Computing in Nick's attic

Are you tapping into the app economy? Nicole Hawkesford reveals the clients waiting for translators who are ready to branch out into this booming sector

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On 5 March this year, Apple announced that the App Store had reached the milestone of 25 billion downloads[1]. A staggering number – but then nearly every number associated with the booming app economy is. The App Store launched in July 2008, and had already seen 10 million downloads by the end of its first weekend. By April 2009 it had reached 1 billion, and the growth has continued to soar[2].

Of course, iOS is only half the picture; there's Google's Android, which also launched in 2008[3]. The number of apps in the Android Market tripled in the last year, and although its 450,000 still lags behind Apple's 500,000[4], it seems to be catching up.

Still, when you combine the two markets it's clear that the app economy is not suffering from the same woes as many others. On Christmas day last year, it's estimated that 6.8 million iOS and Android devices were activated, and 242 million apps were downloaded[5]. This represents an increase in devices and downloads of approximately 240% and 160% compared with the previous Christmas.

You might be thinking 'well, that's all very impressive, but what does it have to do with me as a translator?' Or perhaps, 'I can see the potential, but aren't most apps free anyway? Who's going to want to pay to have it translated?' In fact, about 72% of iOS apps are paid, compared with 43% of Android apps[6]. Since Android is based on a more open-source philosophy, it's unsurprising that more of their apps are free. However, it's still true to say that free apps hold a greater share of downloads on both platforms.

The important thing to remember is that the app economy is by its very nature a global economy – and that's where we come in. One of my first jobs was translating the user interface for an app that helps sufferers from scoliosis monitor and record the progress of their condition. The developer, a doctor in Singapore, wanted to reach and help people all around the world; an app offers

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an ideal avenue for just that.

There seem to be two categories of app that hold the greatest potential for translators. The first is possibly unsurprising: the 'Help' categories of Lifestyle, Travel, Utilities, Reference and Business; these are the apps which are created for a specific purpose, to help the user with an everyday task or chore or to provide a fast source of targeted information. They are likely to have widespread global appeal, but also need adapting in order to be relevant to users in different countries. The second category is Games; representing around 15% of App Store downloads, this sector has great revenue potential for developers, whether that's from charging for download or through in-app advertising. And crucially, people will only pay to download a game if the app description page is good, and if they can see that they will understand how to play the game. If it's in a language they don't speak, then clearly they will be less likely to hit the 'install' button.

Have I convinced you yet? Perhaps you're still a bit wary, maybe you don't feel like you're tech-savvy enough to deal with the app

Downloads from Apple's App Store run into the tens of billions

developers and their content? Well, I've got good news. The limited attention span that most developers cater for, combined with the space constraints of most device displays, means that app content is by and large quite simple, straightforward language. The only terminology you really need to be aware of is that relating to standard menu items or parts of the handset, and the manufacturer's user manual in the appropriate language can usually provide the answers there, or you can switch your own device to the necessary language.

But what about the format of the content? Surely that could be a nightmare, with the hierarchy of screens and numerous buttons? Well, it could – but two simple things can solve this issue. The first, and possibly the most critical, is that you get screenshots of every interface, so that you can see how the various elements

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for translation relate to each other on any given screen or menu within the app. This went a long way towards smoothing the translation process for the scoliosis app I did. In a perfect world, the developer would also provide you with a free copy of the app, so you can interact with it and get an even better user perspective, but at the very least screenshots are essential. Secondly, get the content in Excel format. It's too easy in Word for elements to get shifted out of place; in Excel, you can have clearly defined lists of button names, page titles, menu options, and other text within the app that won't go astray.

This also means you can enter your translation in the column adjacent to the source, which will help your developer when they come to put the translated elements in the right places for the new version of the app.

All in all, you don't need to be a tech-head to get involved with the developers; if you can translate website content, you can translate apps. Recent surveys have suggested that app development could be responsible for creating around half a million jobs – so come on, let's tap into that app economy!

FOOTNOTES
[1] www.apple.com/uk/pr/library/2012/03/05Apples-App-Store-Downloads-Top-25-Billion.html
[2] http://c3316209.r9.cf0.rackcdn.com/500kAppsInfographic.png
[3] www.geekfori.com/app-economy/
[4] http://techland.time.com/2012/02/27/google-android-apps-have-tripled-to-nearly-half-a-million-since-last-year/
[5] http://techcrunch.com/2011/12/27/android
[6] www.geekfori.com/app-economy/

ITI Webinar, facilitated by eCPD Webinars
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS
11am, 11 May 2012

What is professional conduct and why do we need it? Are we all singing from the same hymn sheet or do different versions of what is considered to be professional conduct apply in different situations and in different cultures? Do the various Codes of Conduct of our professional organisations and of our work suppliers cover all eventualities and are they all culturally sensitive? What role (if any) should personal and professional ethics play in our everyday working lives? Who or what exactly is policing our professional conduct?
Speaker: Sue Leschen LLB BA DPSI is a full-time freelance French interpreter based in Manchester. She mainly interprets in the public services sector. She has a special interest in professional conduct and ethics for interpreters and translators and frequently speaks on the subject. She is a member of the CIoL, NRPSI, ITI, APCI, Professional Interpreters Alliance (PIA) and North West Translators Network. She is a member of ITI's Professional Standards Committee. However, first and foremost, she would describe herself as 'an interpreters' interpreter'.
Cost: £25 (members of ITI and FIT organisations), £30 non-members, £15 student members of ITI and FIT organisations.

To register, go to www.ecpdwebinars.co.uk and click on 'Future events'. Last registrations for the live event can be accepted absolute latest two hours before the advertised start time.

ITI Webinar, facilitated by eCPD Webinars
TRANSLATING THE SPOKEN WORD
11am, 19 June 2012

In most languages, the spoken form is different from the written one. A listener will only hear the narration once – the opportunity to go back to the beginning of the sentence is simply not available. However, until very recently translators were neither made aware of this nor trained well enough in translating the spoken word to achieve the required standard. This webinar will discuss the numerous pitfalls that translators encounter in this field and show how to produce excellent translations for studio use, whereby the 'voice' can concentrate one hundred per cent on the performance rather than the translation.
Speaker: Daniel Pageon. After five years at the BBC World Service, Daniel set up his own company to provide language services to video producers. He carried on researching, writing and presenting programmes for BBC Radios 2 and 4. He has translated and voiced thousands of hours of corporate and training videos. He was also a freelance correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for over 20 years, and has been commenting on French affairs for Sky News for the last 15 years. He published *The World of the Voice-over* in 2007 and *The Opening* in 2011.
Cost: £25 (members of ITI and FIT organisations), £30 non-members, £15 student members of ITI and FIT organisations.

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