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July 2016

Write on target

How controlled languages ensure consistent terminology and enable smooth translations

The human role in a machine-translated world

Can professional translators survive the age of the machine?

Playing your way to better content management

How the classic game of Snakes & Ladders helps project teams succeed

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From the editor

Most of us are frequent visitors of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia as a quick reference for facts and figures. But did you know that in 2003, Wikipedia launched another edition of its reference work in Basic English, named Simple English Wikipedia? Its aim is to provide information to "people with different needs such as students, children, adults with learning difficulties, and people who are trying to learn English". This aim is reflected in an interface that is more simply labeled than that of Wikipedia.org (the "edit" button is labeled "change", the "featured article" becomes a "selected article", etc.). But what really sets the site apart are its simply written articles. Here is how it defines "translation":

Translation means to copy writing or speech from one language into a different language. The people who do translation are called translators. [...] A translator who works with the spoken word is also called an interpreter.

And this is how regular Wikipedia defines the same term:

Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. While interpreting – the facilitating of oral or sign-language communication between users of different languages –antedates writing, translation began only after the appearance of written literature.

Simple English Wikipedia is one of numerous initiatives across industries and target audiences to simplify language and break down communication barriers. In the US, these efforts culminated in the enactment of the Plain Writing Act of 2010, which requires all federal agencies to publish documents in writing that is "clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field or audience."

For technical communicators, writing intelligible text should be second nature. But by using modern controlled languages, organizations also aim to tackle another challenge: Producing content with consistent terminology for a multitude of markets and in a multitude of languages. In the focus topic of this edition (starting on page 12), tcworld author Herbert Kaiser describes how the well-established controlled language Simplified English paves the way to smooth global communication. In addition, Lou Cremers depicts the journey of an international tech company to improve its content quality across all languages.
We hope you enjoy this issue of tcworld magazine!

C. Melville

Corinna Melville

technical communication
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Controlled languages

The use of a controlled language not only ensures a consistent terminology, clear and concise writing and unambiguous meaning. It also makes documents easier to translate using machine translation, thus saving international organizations valuable time and money.

page 12

Playing your way to better content management

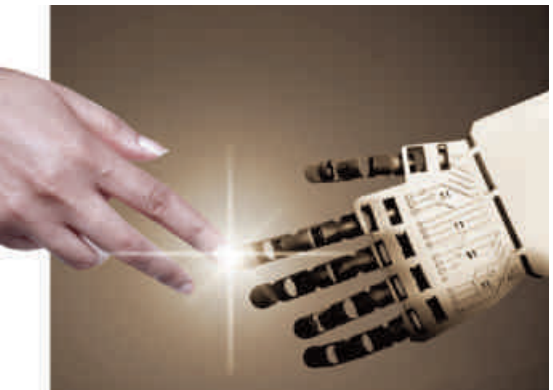
The classic game of Snakes & Ladders – adapted to the challenges of content management – provides a playful tool for professionals to discuss pathways to a successful project.

page 27

The human role in a machine-translated world

The rise of machine translation has left human translators with an uncertain future. However, machines won't be able to fully replace translators any time soon. So where can language professionals find their new place?

page 32



Majority of European organizations are not prepared for a cyberattack

Splunk Inc., provider of an operational intelligence platform, has announced the results of a new IDC white paper in Europe titled "Detecting and Responding to the Accidental Breach: The Impact of the Hapless User". Commissioned by Splunk, the white paper reveals that while threats from within an organization (caused by both malicious insiders and hapless users) remain one of the primary causes of security breaches, they are poorly understood by European organizations. As a result, eight in ten organizations overly rely on traditional approaches to security that focus mainly on system protection and cannot detect and respond to the user activites that can result in a compromise. Nearly a third of respondents do not use basic methods of breach detection and fewer than one in five have any form of security analytics in place.

"Security breaches are inevitable, but that is tough for security professionals to accept given the considerable budgets that are spent on prevention," said Duncan Brown, research director at European Security Practice, IDC. "The majority of organizations have experienced a data breach over the past two years, but the average time to discover a breach remains around eight months. It is clear that organizations need to detect breaches as they happen, and not wait for the damage to be done. Importantly, taking an analytics-driven approach to detect threats early and respond effectively will help companies to deal with threats of all kinds – external attackers, hapless users, and malicious insiders."

Other findings from the white paper include:

- There is more threat from hapless users than there is from malicious insiders. Only twelve percent of respondents reported insider threats as being of high concern. Most organizations are much more concerned about threat types such as viruses (67 percent), APTs (42 percent), phishing (28 percent) and poor user security practices (27 percent). However, the majority of these attacks can be caused by another type of insider threat: hapless users who unintentionally allow their valid credentials or trusted access to be hijacked. Poor understanding of the hapless user means that organizations are looking in the wrong places to detect attacks and avoid breaches.
- Organizations struggle to detect insider-based breaches. Respondents list the top three obstacles to investigating threats from within the organization as not knowing what to look for (40 percent), lack of education and training (39 percent) and not understanding what normal looks like across different departments (36 percent).
- Most organizations do not have the technologies, approaches or mindset to detect breaches once they occur. The majority of organizations across Europe are still using technology that is primarily designed to protect a traditional network-based perimeter. Nearly all respondents recognize the need to use firewalls (98 percent) and anti-virus software (96 percent), but very few see the need to back them up with security analytics (15 percent) or user behavior analytics and anomaly detection (12 percent) in order to detect breaches after they have happened.

Image: © Pali Rao/istockphoto.com

"In the age of the 'inevitable breach', businesses across Europe need to adopt a 'detect and respond' mentality," said Haiyan Song, senior vice president of security markets, Splunk. "Threat patterns vary, so security teams need to take an analytics-driven approach with their security information and event management initiatives, leveraging machine learning and anomaly detection to identify suspicious behavior and malicious activity early. Using these solutions will help organizations further automate detection, conduct timely investigation and take the necessary steps to handle a breach, limiting the reputational and financial damage it can cause."

http://splunk.idciview.net

Modern users are less scared of technology

Image: © stevanovicigor/istockphoto.com

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC), the largest body representing technical writers in the UK, has defined six emerging trends within the industry:

1. Growth of application program interface (API) documentation

The growth of APIs has seen a corresponding growth in the need for API documentation and interactive document environments. Ellis Pratt, director of tc company Cherryleaf, says "Without the documentation, it's virtually impossible to use an API, as developers need to know what resources are available, where they are, and what parameters they will accept."

2. Increase in use of agile methodologies

Agile methodologies are a set of principles for software development in which requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing, cross-functional teams. Alison Peck, director of Clearly Stated Ltd, says "The biggest impacts on [technical communicators] are in the working practices and products of our customer base. For example, there is a steady increase in the percentage of software development teams adopting agile methodologies, which affects technical communicators specifically working in the documentation of software."

3. Increased use of mobile technology

As Alison Peck continues: "The increased use of mobile technology has made changes to our work, as has the (general) improvement to user interface design. Rather than having to give detailed instructions, I'm more likely to explain the outcome of an action or give guidance on when it should be done. People using products and services also expect them to be more tailored to their requirements, so being able to create supporting products (Help, tutorials, guidance) that can be tailored to those same requirements is becoming more important. A one-size-fits-all approach is much less acceptable now than it was a few years ago."

4. Move towards a less formal tone

Ellis Pratt states "As technology becomes more part of our daily lives, we've seen a move towards a less formal tone in some types of documentation. This is a consequence of documentation being part of the pre-sales process, and users are generally less scared of technology than they used to be."

5. Embedded user assistance

Ellis Pratt adds "We're also seeing a move toward embedding user assistance into the application itself, without the need to go to the docs. We'll be seeing more developments with conversational user interfaces, onboarding screens and micro-content. This is a consequence of users being reluctant to admit they're stuck and going to the Help."

6. Navigating via search

Ellis Pratt has also spotted a trend within the ISTC's annual UK Technical Communication Awards entries: "The awards entries have reflected the trend towards navigating via search, rather than via hyperlinks. I've also noticed a move towards content in responsive web format, which can be viewed on mobile phones, tablets and laptops."

www.istc.org.uk

SEPROTEC MULTILINGUAL SOLUTIONS ACQUIRES LIDOLANG TRANSLATIONS

Language services provider SeproTec Multilingual Solutions has acquired Lidolang Translation, an Eastern European localization company. With 25 years of experience Lidolang offers a wide range of multilingual services, mainly in the Slavic languages, as well as a strong technological complement. SeproTec's acquisition of Lidolang improves the company's productive capacity and contributes to its expansion in the strategic international markets.

http://seprotec.com

SDL LAUNCHES GLOBAL TEAM APP

SDL has launched Global Team, a new app on the Salesforce AppExchange that empowers businesses to connect with their customers, partners and employees in more than 100 languages. The SDL Global Team app allows global teams to translate sales data simply by highlighting and hovering over text.

www.sdl.com

XEDITOR 2.7

Appsoft Technologies has released the newest version of its Xeditor authoring tool, which automates DITA specializations and includes improved usability and document design. Xeditor 2.7 also includes an XML preview and updated folder structure. The new DITA release supports the automation of DITA specializations such as company-specific items, topics and attributes. The new release improves usability by optimizing the toolbar elements on the Xeditor user interface to correspond to typical user behavior.

www.xeditor.com

XTM INTERNATIONAL RELEASES XTM 9.6

XTM International, a developer of XML authoring and translation tools, has released XTM 9.6. The new version of XTM supports XLIFF 2.0 – the new industry standard for translation files that offers far greater stability and functionality. In addition, XTM v9.6 has improved processing of Photoshop source files and project managers can now generate a preview Excel file with translations for all languages of a project.

http://xtm-intl.com

Language services market to surpass US$40 billion in 2016

The global market for outsourced language services and technology will reach US$40.27 billion in 2016, according to a study by independent market research firm Common Sense Advisory (CSA Research). In its 12th annual global industry report, "The Language Services Market: 2016," the firm details the findings of its comprehensive study.

CSA Research found that the demand for language services and supporting technologies is growing at an annual rate of 5.52 percent. As part of the study, the firm surveyed providers from every continent to collect actual reported revenue for 2014, 2015, and expected revenue for 2016.

The study confirms that the market continues to expand; however, the current growth rate of 5.52 percent represents a slight decrease over last year's rate of 6.46 percent.

"Because the language industry serves a wide variety of constituencies around the globe, it is exposed to a broad array of macroeconomic forces. One in particular directly affects the size of the market – currency. The US dollar continues a multi-year appreciation against most currencies," explains Don DePalma, CSA Research's founder and Chief Strategy Officer. "However, language service providers in most regions of the world did report steady growth during 2015."

As organizations both large and small address more languages, the firm predicts that the language services industry will continue to grow and that the market will increase to US$45 billion by 2020. Factors driving this demand include continued growth in global mobile and ecommerce, the Internet of Things (IoT), and legislation requiring access to language services for immigrants, refugees, in the courts, and for public safety.

Included in "Language Services Market: 2016" are the largest language providers globally, as well as by region. The five highest-ranked companies on the list of the largest 100 commercially-focused language services companies, listed according to 2015 revenues, are: Lionbridge Technologies (US), TransPerfect (US), Hewlett-Packard's Application and Content Globalization group (FR), LanguageLine (US), and SDL (UK).

The full report, which is available as part of CSA's research membership, also includes projected growth rates for the industry through 2020; rankings and revenues of the largest 100 language services companies; critical benchmarks for LSP financial performance, including average revenue per employee and average revenue per salesperson; reporting on the fastest-growing services in the industry, such as translation, software localization, and on-site interpreting; and much more.

www.commonsenseadvisory.com

Image: © adempercem/istockphoto.com

By 2020, a corporate "no-cloud" policy will be as rare as a "no-internet" policy is today


Image: © shylendrahoode/istockphoto.com

By 2020, a corporate "no-cloud" policy will be as rare as a "no-internet" policy is today, according to research firm Gartner, Inc. Cloud-first, and even cloud-only, is replacing the defensive no-cloud stance that dominated many large providers in recent years.

"Aside from the fact that many organizations with a no-cloud policy actually have some under-the-radar or unavoidable cloud usage, we believe that this position will become increasingly untenable," said Jeffrey Mann, research vice president at Gartner. "Cloud will increasingly be the default option for software deployment. The same is true for custom software, which increasingly is designed for some variation of public or private cloud."

This does not mean that everything will be cloud-based, and concern will remain valid in some cases. However, the extreme of having nothing cloud-based will largely disappear. Technology providers will increasingly be able to assume that their customers will be able to consume cloud capabilities.

Other Gartner predictions include:

1. By 2019, more than 30 percent of the 100 largest vendors' new software investments will have shifted from cloud-first to cloud-only. The now well-established stance of cloud-first in software design and planning is gradually being augmented or replaced by cloud-only. This also applies to private and hybrid cloud scenarios.

   "More leading-edge IT capabilities will be available only in the cloud, forcing reluctant organizations closer to cloud adoption. While some applications and data will remain locked in older technologies, more new solutions will be cloud-based, thus further increasing demand for integration infrastructure," said Yefim V. Natis, vice president and Gartner Fellow.

2. By 2020, more computing power will have been sold by IaaS and PaaS cloud providers than sold and deployed into enterprise data centers.

   The Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) market has been growing more than 40 percent in revenue per year since 2011, and it is projected to continue to grow more than 25 percent per year through 2019.

   By 2019, the majority of virtual machines (VMs) will be delivered by IaaS providers.

   By 2020, the revenue for compute IaaS and Platform as a Service (PaaS) will exceed $55 billion — and likely pass the revenue for servers.

   "With the growth of both bimodal computing and cloud provider offerings, software-defined enterprise data centers have become less centrally important than building a strong multiprovider management capability," explained Thomas J. Bittman, vice president and distinguished analyst at Gartner. "Unless very small, most enterprises will continue to have an on-premises (or hosted) data center capability. But with most compute power moving to IaaS providers, enterprises and vendors need to focus on managing and leveraging the hybrid combination of on-premises, off-premises, cloud and noncloud architectures, with a focus on managing cloud-delivered capacity efficiently and effectively."

www.gartner.com

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Unplugged plugs in: the virtues of mobile technologies

Image: © Khoon Lay Gan/123rf.com

By Leah Guren

For almost two years, I have written about many "unplugged" topics in this column. I have avoided discussing tools and technology; instead, I have focused on soft skills and human issues.

Today, I am still going to talk about the human issues, but this time in relation to mobile technologies (that is, apps and content), and how they can significantly help with accessibility. Over the past year, I have seen many instances where mobile technology has provided special audiences (sectors of the population with specific disabilities or needs) with the precious gift of independence.

So here is my list of the best game-changing mobile technologies and how they are making the world better for everyone:

1. Technology for the hearing-impaired. For the profoundly deaf, communicating with the hearing world is a challenge. It is not always practical to stop and write something down. MotionSavvy (www.motionsavvy.com) makes UNI, a tablet-sized gadget that translates sign language to speech and speech to text. There are several apps, such as Mimix for Android (www.mimix.me), that convert text into sign language. Early this year, a group of college students won a competition by creating an app called Sign Me (http://technical.ly/philly/2016/01/28/american-sign-language-app). For those who are hearing-impaired but able to speak (for example, people with progressive hearing loss that cannot be fully corrected with hearing aids), there are plenty of speech-to-text apps that allow them to navigate difficult situations, such as noisy venues, hard-to-understand accents, etc. And while all of these gadgets and apps have limitations (for example, the sign language apps are only for American Sign Language), they provide the user with the power to communicate.
2. Technology for the vision-impaired. Apple is leading the way to actively encourage accessibility. Text readers have been around for a long time, but audio labels being built into the world around us are relatively new.
   Explore the full list at AppleVis (www.applevis.com). Android's Eyes Free project (https://code.google.com/p/eyes-free) is lagging behind, but there are new developments almost every month.
3. Technology for people with mobility issues. Trigger and Tasker are two Android apps that allow a smartphone to read NFC tags. A person in a wheelchair could use their smartphone to open doors, control lights, and much more. The possibilities are almost endless, leading to increased independence.
4. Technology for translation. We love our translation apps, but the old text-to-text tools don't help you much when you want to chat up that gorgeous stranger in Rome! Waverly Labs is coming to the rescue with the Pilot, an in-ear language translator that lets two people carry on a conversation in two different languages without the need for a human translator. Pilot is still in development but should be available soon (www.waverlylabs.com/2016/05/faqs-about-early-bird-and-launch-date). When Douglas Adams wrote *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* almost 40 years ago, he never dreamt that his funny "Babel Fish" would become reality.
5. Technology for physical analysis. The world around us may not yet be coded with mobile data links, but apps are filling the gap by helping us to identify and analyze what we see. For example, for the plant enthusiast, there are many apps that let you take a picture of a plant and then use their visual database to quickly identify it. FlowerChecker and Plantifier are two that are available for both iOS and Android. And how about a tiny pocket-sized spectroscope that tells you exactly how many calories (and other nutritional information) are in that piece of Black Forest cake? SCiO from DietSensor (www.dietsensor.com) is as small and powerful as the Star Trek scanner.

Finally, let me address one of our most pervasive myths – the idea that older people are technophobic. I recently visited a senior center in Seattle (USA). The center has a small computer room equipped with modern, good-quality computers, network access, and a printer. While I was there, I watched several people come in and use the computers confidently and competently. One gentleman, over 80 years old and accompanied by a service dog, quickly navigated to the browser settings to change the font size. He started a search, scanned the results, and then changed the search topic slightly and tried again. Still not happy with the results, he refined the search yet again, and this time found what he was looking for. He was researching a small household appliance, reading consumer reviews, and comparing models. He took no notes, but printed out two pages containing information on his top choices.

In another case of seniors mastering technology easily, I watched my mother (almost 85) take a picture with her iPhone, then use a photo editing app to crop, sharpen, and add photo effects. These are skills that she has learned very recently, and her photo editing ability now easily surpasses my meager talents.

These are only two instances of many. Young content developers need to remember that senior users are not technophobic or clueless; they simply need fonts they can read and button hotspots large enough to hit.

Do you have another story about the power of mobile content? I'd love to hear from you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Guren
is the owner/operator of Cow TC. She has been active in the field of technical communication since 1980 as a writer, manager, Help author, and usability consultant. She now devotes her time to consulting and teaching courses and seminars in technical communication, primarily in Israel and Europe.

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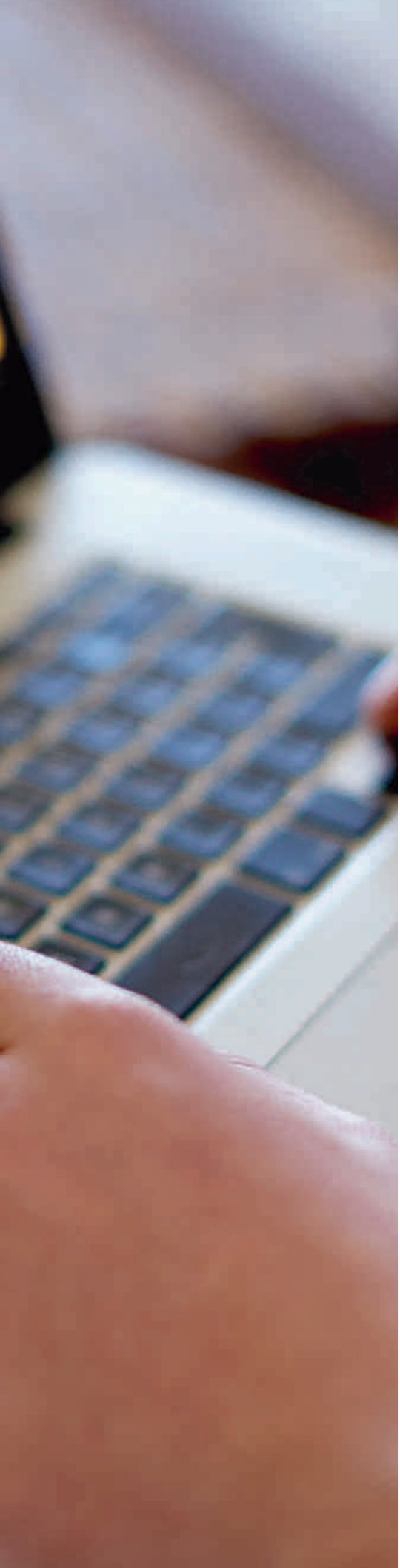
Controlled languages

Image: © Mikolette/istockphoto.com



Simplified Technical English – a globally proven trendsetter

Even 30 years after its initial launch, Simplified Technical English (STE) continues to set itself apart from the bulk of publications on structured/rule-based/controlled writing that have appeared since. So what makes this controlled language so successful?

By Herbert Kaiser

Enabling unambiguous and readily comprehensible communication across borders, the unique characteristics of STE are strict mandatory rules and simplified English. With this approach, STE has become a trendsetter in tackling the challenges of global communication. Modularized text creation, writing appropriately for human and machine translation, and Augmented Reality are domains in which STE unfolds its full potential.

From poor comprehensibility to KISS

Until the late 1960s, technical documentation was primarily targeted at experts who had to handle high-value machines and equipment. These users usually received internal design and development documents, often in addition to special training. Even consumer goods were commonly accompanied by documentation that had not been specifically adapted to customers. Although industrial products as well as consumer goods became more and more complex in the course of time, technical documentation remained a neglected by-product of development resulting in dire consequences: comprehensibility issues, product damage and accidents.

Something had to be done. An important principle was identified when creators and readers got together to find out where and why things were going wrong, and how technical communication could be improved: KISS = Keep it short and simple. Technical information must be conveyed in a short and simple form, so that users can understand and implement it correctly. This principle still applies today and will not lose its importance in technical communication. However, the KISS motto leaves its implementation to the motivation and experience of the authors. In the long run, this wasn't good enough, and it became necessary to formulate this maxim more specifically and to derive guidelines/rules for writing.

From KISS to rule-based writing

Intensive research in comprehensibility was conducted and aspects such as target group, readability and comprehensibility were scientifically studied at the text, sentence and word level. The results of these studies clearly confirmed the KISS principle: Technical information that is short and simple is better understood by users.
The first step was to identify the "junk" that still plagues us in free-style texts: inconsistent termi-

Writing rules from the ASD-STE100 – an excerpt

Consistent terminology

› Do not use different technical names for the same thing.

Lists instead of long sentences

› Use a vertical list for complex texts.

Only one thought per sentence

› Keep to one topic per sentence.
› Write only one instruction per sentence.

Verbs instead of nouns

› If there is an approved verb to describe an action, use the verb (not a noun or other part of speech).

Short words/sentences/paragraphs

› If you have a choice, use the shortest and simplest name.
› Keep procedural sentences as short as possible (20 words maximum).
› Keep sentences in descriptive writing as short as possible (25 words maximum).
› The maximum length of a paragraph is 6 sentences.

Active instead of passive

› Use the active voice. Use only the active voice in procedural writing, and as much as possible in descriptive writing.

Simple tenses

› Use the approved forms of the verb to make only:
- ✔ The infinitive
- ✔ The imperative
- ✔ The simple present tense
- ✔ The simple past tense
- ✔ The past participle as an adjective
- ✔ The future tense*

*Author's note: No other tenses are allowed.

Table 1: Short and precise writing rules make the ASD-STE100 an easy guide. Source: ASD

nology, long sentences, ambiguous sentences, complex tenses, etc. Then, specific rules were established to counter these evils, such as:

- Consistent terminology
- Lists instead of long sentences
- Only one thought per sentence
- Verbs instead of nouns
- Short words/sentences/paragraphs
- Active instead of passive
- Simple tenses

When these rules are applied consistently, we obtain good, comprehensible texts. So, how can we connect this rule-based writing with the challenges of global communication?

Global communication in English…

Two scenarios determine global communication: external communication and internal communication.
External communication – user documentation – is the direct communication with the end user. It must be comprehensible across borders, so that the message can be implemented directly and safely. Therefore, many organizations from non-English speaking countries forego expensive translations into regional languages and communicate information about their products and services directly in English.
Internal communication is gaining importance in our networked world. Various divisions of a multinational group must exchange information across the globe at expert level, i.e. several nations and languages are involved. As a result, they use English as the group language.
But is this enough to ensure smooth communication? What must we as technical communicators consider for our English-speaking target group when treating English as a "global language"?

…is the English of non-native speakers

Here are some facts: The ratio of English non-native speakers to native speakers is increasing dramatically and has reached 5:1, see Figure 1. Moreover, about 70 percent of business communication between non-native speakers is conducted in English. Consequently, "global communication in English is the English of non-native speakers."

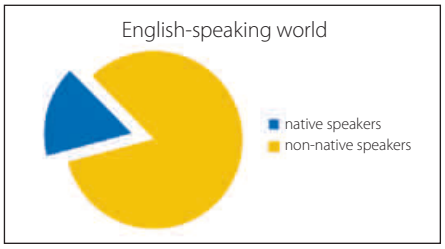


Figure 1: Non-native English speakers vastly outnumber native speakers.
Source: Herbert Kaiser

Therefore, the key question for us is how to reach our target group, the non-native speakers?
The idiomatic, synonym-rich English of native speakers we learned in school does not fulfill this purpose. When it is about conveying facts and correlations unambiguously and clearly, we must switch to simple English that non-native speakers can understand and implement instantly.

"No native speakers, please"

Employees of global players with English as the group language experience the following situation time and again: The communication between non-native speakers is excellent with simple English, but falters when native speakers enter the discussion. Non-native speakers are often overtaxed by the language level and expressions of native speakers and prefer a simplified form of English. This happens to the extent that a request for "no native speakers, please" is expressed as a precaution when clarifying questions or technical issues.
Particularly in a time when Asia is emerging massively as a global cooperation partner, all partners of a company must become aware of this communication blocker. This is also an important advantage to avoid embarrassment and losing face.

Simplified English

The lowest common denominator for the required English must be a simplified but correct English that can be understood internationally and is oriented towards technical communication. Consequently, rule-based writing and simplified English are the primary components of efficient global communication.

Simplified Technical English (STE)

Rule-based writing and simplified English – STE covers both components. STE is focused on the international comprehensibility of non-native speakers: The basic philosophy of Simplified Technical English is to keep texts as simple and readable as possible. It is possible to convey every complex technical matter in simple words with STE. The specification for STE, the ASD-STE100, is a user-friendly language standard with binding writing rules and a consistent dictionary.
The principles of rule-based writing are reflected in 65 simple specific writing rules. These are not mere recommendations (as they are in other rule systems), but binding mandatory rules. While we find formulations such as "It is recommended to use…" or "Try to avoid…" in conventional style guides, the ASD-STE100 has clear statements such as "Do not use…"

Less is more

Consistent documentation has the highest customer priority and must be considered during content creation. The strict, mandatory rules of STE reduce the degree of freedom and thus the number of inconsistent text variants. Even if several authors work on a complex project, high text consistency is obtained. This is the most important argument considering modular text creation.

No ing-form

STE is more rigorous than any other standard – and that's a good thing. One specific rule has had the strictest impact on free-style writing: "***Do not use the '-ing' form of a verb unless it is part of a technical name.***" All ing-forms are prohibited in STE texts, unless they are technical terminology, e.g. switching relay. Let's find out why.
When we look at the grammatical function of the ing-form, its ambiguity becomes clear immediately:

1. The time duration is not specified (ongoing action, future action, etc.)
2. It can occur in different parts of speech as verb/noun/adjective: "Flying planes can be dangerous".
3. Frequently, its position in the sentence is ambiguous: "The converter transmits a signal to the processor, starting the test mode of the analyzer". Who triggers the test mode? The converter, the signal or the processor?
4. Its main function is particularly counterproductive, because it connects various thoughts "elegantly" with each other, which can only be achieved by long sentences. Two rule-based writing sins in one word.

Keyword (part of speech)	Approved meaning/ ALTERNATIVES	APPROVED EXAMPLE	Not approved
BECAUSE (con)	As a result of	BECAUSE THE FLUID LEVEL IS INCORRECT, THE SYSTEM WILL NOT OPERATE.	
SINCE (con)	Function word that shows: "from some time in the past until a later time or now" NOTE: For other meanings, use BECAUSE.	IF IT IS MORE THAN TWO HOURS SINCE YOU MIXED THE COMPOUND, DO NOT USE IT.	
		BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU USE ALODINE, BECAUSE IT IS A DANGEROUS MATERIAL.	Since Alodine is a dangerous material, be careful when you use it.

Table 2: Example of a dictionary entry *Source: ASD*

Thus, there is no reason to keep the ambiguous ing-form in technical documentation. However, this rule alarmed language aestheticians the most. They denoted this methodical approach as impractical and inappropriate: "It doesn't sound as beautiful and fluid as before…" But we, as communication experts, argue quite differently: "If your goal is to write a novel, this is not your job."

Unambiguous global communication is only possible by means of strict rules. However, the area of application of STE is naturally limited. Consciously ambiguous or associative text with flowery language rich in synonyms cannot be created with STE.
Actually, more and more professional writers are becoming aware of the ambiguity of the ing-form. Also native speakers have been sensitized and are dealing constructively with the pros and cons. This can be seen in blog entries of professional writers, such as "Death of the gerund in technical documentation". In the meantime, even clients are requesting their service providers to avoid the ing-form.

STE – a trendsetter for other rule systems

The pragmatic and trendsetting approach of STE also becomes apparent in other cases. The first STE specification appeared in 1986, when structured/rule-based writing was almost unknown. However, today its key values (e.g. the maximum number of words in sentences) are also reflected in other known style guides, which appeared only much later, e.g. J. Kohl's *Global English Style Guide* or the *Microsoft Manual of Style*.

And what is the dictionary good for?

Conventional guidelines and style guides include, for example, a rule that ***because*** and ***since*** must not be used synonymously as causal conjunctions. In the ASD-STE100, such functionalities are not defined in the rules, but in its dictionary. According to the basic principle of STE **One word = one meaning**, entries are defined clearly with their approved meaning and their scope of use (see Table 2).
In addition, the NOTE directly guides the author onto the right track for since: ***"Use since only for temporal progression and think again whether you don't mean because."*** All entries in the dictionary include clear and detailed examples that illustrate the correct usage. Simple and user-friendly – a true help for authors.

Fit for machine translation (MT)

Structured/rule-based texts provide a perfect foundation for translation, all the more so when MT is used. Google Translate is certainly not the answer in the area of MT. In fact it is rather known for its involuntary and strange translation results. Nevertheless, it is used more and more frequently to obtain informative translations for the rough content of a text.

However, when fed with STE texts, Google Translate shows a completely different reaction (this is true at least for German). It often generates good translations that need little editing. Thus, economical machine translation without major post-editing is no longer wishful thinking. Cost reduction in spite of increasing translation requirements – a demand presented by growing globalization – can be realized with STE.

Fit for Augmented Reality (AR)

Currently, in many organizations, Augmented Reality (AR) and mobile technical communication are still visions of the future. However, user information and work instructions via tablet or smart glasses will be a part of our normal life in the foreseeable future. Presenting information precisely and comprehensibly in the smallest restricted space is the ultimate challenge. The brevity, conciseness and simplified language of STE texts are naturally ideal for such a scenario. But even with regard to the design of safety instructions, STE is far ahead of other style guides. STE principles do not correspond to the usual standards, e.g. ANSI Z535, but are more pragmatic and efficient for technical communication. The signal words WARNING or CAUTION are not followed by long explanations about the type and source of the danger and/or possible consequences of not following the instructions. The first information is always a clear request for user action about what needs to be done or what needs to be avoided. Rule 7.1 of the ASD-STE100 states: *"Start a warning or a caution with a simple and clear command."*

Image: © Anzor Mizaushev/istockphoto.com

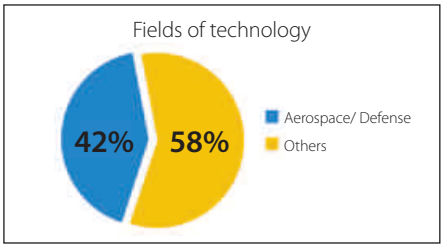


Figure 2: Most requests for the ASD-STE100 come from sources other than the aerospace/ defense industry.

Source: ASD, Herbert Kaiser

Safety first

Such pragmatic sequencing of information is critical for AR. On a limited display space, readers might not be able to clearly distinguish between pure information and instructions for action. Consequently, the instructions (commands) or conditions to avoid a danger must be shown at the beginning. Even ANSI Z535 uses this principle; however, here it only refers to warning signs that demand immediate action. This might change in the future. The ASD-STE100 has already influenced many other standards and style guides.

STE – only for the aerospace industry?

Unfortunately, this incorrect contention continues to haunt some minds. Let us take a look at the industries that requested the ASD-STE100. Figure 2 shows that the highest interest in using STE does not come from the core areas of aerospace/defense but from other fields of technology. The huge bandwidth (see Figure 3) supports what professionals have known for 30 years: STE can be used for EVERY field of technology.

STE – a benefit for all

Clear, easy-to-understand and safe communication of technical content is the task of Simplified Technical English. It has been tried and tested as a mature and trendsetting language standard in global communication, especially for the large target group of non-native speakers. Even existing style guides can be optimized using STE rules, so that all involved can profit: authors, readers/users and the organization. This is the reason why STE has been labeled "the most widely used controlled language on the planet."

- Information technology, software
- Language services
- Technical documentation in general, localization and translation
- Telecommunications
- Power generation, oil, gas, nuclear
- Automotive, trucks, transportation, railways, marine
- Agricultural equipment
- Buildings
- Electric drive systems
- Medical and healthcare
- Fire protection
- Urban planning
- Gaming
- Machinery, mining, manufacturing, automation
- Semiconductors
- Legal services
- Shipping
- Food industry
- Non-profit associations
- ...

Figure 3: Industries that want to benefit from STE

Source: ASD, Herbert Kaiser

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Herbert Kaiser is a technical writer, university lecturer and communication trainer. After 15 years of experience in the aerospace business, he has been working independently since 1999. He runs seminars on comprehensive writing and international communication with a special focus on STE.

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English as a global language

Multinational companies that export to many different countries might well spend millions of euros every year on documentation and localization. An adequate language and automation strategy helps to drastically reduce localization costs and speed up the documentation cycle. The Dutch company Océ shares its journey of improving content quality and translatability.

Image: © tuachanwatthana/istockphoto.com

By Lou Cremers

Some years ago, the multinational manufacturer of copying and printing equipment, Océ Technologies, faced a great challenge: how to improve documentation quality while reducing costs. Although the actual case described in this article dates back a few years, the motivations, principles, and choices are still valid.

The language factor

As our technical writers were mostly Dutch technicians creating the English source documents for user and technical service documentation, the quality of these source documents varied considerably both in style and grammar. Due to a lack of terminology management, documentation was also terminologically inconsistent. This in turn drove up localization costs. Part of the problem had been addressed by introducing a translation memory (TM) and rule-based machine translation (MT). A great deal of effort was also invested in a fully automated workflow, which allowed

- automatic processing of translation requests including analysis of the source documents,
- matching against all existing translation memories,
- creating a project memory,
- translating parts of documentation not found in the translation memories by machine translation, and
- creating a translation package and sending it by email or FTP to a localization vendor for post-editing.

To make further improvements, we had to shift our attention to the front end of the process: the use of language in the document creation cycle. There was another compelling reason for improving the source documentation: At a later stage, an XML-based content management system (CMS) was going to be introduced. As one of the main reasons for introducing a CMS is to optimize reusability, it made sense to ensure that the CMS content would consist of generic, well-written chunks of information right from the start. In preparation, other improvements had already been introduced, such as an internal Text & Structure Course, which gave instruction on

- creating a clear and consistent document structure,
- writing generic and reusable information, and
- formulating concise, correct and standardized source documents.

A set of writing principles further helped to improve the general quality of content by establishing how to

- group information into manageable chunks,
- group similar items and exclude unrelated items,
- label information chunks,
- use terms consistently in chunks and labels,
- use tables, illustrations and diagrams,
- write generically, and
- provide relevant topic titles.

However, the quality of the source text in terms of terminology, style and grammar remained an issue. From an organizational point of view, we had a few options:

- Hire native English-speaking technical writers
- Educate our existing technical writers and take them to an advanced level of English
- Author in the native language (in this case Dutch) and have it translated into English before translating it into other languages (by TM and MT)
- Author in a controlled language

The first option meant that existing staff with long-term experience with Océ products would have to be replaced by new inexperienced writers. This was out of the question. Educating technical writers to a superior level of English would take quite some time and financial investment. Besides, success would be uncertain: Technical skills and language skills often don't mix well. The third option would have been feasible, allowing English to be used as a well-supported pivot language for machine translation. However, it was discarded as well: The removal of the language barrier might only encourage authors to write even longer texts and more complicated sentences. Both needed to be avoided because they would disrupt the efficiency of the machine translation. Thus, we adopted the solution of using a controlled language tool.

Controlling language

We had previously created guidelines for the authors, with a special focus on machine translation. Even simple rules can make quite a difference, as the example below shows. Inserting an article disambiguates the sentence and results in a correct translation. The guidelines could be considered as a first step towards a controlled language (CL).

Original sentence:
paint surface between lines.

MT of original sentence:
Italian: *vernice di superficie tra le righe.*
German: *Farbeoberfläche zwischen Zeilen.*

Corrected sentence:
paint the surface between the lines.

MT of corrected sentence:
Italian: *verniciare la superficie tra le righe.*
German: *Malen Sie die Oberfläche zwischen den Zeilen*

Here are some examples of the recommendations included in the guidelines:

- Write short sentences
- Use punctuation wherever appropriate
- Write in the active voice
- Write grammatically complete sentences
- Use articles

However, the problem with guidelines was that to be effective, they had to be read, applied and finally remembered. A tool to enforce the guidelines was the next logical step.
There was a limited choice of tools for a controlled language at the time, and Océ chose the MAXit Simplified Language tool by Smart Communications. It had a plug-in for several authoring environments including Word and FrameMaker, which Océ was using at the time. MAXit was chosen because it was relatively easy to implement, maintain and use. It provided the following features:

- It analyzed text on the basis of ten rules
- It generated 40 different error messages
- It assigned color codes to specific errors
- It proposed improvements
- It had a core, a custom and a synonym dictionary
- It could be used (almost) "off the shelf"

The simplified language tool operated on the basis of ten general rules:

- Write positive statements
- Write short sentences
- Express one thought per sentence
- Use approved terminology
- Write simple sentences
- Use active voice rather than passive voice
- Avoid gerunds and verbs used as a noun
- Avoid conditional sentences
- Avoid word clusters
- Use valid abbreviations

Implementation

To prepare for the introduction of the controlled language tool, the translation department had created a comprehensive technical terminology database, which was also available to corporate Océ through the Intranet. The dictionary for simplified English was basically a subset of the terminology database containing a carefully selected set of technical domain terms.
MAXit's simplified language rules were adopted. Only one rule was added, the "Dutch glue" rule, which alerts authors when they "glue together" single English words into compounds. Another rule was discarded to accommodate technical service manuals: to spell out numbers below ten. We set up an initial workflow to deal with terminology proposals from technical writers that were not (yet) part of the terminology base.
Hands-on classroom training explained the principles behind a controlled language and the reasons for its introduction. It taught technical writers:

- The principle that what they write is not necessarily what they mean
- How to spot and correct common grammatical mistakes
- That the English language can be rather ambiguous

Controlled language tends to limit the freedom of technical writers to express themselves. Moreover, it changes their way of working. We anticipated that this might lead to potential resistance towards the tool.
The classroom-training course proved to be instrumental in overcoming this initial resistance and contributed in no small part to the success of the controlled language implementation. In some cases, authors even became over-enthusiastic, in the sense that they spent too much time creating CL-compliant sentences.
Other factors favoring acceptance included:

- Technical writers have a technical rather than a linguistic background and more easily accept the restrictions if the tool actually supports them
- The authors were non-native speakers and more inclined to accept linguistic limitations

Failure to involve authors and translators in the whole process would have led to failure of the entire implementation or would at least have reduced its efficiency. Therefore, change management is an important factor to consider.

Positive aspects

Overall, the positive effects of the controlled language were clear:

- Better-quality source texts through improved readability and intelligibility
- Clear and grammatically correct source documentation (from non-native writers)
- Improved content management system efficiency due to the reuse of already written pieces of information across products
- Higher reuse of translated sentences in translation memories (for the same reasons)
- A more standardized writing style
- Consistent use of terminology and much more control over terminology than before
- Shorter sentences and more concise writing in general
- Reduction of superfluous information

The company decided against rewriting legacy material in controlled language. Therefore, it is difficult to calculate the influence of the controlled language with respect to the volume. In one instance, however, rewriting took place and showed an approximate reduction of 35 percent in the word count. Rewriting legacy text is fairly tedious and time-consuming, as one must get rid of all the checker's compliancy error messages. Nevertheless, a positive side effect is that superfluous information is deleted, contributing to concise and to-the-point information.
The effects of controlled English can be seen in this example taken from one of the manuals:

Original sentence:
In several windows, an icon shows the current status/ activity of a printer. See the list below for a description of each status.

Translation of the original in German:
In mehreren Fenstern zeigt ein Ikon den laufenden Status/ Aktivität eines Druckers. Siehe die Liste zwecks einer Definition jedes Status unten

Controlled Language sentence:
These icons show the status or activity of the copier.

German machine translation of the Controlled English sentence:
Diese Ikone zeigen den Status oder die Aktivität des Kopiergeräts.

Table 1 shows some additional examples from a comparative study.

Negative aspects

There were also negative effects from this controlled language (or rather simplified English) implementation.

Simplified English tends to be rather constrictive and inflexible. Using the checker is initially very time-consuming: resolving all flagged errors takes time, especially in the beginning. After a while, however, the feedback leads technical writers to avoid certain mistakes instead of correcting them.

Some authors overrated the tool, blindly accepting the propositions of the checker and producing grammatically false sentences. Therefore, the training sessions had to emphasize the fact that the checker is not a miracle tool or the ultimate solution, but rather a supporting instrument.

Some authors also engaged in so-called "black authoring". They would try to correct all color-coded messages, i.e. resolve all errors flagged by the checker. This wound up taking far too much time, and sometimes the results were even grammatically wrong. Using the tool requires discipline and some basic linguistic knowledge in order to interpret the proposed corrections accurately.

In addition, the rules for controlled language were not always compatible with the rules for improving machine translation.

Original MAXit-controlled version	MAXit error messages	Translation	New controlled text	MAXit error messages	Translation
The end user can use an Océ application to control the jobs to, on and from the Océ VarioPrint 2050-70.	Position of preposition Awkward sentence Style: insert article Not in dictionary	Der Endbenutzer kann eine Océ Anwendung verwenden, um die Aufträge **zu sicherzustellen, auf und von** der Océ VarioPrint 2050-70.	The end user can use an Océ application to control all the job phases of the Océ VarioPrint 2050-70. from the input to the output.	Sentence length Not in dictionary	Der Endbenutzer kann eine Océ Anwendung verwenden, um alle Auftragsphasen der Océ VarioPrint 2050-70 sicherzustellen, von der Eingabe zur Ausgabe.
Scan paper documents	Style: insert article	**Scan-papierbelege**	Scanning of paper documents	Do not use gerunds	Scanning von Papierbelegen
The new technologies and features, developed for this release provide an improved workflow to execute the jobs, in combination with the Océ Intra Logic application.	Sentence length Tenses are not parallel Insert a synonym Style: insert article Insert a synonym Insert a synonym	Die neuen Techniken und Merkmale, die für diese Version entgewickelt werden bieten einen verbesserten workflow, um die Aufträge auszuführen. In Verbindung mit der Océ Intra Logic Anwendung	The new technologies and features of this new release provide an improved workflow for the jobs, which depends on the Océ Intra Logic application.	Sentence length Insert a synonym	Die neuen Techniken und Merkmale dieser neuen Version bieten einen verbesserten workflow für die Aufträge, der von der Océ Intra Logic Anwendung abhängt.

Table 1: The effects of Controlled Language on technical writing and translation.

Source: Océ Technologies

Controlled language and machine translation

With regard to machine translation, controlled language improved the output quality: The improved readability and the absence of ambiguity made the translation process less error-prone, both for human translators and MT systems. In general, the rules for CL also apply to MT.

However, there are also some negative effects:

- Controlled language and machine translation have different goals and different analysis engines. Ideally, MT and CL analysis should be performed by the same engine and have the same underlying set of rules.
- The goal of CL is to facilitate human comprehension of a text, whereas the goal of MT is to control the source for a better translation result.
- The verb set for CL contains too many general verbs, which leads to translation problems as MT requires a detailed context. For MT, the more specific the verbs, the better the output quality.

The principles of structured writing favor the transformation of long descriptions into lists and tables. Although these can greatly enhance readability, they can also cause ambiguity due to extreme conciseness, especially in the case of a poor morphological language like English. Even if human readers usually benefit from this, it certainly presents a problem for a rule-based MT system, which relies on syntactic analysis.

Conclusion

For Océ, the implementation of a controlled language tool made a significant contribution to the reuse of both source documentation and translations, and the consistency of the technical terminology. Although Océ experienced some setbacks with the use of the controlled language, the concept has helped to save considerable time and money as part of an automated workflow in combination with several additional language and translation technologies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lou Cremers ran the internal translation services of Océ Technologies until 2006 when he started Syn-Tactic, specializing in Translation Technology. Currently he also works for 8vance Matching Technologies as a language technology specialist.

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Tight budgets and a growing number of languages impede terminology work

How many companies practice terminology management? Who is concerned with terminology work? How do professionals from the business environment rate the benefits, and how high are the potential savings? A new tekom study provides insights into the current state of terminology work in organizations.

Image: Aleksandr Belugin/123rf.com

By Klaus-Dirk Schmitz and Daniela Straub

Terminology is of utmost importance during knowledge transfer and in information processes. Within the organization, terminology ensures the consistent use of terms across departments and helps to optimize the efficiency and quality of the translation process. When communicating with external stakeholders – other organizations, suppliers, service providers and customers – terminology plays a crucial role in exhibiting a unified corporate identity and a consistent customer experience.

Published in 2010, a study by tekom on behalf of the DIN Consumer Council (German Institute for Standardization) showed the importance of terminology from the customer perspective. According to this study, poor translations and false terminology were the primary causes for issues in understanding and for errors in technical documentation.

The second edition of the tekom study on successful terminology management was published in April 2016 and analyzed data from 800 participants, who responded to an online survey conducted in 2015 on the current status of terminology work in organizations. Of the respondents, 24 percent were managers and 74 percent staff members. The majority (72 percent) worked in industrial organizations, 17 percent in software companies and 11 percent in other organizations.

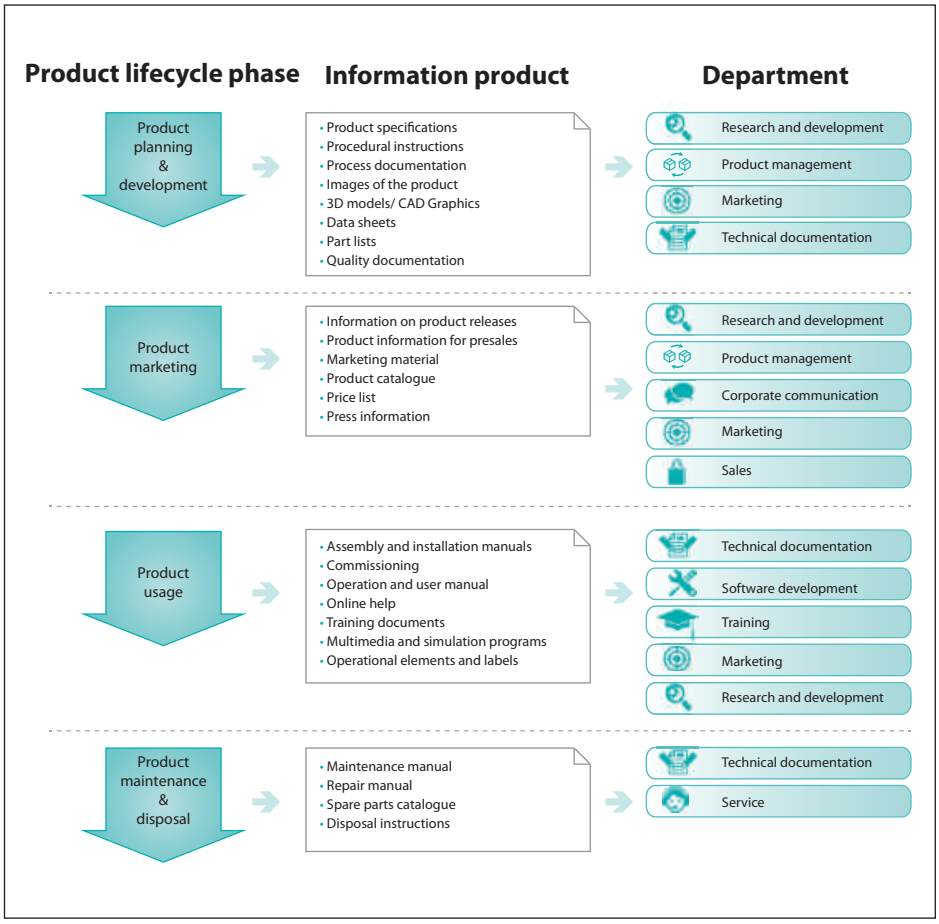

Figure 1: Information products in the product lifecycle, and their source

Source: Schmitz/Straub 2016

Who handles terminology?

Within the organization, many departments develop, convey and use terminology, even though it might not be specifically named as such. Terminology work is most prevalent in departments that create new knowledge, actively formulate information and put knowledge into words, as well as those that deal with the translation of information into other languages and its localization for other cultures.

Empirical data shows that terminology is created almost anywhere in an organization: New terms and names are "born" primarily in the following departments: research and development, design, marketing, technical documentation, training and localization/translation. The sheer number of departments that create terminology, as well as the lifecycle of the respective products or services, make terminology management across the organization a very complex process that must be planned and implemented well. Figure 1 shows which departments develop what kind of information products and during which phase of the product lifecycle they are applied.

One product, many documents

The complexity of the information development process is aggravated by two factors: Almost all information products must be localized or translated for different markets, and information is no longer distributed via a single medium. Consequently, a variety of information products exist in different languages and for different media, for one single product. Figure 2 shows the complexity of information development in the context of product lifecycle and translation/localization.

The study reveals that, on average, 4.8 organizational departments are involved in assigning terms. An average of eleven different information products are created in the organization, which are then translated into an average of twelve different languages. In comparison, the average number of languages for translation was only ten in 2010. Considering the total volume of a company's information products, at least 45 percent are translated into more than ten languages today.

Tackling complexity and tight budgets

The results of the study provide information regarding the sources of information, their transformation from raw information to copy-edited content and their translation/localization. These numbers not only verify the complexity of the creation of terminology, but also its complex use within the organization. When terms are assigned

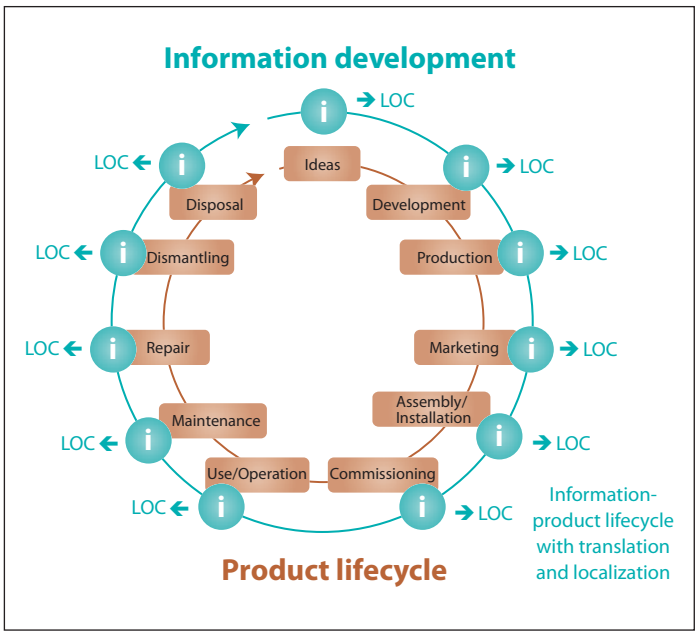

Figure 2: Relationship between information development, product lifecycle and translation/localization. *Source: Schmitz/Straub 2016*

and used inconsistently, this leads to problems in understanding:

- Of those surveyed, 89.5 percent often or constantly experience that different organizational areas or employees use different terms for the same thing
- 74.6 percent of respondents often or constantly find that different terms are used for the same thing in different documents
- 51.9 percent of employees often or constantly cannot understand terms immediately
- 57.2 percent of employees must often or constantly ask what the correct terms are

Terminology management across the organization can help to avoid these problems to a large extent. However, there may be additional challenges for terminology management due to the very common collaboration with service providers in almost all organizations. Results of the tekom Key Industry Figures of 2014 show: Service providers are used most often for the translation or localization of technical documents (almost 70 percent). The use of service providers for creating technical documentation is also quite frequent (32 percent). The layout of technical documentation (13.1 percent), consulting in this area (11 percent) as well as the creation of graphics (20 percent) are some of the other tasks that are also performed by service providers. Only one fifth of all organizations do not use service providers. Industrial organizations with over 1000 employees have a particularly high ratio of service providers as compared to small and medium-sized organizations. Due to the outsourcing of information-related tasks to service providers, the goal of a consistent use of terminology cannot be achieved without systematic terminology management across the organization.
Moreover, information development and translation projects must often be processed within very short timeframes, as market launch times are getting increasingly shorter. Considering the enormous volume of translations, it is crucial to save time and money. This inevitably happens at the expense of quality. Domestic translation service providers often find it difficult to afford and implement the golden rule that a translator should only translate into his native language. One approach to solve this is to offshore the services, e.g. when English-language translation tasks are sent to India. The translation of a document is often distributed over several translators to meet the close timeframes, thus increasing the frequency of stylistic and terminological inconsistencies in the document.

Terminology management – an emerging field

More and more organizations have found that the solution for the highlighted problems is to set up consistent terminology management. Currently, only approximately 19 percent state that terminology management is not an issue in their organization. A total of 21 percent are in the process of introducing and developing terminology processes, and 25 percent have already actively implemented terminology work in the organizational processes. This trend is also reflected in the figures that indicate how long organizations have used a defined terminology:

- One year or less: about 19 percent
- Between 1 and 2.5 years: 21 percent
- Between 2.5 and 5 years: about 25 percent
- Between 5 and 10 years: around 20 percent
- Longer than 10 years: 16 percent

Terminology management in organizations is still an emerging field; about 40 percent of organizations with a defined terminology have started in recent years. This is also reflected in the number of terminology entries in the respective databases, which have increased continuously during the years of active terminology work. On average, organizations working on terminology for less than a year have 1009 entries, those working for 1 – 2.5 years have an average of 3893 entries, those between 2.5 - 5 years have 5261 entries, those between 5 – 10 years have 5196 entries, and companies with more than 10 years have an average of 5417 entries.
Along with the terms in all respective languages, terminology databases contain definitions (in 78 percent of organizations), subject field information (78 percent) and status values such as preferred, permitted, not permitted (deprecated), locked etc. (71 percent). Grammatical information (gender, part of speech, number etc.) is created by only half of the surveyed organizations (51 percent). Other information on the documentation of the terminology entries includes figures (40 percent) and details about the department, project, product line and customer (33 percent).

Reasons for terminology work

According to the tekom study on terminology management in organizations, the main reasons leading to the setup of a terminology solution were:

- Necessity of complying with legal requirements
- Branding for international markets
- Shortened product development cycles
- Increasing number of functions per product, thus increasing the number of terms required
- Heterogeneous target groups for new terminology
- Increasing scope of information

- Increasing number of documents and information products
- Publication of contents in different media
- Shorter timeframes for information development and translation projects
- Significant growth in the number of target languages for translation
- Increase in the volume of translation
- Simultaneous translation of a document by various translators

Cost savings and quality improvements

Even though these arguments are quite revealing, the discussion within the organizations continues to focus on the costs and benefits of terminology work.
When asked about a subjective assessment of the potential of terminology work with respect to cost savings, employees in surveyed organizations considered these as follows:

- Very high: 3.3 percent
- High: 11.5 percent
- Rather high: 17.6 percent
- Rather low: 31.5 percent
- Low: 12.1 percent
- Very low: 7.4 percent
- Cannot assess: 16.7 percent

Thus, cost saving is seen as rather positive by only 32.4 percent (sum of the first three values). The assessment of the potential for quality improvement looks different; a majority of the respondents rate it as positive (57.9 percent):

- Very high: 6.9 percent
- High: 20.2 percent
- Rather high: 29.9 percent
- Rather low: 20.6 percent
- Low: 6.3 percent
- Very low: 4.1 percent

Even if the survey results do not deal with hard figures, it illustrates the subjective assessment that terminology work in organizations is generally connected more to improvement in quality than cost savings.
However, comparing the statements of survey respondents from organizations that have already implemented terminology management with the statements of respondents without terminology management reveals a completely different picture: In organizations with terminology management, 48.5 percent of the respondents see a very high, high or rather high potential for cost savings. In contrast, in organizations without terminology management, this figure is just 19.3 percent. This suggests that experience with terminology work and certain conditions such as a high number of languages influence the assessment of potential cost savings.
The difference is even clearer with respect to the potential for quality improvements: 73.4 percent of respondents from organizations with terminology management assess the potential for improving quality to be very high, high or rather high. Only 43.9 percent of the respondents from organizations without terminology work share this assessment.
Even though these results are based on subjective assessments, the tekom study clearly shows how terminology work is presently assessed in organizations and how its practice can influence the strategic importance of terminology work in these organizations. Although it is not easy to substantiate the benefits of terminology work based on hard numbers, there are some opportunities to record and present these benefits through key data. Possible key parameters can be the number of queries from translators or the match rates in the translation memory system. Key

data can verify that matches in the translation memory system can be increased through terminology work and that queries from translators can help reduce the number of translation edits as well as translation time. Terminology management can also be leveraged to improve the quality of translation.

Leveraging synergies

The positive aspects of a company-wide terminology management are also achieved by many organizations through synergies with other supporting systems. Thus, 82 percent of organizations with terminology management systems also use translation memory systems, 33 percent use systems for controlled or standardized language, and around 20 percent use text control systems.

The results of the current study in comparison with the results of the first study from 2010 show that organizations have experienced a learning curve in recent years: Quality is not just a cost driver, but rather, quality optimizations can help save costs. This is particularly true for terminology management: A defined terminology helps during the creation of content in the source language as well as during the localization or translation of content for the target markets.

In conclusion, the significance of terminology work has increased in organizations along with the recognition of the necessity of terminology management across the organization for internal and external communication.

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Playing your way to better content management

From subject matter experts to content creators, project managers and even translation and localization experts, content management projects involve a lot of people, rendering these projects complex and challenging. The classic game of Snakes & Ladders – adapted to the world of content management – provides a playful tool for people to come together and discuss pathways to a successful project.

Image: © Museum of Games and Gaming

By Nolwenn Kerzreho and Joe Gollner

The role of games in project planning

Using games to help people work through challenges is not a new idea. Games help people to think through and talk about topics that might be difficult to discuss in a formal business setting. The point is to allow people to simplify issues and to discuss them in a way that is intentionally light-hearted and enjoyable. While exploring the possible use of the Snakes & Ladders game for project planning, we were driven by the belief that people feel more at ease about sharing ideas and discussing issues when designing a game than they would be in a marathon project planning session. We further believed that the real value lay not so much in playing the game as in working together to design a game that reflects a shared reality.

Snakes & Ladders, an ancient game from India, is considered a "virtue game" in that it promotes good actions (ladders) and warns against risks (snakes). The concept is that players try to complete a journey across a game board, on which they encounter risks (snakes) that will set them back as well as opportunities to move ahead (ladders). This journey can be correlated to almost any kind of process or project scenario.

After some initial research and an experiment designing a game board based on a DITA adoption project, we decided to develop a content management project-planning workshop that would leverage the Snakes & Ladders game. The project scenario for this workshop focused on how a content management system could be leveraged to facilitate content collaboration with subject matter experts (SMEs). This focus appeared relevant because facilitating content collaboration across organizational silos is a goal that is as common as it is challenging. The idea was that, by collaborating on the design of a game, people would start talking about their collaboration challenges. In short, the workshop was designed to make people collaborate on improving how they collaborate.

The game model

Let's take a look at the various elements of the Snakes & Ladders game and how they can be used to facilitate cross-silo collaboration in content management project planning. The game model is made up of a game board and two basic game building blocks: snakes and ladders.

Project game board

The game board consists of a grid of squares. The starting point at the bottom left corner represents the starting conditions of the project (start), and the end point at the top right corner represents the achievement of the project goals (success). In our workshops, the game board was laid out with seven columns and seven rows, for a total of 49 spaces. The seven rows were associated with seven common project phases (from bottom to top, start to finish):

- **Discovery** – the initiation activities focus on identifying the problems or needs that require a solution, and the collection of initial measurement data.
- **Planning** – the preparation of an initial project roadmap together with the business case that justifies the investment required the players to address the identified problems or needs.
- **Analysis** – the collection of the detailed information needed to support the implementation of a suitable solution, including the identification of candidate technology components.
- **Pilot** – the test deployment of the candidate solution (with its selected technology components) undertaken for the purpose of validating the recommended approach.
- **Implement** – the deployment of the successfully piloted solution and preparation for the transition of the business processes onto the new solution.
- **Transition** – the transition of the business processes and user community to operate using the deployed solution.
- **Use** – the operational use of the deployed solution and the transitioned business processes.

Game building blocks

The snakes and ladders represent, respectively, the risks that a project may face and the responses that might be deployed to address or avoid those risks. The combination of these building blocks can be used to represent the ever-changing mix of problems and opportunities that will be part of every new project.

- **Snakes** – a project risk or threat. A snake delays a project or sets it back in its progress towards its goal. Landing on a square with a head of a snake will result in the game piece being moved

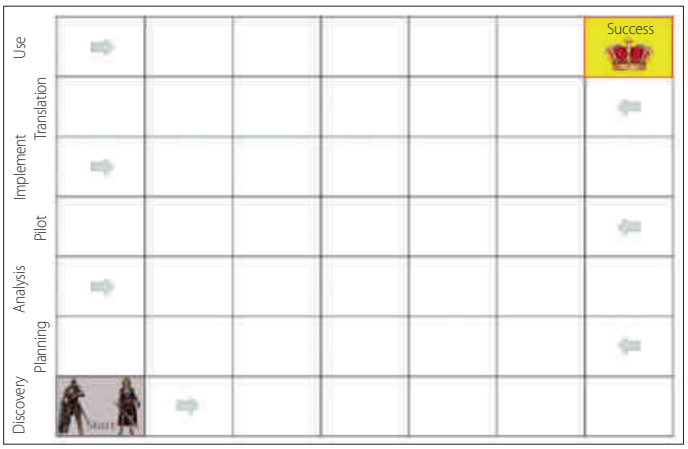

Figure 1: Snakes & Ladders game board
Source: Kerzreho/Gollner

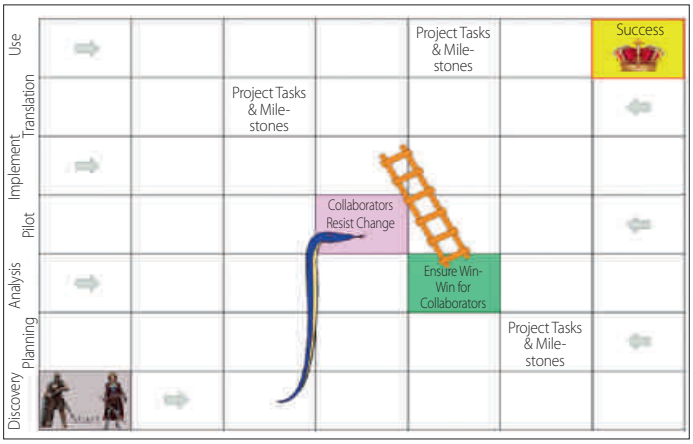

Figure 2: Adding building blocks to the game board
Source: Kerzreho/Gollner

downward to the tail of the snake. An example of a common snake that would threaten a content management project is "IT group opposes project". Another would be "collaborators resist change".

- **Ladders** – a project best practice or tactic. A ladder advances, or accelerates, a project towards its goals. Landing on a square that shows the bottom of a ladder will result in the game piece being moved upward to the top of the ladder. "Engage an executive champion" is an example of an important ladder that can be deployed to help a content management project deal with a variety of risks. Another example is "ensure win-win for collaborators".

Designing games

Before we can play a game of Snakes & Ladders, someone has to lay out the game board, complete with its unique arrangement of snakes and ladders. This is where the collaboration among stakeholders is the most intense and the most productive. Of all the things that might go wrong with a project, the game designers need to agree on what risks are most likely to happen, when they are most likely to occur, and how severe the consequences will be. In looking at best practice responses to these risks, the game designers must ask what responses (ladders) will have the greatest beneficial effects and which responses they will be able to implement given the limitations that come with every project. Working through these questions, the game designers will position their snakes and ladders so that the board reflects their shared understanding of the content management project ahead of them.

The designers need to keep the following things in mind:

- **Snakes** are typically distributed on the game board first and then **ladders** are added to reflect how the identified risks (snakes) will be avoided or addressed.
- The length of a **snake** represents its potential impact. A long snake will set a player back several project phases (rows).
- The length of a **ladder** represents its potential benefit but also its **potential cost.** A long ladder will move a player forward through several project phases (rows). This will have the effect of avoiding whatever snakes appear in the sidestepped rows. Although this is attractive, a long ladder will also be an expensive one, measured in terms of the funds, time and effort required.
- As a **rule of thumb**, loops are not permitted: a snake should not lead directly to the base of a ladder and a ladder should not lead directly to the head of a snake.

Using the game board, building blocks and the rules that have been identified, project stakeholders can create a Snakes & Ladders game that reflects the typical structure of a content management project as well as the unique considerations governing their own project. Now, let's look at what happened when we used these tools to conduct project planning workshops with experienced content management practitioners.

Conducting the workshops

We conducted the Snakes & Ladders workshop for content management project planning on four separate occasions in 2015. We will look at what we learned regarding content management project risks and best practice responses in the next section, but first let's look at what we learned about conducting Snakes & Ladders workshops for content management project planning.

Findings for better workshops

A successful workshop is one that brings together groups of people and takes them through the stages of planning a content management project by designing a Snakes & Ladders game. Working in groups, people were exposed to the very same communication challenges that their projects will face in the real world. We found that collaboration groups of five to seven people were just right: small enough to allow everyone to contribute, but large enough to bring together a vital diversity of perspectives.

We further discovered that we needed to take some initial steps to get people oriented and to help them to collaborate more energetically. An ice-breaker exercise was introduced, which asked participants to prepare persona descriptions, complete with a caricature drawing, for their most problematic collaborator. Sharing these personas helped people to see that everyone was in fact facing very similar challenges. This set the stage for successful group collaboration.

During the group activities, we learned that it is important to help groups get started. We did this by providing them with previously prepared materials to start with. For example, we provided a list of candidate snakes (risks) from which the groups could choose. We then encouraged groups to add new snakes. The same thing was done for the second activity, selecting the ladders they saw as being most useful in addressing the previously selected snakes.

We also added a key constraint to the third and final activity, the layout of a game using the chosen snakes and ladders. The game board worksheet we provided came with a number of unlabeled snakes. Groups were asked to start by assigning the snakes chosen in the first activity to the snakes already placed on the board. The groups then continued by adding more snakes and then deploying the ladders. Structuring activities to help groups get started proved to be extremely important.

Phase	Discovery	Progress
1	Overall goals - building shareable knowledge	✔
2	Game principles and example of board	✔
3	(optional) Ice-breaker individual activity	✔
4	Introducing principles of building blocks	✔
5	Introducing presenters' favorite snakes and ladders	✔
6	Activity – selecting snakes and creating new ones	✔
7	Activity – selecting corresponding ladders and creating new ones	✔
8	Activity – placing snakes and ladders on the board	✔
9	Activity – teams presenting results to the audience	✔

Figure 3: Final delivery sequence and structure for the workshop *Source: Kerzreho/Gollner*

Analyzing workshop results

The common sequence and structure of the group activities in the workshops meant that we were able to collect, compare and analyze the results of the different workshops. The groups identified which snakes and ladders they felt applied to their project and laid them out on their game boards. The groups also emphasized which snakes and ladders they saw as the most important. The table below provides a summary of the results. Prominent snakes and ladders are in bold.

The results clearly reflect a bias towards the candidate set of snakes and ladders that had been provided in each workshop as a starting point. However, a total of 39 new snakes and 29 new ladders were introduced across the different workshops. Several of these new items were selected as a major snake or ladder and this emphasis was used as a criterion for including the new additions in Figure 4.

Snakes highlighted by workshop participants

Three snakes stood out as clearly the most prominent in group selection and emphasis choices:

- **Collaborators too busy.** When involving SMEs in the collaborative processes, the limited availability of these specialized resources came up repeatedly as a key stumbling block. It was one of the risks that won instant recognition and concurrence with almost all workshop participants. This risk stood out as the most prominent of the snakes selected and emphasized.
- **Crisis changes priorities.** This risk was emphasized as the major snake on more game boards than any other. It was a scenario that several workshop participants were personally familiar with. One example given was of a company acquisition suddenly changing the business and financial landscape.
- **Collaborators reject tool.** This risk, while citing the technology that might be used to engage SMEs, is only partly related to the technology itself. Clearly if the tool does not function properly, collaborators will reject it. This risk is in fact broader than that, and it addresses the very real problem of matching the tool to the needs and working patterns of the SME community.

Prominent ladders

When it came to applied best practices, there was a larger group of ladders that stood out:

- Engage executive champion. This ladder focuses on finding and engaging an executive champion who can broker the relationships across organizational boundaries. This ladder was the most frequently emphasized as key to project success.
- Ensure a win-win for collaborators. This best practice focuses on ensuring that the changes provide benefits to the SMEs as well as to the documentation team. This ladder ranked as the second most important step that could be taken towards enabling a successful collaboration with SMEs.
- Engage collaborators early. This ladder and the remaining four all finished with roughly comparable prominence. This particular ladder focuses on the need to involve SME collaborators as early in an initiative as possible. This way issues and reservations can be addressed before they become a major problem.
- Train power users. This ladder focuses on making additional investments in the knowledge of selected power users so that they can help the larger community of SMEs migrate to a modified way of collaborating on content assets.
- Demonstrate customer benefits. This ladder focuses on steps that can be taken to make the benefits of collaboration, and in particular those that will be enjoyed by the end customer, visible and tangible to the SMEs.
- Engage management on issues. Related to engaging an executive champion, this ladder focuses on leveraging management connections to escalate issues when necessary so that resolutions can be worked out and implemented at the right level.
- Involve users in tool selection. This ladder focuses on overcoming potential problems in tool adoption by involving SMEs in the process of selecting, and then customizing, the collaboration tools that they will be expected to use.

Standard Set of Snakes	*Selected*	*Emphasized*
Collaborators too busy	***14***	***3***
Collaborators competing	*1*	
Collaborators too possessive	*3*	
Collaborators weak communicators	*7*	
Collaborators question value	*4*	
Collaborators reject tool	***10***	***1***
Collaborators resist change	*4*	*2*
Management questions ROI	*1*	
Inadequate budget set	*1*	*1*
Unrealistic schedule set	*3*	
Crisis changes priorities	***10***	***5***
Weak PM overwhelmed	*2*	
Legacy practices overemphasized	*6*	
IT blocks project	*2*	
Incomplete tool requirements	*5*	
New Snakes Added & Emphasized		
No executive sponsorship	*1*	*1*
Loss of stakeholder engagement	*1*	*1*
Acquired by different company	*1*	*1*
Tool problems	*1*	*1*
SME training inadequate	*1*	*1*
Fail operational testing	*1*	*1*
Lose executive champion	*1*	*1*
Expectations change	*1*	*1*

Standard Set of Ladders	*Selected*	*Emphasized*
Engage IT early	*3*	
Align with policies	*1*	
Emphasize customer benefits	*6*	*2*
Conduct stakeholder briefings	*5*	
Prototype collaboration tools	*1*	
Pilot collaboration tools	*5*	
Demonstrate customer benefits	***8***	***1***
Engage collaborators early	***9***	***1***
Engage executive champion	***14***	***5***
Publicize project successes	*3*	
Engage management on issues	***8***	***1***
Ensure win-win for collaborators	***11***	***1***
Involve users in tool selection	***8***	
Train power users	***9***	***1***
Provide user support	*6*	
Deliver ongoing training	*4*	
New Ladders Added & Emphasized		
Incentivized participation	*1*	*1*
Use standards	*1*	*1*
Define clear stakeholder roles	*1*	*1*
Treat SMEs as customers	*2*	*1*
Formalize new skills	*1*	*1*
Assign SME responsibilities	*1*	*1*
Build relationships	*1*	*1*

Figure 4: Summary of workshop results *Source: Kerzreho/Gollner*

Conclusions

Several things stand out as significant in our experience of developing and delivering Snakes & Ladders workshops for facilitating content management project planning.

Image: A peek into one of the Snakes & Ladders workshops conducted in Utrecht in 2015 *Source: Magda Caloian*

Firstly, the Snakes & Ladders game model is a natural fit for this use. The game concept proved to be one that all participants were able to grasp quickly and to work with as a planning tool. Based on the feedback received, workshop participants could see the value of using a game model to engage project stakeholders in the often difficult task of identifying project risks and agreeing upon the best ways to address them. In one case, one participant used the Snakes & Ladders workshop to facilitate a content management project planning session with a remote team in India. This participant reported back that this effort had been a success, further proving the ability of the game model to work across cultural boundaries.

Secondly, the effort that was applied to designing, and then refining, the workshop has produced a very high-quality facilitation workshop model that can now be used by organizations to facilitate similar workshops. The workshop is also attractive for the reason that it includes an expanding library of project risks (snakes) and best practice responses (ladders) that project stakeholders can consider when reviewing their own projects. It is worth noting that, in 2015 alone, over 100 experienced content management practitioners participated in the workshops and contributed new snakes and ladders to this library.

Finally, it is often said that the cultural side of content management projects is the most important factor in determining whether an investment in new technology and processes will actually achieve its stated goals. This is doubly true for projects that take on the added challenge of reaching out to and working with subject matter experts in various organizational units. However, in practice, content management project managers often seem to work without any tools or techniques to help them address the cultural aspects of their projects. The Snakes & Ladders workshop is a simple-to-use, low-cost technique that can enable real progress in this area. Project managers can engage their stakeholders in identifying risks and deciding on what to do about them. And this can go a long way towards addressing some of the fundamental change management challenges that accompany every content management project.

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The human role in a machine-translated world

The rise of machine translation has left human translators with an uncertain future. But the translation industry cannot depend on machines alone and won't be able to any time soon. So where do translators find their new place?

By Elanna Mariniello and Afaf Steiert

In 2015, social media sites all over the world were in a frenzy over Taco Bell Japan's new website. Taco Bell restaurants were re-opening in the country and the team had just launched a machine-translated site featuring the menu items. What was intended as a globalization effort to bring American fast food (and fast food product names) to Japan turned into a PR nightmare. A signature item on the menu, "Cheesy Fries", was advertised as "a low-quality fleece". The "Crunchwrap Supreme Beef" had been translated to "Supreme Court Beef". Customers were both amused and confused. And while Taco Bell received a great deal of press for their Japan launch, it wasn't necessarily the type of press they were seeking.

Of course, not all machine translations (MT) suffer such blunders, and, in fact, many MT tools

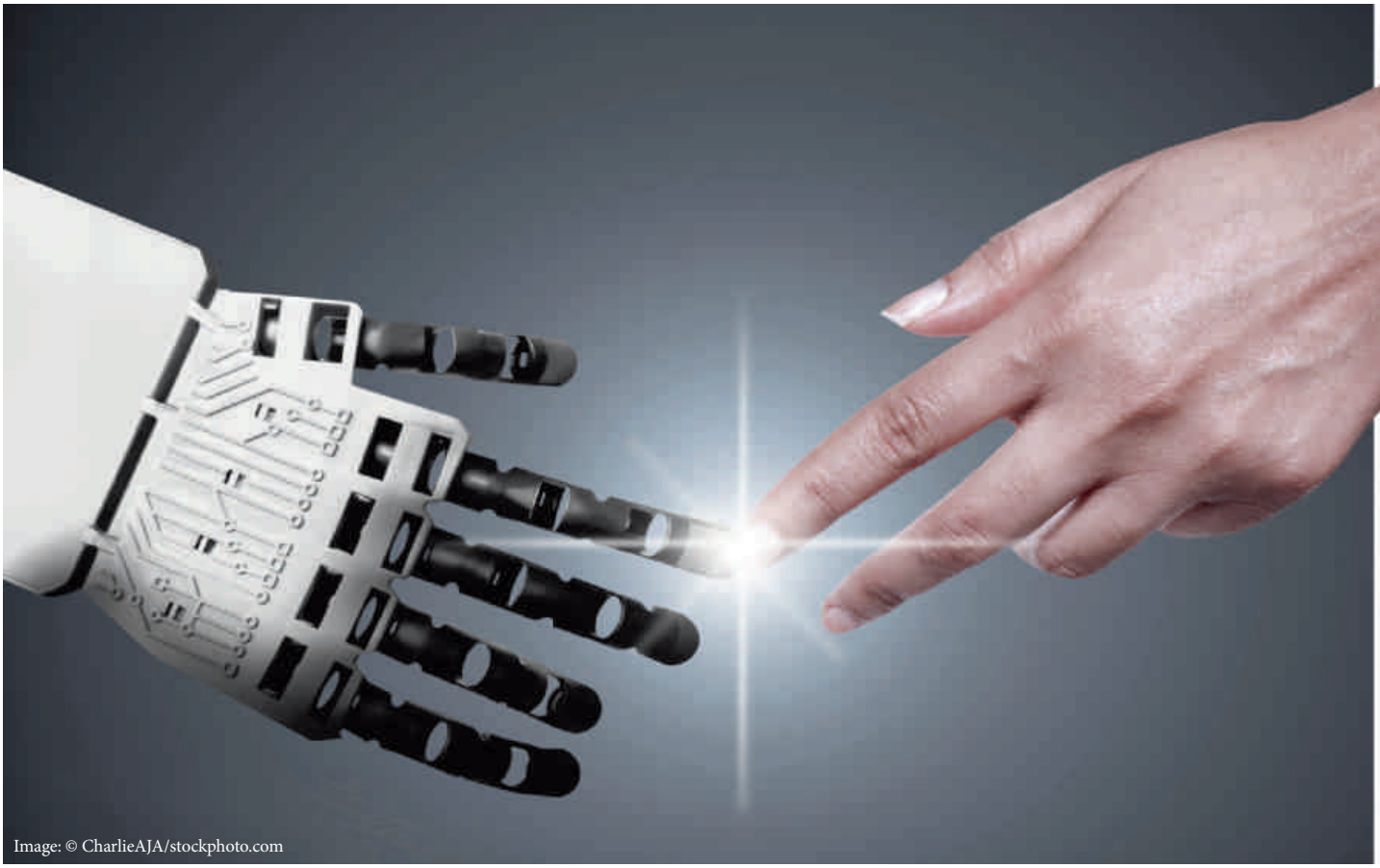

Image: © CharlieAJA/stockphoto.com

have become extremely sophisticated; however, in recent years, the rise of MT has made waves of all kinds within the traditional translation industry. As an industry historically built upon essential human critical thinking, translators all over the world have had to contend with the rise of technology and an increasing demand for quick, cheaper machine translation. Since 2006, anyone with an Internet connection has been able to access Google Translate with the click of a button, and other translation software is continuously being developed and improved upon. With quick turnaround time and human post-editing (PE), many companies are turning to MT and away from traditional translations, leaving many to question what might become of this industry and the language professionals who have built it. While MT is adding a new flavor to the translation world, it is generally accepted that terms like "Crunchwrap Supreme" are better suited to the human translator.

A transforming industry

The translation industry and its related professions are amidst a rapid transformation. An industry worth $38 billion USD (Common Sense Advisory) historically based on the talents of trusted and highly-trained linguistic professionals is coping with the introduction of what many consider to be the antithesis of human quality work: the emergence of translation technology. For many in the industry, translation has long been considered an elevated art form, bridging cultures, ideas, crucial professional content and schools of thought. The earliest translators built roles for themselves based on the clear and most basic necessity of communication. Since then, the industry has evolved in the same way, fueled by clients with an awareness of localization, a need to represent their brands efficiently across cultures, and overall, propelled by a society that recognizes the contributions of a translator as a key conduit of information – a skilled liaison between worlds.

It was this attitude that brought the industry rapid growth and, as with many other industries, translators have continued to train those growing in their field with the same rigor and respect for the craft. Language service professionals have created associations (e.g. the American Translators Association or Translators Without Borders), quality control systems and methods for pricing their work. Conferences have covered everything from the most widespread to the most obscure challenges in the profession – from localization to subtle nuances in literary translation. Translators, no matter how diverse their projects, have supported each other while working towards the same goal: to maintain the highest quality of a source text in its target language.

Disrupting the peace – the rise of MT

MT has left many traditional translators questioning the profession itself. Paper and online dictionaries have been replaced by translation memory devices and word banks stored in the cloud, and instead of pay-per-word translations, there are now post-editing prices, determined by a number of varied elements. While the emergence of MT has been incremental, the comparison of the traditional industry with the industry today is quite stark.

Today's globalizing society still strives for quality, but the major focus is speed. The sheer mass of content necessary to communicate, share and sell content across cultures and languages has led to an unprecedented industry growth, highly dependent upon machines. With tools like Translation Memory (TM) and Google's Statistical Machine Translation (SMT), modern MT software is able to process content with a higher productivity of 30 to 300 percent. In a world that demands more content more quickly, MT is the logical solution. Even more, when we consider the plunging costs of purchasing software versus paying a comparatively expensive human translator.

But while money and time are key concerns for clients, they are also major concerns for translators, holding onto the value of their craft. The emergence of MT as an efficient and low-cost option has altered the landscape: What type of work professional translators are able to obtain and at which pay rate has changed drastically. The life of a freelance translator, once based on securing projects and clients, and establishing a reputation for quality, has now shifted to offering a variety of services. The introduction of MT has made traditional projects harder to come by. There are certainly companies and clients whose focus has remained on human translation; however, budgeting and

project turnaround needs have made them few and far between. In addition, many translators report that their earning potential has taken a downward shift in the technology age (Arenas, JosTrans). Traditionally, translators have charged on a pay-per-word basis; however, many translation projects are no longer solely priced via this format. Translators, increasingly in need of consistent income, are more often accepting projects for post-editing machine translated content, which can be billed via time spent, corrections made, or by the required quality level of the post-edited content.

Perhaps most importantly, MT has been a challenge to the underlying value of quality in the industry. While MT developers are working tirelessly to take machine translations closer to the quality output generated by a human, many translators argue that the machine can never match the layered, nuanced and smart human brain. In the same way that those in the fashion industry defend the quality of handmade clothing over that produced in a factory, or those in the kitchen rate skillfully cooked meals over those produced, packaged and frozen, so do translators emphasize the inherent quality of translations processed by the human mind from start to finish. Skirting quality for speed, many say, may cause serious damage to the industry. And although the costs may be higher for this level of quality, a fair number of translators argue that this tradeoff is worthwhile – particularly when it comes to translating medical documents or legal transcripts.

MT's place in a modern society

MT may not be the solution for the legal and medical fields, but it certainly has its value and place. That place, however, may not be front and center, and it has been an ongoing process to figure out just where it may be best suited.

A common argument in the conversation regarding MT is that we can't push against it; technology is here to stay and we must find a way to accept its inevitability. The implementation of any technology, however, can vary greatly, and the translation industry is no exception. MT, which dates back to the late 1940's, has slowly been inching its way into the modern industry and it is with much fine-tuning that it has been incorporated to the extent that it has reached today. Even so, the estimated accuracy of raw machine-translated content is only 50-70 percent, according to SDL. Thus, the use of MT should be consciously selected, rather than all-embracing.

In medical translation, for example, where words and diagnoses can be a matter of life and death, the quality and accuracy in translation is of utmost importance. The same applies to legal translation, where particular word choices and positioning carry deep significance and can decide the course of legal processes. As stated in a recent ATA Q&A with Cressida Stolp, senior project manager at Divergent Solutions, "As long as there are lawyers and doctors, there will be a need for human translators. That's because they cannot afford mistranslations in these fields."

Other realms where MT encounters numerous errors are in translating languages that read right to left, like Arabic and Hebrew. In these cases, not only is the machine required to implement TM and word replacement, it is also required to rearrange the order of words and the direction in which they're written. In many cases, post-editing this type of machine-translated text can create even more work for a translator than translation from scratch, because of the constant necessity of referring to the source text in order to make sense of the machine-generated content.

One area in which MT is successful, however, is in technical translations. Straightforward, simple, repetitive and with far less nuance, technical writing provides a more calculated approach to writing – one that is highly complemented by the tools employed by MT. "The reality we are seeing every day is that for technical translations ranging from software to manuals to catalogs, quality MT is achievable," states Ken Clark in his article "Elements of Style for Machine Translation" (***MultiLingual Magazine***). For many companies looking to translate their technical content, MT may in fact be a highly valuable tool.

Other arenas in which technology is finding praise by those in the industry is in technological tools that allow the translator to become more successful. Although many companies are working diligently towards creating MT that brings source text to target text, there are also great contributions being made to develop tools for translators to improve their workflow. As in many other fields, technology has the capacity to enhance current human work without completely replacing it. Tools like Wordfast's Classic and Anywhere, Cafe Tran, Trados Studio and more are building in "auto-suggest" features that give MT suggestions to translators in subsegments. Déjà Vu utilizes fragments of MT to automatically fix fuzzy TM matches, and programs have been developed to use TM to validate MT suggestions. (Jost Zetzsche, ***ATA Chronicle***). Here, specifically, technology has been a great asset to translators.

The future of the industry

While technology is here to stay, it's not fair to say that it is the main contributor paving the translation industry's future. Translators are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that they have a voice in shaping the image of the industry they've created. How this may ultimately manifest itself is still a work in progress. Nevertheless, ideas and processes for intentional growth based upon the value of human translation are already being implemented.

In the European Union, for example, translators and contracted translators are entitled to a minimum salary level and clear expectations for salary growth, based on increasing experience. In a continent dependent on 24 official languages, providing outlines for how to translate documents and how to compensate translators based on high quality standards is of utmost importance. The EU, which also implements TM and other translation software, states that, "while computers provide powerful means of increasing productivity and improving quality and consistency, the human touch remains irreplaceable at the core of this difficult art" (***EU, Interpreting and Translating for Europe***). As reported in 2012, the EU Directorate General for Translation employs 1,700 translators and 750 support staff, and translates approximately 1,900,000 pages per year. In the European Council, documents must be made available in all 24 languages, resulting in 630 translators and 340 assistants at this level alone. All contract staff must meet minimum qualification standards, must have a thorough knowledge of three official EU languages and are paid on a monthly salary grade ranging from 3,170 Euro to 6,651 Euro based on experience. Permanent staff receives a monthly salary ranging from

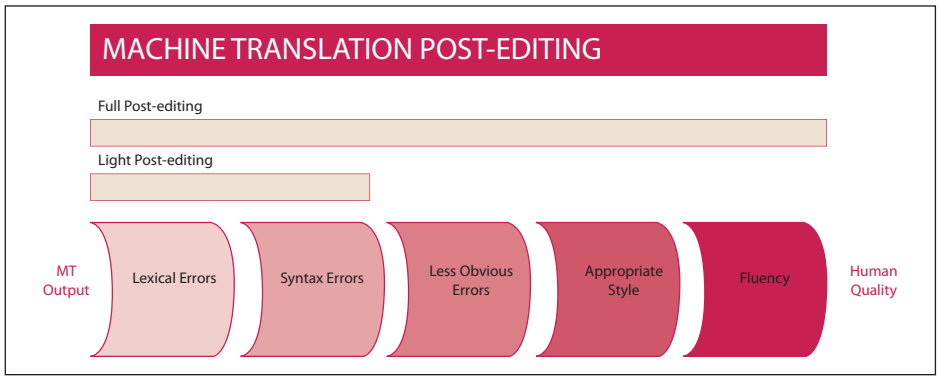

Figure 1: The effects of post-editing on machine-translated content

Source: Afaf Translations

4,335 Euro to 18,000 Euro depending on their "grade" and experience. In this way, the EU has managed to implement technology while providing protection for their translators and avoiding a severe downfall in salary and/or translation quality. This certainly points to a way in which the US and other countries could begin to implement standards and offer some measure of protection.

Payment standards offer the opportunity to promote human value in the industry. While traditional practices are based on a pay-per-word system, changes in the industry are requiring new methods for pricing that allow translators to maintain a financially healthy lifestyle. While the Translation Automation User Society (TAUS) has developed thorough and highly useful guides for post-editing pricing schemes, this side of the industry is still largely unregulated and allows companies to pay significantly lower fees to post-editors for services that may take just as much time and energy as a full translation process. Therefore, quality control – a newer facet in the translation industry – is essential in this area.

Human investment

As MT steps to the forefront, the industry is dependent upon seasoned translators to continue to cultivate and pass on the skills to future translators. Quality, as has been previously stated, is the essential element in the art of translation, and associations are already devising ways to invest in aspiring translators who uphold this value. As salaries for translators continue to experience a downfall, those who believe deeply in the traditional craft are devoting their time and energy to changing the discussion to one of empowerment. They are trying to elevate the industry amidst the machines.

There is an increasing realization that we need to value the quality human capital before all the talented individuals disappear from the industry altogether. Associations like the ATA are frequenting schools to address the value of highly-trained translators, and the topic sparks enthusiastic discussions on popular translation forums, at translation conferences and in many prominent translation circles.

The transition into a new technological age has not been easy for the translation industry, but it has been transformative. It has caused an industry of bright, creative and skillful linguists to consider and reconsider the power of their words and their ability to manipulate them. It has brought translators to a place where challenge and compromise can fuel empowered change with regard to human capital.

Clients may convince translators to accept a lower per-word rate, arguing that technology can now help them to work faster. However, this may come at the cost of the translator's health and eyesight. MT post-editing rates are a real challenge as some clients wish to pay per hour while others prefer to apply lower per-word rates. In both cases, clients need to be aware of the effort involved in transforming MT output into accurate, high-quality content.

In response to the challenges machines have provided, translators should be inspired to leverage their benefits and find creative solutions that emphasize the human value. Unlike other areas, where machines have made humans entirely or nearly obsolete, translation is still very much in need of the human touch.

The days of pure human translations might be gone, but the value of the professional human translator remains indispensable. Humans can do the work well without the machine, but the machine cannot do the work well without humans. As we move forward into a world in which the role of MT is expanding, human growth in the field needs to stay on pace.

If human translators lose their place in the industry, Taco Bell won't be the only company advertising "low-quality fleece".

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Afaf Steiert, M.Sc. is president and founder of Afaf Translations, works as an Arabic conference interpreter, and oversees all medical/technical Arabic translation services at Afaf Translations. She speaks five languages and has good knowledge of all Arabic dialects.

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Mistranslations and cultural faux pas can irreversibly damage brand reputation

The way brands prepare for and respond to an international crisis has a huge impact on their reputation. A new report highlights the importance of considering the linguistic and cultural background of stakeholders.

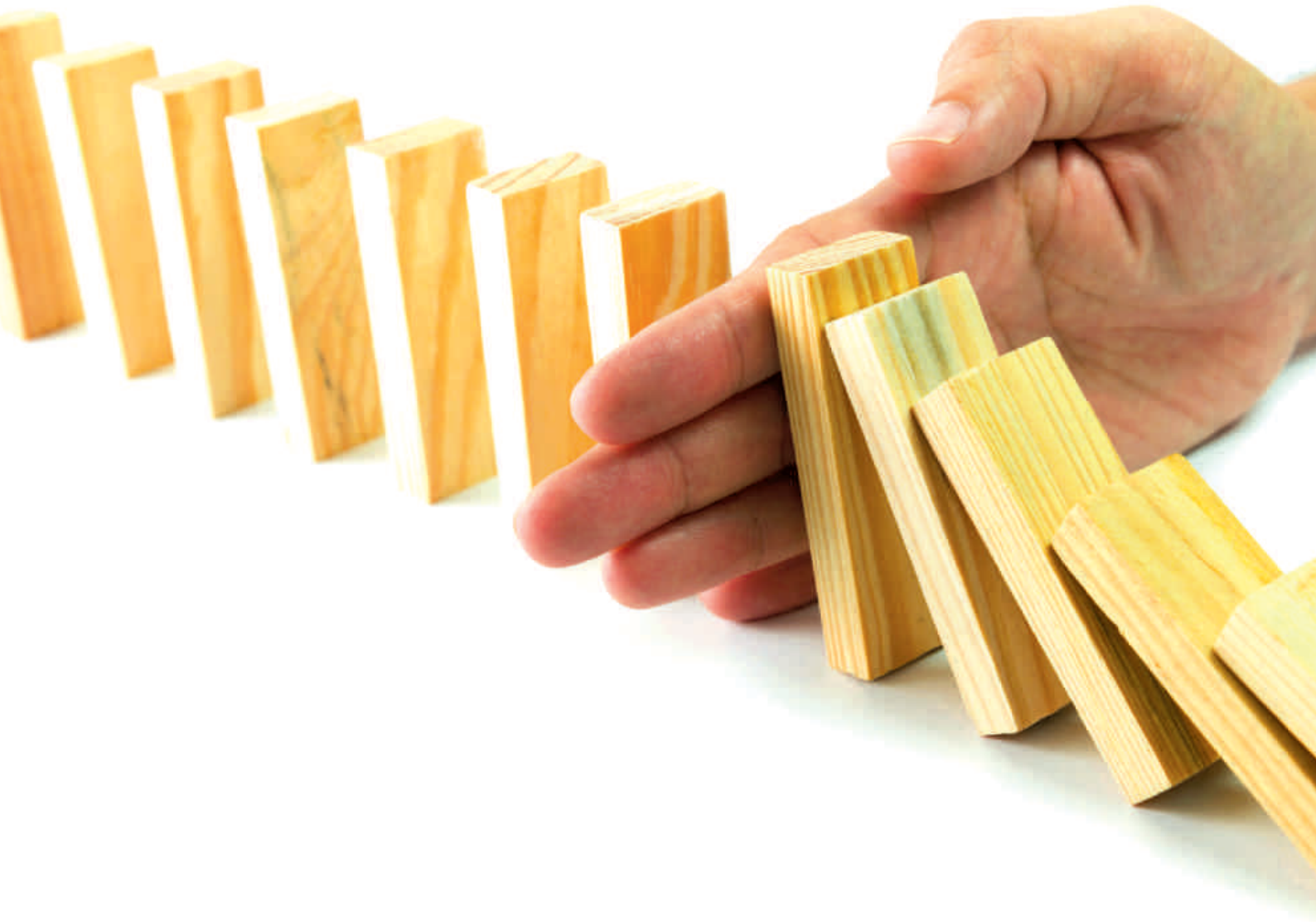

Image: Kenishirotie/istockphoto.com

By Gary Muddyman

With the increasing influence of social media, just one negative comment from a major influencer can spark an international crisis for global organizations. Social media has added an overwhelming complexity to crisis management, with multiple channels, user messaging and real-time delivery making the job far more difficult.

Integrating social media into a crisis communications response is a must, not necessarily to directly communicate with everyone you're connected to, but to provide resources and accessibility to the journalists and key influencers to propagate your message, and to all stakeholders that need a platform to find relevant and real-time information from the source.

The digital age has fundamentally changed the way communications professionals have to manage crisis communications. In a new report titled ***The importance of understanding language and culture when managing an international crisis***, translation and localization provider Conversis gives an insight into how organizations are approaching the linguistic challenge these changes present.

Social media is now an integral part of our personal and business lives. Having billions of potential "citizen journalists" around the world means that previously carefully crafted strategies can be compromised minutes after the event, and in multiple languages. Traditional crisis communications planning and translation work practices only partly meet this challenge.

Localizing the crisis response

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and that is why constantly monitoring the news, online and offline and in all appropriate languages, is crucial.

In fact, the lack of monitoring in relevant languages is just one of several surprising results highlighted in the Conversis report. For example, 15 percent of UK respondents with responsibility for international crisis communications stated that they only monitor the news and/or social media in English. This begs the question whether they would even know if a crisis was unfolding in a particular territory, even if it was trending on their social media monitoring tool of choice.

When a crisis does strike, speed in responding is vital, but even more importantly, the content needs to be factual and empathetic. What might seem perfectly appropriate and assertive in one culture can be considered offensive and condescending in another. So simply translating your holding statement might prove to be a mistake. Regionalizing your content in a way that is culturally appropriate can really make the difference to your response. For example, during the infamous BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill crisis, the former chairman, Carl-Henric Svanberg, following a meeting with US President Barack Obama, said "We care about the small people", using what he believed to be the correct translation of his native Swedish phrase, "den lilla människan", which actually means "the common person". While this might just be a figure of speech in Swedish, it came across as highly patronizing in English.

A lack of language and cultural skills

30.7 percent of respondents to the Conversis survey also said that a lack of language skills among their team had resulted in the wrong message being sent, with 20 percent saying the same thing had happened due to a lack of cultural skills. Just over a quarter (25.9 percent) stated a lack of language skills had also resulted in them not being able to respond to an issue in a timely manner, with 22 percent blaming a lack of cultural skills within the team. 13.2 percent (mounting to 19.8 percent in the US) even admitted to the language skill shortage leading to a deterioration in their relationship with end clients, with 12.9 percent of those based in the US claiming this last issue had happened because of the lack of cultural skills, compared to just 2.9 percent of those in the UK.

In the general chaos that is unavoidable when a crisis hits, you have to be able to rely on your crisis communications plan, which should act as a guiding light. A tactful, pre-orchestrated and

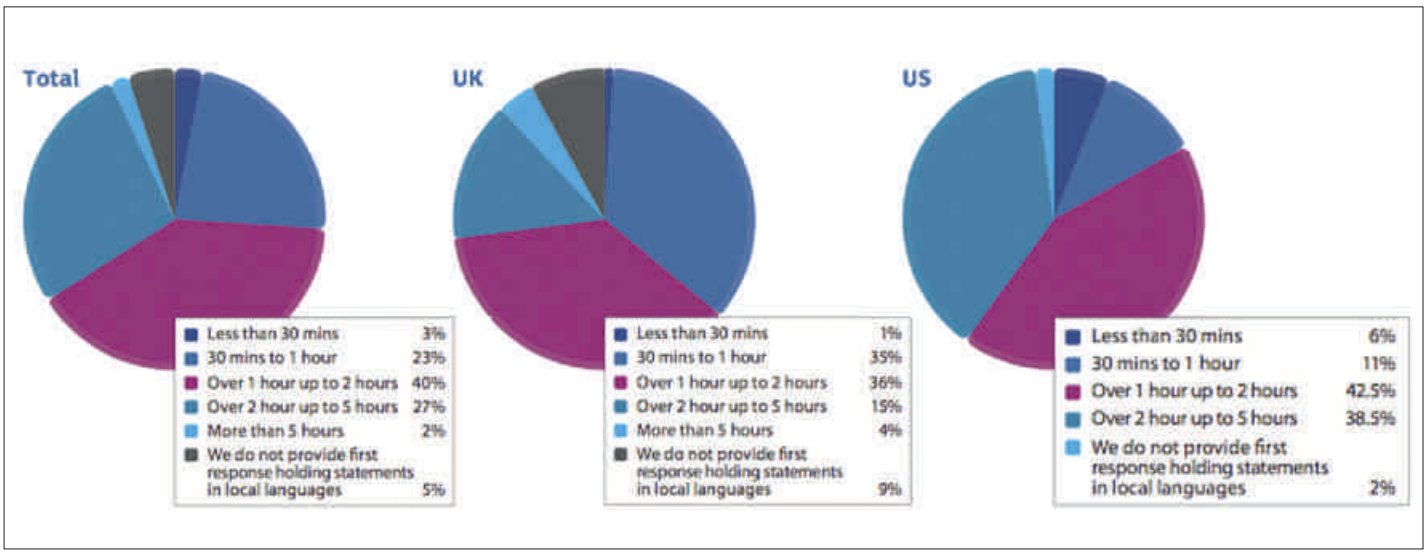

Figure 1: How quickly do you provide a first response holding statement in local languages in the case of a crisis situation? *Source: Conversis*

rehearsed plan will serve as a pivotal guide when the corporate PR team gathers in the company's "war room". Having that first statement ready for release, with well-structured scenarios, a relevant media list and a coordinated team ready to march, will save precious time. If the crisis did not surge in your local market, then linguistic resources such as translators, interpreters or language service providers are key in successfully sending the right message across to your target audience. A localized first statement should be immediately available as a part of your "emergency kit". It should take into account not only the primary language in the geographic location of the crisis, but also the primary language of the stakeholders. Due to language migration, these don't always coincide.

US executives are slightly more confident that they can respond in a timely manner across all markets in the right language, with 48.5 percent of them strongly agreeing with that statement compared to 40 percent of those from the UK. Yet, those based in the US appeared to have far more translation to cope with – more than twice the number of US communications executives (53.5 percent) have to translate their campaigns into 11-20 languages compared to those in the UK (25 percent).

Francis Ingham, Chief Executive of the International Communications Consultants Organization and Director General, UK & MENA Public Relations Consultants Association, who wrote the foreword to the report, said: "The findings are a wakeup call to the [PR] industry on both sides of the Atlantic. Too many people think that, because English is our first language, we have it covered and there isn't a need for planning, resources or trying to get inside the mind set of a different culture and the language of the people we are doing business with. This sometimes leads to us being a little bit arrogant."

Speaking the language of stakeholders

With growing globalization and language migration, corporations have become increasingly vulnerable when it comes to sending the right message across to all the markets they operate in. It is vital, from both an internal and external communications perspective, to control your corporate message in all the required languages, especially when a crisis hits. And keep in mind that sometimes the native language of the locale might not be the main language of your stakeholders.

As an example, in December of 2002, a severe ice storm crippled North Carolina, particularly Mecklenburg County. Massive power outages that lasted more than five days in some areas resulted in dangerous living conditions for city and county residents. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management Team immediately began coordinating emergency response agencies and was successfully responding to life-threatening events during this crisis. However, language and cultural barriers resulted in many immigrant communities suffering a disproportionate number of health-related illnesses associated with the ice storm. The leading cause of illness was carbon monoxide poisoning. There were approximately 100 carbon monoxide poisonings throughout Mecklenburg County, and over half of them involved the Hispanic community.

While 99 percent of senior PR executives with responsibility for international crisis communications stated that they are confident that their work will take into account cultural sensitivities, their teams must better understand who their target audiences are, the languages they speak and the cultural nuances that need to be considered when communicating with them.

You can download the full report at www.conversis.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Muddyman is the founder and CEO of Conversis, a translation and localization agency based in Oxford, a regular advisor to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages, a non-executive director for Wembley to Soweto, a member of the Advisory Board for Translators without Borders and a member of the executive Committee of The Rosetta Foundation.

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European Conferences on technical communication

From the North to the South, and from the East to the West…

Four conferences on technical communication covered all geographic regions of Europe in May and June 2016. Professionals came together in Bologna, Copenhagen, Sofia and Utrecht to discuss the latest industry trends.

Exchanging ideas during the interactice session at COMTecnica.
Source: tcworld

Coffee break at NORDIC TechKomm.
Source: tcworld

By Kiriaki Kampouridou

The series of European conferences started on May 10-11 with **COMTecnica** in Bologna, Italy. In cooperation with the Italian association COM&TEC, experts and professionals from the field of technical communication convened to discuss the main conference theme, "intelligent information" and the importance of delivering smart services in the age of digitalization and Industry 4.0.

The second European conference, **NORDIC TechKomm**, took place in Copenhagen on May 24-25, supported by tekom Danmark. The two-day conference focused on intelligent information as well. The first day offered presentations and interactive sessions and the second day various workshops with international experts.
The attendees had the chance to witness a wide range of presentations on topics such as dynamic content delivery, metadata, responsive websites, as well as tool-based approaches and terminology consolidation.
The workshops on the second day shed light on topics such as writing for translation, from structured authoring to content delivery on mobile apps, as well as taxonomy and structured content or knowledge modeling.

Tech comm knowledge was also exchanged at the **Evolution of Technical Communication (ETC) conference** in Sofia on June 2-3, where the focus was on software documentation. The Bulgarian tech comm community has grown significantly over the last years and thus over 100 attendees were estimated to have attended the conference, which was supported by tekom Bulgaria.
On the first day, the event offered presentations and sessions on topics such as single-source publishing, content delivery, and user feedback as well as web analytics for documentation and more.
The workshops on the second day offered participants an opportunity to learn about technical authoring tools, creating storyboards for an instructional video or a DITA open toolkit, and more.

The last conference took place in Utrecht: At Information Energy on June 8-9, international "Infomedi-

Ask The Experts Panel with Michael Fritz, Sissi Closs, George Bina and others at ETC.

Source: Maria Maltseva

Wim Hooghwinkel, program manager of Information Energy, presents Andy McDonald with the Infomedian of the Year Award

Source: tcworld

ans" came together not only to participate in talks focused on content strategy and information management, but also to interact with experts and peers in the Infomedian Arena. The Infomedian Arena is an open space for Infomedians to discuss, share ideas, pitch innovations or propose new businesses.

At the end of the discussion, the Infomedian of the Year Award was awarded by a jury of visitors, partners and Information Energy staff.

On Tools Day on June 9, attendees had the chance to become familiar with a variety of tools from the field of techdoc management and dynamic publishing. There were tool presentations on the topics of multichannel publishing, using Virtual and Augmented Reality for education and technical support, optimization of the information production process, and more.

Keep an eye out for the European Conferences in 2017:
Dates and locations will be announced on

http://conferences.tekom.de

events

tcworld 2016/2017

ProZ.com International Conference


Image: © _Ryhor Bruyeu_istockphoto.com

September 3-4, 2016
Stockholm, Sweden
http://www.proz.com/conference/683

The ProZ.com International Conference provides a forum to exchange ideas regarding the "human" side of the translation profession and how to best incorporate and adapt technologies to individual goals and practices.

Content Marketing World

September 6-9, 2016
Cleveland, OH, USA
http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/events

Content Marketing World is aimed at marketing/PR professionals who develop the strategy or handle the execution of content marketing initiatives. This is the person that, in some way, develops or curates valuable, relevant and compelling content through one or multiple channels to attract and retain customers.

Technical Communication UK

September 13-15, 2016
Wyboston, UK
http://technicalcommunicationuk.com

Brand2Global

September 28-29, 2016
Silicon Valley, CA, USA
http://brand2global.com

TAUS Annual Conference

October 24-25, 2016
Portland, OR, USA
https://events.taus.net/events/conferences/taus-annual-conference-2016

LocWorld Montreal

October 26-28, 2016
Montreal, Canada
http://locworld.com

LocWorld Dublin

October 27-28, 2016
Brussels, Belgium
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/translating_europe/forum/index_en.htm

Languages & The Media


bluejayphoto_istockphoto.com

November 2-4, 2016
Berlin, Germany

We are witnessing an ever-increasing demand for a personalized user experience and speakers of different languages as well as consumers with visual or hearing impairments expect that this wealth of information be made accessible to them. At the 11th Languages & The Media broadcasters, researchers, language practitioners, translators, interpreters, software developers and all those who produce, market or distribute audiovisual materials for information, entertainment or educational purposes will come together from all parts of the world to address issues on how to thrive in this dynamic mediascape.

tcworld conference 2016

November 8-10, 2016
Stuttgart, Germany
http://conferences.tekom.de

The tekom annual conference, together with the tcworld conference and tekom fair, is the largest global event and marketplace for technical communication. Last year's event was attended by around 4200 conference participants and visitors from 48 countries. The conference is a central platform for anyone who plans, creates, localizes and delivers content in any format and any language.

Gilbane 2016

November 29-30, 2016
Boston, MA, USA
http://gilbaneconference.com/2016

Outsourcing World Summit

February 19-22, 2017
San Antonio, TX, USA
www.iaop.org/summit

GALA 2017

March 26-29, 2017
Amsterdam, Netherlands
www.gala-global.org/conference-2017-amsterdam

Intelligent Content Conference

March 28-30, 2017
Las Vegas, NV, USA
www.intelligentcontentconference.com

tcworld conference 2017

October 24-26, 2017
Stuttgart, Germany
http://conferences.tekom.de


Image: © tekom

Adobe RoboHelp (2015 release)

Personalized Dynamic Content

Filter by

- Country
- Europe
- India
- North America
- Role
- Sale
- Manufacturing
- Product
- Automatic Model

1.2 Overview

The process of content marketing helps deliver a good content experience. We need to change our approach to content that helps deliver a useful content experience.

New sources of data help you structure and filter content. Customers need personalized content.

Allow users to personalize content based on relevance

Relevance has always posed a challenge to technical authors. With Adobe RoboHelp (2015 release) you can let your users cut through the content clutter and filter content on-the-fly to personalize what they view.

To request a demo please visit:
http://www.adobetechcommdemo.com/

For any query, please reach us at techcomm@adobe.com