CAT TOOLS IN TRANSLATION

The article substantiates the necessity to use Computer-aided translation software to increase productivity and better consistency, to stay competitive. Described are the components of Computer-aided translation tools such as Translation Memory, alignment and concordance search. The study on incorporation of translation memory tools into a translator’s daily routine was conducted showing the percentage of TM tools used by translators. The top three motivations for incorporating and using translation memory tools are client requirement at 44%, increased productivity and better consistency tied at 28%, and to stay competitive at 17%. The top three training methods include self-taught at 50%, help files and user manuals tied in with training from colleagues at 28%, and workshops at 22%. Other training methods include in-house training, discussion forums, and a semester course as part of a postgraduate degree.

Our analysis of the roles and capabilities of both MT and CAT shows that neither is efficient and accurate enough to eliminate the necessity for human translators. In their turn, translators should recognize and learn to exploit the potential of the new technologies to help them to be more productive.

Key words: Computer-aided translation tools, translation, Translation Memory, software.

In the era of globalization the demand for an unimpeded flow of information among various languages has grown considerably. Many businesses operate on the worldwide market and need to localize their products and services. As a result, the market for translation services is booming and its extensive needs are still largely unsatisfied. In turn, more and more is demanded from translators who are increasingly expected to be productive and better consistent.

The process of creating TU pairs is referred to as alignment. CAT uses a number of tools to help the translator work accurately and quickly, the most important of which are terminology and target text. Working with a digital document gives us non-sequential access to information so that we can use it according to our needs. It becomes easy to analyze the sentences of the source text, to verify the context in which a word or a text is used, or to create an inventory of terms, for example. All these aspects have profound implications for translation, especially in terms of productivity and better consistency tied at 28%, and to stay competitive at 17%.

As the translation progresses and a SL unit similar or identical to the one stored in translation memory occurs, the system suggests a translation with the help of TM, which is basically a database containing pairs of translation units in the target and source languages, that is, e.g. a sentence in the original language alongside with its translation. The translator may then choose to insert or adapt the previous translation of that segment. Therefore, search-and-retrieval functions are an essential component of all TM tools. Thus the translator is relieved of the tedious task of jogging his own, human, often faulty, memory.

Once a particular sentence, or a phrase, has been translated and entered into the translation memory, every time the same or a similar phrase occurs in the SL, the corresponding TL unit (with the threshold level of correspondence, or similarity, usually set by the user – rarely less than 70%), and enters it into the SL document, leaving the decision to accept, reject, or modify (edit) the suggested translation to the translator.

Translation tools also provide the user with the alignment capability, which enables creation of a translation memory from previously translated documents, by matching SL and TL translation units and entering them into the translation memory database. The process of creating TU pairs is referred to as alignment.
At this point it is necessary to define the notions of exact match and fuzzy match. Those two kinds of matches may be distinguished by the level of correspondence, or similarity, between the SL unit in a new translation project and the SL unit stored in the translation memory. 100% (identical) matches are called exact (perfect) matches, while all other (i.e. non-100%) matches are labeled as fuzzy matches.

We have singled out the following drawbacks of CAT tools

1. In theory, when translators have organized, accessible archives of previous translations at their disposal, the result should be improvements in consistency and translation speed. This applies more to some types of documents than others; by definition, translation memory is most useful when applied to texts with repetitive content.

2. Translators often work with multiple file formats, and Translation Memory systems generally require filters to preserve formatting.

3. Finally, a memory is made of material contributed by both the client and the translator. The question arises who owns the final product. Moral ownership is one thing, but legal ownership is important when a memory becomes a valuable commodity in the marketplace. There are clients who abuse such tools in order to pay only a small rate by providing the translator with their translation memories of not very good quality and still paying less.

We have conducted a study on incorporation of translation memory tools into a translator’s daily routine. The participants were also asked to list tools not directly related to translation that are used in their work. Some of these were already mentioned above, such as Microsoft Office Suite, or electronic and online reference tools. In addition, the participants listed the following in their toolbox:

- antivirus and firewall protection
- email and chat programs
- online and desktop search engines
- file compression tools
- optical character recognition and PDF transformer software
- desktop publishing or graphic design software
- voice recognition software and digital recorders
- small utilities, such as Time Stamp (an application used for keeping track of your time).

The top three motivations for incorporating and using translation memory tools are client requirement at 44%, increased productivity and better consistency tied at 28%, and to stay competitive at 17%. Other reasons mentioned were speed, resting your hands, and protection against power failures.

The top three training methods include self-taught at 50%, help files and user manuals tied in with training from colleagues at 28%, and workshops at 22%. Other training methods include in-house training, discussion forums, and a semester course as part of a postgraduate degree. The percentage of TM tools by users rates Trados first at 71%, followed at length by SDLX at 28% and DejaVu at 24%. It has long been a subject of discussion whether machine translation and Computer-aided translation could convert translators into mere editors, making them less important than the computer programs. The fear of this happening has led to a certain rejection of the new technologies on the part of translators, not only because of a possible loss of work and professional prestige, but also because of concern about a decline in the quality of production. Some translators totally reject machine translation because they associate it with the point of view that translation is merely one more marketable product based on a calculation of investment versus profits. They define translation as an art that possesses its own aesthetic criteria that have nothing to do with profit and loss, but are rather related to creativity and the power of the imagination. This applies mostly, however, to specific kinds of translation, such as that of literary texts, where polysemy, connotation and style play a crucial role. It is clear that computers could not even begin to replace human translators with such texts. Even with other kinds of texts, our analysis of the roles and capabilities of both MT and CAT shows that neither is efficient and accurate enough to eliminate the necessity for human translators. In their turn, translators should recognize and learn to exploit the potential of the new technologies to help them to be more productive.

References:
3. Finally, a memory is made of material contributed by both the client and the translator. The question arises who owns the final product. Moral ownership is one thing, but legal ownership is important when a memory becomes a valuable commodity in the marketplace. There are clients who abuse such tools in order to pay only a small rate by providing the translator with their translation memories of not very good quality and still paying less.

© O. P. Demidenko, 2016