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A Workplace Study of Translator-Computer Interaction at TextMinded Danmark A/S

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ABSTRACT

Due to the forces of globalisation and the explosion in digital content during the last decades, demand for translation has increased significantly. Since traditional human translation is unable to meet this increasing demand, translation tools or so-called computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools are employed in an attempt to increase productivity. Translation Memory (TM) has been the prominent CAT tool for many years. However, in recent years, Machine Translation (MT) has been incorporated in many CAT tools. This combination, also known as MT-assisted TM translation, is the focus of this thesis.

When working with an MT-assisted TM tool, a translator receives suggestions for the translation of every sentence in the source text. In the case of TM, suggestions come from translations previously produced by the translator him- or herself or other human translators, whereas in the case of MT, suggestions are automatically generated by means of MT software.

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: to investigate how professional translators interact with an MT-assisted TM tool, and to explore the translators' attitudes towards this interaction. The thesis is situated within the subfield of Translation Process Research, and regards the MT-assisted TM process as a context-dependent activity and as an instance of Translator-Computer Interaction (TCI). To address the twofold purpose of the thesis, seven research questions are formulated. The first six research questions explore different aspects of the translators' interaction with the tool – for instance the translators' choice to accept, reject or revise the translation suggestions provided by the software; their interaction with the tool relating to said choices; the time dedicated to editing different types of translation suggestions; the amount of editing implemented in these suggestions; the possible implementation of an end revision phase; and, finally, what potential changes might be applied in this phase. The seventh research question explores the translators' attitudes towards TCI in the form of MT-assisted TM translation.

To address these questions, the thesis employs an embedded mixed methods research design. Recognising the context-dependence of the translation process, the study is conducted as a workplace study at the Danish Language Service Provider, TextMinded Danmark A/S, - i.e. within a context where professional translations are undertaken. Within the workplace study, a contextual study and an experimental study are embedded. The contextual study employs the methods of observation, semi-structured interviews and document collection. The experimental study is conducted with eight translators who each translate two source texts, a technical text and a marketing newsletter, from the Danish company Bang & Olufsen using an MT-assisted TM tool. The methods for data collection used in the experimental study are screen recording, keystroke logging, observation, retrospective interviews and a post-experimental questionnaire.

The analyses show that the MT-assisted TM process involves complex interactions between the translator and the tool. The translators respond to different types of translation suggestions diversely and draw on different resources and functionalities both inside and outside the CAT tool while considering client preferences and the situational context of the target text, overcoming challenges posed by the tool and attending to the cohesion of the target text. Also, although the translators identify many negative aspects of MT in particular, they seem to have a flexible and pragmatic attitude towards TCI in the form of MT-assisted TM translation.

The thesis provides new empirical insights on translators' interactions with an MT-assisted TM tool and on translators' attitudes to these interactions. It also contributes theoretically and methodologically to the subfield of Translation Process Research and especially translation processes in the workplace. Finally, the findings also have pedagogical and practical applications and would be very useful for translation trainers and translation tool developers.

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