ON THE (BENEFIC) EFFECTS OF EVOLUTION UPON TRANSATION

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Abstract

The article deals with the idea that a translator should become aware of and benefit from the technology-based tools that aim at supporting his work and not to annul it, since these software programmes are such designed as to provide valuable assistance to the translator.

Keywords: language, technical (r)evolution, translation, CAT tools.

In light of the alert (r)evolution of technology in all life domains, it would be safe to state that the field involving translation activities could not have been left mark-free. Up until not too long, translation scholars argued upon the necessity of using the necessary dictionaries alone, considered among the most important tools to perform in this double-faceted scientific and artistic endeavour. Translators were beginning to thus face the latest needs of updating, therefore adapt to technology supported tools.

In a previous article[2], we supported the idea that the translators of today have embraced, more or less light-heartedly, the obvious reality that the translation process is now enhanced, aided, supported by technological devices, i.e. special kind of software. These software programmes are such designed as to provide valuable assistance to the translator, which, needless to say does not mean to do the work instead of the translator.

The translator is already the specialist with knowledge in linguistic, cultural matters of at least two peoples. In order to keep our article in the well-informed area, we decided to interview a young freelance translator, who has happily agreed to help bring some light upon the issue and who has truly become involved in the whole process of technology supported translation.

Interviewing a freelance translator, Roxana Moldovan[3], we asked her what were, according to her, the most important qualities that a translator ought to possess. She kindly answered: "Based on my own experience, a successful translator should be native speaker of the target language, speak the source language(s) at full professional level, have very good command of CAT tools or other relevant software and keep up with technology or social media trends. Moreover, he/she should be flexible, responsive and possess excellent communication, organisational, and social skills. Last but not least, a professional translator should be market and client-oriented and know that investing in his/her visual identity or professional profile is of tremendous importance and definitely attracts new clients and challenging jobs." We ought to notice that the 'definition' of a

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[2] Article presented at the IETM VI- The International Conference *European Integration between Tradition and Modernity* VIth edition in 2015.
[3] See endnote to this article

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'perfect translator' can no longer be free of the idea that technology-supported tools are a must. On the other hand, our interviewed freelance translator also points out how important it is for the translator to be a good communicator and professional, all these achieved and supported by means of technology, assuredly.

Our interview continued by inquiring about the tools used by our freelance translator in her activity. She started by underlining, again, that "a successful translator should always keep up with technology trends. The most productive tools a modern translator should know how to use are definitely the computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools. There are many different CAT tools on the market, but the most frequently used and the ones I have been using in my activity are SDL Trados[4] (all versions), MemoQ, Wordbee, XTM, as well as other custom-made CATs. A professional translator should be open-minded and always willing to learn how to use new CAT tools. Some clients provide server-based solutions and support, consequently, the more CAT tools you know how to use, the more opportunities to increase your workload and income you can benefit from." Our interviewed translator stresses the idea that CAT tools are means to an end, obviously, aiding means to a valuable end. They are not to be disregarded, feared or considered lightly, but embraced, understood and used effectively.

When asked about her opinion on the latest trend in translation, i.e. using CAT tools, the answer was that "Using CAT tools is not necessarily the latest trend in translation; however, many experienced translators or translation agencies have doubts about embracing technology and I am partially able to understand them." Therefore, she too admits that there is a general stand-back attitude regarding such tools, since it is the sign that the new and, implicitly, unknown enters our professional life. "Technology and CAT tools have definitely changed translators' lives and I am one of those translators. I cannot imagine translating a 300-words text without using a CAT tool. The main advantages of using CAT tools are speeding up the translation process, translating more consistently and efficiently, the possibility of reusing the repetitive text for further translations, as well as earning more money and providing professional services to clients." It is, again, a matter of time management as well as it is a matter of work efficiency in a speed-prone reality.

As one could have imagined, we were curious as to what the CAT tools used by our new translator friend were and to why she decided upon using them. She admitted using various CAT tools and also that she was always willing to learn how to use new translation software. "My favourite CAT tools are SDL Trados, MemoQ or Wordbee because they are user-friendly, help me speed up the translation process and reuse the repetitive text thanks to translation memories." On the other hand, there is always the issue that "these tools are largely used by professional translators and translation agencies, consequently, you can easily have access to technical support when encountering a problem or benefit from increased opportunities of getting challenging new projects."

[4] Disclaimer: The present article contains info about CAT tools by means of scientific reference only, with no commercial intent to advertise them here

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This only proves us once again that the process of professional translation has, for a while now, quitted to be a one-man-job, but it was somehow expanded to using the minds of the more, all eventually involved and connected to a translation network.

This, obviously led us to the next question, aiming to the issue so deeply feared by the majority interested in the topic, i.e. to what extent do CAT tools endanger 'human-made translation'. Just as we expected, the interviewed freelance translator started by pinning the idea that "computer-assisted translation is human-made translation! A CAT tool cannot work without human intervention. In my view, computer-assisted translation cannot endanger translation, on the contrary, it makes the whole translation process more effective." Still, she admits that the rumours regarding this false danger are due to a misconception: "However, I can understand why there are rumours that technology might threaten the translation industry: people often confuse the use of CAT tools with MT (machine translation). Even if CAT tools enable the integration of machine translation plugins, the software cannot replace the human translation since the post-editing and language skills of a professional translator are definitely required for a high-quality output."

Therefore, the translator we approached for our interview ponders that these rumours according to which such technology-based tools will soon 'put translators out of business' is nothing but "the result of disinformation. Technology has a huge impact on translation, but it is definitely a positive one. It is true that the use of translation memories often implies less or even no processing of the repetitive text and, consequently, significant discounts for repetitions, but, on the other hand, the translator is able to process more and more new content due to this amazing feature, not to mention reducing the efforts for retranslating the repetitive content, which I found time and energy-consuming."

Now, that we have agreed that the technology-based tools are in to aid and support the work of a professional translator, we are willing to find out what someone willing to purchase a CAT tool should consider. Therefore, we find out that "First of all, using most CAT tools requires purchasing a licence, which is quite costly. Furthermore, upgrades for the same software are released approximately every two years, which are expensive as well. Consequently, the financial investment is usually the main impediment when it comes to purchasing a CAT tool licence." Thus, the issue regarding technology-based tools is not only a matter of principle, but also a matter of financial concern.

Last but not least, we were worried whether the tools in question might 'reduce' the memory ability of a translator. In response to that, the freelance translator rightfully argued that "frankly, a translator is not a dictionary, a terminological glossary or a translation memory. An active translator processes thousands of words every day, consequently, it is not recommended to make tremendous efforts to constantly memorise new or highly specialised words. Of course, having a good memory is a translation skill, but a professional translator frequently deals with new and highly technical terminology and striving to memorise newly-processed content should not be a professional goal.

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Fortunately, CAT tools include the advantage of 'content storage' (i.e. translation memories, term-bases), consequently, the translator can access the translated content whenever he/she wants." This means that the translator is to benefit from the use of such tools and should not disregard using them.

Our concern in regards to the technological plus that CAT tools bring to support the work of the translator has eventually been resolved by the awareness towards a good understanding of the matter. This means that the translator today needs to continuously adapt to the latest waves in the business, needs to understand them, to learn how to cope and to master the new gadgets in technology and to benefit from them in his work. As long as these technology-based tools are used accordingly and appropriately, the translator cannot be in danger of being annulled.

Endnote:

About Roxana Moldovan: she is a freelance translator and linguist, providing complex language services for translation agencies and famous end-clients. She has four years of experience in the translation industry, having worked for almost two years as a translation project manager. This job allowed her to successfully manage a wide range of language projects, in a multitude of language combinations and use various technical resources including numerous CAT tools.

Roxana provides professional language services such as translation, proofreading, editing, website localisation, transcreation, project management, terminology management, and quality assurance. The fields she specialises in are IT&C, Marketing/Market Research, Travel and Tourism, and creative content. She embraces technology and considers the use of various CAT tools of tremendous importance for professional development and efficiency.

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