



State of the Translation Industry **2009**

Smarter, more casual

Matthew Romaine
Jennifer Richardson

Report Highlights:

- Chinese, Spanish, English represent only 30% of the world's spoken language by population, but they make up 60% of the Internet's users.
- The translation industry is estimated to grow by almost 11% per year over the next 5 years, fueled by demand for business in emerging market languages and expanding online communication.
- The growth of machine translation is forcing translators to reassess their workflow and business strategy.
- A growing number of customers are driven by other factors than just quality, and instead are increasingly concerned with accessibility, convenience, price and speed.
- Increased demand for translation of 'new content' (blogs, emails, websites, twitter) has created a new crop of potential customers who are less sure how to solicit quality translation.
- The top trends in the translation industry this year are machine translation, hybrid or "post-editing" translation, community and crowdsourced translations, and a growing need for 'informal' translation.
- Machine translation is improving but restricted by the Native Sense Gap - a measure of how close to 'accurate and understandable' output it can produce.

What this report means for industry professionals and translation agencies.

We're observing a shift in the power balance between customers and providers of translation services - similar to what we have seen in the music and press industries. A new group of customers have a wide set of demands, but emerging options (machine translation, community translation, post-edited machine translation) have yet to satisfactorily meet their needs.

This environment is forcing translators and agencies to re-evaluate and clarify their position on quality, speed, convenience and client service. Below we show that there are opportunities for all parties to maintain or increase their competitive advantage.

Areas of particular interest for industry professionals have a light-blue background.

What this report means for business owners & Internet surfers.

The value of translation is increasingly difficult to ignore for anyone aspiring to reach a larger audience. This report provides insight into those who are already using translation, how they're using it, and the benefits they are receiving. You will also learn about trends, tools, and services that can add value to your business and online experience.

Areas of particular interest for non-industry professionals have a light-orange background.

State of the Translation Industry 2009

Smarter, more casual

Introduction

By now it's a truism to say that the Internet is changing the way we do business - but the phenomenal increase in non-English-speaking online users is the single biggest factor affecting the translation industry.

If you understand English, navigating the Internet has been a relatively enriching experience. For much of its history, you've been able to absorb online content, and as the lingua franca of business, the English language has provided an advantage when transacting business globally.

But for the past few years, dominance of the English language on the Internet has been challenged at dramatic rates never before seen. As more non-English users connect to the Internet, businesses are realising they need to cater to this audience, and new services are cropping up to enable this. This increasingly competitive non-English landscape is driving greater innovation in communication technologies both on- and off-line, especially in translation.

Insights, observations and trends

In this first annual report by myGengo Inc, we share insights and observations gathered from numerous sources, including surveys we've hosted and statistical market data. This report sheds light on the following four broad questions:

1. **What is the industry like, and how is it changing?**
2. **Who's doing the translations?**
3. **Who needs translations?**
4. **What are the top 4 emerging trends in translation?**

So, let's get started.

The Language Landscape - Offline and Online

Chinese dominance

China, with its estimated population of 1.2 billion, puts the Chinese language as the most natively-spoken language in the world¹. In distant second is Spanish at 329 million, followed by English at 328 million. These top three spoken languages represent approximately 30% of the world's population. But the numbers shift dramatically when including non-native speakers - i.e., those who can hold a conversation at length but whose emotional language is different - with the Chinese and English languages tied for first at 1.3 billion speakers, followed by Hindi with 904 million and Arabic at 530 million (see charts overleaf).

English in third place; Arabic, Russian and Chinese increasing online

Given its prominence in business, it may surprise some to learn that the English language is a very distant third by number of native speakers - 885 million fewer people speak English than Chinese. When non-native speakers are taken into account, spoken English must still compete in the global language market share with Chinese and Hindi. Even if you speak English natively, billions more are speaking another language.

When we look at how these languages are represented on the Internet, the numbers shift dramatically again. English, Chinese, and Spanish represent almost 60% of Internet users by language - English leads with 29%, Chinese with 22% and Spanish with 8% (see chart overleaf).

However, the most dramatic trend is the change of these proportions over time - since 2008 Arabic and Russian online audiences have increased over 1,000%, with China close behind.

New opportunities for expansion online

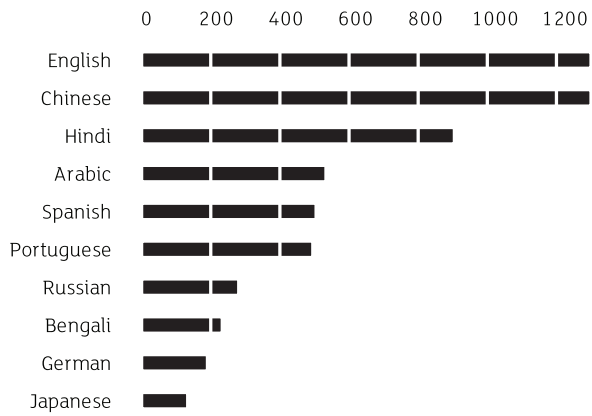
Online businesses react to these figures in different ways. One way is to realize that by providing content in English, Chinese and Spanish, you target approximately 60% of the 1.65 billion Internet users.

Another is to recognize the opportunity in targeting the high-growth languages such as Arabic - with 530 million speakers yet currently only 49 million online - and Portuguese - with 490 million speakers yet only 73 million online. As more of these users go online, they will undoubtedly seek services in their native language. By taking the first-mover advantage, services localized in these high-growth languages have a compelling business opportunity.

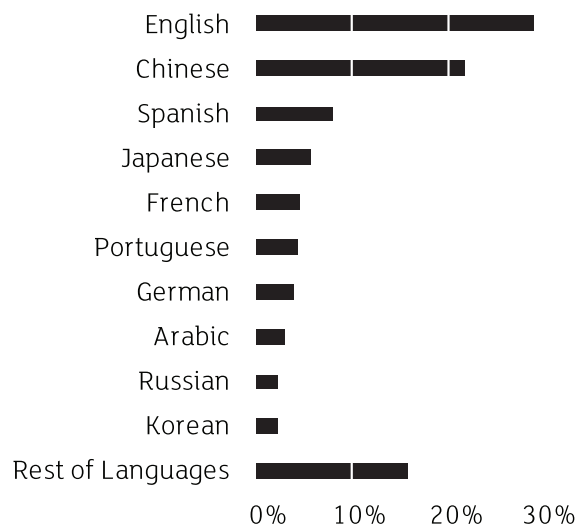
1 Editors note

Throughout our report, we assume speakers of a language are also literate in that language. We can make this assumption as the spoken languages we are concerned with belong to countries with high literacy rates. Additionally, for the purposes of this study we group different dialects under one name.

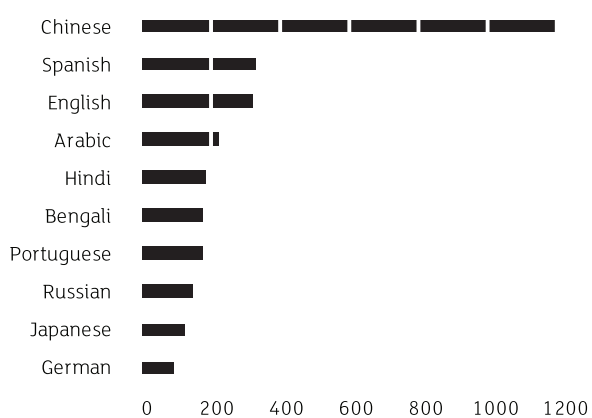
Non-native Speakers (Millions), 2008¹



Proportion of Internet users by Language, 2008



Native Speakers (Millions), 2008



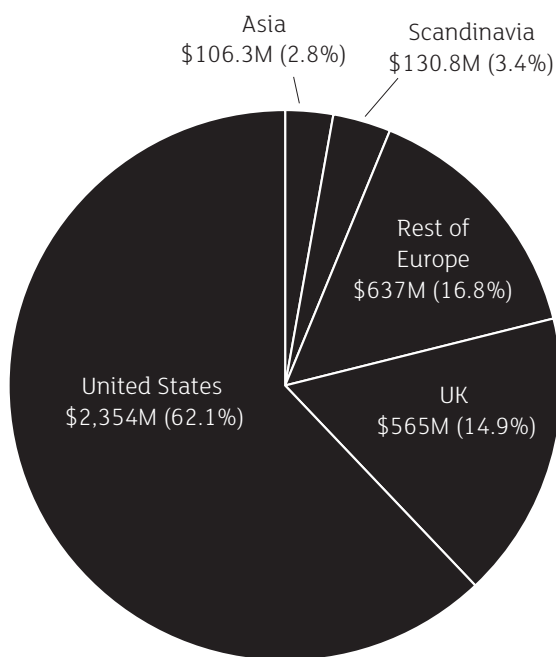
¹ Source: Wikipedia "List of Languages by number of native speakers"

Size and Scope of the Translation Industry

Market to reach \$25 billion in 2013

In its annual "Ranking of Top 30 Language Services Companies," Common Sense Advisory estimates that the total Language Services market size in 2008 was USD\$14.25 billion. Furthermore, CSA predicts that by 2013 the market will reach USD\$25 billion, with a compound annual growth rate of 10.8% over the next 5 years. Due to the recession, projected growth in 2008 dropped from 26.7% to 19.7% - 7% lower than the previous year. Still, the long term outlook is very positive in some countries. In particular, according to the 2006 US Department of Labor's handbook for interpreters and translators, there is expected to be an overall 24% increase in the number of translators in the US by 2016.

Here's a revenue breakdown by region of the top 30 Language Services companies (demonstrating that larger LSPs tend to originate from the US and Europe).¹



¹ Source: "Ranking of Top 30 Language Services Companies" (Common Sense Advisory, Inc.)

Where is the growth coming from?

Much of the predicted growth is attributed to expansion in online communication. One factor of this is U.S. and European businesses spending on translation to capture the huge potential audiences in Asia and the Middle East. Another driver is businesses in those regions expanding and reaching Western consumers.

Lost in definition?

Translation is the term non-professionals commonly use when referring to a range of *language services*. However, language services include:

- **Translation**
- **Interpretation** - converting one spoken language into another either simultaneously or consecutively
- **Localization** - adapting a product or service to a different language, or to a specific region or country that may have different cultural and linguistic characteristics
- **Internationalization** - preparing a product or service so that it can eventually be localized
- **Supporting technologies** - language learning, specialist/non-specialist dictionaries, etc.

Mind your LSPs

Translation companies can more accurately be called "*Language Service Providers*," or "*LSPs*" who provide services in translation, localization, interpretation, internationalization, supporting technologies/engineering and language learning in a variety of standard and specialized subject areas.

A battle for first place

The top three Language Service Providers owe most of their revenue to lucrative contracts with the US Military.

1 Global Linguist Solutions

- Private interpretation, translation and linguistic company
- Formed to serve US Military
- Estimated revenue USD\$691 million

A joint venture by DynCorp International and McNeil Technologies, who won a 5-year USD\$4.6 billion US military contract, making them the top global Language Service Provider.

2 Lionbridge Technologies

- Technology, manufacturing, financial, science, health care, consumer, public sector specialists
- Estimated revenue USD\$461 million:
- Secured \$8 million contract with Dell as “strategic provider for global online content.”
- Extended US Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review contract for “on-site and telephonic interpreters for immigration court proceedings nationwide,” an approximately \$100 million contract over 6 years.

3 L-3 Communications Linguists Operations and Technical Support Division

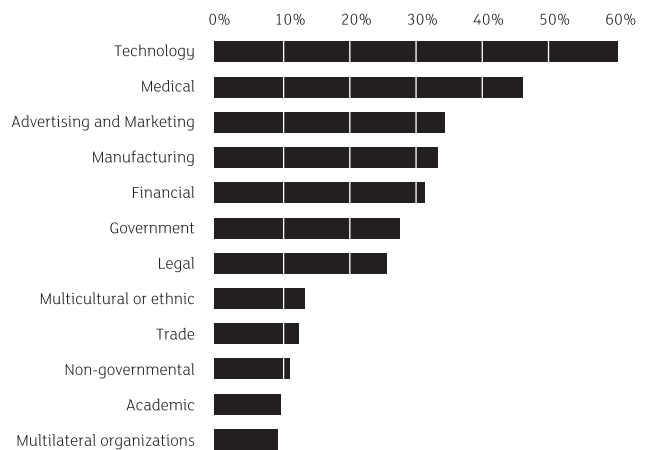
- Military translation specialist
- Estimated revenue USD\$434.59 million:
- L-3 lost their #1 spot for the first time since 2005 to Global Linguist Solutions.

However, the language services industry is not defined by large businesses. The top 30 LSP companies represent only 26.6% or USD\$3.8 billion of the total market revenue, leaving the remaining 73.4% or USD\$14.25 billion to the long tail. While the top 30 companies have an average of 980+ employees, the majority of the industry is fragmented, with a large number of small agencies and freelancers/single-person companies.

A skewed picture

Military contracts are the lifeblood of the very largest LSPs, but this is not something that applies to most agencies.

What are the top sectors for language services?¹



How many translators are there?

While our survey (discussed below) reached a good number of translation industry professionals, the question remains, exactly how many translators are there worldwide? This is difficult to calculate, as the term “translators” makes it hard to know exactly who is included. “Translators” has been used to mean anyone from interpreters to the those who subtitle foreign movies illegally and put them online.

700,000 or more

Common Sense Advisory had a crack at calculating the global number of translators, and came up with an estimated 700,000 professional translators worldwide. However this number does not include the growing number of “accidental translators” - those who do translations irregularly, in informal settings, or on a part-time basis.

If you also include multilingual individuals who do translations on community websites, the number of “translators” could easily be in the millions.

¹ Data Source: Common Sense Advisory, Inc.

What the Translators Say

"My weight has increased from 65kg to 86kg over the years since the time I chose this industry"
-- survey respondent

Despite technological advances in this soon-to-be \$25 billion market, most of the millions of words of text that flow through the industry each year are translated by real people. So what are they like?

To hear directly from translators about their current workflow and impressions on the state of the translation market, we conducted our own 13-question "State of the Translation Industry" survey. We solicited feedback from translator community websites, discussion forums, and direct emails, and received 927 responses. Here are some of the more interesting observations. View the complete survey results in Appendix A.

Are certifications really necessary?

With a relatively large number of certification options, we were curious to know how translators perceived the value of certifications. Did translators get more - in work or pay - for being certified in certain industry circles, or were they simply a 'badge of honor'?

Judging by our survey responses, the main purpose certifications served was for personal satisfaction. Those with certifications listed them with pride but did not indicate any special treatment by customers. Except for certain government related jobs (court translations, notaries, etc.), most translators who claimed to be certified could not articulate an example where work was given on condition of being certified. Similarly, translators without certifications did not mention losing work for not being certified. Both parties commented on the value of experience, and even some with certifications noted that referrals and introductions were of greater value.

"Certifications do not necessarily mean quality. Experience and client feedback do exactly that."
-- survey respondent

To Machine Translate, or Not to Machine Translate

Only 54% of survey respondents never use machine translation ("MT"). Or put another way, 46% of respondents do. We were equally surprised that so many

translators admitted to using MT to assist their work in some form. Understandably, some in the former group were very passionate about their position, stating they never have - and never would - use such a tool.

We wondered if there might be a correlation between industry experience and use of MT, so we filtered the results down to only those translators with more than 3 years in the industry.

Still, 40% of the respondents with over 3 years of translation experience admitted to using machine translation. Whether this is a testament to the accuracy of machine translation, or to the increasingly competitive landscape - and hence, necessity for quick turnarounds - is open for interpretation.

Serious or sarcastic? You decide

"Machine translation tools are very good for the industry. I am now charging a higher rate for 'Proofreading' as I find that I have a lot of demand to correct machine translated texts."
-- survey respondent

Experience Brings Better Rates and Bigger Jobs

Our respondents gave a general consensus in the decline in price per word for translating standard texts, which can be attributed to a number of factors including general economic climate and specific industry competition. 20% of the respondents say they charge no more than \$.05 per word, but if we filter out anyone with under 3 years of experience, this percentage drops to 11%. So as expected, translators with experience seem able to charge higher rates, although these rates are receiving downward pressure.

"The downward pressure on prices infuriates me."
-- survey respondent

While we don't have prior in-house data to compare with, data from other sources including Common Sense Advisory coincides with our observation that this downward trend is brought on in part by a new customer base who are budget conscious and satisfied with less-than-perfect quality. Because they currently can, experienced translators are ignoring an increasing volume of work below their customary price-points, providing an opportunity for less experienced translators to fill the gap. However as the barriers to entry lower for a new translator and the volume of translation work from less discriminating customers on a budget increases, an industry-wide downward pressure on prices becomes evident. Translators who can demonstrate their expertise and find a niche have a brighter future than those who cannot.

Job size decreasing

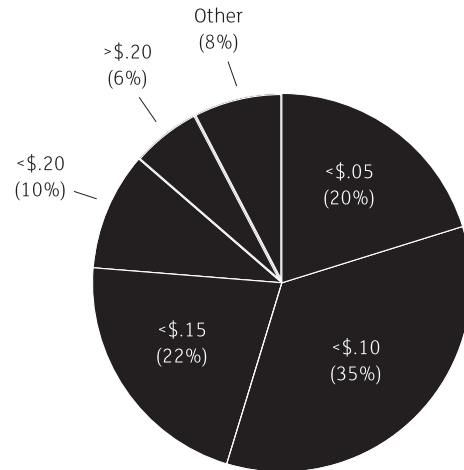
The average word-length of translation jobs is seeing a similar trend. Newer, less experienced entrants to the translation industry have been picking up a much larger percentage of shorter jobs. For example, while only 26% of the work done by translators with over 3 years of experience is under 1000 words, over 40% of similar work is done when including translators with under 3 years in the industry.

This quote from a survey respondent sums the climate up nicely:

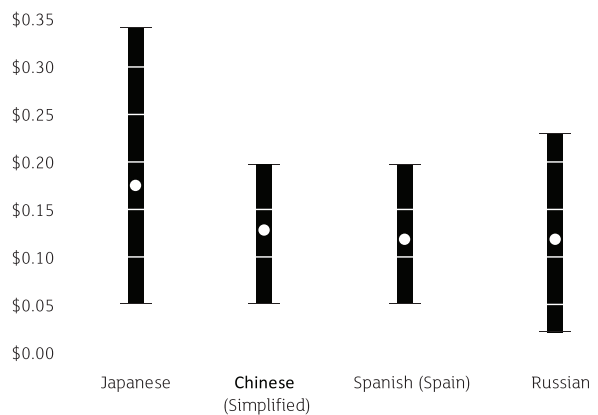
"I've had more work this year than I know what to do with! However, I have noticed a change in the quality requirements - more customers seem to be happy with low-budget, poor-quality translations, which is a shame. I hate seeing my language crucified by poor translators who are either non-native speakers or just plain careless. There seem to be more agencies springing up in India and China who are promoting this kind of work; unfortunately customers appear to be going for it and it could push down our rates as a community in the long term. I have not lowered my rates as a result of the financial crisis, although several agencies (not my regular customers, I hasten to add) have asked me to do so - all of these have been based in India or China."

-- survey respondent

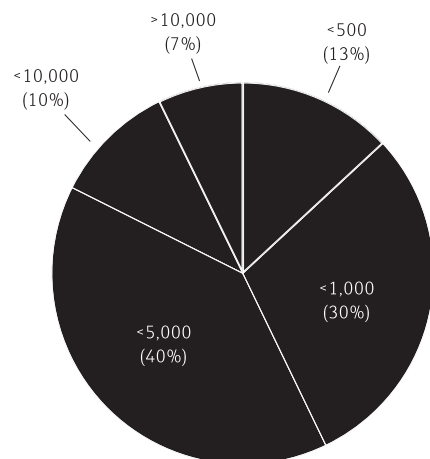
Translators: what is your price for translations (per word or character)?



Translators: what is your price for translations from English into your language (per word)?



Translators: what's the average word-length of job?



Who Needs Translation?

Translation is all around you

As our horizons expand, more and more of us experience translation in a passive context - from watching a foreign movie to reading regional news in our own language. This trend continues as the makeup of the global audience changes, bringing millions of additional foreign-language speakers online. In other words, there are more people out there who don't speak your language than those who do - whatever you speak!

Who needs translation? People who want to communicate with this growing audience in an active context. Who are those people? Businesses (or "producers") who want to participate in a wider market, and individuals ("consumers") who want to enrich their experiences with exclusive news and content from foreign sources.

Not as simple as it should be

Unfortunately, interacting in this active context is still difficult. Numerous challenges, from unfamiliarity with where to begin, to resource-intensive translation processes create a barrier to entry. However new tools and services are springing up that allow users to integrate translation more efficiently into their workflow, and consumer-friendly services like Google and Facebook's translation offerings go some way to answering the unfamiliarity problem.

These effects mean that businesses, especially online services, can now consider entering other markets early on because the value is clear and the language barrier can be overcome.

E-commerce is one area that ROI for translation can be easily measured.

E-commerce: Bought in translation

Independent research carried out by Common Sense Advisory, Inc. on Ecommerce:

- 52% of non-English speakers surveyed **only** buy from websites where the information is presented in their language
- This goes up to 60% when looking at French and Japanese shoppers
- People who have little to no English skills were 6x more likely to **not** buy from English-only sites
- These effects are more pronounced, the higher the value of the item or service.
- 56.2% said that when making a purchase decision, information written in their own language was more important than a low price.

Large businesses are not the only ones who need translation services. Astute users of e-commerce and auction sites like eBay know they can target a larger pool of potential bidders simply by making an auction multilingual. These users understand that not everyone searches online in the same language. By posting translations of product details in multiple languages, they will appear in foreign language search results, increasing exposure, traffic, and profits.

With more people going online, more products and services are being purchased. As translation becomes easier to integrate into websites and selling tools, businesses have a greater ability to reach these people - wherever they may be.

How 'real people' perceive translation

Businesses are the traditional customer for translation services. However, with lower barriers to translation offered by new and more accessible tools, individuals are now able to benefit from translation too.

To better understand how a sliver of the web perceives translation, we conducted our own 22-question survey about their thoughts and everyday uses of translation services. We solicited feedback from users on social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn, and posted the survey on a diverse selection of forums and websites. In total we received 562 responses. Here are some of the more interesting observations. You can view the complete survey results in Appendix B.

There's an alternative to machine translation?

Unsurprisingly, almost everyone (94%) who responded to this survey has used machine translation tools.

Consuming content - reading webpages, documents, emails - were the most popular applications for machine translation especially for personal use, while producing content - publishing a blog or website, writing documents, sending emails - were less popular applications. The frequency of using machine translation was also impressive: 74% of respondents claimed to use it at least once a month, with 45% of them at least once a week and 7% more than once day. With issues of reliability and accuracy, significantly more people use machine translation for personal than business use.

Professional translation services, however, were less popular. As expected, contrary to uses of machine translation, professional translation was used mostly for business purposes - in particular for writing and reading documents (61% and 45%, respectively), and publishing a blog or website (21%).

We specifically asked respondents who had not used professional translation their reasons, and the responses surprised us a bit. While price ("too expensive", 52%) and speed ("not fast enough", 25%) were

factors in not using professional translation services, it seems many users are simply unsure of where to even begin. 46% of respondents selected "not sure how to go about it" - an opportunity, if anything, for Language Service Providers to better their message and appeal to a hesitant market. Finally, 17% of respondents who had not used professional translation expressed opinions about translator inaccuracy of industry-specific terms, getting the right cultural references, an inconvenient process, and machine translations producing sufficient results.

Won't pay to read translated content...

92% of our respondents strongly agreed or agreed they were interested in reading viewpoints from other countries, and 87% even said they buy products from overseas if what they're looking for isn't available locally. But when it came to paying for high quality online news and opinions, only 17% were interested. Even if such news was not originally available in their native language, only 26% were interested in paying for a professional translation.

...but will watch advertising.

This mix shifts if we substitute the costs with advertising. 57% of respondents said they would be willing to watch a video ad for access to high quality online news and opinion, and even more - 64% - would watch an ad for translated content not originally available in their native language. This is an interesting development in the monetary value of time for an online audience.

Interested in foreign content

Our research shows that an overwhelming number of people want access to information from other countries (i.e. scarce, quality information) especially if it has to be human-translated. But readers either want this information for free (41%), or would consider paying only if there's potential for financial gain - i.e. for business purposes (48%). And 77% of respondents indicated that USD\$1 is the most they are willing to

pay to read a 1-page translated website or article. If we only consider respondents who have prior experience with professional translation, a slightly higher number - 36% vs 23% - appreciate the value of professional translation and indicated a willingness to pay over \$1 for similar content.

A community at your fingertips

The survey wrapped up with questions about community translations (covered on page 14). Only 15% of our respondents said they have used community translations, and mostly for personal use. 50% claimed to use community translation at least once a month, with 5% of them using it daily.

Useful, but not for everyone

Opinions for and against community translations were about equal. Proponents of the process said they found it useful, quick, better than machine translation, and found that translators were eager and happy to help them. Detractors cited the opposite of each reason - slow, varied translations for the same content, and not being able to decipher which was correct. There is clearly a space for this kind of service, where the priority for individuals is a "good-enough" translation without having to pay. Next time we may evaluate specific community translation platforms to better understand this discrepancy.

What are the top 4 emerging trends?

1. **Machine translation**
2. **Hybrid translation / “post-editing”**
3. **Community and “crowd-sourced” translations**
4. **The expanding pie**

Trend 1: Machine translation

Our funny valentine

Machine or automated translation technology has been around for over 50 years, carrying with it the hopes of building a system that provides easy, accurate, realtime translations. Although millions of dollars have been invested in development, machine translation continues to underperform in accuracy and reliability, particularly for certain language pairs and their *Native Sense Gap* (see insert). But examples such as *Google Translate* and *Yahoo! BabelFish* are regularly updated and are proving to be very popular. So why do people continue to use it? The fact that it's instant and free makes machine translation an easy choice, especially for informal situations. Hiring a translation agency is often expensive and time consuming, so customers settle for free “gist” automated translations even if they are not happy with the results.

Free and easy

The ease with which machine translation can be integrated into websites and applications has resulted in wide adoption. Widgets and APIs allow 3rd party applications to harness machine translation, and make the tools incredibly visible to web users. As our survey showed, users are already unsure of how to employ professional translation services; the fact that machine translation is so easy to integrate into a workflow means that professional translation services need to try even harder to secure business in the web arena.

Will machine translation displace humans?

Not anytime soon. While some language pairs (such as Spanish/English) have much better machine translation output than others, there is still a big difference between machine translation and human translation. Humans are dynamic and arbitrary, and our language is too - something that machines will take a while to understand.

However, the more machine translation is integrated into our systems, the more we will experience its off-strange or confusing results - a love-hate relationship that grows ever more intertwined.

Fun with machine translation

Despite its imperfections, machine translation is here to stay. Some people have opted to embrace it in entertaining ways that ridicule its poor and unreliable results.

One such form of entertainment is *Translation Party*. Upon entering an English sentence or phrase, this service translates it back and forth between English and Japanese using Google Translate until both translations reach equilibrium - the point at which translating an output continues to produce the same result (if it ever does). You can play this game with other online machine translation tools like *BabelFish*.

Trend 2: Hybrid translation / “post-editing”

“Hybrid” ain’t just for cars

If you’ve used Google Translate recently, you may have noticed an option for the user to “contribute a better translation,” as a way to perfect results with the aid of human corrections. This type of “hybrid” translation - also called “post-editing” - is the latest attempt by machine translation developers to improve accuracy and reliability through the addition of a “human touch” that feeds back into the system with edits and improvements.

The cyborg approach

This combination approach merging man and machine is increasingly popular. In fact, many businesses buy “post-editing” translation products and services - i.e. translators who proofread and edit automated translation results. Instead of hiring a translation agency or using only machine translation tools, post-editing services are now a popular way for businesses to reduce costs and turn-around time.

Under the radar

You might be surprised by the use of automated translation tools by businesses. SDL published their own study in 2008 (details below), where more than half of the respondents said they had heard of automated translation tools being used in a corporate context. Even some of our translator survey respondents said they have started charging for “post-editing” in addition to their regular translation services.

But there are big questions about hybrid translations that are yet to be resolved.

- Are providers effective at judging which language pairs can be offered, and which cannot?
- Are providers being honest about what they are offering? (A native speaker or a translator?)
- How much does it really save? Anecdotally, some translators find it far easier to start from scratch than to use a machine translation.

“Native Sense Gap” - the difference between understandable and useless

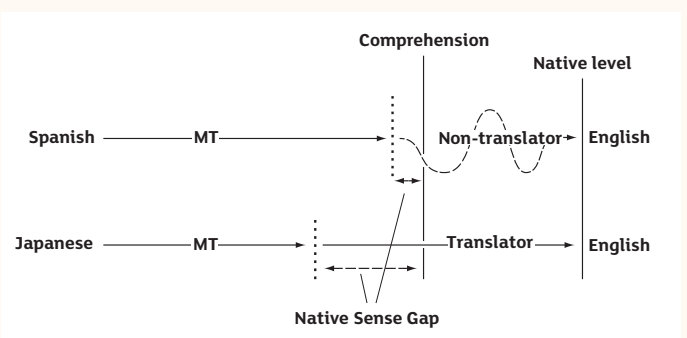
Machine translation quality largely depends on:

- **the similarity of the languages** (English and Spanish, for example, are closely related and give better machine translations than English and Japanese)
- **the demand for a language pair**, and therefore resources invested (e.g. Latvian to Korean has received less effort than English to French)
- **the available body of translated material** to use to ‘train’ machine translation tools

The biggest factor affecting the value of machine translation is what we call the “Native Sense Gap” (NSG) for each language pair. The Native Sense Gap is the difference between what a machine translation produces and what a native speaker can understand.

Consider the example of Spanish/English below, vs Japanese/English. Spanish/English has a small gap (because the languages are closely related), so a native speaker can often understand a machine translation and finalize a text without translator assistance. But if there is a big gap, such as with Japanese/English, the output is unusable since a native speaker can’t bridge the NSG - so you must use a translator.

As the Native Sense Gap decreases, the price of human translation will increasingly be affected by the quality of machine translation.



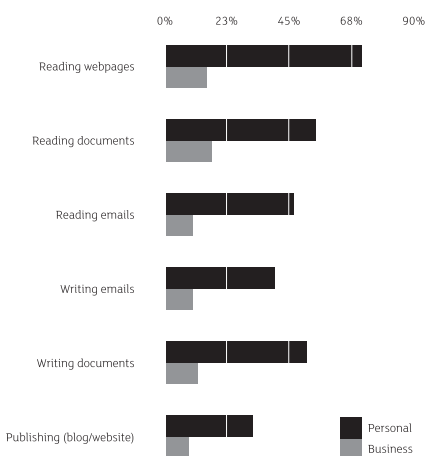
Trend 3: Community and “Crowd-sourced” Translations

Too many cooks?

Community translation sites

Free “community” or volunteer-based translation sites have seen explosive growth over the past year. #Translate Answers, Cucumis and Lang8 are aimed at those who seek a quick clarification or near-perfect translation at no cost. The concept is straightforward - users post their translation requests, and bilingual or native speakers edit or complete the translations. These websites are also used by those learning a new language, as it encourages discussion and exchange among users. Free community translations are not limited to language learning websites however; others have posted translation requests on Yahoo! Answers, Answerbag, or other community-driven question-and-answer websites. Non-profit organizations have also utilized the principle of free community or volunteer translations in an effort to promote greater communication and understanding around the world. Prime examples of this practice include Global Voices Online and the UN Online Volunteering Service.

For what purposes do individuals use community translation?



In some countries, community translations have even become underground operations. Chinese web users gather online to subtitle their favorite foreign-language television shows and movies.

Some even collaborate to translate *The Economist* and *TIME* magazines. Although these underground community translation operations violate copyright law, it is often the only way foreign entertainment and news media can connect with audiences in countries that restrict freedom of speech and press.

Free community translations may be a welcome alternative to those who prefer not to use questionable machine translation tools. But, as our survey results show at only 14%, few people actually use them for their translation needs. The biggest issues seem to be an unreliable turn-around time and quality control, since there are no guarantees. In particular, some users have expressed frustration at receiving various translations of a single text and the inability of the community to agree on a single translation.

It’s clear these sites will continue to expand as more users online look for free translation. But will they be able to shrug off the current concerns of reliability and speed? And will there ever be a business use for ad-hoc translation such as these sites offer?

Any wisdom in crowds?

Crowd.sourcing [verb] - the “act of taking tasks traditionally performed by an employee or contractor and outsourcing it to an undefined, generally large group of people or community in the form of an open call.” (Wikipedia)

Popularized by Wikipedia, crowdsourcing has been a growing buzz-word, with popular websites TED, LinkedIn and Facebook making headlines - and controversy - recruiting translators to translate their content into multiple languages without remuneration. Some translators viewed the solicitation as exploiting their expertise, while others were eager to help and saw it as an opportunity to be a part of a new and exciting project.

While the idea of free translations by crowdsourcing translators may be appealing, the process itself is not as easy (or as free!) as it sounds. Developing a system to take advantage of crowdsourcing costs money, time and development expertise - inevitably creating a hurdle for most people wishing to implement this approach. However, Facebook aims to alleviate this challenge with its new "Translations for Facebook Connect" application. This application allows programmers to crowdsource translators, just as Facebook did for its own website. Completed translations can be promoted on Facebook by users with the Facebook Connect Service, all for the cost of free. Messaging site Twitter recently announced a similar application.

Crowdsourcing is here to stay

The popularity of social networking sites and the increasing adoption of Web2.0 technologies show no signs of slowing down. Consequently, the demand for making these popular services multilingual and accessible to everyone around the world is increasing, and the interactive and inclusive process benefits all parties. With crowdsourcing attempting to capture the best of multiple factors - speed, price, quality and reliability - it strikes a balance between traditional professional translation and automated translation tools.

However, crowdsourcing can only work with a large, committed userbase that is happy to help translate. For owners of smaller websites and publishers of apps with a limited user base, crowdsourcing is not as viable an option.

Trend 4: The Expanding Pie

Who'll be first to the table?

Let's outline the current environment based on our discussion so far:

Traditional organizations who have the resources and funds still hire a translation agency, freelance translators, or in-house staff to make their products and services multilingual. But as they conduct more business globally, this conventional approach may not maintain their competitive advantage.

More progressive businesses and individuals with fewer resources are increasingly turning to alternative translation services and tools.

But these new tools still have their limitations:

- Machine translation is useful because it's instant, free, very easy to integrate and some kind of output is guaranteed. However the quality is poor, making it unusable in many cases.
- Crowdsourcing works because it is human-powered, it allows you to translate a full 'system', and can handle high volumes and ongoing site changes. However, there is no guaranteed output and the cost of building a useful implementation is high. Crowdsourcing is also not a viable option for small businesses without a large user base.
- Hybrid translation is appropriate when the Native Sense Gap is small because it is relatively quick and cheap. However the proposition that only a native speaker is required to convert a machine-translated text into an accurate translation is questionable.

The growth of informal content

As the above services have become more accessible, their popularity has grown despite their limitations because they are now being used by a new group of customers who want to translate new kinds of content. This includes emails, blogs and their comments, tweets, user-generated content and high-volume websites. Over the past ten years, there has been a massive explo-

sion in this kind of "informal content" published and shared online. That content is not well catered for by traditional agencies because of its volume, its informal nature, and the fact it is of lower commercial value than the traditional kinds of texts (books, brochures, corporate websites) that agencies would translate.

Desire to translate this content is pushing the progressive business and individuals to try the new tools - but *what's missing is the right balance between efficiency, easy integration, guaranteed return and a good price.*

Whoever can create a service that will meet these needs has the opportunity to capture a new and growing slice of the translation market.

Authors & Information



Matthew Romaine

Director, myGengo
matt@mygengo.com



Jennifer Richardson

Researcher, myGengo
jennifer@mygengo.com



Gengo-chan

Assistant, myGengo

myGengo, Inc.

4-41-22 - 802
Higashi Ikebukuro 170-0013
Toshima-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Disclosure

myGengo operates a translation service that runs in competition to some of the companies mentioned in this report. As a result, readers should be aware that the firm may have a conflict of interest that could affect the objectivity of myGengo's research reports. Readers should consider myGengo's research as only a single factor in making a purchasing or investment decision.

Disclaimer

Unless otherwise stated, figures used throughout this report are estimates and actual numbers may vary. We have every intention of being as accurate as possible; however some numbers - such as the totals for non-native speakers of English, or the number of translators worldwide - can only be estimated.

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition, Interpreters and Translators, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos175.htm>

Kelly, Nataly, and Beninatto, Renato, "Freelancers Voice Their Views on the Economy," Common Sense Advisory, May 4 2009.

Kelly, Nataly, and Adelson, Bruce, "Title VI Enforcement to Grow under Obama," Common Sense Advisory, January 26 2009.

"Crowdsourcing," on Wikipedia, September 8 2009.

"List of Languages by Number of Native Speakers," on Wikipedia, September 16 2009

"Global Information Management," on SDL, 2009

Hollan, James, "Language and Localization Industry Shows Robust Growth," TC World, November/December 2008.

Kelly, Nataly, and Beninatto, Renato, "Ranking of the Top 30 Language Service Companies," Common Sense Advisory, May 15 2009

McKay, Corinne, "The first step in translation quality: a qualified translator," Thoughts on Translation blog, May 17 2008.

"Minorities expected to be majority in 2050," CNN.com, August 13 2008.

Newman, Andrew Adam, "Translators Wanted at LinkedIn. The Pay? \$0 an Hour," New York Times, June 28, 2009.

"UNV Online Volunteering Service - Translation" on UN Volunteering Online, 2009.

"Statistical Summaries - Summary by Language Size" on Ethnologue - Languages of the World, 2009

"The Top 25 Translation Companies and Some Really Big Revenue Numbers," on Global Watch Tower, June 20 2008.

"Top Ten Internet Languages - Internet World Statistics," on Internet World Statistics, June 30, 2009

"Trends in Automated Translation in Today's Global Business," SDL Research, 2008

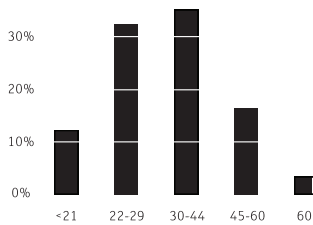
Farrar, Lara, "Found in Translation: China's Volunteer Online Army," on CNN.com June 16, 2009

Baio, Andy, "Translating 'The Economist' Behind China's Great Firewall," on Waxy.org February 26, 2009

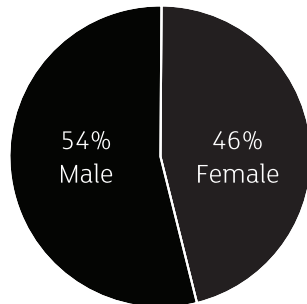
"World Internet Usage and Population Statistics" on Internet World Statistics, June 30, 2009.

Appendix A Translators' Survey results: 1

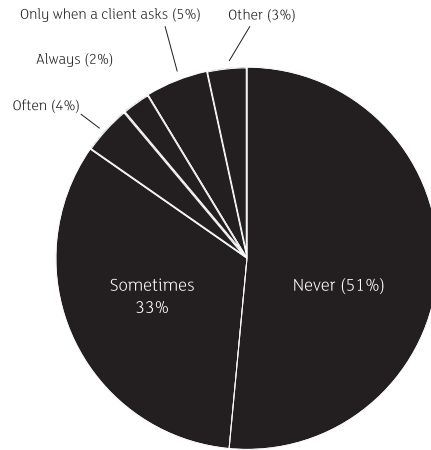
Age Distribution



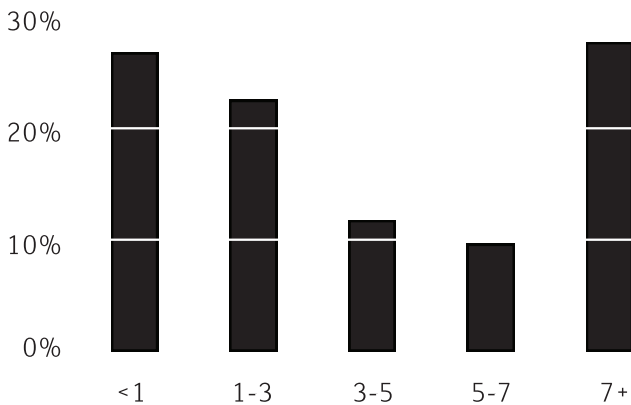
Gender



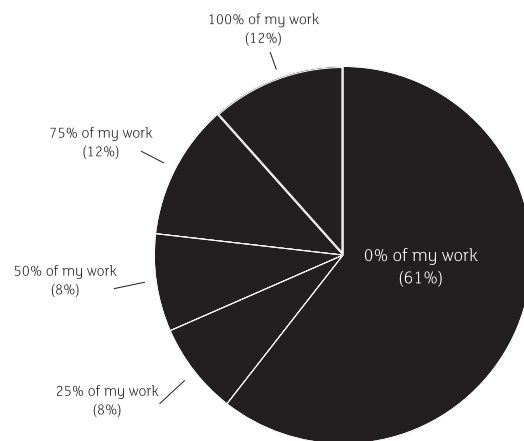
Do you use machine translation to "pre-translate"?



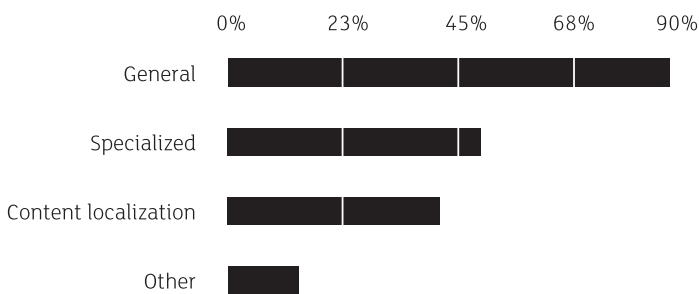
Years as a translator



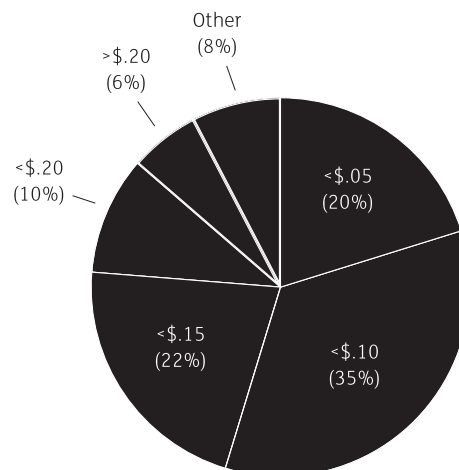
What percentage of your work is via agencies?



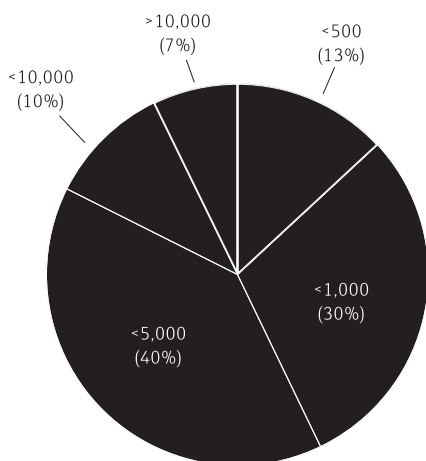
What types of translation jobs do you do?



What is your price for translations (per word or character)?



What's the average word-length of job you do?



Appendix A

Translators' Survey results: 2

How important are certifications for you and your customers? What certifications (if any) do you currently have?

"Certifications do not necessarily mean quality. Experience and client feedback, do exactly that."

"None - no certification can beat real experience."

"I have a Translation and Interpreting degree, but my customers don't seem to care either way."

"Somewhat important for translation. Very important for interpretation. [I am a] Certified court interpreter."

"Most of the time they do not need or expect any certifications."

"Although I am a certified translator here in Colombia, I have found out that when you work on a mass market basis, the best certification - and also your best marketing tool - is the quality of the jobs you do. No doubt: word-of-mouth recommendation has been my most successful marketing tool."

"Certifications are not important for me. The best certification for my customers is the quality of my work."

"Not important at all. Certified translators can be just as bad as non-certified translators. What matters is quality and that's usually tied to experience, not to a piece of paper that says you passed an exam in 3 hours. I think University degrees in your source or target language are much more important."

How do you feel about the current translation industry? Are there any changes - for better or worse - you have noticed? (crowd-sourcing, machine translation tools, etc.)

"buzz seems to be picking up about crowd-sourcing; machine translation seems to be getting better too. specialists will see greater competition i think as customers go with "good enough" translations."

"The fact is that I realise I should try to get used to using these new technological tools for translation, but I actually enjoy the challenge of a page of script to translate, and I usually try to do it at first without the aid of my battered old dictionary, just for the sake of

doing it. After this (what I call my "fun"), I get down to checking and being as accurate as possible with the translation, which then becomes simply a job I have to do well and rather mechanically. I think that the fact that many translators can use a lot of (very helpful!) translation software takes a lot of the challenge and fun out of this job."

"Machine translation tools are very good for the industry. I am now charging a higher rate for 'Proofreading' as I find that I have a lot of demand to correct machine translated texts."

"The downward pressure on prices infuriates me."

"I think there is a lot of work now. Internet has revealed many writings needing translation, and not necessarily to be web content —Internet, for instance shows there is a book in a language so it reveals the importance to translate into another one."

"The crowd-sourcing is killing us."

"oy va voy! I never saw such a terrible market in my whole career." - 7+ years in industry

"It's sad that so many people who don't know any better think that machine translations are meaningful when, at least between Japanese and English, the only value they have is comic."

"I've had more work this year than I know what to do with! However, I have noticed a change in the quality requirements - more customers seem to be happy with low-budget, poor-quality translations, which is a shame. I hate seeing my language crucified by poor translators who are either non-native speakers or just plain careless. There seem to be more agencies springing up in India and China who are promoting this kind of work; unfortunately customers appear to be going for it and it could push down our rates as a community in the long term. I have not lowered my rates as a result of the financial crisis, although several agencies (not my regular customers, I hasten to add) have asked me to do so - all of these have been based in India or China."

"I used to work in a gaming company translating video games and using computer translator tools would have resulted in losing your job very quickly."

Appendix A

Translators' Survey results: 3

Real professionals don't need computer gimmicks to help them."

"For those of us who live in countries with higher cost of living, the future is not bright."

"Deadline demands are quite strict lately. People are trying to avoid translating or trying to find the right translator for a week, and when they find him/her there's only 2 days left for the work. That results in a lot of translations coming in Thursday night or Friday to be delivered Monday morning."

How would you say the Internet has changed your workflow?¹

"Positively. Faster, more immediate contact, more efficient. More work done for less effort. Prices have gone down, unit-wise, but the plus points for productivity make up for the difference - the bottom line is still more favourable."

"It has certainly helped. Of all the agencies I have worked with, I have only visited one office. My communication with agencies is almost exclusively through e-mail. Online communities like proz.com are also a help."

"In a positive way. It is easier to prospect and communicate."

"Sending and receiving jobs by email is the norm. I use all offline dictionaries though, so when I am in the act of translating, I do not utilize the internet. However, if research is necessary, I tend to use the internet to do such research."

"Not improved workflow so much as improved quality."

"The Internet has increased my workflow and improved communication a lot. However, I am overwhelmed by the 24/7 amount of information received regarding the profession, including jobs posts, translation forum posts, blacklisted clients/agencies, translators' portals, etc. Also, I "get late" to many job offers. Someone is always there before you!"

"My weight has increased from 65kg to 86kg over the years since the time I chose this industry"

"It has certainly helped me get my work done twice as fast, and has, in many ways, brought about bigger amounts of it. Still, the internet has also made translation services somewhat more available and thus, considerably cheaper (which is not that good for us translators!)"

"Deadlines are getting much, much shorter, but quality is not improving. I'm not sure if that's the Internet or simply the 24/7 globalized world that demands everything NOW. Quality has gotten worse, though, at least in my language pairs. Possibly due to highly unprepared people entering the marketplace, hoping to cash in."

"I would not know how to get jobs without the Internet: absolutely essential."

"The Internet is very helpful for terminology and context reference but some websites are unreliable. E-Mail, RSS and social networking have made the translation process quicker, one no longer needs to go to the library to look up a rare word and can easily stay in touch with colleagues and friends."

Further insights, observations, thoughts, or comments²

"Many seem to think that Trados or other CAT tools are essential for translators these days. I don't and won't use them, but I still get as much work as I want most of the time."

¹ Translators' Survey, Question 14

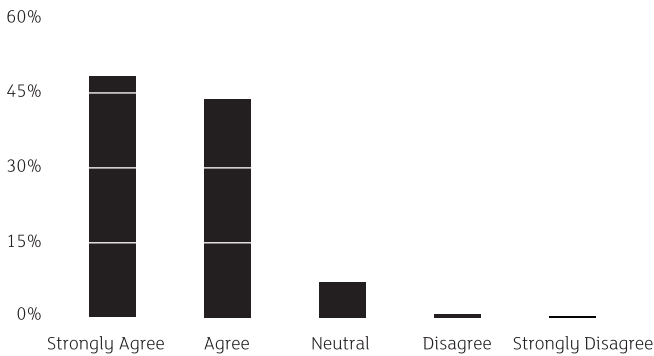
² Translators' survey, question 15

Appendix B

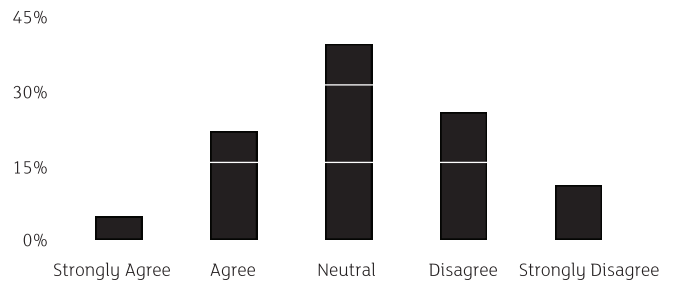
How 'real people' perceive translation

"Translation: What do you think?" survey results: 1

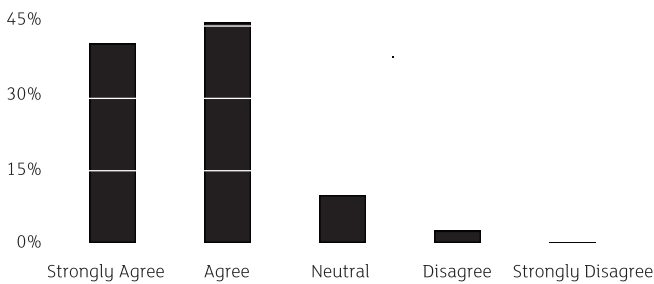
I am interested in viewpoints from other countries



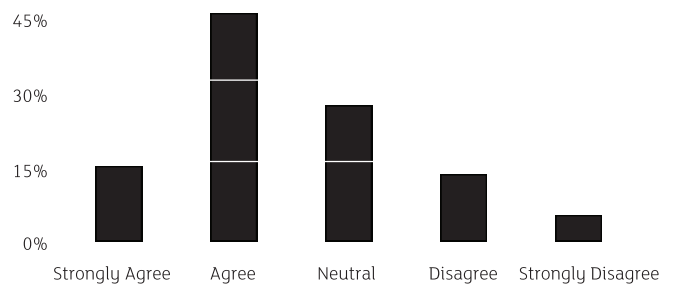
I would pay to read professionally translated news and opinion not available in my own language



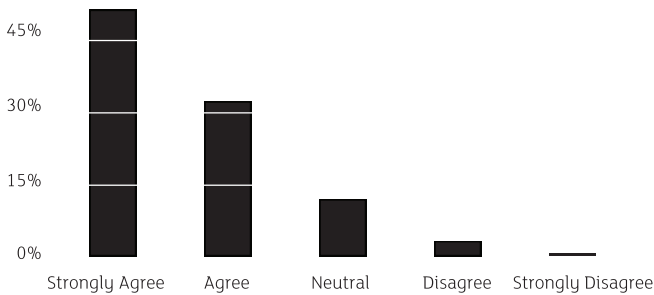
I am interested in reading blogs and websites from other countries



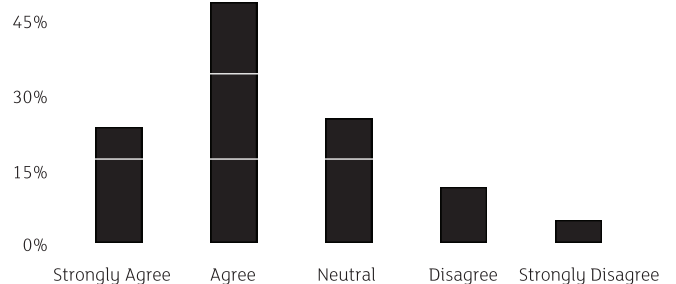
I would watch a video ad to read high quality news and opinion online



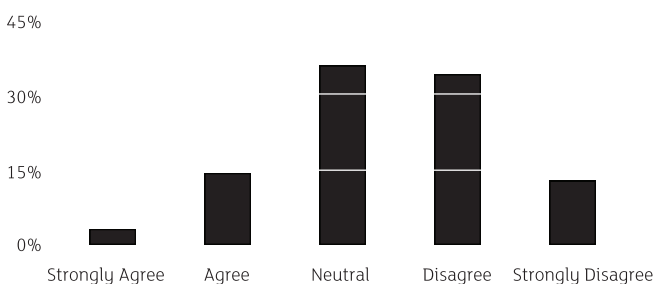
I buy products from overseas when I can't find them in my own country



I would watch a video ad to read professionally translated news and opinion not available in my own language



I would pay to read high-quality news and opinion online



continued...

Appendix B

How 'real people' perceive translation

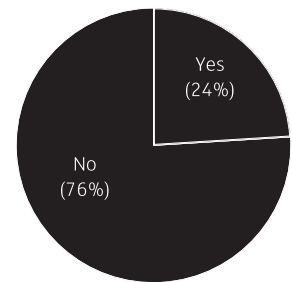
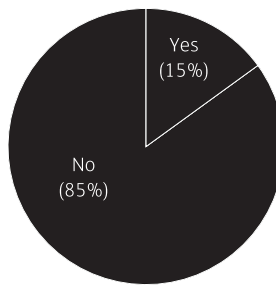
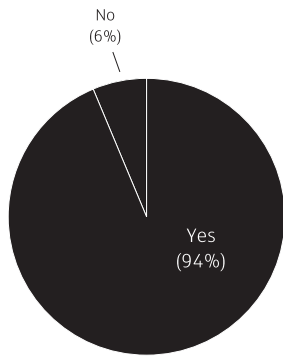
"Translation: What do you think?" survey results: 2

Machine translation

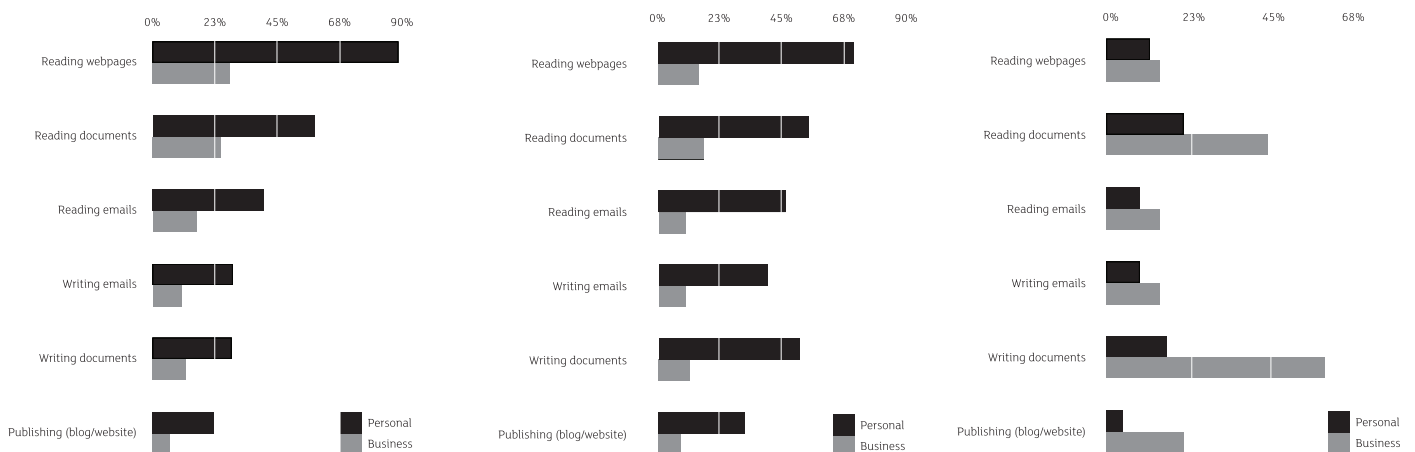
Community translation

Professional translation

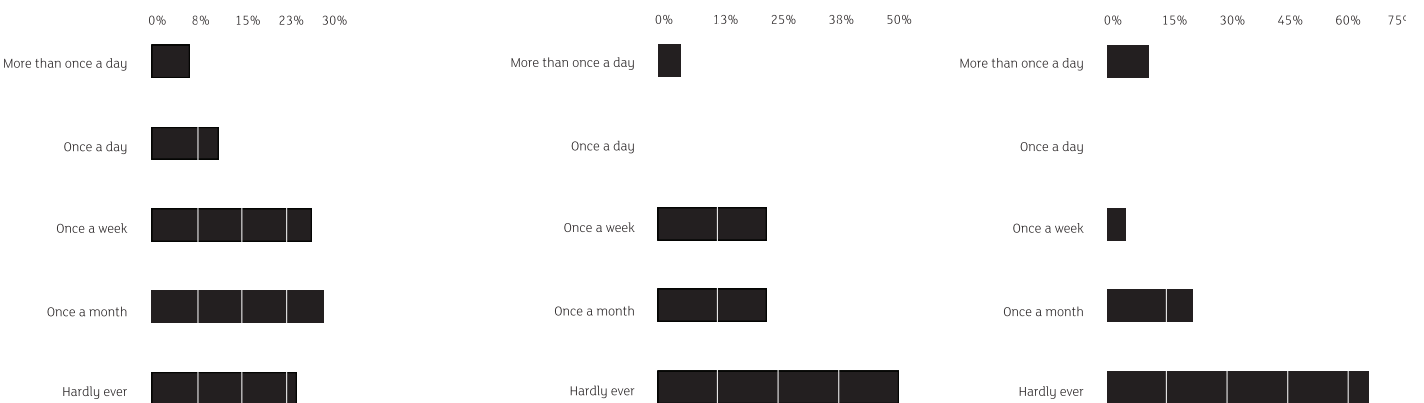
Have used in the past?



(Of those who have used) For what purposes?



(Of those who have used) How often?



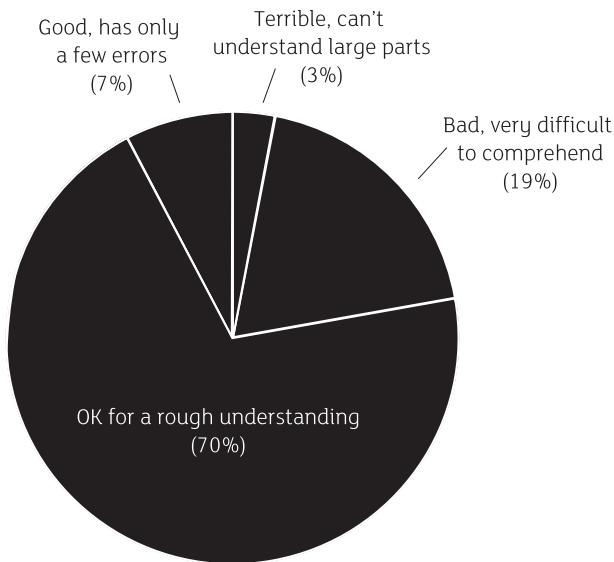
continued...

Appendix B

How 'real people' perceive translation

"Translation: What do you think?" survey results: 3

On average, how good is the text you get back from machine translation?



What reasons have stopped you from using professional translation?

