

Beyond Compliance: Why Language Access Makes Good Business Sense



LUNA | Language
Services

Today, over 65 million individuals—nearly 21 percent of the U.S. population over the age of five—speak a language other than English at home. While the majority of these individuals also speak English either fluently or very well, nearly 41 percent (26.7 million) are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP).

This demographic faces significant language barriers to accessing virtually every area of public life. To help bridge the language gap, state and federal laws and regulations require certain businesses—including hospitals, banks and financial institutions, and other entities—to accommodate LEP persons with interpreting and translation services. Compliance with these laws is part of the cost of doing business. But while this obligation may seem burdensome to some organizations, such outlook ignores the financial benefits of accommodation.

Simply put, investing in language access services makes good business sense. This short guide explains how.

LEP Consumer Buying Power

As the LEP population continues to expand, so does its purchasing power. By bridging the language gap with this segment of the U.S. population, businesses can tap into a major consumer base. Here are a few statistics:

Hispanics

- According to Nielsen, **Hispanics in 2015 controlled \$1.3 trillion in buying power** in the U.S., an amount larger than the GDP of Australia or Spain. This number is expected to reach **\$1.7 trillion by 2020**.
- Among this demographic, **55% are bilingual and 19% are Spanish-dominant** speakers, according to Nielsen.

Asian Americans

- In 2015, **Asian Americans** commanded \$825 billion in buying power, which is projected to **grow to \$1.1 trillion by 2020**, according to research from the University of Georgia.
- A **majority** of this demographic **speaks a language other than English** at home, according to the Pew Research Center. These languages include Vietnamese (86%), Pakistani (85%), Chinese (78%), Indian (78%), Korean (76%), and Filipino (65%).

The Language of Doing Business

Naturally, people prefer to do business in their native language. And bilingual persons often prefer brands and companies that appeal to them through their language and culture.

- According to a recent report from Common Sense Advisory, a leading global market research firm, **80% of LEP persons** surveyed prefer to buy from websites published in their native language.
- **Over 70% of Hispanic Millennials**, a majority of whom are bilingual, indicate a strong preference for multi-cultural influences in the products they consume or places they shop, according to Nielsen.

Cost Savings

Simply stated, language barriers waste time—for both the consumer and the provider. Poor communication means loss of productivity. Efficient and effective communication, on the other hand, means improved

productivity and increased quality of services, ultimately improving the bottom line. The healthcare industry provides a good example:

- The **length of stay** for LEP hospital patients with certain medical and surgical conditions is approximately **0.5 days longer** than English-proficient (EP) patients with similar conditions.
- The **length of stay** for LEP hospital patients **without access** to an interpreter on both admission and discharge days is about **1.5 days longer** than LEP patients with access to interpreters on both days.
- A 2017 study reported a **4.4% decrease in hospital readmission rates among LEP patients** with 24-hour access to remote (phone) interpreter services during an 8-month period, resulting in an estimated total savings of \$1.3 million *after* accounting for interpreter service costs.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, “Limited English proficiency is associated with several factors that contribute to avoidable readmissions, including lower rates of outpatient follow up and use of preventive services, medication adherence, and understanding discharge diagnosis and instructions.” Research has also shown that language barriers—reinforced by the absence of a qualified interpreter—often result in extended hospital stays.

How We Can Help

There are multiple benefits of partnering with a trusted language services provider like LUNA. Here are just a few of the ways we can help:

- **Assessing Your Language Needs.** Using local, state, and national data, LUNA can help its clients identify specific language groups within a client's targeted service areas.
- **Onsite and Remote Interpreting.** LUNA's interpreters are not only fluent in English and the target language, but often have experience in the industry in which they are interpreting. The majority of our interpreters are foreign-born, giving them a sensitive understanding of the cultural subtleties essential to effective communication.
- **Translation.** LUNA's international translation team represents over 90 languages, with training in medical, legal, pharmaceutical, and other industry-specific terminology. Our services include document, website, and app translation with a focus on localization to ensure a cultural connection with the target market.
- **Cultural Training.** LUNA offers training to its clients to facilitate cross-cultural communication and conducting international business.

The financial benefits of providing quality language services are immeasurable. By bridging the language gap, businesses can reduce the cost of inefficient communication while opening the door to a growing, diverse consumer base.

Sources

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