Do we still need to learn languages in the age of machine translation and AI?

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What we do: https://presidencymt.eu/#/
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Language ... we use language to:

- to encode, store, transmit, share and manipulate information
- to express and to explain ourselves
- to convince, agree with, rebut others etc.
- to interact with others and our environment and as social glue
- our laws and constitutions are written in language

We use it

- in science, commerce, teaching and passing on knowledge to the next generations
- for pleasure, creativity and aesthetic enjoyment in puns, jokes and art
- we record history and culture and interpret and enjoy them through language
- our languages are a core part of our identities
Language

• Might even distinguish us from other species?
• Perhaps deep relationship between language and thought ...?

• We do pretty much everything in language
• We are embedded in a sea of language
Language(s)

Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/01/13/40-more-maps-that-explain-the-world/...
## Maschine Translation to the Rescue?

### English → German

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*WMT 2019, Florence, Italy*
Does MT make Human Translators Redundant?

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MT may Make Mistakes:

Je mange une avocat.

Ich esse einen Anwalt.
Do we still need human translators?

Yes! But their work will change:

• Often first raw translation by MT
• MT makes some mistakes
• Finding and correcting mistakes = post-editing
• Post-edited by human expert = translator
The New Human Translators

• Copy-editors > translation from scratch
• Supervisors
• Certify translations (MT + PE): guarantee correctness
Modern Human Translators:

• Computer and language technology savvy
• Need to be excellent translators: language professionals in source and native in target language
• Domain and cultural knowledge
Language Learning?

• Do we still need to learn languages in the age of machine translation/AI?
Language Learning?

- Do we still need to learn languages in the age of machine translation/AI?
- Let's look at engineer/scientists and computers for guidance
Language Learning?

• Engineer/scientists use computers/pocket-calculators for > 60 years
• They are very happy to have them! They made them!
• Do they stop learning maths? NO!
• Are they unemployed: No!

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Language Learning?

• MT is the pocket-calculator of human translators
• Like engineers and computers
• Does it mean we/engineers don’t need to learn maths? NO, on the contrary
• Same with languages!!!
• We need to learn languages, and not just to check up on the machines!