

# The Language Enterprise in the US: The Public and Private Sectors

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# What is “The Language Enterprise”

- The "Language Enterprise" encompasses everyone who enables communication among different cultures and languages
- At the nexus of globalization, information, rising youth populations, entrepreneurship, self-expression: “Assertion of linguistic rights goes hand in hand with the assertion of economic rights” (Salkowitz, 2011)
- Integral to globalization and the national interest: now taken as a given
- One of the oldest professions – globalization, translation, teaching FL aren't new (e.g., Hanseatic League, Folsom arrow points, Aristotle) but pace, information, and mobility are!

# Who is “The Language Enterprise?”

- People who are Directly engaged:
  - Translators, Interpreters
  - Localization, globalization
  - Multilingual professionals
- People enabling those who are engaged
  - Teachers & researchers
  - Testers & test developers
  - Developers of tools and materials for language learning and work

## Everyone involved in the Language Enterprise "gets it"

- **WE** facilitate the free movement of people, information, and ideas
- **WE** build up mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity
- **WE** promote the personal development of the individual

# What comprises the Language Enterprise?

- Educational sector
  - K-12 programs
  - Higher ed programs
  - researchers
  - specialized/graduate programs (e.g., translation, linguistics)
- Federal Sector
  - Training programs (e.g., DLIFLC, FSI)
  - operational elements (Intelligence Community, FBI, DoD)
- Private Sector
  - Translation/Interpreting
  - Globalization/Localization/Multilingual-Multicultural Marketing
  - Private language schools
  - ***and more...***

## How Big is the Language Enterprise in the US?

- Private sector: \$15b per year (Kelly et. al, 2012)
  - 6000+ businesses
  - 85% of revenue from small businesses/sole proprietors
  - Annual growth of 8% since 2006
- Public sector (Federal, State, Local Governments): \$10b per year (estimate)

# Breadth of the Public Sector

- K-12 FL:
- Higher education:
- Government Schools: DLIFLC, FSI, NCS, ILI
- Federal Government language work
  - DoD
  - Intelligence
  - State Department
  - Commerce
  - Health and Human Services
  - Homeland Security
  - And many more...
- State and Local governments
  - Social Services
  - Law Enforcement

# Breadth of the Private Sector

- Private language schools teaching USG personnel, corporate customers, after school programs, adult ESL learners)
- Language test developers and testers
- Translation: financial, legal, technical, marketing, patent, medical, literary
- Interpreting: conference, escort, community, medical, court/legal, sight translation, telephonic
- Localization
- Globalization
- Multicultural / multilingual marketing
- Translation tools / machine translation
- language learning materials
- language learning software / websites

# New Developments in Cross-sector Collaboration: ASTM

- ASTM Main Committee F43, Language Services and Products
  - National Standards within the International Standards Framework, Vienna Agreement, and PL 104-113 (National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995)
  - All sectors and facets of the Language Enterprise are represented
  - Goal: Improve quality and enhance the Language Enterprise through open, transparent standards
  - Test Development Standard (F2889) completed; 3 new standards underway

# New Developments in Cross-sector Collaboration: International Organization of Standards (ISO)

- ISO Technical Committee 232: Language Training: New international Standard for language schools outside the formal educational sector
- ISO TC 37: Standards for Translation, Interpreting, and Language Tools
- ISO: Dominated by the EU (40+ countries that vote as a bloc)
- Size & Complexity of the US Market
- Which proficiency scale (ACTFL, CEFR) would be used in the new standard?
- Service standard or management systems standard?

# The Private Sector Language Industry and the Academic Sector: Common Challenges

- Public Awareness of language as a **profession**, on par with law, accountancy, medicine
- Access & Influence
  - Federal (Legislative & Executive branches)
  - State
  - Local (School Boards, Deans & Administrators)
- Standards, Certification, Accreditation

# The Private Sector Language Industry and the Academic Sector: Specific Challenges

- **Federal funding for K-16 Programs: basis of labor force AND R&D base for the industry**
- Federal reimbursement for language services
- Potential reclassification of translators and interpreters as clerical personnel
- Use of standards to promote quality and improve confidence in the industry

# Looking Ahead

- Private sector will continue to grow
- K-12: effective advocacy required at the local level (PTA, School Boards, Parents)
- USG language programs will be stable (except for those in US Department of Education)
- Collaboration among sectors will increase
- JNCL-NCLIS to engage with private sector

# References

- Kelly, Nataly, Donald A. DePalma, Robert G. Stewart. 2012. *The Language Services Market 2012*. Lowell, MA: Common Sense Advisory.
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