



## Research Article

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# Professional Translators and Translation Technology

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### Abstract

Nowadays we are all aware of the role that technology plays in our private and professional lives, as this has been and continues to be the purpose for which it was created and continues to develop. This article begins with a short analysis of the importance of the use of translation technology in various areas of modern life, focusing on the causes that led to its birth and development. It then describes in general terms the tools offered by this technology, from the translation machine to the computer-assisted translation, explaining what is considered to be the core of CAT known as MT – memory translation. In the last part, the article discusses the pros and cons of professional translators regarding the tools offered by this technology, concluding that on the one hand translators should increasingly insist on using these tools, to be competitive in translation's process, but on the other hand also the companies that produce these technologies should work more towards the quality of translation as well as the involvement of professional translators in the development projects of these tools. Communication between the two parties should be the next challenge for these companies.

**Keywords:** technology, translation, professional translator, machine translation, computer assisted translation, translation memory

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays we are all aware of the role that technology plays in our private and professional lives, as this has been and continues to be the purpose for which it was created and continues to develop. Translation, as one of the oldest industries has undergone radical transformations in a short period of time. These transformations have not only changed the means by which translators secure their living, but have brought about a whole new way of thinking in terms of the role they play in society, communication and language itself. Through technology, real-time analysis of significant amounts of information has become possible without the need for manual sheet-by-sheet search; automatic finding and access of existing translations previously performed by the translator and consultation of previously unknown and unavailable resources. Technology has enabled translators to transfer their

"memory" to hard drives. Now their knowledge and all their background can be stored in the "cloud" from where they can be consulted at that very moment, re-corrected and shared between different sources of information. But translation, like most linguistic issues, is very compound. Machines still are not able to use language in the same way as humans. Translation is at least twice as complex as simply writing in a certain language. The impression is created that every professional translator in the world will have to be eager and inclined to use technology in order to improve his work, speed up the translation process. But this is not always the case. Given this fact, the purpose of this study is not only to briefly explain the tools offered by translation technology, but also to argue the impact and role that this technology is playing in the life and work of professional translators whom we see divided into two groups: pro and against of using translation technology.

### 1.1 *The need for the creation and development of translation Technology*

Developments in information technology have united the demands to promote translation automation with modern communication. The beginning of machine translation dates back to 1954, when the first tests were made of a prototype that translated a few sentences between Russian and English. The success of the experiment raised many hopes and in the following years numerous research projects were developed to achieve the desired high-quality machine translation. Throughout this period, from 1954 to the present, research in machine translation and linguistic tools has generated different types of systems and methodologies. Today the great development of information technology has brought about the birth of a new culture that aims to replace the culture of typing. This is the culture of the screen which carries with it the distribution of printed documents, the immediate access to information and its transmission directly through computers (e-mail, databases, etc.). These computerized documents are immediately available and can be opened and processed with much greater flexibility than printed ones, due to the fact that the status of the information itself has changed, becoming temporary or permanent, as needed. Over the last two decades we have witnessed the fact that the development of information technology has been accompanied by advantages in speed, ease of use, convenience and cost-effectiveness. At the same time, with the development of the global market, the industry and commerce operate more than ever on an international scale within the preservation of freedom and flexibility in terms of the exchange of products and services. (Craciunescu, et al., 2004) Such changes have affected the function of translation and have led to the need for more well-structured translation methods as nowadays we have a growing demand of translation service. The demand for translations is not fulfilled not only because there are not enough translators, but also because different individuals or institutions are not aware of the responsibility, difficulty, and seriousness that the translator's work requires. The daily capacity of a translator and its productivity is something very personal. According to statistics a translator can translate 5-6 pages or approximately 2000-2500 words per day. The ideal working hours is 6-7 hours a day. This allows to be achieved a good work without affecting its quality. Sometimes it is necessary to spend 8 to 10 hours a day or even more on especially important projects. But we know that it is not possible to maintain this rate for more than 2-3 days without decreasing the quality. That is why translation tools are designed to help translators translating so many translations work in effective way and time.

### 1.2 *A quick look at translation technology tools*

#### 1.2.1 *From MT to CAT*

MT, short for Machine Translation, also referred to as automated Translation, is "a sub-field of computer linguistics that studies the use of software to translate texts or lectures from one natural language to another." (Alcina,2008) " Researches for the development of MT dates back to 1933 when scientist P.P. Telojamsky proposed the use of the computer in translation. But the real birth of the

MT system marks the creation in 1954 of the first MT system designed by Georgetown University and IBM which managed to successfully translate a 250-word material from Russian into English. Then, in 1976, the Canadian Bureau of Translation developed a system called TAUM-METEO which was designed to translate weather forecast reports. This system marks an important moment in the history of the MT market and the application of MT technology in translation. However, it should be noted that, since the birth of MT technology, the accuracy and precision of these systems have been and continue to be at the center of discussions by various researchers. The readability of translated texts and the coverage that these systems make of the linguistic phenomenon were far from being satisfactory or acceptable. Therefore, researchers started to turn their attention to the development of CAT technology.

CAT, short for Computer-Aided Translation, is "the process by which human translators use computer instruments to assist with translation-related tasks." (Bowker, 2002); "Is a translation strategy through which translators use software as support during the translation process." (Sager, 1995) The difference between MT and CAT lies in the fact that in the latter human translators play a key role during the translation process. A CAT tool unlike a MT designed to work and stay separate, is intended to support the translator in his work in order to speed up the translation process as well as provide a more consistent terminology. While in the CAT the computer program is the tool to help the translator who translates the text himself, in the MT the computer program translates the texts without the intervention of the translator. "The best thing would be the combination of the best of both models: CAT, through which the translator achieves high quality results and MT, where through the use of the machine a very high degree of productivity is achieved. (Barrachina, 2009)

### 1.2.2 *TM – the main part of CAT*

TM, short for Translation Memory, is a mechanism by which translated texts can be stored and reused repeatedly. The TM concept originated in the 1970s, but only in the late 1990s did this tool manage to develop as a commercial entity. For the first time the scheme of the TM mechanism was proposed by Peter Arthen, who noted that the translator would have many benefits if he managed to search and reuse similar texts previously stored and translated. A CAT program divides a source text into manageable units known as "segments" and creates databases of equivalent segments in different languages. A segment is the basic semantic unit of a text. When a translator needs to translate a segment, the TM system consults the database to see if the new segment corresponds to an existing translation in that database and, if so, provides it to the translator who in turn reviews the previous translation and decide whether or not to incorporate it into the new translation. TM is considered to be the core, the heart of CAT technology. While the translator performs a translation with the help of a program, in the background the computer searches and uses the database. In this way, the translator can benefit from finding translated and saved items instead of translating the same content several times. He can also automatically edit the translated text in the object language, which significantly improves the effectiveness and guarantees the consistency of the translation terminology.

### 1.2.3 *MT vs TM*

It seems like it is not very clear what really distinguishes an MT from a TM. This may be due to the similarity of their English acronyms MT and TM respectively or due to the fact that they represent both ways of using technology in the translation process. But really MT (Machine Translation) and TM (Translation Memory) are two completely different things. We emphasize that TM content is created by a human translator, as opposed to machine translation which is generated by a computer. MT is the process of changing text from one language to another using the computer, without human presence. The quality of translations varies considerably and often the results achieved by an MT are ridiculous. Of course, not all machine translation solutions are the same and range from MT based on

sophistication between the linguistic rules applied in bilingual dictionaries to MT based on statistics where the calculation to ensure translation is done on a syntax basis. Translations made with the latter are generally considered more accurate and sophisticated. They can also be classified differently as untrained or trained MT. Trained MT solutions (such as SDL, BeGlobal Enterprise) are used by corporations to suit specific business needs. While untrained MT solutions provide a generic translation, and are generally used by individuals. In summary, we can say that both TM and MT help in the content of translations. A TM grows steadily as the translator supplies it with translated parts, and the more he translates the more productive it becomes. While MT generates content instantly and needs revisions to improve over time. So, the essential difference lies in the fact where the translation content comes from and how it is generated.

#### 1.2.4 Some CAT tools

Onwards with the development of TM, a number of CAT tools have been developed such as TRADOS, SDLX, Déjà Vu, MemoQ, OmegaT, Star Transit and IBM Translation Manager characterized by customized interpages, support for various file formats, management Powerful terminology and simple automated search function. These tools on the one hand prove the popularity that the use of CAT technology has gained in the translation process and on the other hand present a new standard for the preparation of professional translators. In other words, nowadays it is necessary that professional translators use such CAT tools during their translation work.

### 1.3 For and against the use of translation technology

#### 1.3.1 Why some translators are against

Google has changed the meaning society has for translator and interpreter. Google translate has been at the same time the best and worst phenomenon that has happened in the life of professional translators, as on the one hand it has put translation more in the spotlight of society, announcing that translation is possible and available at any time. But this fact, in turn, has made the translation, which in most cases should be of the highest quality, seem like a simpler and more easily accessible process than it actually is. That's why many people wrongly think that translation is "simple and cheap". This makes it even more difficult for translators to explain to others the true merit of their professional work. Technological translation tools presents serious technical problems for translators. The problems lie in the fact that translators have to work in non-identical systems: getting the file to be translated, the translation process, and returning the translated file to its destination.

Although today there are programs that have automated the translation process, again the risk of sending an incorrect version of the file, or accidental errors while saving it, or other human errors are inevitable. The main priority of the translator - quality is not ensured by the tools of translation technology. If a translator is asked about the level of quality acceptable to him for a translation, he will answer "the higher the level, the better". But if a "translation" buyer is asked which is the "best" translator the answer would be "the one who brings the translation to me at the right time". Often buyers sacrifice quality in the name of providing what they want in the right time. The question arises "what does this have to do with technology?" Many "translation" buyers, by prioritizing business needs, aim for a fast fixed solution with a low cost of translation thinking that technology offers it. It is here that translators see a huge risk in terms of the level of translation quality. Exactly what separates the buyer from the translators is that the first one have completely different priorities from the latter, it is almost impossible for a professional translator to translate with a low level of quality. Translators are in most cases isolated from the rest of the translation process. Translation buyers, especially businesses, buy most of the translations from translation agencies, which have the possibility to find translators of many languages, while a professional translator is specialized in only

one or two combinations. Agencies can also handle larger translation volumes than an individual. Nowadays the translation market is changing faster and communication technologies and methods are changing too. But at the other side, the role and tools of the translator has not changed so far. Universities are producing less translators than the requirements of the market.

And the translators are working under such a pressure of time, volume and traditional practice mode which requires to be updated. Some companies today use MT and to achieve better translation quality often ask translators to "review" the result obtained from MT. This has created a new role that has not previously existed for the translator, called "post-editor". This is where the problem for many translators lies. If you are a professional translator, why should you review and fix all the "mess" generated by a translation machine and moreover that you did not create? Translators are often underestimated or ignored by translation technology companies. Over the decades many translation technology companies have shown no interest in the real needs and problems of the largest group of users, translators, even though they are their primary source of income. There are very few companies that have hired translators who are very capable of leading the development of their projects. But in general, translation technology companies have failed in terms of treating translators, recognizing their professionalism, and involving them in product development processes. The translators themselves are distrustful of these companies as they feel that the interests of both parties do not match. Lack of communication between the two groups is the main cause of the worsening of the problem.

### 1.3.2 Why some translators are for translation technology

Technology helps them translate more effectively. CAT tools help them find the right terminology, thus ensuring consistency and improving quality. These tools certainly have costs, but as professional translators they think the investment is worth it. Technology helps speed up the translation process. Using CAT tools the translation process becomes faster and more productive. They manage to meet the requirements of customers. CAT tools provide the ability to create text databases that they have translated for each of their clients and whenever they work for them they consult these databases following in this case their specific terminology which makes consistency of translation content possible.

## 2. Discussion and Results

In this article, it is given a short analysis of the importance of the use of translation technology in various areas of modern life, focusing on the causes that led to its birth and development. The tools offered by the technology, the translation machine and the computer-assisted translation help to deliver information and improve communication in multiple languages and they also are faster and cheaper but this tools cannot replace translators. The debate over machine vs human translation continues, with the question of whether MT will eventually replace HT in an era when MT is improving all the time. MT has significantly reduced the language barrier. (Muftah, 2022). Of course, some translators have a rather categorical opposite attitude to the use of technology in translation, reasoning that a machine can never replace a deep knowledge of the language and culture of a nation for which it was formed and has many years of experience, but we still think that such an attitude is also wrong, since the use of technological translation cannot be excluded, and if it is used, it should be verified and processed if necessary, since its use saves us a lot of time and to some extent in some types of texts it can be accepted as accurate and efficient up to a considerable percentage. The translation itself is an industry known to be expensive and also an industry that takes a lot of time. With all the changes of globalization and technology, the translator will be needed no matter how technology advances.

## 3. Conclusion

Being a professional academic translator, I value and esteem the opinions of the translator's colleague

who have totally lost faith in translation technology. But my view of the opportunities offered by technology and progress is not so much negative, but more optimistic. Of course, just like them, I do not believe that the greatest progress in the world of professional translators will come from computer realized translation (MT). I am of the opinion that the use of translation technology, especially CAT tools, can help translators to deliver higher quality translations while increasing translation productivity and consistency. If until today CAT tools have helped increase speed and productivity, translation quality should be the next step to be achieved by translation technology. This fact should also be the next difficulty to be resolved for translators, a challenge to be undertaken by the latest technology agencies an issue that translators have to insist on constantly.

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