Translation Tools are Essential for Professional Translations

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Article published on January 11th 2012 | Business

Software for computer aided translation or software for automatic translation have become fundamental for professional translators. Regarding translation software, it is important to distinguish two types of tools. First, automatic translation software is aimed at obtaining a complete conversion from one language to another in order to represent the general meaning of a text. These translations are not very accurate because they essentially provide a word for word translation. More costly versions of this type of software come enhanced with a specialized translation dictionary, such as the Altavista translation software for example, which makes them somewhat more reliable and effective.

However, these translation tools generally do not provide translations of acceptable professional quality. On the other hand, there is computer aided translation software, which has incorporated some topic-specific dictionaries. These are the tools that most professional translators work with. These tools do not provide direct translations but provide a support system that helps translators to work faster and more accurately.

Language translation software is increasingly becoming necessary for both professional translators and corporate businesses. Automatic translation tools are generic tools that are supposed to adapt themselves to all kind of texts, such as technical documents, newspaper articles or literary texts. Their translation models are based on statistics, which allows them to create sentences that sound good enough but that might not be accurate or even have a mistranslation. There are indeed two different main approaches regarding automated translation. Historically, these tools works within rules: the machines learn the syntax and grammar rules and apply them to the text in order to translate it. Another more recent approach is based on statistics analogy. This technique compares a great amount of texts in the source and target languages, and deduces from them some translation rules. But if the combination of language rules and statistical tools seems to be the more effective way to improve automated translation, an equilibrium between these two approaches is still difficult to find.

Computer aided translation software uses translation memories. A translation memory is a data base that contains segments of texts in the source language and equivalent translated texts in another target language. It allows to save sentences segments and to use them again later. This is the main difference between automatic translation and computer aided translation. Computer aided translation offers the advantage of saving time on repetitive texts so the translator needs to type less and can dedicate more time to research. A translation memory is very effective for technical texts because from one version of a product to the next one for example, you might find 90% of common text, which would not be the case for literary texts.

Most software programs that use translation memories are quite expensive and are only developed for Windows (Trados Workbench, DÃ©jÃ VuX, SDLX, Star Transit, MultiTrans, Similis,...), but a growing number of Java applications also allows you to work on Mac OS X and Linux (OmegaT, Open Language Tools, Heartsome,...). When the translator begins to work with this tool, he starts the software which segments the source text. When an identical or similar text segment is found in the database, the software suggests the translation. The translator then has the possibility to accept it, adapt it or reject it. If he chooses this later option, by choice or because of the lack of correspondence, the translator must then translate it by himself and the data base will save the translation for the next time. Despite computer-aided tools, language translation still essentially remains a human skill.

Translators could be worried about the fact that software might finally threaten this human craft but there is no reason for this concern. Since translation language is very specific, professional translators are increasingly participating in updating those electronics tools. Software helps translators process large amounts of text more efficiently. When you select a translation company be it Montreal translation services provider or translation Winnipeg for your professional language translation projects, make sure that they select translators who use professional translation tools.

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Article Keywords:
Language translations,translation Montreal,Montreal translation services,translation Winnipeg,Language translation software,translation service

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