, Ireland, to see the manuals through the process for a big release of new computer systems. Later on, as an engineering program manager at Sun Microsystems, I worked with the team creating the internationalization technology for the Java Development Kit, and I worked with the localization team as well. From there I took on engineering management and finally found my home when I took on managing the Globalization group at Sun Microsystems. I’ve also managed teams at BlackBerry and now, VMware.

How long have you worked in localization?
The earliest forays date back to the 1980s! My full-time roles started in 2006.

What languages do you speak?
English and Spanish. I know enough technical Spanish to do quality checks on the localization.

Whose industry social feeds (twitter, blog, LinkedIn, Facebook) do you follow?
I follow Multilingual, of course, and all the analysts and news sources I can subscribe to, as well as many industry leaders including the technologists. I intend to keep following them as I move into retirement. Localization is in my blood now, and I don't want to lose track of where it’s going!

What do you like to do in your spare time?
I play guitar and bass, and listen to a lot of music — and I'm the president of the board of directors for a non-profit music camp for adults, California Coast Music Camp. I’m involved in the TechWomen program as a mentor and coach for professional technical women in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. And I'm involved in diversity and inclusion programs, particularly for Thrive-WISE (Women in Science and Engineering), where I serve on the advisory board.

What industry organizations and activities do/did you participate in?
LocWorld and TAUS conferences and webinars, Women in Localization events, various vendor conferences and webinars, and private gatherings with colleagues and friends. I really appreciate the open conversation and exchange of ideas and I’ll attend events wherever that happens.

Do you have any social feeds of your own? Twitter handle, blog?
I don't have much time to be active on social media — not yet, anyway.

Why do you read Multilingual?
I like reading perspectives from various segments of the industry and different parts of the world. There’s always an article that opens my eyes to an aspect of globalization that I never thought about. It’s going to be more important to me as I retire and want to keep in touch!
Industry Trends

Emsi Language Services Industry Overview Projects Growth

Jonathan Pyner

An exclusive Emsi report outlines several variables around the language services industry, including salary, job growth, job training, and demographic breakdown.

Emsi, a data modeling firm based in the United States, recently gave MultiLingual a look at its third quarter 2020 data set on the US language services industry, providing a status of job postings as well as the industry’s projected growth over the next two years. The industry has seen steady growth over the past few years, although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a disruption and re-organization in demand. Here are a few takeaways from the report.

As of 2019, translators and interpreters made up over 40,000 jobs in the US, with average annual earnings of over $50,000. The report projects growth of over 19% by 2022, though these numbers depend on region. For example, the San Francisco Bay Area’s southern regions exceed the national growth average at around 23%, whereas the San Diego region projects a slower rate of 14%, according to the report.

Most jobs are found under the category of “Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services,” making up almost 40% of jobs in 2019. The “Other” category represented over 20%, while “Education and Hospitals” at the local level followed at around 17%. Both population size and region play a role in job rate with California, Texas, and New York leading.

The job demand remained steady between early 2017 and 2020, but Emsi reports a rise in demand in 2020, corresponding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and health-related language services. The past couple months have seen a return to the national average.

LanguageLine Solutions represented the majority of unique job postings with over 20,000, and Soliant Health, Inc had over 6,000 postings. The top three job titles are bilingual interpreters, interpreters, and sign language interpreters, and the top hard skills for job postings are language translation, pronunciation, and language interpretation.

Among both industry and language-specific occupations, age demographics spread fairly evenly among people between 19-64, with the highest concentration of those 25-34 years of age. Furthermore, women make up around two-thirds of the industry, with well over two-thirds of those holding language service occupations. White workers also hold most industry positions at 70% but hold less than 50% of language occupations, with Hispanic or Latino workers representing the next highest demographic at around one-third of workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2019 Jobs</th>
<th>2022 Jobs</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA</td>
<td>42,795</td>
<td>50,989</td>
<td>8,194</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Emsi’s predicted regional trends in translation and interpretation jobs.
In terms of educational training, most in the industry hold a bachelor’s degree, though as many as 20% hold a master’s degree or higher. Spanish language and literature ranks highest among educational programs, with University of Wisconsin-Madison, UCLA, and BYU ranking among the top schools.

Emsi data comprises a hybrid dataset derived from official government sources such as the US Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Bureau of Labor Statistics. Leveraging the unique strengths of each source, the data modeling team creates an authoritative dataset that captures more than 99% of all workers in the United States. This core offering is then enriched with data from online social profiles, resumés, and job postings to give a complete view of the workforce.

Industry News

China Restricts Export of Language Technologies

Several technologies familiar to language service providers (LSPs) and language services adjacent industries make the list of new Chinese restrictions, including speech-related technology around corpus design, recording, annotation, and extraction; text prediction; voice recognition and microphone array technologies; and what was described as “Chinese and English composition correction technology,” among other seemingly broad descriptions of digital technology.

The updated restricted-export list does not outright ban these technologies, but requires special approval from Beijing for Chinese companies seeking to take such technologies to market overseas. China has found partners willing to comply with the restrictions, however, with government-backed iFLYTEK recently signing a deal with the Egyptian government to promote natural language processing and machine translation technology for Egyptian-Arabic and Chinese languages.

TED Partners With SYSTRAN to Create Neural Models

AI-based translation technology company SYSTRAN announced recently its new partnership with TED to build specialized neural translation models that are based on high-quality translations of TED Talks. Beginning with ten languages, SYSTRAN will use TED content to develop neural machine translation models for technical content in a variety of fields.

These unique models are designed to meet the sophisticated translation needs of multinational companies, educational institutions, government agencies and other organizations by enabling accurate and fluent translations of learning, scientific, business, and technical content in ten languages.

A nonprofit organization whose slogan is “Ideas Worth Spreading,” TED has committed to global language access as one of its core foundations. Organizations in 150 countries participate in the TEDx initiative, which allows groups to apply for licenses to organize conferences made up of local participants, ranging from professors to scientists to writers.

Along with TEDx, the company currently has a major translation initiative of their online resources, with a team of over 35,000 human translators, who have produced almost 175,000 translations and captions in 115 languages. The data from this major cache of language resources will likely enable SYSTRAN to expand their neural translation models to even more languages as well.

“SYSTRAN is TED’s first-ever authorized partner in bringing together TED content and machine learning to develop a commercial product,” said Alex Hofmann, director of Global Distribution & Licensing at TED.

Boostlingo Launches American Sign Language 24/7 Service

From all areas of telehealth care, emergency and public agency and legal aid support services, and everywhere else where language support is vital, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a growing need for improved access to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. Video remote interpreting (VRI) solutions have helped improve availability for deaf and hard of hearing individuals that need to connect with professional interpretation services, regardless of their location. This VRI-ASL service has solved many of the geographical challenges that exist today in terms of connecting to qualified ASL support, but it has not always been readily available after-hours and overnight.

Recently, the Boostlingo interpreting platform has begun offering on-demand support for ASL.
video remote interpreting to include calls that occur outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST (US). Extending to full 24-hour 7 days a week access to ASL interpreters via its video remote interpreting platform, Boostlingo is widening the hours of coverage to provide connectivity for all deaf and hard of hearing individuals to ensure that they can receive appropriate care during a medical emergency at any time, through the use of the Boostlingo HIPAA compliant telehealth platform.

TransPerfect Owners Settle Legal Disputes

Philip R. Shawe and Elizabeth Elting have settled out of court on long-running issues related to the sale of TransPerfect, a letter from Shawe’s attorney to Delaware Chancery Court stated. The one-time couple owned a 50-50 share of the New York City-based translation services company, with the case over control ending up in Chancery Court. The settlement provides for the transfer of Elting’s 50% ownership interest in Wordfast, LLC, a company with technology used by TransPerfect, as well as real estate holdings in New York and California.

Multilingual Information Access Initiative Launches in COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 Multilingual Information Access (MLIA) initiative is a collective effort from the LT community to improve information exchange about the virus, across all EU languages and beyond, by supporting the development of applications and services in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative covers all noncommercial research activities in various domains such as NLP, social sciences and humanities, and is endorsed by the European Commission and the European Language Resource Coordination (ELRC) and supported by key language technologies stakeholders in Europe including MT companies, universities, research centers and networks like CLARIN-ERIC, ELRA, the Universities of Padua, Utrecht and Lisbon, LIMSI, and Pangeanic S.L.

This community evaluation effort has been initiated as part of the CLEF Initiative and aims at accelerating the creation of resources and tools for an improved MLIA, with particular reference to a general public use case, including information on social, economic or political aspects related to the pandemic, like self-isolation, social distancing, school closing/re-opening, and so on.

Rwandan and Harvard Med Students Help Shatter Coronavirus Language Barrier

Olivier Uwishema, a Rwandan med student currently studying in Turkey, used money he saved from his monthly scholarship stipend to create the Oli Health Magazine Organization, a non-profit organization that helps young people in professional health education and scientific research. The organization has now partnered with Harvard Medical School and a team of people from all over the world for the creation and translation of accessible COVID-19 resources into English, Turkish, French, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, and 21 other languages.
In response to language barriers faced by different communities in accessing government COVID supports, a new shared project aims to make support programs readily available in some of the most widely spoken languages in British Columbia to bridge the language gap for newcomers and immigrants. The languages are Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tagalog, with Punjabi resources being released in the coming days. The websites are now live and can be accessed by every member of the public across Canada.

**Short News**

**KantanMT and Wordbee announce Connector**

Wordbee customers can now benefit from a seamless integration enabling access to high speed, high quality neural machine translation from the KantanMT platform.

**XTM announces new version of XTM Cloud**

XTM International, the company behind the enterprise cloud-based translation management system, announced the release of its new version of XTM Cloud. XTM Cloud 12.5, the "Powerful Connectivity" release comes with new integrations and CMS connectivity as well as usability and productivity enhancements. Read our improved release blog to find out more.

**YTTranslations becomes Citrix provider**

YTTranslations has become an Authorized Citrix Service Provider and Advisor. Citrix is an application that allows users to securely connect to a virtual desktop, server, application, or roaming profile through a terminal (or other computer). In partnership with Podio, YTTranslations developed a custom translation management system (CMS) that helps automate organizational processes. Features include automated project management processes (linguist project offer emails, assignments allocation); automated billing and financial processes (invoices, purchase orders); and automated linguist assessments and review performance system.

**Éclair opens new Barcelona studio, upgrades Paris facility**

Localization specialist Eclair Versioning & Accessibility (EVA) has opened a new dubbing studio in Barcelona, and has added a state-of-the-art, additional recording room in its Vanves (Paris) facility, as it continues its current expansion plans.

The new room in the Paris facility will serve both theatrical and TV recordings, and becomes the fifth hybrid room enabled for both recording and mixing. The facility also has two rooms dedicated to recording and another two designed as mixing studios.
**News**

GTE Localize opens new production office in Indonesia

GTE Localize, a medium-size translation agency specializing in Asian languages, has opened a new office in Indonesia.

SDL wins long-term enterprise agreement with US Navy

SDL has announced a long-term contract with the US Navy to standardize the creation, management, and delivery of all technical publications on the SDL Contenta Publishing Suite. The Navy Enterprise Subscription License (NESL) agreement re-affirms SDL’s role in the US Navy’s ongoing rationalization, reduction, and centralization strategy to lower the total cost of ownership of all technical publications.

TAIA, a Slovenian AI Translation platform, gets €1.2 million investment

The Slovenia translation platform TAIA, which makes use of deep learning methods, has received a 1.2 million euro investment from Fil Rouge Capital, a European venture capital fund. The funds are to be used to boost TAIA’s presence on foreign markets and a further development of the deep learning algorithms.

According to TAIA INT, the company behind the platform, this is one of the biggest investments in tech companies in Slovenia this year.

Amazon starts road-testing streamlined, multilingual Alexa Auto SDK 3.0

Arriving a little over a year after version 2.0 debuted, the new Alexa Auto SDK appears focused on making it easier to add and run custom versions of the platform to more vehicles.

Xiaomi updates XiaoAI Voice Assistant with child’s voice, simultaneous translation

Along with the new ability to listen and translate simultaneously, the XiaoAI voice assistant will be able to carry out multiple tasks with one command. The AI will collect information about how people use connected smart devices to develop responses and follow-up ideas.

Wordbee hires new CEO

Wordbee announced the appointment of Andre Hemker as new Chief Executive Officer as of October 1, 2020 taking over from José Vega.

G3 Life Sciences names localization industry veteran Amanda Ryan division president

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Amanda Ryan brings more than a decade of expertise in leadership, consulting, production, client services, and workflow development and optimization.

Argos Multilingual welcomes Jan Bareš as chief technology officer

Jan Bareš brings over two decades of production, account management, and technology management experience to his new CTO role at Argos Multilingual.

Jesse Carrillo named US Translation Company’s VP of Sales and Marketing

“I have known Jesse for many years as he was a customer of US Translation Company and therefore, he has a deep understanding of our customer’s journey and a clear vision for how to build upon our 25-year foundation,” said David Utrilla, President of US Translation Company.

VICE Media Group expands CaptionHub usage across new international markets

After a successful European-wide adoption in 2019, VMG has expanded its CaptionHub account across its Americas and APAC distribution network, now reaching audiences in over 80 countries across mobile, digital, and linear channels. [M]
November

TCWORLD 2020 – TEKOM
November 2-6, 2020, Remote  
https://conferences.tekom.de/home

Translation and Localization Sales Process Workshop
November 17-19, 2020, Remote  

Nordic Translation Industry Forum (NTIF)
November 17, 2020, Remote  
https://www.ntif.se

SDL Trados Live Virtual Conference Series (in German)
November 17-19, 2020, Remote  
https://www.sdltrados.com/events

Elia's Focus on Project Management
November 18-December 10, 2020, Remote  
http://elia-association.org/focus-pm-2020/

IMUG: Continuous Localization
November 19, 2020, Remote  
https://www.meetup.com/IMUG-Silicon-Valley

Continuous Localization for Software and Documentation at Adobe
November 19, 2020, Remote  
https://www.meetup.com/IMUG-Silicon-Valley

December

FIT World Congress
December 2-4, 2020, Remote  
https://www.fit-ift.org/events/world-congress/

Women in Localization LA Chapter Networking Happy Hour
December 10, 2020, Remote  
https://womeninlocalization.com

Languages & the Media 2020
December 15, 2020, Remote  
https://languages-media.com

XTM LIVESTream The translation Technology Virtual Summit
December 16, 2020, Remote  
www.xtmlivestream.com

2021

LocWorldWide43
January 27-28, 2021, Remote  
https://locworld.com/

Elia's Focus on Executives
May 6-7, 2021, Greece  
http://elia-association.org/our-events

PROFT
June 4-5, 2021, São Paulo, Brazil  
http://www.proft.com.br

All events are subject to change.
The Global Marketing Flywheel

How to think about international growth in a changing world

Libor Safar
Libor Safar is digital marketing director at RWS Moravia. He has over 25 years' experience in the localization industry, with 20 years in international marketing and sales.
There's been a recent shift in marketing circles from talking about funnels to talking about flywheels. This concept — a global marketing flywheel — offers companies options for how and when they expand their global content or product offerings to international markets. In fact, some organizations may already be using the concept to drive their localization decisions without even being aware of it.

Is the marketing funnel outdated?

The concept of a funnel has always been deceptively simple. Traditional marketing efforts have been focused on turning prospects into customers by moving them through stages — awareness, interest, consideration, intent, evaluation, and, ultimately, purchase. These stages formed the top, middle and bottom of the funnel, with activities and metrics built around pushing prospects down through the funnel.

Building on the concept, the typical global marketing playbook calls for focusing first on the top, and subsequently on the middle of the funnel to initiate international growth when entering new markets. The focus then shifts toward the bottom-of-funnel activities, where the goal is growth and winning market share from local competitors.

The funnel has been around for quite some time and has informed many international sales and marketing strategies. The concept works perfectly well until it doesn’t. The reality is, increasingly, that buying is no longer a linear process. Buyers have access to so much information before they even think about buying, and they rely more and more on word of mouth, effectively ignoring much of the traditional marketing that companies produce.

It’s becoming more difficult to win new customers using a framework that pushes them through a funnel. But, more importantly, this approach fails to build on the potential of attracting sales and driving referrals from happy, existing customers.

So while funnels continue to be useful when designing linear processes, their linear nature makes them less useful when considering an overall marketing approach.

In a global marketing context, this leads to a failure to build on a company’s existing customer base and a failure to capitalize on the general goodwill built in its home market and other current markets. Getting the next language or market right isn’t always easier than the last, even when it should be. At best, this results in incremental growth that just about beats the churn-rate companies normally experience, but by no means is it a way to achieve exponential growth.

In fact, this model is even more relevant in the current post-COVID world, which is marked by accelerated digitalization. This is an opportunity to increase revenues and reduce costs, and it comes with a pressing need to keep and delight existing clients.

The funnel vs. the flywheel

This is where the flywheel comes in. The idea takes inspiration from engineering, where a flywheel is a highly efficient device used to store and conserve energy. The flywheel needs initial torque to get moving, and from there it creates and stores more energy with every turn, continually increasing its output. A marketing strategy can work in much the same way. Instead of a company starting over from scratch after a given campaign has been completed or client acquired, the marketing flywheel allows them to harness the energy of the previous cycle to power the next campaign or acquisition, with less energy needed. This is the way to build self-sustaining marketing operations that keep spinning with ever-decreasing friction.

Amazon was perhaps the first company to embrace and perfect this flywheel concept in combining their own ecommerce platform with third-party sellers across markets. This helped increase traffic, the selection of products offered, and, ultimately, the overall customer experience, all while decreasing costs and, by extension, prices. This then formed a virtuous self-reinforcing cycle. In the marketing field, the concept found a lot of traction with respected marketers such as Rand Fishkin, founder of Moz and SparkToro, and Brian Halligan, co-founder and CEO of HubSpot. In fact, much of HubSpot’s operations have been reengineered based on the flywheel model (attract-engage-delight), with corresponding changes to their sales, marketing, customer services, and product development. This has made HubSpot one of the greatest success stories of a high-growth organization customizing and adopting the flywheel concept.

So while marketing as a discipline is not exactly known for its aversion to a constant stream of seemingly new concepts and buzzwords, “flywheel” is one idea that has proven its worth and has real-life applications.

Here’s a closer look at how the global marketing flywheel (Figure 1) works and the specific activities you can pursue at each step.

1. Leverage from existing markets

It’s a rare company that goes from one to 50 or 100 languages in one release. At the same time, since the web is a worldwide phenomenon, anyone can reach out to customers anywhere in the world from day one. That also means companies may have existing goodwill from their
home market or other locales where they already operate that they can leverage in a new market even before they formally enter it.

For instance, an existing website domain authority that contains content and links to assets in other languages added over the years has a global relevance that can be leveraged in a new market. This can be intelligently explored using multiple-domain search engine optimization (SEO) strategies that help build a massive search engine presence that’s hard to beat with a single domain or language footprint. Ongoing technical SEO optimization also helps immensely.

Similarly, companies may have existing global social media followings they can branch off and segment to communicate directly with their audiences in a local language. They can do this even before establishing their local social media channels, which otherwise would take time to build and grow from scratch. For instance, organizations can post on their global social media accounts in local languages specifically to followers who have a given language set as their default, or who are based in selected target markets. This reinforces the global social media presence and later on can be used to cross-promote local channels, and vice versa.

Using this approach, every new language adds strength to the global domain and other assets, and supports all existing and subsequently added languages, creating a self-reinforcing circle that can be leveraged. This also includes getting relevant testimonials from recognized brands and leveraging existing reviews from existing markets when entering a new one. Among other things, this consideration also impacts how organizations structure their global marketing teams, striking the right balance between global efficiencies and local relevance, so they can capitalize on these opportunities.

2. **Boost local brand affinity**

Brand is the lubricant that makes every part of the flywheel go faster. It allows companies to achieve more with considerably less at every stage of the process. For instance, across markets and online platforms, high click-through rates correlate strongly with low costs-per-click. In other words, brands that are recognized and evoke positive connotations enjoy more clicks, resulting in a lower cost of paid or organic acquisition.

In this step, organizations work to build up demand for their brand and increase in-country brand awareness. This is something all other parts of the flywheel contribute to and something that necessarily requires time and patience. Specific activities that can help foster local brand awareness are local PR and media relations, as well as building some form of in-country presence or partnership network. Building and nurturing a local community can be augmented by using brand ambassadors, locally trusted and respected people, or figureheads who can work with the community to represent and promote your brand in-market.

The ultimate goal is for the brand name to become the search term, rather than having to win in the
content search game. This requires constant monitoring on the local market level, as the growing — and highly controversial — practice of companies bidding for their competitors’ brand names with branded keywords in their paid advertising shows.

3. Optimize for local conversation

In broad terms, this represents the ongoing effort to maximize inbound traffic value so visitors proceed to achieve defined goals, with indicators and milestones along the conversion path. This might be conversion on a landing page, subscription to a trial or freemium model, opting into marketing communications, a blog subscription, online inquiry, or request for information.

In a global marketing context, this optimization goes beyond simply localizing website content to redesigning the site so visitors enjoy a native market-like user experience. This includes offering a range of communications options specific to each locale — online, email, local phone, live chat, or chatbot available in a given language, to name just a few — as well as automatic meeting booking in visitors’ time zones, locally preferred payment options and return policies, and compliance with local privacy rules.

The flywheel model is all about iterations and ongoing experimentation, and localization is one way to increase conversions across geographies. Readdle, the growing developer of popular productivity apps for iOS, is a great example of a company using an intelligent approach to test market potential by incremental localization of content. It does this first in the App Store, followed by minimum localization, and finally “all-in” localization for a selected market. Figure 2 shows how their conversion rates from free trial user to paying customer rapidly increased following localization of one of their products.

This metric is even more important in the contexts of the current economic uncertainty, as software companies from Asana to Zoom see a greater adoption of free trials or freemium models across the board. This increases new user registrations and overall user base, but turning these into paid subscriptions is absolutely critical. This is why organizations are focusing on local conversions and optimization with local-language content or localized products more than ever before.

4. Publish market-relevant content

Providing valuable, educational content that addresses the needs of prospects and customers is a winning formula for attracting and engaging customers. But can be hard when the competitive space is increasingly saturated. However, this may not be the case for every market and there’s an opportunity for organizations to create new channels in a range of other languages where the competition for attention may be less fierce.

This applies to local-language blogs, offers, multimedia,
and other assets. Companies have the full list of options here, from translating content created originally for the home market or transcreating it while adding local flavor to opting for complete in-country copywriting with original content written in the given market language with target-market specifics and insights in mind. In most cases, this last approach, with local market stories and context, generates the highest level of engagement, despite typically being the most expensive.

RWS Moravia’s Japanese blog illustrates this point well. It publishes posts that have been translated or transcreated from English as well as original posts that have been authored in-country in Japanese by local copywriters. When we compared the performance of these different types of content, we saw that original posts that tackled locally relevant topics enjoyed view rates 11-12 times higher than that achieved by the translated content.

5. Grow locally through amplifiers

Amplifying local-language communications is crucial, especially in the early stages of market development when the local audience is smaller. In addition to the obvious use of dedicated, popular, market-specific social media accounts and platforms, there are other tactics, including potential local influencer engagement. Another approach, suggested by Rand Fishkin, calls for creating specific content that will appeal to potential amplifiers, such as journalists, industry or mainstream media, and other potential ambassadors and influencers. This can prove useful for local marketing, as it provides for the creation of user-generated content in individual target locales.

One frequently overlooked component for amplifying content is customer marketing, with content and tactics designed to grow audiences among existing customers. Similarly, advocacy marketing is a useful tactic aiming to enable customers to create buzz around your brand and products — one more way to support referrals from happy customers.

Another recent tactic revolves around user reviews, for instance on app stores. These may be written in different languages and may contain a wealth of information about the actual experience users in different geographies have with a given product, whether localized or not. Companies who are able to pick up reviews across languages and who have the ability to respond in the users’ native languages can amplify positive user experiences or improve their products based on those less-than-positive reviews. Sadly, many developers still leave said non-English reviews or comments unanswered.

Ratings, again collected in individual markets, are another great way to grow product adoption, since there is normally a direct correlation between ratings and total downloads, and a one-star increase in ratings may result in conversion increases in hundreds of percent.

In-app prompts to rate a product, in particular, introduced in iOS 11, lead to a ratings inflation across geographies, since giving a rating is now so much easier as users don’t have to go to the app store to provide written feedback. They’ve also probably helped to skew the overall feedback developers receive, with average rankings rising substantially since their introduction.

This is because giving a five-star rating is easy, and developers often deploy smart tactics and behavioral science to display in-app prompts in moments when users are most likely to give a high rating. This means that more valuable information about the actual sentiment in a given geography can be gleaned by mining multilingual feedback and through active listening on social media.

App stores and marketplaces in general are both a global phenomenon and increasingly competitive, so companies need to look for all reviews and ratings they receive regardless of the specific market or language of origin. That’s because the negative experience that customers have in one market can ultimately impact global ratings, hitting overall growth.

6. Create local customer experience

The right degree of localization is crucial to providing a strong local customer experience, but it’s just one element in the overall mix. Other elements include providing localized support, personalization, and integrations with complementary products or services that are popular in a given market.

In this context, the focus on delighting customers in order to drive future growth also means that companies may choose to provide localized products or experiences earlier on. They may also decide to go deeper in the level of localization provided than might have been the case in the past.

In the current economic climate, localization can also be perceived as a measurable tactic designed to decrease annual churn rates or to increase client retention. The fact that users can experience a localized product hands-on in a free trial or freemium model before actual purchasing it increases the likelihood of their conversion to paid customer.

Companies also continue exploring new ways of getting in-country inputs about products. For instance Evernote, the popular productivity app, built their success on the Japanese market by sending a team to Tokyo to interview Japanese users after they saw a growing interest in their English-language product there. This helped them understand the specific local needs and usage behaviors, which they then used when preparing the localized version.
They also used these insights in customizing their App Store presence in Japan, which went beyond the usual App Store optimization tactics and explicitly explored the ways the app was being used in Japan. This has become so useful that Evernote meets with local influencers and active users to get in-country feedback on a regular basis.

7. Expand your own in-country audiences

This step supports the imperative to own your own audiences. Social media and other online platforms with followers provide excellent additional audiences, but they are only secondary. Across markets, engagement rates on social media, where companies need to compete with many others (as well as sponsored content), are much lower than with direct communication such as emails. In addition, social media will always prefer native content and users to stay on their platforms rather than link to other sites. For these reasons, companies need to build and grow their own email lists of opted-in contacts, blog subscribers, and others — genuinely interested communities that can be expected to engage with and amplify content. This is the solid customer base that companies need to consciously build up and nurture over time.

Every piece of content published, or demand generation activity created, should lead to increasing your audience. This reinforces the reach of your assets and activities. In the spirit of global marketing, this means segmenting your global lists by language preferences, cross-promoting content across locales, making it easy to share and promote content, and supporting word-of-mouth and referrals.

Putting it all together

Individually, none of these steps in the global marketing flywheel model are really that revolutionary. The model’s beauty lies in the way it shows the comprehensive nature of international marketing and how it helps identify gaps or sources of friction that may hinder your efforts. And clearly it no longer relies on the traditional, linear buyer journey frameworks.

No individual standalone tactic can have a significant impact. Experience shows that no hacks or shortcuts will have a lasting impact. “Localize and they will come” no longer works. Providing a great localized web experience is not enough. Real growth can be achieved when all the components in the flywheel are in place and contribute in unison, building on the goodwill created by delighting existing customers over time.

This model encourages us to think about how to make the flywheel bigger, how to make it spin faster, and how to eliminate unnecessary friction that slows it down and reduces energy.

Potential friction comes in many shapes and forms. It is not unusual for localized content to resonate less well with the targeted in-country audiences. Fairly often, companies create great content in the given language but fail to promote and amplify it properly. It’s also not unusual for the localized product or web experience to cater to the specifics of larger markets, say Germany, but not smaller ones, hurting adoption and conversion rates. Friction may also arise internally, between the central and local marketing teams, or between product teams and marketing. In every case, the flywheel model helps identify sources of friction and find ways of fixing them.

Take it for a spin

The model reinforces itself with each and every new language added, new piece of content localized, new international customer won. All of these increase the speed of the flywheel. And while the initial revolutions may be difficult, it gets easier over time and feeds into long-term growth. [M]
Employment rates have dropped all over the world. Stocks have experienced great flux. Countries struggled to contain the recession. In this context, how are language service providers (LSPs) doing? Based on the impact of COVID-19 on the overall economy, CSA Research has closely tracked how LSPs have been affected, compiling in-depth analysis of their perceptions. For example, changes in LSP’s overall business, and whether the impacts are viewed as temporary or permanent. Data is presented from three different periods: March, May, and July.
Revenue Losses in All Regions and All Sizes

Figure 1 synthesizes the perceptions of LSPs in three consecutive surveys of top providers and two surveys of Chinese LSPs. Since COVID-19 hit China first, the perceptions of these Chinese LSPs provide a useful comparison to the rest of the world.

- **Decreases are prevalent.** Over one-half of respondents (55%) said in July that they experienced a reduction in their turnover versus last year. Only 20% said business is up.
- **The average revenue change is -6%**. The responses ranged from a 99% decrease all the way to an increase of more than 100%, for a relatively modest average of -6%. While that number may seem small enough, consider that the first quarter of the year was relatively normal for LSPs. In addition, the compounding power of even a 6% loss as the pandemic lingers will amount to large yearly losses for LSPs.

The pressure wasn’t felt quite the same way around the world. Eastern Europe respondents reported the largest drop in revenue for the first half of the year (13%), while North American and Northern European LSPs reported the lowest drop at less than one-half that rate (6%) (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How has COVID-19 affected your business as of today?</th>
<th>LSPs Worldwide</th>
<th>Chinese LSPs Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March</strong></td>
<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td><strong>July</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall business has decreased</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall business is the same</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall business has increased</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too soon to tell</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantify the change in your revenue from January to June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.</th>
<th>LSPs Worldwide</th>
<th>Chinese LSPs Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average change in revenue, January to June, compared to prior year</strong></td>
<td><strong>-6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>-10%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 124</td>
<td>N = 115</td>
<td>N = 121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Overview of COVID-19 Effects on LSPs. Source: CSA Research.
* In the May survey to Chinese LSPs, “Too soon to tell” was not provided as an option.

Figure 2: Average revenue loss by region, January to June. Copyright CSA Research.
Mid-sized LSPs hit hardest

Figure 3 displays the average revenue loss by company size and Figure 4 the percentage of responding companies that reported a decrease in revenue over the last year. Some patterns emerged.

- **Mid-sized LSPs ($5 million to $19.9 million) have taken the brunt of the decline.** They experienced an average 13% decrease in revenue from January to June, and 80% of them say overall business is down, the largest percentage yet that shares this viewpoint. This group is also the most likely to feel that the market changes are permanent, showing a pattern of struggles they must overcome to rebound (Figure 9).

- **Small and large companies’ performance mirrors each other.** Their drop in revenue is smaller: -3% for small LSPs and -4% for large ones. This indicates a story of at least partial recovery.

Recovery signs appear

Focusing on the percentage of respondents that experienced a decrease in revenue, two patterns emerge (Figure 5):

- **Business outlook is improving.** When comparing May to July results by region, Asia-Pacific (APAC) is the only region where LSPs showed a rise in the percentage of LSPs that experienced a decrease in revenue. In CSA Research’s similar survey solely for Chinese LSPs, in July 59% of the 115 respondents experienced a decrease — almost the exact same percentage as the APAC sample. This may be tied to an earlier resurgence of the virus or broader understanding of the longer-term impact in the APAC market.

- **Progression is uneven.** North America was the hardest hit in the first two surveys (65% in March and 78% in April), but experienced the biggest improvement in the July analysis. Western Europe now overtakes the position of most companies in a downward spiral (65% of respondents).

Success begets success, even in a pandemic

We tested whether companies’ performance over the prior three years (2017-2019) was predictive of how well they weathered COVID-19 and found it was (Figure 6). Those whose overall business had increased even in the midst of the pandemic have a compound average growth rate of 37% over the prior three years. However, those that said business was flat or decreased have growth rates not even one-third of that. Based on prior experience with and observation of LSPs, we assume that such strong past sustained growth meant they had the systems and processes in place to react to the vicissitudes of the market and possibly emerge stronger.
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international strategy

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### LSPs Reporting Decreases in Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 124 N = 115 N = 121

Figure 5: LSPs reporting decreases in revenue, March to July, by region. Data copyright CSA Research.

### Perceptions differ on permanence of changes

Only 2% of the LSPs surveyed believe that COVID-19 has not changed the language services and technology market, either temporarily or permanently (Figure 7). Therefore, 98% of respondents thought otherwise: 42% see the market as changed forever, and 56% view the pandemic’s effects as more transitory. What does that mean? The answer will vary based on providers, but it’s a blend of reduction in demand, a different balance of services, changes in production models, increased use of technology, and revisited staffing models (“COVID-19’s Impact on Staffing and Offices at LSPs”).

![Figure 6: Compound average growth rate and effect of COVID-19 on business. Copyright CSA Research 2020.](image-url)
These results were analyzed by region, too, revealing different perspectives on COVID-19’s impact on the market (Figure 8).

- **A conflicted North America.** The region led the world with the highest percentage both seeing the changes as permanent (64%) and as having not changed at all (7%). Why? One reason for their belief in the permanence of the changes is that LSPs in this region tend to be more specialized and have achieved greater market segmentation. They know their markets intimately and thus can better gauge whether these new conditions will last.

- **APAC is overwhelmingly optimistic.** LSPs in the Asia-Pacific region overwhelmingly see the changes in the market as temporary (80%), again aligning with the response received from the survey of 115 Chinese LSPs (71%).

**Small LSPs view the changes as transitory**

Small LSPs are most likely to believe the changes are temporary (63%) (Figure 9). Conversely, a majority of mid-sized LSPs ($5 million to $19.9 million) view them as permanent (55%). As the data in Figure 4 shows, the percentage in this latter group that has reported decreases in business keeps going up — the only revenue group exhibiting this trend.

**Results during pandemic affect market perception**

Those that think COVID-19 hasn’t changed the market in any way have seen the least change in revenue — on average, this group has seen a minimal 4% increase in the first half of the year (Figure 10). However, those who view market changes as permanent have experienced a 4% decrease. Perhaps trying to remain optimistic in the face of strong market headwinds, companies that believe the market’s changes are temporary reported the largest average drop in revenue (-8%).
Focus

**Recommendations**

Based on analysis of five surveys of LSPs, three worldwide and two solely for Chinese LSPs, here are some recommendations:

- **Compare your situation to your peers.** Have you fared better, worse, or in line with companies in your geography or company-size bracket? Think about why that may be. You may have more work in a vertical or service type where clients are operating with minimal work. Likewise, you may benefit from the verticals or services that support the needs of the pandemic.

- **Prepare for the long haul.** Early optimism about a quick return to normal has shifted over the past six months. LSPs are expecting the pandemic’s effects to last longer and many (41%) think the changes it has wrought will be permanent. Waiting it out or treading water until things go back to normal isn’t an option; your business may not be able to remain solvent that long, and some or even most things will never return to how they were.

- **Apply market segmentation.** Identify which markets are performing best for you and focus on those. There are shifts in industry demand due to COVID-19, so see where demand is growing and either increase your footprint there or try to enter these markets if it’s feasible to do so.

Keep in mind, the data in this article is based on CSA Research’s July survey of 121 of the world’s largest LSPs. Additional information is derived from two similar surveys previously conducted, in March and May 2020, for a total of 360 responses, as well as two surveys of China-based LSPs in May and August, resulting in 252 responses. Analysis is based on conditions at time of writing the article. [M]

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**Figure 9: Perception of effects on LSP market by size. Copyright CSA Research.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size Range</th>
<th>It has not changed the market at all</th>
<th>It has temporarily changed the market</th>
<th>It has permanently changed the market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1 to $4.99 million</td>
<td>$5 million to $19.99 million</td>
<td>$20+ million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10: Perception of effects on LSP market by average revenue loss. Copyright CSA Research 2020.**

- 4% increase
- 8% decrease
- 5% decrease

- 0% change
- -5% change
- -10% change

- It has not changed the market at all
- It has permanently changed the market
- It has temporarily changed the market
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Linguistic Blackout

Why does the language services industry in the United States have so few Black people?

Michael Reid

Michael Reid is an educator, translator, and language, culture, and diversity consultant with over 20 years of experience. He’s passionate about the intersection of language and social justice, and speaks six languages fluently and another seven to basic competency. He also speaks enough Klingon to negotiate safe passage through the Neutral Zone.
As anyone following the news from the United States is no doubt aware, the past few months have seen the United States engulfed in a long-overdue reckoning with both its racial past and present. The extrajudicial killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the outright murder of Ahmaud Arbery by his fellow citizens, and the subsequent protests and civil unrest that have rocked cities all over the country have galvanized the country and forced many, both publicly and privately, to confront the ways in which they may be contributing, even unintentionally, to perpetuating a system that privileges white people at the expense of their Black counterparts.

Now, of course, this need to wrestle with the more unsavory threads woven into the American fabric is not viewed with the same urgency by all, and even the above characterization of US society will not meet with universal approbation. The general consensus, though, backed by both anecdotal evidence and the historical record, is that the US, for all its lofty stated ideals, has rarely — and then only haltingly — lived up to those ideals in its dealings with those whose skin color does not resemble that of those who wrote our founding documents.

Counted among this consensus one could surely expect to find language services providers (LSPs). After all, this is an industry devoted to crossing linguistic and cultural barriers, and embracing the beautiful idiomatic diversity of our species in order to ensure that language is not an obstacle to access for anyone. It should be not just a face in the crowd but at the very forefront of the movement to ensure representation. From healthcare to video games to the subtitles on Tiger King, translation, interpretation, and localization have as their stock in trade some of the very diversity that the crowds filling the streets champion.

And yet, in the businesses that operate within and because of the linguistic and cultural diversity among us, racial diversity among the leadership can be hard to come by, and nowhere is that more evident than when we’re talking about Black faces in leadership positions at some of the largest American LSPs. Actual aggregated data on Black/African American diversity within the language services industry is hard to come by, so for this article I looked at upper level and C-suite staffing in the five largest LSPs with headquarters in the US as determined by CSA Research. An analysis of the executive staffs of Welocalize, TransPerfect, LanguageLine, Lionbridge, and CyraCom shows only one Black person appearing in a leadership position. One, out of a combined 44 people, or 2.2% of all executive staff positions. Anecdotally, I can also offer this: in my 24 years as a translator and interpreter, I have never worked with a project manager or coordinator who was Black. When I ask friends and colleagues with even deeper and broader industry experience than me, they report that they’ve worked with maybe two or three Black people in LSPs in their entire careers.

Seeing Black representation in United States LSPs so wildly out of sync with the proportion of the population should give one pause. What are the factors that led to this and help perpetuate it? To explore the possible answer, we need to examine what an LSP actually does, and for whom, and how the case for Black representation has been made in the American business world.

The business (to business) case for diversity

For years, diversity advocates would try to pry open the doors of the C-suite (or sometimes even middle management) by making what was called the business case for diversity. In brief, diversity practitioners and others would try to sell a business on the gains to be realized from greater staffing diversity — either subtly, with talk of how more diverse teams would come up with more creative business solutions driving greater profit, or more cynically, simply touting diversity’s PR benefits. Be they subtle or more direct though, these approaches all had one thing in common: they appealed to the bottom line. “Diversity drives profit” is a likely, if a bit too on-the-nose, motto for the diversity practices of that era.

As the understanding of what diversity actually means has evolved, however, the business case has begun to fall out of favor. More and more, especially given the string of high-profile assaults on the personhood of non-white people in the US, society is realizing that diversity per se means little if historically underrepresented groups are excluded, either explicitly or through the inertia of ingrained practice, from the seats of power. It’s no longer enough to put a couple of stock photos of smiling Black folks on the About page of your website. Black folks (and others) need to be both in the room and heard when crucial decisions are made. This shift in attitude was signaled by the addition of inclusion and equity to the job titles and mission statements of companies around the country.

In the current era, advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion don’t (as a rule) appeal to the bottom line, but to the moral intuition of the companies they work with. Including the historically underrepresented may or may not drive greater profit, but that’s not the point. You don’t include people because it’s profitable, you do it because it’s the right thing to do.
The fact remains, though, that a central consideration for many businesses is the realization that customers being able to see somebody who looks like them in the company’s advertisements and outward-facing communications is going to drive greater profit. Try as they might, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practitioners still have a way to go to convince companies that their moral health is equal to — or greater than — their financial health.

This profit-driven nudge toward doing the right thing works, after a fashion, for B2C companies, but what about B2B companies? After all, B2C companies have racially diverse audiences rightly eager to see themselves represented in the brands they buy. Bluntly put, B2C companies have Black and Brown people to sell stuff to.

LSPs are not B2C companies, though. Few individuals go out translation shopping and, on those rare occasions when they do, they usually hire a freelancer or a small mom-and-pop operation (and well they should). Big name LSPs aren’t in the market for these small, one-off projects. They’re selling their product — the linguistic and cultural expertise which is ironically usually concentrated in the lower ranks of the company — to other businesses. When the customer is another business, though, as in the case of B2B companies, the dynamic changes.

Always a few steps behind

The increase in Black representation in B2C companies has been halting and incomplete, but it has outpaced that of B2B companies. What it hasn’t outpaced is the actual proportion of Black people with the purchasing power to buy the goods and services these companies offer. And while B2C companies catch up to the reality of their consumer base, B2B companies are playing catch up with the new realities of their clients. In other words, if B2C companies are two steps behind the demographic realities of the country, and B2B companies are two steps behind the B2C companies, then the B2B companies are, generously, four steps behind that reality.

But it’s not just the few-steps-behind positioning that leads to such low Black representation in executive positions in LSPs.

LSPs also tend to pull from the affinity networks of the finance and tech sector, along with occasional forays into the venture capital space, for their executive leadership. It shouldn’t come as any surprise that Black people are heavily underrepresented in this space in the US for several reasons, many of which have to do with the structure of these affinity networks in the first place.

While Black representation in terms of those who graduate with a CSTEM or language-related degree is low in proportion to the population, it’s still high compared to the rate of representation in the sector. According to the Los Angeles Times, 8.6% of graduates with a bachelor’s degree in computer science in 2016 were Black, whereas by May of this year only 3.7% of Google employees were Black.

Finance does even worse, with its entire non-white workforce being below the national average. Entrance into the professional ranks of these worlds — at the lower levels but especially at the higher levels — is generally granted through relationships with people who are already highly placed in these companies, or by being able to establish a mentor-mentee relationship with somebody in such a position. This system not only creates a barrier to entry for many Black graduates, it also means that when they do manage to get their foot in the door, they often walk...
right back out because they find the environment so unwelcoming. If people in powerful positions in these companies want to mentor and shepherd people who remind them of themselves, and by and large they themselves are white men, then there remains precious little chance for Black advancement in these sectors.

If these are the realms that LSPs are cultivating their executive leadership from, majority white spaces that often function as self-sealed networks, then it's no surprise that Black representation will be lagging. Furthermore, if LSPs see no immediate need to adjust their demographics, they're not going to. Simply put, the executive leadership of LSPs becomes a group of (mostly) white people drawn from a group of (mostly) white people selling their product back to the group of (mostly) white people from which they were drawn. This isn't to say that they don't have good intentions; many of them do. But as the tech and finance sector show us, the insular, in-group nature of the higher echelons of power have a way of creating obstacles to entry for those who may be eminently qualified, but who haven’t risen up through the same social circle.

**What can be done?**

So, what is to be done about this? How do we break down the barriers that have kept Black representation so low? There are several things that need to happen. One, LSPs need to start actively recruiting from historically Black colleges and universities. They represent an enormous well-spring of dedicated, passionate talent and there is no excuse for not creating a pipeline. LSPs can also begin to look outside of the good old boys-and-girls club and be more open to hiring executive talent from outside of their extended social and professional networks. At the same time, LSPs need to make sure they are creating welcoming environments that foster and support Black talent. A lot of LSPs get lulled into thinking (when they think about it at all) that they don’t need to do any diversity work, that they’re already paragons of diversity. And it is of course true that they are, at least at the lower levels, exemplars of a rich and wonderful linguistic diversity. In the higher ranks, they’ve made impressive strides in Asian and to some degree Latinx inclusion. But we’re talking about Black representation, and it’s in this area where they have fallen woefully short.

All of these measures, though, start with the simple (though not easy) act of simply recognizing the problem for what it is and why things were allowed to become this way in the first place. As James Baldwin famously said, not everything that’s faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. For all their lofty ideals and good intentions many B2B companies, LSPs included, have a long way to go when it comes to creating a truly representative staffing model. End clients may not be clamoring for it (yet) but that means this is even more of an opportunity for LSPs to show leadership in this space and live up to the promise of their brand. Breaking down barriers and ensuring access lie at the heart of language services. What better way to live that mission than to make sure their offices reflect that very ethos? The voice of the people is unmistakable. Let’s make sure it doesn’t get lost in translation. [M]
Automation in the Age of Remote Work

Jessica Roland

A strategic account director at SDL since 2014, Jessica Roland works with selected enterprise customers to help them reach global audiences and enhance customer experience, increasingly via AI. Prior roles include leading enterprise software globalization teams and international product management.
Remember what it used to be like to get all your work done in an eight-hour workday? Starting with the advent of the internet, where an immediate response first became possible, followed by the exponential growth in content, our formally normal workdays are long gone. Even the pandemic has not slowed this trend. COVID-19 work-from-home has eliminated commuting for many, but the informal consensus is that we’re not working any less. Au contraire, hours have lengthened for many. According to Bloomberg News, stay-at-home workers in the United States are spending three more hours per day on the job than before the pandemic, with some other countries not lagging far behind.

Workers are also attending a plethora of virtual conferences and other webinars designed to compensate for the fact that we’re not meeting in person these days. The communications dial has been turned up, not down, during the current crisis. There’s a continual, ever-faster flow of data (Figure 1) and tasks, to the point where it’s now impossible to keep up without assistance.

That assistance used to be human, but with the increasing sophistication of available technology, software programs running on a variety of interfaces have taken over the “assistance” role. Our software assistants have become increasingly intelligent — to the point where they are able to anticipate needs, not just respond to commands.

The Harvard Business Review identifies three ways artificial intelligence can help take on these routine tasks from a real-world perspective, where software is learning to act like humans. The first is process automation at a level of sophistication where the software acts like a human inputting and consuming information from multiple IT systems. The second is cognitive insight — detecting patterns and determining their meaning. The third is cognitive engagement, engaging individuals using natural language processing.

In the global content business, whether creating the original content or offering it in multiple languages, the trends are clear. Traditionally, there have been many routine, monotonous, and rather uninteresting tasks associated with the production of words for commercial purposes and with their translation and adaptation to local languages and cultures. Today, more and more of these routine tasks can be performed by software assistants, leaving writers, translators, and reviewers free to focus on refining texts and tools and on gaining more understanding of future communication needs. Software assistants not only help us humans keep up with the faster pace of work, but also allow us to spend our precious time on the most valuable tasks. That’s an important goal, for as we all realize sooner or later, human time is clearly finite, and every moment spent doing one thing represents a choice not to spend our human creative powers and insights on other activities — a significant opportunity cost.

Figure 1: Annual size of the global datasphere. Adapted from Data Age 2025, published November 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Zettabytes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2025</td>
<td>175 ZB</td>
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Let’s look at a few examples of human plus machine efficiencies that are saving valuable time today in the language industry, and which could make our collective 2021 more fruitful and fun (and don't we all need that these days?).

**Content creators**

Any business writer will tell you that there’s a lot of pleasure in creating content the first time around. It’s fun to think of the concepts you need to convey, to organize them so that they do the best job of persuading or educating, and to feel your words falling into elegant placement on the virtual page. Less fun may be having to revisit the same material — to do updates or to repurpose it for multiple publications or different channels. For websites, help came along in the form of web content management systems that allow site managers to see every place across a site where a given version of a piece of content is used, and to update it easily, consistently, and simultaneously. Same for technical publications managers, who now have DITA-based component content management systems whose raison d'être is to enable efficient content reuse and updating. This year, with the increasing trend of buyers to consume a blend of commercial and technical information as part of their customer journey, we began to see content management systems that "mashup" (blend) these purposes, achieving a single source of truth for all content. Blending these systems saves content creators from having to reinvent the wheel over and over again... and also to avoid inadvertently creating conflicting information across sources (Figure 2).

In 2020, we also saw the early stages of a technological race to enable "writing assistants." Now, writing assistance is not a new concept: you can think of mid-century dictation machines as writing assistants. Over the years, that concept morphed into speech-to-text automation, which, combined with translation technology, has enabled both live and virtual conference attendees to better digest event content and more quickly have a record of it. That technology assists with writing in the sense of capture and transmission, but it does not generate content. In recent years, we’ve started to see AI-driven technology that can

*Figure 2: Parent publications and different channels. Source: SDL.*
automatically derive summaries, abstracts, and social media blurbs when given a full piece of content.

AI-generated writing continues to make startling progress. This year’s news of OpenAI GPT 3 technology being able to actually create fluid content from scratch has created a lot of buzz and speculation about future uses. In some cases, this could be quite problematic; for example, in the wrong hands, it could be used to quickly and widely spread disinformation. At the very least, if it becomes common for software to actually generate content, it will likely mean even vaster amounts of content to consume and make sense of. Then, inevitably, we will delegate that task to software as well! In any case, the “state of content” is rapidly changing, and we will continually need to adapt.

Translators

Translators in general are most enthusiastic when they’re able to bring their creativity to bear. For example, in transcreation, target language content is wholly or partly created from scratch in order to resonate locally, rather than being directly and exactly translated. Transcreation remains one of the really fun and beautiful areas of the business.

Direct translation of commercial or technical content can often seem dry and repetitive. Translation memory and machine translation technologies evolved and were eventually accepted, not only because they allowed managers to drive more output faster, but also because translators themselves came to happily depend upon leveraging previous translations and receiving suggestions on translations they know are consistent with past use. This is especially true for commercial and technical content that is ephemeral and purpose-driven. Post-editing a machine-generated translation may not only faster, but less stultifying and repetitive because now, with AI-driven neural machine translation that takes a machine-first, human-optimized approach, the quality of MT is continually improving.

Translators can observe, and marvel at, these continual improvements, and also help make them happen, by participating actively in MT training and testing. In fact, more and more, training MT seems to be the sweet spot for the translator of the future. It will require translators to have more of a computational linguistics background than ever before, but it will be interesting — and fun. In fact, one could look at it as having a partner in translation, only the partner is a machine and requires some on-boarding to be a helpful part of the team. Translation provider companies should be doing all they can to enable translators to adapt to this shift in translation skill set.

Managers

Some of the most routine tasks for localization project and program managers, whether they’re working on vendor-side or client-side localization teams, have to do with:

- Getting files transferred to and from translators
- Answering translator questions, both linguistic and logistical
- Monitoring and enforcing schedules, milestones, and budgets

Managing the time-cost-quality triangle is their core role, and parts of it have, in the past, been exasperatingly time-consuming and routine. Over the past years, automation such as workflow-based translation management systems and integration with content management systems have made it much easier to move files and jobs along through the different stages of translation on time. Their functionality has also been enriched over the years to include managing business tasks such as quoting projects, processing approvals, and invoicing. Online query systems have helped ensure project managers do not have to answer the same questions over and over for different translators. Routine tasks have thus been eased by software assistants, and this has been essential as translation volumes have grown to super-human levels. Ultimately, these developments have saved project teams enormous amounts of time.

Now we are seeing a further transformation in this area via the power of data, as TMS systems offer continuous, real-time monitoring of various project parameters. This allows project managers to catch problems as they occur. But in today’s AI-emergent world, catching issues quickly is simply not enough. Preventing problems in the first place is even better, and it can be enabled by predictive analytics. Predictive analytics and preemptive actions are the sweet spot of localization projects of the future. The future is starting to be visible right now; for example, at SDL we see this internally, as assigning the best translator resources and translation method at a given point in time is transitioning from human to AI-powered work.

Globalization executives

Similarly, in a level up from day-to-day localization project management, globalization leaders have in recent years been pushing for data analysts to join their teams. Their purpose in doing so is to nip problems in the bud or prevent them before they occur, as well as show the business value gained from their teams’ efforts. At this level, it’s key to be able to see summarized data across projects, in order to derive more systemic insights.

Getting budget for, and hiring, such data analysts has been a major challenge for globalization leaders. The alternative — doing the analysis themselves — is often impossible, due to lack of time or skill set. When they
do have the knowledge to do some of it, it’s generally at
the cost of other priorities… or sleep! And, even though
the insights are exciting, the actual task of identifying,
assembling, cleaning, and processing data is excruciating
work for a globalization leader with relationships up and
down the organization to monitor.

Here again, intelligent assistants are coming to the
rescue. TMS and MT dashboards are now enabling
this important macro view. TMS application program
interfaces (APIs) also allow for connection to business
insight programs like Sisense to enable calculation of
translation profit margins and ROI. API connections
to content management systems enable tying language
to personalization efforts and to AI-based language
optimization tools like Acrolinx. Systematic capture
and automated sentiment analysis of online comments
or survey data regarding source or translated content
are also ways of catching issues early on or gathering
positive data for ROI discussions. These connections
are all moving from only summarizing past data to
also including predicting the future. Human efforts
plus machine efforts are providing ever-more valuable
insights and control of the business, with far less effort
and much more fun.

Translation quality and review

No doubt about it, translation testing and review can
be highly repetitive. Review in particular can be perceived
as burdensome, because these days it’s increasingly being
left to subject matter experts (SMEs). SMEs have their
own day jobs to think of first and are often lending a hand
to review in their "free" time. Lightening the reviewer’s
burden starts with easy to use tools for reviewing material
in context (whether source content or translation) and
capturing, sharing, and resolving review comments in
one interface.

It’s also imperative that they be given the highest
quality content to start with — content that has already
been thoroughly checked for routine errors — so that
the reviewer can focus on the truly value-add aspects.
In recent years, automated "assistants" have helped
companies handle the increased volumes of testing
and review that result from the exponential growth of
content. Translators can run a battery of automated
quality checks so that basic spelling, grammar, and
other syntax errors are caught before review ever starts.

If translators haven’t run automated quality checks
on their desktop, server-based translation management
systems can do it before the translation is accepted.
Upstream from translation, source content can be
optimized automatically, whether in batch mode after
it’s written, or real-time during the writing process —
preventing errors from occurring in the first place and
ensuring consistency.

Where AI comes in is with the massive amounts
of data that go into training these tools in order to

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<th>Role</th>
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<th>Leaves up time for</th>
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<td>Machine translation</td>
<td>Training automated tools</td>
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<td>Project manager</td>
<td>Workflow management</td>
<td>Process innovation</td>
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Figure 3: Areas for intelligent automation and the roles that go with them.
produce cognitive insights that can guide writers and translators. We can anticipate that, as data is collected from writers during the authoring process, it could be used predictively to help determine where training or focused automated checks could be used upstream. This would be key, because the further upstream that errors are caught or prevented, the less costly it is for the organization.

We’ve gone over some of the ways that automation has helped take the burden of repetitive tasks away from humans in the content creation and translation process, making room for higher-value contribution. Most of the automation examples were in the process class, with a few in the cognitive insights class. The emergence of cognitive engagement can most commonly be seen in chatbot applications, where the goal is to make the interaction seem as human as possible. But chatbot use is currently focused on serving consumers and has not yet found a place in helping writers and translators do their jobs.

We’ve covered a lot of ground on changing roles, so let’s recap (Figure 3).

Of course, there is a growing line of sustainability thinking that questions whether unbridled growth in anything, including content, is inevitable or even desirable. But that’s another, longer-term conversation. For the time being, there is no end in sight to exponential content growth. Given that, without intelligent automation, tasks such as those in the middle column above will quickly consume all available time, and workers will be increasingly overwhelmed. The emergence of intelligent tools for process automation and for content insights will enable us to leave repetitive and routine tasks to machines and focus our human time and energy on research, strategy, planning, and optimization, using our full capacity for creative thinking and driving solutions. We’ve seen an acceleration this year in that transition, driven by remarkable advances in linguistic AI. Rather than feel threatened, we can rejoice that these advances will help carve out the mental space and freedom to focus on the most interesting end of the work spectrum. Human plus machine equals more capacity, but also more fun for all of us in the business of words. [M]

Focus

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Localizing Visual Novels for Deaf Teens

Olga Deputatova

Olga Deputatova is a localization manager at Tortuga Social Ltd.
Gaming is one of the few industries that have been virtually unaffected by the pandemic. This is due in part to the nature of the products but also to the nature of the work itself, which allows us to switch almost seamlessly into remote mode and continue working at full capacity from home. However, none of us can (or should) remain on the sidelines during a global crisis, a time when it is especially important to reach out and help others. Of course, it’s up to us to operate that way on an ongoing basis, not just as a one-off action during a pandemic.

Our company, Tortuga Social, began with games for social networks as the name may suggest. We started with Facebook, Draugiem, Nasza klasa, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Moi Mir, Fotostrana, and so on. But we also actively develop the social direction of games. For example, we hold open webinars for kids creating their own games, we organize outings to our offices, and we conduct free training sessions for beginner programmers.

The company was founded in 2009 by three gaming enthusiasts who created their first games at home. The company has grown quite rapidly, and now has 87 employees living in 14 cities across four countries. Our team has released more than ten successful projects, including Jolly Roger, Vikings, and Avataria. Our user numbers have topped 80,000,000, and this figure keeps on growing. Our products are available in nine languages: Brazilian Portuguese, English, French, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish.

However, in the fall of 2019, we decided we could go even further and ventured into the localization of games for teenagers who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

In its simplest definition, deafness is “the condition of having no or very limited functional hearing,” according to Brad A. Stach’s Comprehensive Dictionary of Audiology. But how large is the worldwide Deaf community? According to WHO statistics, over 5% of the world’s population — 432 million adults and 34 million children — have disabling hearing loss. It’s estimated that by 2050, over 900 million people — one in ten — will experience disabling hearing loss.

What challenges related to social interaction and psychological processes do Deaf teens encounter? They may experience challenges in a number of areas. First of all, building social networks. Secondly, emotional and motivational understanding of self and others: it can prove challenging for them to identify emotions and to verbalize them. The personal emotional experience of Deaf teens who have experienced underdevelopment of speech and limited communication with others can be significantly restricted. And as with all developing children, they may also struggle with self-control and self-direction.

According to Rosemary Calderon and Mark T. Greenberg’s Social and Emotional Development of Deaf/Children: Family, School, and Program Effects, communication difficulties in teenagers contribute to emotional fragility, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of frustration.

With all this in mind, we decided to start localizing visual novels for Deaf teens — our Novelize project.
The visual novel is an interactive literary genre that originated in Japan, featuring a text-based story with a literary and interactive narrative style aided by static or sprite-based visuals. These novels are segmented books in which a player makes choices that crucially affect the story’s progress. Graphics are always accompanied by text representing the author’s or the characters’ speech.

**Why visual novels?**

To start with, they are technically appropriate. Our visual novels include no voiced dialogue, as all the graphics are accompanied by printed text. Scenarios and emotions are fully revealed in both text and graphics; facial expressions support and strengthen the perception and appropriate interpretation of the situation and ambience. The text is segmented in a way that makes it easy to read. The main text does not disappear until you tap the screen: the reader determines how long to pause on a given text segment. Additionally, the text is written in a clear, contrastive, large font.

Through visual novels, we can engage teens in reading. In today’s world, it is difficult to completely isolate kids from their electronics — so let that time be dedicated as much as possible to reading. There are, of course, books for every taste: fiction, romance, mystery, and the list goes on. The range of novels runs from fairy tales to crime stories to K-pop. The reader can start with a favorite genre and branch out from there.

Visual novels can also help teens socialize through the game. The choices that players make in the game affect plot development. First, they learn to make a choice — for example, whether or not to help another character; to ask for help from friends or cope on their own — and then the consequences of that choice become clear.

All the characters in our novels are based on realistic prototypes that may be encountered in life. In theory, the player should be able to transfer the experience of interacting with that kind of person to the real world. The game is essentially a simulation of real life: the player has faithful friends but may also meet traitors and backstabbers. An important part of the stories is the relationship with family. In some novels you have pets: you take care of them, sometimes you have to save them, and other times they come to your rescue.

Players gradually form a positive attitude of themselves as they always take center stage in the story. The main character tackles various challenges, but always comes out on top. Thus, step by step, the readers form an active attitude toward their own lives and the perception of themselves as master of their own destiny.

Peer relationships, decision-making, problem-solving, and the development of social interactions are all tackled in the genre. Players read conversations about feelings, family attitudes to behavior, schooling, and friendship patterns, and eventually transfer what they have experienced in the book to themselves. Through these novels, the players become more aware of their own behavior, how they present themselves, and how
they impact others.

Having defined the project, we started looking for recommendations on localizing novels for Deaf players. We were unable to find any suitable ready-made processes and decided to develop our own. Of course, we are constantly refining these processes as we progress in our work, but now is as good a time as any to share our results to date and offer some best practices and strategy tips.

**Project setup and preparatory phase**

To begin with, perform immersive research into the culture of the selected countries. We highly recommend *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer as an introduction to the idiosyncrasies of information perception and other elements of cultural diversity between people in various countries. Then study research conducted by psychologists and teachers in relevant countries on specific features of information perception, emotional development, and the challenges faced by hard of hearing and Deaf teenagers. The next step is selecting data relevant to the project. Meanwhile, involve consultants specializing in this area — psychologists, teachers who work with Deaf teens, and so on.

Moreover, perform an extra review of the text. Remove any ambiguities, and check that there are no jokes about people with disabilities or other forms of discrimination. Take into account age-appropriateness and requirements for the relevant country. Considering our audience, we completely excluded swear words, scenes of violence, blood, names of alcoholic drinks, and so on. The main information will come through the text, so it must be perfect. We opted to use and avoid specific terms based on this list: [www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/](http://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/)

Graphics should reflect real emotions specific to the situation — anger, joy, sadness — and not mislead the reader in any way. At the same time, ensure that background music does not affect the understanding of the situation and the atmosphere of the book. Play the game on mute, and if the absence of sound cues causes difficulty, find a way to represent them visually by another means — icons or text. No essential information should be conveyed by sound alone. If the music matters, provide either captions that function as subtitles and represent sounds rather than speech or visuals to illustrate significant background music. Transmitting all sounds through text is usually neither appropriate nor necessary, but everything that is essential (wind whistling, door creaks) should be displayed in one way or another. If subtitles are used, they should be presented in a clear and easy-to-read manner. Font size, contrast, and the amount of text on screen at any one time are of vital importance.

Also, ensure that none of the text disappears automatically. For people born deaf, the language in the subtitles is often not their first language, so they may have some difficulty with it. A player must be given enough time to read and absorb the text.

For our project, it was decided not to add characters who literally sign, because there are greater regional differences in sign languages than in spoken languages. If characters use American Sign Language (ASL),
Deaf British players will not understand them. It is better to make clear via the plot that a given character is Deaf and customize their speech through the use of italics or a specific color to differentiate it from sound speech.

Once all the preparatory work has been performed, it is time to select localization specialists. Tell them about the project and gauge how they react. How congenial is this topic to them? Do they want to work for this audience?

It is essential to interact with Deaf teens, since they are the target audience. Understand how much interest the project potentially has for them. Involve them as testers and reviewers. Start looking for them early on in the project lifecycle, because this process will take time.

To summarize, each novel has to be meticulously fine-tuned to meet the needs of Deaf players.

To be sure we were on the right path, we consulted a good number of game accessibility guidelines and checklists (see box).

The next stage was the selection of specialists. In today’s world, we are acutely aware of the importance of carefully coordinating a team of remote specialists to keep the process on track even during self-isolation and other possible disruptions.

### Specialists

First of all, before the project, the language skills of all translators are tested. During the project, translators gradually go through several stages of selection. At each stage, we retain only those translators who are willing to use all the reference materials, continually refine their skills, and follow the editors’ recommendations. In addition, we always apply automatic spelling and grammar checks. Furthermore, we do not work through language service providers, because we prefer to communicate directly with our freelance translators so that all issues can be resolved expeditiously.

Since we cannot verify the skillsets of native speakers, we select editors following certain formal criteria. To begin with, all editors are American English speakers and residents of the United States. Next, they are members of the American Translators Association (ATA) and they are ATA-certified in Russian to US English translation. And last but not least, they have verifiable experience in translating and editing works of fiction.

There are several reasons for insisting that an editor be a native speaker. Above all, they have a subtle sense of cultural nuances. Our editors carry out comprehensive and in-depth research to clarify details for our books, being in a position to consult with colleagues, acquaintances, and even strangers in various specialized fields. Another point is that they can detect the negative connotations of names or terms with objectionable associations. Our editors help find euphemisms for swear words, alcoholic drinks, and that sort of thing. They write well-grounded reports on translation quality and help select translators at all stages of the project. Besides this, they can check whether our novels would appeal to the local audience by bouncing ideas off their own children and other young relatives and friends. Additionally, editors review our localization kit.

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Localization process

In creating reference materials, we are guided by the principle of “the more detailed, the better.” The kit includes a style guide, a glossary of given names and proper names, American English vs. British English guides, and glossaries of specific terms. For example, in our medieval fantasy book *The Chronicles of Altea*, we have created a unique world with its own terminology and personal and place names. As one of the editors pointed out, “When you persist in using the same term repeatedly in your book, the reader gets used to it and it becomes part of this created world.” And editor Liv Bliss added that we can always respond to questions on terminology choices by simply saying, “It’s Altea, dude!”

To round out the reference material, we have illustrations of characters, a plot summary for each book, string length restrictions, and so on. We include guidelines for rendering choice options and author’s speech, as these contain features that are peculiar to visual novels.

Our linguistic localization process follows a traditional approach. During the first stage, reference materials are compiled with the editors’ involvement. Then, translators and editors familiarize themselves with the reference materials for each book. Next, the first episodes are translated and edited. After that, mistakes, errors, and cultural elements are reviewed and discussed with the team and reference materials are updated based on the editors’ recommendations on style, tone, common errors, and vocabulary selection for each book, as well as comments they entered directly into the Smartcat platform during editing. After this, summarized recommendations are sent to all translators. Lastly, there is an editorial report on the quality of every translator’s work, and less skilled translators are removed from the project. In subsequent episodes, we begin with step three (translation and editing) and go from there.

What should be added to the traditional localization process with respect to Deaf teenagers?

First of all, involving specialists — medical experts, psychologists, specialists from the National Association of the Deaf in the USA, which has its own youth section (https://www.nad.org/about-us/), ASL interpreters, visual content experts, and so on. Secondly, identifying practical tips and best practices.

For our project, we created an animated character who signs in ASL, inviting teens to read the novels and explaining that they are barrier-free games suitable for Deaf players. Our interactive representative’s Russian name can be rendered as “Muse Make-It-Clear,” while her English/ASL name is still a subject of hot debate.

Engaging a dedicated community manager who communicates with Deaf players and posts videos in sign language about the novels is also crucial. In general, you should put together a special support team so that players can ask questions via text or video in ASL.

This brings up a fascinating connection between ASL and Russian sign language that certainly does not exist between the respective spoken languages. American and Russian Deaf people are more likely to understand each other without an intermediary than, for example, Deaf people from the USA and Great Britain. There are also several exciting apps that convert speech or text into ASL.

Make the game available for viewing on game accessibility review sites such as Can I Play That or DAGER System. Then, involve Deaf players as testers/reviewers of game accessibility. Further, encourage Deaf gamers to play through special Deaf communities on Facebook, Deaf associations, and events.

As previously mentioned, you should afford all players the opportunity to “be” a Deaf character. That said, an entire game that has only Deaf characters may not be advisable.

Finally, ensure that players know whether a game is suitable for them prior to purchase. This can be achieved through information provided on the packaging, on the game’s website, or in feature listings. We suggest creating a special graphic symbol to mark games containing Deaf-friendly and barrier-free content that will make it easier for Deaf and hard of hearing gamers to make informed purchasing decisions. Here are some downloadable disability access symbols, but at the time of writing, Tortuga had yet to make a final decision on this point: https://graphicartistsguild.org/downloadable-disability-access-symbols/ and https://www.oneswitch.org.uk/art.php?id=31.

Certainly, this list can and should be extended with new ways of creating a barrier-free environment for Deaf teenagers, in which entertaining games help them progress in their socialization and feel an enhanced confidence in themselves and their future.

Although several of our titles have already been localized and successfully released in a number of countries, we feel especially enthusiastic about this project, and for good reason. We aren’t just localizing a game; we are giving Deaf teens a chance to fully enjoy visual novels.

We all have to move beyond tokenism, discovering new ways of promoting the rights of Deaf people and their access to a wider world of experience and technologies. By combining our efforts, we can enrich and enlarge the deaf-friendly universe. [M]
After years of anticipation, it’s easy to lose sight of the real-world purpose of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Identification of Medicinal Products (IDMP) data standards. They were designed to enable reliable, efficient sharing of information about medicines on a global scale. In light of COVID-19 and the exceptional circumstances it has created in healthcare and pharma in 2020, IDMP offers transformative potential. This is true across use cases including pharmacovigilance adverse event reporting, electronic prescribing, and falsified medicines control in the supply chain.
The ISO IDMP standards will soon be a reality in support of the European Medicines Agency data management services to power EU regulatory activities. These standards were created to make it easier to identify products throughout the drug development lifecycle and especially in individual case safety reports (ICSRs). If manufacturers, regulators, and clinicians could agree on consistent representation and description of the various attributes of a drug, this would enable assignment of globally acceptable identifiers. These identifiers would make it easier to look up, compare, and monitor relative differences in product formulations, biotechnology, and other manufacturing information that may impact patient outcomes.

The implications of having internationally adopted standards in place and in use around the world are enormous. There is potential to transform not only regulatory and quality operations, but also to advance translational science, improve traceability within the global supply chain, and manage medication therapy for healthcare professionals and patients.

**More collaborative research**

The COVID-19 pandemic has crystallized that potential, as diverse stakeholder groups have joined forces to accelerate the preparation, validation, production, and delivery of new tests, treatments, and ultimately vaccines. If IDMP were widely in use by now, common identifiers would be used during drug development, and comparison of vaccine characteristics across new drug applications would be much easier. This is important given the need to assess clinical trial results and adverse events among vaccine manufacturers. For instance, if patient reactions to certain formulations are somewhat consistent across clinical trials, regulators may require additional monitoring, phase IV/post-market studies, or more explicit patient warnings in package inserts or promotional materials.

Registering and updating product information as globally-understood, multi-dimensional datasets comprising consistent identifiers that span all aspects of a drug’s provenance, make-up, and distribution has much broader potential, too. Being able to share and integrate such data could help directly with the planning of mass immunization programs around the world, not least by allowing emerging issues to be spotted and addressed early on. These might include potential problems with access to raw materials, due to regional lockdowns, transport delays, or geopolitical tensions. Being able to look up the status of equivalent products or similar formulations would open up alternative supply options, or at least allow stakeholders to work out contingency plans.

Once vaccines have been approved, IDMP-based data exchange would support effective and efficient reporting and analysis of adverse events as part of ongoing pharmacovigilance efforts, cross-referenced for maximum accuracy with exact detail about the particular formulation, where it was made, its distribution, storage, and so on. Such activity will be vital as drug companies and regulators strive to roll out COVID-critical products swiftly yet safely. Having this level of data granularity and traceability will also help to combat the threat of falsified medicines entering supply chains, especially in underserved populations.

**Continuity of care across borders**

Reliable cross-border data exchange will also help where individuals have travelled between different countries or regions and need to be given the correct equivalents if they require a second vaccine or additional doses of treatment. Once all parties have begun recording information consistently using IDMP data standards, the opportunity to build a rich international drug knowledge base is substantial, with implications for more enriched clinical decision support and improved pharmacy information systems. Healthcare provider and patient access to accurate and reliable product information is crucial for reducing or eliminating patient harm, especially in cases where the use of equivalent or alternative products is warranted due to unwanted side effects.

Seen through the lens of the persisting pandemic, IDMP’s potential takes on a significance that had seemingly become lost. IDMP compliance is not an end in and of itself. It is just the beginning. This is not just about a new set of specifications about how to submit information, about replacing paper with structured data for its own sake. It is about leveraging that data for the advance of healthcare; for the good of patients.

And it is adhering to these end goals that must and will drive the next push to make IDMP a reality — use cases such as adverse effects reporting; building a definitive, detailed knowledge base and reference source for all drug profiles globally; and logging and being able to cross-reference protocols for novel therapies.

**Building a global knowledge base**

In the context of COVID, the benefits become much more tangible. Here is a real-life situation in which everyone is learning as they go, and (ideally) feeding into a common knowledge pool: a learning health system which is expanding all the time, in turn informing healthcare processes and potentially transforming patient outcomes. In an IDMP-enabled world, this continuous learning would be facilitated by structured, high-quality data entered and...
updated in real time — not painstakingly transcribed and pieced together from a backlog of static documents. Where, previously, the link with translational science was seen as a softer benefit of IDMP, the feed into learning systems becomes a critical consideration in the context of a dynamic pandemic. The ability to analyze credible big-data sets to draw important conclusions has never mattered more.

Since speed is of the essence, global data insights offer to help fill gaps where clinical trials can’t attain the diversity of general populations. They offer to inform regulators and pharma companies about what is working best for patients and to allay fears about vaccines or particular drug formulations in relation to certain populations such as pediatric demographics. A trusted feedback loop updated via multiple data sources will be crucial to building public confidence, especially where healthcare professionals are so overstretched that they might fail to report adverse effects or stay abreast of recall notices on a regulator’s web site.

**Focusing next efforts**

There is still work to be done to get IDMP over the line, of course. It doesn’t help, for example, that the different regions are each tailoring the ISO standards to suit themselves, favoring differing data exchange formats, for instance. Unless stakeholders globally concede some ground and work together to harmonize requirements, there will continue to be deviations in approach which threaten the speed of global conformance and the delivery of improved patient experiences. Failure to resolve the final details is also having an impact on optimized IT systems being developed and rolled out — delays that are enormously frustrating when there is such urgency around meaningful progress in life sciences linked to the current pandemic.

Yes, there is growing “COVID fatigue” now, but if the industry does not use this as leverage to accelerate transformation, IDMP will never fulfil its wider purpose and it will end up being just another costly administrative exercise which goes nowhere. No one wants that. Rather, COVID-19 should raise awareness for more targeted and proactive harmonization across geographical regions — something that has been talked about for a decade or more now! It must not take a new, future pandemic or bioterrorist event to deliver what has been promised. We need those benefits now.

Success now, while it counts, will depend on a concerted, agile, matrix-based effort to secure progress, in place of siloed, serial decision-making among a closed and relatively limited group of stakeholders. There needs to be a greater push and proactive negotiation from the pharmaceutical industry now too, so that regulators can see the industry’s appetite for an international framework.

A consortium approach to driving real change will be the most effective, but currently the healthcare profession remains a missing party at the table. As a consequence, there needs to be an effort to bring in this element which can advocate for real-world applications for standardized product data exchange as well as better outcomes for patients. Academic research centers should be party to discussions too, promoting the role of a robust learning health system and what will be needed to advance this.

These are uncertain times, but sometimes it takes a crisis to focus attention and resources. Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention. [M]
Red Talk, Blue Talk
Exploring the political dialects of a fractured nation

Katie Botkin is the editor-in-chief of MultiLingual magazine. She grew up in a deeply religious US microculture, and has taught English on three continents.
Historically, dialect has been tied to place. People in one town spoke slightly differently than people in the next town, and you could tell where someone was from pretty specifically by their choice of words, how they used them, their accent, and so on.

With globalization, this has lessened considerably. However, we are seeing different kinds of dialects based on subcultures, and specifically based on political affiliation. You see it in keywords that politicians use, and more obviously in how in-groups talk to each other and about each other. Technology has allowed users to isolate themselves not in place, but in ideology, and this in turn creates its own isolated dialects. It represents an evolution in language. And obviously, location-based dialects still exist, but online, someone from California will be able to speak with a New Yorker of the same political persuasion more seamlessly than either of them will be able to talk to someone who lives next door but has an opposite political view.

This has interesting implications for the translation industry, and particularly for machine translation (MT). It would be difficult to create a tool to automate widespread data collection of dialects that are this specific — and this might matter if you’re trying not to alienate certain audiences.

Computational linguistics can be of limited use with very nuanced semantic studies — natural language processing (NLP) experts worry about MT accuracy. “From an NLP perspective, it’s a matter of semantics, and the challenge is context,” said John Tinsley, managing director of Iconic Translation. “From an MT perspective, the same idea would follow but with a whole additional challenge — whether the same nuance is captured in the target language, or whether this is particular to the US.”

On a certain level, however, computational dialect study is already happening. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University recently analyzed over 86 million YouTube comments to track how people of different political affiliations use different words to refer to the same thing, such as “liberal” versus the derogatory “libtard.” Although the paper considers these words “translatable” pairs, they certainly are not in any traditional sense.

In a different vein, the University of Oxford’s Computational Propaganda (ComProp) project has been tracking the rise of “computational propaganda” since 2012. The project “includes analysis of how tools like social media bots are used to manipulate public opinion,” and estimates that over 40 countries, and counting, have deployed some type of political bot. Russia has used social media very effectively, most notably in the 2016 and 2020 US elections, but it isn’t alone. Digital propaganda has been influencing political opinion from Catalan to the UK. From a linguistic perspective, the use of political NLP bots may actually be shaping how language is evolving — the repetitive, grammatically-poor draconian style of partisan social media discourse is well-suited to chatbots. According to ComProp researchers, Russia-based RT, the best-funded disinformation organization in the world, has a specific goal to cause chaos and in-fighting in other nations. This has extended to the way the org employs specific terms and ideas.

Whatever the causes, in the United States, conservatives and liberals have splintered into factions that speak different languages, in an almost literal sense — and it seems to be a trend that is spilling over into the rest of the world as well. Now more than ever, in perhaps the most tense presidential election the country has ever seen, there are certain words and phrases each political group uses that are foreign to the other. Many so-called “Antifa” posters circulating around the internet in mid-2020 were easily spotted as fake for this reason. One such fake, for example, called for violence, offered free vegan food, used a word considered a slur in leftist circles, and asterisked out most of a curse word (f***).

Perhaps most confusingly, conservatives and liberals sometimes use the same words to mean opposite things. Although they use the same dictionaries — standard US English — the context and subtext of the words are vastly different. Conservatives use words to speak about top-down authoritarianism and duty, and liberals use the same words to talk about individual self-determination.

Consider the word “sovereign,” for example. Conservative Christians often say that “God is sovereign,” and leftists talk about their “sovereign bodies” during meditation retreats. Conservatives tend to see sovereignty as being handed down to the chosen people; liberals talk about sovereignty as belonging to indigenous nations, or to individuals.

Specific word usage reflects other epistemology-level ideas about the world, too. Recently, a debate sprung up on a private individual’s social media page about the meaning of the word “privilege.” One conservative argued that poor white people have no privilege. How could they? They don’t have any of the extras of the upper classes. “Privilege doesn’t mean the lack of oppression,” she said. But to leftists, that’s exactly what it means — the baseline isn’t what’s considered normal, it’s whatever is at the very bottom. Conservatives drew the baseline at more of a social average, and it’s only if you pass that line that they’d use the word “privilege.”

Additionally, words like “antifascist,” “power,” “obedience,” “constitutional” and even “love” are used differently in different circles. “Thug” might be code for “Black guy” or it might — somewhat tongue in cheek — mean “police in riot gear.” “Anarchist” might mean “violent looter” or “person who feeds the homeless,” depending on who you ask.
The word “violence” itself means different things to different groups of people. “We practice non-violence” is likely to proceed different ideas, depending on your political leanings. Choose your own adventure:

Far right: “… only if we’re cucks.”

Traditional conservative: “… until you push us too far.”

Traditional liberal: “… because love is always the answer.”

Far left: “… because dismantling the tools of oppression is non-violence.”

If you’re unfamiliar with the term “cuck,” it’s short for “cuckold”; it’s a fetish term that was adopted by the right and entered the mainstream with the 2016 US election.

Another linguistic example comes from the claim that “if you don’t love our country and our freedom, you’re a traitor and don’t deserve to be here.”

Now, of course, everyone loves freedom — saying “you don’t love freedom” is akin to saying “you don’t love oxygen.” However, in this context, “Freedom” is a stand-in word for “loyalty,” or perhaps “the previous amount of people who have been killed overseas fighting in our uniforms, and the ones who will probably die if we deploy more of them.” And this is the antithesis of how the word is used in leftist circles. If we were going to write accurate definitions for how the different groups use the words, it would be something like this:

**Freedom** (conservative)
- Under constant threat of being lost if the other party wins.
- Gained by soldiers fighting overseas.
- Ingrained in American ideology since the inception of America.
- Associated with sacrifice, loyalty, and death.

**Freedom** (liberal)
- Your innate state of being.
- Gained primarily by domestic struggle against oppression: civil rights, and literal emancipation.
- More present now for a wider variety of people than in 1776.
- Associated with self-expression and self-determination.

In a nutshell, “Freedom is won by heroes” conjures up different images in the minds of conservatives and liberals — either a bloody Marine charging into battle, or someone like Rosa Parks, refusing to budge.

Which is more historically accurate? Well, traditionally, freedom included freedom of thought. For over a thousand years, dating back to when it was pronounced “freedom,” the word referred to self-determination, free will. It is highly unusual for a word to maintain such a strong single definition for a millennium, and in the Old English form we see the emancipation that centuries of slaves dreamed of.

There are long lists of words that have opposite nuances in different contexts. Words about values, such as “perfect”
and “love,” and political scare-words like “socialism”:

**Perfect** (conservative)
- No one is actually perfect.
- Associated with figures rather than universal standards.
- Jesus said it, so it’s perfect. Trump said it, so it’s perfect.

**Perfect** (liberal)
- Everyone is actually perfect.
- Associated with efforts to improve.
- Buddha taught us to “see the perfection” in others.

**Love** (conservative)
- Of country, God, and family.
- Is required for some authority figures.

**Love** (liberal)
- Is for the people you choose.
- Means being able to say no and does not exist if it’s demanded.

**Socialism** (conservative)
- Bad.
- Practiced exclusively by the Soviet Union, the Nazi party and other failed states.
- Stealing opportunity from anyone who works hard.

**Socialism** (liberal)
- Not bad.
- Practiced by countries such as Denmark and Sweden.
- Promotes equal opportunity for everyone.

Right-leaning NLP bots have echoed conservative talking points with a degree of credibility that is difficult to overstate. One ComProp research paper concluded that political bots are influencing political discourse, particularly on the right. Bots tweeted hashtags such as #lockherup and #MAGA, and not infrequently, got re-tweeted by real conservatives on Twitter. These bot networks were sophisticated enough that researchers concluded there was a relatively high level of “coordination and strategic organization among Trump-related bot activity,” but stated that this was not true of leftist bots.

This may be because it’s relatively simple to write copy playing to the idea that freedom is under constant threat of being lost. “These Trump supporters were very easily influenced,” said a woman styling herself as Empress Delfina and charging Trump supporters $1.99 a minute to chant slogans. “They like to chant—that’s part of the whole programming,” she told The Daily Beast, saying her clients like being told what to think. It’s more difficult, though, to create convincing political copy celebrating freedom as an innate state of being. [M]

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**When translating books turns deadly...**

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Pharma firms face a growing requirement to collect, manage, and publish data. Structured content management and authoring solutions can help. But many companies are trying to run before they can walk. They first need to get a handle on the huge volumes of unstructured data in many languages that are likely to be scattered across multiple, disparate systems.

Agnes Cwienczek

Agnes Cwienczek is head of product management and consulting at Amplexor. Prior to joining Amplexor, Agnes worked at Merck in its global regulatory and quality assurance department. She received her master’s degree in information management from the University of Koblenz-Landau.
Companies need to be smarter, faster, and more cost-efficient in the way they capture data and create critical content — from clinical trial study data to product labelling. Regulators are demanding increased safety and traceability data and stipulating increasingly stringent packaging and labeling requirements. At the same time, healthcare professionals and the public alike are calling for greater transparency around medical devices and pharmaceuticals.

Significant challenges lie ahead, and the road to effective multilingual data management is long and full of potholes. However, there are actions companies can take to smooth the path to effective information management:

1. **Build in quick wins**

To secure buy-in, look for some quick wins early on. It’s a good idea to start with a proof-of-concept in an area where documents are simpler. Choose factual rather than descriptive documents that are, preferably, in a single language. Chemistry, manufacturing, and control documents detailing drug composition may fall into this category and they are usually in a common language. Formula descriptions can easily be transferred to a table format with standard fields that describe a manufacturer or drug. Clinical study narratives — although historically written free-form — typically contain common standard text and tend to be generated in English as the default language.

Once companies have learned what works well and have discovered the benefits of using a standard, consistent format to capture and manage content, they can approach international labeling management in a structured manner, leveraging reusable master content. Demonstrating specific measurable benefits in one area of the business can help justify the budget for further changes. It’s important, too, to get people on board and address their fears about change. Changing the way organizations manage content inevitably means disrupting the way people behave and work. Identifying corporate-level champions and creating a team to showcase successful initial use cases plays an important role in maintaining momentum.

2. **Start small but keep the bigger picture in view**

Companies should approach change with a clearly-defined and focused business case in a single area. However, once benefits have been demonstrated, it’s important to move quickly towards the goal of creating a strong technical structure. Having a master data source capable of supporting current and future use of regulated product data from one end of a global organization to the other is a critical requirement.

Too often, project teams try to address an isolated problem by applying a new approach to data management, expecting that focus alone — and perhaps simple use of XML to publish the same information to different channels — will bring them their desired results. But unless they approach their goals in the context of a wider journey, such investment will likely see a poor and limited return. These goals should include creating a credible, accurate, up-to-date, and compliant master data source that can be continually and consistently relied upon across the organization.

3. **Establish a standard dictionary**

When undertaking the daunting task of transforming and retrofitting an organization’s existing content into new, structured templates, it is critical to create a standard dictionary for all content. A standard dictionary establishes set rules for referring to products and product data and defines content metadata that makes assets searchable and connectable to context.

There is no getting away from the fact that this will be a vast undertaking that involves assessing content, de-duplicating repeat records, addressing subtle linguistic differences between versions of content, and so on. There are excellent tools that can help with this, by doing things like analyzing and comparing documents between countries and languages.

The positive impact of the change will begin to be felt in everyday activities once historic product data has been drawn down, cleaned up, transformed, and assigned proper schema — mapping relationships between data, different-language versions of the same content, and so on. Additionally, processes must be put in place to ensure that information maintenance (edits, additions) adheres to the new structure.

4. **Regularly review the direction of travel**

Establishing common structures and templates for data helps put a hard stop to continuing data complexity by imposing firmer parameters over what data is captured from document authors and how. Legacy formats and systems take time to sort out, but there comes a point when teams must stop creating and handling content “the old way.” By restricting data input to what is needed by regulators, companies can start to curb the creation of free-form content.

This helps keep everyone focused on building
consistent, high-quality data with the potential for extensive re-use. As long as the data is kept up to date and accurate across its lifecycle it will remain trusted as a definitive information source.

5. Don’t expect overnight transformation

A high-quality, standardized global data structure is likely to take years to create. Ideally, it would be possible to analyze and transform content by tackling small sections at a time, comparing different sources to look for discrepancies or overlap. However, if respective systems and teams have captured data in different formats and with differing degrees of granularity, comparisons will require too much time. Other potential issues include data ownership. If content ownership has tended to exist at a document level rather than a source-data level, it may not be immediately obvious who should be driving any data transformation initiative.

It’s easy to underestimate the scope of what may be needed by an organization to put its house in order, especially after decades of working in fragmented ways with massive variation around how product-based data is captured and published. International firms will have amassed huge and highly dispersed volumes of data comprising multiple different formats. These will be of variable completeness and quality, and include considerable duplication and redundancy.

A roadmap to success

For any data transformation initiative to provide maximum long-term benefits, companies need to think in terms of building a roadmap to their desired destination. One that will help their operations run more smoothly once the way is clear. And this will take time, not least because there will be existing side roads in a poor state of repair and disused dead-end routes to be attended to as part of the new construction effort.

There are no shortcuts to structured, multilingual product information management. The pharmaceutical sector will benefit greatly from data-driven operational transformation, but only after completing the substantial groundwork required, which simply cannot happen overnight. [M]
Patent Translation

An overview of a niche market

Domenico Lombardini

Domenico Lombardini is founder and CEO of ASTW, an Italian LSP specializing in the intellectual property (patents and trademarks), legal, medical and scientific sectors. He has a BS in biological sciences.
Years ago, my full-time freelance patent translation career in full swing, people were inevitably surprised when I told them I translated patents all day long. I remember how befuddled they were. “But aren’t you a biologist?” they asked. “And are there really that many patents to translate?” Well, my answer was always fairly predictable.

In Italy and other countries in Europe, patents need to be translated in order to be validated — that is, to be valid in the country in question. With the London Agreement (dated May 1, 2008), a number of countries ratified rules to streamline procedures relating to the translation of European patents. According to this agreement, which is optional for member states of the European Patent Convention, signatories waive their right to require mandatory translation of European patents as a necessary step to validate patents in their country. The agreement establishes that member states using one of the three official languages of the European Patent Convention (EPO) — namely French, English, and German — no longer require translation into their own language at the time of national validation. The other member states, whose official language is a language other than French, English, or German, have the right to request translation of a European patent into any one of the three official EPO languages of their choosing, with only the translation of claims being required in their country’s own official language.

To date, the London Agreement has been signed by 13 EPO member states. As of May 1, 2008, it is no longer necessary to translate European patents for validation in France, Germany, Luxembourg, Monaco, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein, while in Croatia, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovenia, and Sweden only translation of claims is required in the national language. In all other countries, the translation of the entire patent text is still required.

The correct and accurate translation of a patent is, therefore, a bottleneck for the purposes of giving it legal value in the countries concerned. Over the years, this discrete sector has afforded me the opportunity to acquire and hone valuable linguistic and technical skills (think of computer-aided translation tools and machine translation). Such experience primed me to tackle the typical patent jargon of any technology sector, from biotechnology to mechanics, from organic chemistry to information technology. Conceivably, my scientific training combined with a certain stubbornness for detail have allowed me to fill in any linguistic and technical gaps, enabling me, over time, to handle disparate topics.

However, just to take a step back, what exactly is a patent?

**The patent: Legal lexicon, technical knowledge**

A patent is a legal title under which the owner is granted an exclusive right of economic exploitation of an invention in a country for a set period of time. It prevents others from manufacturing, marketing, or using the invention without authorization. The word patent comes from the Latin word *patere*, which means “to lay open,” or in other words, to make available for public inspection.

From a macro-textual point of view, a patent consists of two fundamental elements: description and final set of claims. The description, which is the most substantial part, is in turn made up of the background, summary of the invention, and detailed description thereof. The second portion of the patent, the set of claims, defines and delimits the scope of protection of the patent in an unequivocal yet succinct manner. In terms of volume, the text of a patent can range from a few thousand words to more than 100,000 words, depending on the technique sector and type of patent. Well, many people may lick their chops with delight upon hearing about such volumes! Regrettably, these volumes come with relatively low per-word rates, which, at first glance, could be discouraging to many people. But let’s not despair. Thanks to computer-aided translation (CAT) tools, termbases, and machine translation (MT) — especially those already populated with patent data — it is possible to make of patent translation a very lucrative business. This is true notwithstanding the relatively low rates.

But what critical issues are encountered when dealing with translating patent texts? First and foremost, it is necessary to know the jargon of patents. These are words and expressions used in the intellectual property (IP) sector that must be translated appropriately, just as if they were written by a patent attorney. Secondly, it is essential to stay true to the original text, replicating, as far as possible, the syntactic structure of the text and avoiding, for example, the use of synonyms. The consistency between source and target texts, at the lexical, morphological, and syntactic level, must be as unambiguous as possible.

However, in terms of translation, some patent texts
can be decidedly more difficult precisely because they stand at the technological forefront of a particular sector at particular time. Thus, it is sometimes difficult, if not almost impossible, to find the appropriate terminology and fully understand the original text in all of its constituent parts. To reassure any translator who may want to give patent translation a try, let me point out that such challenging cases are few and far between, and that it is always possible, in the face of a serious impasse during translation, to seek the advice of a real “skilled in the art” person — in other words, a technical expert who will certainly be able to clear away any doubts and suggest correct terminology. Over time and with daily practice, it will become obvious that despite the wide range of subjects, patent texts, no matter how seemingly disparate, share similarities on how they should be approached for translation.

Patent translation: Controlled language and automation

It is impossible to know everything about any one thing. No one can have knowledge in computer science, biochemistry, organic chemistry, mechanics, and electronics so extensive as to make any related translation effortless. You cannot expect a human translator to be innately able to manage a rich variety of lexicons, terminological worlds, and expressive ways so far apart from one another. However, there is a translation sector in which the translator is required to have familiarity with an array of sectors in virtually any and all technological and scientific field having a potential industrial impact. This is, indeed, the world of patent translation. Some indulge in high-sounding expressions such as “the art of translating patents” or “the craft of patent translation,” but emphasis and rhetoric aside, it is undeniable that the translation of patents is an oft-difficult task, sometimes pushing the very limits of one’s translation skills. This is because the technology that is the subject of a patent is itself at the forefront of technology, as previously mentioned. Hence, it is difficult to find reliable terminological sources to draw from to translate a patent. Luckily, such cases are few and far between, and the use of termbases, of validated translation memories (TMs), and of MT is, most of the time, more than enough to complete a flawless patent translation from any point of view.

A patent text, if written correctly, is a classic example of controlled natural language. Controlled language has the aim of reducing the ambiguity and complexity of a text, simplifying grammar, and consolidating its lexicon as far as possible. Controlled language encodes a set of rules that helps the writer who is processing the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>59,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>57,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>52,705</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>19,337</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>4,044</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Ranking of the top ten countries that filed the most international patent applications in 2019. Copyright Statista 2020.
in terms of syntax, semantics, and structure. Therefore, the purpose of controlled language is to improve:

- Legibility and clarity: the structural and lexical ambiguities in the text are considerably reduced by establishing rules that themselves limit the possibility of incurring syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic ambiguities at the time the document is drawn up.
- Editability: any text that is easier to read and understand is also easier to update because the structure of the document is more easily recognizable.

It is easy to understand that such a text, by virtue of its extremely simplified, unambiguous, and often redundant structure, becomes an ideal text to be processed automatically. And, indeed, it is. For example, at times, the use of CAT tools and termbases significantly increases the speed of the translation process, thanks to leverageable full and fuzzy matches from within the same patent text and from previous translation projects. In fact, it often happens that the patent texts of one particular inventor or company have similar or sometimes identical segments, and this is an obvious advantage in terms of speed as well as ability to maintain intratextual and intertextual terminological consistency. Over time, it will be possible to accumulate large sector-specific TMs — for example, memories for biotech, mechanic, construction, chemistry sectors — and those TMs can be leveraged to train machine translation engines.

The patent translation market

In Europe, the patent market — and by extension patent translation — has been growing over the last five years. In 2018 alone, 147,317 patent applications were submitted to the European Patent Office. And Italy, with 4,399 applications and a growth of 0.9% compared to 2017, ranks sixth in number of requests among EPO Member States.

We do not know if the current pandemic will have a negative effect on the global validation processes. From our vantage point at ASTW (we translate approximately two million patent words every month), we have not seen any decrease. Indeed, we have recorded an appreciable increase in requests from our clients. During a pandemic, it is reasonable to expect an increase in patents and related validations (and, therefore, translations) in discrete sectors such as medical and biotech, as well as sectors relating to cellular communications and information technology. It is also reasonable to experience a decrease of requests in other industries.

The most active technical sectors in recent years have been those that involve new technologies, and, namely biotechnology, digital communication, information technology, energy, and transport, and the largest presence on the market is registered by large multinationals (which represent a 71% market share), with Siemens, Huawei, and Samsung being the predominant applicants in 2018.

A significant figure emerges from a large representative sample of patent applications submitted to the EPO: in 2018, one in five applications were submitted by SMEs or individual inventors.

In this scenario, and in light of current relevant legislation, in order to protect the intellectual property of an invention in industrialized countries, an applicant must involve all of the countries in which they would like to obtain a patent. Therefore, it is easy to understand how translation costs are a determining factor in the validation procedure. It often happens that the costs to be incurred for the translation of a patent exceed the patent filing costs, and it is for this reason that the fees generally paid to LSPs and translators are relatively low. However, by leveraging CAT tools and MT, an expert patent translator can make patent translation profitable and professionally lucrative and fulfilling.

Quality is what matters

To ensure the quality of each patent translation, we have established a workflow over the years that has enabled us to be confident about the quality of our patent translations.

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The importance of linguist training

To be a good patent translator, however, it is not enough just to use technology, automatic translation, and CAT tools. Indeed, these tools must be handled by an expert hand. The training of patent translators is, therefore, critically important.

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The Disappearing Tz’utujil

Alex Shur
Alex Shur is an international development professional, social justice journalism graduate student at Northwestern University, and freelance content writer.
Language

Santiago Atitlán is an indigenous Guatemalan town surrounded by three imposing volcanoes and Lake Atitlán, widely regarded as one of the world's most beautiful lakes. Most of the town's residents consider Tz'utujil as their mother tongue. According to the 2002 Guatemalan Census, there were 78,498 ethnic Tz'utujil people and 62,237 Tz'utujil speakers in the country; around two-thirds of them live in Santiago Atitlán. But a lot has changed in the past two decades. Population growth has remained stable, but the language isn't faring so well. If the census were updated, it would most likely show that while the ethnic Tz'utujil population has grown, the language has not.

The geological features surrounding Santiago Atitlán rendered it nearly impenetrable by cultural and military intervention until the Spanish arrived around half a millennium ago. Before then, Tz'utujil — the primary language of five cities in Guatemala — was the only language spoken in the town. And until the Guatemalan Civil War crippled Santiago Atitlán in the 1970s, nobody cared to speak Spanish. But when the American-sponsored dictatorial Guatemalan military held guns against the heads of parents, and schools were forced to implement a Spanish-first policy, the Tz'utujil language took a formal backseat to Spanish.

Families in Santiago Atitlán kept speaking Tz'utujil behind closed doors throughout the deadly war. The Tz'utujil language and dress became symbols of resilience: as the Guatemalan military pillaged lands and murdered farmers, the language and clothing were all that many families had left. The people faltered, but the language never did. Until recently, almost everybody in town spoke Tz'utujil as their first language, including its few ladino, or mixed ethnicity, residents. But now, less than 25 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, the Tz'utujil language and culture face a new threat: globalization.

In the early 20th century, it took dugout canoes a day to reach the shores of Santiago Atitlán from the port city of Panajachel. The journey required several men to paddle across the ten-mile lake, against the waves that Xochimilco — the feared northerly wind — brings. Now, motorboats leave every half hour, arriving in 20 minutes on days when the waves are calm. And a paved road connects the town to civilization. Every day, trucks arrive in the town, emitting clouds of smoke and delivering products from around the world.

The impact of globalization is clear in Santiago Atitlán. Secondhand American clothing stores are abundant, as are Chinese restaurants, and the main tourist street has signs in English and Spanish. Indigenous women line the city’s central park, serving chow mein on tostadas and other, more traditional foods.

Globalization has come partly because of necessity. There is more economic opportunity in serving tourists pizza and sandwiches than local foods that they may not recognize. Along the same lines, knowing a few English words can be advantageous. But the changes that globalization brings are present far beyond the lone tourist street and late-night food stands of the town.

I arrived in Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, in 2018 as a United States Peace Corps volunteer. The irony of being an aid worker for the country that supported Guatemala’s oppressive regime during the civil war was never lost on me. I intended to tread lightly, but I quickly realized that the influence of the United States preceded me.

I first observed the impact of globalization on the Tz'utujil language soon after arriving at my host family’s residence. I was sitting at the dinner table with my host mother, Ana Leticia, her young children, and her father. As we ate patín — a local delicacy of fish in a spicy tomato sauce, wrapped in a leaf — I listened as Ana Leticia translated from her father’s native Tz'utujil to Spanish. At first, I thought she was only doing it for me. Then, I realized something: as Ana Leticia’s father spoke Tz'utujil, her children looked at the table or away from him.

I waited until the conversation slowed, then I asked Gustavo, Ana Leticia’s seven-year-old child, whether he spoke Tz'utujil.

“No, I just speak Spanish. I understand some of it, but not much.”

Then, Ana Leticia told me, “Most children his age in the center of town no longer speak much Tz'utujil. It’s a bit of a problem.”

The problem is two-fold. First, it’s impractical. Few people above the age of 60 can speak Spanish fluently. Most speak little to no Spanish. The same goes for younger generations in the villages outside of town. Near the town center, children born in the 21st century often consider Spanish to be their first language. And many children under ten speak no Tz'utujil at all. Hence, there’s a linguistic divide from city to village and across generations within the city. But when Leti told me that the language divide created a problem, I could tell that she wasn’t only talking about practicality.

For centuries, the Tz'utujil people have embraced an oral history. They trade stories, gossip, advice, and myth from grandparent to parent and from parent to child. These oral traditions constitute a vital component of Tz'utujil culture. Through these stories and myths, the youth learn how the lake comes alive, why the late-night pedestrians turn into otherworldly beings, and how conspicuous treasures found on the volcano can grant a lifetime of money and a world of stress.

Multilingual November/December 2020
While stories can be translated, they lose significance, weight, and meaning without the words that are unique to the Tz’utujil language. For the elderly, who embraced the language as one of the last remnants of their culture during the tragic Civil War, a child’s inability to speak Tz’utujil is more than an inconvenience — it’s a sign that their culture is forgetting them.

The systemic and systematic racism toward indigenous people in Guatemala has become more insidious since the Civil War ended. Schools have reverted to a Tz’utujil-first policy, but many ban children from wearing the traditional indigenous dress of the town. Guatemalan institutions emphasize the opportunities that having a better socioeconomic status provides, but they don’t mention that embracing a “better life” implies rejecting traditional cultural and linguistic values.

The use of the Tz’utujil language has dropped off further with the arrival of the internet and television. Having a computer and TV is a necessity for any family of means in Santiago Atitlán. Technology exposes children to opportunities, distractions, and distant cultures — values that parents and children cherish. So while parents are tilling their lands, in much the same way as their ancestors of centuries past, technology exposes children to the Spanish and English-speaking world. And with every television show, Spanish class, and computer game, children become removed from their native language.

Much of the disappearance of Tz’utujil can be attributed to the imported emphasis on socioeconomic status. Spanish allows you upward economic movement; Tz’utujil keeps you stagnant. By speaking Spanish, you can access jobs in hundreds of cities across Guatemala and the world. With Tz’utujil, you’re limited to five small towns. Thus, parents emphasize that their children learn Spanish to access more professional sectors, cities, and opportunities. At the same time, parents lament that their children are moving away from the former capital of the Tz’utujil people and that the culture seems to be slipping away with them.

As globalization divides the Tz’utujil people by socioeconomic class — those who can afford technology and education, and thus learn Spanish, as opposed to those who can’t — Santiago Atitlán faces another significant divide that results from a mix of globalization and machismo culture. Husbands and fathers often restrict their spouses and daughters to the house, limiting their social lives, educational prospects, and work opportunities. Machismo manifests in different ways, but the opportunities and respect given to men and women aren’t even. And globalization has made the disparities worse.

While almost all Tz’utujil women wear the traditional handwoven huipiles and cortes of Santiago Atitlán, young men and boys wear counterfeit Ralph Lauren jeans, American-made second-hand shirts, and basketball shoes. When an indigenous woman wears modern American clothing, they run the risk of being berated and called xeñor, which is a derogatory word for foreigners. But when a man wears contemporary clothing, they look refined and masculine to the people surrounding them. Even when their shirts say I Love Pink in bejeweled letters.

Men take advantage of globalization, but women feel isolated because machismo culture doesn’t allow them to reap many of its benefits. Men frequently attend university in the capital; most women don’t. Men listen to reggaeton together, while women listening to foreign music seems to pose an existential threat to men. Globalization isn’t inherently at fault here, but it adds a volatile element to an already toxic mixture.

I recently spoke to Diego Petzey, a young community leader of Santiago Atitlán, about globalization’s effect on the Tz’utujil language. Petzey leads B’atz, a traditional weaving cooperative whose name means “threads” in Tz’utujil. B’atz teaches young children — boys and girls — the techniques and value of weaving traditional clothing. By learning the patterns, mythology, and techniques of weaving, children may come to understand, remember, and cherish the traditional culture of the Tz’utujil people.

Petzey is also a stakeholder in many other community efforts and organizations, and a mentor to many. He has taught me about the scars that the war left behind, how machismo affects the city, and how systemic racism constantly undermines community efforts. Petzey is a realist. He has high hopes, but he knows that his efforts in preserving Tz’utujil culture go against the tide of globalization.

Toward the end of our conversation, I asked Petzey whether he thinks Tz’utujil will be spoken in 100 years. He was silent for a few seconds, then he sighed. “At this rate, not a chance,” Petzey told me. “Maybe if something changes. But I don’t think so.” It hurt Diego to say those words, but I sensed an ounce or two of hope in his latter statement. I then asked him what could help save the language.

“The national government would have to yield to the League of Indigenous Peoples’ demands. And both public and private schools would have to encourage their students to speak in their native tongue. But if these changes don’t happen, I don’t think there’s any way to save the Tz’utujil language from extinction,” Petzey said.

There is hope, then, that the language can be saved. Like Petzey, many Tz’utujil people are helping to organize community efforts to maintain the traditions that haven’t yet disappeared. But their efforts go against the pressures of globalization and systemic racism, which seem like insurmountable challenges to the efforts of maintaining the Tz’utujil identity in the long run. [M]
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I think we can all agree that when you contract for a service, you want to receive quality. When you go to a hairdresser, you expect to have your hair look its best once you leave the salon. Likewise, when you take your car in for servicing, you expect your car to be tuned and in good condition when you pick it up.

When contracting a translation job, shouldn’t we also expect the quality to be good, if not perfect? We can agree then that clients who purchase translation services expect quality — but defining quality translation is not so easy.

To try to define quality, I turned first to ISO 9001. This standard defines quality as the degree which a commodity meets the requirements of the customer. This definition doesn’t really help, though, since translations are far from a commodity. ISO 17100, as well as other similar standardization rules, on the other hand, provide processes that need to be followed in order to assure quality translations from the supplier’s perspective.

So now we have a process that a language service provider needs to adhere to in order to produce quality. Is that all? There have to be more ingredients required for a quality translation than making sure the supplier follows a process. I decided to Google “quality translation.” Most of the results led me to suppliers’ websites, boasting about how seriously they take quality. In order to provide quality we need to include all three players: the client, the supplier and the translators, who in most cases are freelancers.

There is a critical role that clients should play in the translation mix. Clients don’t typically get much involved in the translation process or client reviews. I sent out a questionnaire to clients who work on a routine basis with LSPs — 800 in total. We wanted to know how involved they were in assuring quality deliverables. The first question we asked was: “what is quality?” We received more definitions than ice cream flavors at Baskin Robbins — or if that’s too culturally specific, more definitions than flavors of beer.

Here are some of the answers: it does not sound like a translation; conveys the intended meaning in the target language; is grammatically correct and follows style guide and terminology; and is correct according to the end user. The best and most encompassing answer: it meets its purpose and expectations in relation to end user purpose, time, cost, shelf life and intended audience.

In short, each client defines quality in their own way. The truth is it doesn’t matter how you define it, what’s important is to define it at the beginning of the client-supplier relationship.

Then we asked whether they even had a quality assurance plan in place. Drumroll, please... 8% said that they had one. Interestingly, the majority of the 8% are seasoned purchasers of translation, meaning they have translated a substantial amount of content for at least ten years. Perhaps experience led them to implementing a quality process.

For those clients who said they don’t have an internal quality measuring stick, we asked why not? 37% said they expected their suppliers would assure a quality deliverable. 18% said they don’t have anyone in-house that can review translations. 9% said the translation process doesn’t allow enough time for internal review. 11% responded that their budget doesn’t allow for internal review. The remaining clients either did not answer the question, or their response was one of a kind (i.e. this is not my responsibility).
Next, we asked the respondents who had an internal review process to tell us whether they (or their supplier) have a written quality assurance (QA) report system that defines the types of errors and severity. One-third of the respondents indicated yes, they have a QA report that they fill out when reviewing their supplier’s work. 7% of the respondents said their reviewers review translations and provide feedback, but they do not have a standard written report. 12% said that their suppliers have QA procedures, but they have never seen it. 13% said that they don’t know what a QA report is, and 10% said that their suppliers are ISO certified, so they must be following some QA protocol.

Then, we turned to the importance of quality. The majority of the respondents said cost and time to market were both important. The second set of respondents said cost and quality. And the lonely third set of respondents said quality alone — the least voted answer.

Perhaps the fact that quality does not seem to be on the minds of most clients is the reason why so few clients have an internal QA measure. Interestingly, I conducted a study 20 years ago asking clients what was the most important thing they looked for in a supplier and the answer was quality. Nowadays, time is money and translations need to be performed at mach speed. Quality is of second (or third) level of importance.

Assume for a minute that I have convinced you that client reviews should be an integral part of the translation process in order to assure clients are receiving good work. There is a secondary benefit of client reviews. Translators do not often receive feedback on their work and they thirst for feedback.

Again, I sent out a questionnaire, this time to 200 translators, and asked what percentage of clients provided feedback. 8% of clients provide feedback. Half of the respondents said they receive feedback only when the feedback is negative. When asked whether they felt client feedback was important, 100% said that it was important. I then asked whether the translators performed better when they knew their work was being reviewed. 72% said they paid more attention when their work was being reviewed.

Yes, yes… I did try harder on this article because I know someone is going to read and edit it.

It’s a detriment to all to overlook the importance of getting the right client reviewer in place. First, they must have excellent editing skills — not just command of the language and grammar. Having visited the country or eaten at an international restaurant is not enough. Second, they must leave their ego at the door when collaborating with the suppliers. Remember, this is a team effort. Third, they must be a candidate for political office — in other words, know how to be diplomatic. The goal of the reviewer is to make sure the final product is excellent, and not to put down the linguists. They must also be familiar with translation memory as well as different file formats, and should have experience in glossary management and style guide creation.

Too often reviewers shout out obscenities like “Either these ***** linguists don’t even speak the language they are translating into or they never learned grammar at school,” or “I Google Translated the same text and the quality was better.” These sorts of statements are unhelpful to the process — reviewers should win over the linguists. Yes, we want excellent quality, but time and cost need to be considered in play. Is the suggested change of a subjective nature requiring 12 hours to redo a nice to have, or is it a show stopper?

After reading the benefits of client review, perhaps a few clients will move to an in-house review model. To clients who continue to abstain from performing quality, I can only advise: be wary of the quality of translations you are currently accepting.
COVID-19 has shifted people to online shopping, e-learning and digital healthcare quickly. In this new normal, it's essential that these applications be as interesting and effective as possible. Gamification, a technique to add game-like elements to web and mobile applications, can help impact and inspire your users.

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