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Global Ambitions

(R)Evolution in Motion



Dear reader,

The world is evolving, with AI reshaping the playbook — but that part you already knew. The real question is, *what are we changing into?*

In the language industry, change rarely announces itself. It shows up unnoticed, slipping in as a new tool, a quiet (or occasionally loud) user critique, or a revised line in a budget.

Zoom out and you’ll see an industry in flux, tugged forward by ambition, AI, and the relentless pressure to do more, faster, and cheaper.

And so questions arise. Has AI solved localization, or has it simply recentered our attention on what needs solving?

That’s what this edition of Global Ambitions is about. Not just motion, but meaning. Progress, yes, but whose? Change, certainly — but toward what? If AI is the easy answer, maybe we need to ask sharper questions.

Inside, you’ll be hearing voices grappling with this momentum, resisting it, shaping it, running with it. Some names you’ll recognize. Others, you’ll meet for the first time.

Turn the pages. Discover what they have to share. Then return to your world and reflect on the most important question of them all:

What is the one question worth holding onto as the industry — and your role within it — reshapes?

About Argos Multilingual

Argos Multilingual provides global language solutions. With over 30 years of experience, we serve clients in the high-tech, life sciences, human resources, and financial industries. We make it easy for businesses to grow globally and connect with expert talent anywhere in the world. With production centers in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, we follow a strategy of building robust programs for continuous translation and localization. You can expect a long-term and transparent partnership, backed by innovative solutions around technology, AI & data, creative content, and quality assurance.

For more information, please visit us at www.argosmultilingual.com.

Alexander Ulichnowski

CEO at Argos Multilingual



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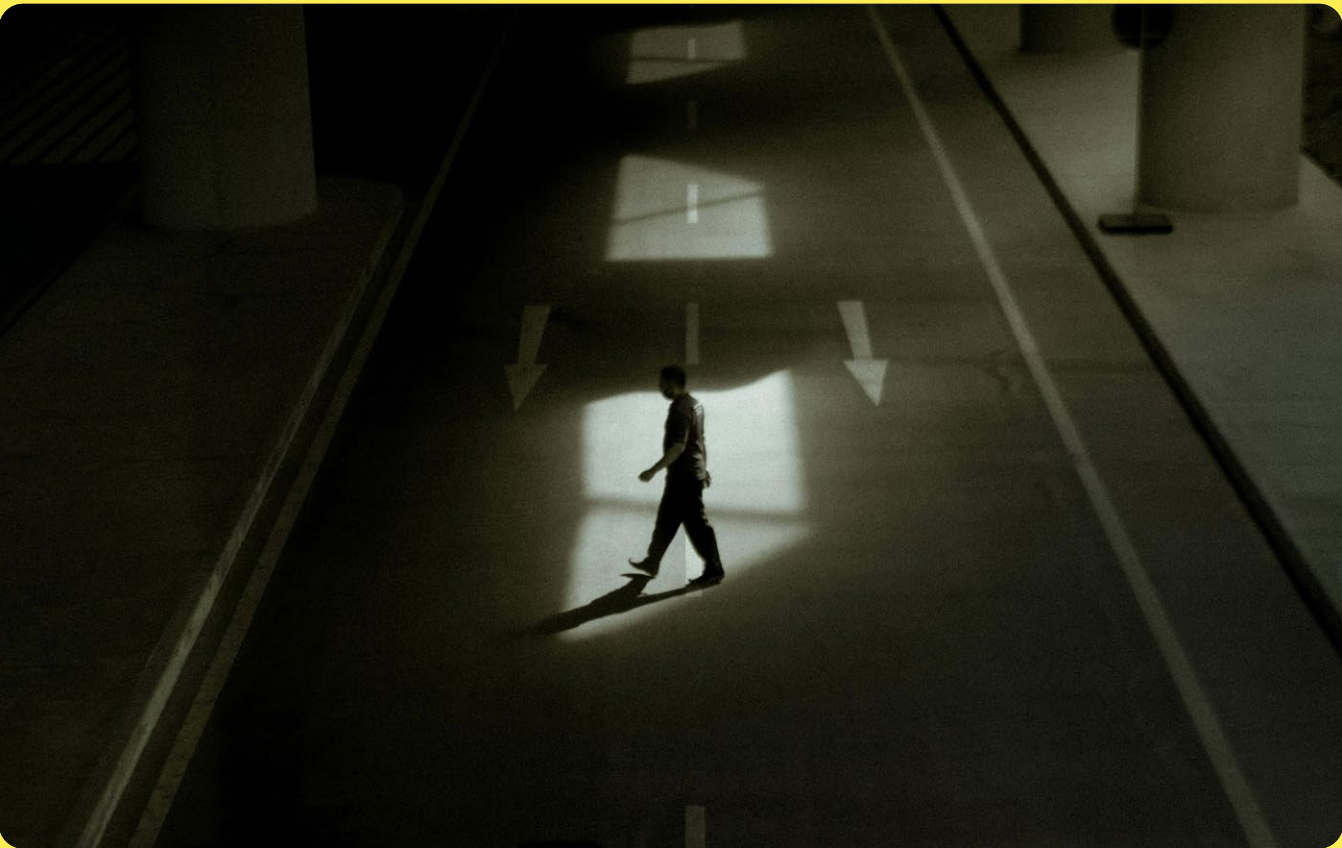
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ACT 1: The Snapshot



We begin with our feet firmly planted in the present and reflect on where the language services industry currently stands (spoiler: there's no way to avoid this thing called GenAI).

But do we understand where we are and where we are headed? Are we asking the right questions, or should we just start with the "Why"?

There is a sense of urgency that powers the varied market players. We explore new pathways, test new solutions, learn from the mistakes made along the way, course-correct, and start again.

The industry is evolving, and we are in motion. In the following pages, we examine what this movement looks like.

Stagnation? Redefinition? No, Evolution.

Peter Coleman

Senior Research Analyst
at CSA Research

Peter Coleman is a senior research analyst at CSA Research with over 20 years of experience developing and managing language services programs, content management systems, and digital asset management solutions for global enterprises.



"Redefinition vs. stagnation: Where are we, as an industry?"

In considering this question, I reflected on an amazing creature — the emu. Why an emu? Well, once you read about them, you realize they are truly the epitome of adaptation and survival. Not only did this fantastical creature somehow grow out from under the mass extinction that took the dinosaur away, but they also survived the Great Emu War of 1932 — a war that had three onslaughts, all of which the emu managed to emerge from victorious. So, when the question of stagnation or redefinition was posed to CSA Research, we didn't think either was the answer. We believe rapid evolution is the only real option here. CSA Research has talked of the evolution, the stages, as well as the need for it for years.

A long time ago, someone said jump, and LSPs said, "How high?" This industry was born, in large part, from an afterthought of globalization. The United States was one of the key drivers of globalization and

the multinational brands we have today. The United States is also the least likely to understand the need to read and connect in languages beyond English (it did, after all, just declare English as the official language in the U.S., despite being a country of immigrants). So, in turn, U.S. enterprises found themselves needing to communicate in languages they didn't care to consider, but which were also necessary for both selling to customers overseas and for regulatory compliance.

LSPs all signed up to have a piece of the massive pie on the table. Cost and technology could be figured out later, but at the time, it was a feast. LSPs took on the complexity of separating content from file structures, rebuilding it all again, and storing their work in translation memories. Scale was managed by tapping into tiers of vendors — it was the only scalable way to keep up with demand. No one considered the value of the complexity or the cost of capacity that could scale up and down based on the client's demand. At the end of the day, the only thing that mattered to the client was the cost-per-word, a quality

score, and the time needed to turn around a project.

Then came the technology that put its foot on the pedal of “faster” and “good enough.” Neural MT (NMT) hit the gas in 2016. It was a double-edged sword. Savvy loc programs started demanding it to drive down cost-per-word and ramp up capacity. LSPs used it, sometimes without clients knowing, to keep margins healthy. And then, just as LSPs were getting NMT integrated, LLMs led enterprise managers to ask, “Do you really need an LSP?”

The same familiar question and pattern has been answered. Traditional translation and localization — let alone interpreting — aren’t things most multinational corporations want to pay for. They are an expense, no different than a lease or electricity. The reason? Because no one has demonstrated the VALUE of language when it comes to creating trust, clarity, emotional resonance, relevance, and most importantly, the connection with a brand. The industry only said, “Yes, we can translate that for pennies on the dollar.” It has never said, “Here’s what we can really do with language... here’s the real value of language.”

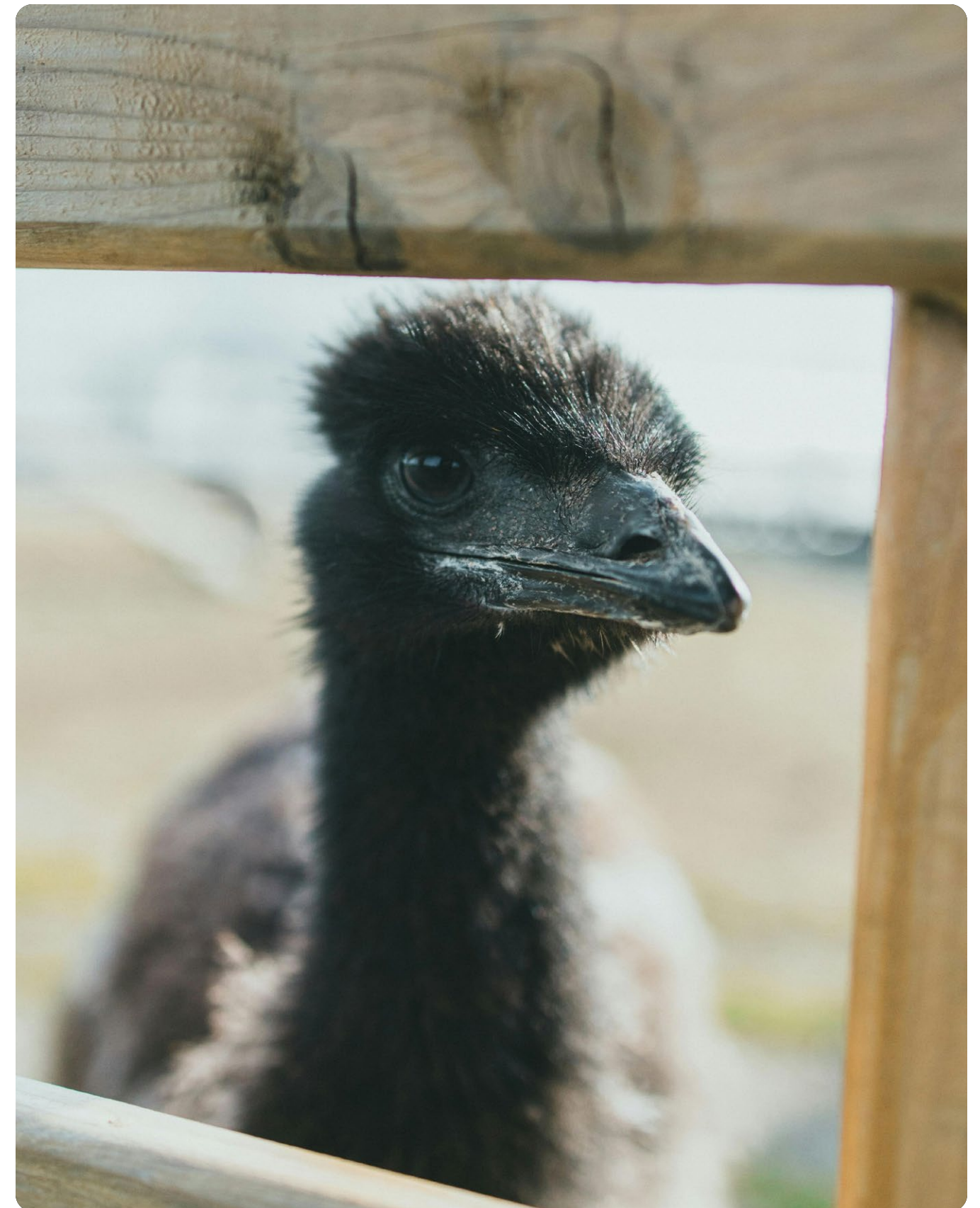
Others who study this industry want to ignore the reality of the cost-per-word race and relabel the traditional LSP work as something it’s not; renaming a function doesn’t change the function.

Now, more than ever, LSPs recognize the need to move past service offerings and into return on investment (ROI)-based solutions. LSPs are better positioned than anyone to do this.

They know the true value of connection through language and culture, and many are beginning their journey to becoming a true

global content solutions provider (GCSP). The challenge will be demonstrating to multinational corporations that the true value of multilingual content is well beyond the cost-per-word schema purchased today.

The level of disruption that’s here now has come harder and faster than anything I’ve seen in the twenty years I’ve been in this space. However, I have also seen the resilience and tenacity of those who continue to deliver on unrelenting demands. And they will adapt and evolve. Some will be able to remain, and even thrive, as an LSP by becoming a specialist in a domain or vertical. They will be able to provide something NMT or AI cannot yet replicate. Others will move past those services and into new spaces. They will create new solutions that deliver value well beyond how many words, and how much savings can be had, in a translation memory. They will focus on factors such as engagement with new demographics, conversion rates, brand loyalty, reduction in support costs, and increased customer satisfaction. If they can do so, they can evolve into something as resilient as a flightless bird that refused to be defeated by an army.

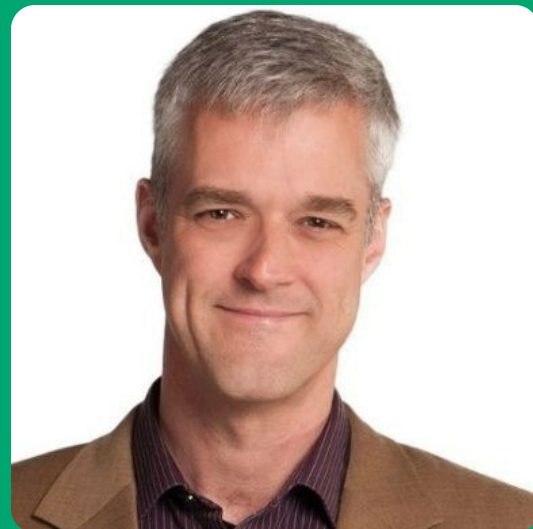


Innovation Meets Infrastructure

Erik Vogt

Solutions and Innovation Strategist
at Argos Multilingual

Erik Vogt is a veteran solutions architect, program director, and executive consultant with deep expertise in AI enablement, multilingual content, and global operations at scale. He partners with organizations to unlock business value through strategic innovation, operational alignment, and measurable outcomes across complex, cross-functional programs.



Even when there's a strong appetite for innovation, the reality on the ground is far messier. Most language services teams aren't operating with a clean slate. They're carrying years — sometimes decades — of infrastructure decisions, integrations, and workflows that were built under a very different technological framework. Although it may surprise some of you, there are still clients today who require the resizing of .rc files or compiling CHM files as part of their localization process. Those are literally 20th century technologies, having been introduced in Windows 1.0 and Windows 95, respectively.

Add to this a long list of proprietary systems built by a cohort of perhaps 10,000–25,000 localization buyers (my estimate includes only companies who spend over \$100k on localization) and the many permutations of CMS, LMS, DAMS, CRMs, and TMS systems could easily reach 500,000 — not including other significant differences like software versions and let's not forget, ahem, languages. And the legacy system issues aren't just technical; they're also hardwired

into organizational structure, business endpoints, and cultural dimensions. They represent baked-in assumptions about quality, accountability, and even the definition of success.

Add to that the sheer velocity and scale challenges of market leaders, where computing, storage, and transaction costs are the primary constraints.

It's easy to say, "AI will make this faster," and we hear that just about every day. I don't need to cite a single number to prove this point, but I feel I should anyway. According to a 2024 Gartner report, 79% of CEOs say AI is a top priority for business transformation, yet only 15% of companies have successfully scaled AI beyond pilot programs. AI is talked about everywhere, but a staggering number of AI projects fail to deliver value, by various accounts between 70% and 90% in fact. Of course, OpenAI and other LLMs have started a new arms race over the past couple of years that many expect to improve the odds, but aligning systems, maintaining accountability, defining



correct KPIs, and reorganizing systems remain challenging.

Still, even against these odds, the language services industry is starting to deliver real value, in part because of decades of experience with foundational technologies like TMS and NMT systems. Adding an AI-based review can add demonstrable value, not to mention exciting new opportunities like orchestration, knowledge graphs, and soon generating content on demand directly from a new set of core assets. These new capabilities are measurable and compelling, but we still run across systematic challenges in deployment.

Case in point, how do we predict project costs for a procurement system that expects word counts and predefined rate cards, when the NMT and AI output is not determinative? Who is accountable if technology doesn't translate to lower human effort on the part of translators or reviewers? How does one even measure that when there could be half a dozen systems being deployed across a localization program? How should we now manage CMS systems that need to accommodate multilingual (or even multimodal) feedback loops? Or what

do we do with a QA process that flags AI-generated content as inherently suspect, regardless of outcome (or can't effectively determine what AI-generated content is in the first place)?

The constraint, then, isn't just what AI can do — it's what the end-to-end system lets it do. Real change requires mapping the whole environment: the business transaction layers, the data flows, the metrics, the regulatory expectations, and the unspoken norms that shape how things actually get done.

In many cases, we're asking 2025 questions while living inside a 2010 (or earlier) infrastructure.

Three hidden bottlenecks that block AI innovation

While the promise of AI in language services is real, many organizations are finding that the biggest obstacles aren't about models or capabilities — they're structural. The innovation bottlenecks are often hidden in plain sight, buried in processes, policies, and systems that were never designed for rapid, intelligent change.

1. Rigid procurement models

Traditional procurement structures are optimized for predictability and scale, not experimentation. They depend on rate cards, fixed scopes, and RFPs that assume human translation is the atomic unit of value and that human effort has a predictable level of output.

But AI-driven workflows don't always conform. They thrive on iteration, feedback, and blended outputs. There are several major bottlenecks, including buyer-hosted systems, intermediate technology providers, and language service providers, and their subsidiaries. Business endpoints require deterministic metrics, but procurement teams often can't flex to accommodate those variables, and as a result, innovation stalls before it even starts.

2. Legacy metrics and incentives

A few years ago, I helped pitch metrics heavily, with a "Measure what Matters" campaign. I still find it deeply useful, but I recognize that we need another level of thinking on how to apply it in today's world. The premise is that you get what you measure — and in most cases, we're still measuring inputs (words translated, hours billed) rather than outcomes (customer understanding, speed to market, user engagement). AI changes the shape

of the work, but if quality metrics and accountability structures remain static, teams will default to the safest path — even if it's no longer the most effective.

For example, if a program is highly commoditized, it is organized to standardize and minimize unit price. In most cases, that is per word. Words are an obvious choice. They are easy to count, and the human translation process roughly follows somewhat predictable levels of effort. The time it takes to translate 100 words varies by content and translator, but the business layer imposes a structure that generally normalizes around sustainable means. However, with AI, the system performance (as defined by the product of a hybrid system against any standard metrics) may range from 0% to 500% of the non-AI throughput. While we're on the topic of standards, does MQM still represent the valid framework for quality? How much does severity and classification matter in an AI-powered workflow?

3. Fragmented ecosystems

Language doesn't live in isolation. It's woven through CMSs, product databases, analytics platforms, and user interfaces. AI can automate specific tasks, but if the surrounding systems are brittle or siloed, the cost of integration outweighs the benefit of innovation. Too often, the conversation stops at "Can we use AI here?" rather than "What would it take for our whole system to support this kind of intelligence end-to-end?" This helps us get to a deeper journey of discovery for the goals and means of using language to deliver value to organizations in the first place.

I think a fundamental rethinking of language is at the heart of the discussion about LangOps, and how language is handled across multiple business functions, including

value delivery (products, services, and experiences), trust and compliance, market access, brand identity, and operational clarity. For example, I have seen many in-country review efforts clash with central localization initiatives due to a profound mismatch of expectations. The in-country reviewers, such as resellers or in-country sales teams, are often not linguists and can introduce errors and provide erratic feedback. However, they might have a bone to pick with the head office about the inclusion of translated features they can't sell in their region.

Unpacking the chaos

I think many in the language services industry will relate to the challenges I've skated through and shrug, "But that's just our business." I believe there is a more strategic way to tackle this complex world, and it starts with rethinking some basic assumptions.

One of the first to go is the premise that translation is a fixed process with fixed parameters (such as word count). Describing global strategy through word count is about the same as measuring a play by its word count. Would anyone say they got ripped off because the price to see "A Comedy of Errors" is probably the same as "Hamlet", when the former only delivers around 14,701 words and the latter roughly twice that at 29,551? Of course not — "the play's the thing," not the average cost per spoken word.

To address this, return to the original purpose of the translation, and even whether or not it needs to be translated at all. Estimate the consequences of failure, including the consequences of untranslated, mistranslated, culturally mismatched, inconsistent, high latency, and unclear content. Consider whether some translation spend is underdelivering in its core purpose. Is the in-market review by non-linguists

adding more time and cost than it's worth, especially if contrasted by underspending in terminology control, or in ensuring the right content is being translated? How about when contrasting with deploying a RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) workflow, AI-driven content tiering, or using AI as a Governance Layer? Despite all these amazing new capabilities, does adding them offset the structural inefficiencies of legacy workflows, incompatible business systems, or misaligned data systems?

Or perhaps a more important question is not whether you can deploy the latest AI capabilities, but whether one can define the value it could bring. As Simon Sinek said perfectly in 2011: "Start with Why."

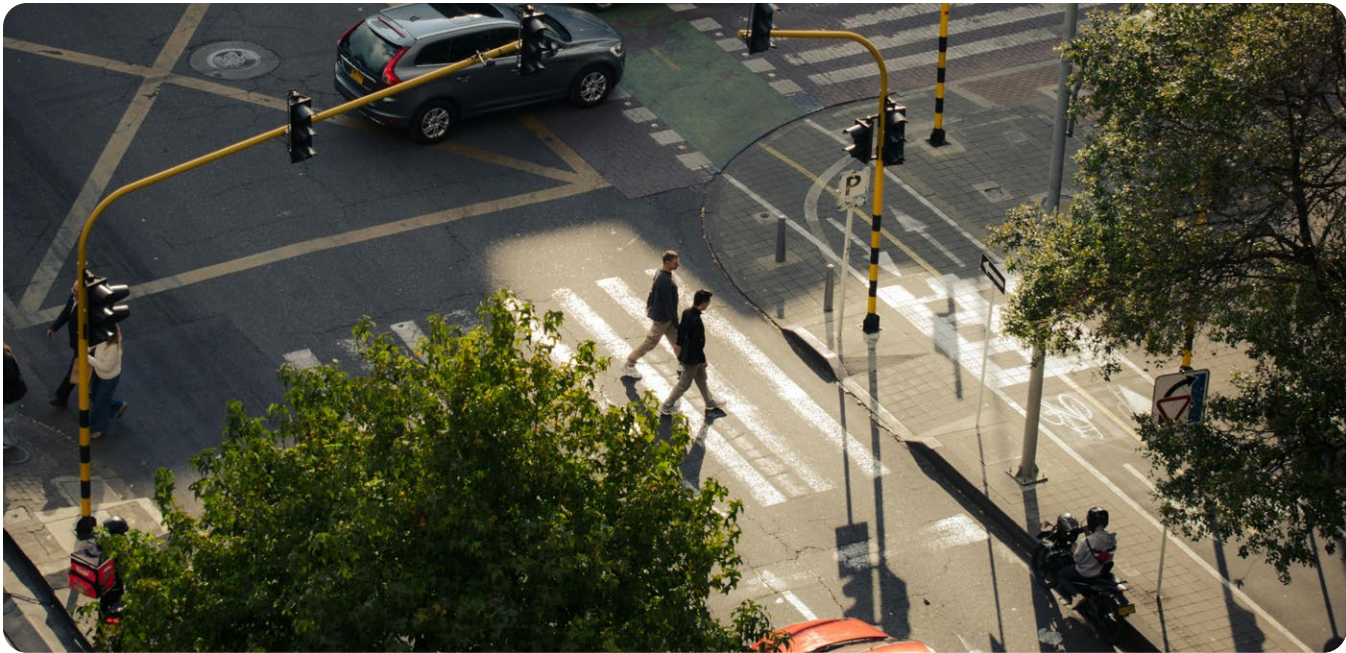


Our Origin Story

Dan Milczarski

Vice President of Solutions
at Blackbird

Dan Milczarski is a seasoned technology leader with over 20 years of experience, most recently serving as CTO at CQ fluency — transforming it into a top-tier, tech-enabled language service provider focused on process automation and custom development. He has since been appointed Vice President of Solutions at Blackbird.io, where he continues to drive AI and localization innovations and frequently speaks on responsible AI, machine translation, and process automation.



When we talk about progress in localization, it's easy to focus on the shiny objects of today (*cough, cough, AI, cough, cough*). But to truly appreciate where we stand, we must look back. And what we see in that rear-view mirror isn't a tale of stagnation, but instead an industry that has been laying the groundwork for the changes of today.

Let's set the scene. A decade or so ago, the localization industry was, on the surface, steady. Perhaps even static. Many enterprise teams and language service providers relied on established workflows that had evolved only incrementally over the years. CAT tools ruled the day, connectors were rare and fragile, and human translators remained at the heart of every project, with technology playing a supporting role rather than acting as a catalyst.

From the outside, it could look like stagnation. But beneath that surface, important seeds were being sown. Early API integrations began to emerge, albeit clunky and limited. The first orchestration efforts (neanderthals by today's standards)

hinted at a future where localization would no longer live on the periphery of content operations but become embedded in them. And machine translation, once viewed with suspicion, began to find acceptance as a tool in the linguist's toolkit rather than a threat to their craft.

Customer expectations were evolving, too. Enterprises started asking for scale (more content without much more cost) and holding LSPs to stricter SLAs in terms of quality and timeliness. This demand drove innovation. It pushed technology providers to think toward platforms that could connect content creation, management, and delivery in real time, across languages.

Looking back now, we can see that what seemed like small, incremental steps were actually laying the groundwork for the industry's transformation. It's a little like the early days of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Those first movies might have seemed standalone, but they were actually setting up a much larger, interconnected story that would change the game. The localization

industry's "origin stories" of automation, interoperability, and integration have brought us to today's inflection point.

Why does this matter?
Because progress isn't always loud. It isn't always packaged as disruption. Sometimes, progress is *Thor: The Dark World*. A fine film that doesn't stand out as a great Marvel flick but serves a purpose to move things along.

Equate that to the countless decisions made by technologists, linguists, and business leaders who chose to push just a little further toward efficiency, toward connection, toward innovation. Orchestration, AI, and automation are no longer buzzwords but realities. And we'd be less prepared to use them if it wasn't for the past decade of incremental improvements.

So, it's worth acknowledging the journey. Our past wasn't about standing still. It was about preparing the ground for the revolution that is now in motion.



AI Is Widening the Localization Divide

Etgar Bonar

Chief Marketing Officer at Lokalise

Etgar Bonar is CMO at Lokalise, with prior leadership roles at Rapyd, Taboola, and Amazon. He specializes in global marketing and growth strategy, holds an MBA from London Business School, and enjoys being by the sea, whether running, cycling, or diving



AI has forced a reckoning in localization. For some teams, AI is helping deliver content faster, localize with better quality, and prove ROI faster than ever before. For others, it's exposing just how fragmented, under-resourced, or outdated their workflows have become.

The result is a widening divide, not just between large and small companies, but between teams that have a clear strategy and those who can't get out of reactive mode. Some are scaling their efforts through smart automation. Others are still stuck trying to justify basic investments or untangle manual processes.

The reshaping is already happening. The ones moving now are already pulling ahead. The rest are falling behind.

Where teams are falling behind

1. No dedicated ownership

Many smaller companies don't have a dedicated localization lead. Instead, marketing managers, product owners, or engineers are expected to manage localization on top of everything else, often without training, support, or tools. As a result, decisions get delayed, are made in isolation, or are disconnected from broader business goals.

2. No data, no budget

Teams without proper tools and processes often can't track turnaround times, reuse rates, or translation costs in any meaningful way. That makes it hard to demonstrate ROI, and even harder to justify budget improvements. The cycle repeats: underinvestment leads to inefficiency, which leads to more underinvestment.



This aligns with our research: while 74% of surveyed companies recognize localization as a revenue driver, 62% struggle to execute it successfully. These teams are stuck in the middle, under pressure to show impact, but unable to make the case with data.

3. Enterprise red tape

Large companies may have localization teams and tooling, but often face a different kind of barrier: compliance. AI and tool adoption stalls under layers of procurement, legal review, and security risk assessments. Months can pass before a pilot gets approved, and by then smaller competitors may already be shipping localized content faster and at scale.

4. Too risk-averse to experiment

Across company sizes, hesitation is slowing down progress. In our research, 49% of teams cited quality concerns around AI, and 37% were worried about data privacy. But with over 80% planning to implement AI in

the next year, many are already behind the curve, and not experimenting now means losing even more valuable time to test, learn, and iterate.

5. Tooling perceived as too complex

More than half of companies reported that localization tools are too complicated to implement. That perceived complexity creates friction before a pilot even begins, especially for teams with limited technical resources. The result: delayed adoption, fragmented systems, and workflows that never scale.

How to start moving

1. Pick projects that prove value fast

If you're struggling to get buy-in, skip the risky flagship campaigns and start with

lower-visibility content: internal docs, long-tail web pages, or support content. Use these as test cases to measure cost, speed, and quality, and then show what changes when you localize with the right tools and processes in place.

2. Assign clear ownership

You don't need a headcount to get started, you just need clarity. Assign a specific person to track performance, define processes, and flag blockers. If no one owns localization, nothing improves. Even part-time ownership gives you a foundation to build on.

3. Start with AI where it's easiest to control

AI doesn't need to be rolled out everywhere at once. Start where the stakes are lower: internal tools, bulk content, or file prep. Use these areas to evaluate performance, build internal trust, and learn how to improve output. Early experimentation makes you faster and smarter later.

4. Use tools that are easy to adopt

Implementing new tools stalls when teams assume every solution will take six months and a custom integration. Look for platforms that connect you to the tools you already use, offer clear onboarding, and don't require a lot of developer input. Localization tools are often not as complicated as people think, but projects are often delayed because people assume they are.

Check out this playbook on how to set up localization in just one hour.

5. Make localization visible across teams

Localization often operates behind the scenes, which means wins can go unnoticed. When a pilot achieves faster turnaround, lower costs, or improved quality, make sure stakeholders across product, marketing, and leadership hear about it. What gets seen gets supported, and visibility builds momentum. Building cross-functional awareness helps reduce friction later and reinforces that localization is worth investing in.

Momentum compounds

Small steps in localization can have a snowball effect: a successful pilot leads to a better process. A clear result unlocks new investment. Assigning ownership turns plans into progress. The gap between teams falling behind and those moving ahead isn't permanent. It's the product of daily decisions, and it can start to close as soon as teams commit to moving.

Are We Marketing Language Services (and Ourselves) All Wrong?

Libor Šafář

Vice President of Growth
at Argos Multilingual

Libor Šafář is currently Vice President of Growth at Argos Multilingual. With a background in electrical engineering and business administration, his passion for languages and technologies led him to the translation industry in the mid-1990s. Since then, he's worked various roles in translation, localization, quality management, operations, sales, and marketing before joining Argos in 2021.



We all need to be good at marketing, even if we don't work in marketing. And it's not just about brands or products. In the language industry, as everywhere else, we need to know how to market our function (why we exist), our team (who they are and what they do), and ourselves (why we remain relevant).

This has always been the case. But with the rise of multilingual AI, this need has become even more pronounced.

Working in localization, relative obscurity has been both a blessing and a curse, even if it at times meant slipping into a James Bond-grade disguise. While we may not have always received the attention or resources we asked for, this obscurity also served as protection. Localization has been perceived as a less-known, somewhat opaque, yet necessary function, and it wasn't entirely bad. This obscurity was our protective shield.

AI has changed that. Now, everyone considers themselves an AI expert and believes they understand what it can do. They're convinced that GenAI can translate

between all languages quickly, effortlessly, and almost freely, if only we use the right prompts and mindset.

Looking deeper, however, it's clear that AI has the potential to reconnect us with localization's true essence: Creativity, genuine understanding of local culture and markets, and helping products and services shine. It enables us to do meaningful work that makes products beloved and helps real people solve actual problems (and this is not just the marketer in me speaking; I truly believe this, I promise).

So, while multilingual AI might seem like a curse, it's a blessing if we approach it as an opportunity.

Here are a few ways we can achieve this, applicable at any level: organizational, team, or personal.

Offensive vs. defensive? 1:0

Localization teams have historically been forced to play defense, justifying their very existence, resources, and budgets rather than proactively driving business outcomes. They’ve been positioned as cost centers that activate after the “real work” of product development, content creation, or marketing strategy is completed.

But marketing is all about offense. So, it pays off handsomely to be proactive with multilingual AI internally. Rather than sounding alarms about AI’s shortcomings, it’s better to focus on showing up and proactively demonstrating what it can do, both as teams and individuals. There’s no benefit in being the party spoiler. Be the DJ operating the turntable.

Save the savings for later

Whatever your strategy, leading the discussion with AI cost savings might not be the best approach. In the corporate world, you’re unlikely to become a hero if your main achievements are savings. While these are valuable, applauded, and may align with your company’s OKRs, they rarely create legends.

The real corporate heroes are those who accomplish new and interesting things that help companies grow or create new opportunities. This is where localization teams should focus their activities and internal communications.

This approach borrows from marketing, where benefits-focused messaging typically drives stronger results than savings-focused messaging. It’s simply human psychology.

A more promising avenue is showing how multilingual AI can grow revenue, reach new buyers, or enhance “customer delight.” Highlight how it enables previously impossible or economically unfeasible initiatives, like localizing for additional languages, tackling huge content repositories, offering multilingual support where none existed before, or providing hyper-targeted communication where previously only generic messaging was possible.

Show, don't tell

Multilingual AI supports experimentation. The low barrier to entry means you can quickly move from telling to showing. Creating AI-powered “proof of concept” projects that solve visible business problems (like reducing time-to-market for global products) provides substantial evidence to support your communication.

Instead of describing what technology can do in abstract terms, create tangible demonstrations that stakeholders can see and interact with. For example, demonstrate how quickly your team can now localize urgent communications compared to previous methods.

Connect to broader business initiatives

Align your localization efforts with high-visibility company initiatives. If your organization is focused on digital transformation, position your multilingual AI implementation as a critical component



of that journey. If customer experience is a priority at the moment, show how your work directly enhances the experience for international customers.

Collecting and showcasing relevant metrics strengthens your case significantly. These might include revenue lift in localized markets, increased conversion rates, decreased support tickets from international customers, or improved NPS scores across languages. This helps to elevate localization, making it harder to overlook or undervalue.

Speak the right language

Anyone working in localization for some time will be forgiven for using and loving the industry lingo. It’s so spot on. It feels so right, doesn’t it? But it’s also how we think and talk about ourselves that often holds us back when communicating with others. And it’s not just the language, it’s also what we talk about. And finding the right “altitude,” the appropriate level of detail and depth for each audience. After all, this is what good marketing is all about.

Remember that finding the right altitude isn’t about oversimplifying complex concepts. It’s about making them accessible to non-specialists.

Talking the talk

When talking with executives, focus on business outcomes and competitive advantages. Use high-level language that connects multilingual AI capabilities directly to organizational goals (or the executives’ personal ambitions). “Our multilingual AI implementation reduced time-to-market by 40% while maintaining our brand voice across 24 markets” will go down well.

For product teams, you may want to balance technical capabilities with practical applications. Focus on specific use cases, integration points, and quality benchmarks. “This AI-powered workflow can handle multilingual product descriptions at scale while flagging culturally sensitive content for human review” will earn their respect.

With content creators or marketing, address anxieties and highlight collaborative potential.

Frame AI as an enhancement tool: "This AI system learns from your best work to handle repetitive translations, freeing you to focus on creative adaptation so we sound truly authentic." This approach will help win allies.

Be consistent, but...

When marketing yourself or your localization team, consistent communication is critical. Show up regularly. Be accessible, available, informed, and informative. But the key challenge is being consistent without being boring. Being predictable, but not entirely so.

It's not about cracking jokes, it's about understanding your audience (internal or external), recognizing their obvious and hidden motivations, and tailoring your communication accordingly. This is challenging but worthwhile, especially when expanding beyond your core audience. You need their engagement to convey your message effectively.

Perception matters, so go get yourself a better name

Your team's name matters, as does your title. While localization may still describe what we do, the term is beginning to sound obsolete. If "localization" appears in your title, consider proposing a change. Terms like "international experience" and "global content" are gaining traction. This change may seem trivial to you, but remember that much of how the world operates isn't entirely rational.

How to stay relevant

Everyone in localization may wonder how to stay relevant with the rise of multilingual AI. The answer is straightforward: by remaining valuable, if not indispensable.

Be the solution, not the problem. Take a proactive stance on AI implementation instead of dwelling on its limitations.

There's a significant knowledge gap in the industry waiting to be filled. Everyone is trying to determine what they need to know, identify trusted sources, and prioritize their learning journey. This is precisely where you can show your value.

Staying relevant in the age of multilingual AI isn't about defending territory, it's about expanding it. And some smart marketing can go a long way.



Context Is the New Currency in Localization

Simone Bohnenberger-Rich, PhD

Chief Product Officer at Phrase

Simone Bohnenberger-Rich is Chief Product Officer at Phrase, with experience in AI, NLP, and MT from her time at Eigen Technologies. She advised on growth at Monitor Deloitte and, with a PhD from the London School of Economics, understands global markets and technology-driven transformation.



Localization is undergoing a necessary reckoning. Long-standing practices, such as treating fuzzy matches as quality proxies or relying on static style guides, are increasingly unfit for the complexities of global, multi-channel content. The industry must evolve from rigid reuse of past translations toward intelligent, real-time orchestration. AI systems need to interpret context, tone, and intent from the start to guide how content is adapted across channels.

What’s driving this shift? GenAI/LLMs have redefined what’s possible. Their strength lies not in matching words, but in capturing nuance using tone, intent, persona, and other key considerations and insights. But this nuance cannot be summoned from fuzzy matches. Unless a match is “perfect,” it often fails to provide the kind of rich context these systems need.

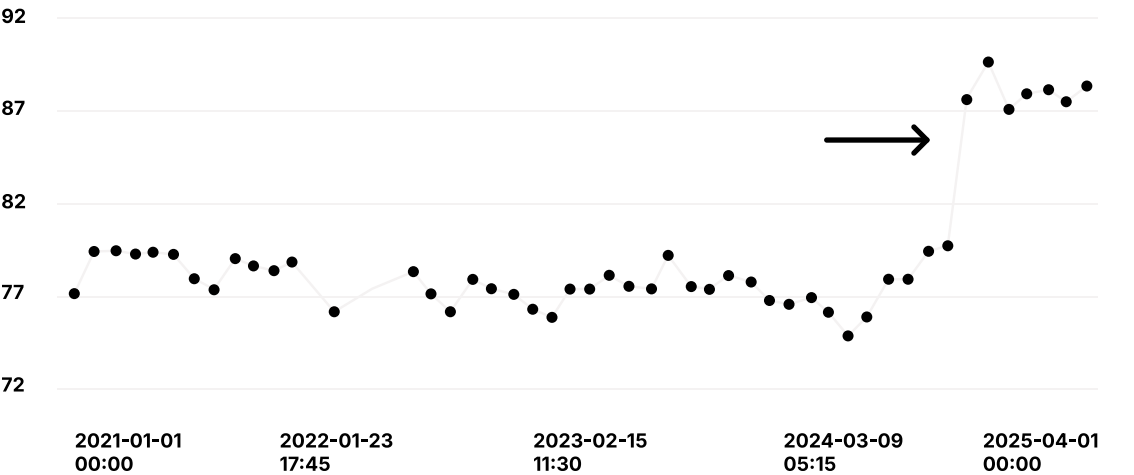
Instead, a new class of inputs is emerging. Style guides, glossaries, and TMs are being leveraged in dynamic, machine-readable **content profiles**. These are bundles of structured context (e.g., tone, audience, platform constraints) that guide generation from the outset. This isn’t about polishing output after the fact; it’s about **shaping intent at the source**.

Our data (see graph) highlights this shift. Over a two-month period earlier this year, platform usage analysis reveals that fuzzy match thresholds tightened significantly. The average increased from 70% to 86%. This indicates a clear move towards AI-led “straight-through” processing. This marks a significant shift in behavior, given that these TM thresholds had been largely flat in the previous years. The confidence to bypass fuzzy matches here signals rising trust in AI’s ability to fill contextual gaps where TMs just fall short.

This evolution is not just about improving outputs; it lays the groundwork for **Agentic AI** in localization. These systems aim to automate entire workflows, making decisions on model selection, quality checks, and exception handling without human intervention. That autonomy demands structured, machine-readable context. Without clear inputs (tone, audience, risk constraints), agents cannot reason effectively. In this emerging paradigm, TMs, style guides, and glossaries must become dynamic signals, not static references.

The future of localization isn’t reactive. It’s intelligent, intent-driven, and designed for scale.

TM threshold



The Breakthroughs Are Real — And They're Finally Enterprise-Ready

Ian Evans

CEO at XTM International

Ian Evans is a veteran in scaling enterprise technology solutions globally. He excels in driving growth, optimizing operations, and delivering innovation in localization, privacy, and governance to help organizations achieve efficiency and a competitive advantage worldwide.



For years, AI in localization was more promise than practice. Much of it looked impressive in demos, but it crumbled under real-world demands, especially for enterprise teams juggling speed, quality, and compliance across dozens of markets.

That's now changing.

The breakthroughs we're seeing aren't about academic or translation gimmicks — they're about solving the complex, high-stakes realities of global content operations.

At XTM, for example, we're focusing on building AI that's deeply embedded into the localization workflow.

Language Guard flags anything that could damage your brand or break compliance — from non-inclusive terms to regulatory red flags — and suggests edits instantly. Intelligent Score gives you real-time quality scoring based on thresholds you set, so you know exactly what's ready to go and what needs attention. And with Intelligent Workflow, those scores aren't just numbers — they drive action. High-confidence translations get pushed through automatically, while anything that needs review gets flagged for your team.

It's smart, efficient, and built for the pace enterprise teams are working at today.

These aren't isolated features. They're part of an integrated ecosystem that helps localization teams do more with less, without sacrificing control.

Why does this matter in 2025?

Translation content volumes are exploding. The old patchwork of disconnected tools can't keep up. And for industries like life sciences, delays don't just cost time — they can hold up product launches and regulatory approvals.

The boundary we're expanding isn't just technological. It's operational.

We're giving teams the power to move faster and with greater accuracy and autonomy, whether they're translating web content, software strings, or regulated documentation. And we're doing it with AI that's designed for the real world, not just a laboratory exercise.

The future of localization isn't automated. It's intelligently orchestrated.

And it's already happening.

Reflections: From AI-Assisted to AI-Led Translation

AI agents are the most significant development we've observed since last year. It's impressive how much more capable and reliable AI becomes when you let it plan its work, collect context as needed, check itself before delivering results, and use tools relevant to each project.

At Crowdin, we take inspiration from how the software development industry integrates AI and learn from those approaches. AI Agents are not really a breakthrough, but rather the right way to use AI effectively.

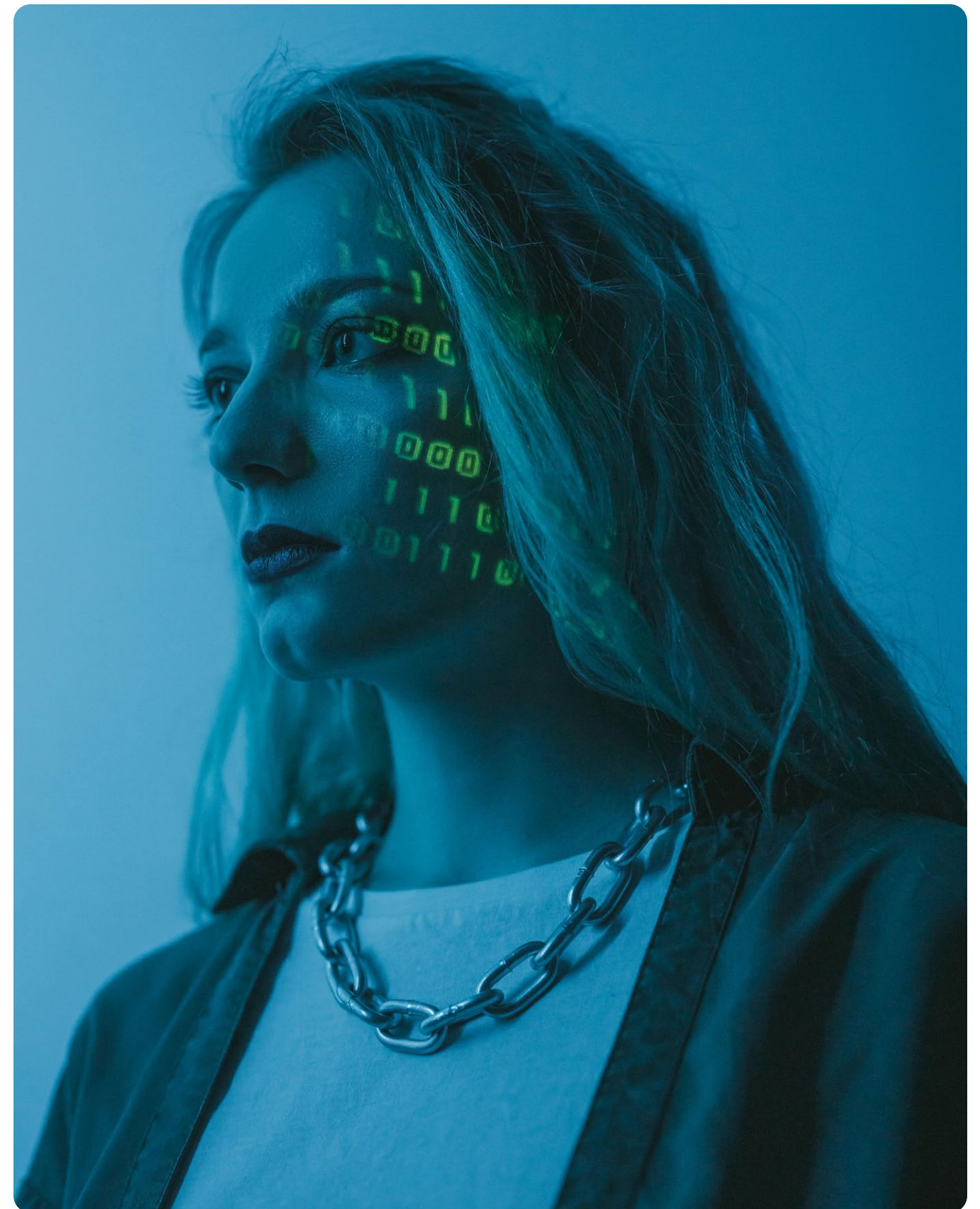
We now focus on equipping AI with all the tools it needs to consistently deliver high-quality translations that humans review, rather than creating them from scratch. The goal is for humans to never have to type translation work — just oversee it.

This represents a shift from AI-assisted translation to AI handling the translation process while humans provide oversight and quality control.

Serhiy Dmytryshyn

CEO at Crowdin

As founder and CEO, Serhiy combines deep technical expertise with a focus on user experience and measurable results. He works alongside clients to streamline translation workflows, strengthen security, and help global teams launch products that reach more people, in more places.



Heading Toward a Finer-Grained Localization

Charles Dowdell

Manager, Technical Communications at Komatsu

Charles has 25+ years of experience managing technical communications teams and processes. He has significant global experience in multinational corporations in several different industries. He is an experienced conference presenter and enjoys a good laugh coupled with professionalism in Tech Comms and Information Science. His career started as a global field service engineer. He is an alumnus of Syracuse University iSchool and has worked on all seven continents.



People often overlook how significant language translation truly is. Yet, translation and localization are unquestionably at the heart of global commerce.

Global commerce is a living, breathing, interconnected ecosystem of billions of people, spread over considerable distances. Distance creates scarcity. Scarcity creates value. The ability to create value builds trade networks and powers our interconnected world. Language translations in this system are not just a matter of terminology cross-references and grammar – they are inextricably linked to culture. As such, we need to expand our ability to cross both language and cultural barriers to keep pace with new ideas and spread real value. Efficiency in communicating new ideas benefits everyone.

Enter the era of generative AI tools and processes. While AI has existed for decades, we now have the computer speeds, affordable mass storage and access to unimaginable amounts of content to provide transformative potential. Add to this the societal push to embrace new technology, and we now have tools capable

of condensing decades of study and experience into actionable insights.

It’s worth noting that the underlying technology of modern GenAI processes originated in the language services industry. Stiff competition, razor-thin margins, and rapid turnaround times have created the perfect crucible for change and automation.

At Komatsu, we’ve seen this firsthand. We recently took large amounts of structured content that had been translated into English – specifically Japanese English which, while technically English, wasn’t fully optimized for North American users. Using the standards set out by ASD-STE100 Simplified Technical English and other training ingredients, we rewrote that content with the help of modern technology on a large scale.

This project got us thinking... if we can do automated localization of language with this kind of depth, maybe we can do an even finer-grained localization.

Localization has traditionally been segmented by geographies (EN-US is for American English, EN-GB for British English, and so on). But what if we micro-segmented the localization aspect, training on the domain language rather than the geography?

After all, that’s exactly what technical trainers do. They take the language chain to the last step by interpreting the manual and translating its meaning specifically for the end user, intertwining cultural subtleties familiar to the domain and the user.

Different knowledge domains – whether physics, medicine or software engineering – have their own unwritten rules of grammar, word order, phrases and terminology. For example, the term “bandwidth” has a domain definition in physics as well as popular culture and broadly describes human effectiveness, too.

Imagine if we could expand the role of language localization to rewrite instructions based on what the user digests best, understanding both the user’s domain experience and their learning style.

Using GenAI and automation assists in breaking down the walls of localization, possibly allowing for training a model down to a specific user. A help topic explaining a software feature could be rewritten in the style most approachable to that specific user. A medical instruction could adapt its terminology to a patient’s level of understanding without losing accuracy. With GenAI, we could potentially capture the language of the user through speech-to-text and train the models on an individual’s unique local language.

Yes, the manual exists in English, but whose style of English is it? Is the content presented in an approachable way that is reminiscent of my upbringing and unique experiences?

There is an unexplored frontier of using AI to provide content localized to the domain and individual user level.

It’s often argued that a translated text cannot be definitively "better" than the source language text it derives from. The input from the original author is indeed finite. However, when we add the vast and available external context that the machine can now process, the target will be enriched to a scale that bridges domains, enhances understanding and unlocks value. If we can translate content from the language of design engineering to the language of service technician, we aren’t just converting words – we’re building understanding and spreading knowledge.



The Sound(s) of Localization

Tommaso Rossi

Head of Localization and Internationalization at Spotify

Tommaso Rossi is Head of Localization and Internationalization at Spotify, where he leads global-language strategy and AI innovation. A strategic leader with 20+ years in tech, he shapes scalable localization programs that drive global growth and inclusion.



When you open the Spotify app and scroll through your home screen, you'll see a rich tapestry of content: a curated playlist to match your mood, a gripping true crime podcast, a relaxing audiobook, and now, perhaps even a short eLearning course on something you never knew you were curious about. It all feels personalized, relevant — and it's in your native language.

What you don't see is the complex and innovative engine behind the scenes that makes this seamless experience possible. Spotify isn't just delivering content; we're delivering it globally — and that means making every element, from the interface to the voice in your headphones, feel natural, local, and human.

In this article, I want to share how our team is pioneering a new era of localization — because as audio becomes the next frontier of global connection, we believe that everyone, everywhere, deserves to experience content that feels native, personal, and deeply human — no matter the language.

Because behind every playlist that lifts your mood, every podcast that pulls you in, and every voice that feels like it's speaking just to you, there's a quiet revolution unfolding. One where language is no longer a barrier, where culture is honored, and where Spotify is reimagining what it means to feel truly seen and heard, no matter where you are in the world.

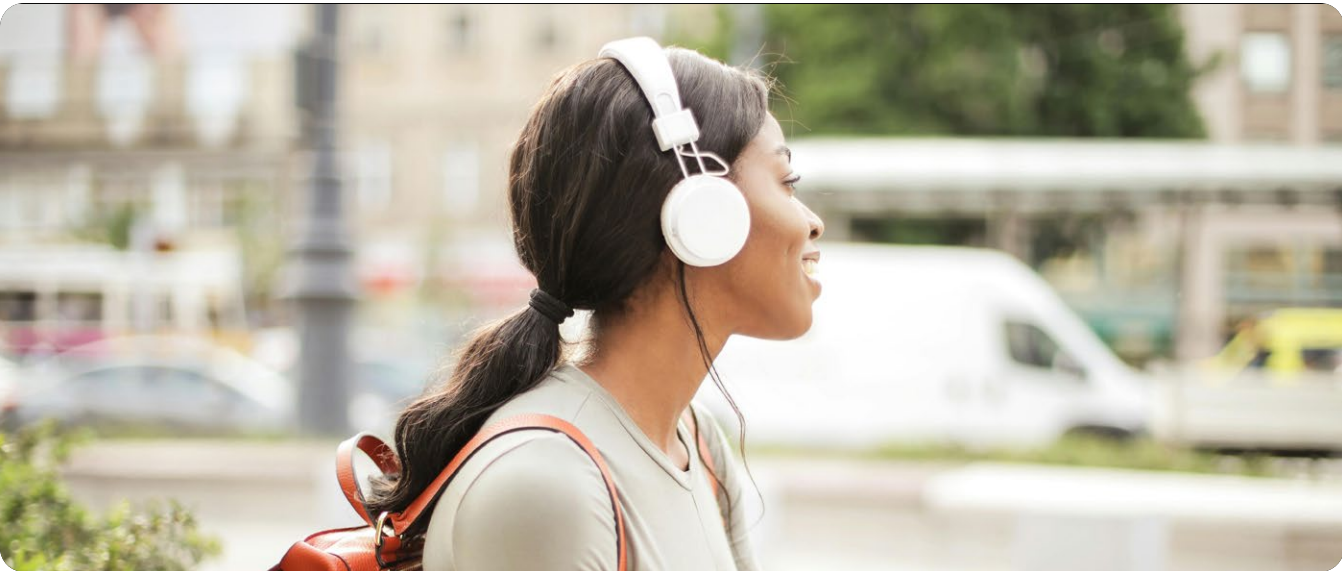
A different kind of scale

Spotify currently operates in 180 markets and supports 74 languages. Behind this scale is a centralized localization team focused on more than just translation. We bring cultural context, linguistic expertise, and a deep understanding of

how our platform works to everything from marketing campaigns in Japan to platform design in Brazil. Our work ensures that a Spotify user in Indonesia or Poland experiences the platform as if it were made just for them. As a start, the Spotify localization team has begun reimagining the very foundation of how content is localized at scale. In the last 18 months, we've gone from virtually no machine translation in production to 90% of our localization pipeline now supported by MT. This massive shift has allowed us to increase speed, reduce cost, and unlock faster go-to-market timelines — all while maintaining our high-quality bar through layered review and quality assurance frameworks.

But the use of AI has not stopped with the classic localization production use case. Even quality assurance is undergoing its own transformation. We're now experimenting with AI in both linguistic and functional QA testing, leveraging models that can automatically flag inconsistencies, detect placeholder issues, and even simulate user flows across languages. For instance, when a translated string doesn't fit the UI in German or a currency symbol is rendered incorrectly in Arabic, these systems can identify the issue before it ever reaches a user. Combined with human expertise, this hybrid model ensures that scale doesn't come at the cost of experience.

And we're not stopping at how content is localized: we're also rethinking how localization itself is run. Looking ahead, we're exploring a bold new model: one where content isn't translated after it's created, but generated in multiple languages simultaneously from the outset. Technically, this means working with large language models (LLMs) and multilingual generation pipelines that can produce semantically aligned versions of content in parallel. Instead of a single source language driving the process, we envision a system where prompts, intent, and creative direction are



fed into AI models that generate content natively in each target language — reducing the reliance on sequential translation workflows. Human-in-the-loop validation would still play a critical role, with expert linguists and reviewers fine-tuning tone, cultural nuance, and context before content goes live. This paradigm shift could enable faster go-to-market timelines, improved quality consistency, and an inclusive user experience where content feels truly native — from day one, in every market.

It’s no cliché to say that AI has truly revolutionized our localization ecosystem and forced us to rethink the way we approach localization in every single aspect of its specific functioning.

AI redefining content interaction

And while we have made terrific progress in localization production, we have also started working on how localization, through the power of AI, can help revolutionize the entire Spotify company. As the platform expanded

beyond music into podcasts, audiobooks, video content, and even live interactions, our localization strategy had to evolve fast. It’s not just about text anymore — it’s about voice, sound, and experience.

For example, let’s talk about podcasts. Traditionally, if a podcast was in English, only English speakers could access it, unless the creators produced separate versions in other languages. This unfortunately means a lot of people miss out as they don’t speak the language. Now, Spotify is exploring AI dubbing for podcasts using synthetic voices. Imagine a podcast originally recorded in English by a host in New York automatically dubbed in Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, or Hindi using a synthetic voice that matches the tone and emotion of the speaker. That’s exactly what’s happening now: we’re testing it with internal pilots and developing a quality framework to ensure authenticity and cultural accuracy.

For video content, including music videos and video podcasts, we’re also generating multilingual subtitles — making sure that when an artist shares a story on camera, audiences across the world can understand, engage, and connect. This is especially

powerful for creators who want to reach new markets without losing the personal voice and pacing that make their content unique.

Audiobooks bring even more complexity. Some titles exist in many languages but don’t have corresponding audio versions. In these cases, Spotify can offer synthetic voice-over recordings to fill that gap, making stories more accessible without the long production cycles of traditional voice actors. For books that only exist in one language, we’re testing full pipelines of AI translation combined with synthetic voice narration. Imagine a popular advice book originally recorded in French — now, with the help of our AI systems, it can reach a Korean listener for the first time. **These efforts don’t just improve accessibility; they open doors for authors and publishers to connect with truly global audiences.** And we’re not stopping there. Live experiences are the next big frontier. When artists speak directly to fans during a live-streamed “Listening Party,” we’re working to provide real-time multilingual captions and instant chat translations. This means a fan in Berlin can ask a question in German, and an artist in Los Angeles can answer in English — yet everyone in the chat sees the interaction in their own language. It turns one live event into a global dialogue.

To orchestrate all this, we’re building what we call MAP: the Multilingual AI Platform. It’s our centralized system for managing every AI-powered localization flow — from dubbing and voice synthesis to live captioning and beyond. This platform allows us to scale quickly, test new features efficiently, and ensure quality across every touchpoint. It’s our way of future-proofing localization for a world where content is increasingly multimodal and multilingual by default.

Of course, localization is not just about language — it’s about culture. Spotify’s localization team doesn’t just run content through a machine. We continuously test

UX with real users in each market. We adjust product labels that may feel awkward in Japanese or fine-tune search terms in Turkish. When we market a new artist in Mexico, we tailor the message, imagery, and tone to reflect local music culture — not just translate a global campaign.

A recent example: we recently launched our audiobook platform in Germany, and during the launch process we worked closely with local publishers to ensure metadata was structured in a way that German users expect. We even updated our content categories to reflect regional preferences like “Krimi” (crime fiction) or “Ratgeber” (self-help). These are details that require human insight, linguistic sensitivity, and deep local knowledge.

This dual approach — traditional linguistic rigor combined with AI innovation — positions Spotify not only as a leader in music streaming but also as a true pioneer in global audio experiences. By embracing cutting-edge tools while staying rooted in cultural understanding, we’re not just translating, we’re transforming how people experience stories, music, and ideas.

Spotify changed how people experience music and audio — and now, we’re transforming how people access and understand that content across different languages and cultures. And this is only the beginning. In the past, music was universal. Now, everything can be. **Spotify is making audio borderless — one voice, one story, one language at a time.**

The Unexpected AI Playbook: User Experience First

Maiju Nurminen

Senior Localization Manager
at Deliveroo

Known for taking localization beyond translation and deep into other disciplines, Maiju works across UX, research, and product to shape experiences that drive impact and conversion. With nearly a decade in tech, she helps global companies act on cultural insight, translating connection and relevance to measurable business growth.



Cristina Marín Garcés

Staff Localization Manager
at Deliveroo

Cristina brings over 12 years of experience in the localization industry, including five years in the tech sector, with strong expertise in localization technology, digital products, and operations. She leads cross-functional initiatives, driving innovation and streamlining workflows to scale global content delivery. She also focuses on localization strategy, ensuring seamless, high-impact experiences for international audiences.



Forget everything you thought you knew about AI in localization, at least for a moment. As the industry fixated on the ever-improving capabilities of machine translation to drive cost and time efficiencies, we at Deliveroo faced a different challenge: What happens when your brand's distinct voice and customer-centric content just don't align with the mainstream AI translation approach? This question led us to completely reshape our mindset (and ultimately our localization strategy), bringing us back to what truly matters: **the person on the other side of the screen.**

The Deliveroo dilemma: Not all content is fit for AI. Now what?

For many organizations, the initial foray into AI for localization often starts with content amenable to machine translation (MT). MT typically performs best with long-form,

repetitive, or low-context content. However, Deliveroo's content landscape is markedly different: As a mobile and web application-driven company, the bulk of our language localization requirements are for research-informed, short-form, high-stakes user experience content and marketing creative.

Even deeper content challenges arise from the way our business is structured. As a three-sided marketplace, we have to localize for three distinct audiences — consumers, riders, and partners — each with their own needs, goals, and brand voice expectations. A Deliveroo feature update commonly involves localizing multiple intertwined user journeys: We might be explaining a new payment process to a consumer, a delivery route feature to a rider, and an order management journey to a partner, all within a single product release. **These pieces of UX content have far more important jobs than simply existing in a given language; they're designed to guide users, build trust, and foster a seamless experience for our diverse global audiences.**

It is this intricate web of overlapping features, high-stakes content, and the complex marketplace that makes our content so reliant on human judgment — and beyond the reach of generic AI solutions.

Given these circumstances, the idea of using a human-in-the-loop model might seem like the logical next step. However, we've found that this approach often misses the point of what AI should be. The sheer volume of human input required for post-editing, detailed training, and prompt design for generative AI risks negating any initial efficiency gains. In other words: If AI isn't genuinely enhancing the customer experience in a way that couldn't be achieved as efficiently or even more efficiently by other means, then its application risks becoming a drain on resources rather than a strategic advantage.

Having analyzed our content and concluded that the ROI for MT/AI and human post-editing just isn't there for the vast majority of our requirements, we were left with a crucial question: If we can't use AI to localize the bulk of our content, does that mean we can afford to ignore it altogether?

Re-evaluating the use case

The answer, we quickly realized, was a definitive no. Our content may not fit neatly into the usual MT or AI applications, but the pace of AI innovation — and the growing demand for instant, intelligent customer interactions — left no room for hesitation. Embracing AI isn't optional: It's an opportunity to reimagine the customer experience in practical and forward-thinking ways.

This imperative led us to another fundamental question: If our usual content types aren't a good fit, what if not

only the solution but also the use case itself should be novel? This became the guiding principle for our exploration. Instead of forcing our existing content into an ill-fitting AI framework, we began to consider how AI could enable entirely new forms of communication and service that align with our brand and benefit our users.

Our journey into novel AI use cases has been heavily influenced by understanding our user base — what they expect, how they interact with our products, and where their pain points lie. This isn't just about market research, but a deep, continuous learning process from real-life user interactions that has pushed us in new and exciting directions.

By listening closely to our customers, riders, and partners, we uncovered a powerful opportunity to make our marketplace even more connected through seamless communication. It wasn't about translating official content, but about enabling spontaneous, real-time conversations between riders and consumers, celebrating the rich diversity of languages in our community. That insight led to a new AI use case at Deliveroo: an instant, multilingual interpreter. This is a dynamic, AI-powered bridge that helps customers and riders connect effortlessly, collaborate in the moment, and complete deliveries with greater ease.

The real value we're finding lies in understanding the unique aspects of our situation and our strong sense of brand and culture, which is highly user-attuned. Our approach is now leading us down a path of exploration and testing on our own terms, rather than simply adopting off-the-shelf solutions.



As members of the Experience team at Deliveroo, our mission extends far beyond merely translating words. We are, fundamentally, in the business of cross-cultural mediation and impact. Every phrase, every user journey, every interaction we localize is a deliberate act of bridging cultural divides and ensuring our global users feel seen, understood, and seamlessly connected to our platform. This isn't a checkbox exercise — it's a core strategic imperative that directly influences customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and ultimately, our brand's global success.

This positioning of our role has shaped our approach to AI. While the industry often focuses on AI for sheer volume and speed in translation, our journey has revealed that its true power for a brand like Deliveroo lies in its capacity to unlock entirely new avenues for customer experience and cross-cultural engagement. We're not using AI just because it's available; we're leveraging it to solve unique challenges and create value in previously unimaginable ways.

The future of localization is full of opportunity — but it's not just about embracing the latest AI technology. At Deliveroo, we've seen firsthand that when your content doesn't align with the conventional machine translation approach, it's not a limitation. It's a chance to rethink your strategy. Rather than chasing translation speed as a success metric, we focus on what actually matters: how our content performs in-market.

For us, that means using technology to support real cultural connection, not just linguistic accuracy. By tailoring localization efforts to what resonates with specific audiences, we unlock measurable results: Stronger brand loyalty, better customer retention, and a more stable presence in each market we serve.

ACT 2:

Moving Pictures

It's been three years with GenAI in our lives.

You may think we understand what AI can or cannot do (at least those in the Global North think they do). But think again. There are entire regions of the world that are playing catch-up to the AI-first reality. And there are always newcomers to our industry who need guidance to set them on the right path.

Ultimately, progress will look different to every team and professional. It won't be linear, and it may come at a cost. It may require us to redefine ourselves. In our quest onward, no one should be left behind, right?

In this section, read the articles that explore the human side of the *(r)*evolution unfolding around us.



Choosing the Right Timeline

Mathijs Sonnemans

Vice President of Product
at Blackbird

Mathijs Sonnemans is a versatile professional who bridges software engineering, language technology and philosophy. He holds master's degrees in Computing Science & Cybersecurity and Philosophy from Radboud University. As VP of Product at Blackbird.io, he brings his passion to the product's vision while also keeping closely connected to Blackbird's customers to ensure the best user experience.





In every great story, there comes a moment where the universe splits - not into good and evil - but into possibility. The localization industry stands at such a crossroads today. For years, we've reacted to new content demands, shifting technologies, and rising customer expectations. But now, the multiverse is open. Multiple paths stretch before us. Some lead to operational chaos, others to strategic clarity.

The question is no longer *can we adapt?* It's: *Which timeline will we choose?*

Much like Doctor Strange confronting countless futures, localization teams must stop reacting to change and instead orchestrate it. This moment isn't about surviving content demands. It's about mastering them. When machine translation emerged, the industry scrambled to integrate it. This often happened in isolated pilots rather than holistic workflows. As AI quality improved, the debates raged:

Is it better than humans? Is it ready for prime time?

But in focusing solely on whether AI could replace existing processes, we missed the bigger opportunity. Because the real question wasn't about quality comparisons. It was about redefining how we localize and the business models that underpin it.

Today, the shift to strategic thinking is underway. Localization leaders are no longer content to react; they're looking at their tech stacks and asking:

How do these tools align with our business goals?

This is where orchestration platforms and middleware step in as the connective tissue. Like Nick Fury bringing together diverse heroes into one coordinated force, orchestration tools unify fragmented systems:

- Connecting content management, TMS, MT, and publishing workflows
 - Enabling integrated and continuous localization (where content flows seamlessly from creation to global delivery)
 - Supporting quality-based and analytics-based routing, so decisions are data-driven rather than guesswork
- Reduced manual workflows and operational waste
 - Strategic insights through data and analytics

The rise of these tools represents a fundamental mindset change: from *How do we translate faster?* to *How do we create, manage, and deliver global content smarter?*

However, technology alone isn't enough. Just as Tony Stark's suit is useless without the person inside, orchestration tools require organizations to rethink how they work:

- Pricing models are under pressure as customers expect more for less. Traditional per-word billing struggles to capture the value of integrated, multimodal content repurposing.
- Services are shifting from transactional projects to embedded, strategic partnerships.
- Customer expectations now include speed, scalability, and visibility, not just quality.

Proactive transformation starts with orchestration. By integrating disparate systems, enabling multimodal content repurposing, and shifting localization left into the creation process, teams gain superpowers:

- Faster time-to-market for multilingual content

In the Marvel universe, the multiverse isn't just a metaphor. It's a challenge. A test of vision, judgment, and timing. For localization, this is our multiversal moment. We can remain stuck in fragmented processes and reactive habits, or we can choose a new timeline - one defined by orchestration, integration, and strategic impact.

Because progress is inevitable, but direction is a choice. The winning timeline is the one where localization becomes not just a service, but a superpower.

The Progress To Disappear (or Why Everyone Still Needs a Plumber)

Jon Ritzdorf

Senior Manager of Globalization
Content Infrastructure
at Procore Technologies

Jon Ritzdorf is a seasoned language industry professional with over 20 years of experience in translation technology, solutions engineering, and globalization strategy. Since 2003, Jon has served as an adjunct professor in translation technology, localization, and language industry business practices at institutions including Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS), NYU, U. of Maryland, and U. of Chicago. Currently, Jon is Senior Manager of Globalization Content Infrastructure at Procore Technologies, leading Procore's technical strategy for global expansion.



I have to wonder. If the last stage of CSA's globalization maturity model is "Transparent" — where localization is no longer a function or department, just the way things are — aren't we, the people who built the system, setting ourselves up for obsolescence?

Think about it. "Transparent" describes a state where the localization team has done such a stellar job that systems, awareness, and mindsets are so attuned that they've made themselves redundant. Everyone knows how to write for a global audience. Products are designed with all the cultural permutations factored in from the start. The marketer instantly knows what won't fly in Japan. The developer instinctively prepares the UI to be readable from right to left for Arabic-speaking countries. You know, the dream.

So, where does that leave us, the localization professionals, the language enthusiasts?

There are two things that we have going for us, in my view:

1. There's a long and winding road for companies to realize that dream state. Sometimes they even regress or fall into a loop of "two steps forward, one step back." Until then, there's plenty for us to do.
2. Everyone needs a plumber at some point. As unglamorous as this may sound, we, the localization professionals, are the plumbers of global business. No matter how much AI a company throws at solving a challenge, something somewhere will break, and they call the plumber to fix it.

This is the paradox of localization in the GenAI age. If our goal is to automate ourselves out of our jobs (and we seem to be hell-bent on this), the system is not designed to work without some level of expertise in plumbing. It just so happens we're very good at quickly diagnosing and solving plumbing issues.

The “how” of localization is changing, but the “why” stays the same (and you need a plumber to understand the “why”)

I was recently asked the question, “What excites you?” Twenty years later, I’m happy to report that I’m still excited about teaching. I just love passing on my knowledge to others.

Having done so for some time now, one thing I’ve noticed is that the fundamentals of localization and internationalization (or the “why”) have remained unchanged between today and, say, the 1990s. Just because we have AI now and we can do things faster or more efficiently, doesn’t change the basics. It’s the “how” that is changing.

The “how” we go about things may be changing, but the “why” — enabling and facilitating communication or allowing companies to sell — remains largely unchanged. The problem is that the “how” is feeding our anxieties today and diverting us from the “why.”

People are rightly anxious about machines replacing them, and as machines improve, that anxiety is triggered even more.

However, consider something else, the playbook for doing things globally is evolving as well. There are the fundamentals, sure: If you do this, you need to translate that (or not). If you translate, there are better options than spreadsheets. Then there are numerous permutations of companies with varying levels of maturity. Are they truly

thinking globally, or is it all just aspiration? Are they open to adopting a global approach to current challenges, even if it creates issues or hogs resources? How will “going global” be prioritized? What’s the budget? Do they have the time or the personnel?

Every team has a unique combination of these elements, and (spoiler alert) it still requires a human to make sense of it all and connect the objective with a process. Sure, you can throw the problem at the machine, but chances are you’ll end up going back to the human for cleanup or refitting (which neatly brings us back to our humble plumber analogy). The fact is, there is a reason truly global-minded companies have a localization team. Nobody gets as excited about doing this cleanup work as we language and technology nerds. We’re expert plumbers and we take pride in our jobs.

AI: a solution in search of a problem

I’m sure there will always be a need for people like us. We now have a wonderful toolbox called AI, and it’s a potential solution to many problems that required significantly more time and tooling before the 2020s: It can perform source rewrites, extract terminology, modify tone and register, and automate post-editing to some degree.

Yet for all its prowess, the LLM sometimes still can’t manage things as basic as consistently preserving line breaks. The LLM is also not an “all-knowing” localization specialist that will tolerate and be understanding of your engineering team’s insistence on using improper ISO coding for internationalization. So what’s supposed to be a solution often just introduces a new set of complexities, unpredictable decision making, and it’s still me, the human, doing



the cleanup, making hard decisions, and choosing trade-offs, just as I did back when I started 24 years ago in 2001.

In a way, interactions with the machine are not unlike an executive coming and saying, “Just get this translated” into 10 new languages. Every person the executive asks (some with experience in the area and others with no knowledge) will present a different pathway and process to achieve the goal. Just as any set of randomly chosen LLMs will present 10 answers to the same prompt when you ask 10 different times. It’s still the plumber who has to *decide* which of the 10 different ways to fix the problem is the “right” one based on decades of hard-earned experience. But I made my point clear: the plumber doesn’t go away, not really.

I worry about who comes next, and you should too

Worry might be too strong, but at the very least, we should all be thinking about the next generation (of plumbers).

If you think about the typical localization career, most of us over the age of 30 fell into it through an affinity for language and foreign cultures, or just being at the right place at the right time (“Who speaks French in this office?”). Very few explicitly train for a job in our industry. The institutions that train professionals for career paths in the language industry generally lean heavily into (or are forced into) a dark corner of the institution where interest is low.

And that’s the core issue: Higher educational institutions should be open to all the potential departments our skill set really falls into, say, in a global business school, exposing students to all the topics related to doing business globally (and arguably trying to stray away from all the acronyms our industry loves so much; they’ll have plenty of time to pick those up later). Alternatively, programs in technical writing, user-centered design, marketing, supply chain logistics, and other fields could all afford to include a localization component in their curriculum. If we continue to be confined to our niche, I am nearly certain that in a decade there won’t even be a formal education pathway anymore, and we’ll go right back to the time when people just fell into this field by accident.

Certainly in the U.S., language programs overall have been fighting a battle of interest. Our industry is competing for attention, and (depending on how much stock you put into the reports), the attention spans of younger generations are not very long. That's why we should get out of our shells and push hard to get a seat in programs that offer more "fashionable" degrees with long-term viability, such as global business or information design. Exactly the kind of bridges we are building with our stakeholders. We've been so focused on making the case for this "localization thing" to the C-level for so long, and we've done a decent job of that. Now, we should do the same in approaching those who educated that C-suite executive in the first place.

I'll leave you with another question that is bigger than can be answered in one article: What are we doing to embrace new talent, pull in interest from other areas of study, and bring it into our industry?

It's rare for new talent to appear at traditional localization events uninvited. It's time we did something about that, too. Otherwise, I fear it'll just be us, the geeks and the language enthusiasts, who continue talking to ourselves in our echo chambers about fixing the (global) pipes when our stated "transparency" goal is to get everyone in every department to think global from day one.



Progress Comes from Within

Johan Botha

Director at Folio Online

Johan Botha is a seasoned African language expert and localization strategist with 20+ years' experience. A Director at Folio Online and Co-Founder of the Association of Language Companies in Africa, he champions ethical, tech-enabled solutions across global and African markets.



Africa is often talked about as a land of opportunity. The next billion consumers who come after the more “traditional” billion found in Asia (don’t you just love to be reduced to a number?). Oh, and now we’ve got AI, so naturally, it’ll be so much easier to establish a foothold on the continent. Right?

This is not just an exercise in myth-busting, though. I want to share a story of resilience, a story of progress. One that comes from within. So, while it may be tempting to wait for business to arrive, we cannot afford to sit idly by, twiddling our thumbs.

Across Africa, communities and companies are busy building: building awareness, building solutions that work for us, and building bridges between communities across the continent.

What we learned about AI and ourselves

1. Please keep your (AI) expectations in check

The so-called Global North, including its language services industry, may think they have GenAI and its use cases all figured out. However, copy-pasting those learnings or processes in Africa and expecting similar results will get you nowhere, because flipping a power switch might yield no results.

There are regions of Africa that lack what other parts of the world take for granted. A reliable electricity grid or decent internet connectivity being top of the list. This remains the case in 2025 and severely hampers access to AI technology. Without access to the technology, there is no experimentation to be done and no advancements to be made.

So, if we aim to educate, before discussing opportunities that AI can bring, let’s talk about how we are making things work despite some of the latent infrastructure challenges.

2. Solutions exist, just not the kind you may be used to

Africa, with its mobile-first mindset, has a track record of developing solutions that work for Africa. A classic example is M-Pesa, a mobile money transfer and microfinancing service launched in 2007 that revolutionized the banking sector in Kenya and was adopted by a burgeoning fintech industry across the continent and imitated globally. Unique solutions like these have paved the way for a company like Flutterwave from Nigeria to offer an API that aims to address payment fragmentation, high transaction costs and the slow speeds experienced when using traditional banking ecosystems in Africa.

This is just one example. Africa not being on par with other parts of the world in terms of infrastructure that can support AI doesn’t mean that no progress is being made. There is a greater focus on no-code/low-code solutions that are optimized for mobile and work even in situations where internet access is limited, or indeed, not available at all.

This also touches on a persistent pain point for linguists in Africa. Most traditional CAT/TMS tools aren’t optimized for mobile devices and low-connectivity environments (not to mention they aren’t exactly priced for the masses). That’s where, for example, a lot of our unseen work goes, creating

conditions that allow linguists to accept a job in the first place. If you cannot even take on a job, are discussions around progress even worthwhile? In such instances, AI is way down the list of worries.

3. More building, less waiting

Localization work in Africa is tricky business, especially these days, when every client discussion is so cost-obsessed. It's paradoxical. Africa has the youngest population globally, with a median age of 19.7 in 2020. Approximately 60% of the continent's population is under the age of 25. That's potentially a lot of buying power entering the market. The economic incentives are there, but when clients realize the challenges of localizing for the continent, it's not unusual to see them pull out (and sometimes at the last minute).

It's getting better, though. Twenty-odd years ago, when I entered the industry, the clients were asking which language they needed to translate into if they wanted to sell in Africa. Thankfully, the awareness of Africa as a linguistically and culturally rich continent has evolved. Still, today, with NMT and AI, we have a similar discussion on our hands: No, AI is not a blanket solution to translate at scale into African languages. But that doesn't mean it couldn't work or that you should give up.

When we're not doing it ourselves at Folio, we're right there in the trenches, helping others build with AI. We're seeing the value of hyper-specialized models. Instead of creating, say, a language model that can do everything, you train a model in one language (Afrikaans) and one domain (life sciences), and use that as a template for building an AI model in other domains and languages. Instead of casting a wide (AI) net, people here are investing their energy in small language models (SLMs) and getting encouraging results.

Another example you may have heard about is Lelapa AI, a South African company outside the language industry, which has been actively developing an AI model for various African languages. Their Vulavula API is available for LSPs and the like to start building in their languages for their customers.

These examples show that the well-documented challenges AI has with low-resource languages don't prevent us from building viable solutions. Stories of progress may be isolated. But they exist and they're growing incrementally. Part of the work ahead of us is linking initiatives across the continent.

4. Building bridges between communities and letting the world know

This is where the work of the Association of Language Companies in Africa (ALCA) is so important, especially in a world that thinks it knows everything about Africa and how business is done on the continent.

The language services industry in Africa is fragmented and concentrated in a few geographical pockets. There is work to be done to connect the activities of LSPs in Egypt with those in Nigeria, Kenya, or South Africa (or anywhere else on the continent). If industry and company growth is the answer, the question is whether to go at it alone or together. It should be an obvious one.

The progress comes from within

Perhaps part of exploring what other amazing things are lying beyond the next hill, whether it's another new AI development or selling your (localized)

product in Africa, is fundamentally understanding that not every part of the world is moving at the same speed. Africa is a unique continent, often overlooked, frequently misunderstood, yet anything but static. Waiting for the next big wave of outside interest and investment (which has yet to materialize fully) is simply not enough, and so we should get a move on, building the tools that will allow us to prosper.

AI is a boon for Africa; when used correctly and optimized in the right way, it can allow us to circumvent many of the structural challenges. I am optimistic about Africa's future. The dynamic demographic will drive demand, and technology will rise to meet it. Those of us on the ground have already been hard at work preparing the terrain, removing roadblocks, and doing the unglamorous work that moves us forward.



The Human Toll of (R)Evolution and Shifting the Power

Mario Pluzny

Career Clarity and Life Coach

Mario is helping localization professionals define their next step with clarity and confidence.



Not a conference or water cooler discussion goes by without the word AI dominating the discourse. While innovation brings many positives, it also has a darker side that is negatively impacting our mental well-being.

As a qualified Career and Life Coach working with clients almost exclusively from our industry, I've seen firsthand the many challenges that localization professionals face today.

We're all just seeking answers, trying to do better and be better. The good news is, there is always a way (and yes, it can get hairy before it gets better). But before we find solutions, we should name things.

Here is what I propose.

The state of the human in the loop

Put simply, we're overwhelmed.

In my coaching practice, the first step to getting better is recognizing and naming the problem. So before we shift the power, let's unpack some observations that may ring true for you, too:

- I hear many of my clients complain about cognitive overload. The sheer amount of information is overwhelming, and it feels increasingly difficult to sit down and focus on just one task. This feeling of being overwhelmed influences many of our reactions and actions, for better or worse.
- The C-level is not making lives easier: Leadership wants (and perhaps needs?) to jump on the AI bandwagon. Rather than exploring slowly or running small experiments, they want things yesterday. To compound matters, we often deal with teams and leaders who are unfamiliar with localization. Educating our stakeholders and leadership teams on both the localization process and how AI can (or cannot) fit into it feels doubly exhausting.

- As a (gut) reaction to our world spinning too fast, I see many people going on sick leave, quitting their jobs, or leaving the industry altogether. This is because we're unable to keep up, regulate, and organize our time in order to mitigate the external pressures. AI feels like that one extra thing we could have done without in an already overwhelming world. Our fight-or-flight response is kicking in, leading to career- and life-altering decisions.
- I call this sense of disillusionment with how things are an identity crisis. AI is now adding an existential component to the spectrum of emotions that feels unwanted and is unsolvable for many. Many people I speak to regularly are translators or come from a linguistic background. Everything they do or have worked towards is now being questioned and shaken to the core. What once took hours of research and a human thinking and puzzling over, can now be done with a tool quickly, despite not being at the same quality level (yet). One question arises repeatedly: "Where do I look for motivation?"

There are positives, too, of course. For one, talking about mental health is not necessarily taboo anymore. Some companies are also offering mental health benefits, such as the option to take leave (although this may not be sufficiently widespread yet, and freelancers cannot typically access it).

One thing that often goes amiss — and I try to help my clients rediscover it — is that going through adversity builds resilience. The trick is in giving yourselves the keys to creating it.

Shifting the power

In the coaching process, I help my clients sit with the problem they're experiencing, examine it from all angles, and push them to proactively tackle it with action. I shift the power back onto them.

When someone is first seeking support in the form of therapy, coaching, or



mentoring, they may believe that the person they're speaking to will solve their problems for them. However, we are the architects of our own lives, and positive change starts with accountability.

As a coach, I provide a mirror to my clients and ask them questions such as, "What do you want to do?" or "What can you do about this situation?" or "Where do you want to take this?" This is because, **in our gut, we usually know what we need to do, and often the first solution that comes to us is the right one. The coach is there to provide that initial nudge to make space for reflection and identifying solutions.** The coach might just accelerate this process and provide an external perspective to get started.

We may be a generation of overthinkers — we almost feel compelled to ruminate or consider things from different angles. And that's precisely it. Our gut knows what to do. You just need to reconnect with it. Want to get unstuck? One little trick if you're sitting with a problem is that a shift in your physical environment can provide a different stimulus that will help.

Action = Accountability

As we consult AI for almost everything these days, I can't help but think about the idea of "prompting." In the same way that a successful response in ChatGPT depends on the quality of your prompt, coaching works similarly.

So, what makes a good coaching prompt? It's usually a question that makes people think... and then take action.

As a coach, I ask open-ended questions because that is what makes people reflect and think. This can start with a very broad introductory question that we then narrow

down. For example, we may start with "What's on your mind?" and then I funnel the conversation into something more specific or dig deeper with "And what else?" or "How does this affect you/your life right now?"

At the end of each coaching session, I want clients to recognize how far they've come and understand that they have control over their responses to situations. We need to learn to hold ourselves accountable. This is because the best plan is good on paper, but it goes nowhere without real, tangible action.

In those spaces shared between a coach and client, or when you sit alone at home with nothing but your thoughts for company, the clear shift that needs to happen is for you to regain power. The theme is clear: There's always something you can do.

As Risks Multiply, Should We Redefine Quality Management?

Kateřina Gašová

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With almost 30 years in the language industry, Kateřina Gašová drives the development of language quality programs for Argos' enterprise clients. She also owns the company's overall language quality management strategy and helps introduce new language-related solutions.



What a time to be alive, no? This may come across as a very pro-AI question on the surface.

We're well advanced into the AI era, and it's undeniable that tech is a fertile ground for discussions, controversy, fundamental questions of ethics, and reflections on the nature of language work (and the future of our jobs).

Then there's an explosion of content triggered by AI — good, bad, and every shade in between. And it's not just text. Audio, video, immersive experiences and, yes, text now all coexist and seamlessly integrate across a multitude of surfaces and platforms, and are increasingly accessible to global users. Content is multimodal. Use cases number in the dozens.

And as AI-powered companies scale their content and user interactions, the risks multiply. More touchpoints, more complexity, more potential for something to go wrong.

In this world of "more is more," what's new in the realm of quality management?

The case for a risk-focused approach to quality management

Quality is (still) a hot topic — and a highly subjective one. Everyone has a definition, few agree, and the stakes keep rising. **That's why a shift is underway: from measuring perfection to managing risk.** Companies are running pilots comparing the output of MT and LLM, asking just how hands-off they can afford to be — and whether C-level ambitions align with technological reality.

Over the past two years, localization programs have redefined what's possible. The industry has coined new terms: agentic AI, AI-enabled LQA, automated quality scores, and developed the practice of prompt engineering to keep pace and build guardrails as we go. Quality pipelines are becoming more intricate and dynamic, and in many cases, more dependent on the machine. In parallel, we are trying to reimagine humans' place in an increasingly automated process.

This is the most telling development: not what has been added, but what is being reconsidered. Some of the AI-first companies are now walking back their bets. The limits of automation have been tested. We've been busily deploying agentic solutions, and the end-users are not necessarily happy. Hallucinations remain a feature, and quality still doesn't tick all the boxes (e.g., fluency, accuracy, etc.). It turns out automation cannot eliminate risk — it redistributes it.

This about-face gives one pause. Have these companies truly mapped the risks? Or did they unknowingly trade cost savings for the wrong kind of exposure?

In any case, these highly publicized examples of companies course-correcting are forcing us to refocus on two essential questions: What is the content, and what is it for? It's not enough to tell an LLM this is marketing content, we need to be much more precise — is it an ad, a tagline, landing page copy? Each will come with vastly different requirements that the AI will need to take into account.

In other words, when trusting the machine to do the work, are humans' expectations aligned with what the content is intended for? Are the associated risks understood

and reflected in the quality management framework? Is the tool producing trustworthy results?

Risk-free localization:
tech-powered utopia or
human-led orchestra?

The shift to a risk-based approach to quality management is not necessarily a novel concept, but rather a maturation of existing practices. You need to measure risks from the outset, *especially* if you have agentic workflows (where the agents are supposed to help you assess, manage, or solve the risks). You need to be precise and detailed when instructing the agent on what to do.

With this latest wave of AI implementation, instead of chasing validation through numbers on a dashboard, teams should be asking, “What could go wrong?”

The mapping of possible risks begins at the source. Organizations must assess the data that feeds their tools, the failures they want to avoid, and how best to prompt or fine-tune models to produce safer outputs. One way to approach this is by blending different disciplines, such as pairing a terminologist with a prompt engineer to shape inputs and expectations. Not every team has the available talent or budget for this, but the principle holds: **Before teams can instruct AI on what they want, they must first understand what they cannot afford to get wrong.**

With large language models, generating content on virtually any topic has become trivial. At first glance, much of it will look fine. However, the question remains, “Is the answer correct?” The model did its job in replying to you — they are tuned to answer your prompt — but the crucial question is,

can you trust the answer? From a quality standpoint, the primary concern is the trustworthiness of the information the user receives from the system. Understanding this helps to pinpoint high-risk content types and surfaces.

A risk-based quality management strategy becomes increasingly inevitable when considering the broader context of AI governance. Legislation, such as the EU AI Act, is now setting clear expectations for when and how to use AI. In some industries, air-tight quality isn’t just a goal — it’s a compliance requirement.

Quality management needs a reset. At its core, it is about controlling risks by identifying content use cases, understanding their requirements, aligning them with the specificities of the selected languages, and developing acceptance criteria of what passes for “quality” content. This clarity will help narrow AI’s focus, improve its output, and allow teams to deploy the most expensive asset — humans — where it matters. When applied well, humans not only review the risky parts of the process but also verify what is assumed to be safe. In the world of AI, quality management becomes an end-to-end process.

Multiple paths to quality
results, all with a human
somewhere in the loop

We have every incentive to pivot to a risk-based approach, and not just because it is mandated by legislation. In our industry, we see localization teams trying to align with stakeholder expectations, but these expectations also need to be managed effectively.



The results of pilots are compelling evidence: Working backward from the results and clearly defining risks helps make the case that a human is still needed somewhere in the loop. In fact, I’d argue we need a broader spectrum of human skills so people can help with what goes into the AI models, and then ensure that the outputs are properly validated and verified for integrity. The public examples of companies backtracking on the AI-first experiments just show that the world is not yet ready to embrace AI-first — and that the technology needs to be managed to reach its potential. Localization is used to managing complexity, but now with AI, we’re also managing a wider variety of risks that have previously been alien to localization.

Ultimately, there isn’t just one way to set up a quality framework (note the shift from talking about quality “programs”). Multiple pathways exist. Companies will increasingly

resort to using AI for translation and editing, especially if they are pushed to produce something fast. But even then the AI will need a quality style guide and terminology to produce decent results. They publish AI-made content, which is then also flagged as generated by AI, which ties in nicely with the content labeling debate unfolding in parallel. In the meantime, critical touchpoints are revisited by humans. It’s often only post-facto that the content receives polish and the assets are expanded and cleaned so the input data can be well-read by AI in the next run. Risk is managed by feeding AI quality assets — and letting humans test and tune the system. For now, the humans retain their role in the loop.

The Quality Question: What Happens Before and After the Prompt?

Agustín Da Fieno Delucchi

Industry Expert and Consultant

Agustín Da Fieno Delucchi is an expert in data, AI, and localization, with decades of experience in driving global technology initiatives. A consultant, frequent speaker, and panelist at major conferences and professional podcasts, he is recognized for his thought leadership in the evolving localization and technology landscape.



In this new era of generative AI, the question is no longer whether machines can produce content across languages and modalities; it is whether they should, and under what conditions. The floodgates have opened. Multilingual outputs now flow from prompts at breathtaking scale. But as this (r)evolution accelerates, we must stop and ask: What scaffolding are we building around these outputs to ensure they mean something? To someone? Somewhere?

The excitement around GenAI in localization has often been about efficiency – how fast we can go, how many markets we can cover. But speed without quality is just multilingual noise. The deeper evolution now underway is not one of scale, but of *sense-making*.

Quality is not a retrospective

For years, quality assessment came at the tail end of the content lifecycle. Reviewers would flag mistranslations, misused terms, or culturally jarring expressions long after

damage had already been done. But generative AI forces reframing. When there is no “source” text to anchor a review, what becomes the reference? The answer: quality must be designed into the system, *before* generation ever happens.

That is where semantic intent modeling and structured content governance come in. Instead of relying on post-hoc evaluation, GenAI workflows are now incorporating semantic blueprints; data-rich templates that encode the “why” of a message. Tone preferences, brand voice, factual claims, taboo phrases, cultural framing – all of these become structured signals in a semantic map that informs prompt creation.

That is precisely what frameworks like DirectGC™ are bringing to the table: a systematic, upstream approach to content generation that fuses intent, compliance, and context before a single word is generated. These frameworks do not eliminate the need for quality checks; they raise the floor from which those checks begin.

This preparation phase is not glamorous. It does not make headlines. But it is here that

the most meaningful shifts in our industry are happening. Because the quality of generative outputs is not just a reflection of the model; it reflects the preconditions we set.

Measuring what matters

If preflight quality governance is the first half of the story, the second half is validation. But validating what, exactly?

Traditional localization QA focused heavily on linguistic correctness and term adherence. But those standards fall short in a generative, multimodal context. That’s why some in the field are turning to [MMQEval](#), a multidimensional framework that evaluates content not only for accuracy and consistency, but also for resonance, engagement, and ethical grounding.

Unlike legacy QA methods, MMQEval does not treat quality as a single metric. It breaks it down across four axes:

- **Normative Integrity:** Does the output meet the brief and align with local norms?
- **Factual & Ethical Integrity:** Is the information correct, and is it safe?
- **Communication Coherence:** Does it sound natural and tonally appropriate?
- **Experience & Engagement:** Does it connect emotionally, visually, contextually?

Each axis is scored, producing a nuanced profile of quality. And importantly, it allows systems to learn over time. QA is no longer just a gatekeeper; it becomes a feedback loop. If a term keeps falling flat in a market, the terminology cluster gets updated. If an emotional tone misses the mark, the cultural

vector gets refined. Quality, then, becomes a living system, not a checklist.

When quality drives the experience: A retail example

Imagine a multilingual retail campaign promoting a new eco-conscious product line across Japan, France, Brazil, and the United States. The messaging emphasizes ethical sourcing, carbon footprint reduction, and the emotional reward of sustainable living.

In a traditional localization flow, the English source copy, crafted with a U.S. audience in mind, becomes the blueprint. Translations attempt to adapt tone and claims downstream. But in Japan, the emotional appeal feels too sentimental. In Brazil, the claims raise skepticism due to regulatory differences. In France, the use of English-origin environmental terms feels alienating. And in the U.S., the message still performs but lacks cultural novelty.

Now contrast that with an intent-first generative system. Each locale receives a version built natively: the Japanese message emphasizes social harmony and craftsmanship; the Brazilian one blends ecological messaging with aspirational affordability; the French version centers around civic responsibility; and the U.S. copy leans into personal agency and status. These variations are not only different; they are aligned. Each draws from a shared semantic intent model but filters that intent through market-specific tone maps, terminology clusters, regulatory constraints, and emotional cues. Quality is not applied after the fact. It is embedded from the start and measured at every step using frameworks like MMQEval.

The results? Fewer rewrites. Fewer cultural misfires. Faster time to market. Higher engagement.

Not because the AI was “smarter” but because the system was *better prepared*.

Who gets to define “good enough”?

The GenAI moment has forced us to redefine what counts as quality, and who decides. Is it the model? The LQA team? The market? The stakeholder who signed off on the prompt? Or the person who clicked “skip ad” because it did not land?

Quality is no longer binary. It is contextual, multimodal, and increasingly *subjective*. But that is not an excuse for vagueness. It is a call for rigor. Evaluating global content now means incorporating perspectives that were long overlooked, cultural cues, emotional preferences, even visual taboos. The new frontier of quality is not error detection; it is *alignment*.

Closing the gap between creation and meaning

Here is the uncomfortable truth: Generative AI has removed bottlenecks in global content workflows. But it has also removed safeguards. In the rush to scale, we risk flattening nuance, homogenizing voice, and diluting resonance. That is why quality conversations must move upstream, and downstream.

So, here is the question we must ask ourselves as practitioners, strategists, and leaders in global content:

Are we just generating outputs, or are we building systems that care about what those outputs become in the world?

Because in the end, what we ship is not just content. It is meaning. And meaning, unlike tokens, cannot be auto-completed.

Attributions:

DirectGC™ is a system architecture developed by Trilogica Global.

The MMQEval framework is a collaborative initiative maintained by a global community of researchers, evaluators, and practitioners committed to open evaluation standards for multimodal content. Learn more at [mmqeval.org](#).

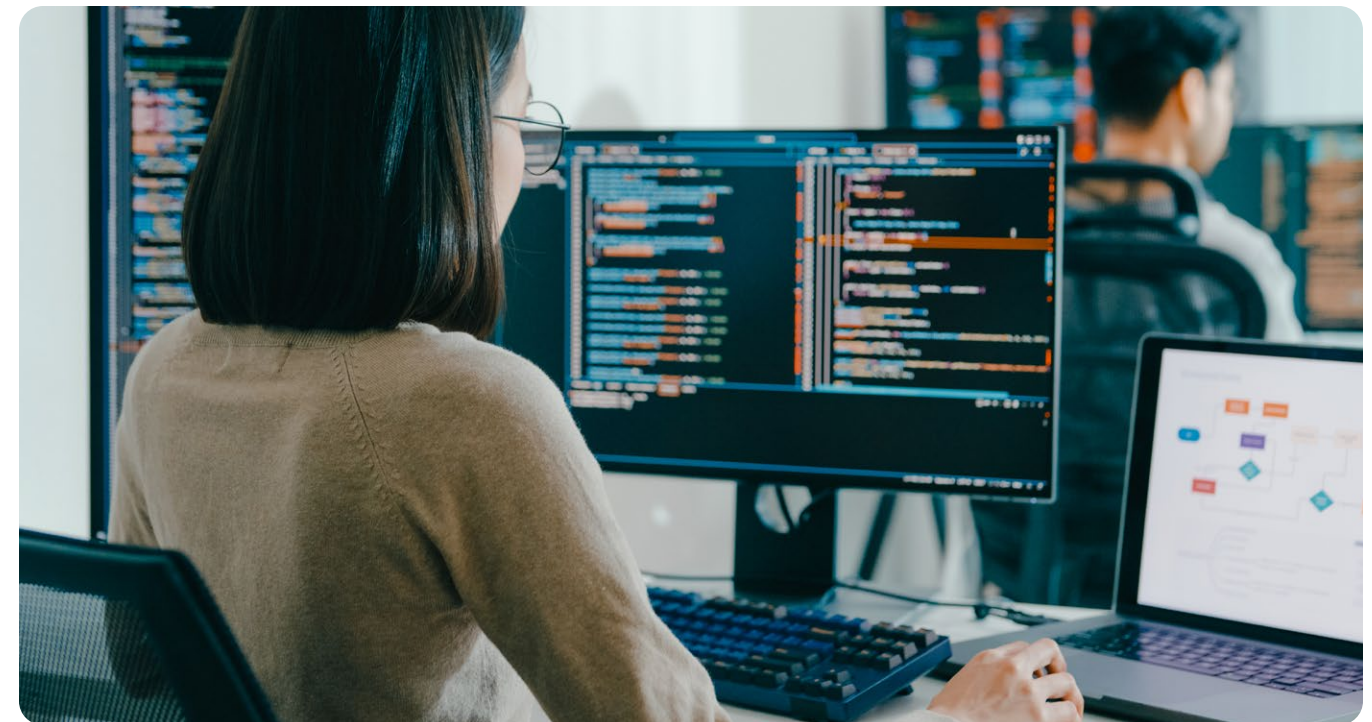
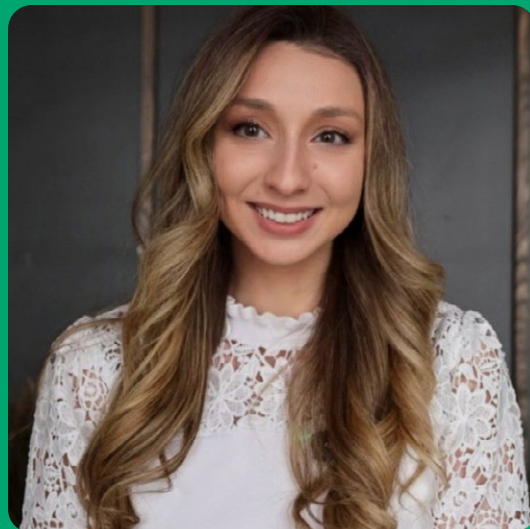
Why Localization Is Now a Product Problem

Veronica Hylak

AI Product Strategist

Veronica Hylak is a product leader with 10 years of experience in software and six years in AI/ML. She has led product innovation for SaaS and AI platforms across Fortune 500s, U.S. government agencies, and early-stage startups, from autonomous drone systems to business management tools.

Her current focus lies at the intersection of go-to-market strategy, regulation, and AI ethics, helping organizations deploy reliable and responsible AI at scale while navigating real-world constraints.



When a product really wants to gain credibility or traction, whether it's a Silicon Valley startup or an established enterprise, there's a predictable moment of truth. They start thinking about expanding to new markets.

And when they do, what's the first thing on their checklist? Localization.

It has become the litmus test for platform maturity, the gateway to user trust, and the difference between scaling successfully or failing to gain traction globally. But something big has changed.

Localization is no longer a siloed industry workflow managed by specialty linguists behind the scenes. It has evolved into a core product problem that directly impacts user acquisition, sales conversion, and customer retention. Technical teams, product teams, marketing teams, and sales are all thinking about it. **Many companies now think about language access through the lens of user trust, not just translation coverage.**

Translation as a feature, not a premium

Slator coined the term "Translation as a Feature" (TaaF) to capture this mindset. Translation is no longer a premium service, but rather **it has become the bare minimum expectation for end users**. Open TikTok, Instagram, or any major social platform, and you'll see translation embedded everywhere. With over 5.24 billion active social media users globally spending an average of 2 hours and 21 minutes daily on these platforms, billions of people are constantly consuming localized content. These platforms have become the first way most global audiences interact with translation (even if the quality is junk), and this ubiquity has fundamentally altered user expectations.

When users encounter an app or platform that doesn't speak their language, they don't see it as a company that hasn't invested in translation yet, but rather, they see it as a company that doesn't care about them.

The data backs this up: According to a report by UserPilot, around **52% of users have uninstalled an app due to poor localization**. But that's not a translation problem. **That's a product problem.**

The invisible industry problem

Despite the critical importance of localization, we face a massive awareness gap.

When most people outside our industry think about translation, what comes to mind first? Google Translate. Then ChatGPT.

The sophisticated ecosystem of translators, interpreters, localization engineers, and

cultural consultants remains largely invisible to the very people who need these services most. Startups, corporations, and product teams recognize the need to localize, but **many decision-makers don't know our industry exists.**

So they default to the tools they're familiar with (Google Translate or AI chatbots) for their first multilingual experiment. Plug in an API, and call it a day. The Chinese translation LOOKS correct, so it must be... right?

While they struggle with user conversion loss, the very people building these apps often lack awareness of professional localization services. They're solving a product problem with the wrong tools because they don't know better tools exist.

The opportunity gap

This disconnect has created interesting market dynamics. We're seeing well-funded, Y Combinator-backed startups emerge promising to solve localization for developers (receiving backing, press coverage from TechCrunch, and accelerator support) without any team members who have localization industry experience.



They have a shallow understanding of how localization teams function, yet they're the ones capturing mindshare in the product and development community, as many believe it's a problem that has yet to be solved.

This isn't necessarily their fault, but rather it's a symptom of the broader disconnect between our industry and the product teams who desperately need our expertise.

We've remained behind the scenes while the problem we solve has become central to product success.

Localization is now the product manager's issue

Product managers and directors are responsible for figuring out what to build, how to build it, and ensuring it's sticky enough to retain users.

When localization becomes a barrier to product stickiness and to expanding to other markets, it automatically becomes the product team's problem to solve.

The most forward-thinking product leaders are starting to recognize this.

They understand that localization isn't just about translating text, but building trust with users across cultures and markets. **It's about ensuring your product feels native, not foreign.** It's about creating experiences that convert users rather than confuse them.

What's particularly telling is that I am now seeing product managers themselves start championing localization best practices. As one product manager noted in a UserPilot article: "Mobile app localization isn't throwing your copy into Google Translate and calling it a day."

These weren't the words of a linguist or localization specialist. They came from a product manager who recognized that poor localization was directly impacting the success of their product. A product manager took it upon themselves to educate their fellow product community about the importance of quality localization.

How we reframe the conversation

The solution isn't to lament our industry's invisibility, but rather to reposition ourselves within the product development conversation. **Instead of talking about translation coverage, we need to talk about user trust and access. Instead of discussing translation quality in isolation, we need to connect it directly to conversion rates and user retention. Instead of focusing on process workflows, we need to focus on product outcomes.**

Localization has become a product discipline, whether we acknowledge it or not. The question is whether we'll step into that role that we already know how to do so well, or continue watching tech companies attempt to solve these problems without us.

The companies that understand this shift, that treat localization as a core product capability rather than an afterthought, are the ones winning global markets. This is something we already know. They're not just translating their products, but they're building products that succeed across cultures from the ground up.

The only question is whether our industry will be part of building those solutions or watching from the sidelines as others attempt to solve them without us. I know which side I will choose.

Everything Is a Product: Selling Innovation to the Crowds

Olga Stokowiec

Localization Program Manager
at Maxon

Olga is a seasoned localization professional with a background in law, music and translation studies. She’s currently leading the localization program at Maxon, focusing on scalability, cross-functional collaboration, and cost efficiency. When not in localization, you’ll find Olga playing the trumpet, cycling, or hiking with her dog.



The floor is lava, everything’s moving, and we’re sprinting to stay ahead — without getting burned to cinders. We (i.e., the Localization Crowd) are hungry for innovation, eager to gaze into the crystal ball and make decisions with lasting impact. No one wants to just ride the wave of the Next Big Thing™ (be it agentic workflows, RAG, concurrent multilingual content creation, etc.) without a concrete strategy.

The localization space is buzzing with ideas. Language service providers morph into Language Solutions Integrators (LSIs), and TMSs evolve into multilingual CMS platforms. The ideas for how to use LLMs for quality evaluation or decoupling localization operations from the constraints of traditional translation memories are blooming, and you can see it as you enter every room filled with language industry professionals. All of this sounds nice, but how do you take action on any of them?

This is a field guide for the localization product manager in 2025 (and until the next earth-moving innovation drops).

We’re flying fast... but is the pilot even on board?

Outside of the industry conferences and meetups, localization teams often still have to fight for visibility, budgets, and approvals within corporate hierarchies. The more things change, the more they stay the same. We know the value of long-term innovation — but do our stakeholders?

We understand that every string in our repo, every legal disclaimer, and every segment is a nugget of data gold that can save us time and money. We know that centralized operations mean better knowledge flow and less overhead for other teams. The smarter we are at consolidating our assets and leveraging them for future projects, the more closely quality and cost efficiency go hand in hand. Tech savviness, curiosity, and exploration of new tools and ideas are not optional, they’re imperative if we want to not just keep up, but set the pace for the international experience our companies offer.

But how do we showcase the value of localization beyond our own bubble? How do we talk about localization to the non-localization crowd? The people who may not share our passion for cross-cultural communication, or those who are risk-averse yet hold the purse strings and the decision-making power.

The answer is: Treat everything like a product.

Localization, your career, your mission at the company. Not to sound overly pompous (just a little bit), but you’re the product manager of your destiny. **Productizing** localization internally can be a helpful North Star when navigating the corporate labyrinth on a quest to advance the cause.

What does productizing localization mean in practice? Is it just about being able to articulate ROI and having a roadmap? That too, but not only. We have to dig deeper.

Meet *all* your users

By users, I don’t mean the end-users of the product your company is selling (at least not at the beginning of this process). First, you need to learn more about your internal users. The first people whose needs you need to meet to pitch your solution (i.e., localization operations) are your manager, C-level, and internal stakeholders.

What are *their* pain points? What has recently caused *them* a headache? Where did they lose money? If they had a magic wand, what ideal-world tools and processes would they implement?

You might have a flawless diagram showing how you’ve slashed time-to-delivery or compelling data on skyrocketing translation memory leverage — but if your definition of ‘impact’ doesn’t align with theirs, it could all fall flat.



If you want to pitch localization to corporate decision-makers, you need to understand what matters *to them*:

- Is it money? (How much can we save if we implement the new TMS? How does this quality improvement translate to increased adoption aka more money?)
- Is it data security? (Is our LLM ethically trained? Do we know what happens to our data in the innovation process?)
- Is it intellectual property or procurement concerns? (How does this solution affect our data governance and the control over our intellectual property? Are we compliant with all the local regulations at every step of the way?)

It’s not about dazzling every room with your localization expertise. It’s about meeting people where they are and speaking their language — figuratively and literally. Make sure to hold space for the users you’re talking to and craft a narrative that resonates with them. Only then will you capture their attention and advance your localization initiatives.

Start small and iterate

Localization is incredibly complex. It’s not just translation, getting an app in your language, and funny mistranslations that go viral (sometimes). Localization is about creating an end-to-end international experience, juggling multiple vendors and time zones at a time, meeting tight deadlines, and grappling with various file formats. It’s about figuring out the best ways to assess the quality of the different content types and adjusting the workflows and requirements to each of them. It’s about collecting data and driving impact.

But we, the localization professionals, don’t always do a great job of communicating this complexity. Most of the non-localization crowd have no idea what we’re dealing with daily. So when we embark on a journey of onboarding internal stakeholders into our world and start painting the full picture of our operations, it can quickly get overwhelming (*what do you mean we have to consider **all** those moving parts?!*). Particularly if we want to pitch a new solution or get buy-in for an innovative project.

No one wants a revolution and sweeping changes all at once. The key to success is to bundle the bold ideas with an easily digestible implementation plan.

Break down the initiative into small chunks. Define the phases, desired outcomes, and deliverables for each of them. Think about success metrics and how you will report on the progress. **Build your localization initiatives the same way designers build a product: start small and iterate.** Don’t kill the existing environment (at least not immediately). Lead with gradual changes, from a proof of concept on dummy repos to the full-scale rollout at the end. Don’t forget to collect feedback and act on it!

Show the value, foster the dialogue

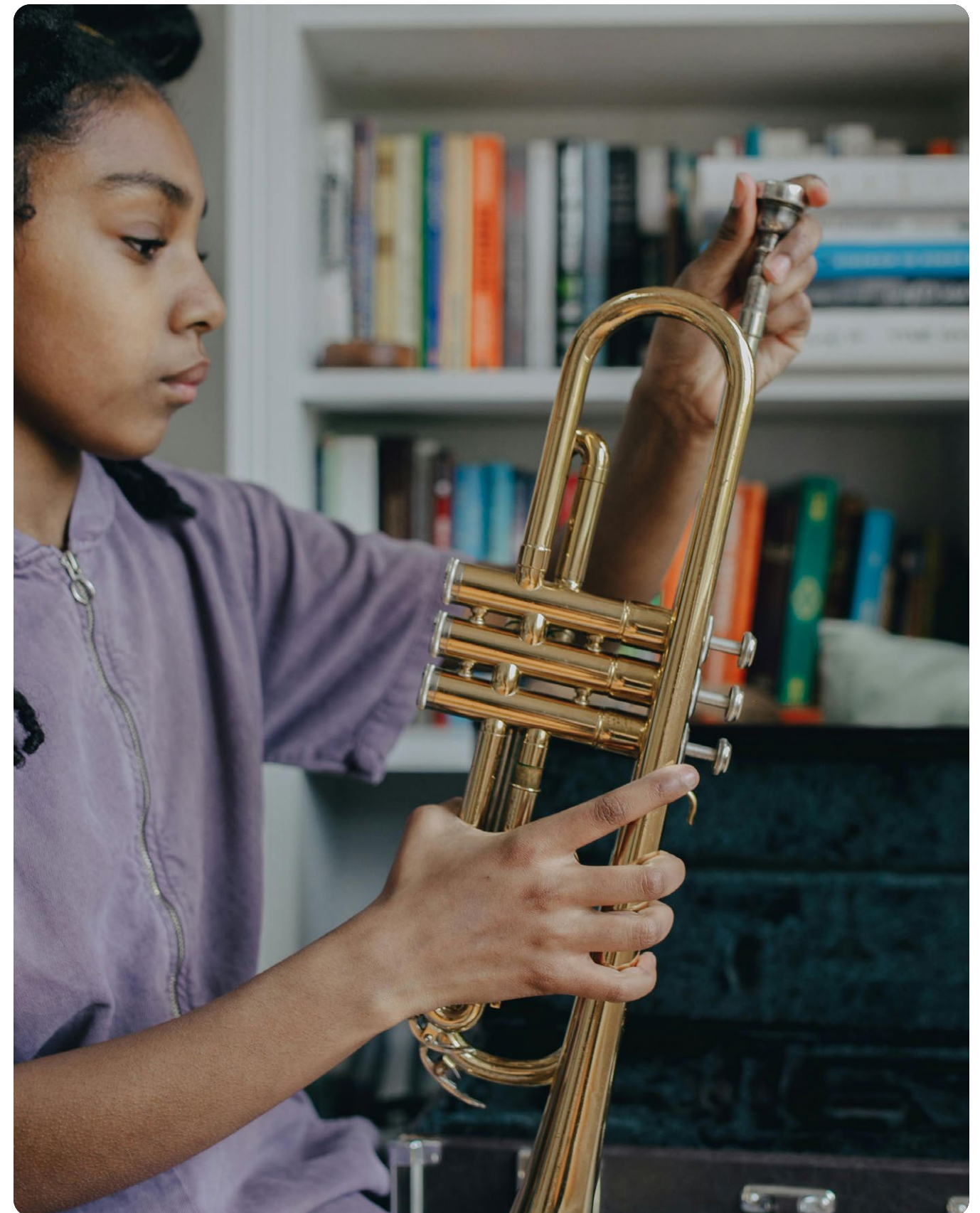
Keep the momentum. Once your stakeholders are on board and you’re moving forward with the implementation plan, you need to continue showing the value of the initiative.

Maintain the dialogue. Return to the initial questions — the initial *user research*. Build the narrative about localization success around

what's meaningful to your stakeholders. Show how localization moves the needle in a way that resonates with the leadership.

And collect the feedback! Establish cross-functional communication and collaboration between all the teams, from marketing to engineering. Make sure that everyone is heard and that there's a platform for feedback and exchange. Sometimes we become so immersed in a project that we overlook obvious shortcomings or ideas for improvement. Being open to new insights — and sometimes challenging opinions — is a core competence for any product manager.

In a world moving at lightning speed, localization professionals have a choice: stay reactive, or step into a product mindset to better shape the future. Treat your work like a product, your stakeholders like users, and your ideas like prototypes. Iterate, collaborate, and lead with value. That's how localization becomes not just a function — but a force.



My Tech Stack Confuses Me: Better Call István!

István Lengyel

Founder and CEO at BeLazy

István Lengyel is the Founder and CEO of BeLazy, a company working towards introducing exception-based translation project management. In this role, he analyzed and designed full automation with over ten TMSes and a variety of business management systems. He was also the Co-Founder of memoQ and spent many years conceptualizing and designing the system's concepts and functionality.



Hype has tunnel vision. The AI craze zeroed in on one thing: where to throw automatic text processing at problems. Everything else was ignored.

Now we're sobering up from our LLM hangover and realizing we can't just sprinkle AI magic dust on everything. Two reasons:

- 1. Humans still matter.** (Yes, that's the optimistic take!)
- 2. Economics matter.** If we deploy armies of agents with mountains of background material, won't it cost the same as just hiring human translators?

Reality check: you're not managing one technology anymore. You're managing a zoo of them, or someone else is doing it for you. Welcome to the era of technology vendor management! You need the right mix of providers — humans and machines — to cover all bases without breaking the bank.

Here's the paradox: While every conference preaches hourly fees, LLMs and MT are doubling down on cost-per-word pricing. TMSs keep pushing "managed words" — reinforcing per-unit pricing while experts sell the opposite. Measuring the two and normalizing them is key to keeping sanity.

Build your own tech stack or pay the premium. Managed services cost more than DIY — that's universal. So here's your roadmap: think in three independent tracks. List all steps of your different workflows. By workflow I don't mean what any TMS, business management system (BMS) or other system calls a workflow, it is what you are doing, from the moment something appears in a system — and your email or a link is as much a system as a customer portal — to the moment you will never touch this content again. Map every workflow step against each track, and suddenly the gaps become obvious.

The three tracks

- 1. Project flow:** The step-by-step journey of your project. TMSs excel at getting documents in/out of bilingual formats. BMSs and task tools like JIRA handle the human prep work better. Some steps are manual (DTP), some are TMS-native (translation/review), and others are automated (segment locking based on MTQE). Once you're in a TMS, XLIFF export-import is your friend.
- 2. Modality:** Human work, LLM, machine learning, traditional MT, or rule-based engineering — what are you applying and where? Both MT software and LLMs handle multiple file formats beautifully in their UIs, but LLM APIs? They are restricted. **LLM providers added all these flashy features to impress your boss and leave the headaches to you.**
- 3. Databases:** Four big dynamic ones plus smaller static ones like style guides. The dynamic quartet? The translation repository (translation memory, corpus, collection of bilingual files — any of these concepts works), term base or glossary, client database, vendor database. TMSs excel at managing the first two, but oversimplify the latter two, while BMSs, spreadsheets, and CRMs are the usual go-to for client and vendor management. The translation repository is where final, approved translations get stored for two reasons: reusing them and using them to orient any of the above modalities. Don't forget that for efficient "personalization" of modality queries, only relevant information needs to be extracted and passed over. While TMSs generally store these databases, for such purposes, something smaller and more tailored may even be enough.

The integration reality

TMSs used to be the integration hub. The TMS providers know this and they charge accordingly. However, their solution isn't necessarily the best or only solution for you.

Enter middleware, orchestrators, and custom functions. Combine these with any TMS and you'll get good results. Mix technologies freely and you'll get better results. You can even use one TMS's file filters and user interface while tapping into another TMS's AI capabilities and connector framework — the possibilities are endless.

Integration truth: I've never seen impossible integration, but I've seen plenty of cases where integration costs exceeded user benefits.

Vendor myth-busting: Don't assume that one vendor's own integrated technology will be integrated better than systems combined from multiple (trusted) parties. The bigger the range of capabilities, the more gaps you can find. Focus means efficiency. We live in the microservices age — every "unified" system uses hundreds of components from strangers.

Flip the script

Technology changes daily. The tech-to-human cost ratio keeps growing. So, stop asking, "What's possible?"

Start asking: "Which technologies and people optimize my speed-cost-quality triangle?"

That's where the real answers live.

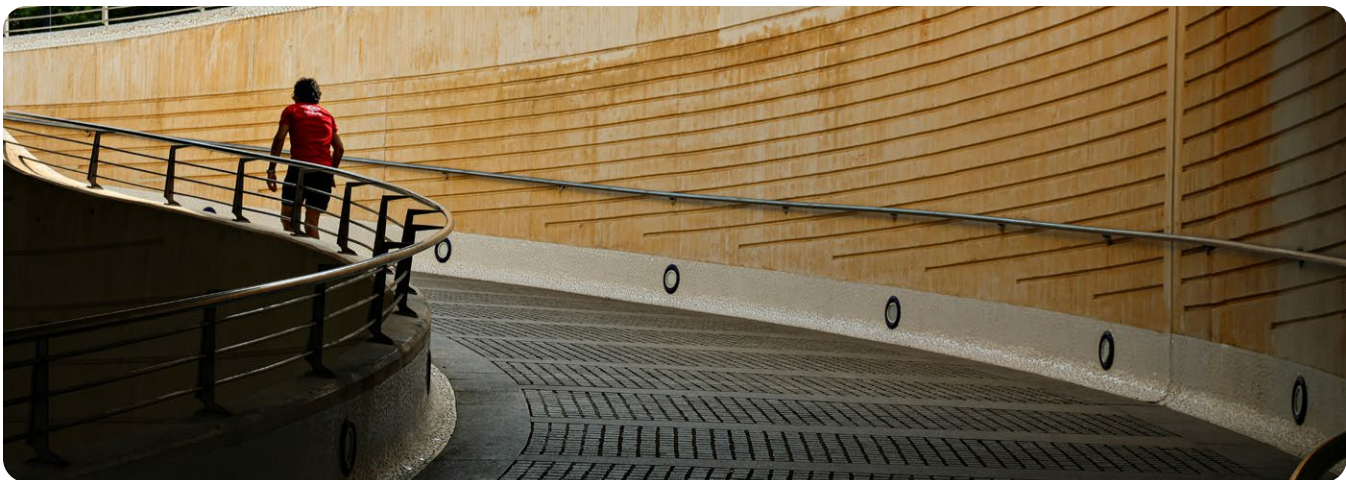


From Execution to Governance: The 1000x Opportunity

Konstantin Savenkov

CEO at Intento

Konstantin Savenkov is the Co-Founder and CEO of Intento, a machine translation and multilingual generative AI platform for global companies. Its Enterprise Language Hub enables companies like Procore and Subway to deliver consistent, authentic language experiences across all markets and audiences. It combines machine translation and generative AI models into automatic translation workflows, customizing them to client data and integrating them into customers' existing software systems for localization, marketing, customer support, and other business functions. With Intento, clients achieve high-quality, real-time translations for all users and team members worldwide.



While many fear AI will replace translators, this misses a bigger opportunity. The problem isn't automation, it's that most professionals focus on execution rather than governance.

Today's industry creates value through translation but captures it downstream when customers buy localized products. This gap means automation won't capture value at the execution level but will create bottlenecks elsewhere, following Ricardian rent principles.

Rather than competing with machines, successful professionals should focus on the bottlenecks that automation creates, particularly human judgment. As long as humans benefit from translation, they must define requirements and assess quality. Fewer humans in execution makes governance more critical.

One Intento customer shows this shift in action. Their in-house team previously produced thousands of words daily. Now, the same team defines nuanced market requirements — some of which can't be expressed in English — and develops prompts to meet them. Through risk-based sampling and strategic oversight, they

govern 10 million words daily: a 1000x increase in leverage.

This move from translator to translation strategist is localization's hidden opportunity. AI doesn't eliminate expertise; it multiplies it. Success requires shifting from doing work to defining what good looks like, from execution to governance.

The future belongs to professionals who utilize this change to their advantage, allowing AI to amplify their impact rather than competing with it. The question isn't whether machines will translate — it's whether we'll govern how they do it.

This reframing turns the automation threat into an opportunity for massive scale and influence, where a single expert's judgment can shape millions of words across global markets. Smart management decisions and proper tools make this possible.

ACT 3:

Reframing the Scene



What does the future hold?

Chances are, every person you ask this question will offer a different answer. And that’s as it should be (let’s leave the probable-words-in-a-sequence prediction to something else). The future will likely be composed of a multiplicity of parallel realities, much like a multi-colored glass vitrage.

Any discussion about the future comes with its share of responsibility. A responsibility toward ourselves, the teams we work in, and the communities we are involved in. A responsibility for those who come next — the next generation of talent that will be entering our industry.

When reading this closing section, ask yourselves: What are YOU doing to affect those around you positively?

Two Visions of What Awaits Beyond the Next Hill

Balázs Kis

Co-Founder and Chief Evangelist at memoQ

Balázs Kis is a Co-Founder and Chief Evangelist of memoQ. He has decades of experience in translation and translation technology. Balázs is a member of the Language Industry expert group (LIND) of the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission, and is also, and is also involved in the AI Localization Think Tank.



There is a lot of talk and writing about the risks and shortcomings of AI, and how it is becoming a major player in all work related to language. I write some of these pieces myself (although I am far from being the most prominent voice in this space).

On the other hand, I have not seen a lot of discussions on how to prevent or stop all the bad things usually associated with AI from happening, at least outside the circles of compliance and research. However, before we can have this conversation in a wider circle, we need to have an idea of what a desired outcome looks like.

To facilitate this, I will present two best-case (or close-to-best-case) scenarios, the first from the perspective of people and organizations, and the second with technology at the center.

People: New premium, new professions, a stronger position

Back in 2013, the use of machine translation was already at the level that, according to some estimations, less than one-millionth of all translations were produced by humans. But the portion of the content that was actually translated by humans or with humans having the last word was more valuable than the seas of machine-translated text. This is connected to the purpose of the content.

Content becomes valuable when human life, livelihood, or the viability of a business depends on it, or if it represents such cultural or aesthetic value that it is inconceivable to use the

cheapest form of automation on it. This value remains there regardless of the advances in AI or other automation techniques.

Today, it isn't only about translation: More and more online content is generated by AI. In a way, AI models are the "great equalizers." They produce uniform content in a uniform style. And, because AI-generated content is not consistently labeled, it gets back to the training data of foundational models, reinforcing the bland and uniform nature of the output.

Conversely, this also means that there will be a need for high-value content that is created or curated by humans, and the hope — and this is the best-case scenario — is that society recognizes that this is needed and begins to appreciate and pay for the real value of such content. In other words, human-curated content will no longer be a commodity because the contrast between cheap and premium becomes evident. Imagine lighthouses scattered over a grey ocean of AI-generated mediocrity.

However, AI is not the only factor that imposes fundamental changes on the language industry. Quiet and not-so-quiet changes have been afoot in the way client-side organizations look at the role of localization in their content processes. Localization is no longer an afterthought, but it also means that it isn't a monolithic process that can simply be attached at the end of the content management process. The steps and motions of localization are now embedded in various stages of content creation. As a result, it is more difficult, if not impossible, to outsource "translation," and it has become harder to separate localization from the rest of content-related work.

The outcome we want — and the one I hope for — is that the language industry

actually becomes something more than just "localization," that the profession becomes all things Language. I expect that the professionals and organizations in this community will have the opportunity to be the language specialists, content creators, and language managers they deserve to be.

Let me share another recent revelation: Businesses outside the language industry struggle to incorporate AI in their processes. (That isn't the revelation: wait for it.) Most of the time, it is done for the sake of the AI, rather than for the business or its customers, simply out of fear of missing out. But there is little reliable information and education available for these organizations. Guidance on where to start is also scarce.

This is where the language community comes into the picture (this is the revelation!): Because modern AI has everything to do with language, our profession is the single most qualified group to educate everyone else on the benefits and the responsible use of AI and AI-based technology. If you ask me, I can't wait for us to get there.

Tech: More reliable and more responsibly used AI

Language-based AI is the single most unpredictable form of technology humanity has ever invented. It lacks the precision we are used to from computers, and it also does not have the kind of motivation and structure that humans use to manage their tasks. This is not a philosophical problem. If AI models stay at today's levels, businesses will struggle to assess the value they derive from AI and will find it difficult to have a sense of a return on their investment. The only businesses getting reliable and predictable

value from AI today are the providers and the consultants implementing systems for a subscription fee.

My hope — and expectation — is that this will change, and AI systems will pick up some structure and predictability. I have a feeling that this will happen outside of the realm of training data because curating and annotating data at the level that provides this reliability probably comes at a prohibitive cost and, although the large providers don't share financial information, I have strong doubts they make a profit on their models. It is smaller models by smaller players that are where we can curate data more carefully; they might be (part of) the way ahead.

Today, there is a lot of noise around large language models and the technologies derived from them. Many people, organizations, media outlets, opinion leaders — advocates and critics alike — view AI as a force that, together with social media, implements power to control the population.

The dust must settle. If we're talking about a best-case scenario, we say that the dust *will* settle. AI must become a tool that businesses and individuals use as an extension of their innate capabilities to manage their lives and business more efficiently.

Charting the Endgame: What Awaits the Localization Industry

Bruno Bitter

CEO and Co-Founder at Blackbird

Bruno Bitter is a tech entrepreneur and the CEO/Co-Founder of Blackbird.io. With over 25 years of marketing and language industry experience, Bruno has been recognized as Innovator of the Year 2023, with a focus on bootstrapped, lean growth and practical solutions in language technology. Bruno has been a strong voice in the language industry during its rapid changes, while Blackbird has helped companies quickly adapt to this new future.



Every journey reaches a crossroads where leaders must decide: keep walking the same path, or chart an entirely new course. For the localization industry, that moment is here. While the MCU had to deal with the “Thanos Blip,” the localization universe is now dealing with what I call “The Flip.”

Before “The Flip,” Translation Management Systems (TMS) sat at the center of language operations. They served as the backbone – the system of record and the execution engine. Orchestration was seen as an add-on: a few more connectors, some AI options, a bit of interoperability around the edges.

But we are now in the middle of “The Flip.”

After “The Flip,” orchestration becomes the core. It governs how content moves across systems, integrates with AI, enables interoperability, and involves humans when needed.

But keeping in our theme, we can call this “The Endgame.”

It’s not an ending, but a culmination of every innovation, every integration, every bold experiment to date. Because in this Endgame, our choices today will define what localization becomes tomorrow.

If we look ahead, several futures emerge:

- **Consolidation:** where a few large players acquire, merge, and absorb, creating mega-platforms with end-to-end capabilities.
- **Specialization:** where nimble niche providers thrive by offering unparalleled expertise in AI training data, multimedia localization, or regulatory-sensitive verticals.
- **Reinvention:** where the very idea of localization is redefined (becoming invisible infrastructure embedded into the heart of digital experience creation).

Each scenario has its heroes and casualties. But the greatest risk? Inertia. Believing we can continue doing what we’ve always done

and expect relevance in a market being fundamentally rewritten by technology.

We’re already seeing the rise of AI-driven orchestration platforms that go beyond traditional translation management systems. They unify disparate systems, automate decisions, and connect every part of the content lifecycle.

Imagine concurrent content creation workflows where:

- AI repurposes content for different channels as it’s being created
- Adaptive delivery engines customize language, style, and format in real time based on user context
- Multimodal workflows seamlessly produce text, audio, video, and interactive content in parallel, not in silos

The best orchestration tools are building towards this vision, integrating creation, localization and publishing into a single flow. Because the future isn’t about linear processes. It’s about orchestrated concurrency.

These technologies demand a shift in how businesses define value:

- It’s no longer about per-word pricing.
- It’s about outcomes: faster market entry, improved customer engagement, and competitive advantage through localized experiences that feel native and human.
- The winners will price for strategic impact, not just operational tasks.

In every Marvel story, Endgame moments require heroes to act boldly, not comfortably. For localization leaders, the same is true.

Those who cling to legacy systems, linear workflows, and narrow definitions of service will watch opportunity slip away. But those who:

- Embrace AI as augmentation, not just automation
- Invest in orchestration as core infrastructure
- Redefine localization as a value multiplier within broader digital transformation

...will not just survive. They will shape what comes next.



The Content Newsroom: A Reimagining of Content Creation and Distribution

Claudia Francesca Müller

Team Lead Content Design and Localization at Trusted Shops

Claudia Francesca Müller is a multilingual content and localization expert with over 15 years of experience. She blends language, culture, and design with strategy and innovation, viewing content as a holistic discipline that extends beyond mere words.



Have you ever experienced the elation and frustration that go hand in hand when working with content and translation?

The elation (however fleeting it may be) that comes when things magically click and content creators and translators work collaboratively, co-creating memorable user experiences. Or the persistent frustration that surfaces when translation is disconnected from the creation process, often relegated to an end-of-chain bottleneck. Some of these feelings (I'll trust you to connect the dots) are rarer than others, and this is where the problem lies.

Too often, content is released into the world without much thought for how it will resonate in the target markets, not because creators don't care, but because the process never prompts them to. In the meantime, translators seldom get a seat at the table where the source material is being decided upon.

What if we rethought what creation means and reorganized the entire creation process? What do we stand to gain by doing so?

Bridging the content/translation divide

The way we've been going about creating and translating as two separate activities in a sequence, and sometimes quite far removed from each other, no longer serves our purposes. Sequestering creation and translation has brought us to a point where, too often, insufficient attention is being paid to the ultimate goal — what is the content intended for?

How do the end-users benefit? Will they read/click/buy? In theory, the translators and localization professionals help with this (but lack the glamorous job title that conveys this importance, such as UX writers). They are the ones who add the local nuance or impact. In practice, they arrive too late in the process.

For the longest time, there has been a source (i.e., the original content) that has demanded all the attention of the company and the creators, and after that came the translation, dutifully serving this source

and working within the imposed technical and creative constraints. This hard-coded sequence is ripe for disruption, and we should disrupt it. And no, it's not just AI that's doing the disruption.

I propose something that's not as radical as it sounds: **Let's redefine content and how it's created and distributed by putting the creators and translators in the same room.**

The ongoing AI (r)evolution presents us with a golden opportunity to reposition content creation and translation as parallel activities originating from the same room. AI actually helps us achieve this vision — with AI, we're finally able to escape decades of string-based, segmented, sequential practices and move in the direction of concepts, knowledge graphs, meaning, and multilingual content generated at the source.

Too often, I see companies forgetting to treat content as the strategic asset it is. Some are doing this well (Netflix comes to mind as an example of a company that excels at creating original content for both global and local markets), and others ought to follow suit. At Trusted Shops, we are embracing it, putting UX writers, designers, and translators in the same room.

The questions I am asking you, dear reader, are especially valid today, when creating content en masse has become all but trivial (also thanks to AI). With all of us being "creators," what distinguishes us will be the authenticity of what we produce — and just how much we can include the end-user perspective in whatever we create.

Content as a newsroom: rethinking how content is created and distributed

What I propose is the creation of a content newsroom: An internal engine that creates, articulates, and amplifies the company's mission and message in so many languages.

This isn't as if we were lighting a single match in pitch blackness, knowing it will fizzle out. Having had, throughout my career, a foot in both translation and UX writing I've come to see that while these disciplines may talk differently, the end goal is the same — crafting memorable user experiences. Our problem (and "our" applies to both the world of translation and UX writing) is that we have had a harder time articulating our value proposition than, say, the marketing department. Marketing can be directly translated (!) into sales. It's a much more nuanced proposition to tie good UX content or a good translation to sales. This brings us to the question of how we quantify good user experience (although that's for a different article at a different time).

So then, what happens if we sit everyone in the same room, collaborating between themselves and with the ever-more-present AI?

This shift tracks with what we're seeing unfolding under the influence of AI. AI accelerates operations, enabling scale and forcing us to confront future-of-work questions. I believe we, the humans in the loop, are becoming professional optimizers and fine-tuners (emphasis on "professional"). Where UX writers will blend data with engineering and human sensitivities, translators will create and optimize meaning, ensuring authenticity, so the message stands out from the otherwise drab sea of AI-generated content.

With the content newsroom, the key principle is the proximity of the teams, and



the idea of distribution of content in content blocks for different kinds of channels.

As a journalist, I remember being in the newsroom as information trickled in and the central question was always: "What are we doing with it?" Today, in tech and beyond, the same scenario is omnipresent — there is customer data coming in, and we have to decide what we are going to do with it. What's the best way to use the information? Do we need to send somebody out there and investigate? Do we do a social media post? Do we produce a report? These are the types of questions that govern decision-making, and the processes are shaped based on the nature of the input and its audience.

Sure, this type of work may take us away from what we were originally trained to do as writers or translators. The content newsroom may be a metaphor, but it's also a model for how we can work alongside the machine: collaboratively and with a sharp focus on the user. Prioritizing meaning and intent to maximize impact.

Because in the end, it's still about the story we want to tell — and making sure users stay around long enough to listen.

Rewriting the Script: Localization in the Age of AI

Renato Beninatto

Chief Advisor at Nimdzi Insights

Renato Beninatto is Chief Advisor at Nimdzi Insights and a recognized leader in the global language services industry. He is known for his sharp industry analysis and pragmatic perspective on localization strategy.



The CEO of Cirque du Soleil was the keynote speaker at the GALA conference in Montreal this year. There was a moment during that talk when everyone suddenly started rethinking their job titles. That’s when it hit me: We’re all trapeze artists now. No net, just platforms constantly shifting underfoot. Welcome to the localization industry in the GenAI age.

We keep asking ourselves the same question in different costumes: Is this the end of localization? Are we being replaced? Have we lost the narrative? Honestly, it feels like a collective midlife crisis, just with better coffee and more acronyms.

The existential panic is misplaced. Localization isn’t going away. It’s just moving out of the basement and into the architecture. AI didn’t kill the translator. It just changed the lighting on the stage. What we do has always been about enabling outcomes, not preserving tasks. We don’t fight to save the act of translation. We fight to stay relevant in the value chain.

Let’s talk about value. For years, we’ve sold our work in units that sound like we should be on a factory floor: words per hour, lines per day, pages per deadline. That mindset made sense when the business was about volume. But GenAI doesn’t care about word counts. It cares about context, intent, and results. So should we.

Here’s the uncomfortable truth: Maybe AI didn’t come to replace us. Maybe it came to expose how replaceable our pricing models, workflows, and self-perception have become. We’re clinging to the methods when we should be owning the mission.

In my conversations with buyers of localization services, through Nimdzi’s Lessons in Localization events, dozens of interviews, and surveys, we’ve heard a consistent message. The struggle isn’t with technology. It’s with proving value.

Buyers are under pressure to show ROI, but they don't have the data or tools to make the case. They're stuck translating operational metrics into something the C-suite understands. Word counts don't translate into revenue.

And while AI is generating excitement, it's also generating anxiety. Leaders are being told to use it, sometimes without a strategy or infrastructure. They want AI to work, but they're not sure how to make it fit into their existing systems. Worse, they're being sold features and cost savings, not business impact. There's a disconnect between what's offered and what they actually need: integrated, practical, context-aware solutions.

The same goes for stakeholder engagement. Buyers are still battling to be involved earlier in the product lifecycle, to stop being seen as a final step or afterthought. They're advocating for education, storytelling, and metrics that resonate beyond the language department. They want to help their companies win globally, but often feel excluded from strategic conversations.

Where does this leave us? Not at the end. Not even close. But definitely on a different hill. The one where we stop pretending that every multilingual asset needs handcrafted perfection and start asking harder questions:

- What needs to be localized, and what just needs to be understood?
- Are we optimizing for pride or impact?
- Do we want to be artists, strategists, or vendors?

The hidden success stories, because yes, they do exist, aren't about perfect translations. They're about companies that embedded localization thinking into product development, marketing campaigns, customer support, and community building.

They're not shouting about localization. They're just winning at global.

Buyers have told us what they want: clear ways to show impact, smart AI they can actually use, real integration into company processes, and a seat at the strategic table. They don't want one-size-fits-all solutions. They want partners who understand their context, including size, industry, and internal politics, and can help them evolve.

That's the future. Not a department. Not a deliverable. A discipline.

It's time we stopped mourning what localization was and started building what it should be. We're not in the business of translating words. We're in the business of creating outcomes across borders. That takes language, yes, but it also takes courage, vision, business sense, and occasionally, a trampoline.

Because just like Cirque du Soleil, the show goes on. But only if we remember we're not the safety net. We're the act.



The Localization Maestro: Orchestrating Global Content in the Age of AI

Pedro Guerra Ribeiro

Head of Global Experience and Localization at Qualtrics

An international localization leader with cross-cultural expertise spanning three continents, Pedro currently heads Qualtrics’ global experience team, focusing on creating scalable, efficient, and quality-driven localization programs that grow business globally and close experience gaps. Drawing on his academic background in international politics and experiences in Poland, Ireland, Portugal, the US and Japan, Pedro brings a uniquely informed perspective to global content strategy and cultural adaptation challenges.



After a taxing 10-hour journey to my U.S. headquarters, tired and jetlagged, I instinctively did what localization professionals do best: absorb local culture one peculiar beverage at a time. On this occasion, I was nursing a "dirty Diet Coke" — a quintessential Utah concoction of soda laced with coconut syrup, fresh lime, and a splash of half-and-half.

The global marketing strategy meeting had been going on for over an hour, my jetlagged mind occasionally wandering to the dramatic mountain landscape visible through the conference room windows, when our CMO asked:

"How can we use AI to translate our campaigns faster?"

The dreaded question about AI translation pulled me back to full alertness. All eyes turned expectantly to me — the localization expert in the room — and in a moment of clarity, despite the travel fatigue and sugar rush, I felt the tipping point that is reshaping my career and our entire industry.

I quickly responded, "We are actively exploring several AI approaches that could benefit our campaigns." Yes, my answer was riddled with corporate jargon and was adequately vague, yet I knew I had just committed myself to delivering tangible results. I started a timer.

This tipping point prompted me to confront profound questions about my professional future: What happens to traditional localization workflows as AI translation quality approaches human parity? What new value do we create when language barriers are increasingly dismantled by technology? And perhaps the most personal question of them all: How do we transform our own professional identities to lead in this new landscape?

The instinct for self-preservation is natural, but the opportunity before us is extraordinary. Much like that "dirty Diet Coke": initially strange, unexpectedly refreshing, and composed of elements that shouldn't work together but somehow create something better than the sum of their parts. **The fusion of localization expertise with AI, system design, and strategic business thinking might seem like an odd mixture, but it could be exactly the recipe our industry needs.**

From doers to builders of systems

The months after that meeting have been marked by deep research, introspection, and a lot of getting my hands dirty. The first thing I realized is that from the traditional

"buyer" perspective on localization, the classic localization manager's role is no longer fit for purpose. In this efficiency-obsessed era, corporations crave holistic systems that free their top talent to focus on core business operations — manual task executors are quickly going out of fashion. This transformation mirrors what we've seen in programming and software development, and our industry is now following suit. Clinging to outdated systems purely for self-preservation isn't just short-sighted — it's the express lane to professional irrelevance.

I realized that this evolution isn't just aspirational; it's *existential*. With AI platforms, AI agents, and streamlined workflow automation maturing at breakneck speed, companies can increasingly manage straightforward translation tasks without specialized localization staff (or so they think), and they will do it with or without you.

I came to see we are not only modernizing our tools and technology, but we are also modernizing our function from doers to builders of systems. A good localization manager excels at managing complexity, yet still finds themselves siloed, surrounded by stakeholders who "don't care" or "don't understand" their value.

The emerging localization *orchestrator*, however, transcends these limitations by standing at the nexus of business strategy and global operations. No longer are they merely contracting humans for manual tasks. They are now leveraging artificial intelligence and automation to do most of the manual work, so they can focus instead on governance, program design, stakeholder management, and strategic initiatives. These next-generation leaders are building systems that transform business objectives into hyper-localized, hyper-personalized global content while simultaneously analyzing data, proposing innovative solutions to stakeholders, and elevating their careers to unprecedented strategic heights within their organizations.



The frequent discussion of "human in the loop" workflows often carries defensive undertones — as if maintaining human involvement is primarily about preserving jobs. This framing misses a crucial point: Human strategic guidance in localization **isn't about self-preservation**; it's about **self-actualization**. Time to go from ideas to action!

Orchestrating the symphony of global content

So, here I am, armed with my self-motivation quotes on the walls, black coffee to keep me focused, and an unyielding determination to be my best self. I am on a Zoom call with my marketing department head, proposing a new scenario for the localization and global content architecture. A scenario where the system is built to maximize business value and keep our localization imperatives in the loop. This is the gist of it:

A regional marketing manager accesses our integrated content portal upon receiving a campaign brief. Using our fine-tuned LLM, they generate localized marketing materials — complete with appropriate style, terminology, and culturally-nuanced content. A single click routes the content through automated QA and to specialized linguists for review or rewriting (if necessary). The finished content returns directly to the regional marketing manager's dashboard, ready for deployment. Meanwhile, our localization team monitors the system, manages exceptions, and continuously optimizes performance — transforming what was once a multi-step, time-consuming process into a seamless, self-service experience that maintains quality while dramatically reducing time-to-market.

When I am done illustrating to my colleague the architecture behind the system we need to build for our marketing engine, I finish my coffee fully aware that all of this is easier said than done. When the nod and words of approval and encouragement come from the other side of the monitor, I couldn't be happier. There is a lot of work ahead to make this run smoothly like Usain Bolt, but it's a first step.

Let's be honest, for a CMO, the proposal is exactly what they want for their function, but it's simultaneously a unique opportunity for me to transcend my role limitations.

By reimagining my role as system architect rather than word processor, I envision that we can finally deliver the immediacy my colleagues in marketing need. To become an invisible engine rather than the dreaded bottleneck we were once known as. Our marketers can get what they need when they need it, while my team and I focus on the far more stimulating work of ecosystem optimization and global strategy instead of chasing project deadlines.

This evolution doesn't mean we're working ourselves out of jobs — quite the opposite. We're elevating our role to something truly strategic and structurally essential. Just as the IT individual who once crawled under desks to connect cables now designs cloud architectures, we're branching from project managers into global program strategists. The localization function — once the department of "sorry, that'll take two weeks" — will become the enabler of global velocity.

The great extinction event?

Not exactly. Yes, the AI tipping point, with the growth of AI-generated content, solutions, and automations, is the catalyst for a rebranding and reimagining of my role. Yes, localization teams, already small in number, might become even smaller. But it also means one-person teams will be able to sustain complex and expanding localization programs, allowing more businesses to create these functions within their structure, enabling more content and services to go global.

I don't see AI as an extinction-level event. It's more like a (hopefully brief) Ice Age, where adaptation, flexibility, and resilience will allow us to emerge as more complete and valuable professionals. Those who can't adapt may remain locked in ice for eternity. This isn't just the evolution of a role — I'm not afraid to call it the revolution of an industry. And for those willing to reimagine their purpose and develop new capabilities, the view beyond the next mountain isn't a threat, it's the most exciting opportunity our field has ever encountered.

So, I will leave you with a question, dear reader. As you reflect on your own role in the localization ecosystem, are you building systems that require your constant intervention, or are you creating infrastructure that empowers others while elevating your strategic contribution? The answer may determine not just your professional trajectory, but also the very future of localization itself.



We Are the Masters of Our Destiny... Or Are We?

Belén Agulló García

Executive Consultant of Innovation at Terra and Co-Founder of the AI Localization Think Tank

Belén Agulló García is a localization strategist with over 15 years of experience, specializing in gaming, media, and language technology. She focuses on matching innovation with purpose, building communities, and democratizing knowledge related to AI in localization.



Marina Pantcheva

Director of the Linguistic AI Services Center of Excellence at RWS and Co-Founder of the AI Localization Think Tank.

Marina Pantcheva, PhD, bridges the realms of language, technology, science, and communication. A former academic, she now serves as Director of the Linguistic AI Services Center of Excellence at RWS and is a Co-Founder of the AI Localization Think Tank.



Hello, dear reader. We are Belén and Marina, co-founders of the AI Localization Think Tank. We often reflect on the future of our industry and the transformations brought by AI. Although we view the world from quite different perspectives, we find we are of one mind. Belén is a philosopher who focuses on ethics. Marina is a scientist with a practical mindset. We both care about what's going on in our industry.

In this piece, we share our reflections on the future, how to reinvent yourself, and where the magic happens. What follows is an open exchange of thoughts between the two of us.

Belén: For a couple of years now, there has been a recurring conversation among industry peers, colleagues, and friends about what the future holds for us and our profession. We keep circling back to the same answer: We have no idea. Uncertainty can generate anxiety if you don't know how to handle it, but it also brings a whole host of opportunities.

Marina: Sure, we may not know where this is headed (although that in itself is a topic of debate), but that doesn't mean you don't have options. To seize these opportunities, we need three ingredients:

1. **The knowledge of how to change** and understanding what direction to take. This knowledge comes from being aware of what's happening, which isn't always easy amid all the hype and marketing jargon. One needs to make an effort to read the full research papers instead of an AI summary. Organizations should give their R&D teams (even if it's just a one-person team) the time to do this. More importantly, every employee must gain AI literacy through targeted training that addresses their specific use cases. Prioritize knowledge first; only then pursue profit.

2. **The ability to change** and the capacity to move quickly and adapt. Smaller and mid-sized companies often have an advantage because they can be more agile. In contrast, large organizations might be more conservative as they can't easily discard their existing tools and structures to start afresh. This was confirmed by a recent McKinsey report, which highlighted that many AI initiatives fail to deliver genuinely transformative results.

3. **The means to change** (including money, tools, and development teams). In this area, large players clearly have the upper hand. They have the budgets for R&D and the ability to build or acquire the necessary technology.

Belén: It's nice to have options (this is a blatant understatement). I remember interviewing Aaron Bhugobaun (of CDSA fame) and asking him how to future-proof our work and whether he had a crystal ball. His answer was: "My crystal ball is my community." So, to your three ingredients, Marina, I'd add a fourth one: Engage with peers, attend conferences, be part of the conversation, and actively contribute to shaping how our industry evolves. That was one of the brightest answers I've ever heard about how to prepare for the future.

Marina: This is indeed one of the fastest ways to access practical information firsthand. Meeting with peers at conferences, learning about their challenges and successes, comparing those with our own, brainstorming unresolved issues — all of this helps us see the broad context.

But riddle me this: I can't help feeling we're all too aligned. We agree too much. We do mostly the same things. We're cautious because business is at stake (or our jobs).

Even innovation is often just a continuation of an existing tech trend dressed in new terms. Few companies dare to be truly disruptive, shake everything up, challenge the narrative, and force the rest to rethink everything. We discuss the big picture but rarely wade into the deep details.

Take, for example, the phrase “human in the loop.” It’s vague, overused, and nearly meaningless, like the endless loop it refers to. Rarely is the real question asked: Where in that loop do we (want to) have the human?

Are they at the end as inspectors of machine errors, accountable for any issue that may slip through? Or are they at the beginning as AI linguistics specialists curating data and working closely with models? Or perhaps somewhere in the middle, as prompt designers and data analysts? The truth is, it’s not really a loop. It’s a line. An assembly line. And the further down the line the humans appear, the more mechanical and devalued their role seems to be.

Yet we keep using the phrase “*human in the loop*” without questioning the exact position of the human there when this is what truly matters.

Belén: We clearly should be asking a lot more “*Why*” and “*How*” type questions. I think it starts with the *Where* part, though.

For example, since that eye-opening conversation with Aaron (whom I credit massively), I have attended more events than I can count: Translating Europe Forum, Languages & The Media, GALA, LocWorld, Game Quality Forum, several Women in Localization events, and probably a few more that I’m forgetting.

I wholeheartedly subscribe to the idea that being part of a community can be a springboard to finding a way. Yet despite the clear benefits of attending events, conferences and localization associations are witnessing a decline in attendance, reduced engagement, and a decrease in membership and volunteer numbers. What is going on? Are we in the middle of an existential crisis? Are our budgets drying up? Are we just plain old tired? Even the people organizing the conferences don’t seem to know the answer and are seeking guidance from the community. While I don’t have a clear answer, I have my suspicions. There is one element that is sometimes missing, and that is the concept of a safe space and the possibility of being vulnerable.

Marina: I think one reason is financial. Conferences are business enterprises, and many charge high attendance fees. Some companies can’t afford them due to financial pressure (diminishing margins and budgets growing thin), never mind that we’re failing to attract people outside of the industry or students due to how pricey these events are. For those who can go, there’s pressure to ensure a return on investment, which often means focusing on business, not vulnerability. You don’t win clients by openly sharing your problems and struggles. This is me holding up a mirror to you, dear Belén.

One way to change this is to shift the purpose of conferences to become spaces for sharing and gaining knowledge, not platforms for showcasing success or attracting new clients. As I mentioned before, this requires prioritizing knowledge over immediate profit.

Belén: There is no real connection and no real community unless we can be ourselves. To be able to admit that we don’t know, be humble, and maybe share some of our struggles. In a world of posturing, we need authenticity. We need good intentions, empathy, and kindness.



Some will say, “Business is business.” Well, I rebel against that. If we want our business to continue thriving, we need to collaborate. We need to altruistically share what we know more often, expecting nothing in return. We need to have open conversations and support each other. It doesn’t matter if we work in different companies, even if we are competitors. People who love language haven’t entered this field because they love the money. The mission is bigger. We are here to make the world a more connected, accessible, and inclusive place. Some might call me naïve or romantic for thinking this way.

You know what? I’m done being cynical. Let’s do this together. Community building and engaging don’t need to happen only at the usual events.

Marina: From words to action, just how I like it! And that’s part of what motivated us to create the AI Localization Think Tank, an informal, community-oriented,

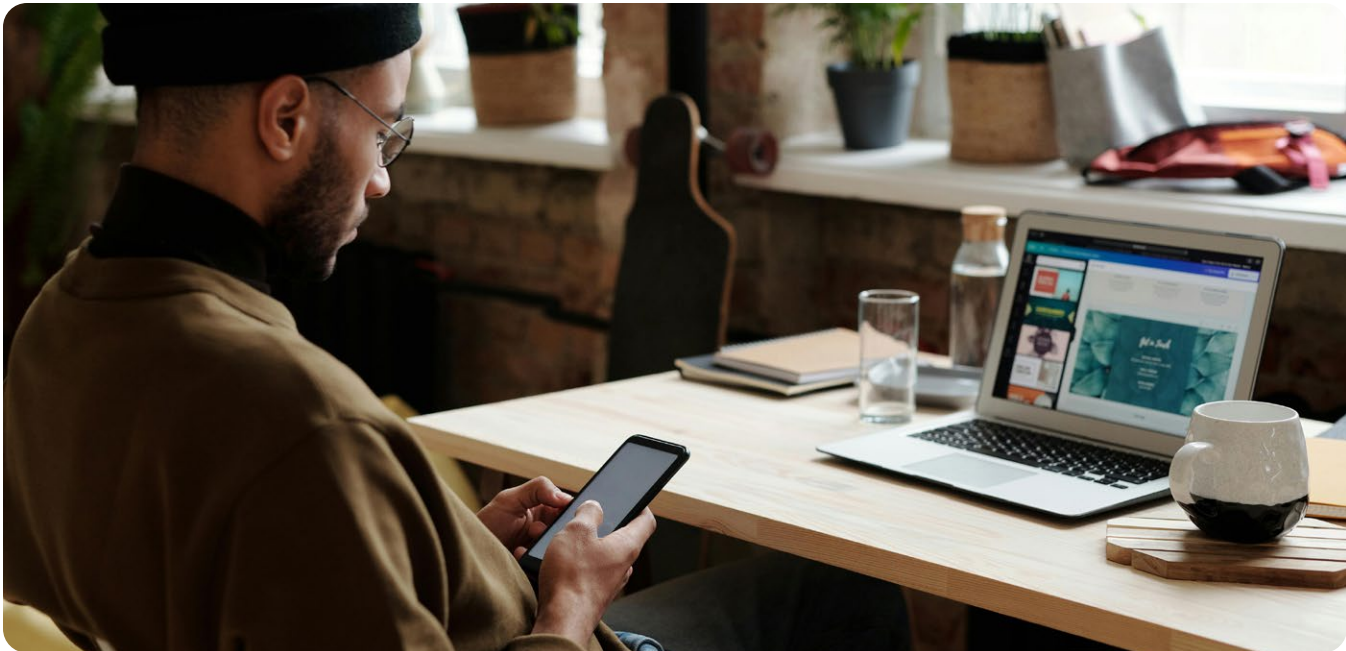
and non-commercial group, where people in our field can exchange ideas and ask questions without pressure. It’s still evolving, but it gives us a way to stay curious, learn together, and better manage the changes we’re experiencing.

Who Comes Next? The Future Should Look Different

Michael Levot

Head of Localization at Canva

Michael is Head of Localization at Canva, a graphic design platform available in over 100 languages and with more than 100 million users in languages other than English each month.



Here are three quick snapshots from Canva’s localization team in Q2 2025:

1. We hired for a new senior localization role in a key market. The successful candidate’s prior experience was in sales and product.
2. We kicked off a large-scale localization initiative. We used project templates (presentation decks, whiteboards) borrowed from our colleagues in UX design and content design.
3. We purchased two new software tools and engaged with two new agency partners. The software was for creative review and video dubbing, and the agency partners were production agencies.

The common thread of these snapshots is that they don’t fit within (what I consider to be) the boundaries of the localization industry and craft. Talent, playbooks, and partners you won’t find in the buffet line at Monterey.

Another common thread from the above is that all of these things are in some way or another a response to internal pressures: an organization frustrated with the process-driven, efficiency-oriented, scale-obsessed approach of our localization team; stakeholders who speak their own dialect of growth and customer value; in-market teams who would rather take matters into their own hands — even at significant cost — than accept a centrally funded solution that limits their ability to tailor content to local nuances.

When I was asked to share my thoughts on “Who comes next?” and what the next crop of people driving localization will look like, my mind immediately went outside the boundaries of the language industry and the idea that these things and these people might play a bigger role in the future than they do today. The next generation of localization leaders shouldn’t be defined by deep specialization in tools or workflows. They should bring skills from marketing, growth, product, and research into our industry. This isn’t a prediction. (I have enough trouble predicting the future at

Canva, let alone the rest of the world.) It’s an ambition. The future *should* look different.

Of *course* it should look different. Who looks at the current state of things and thinks “This is as it should be”?! The challenges are so familiar and ubiquitous that they’ve become too trite to repeat at any length. Our metrics don’t measure what matters. Our stakeholders don’t consider us strategic partners. Agencies are underpaying the talent. Repeat *ad infinitum*.

So, in a moment when the vendor side is facing obliteration, and the buyer side is unhappy with their lot, why wouldn’t we all take the opportunity to rethink the whole endeavor?

At Canva, we piloted this shift by reallocating linguists’ time. Rather than scoring thousands of randomly sampled strings, we now run **weekly qualitative audits of complete user journeys**. A native speaker signs up, publishes a design, upgrades to Canva Pro, and shares a template — exactly as a customer would. They flag moments of friction, cultural mismatch, or emotional dissonance that an MQM spreadsheet could never surface. Vendors still perform the bulk of quantitative checks, but our internal experts focus on the experience that actually moves revenue and retention.

This is not mere process tinkering; it is talent realignment. Suddenly the most valuable localization skills look a lot like **product growth, UX research, and data storytelling**. In our upcoming Japan Localization Lead role, “localization experience” appears fourth on the list — after cultural insight, product growth, and content strategy.

One uncomfortable hypothesis raised in our editorial brainstorm is that the industry’s operating model is often shaped less by

buyer needs than by **what vendors can sell at scale**. If your revenue comes from per-word production, you optimize for throughput; if you earn margin on QA, you preach the gospel of error categories and severity scores. Buyers may internalize those frameworks without questioning whether they map to user value.

The next wave of leaders will flip that dynamic. They will start from the user’s end-to-end experience, and then reverse-engineer the processes and partnerships required. They will measure fluency, delight, and conversion rather than error density. And they will buy services, not because those services fit a legacy RFP template, but because they accelerate the product’s mission.



On Talent and Those Who Get to Lead Us Into the Future

Eva Klaudinyova

Program Chair of the Translation and Localization Management program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Co-Founder of Women in Localization

Eva Klaudinyova has been in the localization industry since 2000, managing localization programs and teams at MediaLocate, VeriSign, VMware and Apple. Eva is a Co-Founder and an Advisory Board member of Women in Localization. She is currently an Associate Professor and a Program Chair of the Translation and Localization Management program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.



A recurring question in us humans trying to cope with whatever the world throws at us (including AI) is who comes after. Sure, we're all trying to do the best we can, but it's legitimate to ask whether our best is enough for those we'll be passing the torch to. Will anyone be willing to pick it up?

Our editor, Gabriel Karandyšovský, sat down in the virtual room with Eva Klaudinyova, Program Chair of the Translation and Localization Management program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies and Co-Founder of Women in Localization, to shed light on the importance of talent and discuss who will lead us into the future.

Question: Do we have a talent problem on our hands? How difficult is it to attract new talent?

Eva: In the U.S., we've been seeing a steep decline in enrollment numbers, not just in

higher education, but also in professional training programs, since about 2021-2022. Universities around the world are struggling with enrollment due to fears caused by AI.

Let me share the approximate breakdown of jobs in localization as of June 2025 and the difficulties that are present in each region:

- Approximately 45% of localization jobs are located in the U.S., which is dealing with an extremely high cost of education, strict immigration policies, waves of layoffs, an unstable political situation, and a slowdown in the job market for white-collar jobs, especially in tech, finance, and media.
- Approximately 35% of localization jobs are based in Europe. Education in Europe is less expensive than in the U.S. and, therefore, more accessible to a greater number of people. The EU has a lengthy immigration process, but offers much safer jobs in the long term. There is a slowdown in the job market for white-collar jobs, with growing emphasis on labor shortages

in blue-collar jobs. Europe also faces demographic challenges, with fewer young workers entering the workforce in many industries.

- Approximately 20% of localization jobs are located outside the U.S. and the EU, with the majority in China, India, Japan, and Argentina. Most opportunities are available in China (despite the recent slowdown in the job market), India (owing to its growth), and Japan (due to labor shortages). The growth of localization jobs in Argentina, which has been plagued by low pay and strict governmental regulations, is now driven by remote opportunities for international companies.

Beyond looking at industry jobs through a regional lens, there is the language angle, too. There are many low-resource languages with limited training data for AI, which are still relying heavily on human translation, so a specific blend of skills (translation, quality management, project management, and technology) is required for those localization jobs.

In addition to the difficulties and challenges I've mentioned above, the new generation considering localization as a career path is concerned about quickly becoming obsolete due to the rapid developments in AI. Those who do enroll do it with the hope they won't spend tens of thousands of dollars on learning a job that will be irrelevant before they even pay off half of their student loans.

We're in a state of upheaval, and if we want to attract talent, we need to offer not just a certain level of job stability and financial incentives, but also a clear plan for the future. As long as the industry's main focus is on AI as the be-all and end-all, and we downplay

the role humans still need to play in various roles within the process, we will continue to have problems attracting talent.

Question: You spend a lot of time with students. Have you had any eye-opening interactions with them where you thought, "Wow, this is really good"?

Eva: I have these eye-opening moments every semester. There are always students who go above and beyond in their research, analysis, and solution design, and deliver work that's at the level of more seasoned industry professionals, and it's really rewarding to know that my colleagues and I inspired them to deliver this kind of work.

What I really appreciate about the younger generations, especially Millennials and Gen Z, is their fearlessness. They explore areas that we, the older generations, never dared to explore at their age because "it wasn't the right time," or "we didn't have the required amount of experience yet," "we didn't have the proper title yet that would allow us to speak up," or "the hierarchy didn't let us." Fortunately, the younger generations don't believe in these constraints. We've had students who hadn't even graduated from our program, yet they already wrote articles for Multilingual Magazine or spoke at LocWorld, ATA, and other conferences, because they became experts in a specific area and they were not afraid to grab the opportunity by the horns and share their knowledge with the world.



Gen Zers are the youngest generation we're seeing in school and the workplace, and it is the first generation that grew up with technology since they were toddlers. They grew up with it organically, are not afraid of it, and use it like an extension of their person. They are not just tech-savvy, they're innovative. They think in broader contexts and they're not afraid to explore new areas. They are perhaps less constrained with social norms than the older generations, and also more conscious of environmental and social impacts of decisions made by themselves or on their behalf, and they're not afraid to challenge the status quo.

Question: There are rumors of a generational shift that needs to occur in our industry to help us get unstuck. Are we stuck?

Eva: I don't think we're stuck when it comes to innovation or opportunities; the spectrum is broader than ever. Where we are lacking, however, and in many ways even going backwards, is diversity — diversity of leadership, of ideas that fall outside current norms or the prevailing "mot du jour," and even the representation of the languages themselves.

The industry is now dominated by technology companies led mostly by men from the U.S. or Europe. There are now fewer female leaders at the top of organizations than there were a few years ago, particularly in technology companies and LSPs. This lack of representation is now reflected in many of the industry conferences, with a few notable exceptions. Just look at the speakers in most of the panels — we've gone backwards.

Our industry is too Anglophone, even though by nature, we're the ones supposed to represent linguistic diversity.

Any society without progress stagnates. However, kneeling at the altar of progress without considering all the other moral, ethical, societal, and environmental implications of said progress is dangerous. Sure, there are individual voices that are speaking up on these topics. Still, we, the localization industry as a whole, need to realize that we owe it to ourselves, as well as to future generations, not to follow the lead of a few billionaires blindly, but to integrate technologies thoughtfully and make our world a better, safer, and healthier place for everyone.

Question: Who gets to lead us forward in the years to come?

Eva: I don't have the gift of prophecy, but my fervent hope is that our industry will be truly equal for everyone and that the leaders of the future will be diverse. That the amount of women in senior leadership positions will be proportionate to the percentage of women in localization. Seventy-six percent of the industry are women according to the 2023 Gender and Family Survey by CSA Research, yet they represent only 45% of higher leadership positions.

I hope that the pay gap will close because men employed by organizations receive an additional 36% compared to women. I hope we'll see more leaders from Asia, Africa, and South America in decision-making positions at all levels of their companies, and our industry will become truly multicultural *and* multilingual.

My other wish is that we, as an industry, also learn how to be sustainable, since the resources we're currently consuming to drive our AI revolution and the constant growth

required by the companies most of us work for are extremely taxing on our planet.

I simply wish we could all become better humans and be led by people with a much more thoughtful and comprehensive vision of the bright new future.



Dear reader,

There is no single definition of progress.

Every individual and every team is propelled forward by different pressures, hopes, and questions. Yet move forward we must.

You may be justified in thinking that not much is happening in your day-to-day, but if you zoom out, you'll see an industry that is in *motion*. An industry that is collectively realizing that we are the masters of our destiny and that, yes, we have a role to play in shaping the future we want.

So a word on the future, dear reader.

I don't see it as a monolith, but a kaleidoscope of realities coexisting.

Linguists will be valued for their work and will continue perpetuating the millennia-old craft of translation — provided we protect that value. Solution providers and integrators will continue to find new ways to innovate and connect technology with meaningful outcomes. Buyers will continue growing into architects of memorable user experiences.

In the future, there is a place for everyone... as long as we keep showing up for it.

Alexander Ulichnowski

CEO at Argos Multilingual



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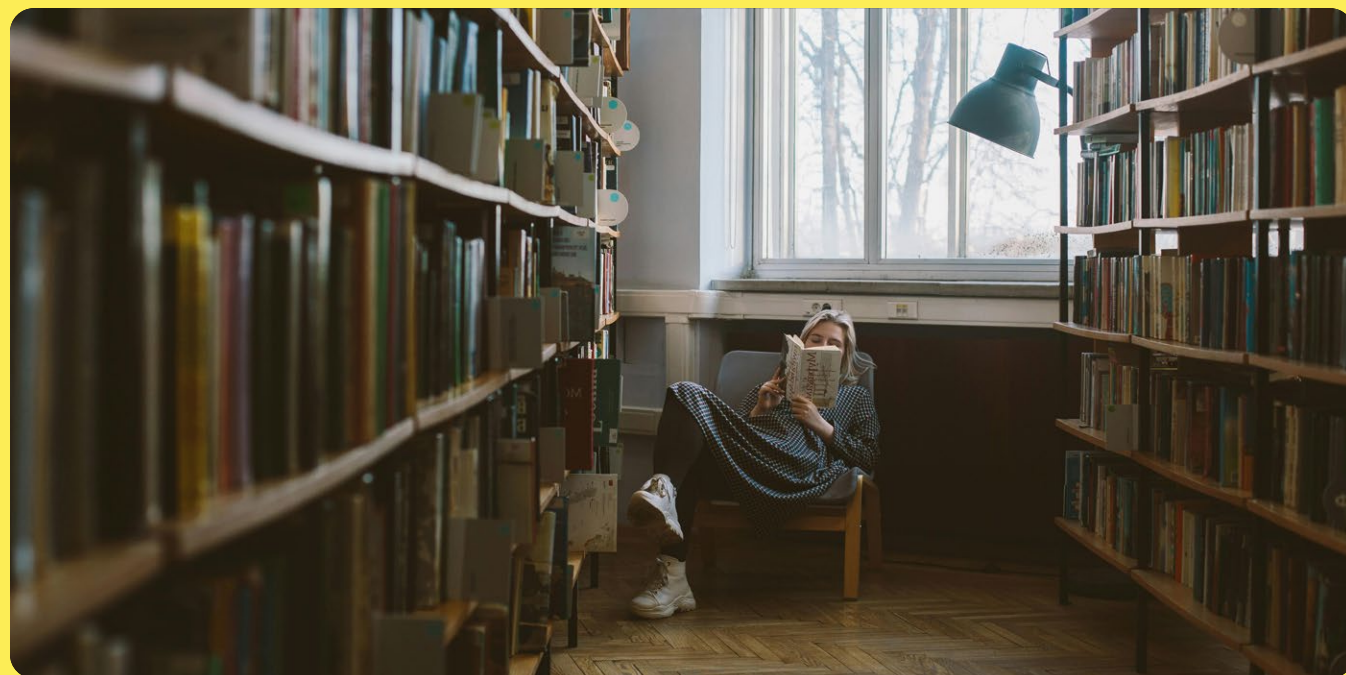
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