



## Translation Companies in Kazakhstan: Key Players of The Industry

### KEYWORDS

Translation Companies, LSP (Language Service Provider), freelancer, translation services market, CAT (computer aided translation), conference/consecutive interpretation, dumping, language training, National Association of Translators, standardization.

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**ABSTRACT** *The market of translation services nowadays is one of the most recent and rapidly developing markets. It has great potential and is very relevant in the age of globalization. The list of key players providing services in translation today comes down mainly to numerous translation companies and freelancers with the latter starting to work more often not individually but in collaboration with the first. Translation companies in Kazakhstan gain popularity however they face many problems. This article reveals the problems in the industry and suggests the ways to tackle them.*

### General information

The market of translation services nowadays is one of the most recent and rapidly developing markets. It has great potential and is very relevant in the age of globalization. The number of LSPs (Language Service Providers) is constantly on the rise. The reason is the fact that more and more businesses throughout the world expand and grow international.

Presently we can speak of Kazakhstan's large integration into the world community, mutually beneficial and close cooperation in addressing global issues. Experts say that Kazakhstan unlike other countries in the region has the most favourable environment to enter the global market. Its foreign policy is aimed at securing peace, adopting modern western techniques and technologies as well as attracting the capital, active participation in international labour division. [1]

As a result of gaining independence in 1991 the Kazakh language regains its status of a national language. New social and political organization of the country dictates creation of a language policy corresponding with the needs of a polyethnic nation in the context of peculiar language, demographic and political situation. [2]

Lately, Kazakh is actively spoken in many spheres/contexts. Let us say, to get a position in public administration one needs to speak the Kazakh/national language. Moreover, Kazakh becomes mandatory for state-to-state relations. [3]

We have conducted a survey among translation companies' employees and analyzed statistics and the information available on the LSP's websites.

Presently, there are about 300 translation companies on the Kazakhstan market and according to Forbes Kazakhstan the estimated return is around US\$20 000 000 (twenty million US dollars) annually. The market of translation services in Kazakhstan is emerging and yet sustainable since the annual market growth counts to 10%.

Kazakhstan translation services market is hardly specialized. In terms of high competitiveness there is nothing for small companies but to engage into all types of language services which affects the quality as having large staff on a payroll turns out to be extremely costly. Thus the number of translation companies specializing in several particular fields of knowledge (so-called linguistic engineering companies) is still small.

### Problems of translation companies

Although the industry itself is quite large one doesn't need a license to become a language services vendor and consequently any legal entity may offer their services in translation. Highly fragmented structure of the industry is a key feature. Thus, we note the presence of a great number of small translation companies as well as the absence of giants consolidating the industry and taking up to 10% of the market. The largest translation company in the world is known to have only a 3.5% share on the market.

- 1) The entrance threshold is very low which results in increasing competitiveness, price decline and quality loss. A new certification system designed to solve the problem has been successfully implemented in Europe but it needs to be updated since it only partially deals with quality issues.
- 2) One of the problems thwarting the progress on the market is low prices for translation services. In Europe translation of 1 page text costs around \$30. In Russia that number is twice as small while in Kazakhstan it is even smaller. Translators are puzzled over the fact that, for instance, lawyers are recognized to be good professionals and are paid \$100 per hour, while the translation services remain to be low-paid.
- 3) Technical instruments and modern technologies are not yet popular. What concerns language technologies LSPs continually focus on translation programs and instruments. Resistance to CAT is weakening. Probably, the use of CAT will increase to meet the growing demand in the age of globalization. It may also be the result of lack of qualified human resources on the translation services market.
- 4) There is a great problem on the level of the Kazakh language. Despite the measures being taken the Kazakh language fails to instrument the status of a national language. The main reason is that this status has been only declared officially but it lacks the mechanism ensuring its usage and learning countrywide. There is also a question of enriching and developing of modern Kazakh language.

Translating from and into Kazakh presents great difficulties. Generally the main matter of argument is different vision of how to translate particular words. There are great terminology gaps in most fields of knowledge as a result of the fact that in Soviet times the language was not developed and used since it was prohibited. Today

many words required for global communication just do not have their equivalents in Kazakh. Thus new words are being coined in such haste that many native speakers are not able to keep pace with it. That is the reason of variations that complicate consensus of opinions.

Russian is the language that is used alongside with the Kazakh language in public institutions and local government organizations. It will continue to be one of the main sources of information in various fields of science and technology, means of communication with neighbours and far abroad countries.

- 5) Dumping is a serious problem of the translation services industry.

Practically, dumping means a promise to provide a client with a quality translation (which in companies with good credit presupposes managing of the order, selection of specialists and editing the texts), when indeed the client pays for the work of a translator only without any preparatory and follow-up work. All this reduces the prices for translation services.

- 6) Acute shortage of qualified professionals is another problem of translation services industry in the world and in Kazakhstan in particular.

Unfortunately, the level of language training does not meet the requirements of translation companies. Moreover, high language competency is not enough; one should know the particular terminology. Future professionals should strive to specialize in particular subjects. Young specialists should be mentally ready to work with the clients/businesses the translation companies work with today. Nowadays there is almost no translation program in higher education institutions that would provide the required language training.

As to the conference and consecutive interpretation the situation is the following: young specialists are not ready for and simply do not have the skills in interpreting. They know the language but they are not familiar with terminology, lack professional skills and don't seem to have a profound background knowledge.

- 7) The absence of standards and certification on the translation services market of Kazakhstan. The business of translation companies in Kazakhstan is far behind its European and US counterparts and is still in the making.

This time lag can be seen in the absence of joint standards for LSPs. There is no institution authorized to certify translators. The majority of translation companies either sees no need in introducing international quality standards or considers them too costly and unable to bring immediate profit.

### Problem solving

- 1) Establishing of the National Association of Translators would by itself help tackle various problems. The Association would have to formulate the standards of quality, ethics and professionalism for the translators. It would also work on certification of and giving out licenses to translators and translation companies. As a result the entrance threshold would also rise meaning only highly qualified professionals would get the right to provide their services on the market.
- 2) To adequately introduce translation services on the market and prevent the spread of low qualified specialists thorough attention should be paid to cultivating positive image of a translator and hence rising prices for the translation services. The demand for interpreters specializing in particular subjects and having experience of working with modern technologies in translation should be satisfied by universities and colleges.
- 3) The issue of technical modernization must be decided by attracting investors and sponsors interested in quality translation. The side of the investors and sponsors may be presented by both private capital and public organizations.
- 4) To tackle the problem of a status of Kazakh some translation companies have introduced a new practice of preliminary consulting with clients. As a rule the translation is adjusted according with the requirements and internal standards of the clients. Moreover the government should subsidize university programs aimed at training qualified specialists in Kazakh.
- 5) Another problem that many translation companies face is dumping. Joint efforts to raise the clients awareness is one good way to fight dumping. The clients often are not just aware of the fact that the price of translation services includes the whole range of activities strating with managing the order, selecting the professionals, meeting the time-limits, correcting and editing the translated texts.
- 6) The profession of a translator becomes popular. The number of universities offering programs in translation and interpretation is also on the rise. Nevertheless, there is no redundancy of qualified specialists if any. Large translation companies have to engage in training of the employees themselves. It's a very fast moving business. The market undergoes technological modernization. The companies increasingly use special linguistic software. According to our estimates some companies spend up to 10% of their annual revenues on training and retraining of staff translators. Thus translation companies play the role of education institutions. However, on the whole, given that the problems are worked on, the market of translation services has great potential and prospects.
- 7) The problem of lack of standardization and certification must be solved by adopting the practices of leaders on the world market of translation services. Proactive approach in this respect is mandatory.

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