

## *Translation in the Digital Age: Rethinking Translation Pedagogy*

**DJEBBARI Zakia**  
Université de Tlemcen

### **Abstract:**

*Translation is witnessing a period of innovative upheaval. The effects of digital technology and internet on translation are continuous, widespread and profound. From automatic online translation services to the rise of crowd-sourced translation and the proliferation of translation Apps for smartphones, translation revolution is everywhere. The implications for human languages, cultures and society of this revolution are radical and far-reaching. In this Information Age, new ways of talking and thinking about translation which take full account of the dramatic changes in the digital sphere are urgently required. This paper will examine the role of translation with regard to the debates around emerging digital technologies, discussing the impact of technology on translation from the point of view of a freelance translator and translator trainer.*

### **Introduction**

Translation seems to be considered as a variable concept in space and time, thus, searching for the very object of inquiry of translation studies may appear as a risky venture. In this sense, scholars have repeatedly pointed out the fundamental weaknesses of any translation theory which fails to take into account the revolutions our age is witnessing. Based on the assumption that translators seem to be unaware of the potential influence translations can have in shaping cultures, forming national identities, and chronicling ideological shifts, the present paper maps a possible outlook to translation teaching within this digital age, trying to bridge the technological gap in translation and cross out the possible barriers that may cause mistranslation of information in the target language.

Over the past decade or so, urgent need for translation services has increased considerably due to a number of factors, such as the growing importance of business on globalisation, the advent of the World Wide Web as an international marketing tool, the rise of the software localisation industry (Sprung, 2000: ix), and the increasing opportunities for international trade. The advent of translation technology has totally globalized translation and drastically changed the way we process, teach, and study translation. Translation technology has, in short, brought fundamental changes and additional dimensions to all aspects of the contemporary world of translation.

Higher education is undergoing radical changes and society is expecting the university to respond to these challenges. Within all these winds of change, technology appears to be able to adapt the new context and offer golden opportunities to cope with.

### **-Benefits of Translation with ICTs**

In recent decades, on account of the rapid advances in computer sciences and other related disciplines, translation technology has become a norm in translation practice, an important part of translation studies, a new paradigm of translation pedagogy, and a major trend in the industry.

Electronic and digital technology prompted a widening of translation thinking. How relevant was the paradigm of translation beyond the level of verbal translation? It soon became apparent that the concept of translation had to enter the realm of visual, musical, multimedia, and hypermedia translations. Now that digital technology has made its presence known in all areas of research, the question has to be asked; in what form does the digital expand translation thinking and translation pedagogy?

One should be cognisant of the fact that the increasing availability of general-purpose software applications such as word processing packages and e-mail, a number of translation-specific software systems have migrated from mainframe to PC

platforms, rendering them accessible to freelance translators, rather than being restricted to use by translators employed in translation departments and language service organisations. This has in a way facilitated the translation process to a large extent, i.e., non-professional translation may take place within the implementation of software. This latter needs the refinement and correction of a professional to create acceptable texts

### **-Web-Based Translation: The Challenge**

Digital technology can be responsible for bringing human creative expressions closer together through the incorporation of the action of the user. The use of ICTs permits translators to overcome time and space barriers, to design new methods and instruments of teaching, tutoring and evaluation. However, technology seems to prevent culture-oriented translation, this may destroy to a certain extent the intended meaning within the context. Nevertheless, challenges still remain raised to benefit from the revolutionary phenomenon.

Within a pedagogical perspective, it is important to realise that the use of new technologies need first and foremost to be learned and mastered, not only the instructors but also by their learners. This training is two-ways process, technical and pedagogical.

It is obvious that change in anything requires time, and revolution needs modification of both translators and learners minds to achieve the necessary knowledge and skills. On the other hand, change also requires investment in staff and equipments as well as in maintenance and training.

With the rise of the global economy, the use of language learning software is gradually increasing. Such software replaces expensive and time consuming higher education classes and allows for people to learn and translate on their

own schedule. These programs have changed the face of language. They allow for more fluidity in communication between countries. Though they are not true language translation software, they play a similar role.

With the shifting winds and new fashion of websites, Google found it very empirical to create a way to ease the task of communication between people from different countries on the same websites. With translation, one can copy/paste into the translate page, or even have the option of typing in the URL and translating the entire page in bulk. This type of easily accessible translation allows for mass communication between countries and individuals. It also allows for information to be retrievable from any country, though the given translation is not really well refined.

Google translate even has a plug-in for Google's web browser, chrome, that allows for automatic translation of words when you hover over them with the cursor. The plug-in also prompts full page translation any time the user accesses a page that is not naturally in the user's default language. If someone from England were trying to access a French website, the program would notice and ask the user if they want the whole page translated to English. This makes already easy software almost second nature. There are no longer limits to what type of web pages one can understand. The software also has a mobile app for android, iphone, and windows phone which made the task more accessible and much easier.

### **-Limits of Translation Technology: Curse or a Blessing?**

As with any form of computing, technology is not perfect. Until humanity achieves true artificial intelligence, there will always be problems with automated translation. Context is the biggest problem for artificial translation. A machine cannot

grasp the individual nuances of language. It cannot cope with culture differences.

Take a look at Google Translate as an example. Type in a single word and Google Translate will provide several different words that have the same meaning giving several options. However, if you type a sentence, Google will rather give a sentence riddled with grammatical errors. It can easily translate the words, but has a harder time getting the flow just right as a native speaker would. In addition, Google does not know context. If you type in a word in English that has several meanings for the same spelling, Google will not know which meaning you had in mind and may give you a word that is incorrect for your context. Being a computer program, it does not have the capacity to think critically before spitting out an answer.

### **-Conclusion**

Digital technology allows us to create a more total understanding of a work and, at the same time, a possibility to establish a continuous interaction with the work.

Considering language as being a remarkable index of pedagogy changing, it would be surprising; indeed, if such a radically innovative phenomenon; namely technology did not have a fascinating impact on the way learners learn and grow. However, the feasible combination of technology into translation process seems reasonably doubtful if it is not carefully integrated within the curriculum accompanied by appropriate services, mechanisms and professional development support (Fox, 2003).

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