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# Reconceptualizing Translators' Competences

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During the last few decades, translators have had to deal with the rise of CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools and Machine Translation (MT)/Neural Machine Translation (NMT) systems. Moreover, some advances have come from leveraging massive corpora of already-translated materials to have translation models that can translate similar content in the future.

The increasing efficiency and reliability of translation technologies and the recent acceleration in MT/NMT have led translators to speculate that machines will eventually remove the need for human translation services. However, this is a false extrapolation of the situation. Although the recent improvements have been largely adopted at a worldwide level, the idea that machines will drastically reduce the need for translators is not feasible. The truth is that there is plenty of room for both machine and human translation in the marketplace. The key is to reconceptualize translators' competences and to leverage technology tools.

Human translators should always be an essential part of the translation process. However, the translation profession is on the verge of changing dramatically. As previously stated, the use of MT/NMT has started to gain ground in the last few years. It is a viable solution for translation projects that need to be completed either in a very tight time frame or with a reduced budget. Thus, in the immediate future, MT/NMT will certainly provide a powerful solution for accelerating the production of some specific kinds of translation. Nevertheless, there is no MT/NMT system with an output that can be qualified as equal to human output. Moreover, as many source texts are very specific in terms of context and discipline and there are lower volumes of already-translated data for these narrower contexts, the translation output will still depend on human translators for some projects.

So, what can translators do if large volume of texts will be translated by machines in the future? To start with, they have to adopt a very flexible and positive attitude. There are some cornerstones that should give them some hope. Translators can actually take a couple of tactical steps that will take away a little bit of their fear. They have to focus on niche markets while using AI (Artificial Intelligence) as a tool to boost their productivity. They also have to focus on what is specifically human and find a way to inoculate themselves against the machine. In brief, translators have to reconceptualize their competences and learn how to work alongside with machines in a seamless manner by applying different strategies.

First, every translator should focus on continuing education. A well-trained and educated translator will not be easily replaced by machines in some tasks.

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SUPLEMENTO *Ideas*, II, 5 (2021), pp. 7-12

“Knowledge is Power,” as Francis Bacon once said more than 400 years ago.

Second, translators can differentiate from machines through critical thought. This can apply to Marketing and Social Media where there is a strong need for translators who can adjust the message to meet the needs of the audience and search engines alike.

Third, translators should have a flexible and creative mind. Within 20 years, we do not know exactly what kind of work translators will have to do but we do know that they will need to adapt to new realities and be creative. Genuine creativity is a hard one to mimic for a machine. Thus, it is crucial to specialize in a field that values accuracy and creativity over speed and volume. Linguists who specialize in creative fields, such as Marketing will be well-positioned against the rising tide of automation. Their areas of expertise can include transcreation, content writing, copy-adapt, cultural consultation, among others.

Fourth, translators can make a difference regarding context. MT does not have access to the previous or following sentences during the translation process and we all know that context is the key to unlock new potential for MT. Sentence-by-sentence MT, which is used almost everywhere in production these days, cannot always choose the best possible translation. This is a real limitation, as context can contain some critical information.

Last but not least, translators have to ensure the best quality, which is a crucial factor in the translation industry. As interest in Quality Management has grown, the translation process has become clearly specified in different quality standards. There are many national, regional and international standards related to the quality of translation and interpreting services.

The *International Organization for Standardization*, or simply *ISO*, together with translation industry professionals have addressed the latest developments in the translation industry by issuing two translation-related international standards, namely:

- ISO 17100:2015 on Translation Services was based on the already well-known previously issued EN 15038 standard, and
- ISO 18587:2017 on Post-Editing of Machine Translation Output is a standard that establishes a framework and the requirements for editors of MT output. This standard also has its own requirements regarding data protection. It states that TSPs shall have the infrastructure to ensure a safe and confidential handling, storage, retrieval, archiving and disposal of all relevant data and documents.

ISO 17100 was based on EN15038 but has a different structure since it focuses more on conventional translation processes. It incorporates the requirement for translations to be subject to revision by a second person; it pays particular attention to the qualification of all parties involved in the production process of a translation; and, it clarifies that the responsibility for the preparation does not just rest on the contractor, but on the client, as well. This standard also refers to data protection, which is considered mandatory because translations are sometimes confidential and involve sensitive information from the clients. Finally, as a new thing compared to EN 15038, ISO 17100 also requires having a process for handling client feedback, which is necessary and valuable for each translation project as it is used as an indicator for the client's perceived satisfaction and serves as a basis for future improvement.

Nowadays, as machines are heavily involved in the translation process, some translators have started to work as post-editors but editing of MT output requires special knowledge of CAT tools and an understanding of how translation and terminology management systems interact with MT and MT systems.

The use of MT systems to meet the needs of the increasing demand in the translation and localization industry has been gaining ground and Post-Editing (PE) of machine translation has established itself as a translation service. With MT systems, clients can have a large volume of material translated that would not be otherwise translated. However, there is no MT/NMT system that can be qualified as equal to human output and, thus, the final quality of translation output still depends on human translators. To ensure this quality, ISO 18587: 2017 has specified standardized requirements for the post-editing process and post-editors' competences.

Post-editors need to be thoroughly trained to use the post-editing tools, recognize common MT errors, assess whether it makes sense to even edit the MT output in terms of effort and time spent and to become familiar with the difference between the full and light post-editing processes and the eventual outcome.

Post-Editing is performed on MT output for the purpose of

- Checking the accuracy and comprehensibility
- Improving the text
- Making the text more readable, and
- Correcting errors

Post-Editing can be automatic or human. Automatic Post-Editing performed by computer applications corrects systematic errors of MT systems and can reduce Human Post-Editing.

There are two main levels of Human Post-Editing (Light and Full) depending on the purpose of the translation output and the client's requirements.

Post-editing can take place in 2 environments: 1) where all the text to be processed has been machine-translated; and 2) in a multi-modal integrated environment where MT and TM (Translation Memory) with consistent terminology.

During the post-editing process, the LSP (Language Service Provider) shall ensure that post-editors meet the following requirements:

- Comprehensibility of post-edited output
- Correspondence of source language content with target language content
- Compliance of requirements and specifications defined by the TSP

According to ISO 17100 and 18587, the LSP shall have documented evidence that the post-editor meets at least of the following qualification requirements:

- A degree in translation, linguistics or language studies from a recognized institution of higher education
- A degree in another field from a recognized institution of higher education +
- 2 years of full-time professional experience in translating or post-editing
- 5 years of full-time professional experience in translating or post-editing

Regarding competences, the post-editor must demonstrate the following competences: a) translation competence, b) linguistic and textual competences (such as understanding of the source language and fluency in the target language), c) competence in research, information acquisition

and processing, d) cultural competences, and e) domain competences.

In terms of professionalism, ISO 18587 states that post-editors shall apply a professional approach towards the post-editing task and have:

- A general knowledge of MT technology and a basic understanding of common errors that MT systems make
- The ability to follow instructions and to focus on specific kinds of errors and issues
- The ability to provide feedback on MT output, thus contributing to the improvement of MT systems
- A general understanding of how terminology management systems can be applied to MT
- Practice in light and full post-editing
- Use of tools to perform quality checks at the end of the project

To prepare for the future, translators need to learn how to work with machines and how to get the best out of them. Most importantly, they need to ensure that their work conducted alongside with AI is still perceived as meaningful.

The biggest leap forward is also achieved through the data that translators feed the engines. And, when it comes to the data, it would be great to take control of the language and translation data. It is crucial to monitor where it is stored and how it is managed. Translators have to ensure a proper process for their translation memory data and the feedback in their workflow.

Questions around privacy of language data are becoming particularly pressing now that Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are playing such a major role in business processes of all kinds.

Privacy and confidentiality are often confused or perceived to be equivalent terms, but they actually represent completely different concepts. Confidentiality is about the data, and privacy is about the individual.

Privacy is the right of an individual to have some control over how his or her personal information is collected, used, and/or disclosed. Questions around privacy of language data are becoming particularly pressing now that Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are playing such a major role in business processes of all kinds. The only way to protect privacy is for organizations that collect and handle personal data to do so responsibly.

This practice of collecting, analyzing and even re-selling private data has gotten the attention of legislators. Many governing bodies are finally incorporating privacy concerns into regulation and legislation. Perhaps the most extensive effort to date is the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR goes way beyond any previous legislation to protect individual online privacy.

Confidentiality is the duty to ensure that information is kept secret. It is focused on preventing access of data by unauthorized parties. Security professionals most often ensure confidentiality by using access controls and encryption. Access controls work well in controlled environments, but when data has to be sent across the internet, there is no trusted authority. That's where encryption comes in. Encrypted data can only be accessed by individuals who possess the key to decrypt the data.

When it comes to keeping information assets secure, organizations can rely on the ISO/IEC 27000 Family. ISO/IEC 27001 is widely known and it provides requirements for an information security management system (ISMS), though there are more than a dozen standards in the ISO/IEC 27000 Family. Using them enables organizations of any kind to manage the security of assets such as financial information, intellectual property, employee details or information entrusted by third parties.

To conclude, it is undebatable that AI is one of the biggest scientific breakthroughs of the 21st century and it has been growing exponentially in the last few years. However, if translators look beyond the current discussion of AI and the future of translators, they can focus on how to create inspiring new ways to work with machines by reconceptualizing their competences. Therefore, there is no reason for translators to fear MT/NMT and its associated impact. In fact, the latest developments in technology can create a great opportunity for those with the foresight and agility to pivot quickly into this new reality. In short, while machines will take away a lot of the grunt work, translators will have more opportunities to make a difference. The continued need for domain expertise and very high accuracy actually holds a great promise.

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