



BUSINESS OF LANGUAGE  
Case Study

Tur

Photos: Courtesy Logos

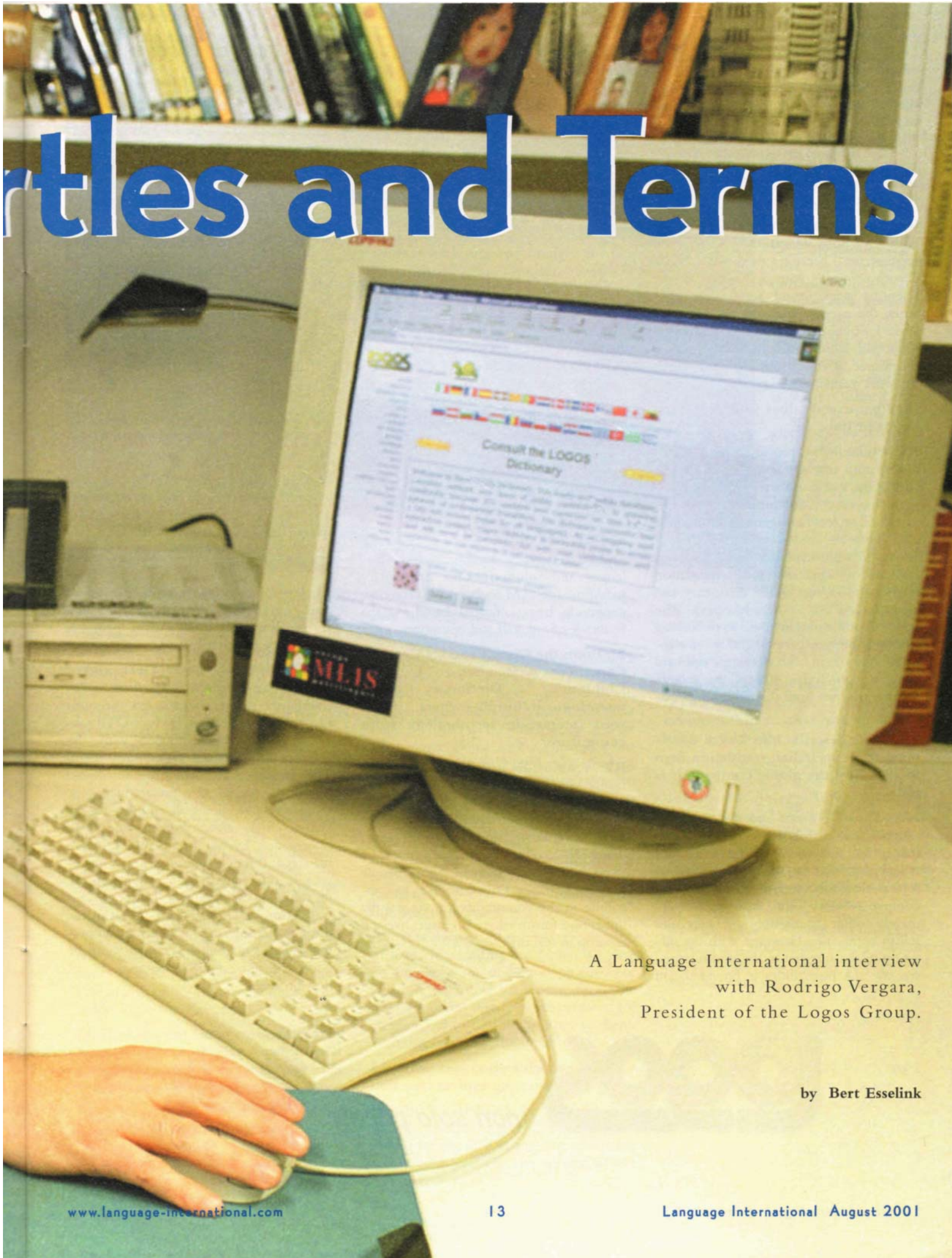
Language International August 2001

12

[www.language-international.com](http://www.language-international.com)



# Articles and Terms



A Language International interview  
with Rodrigo Vergara,  
President of the Logos Group.

by Bert Esselink



Logos is a global translation services provider headquartered in Modena, Italy. Since 1979, Rodrigo Vergara has transformed Logos from a traditional translation firm to a Web-based multilingual information management company.

**Language International: Please describe the contents of your CV in four sentences.**

**Rodrigo Vergara:** I am a political refugee with a scientific education in agricultural engineering. I became a translator quite by chance some 20 years ago, although my scientific background served me well when the need to organize the company arose. I would define myself as a scientific mind with a humanistic heart. The latter is the source of my passion without which my work would not be possible.

**LI: What exactly does your company, Logos in Italy, do?**

**RV:** Primarily, we provide a multilingual information management service, that is: translation, localization, terminology management, creation and maintenance of TM databases, project management of multilingual projects and everything that is associated with these activities, like development of workflow tools, translation memory tools, the online dictionary and electronic library (Wordtheque). The Logos Group is also involved in publishing (Italian fashion magazines) and the distribution of books in both electronic and hard copy formats. Today, 40% of the group's turnover derives from the publishing business.

**LI: Please describe how Logos developed from an Italian translation firm in 1979 into the global company it is today.**

**RV:** Until 1994 our strategy could be summarized as follows: translating into Italian for the whole world and from Italian into other languages for Italian customers, always focusing on quality and cost competitiveness. Our customers were mainly other translation agencies and Italian companies. However, with the diffusion of the Internet in the mid nineties, we saw the possibilities it provided and

seized the opportunity to translate for the whole world from and into practically all languages, collaborating with customers and translators worldwide, regardless of geographical location, but without compromising quality and cost competitiveness. Today, only about 40% of our annual translation turnover derives from Italian customers as we continue to expand and consolidate our position throughout Europe and the US.

**LI: In what way do you feel that Logos is different from other translation and localization firms?**

**RV:** The main difference is our vocation to serve the community by making our Web-based resources available to everyone. We have always used technology to facilitate the work of our collaborators not to replace them. Over 200 professionals are based at our Modena headquarters where they interact with each other and our clients, solving problems and learning something new everyday. The level of interaction between our project managers, translators, DTP personnel and software engineers gives us a flexibility that is hard to find elsewhere. Nothing is taken for granted and every day brings new challenges and solutions. Our proprietary workflow tool, TM tool and Web tools are constantly being updated based on the feedback of our staff and customers.

**LI: From the Cisco Glossary Connection ([www.cisco.com](http://www.cisco.com)) to the Children's Dictionary at [www.logos.it/bimbi](http://www.logos.it/bimbi)—where does your interest in terminology work come from?**

**RV:** Words are the atoms that make up our reality. We vision the future, describe the past and present by using words. Translation is a continuous reflection of meaning and the tools we use to make sense are words. We collect them, keep track of them, and play with them. Show people how they change. Our mission is to contribute to the community in our way by donating a forum where languages live and develop in real time.

**LI: How does the LOGOS Dictionary differ from other public dictionaries such as Eurodicautom?**

**RV:** The Logos dictionary is part of our contribution to society and is not publicly funded. It is interactive, open to everybody with a love for languages and words. Ours is a living dictionary, constantly growing and changing. The Logos Dictionary is the result of the work of thousands of people. Other than translators collaborating with us, over 2000 persons have contributed with more than 230,000 words. The dictionary comprises more than 160 different languages and dialects and the number is constantly growing. It is a dictionary of the people, not the work of scholars. Besides, it also contains pronunciation and context search features as well as links to figures or Web pages containing images.

**LI: What was the result of the LOGOSeDMN joint venture with DNM that was announced last year?**

**RV:** We collaborate with DNM. They develop Web sites, which they do very well, and we localize these sites. Besides, we have a mutual agreement of passing on customers and prospects whenever possible.

**LI: How has Logos adapted Internet and translation technology to make translation and localization projects run more efficiently?**

**RV:** Logos is a network of independent professionals, all experts in their fields: translators, project managers, account managers, sales persons, lawyers, DTP specialists and software engineers, while the Internet is the systems that connects them. The Internet has become an integrated part of our workflow as project managers, translators and clients all connect to exchange files, view projects and seek information. Even our translation tools are managed through the Internet. Our e-term is an interactive online client-specific terminology management platform. Our translation memory tool is available through the Internet for filtering and pre-translation. Our online dictionary can be consulted and reference material can be downloaded.



*non solo parole*







**LI:** Logos must have spent an enormous amount of money developing the Web-based resources that you have made publicly available over the years. Have you realized any return on investment?

**RV:** Yes, other than the satisfaction of seeing them used by hundreds of thousands of translators and languages specialists, thanks to our Web-based resources we have become known to translators all over the world, who seek to collaborate with us, thus expanding our pool of resources. Our Web-based resources have also contributed to diffusing brand awareness and giving us more visibility than we could have hoped for. Moreover, our e-term terminology platform is the product of 15 years of experience in electronic dictionary research and development. The e-term is a cost effective, multilingual relational database designed to manage company and industry-specific glossaries.

**LI:** How do you value companies that have more recently developed hosted translation workflow solutions, such as Uniscape and eTranslate?

**RV:** We never comment on other companies' way of doing business.

**LI:** What has been the most important development in the translation industry in the past decade?

**RV:** In our industry, Translation Memory is probably the most important development but developments in telecommunications have also had a great impact. Thanks to the Internet, the market has become global with companies transcending geographical borders in search of quality, timely and cost effective services. Thanks to the Internet, file transfer is fast and simple, making it easier to work with translators all over the globe.

**LI:** What will be the most important change for translators and the way translation projects are managed in the next few years?

**RV:** It is always hard to make predictions, particularly regarding the future. We have no influence on the developments, but whatever the future has in store for us the most important thing is to be prepared for changes and to be able to adapt to them, both mentally and structurally.

**LI:** How can companies achieve the best cost savings on translation work?

**RV:** By standardizing the source text as well as the translations. The source text should be regarded as the first translation and treated as such. The quality of the

source text is crucial to the quality of all subsequent translations. A combination of database and terminology management, style guides and a streamlined process of "recycling" both source text and translated text, is the best way of achieving cost savings.

**LI:** How should translators use the Web to enhance both the quality and speed in their work?

**RV:** Quality depends on being able to find the right words so the WEB is a great contribution. Translators can access glossaries and translation memories online. This increases productivity and enhances quality. However, I don't like to use the word "speed". It sounds like poor planning, as people should understand that speed and quality are usually

incompatible. That is why our logo is a turtle. Even though the turtle is running he is not going so fast as to compromise the quality of the job.

**LI:** In all the years that Logos has existed, what has been the accomplishment that you have been most proud of?

**RV:** I am not proud but humbled by what we have created. Every time you do a job well the reward is simply the opportunity to work more. Having done something well only means that the next time you have to do it even better. You can never say you have accomplished something because for every milestone reached there is always another waiting in the distance.

We wish to thank Rodrigo for his cooperation. For more information on the activities of the Logos Group, visit [www.logos.it](http://www.logos.it).