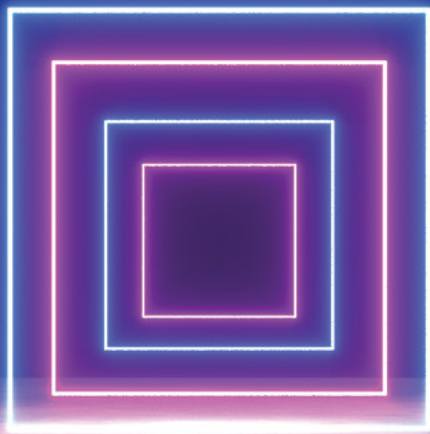

GLOBAL **AMBITIONS**

Windows Into the Future



argos
multilingual

Dear Reader,

When reflecting on the state of the language industry today and where we're headed, it is easy to conclude that we're in flux. What are we transitioning from, and where are we transitioning to are the next two logical — and vital — questions that warrant close examination. What is our starting point? And what is our destination? The latter question, in particular, is without a definitive answer. And that's okay. Opinions and ideas will vary, but the most important is not to remain idle (and at Argos, we certainly aren't). So what is there to do?

Let's start chronologically and, once and for all, put the hype surrounding generative AI to bed. By now, our industry has put in the reps to ascertain where GenAI can be used. We understand the collective work needed to continue harnessing its potential in the name of increased accessibility and inclusivity for millions of end-users who engage with brands and their products. AI has been the main topic of conversation for the last two years, but other equally important topics surely also require our attention.

What the GenAI (r)evolution makes clear is the need to continue evolving personally, professionally, and organizationally and challenge the status quo. We may suddenly find ourselves playing with a different hand of cards (and perhaps against our will, too), but our mission remains intact — the language industry is a unique place where we enable business growth and create memorable experiences for end-users.

We aim to document the present and draw your attention to what matters before we attempt to sketch the future. We're pleased to have worked with a collective of brilliant minds to make this publication happen. They share their perspectives on significant topics shaping our industry and offer you ways of tackling today's challenges. When working with them on the contents of this issue, one crucial element that unites all our diverse opinions started emerging: the human-AI synergy. Today, AI tech cannot exist on its own. The role humans play in piloting technology and safeguarding other humans cannot be understated. From end-users to CEOs to linguists, we all have a responsibility to shape the future.

If we were to state a goal for this year's edition of Global Ambitions, aptly titled "Windows Into the Future," it is that we aim to push and prod you to think outside of the box and ask crucial questions — or learn to formulate the right prompts, as it were — that will help you and your organization to envision a future and start moving toward realizing it. We won't provide definitive answers; in fact, more questions may be raised by the time you read through to the end. We're simply peeling back the curtains so you can peer through the window and imagine what can be and how you can achieve it.

What do you see, dear reader?



Alexander Ulichnowski
CEO, Argos Multilingual



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PART 1

Cataloging the Present

So Long, AI Hype. Don't Let the Door Hit You on the Way Out



LIBOR ŠAFÁŘ

VP 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.

It's such a popular question, isn't it: What were you doing when? When we landed on the moon (yes, we did). Or when 9/11 happened. But what were you doing when ChatGPT was released back on November 30, 2022?

Some of us in the language industry saw this coming, some of us were blindsided. Many got very excited, verging on irrational exuberance. Still, others were skeptical, but only a small minority was indifferent.

ChatGPT hit the market as perhaps the first major consumer AI "application," and initially totally free, for everyone to play with. It was the beginning of the AI boom.



The reaction was a similar story in the language industry. With one particular twist — AI has become the best advertisement (N)MT could have wished for. It has given it a "new lease on life", at least for the near future.

Asked how they're using AI internally, many enterprise localization teams can proudly say: actually, we've been using AI for years, we've just been using a different name. This is how it works. This is how it differs from what you might call AI. And these are the use cases where it will still beat AI easily.

Everyone attending any language industry event over the past two years would have seen presentations showing the much-hyped Gartner hype cycle for AI. How we're at the peak of inflated expectations, just about to experience the inevitable disillusionment.

But AI is not going away. It will continue challenging us, and what we need to do to stay relevant.

Where are YOU on the scale?

This is not to say that everyone has been buying the hype. Those ready for the upcoming disillusionment phase have some valid arguments, such as:

- LLMs were never made for translation (but can be trained for specific tasks)
- AI is slower than MT
- It's expensive
- It's error-prone
- It can't be trusted
- It's not universal: LLMs are much better in high-resource languages or specific combinations
- There's limited NLP expertise in the industry that hinders application

And yet, even AI skeptics seem to accept that LLMs will be the future, eventually. When? Opinions differ, but the general belief right now is that we may need 12-24 months for LLM-based workflows to level up to those built on MT.

Get ready for AI disillusionment

- ☑ LLMs were never made for translation
- ☑ AI is slower than MT
- ☑ It's expensive
- ☑ It's error-prone
- ☑ It can't be trusted
- ☑ There's limited NLP expertise in the industry that hinders application

But this won't just happen.

There's an interesting divide between those who prefer to wait and see until the situation becomes clearer, so they can take the right path and move fast then, and those who are "all-in" already.

Main factors? Levels of risk-aversion, organizational context, resources available, tech mindset. Being a fast follower is as viable a strategy as being the first mover. But getting the timing right is crucial, and notoriously hard. And fortune tends to favor the bold.

Grasping the AI mettle

AI has also become the new litmus test for every organization's ability to act and react, pretty much like Covid was a few years ago. AI is new, it's big, it's hairy, and there are no certainties.



It's complex and requires sound cooperation between teams. Which is why internal culture and organizational issues may either help or hinder just about every AI implementation.

And this is not merely a divide between high-tech enterprises vs. everybody else, or even big vs. small. High-tech organizations, big and small, may equally struggle with adopting or productizing AI.

There may be inertia, a lack of coherence, competing interests, and a fragmented structure. These are all potential barriers.

Every organization where the internal culture is sound is set to benefit from AI in the years to come. Because they will figure things out and will be able to act fast.

The optimist's manifesto

The past few decades in the industry have seen some serious innovation and professionalization. It was goodbye to translating resource files in Microsoft Word, and hello to TMs, TMS, MT, and all that jazz.

Afterward, it was mostly incremental innovation. The industry got larger, it got smarter, but there wasn't so much real change under the hood. If you knew how to use a translation tool in the past, you could get up and running again a decade later, like getting into your old car you know so well.

But now it's getting really exciting again.

ML and LLMs have the potential to massively change the way translation is done. Not just to

replace NMT at some stage, but to reconfigure the way multilingual content flows from the source to the consumer, and all the plumbing that goes with that. This means more multilingual content than was humanly possible to date.

Sure, the path ahead is still long and full of pot-holes, but a number of progressive organizations already have their goals set very clearly: being able to provide any content, in any language, at every interaction their customers have with them, also internally. And all of this optimized for their company's unique tone of voice.

This has been the ultimate goal in the language industry well before I was even born. AI should be able to make this possible. And every globally ambitious organization, regardless of its size, might adopt this goal. It's ambitious. It's memorable. And it ties directly with any business's objectives. Making language for their businesses a "non-issue."

At the moment, AI is forcing everyone to take a fresh, hard look at their current processes, break them (again!) into individual tasks, assess their current value, and see which tasks can now be better automated with AI. This is a great by-product of the AI revolution.

The future of localization teams is... bright

Multilingual AI is creating a new opportunity for localization professionals to raise their profile within their respective organizations.

Every localization team in the world has (too) many jobs to do... yet one that is often overlooked, and even more often underrated, is internal education. Do it well, and you will have fewer problems having your role and value appreciated.

With multilingual AI, there is a huge demand for "actionable" education within just about any organization. This is where internal localization teams can, for instance, easily build on their existing,

and often massive, knowledge of what-used-to-be-called-MT-but-now-goes-by-the-name-of-AI.

It can be an internal hub on multilingual AI, or a resource library. It can involve documenting and communicating your own journey (experimentation and application) with multilingual AI.

This is great knowledge, and it's specific to your own organization. All it takes is some good promotion. Internal education is effectively internal marketing on steroids. And now is a great time to nail it.

...and here's why

"We're using AI, so why are we actually still paying for our translations?" Just about every localization leader has been asked this question by their executives. The good news is that in-house localization teams will have a major competitive advantage in the age of AI. I'm sure of that, despite constantly hearing about waves of layoffs in the language industry these days. Here are a few of the many reasons:

- They manage and understand the language assets in their organizations, warts and all. This is essential for anything related to LLMs.
- They are the ultimate international risk managers. They know what can go wrong with the local language content their companies may publish, regardless of the source or the method used to produce it. And they know how to possibly prevent that. So many scars already.
- AI will continue to perform unevenly across languages or language combinations for some time. Any cool stuff that will be possible with one language will not automatically translate into all the others. So many potential show-stoppers right there.

Perception is reality, as they say, and so some internal rebranding and marketing can go a long way. But their unique expertise will become even more important than it is now, not less.

"We're using AI, so why are we actually still paying for our translations?' Just about every localization leader has been asked this question by their executives. **The good news is that in-house localization teams will have a major competitive advantage in the age of AI."**

AI sanity checklist

With AI too big a beast to ignore, I see forward-looking localization professionals adopting a very similar mindset. Let's call it an AI sanity checklist:

- It's impossible to know everything about AI, how it works, what everyone else does, or even thinks. It helps to have a game plan for what you want to learn and what you need to understand (and then apply it).
- Decide, also, what you don't need to learn in-depth.
- Build (and grow) a short list of resources or experts you trust and from whom you plan to learn.
- Take stock of what you already know. Nobody starts from scratch. Anyone working with languages is, by definition, some sort of an expert

in NLP already.

- Get your hands dirty using LLMs. Nothing beats getting hands-on experience.
- There's so much pressure to get stuff done with AI... It's easy to feel overwhelmed and perhaps paralyzed. But feeling this may be a good sign; it may mean you're actually already ahead of others.

On the other hand, we all have the right to forget about AI when we feel like it. It's not — and won't be — everything. There's much more to being a human: the human experience. Our human language models (called a brain) have zillions of years of building and fine-tuning behind them already. That's another reason to take this AI hype in our stride.

Escape the Trap of Self-Centeredness: The End-User Point of View



GABRIEL KARANDÝŠOVSKÝ

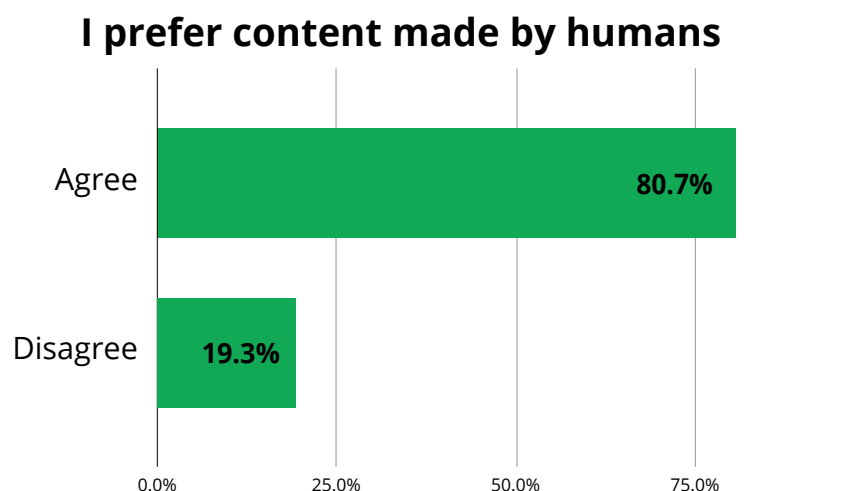
Industry Researcher, Content Producer, and Analyst

Gabriel is an independent industry researcher, content producer, and analyst. With over a decade in the language industry, Gabriel has worn many hats, from onboarding new clients as a business developer to hands-on work on projects in 100+ languages, from deconstructing industry trends to advising clients on how to talk to global audiences. Today, he helps tackle the biggest challenges of our industry — how do professionals and companies grow and reinvent themselves while ensuring that no one is left behind?

Much of the language industry today revolves around the two-way highway between the company (the buyer) and the service provider (tech supplier, LSP, or the linguist). In this relationship, the focus is on addressing the buyer's needs (or making the sale, depending on your outlook), whether by implementing the latest tech advancements or finding a creative solution to their problems.

There's a third party — the end-users — who are often omitted from the discussion, but who are equally important. Where did they go?

10%



We're thankfully now moving past the hype and seeing language AI becoming an accepted part of the landscape. However, questions about the use of AI persist, ranging from quality and ethics to representation and inclusivity. What makes now a particularly interesting point in time to reassess what we do (and how we talk about it) is the absence of the end-user in the discussion. You could say the end-user's perspective has always held an awkward place in the localization conversation because how do you reflect it in business practice?

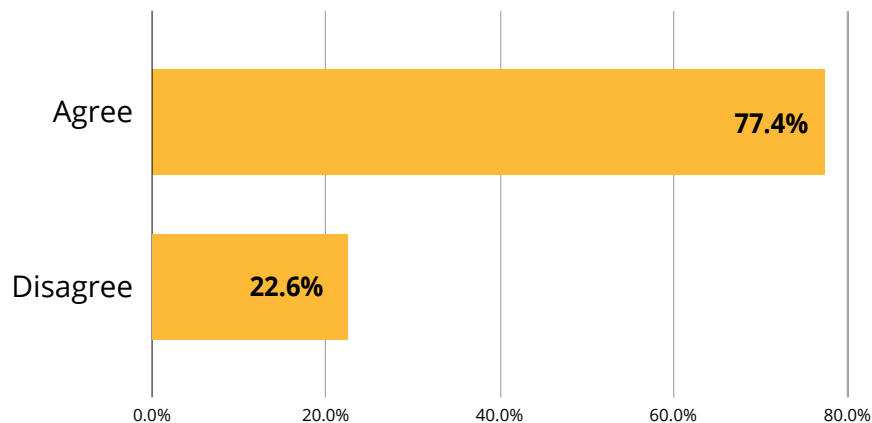
And so this begs a question: Aren't we, the buyers, the service providers, the tech suppliers, too self-centered? We rushed to figure out AI's fit. We're now comparing and deciding which

LLM-based tools are the best. Have we pushed other considerations, such as the preferences of end-users, to the side?

This is not to say that savvy companies haven't been doing their due diligence, with user research teams bent on anticipating users' needs and incorporating this precious feedback in product development. But this area is still under construction.

This is why we decided to gauge sentiment on AI by running an end-user survey in June and July on a panel of respondents in eight countries. Perhaps looking to the user for answers is the reality check the language industry needs. Some of the answers we obtained are illuminating, some you could have reasonably predicted. Some lead to

You have mistaken AI-generated for content created by a human before



yet more questions. Either way, as we're collectively trying to figure out the future and what it may bring, we present three key takeaways from our research to reflect on and shape the ongoing conversations you may be having.

#1: Humans are AI-biased

Humans are biased toward AI. How about you, dear reader?

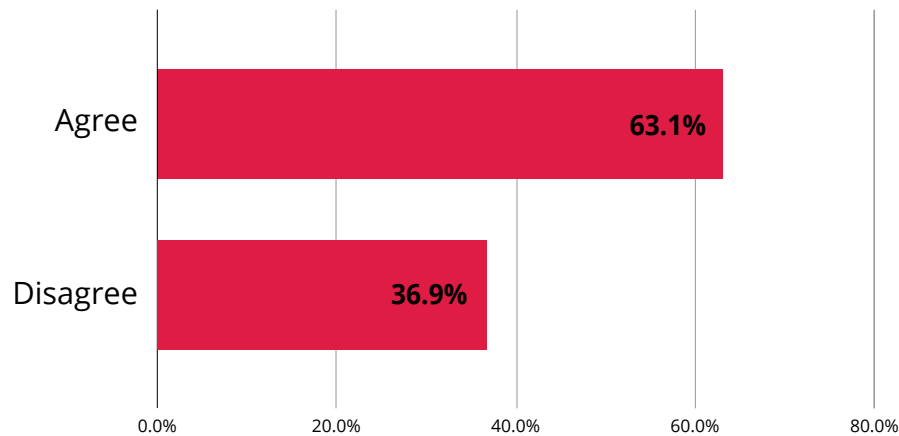
In the survey, we asked respondents whether they preferred human-made content, and a significant majority (80.7%) agreed. Humans still prefer humans. However obvious the answer, it was a choice we wanted to verify.

AI bias is a good thing, especially for the creative professions that make up the backbone of the language industry — as the hype dies down

and reality sets in, they will still have a job. This assumes the user can distinguish machine-generated content from human-made content, which we verified during the survey and is far from a foregone conclusion (see below). But there are a few things to note here:

- The AI hype and associated doomsaying of the last two years have left their mark with a negative perception of AI. This will vary depending on where you are, but it is becoming something AI developers and adopters need to account for if AI initiatives are to succeed.
- When presented with a binary choice, users will opt for human-generated content. However, they are rarely given a choice and are instead presented with an outcome, or they may not realize they are engaging with an AI-powered

I am confident in my ability distinguish content created by AI



feature. Only a few companies offer transparency in their use of AI, clearly labeling what the user sees as machine-made.

- Human- and machine-generated content already coexist and will continue to coexist in the future. It shouldn't be a case of either or. According to our survey, 76.4% of respondents agree that using the label "made with AI" would add more trustworthiness to the brand. Companies can benefit from increased engagement and brand equity by taking a stand and being transparent.

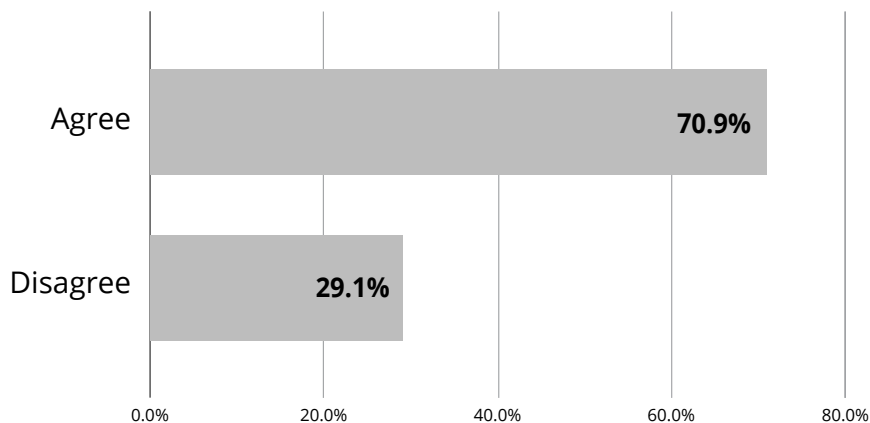
#2: Much work remains to make AI transparent

Creating accurate and trustworthy AI-driven systems and being transparent about their use



76.4%
of respondents
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label "made with
AI" would add more
**trustworthiness to
the brand.**

I don't mind the occasional language error as long as I obtain the information I want



sits squarely on the system creators' and the company's shoulders. Why should the language industry care, you may be asking?

To continue from the preceding point about users preferring (maybe even craving?) human content — as supplied by the language industry for decades — the problem is that humans are bad at identifying it (unless the person in the photo has more than five fingers). Yes, professionals in our industry will quickly identify stilted language or a lack of fluency, some of the machine's tell-tale signs. But it is not so for the average user. Humans are good at seeing things that aren't there (Is there a face on Mars? Pareidolia is such a fascinating phenomenon!), but they often cannot see things right under their noses.

Our survey shows that 77.4% of people mistake AI-generated content, and a noteworthy portion of the population (36.9%) is not confident about distinguishing it from human-made content. In countries such as the US or Japan, this number is even higher (50.4% and 60.4% respectively).

In reality, the responsibility to guide AI is collective, and the language industry is uniquely positioned to convey the importance of injecting linguistic and cultural subtlety into content to improve its impact.

#3: Quality is in the eye of the beholder


In recent years, much of the industry debate has been focused on language quality. What it means, how to define it, and how to maintain or improve

it. AI's ability to assess translation quality at scale provides quasi-instantaneous feedback and, if properly tuned, suggestions to improve the text. This has upended tried-and-tested human-centric quality assurance processes and led to a healthy debate about the merits of leveraging AI to streamline traditionally time- and labor-intensive processes. We'll delve into the relative merits of using AI for quality assurance later in this issue.

But let us touch on one of the points of consensus in the language industry — that quality is an integral component of the end-user's experience when engaging with a brand. Most will agree that a crucial variable influences this experience even before it begins: the user's desired outcome.

So how do you reconcile the notion of language quality — a topic of great importance to the language industry — with what the user wants, when, for all intents and purposes, their desire is undecipherable? Though inefficient, a blanket or "standardized" level of quality across languages and content types would be one approach. If you consider high-risk or potentially life-altering scenarios where incorrect translation can have dire consequences, then yes, you cannot compromise on quality. But, in some situations where you need surface-level information quickly — say, what the weather will look like in Florence two weeks from now because you're planning a trip — you should be fine if the result is not 100% accurate (because as a user you also assume weather forecasts are not entirely reliable beyond a certain number of days in advance).

When debating the relative merits of language AI and how it can be applied in conventional localization scenarios, a frequent answer is that it is not an out-of-the-box solution for providing high-quality, accurate multilingual content. This has been well-documented, and we have the data to support the case. But perhaps we've been asking the wrong question.



"So how do you reconcile the notion of language quality — a topic of great importance to the language industry — **with what the user wants, when, for all intents and purposes, their desire is undecipherable?**"

Shouldn't we be focusing on the user's desired outcome for their specific use case at the point in time when they're engaging with the content?

Argos's end-user sentiment survey is highly revealing, with 70.9% of respondents claiming they don't mind a *language* error as long as they get the information they want. The question has been asked in a vacuum, without asking the user to imagine a specific situation, so this would look different if you were in a life-threatening situation.

However, two related questions come to the fore and will look very familiar as we continue our evolution with AI: Does language quality matter if the user accomplishes their goal? And if so, how? Both of them remain, for now, distinctly open-ended.

Meanwhile, in Marketing Land



ELISE LE MER

Content Writing, Localization and Translation

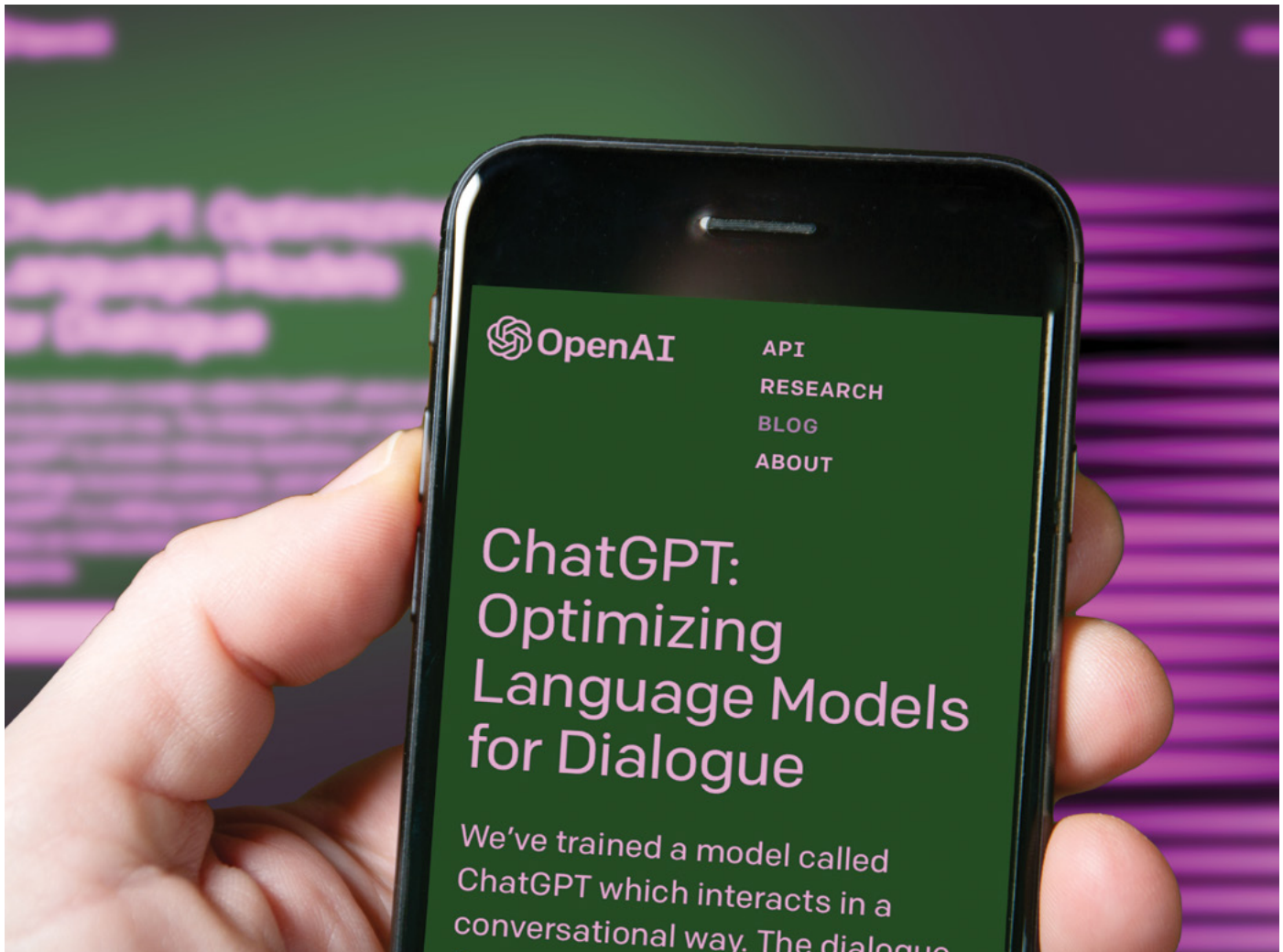
Elise Le Mer specialises in all things marketing, with a special focus on English and French languages and cultures. She helps companies find their voice and position their offering for the French market. When she is not at her desk, she enjoys writing non-fiction in both French and English and jogging in the local park.

Go to any marketing conference or webinar these days, and you're guaranteed to find AI as the main topic 95% of the time. In truth, a lot of AI applications were around pre-ChatGPT. It's just that they didn't make headlines outside of the marcomms world — think programmatic advertising (advertising space bidding and content optimization in real-time), customer support (chatbots), etc.

A flurry of marketing applications with predictive and generative AI

The launch of ChatGPT in late 2022 has boosted content generation (newsletters and social media posts, visual imagery via Midjourney) and revolutionized the customer journey while enabling hyper-personalization. The customer journey online no longer always starts with a query on a search engine, as people can ask AI platforms to recommend brands and shortlist products for them.

15%



This shift is sending shock waves along the marketing chain: brands need to rethink their sales funnels and, notably, how they build brand awareness, while agencies (markedly those specialized in SEO) have to adapt quickly. AI is also getting companies much closer to that industry holy grail: hyper-personalization (or personalization at scale).

In the past, personalization stopped at ensuring that brands' emails opened with the contact's name ("Hi Alisha!"), but it is now possible to generate one unique email per contact for a given newsletter campaign, with AI considering all the obvious factors (gender, previous purchase,

browsing history, A/B tests on each consumer segment) and other lesser-known variables. And, of course, the predictive abilities of AI are turbocharging consumer research (with synthetic data), sales forecasts, and financial modeling. To businesses around the globe, AI + Big Data = a marriage made in heaven.

Marketers as early adopters

Marketing is typically ahead of the curve in terms of technology adoption, having embraced NFTs, the metaverse, and so many other technological advances over the years. Due to its creative nature, paired with the commercial imperative

to make money, marketing is a good sector to monitor and possibly benchmark if you want to get a sense of which technologies will “stick”: if you want to know what to watch, follow the marketing flocks.

AI is no exception – according to HubSpot research, “64% of global marketers are already using generative AI”. The early clamor of “AI is going to take our jobs away... we are all doomed! Let’s bury our heads in the sand, watch cute kitten videos, and pretend this isn’t happening” was quickly replaced by advocates of the co-pilot vision: that artificial intelligence and human intelligence will be meshed together to yield the very best results.

Push and pull dynamics

And yet... Some marketers have chosen a more cautious stance, trying their hand at AI but using it in low-stake contexts, waiting to understand how best to use AI-based tools and how to address its specific issues. So, the same push and pull dynamics currently at play in the localization world are present in the marketing world, with early adopters vs. promoters of a “wait and see” approach playing tug of war.

These tensions about how to use AI result from its image problem among consumers and the issues related to plagiarism for the marketing industry.

Houston: AI has a PR problem

AI has a very low adoption rate: as little as 25-30% of the population in 6 of the main countries surveyed by the Reuters Institute have ever used AI, and only about 5-10% use it daily. For all the talk about AI in the press, in the board rooms, and at the dinner table, here’s the acid test: ask your friends, family, and colleagues if and how they have used AI, and the answer will be:

1. Very few have actually used it, and
2. The uses are quite limited: your nephew cheating on his homework paper, your uncle

Barnard asking stupid questions to ChatGPT for a laugh with his mates, you editing wonky sentences in a big visibility email to a boss, or prior to posting on LinkedIn. That’s it.

As ever, when it comes to technology, not everyone is the same: various studies show that men, young people, and city dwellers are more likely to embrace AI. The truth is people have no idea how to use AI, and they are scared of it. This distrust toward AI begs a question: How do consumers react when they understand that they are interacting with an AI and that what they read or see has been generated by an AI? Not all consumers realize that AI is not just an external tool you access through specific platforms, such as ChatGPT, but also embedded in many companies’ processes and products.

Managing the negatives: AI-labeling, industry guidelines, and strengthened regulations

This fear of AI is probably a fear of the unknown, but it also reflects a general reluctance toward technology, as well as concerns surrounding data privacy. Brands and agencies have reacted in various ways. Unilever’s body-positive brand Dove has pledged not to use AI in its advertising. Contracts between brands and their creative agencies now routinely forbid the use of AI without prior authorization from the client. Most social platforms including LinkedIn use some form of AI content tags in-stream to improve transparency and limit the spread of “deepfake” content. To address the underlying fears around privacy and the perpetuation of racist and sexist prejudices, the marketing and advertising industry is also working on guidelines for brands and agencies.

Smells like AI-spirit

AI can create a plagiarism issue, as what you feed the machine and what it spurts out can be

recycled by another brand for another campaign. For a creative industry like advertising, this represents an existential threat, but it also means that all AI-generated content can be quite similar and feel samey, thus making it harder for brands to stand out or differentiate. Besides, currently, a lot of what AI writes sounds very much like AI-style and the risk of sounding bland is real for all brands blindly embracing AI prose. Time will tell if the risks of uniformity and blandness lead to a push towards more differentiation and, therefore, more original content.

The times are a-changing

Marketers' jobs are changing. The skills in hot demand, much like everywhere else, are an understanding of AI, notions of big data, mastery of prompt engineering, and how to use input data. No matter where you are in your career, but especially if you are a junior marketer, these are the skills you need to focus on (hello, MOOC!). But it's also the content of the job that is evolving: AI's promise to relieve people of the admin tasks and deliver more effectiveness should, in theory, lead to more time to do what matters: understanding consumers, delivering better products and services, planning great campaigns.

Augmented marketers

Jim Rohn has famously quipped, "You are the sum of the five people you spend the most time with." — what if one of these people is ChatGPT? It's still early to measure the long-term changes, but ChatGPT will impact how marketers think and communicate. If you spend a lot of time prompting AI in a certain way, how will that impact your communication style? No one will complain about getting clearer and more concise instructions, but how about the fact that AI hallucinates? Will it encourage people to utter fake news without batting an eyelid? Or on the contrary, will AI's

"Jim Rohn has famously quipped, 'You are the sum of the five people you spend the most time with.' - **what if one of these people is ChatGPT?**"

tendency to hallucinate cause us all to routinely doublecheck things that we might have taken at face value in the past?

Conclusion

Learning about AI should be our first priority – especially if you are reluctant to embrace it. To help seize the future, here's an idea. Next time you have a family gathering or meet people at a work conference, use this icebreaker: Ask them if and how they use AI in their company and daily life. Hearing the ideas from other sectors and other types of jobs in a very practical, tangible way, might be just the push needed to unlock the doors of AI.

Out of Touch: What Is Happening Outside the Language Industry Bubble?



TATIANA RYABININA

Management Consultant

Tatiana Ryabinina is a management consultant making localization a nonissue. She is a co-founder and managing director at Grow-thru, a consultancy that helps companies and teams drive international growth by bringing their vision of localization to life.

Nearly every industry today is undergoing significant digital transformation with AI — is it still okay to talk about it? — being leveraged for efficiency, personalization, and decision-making across sectors. Beyond AI, industries are focusing on tailored experiences and services, environmental sustainability, and social impact.

Due to technological changes, cybersecurity, data protection, and workforce development are crucial across sectors. Industries are navigating complex and evolving regulatory landscapes, with ethical use of technology and responsible business practices becoming more important. Companies are looking at global markets for growth while adjusting to post-pandemic hybrid work models.

Many businesses are building more flexible and resilient operations and forming strategic partnerships to innovate and compete. There seems to be a focus on core competencies, with many companies emphasizing their unique strengths while outsourcing or automating other aspects. At the same time, AI is now helping businesses per-



form tasks in-house that have traditionally been outsourced, like software development, content creation, and translation.

In 2017, I realized that the language industry was stuck in its ways of working; with it, I was getting stuck in my career. So, I went to study business to find a way out. This high-level view of what is happening in the business world today is what every professor at my business school was already envisioning six or seven years ago.

Back then, many business leaders perceived the term “digital transformation” as overused, a bit like “AI” is viewed today by pretty much anyone in the language industry. The biggest question for everyone in our sector is, “What’s next for our industry?”

“AI reached its tipping point in 2023,” says PwC, yet it seems to have caught many language industry players by surprise and clouded their leaders’ judgment. While some language service agencies who feel late to the party are hiring innovation managers to help them implement AI (because their clients are asking them to do something with it), some translation technology companies now claim that helping businesses implement AI is essentially what they do.

In the meantime, the best copywriters and transcreation specialists that I know had to start searching for clients for the first time in their careers, suspecting that AI is the cause. More and more often, I meet freelance translators who are considering becoming localization managers. Localization managers who I was interviewing for Head of Localization roles a couple of years ago are changing careers and moving into product and UX.

Where is the language industry heading? What value will it create, for whom, and how? It all looks very gloomy and uncertain, to say the least...if we stay inside the language industry bubble. How about taking a look outside to get unstuck?

What are top-of-mind challenges across industries?

TECHNOLOGY: Complying with evolving regulations is an old challenge for the tech sector, but AI regulation is new and pressing, along with ethical concerns about this technology. Major players are establishing AI ethics boards and policies to ensure responsible innovation, fairness, reliability, privacy, and inclusiveness. While some tech companies are implementing protocols to deal with other imminent problems like increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks and data breaches, others are looking ahead and investing in quantum-resistant encryption to prepare for potential threats from quantum computing. This emerging technology could soon enable computers and computer-based applications, including AI, to perform far more complex operations than conventional solutions, so it’s worth considering its impact already.

FINANCE: Adapting to evolving regulations and balancing digital transformation with traditional operating models are also top-of-mind challenges for the finance sector. Industry players are developing robust crypto policies and leveraging AI for predictive analytics to deal with evergreen issues such as fraud prevention. Governments and central banks worldwide are looking into how central bank digital currencies can be introduced into existing monetary systems to cater to changes in a payment landscape where physical money is used less often. Other major trends include decentralized finance facilitated by blockchain integration, which can be leveraged for increased security, transparency, more efficient cross-border payments, and sustainable investing.

ENERGY: The energy sector is not new to the issue of sustainability, but the energy security

problem is growing. This is why the industry is accelerating its transition to renewable sources by investing in green technologies, exploring energy storage solutions, and expanding carbon capture initiatives to reduce emissions while maintaining energy production. However, according to one of my friends in this space, the green hydrogen sector has passed the peak of inflated expectations in the Gartner hype cycle terms and is going towards the trough of disillusionment. (By the way, we seem to be almost there with AI, both generative and “everyday”.)

AGRICULTURE: Security and sustainability are also top-of-mind in agriculture. Industry players are working on improving soil health, carbon sequestration, and access to locally-grown produce in urban areas. What’s new is the need to adapt to climate change, driving the development of AI-driven equipment that can adapt to changing weather conditions, IoT-enabled precision farming that can maximize crop yields while minimizing resources, and the use of gene editing technologies for the development of drought-resistant crop varieties. (This is a lot more innovation and tech change than the language industry.)

HEALTHCARE: Healthcare is another sector that sees emerging applications of AI and gene editing (obviously). We are entering the era of gene writing two decades after scientists learned how to read the human genome. (Sounds a bit like the transition from MT to LLMs, doesn’t it?) Despite significant technological advancements such as gene-editing therapies, AI-assisted diagnostics, and integration of virtual reality in mental health treatments, the sector is still adapting to post-pandemic healthcare models while dealing with rising costs and accessibility issues, managing data privacy and security, and addressing

healthcare worker burnout. (Does this sound like the language industry again?)

RETAIL: Similar to the healthcare sector, where telemedicine and virtual care are becoming the norm, balancing an online and physical presence post-pandemic is still challenging in retail. While some retailers are starting to use physical locations for both in-store shopping and online order fulfillment, others are transforming their stores into automated fulfillment centers to serve online shoppers better. (A bit like offering MT in addition to human translation vs. focusing on MT to serve more price-sensitive convenience-driven buyers.) The need for personalization and better customer experience still exists, and omnichannel strategies are still relevant. Major brands allow customers to design their own products and use AI-powered tools to provide personalized product recommendations both online and in-store.

EDUCATION: Physical and online experiences are also becoming more interconnected in education. Born-digital industry players are partnering with their old-school counterparts, such as schools and universities, to tackle the industry’s ongoing challenge of educational inequality by providing personalized learning programs and more accessible online degrees. The former is also being done by leveraging, you’ve guessed what, AI. Other technologies known by two-letter acronyms — AR and VR — are slowly but finally gaining traction to provide immersive educational experiences.

AUTOMOTIVE: The automotive industry is transitioning to electric and autonomous vehicles to address the persistent challenge of reducing emissions and to enable our cars to automatically stop at red lights and stop signs.

Car manufacturers are investing in battery technology and charging infrastructure to do the former. They are investing in industry challengers and partnerships with technology firms to accelerate the latter.

MANUFACTURING: Like the automotive industry, the broader manufacturing sector is developing supply chain resilience, which for many players means diversifying suppliers – through reshoring or localization (as in producing in China for China) — and implementing AI and blockchain into their supply chain management systems. Like the technology sector, the industry is figuring out how to effectively implement AI and robots while managing workforce displacement, addressing the challenge by upskilling employees to work alongside these tools.

What does this mean for the language industry?

As these other sectors are reimagining their roles in a rapidly evolving landscape, we too must redefine our value proposition. The era of simply translating words is behind us, and digital transformation isn't just about adopting AI. The language industry needs to reimagine its entire approach to language services and redefine the value it offers.

The finance sector didn't just digitize existing processes — it created entirely new paradigms like cryptocurrency and decentralized finance. What's our industry's equivalent? Could we be pioneering new forms of cross-cultural communication that we haven't even imagined yet?

The manufacturing and automotive industries are not just adapting to new technologies but actively reshaping their workforces and supply chains. In the language industry, this might mean investing heavily in upskilling translators.

While we've been debating whether AI will

replace translators, history is repeating itself right before our eyes. "Computers" used to be humans who performed calculations by hand. When electrical computers emerged, these professionals became the first generation of computer programmers. Translators are standing at a similar crossroads today.

Who will they become? AI prompt engineers and cross-cultural UX consultants already sound old-school and don't add a great deal of value. I don't think the choice is between purveyors of cultural intelligence, facilitators of global communication strategies, and guardians of ethical, multilingual AI implementation either.

The retail and education sectors are blurring the lines between physical and digital experiences. Should we imagine multisensory communication designers creating experiences that go beyond words, incorporating cultural nuances, non-verbal cues, and context into AI-powered communication tools?

Like other industries, we can innovate and compete by forming strategic alliances. Who are our potential partners? Tech companies? Neuroscientists? Global policy think tanks?

As other industries focus on sustainability and social impact, should we consider how we can contribute to these global priorities? Could we facilitate cross-border collaboration on environmental initiatives? Or help ensure diverse voices are heard in the development of new technologies?

We must stop seeing ourselves as just a service industry and start thinking of ourselves as innovation drivers, like the first generation of computer programmers who were pivotal in shaping the digital age. Yes, AI is disrupting our traditional business models. But if we look beyond our industry bubble, we'll see that disruption is just another word for opportunity.

Alignment in the AI Age



PATRICK NUNES

Global Communications and Design at Rotary

Patrick leads the Global Communications and Design teams at Rotary in five areas, and they include localization and creation of written content in multiple languages, simultaneous interpretation, global editing that aligns English content to the voice and tone of the organization, design of visual elements that inspire global audiences, and the relationship with 33 regional magazines around the world. Their primary objective is to offer content that is both inspiring and relevant to a diverse global community, so Rotary members are motivated to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

These days, everyone is an AI expert. Here's why that's a good thing: People coming to you asking about whether you're using AI or suggesting what you should do with it are opening doors to conversations that would, back before the GenAI wave hit us, likely be closed or very difficult for localization and globalization teams to pry open. At least, that's how we choose to view these situations at Rotary — remember this deliberate stance; it's something I'll get back to in a moment.


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Whether they happen to you or you initiate them, these conversations are opportunities for you to build bridges with your stakeholders to find common ground and solutions. You typically engage in them for the greater good, i.e., the company's best interests, but a lot of personal growth and leadership skills can be found and developed when going through the alignment exercise. In a time when a lot of business discussions are focused on what you can do with tech, it's the thousand-year-old practice of sitting down and having a conversation that will be the most impactful in moving the needle. In other words, it is a very human thing to do.

Proactive beats reactive, any day, every day

One of the first conversations I had once GenAI appeared on the radar was with a colleague from HR who asked, "Have you seen this, and how do you think this will matter from a human perspective?" You've undoubtedly heard a variant of the same question being asked. I continue to have similar conversations at least once a week. This is part of our new normal. Everyone has opinions about AI, and especially about how others should be using it. In this case, I was consulted for my opinion, but your experience may vary if the person doesn't know you are the in-house expert on all things language AI. Sometimes, you may be on the receiving end of a very prescriptive "Here's what you should be doing..." type of opening statement.

I typically get ahead of the conversation by showing the person asking the question that I thought about this and showing them how we are tackling it. Better yet, invite them to be part of the solution you've been working on for the specific problem. In other words, doing your homework is key to aligning with your stakeholders. It has two components: Naturally, you want

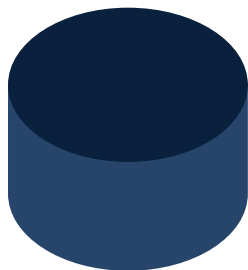


"You can't be tech-forward without being human-centric because so much of your success relies on partnering with humans."

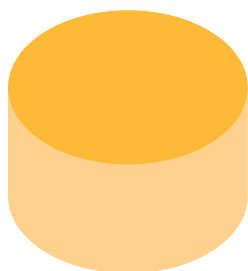
to educate yourself about everything on a given topic. You needn't do this alone; you can rely on your team and others inside the organization to surface the necessary knowledge. Secondly, you want to put yourself in the shoes of the person coming to you with the question — they are doing their due diligence, and it should be safe to assume that they're coming into the conversation with good intentions. Tune in to what they are saying and how they are saying it.

It starts with you, the humans in the loop

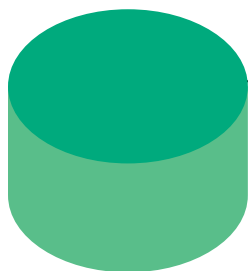
To pretend GenAI doesn't impact our day-to-day life would be naive. The key to understanding its impact — and approaching conversations with peers, stakeholders, or vendors the right

**01**

Come to the conversation with an open mind and an understanding that people on the other side will bring their own thoughts.

**02**

Be persistent and patient. Sometimes, things will move slower than you want or not in the direction you want them to.

**03**

Don't wait for people to come to you. Be proactive.

way — is examining what AI means in my daily work, for my team members, or the organization. In a way, you're painting a pre-mortem tableau: What will using AI (or not) mean X months from now? If you're not looking inward and expanding your horizon first, you won't be fast enough when the external prompt arrives. We're in a window of opportunity where AI gives us a platform to be more visible and multiplies the conversations we're having. We — the localization and globalization experts — have a role to play in these conversations.

Being human-centric is the only way to bring new ideas — or new technology, in this case —

into the fold. You can't be tech-forward without being human-centric because so much of your success relies on partnering with humans.

Often, I respond to questions with a "Have you spoken with Mary or Joe about this?" You must remain humble enough to acknowledge that your role will differ at different times. Sometimes, you're the driver in the conversation, helping to frame it (especially when it comes to language AI), but sometimes, you will be the passenger who loops in other experts in the company. This is a beautiful thing for alignment purposes:

- You show you know what you're talking about because you know who can add value to the

conversation, so you loop them in. Equally important, you're not wasting the time of the person asking the question.

- You elevate the colleague and their expertise by bringing them into the conversation. You're expanding the scope of the conversation by bringing in others who can help the collective to advance.

You won't always arrive at this type of win-win scenario. But you absolutely should be developing your ability to identify opportunities to broaden the conversation. It starts with the homework you should do during downtime when no one asks questions.

Now, you may not always arrive at an entirely satisfactory conclusion when working with a stakeholder. Sometimes, invisible roadblocks will prevent you from advancing, no matter how much goodwill you or your counterpart puts into the effort. When this occurs, it's an invitation for you to pause and ask yourself — is this a space you want to be in? If you're uncomfortable with the situation or the culture in the company, what can you do to change it? There's always a win in it for you if you ask this, even if seemingly no one has won.

The three fundamentals of alignment

So many of the exchanges you will have are situational and context-dependent. But the attitude you take into them matters and can significantly alter the conversation's outcome. If we wanted to summarize the fundamentals of alignment, I believe the following three precepts will help you go a long way in any situation:

1. Come to the conversation with an open mind and an understanding that people on the other side will bring their own thoughts, knowledge, and biases. They're just doing their work, and the following is true — they don't know what you know (and vice versa). Your understand-

ing and knowledge of the topic vary, especially now that AI is such a prominent feature of our workdays, and you will find both sides are using different words to express the same thing. Bring the person you're talking to along, broaden their horizons, and help them help you. That's where alignment magically clicks into place.

2. Be persistent and patient. Sometimes, things will move slower than you want or not in the direction you want them to. Sometimes, it becomes personal and that's where human-centrism becomes essential. It is important to be persistent and patient and have a plan B (or plan C, D, or E, although hopefully they won't be needed).

3. Don't wait for people to come to you. Be proactive. Too often in the localization space, we suffer from the complex of being last in line or forgotten. Learn to package your value and show your counterpart where you're coming from. You may also need different types of packages depending on who you're talking to.

What is waiting for you once you read this article? More conversations and some you may have been putting off. Alignment has been a strategic priority for localization and globalization leaders for ages. It's nothing new — and certainly not exclusive to our industry. The crystal ball is a tempting lens to try and look through and an important function of leadership. A few years ago, the crystal ball question looked at a horizon of 4-5 years; today, it's 4-6 months. When working with people, you have an opportunity to make them see the trajectory and the journey we're all on. Some things may take time, but we're also working on accelerated timeframes, where things evolve fast. Seek out the conversations you avoided. Those are the ones that move the needle.

Humans at the Core



KATEŘINA GAŠOVÁ

Global Quality Director at Argos Multilingual

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.

Humans are always curious about how to make our lives easier. Two years ago, GenAI appeared on the scene. Given that the technology (i.e., LLMs) has “language” in its name, it's no surprise that our industry was eager to adopt it. Today, the initial wave of astonishment has gradually given way to moderate acceptance.

2023 may go down as the Big Year of GenAI Research and Experimentation. Experimenting with GenAI opened a new realm of possibilities. Still, more importantly, it helped identify risks associated with its uncontrolled use and the limitations and challenges of rushing blindly toward implementation.

Despite our collective and often highly collaborative efforts, it is fair to say that we are still far from having figured out AI. For every solution we seemingly find, a new big question appears. It's not all doom and gloom, though — far from it. In pursuing sustainable AI adoption, we must consider the role of humans.

40%

What is humans' place in the brave new AI world?

A glance at your LinkedIn feed or into the “Other” Outlook folder is enough to reveal that, along with news of yet another breakthrough in AI research, the impact of AI on human activity and roles is one of the most frequently discussed topics. Personally, I am very optimistic. For me, it’s no longer about “humans in the loop.” With AI, it’s all about “humans at the core.”

Now, and until the next major leap in technology development, AI will only be as good (or imperfect) as its creators. Humans drive technology development, not the other way around. AI is the result of human ingenuity. It can address industry challenges such as scale, speed, and resource limitations. Yet, AI still relies on us to make sense of what it produces. For the time being, to *think* is a uniquely human capability.

In the field of quality management, which is closest to my heart, AI presents an opportunity to elevate traditional quality management concepts within the localization workflow. This is a shift from analytic, atomized quality gatekeeping to end-to-end quality management. Instead of focusing primarily on counting errors in the translation output, we start by exploring the key business and production attributes that define product quality. Questions like “Who is the user, and what’s important to them?” and “How do we balance risk, budget, and timeline?” become central. From there, we work backward, breaking down the use-case-driven production workflow into detailed tasks, ensuring that humans are engaged only when necessary to address challenges that arise because AI is “just” a technology.

The key to success lies in how precisely we can define and orchestrate the most appropriate mix of quality management and control activities performed by AI and humans throughout the entire localization workflow to ensure the

desired product quality. We see buyer-side organizations and service providers investing thousands of hours and dollars into experiments to optimize AI capabilities, often arriving at similar conclusions: A human touch is needed to produce contextually and emotionally appropriate content — whether during translation or as part of quality evaluation. Only humans can connect the dots that matter in a given situation, determine what needs editing or tweaking, prepare the right corpus, or formulate the most effective prompts. Even how production workflows are set up is an astonishing symbiosis of humans and technology.

Today, humans shape AI’s potential and determine its trajectory. Only with humans at the core can humans’ needs and expectations truly be met.

If your logic is to automate and streamline with the help of AI — and the business logic driving these decisions is ironclad — then the next question becomes:

When does the human come into the mix?

As a strong advocate of the humans-at-the-core principle, my answer would be: always. This is a bold statement, especially when everyone strives to deploy AI to achieve a no-touch content delivery process for creating a product that fully resonates with its users.

Although we’re more down to earth these days, we still encounter unrealistic and faulty expectations regarding AI-powered solutions. There remains a lack of understanding about what underlies AI technology, the prerequisites for integrating AI into the localization workflow, and so on.

Researchers and experts working with LLMs are familiar with concepts that we, as general stakeholders or linguists, tend to overlook: Technology doesn’t think; it generates output based on how

it has been trained. Transfer learning allows for rapid and extensive information sharing, but the training inputs are always broken down into very specific pieces of information. When humans train others — by sharing experience and knowledge — we do so holistically. We rarely break down knowledge into isolated concepts; instead, we share experiences and rely on intuition and the human ability to decode information.

We should remember these points whenever we consider integrating AI and carefully consider the context of AI applications. Take, for example, AI-assisted quality evaluation and the contexts in which it is applied:

- **Segment-level scoring:** Even trained LLMs produce segment-level scores that are difficult for a professional linguist to interpret. This is because humans assess the correctness of a sentence or segment within the context of the entire document, a specific situation or need, emotional tone, relevant knowledge, and more. However, these automated scores are extremely useful for quickly understanding quality improvements at a system level when training or creating language corpora.
- **Error annotation:** Despite using very sophisticated prompts, the types of errors identified by LLMs and the explanations provided are often inappropriate or incorrect. The root cause is that LLMs apply the contexts they were trained on, missing, for instance, the emotional nuances that require a different tone of voice, synonym, pun, or other subtleties.

This brings me to the next big question that needs to be asked:

When can you trust the machine?

You'll note that the question is not whether we can trust the machine. The real question is iden-

tifying, on the fly, with the context and knowledge of our situation at any given moment when we can trust the machine. AI can work wonders — creating reams of content, checking it, and generating detailed issue logs with just one click. In the AI world, the traditional “human’s role of producing (linguistic, quality) data” has shifted to “only a human can decide if this data is appropriate for the particular context” or, more generally, “whether and how much to trust this data.”

For AI technology, language is just data. For humans, language is a flexible tool that combines cultural concepts, modality, and context to communicate information in a way that is appropriate and effective for the situation. Tech delivers “output”; humans make it trustworthy and genuine. Humans — end-users — are at the end of the funnel, the ultimate beneficiaries of our expertise. As we’ve touched on elsewhere in this issue of Global Ambitions, there’s also the idea that humans still prefer human-created content. This is another reason to emphasize the human-at-the-core concept and the importance of elevating traditional quality management within the localization workflow.

As I’ve mentioned, quality is a complex concept composed of various perspectives and elements, all contributing to the final result — a memorable user experience. Today, when AI is still something of a “black box,” the only way to ensure quality, in my view, is by defining what quality means at every step of the process until the final result is achieved. This includes the translated word, the quality of the system you’ve built, the quality of the data set it uses, the quality of the people who interact with the system, and, last but not least, the quality of collaboration between those who design and use it. Quality is an inherent component of every step in the sequence, not just during the translation task. It’s the sum of the parts that makes or breaks the result.

Historically, buyers have been deciding about their localization operation (or any business operation!) based on a set of variables — cost, time, quality — and, usually, compromises are involved. This will continue to be how it's done. The answer to the question of when to trust the machine hinges on understanding the place and role of the human first (back to the idea of human-machine synergy) and comes with a series of smaller questions you will need to ask:

- Which tasks must involve a human in the process?
- What profile is needed for the particular task?
- What are your requirements and expectations — from the system, AI tech, and results that will appear in your product?
- How do you know you've done enough to manage risk and make end-users happy?

What pathway is there for humans to evolve?

Evolution is constant. By now, it is abundantly clear that we must adapt to thrive. When reflecting on the role humans will continue playing in the localization operation of the future, it's evident that our current skills and competencies won't be enough to coexist with AI.

Take, for example, the role of a translator. Typically, you follow the source text, rely on your intuition, and use context and available reference materials to select the right word for the translation. You do not necessarily pause to consider the sociocultural influences or implications of the word you've chosen (if you're good at your craft, it simply flows). This classic scenario occurs countless times in a linguist's workday. Now, imagine you're a linguist tasked with helping to create or edit linguistic data for machine training purposes. This could involve translating very specific and complex concepts or sifting through

pages of profanity-laden segments so the machine knows what not to use. You could say this is a non-standard task, but now, with LLMs, it's calling for a new set of creative or expert skills that linguists will need to develop.

Then there is the relatively new discipline of prompt engineering and the related questions of how and where it fits in the workflow and whether it's a task for linguists. The traditional linguist, however, is not a prompt engineer (remember the earlier idea of humans and machines “thinking” differently). To effectively guide the system through prompts, you need to be a linguist and an engineer both. Prompting requires a skill set closer to that of a developer who understands the underlying architecture of the language model. As we're heading towards embedding prompting in conventional CAT tools, it's clear that our only pathway is upskilling.

And one last question for the road:

What does the future hold?

There is a paradox here. With AI, the human is more visible and important than ever before. Technology enabled the democratization of access to content in the users' native languages and is broadening our horizons. The humans are the centerpiece — we, localizers, do our work for them to help them accomplish their objectives and broaden their horizons. So, in the grand scheme of things, how risky and important are the minutiae of translation errors?

In the long run, AI may support our humanity and multiculturalism more than any individual's or company's effort. AI forces us to reexamine our place in the chain and forces us to work on ourselves and our traits — most of all those we didn't think we had or didn't think about developing before. This is our pathway to coexisting with AI.

Quality in Translation: Back to Service



GUILLAUME DENEUFBOURG

Teacher at University Translation

Guillaume Deneufbourg could be hailed as the quintessential "jack of all trades" in the field of translation. Former translation project manager, he is now simultaneously a university translation teacher, an award-winning literary translator, a boutique translation agency manager, an individual contractor for the UN and an engaged member of the voluntary sector (as a former president of the Belgian association CBTI and as a current FIT council member).

Both in university translation courses and in the professional market, a distinction is made when considering the skills that make a good translator: translation as a *product* and translation as a *service*.

This distinction is not merely academic; it highlights a fundamental conflict in how translation work is perceived and valued. This conflict arises because, while the final product — a well-translated document — is crucial, the process and service surrounding this product are equally important. By focusing solely on the product, we risk undervaluing the broader skills that ensure the translation meets all client needs effectively and efficiently.

Translation as a *product* refers to the final text as delivered to the client. This document must be accurate, consistent, and tick every box in the client's brief. When assessing the product, the focus



is often on criteria such as accuracy, flow, readability, and how faithful the translation is to the source text. House's (1997) model of translation quality assessment is a classic in this field, but as experts would no doubt agree, translation quality is very much open to debate. To keep things simple, let's work with the premise that a quality translation is one that meets the client's expectations, i.e., it is "fit for purpose."

In contrast, translation as a *service* encompasses the full service provided by a language professional, sometimes called "entrepreneurial" skills (Thelen, 2022), including project management, exchanges with the client, meeting deadlines, and adapting to the client's specific requirements. This is, therefore, a broader concept that covers not only the quality of the text itself but also how the translator (or translation agency) manages the overall service. In short, those much-vaunted "soft skills" or, to use a more topical term, "interpersonal skills" (the two concepts are not completely interchangeable).

This subject has already been extensively researched. Let's take a closer look at two classic systems or models: one that applies to academia (the European Master's in Translation (EMT) competence framework) and the other to the professional world (ISO 17100).

The EMT model is a competence framework developed by the European Commission to standardize and improve the quality of translator training at the Master's level in Europe. It identifies a number of essential skills that future translation professionals need, not least "service" skills such as project management, which entails managing translation projects efficiently from start to finish, including planning, executing, monitoring, and finalizing jobs while adhering to deadlines and clients' specifications.


Communication skills are also key – communicating clearly and professionally with clients, listening

to their translation needs, clarifying expectations, and providing regular project status updates. And last but not least comes quality assurance (implementing rigorous quality assurance procedures to check that translations are accurate and consistent and to deal with complaints).

ISO 17100:2015 also sets out requirements for translation services but focuses more on the translation process as a whole. For example, it stipulates the "four-eyes" independent review principle and an effective complaints handling system to address any "non-conformities." In informal discussions, some translation professionals have even argued that in practice, how you deal with customer dissatisfaction (which is bound to crop up at some point in a long-term working relationship, whether justified or not) is ultimately more important than any quality assurance measures you might put in place. This seems quite a radical view to me, but I do share it to some extent. In fact, as I pointed out during my presentation at last year's ATA conference in Miami, a complaint – however anxiety-provoking it may be when it lands in your inbox – is always an excellent opportunity to show your client that you're actively listening to them (even when you know you're in the right) and to demonstrate your professionalism.

In view of the growing prevalence of artificial intelligence in our profession, it's not unreasonable to suggest that soft skills and a service ethos are becoming increasingly important in the translation business: more and more tasks are being fully or partially automated, reducing human input to management, checks, support, and advice.

These days, many agencies highlight the efficiency of their processes or the quality of their translations, but they rarely describe themselves as experts in service provision. In fact, the opposite trend is emerging, with human interac-



"In today's world, where everything is happening at a faster pace and processes are over-automated, **service is becoming a rare commodity."**

tion being kept to a minimum to cut costs and streamline processes. The result is a growing number of automated platforms where clients can upload files to be translated and specify their requirements using drop-down menus.

This is a mistake, in my opinion. While this streamlining process is obviously useful for multinationals, given the number of parties involved, I take the view that a service ethos can still be – or once again become? – something that really makes you stand out from the crowd. Just as some people are advocating adopting a “slow” approach in a whole host of areas (slow food, slow travel, slow management, etc.), I too support a return to more quality-driven, ethical, sustainable, authentic values – at least for those clients who are open to this way of thinking. Laura Hurot has even gone so far as to put forward the concept of slow translation (which I broadly support), emphasizing the importance of adopting a service ethos and having all the quali-

ties associated with interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen.

In today's world, where everything is happening at a faster pace and processes are over-automated, service is becoming a rare commodity. It may be a wise move to buck this trend and embrace more authentic values once again, at least in some areas of our business.

The aim here is not to advocate a return to the typewriter, but to reconcile the best of both worlds: using technology sensibly when appropriate, while also promoting the human touch, cultivating empathy, and putting service at the heart of our interactions. In my view, this combined approach is the best way to set ourselves apart and grow. We need to understand our profession and its challenges, move with the times, and make sure we serve our clients with integrity and passion so that each and every one of them feels supported and truly valued. This is the key to our success. And to our long-term future.

To successfully shift towards a service-oriented approach, here are some practical steps and examples that individuals or agencies can implement. By integrating these practical steps, translation profes-

sionals can better balance the use of technology with the indispensable human touch, ultimately enhancing the overall client experience and fostering stronger, more sustainable relationships.

01

Enhance Communication Skills:

- Regularly update clients on the progress of their projects.
- Use clear and professional language in all communications.
- Actively listen to client feedback and incorporate it where feasible.

02

Implement Robust Project Management:

- Adopt project management tools like LSP Expert or Proteomos.
- Ensure thorough planning and scheduling to meet client expectations without last-minute rushes.
- Maintain detailed records of client preferences and requirements to streamline future projects.

03

Offer Personalized Services:

- Engage with clients to understand their specific needs and preferences.
- Provide tailored solutions rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Make sure you always offer consultancy services to advise clients on best practices for their translation projects.

04

Focus on Quality Assurance:

In addition to implementing the usual “four-eyes” principle for all translations, develop a systematic process for handling and resolving complaints promptly and effectively. More specifically on complaint management, you might want to take a look at the congress presentation I gave at the American Translators Association Annual Conference in Miami (October 2023): Received A Quality Complaint? Say Yes! How to address quality issues and show your value. In a nutshell:

Prompt Response:

Respond to complaints quickly to show clients their concerns are taken seriously. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide an estimated timeline for resolution.

Thorough Investigation:

Conduct a detailed review of the complaint to understand its root cause. Gather all relevant information, including the original brief, translation, and client feedback.

Transparent Communication:

Keep the client informed throughout the investigation process. Explain the steps being taken to address their concerns and any interim measures implemented.

Resolution and Follow-Up:

Provide a clear explanation for what happened and a practical solution to the issue, such as revising the translation or offering a discount on future services. Follow up with the client after the resolution to ensure their satisfaction and to rebuild trust.

Continuous Improvement:

Use feedback from complaints to identify areas for improvement in processes and services. Implement changes to prevent similar issues from arising in the future, demonstrating a commitment to quality and client satisfaction.

05

Build Strong Relationships:

- Foster long-term relationships with clients through consistent and reliable service.
- Show appreciation for client loyalty with personalized thank-you notes or occasional discounts.
- Conduct regular check-ins to understand how you can better serve their evolving needs.

The Present and the Future by Those Who Help Drive Change



KONSTANTIN SAVENKOV
CEO at Intento



PETR ANTROPOV
CSO & Co-founder at Lokalise



IAN EVANS
CEO at XTM International



SERHIY DMYTRYSHYN
Founder at CrowdIn



ALON LAVIE
VP of AI Research at Phrase

Language technology providers are at the vanguard of driving change and helping the masses — the clients, the partners, the linguists — make sense of it and employ technology smartly. They show ways to tackle big, hairy challenges and enable success. Given their central role in harnessing tomorrow's technology, we've asked leaders of our tech partners two essential questions to try and capture the AI zeitgeist.

1. How would you characterize the state of the industry today?
2. How are you getting ready for the future? What are some of the actions you've been taking to future-proof your business?





Intento

The language industry demands close collaboration between skilled professionals, software developers, and AI, with extensive supply chains and complex technology stacks. AI advancement has been the primary driver of progress over the past two years. The capacity of AI to enhance the existing translation workforce and legacy software stack is nearing its maximum potential, indicating that the lack of expertise and technology bottlenecks often hinder further improvements. On the technology side, examples include approaches to content segmentation and formatting. On the human side, outdated pricing models frequently place all technology risks on translators, making them hesitant to upskill.

Previously, it was believed that the pace of innovation in the language industry was determined by the ability of large companies to change the status quo. However, we now observe that there is often a strong desire for change, but the limiting factor is the ability of existing vendors to innovate and uplevel their staff, systems, and business models. At the enterprise level, this may lead to a tipping point where shadow localization grows as other, more agile teams take matters into their own hands, being able to build from scratch rather than change. This is suboptimal, as achieving the best language experience for end-users requires aligning all localization efforts under the guidance of people with a passion for language.

This is why we believe next-gen AI integration technologies and supporting enterprise localization teams with AI expertise are more critical than ever. For integration, we aim to make multi-agent AI systems work within the existing localization stack by providing them with full context and metadata.

Regarding expertise, we recognize that upskilling the workforce will take longer than expected, so we're investing in generative AI to automate processes that require scarce expertise, such as building automatic translation solutions for specific quality requirements and performing AI maintenance and change management processes. We've earned our reputation as a trusted innovation partner to our customers, and now we're using AI internally to maintain this at our growing business scale.



Lokalise

New technologies are disrupting the localization industry, reducing costs, improving quality control, streamlining workflows, and attracting businesses that are new to localization. As a result, a world where language no longer limits consumer choices is becoming a reality sooner than we could have imagined.

AI and machine learning have been part of localization for years now. However, recent developments have the potential to enhance localization processes further. The rapid adoption of tools like ChatGPT among consumers puts extra pressure on businesses to become multilingual and, in doing so, expands the localization market.

Browsers, operating systems, and devices such as the iPhone increasingly play a role in consumer-side localization. However, businesses still want to control their offerings in every language. We anticipate that businesses will start using a multilingual, ultra-personalized copy for every marketing message and product feature.

Both Lokalise and the localization industry will increasingly embrace technology, delegating rou-

tine tasks to machines and enhancing the value of human involvement. Technological improvements will lower entry barriers, leading to greater adoption among businesses of all sizes. This will drive industry players to focus more on specific customer segments. We're entering an exciting period. Combining new technologies and increased localization adoption will make businesses multilingual much sooner. We're planning to release new features and products to support these changes.

Localization services and products have become increasingly commoditized in recent years. We expect this trend to reverse, benefiting buyers, providers, and translators, whose added value should become more apparent.



XTM

The localization industry is faced with some decisions that it will have to address sooner rather than later, and these decisions will be influenced by how LLMs are deployed and who will provide them. TMS solutions that integrate robust LLMs will have the biggest impact on global customers in the short and mid-term, as they will be able to drive speed, quality, and data security in their results, three key factors that we know are required in this space. In summary, tech providers who embrace LLMs correctly will be those who will be able to drive higher value through their solutions.

Modern-day localization processes require various connected tools and stakeholders from different teams to achieve the desired results. We understand that to help our customers achieve their global goals, we must offer a solution that caters to every single need in the localization process. That is why we are building the translation platform of the future. The XTM Translation

Platform is an end-to-end headless and connected hub that incorporates a wide range of tools and the latest localization technology, making the localization process more agile for our customers.

Our integrated and interoperable hub enables our customers to plug and play the tools they need as and when necessary. To that end, we completed the acquisitions of XTRF and Rigi in 2021 and 2023, respectively, and will continue to look for opportunities to add to our platform with tools that can make the localization process faster, more agile, and, ultimately, more efficient for our customers. As technologies evolve and localization time frames shorten, we believe having a wide range of integrated, best-in-class tools at their fingertips will provide a competitive advantage that global enterprises can no longer afford to overlook in their path to global success.



Crowdin

Every day, we see AI competing with humans in translation tasks across a range of project types. The underlying technology (LLM vendors) is receiving unprecedented investment, driving continuous improvement. This leads us to believe that LLMs will continue to evolve.

Humans are likely to do less of the actual translation work in the near future. However, they will likely remain an integral part of the process for some time to come. We hope that TMSes will continue to be relevant, too, although they will need to evolve.

The workflow we foresee becoming common for many enterprises might look like this:

- **Human Oversight:** Due to the unpredictable nature of LLMs, human linguists will "take responsibility" for translations. In the absence of a major breakthrough, hallucinations will likely occur in

future LLMs.

- **Feedback Loop:** Any micro changes to AI translations introduced by humans will be fed back to the LLMs for improvement. TMS will serve more as an AI training studio than just a translation tool.
- **Context Supply:** Humans excel at absorbing context, a crucial element in translation that AI cannot match effortlessly. AI will rely on humans to provide the necessary context and guidance for the projects they translate.

Ultimately, we believe that with the help of the TMS of the future and LSPs, every multilingual business will have its own AI translation agent that is constantly improving.

"Humans are likely to do less of the actual translation work in the near future. However, **they will likely remain an integral part of the process for some time to come.**"

- Serhiy Dmytryshyn, Crowdin



Phrase

The localization industry is at a pivotal moment, driven by accelerating AI and machine learning advancements. Two critical questions shape our present and future: In a world where content explodes, how do we balance accelerating automation with maintaining high levels of control over translation quality? And how do we leverage AI to enhance efficiency without compromising content integrity?

The Phrase Localization Platform addresses these questions by implementing and integrating cutting-edge AI capabilities to unlock hyperautomation. This involves automating essential functionalities to streamline workflows while ensuring transparency and full control over quality. Advances in neural MT and LLMs have made MT both accurate and fluent for many languages and use cases. However, relying solely on MT presents unacceptable risks for most enterprise applications, necessitating a con-

trollable balance between automation and quality.

To future-proof our business, Phrase has been investing in sophisticated AI-driven capabilities and workflows designed to maximize MT value while optimizing the trade-off between automation and quality risk. Our flagship technologies — Phrase Next GenMT, Phrase QPS (Quality Performance Score), quality routing, Auto LQA (Automated Language Quality Assessment), and upcoming features such as automated review and asset curation — are central to this strategy.

The combination of this AI-driven feature set unlocks hyperautomated workflows that are customizable and adaptable to meet our client's business needs. This integrated approach balances precision with scalability, ensuring our clients maintain high translation quality while embracing automation efficiencies.

The localization industry is on the brink of a revolution driven by AI and hyperautomation. At Phrase, we are leading this transformation, ensuring our clients are prepared for the future with innovative solutions that enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and deliver the required translation quality standards.

Learn where you are with AI and what work remains to be done

The AI Maturity Model — or AIMM for short — is a universal framework Argos Multilingual developed based on qualitative feedback collected from those who are first in line with the task of operationalizing AI in localization workflows — the localization teams on the client side.

The AIMM aims to help teams learn what they need to do to get to the next step and realize the transformative potential of AI.

info.argosmultilingual.com/ai-maturity-model



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PART 2

Transitioning
Into the Future

Localization and Globalization: What if It's Bigger Than Us?



MIGUEL SEPULVEDA

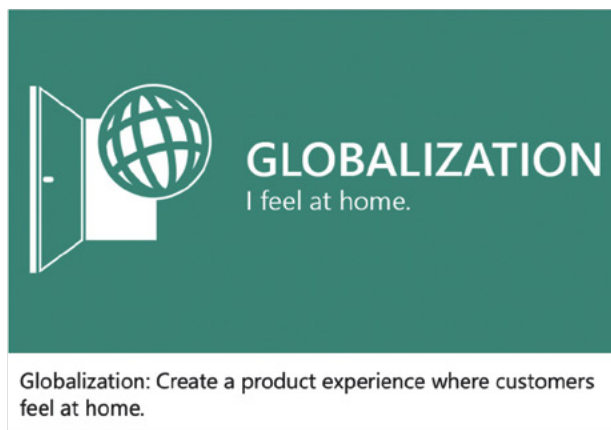
Globalization Director at King

Miguel Sepulveda started his career in 1995, working in language quality assurance for different products as part of the Lionbridge team. Currently, he is the Globalization Director at Microsoft Xbox - King Games. Miguel is also the author of the blog yolocalizo.com, a website dedicated to the Globalization industry and leadership strategies. With a wealth of experience in localization and business strategy, Miguel is committed to advancing the field through innovative practices and inclusive localization approaches.

One aspect that often goes unnoticed when a company decides to localize its products is that it has, deliberately or unwittingly, committed to inclusivity and accessibility. And once you commit, there is no space for half-measures. So, how about broadening the focus and making localization, globalization, inclusivity, and accessibility all part of the mission statement? Others are already doing it.

If you pause to think about it, localization and globalization are crucial elements of a broader global focus on accessibility and inclusion. This may be more evident to those in the language industry, but it's a message we must continue spreading far and wide. Accessibility is all about removing barriers.





The four Inclusive Growth Doorways of Microsoft's Product Inclusion Framework

ers. Sometimes, these barriers are physical, and other times, they are virtual. Both dimensions of accessibility are valid and widely accepted, yet the role of localization in helping to remove barriers is often overlooked. A barrier is anything that prevents you from achieving something or moving forward. Imagine you're reading a menu in a Korean street food restaurant. Is there anything more obstructive to having a good experience — and a full belly at the end — than not understanding what you read?

Not understanding a language is a barrier to use, a barrier that prevents you from enjoying a good user experience, and also a barrier to inclusivity. When a company decides not to adapt its

products to other markets, it is inadvertently making an exclusionary decision. It creates two user groups and makes the ones who don't speak the language feel like second-rate citizens. Therefore, localization and globalization are key parts of a broader strategy that goes beyond merely translating languages or adapting products to different markets; it encompasses ensuring that products are usable and beneficial for everyone, regardless of their language, culture, and cognitive or physical abilities.

As we look to the future, the importance of creating inclusive and accessible experiences will grow. Companies prioritizing these aspects will meet evolving ethical and legal standards, ben-

efit from increased user engagement, and be better positioned to expand their market reach. Really, what's not to like in taking the inclusive route?

Future prospects

As technology helps us create more interconnected systems, it is reasonable to expect the demand for accessible and inclusive products will only increase. Accessibility and inclusion will become standard practices rather than exceptions. Designing technologies and products with diverse user needs in mind from the outset will be crucial. Companies that fail to do so may lag in user adoption and market expansion. It is essential to create a sense of urgency about incorporating principles of inclusion and accessibility into our globalization strategy.

Learning from early adopters

There are valuable lessons to be learned from those who have integrated accessibility and inclusion into their company strategy. Look no further than Microsoft, which has developed the Product Inclusion Framework to help developers create more inclusive products for its professional software and gaming divisions. Katy Jo Wright, Head of Gaming for Everyone & Sustainability at Microsoft, unveiled this framework in a well-received presentation during the Games Development Conference (GDC) in March 2024 in San Francisco, presenting a model designed to revolutionize how developers approach creating digital products.

The presented model introduced four pillars — approachability, representation, globalization, and accessibility — that give developers the tools to make inclusive products that meet the needs of some three billion gamers globally. These pillars, or doorways as Microsoft defines them, open the door to a world where barriers fade away (Microsoft Product Inclusion Framework). As you can see, globalization is a core part of this initiative. But Microsoft is showing us that our industry and work

are part of something bigger and more wholesome — and that they matter.

Results and impact

The impact of ignoring accessibility is clear and goes beyond entertainment products such as the aforementioned video games. According to Forbes, in 2021, retailers risked losing as much as USD 828 million in sales over Christmas due to inaccessible websites. And that number has likely grown in recent years.

Legal issues can also threaten companies that do not consider accessibility as part of their strategy, as seen in the Supreme Court's decision against Domino's in a disability rights case (Slate). Thinking about accessibility and inclusion when designing products is not only the right thing to do, but also a moral obligation that we must gradually embrace since, according to the World Health Organization, 1.3 billion people worldwide experience significant disabilities.

However, despite our work being “the right thing to do” and contributing to something bigger, measuring the impact of the localization program's actions is as important as ever. Companies that fail to understand how their localization efforts contribute to their objectives will struggle to embed these efforts into their mission and vision. As management guru Peter Drucker said, “What gets measured gets managed.” The truth is that the localization industry has struggled for years to consistently measure the impact of globalization programs. It doesn't necessarily get easier if you shift your focus to include accessibility and inclusion.

Initial returns from focusing on accessibility and inclusion are promising, with companies reporting increased user satisfaction, higher engagement rates, and expanded market reach when investing in inclusive practices. Still, learning to quantify this impact with metrics is vital.

Measuring the Progress Towards Product Inclusion (source: Microsoft Product Inclusion Framework):

CATEGORY	METRIC	DESCRIPTION
Approachability	New User Retention Rate	Measures how many new users continue to use the product after initial adoption, indicating the product's initial appeal and usability for novices.
	Engagement	Measures the quality and quantity of time spent by users on the platform, indicating their ability to approach and engage with the ecosystem.
	Customer Service Satisfaction	Surveys or metrics from customer service interactions gauge if users feel supported, reflecting the quality and approachability of customer support.
	Trust and Safety Incident Reports	Quantifies incidents that breach trust or safety, aiming for a reduction, reflecting how safety and trust are built into the system.
Representation Metrics	Demographic User Data	Breakdown of the product user base by demographic factors, essential for understanding if the product resonates with a diverse audience.
	Community Engagement	Participation rates of underrepresented communities in forums, beta tests, or co-creation initiatives. Active engagement suggests that co-creation efforts are effective, leading to a sense of belonging among participants.
	Sentiment Analysis by Demographics	Analysis of user sentiment segmented by different demographic groups, helping identify if certain groups have less positive experiences.
	Inclusive Content Ratio	The proportion of content featuring or catering to underrepresented groups, measuring the extent of representation in the product's content.
Globalization Metrics	Market Penetration	Measures engagement with users in each region, indicating global reach and acceptance.
	Localization Quality	Measures the effectiveness of localized content through user feedback and error rate reporting, reflecting the quality of localization efforts.
	Growth Markets	Measures the rate of growth in monthly active users (MAU) or monthly active devices (MAD) in a region compared to the growth rate in the healthiest markets, indicating growth proportions and market health.
	Cultural Relevance Score	User ratings on how culturally relevant they find the product, assessing whether the product feels at home in various cultures.
	Global Customer Feedback Loop Efficiency	The time it takes for global customer feedback to be acknowledged and acted upon, indicating responsiveness to global user needs.
	Regional/Market Views on Metrics	Analyzing other metrics (such as New User Retention and Engagement) with a regional or market view to reveal disparities in the user experience.

Accessibility Metrics	Usage of Accessibility Features	Metrics on how often accessibility features are used by whom, showing how many users benefit from accessible design.
	Usability of Accessibility Features	Measures the usability of an accessibility feature or capability, showing user feedback on accessibility features.
	User Ability Success Rate	Success rates of users with disabilities completing core tasks, indicating how well the product supports users with various abilities.
	Compliance with Legal Accessibility Standards	The degree to which the product meets legal accessibility standards, serving as a baseline measure of accessibility compliance.
	Support and Help Desk Tickets	The number of support tickets related to accessibility, indicating areas where users face challenges with accessibility features.

Let's once more turn to Microsoft for guidance on how to measure the impact of our actions.

Blueprint for the future

Successfully embedding inclusion in product development will require deliberate action. This involves focusing on approachability, representation, and globalization. Companies should seek feedback from diverse user groups, partner with local creators and communities, and engage community members throughout the product development process. It's also crucial to customize experiences with easy-to-use personalization options and design products that remove language and cultural barriers.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, as each region and market requires tailored approaches. This is nothing new for language industry professionals. Yet this also puts localizers in an

excellent position to help product teams create inclusive and accessible user experiences for diverse global users.

It may be difficult to pinpoint the precise moment we started it, but we are already on the journey toward a more accessible and inclusive future (digital or physical). By integrating localization and globalization efforts with accessibility and inclusion best practices, companies can create products that are not only widely accessible but also deeply meaningful, improving lives and leaving lasting memories. This approach will lead to a more equitable product landscape where everyone can benefit from technological advancements regardless of background or abilities. Embracing these practices today is shaping up as one of the important pathways we must take to continue meeting the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Setting up Language Technology for Inclusive and Non-Binary Language



CRISTINA ANSELM

Machine Translation and Translation Technology Expert

Technology and innovation enthusiast, Cristina has worked in the video game industry for nearly 15 years, with several different roles all related to project and program management. She has taken care of the localization of several AAA titles to make sure to deliver the best player experience possible. Her focus for the last 7 years has been implementing AI technologies to automate workflows, acting as a program manager and product owner for several developments around machine translation and AI. Her goal is to pave the way for AI and technology to be welcome and used in the localization industry and be seen as a help rather than an enemy, a powerful tool that can enhance productivity, without jeopardizing quality and creativity.

In recent years, we've seen a slow but steady evolution in language driven by significant societal and cultural shifts. Language is becoming more and more inclusive, not only regarding biases related to gender, ethnicity, age, religion, and so on, but also evolving from a binary view into a non-binary one. This may be a sign of our times, but it's also becoming essential for brands to include people who identify themselves as non-binary individuals when designing user experiences.

Inclusivity is not just a temporary trend; it is becoming a vital aspect of fostering respect, understanding, and equality. Our ways of communicating — facilitated and multiplied by the digital world and instantaneous access to products and services — have been changing, and these changes are reflected in how we speak

70%

and write and, consequently, in how we localize content. We must carefully choose words that acknowledge and respect any individual regardless of their gender, ethnicity, age, or any other characteristics. Moving away from a binary and deterministic approach, we can create an environment where everyone feels safe, heard, and valued.

This shift naturally impacts the localization field, where our stated mission has always been ensuring the content resonates with diverse audiences. So, how can you afford not to include inclusivity in the localization process (pun not intended)?

How to embed inclusivity in your localization process

Since inclusivity is relatively new to localization, it is not yet reflected in how conventional language technology is structured. Many studies have proven that machine translation perpetuates a lot of biases in the language, using the predominant masculine form for certain professions, for example, or not being able to reproduce non-binary forms. Because there is not yet enough non-binary data to surpass the huge amount of legacy data used to create language models, we need to be very careful when implementing the latest language technology in the localization processes if our objective is to create inclusive content. We need to train the models to ensure the output follows specific rules and post-edit until the machine-introduced biases are completely removed.

The first step is to create inclusive language guidelines with specific rules to follow while post-editing and adapting previously translated content so it can be used to retrain language models. The guidelines need to be comprehensive and, of course, language-specific.

Since inclusivity (and language in general) is

constantly evolving, it's important to be up to date with the most recent trends and changes, especially for non-binary aspects. It's fundamental to do a lot of research to ensure the guidelines comply with the different country regulations and language institutions. Accademia della Crusca for Italy and Real Academia for Spain are examples of two such institutions dedicating a lot of space to this topic to make sure that the language choices are approved and adopted by the countries. This aspect can pose a particular challenge, especially to the training of language models, as it's not something that can be done very often, both for the amount of data needed and the care needed to prepare the data. It can entail a fair bit of manual work and be challenging financially, as training a model can be quite an investment.

Some of the aspects to consider when creating guidelines are the following:

- Make sure the communication is gender inclusive and that no group is consciously excluded, especially when referring to a person's sexual orientation. For example, you may want to use sentences like *"hi everyone"* instead of *"hi guys"* when referring to a mixed group.
- Each language has a specific way of addressing non-binary people. Make sure to use a direct non-binary approach or an indirect non-binary approach (gender neutral) that is in accord with each language's preferred approach. In English, you would use the pronouns *"they/they,"* whereas in other languages, you might want to use passive forms, for instance.
- Do not use any racist or sexist messaging, and make sure to exclude anything of this kind from the text.
- Make sure to use the correct inclusive language when talking about or to people with specific disabilities and mental health.
- Religious connotations should be handled

carefully to make sure the message is not perceived as offensive.

- Social and economic background and age should not be presented as a reason for discrimination or in a derogatory way.

As stated before, each language has its own rules for inclusive and gender-neutral language. That's why preparing the data for model training will be quite specific, although we're also seeing a standardization of processes. Since we usually don't have the luxury of eliminating content because we need to avoid the risk of losing too much data for training, a deep cleaning is not the preferred solution and a less heavy process is recommended. That being said, the process needs to be more detailed, and that's why more manual work might be needed to ensure the cleaning process is tailored to what we want to achieve.

Here are some best practices:

- Choose the data you want to use carefully — create a good mix of training data that contains enough representative content of the result you want to achieve. It can be very different if you want to create an engine focused on more generic content, or it can be very tailored to a specific area if you have enough specific data.
- Depending on the level of variety and fluency you want to achieve, you may want to deduplicate the training set, eliminating exact duplicates, i.e., sentences containing the same source and target translations.
- Remove short segments that don't offer any meaning (i.e., one-word segments) but use the ones containing the gendered word to generate full sentences using a gender-inclusive approach (e.g., segments that contain names of professions).
- Use a variety of sentences containing both binary and non-binary and non-gendered examples. You can use gender tags, which are

"Inclusivity is not just a temporary trend; **it is becoming a vital aspect of fostering respect, understanding, and equality.**"

very common in the context of video games, for example. While non-natural language should usually be eliminated, in this case, it is proven to help address the correct translation of specific cases.

- Use a balanced dataset to tune your model. This dataset should contain enough examples for the output you want to achieve, further ensuring you eliminate biases from the model.
- To ensure a balanced dataset, generate different versions of the same segments or slightly different versions containing non-gendered or non-binary examples. This process can be manual, or you can use LLMs with the help of RAG (retrieval-augmented generation), i.e.,

SOURCE	TARGET	ACTION
Weakling.	Débil.	Reject, short word
Welcome to my home.	Bienvenide a mi casa.	Original sentence was “Welcome”. Keep and generate full sentences with alternates
Welcome.	Bienvenido a mi casa.	
Welcome.	Bienvenida a mi casa.	
What, are you crazy!?	¿Te has vuelto loque?!	Non-binary example
Reach Spellcaster Rank 3 -Adept	Alcanzar el nivel 3 de hechicería: {M0.adepto}{F0.adepta}{N0.adepte}.	Use of tags
It's me.	Ese soy yo.	Keep, near duplicates
It's me.	Esa soy yo.	
It's me.	Eso soy yo.	

using examples to help the technology generate the desired content.

Here are a few examples of what your choices might look like when preparing the data. Due to the relative shortage of data you must contend with, you may have to choose something you would usually discard, as stated above. This choice of training data might seem very unusual to any language technology expert, but it will do until the available data grows.

Naturally, these are just some tips and best practices for leveraging your tech to create inclusive copy. The challenge is how we, as a society,

continue to engage with and expand the topic of inclusivity. We're trending in the direction of language technology becoming more commonplace and easy to use by the masses — as opposed to being reserved for savvy language industry professionals — so training and fine-tuning the models to make sure the output is inclusive and non-binary-friendly is crucial if we want to reflect all the beautiful varieties of human nature and expression. The collaborative process between companies, tech developers, inclusive language experts, and non-binary communities is fundamental and has just started.

More or More Meaningful: Scale and Creativity in the Era of Product-Led Growth



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 LOTE users each month.

Change(s) ahead

What does the future hold for localization? A reasonable response would be something like, “We don’t know all the details yet, but AI is going to change everything.” That may prove to be the case, but when I look at what’s being asked of the localization team in my organization, and when I speak to my colleagues in software localization at other organizations, I get the impression that a more dramatic reorientation is needed than the one AI appears to have in store for us.



In my view, the situation has an ironic element to it because AI, at least the way it's currently being deployed, is acting as a stalwart *against* the kind of change that we, as localizers, will need to stay relevant. The risk of obsolescence stems from the fact that the tools of e-commerce and product growth have become razor-sharp over the past 15 years, and their asks of localization teams are shifting to suit new strategies, tactics, and ways of working. If we stay the course, even with all the promised innovations of AI, we risk becoming obsolete.

My experience of the shifting needs at Canva can serve as an example. The big challenges the team addressed just five years ago were focused on scale. We quickly launched in 100 languages, took on a project producing hundreds of thousands of localized templates, and translated tens of thousands of words each week. But in 2024, our goals are not to launch in 100 more languages (though we'd like to...), produce a million localized templates, or translate hundreds of thousands of words each week. On the contrary, our team has *narrowed* our scope to a few areas of the product. But the depth and meaningfulness of our localization work has increased exponentially. For the recent Canva Create event and associated product launches, the team produced copy that had been meticulously crafted and undergone user testing and internal vetting. They provided visual media to product and marketing teams which utilized localized brand assets, photography, and talent. And they provided localized onboarding materials with bespoke screen recordings and guided exercises for customers to try the new features being launched.

Two eras of software localization

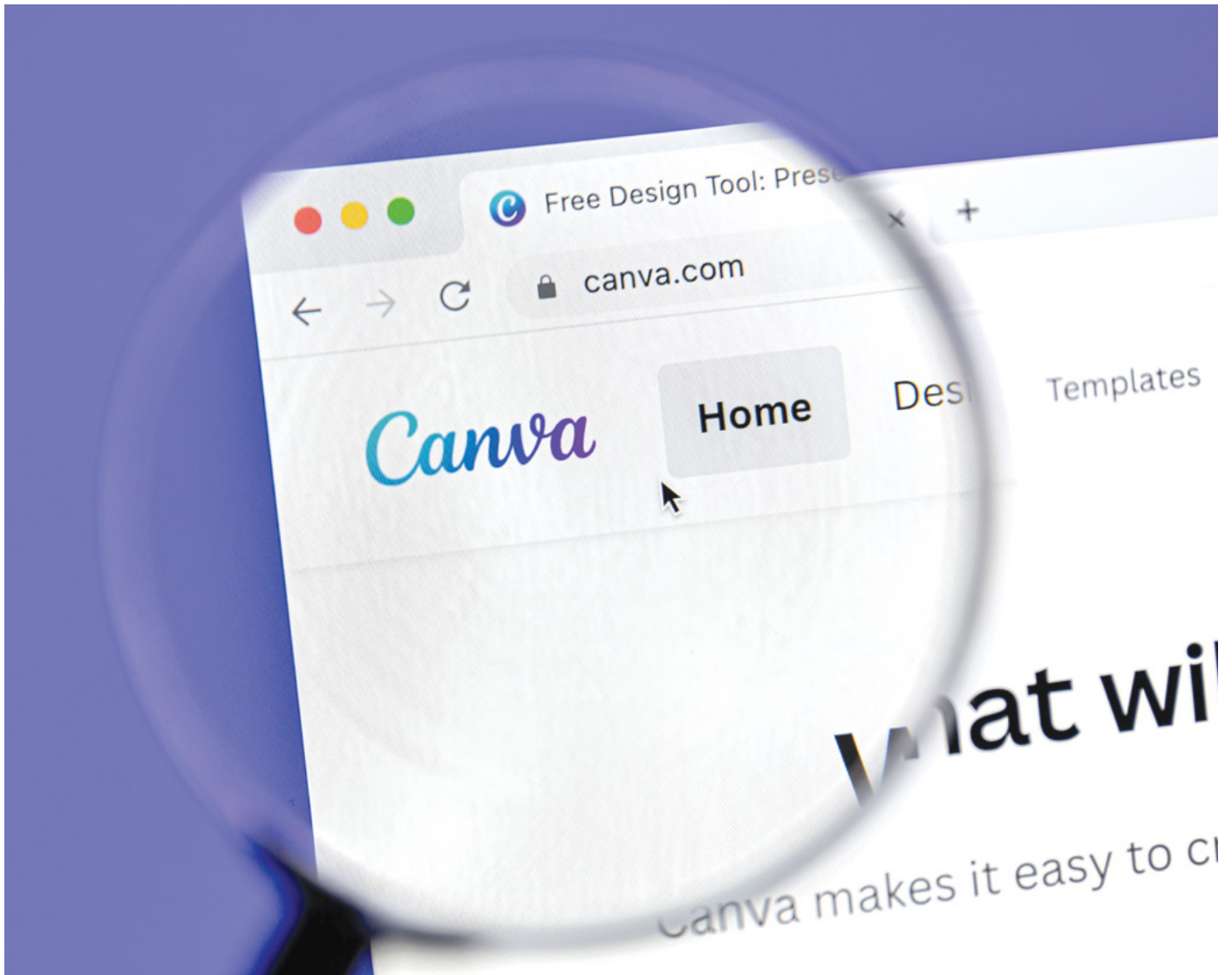
Part of this shift is surely just the natural evolution of a localization team and the broader organiza-

tion it's a part of. But some observations stand out to me: our reliance on the typical machinery of "the localization industry" (i.e., LSPs and TMSes) shrunk during this evolution, our stakeholders are happier for the change, and AI hasn't been central to the innovations we've seen.

This all seems at odds with the mooted "AI content explosion." What's driving this trajectory from the localization industry and its preferred model and tools? From my vantage point, it seems that LSPs and localization software have remained fixated on meeting the needs of a couple of project archetypes: (1) The simultaneous launch of software products in many languages and (2) the reproductions of voluminous content marketing and product support documentation.

Faced with challenges of these sorts for 40-odd years, the industry got really good at producing "direct" translations quickly and cheaply. The way it achieved that, roughly speaking, was by minimizing the role of slow and expensive human creativity. The Localization Industry is a goliath supply chain of LSPs providing (ideally interchangeable) linguists and a handful of TMS players offering the same set of technologies (Computer Assisted Translation, translation memory, glossaries, and post-edited machine translation), which are all elaborations of this same trajectory. And so with GenAI, which aims to further compartmentalize the surface area of human creativity.

Meanwhile, the growth functions of software (and probably other) industries have not been static at all. Twenty-odd years ago, and just a few hundred meters from Canva's headquarters in Sydney, Australia, Atlassian pioneered "product-led growth" (or PLG) as a means of selling software. In a nutshell, product-led growth stands in contrast to a traditional sales growth function. So, where once software businesses grew revenue by hiring salespeople to do cold calls, follow up



on leads, etc., many software businesses today allow potential customers to use the software for free and provide some pathway for them to upgrade to a subscription. Salespeople are often still involved in the process, but the point is that a customer's decision to purchase (or not) now happens *within the product*.

More or more meaningful?

That should be a seismic change for localization because, in the sales-led model, the bit that needs to be fine-tuned for each market is the salesperson. Salespeople are great at this — their job is to understand their potential

customers, anticipate their needs, and funnel product feedback to the developer teams. But in the product-led model, the bit that needs to be fine-tuned for each market is the product itself and, as a consequence, we've seen for many years now an explosion in the attention paid to onboarding, checkout, and customer retention surfaces, which are scrutinized and iterated upon by product designers, UX researchers, and product managers as incredibly valuable and impactful surfaces.

This is the crux of a decade's change in my view: the value of software product surfaces has increased with the sophistication of product

growth teams, and with that, the incentives have shifted from producing a lot of multilingual content quickly and cheaply to producing very high-value content that creates measurable impact in target markets. The required function of localization in this new model is the exact opposite of what the localization industry has evolved to serve and which AI is currently accelerating; the challenge is not to remove slow and expensive human creativity from the process but to incorporate *more* of it.

Risk and opportunity

If I'm right about all this, the future of localization is about understanding customers and creating experiences that move them through the customer journey toward purchasing. If the seller side of the localization industry will be more than a small part of this future, it will need to adapt.

What might that look like? On the software side, localization will need tooling that operates further upstream in the tech stack to enable far more complex content variants. The target should no longer be duplicating strings of copy in multiple languages but allowing for divergent blocks of design content: CTA buttons, modals, banners, and so on. On the services side, the expertise that LSPs provide will need to become deeper and broader. Linguists still have a (substantial) place, but the required expertise goes beyond this into UI design, UX research, and content strategy. These skills are much harder to deliver at the arm's length of an agency partner but also provide much more scope for services, which help bridge the stubborn divide between localization services and measurable impact — the elusive “ROI” of localization.

These few comments are admittedly far from being a roadmap to more successful localization teams and more suitable language services and software. I want to convey what my experience

"...the incentives have shifted from producing a lot of multilingual content quickly and cheaply to producing very high-value content that creates measurable impact in target markets."

at Canva suggests about the future of client-side localizers and the opportunity that creates on the seller side. My experience at Canva tells me that client-side localizers can't let their impact be molded by what the industry wants to sell us. Nonetheless, the localization landscape will continue to demand fractional rather than permanent talent — very few companies operate at the scale necessary to be able to hire in-house teams delivering multilingual UX research, visual design, and product expertise — and this gap isn't currently being filled by AI or other service niches. The story is similar on the software side, where tooling is too tightly oriented towards strings of copy instead of the larger blocks of design that drive impact in PLG companies. I'm confident that *someone* will bridge this gap. I'd like the opportunity to add to rather than take from our industry.

Resetting the Status Quo: Will We Need a TMS 10 Years From Now?



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 analysed 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.

The economy has been governed by the ebb and flow of supply and demand for the last 300-odd years. The demand for goods and services impacts the cost of employment, profits and retirement funds impact the capital markets, and market growth drives capital investments towards new goods and services. While the importance of these individual factors changes over time, and governments take different approaches to regulating the markets, the key factors and considerations remain the same.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, marketing did everything possible to work against the perfect information theory postulated by theoretical economists to describe a well-working capitalist society. With perfect information in a market, all consumers and producers have complete and instantaneous knowledge of all market prices, their own utility, and own cost functions. This is one of the prerequisites for the perfect market situation, which traditional models best describe.



Enter AI. Or rather, Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), the next development in line to disrupt the status quo. Forget about the narrow niche of localization for a moment. AGI could be the invisible hand guiding you while it crunches everyone else's possible decisions. It could make more informed decisions than employees — good old humans — who often decide for their own good and take the path of least resistance rather than the one in the best interest of the organization they work for.

It is a heady question, what will happen to the linguistic jobs? An even bigger question is what will happen to jobs in general? Let's assume AGI can make better purchasing, hiring, and investment decisions than people, and computers will not only deliver products and services, but also make buying decisions. If computers read our texts, they will not need impeccable quality. Do we really need to worry about linguist jobs more than we worry about the world's welfare?

Then there is the TMS. The question isn't what will happen to the TMS, but more what will happen to money, capital, and the feeling of security. Will tech enable such a societal leap and render our current problems obsolete?

Data and structured data

If computers are to take over the organization of our information, we will probably see complex structuring of data. As a side note, this is not what transformer models are good at today, but developments like knowledge graphs are the first steps in this direction. As a buyer, you perform text-based discovery. However, when comparing options and presenting to others, you make comparison tables, which is already a structuring of information.

Structures change in complexity over time because of external factors. Take the example of a Request for Proposal (RFP) answer, one type of structured information. Before 2023, no client-side translation management system RFP contained any LLM- or AI-related questions. On the vendor side, before 2023, no TMS vendor compared themselves

to others on what LLMs they support, whether they support only single-pass or multi-pass prompts, whether they store information about segments where a translation was made or corrected by an LLM, and if so, which prompt was executed at what time by which engine, etc. These pieces of information are essential to compare today's LLM results with the results you get a year or two from now. They do not change the usefulness of a TMS now. They are future-proofing them.

Engineering, as a principle, is about understanding a problem in all its details and solving it, if possible, in one go. Software technologies today often become outdated because the underlying database does not support the changes required by the passage of time. Databases can be updated, and new databases can be built and optimized. However, this requires a willingness and understanding on the vendor side.

The actual need is often overshadowed by what the vendors want you to perceive. For example, I spent weeks trying to understand how an attractive technology like HubSpot could be used to manage sales in a translation company. HubSpot's data structure is missing two important concepts used in our industry:

1. There is no straightforward way of applying fuzzy matches.
2. Either/or products are not an option: you cannot offer your customer two quotes, one on MT post-editing and one on human translation, in one pipeline.

Either HubSpot implements these requirements and becomes more feature-rich to support the current translation industry, or the translation industry changes and/or finds a way to use what it supports. In this particular example, guess which outcome is likelier than the other.

Will AI-driven technologies revolutionize data structuring and software refactoring? Will we, as an industry, retain the same requirements or change them to accommodate what needs to be stored? Our industry is currently not driving the change.

Therefore, we need to examine the question from two perspectives: Why do we need a TMS now, and how are the LLM systems evolving?

Why do we need a TMS?

Let's focus exclusively on the enterprise side because in this B2B industry, if enterprises do not need human translation services, language service providers and translators will be partially or fully out of business.

What does a TMS do for an enterprise?

- It allows the integration of data flows. You can already do this with any LLM.
- It offers customer portals. What is simpler than a chat-based interface?
- It handles complex file formats. Two main complexities are DTP and multilingual and cascading file formats (e.g., HTML in Excel). The client requirement is: "Only translate the highlighted text."
- It offers to add steps. For example, if the format is Framemaker, there could be a preparation step and a post-processing step performed by a human or a computer.
- It offers a visual interface for understanding what was done to each document e.g., a project management interface.
- It offers a visual interface for editing the text. This is the linguist interface.
- It allows filling some of those segments with automation results. Think about machine translation engines, LLMs, etc. - the right routing according to user preference.
- It allows quality assurance tools to be run on these segments (some are ridiculously simple and unintelligent).
- It offers underlying databases that can affect the editing experience, such as translation memories, term bases, stop word lists, and corpora.
- It allows tasks to be outsourced to people and companies. You have multiple assignment methods and job-taking methods.
- It allows people's work to be monitored (e.g., who

delivered on time, etc.).

- It offers a business model called fuzzy analysis. While there are other business models, those have not been successfully applied in human translation (e.g., post-translation analysis).
 - It stores transactional information, e.g., who did what and when.
- What are the assumptions behind TMSes?
- Understanding and enforcing a consistent set of steps improves quality.
 - The ability to identify who is at fault can improve the process.
 - The process is engineered toward output quality: what got into the translation memory can be considered perfect. This is the assumption that the reproducibility of a translation is more reliable than getting the same thing translated twice differently.
 - Translation quality has to be uniform because this feeds the translation memories.

What does an LLM currently do? When ChatGPT first came out, it could not handle file formats. Now it pretty much can, and its PDF filter is surprisingly accurate. What is more, it started to generate target-language files (not available for OCR yet, but there are some other cloud OCRs available):

I also tried to use ChatGPT to translate sentences with other machine translation engines and set up projects in TMSes via APIs. When I tried it, requests timed out, so I could not do it, but I received Python scripts. The capabilities of these technologies are scary in the long run.

So far, I do not see any capability for dashboarding, visual representations, or structuring the interactions.

The human's place in the loop

The question with AI is whether a human in the loop will be needed. Here, I see two possibilities:

1. Language quality will not reach human parity despite the inclusion of context — everything that a human can perceive and receive. In this

The IDML file has been successfully translated and repackaged. You can download the translated IDML file from the link below:

[Download the translated IDML file](#)

If you need any further assistance, feel free to ask! [;-]



case, a human in the loop will be needed, and a future TMS will be needed if you need a visual management interface for translations.

2. Automated translation requires the same method of improvement as human translation: the shift-left approach, having more extensive briefs and clarifying all questions at the moment of input. Here, there are two sub-situations:

A. Humans will care about and pay money for preferential edits 10 years from now. This comes from the human psychology of ownership and feelings about the impact of text. This will necessitate a TMS, as you have to feed changes back into the system so it learns from them.

B. Humans won't be able to spend money for preferential edits. In this case, a TMS won't be likely.

Can we already start working on such a TMS?

I would argue that the right point to start considering this will come when one feels comfortable understanding the process aspects of "LLMs." I put LLMs in quotation marks because I tested the file format parsers and the execution capabilities of ChatGPT, but I have no experience with the other LLM executor platforms. This is a capability of the

platform rather than of the model. Most of the investigations in the industry focused on language capabilities, but this is a very different aspect. If someone started to work on such a platform, I would consider investing some money, but not too much: LLM providers may easily surprise us there, eliminating the value of the investment.

Consider this: right now, it seems as if companies like OpenAI are operating with the mentality of "us against the world." Uncompromising, all-encompassing, these tools are marketed with a lot of money to create the message: this is the future. Their product management is solid, and before we know it, an LLM becomes an AI management system, like how the 1990s Trados became the enterprise TMS of today. Reproducibility, human oversight, and human-in-the-loop are not aspects exclusive to translation — every industry operates on this basis due to the existing human structures at organizations. Therefore, the investment question becomes: Do we want to learn from other industries and design systems, whether we end up labeling them a TMS or not, that solve more general problems — efficiently coordinating humans and machines for a start — than specific tasks, such as content creation and translation?

Transformation Is Not Going Out of Fashion



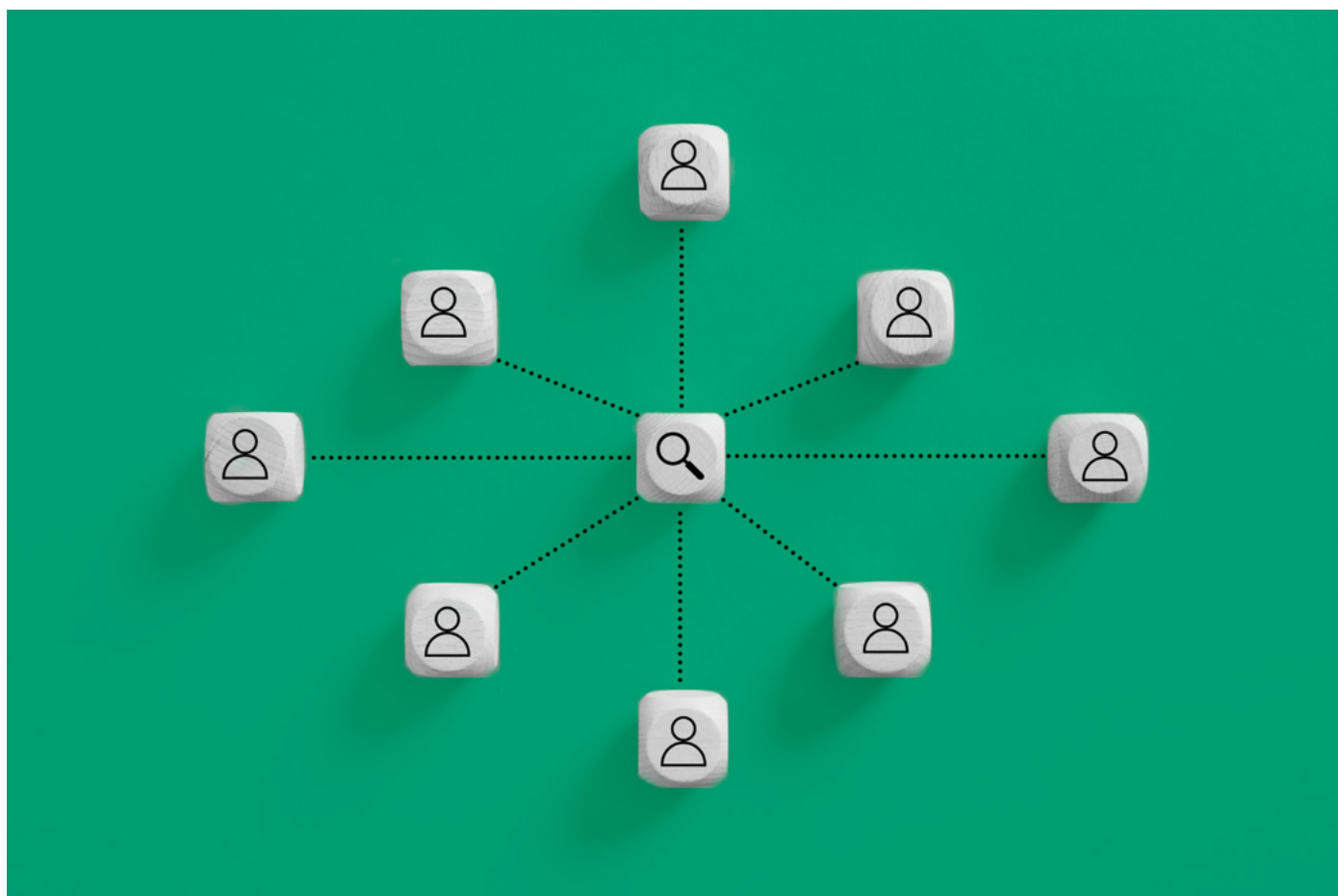
INÉS RUBIO

Language Services Director at NI

Ines joined NI in 2018 where she was trusted with the creation of a company-wide language services team. She modernized processes while ensuring team engagement, earning a reputation for innovation and efficiency. Today, at Emerson's Testing and Measurement Business Unit, she leads the Technical Documentation and Language Services teams.

We have our hands full for the foreseeable future, and I'm not necessarily referring to generative AI. You could say the abundance of work and challenges to solve is just business as usual — a cliché, sure — but something I believe we're accustomed to all too well in the localization space. The "we" might also include the entire language industry, although in this case, I'm referring to the Documentation and Language Services team I'm leading at Emerson's Testing and Measurement (T&M) Business Unit.

It's true — we have our hands in many pots, and our work influences many aspects of the global organization, from sales to marketing to R&D and product development to post-sales... But if that weren't the case, what space and opportunities would there be for growth?



I want to share a recent transformation we've been going through inside the company. From the outside, no one is the wiser, but the point of sharing what we're working on is also to show that while the world is busy with all things AI, there will be companies at different stages of their trajectory. Some face more "mundane" challenges, although no less complex, that require all of our accumulated experience to get right. Some business challenges don't go out of fashion, and you must react proactively as you would to the latest shiny toy (you know the one I'm referring to).

The scenario

Transformation is familiar to anyone working in localization. There is a sense of progression to our work, creating, transforming, and optimizing content in varied forms. We never remain idle.

This progression often parallels or mirrors the company's growth and evolution.

You have a company that decides to expand internationally, and almost from one day to the next, a group of people is onboarded to take care of this thing called localization. Then there is the case of a company being acquired by another — and the work to align and streamline language-related activities between sister teams. This is our starting point. After being acquired by Emerson, our team at NI worked with a one-year timeline to restructure localization activities and build twin centers of excellence in Hungary and Malaysia, quite far from the original one in Austin, but both locations where NI has existing talent and infrastructure. How do you go about (re)building a team?

How to own the challenge

There is no secret formula to making this kind of transformation while ensuring business continuity (you have to keep delivering the work) and devising it in a way that sticks in the long run (which is absolutely a consideration). It's also not necessarily novel — others have gone through this scenario. It requires following change management best practices and working with many stakeholders for alignment, from the C-suite to HR to onsite leadership and existing teams, as well as leveraging existing infrastructure, sourcing talent, and building the team.

You also don't lift the anchor and move an entire localization operation from one day to the next. Right now, we are at a point where we can safely flip the switch and rebuild operations on a different continent. But there's been a lot of prep work, standardization, and knowledge gathering leading to this. We've built a system that is not talent- or individual-dependent. We went from an unnecessarily complex system where we relied on people who had the knowledge of how to run things in their heads to a more streamlined operation. In the past, whenever we lost talent, we realized we were overstaffed, so one of the most significant changes has been going from throwing people at a problem to rethinking the system. Again, not necessarily novel. But this is our testimony of how you need to evolve to continue meeting the organization's demands — and I think adapting to changing circumstances is very topical for many of us at the moment.

Innovation is a question of priorities

Sourcing talent is an evergreen challenge for localization and globalization teams. With the industry going through different stages of AI discovery and adoption and everyone hunting for AI-ready talent, it has stood out in even starker contrast. Sure, there are creative ways of reach-

ing the right people (relying on your network and peers for referrals is one), but it still takes time. Then, you add the challenge of working in locations where localization-savvy folks are not readily available. One of our first challenges has been to help our leadership understand that you cannot recruit very pointed profiles, like a Japanese technical translator, in Debrecen, Hungary, where the talent pool for this skillset is limited. This contrasts with our previous setup, where all specialist roles were in-house in Austin. There are no magic solutions to finding local talent, so we decided to split our team between Hungary and Malaysia, where the company has another existing hub, to tap into existing infrastructure and teams for ad-hoc support. For example, engineering help is easier to obtain in Malaysia, and it's also a geographically close spot to source translation and localization for the Asian region. Once we establish where to get the talent, the second big question is how do you onboard them? We're going the hybrid route — having everyone physically present is no longer possible nowadays, and both sides (employer and employee) need to weigh the associated costs.

There is substantial debate in the industry about how the roles and responsibilities of people in the localization chain will evolve, especially under the influence of AI. It's tempting to go all-in on innovation and think about all the new roles we can create, but I find working with what you have and *adapting* existing skills is a much more efficient route for now. Innovation is a function of your priorities and the resources you have at your disposal. In a company such as ours, where we've been accustomed to doing things a certain way for a long time, there is a novelty in revamping the process from an in-house team to a combination of in-house specialists and external partners. More creativity is not necessarily needed at this point, but as we

move forward and make this change stick, there will come a time for experimentation and, who knows, maybe reinventing the wheel.

The evolution of our roles

Determining our priorities and doggedly pursuing them doesn't mean we lack ideas. Our industry does a good job of exposing us to our peers' ideas and ways of doing things. One observation is that the specific context of the company and the localization teams play a big role in shaping your trajectory. In the past, when I was leading teams at different companies, I missed opportunities to branch out into content creation because I didn't see how content creation went hand in hand with content transformation (i.e., localization). Our team at T&M BU at Emerson sits in R&D, at the heart of product development, so these functions are very closely related. Going from localization to documentation and expanding our activities is a natural evolution for language operations, even though it is very specific to us.

You also see an evolution underway at other companies, with less traditional work and more governance tasks (whether content quality governance or data governance) appearing on the menu for localization and globalization teams. For example, we're pursuing the idea of separating the process of content creation from content health and optimization. We already have technical writers, but this raises the question of whether we need technical editors who are more focused on the architecture of the content, its taxonomy, and classification in the name of optimization.

The last two years show us that circumstances can change fast. Anyone going through an acquisition as we did has a lot of opportunities to influence how localization is done. This works the other way too — when you're acquiring companies, you have a lot of opportunities to mix it up

"[...] there is less traditional work and more governance tasks for localization and globalization teams. For example, **we're pursuing the idea of separating the process of content creation from content health and optimization.**"

or to expand the portfolio of services your team offers to the organization. I frequently encounter the question, "So what did you do?" and the answer is simple: A lot of proactive reaching out to learn from stakeholders at Emerson who had a hand in translation, despite latent fears about what these conversations could mean for our team. We seized the initiative, and it was the right thing to do. The business transformation still went through, despite our fears, but there is a huge opportunity in it too. Enterprise-level localization at Emerson is still changing, but by changing our attitudes and embracing transformation we let the organization know what our team is doing.

We created an opportunity while things changed quickly. When you see an opportunity like this, what you do to seize it will make all the difference.

Exciting Times Ahead

It's impossible to predict with 100% confidence what the future holds for us. Only those few in the know and those developing the technology could have predicted GenAI's disruptive effect on global industries. Most of the rest were left scrambling to adapt to the new business reality of AI taking on an increasingly large role. Who knows what new developments await us around the corner?

However, not knowing doesn't prevent us from imagining where we want to go and then getting to work to see our vision materialize. Uncertainty is no excuse for inaction. There's plenty of opportunity for individuals and companies to thrive. While AI transforms our workflows, human expertise remains irreplaceable. For example, at Argos our role is evolving to more consultative, strategic involvement, guid-

ing clients through technological advancements and ensuring quality control. The human-AI synergy will be central for companies that wish to remain culturally relevant and want to leave a lasting positive impact.

Many of the questions you're asking can only be answered collectively and will require the different sides of the language industry — clients, service providers, linguists, tech developers, and anyone with a hand in the localization pot — to come together to find solutions. We are responsible for supporting every link in the chain, particularly individual linguists, who are the most vulnerable to change. In the future, no one will be left behind.

What waits on the other side of the window? In two words: exciting times.



Alexander Ulichnowski
CEO, Argos Multilingual

Because no one learned about GenAI at localization school

There is a way to harness the power of GenAI — and it works. We talked to the leaders of some of the largest and most innovative localization programs about their experiences with AI. We asked them to share their daily challenges, first successes with AI initiatives, and predictions about where AI is headed.

We consolidate their insights into 13 lessons that capture the status quo in the **Beyond the Hype: State of AI in Localization** report.

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