Voice Recognition in Windows 11

Operating systems have become increasingly less important now that so much has moved to the cloud and so many browser-based applications don't care whether you run them on Windows, macOS/iOS, Linux, or Android.

On the other hand, there are still plenty of applications that depend either completely or mostly on the operating system, including many of the translation environment tools we use. I say this, of course, because Windows 11, a major new operating system version, has officially been released, and you likely have already been prodded to upgrade or at least check whether your computer's hardware is compatible. (Assuming, of course, that you use Windows in the first place.)

I'm always excited to look at each new version of Windows. Not so much because of the new and widely touted features (most of which are really lame in this version, if you ask me), but to find out what new multilingual features are available—such as newly translated versions, new kinds of keyboards, or new voice recognition languages. I was disappointed to discover that this version of Windows is localized into exactly the same number of languages as version 10, and I was unable to find anything relating to additional keyboard layouts.

But the "voice typing" options have gone from seven languages to...a LOT. Specifically, the following languages are now supported: Bulgarian, Chinese (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch (Netherlands), English (Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, U.K., U.S.), Estonian, Finnish, French (Canada and France), German, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Marathi, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil and Portugal), Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish (Mexico and Spain), Swedish, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

To me, this is really great news. While it was possible to dictate in most of these languages on a Mac or with a rather convoluted system via a cell phone and an automatic transferal to a PC, things will become much easier for translators into the newly supported languages. To be clear, this refers to the Windows internal "voice typing" (which, by the way, you install alongside the keyboard of the language in question), so it's not as advanced as Dragon voice recognition. This means that there are no customized commands and no training or incremental improvement, *but* it's still really quite good. I can personally speak only for English and German, but my sense is that most of these languages will be more or less supported with the same level of accuracy. My assumption is reinforced because punctuation is also now available in each of the respective languages rather than only in English. (See the list of dictation-language-specific voice commands at the link at the end of this article.[1])

So, congrats to all you Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Irish, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Marathi, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Swedish, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, and Vietnamese speakers!

My tips to those who have never tried voice recognition: Don't translate in single words but in longer fragments or even sentences. Use your regular voice rather than a special dictation voice. And be aware that there is a little learning curve. ⒶⓉⒶ

NOTE

[1]   "Use Voice Typing to Talk Instead of Type on Your PC" (Microsoft Support Page), *https://bit.ly/voice-Windows11*.

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This column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals.