MOBA ВІЙНИ:
What sociolinguistic tension tells us about the war in Ukraine

+ PROFILE
Salvatore Giammarresi
Head of Localization at Airbnb
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John Fennelly, CEO, Lionbridge

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It’s been a difficult month for the international community.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has rippled beyond the regional peoples — and the thousands of accompanying tragedies — to affect also the linguistic and localization community. It impacts international business and infrastructure. It weighs on mental health. And it heightens anxiety as the world waits for the next barrage of bad news.

Here at MultiLingual, we stand behind the Ukrainian people as they defend their country from an aggressive autocrat. At the same time, this is not a time for tribalism or blinkered thinking. It’s a time to find our common humanity, to proactively support everyone suffering physically, economically, and mentally because of the unjust actions of a few brutal men. When empathy and good will guide our actions, it makes an impossible situation all the more bearable.

If you’ve been following MultiLingual’s coverage over the past month, you know most of our focus has been on this war and its impact on the language community. That theme carries over into this month’s magazine. You’ll find in this issue extensive coverage of the languages, places, and people at the center of the fighting. But you’ll also find the professional columns, analysis, and features you’ve come to expect from us.

Whether in peacetime or wartime, it’s our job to make the most of the conditions forced upon us. Let’s all hope for brighter days by the time the next issue reaches your doorstep.

CAMERON RASMUSSON
Editor in Chief


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JULY 11-13, 2022

LocWorld47 Berlin

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The language we speak can be strongly connected to our emotional and sociopolitical identity. Illustration by Antonella Tiezzi.
Bite-Size Breakdown

INTERPRETER IN TEARS GIVES MULTILINGUAL EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

The Ukrainian-German interpreter Kateryna Rietz-Rakul went viral on social media after breaking into tears while interpreting a press conference by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Stefan Huyghe’s interview with Rietz-Rakul has been viewed 1,000 times on youtube.com/multilingualTV.

KATERYNA RIETZ-RAKUL

No more Russian Wiki?

In an effort to suppress information about the Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory, the Russian government sent Wikipedia a notice on March 1, threatening to block Russian Wikipedia.

FREE LANGUAGE SERVICES TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Translit will be donating its services to the roughly 100,000 Ukrainian refugees expected to enter Ireland.

TRANSLIT CEO ALEX CHERNENKO
Hong Kong legal system ditches English translations

As a former British colony, the region has a small minority of native English speakers, and about half of the country speaks the language with a high level of proficiency.

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<th>Language</th>
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Zoo Digital Launches ZOO Korea

ZOO Korea is poised to capitalize upon the recent popularity boom of Korean-language entertainment, which surged thanks to the widespread critical acclaim of films and television shows like Netflix’s Squid Game and the Oscar-winning Parasite. On March 7, the company announced it made a majority investment of 51% in WhatSub Pro, launching ZOO Korea, which will specialize in localizing Korean media.

#LANGUAGEPLEDGE
#UKRAINIAN

LocLunch founder Jan Hinrichs came up with the idea to pool localization industry resources and help the Ukrainian linguists affected by the conflict. ProZ founder Henry Dotterer and Smartcat’s Andrew Federici agreed to make their respective databases of Ukrainian translators and interpreters available to the public so it would be easier for them to be contacted for work.
Several weeks ago, MultiLingual reader Deepak Nagabhushana submitted a guest article written by his daughter, Vijetha, expressing her thoughts on language work and MultiLingual magazine itself. The MultiLingual staff was so charmed by the article, we reached out to Deepak about his work and what his daughter has planned for her future.

Tell us a little bit about your professional background. How long have you been working in the industry, what do you do, and who have you worked for?
I’m currently working as Staff Localization Project Manager at GoTo, based in Bangalore/India, and have worked the past 17 years in localization project management, LSP management, budget management, stakeholder management, localization tools administration, localization engineering and content management. Prior to GoTo, I worked for Intel, Oracle, NetApp, and Dell. In my first job, I was managing the translations for the websites. In the next jobs, I started learning to manage the localization workflows, project management, vendor management, process improvements, budget management, tech stack administrations, and process automation. Today at GoTo, I am responsible for service ownership of UI projects, tech stack administration and helping the company run Optimal Core Services strategic projects.

I always feel proud about my managers. I would like to thank them as they gave me guidance, continuous support, and the opportunity to work on strategic projects.

What are some of the things you enjoy doing when you aren’t working?
The things I enjoy the most when I am not working is traveling. I love spending time with family at the beautiful beach resorts. I feel I am connected to water. When I sit on the beach and start looking into the waves, it relaxes the mind. Goa is my all-time favorite destination.
I also enjoy motor bike riding and am teaching my daughter to ride one. I like watching vlogs, especially those related to the aviation industry because I love aircraft — the Airbus A380 being my favorite. And I love cooking spicy Indian rice and curries and meditation, which helps my focusing power and self-awareness.

What drew you to the language industry? What are your favorite (and perhaps least favorite!) parts of the work?
I come from an education background of post-graduation studies in nuclear physics. Interesting, right? From physics to language field. Afterward, the IT field was booming up in India. Since my interests leaned toward the technology and computer science side, I was selected for a multinational company and got the opportunity to manage the translations for the marketing website. That’s how I got an opportunity to enter the language industry. From day one I worked with stakeholders across different countries, and it was a great learning experience for me.

My favorite parts of the work include managing the tech stack systems, educating stakeholders on the best practices of the localization process, working on strategic projects, always giving new projects a try, and automation of processes. Perhaps my least favorite part of the work are the repetitive tasks. Which suggests there’s an opportunity to automate some processes.

When did you start reading MultiLingual magazine?
I read my first MultiLingual magazine in February 2015. In fact, I got to know about MultiLingual magazine through my manager, and one of my articles got published in the February 2015 magazine. I really enjoy reading the magazine. My most interesting topics are related to tools (especially translation management systems), technologies, business strategies, and automation. I feel like MultiLingual magazines are the best source of knowledge for localization industry professionals. I really like the way they publish the articles. It always contains rich information and the latest trend topics related to industry. Huge thanks to the whole team!

Your daughter seems to enjoy the magazine, too, and we’re publishing her article along with this Q&A. Tell us a little more about how it first caught her interest. Does she have any thoughts about what she wants to do when she grows up?
Yes, my daughter seems to enjoy the magazine too! She has got great interest in learning languages. When she grows up, she would like to see herself in the language industry. Her areas of interest are content writing and learning about different cultures. She is also planning to learn more about UX writing in the upcoming months. Overall, learning languages, exploring language history and culture, and the arts are her core areas of interests. 😊
What are languages?

Languages are powerful weapons, a mode of communication used to express our thoughts. It is a tool for humans communication and relationship building through speech and writing. Language is a vital part of human connection. Each and every person in this world has a curiosity to learn a language, as it is a necessity, too. We need to communicate to others to make them understand our needs. Approximately 6,500 languages are spoken in the world today. Everybody will be inspired to learn a particular language right from their birth. Even a baby has its own language to express its needs in a way a mother can understand. Later on, when the baby grows up with all its family members in the home, the language spoken at home is automatically adopted, and it becomes a common means of communication. It is so mesmerizing to know that evolution of language is so wonderful for every human being.

Why was I, as a student, inspired to write this article on languages?

I am Vijetha D Jois of class six, studying in Auden Public School, Bengaluru, India. It was a hot, sunny day when I returned back home from school. After getting back, I freshened up myself, indulged in some snacks, and started doing my homework. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. There was a postman, handing me a parcel for my father, who works as a localization project manager. I opened the parcel and saw an attractive magazine that completely drew my attention. I called my father immediately, who was still in his office, and asked him about the details of the magazine. My father said that this is MultiLingual magazine which is full of terms and articles, related to localization and language industries.

I opened the magazine and read a few articles. Just as my father said, I came across certain terminologies like “localization,” “translation management system,” and many more. I could not understand what these tools are and why are they used in the language industry. I checked with my father for more information on these tools when he returned back home from his office. He saw my curiosity on the language part and explained to me in detail what these tools actually are and how are they used in his work. It is just like when I was a small kid and did not even know how to speak, but my parents used to guess what I actually was looking for at that point in time. These tools work in a similar manner: They assist in the translation process.

It was fun discussing all languages with my father who spends his days in the language industry. As we learn more languages, we can communicate with more and more people and win their hearts and minds when we talk to them. Also, languages help express our feelings and thoughts. As we all know, learning is a continuous process. Similarly, it is applicable to languages as well. There is no age limit to learning languages. The more languages we learn, the more useful it is in our life.

Learning languages is a very good activity for our brains. It is important to know other languages, as they open a new door to you. There are so many similar words that mean different in different languages. Every language is beautiful in its own way. Each has its own grammar, vocabulary, and way of speaking. It also has a variety of dialects depending on the places in which it is spoken. For example, the Spanish spoken in Spain is different from the Spanish spoken in Mexico. Similarly, Simplified Chinese (Mandarin) is different from Traditional Chinese (Cantonese). It is fun to learn the different meanings of the same word in different languages. I have a lot of friends in my school who speak a wide variety of languages. I always like to learn and try to speak to them in their own languages.

The easiest and most fun way to learn new languages is to travel to different places and explore their local language, food, and culture. We can relate their language to our mother tongue and soon get to know more languages easily. In modern times, there are a lot of tools and websites available to get to know different languages. Still, there is a special place for the traditional and local language speakers. For such people, language serves as a means of livelihood even today. They work as teachers and professors to teach their typical, native local language. They work as manual translators, editors, and publishers, content writers who literally sit and translate the content in their native language. They also write content to publish in the magazines. Some people also work as linguists who make grammatical corrections as required. Although there are plenty of tools available in the market, it always requires a human touch.

This is how I feel one can learn more languages. After speaking about all this with my father, I, too, want to pursue my career in my favorite language. I, too, made up my mind to join the language industry, which is always ongoing, as language is an essential key to life. ☺
The LocWorld virtual conference focused on Africa was held March 7-9, 2022. More than 200 people attended the conference from 36 countries worldwide, including 12 African countries. Mulumba Lwatula, deputy head of investments for mining, manufacturing, and agriculture at the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) in Lusaka, Zambia, spoke on “The Bright Side of Africa: Unlocking Opportunities in a Digitally Connected Africa Through People and Ingenuity.” After highlighting innovation, technology, and moonshot goals, he cautioned that many strategies for entering Africa have failed due to assuming Africa is like everywhere else. He then challenged attendees to consider “what will pushing boundaries translate to in your Africa story?” The second day opening session featured Salvo Giammarresi, head of localization at Airbnb. His talk, “Beyond Globalization,” was about how Airbnb created academies to help potential hosts grow in skills to make their hosting experience more successful. This program was well-received in African countries and is now being expanded to other parts of the world.

A special effort was made to encourage African translators, interpreters, and businesspeople to attend the conference and to meet other attendees through eight networking opportunities in addition to the ongoing conference chat.
A few years ago, I was in Bangladesh, doing some public health work, meeting members of some of the country’s indigenous peoples, and thinking a great deal about endangered alphabets. I found myself thinking about script loss even in my down time — in other words, when I was watching television, where I got a front-and-center education in the real-life process of language endangerment and cultural erosion.

A naïve visitor to a developing country (or, indeed, any country) might assume the available channels represent that country’s cultural communities, and, by implication, speak in their languages. And even though not many people think like I do, the naïve visitor might likewise assume those same TV channels will represent those same local languages in the form of on-screen scripts.

At first sight this seemed to be true, because while flicking through the channels in search of cricket matches and the Copa America, I saw Bengali script (which, by the way, I can’t read). A closer channel-by-channel examination, however, even though hardly scientific, showed television to have less to do with the broadcast and expression of local culture and more to do with the forces of cultural and economic globalism.

The television in my guesthouse boasted nearly 100 channels, though several of these were blocked, dysfunctional, or duplicates of other channels. Beyond Channel 40, almost every channel was imported, mainly from the UK, the US and Australia — BBC World News, the National Geographic Channel, and blokes handling crocs. These channels demonstrated that almost no country in the world can resist the infiltration of the English language and the Latin alphabet, but that wasn’t my point. I wanted to know to what extent the Latin alphabet had infiltrated and taken root in even the local or regional channels.

When two languages coexist (a situation called diglossia), sooner or later one language is almost always eroded and then marginalized by the other. I was curious to see whether something similar was happening with scripts. Was there a condition we could call digraphia, the coexistence of more than one script? Were the Bangladeshi channels displaying exclusively Bangla script, or was the visual representation of Bangla similarly being infiltrated by the use of Latin script — and if so, under what circumstances?

With four channels in the Top 40 apparently duplicates, at least at the time when I was watching, this left 36 separate video/audio streams to examine.

Even before I started concentrating on the individual channels, I realized that the TV set itself was Latin-centric: When I used the remote to change channels, the channel numbers that appeared briefly were Latin numerals rather than Bengali. (That is to say, English Latin numbers, rather than Roman numerals.) The operation of a TV set, then, had an internationalized quality about it. TV was not only a window on the world, but a window through which the world could get in.

What’s more, the TV stations and channels clearly saw themselves as operating in a broader world where the Latin script is essential: in every case but one, the station or channel ID logo in the corner of the screen used Latin letters and/or words. To be television, it seemed, was to be modern and international and therefore to use the Latin script, the global signifier.

At this point, I confess, I got distracted. In particular, I got distracted by the commercials — which are, after all, intended to distract.

It was clear right away that commercials as a whole, in appealing to the middle and upper classes with disposable income, almost invariably tried to present their products and services as cosmopolitan and modern, which in the case of imported products meant interjecting the English name (“Head and Shoulders”) and even English terms (“dandruff”) into the voiced-over stream of spoken Bengali, and preserving the names and labels in their original Latin script on-screen. To be hip and worldly
in Bangladesh, it seemed, was to be able to speak English and read the Latin alphabet.

This seems unremarkable until you consider how weird it would look on American TV to hear the names of a thousand miscellaneous imported Chinese products pronounced in Chinese and, say, Toyota represented on-screen in Japanese characters. A substantial percentage of the shrimp sold in the US are imported from Bangladesh, in fact, but that doesn't mean we need to know the Bengali word for “shrimp” to order them. We are clearly the bosses here, and language is simply one sign of that inequality.

The more commercial the content, the more English words appeared. Serious discussion programs on local and national affairs, and religious programs, were entirely in Bengali, from what I could tell. Once the channel broke to commercial, though, the rules changed. A voice on a channel otherwise entirely voiced in Bengali suddenly said “Crown Cement.”

The more upscale and cosmopolitan ads, especially those that seemed to have been made in India featuring Indian models, cricketers, and movie stars, switched constantly and fluently into and out of English as a sign of their sophistication.

The same was even more true of text. A glossy beauty product or car commercial, voiced over half in English, was likely to present its text almost entirely in Latin script. The name and the label were the brand. Even low-budget ads produced for regional channels tended to have CALL NOW in English, with the phone number in both Latin and Bengali scripts. For some stations, their visual identity was entirely Bengali; in some cases, though, they seemed to have decided that a little internationalized peppering-up was in order. On at least two otherwise all-Bangla channels, program names (FRONT LINE, FASHION) were presented in English/Latin capitals.

Concentrating on the programming itself showed different kinds and different degrees of infiltration. One channel seemed to have audio consisting entirely of Bangla music. Of the other 35, 11 had audio in English (including HBO, which oddly also had subtitles in English). The other 24 had what I will call “regional audio” to disguise the fact that my ear can't distinguish Bengali from, say, Hindi.

In these 24 channels clearly locally produced for local consumption, English words had certainly infiltrated the local spoken language. In general narrative, conversation, or newscasts, it wasn't unusual to hear “kilometer.” In broadcasts about cricket, of course, technical terms such as fielding positions or equipment were almost all in English.

I found the whole exercise slightly depressing, if unsurprising. At least in theory, television should be perfectly capable of acting in the name of cultural integrity. One of the people I met in Dhaka worked on the Bangladeshi edition of Sesame Street. He was very aware of the goal of teaching children their letters and numbers in Bengali rather than some internationalized form — though he himself was Chakma. And he was all too aware that neither the Chakma language nor its script were to be seen anywhere on Bangladeshi television, not even on Sesame Street.

In fact, quite the opposite was happening: although Bangladesh is the world's eighth-largest nation, with a population of over 160 million, even in its own capital Bangladesh came across as a minority, a sort of province of India, which in turn came across as a province of global Western/Anglo culture.

“The more upscale and cosmopolitan ads … switched constantly and fluently into and out of English as a sign of their sophistication.”

And that, of course, suggests another disturbing pattern — that in order to establish a strong, coherent national identity in the face of this global whitewash, each developing country feels it must work twice as hard to suppress its own regional or cultural minorities.

And as for television, TV in Bangladesh behaves very much like TV in the US in, say, 1960, when earnest local programming was already being edged out by glossier network programming. This programming seemed to come from a larger, brighter, more exciting world, a world of luxuries and affluence that seemed to have no geographic locus at all. Everywhere and nowhere.
In pursuit of a true sorting solution

MARK SHRINER
Mark Shriner is the Strategic Sales Director for memoQ, leading the company’s market growth in the regulated industries. He has previously worked in several leadership roles in the localization industry including CEO Asia Pacific for CLS Communication.

Last month we talked about the rise of structured content in pharma driven by the need to increase content reuse, improve quality and consistency, reduce costs, and adhere to industry regulations related to readability and accessibility. That trend is being assisted and accelerated by the adoption of standards such as the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) and the use of component content management systems (CCMS) which make it easier to create, store, search, reuse, and even translate content.

The use of DITA is important because it allows for the definition of document types, the application of metadata, and the application of specializations to content that greatly facilitates the reuse of content in an automated process. In short, DITA facilitates the classifying and sorting of content at the level of granularity required by the publisher.

Dominique Trouche, CEO of WhP, explains: “DITA provides many benefits including content reuse across different documents, translating and reviewing only once, and removing the need for DTP. These all reduce costs, errors, and time requirements.” Dominique also believes that DITA’s “specialization” capability is a huge benefit since it can automate many functions such as the translation of measurements across various systems and languages and perform automated text-to-speech translation and recording in MP3.

When DITA is applied in a workflow that includes the use of a CCMS, its value becomes even more pronounced. Instead of simply storing documents or blocks of content, CCMS platforms can sort, store, and retrieve content at an extremely granular level. In life sciences this can be particularly beneficial when considering re-use opportunities such as with product disclaimers and other commonly produced industry-specific documents.

Going one step further, integrating a CCMS with a TMS is the crown jewel for content reuse and translation workflow management. However, with so many CCMS, CMS, and TMS solutions on the market, many organizations are faced with the paradox of choice, or at least find it difficult to commit to a specific solution.

According to Dominique Trouche, WhP is CCMS and CMS agnostic and can work with almost any content management platform. However, they only use one TMS. To that end, WhP has developed a firmware solution that can allow for the development of a connector for most CCMS and CMS platforms to WhP’s preferred TMS solution within one or two business days.

An example of an enhanced workflow based upon the integration of a CMS and a TMS is augmented review for medical device manufacturers. Augmented review is a better option than the traditional in-country review because only the revised content needs to be reviewed, as opposed to an entire document. This can be done by a linguist with subject matter expertise. Once changes are made to a content block, those changes can be set to automatically flow to all documents or webpages that use that specific content.

This automated approach solves the typical labor-intensive manual “find and replace” problem which first necessitates the locating of all documents and webpages where a piece of content has been used and eliminates the need for costly, time consuming, and error prone DTP work.

According to the DITA Exchange, an organization that works to help companies simplify the creation, management, delivery, and re-use of content, their Dx4 structured content management solution which runs on Microsoft SharePoint...
achieves the above goals and helps to fulfill compliance and regulatory requirements.

A specific example provided by the DITA Exchange is the re-use of Global Labeling content across all related documents such as Company Core Datasheet (CCDS), Company Core Safety Information (CCSI), Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC), and United States Prescribing Information (USPI).

As the amount of life sciences content being produced and localized, as well as the volume of patient data being around the world is rapidly growing, the use of a CCMS and TMS would seem to be a no brainer for all organizations creating and translating content. But as Uncle Ben in Spider-Man says, “With great power comes great responsibilities.”

The great responsibilities in this case are specifically related to both the readability and accuracy of the content that is being translated, and also to the protection of patient and customer data that is being processed and/or translated. To ensure that these responsibilities are taken seriously, various regulatory agencies across the globe are continually updating, refining, and releasing new regulations and guidelines.

For content creation and translation, a good example of guidelines would be the Lay Summary Best Practices that were created by the Clinical Trials Expert Group (CTEG) and discussed in detail in last month’s column.

Another example would be the recently released guidance for translating Clinical Outcome Assessments (COAs). If you have been using the same procedure for translating Patient Reported Outcomes (PROs) and the various reported outcomes in COAs, you may be surprised to learn that there are several notable differences in what is accepted as best practices.

The ISOQOL Translation and Cultural Adaptation Special Interest Group (TCASIG) has released recommendations related to the translation of various COA types. These recommendations are discussed in detail in the paper Good practices for the translation, cultural adaptation, and linguistic validation of clinician-reported outcome, observer reported outcome, and performance outcome measures at pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33146755.

On the data protection and privacy front, regulations including HIPAA and GDPR, both highly relevant to the life sciences industry, are continually evolving in terms of their scope, guidance, and interpretation of their regulations. Examples include HIPAA’s easing of compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic and the allowance of the use of everyday communication tools such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, and Google Hangouts video by healthcare providers to provide telehealth services to their patients.

Normally the use of these types of tools would not be considered fully HIPAA compliant but have recently been allowed. It should be noted that public-facing platforms such as Facebook Live and TikTok are still not allowed.

The U.S. Congress is getting in on the healthcare data protection act and has recently introduced two bills related to the protection of healthcare data that falls outside of HIPAA protection. S.3620 is a bill to establish a commission that will study health data use and privacy protection, and S.3627, known as the “Delete Act” would call for the establishment of a centralized system that would allow individuals to request the deletion or disallow tracking of their data.

At the same time several states including California, Colorado, and Virginia have recently passed new regulations that relates to the protection of patient data that falls outside the purview of HIPAA.

Keeping up with and maintaining compliance with new regulations can be challenging for those involved with life science content creation and translation. One solution is to only work with HIPAA- and/or GDPR-compliant vendors. Typically, larger vendors will issue guidance and updates as part of the business agreement to help their customer understand the regulatory landscape and work towards maintaining compliance.

The use of machine translation continues to increase across all areas of life sciences. That said, not all that glitters is gold. Many readers may be surprised to find out that public cloud services such as Google Translate aren’t considered to be HIPAA compliant, but services such as Microsoft Translator and iTranslate Medical are promoted as HIPAA compliant by their respective companies.

Next month in The Lab we will take a deeper look at security and compliance requirements for life sciences localization providers.
The Evolution of Cultural Adaptation

Back in the earlier days of software creation and distribution — and I’m referring to around the time I started my career in the early 1990s — most software was distributed on CDs and DVDs as packaged products that were physically shipped to specific markets around the world. The source company could target their offerings to whichever markets they felt were strategically important. In the event one of their product versions ended up in a non-targeted locale, they had a degree of plausible deniability. In other words, if the software’s content was not culturally or geopolitically compatible with a local market, and the company had no intention of shipping the product there, they could blame it on the black or gray markets and sidestep (most) of their accountability.

However, through the years since my career commenced, software creation has evolved and at this point, the majority of content is distributed via internet channels and less as physical media. Now, when content is “shipped”, it instantly becomes ubiquitous and exposed to a broad multicultural audience, often without the slow trickle effect of the past when companies had to wait to determine the compatibility. And while many companies today still operate under the illusion that their content is geotargeted and only available to whomever they determine, the reality is that all content that is released now is global — regardless of what the company intends it to be. In short, the system that fuels content creation and global distribution has dramatically changed.

Another major shift over the past couple of decades that has changed the dynamic of content creation is the emergence of social media — instant, targeted feedback from anyone, anywhere towards any content producer. In this often-harsh environment of knee-jerk backlash and reactions without context, the creators’ intentions have become mostly irrelevant. In the early days of the internet, we experienced many general discussions and mostly civil disagreements around issues discussed in nascent online forums. But these have mutated into full-blown culture wars, primarily fueled by tech companies like Meta (Facebook), Alphabet (Google), and Twitter which generate a healthy profit off the phenomenon. There do remain some online forums where people can have constructive dialogues, but most people have been siloed into online echo chambers which reinforce the inclusion of like-minded people while excluding those who may think differently — to the point of “canceling” them (effectively erasing their digital existence). As a result, we have a plethora of toxic online environments where anything and everything is seemingly offered up for a vitriolic debate — from religion to politics, from the latest game release to simple meme reactions.

The upshot is a wide range of effects depending on the type of media scrutinized by the online masses. For films, it could mean being banned in a specific market, or at least edited for content sensitivities. In the case of video games, broader culture is still confirming their reality as an artistic medium that can address the same serious, challenging topics as films or books. But games still must cope with uninformed people (including many politicians) who conclude that if a game isn’t “fun”, then it must be regulated or banned. This kind of thinking persists today, even though we’ve seen signs of positive change — such as the US Supreme Court’s ruling in 2011 that games are protected free speech on the same artistic level as film, literature, and art.

So simple distribution is no longer the issue — we must also manage the immediate reactions from a massive online audience and the often-accompanying toxicity. But there’s yet another dimension that transcends and, in some ways, overshadows both the distribution and reaction issues, and that’s
the fundamental aspect of default audience: The content’s intended recipients.

For decades now, most companies often made their content with the Western mindset as the default version — namely thinking of North America and Western Europe as their primary markets (I’ve found in many cases even today, companies don’t even realize that this is what they’ve been doing). The logic was that given the relatively high levels of freedom of speech and allowability of content in these regions, a company could create the default version of the content they are releasing (a film, a video game, etc.) and still maintain a high degree of creative freedom. If the default content didn’t align with local values or requirements, minor revisions were an easy possibility from market to market. But for the most part, the great majority of the creative intent would remain intact. And then, this content produced with a default Western worldview could then be adapted as needed to locales beyond the region — to make localized and culturalized versions for the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and so on — to appease the general sensitivities in other worldviews.

“...we have a plethora of toxic online environments where anything and everything is seemingly offered up for a vitriolic debate — from religion to politics, from the latest game release to simple meme reactions.”

What I find compelling is that in just the last five years or so, we’re starting to see more companies pivot their default version from targeting a mostly Western audience towards not just an East Asian perspective, but a distinctly Chinese worldview. Why? The answer is obvious: Money. China is the fastest growing market for film consumption and became the top market in 2020, surpassing North America. In 2018, China also became the largest market for video games, finally surpassing the United States, which held the title for many years. Also in 2018, China climbed past the United Kingdom to become the second-largest market for television content, second only to the US (and likely to surpass the US soon). In short, China is a consumer superpower, and companies are eagerly responding to the demand and market potential.

Yet many companies are quickly learning that with the challenges of global exposure and social media backlash, the China-first strategy isn’t easily hidden. Unlike the Western perspective which tends to have more liberal standards on many issues — such as the depiction of violence, sex, nudity, and controversial topics like politics and religion — China’s approach is far more restrictive. The flexibility that companies enjoyed by creating a default version for Western expectations gets exchanged for a more stringent default that grants access to the vast Chinese market yet at the high price of creating content that is far less backwards adaptable to other markets.

Let’s examine a few recent examples of how companies have started to encounter this challenge.

For the upcoming film Top Gun: Maverick, the anticipated sequel to the extremely successful Top Gun (1986), the jacket worn by Tom Cruise’s main character was altered to appease Chinese political sensitivities. In the original film, an American cult classic, the jacket has a patch that includes the US, UN, Japan, and Taiwan flags. But for the 2022 sequel, the same jacket was revised so that the Japanese flag is now a white field with a red triangle (instead of red circle), and the Taiwan flag has been replaced entirely.

In 2019, DreamWorks Animation released the film Abominable, a story about a Chinese girl who helps a mythical yeti (also known as the “abominable snowman”) find his way back to his home in the Himalayas. Sounds innocent enough, right? Well, in one very brief scene, the girl walks past a map of China, which happens to show the 10-dash line that indicates the Chinese geopolitical claim on Taiwan and the entire South China Sea. Vietnam, which is one of the parties disputing China’s claim, consequently banned the film. That action was repeated by the Philippines and Malaysia, who are parties in the territorial dispute as well. An appeal to Universal Pictures for a simple edit of this one scene was ignored, likely in part because DreamWorks co-produced the film with Pearl Studio, a Chinese production company.

And perhaps one of the starker examples of the growing gulf between a Western versus a Chinese default version came about in late 2021. China announced a host of new restrictions on video game content, which included a clear disapproval of the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals and relationships in game content. This comes at a time when the great majority of Western companies are explicitly striving to improve the presence of underrepresented people and groups in their creative media. Thus, for many companies publicly supporting diversity and inclusion in their workplaces and in their content, this action is a line in the sand they cannot cross, or else undermine their own values.

Truly, we are experiencing a very different world of content creation compared to when I started working in this field way back in February 1992. The examples I’ve cited are not intended as a rant against China specifically but illustrate the fact that the challenges of content creation and distribution will always evolve and are becoming more complex. Each content creator and company must strive to not only keep in step with these changes but be mindful of their boundaries over compromising values for business.
Last year, Airbnb announced it partnered with Italian LSP Translated to create Translation Engine, a language solution for its massive collection of listings and reviews. Covering 60 languages in total, the sophisticated machine-learning process — a custom solution based on Translated’s ModernMT technology — seamlessly translates content for everyone from vacationers to perpetually traveling “digital nomads.” By some estimations, it’s the largest contract awarded in terms of total words processed.

*MultiLingual* reached out to Airbnb’s Head of Localization Salvatore (Salvo) Giammarresi to discuss his professional background, the experience of such a massive undertaking, and the state of the industry in 2022.
Tell us a little about your own professional background. What was the career path that led you to Airbnb?

I moved to San Francisco in the mid-90s during the first Dot Com era with a Masters degree in Languages (specialized in Linguistics) and a self-taught keen interest in AI and computer science. I discovered the world of localization during one of my earlier roles as Engineering Program Manager at Electronics for Imaging. I fell in love with it and realized that I wanted to focus my career in this field. I particularly loved how localization combined my passion for people, languages, cultures, engineering, products, business, quality, human-machine communication, AI, and operations. From the start it didn’t feel like just “work,” but instead it became my “passion.” As a bilingual speaker and son of emigrants, I could deeply empathize with those who were facing linguistic and cultural barriers in their life and in their work. I could also understand what was holding back many companies as they struggled to efficiently make their products locally relevant at scale. My professional career path then continued as Senior Localization Manager at Kana Software; then Director of International Product Management at Move.com; Vice President of Products at Classified Ventures; Senior Director of Localization Engineering at Yahoo; and Head of Content & Globalization at PayPal, before joining Airbnb as Head of Localization.

In parallel, my academic career led me to a PhD in Applied Computational Linguistics and becoming a visiting professor, teaching localization, at the University of Palermo in Italy.

What were some of the factors that prompted you to accept your position with Airbnb?

I was drawn to Airbnb because I felt that it had a unique and interesting localization puzzle to solve. In most products, the assumption is that your user is always in the same “locale” (mix of language and country). At Airbnb, by definition our users, particularly those traveling cross-border, were on the move going through two or more locales. In many cases, there might also be a linguistic and cultural mismatch between host and guest. I saw a clear affinity between Airbnb’s community and localization’s own mission of connecting people through cultural empathy and language.

I also loved that, while Airbnb was already localized in around 30 languages, there was still room to improve. I saw a lot of potential for innovation, and doing things differently. Indeed, since I joined, we have been pushing the boundaries and, in the process, helping Airbnb’s global community to connect.

The focus of the first year was the team itself and moving to a vendor model. This allowed us to scale and grow our operational bandwidth. We expanded the size and role of the internationalization engineering team. We expanded and refocused the localization program management team. We refined the role and scope of our language managers. Last but not least, we onboarded Translated as our sole human translation partner across all Airbnb content — which allowed us to automate many processes, and free up valuable time across our team, allowing for more and better involvement with our internal stakeholders.

The second year we focused on language expansion, and in record time, we doubled Airbnb’s supported languages and created a more robust global gateway.

Most recently we focused on improving the quality and UX of translating user generated content and this led to the creation of Translation Engine.

What is Airbnb doing right now in the world of localization that you think offers a lesson to your industry peers?

Our team operates under two foundational themes. The first one is to serve Airbnb’s global community of hosts and guests, partnering with all internal teams and functions to localize and internationalize everything that Airbnb creates, at scale, at a high quality, on time, and within budget.

The other foundational theme — from day one and everyday since — was to question everything and try to innovate wherever possible.

Our first innovation was to select and focus on just one language service provider, Translated. While the traditional wisdom is that companies should hedge their bets and use more than one provider, in my experience, this was causing more issues than it was solving. With one provider, we could work as one team and become true partners with common goals and metrics.

Another thing we did was to align our team with the values and business goals of the company. This has allowed our team, over time, to expand and deepen our role, and get involved further upstream in all processes.

Localization is viewed as a foundational asset at Airbnb. This was exemplified by Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky’s Nov. 9 product announcement and demo of Translation Engine.

Lastly, Airbnb is setting a new bar for the whole industry in regards to translation of user generated content (UGC). For many years Airbnb, and the entire industry, thought that “state
of the art” was to display UGC in whatever language it was created in, and then offer a “translate” button that calls a third-party machine translation provider. In many ways UGC was deemed less relevant, and therefore it didn’t deserve the same high quality human translations.

We were inspired by this Charles Eames quote: “The role of the designer is that of a very good, thoughtful host anticipating the needs of his guests.” Translation Engine makes Airbnb an even better host to our community of hosts and guests, by presenting all content, whether it’s created by Airbnb or UGC, in the user’s preferred language.

**When did Airbnb first begin offering automated translation? What was the scale? What were some limitations?**

Airbnb has been offering machine translation by a single provider of its user generated content for many years. Some of the limitations have always been quality and cost. Using a generic engine meant that Airbnb couldn’t independently improve the quality. Cost started to become a factor as our UGC started to grow exponentially in line with the global growth of Airbnb.

**How has language access progressed on Airbnb since then?**

The main progress, in terms of language access, occurred in 2019 when Airbnb doubled the number of supported languages, bringing the total to 62. This ambitious language expansion program was one of the single largest ones in the localization industry, given its size and scope, and allowed more than one billion people to access Airbnb in their native language.

**When it comes to automated translation, do you have any stories or examples of the system working not quite as intended?**

When we launched Translation Engine, we gave the example of a seaside listing in Brittany, France: When guests clicked to translate the listing from French to English, the listing's translated title read as “House feet in the water.” We knew that we could do better than that! Now, with Translation Engine, that same listing’s title will be translated to “beachfront house,” and that translation will happen automatically.

One of the reasons why Translation Engine bears its name is because — like an engine — it is made of many components, and the overall success of the engine depends on how all these components work together.

Let’s dig a little deeper into Translation Engine. I’m curious to know how it was developed.

We worked with our best in class partner — Translated, leveraging their ModernMT technology — to create Translation Engine, a brand-new machine learning model and solution. Translation Engine is trained on Airbnb’s content to better understand the content it’s translating and continuously learns Airbnb’s and our users’ language and expressions. The end result is a higher quality, more human-like translation rather than an automated, one-size-fits-all computerized translation.

**How long has this translation technology been in the making?**

I first had the idea in early 2018, while I was interviewing for the Head of Localization role at Airbnb. There was definitely a way to make it easier for hosts and guests to communicate and help create more human-like translations. In 2019/2020, it really became one of our main focus areas.

“One of the reasons why Translation Engine bears its name is because — like an engine — it is made of many components, and the overall success of the engine depends on how all these components work together.”
What were some of the challenges you encountered along the way? How did you overcome them?

The biggest — but also most rewarding — challenge was to align across more than 100 people and different teams across the globe. While our team had the vision, set the direction, and built the Translation Engine technology in partnership with Translated, we needed to partner with all the teams that managed product flows where user generated content was being ingested and displayed. It definitely had its challenges, but it’s so rewarding when you see the final product and hard work the team accomplished.

Tell me a little about the practical scenarios this will enable. What stress points will this relieve for travelers seeking a smoother experience? How about the hosts?

Frictionless communication is at the core of creating human connections. Previously, guests on Airbnb would experience a localized product excepting user generated content, which was displayed in whatever language we received it. To display this content in the user’s language a user had to click on a “translate” button, which would use an off-the-shelf software translation service. Thanks to Translation Engine, when you land on a page, all of its content will be pre-translated in a preferred language — saving guests time, creating a better user experience, and making it even easier to book. Hosts will now be able to write their listing in their own language and rest assured that anyone around the world can read it in their own language. And the best thing about Translation Engine is that it learns and adapts to new content. The more information that’s added to it, the better the quality.

A growing trend I see among my own colleagues is the "digital nomad" — professionals who maintain a lifestyle of perpetual travel while working via the internet. I’d imagine Airbnb has a clearer, more data-supported view of this lifestyle, since they’re likely frequent customers. What have you observed about these types of people, and did you have them in mind when developing these new translation services?

The world is undergoing a revolution in how we live and work. Technologies like Zoom make it possible to work from home. Airbnb makes it possible to work from any home. As a result, consumers are demanding a newfound flexibility. According to a recent five-country survey that we commissioned, more than one third of self-identified remote employees say they would rather quit their jobs than go back to work in-person full-time.

Now, people increasingly are living on Airbnb, and they are doing so around the world. In a dozen-plus destinations, at least 50% of recent nights were for long-term stays — from Bangkok and Phuket to Buenos Aires. As borders begin to reopen again, guests are increasingly looking to travel further: Between early 2021 and now, the most acceleration in growth for guests has been for trips of more than 3,000 miles from home.

Translation Engine will certainly serve this new, emerging need among guests who are living on Airbnb far away from home.

Are there any other types of guests and hosts who will particularly benefit from this and the other new services you’re introducing?

As US borders reopen — the largest country to reopen to foreign travelers arriving by commercial flights — Translation Engine will be particularly useful to travelers ready to travel longer distances and cross borders once again. In fact cross-border travel has been increasing steadily throughout the year, from 20% of gross nights booked in the first quarter, to 27% in the second,

“Thanks to Translation Engine, when you land on a page, all of its content will be pre-translated in your preferred language — saving guests time, creating a better user experience and making it even easier to book.”
OPENING DOORS: AIRBNB.ORG’S EFFORT TO SHELTER REFUGEES

The recent events in Ukraine provide a stark reminder to always be prepared for refugee relief. No one can foresee the turns of world events, and war, drought, famine, or natural disasters can create a refugee crisis before anyone has time to respond.

While the Russia-Ukraine war brought refugee issues to the forefront of the collective consciousness, it’s worth remembering that similar crises happen whether the world is paying attention or not. When refugees are in need of shelter, every open bed makes a difference. And there are few companies that know about matching people with beds better than Airbnb.

In 2012, an Airbnb host requested the company’s assistance in providing free shelter to individuals displaced by Hurricane Sandy. As Airbnb gained more experience providing shelter to those in need, the program evolved into a full-fledged nonprofit called Airbnb.org. Hosts can opt to provide rooms for free to those impacted by emergencies — they even earn a special profile badge for their community spirit.

“To date, Airbnb and Airbnb.org have connected more than 54,000 refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, including from Syria, Venezuela, and Afghanistan — to temporary housing through Airbnb.org partners,” said company spokesperson Liz DeBold Fusco. “Last year, Airbnb.org announced the creation of its Refugee Fund and has galvanized more than 4,000 donors to further support its work with refugees and asylum seekers worldwide.”

To better serve refugee needs, Airbnb.org partners with International Rescue Committee, Church World Service, HIAS, CARE, and other local and global nonprofits. Good teamwork is key for an escalating crisis like Ukraine, where regional and international NGOs have a clearer view of the situation on the ground. The plan is to provide assistance for 100,000 Ukrainians.

“Airbnb is mobilizing hosts that want to offer their home for free or at a discount for this cause,” Fusco said. “Airbnb will also provide the services, technology, and other resources necessary to facilitate these stays via the Airbnb platform.”

“In addition to Airbnb.org’s efforts, we have been so humbled by the inspiring generosity of our community during this moment of crisis, with many booking stays in Ukraine with no intention of staying — simply to support local hosts,” she added. “On March 2 and March 3, there were more than 61,000 nights booked in Ukraine around the world, including more than 34,000 nights booked by US guests. Airbnb is temporarily waiving guest and host fees on bookings in Ukraine at this time, and on March 2-3, total gross booking value to Ukraine was nearly $2 million.”

With so much energy and willpower being directed toward helping Ukrainians, it’s a good thing Airbnb has built up significant experience in refugee aid. In August, for instance, Airbnb announced it would provide free temporary housing to 20,000 Afghan refugees — a goal the company met in February by assisting 21,300 individuals.

“[We] set a new goal of providing free, temporary housing to another 20,000 refugees from Afghanistan, Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America, and other regions,” Fusco said. “Airbnb.org’s offer to provide housing to up to 100,000 refugees fleeing Ukraine is in addition to this broader effort.”

According to Fusco, the thanks goes to so many individuals and homeowners who are eager to help out in the midst of an international catastrophe. That kind of motivation, taken collectively, makes all the difference.

“Anyone interested in getting involved with Airbnb.org should go to airbnb.org/help-ukraine, and support Airbnb.org’s initiative to provide housing to refugees fleeing Ukraine, by becoming a host or donating,” she said. “You don’t have to be an existing Airbnb host to participate — anyone can share their home with refugees through Airbnb.org.”

I’d imagine these services have the potential to only expand as time goes on. What kind of a future do you see being paved by these new capabilities?

Right now, search pages, listing pages, and the first few reviews of a listing will be automatically translated — but we’ll be rolling Translation Engine out further across the service. We’re incredibly proud of Translation Engine, and we are looking forward to introducing higher quality, more human-like translations platform-wide.

Is there anything else you want to highlight that we haven’t yet covered?

Airbnb is built on the idea of hosting. More than 4 million Airbnb hosts have welcomed more than 1 billion guests into their homes worldwide. Airbnb helps establish human connections through hosting. Translation Engine is our way of being great hosts to the millions of people who are part of the Airbnb community. Translation Engine unlocks all the user generated content, created by hosts and guests on Airbnb, making it easier for human connections to occur on our platform.
Given the scope of the project, you must need some time to relax and unwind. What are some of the hobbies and interests that keep you occupied outside work?

When I am not working on Airbnb projects, I spend time reading, which fulfills the lifelong learner in me. I love taking walks in nature and playing tennis. When time permits, I love advising companies and coaching people.

When you look to the future, what most excites you about localization? What are the challenges and pitfalls that will need to be overcome or avoided?

The internet has made the world smaller. Any company has the potential of reaching millions of people online. This is a clear trend that has been growing over time. According to Byte Level Research, every day about 1 million people join the internet for the first time, and only nine out of 100 new internet users speak English. Not only is English no longer the most-used language online, but the largest and fastest growing segment of users is made of all the “other” non-top-20 languages combined.

Within this context, the role of localization professionals is going to be even more critical. This is what excites me and this is what I tell people who are considering joining localization teams.

The opportunities I see for localization professionals on the buyer side is to have a larger impact in their respective companies, by connecting dots that no one else sees. Connecting people, growing the business and making companies more locally relevant at scale and efficiently.

For language service providers on the vendor side, the opportunity is to find novel ways to partner with localization buyers, to bring about process, engineering, automation, and operational innovations that will unlock even more value for all.

The challenges are that the role of localization as a function, on average, has not fully matured yet, and therefore it is not always properly leveraged within companies. There are very few functions and people in a company who have the depth and breadth of seeing how all the moving parts of a company coalesce into a product or the launch of a new service or campaign. Localization professionals must embrace this, while deepening, expanding, and leveraging their unique combination of cultural, operational, linguistic, engineering, and design know-how.

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The Language of War: What sociolinguistic tension

Мова війни: Як соціолінгвістичне
tells us about the war in Ukraine
In an address to the Russian populace on Feb. 21, Russian president Vladimir Putin made several claims about the Ukrainian government’s attempts to suppress ethnic Russians and Russian speakers living in Ukraine.

“The Ukrainian Parliament is continuing to discriminate against Russians,” he said, accusing Ukraine and Eastern European NATO members, of anti-Russian sentiment. “The politics of de-Russification continue. The Russian language is being persecuted.”

On the eve of Russia’s invasion, Volodymyr Dibrova was glued to his television screen, watching news coverage of the action. Dibrova, an author and professor of Ukrainian at Harvard University, said much of what Putin says comes from an overly paranoid point of view — to say he’s skeptical of Putin’s claims would be an understatement.

“He lives in a bunker. He has no connection with reality at all,” the Donetsk native said over a Zoom call on Feb. 25. “When you hear what he has to say, it’s total rubbish.”

Dibrova’s hometown, Donetsk, has been a focal point of the current situation — fighting there began in 2014, several years before Russia’s recent invasion of the country. Located in the eastern region of Ukraine known as Donbas, the city, along with other districts throughout Donbas, has close cultural ties with Russia.

Donbas is a bit of an anomaly in Ukraine, language-wise. You’re likely to come across Russian speakers all over Ukraine, though the language becomes less prevalent the further west one ventures within its borders. While there are urban areas like Kharkiv and Odesa with a majority of Russian speakers, the language is especially highly concentrated in Donbas, where its speakers make up a majority of the population across a particularly large stretch of land. Still, a little less than 60% of the region’s residents identify as ethnically Ukrainian — not Russian. In 2014, pro-Russian separatists gained traction there, and fighting between them and the Ukrainian government ensued.
Separatists in two regions of Donbas — Donetsk and Luhansk — declared independence from Ukraine, forming the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic shortly after Euromaidan in 2014. While parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions remain under Ukrainian control, most of the highly populated urban areas are subject to the rebel leadership. Linguistic differences have certainly played a role in this conflict — when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, Putin justified the action by noting that the vast majority of its residents spoke Russian, rather than Ukrainian. Also that year, demonstrators in Donetsk reportedly burned several Ukrainian-language books in a display of anti-Ukrainian sentiment.

The Ukrainian government views the breakaway states and their governing bodies as terrorist fringe movements. On the other hand, the Russian government officially recognized them as nations independent of Ukraine on Feb. 21 of this year.

Just a few days later, Russia announced a “special military operation” — a euphemistic term which, in this case, essentially means “invasion” — in Ukraine. Now, the fighting is no longer limited to Donbas — bombings have occurred throughout Ukraine, in many of the biggest cities in the country. Since Feb. 24, the countries have been engaged in a full-fledged war on Ukrainian territory, the likes of which the European continent has not seen for several decades.

When Russia first began its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, a huge group of people — who hadn’t paid much mind to this relatively small corner of the planet before this year — suddenly had all eyes on Ukraine. People’s curiosities about the country surged. According to Google Trends, which allows people to identify popular search terms among Google’s users, interest in the country skyrocketed to heights it never had before.

Before the week of the invasion, searches for “Ukraine” reached their peak in March 2014, in the aftermath of the Euromaidan demonstrations. This past February, Google Trends estimated that interest in the country rose to more than six times what it was in March 2014.

As interest in Ukraine spiked, so too did interest in the country’s official...

“He lives in a bunker. He has no connection with reality at all,” the Donetsk native said over a Zoom call on Feb. 25. “When you hear what he has to say, it’s total rubbish.”
“On the language learning app Duolingo, the number of users learning Ukrainian increased by nearly 500% following the invasion.”

language, Ukrainian. Though Google doesn’t report quite as large of a rise in interest for the Ukrainian language as it does for the country, the newfound fascination with the nation and its official language is evident in media coverage of the war in Ukraine. On the language learning app Duolingo, the number of users learning Ukrainian increased by nearly 500% following the invasion. Interestingly, one question about the language seems to be on many people’s minds:

What is the difference between Ukrainian and Russian?

Curious Googlers searched “difference Ukrainian Russian” in droves over the course of the week following the invasion. In an attempt to answer this question, language learning companies Duolingo and Babbel both published their own blog posts explaining the differences between the two languages.

“The languages are pretty close, but they are totally different,” Dibrova said.

There’s good reason for that. Ukrainian and Russian share about 62% of their lexicon, meaning that in a 10-word sentence in Ukrainian, Russian speakers are likely to understand six words, and vice versa. And four misunderstood words can make a big difference.

To many Ukrainian speakers, of course, this comes across as quite a naïve inquiry. Since she moved to the United States from central Ukraine in 1995, researcher and educator Ruslana Westerlund told MultiLingual that she’s heard and answered

містах. З 24 лютого країни ведуть повноцінну війну на українській території, війну, якої європейський континент не бачив кілька десятиліть.

Коли 24 лютого Росія розпочала вторгнення в Україну, величезна група людей, які до цього року не звертали особливої уваги на цей відносно маленький куток планети, радом усі сконцентрувалися на Україні. Люди почали активно цікавитися країною. Згідно з даними сервісу Google Тренди, який визначає популярні пошукові терміни серед користувачів Google, інтерес до країни злетів до небачених раніше висот.

До вторгнення пік пошукових запитів за словом «Україна» спостерігався в березні 2014 року, після Євромайдану. У лютому 2022 року сервіс Google Тренди підрахував, що інтерес до країни зріс у шість разів у порівнянні з березнем 2014 року.

Зі зростанням цікавості до України зростав й інтерес до її офіційної мови — української. Хоча Google не відзначає такого значного зростання інтересу до української мови, як до самої країни, нове захоплення країною та її державною мовою помітно у висвітлені російсько-української війни в ЗМІ. У додатку для вивчення мов Duolingo кількість користувачів, які вивчають українську, зросла майже на 500% після вторгнення. Цікаво те, що багатьох людей, здається, турбує одне питання:

у чому різниця між українською та російською мовою?

Протягом тижня після вторгнення допитливі користувачі Google масово шукали за запитом «різниця українська російська». Сервіси для вивчення мов Duolingo і Babbel спробували розібратися з цим питанням й опублікували дописи у власних блогах, у яких пояснили відмінності між двома мовами.

«Мови досить близькі, але зовсім різні, — стверджує Діброва. — Якщо дати російськомовній людині українську книгу чи газету, вона нічого не зрозуміє».

Для багатьох україномовних такий запит, звісно, видається дещо наївним. Дослідниця й педагог Руслана Вестерлунд переехала з Центральної України до США в 1995 році. Вона розкалася порталу MultiLingual, що відтоді вона чула кілька вариацій цього запитання й відповідала на них. За кілька тижнів до вторгнення Вестерлунд передбачив опублікувала статтю в журналі Language Magazine, у якій завчасно розкрила
several variations of this question. In the weeks leading up to the invasion, Westerlund published a piece in *Language Magazine*, preemptively addressing the question she’d been anticipating as tensions between Russia and Ukraine were growing increasingly more intense.

“To ask, ‘How does Ukrainian compare to Russian?’ seems so innocent and so curious, and yet it is so tiring for Ukrainians to keep repeating the same thing over and over again,” Westerlund wrote. “If you ask ‘How does Ukrainian compare to Russian?’ be ready and willing to learn new words like linguicide, language suppression, banned language, linguicism, language status, [and] linguistic inferiority.”

Considering the languages’ intertwined histories, however, it’s also a fair question to ask — especially when the question comes from people who likely didn’t know much about either language before February. Along with Belarusian and Rusyn, the two languages make up the East Slavic language family. Members of this language family split up from each other relatively recently, and as such, they have a high degree of lexical and grammatical similarity.
These similarities — along with the Russian Empire and Soviet Union's respective efforts to “Russify” Ukraine and other territories — have often led to the misperception that Ukrainian is simply a dialect of Russian. They view it no differently from, say, the relationship between the varieties of English spoken in the United Kingdom and those spoken in North America. To some extent, this Russification of Ukraine (and therefore, its language as well) has played a role in Russian propaganda promoting the so-called “special military operation” that’s currently raging in the country. In his Feb. 21 address to his nation, Putin claimed that “modern Ukraine was completely and utterly created by the Bolsheviks,” who he said haphazardly demarcated the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic during the socialist revolution of 1917.

Ukrainians often claim that Russia repressed the Ukrainian language throughout its history, some going as far as to claim that there was an all-out “linguicide” of it. On the other hand, Putin and others in Russia have claimed that the modern Ukrainian government has persecuted speakers of the Russian language. While the events currently taking place no doubt go beyond mere sociolinguistics, tension like this can be an underlying factor in geopolitical conflicts like this one, often predating outright military conflict.

There’s an old Yiddish proverb that seems particularly relevant at a time like this: “A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.” If a country’s military capacity is any indicator of the status of its native language, then it ought to be clear by this point in time that Ukrainian is indeed a separate language in its own right. Still, looking at the current war through the lens of socio- and historical linguistics can shed further light on the ways in which issues regarding language have contributed to the conflict at hand.

Growing up in the Soviet Union, Dibrova said that he frequently switched between Russian and Ukrainian. To him, it never felt like there was a “clear-cut demarcation” between the two languages, yet he ultimately preferred to use Ukrainian.

“At home, we used to speak Russian. Ukrainian was always

“A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.”

пролити більше світла на те, як мовні проблеми сприяли конфлікту.

Дитинство Діброви пройшло в Радянському союзі, і він стверджує, що постійно перемикаюся між російською й українською. Він ніколи не відчував «чіткого розмежування» між двома мовами, але загалом волів використовувати українську.

«Удома ми говорили російською. Українська завжди віталася, — говорить Діброва. — Але коли прийшов час визначитися, я обрав українську».

Хоча Діброва й стверджує, що його ніколи не утискали за використання української мови, він також визнає, що радянська влада намагалась упослідити українську, вважаючи її мовою низького престижу. І Російська імперія, і Радянський Союз проводили політику русифікації, змушуючи неросіян асимілюватися в російську культуру. Не могла русифікація не вплинути також і на мови, якими послуговувалися на всій Росії та її колишніх територіях.

Навіть за межами України неважко побачити довготривалі наслідки цієї політики. Візьмемо до прикладу Казахстан. Місцева казахська мова зараз оформлюється кирилицею, як і російська. (Однак слід
“...the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union implemented policies of Russification, forcing non-Russian people to assimilate into Russian culture — naturally, Russification also impacted the languages spoken throughout Russia and its former territories...”

welcome,” he said. “But when the time came for me to choose, I opted for Ukrainian.”

While Dibrova said he never felt persecuted for using Ukrainian, he also admitted that the Soviet policy toward the language attempted to subjugate Ukrainian, deeming it a language of low prestige. Both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union implemented policies of Russification, forcing non-Russian people to assimilate into Russian culture — naturally, Russification also impacted the languages spoken throughout Russia and its former territories.

Even outside of Ukraine, it’s not hard to see the long-lasting effects of this undertaking — take Kazakhstan as an example. There, the local Kazakh language is currently written using the Cyrillic alphabet, much like Russian. (It should be noted, however, that a recently adopted policy in the country promises a
complete shift to the Latin alphabet by 2025.)

The fact that a Turkic language like Kazakh — which is completely unrelated to any of the Slavic languages for which the Cyrillic alphabet was initially developed — uses this script is far from a coincidence. Kazakh speakers used a slightly modified Arabic-based script for centuries, until Soviet policy forced them to use a Latin-based script in the late 1920s. Little more than a decade later, the Soviet government implemented another policy, changing the language's primary writing system to Cyrillic. Outside of the modern territory of Kazakhstan, however, many Kazakh speakers in China and Afghanistan continue to write using an Arabic-based script.

The story is similar for several other non-Russian languages spoken throughout former (and current) Russian territories. In the case of the Ukrainian language, this Russification dates back even further than the existence of the Soviet Union.

“The Soviet policy vis-a-vis the Ukrainian language was a kind of continuation of the Russian Imperial policy,” Dibrova said. “It was okay, it was tolerated, … but it was effectively pushed into a sort of cultural ghetto.”

The Russian Empire essentially viewed Ukrainian as a lesser dialect of Russian — census data from the late 19th Century officially referred to the language as “Little Russian,” while the language we now refer to as Russian was called “Great Russian.” Throughout the Russian Empire’s existence, there are several instances of policies that attempt to relegate the Ukrainian language to the fringes of society. Researchers at Euromaidan Press, a Ukrainian NGO that publishes information about history and current events in Ukraine, have identified at least 60 instances of foreign powers prohibiting the Ukrainian language over the course of three decades.

While imperial powers like the United Kingdom or the United States enacted linguistic assimilation through compulsory English education for their indigenous people, historians note that the Russian Empire did not have the proper educational infrastructure to mimic this approach. Instead, the empire limited or even banned the publication of works in certain minority languages. For example, the Valuev Circular of 1863 was a decree that limited the number of Ukrainian-language publications that could be printed and distributed within the empire. The man behind the policy, Petr Alexandrovich Valuev, was especially concerned that Ukrainian and Polish nationalist movements threatened the empire — by his logic, censoring the publication of Ukrainian texts could limit...
the spread of Ukrainian nationalism.

In her piece for Language Magazine, Westerlund points to a similar policy adopted in the late 18th century, in which the Synod of the Russian Patriarchate banned the printing of a Ukrainian alphabet book and prohibited the translation of literature into Ukrainian. While these instances often play a role in the argument that the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union waged an all-out linguicide against the Ukrainian language, it’s important to note that their success was rather limited.

While the intentions may have been similar — that is, to subjugate foreign peoples and erase their respective cultural and linguistic identities — the effects of Russian censorship of Ukrainian texts pale in comparison to those of compulsory English education in North America. In the United States, the vast majority of Native American people speak English as their primary language — very few languages indigenous to the country have more than 10,000 speakers, and many of these languages are no longer spoken at all. Ukrainian, on the other hand, boasts a population of nearly 50 million speakers — many of whom do not even identify as Ukrainians.

Still, the censorship undeniably contributed to placement of the Ukrainian language in what Dibrova calls a “cultural ghetto.” The language never had any sort of official status within Ukrainian territory until 1990, just before Ukraine gained independence. During her early life in the Soviet Union, Westerlund told MultiLingual that, although Ukrainian was never banned during her lifetime, there was a clear difference in prestige between Russian and Ukrainian.

“Ukrainian was always perceived as the language of the peasants,” she said. “It was a second class language, not the prestigious one.” She added that Russian always seemed like a more chic language — in her childhood, for example, she and her friends would play with dolls, speaking Russian with the cooler, more stylish-looking dolls and Ukrainian with the ones that looked like peasants.

While Dibrova is hesitant to claim that Soviet language policy had a tangible negative impact on his identity as a Ukrainian speaker, he also notes that political elites in Russia and Ukraine have both attempted to capitalize on linguistic tension nonetheless.

“Ukraine is, de facto, a bilingual country. This linguistic issue is kind of a political choice,” he said, also noting that the Ukrainian language has been a significant factor in consolidating the national identity of Ukraine following its independence in the 1990s. “People switch to Ukrainian just to show which side they are on.”

“...Ukrainian was always perceived as the language of the peasants,” she said. “It was a second class language, not the prestigious one.”...”
“Ukrainian has continued to prevail in a way that its sister language simply has not been able to. Once the country gained independence from foreign powers, the country’s populace placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the Ukrainian language.”

Young and/or newly independent nations tend to latch onto particular identifying factors that differentiate them from neighboring areas, effectively unifying their populace under one umbrella. For Ukraine, Dibrova and Westerlund both agree that this unifying agent is the Ukrainian language.

Since gaining its status as an independent nation in 1991, Ukraine gave official status to just one language: Ukrainian. Unlike neighboring Belarus, Ukraine opted not to give official status to Russian — interestingly, Belarusian has become a minority language in its own homeland, while Ukrainian is prevalent within all aspects of Ukrainian society, even in areas where the Russian language maintains a large base of speakers.

There are several reasons for this, but adopting Russian as an official language post-independence likely has something to do with the Belarusian language’s decline. Dibrova argued that Belarus — and therefore the Belarusian language — was particularly hard-hit during the second World War. Historians have also noted, however, that once Belarus gave Russian official status in 1995, Belarusian was virtually erased from “all domains of public life.”

Ukrainian has continued to prevail in a way that its sister language simply has not been able to. Once the country gained independence from foreign powers, the country’s populace
FEATURE
The Language of War | Andrew Warner

ANDREW WARNER is a staff writer for MultiLingual.
placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the Ukrainian language — Dibrova said many parents and grandparents in Ukraine who grew up speaking Russian and Ukrainian will choose to speak Ukrainian with their children, rather than teaching them both languages.

“Elderly people or middle-aged people are saying, ‘Oh, we normally speak Russian, but we want our children or grandchildren to speak Ukrainian,’” he said.

In the early days of Ukraine’s independence, Russian still maintained a high level of prestige over Ukrainian. During his college days in the late 1990s, Igor Marach said his fellow students mainly spoke with each other in Russian. Marach, now the CEO of the Ukrainian language service provider Technoplex, said that the Russian language felt fairly dominant in many domains within the country until the Orange Revolution, a series of protests against corruption following the country’s 2004 presidential election.

“The influence of the Russian culture was too strong everywhere: from entertainment to science,” he said. “However, in 2004 after the Orange Revolution, many of us started to understand the value of our own language.”

Conversations about language policy, at least in North America, often revolve around language access services — that is, attempting to provide native speakers of minority languages with access to information in their native or primary language. This hasn’t quite been the case in Ukraine, however.

In the three decades since the country split off from the Soviet Union, politicians in the country have played a sort of linguistic tug-of-war. Early on in the modern state’s history, many pro-Russian politicians wanted the country to adopt Russian as a co-official language, similar to what Belarus did in 1995.

Pro-Ukrainian politicians succeeded in blocking such legislation from coming into place under President Viktor Yushchenko, who reigned as president from 2005 to 2010. Shortly afterward, Viktor Yanukovych took his place. Having long proclaimed his support for giving Russian recognition as a minority language, Yanukovych’s pro-Russian administration would eventually pass legislation that gave Russian regional status in half of the country’s territory, throughout its eastern and southern regions, where Russian remains a fairly prevalent language.

After Yanukovych was ousted in the midst of the Euromaïdan demonstrations, the country further attempted to distance itself from Russian powers, a move that is evident in its most recent language policies.

“After (Euromaïdan) and the first Russian invasion of Donbass and Crimea, many Ukrainians stopped visiting Russia, stopped watching Russian movies, et cetera,” Marach said. “In our business, which is focused on delivering Ukrainian and Russian language services, we saw that Ukrainian translation demand was growing — before that, EN-RU combination was around 75% of our volumes.”

каке, що російська мова явно домінувала в багатьох сферах життя країни до Помаранчевої революції, серії протестів проти корупції після президентських виборів у країні 2004 року.

«Вплив російської культури був надто сильним усюди: від індустрії розваг до науки. Однак у 2004 році, після Помаранчевої революції багато з нас почали розуміти цінність рідної мови».

Розмови про мовну політику, принаймні в Північній Америці, часто обертаються навколо доступу до мовних послуг. Носіям мов меншин намагаються надати доступ до інформації рідною або основною мовою спілкування. В Україні про це насправді не йдеться.

Три десятиліття після того, як країна відокремилася від Радянського Союзу, політики в країні грали на своєрідне мовне перетягування каната. На початку сучасної історії держави багато проросійських політиків хотіли, щоб країна зафіксувала російську мову як державну за прикладом Білорусі в 1995 році.

Проукраїнським політикам вдалося заблокувати прийняття такого закону за президента Віктора Ющенка, який перебував на цій посаді з 2005 по 2010 роки. Невдовзі його наступником став Віктор Янукович. Янукович тривалий час проголошував свою підтримку визнання російської як мови меншин. Тому його проросійська адміністрація врешті-решт приймає закон, який надавав російській статус регіональної мови на половині території країни, у всіх її східних і південних регіонах, де вона досить поширенна й зараз.

Після того, як Янукович був усунений у розпал протестів Євромайдану, країна ще більше спробувала дистанціюватися від російського впливу, що відбилося в її поточній мовній стратегії.

«Після (Євромайдану) та першого російського вторгнення на Донбас і Крим багато українців перестали відвідувати Росію, перестали дивитися російські фільми тощо, — стверджує Марач. — У нашій компанії, яка надає мовні послуги українською та російською мовами, ми зафіксували, що попит на український переклад зрос. До цих подій замовлення з мовою парою EN-RU становили близько 75% наших обсягів».

Закон, прийнятий у 2019 році, вимагає, щоб українська була основною мовою суспільного простору. Таке рішення отримало значну критику не лише з боку російського уряду, а й носіїв інших мов меншин, таких як угорська та румунська. Закон має кілька основних принципів, але особливо цікаво є вимога, щоб підприємства використовували українську мову як мову за замовчуванням. Це означає, що вивіси, меню і інші засоби комунікації з клієнтами мають бути українською мовою, навіть у регіонах, де переважає російська або інші мови меншин.
A law passed in 2019 requires Ukrainian to serve as the primary language of the public domain — the bill received significant criticism not only from the Russian government, but also speakers of other minority languages like Hungarian and Romanian. The law has several core tenets, but of particular interest is its requirement that businesses use Ukrainian as their default language — this means signage, menus, and other communications, must be produced in Ukrainian, even in areas where Russian or other minority languages prevail.

“That (law) made a big impact on the Ukrainian language industry,” Marach said. “The share of Ukrainian translations in our company became bigger than the Russian one. We even started to experience a sort of lack of Ukrainian resources on the market.”

Marach said he believes the legislation was important to distinguish Ukraine and its culture from its intrusive neighbor. While the Kremlin has heavily criticized the policy, using it as logistical ammunition against Ukraine, Marach and Dibrova both argued that people can use the Russian language freely within society. “I must assure you that in our daily life we could use any language we wanted, including Russian,” Marach said.

While the war at hand is clearly much bigger and more severe than mere linguistic tension at this point, political elites continue to use such pressure as a tool to invoke resentment against their opposition. Ukraine is by no means the only country to push against the Russian language’s hegemony since the fall of the Soviet Union. Other former Soviet states such as Moldova and Uzbekistan have pushed for legislation similar to Ukraine’s 2019 language law, of which the Russian government has been similarly critical.

Dibrova dismissed this criticism as “Russian paranoia,” maintaining that much of the linguistic tension is more an issue for political elites than it is for the average Ukrainian — whether they speak Russian or Ukrainian as their primary language (or languages, in many cases). He also stressed the notion that most Ukrainians — regardless of their native language — identify, not as Russians, but as Ukrainians.

“Although Russian was spoken in my household, I never felt Russian at all,” he said. “Nowadays, more and more people are switching to Ukrainian. Why? Well, because it’s a political issue; because they don’t feel like Russians.”

«Цей закон серйозно вплинув на українську галузь мовних послуг, — зазначає Марач. — Частка українських перекладів у нашій компанії стала більшою за російську. Ми навіть почали відчувати своєрідну нестачу українських спеціалістів на ринку».

За словами Марача, таке законодавство відіграє важливу роль у вирізненні України та її культури з тіні нав’язливого сусіда. Кремль різко розкритикував цю стратегію, використовуючи її як дипломатичну зброю проти України. Проте Марач і Діброва стверджували, що люди можуть вільно спілкуватися російською в побуті. «Я маю запевнити вас, що в нашому повсякденному житті ми могли використовувати будь-яку мову за вибором, включно з російською», — каже Марач.

Хоча сьогоднішня війна наразі є набагато більшою й серйознішою проблемою, ніж якесь мовне напруження, політичні еліти продовжують використовувати мовний тиск як інструмент, щоб спровокувати обурення позицією своїх опонентів. Україна далеко не єдина країна, яка боролася з гегемонією російської мови після розпаду Радянського Союзу. Інші країни колишнього Радянського Союзу, як-от Молдова й Узбекистан, наполягали на ухваленні законів, подібних до українського закону про мову 2019 року, до яких так само критично ставився російський уряд.

Діброва відкинув цю критику, характеризуючи її як “російську параною.” Він стверджує, що значною мірою мовна напруга є проблемою політичних еліт, ніж пересічних українців, які можуть говорити російською чи українською як основною мовою (або в багатьох випадках — обома мовами). Він також наголосив на тому, що більшість українців — незалежно від їхньої рідної мови — ідентифікують себе не як росіяні, а саме як українці.

“Хоча в моїй родині розмовляли російською, я ніколи не відчував себе росіянином, — зазначає Діброва. — Сьогодні все більше людей переходять на українську. Чому? Бо тепер це політична позиція. Вони не почуються росіянами».

ANDREW WARNER is a staff writer for MultiLingual.
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It was Iryna Vizir’s 35th birthday when Russia invaded Ukraine. And it’s one birthday she’ll never forget.

After weeks upon weeks of rumblings about the country’s aggressive intentions and denials by Russian leaders, the moment of the invasion itself was nevertheless a shock. One thing was certain: At that moment, life in Ukraine changed forever.

“My cousin from Kharkiv called me at 5 a.m. and I thought, ‘Wow, why does she want to wish me a happy birthday so early?’” Vizir said. "But she cried, ‘Ira, they’ve started a war! I can hear the explosions! I’m going to take my kids and go to Dnipro. Or to your parents’ place near Poltava.’ I turned on the TV: They had also attacked numerous strategic objects in the whole country. The war had started.”

The international crisis has reframed life and work for everyone in the country or involved in the crisis, and that includes language-industry workers. Interpreters are key to the war effort in handling government and press communications, as well as translating intercepted Russian military chatter. And other language workers — like Vizir, who works for the language company InText — are doing their best to do their jobs under unimaginable circumstances.

“We’ve been trying to work as usual as it was just impossible to imagine that everything could simply stop, and all the huge amount of work our team is doing could be destroyed,” Vizir

A Ukrainian professional describes LSP work during an invasion
“We’ve been trying to work as usual as it was just impossible to imagine that everything could simply stop, and all the huge amount of work our team is doing could be destroyed,” Vizir said.

said. “We feel highly responsible, first and foremost, for our colleagues and freelance suppliers, and their families.”

Tetyana Struk, owner of Ukrainian LSP Linguistic Centre, demonstrates a similar commitment to business as usual — or at least, to the greatest extent possible. Thanks to an earlier business decision that shifted some resources toward a Poland-based division, that’s more possible than one might think.

“It wasn’t really premeditated as much as a coincidence,” she said. “In retrospect it feels like a really smart decision now. All our localization processes never stopped no matter what was going on here in Ukraine.”

“Of course, a lot of our linguists in Ukraine are affected, but it could all be managed from Poland,” Struk added. “It gave me a chance to concentrate on helping with the refugee crisis here on the ground. From the second day we accepted a lot of refugees here in the house.”

According to Vizir, the goal is to keep the situation as normal as possible for clients, freelancers, and employee families while maintaining a high quality standard. That’s no easy task when reports of civilian deaths are now a matter of daily life.

“Our team is coping with this situation like real heroes,” Vizir said. “To continue running a business is also a powerful tool now: It helps us support and contribute to maintaining the economic stability in Ukraine. It will also help us to recover our country after the war.”

InText has taken several steps to make the situation more bearable for all involved, according to Vizir. The company formed an assistance fund for employees, their family members, and other citizens of Ukraine, including the residents of the city of Dnipro. It is making advanced payments to employees, freelancers, and the state budget. And it’s lending efforts toward humanitarian aid.

“InTexts supplies food and necessary items to the railway station to support the refugees evacuating from the hotspots of Ukraine,” Vizir said. “We also help some evacuated families to find shelter and support in our city. This goes without saying.”

Fortunately, Ukrainian forces have so far maintained control of Dnipro. Vizir said the portion of employees that remain in the city have maintained a work environment similar to pre-war routines. The only difference: the implementation of safety measures and an occasional interruption by air-raid alarms.

“The others have relocated to western Ukraine or abroad to continue working and living in a safer environment,” Vizir said. “Our hearts are breaking in a wish to help each other in this war, and we are helping in every way we can. Many of us are volunteering in translation and humanitarian initiatives.”

Air raid alarms are a part of life for Struk, too. It’s a reminder of the danger that could strike at any moment, although Struk said that their experience has been more bearable than other areas of Ukraine.

“As the air raid alarm sounds, we seek refuge into our basement which by now is well equipped,” she said. “It’s a feeling of utter helplessness. I can’t even imagine what people in Mariupol or Kharkiv must go through. We had some people from that last city stay with us for a couple of days, and they were traumatized.”

That’s to say nothing of the toll on workers’ personal lives. Vizir, for instance, said goodbye to her husband, a reserve officer who received his call-up notice as soon as Ukraine declared military law. He joined the Armed Forces the next day.

“I didn’t want him to go, but we both knew it was the right decision now,” she said. “We told our 6-year-old daughter that daddy had become a soldier and went on a business trip. And she accepted it easily, as she hadn’t seen the war’s reality and didn’t know all the terrible consequences.”

Struk experienced a similar separation with her husband when he left to defend the country.

“My husband was not even supposed to be called to war,” she said. “He is 53. He volunteered because of his military experience in the past. For him, it probably was not only about protecting Ukraine but also about protecting his two sons. Hopefully, by him going first, there will not be a need for them to go.”

“Our hearts are breaking in a wish to help each other in this war, and we are helping in every way we can. Many of us are volunteering in translation and humanitarian initiatives.”
The ever-changing situation is a difficult one to navigate for any Ukrainian, one that demands difficult decisions. It’s a crisis in constant evolution as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Mariupol, and many other Ukrainian cities endure destruction and bombing. While Dnipro is safe for the time being, Vizir decided to leave the country to ensure the safety of her daughter. It was a long, dangerous trip, and though she’s away, her thoughts are rarely removed from Ukraine.

“My company and I stand with all the people of Ukraine in claiming that the Russian leadership has treacherously unleashed and is waging a war against peaceful Ukraine,” she said. “We did not expect such a tragic scenario, but we are coping with the hardships.”

Interpreters, too, have faced difficult circumstances while performing their essential duties. Dr. Kateryna Rietz-Rakul, a Ukrainian-German interpreter, went viral on social media after breaking into tears while translating a press conference by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. For many both inside and outside the language industry, the vulnerable moment was a reminder of the often-difficult circumstances interpreters endure to do their jobs, one reinforced when a second interpreter openly wept during a Zelensky speech to the European Parliament just days later.

“Of course I know how to distance myself,” Rietz-Rakul told MultiLingual. “But sometimes you just can’t because it’s too much."

“I just thought, ‘Well, I lost it, and they’ll say it was nice working with you, but obviously you’re not fit for the job,’” she added. “So I sat there, and the woman responsible for the broadcast ran to me. She hugged me, and she said, ‘I’m so sorry, and I feel with you. You are doing a great job. It’s OK, we all know how you feel.’”

Given the difficult work those directly impacted by the conflict face, what can others do to help? Vizir recommends donating money to humanitarian organizations and fundraisers like helpukrainewin.org, supporting Ukrainian LSPs and freelancers, and spreading truthful reporting to fight propaganda and misinformation.

“And you can pray as well,” she added. “I believe every religion is against war.”

At the very least, Vizir said that the invasion and its accompanying fear puts the value of life into perspective. And she looks forward to the day when she can return to work in a country that knows peace once again.

“I would like to thank the world for supporting us. And I want to thank everyone in the localization industry for your help,” she said. “I’d also like to tell all my fellow Ukrainians who are reading this: Stay safe! Glory to Ukraine!”

CAMERON RASMUSSON is Editor-in-Chief of MultiLingual.

Treat your TMs to a proper clean-up.
(They will pay you back)

Translation Memories (TMs) have been the industry’s unsung heroes for almost 30 years now. They’ve stored billions of words of content and helped save millions. But they age over time. (Just like us, humans)

This is bad because it means that savings driven by TM use drop. Often dramatically. And when 100% matches and context matches are reused without review, quality may suffer.

Cleaning up TMs has always been possible, as a long, manual, and costly process. Which means it gets done very rarely.

But AI is changing everything. We can now apply AI to automate the process of cleaning up TMs. Think TM content distribution, language detection models and targeted regular expressions. And all this at a fraction of the cost or time that used to be needed for manual review.

Learn more or book a free consultation with our engineers to see how your precious TMs could be cleaned up with our AI services. So they are again as good as new.

www.argosmultilingual.com/ai-tm-clean-up
How Virtual Interpretation Can Transform Your Language Service Company

Interpretation is going virtual
In the United States pre-pandemic, as few as 8% of patients had taken advantage of telehealth. As early as June of 2020, that number had climbed to 50% in a survey asking patients if they’d used telehealth in the past three months.

Doctors in the US are facing the explosion of telehealth with cautious optimism while also working to include limited English proficiency (LEP) patients in this new quality of care. Among the strategies being deployed is integrating interpreters into virtual platforms.

“With an increased reliance on virtual care for health care during the pandemic, it’s important to make sure we are not increasing disparities for patients who have language barriers,” said Aswita Tan-McGrory, MBA, MSPH, the lead author of a study examining strategies to address disparities in virtual care platforms.

The US isn’t alone in this rapid switch to telehealth. Researchers found a 169% year-over-year increase in global telehealth investment in Q2 of 2021.

Neither is the telehealth industry alone in the switch to virtual. Gartner forecasted in 2021 that by the end of the year 51% of knowledge workers would be remote. Remote workers mean remote meetings both internally and externally, which means routine business translation will be moving into the virtual space. Integrations like Boostlingo’s Webex Embedded App, Boostlingo Interpretation, will be crucial for catering to a global workforce and client base with growing interpretation demands.

For language service providers, this shift to more virtual communication means onsite interpretation offerings are no longer enough to remain competitive in the global interpretation marketplace. According to Nimdzi’s 2021 Interpreting
Index, Virtual Remote Interpreting (VRI) and Over the Phone Interpreting (OPI) made up only 17% of the market before the pandemic. During the pandemic, these numbers shot up by nearly 500% to 47% share of the interpreting market. Post-pandemic, Nimdzi is predicting that the levels will fall to virtual holding a 35% share of the market as onsite interpreting returns as an option.

In a market where the largest global providers have robust virtual options, growing language service providers need options for affordable virtual interpretation in addition to their onsite interpretation staff. iTek Interpreting Solutions, a language service provider in the Quad Cities District of the United States is an example of virtual interpreting keeping a smaller shop competitive even as the market changed rapidly in the pandemic.

Education language support reimagined: A virtual interpretation use case
In 2017, Hector opened iTek Interpreting Solutions as an underdog. He had left his previous language service company to start a business from scratch, and his interpretation market was saturated with global providers. The task was not too daunting for him and his wife, Denise, the co-owner and co-founder of iTek.

As he began his business, virtual interpretation was becoming affordable enough for small language service providers to use the product and expand their interpretation offerings. iTek partnered with Boostlingo to add virtual services to his portfolio and began going after local schools and hospitals. With Boostlingo, he had the scheduling and interpreter management solutions he needed for his onsite staff, and additionally he had access to a global bank of interpreters instantly.

The combination of onsite and virtual solutions allowed him to offer the lowest prices for even the rarer languages in his area. Due to a booming manufacturing industry attracting an immigrant workforce to the Quad Cities, 35 languages are spoken in the area. Some are more common and easier to staff like Spanish and Vietnamese. Oth-

GLOBAL MARKET BY THE NUMBERS*

17%
Share of the global interpreting market taken up by virtual remote interpreting (VRI) and Over the Phone Interpreting (OPI) before the pandemic

47%
Share of the global interpreting market taken up by virtual remote interpreting (VRI) and Over the Phone Interpreting (OPI) during the pandemic

35%
Predicted share of the global interpreting market taken up by virtual remote interpreting (VRI) and Over the Phone Interpreting (OPI) post-pandemic

*Figures and percentages from the 2021 Nimdzi Interpreting Index
ers, like Ixil (a Mayan-based language spoken in Guatemala), would have been unaffordable for a small team to staff in an onsite capacity. With Boostlingo, Hector and iTek were able to use the virtual platform to tap into a global workforce and fill those interpretation needs.

In 2019, iTek’s reputation in the area school systems was so positive that Davenport Community School District (DCSD), made up of 15,000 students, reached out to Hector to see if virtual interpretation could fix the gap the district was experiencing in language support services. Due to budget constraints and a limited number of interpreters, things like parent-teacher conferences were being scheduled back-to-back-to-back to accommodate the two-hour window a Vietnamese interpreter could be onsite. In other instances, family members and other students were being relied on to provide educational interpretation for students and parents.

“In the United States, 1 in 10 students is currently learning English on top of their standard curriculum. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the basis for a nationwide requirement of language support as a means of equal access to education.

To get Davenport back into compliance with US Civil Rights laws and to support limited-English proficiency students in their education, virtual

“Due to a booming manufacturing industry attracting an immigrant workforce to the Quad Cities, 35 languages are spoken in the area.”
interpretation became a budget-friendly solution for DCSD. Now, a virtual interpreter could be accessed on any device and for any of their students’ languages. The school could preschedule calls for things like routine conferences, and also have on-demand interpretation options in case of an emergency. Without the affordability and convenience of Boostlingo’s virtual platform, students and families in DSCD would still be falling behind because of language barriers. iTek was able to fill a need in the community with virtual interpretation.

For Hector the ability to help these students is personal. As the child of immigrants from Mexico, Hector moved to the Quad Cities area at six, and quickly became the link between his parents and the English-speaking world they had relocated to. “In my way, I was forced at a very young age to become an adult,” Hector recalls of his childhood in Illinois. The daily challenges of being a third grader helping his parents pay bills, get medical care and generally navigate their life in the United States informs the way he sees and conducts interpretation as a business.

Aside from DCSD, iTek Interpreting Solutions serves the majority of the school districts in the area as well as serving large legal and healthcare clients in the region. Over the course of five years, the combination of Boostlingo’s digital platform and Hector’s compassionate drive for more interpretation led to iTek becoming the #1 language service provider in the Quad Cities area.

asked about the key to his success, Hector explained:

“With the right partners and the right technology, the sky really is the limit.”

How Boostlingo can help you reimagine interpretation
Telehealth, education, and business meetings are just a few of the spaces in which virtual interpretation allows your company to offer unique solutions made for today’s changing environment. In addition to the power of virtual solutions, Boostlingo’s flexible platform offers interpreter scheduling, interpretation management, and on-demand interpretation. Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) and Over the Phone Interpretation (OPI) can either be hosted on the platform with your interpreters, or you can schedule appointments with the Boostlingo Professional Interpreter Network comprised of 10,000 interpreters in over 300 languages.

Why do all of these options matter? As a language service provider, you’re dedicated to improving language access and making it easy on your clients to use interpretation every day. Virtual solutions are an important tool in the toolkit as more of our communication takes place online or in increasingly diverse settings where language barriers arise.

Boostlingo partners with your company to help you find creative solutions for better communication. Reimagining interpretation is a choice to bring interpretation into spaces where the languages were too rare, the logistics were too hard, or the prices were too unaffordable before. Be a part of improving communication every day. Partner with Boostlingo today.

“With the right partners and the right technology, the sky really is the limit.”
How to Get Your Website to the Top of Google in More Than One Country | Maria Scheibengraf
You have the website, the knowledge, the resources, and the experience it takes to make your business stand out. You also have an international presence, perhaps in more than one foreign market. All you’re missing is website traffic that converts — the Holy Grail for any business. But how do you achieve that when your website is designed for a specific locale, and Google returns different search results depending on the user’s country and language?

Say hello to international SEO: the process of optimizing your website content to drive organic traffic from multiple countries and/or languages. It’s not easy, but with the right tools and strategies in place, it can be a huge boon to your international business.

Take this article as a crash course in international SEO. I’ll cover the basics of how it works, what you need to do to get started, and some common pitfalls to avoid. So whether you’re just getting started or you’re looking for ways to improve your current strategy, read on and get ready to conquer the world (or at least a few more countries)!

**What is international SEO?**

International SEO is the process of optimizing a website’s content and structure to rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs) for users in foreign markets.

The goal is to attract visitors from specific countries and/or languages, with the intent of converting them into customers.

**How is international SEO different from "regular" SEO?**

If we were to divide SEO according to its target audience, a possible breakdown would look something like this:
• **Domestic SEO**: This is "regular" SEO, or SEO as you know it — targeting users in your home country.

• **International SEO**: This is SEO targeting users in foreign countries.

An important consideration: International SEO may target people from other parts of the world but doesn’t necessarily involve multilingual content — think of English-speaking users in Australia, Canada, Ireland, or the US. Several countries, one language. If the division was by language, then SEO would include:

• **Monolingual SEO**: This is SEO targeting users in just one language.

• **Multilingual SEO**: This is SEO targeting users in two or more languages.

Just like international SEO can just involve one language, multilingual SEO could well be constrained by geographical boundaries to only one country — there are countries with more than one official language, after all. Drawing from the above, we can speak of:

• **Domestic monolingual SEO**

• **Domestic multilingual SEO**

• **International monolingual SEO**

• **International multilingual SEO**

For the purpose of this article, when I speak of international SEO, I’m referring to the fourth category: international multilingual SEO.

Why do businesses need international SEO?
The short answer is this: because the world has gone global. Thanks to the internet, businesses can now reach customers all over the world from the comfort of their own homes.

But simply having a website isn’t enough. You need to make sure that your website is visible to the right people, in the right places, and that you combine cultural knowledge of those places with SEO expertise — both back-end tactics and on-page optimization — to achieve the best results in every target region. That’s where international SEO comes in.

Is international SEO for everyone?
No, international SEO is not for everyone. Your potential to reach and convert foreign customers will determine whether developing a new presence or optimizing an existing one for international SEO is the right move for your business. If you’re not sure, ask yourself these questions:

• What’s my site’s current traffic (organic and total) from foreign countries?
• What’s my site’s current conversion rate from foreign traffic?
• What’s my site’s current organic search visibility in foreign countries?
• Can I afford to invest in developing a new presence overseas, or expanding and optimizing my current one?
• Do I have the time and resources to learn about different cultures and how they interact with search engines?
• Do the potential traffic and conversions from foreign countries justify the investment?

If your answers to most of these questions are negative, then international SEO may not be for you. However, that doesn’t mean you should give up on global expansion — it may be more feasible to focus on domestic SEO first and then branch out into foreign markets as your business grows.

Main international SEO terms
Before we delve into the actual tactics of international SEO take a quick look to page 61 on your right, listing some of the main terms you’ll encounter.

How does international SEO work?
Now that we’ve covered the basic terminology, let’s examine how international SEO actually works.

The first step is to identify your target countries and determine which of those countries you want to rank in. Once you’ve decided on your targets, the next step is to carry out some good ol’ market research to identify things like:

• The language(s) spoken in those countries
• Local consumer behavior, including search engine usage, preferred payment methods, and preferred shipping and delivery methods

“International SEO is the process of optimizing a website's content and structure to rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs) for users in foreign markets.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Geo-targeting</strong></th>
<th>The process of serving different content to users based on their location. For example, you may want to show UK users a different homepage than US users.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country code top-level domains (ccTLDs)</strong></td>
<td>A ccTLD is a domain suffix that identifies a country. For example, .co.uk for the United Kingdom, .fr for France, and .de for Germany. These are assigned by ICANN and Google automatically associates them with the relevant country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generic top-level domains (gTLDs)</strong></td>
<td>A gTLD is a domain suffix that doesn't identify a country. For example, .com, .net, and .org. To geo-target a website with a gTLD, you need to use geo-targeting settings in Google Search Console or Bing Webmaster Tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td>The domain is the name of your website. For example, in <a href="http://www.example.com">www.example.com</a>, &quot;example.com&quot; is the domain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subdomain</strong></td>
<td>A subdomain is a subsection of your website’s domain. For example, blog.example.com or shop.example.com.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subfolder</strong></td>
<td>A subfolder is a subsection of your website’s domain that's located in a folder. For example, in <a href="http://www.example.com/shop">www.example.com/shop</a>, &quot;shop&quot; is the subfolder. Other common subfolders are language-specific versions of a website, such as <a href="http://www.example.com/fr">www.example.com/fr</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>URL</strong></td>
<td>The Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is the web address of a page or document, for example, <a href="http://www.example.com/about.html">http://www.example.com/about.html</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Search Console</strong></td>
<td>Formerly known as Google Webmaster Tools, this is a free tool from Google that helps you monitor your website’s performance in Google search, including visibility, crawl errors, and security issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bing Webmaster Tools</strong></td>
<td>This is the equivalent of Google Search Console for Bing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hreflang</strong></td>
<td>A tag used to indicate to Google which language your content is in and which countries you want it to be served to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Any cultural differences that could affect your website’s content or design, like colors with negative connotations or taboo subjects
- Any cultural differences that might affect search behavior (e.g., preference for local brands, etc.)
- The competitive landscape
- What type of content tends to perform best in those countries (e.g., video tutorials, infographics, blog posts, etc.)
- Popular social media platforms in those countries that could help you drive traffic and engagement to your website
- Any other factors that could affect your success in those countries

Once you have this information, there are three main factors that you need consider when optimizing a website for foreign markets: website structure, on-page optimization (content), and back-end optimization.

**Website structure**
The structure of your website — its URL architecture and navigation — is key to getting it ranked in foreign markets. Some best practices include:

- Using localized URLs, whether with a ccTLD or gTLD. For example, if you had a skincare company and you were trying to penetrate the German market, you could use www.skincare.de or www.skincare.com/de. Do consider that using ccTLDs will create separates websites rather than just localized versions of your existing website, and those new websites will start with zero SEO authority. You will have to work to get them ranked, and it could take months or even years.
- Using the geo-targeting settings in Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools, or equivalent to indicate to the search engines which countries you’re targeting.
- Creating individual profiles for each country on Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools, or equivalent to track each country’s search engine rankings and organic traffic.
- Using the correct hreflang tags in each page’s code. For Germany, the hreflang tag for www.skincare.com/de would look something like `<link rel="alternate" href="http://skincare.com/de" hreflang="de-de"/>`
- If possible, hosting each country’s website with a local IP address.
- Minding URL length, as it affects both SEO and UX. The appropriate page URL is 75 characters long. However, up to 120 characters will also be indexed quite well. Your URL length doesn’t need to be deliberately short, but by excluding words like ‘of’, ‘the’, etc. and, instead, using dashes between content words, crawlers and search engines will pick up your URL much more easily.

**On-page optimization**
The on-page elements of your website — headings, copy, images, etc. — play a major role in how well you rank in foreign markets. If you localize your website’s content using the correct keywords and phrases, you’re more likely to be found by searchers in those countries and to appeal to their cultural sensibilities.

The more local users feel your website is designed for them, the more likely they are to trust it, click through to it, and convert, which in turn will help to improve your website’s ranking. Some general tips for on-page optimization include:

- **Adapting keywords and phrases to local languages.** This doesn’t mean a direct translation of your keywords, but rather finding the right local terms that will resonate with your target audience. For example, German consumers tend...
to be very environmentally aware. Therefore, to rank well in Germany, your skincare company website would need to target keywords that emphasize its green credentials and environmental friendliness.

- **Optimizing for different currencies.** If you’re targeting a country that uses a different currency than your home country, make sure to use localized currency symbols in your content and on your website. You’ll also need to decide whether the price adaptation will go beyond a purely “cosmetic” change (e.g., €10 instead of $10), whether you’ll use the foreign currency’s exchange rate to calculate your prices (e.g., 1€ = 1.25$), or whether you’ll apply a completely different pricing model based on the target market’s economic conditions.

- **Using localized images and videos.** If you’re targeting a foreign market, it’s a good idea to use localized images and videos on your website. It will feel more authentic and trustworthy to potential customers.

- **Including localized contact information.** If you want your website to rank in a foreign country, it’s important to make it as easy as possible for people to contact you. Make sure to include local phone numbers, email addresses, and social media accounts on your website.

- **Localizing website content.** This is perhaps the most important on-page element of international SEO — you need to make sure that all of your website’s content is localized for each target market. This includes not just translating your text, but also adapting it to what’s locally popular, culturally relevant, and legally acceptable. Ensuring that internal and external links point to local-language content is also part of content localization.

- **Localizing the user interface (design, layout, and navigation).** Adapting the UI includes anything from accounting for different text lengths and widths across languages and supporting right-to-left scripts for languages like Arabic and Hebrew to changing the color scheme and layout to account for cultural preferences. For example, Asian cultures prefer website designs that are cluttered and include a lot of text.

- **Localizing the user experience.** This involves considerations such as providing local customer support, supporting local payment methods, or even adapting contact forms to localized formats. For example, in Spain, contact forms need to include two fields for surnames because Spanish surnames are typically double-barreled.

**Back-end optimization (off-page and technical SEO tactics)**

The final piece of the puzzle is back-end optimization. This includes all the actions and tactics that you deploy either away from your own website or behind-the-scenes on your website. Here are a few of the most important back-end optimization tactics for international SEO:

- **Link building.** A strong backlink profile is essential for any website looking to rank in foreign markets. You’ll need to focus on getting links from high-quality websites that are relevant to your target market.

- **Social media profiles.** While Google has stated its rankings aren’t directly affected by social media shares, social media can still be a powerful tool for driving traffic to your website. Set up social media profiles for your business in all of the key markets you’re targeting, and share high-quality content regularly.

- **Local business listings.** Get your website listed in as many local business directories as possible. This will help to improve your website’s local visibility and organic search traffic.

- **Local reviews.** Encourage your customers in each target market to leave reviews of your business on popular review websites and on your Google My Business profile if you have one. This will help to build trust and authority for your website in those markets.

- **Optimizing each page’s metadata (i.e., the title tag,
meta description, alt text, etc.}. For each target market, make sure the metadata includes the relevant keywords and phrases that you want the page to rank for.

- **301 redirects.** When you want to move or delete a page on your website, setting up redirects ensures that any links to the old page are automatically redirected to the new page and that the SEO authority of the old page is passed on to the new one.

- **Crawlability.** Ensuring that your website is crawlable by search engine bots is essential for getting your website ranked in foreign markets. Make sure to check your website’s robots.txt file and submit a sitemap to Google Search Console or equivalent for each different target market.

- **URL encryption.** This is becoming increasingly important as Google continues to give preference to websites that are encrypted with SSL (Secure Socket Layer) and HTTPS (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure). These technologies prevent data theft by encrypting all communication between the user’s browser and the website.

- **Mobile responsiveness.** Your site should be mobile responsive in all markets, meaning that it looks good and functions well on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. If it doesn’t, you’ll likely experience a significant loss in traffic from mobile users.

- **Page speed.** Your website’s page speed is another important factor that Google factors when ranking websites. Make sure to optimize your images, scripts, and code in every language version of your site to ensure a fast loading time for all of your webpages.

- **Domain authority.** Building up the authority of your website’s domain is essential for ranking in foreign markets. There are several different strategies you can use, including link building, social media engagement, and publishing high-quality content. Remember that using ccTLDs that result in separate websites for each language version of your site is not as effective for building domain authority as using a single website with multiple language versions.

**International SEO pitfalls to avoid**

As with any SEO strategy, there are some potential pitfalls that you need to be aware of when undertaking an international SEO campaign.

- **Duplicate content**
  When you’re targeting multiple countries and/or languages, it’s easy to inadvertently create duplicate content across your website. This can happen, for example, when you translate a page’s content into different languages but don’t use hreflang tags to tell Google and other search engines which language version is the primary version.

- **Keyword cannibalization**
  This happens when two or more pages on your website target the same keywords or phrases. This can be a problem because it can cause Google to rank one of the pages lower than the others, as it sees them as competing for the same traffic.

  Cannibalization often occurs accidentally. For example, different people may be working on optimizing different pages within the same language version of your website, and they’re not aware of what the other is doing. Or perhaps you haven’t used the appropriate hreflang tags or geo-targeting settings, and different versions of your website are competing for the same traffic.

- **Automatic redirects**
  A big no-no in back-end international SEO is setting up automatic location redirects based on the user’s IP or browser language preference. While the intention may be to ensure that users are automatically redirected to the correct language version of your website, Google actually recommends against this practice, as it can frustrate users who don’t want to be redirected.
Moreover, multiple countries can have multiple official languages, so assuming one based purely on the user’s IP or browser settings can lead to inaccurate redirection.

**Direct keyword translation**

Another common international SEO mistake is to simply translate keywords from one language into another without taking local cultural nuances into account. For example, if you sell pest-control services, users from different parts of the world might search for your services with terms allusive to pests that are specific to their region (e.g., cockroaches in the US., bedbugs in the UK.).

**Using flags to indicate languages**

Flags are not languages. Why would you use the UK flag to mean "English", when there’s at least 100 countries where English is a common language? Why use the Spanish flag to mean "Spanish", when there are about 20 countries in Latin America where Spanish is the official language?

Flags can be useful for indicating country, but avoid using it to indicate the website’s language if you don’t want to risk putting off users who don’t share that nationality. Instead, use the name of the language, written in the local language (e.g., "Español" for Spanish).

**Not working with experts**

Hiring local-market content writers and localizers who are experts in both the language and the local SEO landscape can be essential to the success of your international SEO campaign. Trying to do everything yourself can be a recipe for disaster, so it’s always best to collaborate with people who know what they’re doing.

This includes avoiding machine translation as much as possible, except in cases where you have a limited budget and the content is either not highly visible (e.g., footer text) or quickly perishable (e.g., user-generated content). in these cases, machine-translation-post-editing can be a viable option if approached with caution.

**Additional resources**

International SEO is a highly complex field, and I’ve only just scratched the surface. If you’re looking for more in-depth information, be sure to check out some of the following resources:

- The Google Search Central Blog: This official blog from Google covers a wide range of topics related to search, including international SEO.
- Moz’s International SEO resources: Moz is a comprehensive online resource for all things SEO, and its articles and guides on international SEO are particularly informative.
- Search Engine Land’s Ultimate Guide to Multilingual and Multiregional SEO: This guide from Search Engine Land is a great starting point for anyone looking to improve their website’s multilingual SEO.

If you know others who could benefit from this article, please share it widely or request a gift copy of the entire magazine by writing to backissues@multilingual.com.

**MARIA SCHEIBENGRAF** is an English-to-Spanish translator specialised in Marketing and SEO for SaaS companies. She’s also the Operations Manager of Crisol Translation Services, a boutique team of translators that’s a blend between a translation agency and a freelancer.
How Multimedia Localization can Help Companies Expand Internationally

BY MAYA TSIRULNIK
As the world is becoming more interconnected and globalized, companies both large and small are expanding internationally. While there are many components to international marketing success, multimedia localization is truly the key. A recent study by Wyzowl found that people watch an average of 19 hours of online video per week. And another study by Cisco Visual Networking Index found that internet traffic from videos will make up 82% of all consumer internet traffic in 2022. Because of statistics like these, top global brands are investing heavily in captivating audiences with videos and voices that draw in potential customers.

They are keenly aware that the power of video lies in its ability to tell stories and convey emotions through images and sound. This emotional connection has the potential to go much deeper than any other medium because it stimulates the senses all at once, creating a powerful experience for the viewer.

Well-established international brands also realize that marketing campaigns aren’t only about advertisements. They know that in order to maximize profits, their global salesforce and staff need proper training in the form of localized video demonstrations and elearning courses.

To reach international customers and employees, translation is obviously necessary. However, it’s not just about translating words — it’s about understanding cultural nuances and adapting content for use in different countries. Every language has its own specific dialects, social conventions, cultural norms, and legal standards that must be followed to be accurate and acceptable.

In a November 2021 report on consumer viewing habits, Entertainment Globalization Association along with Whip Media surveyed over 15,000 consumers from France, Italy, Germany, and Spain about their viewing habits on streaming platforms. They found that 61% of respondents encountered poor localization quality on a monthly basis and that 65% stopped watching a movie or TV show in the last year as a result. This is one of countless examples that points to how crucial multimedia localization is to international business.

Video content is a large part of multimedia localization. Whether the goal is to convince someone to buy a product or service or train them to do a job, it’s the “voice” of the company that is used in video to make a connection with people. This is exactly why voiceovers (also known as dubbing) are an integral part of the international marketing process.

From TV commercials, radio spots, and online videos to elearning courses and on-hold messages, voiceovers (and their text-based counterparts called subtitles) are just about everywhere. This type of medium is especially effective considering that people often make purchasing decisions or learn important information based on what they hear and see rather than what they read. A 2021 study by Animoto found that 93% of consumers said video is helpful when purchasing a product. The study shows that when learning about a new product or service, consumers prefer video over reading about it or looking at photos of it. Also, surveyors felt that video was their favorite type of content from brands on social media.

But exactly how do multimedia localization, voiceovers and subtitling work together? And what do you need to know in order to assist your clients with international expansion? Keep reading, because we’ve put together guidance to help you navigate the often-confusing world of foreign language voiceover production.

**Don’t Get Lost in Translation**

Let’s say, for instance, your client has a successful marketing video that has already been produced in English. Now it needs a foreign language voiceover. As we mentioned, the voiceover process begins with translation into a target language. From the very start of the process, the translator must have access to the English version of the video.

This is because once the text is translated, the translator needs to read it back to the video to ensure that it’s in sync. If it’s not, and the translated script is too long or short, the voice actor will be forced to speak too fast or too slow in order to match the length of the video. The audio also won’t match what’s happen-
How Multimedia Localization can Help Companies Expand Internationally

Maya Tsirulnik

April 2022

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

ing in the video. In the event that the translator can’t read the translation back to the video at a normal speaking pace, the text must be shortened or amended.

As an example, languages like Arabic and Hindi are spoken at a slower speed than English. That’s why it’s usually recommended that Arabic or Hindi translations be shortened in order to fit them into a video. In some cases, voices over talents for these projects are instructed to speak faster.

**Timed vs. Untimed Voice Overs (Dubbing)**

If a foreign language voiceover is needed to match an English version of a video, it’s called a *timed voiceover or timed dubbing*. Timed dubbing is the process of matching sync points at the beginning and ending of each sentence.

When working with a voiceover artist or agency on a timed project, it’s the industry standard to provide a script that includes timestamps corresponding to the video. This bilingual script should be provided in a two-column format with English on the left and the foreign language on the right. The artist or agency will also need any music track or sound effect files that are to be used in the video.

Often, timed dubbing is confused with lip syncing process. Lip syncing is much more complex than timed dubbing — a process of matching mouth movements and depends on a syllable-by-syllable translation.

As an example, a timed voiceover for a *one-hour English video* that needs to be dubbed into a foreign language takes about 11 hours. The lip-syncing process for the same video takes three to four times longer (or between 33 to 44 hours).

### Here’s how this is calculated:

Approximately 150 words are recorded per minute, or 840 words per hour.

60 minutes video x 150 = 9,000 words per hour.

9,000 / 840 = 11 hours of dubbing.

A one hour video requires about 11 hours of dubbing. As mentioned, lip syncing takes three to four times longer.

Now, what if your client wants to create voiceovers for an elearning course to allow their international employees to learn about company culture and expectations? Elearning courses as well as other projects like phone prompt recordings typically don’t need to include timestamps. These types of voiceovers can be performed using a natural speaking pace. Therefore, they’re known as *untimed voiceovers or untimed dubbing*. Untimed voiceover projects have no time constraints and can be recorded at any speed or pace as required by the client.

### Subtitling Challenges

Voiceovers aren’t the only way to help present foreign language multimedia to viewers. Subtitles are also commonly used in videos. These allow people who don’t understand the language to be able to see what is being said on-screen. In addition, subtitles are very useful for deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals.

When you have a subtitling project, you should be aware of some challenges that may arise during the production process. Working with foreign language fonts during the subtitling process can be quite a challenge, even for production studios. Multilingual engineers are needed to handle the placement of the subtitles. Most of these engineers are familiar with a vast
number of fonts in different languages. After all, a font style that may be acceptable to people in one country may not be acceptable to people in another.

Typically, subtitles are placed on the bottom of the video in an area known as the “lower third.” This may also present a challenge when there is on-screen text involved. In these instances, the engineer must decide whether to redesign the graphic, remove the graphic, or take another course of action. If a graphic is required to be moved, then the studio must request the original source file used to create the video. This can lead to additional time needed to complete the project. The easiest course of action to avoid graphics in the “lower third” is to simply move the subtitles to the top of the video until the graphic leaves the screen.

**Fun fact:**
The German word “Kraftrzeug-Haftpflichtversicherung” has 36 letters and means “motor vehicle liability insurance.”

Here’s an example of a subtitling nightmare that includes this very long term: “Seine Kraftfahrzeug-Haftpflichtversicherungsbescheinigung war seit Wochen überfällig.”

This sentence means “His motor vehicle liability insurance certificate was weeks overdue.” It sounds a lot shorter in English, doesn’t it?

Here’s how this dilemma can be resolved by a multilingual engineer: Roughly 42 characters can be used per line, so the German sentence would need to be split up into two screens instead of one.

**The Benefits of Working with a Voice Over Agency**
Regardless of whether a timed or untimed voiceover is needed, many companies choose to work with foreign language production companies rather than individual voice talents. In working with an agency, clients get access to an entire team of professionals who specialize in language localization. These include a pool of qualified voice talents, language directors, and sound engineers who are trained in working with multiple languages. These professionals have skill sets that help them understand and analyze the localization process and handle language and sound nuances.

Production studios also have expertise with industry-standard software such as Adobe Audition and After Effects as well as Vegas Pro. Collectively, these programs can handle everything from recording, mixing, and mastering to special effects, digital compositing, 3D animation, motion graphics, and more.

**When in Doubt, Ask the Experts**
We hope this guidance provides you with some insight into the world of voiceover production with a focus on translation, localization, dubbing, and subtitles. While we covered the general differences between voiceovers and subtitles as well as timed and untimed scripts, it’s important to keep in mind that every project is different.

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I recently carried out a piece of research for a professional institute in the UK. The project was to find out what small to medium enterprises (these are defined as companies with less than £50M in revenue) consider to be their biggest sales challenge(s).

Now that the research is in, the top-three challenges were: key account management, communication strategies, and strategic selling. Anyone working in sales will have noticed a change in the profession. Transactional customer interactions are automated. Technology transformed an account manager’s job from predominantly informing customers about their company’s offerings to managing complex business-to-business (B2B) relationships involving value co-creation. Sales has become a broader discipline.

Developing your sales team to understand this can be a source of competitive advantage as it puts you closer to the customer than your nearest competitor. But it may require a change in an organization’s approach to sales management. Let’s explore what this means and what skills your client-facing teams need to enable this approach.

The Fight Against Commoditization
This approach is of particular interest to the localization industry. This industry creates a huge amount of value for its customers, and in most cases the value is measurable. I’ve been in the debate many times before that translation services are being commoditized (that is, indistinguishable from another provider and bought on price) resulting in a race to zero. While the argument is complex, the answer in part is how the customer sees the value of the service being offered.

Marketing teams will make personas of potential clients to help them to develop generic strategies to attract their interest; the same is true for procurement professionals. Procurement categorizes suppliers. They’ll often use a model similar to the Kraljic Matrix (1983) to quantitatively measure supply risk versus the impact on profits. The model draws up four quadrants with each one providing basic supplier/vendor management techniques; these are: non-critical (commodity), leverage, bottleneck and strategic items. You can often tell which box you’ve been put in by the seniority of procurement professionals you deal with and the type of conversations you have (sales people, being eternal optimists, assume they’re in the strategic supplier box, but very few actually are).

If you find yourself repeatedly selling your service on price, look internally at how your customer relationships are being managed and how value is being communicated. Consider the sales team to be the messenger of value. They must understand how your company’s service offering creates value within the context of the customer and then be able to communicate that value in a language the customer understands. It’s not up to the procurement team to work this out and then pay you accordingly — that’s your job.

Consider the concept of value in B2B sales to be the impact on the customer’s business minus total cost of ownership. Impact includes the top line, the bottom line and everything in between, including intangible items (reputation, governance,
brand). Total cost of ownership expands to include procurement costs, switching costs, maintenance, and supply chain costs.

This invites a broader conversation, encouraging innovation and shifting focus away from the lowest-cost marketplace provider. To achieve this, we need to understand the customer’s world.

**Analyze the Customer's World**

Profits are created by your customer; they are not created by your products. Generating them means doing something your customer values.

Getting to the root of what your customer wants isn’t easy. In the words of Henry Ford, “If I’d asked the customer what they wanted, they’d have said faster horses”. Your customer might not know what they want or how your service can be leveraged into their supply chain to generate value. To find sources of value we need to analyze our customer’s business and understand how their model performs.

To gain a 360-degree view of the customer’s business we can look in the following places:
- The environment they operate in
- The industry in which they compete
- The customer’s strategic goals

**Scanning The Customer’s Environment**

All organizations are surrounded by environmental factors that influence opportunities to create profits. To determine which elements are changing in your customer’s world and what the implications of these changes will be, an environmental scanning tool such as PEST analysis can be used.

This tool is a straightforward process to identify and list out factors under the following headings:
- Political and Legal: factors affecting the customer and/or their markets which are the results of political and/or legal trends.
- Economic: factors affecting the customer which are driven by the economy.
- Sociocultural: factors impacting the customer driven by social changes. Think about demographic changes and changes in consumer habits. Note that cultural differences play an increased role as your customer’s products/services will be crossing borders.
- Technological: factors affecting the customer coming from a technology standpoint.

Most of the information you need to complete a PEST analysis for your customer is publicly available. Governments all over the world publish statistics on the economy, demograph-
ics, trends in consumption, etc; and finding it can be as easy as using a search engine. More specific market research reports are provided by entities such as The Economist Intelligence Unit, Datamonitor and Mintel.

Scanning the Customer’s Industry
No discussion on industry analysis is complete without mentioning Porter’s five-forces framework (see M. Porter, *How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy*, 1979). The tool enables a scan of the state of competition and underlying economics within a particular industry. It shows us how forces interact to drive profitability and growth in a particular vertical. Specifically, Porter identified five forces that govern industry competition:
- Threat of new entrants
- Bargaining power of suppliers
- Rivalry within the industry
- Bargaining power of customers
- Threat of substitute products

The collective strength of these forces determines the ultimate potential for profit. Companies seek to create a position in an industry that is less vulnerable to attack from head-to-head opponents and erosion of market share to the supply chain.

With the knowledge gained about your customer’s industry, think about how your service can help your customer to solidify relationships, differentiate products, integrate operations, and gain technical leadership.

### The Customer’s Strategic Goals
If your customer is listed on any stock exchange, they’ll issue investor relations reports to their shareholders; these will be in the public domain. Make it your business to read and summarize this information and think how you can position your firm to help them achieve these goals quicker.

If the company isn’t listed, information will still be published in the form of audited accounts. Social media can be useful — with a huge pinch of salt. Strategic intent can also be interpreted by looking at the job roles they advertise for. More advanced due diligence can be applied in the form of mystery shopper visits or talking to the customer’s customer.

### Finding Value
To help explain how value is created within a company, let’s look at Porter’s Value Chain (M. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, 1985). This model is a way of breaking down a company into its strategically relevant areas so we can begin to identify the areas of competitive advantage.

It consists of a number of primary and support activities. Primary activities have an immediate cost advantage on the production, maintenance, sales, and support of the products or services that the company creates. These activities consist of: inbound logistics, production, outbound logistics, marketing, sales, and service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Name: XYZ Inc</th>
<th>Date Completed: Q1 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margin</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit Potential</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Aligned</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - example of weighted customer factors
STAR
Price is a key factor here, but security of supply and service is also very important.

Spend time here with some of the clients and aim to develop a deeper relationship with them in time.

STREAMLINE
Off-the-shelf products/services. Price will be the key factor here.

Relationship is helpful, professional but transactional. Do not invest large amounts of time in the business relationship at this stage.

STRATEGIC
Very important clients. Relationship has developed to partnership. This is a win-win: Both sides recognize the benefits they gain from working with each other. Not price driven, but predominantly value driven. Broad range of contacts and joint plans for the future are in place. Co-creation of services/products. Very few clients will be in this box.

STATUS
Very important clients in terms of value. Commit to security of supply and offer services tailored to the client’s particular needs. Price becomes less important. You will have goals in common with your client. Some commitments are made.

Invest as needed to continue the business relationship for mutual advantage.

Support activities help the primary activities and form the basis of any organization. They consist of firm infrastructure, human resource management, technology development, and (everyone’s favorite) procurement.

This is typically part of a larger value system that includes companies either upstream (suppliers) or downstream (distribution channels). This perspective about how value is created helps you to see that each business activity adds value as opposed to them being costs. To badly paraphrase Carl Sagan, the beauty of a business is not the resources that go into it, but the way those resources are put together.

Classifying your Key Accounts
Not all of your accounts are equal and resources within your company are limited. To maximize return on your investment, focus on strategically important customers. Some customers will only ever require a low-cost transaction. At the other end of the spectrum, some will offer you the opportunity to invest, innovate, and add value.

Start with your top 20 customers. List out all of the customer-attractiveness factors to determine your ideal customer. Go through them methodically and apply a weighted score to each customer factor. In table 1, I’ve given an example of six factors; the ones you choose for your business might be different.

We then need to consider our relative strength with the customer, scored from low to high. Once you have these two numbers, plotting the customer attractiveness and relative strength places the customer somewhere on this 2x2.

This gives us some generic strategies as a starting point for each quadrant. Note that you can only provide key account management for companies who appreciate value. Over-servicing accounts who do not appreciate it is a waste.

With this research completed, you should have an in-depth understanding of your customer’s business and how to achieve their strategic goals. Rather than boasting about yourself, this method presents value in a language a business can understand. For example, Popeye doesn’t want spinach — he wants the outcome that happens when he eats spinach (date Olive, knock...
out Bluto, lift steel beams). This is the same for your customers. They don’t want localization services. They want the ability to sell their own products to a new region of hungry consumers. Being the enabler of this will allow you to have much more meaningful conversations with your customer and help to move you to the illustrious position of strategic supplier.

**Presenting Value**

One of the largest costs in your business will be the attraction and onboarding of new clients. By applying key account management principles, you’ll retain customers longer, growing your and their business while they use your services. That’s a win-win situation if ever there was one. Creating long-term demand from customers through value creation is a sustainable and potentially limitless opportunity.

When presenting our value proposition to the customer, we should demonstrate that dealing with us will create advantage, not merely avoid disappointment. Far too many value propositions do not explicitly show what value is created and the benefits thereof. The areas where we can support can be classified under the following headings:

- **Strategic**: Issues that will ensure the customer’s long-term success.
- **High Potential**: Items that could potentially lead to differential advantage to the customer.
- **Key Operational**: These need to be solved quickly to avoid disadvantage.
- **Support**: Non-urgent areas of value that still need to be solved to protect market positions.

Invariably this will come down to the numbers. Learn the language of finance, because accountants run the world. Show the customer how your service will affect their future cash flows. Show them the percentage return on investment, the payback period in months, the internal rate of return, and the net present value of your service offering when it’s deployed within your customer’s business. If you can, you are in the top 10% of sales people in the world.

**RICHARD BROOKS** is the CEO and co-owner of UK-based Language Service Provider K International. He spent over 25 years in the localization industry and held executive board positions at the European Language Industry Association and the Association of Language Companies.
BUYER'S GUIDE

Because you are holding MultiLingual magazine, you may be looking for a solution for your translation or localization needs. This Buyer’s Guide is meant to showcase some of the language industry’s offerings, highlighting details you may need while you’re shopping for language services or tools. Additionally, the listed associations and nonprofit organizations provide a great resource for networking opportunities and exploring the human side of the language industry.

If you have questions about products and services, no matter what your level of expertise, this Buyer’s Guide can help point you in the right direction.

ASSOCIATIONS

European Language Industry Association (Elia)
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Founded in 1983, ORCO celebrates this year its 35th anniversary. Over the years, ORCO has built a reputation for excellence and gained the trust of leading companies, such as Oracle, IBM, and Carrier for the localization of their products. Our core business activities include technical, medical, legal, financial, marketing, and other translations, software and multimedia localization, as well as localization consulting. We cover most European languages, and our client list includes long-term collaborations with international corporations, government institutions, banks, private enterprises, NGOs, and the European Union. ORCO is certified according to ISO 17100 and ISO 9001 quality standards.

Languages: Greek and European languages

**ORCO S.A.** Athens, Greece
+30 210 723 6001
info@orco.gr
www.orco.gr

**INSURANCE**

**Alliant**

Alliant Insurance Services is a National leader in insurance, risk management, and consulting. Since 1925, our clients have had profound confidence in us to deliver in all market climates. Today, this promise lives on through the dynamic confluences of people, ideas, and solutions, which have defined the Alliant name. The member-exclusive, ATA-endorsed Professional Liability Insurance Program protects translators and interpreters against claims-related errors, omissions, and/or negligence arising from their professional services. This comprehensive solution commonly known as errors and omissions liability insurance (E&O) covers defense costs and settlements and provides a valuable layer of additional coverage for translators and interpreters.

**Alliant** Chantilly, Virginia, United States
855-663-2282
ata-questions@alliant.com
www.alliant.com
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Gobetween LSP is a female-led company of PMs and linguists specialized in providing English into Spanish localization and translation services of excellent quality and value. We rethink and recreate industry best-practices based on more than one decade of experience in effective communication, quality indicators, and project planning. At gobetween LSP, we help clients and linguists succeed, we believe in teamwork, we focus on human relationships in an increasingly automated world, and we mediate across cultures to ensure communication and understanding.

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Languages: English<>Spanish (all flavors)
Gobetween LSP Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina
+1 347 946 3834
info@gobetweenlsp.com
www.gobetweenlsp.com

PTW — Bringing your story to the world

The team at PTW are game localization experts, offering end-to-end audio production, translation and localization quality assurance services from an extensive global studio footprint.

PTW’s 25 years’ history in the games industry has allowed us to build a client-centric organization, providing a boutique service that is tightly integrated across key regions.

We're a global team of passionate, hard-working, ambitious gamers, whose goal is always to make every gamers experience as perfect as possible.

The PTW family of brands includes SIDE, an award-winning creative services provider, and Entalize, the leading video game localization outsourcer in Japan.

Translation | Audio Recording | Localization Testing | Development. Languages: 40+.
PTW Los Angeles, CA, United States
+1 781 434 6000
sales@ptw.com
www.ptw.com

Lionbridge

Lionbridge partners with brands to break barriers and build bridges all over the world. For 25 years, we have helped companies connect with their global customers and employees by delivering translation and localization solutions in 350+ languages. Through our world-class platform, we orchestrate a network of passionate experts across the globe who partner with brands to create culturally rich experiences. Relentless in our love of linguistics, we use the best of human and machine intelligence to forge understanding that resonates with our customers’ customers. Based in Waltham, Massachusetts, Lionbridge maintains solution centers in 26 countries. Languages: 350+.
Lionbridge Waltham, MA, United States
+1 781-434-6000
marketing@lionbridge.com
www.lionbridge.com

Mobico — by Saltlux

Mobico is the new brand name of Saltlux’s technical communication services and is also the name of the predecessor company to Saltlux, established in 1979 as Korea’s first TC business. What started as a small enterprise concentrating on creating Korean manuals and East Asian language translations evolved into a one-stop service provider for all your needs in the world of business today, including multilingual translation, localization, DTP, TW, and MTPE. The relentless pursuit of progress and perfection results in the use of state-of-the-art technology and processes, which in turn lead to superior translation quality with shorter turn-around times and therefore to greater customer satisfaction. Languages: More than 70 languages.
Saltlux, Inc. Seoul, South Korea
+82-2-2193-1725
tcsales@saltlux.com
www.mobico.com

BLEND — End-to-End Localization Service s

Multiple Platforms
BLEND (getblend.com) is a global localization company brought to you by the makers of One Hour Translation — the legacy LSP founded in 2008.

As an end-to-end, technology-based, multi-market enabler, BLEND empowers global brands to establish a native presence in fundamentally different markets worldwide.

Our strength lies in the power of our AI-driven technology stack, the diversity of our team, and the strength of our global community of linguists. With a multitude of ethnicities and global locations, we’re dedicated to helping global companies weave their brands successfully into local markets. BLEND is a privately held company with offices in Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Kyiv, and Bucharest. Languages: 120+
BLEND 11 Ha’achim Mislavita st. Tel Aviv 7401022 Israel
sales@getblend.com
www.getblend.com

iDISC Information Technologies

iDISC, established in 1987, is an ISO 9001 and ISO 17100 certified language and software company based in Barcelona with branches and teams in Mexico, Brazil, USA, Argentina, Bolivia and Guatemala. We have dedicated teams for web content, software localization and translation of technical, business, automotive, biomedical and marketing documents. Our software development engineers and translation teams provide high-quality and on-time production solutions that are cost-efficient, flexible and scalable.

Languages: Spanish (all variants), Portuguese (all variants), Catalan, Basque, Galician, Valencian, K’iche’, Quechua, Aymara, Guarani
iDISC Information Technologies, S.L.
Barcelona, Spain
34-93-778-73-00
info@idisc.com
www.idisc.com
RWS Holdings plc

RWS Holdings plc is the world’s leading provider of technology-enabled language, content management, and intellectual property services. We help our customers to connect with and bring new ideas to people globally by communicating business critical content at scale and enabling the protection and realization of their innovations. Our vision is to help organizations interact effectively with people anywhere in the world by solving their language, content, and market-access challenges through our collective global intelligence, deep expertise, and smart technology.

RWS Holdings plc, Chalfont St. Peter, UK
+44 (0) 1753 480 200
rws@rws.com
www.rws.com

Translation Commons

Translation Commons is a nonprofit US public charity powered by translators. We are a volunteer-based online community aiming to help our language community thrive and bridge all the sectors within our industry. We facilitate cross-functional collaboration among the diverse sectors and stakeholders within the language industry and instigate transparency, trust and free knowledge. Our mission is to offer free access to tools and all other available resources, to facilitate community-driven projects, to empower linguists and to share educational and language assets.

Translation Commons Las Vegas, NV USA
(310) 405-4991
krista@translationcommons.org
www.translationcommons.org

Nimdzi Insights

Nimdzi Insights is an international market research and consulting company. Nimdzi advises on language services, localization programs, business operations and mergers and acquisitions. Nimdzi is committed to providing opportunities for continuous professional development and resources for business professionals worldwide.

Nimdzi Insights Seattle, WA, United States
+1 206 823 3177
info@nimdzi.com
www.nimdzi.com

Joint National Committee for Languages

The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) represent the interests of over 140 member organizations, associations and companies in virtually all aspects of the language enterprise — education PreK-20, research, training, assessment, translation, interpreting and localization — to the US government. The mission of JNCL-NCLIS is to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn English and at least one other language.

Joint National Committee for Languages - National Council for Languages and International Studies
Garrett Park, MD USA, 202-580-8684
info@languagepolicy.org
www.languagepolicy.org

Translators without Borders

Originally founded in 1993 in France as Traducteurs sans Frontières by Lori Thicke and Ros Smith-Thomas to link the world’s translators to vetted NGOs that focus on health and education, Translators without Borders (TWB) is a US nonprofit organization that aims to close the language gaps that hinder critical humanitarian efforts worldwide. TWB recognizes that the effectiveness of any aid program depends on delivering information in the language of the affected population.

Languages: 190 language pairs
Translators without Borders CT USA
info@translatorswithoutborders.org
www.translatorswithoutborders.org

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Consoltec Montreal, Québec, Canada
(+1) 514 312-2485
info@consoltec.ca
www.consoltec.ca

XTM International
XTM International develops and sells XTM Cloud, an enterprise SaaS translation management system with an integrated computer aided translation tool. XTM’s mission is to help enterprises reach global markets more efficiently by automating and managing all aspects of the localization process. XTM Cloud employs AI to deliver advanced automation, has a well-developed REST API and out-of-the-box connectors for content management systems and machine translation systems. XTM’s flexible and automated workflow streamlines complex localization processes and supply chains while providing project managers with an up-to-date view of the project status. XTM Cloud is designed to be scalable, flexible and agile, with industry open standards at its core. Visit www.xtm.cloud for more.
XTM International Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom
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sales@xtm.cloud
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Languages: German <-> major European languages
Rheinschrift Language Services
Cologne, Germany
+49 (0)221-80-19-28-0
contact@rheinschrift.de
www.rheinschrift.de

Ryszard Jarża Translations
Translations into Polish
Ryszard Jarża Translations, established in 2000, is a provider of Polish translation, localization and testing services, primarily for life sciences, IT, automotive, refrigeration and other technology sectors. Most of our work is produced in-house by a team of Polish linguists and subject matter experts who offer a unique combination of technical competences and creativity required in marketing translation projects. We work directly with localization departments of large multinational clients and with multilanguage service providers. With focus on one target language only (Polish) and very strong in-house capabilities, we achieve highest levels of quality and efficiency. Our quality management system is certified to ISO 13485, ISO 9001, and ISO 17100.
Languages: Polish
Ryszard Jarza Translations
Wrocław, Dolnośląskie, Poland
+48 601 228 332
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www.jarza.pl
Birotranslations

Founded in 1992, birotranslations specializes in life science, legal, technical, IT, and automotive translations into all East European languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian). We have a long-term partnership with the world’s top 100 MLVs and many end-clients all around the globe. With our experienced project managers, extensive network of expert linguists and usage of the latest CAT tool technology, your projects will be delivered on time, within budget, and with the highest standards of quality. For more information, please contact Mr. Matic Berginc (details below).

Languages: Eastern European languages

birotranslations Ljubljana, Slovenia
+386 590 43 557
projects@birotranslations.com
www.birotranslations.com

ADAPT Localization Services

ADAPT Localization Services offers premium language services for clients in the medical, life sciences, and technology sectors. Certified under ISO 13485 and ISO 17100, the company is headquartered in Germany and maintains offices in Sweden, Spain, and Denmark.

ADAPT offers the full range of services from translation, software localization, and termintology work through graphics and pre-print tasks to dubbing and subtitling of training courses and company presentations. With more than 20 years of experience in fields like in vitro diagnostics, medical devices, optics, or automation technology, ADAPT is the partner of choice for many leading manufacturers particularly when it comes to complying with regulatory language requirements in Europe and worldwide.

Languages: All the world’s business languages

ADAPT Germany, Bonn, NRW
+49 228 982260
adapt@adapt-localization.com
www.adapt-localization.com

GlobalWay Co., Ltd.

GlobalWay, located in Korea, has been providing incomparable professional localization services to partners all around the globe since 2003. As an industry-leading localization company and ISO 9001, 17100, 18587 certified, we are here to offer language solutions including translation, voiceover, subtitling, DTP, and testing services. Our highly qualified and experienced in-house linguists, engineers, and project managers will add value to your business.

GlobalWay and its long-term global partners are ready to support you on the road to success. Are you looking for a reliable localization partner? Our doors are wide open for you. Should you need more information, please feel free to contact us.

Languages: 50+ more languages including Korean, English, Chinese, Japanese, German, Russian, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian.

GlobalWay Co., Ltd. Seoul, South Korea
+82 2 3453 4924
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Languages: 150+ languages

Argos Multilingual
Mogiliska 100, 31-546, Krakow, Poland
info@argosmultilingual.com
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TRANSLATION TOOLS

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From: The 2022 Nimdzi 100: The Ranking of Top 100 Largest Language Service Providers

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