Vertourist: Providing accuracy in language translations, using an online workforce

Shubheek Dhillon
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VERTOURIST

Providing accuracy in language translations, using an online workforce

Shubhneek Dhillon

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
in Visual Communication Design

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts & Sciences
School of Design
Rochester, NY
May 10, 2016
**Title**

VER TOURIST: Providing accuracy in language translations, using online workforce

**Submitted by**

Shubhneek Dhillon  
May 10, 2016

**Committee Approvals**

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### Appendices

- User Survey Results
- Original Thesis Proposal
Abstract

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, travelers, language barriers, translators, human-generated exchange, crowd programming, accuracy, bridging barriers, design system, user experience design, user interaction design, information design, android, iOS

Language is our greatest mediator that allows us to relate to and understand each other. Linguistic boundaries cause a massive downside for travelers. They often find it difficult to communicate with locals in another country to learn more about the foreign culture, country, aesthetics and life. It’s even more critical for the people who are deaf.

Human generated translation is much more accurate than computer generated translation. Travelers often rely on computer-generated translation that result in more confusion when the person is trying to communicate with in a foreign language. My thesis will address this issue using social media. A social network brings people together to help each other and exchange experiences. The ultimate goal is to eliminate language barriers for travelers by connecting them to interpreters through video chats.

The thesis project explores interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform for interpreters and travelers to use. In addition, to digital design elements, an identity for this service will also be designed in order to support marketing and promotional strategies.
Situation Analysis

Language is our greatest mediator that allows us to relate to and understand each other. It can be defined as a system of conceptual symbols that allows us to communicate. It is the key to a person’s identity that enables the person to express himself or herself. It can also be defined as a biologically innate, verbal, physical form of communication across the globe.

According to BBC - UK report¹, around 75% of the world’s population does not speak in English. This generates a worldwide communication gap. This language barrier prevents a person from seeking necessary information, especially for travelers. Conversations with foreigners are limited to asking for directions to the nearest restaurant, transportation, and/or hotel. When traveling in non-English speaking countries, one can feel like he or she is inside a bizarre bubble, cut off from the rest of society, by this inability to communicate. Linguistic boundaries cause a massive downside for travelers. They often find it difficult to communicate with locals in another country to learn more about the foreign culture, country, aesthetics and life. It is even more critical for the people who are deaf.

An interpreter or translator addresses such issues of linguistic barriers very well by converting spoken or sign language statements from one language to another. Interpreting involves listening to, understanding and memorizing content in the original ‘source’ language, then reproducing statements, questions and speeches in a different ‘target’ language. The range of interpretation subjects is broad. They work in conference centers, hospitals, schools, embassies and business meetings.

Apart from these human interpreters, today we also have an option that is just a click away on our mobile phones. We have translation apps that help us in quick and simple translations. These are computer generated translation apps.

¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml
The only drawback about these apps is that they hinder the accuracy of translated information. This method often obstructs the communication resulting in uncanny conversations. However, technology today allows us to reach new levels of international communication. Using social network and video chat, this service can bridge the international communication barrier by connecting travelers with translators directly.

The goal of this thesis addresses the issue in international communication using interaction and user experience design. The project will be a user-centered design that promotes a service strategy based on outsourcing the required translations using human powered interpretation. By providing a common platform where the interpreters help the international travelers leading to an efficient solution in this age of technology. This way the travelers will have a phenomenal experience during their travels abroad. The ultimate goal of this design thesis research is to eradicate language barriers for travelers.
Problem Statement

Human generated translation is much more accurate than computer-generated translation. Travelers often rely on computer-generated translation that result in more confusion when the person is trying to communicate with in a foreign language. Some seek help from their friends or relatives in these situations. This issue will be addressed using social media.

A social network brings people together to help each other and exchange experiences. The ultimate goal is to eliminate language barriers for travelers by connecting them to interpreters through video chats. This will help the user get the trusted translation from various grades of translators, basic to fluent, affecting the price rate of the translated information. Also, providing a way for the interpreters to make some extra money.

The thesis project explores interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform for interpreters and travelers to use. In addition, to digital design elements, an identity for this service will also be designed in order to support marketing and promotional strategies.

Thesis Statement

The thesis research focuses on exploring interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform using social media to provide human powered language translations to international travelers.
Survey of Literature

Online Articles & Books

1 Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: Language ideologies and processes of exclusion
   Dorte Lønsmann
   2011
   This is a research article on multilingualism in an work environment. It focuses on the linguistic and social challenges that are related to the diversity of language competences among employees.

2 Bridging language barriers in multilingual care encounters
   Gunilla Jansson
   2014
   This case study demonstrates how the multilingual practices of a linguistically diverse workforce contribute to the functioning of a modern work environment. This study highlights the complexity of providing adequate and well-functioning care in today’s diverse society, where linguistic and cultural matching of clients and caregivers cannot always be obtained.

3 Overcoming Language Barriers to International Trade: A Text-Based Study of the Language of Deals
   Rolf D. Cremer & Mary J. Willes
   1994
   The study based on an examination of written English language documents exchanged between Asian textile manufacturers & their overseas business partners for international trade. The study further demonstrates how various language backgrounds can cause confusion in understanding ideas.
4 Barriers in Verbal Communication
   Andreea Dobra & Alexandra-Valeria Popescu
   2008
   This document studies the main barriers in oral and verbal communication both in sending and receiving the messages, the role of the verbal component in communication and its strengths and weaknesses.

5 Through the language glass:
   why the world looks different in other languages
   Dr. Guy Deutscher
   2010
   This book is talks about the affects of culture on language and visa versa.

6 Foreign Language Learning with Digital Technology
   Michael Evans
   2009
   The article demonstrates how technology is endlessly innovating and improving itself as a tool to support language teaching and learning.

7 Cross-cultural Communication Challenges of International Tourism Business Environment
   Eriks Lingeberzins
   2011
   This paper is demonstrates the challenges of international tourism affected by multicultural and multilingual communication.

8 Don’t make me think!:
   A common sense approach to web usability
   Steve Krug
   2006
   This book explains the design principles for websites.
**Websites**

9  [http://www.hlp.rochester.edu/](http://www.hlp.rochester.edu/)
   Accessed October 19, 2014
   Human Language Processing Lab focuses on language production and comprehension and the interaction between them.

10  [http://vive.me/](http://vive.me/)
    Accessed October 19, 2014
    A phone application that helps people across the globe communicate with each other via video chat to share common passions.

    Accessed October 19, 2014
    An online service that allows neighbors to connect with each other. This website outsources the tasks to the available neighbors to help the user in various ways like plumbing, gardening, etc.

    Accessed October 19, 2014
    An online service and app that provides human powered language translations and interpretation for businesses and various other conferences.

    Accessed October 18, 2014
    An online service and app for video calling.

    Accessed October 19, 2014
    An online article that explains the real life challenges faced by travelers abroad.
Competitive Analysis

Vive
- Video chat app bringing people together
- Strangers talk to each other using social media
- Creative way to share passions from all over the world
- Reviving emotional value virtually

Skype
- An online calling service that also gives the user an option for video calling
- Services are similar to Yahoo Messenger, Hangouts, WhatsApp, FaceTime

VerbalizeIt
- Human powered translation for businesses
- Company pays the interpreters
- Interpreters sign up online, test and train and give video interview
- Mode of interpretations: type, video, audio and call
- Interpreters make themselves available to pick up interpretation task

Task Rabbit
- Work outsourcing website and app that allows neighbors helping each other
- No physical money/cash involved
- Transactions are handled securely online after the completion of work
- Some percentage of payment goes to the website for providing the service
- Task performers go through identity check, criminal record check, in person interview and training session
- Push notifications are sent to task performers once they make themselves available
- Qualification of the task performer ranges basic to professional
My Services

- Helping locals communicate with international travelers
- An online video calling service
- Translations will be more reliable as they are human generated
- Translations are provided anywhere anytime
- Communication barriers for the deaf are also addressed.
- Qualification of the interpretation will range from basic to fluent
- No physical payment methods involved
- All transactions will be handled securely online after the video call
- Payment will depend on the complete time of the video call
- Interpreters will make themselves available for receiving interpretation video calls through push notifications
Google Translate Example

Following is an example of a computer-generated translation app by Google. The translated text in Hindi script is not accurate. In Figure 1, you can see the question portrait by an English speaker.

Figure 1: English to Hindi Translation

In the figure below (Figure 2), you clearly notice what exactly was translated in Hindi. The translated information is confusing.

Figure 2: Hindi to English Translation
User Personas

Clark Andrews, 32

**Background:** Archeology Professor, Single Father

**Lifestyle:** Lives in San Jose, USA. Loves to explore new cities and understand the history of a place.

**Languages:**
- English Fluent (speaking, reading, writing)
- Hebrew Intermediate (speaking, reading)
- Italian Intermediate (speaking)

**Countries Visited:** France, Turkey and Philippines

**Goals and tasks in relation to app:** Finds it difficult to have a clear conversation with local people while traveling to Non-English speaking countries. Wants to connect directly with translators who can provide him with accurate translation results.
Marii Leva, 27

Background: Street Artist and Performer

Lifestyle: Lives in New York City, USA. Loves to explore small villages/towns of the countries she visits to understand their lifestyle. Also has a keen interest to learn about the art, history and culture of every city she travels to.

Languages:

- English          Fluent (speaking, reading, writing)
- Ukrainian      Intermediate (speaking, reading, writing)
- Polish            Intermediate (speaking, reading)

Countries Visited: Russia and Egypt

Goals and tasks in relation to app: Finds it difficult to have detailed conversations with people in the villages/small towns. Though, can manage small conversations using apps available today (computer generated translation apps). Waiting for a better solution to converse accurately to understand her subject of interest.
Hui Xu, 33

**Background:** Sous Chef, Hard of hearing and speaking. Uses a hearing aid.

**Lifestyle:** Lives with family in New York City, USA. Has a passion for cooking. Loves to travel to try authentic cuisines and learn about the recipes.

**Languages:**
- Sign: Fluent (speaking)
- Vietnamese: Fluent (reading, writing)
- English: Intermediate (reading, writing)

**Countries Visited:** Vietnam, Thailand and India

**Goals and tasks in relation to app:** Faces huge difficulty to have a clear conversation about recipes with local people of the visiting country. Would love to get connected with a real-time network of translators to have smoother conversations over her travels and get a better experience.
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<th>Zaid Malikzada, 29</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Background:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lifestyle:</strong></td>
<td>Completing his PHD at University of Rochester.</td>
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| **Languages:**    | English  Fluent (speaking, reading, writing)  
|                   | Persian  Fluent (speaking, reading, writing) |
| **Countries Visited:** | Iran, Mexico |
Simerjit Kaur Sidhu, 43

Background: Professional translator at a hospital

Lifestyle: Lives with husband and three kids in Indianapolis, USA.

Languages: English Fluent (speaking, reading, writing)
            Hindi Intermediate (speaking, reading, writing)
            Punjabi Fluent (speaking, reading, writing)

Countries Visited: India

Goals and tasks in relation to app: Faces problems managing her job with three kids. Therefore, wants an online language translation job that she can do while at home.
Name Selection

A list of brand names was prepared that closely explained or matched the services, from which the final name was shortlisted.

- Exponere means explain
- Lingua means tongue
- Quaenam means what
- Dico means tell
- Dicere means say
- Auxilium means help
- Sermo means speech
- Verbum means word
- Narro means say, tell, relate, talk
- Verto means exchange, translate
- Verba means words
- Posco means require, call, request, ask
- Postulo means ask, need, request, call
- Iter means way, road, journey
- Juvo means help, avail, assist
- Faveo means favor, help, support
- Dictio means expression, speech, delivery
- Vox means voice
Round 2

- Posco: means require, call, request, ask
- **Verto**: *means exchange, translate*
- Virt: Virtual + Translation
- Hupot: *(Acronym) Human Powered Translation*
- Hupoi: *(Acronym) Human Powered Interpretation*
- Hupoint: *(Acronym) Human Powered Interpretation*
- Int: *(Acronym) Interpretation*

  Making intimidating conversations interesting

- I2I: Intimidating to Interesting
  Individual to Individual

Final Round

The following brand name was finalized as it best defined the app idea.

**Vertourist**  
**Verto** *(Service) + Tourist* *(Target Audience)*
Logo Sketches

A speech blurb is the first graphic representation of communication. Thus, the core element of the following sketches is a speech blurb.

Figure 3: Logo Sketches
Another way to depict communication is showing silhouettes of people having a conversation. The following logos represent this idea.

Figure 4: Logo Sketches

Moving forward the idea of traveling was tried through a paper plane or two directions or just a street sign. However, these did not come out so well and were not selected.

Figure 5: Logo Sketches
Further, an attempt was made to create a globe by merging a speech blurb with it.

Figure 6: Logo Sketches
Some of the hand drawn sketches (Figure 3 and Figure 6) were then developed in Adobe Illustrator.

Figure 7: Logo Sketches
More sketches were made as none of the prior concepts were selected.

Figure 8: Logo Sketches

The concept below was the result of merging the three icon concepts, then further revised.

Figure 9: Logo Sketches
These latest iterations (Figure 9) were then merged with the name of the brand ‘Vertourist’.

Figure 10: Logo Sketches
Final Logo Design

The final incorporates elements of both speech and travel. Thus, referring to both groups of target audience in this project.

Figure 11: Logo Sketches
Potential Fonts

Sans serif fonts are good font choices for on-screen type and the most flexible fonts and are easy to read since the simplicity of the letter makes them more recognizable, even in the smaller sizes or resolution. The font survives reproduction and smearing because of its simple forms.

This font is typically used for emphasis and very functional for children learning to read as it is simple. This font allows the reader to notice the message clearly as they are more attention grabbing.

Univers LT Std Light

Univers LT Std Roman

Univers LT Std Bold

Helvetica LT Std Light

Helvetica LT Std Roman

Helvetica LT Std Bold

Avenir Light

Avenir Book

Avenir Roman

Avenir Medium
Roboto Thin

Roboto Light

Roboto Regular

Roboto Medium

Roboto Bold

Museo Slab 300

Museo Slab 700

Source Sans Pro Extra Light

Source Sans Pro Light

Source Sans Pro Regular

Source Sans Pro Semi Bold

Source Sans Pro Bold
Final Font Selection

Roboto typeface was selected for mobile application as it is easy on the eye. And Museo typeface is only used in combination with Roboto typeface for logo design.

Roboto Thin

Roboto Light

Roboto Regular

Roboto Medium

Roboto Bold

Museo Slab 300

Museo Slab 700
Potential Color Palettes

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- Hexadecimal: FFFFFFFF

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Color Palette Implementation
Final Color Palette

![Color Palette](image)

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HEX: 68AABC  HEX: 373D42  HEX: FFF9EF

Color Palette Implementation

![Logo](image)
Taglines

- Powering translations with a human touch
- **Translations with a human touch**
- Providing clear communication
- Connecting you with the world
- Communicating with the world
- Clear communications with a human touch
Final Identity Design
Mobile App User Flow

User flow was created for understanding the mobile app.

Figure 12: User Flow
Low Fidelity Wireframes

From the user flow one complete scenario was chosen to execute.

Figure 13: Wireframes
Once the flowchart and the low fidelity wireframes were completed, they were presented to Dr. Florian Jaegar at Human Language Processing Lab, University of Rochester. Just recently, the lab has submitted a research review on *Speech perception and generalization across talkers*. This topic is closely connected to my thesis.

With his expertise in this subject, it was easy to foresee possible challenges and with their effective solutions. Dr. Jaegar was very interested to know more about the mobile app service and was always willing to provide feedback. After detailed discussions, he pinpointed out a problem that could cause failure in future. He could easily foresee the problem in a human translating for another human: Accents. This could also cause delays and may make my users switch back to computer-generated translation apps.

After a long discussion with him, a two way solution was developed of segmenting the users and the taskers to overcome various accent based problems. Firstly, the taskers would fill in their accents that would be shown to the users while selecting from a translator pool.
Secondly, a quick game type feedback messaging that would allow us to understand the kind of accents that a certain segment of users find comfortable to understand. The following figure (Figure 14) shows the work flow of the game type messaging system.

![Diagram of Basic Game Type Feedback Messaging Workflow]

**Figure 14:** Basic Game Type Feedback Messaging Workflow
This feedback system becomes advanced over time, where a certain segment of accents would overlap with other segments.

Figure 15: Complex Overlapping Segments Workflow
Revised Low Fidelity Wireframes

Incorporated the first solution for accent based problem.

Figure 16: Revised Wireframes
High Fidelity Prototype/Visuals

An accordion design was created for easy navigation and quickly connecting the user 1 (traveler) with user 2 (translator).

Step 1: User’s known language is auto populated in the source language and the target language is auto populated as per the location of the user.

Step 2: Based on the strength of the Internet the user must select media type.

Step 3: The user then directed to a pool of available translators. Here the user can select a translator based on their availability, proficiency, accent, pricing and rating.

Figure 17: Visuals
From the user flow one complete scenario was chosen to execute.

Step 4: This step shows the whether or not the translator is available right away. If the translator is not available, the user can choose to request a call back or choose another translator.

Step 5: This is the screen while the phone call is occurring.

Step 6: At the end of each call a rating request is sent to the user along with the bill receipt.

Figure 18: Visuals
Interactive Prototyping

An interactive prototype was created in **invisionapp**.

Figure 19: Invision App
Wireframes

Figure 20: Landing Page

Figure 21: About Us
Figure 22: How it Works

Figure 23: Languages Available
Figure 24: Pricing

Figure 25: Contact Us
Website Design Implementation

A parallax website was created in Adobe Muse that also matches to the accordion layout of the mobile application.

![Website Visual](image)

Figure 26: Website Visual
Promotional Video

Figure 27: Storyboard
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screen</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 1</strong></td>
<td>Have you ever felt disconnected due to a language barrier?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 2</strong></td>
<td>So much that regular translation apps only confuse you more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 3</strong></td>
<td>Well there is a solution!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 4</strong></td>
<td>Presenting Vertourist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 5</strong></td>
<td>an app connecting you with human translators to help you have a great travelling experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 6</strong></td>
<td>Vertourist automatically picks your target translation language based on your location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 7</strong></td>
<td>Select your medium of translation depending on your network strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 8</strong></td>
<td>Then select from a pool of available translators depending on their proficiency, accent, rating and pricing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 9</strong></td>
<td>Quick simple taps and you are connected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen 10</strong></td>
<td>Safe travels with Vertourist!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Video Implementation

A demo reel was created in Adobe After Effects.

Figure 28: Mobile App Promotional Video in the making
User Feedback

User feedback was gathered from my peers and the visitors attending Imagine RIT 2015. Mostly everyone suggested to further develop the app and make it available in the market. A lot of users appreciated the clean user interface and ease to get language translation services. The main thing that impressed a lot of people was that not only spoken languages but also sign languages could be available on this mobile app. The overall feedback was positive.

Some suggestions to improve the app were also given. Firstly, making this app free for users was suggested. It is so because all computer generated translation apps are for free. This was a good suggestion which would be considered while developing the business model.

Secondly, a suggestion of having a pool professional translators was given. This is a big idea that will be implemented later, as this would require surveys with professional translators personally to gather more information and another round of user testings.

Lastly, a suggestion to have limited advertisements was provided. Current business model only supports removal of advertisements by charging the user with some amount. This again will be considered later when this mobile app is presented to the venture capitalists for business advise.
Dissemination

**On campus dissemination**
Imagine RIT - May 2015
Thesis Show - May 2015

**Off-campus dissemination**
Second International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality Management 2015 Manipal, Karnataka, India
D&AD Professional Awards 2015
Behance Student Show, Online
Kyoorious Design Awards 2015
New Challenges

Receipt of user feedback helped to identify areas of improvement for the mobile app. The biggest challenge is the Internet availability for tourists in different countries. More language translators must be in the database, especially sign language translators.
Permission

While designing a prototype for the website, professional imagery of tourists were purchased from Shutterstock.com (Figure 24) by sharing the account with a friend, Marina Minnikova.

Figure 29: Shutterstock Receipt
Conclusion

This thesis project provides a service that enhances the overall traveling experience and offers part-time/full-time employment opportunities. It has the potential of a unique business plan and a further becoming a well known traveling app in the world.

A thorough research was done on the problems of language barriers and the challenges of using computer generated language translations services. Further a mobile app and a website was conceptualized. The project was implemented in Adobe software (Adobe After Effects, Adobe Muse, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Audition, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator,) and Invision prototyping app.

Further, the plan is to develop this mobile app and launch it in the market. It was clear from the user feedback that this is was well appreciated. The users have shown interest in the app to a level they would love to use it as soon as it is launched. I learned that a complete research and a proper user need understanding can help build a pragmatic solution.

This research helped in learning the elaborate process of UX/UI design. It is phenomenal to realize how various disciplines come together to make design functional. Professors from various schools at RIT, Dr. Richard Martino and Dr. Deborah Colton were then approached to develop this as a business model. Their advice not only helped in improving the app. In conclusion, a practical approach will attract users more these days.
Appendices

User Survey Results

Vertourist Survey

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td></td>
<td>effective</td>
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</table>

What would you prefer in this app? Text, Call

Suggested Improvements:

- Very nice, very clean design.
- Going through all the menus might be confusing if not explained by a person.

Vertourist Survey

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>effective</td>
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</table>

What would you prefer in this app? Text, Call

Suggested Improvements:

Very unique, useful idea!
<table>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity of Information</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you prefer in this app?</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Suggested Improvements:**

Wonderful project! Take it to market!

**Comments:**

Good idea, can't wait for it to go live.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Style</td>
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<td>Usability</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you prefer in the app?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Text, Call, Both</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggested Improvements:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add more languages, including sign languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td>It's awesome</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### VERTOURIST Survey

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What would you prefer in this app?
- Text
- Call

Suggested Improvements:
- Clicking on image is kind of counterintuitive, I think a 'share' button will be more clear.

Comments:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>1</td>
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What would you prefer in this app?
- Text
- Call

Suggested Improvements:
- Have a tool tip or instructions for beginners

Comments:
- Good work!
Eliminating Linguistic Barriers
Using Social Media to Develop a Human Powered Translation App.

Shubhneek Dhillon
Thesis Proposal for the Masters of Fine Arts Degree

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts & Science
School of Design
Visual Communication Design
October 21, 2014
Thesis Approval Committee

Chief Advisor
Dan DeLuna
Associate Professor
School of Design

Associate Advisor
Chris Jackson
Professor, Graduate Director
School of Design

Associate Advisor
Nancy Ciolek
Program Chair
School of Design

Associate Advisor
Shaun Foster
Assistant Professor
School of Design

MFA Thesis Candidate
Shubhneek Dhillon
School of Design
Abstract

Language is our greatest mediator that allows us to relate to and understand each other. Linguistic boundaries cause a massive downside for travelers. They often find it difficult to communicate with locals in another country to learn more about the foreign culture, country, aesthetics and life. It is even more critical for the people who are deaf.

Human generated translation is much more accurate than computer generated translation. Travelers often rely on computer-generated translation that result in more confusion when the person is trying to communicate with in a foreign language. My thesis will address this issue using social media. A social network brings people together to help each other and exchange experiences. The ultimate goal is to eliminate language barriers for travelers by connecting them to interpreters through video chats.

The thesis project explores interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform for interpreters and travelers to use. In addition to digital design elements, an identity for this service will also be designed in order to support marketing and promotional strategies.

Keywords

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<td>Video Chat</td>
<td>Bridging Barriers</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
<td>Digital Media</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
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Situation Analysis

Language is our greatest mediator that allows us to relate to and understand each other. It can be defined as a system of conceptual symbols that allows us to communicate. It is the key to a person's identity that enables the person to express himself or herself. It can also be defined as a biologically innate, verbal, physical form of communication across the globe.

According to BBC - UK report\(^1\), around 75% of the world’s population do not speak in English. This generates a worldwide communication gap. This language barrier prevents a person from seeking necessary information, especially for travelers. Conversations with foreigners are limited to asking for directions to the nearest restaurant, transportation, and/or hotel. When traveling in non-English speaking countries, one can feel like her or she is inside a bizarre bubble, cut off from the rest of society, by this inability to communicate. Linguistic boundaries cause a massive downside for travelers. They often find it difficult to communicate with locals in another country to learn more about the foreign culture, country, aesthetics and life. It is even more critical for the people who are deaf.

An interpreter or translator addresses such issues of linguistic barriers very well by converting spoken or sign language statements from one language to another. Interpreting involves listening to, understanding and memorizing content in the original ‘source’ language, then reproducing statements, questions and speeches in a different ‘target’ language. The range of interpretation subjects is broad. They work in hospitals, conference centers, schools, embassies and business meetings.

The computer-generated translation age actually hindered the accuracy of translated information. This method often obstructed the communication resulting in uncanny conversations. However, technology today allows us to reach new levels of international communication. Using social network and video chat, this service bridges the international communication barrier by connecting travelers with translators directly.

My thesis goal addresses this issue in international communication using interaction and user experience design. The project will be a user-centered design that promotes a service strategy based on outsourcing the required translations using human powered interpretation. By providing a common platform where the interpreters help the international travelers leading to an efficient solution in this age of technology. This way the travelers will have a phenomenal experience during their travels abroad. The ultimate goal of this design thesis research is to eradicate language barriers for travelers.

\(^1\) http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml
Thesis Statement

The thesis research focuses on exploring interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform using social media to provide human powered language translations to international travelers.

Problem Statement

Human generated translation is much more accurate than computer-generated translation. Travelers often rely on computer-generated translation that result in more confusion when the person is trying to communicate with in a foreign language. Some seek help from their friends or relatives in these situations. I would like to address this issue using social media.

A social network brings people together to help each other and exchange experiences. The ultimate goal is to eliminate language barriers for travelers by connecting them to interpreters through video chats. This will help the user get the trusted translation from various grades of translators, basic to fluent, affecting the price rate of the translated information. Also providing a way for the interpreters to make some extra money.

The thesis project explores interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform for interpreters and travelers to use. In addition to digital design elements, an identity for this service will also be designed in order to support marketing and promotional strategies.
# Survey of Literature

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: Language ideologies and processes of exclusion.</td>
<td>Dorte Lønsmann</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is a research article on multilingualism in an work environment. It focuses on the linguistic and social challenges that are related to the diversity of language competences among employees.</td>
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<td><a href="http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=35ec-b7eb-524b-4b3d-900a-c26720e1308a%40sessionmgr113&amp;vid=6&amp;hid=105">http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=35ec-b7eb-524b-4b3d-900a-c26720e1308a%40sessionmgr113&amp;vid=6&amp;hid=105</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bridging language barriers in multilingual care encounters</td>
<td>Gunilla Jansson</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>This case study demonstrates how the multilingual practices of a linguistically diverse workforce contribute to the functioning of a modern work environment. The study highlights the complexity of providing adequate and well-functioning care in today’s diverse society, where linguistic and cultural matching of clients and caregivers cannot always be obtained.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Overcoming Language Barriers to International Trade: A Text-Based Study of the Language of Deals</td>
<td>Rolf D. Cremer &amp; Mary J. Willes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The study based on an examination of written English language documents exchanged between Asian textile manufacturers &amp; their overseas business partners for international trade. The study further demonstrates how various language backgrounds can cause confusion in understanding ideas.</td>
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Survey of Literature

4 Barriers in Verbal Communication
Andreea Dobra & Alexandra-Valeria Popescu

This document studies the main barriers in oral and verbal communication both in sending and receiving the messages, the role of the verbal component in communication and its strengths and weaknesses.

http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c-4604b7e-345b-4986-a7df-e4d884c4a012%40sessionmgr198&vid=1&hid=105

5 Through the language glass: why the world looks different in other languages
Dr. Guy Deutscher

This book is talks about the affects of culture on language and visa versa.


6 Foreign Language Learning with Digital Technology
Michael Evans
The article demonstrates how technology is endlessly innovating and improving itself as a tool to support language teaching and learning.


7 Cross-cultural Communication Challenges of International Tourism Business Environment
Eriks Lingeberzins

This paper is demonstrates the challenges of international tourism affected by multicultural and multilingual communication.

http://search.proquest.com/docview/900113772?pq-origsite=summon
Survey of Literature

8 Don't make me think!:
A common sense approach to web usability
Steve Krug
This book explains the design principles for websites.

Websites

9 http://www.hlprochester.edu/
Human Language Processing Lab focuses on language production and comprehension and the interaction between them.

10 http://vive.me/
A phone application that helps people across the globe communicate with each other via video chat to share common passions.

11 https://www.taskrabbit.com/
An online service that allows neighbors to connect with each other. This website outsources the tasks to the available neighbors to help the user in various ways like plumbing, gardening, etc.

12 http://www.verbalizeit.com/about-us/
An online service and app that provides human powered language translations and interpretation for businesses and various other conferences.

An online service and app for video calling.

An online article that explains the real life challenges faced by travelers abroad.
## Competitive Analysis

### Vive
- Video chat app bringing people together
- Strangers talk to each other using social media
- Creative way to share passions from all over the world
- Reviving emotional value virtually

### Skype
- An online calling service that also gives the user an option for video calling
- Services are similar to Yahoo Messenger, Hangouts, Viber, WhatsApp, FaceTime

### VerbalizeIt
- Human powered translation for businesses
- Company pays the interpreters
- Interpreters sign up online, test and train and give video interview
- Mode of interpretations: type, video, audio and call
- Interpreters make themselves available to pick up interpretation task

### Task Rabbit
- Work outsourcing website and app that allows neighbors helping each other
- No physical money/cash involved
- Transactions are handled securely online after the completion of work
- Some percentage of the payment goes to the website for providing the service
- Task performers go through identity check, criminal record check, in person interview and training session
- Push notifications are sent to task performers once they make themselves available
- Qualification of the task performer ranges basic to professional

### My Service
- Helping locals communicate with international travelers
- An online video calling service
- Translations will be more reliable as they are human generated
- Translations are provided anywhere anytime
- Communication barriers for the deaf are also addressed.
- Qualification of the interpretation will range from basic to fluent
- No physical payment methods involved
- All transactions will be handled securely online after the video call
- Payment will depend on the complete time of the video call
- Interpreters will make themselves available for receiving interpretation video calls through push notifications
Design Ideation

Website Pages

• Homepage (Login/Register)

- Logo
- About
- How it Works
- Languages
- Pricing
- Contact Us

Sign Up or Login

- I need help with translation

- I want to be a translator

Download our app

- Careers
- Press
- Blog
- Terms & Privacy
- Clients & Partners

Social Media Icon links

About Us

- Logo
- About
- How it Works
- Languages
- Pricing
- Contact Us

Mission
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Our Team
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo

Download our app

- Careers
- Press
- Blog
- Terms & Privacy
- Clients & Partners

Social Media Icon links
Design Ideation

- How it Works

- Languages

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<tr>
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<td>Number of Translators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Design Ideation

- Pricing

- Contact Us
### Methodological Design

The thesis project explores interaction, user interface and experience design to build a digital media platform for interpreters and travelers to use. In addition to digital design elements, an identity for this service will also be designed in order to support marketing and promotional strategies.

| Target Audience | • International travelers or anyone who needs help with translation while traveling. This includes young adults and adults.  
• People who know at least two international languages (basic – fluent). This group comprises of students, house wifes, retired professional and professional translators. |
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<td>Anticipated Project &amp; Components</td>
<td>I will create an exclusive brand identity for this service in order to support marketing and promotional strategies. This service requires to be designed on multiple digital media platforms for various users to connect with translators for help. This includes designing a website and a mobile application that will be prototyped to show the various features of the interactivity. The project’s brand identity and user interface will be designed using Adobe Illustrator. The functionality of features will then be prototyped using After Effects. Fairly detailed demo reels would be created to explain user navigation and orientation.</td>
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| Final Deliverables | • Branding & Identity: Logo  
Promotional Collaterals  
• UI & UX Design: Marketing Website Design (6 Screens)  
Mobile App Design (7 Screens)  
• Motion Graphics: Demo Reel explaining the interface design  
Duration: About a minute |
Implementation Strategy

With a technical foundation in visual communication design I will build my thesis project. I have a passion for 2D graphic design and visual communication design. With my experience in 2D graphic design I will execute a branding and identity design for this translation service. I learnt about various aspects and principles of interaction, user interface and user experience design in my first year of masters. I would like to take this knowledge to the next professional level. This project challenges my skills in Web & UI design that I will gradually help me polish them.

Dissemination

For future audience interaction the thesis will be showcased at:

- Thesis Show 2015
  Rochester Institute of Technology
- Second International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality Management 2015
  Manipal, Karnataka, India
- D&AD Professional Awards 2015
- Behance Student Show, Online
- Kyoorious Design Awards 2015

Evaluation Plan

The interactivity of website and mobile application will be tested on various people from different nationalities. Then the results will be implemented to revise the design and/or service accordingly.
### Timeline 2014 - 2015

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- **Thesis Documentation**
- **Thesis Planning - Written Proposal**
- **Proposal Defense**
- **Finalize Committee**
- **Thesis Development**
- **Design Ideation & Implementation**
- **Questionnaires/Surveys**
- **Data Analysis**
- **Design Revisions**
- **Publish Thesis**
- **Thesis Show**

- **Winter Break**
- **Committee Meeting**
Bibliography


Bibliography


