The Really Helpful Friendly
Guide to
Foreign Language
Telephony IVR prompts
from
Lifeline Language Services

*- where the accent is on **you**!*

Most language companies can translate your IVR script. But not many can help ensure this will actually work in your IVR model - and often, it won't.

This Guide aims to offer a few pointers on the pitfalls in foreign language IVR. We can support you with

- Qualified professional mother-tongue translators able to advise on what your IVR *really* needs

- Translation edited and written to work in IVR apps

- 100% reviewed and accurate translation

- Over 150 languages from our trusted and established translators

And when the script's good to go, we can *professionally record* the prompts for you. One stop, no hassle.

Call free on **0800 783 4678**

email: **voiceover@lifelinelanguageservices.co.uk**

We don't develop IVR apps, but work with developers needing to enable a foreign language IVR solution. If you've been tasked to develop a foreign language form of an English telephony IVR app, there's a lot to consider. The below should help you spot some key points to consider – but this is a complex area and we would recommend involving professional language consultancy as early as possible.

English is one of the most compact languages on the planet. It's also one of the laziest – things don't have to "agree" with each other, unlike French, and word order is uncomplicated. It's easy to assume other languages are the same – but this just isn't the case… So, your English IVR system's up and running, with a script and model that builds phrases correctly. Now you need it in a foreign language…

Yep – how hard can it be?

Well… depends on the language. Some work pretty much like English and you may just have to translate your script. Your model may work straight off.

Others add complexity – for example in French the noun, verb and adjective agree in gender and number (black bull, black cows… *le taureau noir, les vaches noires*)… So, it's not only additional word forms, but also which to use, and when.

Many foreign languages change the sentence structure fundamentally – in German the verb is often at the end of the sentence, while in Indian languages the subject is usually at the beginning. This means that as well as additional word forms and agreements you may need to re-write your system's entire grammar model. After this things get really complicated, such as Czech, Finnish, or worse …

There are other considerations too – how are times and dates said, for example? Numbering can also be very different to ours. And how many genders are there to agree? French has 2, but German 3…

I'm starting to see what you mean… any advice?

There are a few basics below to consider that may help. These are just a start however – we'd very strongly recommend involving a professional linguist on Day 1. When doing so make sure they understand what you're trying to achieve - few translators have experience of IVR models and even fewer have the systems knowledge to help. DON'T just ask a translator to translate your English IVR script – you'll almost certainly need far more, and you'll be faced with lots of costly re-work and delay!

We've recorded a wide range of IVR models and advised the designers on their construction in non-English languages including Hindi and Polish, and employ the talents of over 3,500 qualified professional mother-tongue linguists worldwide, in over 150 languages.

OK... you mentioned some basics?

Well, let's look at a few.

*1. Syntax. Is the language constructed like English? If you don't know, DO ask someone who does - and do so very early on in the project – you could save yourself a **lot** of pain…*

*2. Time and date. IVR uses times and dates a lot – like "e-mail received at…". How are times and dates used in the language? Does it even use the same **calendar**? Lots of countries don't… Even if the format is the same as English, numbers for example may take different agreements depending on the month.*

3. Singular and plural. He/she/it may all take different agreements, and so may "hes" and "shes". And in some languages 2 "hes" needs different agreement to 5 "hes", or to10 …

4. Prepositions. Things like "on", "to", "for" are easy in English where there's just one form, but in many languages two or more words exist and you'll need more than one (and the software logic to handle them)

*5. Agreements. Like the French "black bull, black cows" example above. Will you need extra prompts for this? (Did you know: In some languages verbs **don't agree** in the **present** tense, but **DO** in the **past tense**? Starting to see why you need a professional linguist...?)*

6. Numbers. You may need additional ones – as a simple example, French has male and female forms of "one" – for example "21" may need both "vingt-et-un" and "vingt-et-une". Greek gets complicated too...

They're the easy bits - after that, it gets harder… With many languages, things get much more complex. Here's one of our translators describing Czech syntax: *"Flexible word order, with endings, and intonation, determining relationships within the sentence".* There are no less than 7 cases in Polish and Czech, and word endings – including proper nouns - change depending on the noun case. Hence you'll see *Tony Blair* appear as *Tonyho Blaira, Tonymu Blairovi* and more – these aren't simple writer's preferences but basic – and essential - grammar, without which meaning changes completely!

The bottom line: in English you can easily build complex sentences from a few simple blocks. In many other languages it's much more complicated, and you really should involve a language professional at a very early stage. If you'd like that to be us, we'd be pleased to help.

*We really hope you've found this Guide helpful. If you'd like assistance with foreign language IVR projects, just give us a call on **0800 783 4678** or drop a line to* voiceover@lifelinelanguageservices.co.uk *- we'll be happy to help!*

Testimonials

*Here's just a few of the many kind words we've
had from some of our translation clients:*

"Lifeline has continually earned our trust and respect, and always demonstrated a remarkable work ethic... their attention to detail with our scripting in many different language translations has helped serve our customers well."

GM Voices

"We have found Lifeline Language Services to be friendly, fast and efficient. They stick to our tight deadlines, and deliver a quality result on time and to budget. The translations are accurate and the voiceover standard excellent!"

Hallmark Productions

"Resolution Television places great importance on the right voice-over... we have always been impressed with the prompt, professional and efficient translation and voice-over service we receive [...] and we can guarantee our clients are always pleased too!"

Resolution Television

"Lifeline Language Services not only delivered a completely first class service along with friendly customer service and support before and after the job ... but were a complete one-stop shop"

Phoenix File & Television

"The completed translations have been very well received by our clients and the technical accuracy has always been excellent. I would have absolutely no hesitation in recommending Lifeline Language Services."

RRC Training

User-friendly professional, qualified and quality-assured

language IVR consultancy

from

Lifeline Language Services

- where the accent is on you!

Lifeline provides a full range of complementary language services including TRANSLATION, INTERPRETING, TRANSCRIPTION, TYPESETTING, VOICEOVER & SUBTITLING.

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