

Reflections on Translation Teaching through New Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

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Abstract:

The growth and development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to a wide diffusion and application in language learning and teaching. As pedagogy of translation is still quite neglected, the present article is mainly concerned with the application of audio-visual teaching methodology that is common to translation subjects and pursues the objectives of certain skills or competencies that learners should acquire in order to translate in a professional manner. It tries to shed some light on theoretical reflections about how technology-based knowledge of audio-visual aids may enhance the translation process, considering that the use of ICTs may assist teachers to overcome time and space barriers. Therefore, this paper attempts to design new methods and instruments of teaching translation in relation to technology, preserving at the same time a personalized approach.

Key words: New Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs); Audio-Visual Translation (AVT); Translation teaching; Theories and methods; Technology-based knowledge.

The last half of the twentieth century was characterised by revolutions in **information** and **communication** technology that influenced various professions. The impact of information and communication technologies on the translation process has given rise to some interesting debates and reflections among researchers. In view of the fact that technology is relevant in the *production, transmission, and distribution* of information, translation teachers cannot in all possibilities ignore computer-based technology in the training of students and even in their own professional development. This is particularly obvious in today's translation needs.

The continuous improvements and achievements in the scope of information technology-based knowledge seem to gradually revolutionize the translation industry. The translator is no more that person who is supposed to sit before a typewriter surrounded by volumes of dictionaries, encyclopaedias or other paper-based reference materials. Electronic dictionaries and databases, online terminology, translation memories and other computerized tools seem to become the present-day research instruments for the modern translator. To put it in a nutshell, information technology has changed the way information is *processed, disseminated, and thus produced*, i.e., the shift from static materials to multimedia contents is becoming commonplace in all domains of knowledge and text genres.

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As it might be acknowledged, huge changes are undergone in our educational systems and it appears that new technologies may in all probabilities help adapting to a new pedagogy a new way of learning, where every learner can acquire and practice the skills necessary to his own profession in a time and a way that better suits his task. It is worth remembering at this level that teaching methodology is more and more changing and the role of teachers shifted as learners become the central agent of the learning process.

As pedagogy advances, the introduction of electronic means of communication into the teaching-learning process has conferred special importance on virtual environments; while, the introduction of pedagogy of translation is still unduly neglected or ignored. Since learning to translate is meant to acquire a set of knowledge, skills, techniques, and strategies that allow translators to render proficiently a text from a language to another so that it causes the same *effect* in the target reader as the *source-text* did in the *source-language* reader.

Therefore, improving translation pedagogy seems to become one of the most constant aims of any language teaching researcher. With the process of *globalization* and with the extensive challenges for teaching and learning, it is of great essence for researchers to cope

with the requirements and the conditions of a new emerging generation in the modern life in order to be able to confront them. One of the most important concerns in this framework is the incursion of new technologies to face the current changes. Instructors are expected to adopt first a '*change of mind*' and to design their classes for a paramount use of present-day information technologies and, in consequence, to *top-quality professional* performance. Our concern will, therefore, focus more on how new technologies may improve not only the professional standards of the acquisition of skills like the use of translation memories, databases, and the Internet as information sources, but also how they may become a pedagogical tool to attain fundamental skills such as autonomous learning and assessment or collaborative learning.

Professional translators have always had strong views on *machine translation* (MT) ever since the idea of automating the process of translation proposed in the late 1940s, with attitudes ranging from healthy scepticism to contemptuous dismissal. Some more apprehensive members of the translation community even feared that the nascent translation technology could sooner or later replace them altogether (maybe some of them still do). This picture has changed slightly over the last few years, since today computer-based applications play a key-role in the success of many professional translators: Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools

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such as translation memory software and terminology management packages are widely used and are now seen by many as part and parcel of the translator's working environment. On the other hand, though, fully automatic machine translation systems and on-line MT in particular surprisingly remain unknown territory to most professional translators.

By the same token, Mayoral (2001: 315) expresses his deep conviction that the effectiveness of basing translator exercises on *textual criteria* seems to be doubtful, although it is a very common approach in many translator institutes, since there is no model of textual typology that is accepted by all translator trainers. That is the reason why he insists on focussing on tasks.

ICTs are at the very core of the knowledge-based learning, it tries to strengthen learners' technology-base knowledge and ensure development. In learning and teaching, it enhances the process of innovation, change and creativity. In the same line of thought, the perception of Audio-Visual Translation (AVT) has also widened as information technology has changed the competences of scientific and technical translators. This seems to be no longer limited to subtitling, dubbing and voice-over. Nowadays, AVT includes new formats and new channels of information, since, as Neves and Remael state: "*AVT is mingling with multimedia translation and*

localization, channelling our access to information and entertainment that are today, more than ever linked”.

Consequently, one may assume that the inclusion of multimedia material in the translation process seems to be a valuable means for students to become familiar with the new emerging forms of translation which bring to light the knowledge of the subject field and its conventions, combined with some knowledge of audiovisual formats.

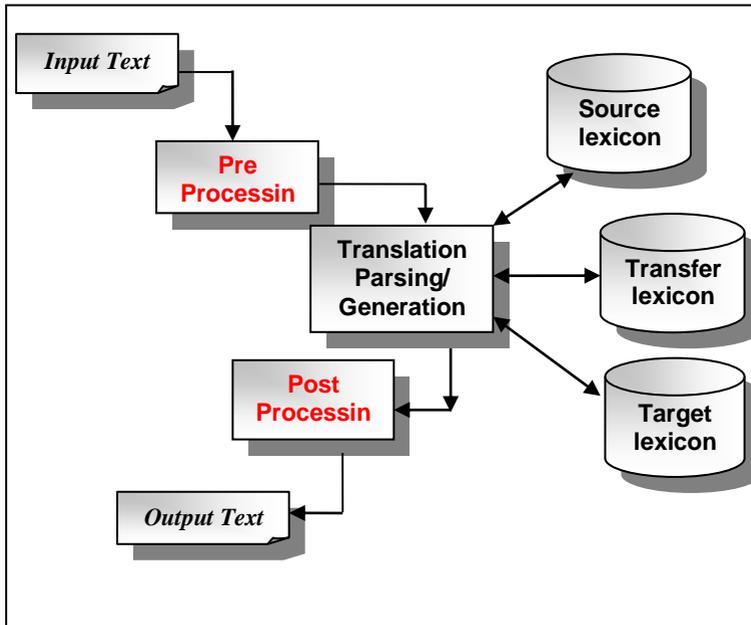
Within a new state-of-art perspective in audio-visual translation, and a new approach namely the Machine Assisted Translation for short, MANTRA was adopted by Pacte (2003) for the sake of improving the quality of translation. The system is facilitated with the pre-processing and post-processing tools, which enables the user to overcome the problems/errors with minimum effort. The strategy used for translation in MANTRA is:

NOT Word to Word;

NOR Rule to Rule;

BUT Lexical Tree to Lexical Tree

Pictorial depiction of the Architecture used in MANTRA



PACTE (2003)

The apparent consequences of the new paradigm are twofold angles: on the one hand, internationalisation and globalisation processes and the shifts in human communicative patterns and social relations have transformed, to a larger extent, the “*scene*” of communication in general. Alternatively, the development of new technologies has dramatically enhanced the possibilities of the classroom setting. A

comprehensive analysis of both appear to be required to face the recent challenges posed by the new technological environment, especially in a field such as multimedia translation, in which technology is both an instrument and a goal.

In this change of translation practice, one needs to see how pedagogy is influenced by the introduction of project management techniques and strategies in translation, the implementation of localization practices and technologies in the more traditional aspects of translation, the new role of translation in multilingual documentation management, the development of standards for quality control and for translation exchange, and the increasing need for translating all types of documentation in all sorts of formats, to name but a few.

Due attention needs also to be paid on the relationship between the intellectual act of translating and the industry's expectations. As the translation process no longer becomes an isolated activity in the production process, the translator needs to retain full control of the different tasks and tools involved in the translation process. The translator has to take on a central role and find a way to manage creativity and technology with a sound practice.

CONCLUSION

Computer-assisted technology adds a hermeneutical layer to an already complex process, given the rapid advances in computer technology; this paper proposes to reconsider the challenges that professionals teaching multimedia translation have to face within the framework of the new globalised technological paradigm, as well as the various strategies that may be developed to face these challenges.

The novelty of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) often leads its erroneous use such as, for example, offering traditional learning material online, so that only the medium changes. But there is a need to adapt this material to the new environment in order to exploit all the advantages of technology. In addition, new interaction strategies should be developed and trained with instructors and learners. In fact, most instructors first need training in ICTs and the didactic shifts that it brings about. Of course, an additional effort is needed to bring about this change successfully. Also, efficient use of the new technologies frequently implies investing more time in class preparation and a conscious planning of communication processes through different means and channels.

Although challenges of learning, use and mastering remain problematic, the use of ICTs permits translators overcome time and space barriers, to design new methods and instruments of teaching, tutoring, assessing and preserving at the same time a personalized approach. Therefore, they need technical and pedagogical advice that should be organized by the university itself. But there is also a need for a change of the traditional roles, which seems to be not easy.

It is worth concluding that Translation systems are not giving satisfactory results, hence, in order to overcome such phenomenon researchers and developers found that the domain-specific translation system is the preferred solution for the time being.

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