

In these times, where smart phones and computers do a lot thinking for us, language can be still a huge barrier between people, not often caused by technology itself.

We rely on phones to find our way, computers find our perfect match, glasses even recognize if we are happy or sad. But when it comes to understanding what we want to say, and translating that into other languages, technology and false translation can still put us into rather embarrassing, desperate or even dangerous situations.

Finding the right translation in a multilingual world is like finding your way in a big city. It is easy to get lost.

But, there is hope. A new Internationalization Tag Set called ITS 2.0 will help you find the right way. How?

By providing information, called metadata about how text should be translated. This metadata is in the form of “data categories” that can be seen as signs guiding you onto the right way to your destination. And how does it work? Here is one example:

In 1956 Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev heightened Cold War tensions between the Soviets and Americans when he famously said to Western diplomats and journalists “We will bury you”. This very aggressive-sounding statement came across as a threat of war and had many Americans very worried about the threat of nuclear war.

But most Americans didn’t know that Khrushchev wasn’t making a threat. Instead, the person translating the text from Russian-language newspapers hadn’t known that Khrushchev was quoting a Russian proverb.

He simply meant that the Communists would outlive the Capitalists and be around at their funeral. So the world took one step closer to war because of a mistranslation. If this would have happened today a new technology called ITS 2.0 could have helped to prevent from this confusing situation.

A “localization note” would provide a note about the intended meaning and guidance about how to translate the text. Just imagine how history could have changed with a localization note!

While most information won’t be quite so serious, information about drugs or potentially hazardous devices and situations requires special consideration since translation problems can lead to serious bodily harm.

~~For instance, a hospital in Berlin implanted 47 patients the incorrect kind of artificial knee and hip implants. The reason was a mistranslation made by the hospital employees itself. Instead of understanding that the implants were “for cement use only” they understood that they were “cement free” implants.~~

You see, with ITS 2.0. you can potentially save lives, but can you also save money?
Yes! How?

A good translation is like a good meal, you don't get it cheap in every fast food corner. You have to visit a restaurant. The better the "meal" the more cooks and providers are involved to make sure the right ingredients are delivered and cooked in the right way. In multilingual Web content creation is a complex process just like that.

In the same way you don't need to care about how your food reaches the table, you don't normally need to care about how Web content in your language was created, as long as it conveys the information you need.

But there may be hundreds of people involved in preparing this content for you such as:

- Create content in one language
- Gather that content and prepare it for translation.
- Send content to translation providers who then send it out to dozens or even hundreds of translators.
- Translate the content into many languages.
- Other people review the quality, prepare the layout, and handle technical issues.

NOTE: (ARE U TALKING ABOUT ITS, OR THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION IN GENERAL?)

Communication in such a complex workflows is the key to making things work in a timely, cost-effective manner, but communication barriers can easily overwhelm people, leading to real problems and spoil the end result.

ITS provides ways to improve this situation by using embedded metadata that eliminates the need for manual management, thus reducing costs up to 40% and saving up to 30-60% of the time needed to deliver content.

ITS provides standardized data categories to support communication in multilingual content production and any kind of situation needed. This may be simple translation like in the case of Khrushchev, or it may be communication in a complex workflow.

In that case, ITS 2.0 data categories especially support automation: they help integrate content management systems, machine translation engines and computer assisted translation tools as well as human players, and enable them to work together seamlessly to reduce the overheads associated with building the message in your language.

The European Commission supported the development of ITS 2.0 in order to foster the vision of a European single digital market. ITS 2.0 was created by the Multilingual Web – Language Technology Working Group.

We had the right people involved and tools and processes are starting to take advantages of the opportunities offered by ITS 2.0 to created the tools needed to bring everyone to the same table, lead the way to the right understanding and cook a lot of delicious translation meals.

For more information on ITS 2.0 implementations and how you can use them to solve the problems you face, visit the ITS Interest Group wiki or view our other videos.