BoostCast #4 - Bill Rivers

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Russian translator, language advocacy, safe AI, language industry, advocacy support, immigration enforcement, language access, ACA regulations, machine translation, language policy, AI interpreting, language education, technology integration, ethical AI, language accessibility

SPEAKERS

Dieter Runge, Bill Rivers, Nate Klause

D **Dieter Runge** 00:00

Become a Russian English translator and interpreter, Russian teacher, academic, researcher, administrator and for profit and nonprofit organizations, with more than 30 years of experience in language advocacy and capacity at the national level, with significant experience in culture and language for economic development and national national security, excuse me, in the intelligence community, private and academic sectors, lots of publications under his belt in second and third language acquisition, research, proficiency assessment, program evaluation and language policy development and advocacy. His company WP rivers and Associates is contracted by the ALC for advocacy support. And most recently, Bill has taken additional role as the Chair for the safe AI Task Force, something we're going to talk about a little bit later today, but I like to refer to Bill just as our man on the hill. And Bill Happy New Year. And welcome to boost cast.

B **Bill Rivers** 00:58

Well, Happy New Year to you Jeter, and thanks for having me on. It's a very long biography, and it tells you two things about me. One, I'm old, and two, I've got, like the CEO ADHD, where something holds my interest for a couple of years, and then I move on to something else. Somehow I've made it work. Squirrel, don't recommend it for everybody, but, you know, and, and, yeah, so I do a lot of work with the ALC, consulting on advocacy and supporting the the language industry, lobbying on behalf of the language industry. But as Peter said, I've also spent the last two years as the chair of the safe AI Task Force, and we're going to talk about that later,

D **Dieter Runge** 01:42

yeah. Well, listen, I gotta say, I am eternally grateful to you for coordinating those Advocacy Days through the through ALC. I had no idea about what DC energy really meant until we did that, that day of advocacy, I think it was 2017 or 2018 remember now, but yeah, I didn't quite

get it until I was under, underneath, you know, in the cafeteria there, and just, you know, and then sitting in the offices of, you know, Kamala HARRIS and, and who else, who else are we

B **Bill Rivers** 02:23

trying to think

D **Dieter Runge** 02:26

of, that's right, Diane Feinstein, and also Nancy Pelosi. I was half attempted to, I was sitting there waiting, and I was half attempted to take a selfie of myself sitting in her chair. But I thought, Nate, I don't want to get tackled by. Yeah, the security guards and doing that, so I opted not to do that. But, yeah, you can't, you can't describe it. It's, you're there. You're like, oh, yeah, I get it. I get this is, you know, this is DC. So thank you. Thank you so much for recording those, those events.

B **Bill Rivers** 02:59

It's my pleasure, and it's so important that people in the industry make their voices heard. We have as Americans are an inalienable first amendment right to petition the government for redress of grievances, to ask our elected officials to act in our interests, to do their jobs, our elected officials and their employees, or appointed employee employees. And ALC will be doing it again March 20, a one day virtual event, ALC, us.org, and you can it's open to anybody. You don't have to be an ALC member to sign up and come on. Come on, because we get, you know we're we're going to make our voices heard in DC, making sure the Congress knows what matters to the language industry?

D **Dieter Runge** 03:43

Fantastic. Well, we'll make sure that we properly broadcast and let folks know about that, and we'll include the links to that in the boost cast as well. So I need to use a word that I recently inducted into my vocab bill, and that is recrudescence as we prepare for the incoming administer. Yeah, well, so it was the word of the day on one of my, one of my like feeds, and I'm like, Oh my gosh, it's the return of something terrible after a time of reprieve.

B **Bill Rivers** 04:22

So he has the root of credit, right? You know?

D **Dieter Runge** 04:27

Well, so this is the first question I want to pose to you just out of the gate. Here is, what can we anticipate you have an era very close to the ground in DC, and always our first line of defense and feedback. You know, new administration, new policies, possible, demand shifts. What you

know, how might this incoming Trump admin impact the demand for our language services in the short and long term? What? What? What um, you know, what are you? What are you feeling right now? What are you hearing? You know, where are we at this moment, magic eight ball,

B   Bill Rivers   05:10

right? You know, I don't have a volunteer. I don't have a, you know, the man I used to have magic eight ball. Because, God, I am so dating myself when I say that. Yeah, incoming administration has, you know, elections have consequences, and so the incoming administration has made clear that there's going to be some fairly significant um enforcement of immigration. To put it mild, you know, to what, what exact form that takes is is not immediately clear. So that has some specific potential consequences that we saw the last time around. Yeah, the first is there may be a chilling effect where undocumented immigrants, or immigrants who might be somehow concerned about their status. They're on some kind of protected status, like the the immigrants from certain Central American countries that have, you know, war torn or Haitian or Haitian immigrants or asylum might be less, less willing to go and seek medical care, or less willing to enroll their kids in school, and the knock on consequence of that would be that there might be a reduction, might be a reduction in demand for language access in some specific areas. Now, having said that, you can look at the industry trends from nimz or CSA or Slater during the previous Trump administration, we kept growing. You know, growing, and Donald Trump can take his chair down to the edge of the sea and say, ask the tide not to turn. But America will still be a destination for people seeking a better life, fleeing repression. It might be harder to get into, might be harder to stay. But, you know, we and we've seen a slowdown in immigration and migration, immigrate, legal immigration, and migrate other migration patterns. We've seen a slowdown during the Biden administration, which is actually, you know, we've had the Obama but Trump and Biden administration's all been pretty tough on immigration. We've seen a slowdown in the overall numbers and rates. I mean, it's gone up and down at times, but the overall language access issues have been pretty steady with respect to language access itself. You know that that the the which is an enormous driver, the legal basis for those who are not in the States. You know, we have title six, the Civil Rights Act, loud V Nichols, which interprets the national origin discrimination and title six as extending to language status. We have the 88 Americans with Disabilities Act. We have the PPACA, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. None of those bills are going away. The recent regulations, you know, they might change, but they're they were crafted in a way, at least in my opinion. I'm not a lawyer, I'm a linguist and a lobbyist. It's a lot of L words, but, you know, I don't, I don't see necessarily immediate changes to that. We may see a reduction. Yeah, so, yeah, go ahead. Go ahead. Dieter,

D   Dieter Runge   08:34

yeah. I was gonna say, you know, they like in the previous term, you know, Trump targeted section 1557, and, you know, there's a lot of chatter about rolling back language access notifications and other civil right protections, but so far, there hasn't been any in this, this chat that I've heard about repealing the ACA instead that they're talking about, you know, how we're going to Improve? You know, I still get to see they have ideas of a plan, apparently. Well, I mean, so how do you see the administration still addressing that specifically with

B Bill Rivers 09:10

So, so the ACA has got 70% approval among the public, so nobody's gonna touch it that. You know, that's political, politically ill advised the previous Trump administration. Took on the rules under Section 1557, which are the non discrimination provisions in the AC, the ACA, yeah, but they really were interested, you know, they said, Okay, we're going to revise this regulation earlier than would normally be done under something called the Administrative Procedures Act. Normally, it's five or 10 years, depending on how the law is written. And, you know, don't ask me for the exact citation, but they decided they were going to revive the 20, I think 2015 or 2016 rule. That was the, the first. Version of the rule on language access and other non discrimination provisions, revised it a little early, and what they said is the reason they were doing that they gave an economic reason, and the economic reason was that it costs $3 billion a year to provide notices of language assistance, and some of us react as like, Are you kidding? Like, hello, if, if there was $3 billion a year for that specific function, you know, of of including in your when you get from Kaiser or care first, or United Health, your explanation of benefit. And then there's that, you know, one or two pages of, you know, see it a kid, you know, interpret day, right? The, you know, the notices that you can get an interpreter or translator, whatever. If that was actually $3 billion of economic activity, we would have known about that. Hello, you know. But so it was essentially a spurious analysis. But the reason they did that is it allowed them to go in and revise all of the other non discrimination protections for LGBTQ plus LG you know, for pregnant women, etc, for religious minorities. And they hung that on the reason. They said, Okay, we can revise this whole section of non discrimination regulations. They hung it on this very spurious analysis, in my view, not just mine, but you know, other people who are far smarter than me of the actual cost of providing notices of the availability of language assistance. Now that revised rule was litigated immediately, and a federal judge in DC enjoined it and said, No, this is capricious and arbitrary, that the Trump administration had revised this in a way that was not legal under the Administrative Procedures Act, which is the law that governs the creation of regulations in the government. But that judge said, Okay, so all that stuff for all the other protected categories, we're going to enjoin, and it will revert back to the Obama era rule, but we're going to leave in place the changes for language access. And there were some notable changes that there was no longer a provision that notices of language assistance had to be posted. There was no longer a provision that you had to have a language access coordinator and some other things. Well, it took the Biden administration two years to then go back and revise that rule, which they did, and the draft rules published in August of 22 a coalition of organizations including ALC, but also the National Health Law Program, the National Immigration Law Center, justice and aging, the Asian American Pacific Health Forum. A whole bunch of organizations weighed in and provided extensive comments to say, Hey, this is a great rule, but here's how you can make it better. It was finally published in May of last year, and the last bits go into effect later this month, and it's a really good rule. And they did something really smart. They split it away from the LGBTQ plus and other kind of, more culture war issues, and said, Hey, here's the standalone rule, number one and number two, you know, you can go back. So that's, that's like the really detailed part. Now we're going to step back a bit. We'll say, okay, so they decoupled that from, from the from the, basically, from from the from the other protections, which kind of the federal judge had kind of already done, and that's fine, and and the new rule has lots of really, you really good stuff for our space in it, for for patient advocates, for immigrant communities, for the language industry, including a requirement that any use of machine translation for anything that is, you know, that affects health rights benefits or that is complex or nuanced, any use of machine translation must be reviewed by a qualified human translator. There's a better definition of qualified translators and interpreters. It's not exactly all that we wanted, but it's at least a more stringent definition. There's a requirement that you have 15, one, five FTEs at any particular site in a healthcare provider. Then you must have a non discrimination coordinator, that healthcare providers must

have language access, policies and plans. There's a lot of really good stuff in there that I think will help ensure the provision of language access. The one thing they didn't address is AI and interpreting, because the rule was published in August of 22 the comments were closed 60 days later in October, and chat GPT, yeah. Four launched in March of 23 so we're still waiting for the department to maybe address give some guidance, even though there's a reading that you can read the the rule, and it says it gives it well, it gives the definition of machine translation that includes audio output. And so if you were being strict, you'd say, well, okay, you know AI interpreting is automated speech recognition, or speech to text machine translation, natural language creation, or text to speech. At its core, it's machine translation. There may be aI interpreting solutions out there that would say, Oh no, we're not. That's not how we work, right? So we're waiting to see if that clarifies that. Maybe they'll clarify it. Maybe they won't. We've asked them to. We do so the broader language access community,

D Dieter Runge 15:56

right? Right, right? And without that definition, well, and this is, in part, sort of what role safe AI Task Force plays as well, right? So, yeah, we'll jump into that in a moment. So just going back to, I mean, you know, we've got a wait and see posture at the moment, right? And as you say, No, go ahead. Well,

B Bill Rivers 16:22

you have to remember, in the previous version of the Trump administration, we still had offices of civil rights enforcing language access, whether it was in the department of Office of Civil Rights, the Department of Education, Department of Justice, Health and Human Services, et cetera, et cetera. And the senior civil servants are all staying on, and the law is what it is, and and more importantly, so I don't want to necessarily say, Okay, it's just there's not just that. There's a quote, unquote deep state, because that's BS that there are bureaucrats who have sworn to uphold the law. You know the federal employees. I was a federal employee once, you know, you swear an oath to uphold, defend the Constitution, etc, etc. Okay, fine. We have bipartisan support for language access in the Congress, for education, for health care and for other things. Bipartisan support, right? And, and it's, it's easy to say, you know, it's kind of lazy. I don't see easy, but, oh, everybody in this space is on one side of the political spectrum or the other, or this is a particularly partisan issue. Actually, historically, it hasn't been, and recently, it hasn't been. And we may see, you know, in the next few weeks, we may see legislative action around language access and health care that is sponsored, you know, led by Republican offices to say, you know, because if you're looking at Orange County, California's number of Republican representatives, or Texas with Republican senators and a lot of Republican representatives, you know, a massively multicultural, multilingual spaces. And the, you know, a lot of folks in those states and locations might actually vote Republican. So it's, yeah, a lazy analysis that says this is a Democratic issue with actually, no, it's, it's pretty bipartisan,

D Dieter Runge 18:19

well, and I think state governments, and, you know, local governments can play a part in maintaining the level of accesses as well. Do you think that you'll see some of that shored up at this, you know, at the state regional levels,

Bill Rivers 18:41

yeah, yeah, Oregon's tried some things we don't do. The ALC doesn't necessarily agree with all of them, but it's, it's doing, yeah, at least the legislature is paying attention and has allocated funds to support language access, which is a positive state of Colorado, and there have been ALC members involved in that, have, you know, with a state level commission on language access. The state of Maryland, there are administrative offices of the courts that are improving language access across the US. So, you know, it's, I said earlier, I could take my chair down to the agency until it's tied not to turn and immigrants to take, you know, and that's you know, okay, immigrants, tides, whatever. But you have to remember that when you look at the census data, there are roughly the rough between 65 and 70 million Americans to speak language other than English at home. And that's right, about a third of them are LEP they don't speak English well enough to interact with the healthcare system, with the local government, what have you. 70 million people is an enormous amount. That's bigger than the population of, you know, the UK. It's bigger than the population of France. It's almost a population of Germany and and it's under count. Right? So, the the effective, efficient administration of public services, the profitable provision of health care, depends on language access in no small measure.

20:15

Yeah, you're as an educator.

Bill Rivers 20:18

Had that cup of coffee, you know? I as

Dieter Runge 20:23

it, you know, as an educator as well, looking at a pivot to this America first, away from multilingualism, more English centric policies in classrooms and language education programs. Do you see this having a, you know, an effect in this space, or is that also sort of a wait and see? I'm glad I, you know, had conversations. There's a couple. I mean, the good reason I asked because I've been at a few events conferences recently and talking to educators in this space. Number one, they're all a little bit freaked out because enrollment in language courses is down. Also, folks, are choosing to pivot to other programs. So there's a challenge there. And, you know, without interpreters, we are nothing really, you know, like there's such the most important ingredient in this business. So when I hear about, you know, pets to programs for multilingualism, I get, I get very concerned. Yeah,

Bill Rivers 21:48

there's a lot to unpack there. So the great thing about the American educational system is the great thing and the kind of crazy thing. It's maximally decentralized. We have 56 or 57 states and territories. I should know the actual number. Each of them has a State Educational Agency. We have something like 11,000 local school districts, you know, and each of them sets its own

policies within broad parameters, right? So the Congress, the Department of Education, the president, really doesn't have a huge amount of influence on that, on education. Education is very much a local prerogative, a local decision. It's funded locally. The school boards elected locally and so on. And outside of, you know, maybe one or two states, there's a lot of support at the state level for in K 12 education for things like dual language immersion, you know, recognizing that roughly 10% of our student population speak another language when they come to school, 80% of those kids are citizens or legal residents, and they speak 300 languages. So there's Dual Language immersions popping up all over the place all the time. In you know, there's Hmong and Karen and Somali in Minnesota and and Ojibwe and, you know, in Minnesota, black feet and Spanish, and bask in Montana, you know, and, and the real hope for the industry is actually those kids, especially immigrant kids, who Go through and become really functionally, functionally bilingual and biliterate. And there are and decide, maybe, maybe I'll try this translation or interpreting and localization, etc thing out and and, and there are programs in high schools around the country and in community colleges where they're using federal funding to support Translation and Interpreting training programs for that exact audience. There aren't enough of them, but they're growing. You know, there were three or four or 10 years ago, and now they're 30 or 40. So that's a pretty good growth curve. You know, it's for when you look at colleges, then it's a challenge, because you know perception that a degree in the humanities or degree in languages isn't going to do you much good. You should get a degree in comp sci or business and go make money. And okay, but there, there are lots of programs there, I would say the roughly, I'd say 20% of American colleges, community colleges and universities, have really strong language programs, and ALC is engaging with that group. It's engaging with the ALC bridge and reaching out to and providing guest lecturers adjunct faculty job. Postings for for for kids in the programs, and the ATA American Translators Association, education and pedagogy Committee, which is very closely, you know, working very closely with the LC bridge, is supporting and providing curriculum like, if you want to do a 12th grade, you know, Tni program that prepares kids to take the CCH I exam, or prepares kids to take when they turn 18, they can take the CCH I exam. Or the state consortial court interpreting exam, which is for 28 or however many states, they can go out make money, you know. And for first generation kids, that's a big deal, and suddenly they're not making a minimum wage. They're making, you know, professional hourly rates, and putting themselves through college, and going on to found businesses and all that. And this has been going on for about, I don't know, 1012, years, maybe a little longer, with you know, there's lots of grassroots energy around it. Is the Department of Education at the national level going to pay attention? Maybe, maybe not. That's hard. They got a lot of other issues to deal with. And at the state level, it's really a question of, Do you know, what are the how's that state organized, and what are the issues in their own state education system? But I will say there's a lot of grassroots energy, especially in K 12 education, around language learning, not just for immigrant kids, but for, you know, Anglos as well. And yeah, we're tapping we're tapping into that now. We're tapping into that and making progress. Yeah.

D Dieter Runge 26:49

Well, one of the, one of the things that I you know, this year, I purposed to try to advocate for getting more technology in the hands of these kids as well, arming them with the tools that they're going to need to succeed. You know, at this point in the language industry, you are an IT worker as well, right? And I think it's going to be really you

Bill Rivers 27:12

have been for a generation. We're one of the most technical, advanced industries out there. I mean, you think about right for translation and localization, you cannot be a professional translator. Now, if you are not really adept with technology in interpreting, that's right. Like we your, your company exists, boost lingo started as a platform, a technology platform. We are. We have been on the the bleeding edge technology for 30 years as a language industry. People don't realize that because they think of interpreters and translate to think, you know, thinking of the translator, you're thinking of Saint Jerome, yeah, torum with the candles, you know, writing with a quilt pen. And that hasn't been the case, you know, for a very long time. Well, very long time.

D **Dieter Runge** 28:03

Case of point. Case of point is, is, you know, generative AI. AI exploded in the language space first, right? Which is, which is why we were a little more in front of it than than of a lot of other industries, which are, which are playing catch up at this moment. But before I before I leave there, I move more into the safe AI stuff in terms of, you know what. And this goes back to my earlier point, like, what, what strategies could, should we in the language industry employ to, I guess, stay vigilant, engage and, most importantly, you know, resilient potential policy changes and you know, just keeping on top of it. What? What for our viewers and listeners, what? What advice, guidance would you give for folks in industry and adjacent industry, to ensure that, you know, language access stays front and center.

B **Bill Rivers** 29:05

So if you're if you're in the language industry, you've got to be part of ALC. And I think ALC and Gala. So ALC gets you the US, primarily, gala gets global, yeah, and ALC does. I am obviously biased, and I'm to full disclosure, I'm a consultant for ALC. I'm also a lifetime honorary member, winner of the bill Graber award. He's probably looking down at me and snickering. ALC, it has as part of its mission, representing the language industry to the powers that be at this role and state level. And it's so important to be part of that, and to, you know, support that with your membership, but also to come to the events, to participate, and then to to engage in you know, you know, the most important, the reason. To join an organization like ALC, or if you're an individual practitioner, to join the ATA is you, you, you're part of a community, and you have people to talk. You have a support network, a built in support network. And you might think, Oh, these are my competitors, yeah. Sometimes might be beating each other's brains out for one RFP and then partnering on another. That's okay. That's right, you know, it's totally that's that's okay. And but you have this, you know, you have this network of people you can talk to and learn from. And I have every ALC unconference from the very first one I'll be at the next one in St Pete Beach next month, February, night, 18th. Night, February 20, 24/20 and 21st I think good

D **Dieter Runge** 30:49

time to be in Florida, a good month to be in Florida.

Bill Rivers 30:53

And the learning there and the connections there are just so incredible, you know, they've affected my business built, you know, helped me build my business and my connections. And I'm sure it's the same for a lot of other folks.

Dieter Runge 31:08

Yeah, I want to chime in and agree. I and especially the unconference, I find that folks are a little less on guard, a little more disarmed and willing to engage in some real conversations about where we're taking this, I really, I agree on conferences provide a more unfiltered engagement with folks, and so I wholeheartedly co endorse attending those events. And you know, we've been ALC members since, since we started, and never look back. You know, we, I love going to the events because it, you know, we all get heads down in the stuff that we're doing, and it's an opportunity to just take a beat and reconnect with with folks that are just as equally as passionate about what this industry is, as as we all are.

Bill Rivers 32:02

This is speaking of Go ahead. No, go ahead.

Dieter Runge 32:08

As I say, so. I agree. And gala as well has a nice, you know, it's a nice way to reconnect with your compadres from Europe and other parts of the globe. And I guess, you know, I would endorse wherever you're located. There are other other groups, you know, if you're in central South America, you know, yeah, fantastic. Very excited about that event. Come Leah in Europe and in Europe, yeah. And, you know, and this is free plugs, because I really do agree that community happens in these events. You know, intrinsically motivated to go every year to as many as I can, just to learn, you know, poke my head on the gopher hole a little bit and see what else everybody's up to, and also understand, you know, some of the complex issues that that we're all you know, faced with each year. And speaking of which, I wanted to get into a little bit about the safe AI Task Force, because that's relatively new organization. And for our listeners who, who may not be familiar, can you maybe give us a sort of a high level of you know what and why and who? About

Bill Rivers 33:29

safe AI Task Force. Safe AI stands for stakeholders advocating for fair and ethical use of AI in interpreting and it's a task force. Call it a task force because it's a very informal organization. It was formed in 2023 after chat GPT three, chat GP chat GPT three and four came out. And, you know, there's this massive hype. And the folks who went to gala in Dublin that year and attended some other events, local world events. In the spring of 23 came back saying, Wow, they're all these technology vendors saying that, you know, AI is just going to replace interpreting, not so much translation, because, you know, we've had machine translation for a generation, and it's evolved from language Weaver through NMT and now llms, but at every step, it's been kind of digested into the translation and localization workflow and translators,

the work of the day, the day to day lives of translators, has certainly changed. And you know, the llms have actually depressed rates to some degree. But overall, when you take a step back and take this historical view of a generation, we've, we've absorbed the technology and then and digested it and incorporated it and it really, you know, it's. Accelerated demand for human translators and but it's also changed the work the translators do. It actually made it much more cognitively demanding. This is no longer the engine, right? The engine is in here, in the on the web or in the computer, and now the translator has to do higher order cognitive tasks, like, is this really congruent? Is does this, you know, fit for purpose, and so on. And I, I'm, I'm providing that preface, because it, it, it seems to many of us that AI and interpreting will have an analogous pathway, that there will be applications of AI interpreting that are entirely standalone, probably low risk, when we get to this, to a point where the technology is stable and mature, which is not yet. And there will be other applications where it's all humans, high risk, you know, high risk, high reward situations, where, whether it's, you know, a diplomatic conference or it's a surgery consult, where, you know, you need a human. Now, the safe AI came about. It was a call for volunteers. We had 600 volunteers engaged in safe, the safe AI Task Force. I was chosen as the chair for good, or, you know, good or bad, the task force. Safe, AI, tf.org, safe, AI, S, A, F, E, T, F, somebody essay, we'll put it in the you know, we'll run out across, yeah, this is why spelling I always lost its spelling bees, because they have to actually spell it out by hand. But safe AI Task Force has raised money to do a number of research studies. We did a perception survey in 23 on the implementation of AI and interpreting that had 2500 responses from interpreters, researchers, regulators, client side, you know, healthcare systems, judicial systems, language service companies, technology companies, etc, very broad base. And showed that, you know, we trust the computers for certain things and not for other things. And a very stepping again, way back, a very high level, you know, 80,000 foot view at the same time, a sort of grassroots, Deaf and Hard of Hearing group evolved and did their own research study, which involved 100 hours, roughly, of webinars and focus groups in conducted in ASL and produced similar results. Right then, there was guidance developed. We thought it would be guidelines. We very, you know, we created a Guidelines Committee, like, if we're going to draft some standards, but the Guidelines Committee said, No, we need actual we need to abstract it a level and say there are very important principles, and those they came up with four principles, and this is the more most important work that the safe AI Task Force has done. There are four important principles. The first is, there's end user autonomy. End user is not a great word for the people involved in a conversation, but that's what exists in the ISO and ASTM standards. So we're kind of stuck with it. But the people involved in an interpreted encounter have the right to auto they have the right to communicative autonomy. They have the right to the full ability to participate in that encounter. And that means that concept, you know, consequently, if they have the they need to know. Number two, the first principles autonomy, which is transparency, is this a human? Is this a human, assisted by AI? Is this AI? And then three, they have the ability to say, well, you know, we want, I don't want AI, or I'm fine with AI. You have to have the ability to opt in, out, choice. Yeah, choice. And then finally, it's accountability, accountability for harms and errors, transparency in the development of the process. So if something goes wrong, yeah, if operated on who, who's responsible for that, right? And those are pretty what, what

D   Dieter Runge 39:49

is the current thinking on that? Where are we at with that? The I think about this all the time, like you can't if the machine is. Doing it. Then, is it the the, you know, the LLM that was created by company XYZ, that's ultimately accountable, you know, it's right. Clearly, you can't hold the position, you know?

Bill Rivers 40:14

So the the Biden administration had an ambitious AI regulation agenda, yeah, which has been Obed right, overtaken by events, namely, the election, yeah. But, um, I think that's going to play out in the marketplace where, yeah, sooner, you know, at some point there will be some much as there was, you know, was that the case, I don't know, 30 years ago in taxicago, right? Which meant poison, right? But, but there will be, God help me for saying this. And, you know, may God forgive me for saying this, somebody's gonna get harmed, and then who's held accountable? Yeah, and a smart is going to be a spectacular failure, right? Yeah, smart lawyer will say, Well, I'm, I'm suing Microsoft because they, you know, they're, they develop the LLM, and I'm suing the doctor, and I'm suing the healthcare provider and I'm suing the app developer, right? Let's see what sticks, yeah, and see what six the the federal government has taken a position that that liability is shared for AI used in diagnostics, in what's called Patient Decision Making, that the liability is shared. Neither side can pawn it off on the other. Right, the the AI developer of whatever algorithm that's being used in patient decision making or healthcare, does not get to say, Well, you take the box on accepting the terms and conditions, so you're not we're not responsible. And the healthcare provider, oh, we just bought it, you know, and they told us it would work. They don't get to say that either. Like, both sides are responsible. We haven't seen that play out yet. And you know, it's gonna be interesting, like how the Joint Commission on healthcare accreditation deals with this, how, you know, the next administration is probably not going to take it on. They've signaled pretty strongly they're gonna, they're not interested in regulating AI very much. So we're gonna see it unfortunately play out in in real life. But the step back to safe. Ai, because that's that's not bill rivers speaking as a chair of safe. Ai, that's Bill rivers speaking, as you know, Bill rivers to step back to safe. Ai, we have this guidance in place. And you know, boost has developed a rubric, a guide to how to implement this the National Council on healthcare interpreting has developed their guide on how to implement AI in interpreting. And there are other organizations and other companies who are taking that guidance that we that I talked about, these very high level principles, saying, Okay, how does this apply to our use cases? And provide much more detailed guidance. And I think that's the power of this safe AI again, 600 volunteers, 2500 responses, two years of work, tremendous support from the language industry, from the professional associations, unprecedented collaboration with the deaf and hard of hearing community. But we came to this point where we have these, these guidance principles that should should form the basis of how we as a and as an industry, as a profession, as professions address AI and interpreting, because we're not going to stop it. Can't Stop it.

Dieter Runge 43:42

Yeah, and I should point out that all this stuff is is available for for folks to grab off the safe AI website. It's

Bill Rivers 43:51

a, it's a, it's all there. Yeah, we it's a, it's a very straightforward site. Everything is on flash page. You can get to everything and you know, it's, it's, again, it's, it's this, the I the the point being that, you know, we're facing this in a way that you know kind of didn't, nobody really took

on, um, when, when, when, remote, interpreting, hit, that's 20 years ago, right? Like OPI had been there since the late 80s, or when, you know, early 80s, with with language line. But when Video Remote Interpreting came along, you know, it happened very rapidly, and the nobody was organized to think about it and develop, you know, develop thoughtful ways to talk about it, to to regulate it, to standardize it, you know, sort of,

D Dieter Runge 44:49

and we, we, you know, when, when we started, we felt a lot of the pushback and concern. You know, that was back in 2015 and it was. Quite a resistance to the tech. And you know, it's gonna, it's gonna kill jobs, blah, blah, blah, it did the exact opposite, right? Yeah, actually expanded opportunities for interpreters. And, you know, like, like, with any technology, right? You know, some things, some tasks go away, some things change, ultimately, but at the end of the day, the technology typically takes us forward and creates new opportunities and new ways for us to connect. So I want to

B Bill Rivers 45:34

say the last thing you know, as as with, as in comparison to, to VRI, the idea behind safe AI is that at least we're collectively as a community, around the table, thinking about this and finding ways to make it useful. That and that should accelerate the development curve, compared to VRI, where now it's now VRI is absolutely essential. You cannot provide language access in remote areas or in languages of lesser diffusion, or at, you know, two in the morning on New Year's Eve without it, right? It's absolutely essential to the provision of language access in healthcare and and, and, and, you know, in the just judicial system and other public services, but there, but it, it took a while to evolve, and we're trying, you know, we're essentially trying to short circuit that and accelerate that process so that it's the evolution doesn't take as long, at least. That's my opinion. Not speaking on behalf of safe AI, but on behalf of Bill rivers,

D Dieter Runge 46:44

well, we're coming close to time here, but I wanted to maybe just ask one last question about safe AI Task Force. What in your estimation? What does the task force plan to how are you guys planning to measure the, ultimately, the success of its initiatives. And what are some of the the you know, the benchmarks and outcomes that would, in your estimation, would indicate a, you know, progress towards ethical AI and interpreting So,

B Bill Rivers 47:15

in no particular order. Yeah, the we are working with standards bodies, ISO, international Standardization Organization, technical committee 37 on language and terminology, subcommittee five on translation, interpreting and related technologies, as well as ASTM committee F 43 which is the main committee language services and products. And it not to get too wonky here, but there are actually very comprehensive and strict legal definitions of what constitutes an industrial standard and how they're developed. And we're working with both of those bodies to address AI in interpreting. You know, there are, there are already with

translation. There are requirements for labeling translation under F 25 ASTM, F 2575 the standard practice for language translation. So is a translation entirely human. Is it some blend? Is it entirely empty, right? And colleagues like Alan Melby and R lamel and other international colleagues have worked very hard and look so we're looking at similar types of labels for interpreting and so that'll be, you know, worked out in the next, probably the next year to 18 months. That's one piece. The second piece are these. Are these four ethical principles being adapted into more detailed guidelines. We've, as I said, we've already seen one company and one nonprofit or, you know, membership organization do it, and there are multiple other companies and membership organizations working on that, to address how the company might be implementing AI, or to address how the members of an organization, a professional organization, might think about using AI. That's the second piece. And the third metric is, you know, do we see regulation, which, you know, kind of hinted at. I don't expect any in the current, in the upcoming administration, but you know, again, to step way back, it's more important that we're at the table and engaging with the key stakeholders as this, you know, as this technology evolves,

D Dieter Runge 49:46

yeah, and to that point, you know, we still have a lot, a long way to go. And I. Guess my, you know, my, my question is, are there other key partnerships, other key organizations that need to be brought into the fold to get us there to where we need to be, like, what I Where? Where do we need to continue to advocate and educate.

B Bill Rivers 50:23

The biggest gap is. The most important gap is on the client side, right and, yeah, I'm less concerned about major healthcare providers, you know, the big time networks in the US or federal courts. I'm more concerned about, you know, state and local courts or mid sized regional health care organizations or local health care organizations who will experiment with AI, and might do so without fully understanding the consequence, potential consequences. And as I said, that's a I said earlier, that's kind of a near term worry, but not a long term worry, because we're already seeing, at least anecdotally, with with companies like boost and other companies. I'm not saying that boost has said this to me. I'm just saying, you know, companies like boost, that that client side, that have experimented with AI and interpreting, are coming back saying it's, it's not, it's not up to stuff, you know. And, yeah,

D Dieter Runge 51:37

the day went okay, but you know, we're, we're, coming back to the things that were tried, tested and true, and then it's like, with anything right, like we're already seeing some of the limitations, and we're seeing where the, you know, where it is effective, and where it's applicable. And, you know, you got to just keep testing and, you know, trying. But I think that it all begins with a dialog, you know, between the tech providers, the language service providers and advocacy groups and safe, the IT Task Force. You know that's we have to keep all those channels open, right?

Bill Rivers 52:23

Yeah, and I don't want to come across as anti technology, there are applications of large language models of AI that are being developed and and actually deployed that really enhance the ability of the interpreter. For example, when I first started as an interpreter in the fall of 1988 which is a long time ago, I'm not going to do the math. Y'all can do it yourselves. My first assignment was at a scientific conference to develop a an x ray spectroscopy satellite between NASA and the Soviet Space Institute. And I had about a month before this assignment, I took that most of that month, developing my terminology database going around to, you know, sitting in the Library of Congress with rare dictionaries like the the Soviet the the Russian English Dictionary of of astrodynamic terminology or whatever, and literally writing out by hand a terminology list and compiling, compiling that into a loose leaf binder, right? I mean, you think about that, but that's what we did way back when, way back when, right? I probably ask that there are apps that could do that for me now, in, you know, a very short period of time while I'm making a cup of tea, and there's things like that. And Catherine Allen at boost has been really good about compiling the list and and explaining those technologies where where AI can really enhance the work of the interpreters in the in ways that are similar to how computational technologies have enhanced the productivity of translators and localizers. And I think that's everybody's benefit. That's going to be great, you know,

Dieter Runge 54:30

yeah. And, you know, we're, increasingly, we see the term the augmented interpreter, right? And I really, really, well and truly, firmly believe in that, you know, it's, it's part of the toolkit. There are some amazing tools already available, you know, for folks and the the importance of the language professional in you know, business and in the public sector is just going to increase with you. Competency and capabilities using these, these tools. So, yeah, well, listen, we've come up to the end of the end of the hour. I really want to thank you for jumping on I look forward to future chats, you know, and reconnecting at future events as well is going to be 2025, any predictions? Man, any, anything that you want to, I am not want to throw out there for,

Bill Rivers 55:30

no, no, all predictions are wrong. Not even going to go there. So we're going to see continued enforcement, language access. We're going to see, we're going to see the increased use of AI to augment interpreters. And I think we'll we'll see an increased demand for humans in the not just in loop, but in control, in interpreting the very much analogous to how technology has affected translation over the last generation. And all predictions wrong, guaranteed or your money back. 100% right, but 100% I'm not I've been bullish on this industry for 30 years, it's, it's a fantastic industry. But the what, what yose said in night in 2002 what Bill Woods said in 2010 you know, interpreters or translators who will not be replaced by technology. They'll be replaced by translators or interpreters who learn how to use technology. And I think that's absolutely true.

Dieter Runge 56:44

Yeah, well, I would agree. You know, every year we seem to do something new and cool in this

industry. It's, you know, every January, I get re, you know, reignited and excited about new developed developments in this space. And you know, if there's one industry that is pushing technology and and pushing technology forward and doing new and interesting things, it's the language industry. So I'm always very excited and reinvigorated, as they say, every year, with all the new, new developments and and it's, it's happening at a fast pace, but you know it, there's just so much cool tech that's coming coming out. And you know, I agree with your sentiment that you know it is designed by people who care about other human beings. And you know, we we truly believe in language access as as a right and as a important. I don't know what the best word for is, but it's important component to, you know, the human experience. And you know, it lifts. Lifts everybody up when they have, you know, access, communicative autonomy, as you said earlier today, it's so important

B Bill Rivers 58:11

we work for the greater good, whether we're in translation, interpreting globalization, you know, we make, we open markets up. We make public services healthcare to just, you know, the justice system accessible it is. It has been an honor and a pleasure for the last 15 years to advocate for this industry, because I can walk into any office in DC and say, This is how we make people's lives better. This is how we make, we make people's lives better. We make companies more money. You know, we, we provide, yeah, meaningful, middle class, professional living for more than 200,000 people in the US, it's, it's just a fantastic industry to be part of, and it has been, in, you know, the honor of my career to be part of

D Dieter Runge 59:11

it. Well, Bill, we thank you for all the good work that you do, and thank you so much for joining us here today to share a little bit of insight and into where things may be headed, and we'll look forward to reconnecting at some point later in 2025 All right.

B Bill Rivers 59:31

Thanks, Bill, thank you.

N Nate Klause 59:36

All right, can you guys hold on for a couple of minutes while the year your file uploads

D Dieter Runge 59:42

it, I'm seeing it upload. I don't know why, but I said everything to do not disturb.