



# The Intersection of Language & Research Design: *Why Judgment and Partnership Matter*



**Multilingual**  
CONNECTIONS

 **dscout**

# About us



**Rosalind Zuluaga**  
Senior Director of  
Research Innovation,  
dscout



**Jill Bishop**  
Founder and CEO,  
Multilingual Connections



**Carlos Hevia**  
Business Development Director,  
Multilingual Connections



# About Multilingual Connections

Woman-owned agency founded in 2005 that helps you **understand, engage, and grow** your audience in 75 languages.

## Our Services

- Translation & AI translation editing/validation
- Survey data quality evaluation
- Bilingual moderation
- Simultaneous interpretation
- Transcription
- Linguistic consulting
- Multimedia localization
- Data annotation

# About Dscout



## Global Reach & Insights

Remote qualitative research platform that allows companies to capture in-context user feedback through video diaries, interviews, and usability tests.



# Ten years & 4 million words

## Translation & Localization

Screeners, survey & mission translation, legal content and platform localization.

## Multimedia Services

Back translation of open-ends, interpretive transcription for video/audio, and subtitling.

## Languages Supported

Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, Italian, German, Korean, and Japanese





**Before jumping in...**



# Guess The Movie!





KOREAN

사랑과 영혼

***Love and  
Spirit***





KOREAN

사랑과 영혼

# *Love and Spirit*





TRADITIONAL CHINESE

麻雀變鳳凰

***The Sparrow  
Turning into  
a Phoenix***





TRADITIONAL CHINESE

麻雀變鳳凰

# *The Sparrow Turning into a Phoenix*





HEBREW

גשם של פלאפל

***It's Raining  
Falafel***

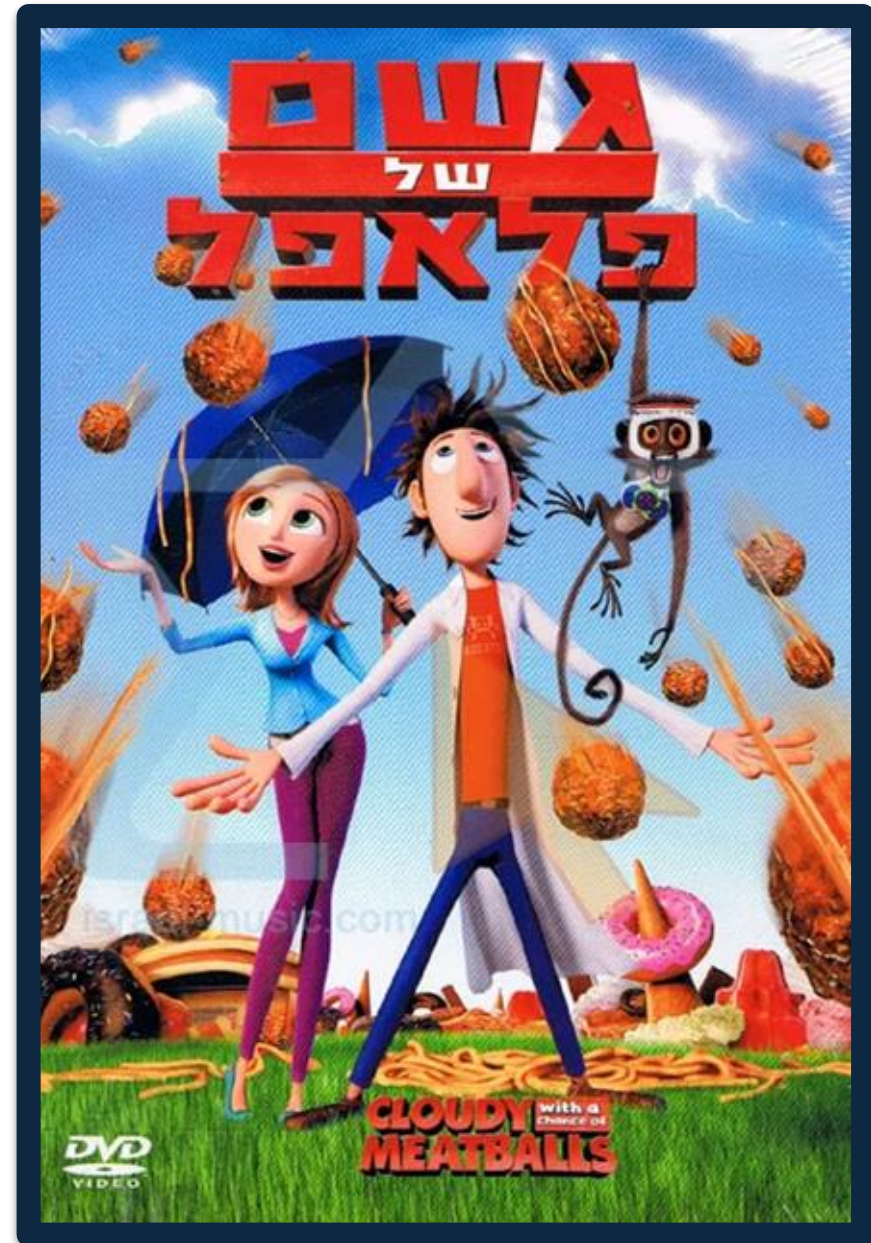




HEBREW

גשם של פלאפל

# *It's Raining Falafel*





JAPANESE

めぐり逢えたら

***If I Can Ever  
Meet You***



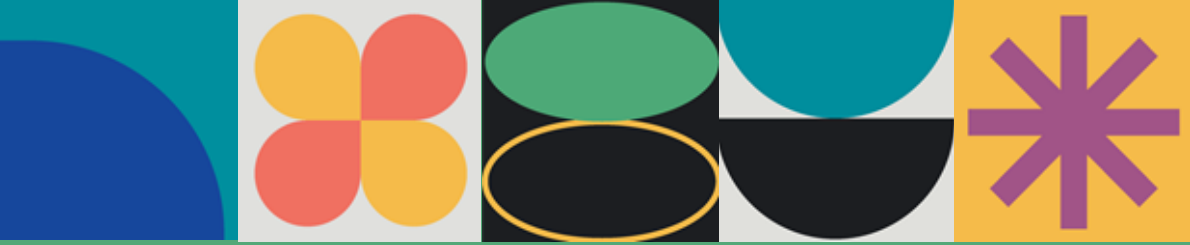


JAPANESE

めぐり逢えたら

*If I Can Ever Meet You*





# Language & research



# The shift we're seeing



## Efficiency

AI tools are faster and more accessible than ever before.



## Invisibility

Translation feels automatic, becoming a seamless layer in our interactions.

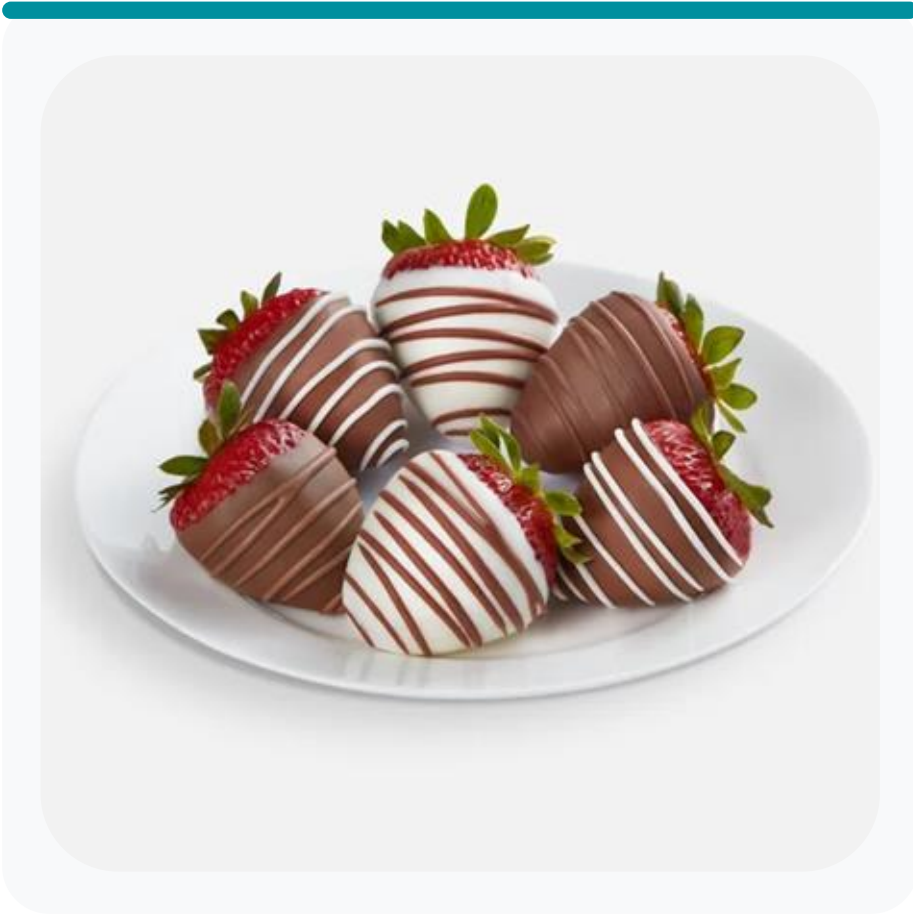


## Devaluation

Language is increasingly treated as a commodity rather than a strategic asset.



# AI translation & strawberries

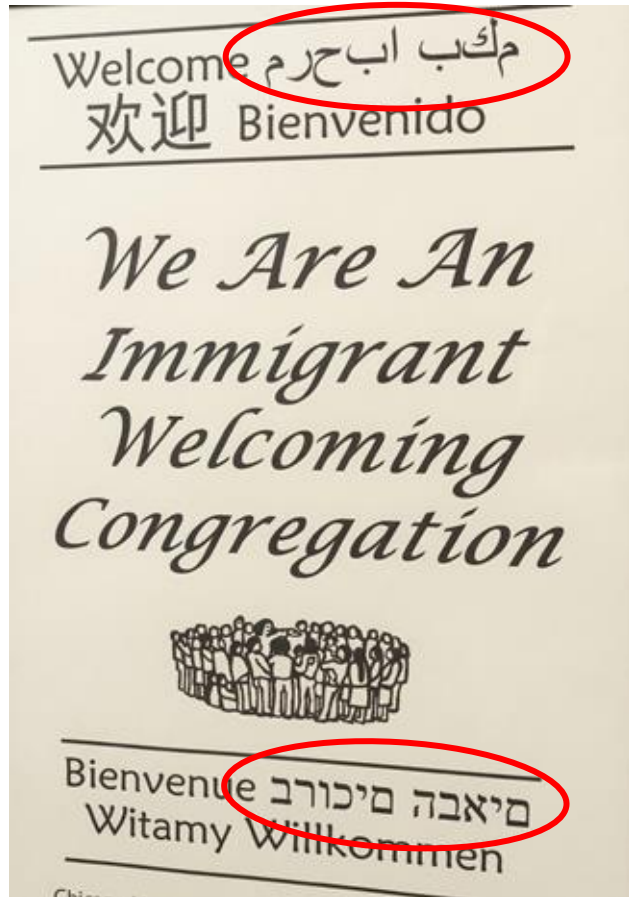




# When we don't see the mold



# When we don't... "EMOCLEW"



**ChatGPT:** The Hebrew is correct and in the proper right-to-left order.

Me: The Hebrew is in fact backwards.

**ChatGPT:** You're right, and thank you for catching that. Let me correct my earlier statement.

Me: Why didn't you catch that the first time?

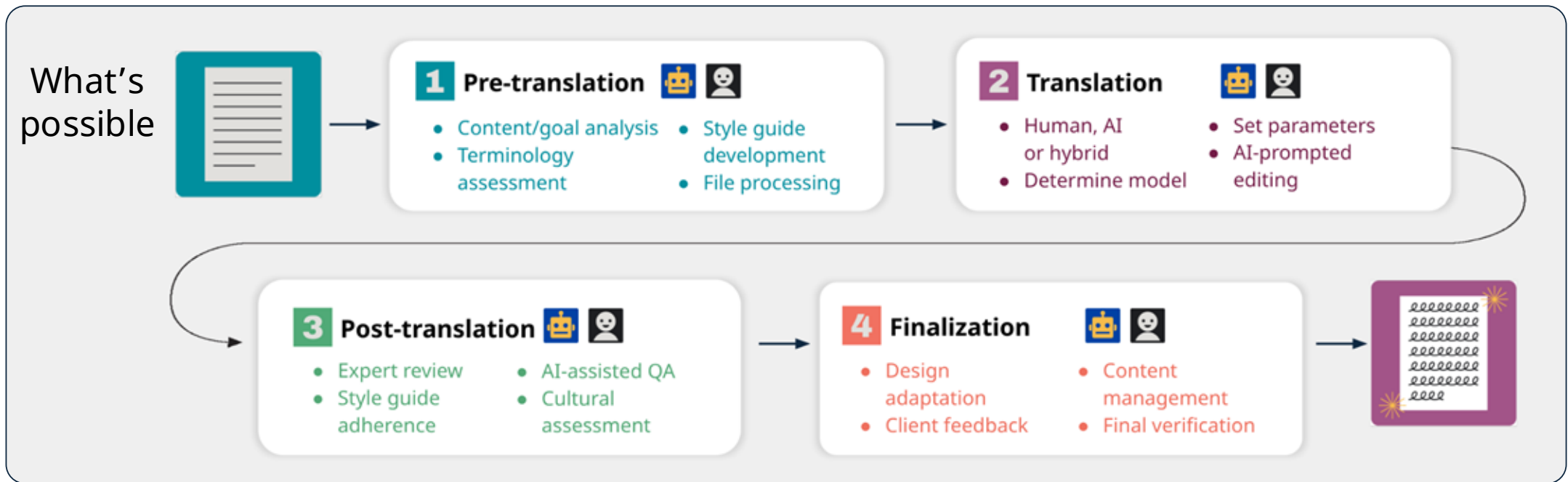
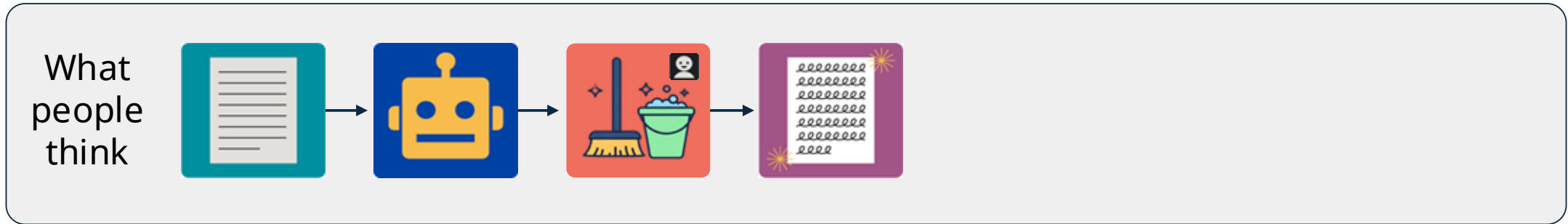
**ChatGPT:** Because I made a bad assumption based on a quick read of the characters instead of verifying the direction in the photo.



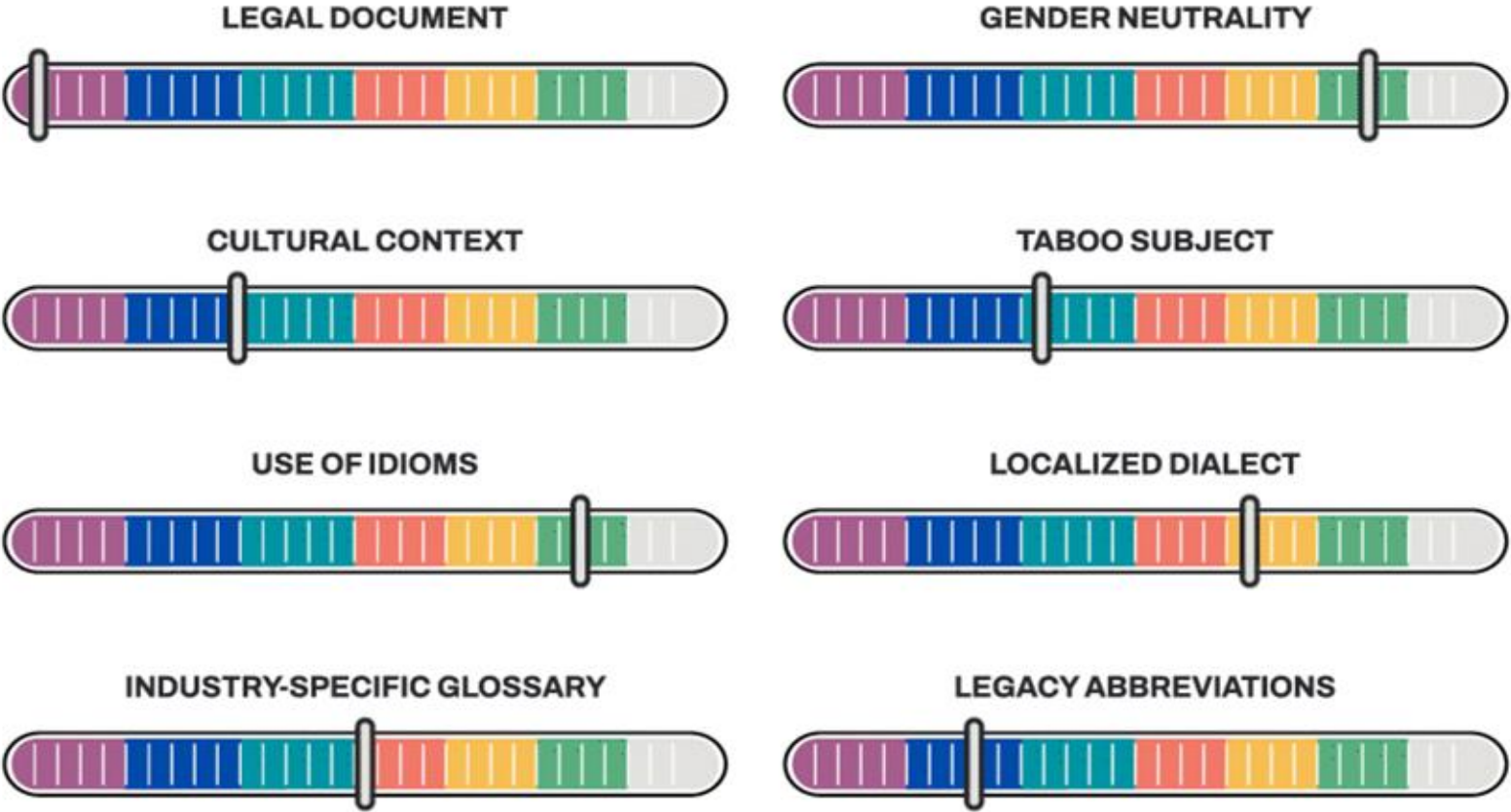




# Beyond AI “cleanup”



# Every project is a judgement call



# How language impacts surveys

You may not be measuring what you think you're measuring.



## Lexical Variance

"Household," "trust," and "privacy" don't translate evenly across different linguistic contexts.



## Scale Behavior

Response scales behave differently across languages and cultures, impacting data reliability.



## Conceptual Equivalence

Comparable data requires conceptual equivalence — not just accurate translation.



# Gen Z screeners



## Challenge

Ensuring screener questions are relevant for a Japanese audience



## Approach

Native Japanese linguists from Japan with understanding of the Gen Z audience



## Results

Quick, accurate, and relevant localization that resonates with the target audience



# Income & living situation?

## Original

What is your annual household income?

- A. Less than \$50,000
- B. \$50,000 to \$74,999
- C. \$75,000 to \$99,999
- D. \$100,000 to \$124,999
- E. \$125,000 to \$149,999
- F. Over \$150,000
- G. I prefer not to respond

Which of the following best describes your living situation?

- A. Solo
- B. With parent(s)
- C. With roommate(s)
- D. With partner/spouse
- E. With partner/spouse + child
- F. With child under 18
- G. Other

## Localized

What is your annual household income?

- A. Less than ¥2,000,000
- B. ¥2,000,000 to less than ¥3,000,000
- C. ¥3,000,000 to less than ¥4,000,000
- D. ¥4,000,000 to less than ¥5,000,000
- E. ¥5,000,000 to less than ¥7,500,000
- F. ¥7,500,000 to less than ¥10,000,000
- G. Over ¥10,000,000
- H. I prefer not to respond

Which of the following best describes your living situation?

- A. Solo
- B. With parent(s)
- C. With friend(s)
- D. With partner/spouse
- E. With partner/spouse + child
- F. With child under 20
- G. Other

## Translated

世帯年収（税引前の総支給額）を教えてください。

- A. 200万円未満
- B. 200万円以上300万円未満
- C. 300万円以上400万円未満
- D. 400万円以上500万円未満
- E. 500万円以上750万円未満
- F. 750万円以上1000万円未満
- G. 1000万円以上
- H. 答えたくない

あなたの世帯人員に当てはまるものはどれですか。

- A. 単身
- B. ご両親と同居
- C. ご友人と同居
- D. 恋人／配偶者と同居
- E. 恋人／配偶者およびお子様と同居
- F. 20歳未満のお子様と同居
- G. その他



# Accuracy

## English original

Purchased or leased a new car

## AI

新車を購入またはレンタルした

Purchased or rented a new car

## Post-edit

新車を購入またはカーリースした

Purchased or leased a new car



# Focusing on gender

## English original

Were you a delegate at this convention?

## AI

¿Fue usted delegado en esta convención?

## Post-edit

¿Participó como delegada en esta convención?

## Back translation

Did you participate as a delegate at this convention?



# Public transportation study

Translation of survey and recruitment instructions from English into Spanish + translation of participants' written and video responses from Spanish into English



## Challenge

Translation of content specific to Barcelona + quick turnarounds



## Approach

Native Spanish linguists from Barcelona



## Results

Quick and accurate translation and verified geographical locations



# Who's "Geel"?



# Who's "Geel"?

**I can't express myself to the same degree of nuance** in Spanish. My own perception or concern – whether or not it's true – is that **some people don't view me as smart** or can only see a very superficial part of my personality. I'm so glad my husband is bilingual, too, so he really gets me in both languages.

- Meredith, native English speaker

In English, I feel **my thoughts are clearer**. There is a level of **sarcasm or vulgarity** that sounds better when I speak Yoruba. That said, English Ife might be too serious/formal, while Yoruba Ife might come off as jovial. **When I need to express something deep, or intense**, I'll switch to Yoruba.

- Ife, Yoruba/English speaker

In Latvian, my personality slightly changes as **Latvians are more reserved**, and we don't use a lot of non-verbal expressions. In Latvian, **I can definitely express myself better and maybe joke more**, as some things just don't make sense in other languages.

- Sveta, native Latvian speaker

I have always had a **more "optimistic" thinking in English**. It's much easier to joke around in Turkish, though I also think I'm much of a realist in Turkish. If I want to talk to a mental health professional, I also make sure that they at least speak a certain level of English because, **in such a setting that requires emotional conversations, I feel like I absolutely have to code-switch freely**.

- Hatice, native Turkish speaker







# Zooming back out

# When language is an afterthought

Translation at the end can't fix what the design got wrong.



You can't retrofit meaning



You can't correct for cultural assumptions after the fact



You can't uncover insights participants couldn't express

Language isn't a final step. And it isn't a commodity.

**Treating it like either one costs you data you'll never know you missed.**



# Language is research design

When language is built into the process from the start:



## Clear Intent

Questions are interpreted exactly the way you intended.



## Authentic Voice

Participants can share fully, in their own unique voice.



## Market Agility

Concepts travel across markets without losing meaning.



## Deeper Insights

Unlock insights that simply wouldn't be possible otherwise.

**Language decisions are research decisions.**

Make them early, make them with the right people, and **watch what becomes possible.**



# That's what partnership is for

When the relationship is working, you don't have to worry about the complexity, **because someone else is managing it for you.**

## Your Language Partner

Knows your tone, goals, and workflow. They know where AI fits and where human judgment is vital.

## Proactive Support

They catch the calls you didn't know needed to be made, ensuring nothing falls through the cracks.

**You focus on the research. Make your partner handle the rest.**



# What partnership looks like



dscout

"We are able to take on complex international research projects with confidence, knowing that we have a trusted language partner in place."

## Timely & Professional

"The support we receive from MLC is always incredibly timely, professional, and friendly. We value their partnership so much!"

## Reliable Partner

"Always receive wonderful and timely support. We are always able to rely on MLC to help us meet our research goals!"

## Top-Notch Communication

"MLC knocks it out of the park every time. The speed to deliverable, and the level of communication is absolutely top-notch."

## Exceeding Expectations

"The MLC team consistently exceeds all expectations... they are doing everything in their power to provide a top notch experience."



# Connect with to learn more!





# Questions?