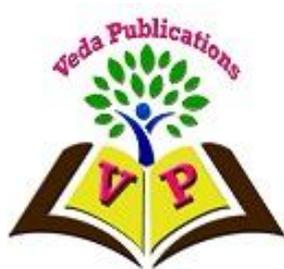


**CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES**

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Obsessed by the growth of a global economy and developments in high technology, the process of creating and translating literary and technical documentation has been developing rapidly. In particular, machine translation has shown increasing capabilities of effectively accomplishing the early stages of translation identified years ago by Robert Bly. As a consequence, translators have learned to use Machine Translation as a tool to pick up the pace in their work, but they have also grown cautious of machine translation's probable for replacing them. To guarantee steady employment, some translators have begun cross-training as technical writers; correspondingly, a few technical writers have begun cross-training as translators, as the two professions appear to be undergoing a gradual trend of convergence. Academic programs are required to respond to the evolving trends.

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PREFACE

In the business of translation, it is evident that wide changes are happening in the translation of professional documents. To those in the business of technical writing or those who write or study fiction and poetry, the changes may not be quite as obvious, but they are affecting those accomplishments nevertheless. These changes are accelerating the process of providing documents, especially technical documents, in multiple language versions. In turn, they are changing the professions of both technical writing and translation and increasingly merging them into one.

What are the reasons behind these changes? What are the causes that attracting money? At its spirit, it is the requirement of the information economy. Companies selling their products and services in countries like Switzerland, Belgium, or Canada have long had to localize and

translate for a set number of multiple languages. However, with the trade agreements of the 1990s and resulting expansion in trade to create a truly global marketplace, companies anywhere have an encouragement to sell everywhere.

When we speak of any information economy, we are talking about information communicated through language. Information is best understood when it is in the consumers or clients or readers of literature in their native language.

A renowned poet and translator Robert Bly (1983) wrote a book 'The Eight Stages of Translation'. Which focused on poetry, the book is instructive in helping us understand current trends in the translation of professional communication. The eight stages constitute the following,

- *The literal translation
- *The detection of problematic detail and uncertainty
- * Re-examination of the literal meaning in the(target) language to be translated



*Adjusting the target text with an idiomatic ear to the tone of the target language

*Adjusting the target text with an idiomatic ear turned back to the tone of the source language

*Attending to the sound patterns apparent in the source language and equivalent in the target language

* Passing the review of native speaker of the source language to the target language well.

*Polishing the text with a view to earlier drafts and other translator's versions.

It is now observed that advances in machine translation are allowing computers using programs like Systran, to give translators a head start by taking a text through the first two translation stages and now even the third. Computer software like Trados is helping translators work much more rapidly through the middle stages as well. Today translators commonly use controlled language, in which translated phrases have received prior approval as accurate. They employ single-sourcing software to reuse these phrases in new or updated documents. Software for guided authoring or structured authoring helps them insert new phrasing where reused phrases are not yet available or are inappropriate for the context. Achieving full and complete memory is paramount; translation memory is at the heart of automated language translation. To facilitate memory, the translation community is now contending with the need for standards. Indeed, the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) is at work developing standards for translation memory exchange for document content.

THE ORIGIN

Anticipating automated machine translation of Bly's eight stages is nothing new. As Mike Shield (University of Surrey) remarked, "I can see novels being banged out in machine translation systems and handed over to ghost writers to turn them into as good English as is necessary, and completely wipe out translators and even interpreters". Indeed, the speed with which Machine Translation technology has been developing is nothing short of remarkable, when viewed on the scale of human history. Mr. Wagner describes how the purpose of a document determined the process for translation at the European Commission. Wagner defines 'basic

understanding' as rough translation, usually for one person, to permit understanding of content will not be published. It defines for information as accurate translation for internal informational purposes will not be published. Thus, definitions are determined by estimated number of users and by breadth of distribution. Such identifications and accompanying procedures were not confined to large governmental entities such as the European Commission. At this same time, Perez found that industry Computer Assisted Translation (CAT), in the form of translation memories, terminology management systems and machine translation was used at different stages of the translation process. CAT had by now expanded into the 'multilingual workflow system' in which Translation is an essential part of the information cycle, resulting in a shift toward 'controlled translation' in which translators are parts of teams developing 'language technology'. Such trends would only strengthen and continue seem inevitable, especially when one examines the forces driving them. Hutchins lists six reasons why Machine Translation will become more widespread: -1.here is just too much that needs to be translated, 2.technical materials are too boring for human translators, 3.terminology need to be used consistently, 4.the use of computer-based translation tools can increase the volume and speed of translation, 5.top quality human translation is not always needed, 6.companies want to reduce translation costs and selling their products and services.

As the president of Prisma International, a prominent translation and technical documentation company in Minneapolis put it 'the real change will be forced by the budget cutters'. Both translators and technical writers have found themselves adjusting their approaches and procedures in what can be seen as an attempt to integrate human translators with the emerging technology of Machine Translation. As a consequence, the advent of the information age has sustainably altered the profession of translation, especially with regard to the type of electronic tools used, the type of texts translated, and the types of skills needed by today's translators and localizers. Online editions of magazines and daily newspapers, with articles that are often shorter than in print and that are updated



frequently, thus demanding a shorter timeframe for translation. And with a wider native-speaker audience, as well as e-books published exclusively on the Internet and likely to reduce the time available for the translation process. Other examples that they cite include product documentation and audio-visual subtitles. In each case, demand for translation in shorter and shorter amounts of time drives the increased use of MT. The automation of MT the stages left for human translators to complete can have the effect of heightening the value of the human element, namely creativity. Risku (2002) observes that Translation is a highly creative, situation-specific activity and it is extremely flexible. Translators create a means of communication in a specific target situation; Translation can be seen as a problem-solving process in which the communication expert is part of a complex, dynamic system with various cultural, communicative, situative and professional aspects. This view stands in contrast to the one that translators have historically held, particularly in regard to translation of technical documents. In this context as Venuti describes it, "They are likely to feel that translation is basically a practical activity which requires little more than knowledge of a foreign language and an elegant writing style, certainly not any immersion in translation studies or any familiarity with translation theory." However, as we shall see in the next section, more and more translators and technical writers are coming to terms with their changing role as Machine Translation evolves and takes over some of the early stages completed in the past by translators.

THE FUTURE PATH

Despite the remarkable developments in MT and the translation process, further improvements to MT seem all the more discouraging as one move farther down Bly's list of stages. The human judgment and wisdom are in social and cultural knowledge, seem complex to the point that they do not fit with ease into the flow charts of computer programming. Nevertheless, the forces that Hutchins (2004) lists above continue to motivate industry to forge ahead with MT. As Pérez (2003) observes 'from the industry's point of view, complete mechanization of translation can only be possible through absolute predictability, that is to say by turning language into a

static object and reducing dynamic change into static structure'. Machines have begun to construct a bridge from the translator's intelligence to the translator's practice.

The current drawbacks to this relentless drive are apparent to anyone who has to rely on an MT text, even with light 'post-editing' as it has been termed: "Generally users expect high quality, equivalent to that of human translators, but what they usually get is low quality". Dillinger (2012: 20) stresses that MT "does not really translate; it only help us reuse words and segments that have already been translated. Hutchins (2004: 17) elaborates, "We are not going to get MT systems that can take any text in any subject and produce unaided a good translation". Literature, philosophy, sociology, law and any other areas of interest which are highly culture-dependent are beyond the scope of MT. It is true now, and will probably always be true.

Translators may be quick to concur with Hutchins's observation, but industry managers, especially those with little familiarity of translation or even a working knowledge of a second language may be slow or even reluctant to accept it. Because of human translators are much costlier and slower speeds, indeed, this gets at the crux of the issue. Striking a balance between quality and quantity is one of the greatest challenges faced by translators in the 21st century....the increase in volume has been accompanied by an increase in pressure on translators to work more quickly in order to reduce the time to market a global product.

Many translators have grown increasingly aware and anxious of machines taking over their jobs, while more and more technical writers have likewise grown increasingly aware and anxious of translators encroaching on technical writer's jobs by becoming cross-trained. It is worthwhile to examine the details at length in Perez's acute observation: On one hand, the intellectual act of translation remains the same and the translator still has to activate cognitive processes to turn raw intellectual capacities into behaviour patterns that work in a complex universe in order to process and interpret information. On the other, the industry expects the translator to work in a global team, to accommodate his work to the latest technology, to put into practice



the most advanced electronic publishing techniques, to understand the intricacies of translation software tools, to create and manage terminology databases and to keep the pace with market requirements. The moment translation is no longer an isolated activity in the production process, the translator needs to retain full control of the different tasks and tools involved in translation so that interaction between the human and the machine is felt as a natural process. In order to ease this tension, the translator has to take on a central role and find a way to manage creativity and technology with a sound business practice. Wrestling some impression of control, while working in tandem with the machine emerges as professional communicators' chief challenge.

One can sense the precarious position and resulting anxiety that translators increasingly feel, the American Translators Association (ATA) in the January 2009 issue of *The ATA Chronicle*, translator's purpose was clearly to put members at ease and to show them a brighter future:

While there are many examples of translation errors caused by human translators, these soft in comparison with the errors of machine translation. And when an erring human combines with an erring machine, an amazing thing happens: the translation takes on a life of its own and the end result turns out to have no relation to the source text. However, it would be foolish to dismiss machine translation completely. When a sophisticated machine translation application is used with competence for a specific purpose, it can yield remarkable results. This is achieved through machine translation that, thanks to the similar structure and vocabulary of the two languages, requires minimum post-editing. Does this mean that human translators will soon be replaced by sophisticated software? This was a question posed at the recent conference of the Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (www.amtaweb.org). The answer was a resounding 'NO'. Machine Translation fills an entirely new space that overlaps with the human translation space to only a very insignificant degree. In fact, it can be argued that machine translation creates more work for human translators.

More work for human translators would indeed be welcome, particularly as 2009 saw the staggering and near total collapse of the global economy and the manufacturing and production that require translated materials. In the meantime, translators are securing employment by expanding their repertoire of skills and performing tasks that used to be viewed as falling into the domain of other professionals. As experts for intercultural technical communication, modern translators often double as technical writers, lexicographers, software testers, or cultural consultants. The surveys conduct translators are doubling as technical writers in particular. In a pattern of professional convergence, technical writers, especially in Europe, are increasingly seeking out cross-training so that they serve as translators.

With a view to such convergence, one might expect that academic programs would respond with curriculum that offers such cross-training. With regard to preparing translation students, for the professional realities of technical translation and localization, recommend specialized curricular modules based on localization tool, text, and process typology.

CONCLUSION

What is driving both the trend toward increased translation and the trend to automate and accelerate is the economy part of the information economy better understanding, which leads to increased customer satisfaction, which leads to increased sales. Automation, along with its lubricant, standardization, saves costs. While the cost-effectiveness of automation has long been clearly the case in agriculture or industry, only now it is becoming fully clear to those engaged in language production. It remains to be seen to what extent the trends identified will continue or level off in affecting accuracy of meaning, efficiencies of production and inevitably, employment of translators. For his part, Jost Zetzsche (2012: 31, 33), reflecting on the latest advances in MT technology, writes to his fellow translators that "we have the opportunity to step out of the shadows and engage with the general public." We can say for the foreseeable future that the trends will likely continue to accelerate. As they do, professional communicators, including both technical writers and translators, will need to weigh the cost



savings of automation with the linguistic accuracy that to this point only humans can ultimately render and judge. Cost and accuracy: Whatever the language, whatever the document, professional communicators aim to have less cost and more accuracy.

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