

PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS AND TRANSLATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Today, we are fully conscious of the significant role technology plays in both our personal and professional lives, as this has always been its primary purpose and continues to drive its evolution. This article opens with a brief examination of the relevance of translation technology across different domains of contemporary society, emphasizing the factors that contributed to its emergence and growth. It then provides a general overview of the tools made available by this technology, ranging from machine translation to computer-assisted translation, clarifying what is regarded as the core component of CAT, namely translation memory (TM). In the final section, the article analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of these technological tools from the perspective of professional translators. It concludes that, on the one hand, translators must increasingly adopt these tools to remain competitive in the translation process, while on the other hand, companies developing such technologies should place greater emphasis on translation quality and on the active participation of professional translators in tool development. Strengthening communication between these two parties should represent the next major challenge for technology providers.

Keywords

technology, translation, professional translator, machine translation, computer-assisted translation, translation memory.

Translation, as one of the most ancient professions, has experienced profound changes within a relatively short period of time. These changes have not only transformed the ways in which translators earn their livelihood, but have also introduced a completely new perspective on their role in society, communication, and language itself. With the advancement of technology, real-time processing of large volumes of information has become achievable without the necessity of manual, page-by-page searching. Technology also allows the automatic retrieval and reuse of translations previously produced by translators, as well as access to resources that were once unknown or unavailable. Furthermore, technology has made it possible for translators to externalize their “memory” onto digital storage. Their expertise and background knowledge can now be saved in the cloud, where it can be instantly accessed, revised, and shared across various information sources. However, translation, like most linguistic phenomena, is highly complex. Machines are still incapable of handling language in the same way humans do. Translation is far more intricate than simply writing in a particular language. There is a widespread assumption that every professional translator must be willing and motivated to adopt technology in order to enhance performance and accelerate the translation process. Yet this is not always true.

Advances in information technology have brought together the need to encourage translation automation with the requirements of modern communication. The origins of machine translation can be traced back to 1954, when the first experiments were conducted using a prototype capable of translating a limited number of sentences between Russian and English. The positive results of this experiment generated great optimism, leading to the development of numerous research initiatives in subsequent years aimed at achieving high-quality machine translation. From 1954 to the present day, research in machine translation and linguistic technologies has produced a variety of systems and approaches. Today, the rapid progress of information technology has given rise to a new cultural paradigm intended to replace traditional typing practices. This so-



called screen culture supports the digital distribution of written documents, immediate access to information, and direct electronic transmission through computers, such as via email and databases. These digital documents are instantly accessible and can be opened and processed with far greater flexibility than printed materials, since the nature of information itself has evolved to be either temporary or permanent, depending on need. Over the past two decades, developments in information technology have been accompanied by benefits such as increased speed, user-friendliness, convenience, and cost efficiency. At the same time, the expansion of the global market has pushed industry and commerce to operate increasingly on an international level, while maintaining freedom and flexibility in the exchange of goods and services (Craciunescu et al., 2004). These transformations have influenced the role of translation and created the necessity for more systematic and structured translation methods, as the demand for translation services continues to rise.

MT, an abbreviation for Machine Translation, also known as automated translation, is defined as “a branch of computational linguistics that examines the use of software to translate written texts or spoken discourse from one natural language into another” (Alcina, 2008). Research into the development of machine translation dates back to 1933, when the scientist P. P. Telojamsky proposed employing computers for translation purposes. However, the true emergence of MT systems occurred in 1954 with the creation of the first machine translation system by Georgetown University in collaboration with IBM, which successfully translated a 250-word text from Russian into English. Later, in 1976, the Canadian Translation Bureau developed a system known as TAUM-METEO, specifically designed to translate weather forecast reports. This system represented a significant milestone in the history of the MT market and in the practical application of machine translation technology. Nevertheless, since the introduction of MT, the accuracy and reliability of such systems have consistently been the subject of debate among researchers. The clarity and readability of machine-translated texts, as well as the extent to which these systems adequately cover linguistic phenomena, were far from satisfactory or widely acceptable. As a result, researchers began to shift their focus toward the development of computer-assisted translation (CAT) technology.

Google has reshaped society's perception of the roles of translators and interpreters. Google Translate has simultaneously been one of the most beneficial and most problematic developments in the professional lives of translators. On the one hand, it has brought translation into public awareness by suggesting that translation is always possible and instantly accessible. On the other hand, this perception has contributed to the belief that translation—often required to be of the highest quality—is a straightforward and easily attainable task. As a result, many people mistakenly assume that translation is “simple and inexpensive,” making it increasingly difficult for translators to communicate the true value of their professional expertise.

With the continued development of translation memory (TM), numerous computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools have emerged, including TRADOS, SDLX, Déjà Vu, MemoQ, OmegaT, Star Transit, and IBM Translation Manager. These tools are characterized by customizable interfaces, support for a wide range of file formats, advanced terminology management, and efficient automated search functions. On the one hand, their widespread use demonstrates the growing popularity of CAT technology in the translation process, and on the other hand, they establish a new benchmark for the training and professional preparation of translators. In other words, in today's translation industry, it is essential for professional translators to employ such CAT tools in their work.

Technology enables translators to work more efficiently. Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools support accurate terminology selection, thereby ensuring consistency and enhancing overall translation quality. Although these tools involve certain costs, professional translators



generally consider them a worthwhile investment. Technology also contributes to faster translation workflows, making the process more efficient and productive. By using CAT tools, translators are better able to meet client requirements and deadlines. In addition, CAT tools allow translators to build translation databases for each client. When working on future projects, these databases can be consulted to apply client-specific terminology, which helps maintain consistency across translated texts.

In conclusion, translation technology has significantly reshaped the landscape of professional translation, offering tools that increase speed, improve consistency, and support higher-quality output. CAT tools and machine translation have become essential for modern translators, enabling them to manage large volumes of work and maintain specialized terminology across projects. However, these technologies also present challenges, including risks to accuracy, the need for careful post-editing, and the ongoing gap between translators and technology developers. For translation to truly benefit from these innovations, professional translators must embrace these tools while technology companies must actively involve them in the development process. Only through collaboration can the industry ensure both efficiency and the high standards of professional translation are maintained.

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