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Incorporating Survey-Identified ICT Affordances into Online Translation Practice

Cómo integrar en la práctica de la traducción en línea las funcionalidades de las TIC identificadas mediante una encuesta

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ABSTRACT: Surveys of translator ICT use typically focus on a narrow range of technologies, such as CAT tools. They do not address how translators use ICTs to complete a variety of tasks involving interaction with individuals who do not use translation memory software. Therefore, survey results have been of limited use to educators wishing to incorporate ICTs into translation practice. I describe the methods employed to survey translators and educators regarding a) how translators use ICTs to interact with others while translating, and b) how educators incorporate ICTs into online translation practice. Categories of interaction-relevant tools and tool features are proposed based on the affordances of the reported tools. Responses evidence a narrow conceptualization of translation tools by educators, who also mention multiple constraints faced when incorporating tools into practice. The paper concludes with proposals for incorporating professionally relevant interaction into translation practice.

KEYWORDS: ICTs; information and communication technologies; surveys; translation pedagogy; translation technologies; translator training.

RESUMEN: Las encuestas sobre el uso de TIC por parte de los traductores suelen centrarse en un conjunto limitado de tecnologías, como las herramientas TAO, sin considerar las diversas tareas para las que los traductores las usan. Esto reduce la utilidad de los resultados para los docentes que desean integrar las TIC en sus clases prácticas. Este trabajo explica los métodos empleados para encuestar a traductores sobre cómo utilizan las TIC para interactuar con otros mientras traducen y a docentes sobre cómo las incorporan en la práctica de la traducción en línea. Según las funcionalidades que ofrecen

las herramientas, se proponen categorías para clasificarlas en función de sus características y relevancia en términos de interacción. Los resultados muestran que los docentes tienen una perspectiva restringida de las herramientas de traducción y enfrentan múltiples obstáculos para su implementación. Así, se presentan propuestas de interacción profesional pertinentes para la práctica de la traducción.

PALABRAS CLAVE: TIC; tecnologías de la información y la comunicación; encuestas; didáctica de la traducción; tecnologías de la traducción; formación de traductores.

1. INTRODUCTION

To develop the personal/interpersonal and technology translation subcompetences (European Commission 2022), students of translation must practice interacting in professionally relevant ways. The «soft» skills integral to interpersonal competence can be fostered in coursework designed to reflect how translators use tools to interact while translating. That said, constraints affect the selection and implementation of these tools in translation practice.

This paper summarizes how a survey was used to identify the affordances of information and communication technologies (ICTs) used by translators to interact during a range of translation-relevant tasks and to determine how educators have incorporated translation-relevant interaction into online translation practice. The results serve as evidence of the interaction-related tool affordances that warrant emphasis given educational constraints and changing technology. The survey was conducted as part of an action research cycle implemented in an introductory master's-level online translation practice course at an American university. The data is reported on more extensively in Tucker (2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Surveys in which translators are asked to describe ICT use generally document the uptake of translation-specific technologies, such as computer-assisted and machine translation tools (e.g., American Translators Association 2022; Shih [2014] 2023; Slator 2022). Others address topics such as instant messaging applications (Kerremans et al. 2019), student and professional attitudes toward tools (Heinisch and Iacono 2019), and the alignment between curriculum and industry (Peña Aguilar 2022). However, it is unclear how a range of tools used by translators make interaction possible during translation.

Translators use ICTs while interacting to share knowledge. Knowledge-sharing tools allow entities (e.g., translators and other project participants) to create, transfer, and store knowledge using artifacts (e.g., digital documents) while requesting feedback, asking questions, sharing a plan of action with and requesting help from others, requesting and planning for collaboration, justifying why actions are being taken, requesting advice, brainstorming, evaluating, and reflecting (Babu and Gopalakrishnan 2008; Lee 2001;

Wenneker et al. 2005). An example of a knowledge-sharing tool feature is text annotation (e.g., underlining, striking through, and highlighting).

Tools can be used to share knowledge in these ways due to the actions that they afford. An affordance is «the relationship between an object's physical properties (artifacts) and the characteristics of an agent (user) that enables particular interactions between agent and object» (Gibson 1977, as quoted by Kirschner 2002, 12), or a «relationship between the properties of an object and the capabilities of the agent that determine just how the object could possibly be used» (Norman 2013, 11). Therefore, affordances lower the threshold for carrying out an action (Kirschner 2002, 13). The following questions must be answered to determine which knowledge-sharing tools afford translation-relevant interaction and how these affordances are incorporated into online translation practice:

a. How do translators use knowledge-sharing tools and tool features to interact with others while completing translation-relevant tasks?
b. How do educators incorporate technology-mediated interaction into online translation practice?
c. Which interaction-related tool affordances merit emphasis given the constraints faced by educators and the variety of technologies used by translators?

3. METHODS

The data were collected using the Survey of Translators and Online Translator Educators (Tucker 2021), which consisted of a questionnaire and semi-structured follow-up interviews. Responses depicted ways in which the surveyed translators used knowledge-sharing tools and tool features to interact with other professionals to complete constellations of translation-relevant tasks, the extent to which interaction needs were accounted for in the online translation practice coursework of the surveyed educators, and the constraints faced by these educators when incorporating tools into practice.

The survey was targeted toward translators and two types of educators: instructors and program coordinators. «Translator» is defined as an individual who identifies as a translator and whose income from translation-related work amounts to at least 55 % of their total earnings. «Instructors» and «coordinators» are individuals who currently teach or coordinate university-level translation practice online or have taught or coordinated it within the past five years.

Mainly purposive sampling was used to recruit translators worldwide, on multiple social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter), among the author's personal networks and in large private groups of translation technology users and translation interest groups. Professional associations and institutes were contacted and asked to share the recruitment message. Convenience sampling was used to recruit educators after a list of universities with online translation practice coursework was created.

Most questionnaire items overlap among the respondent types, which comprise three streams (translator, instructor, coordinator) that are further arranged in all possible

permutations (translator, translator-instructor, translator-coordinator, instructor, instructor-coordinator, coordinator, translator-instructor-coordinator). Several key items contain open-ended, text-entry response fields that allowed translators to describe their professional activities (Figure 1).

> List up to three of the most important *tools* you use when **exchanging and/or updating glossaries or other terminology resources (e.g., corpora)**. Then, briefly describe the tool *features* you use and *how* you use these features. For example, if you use the common tool MultiTerm Convert when exchanging glossaries with others who do not use MultiTerm, your reply might appear as *MultiTerm Convert / All features / When exchanging glossaries with others who do not use Multiterm*. However, if you use the tool Google Sheets to keep a glossary synced among various translators, your reply might appear as *Google Sheets / Share settings and comments / When exchanging glossaries with others and when discussing terms before updating glossaries*. The tools you mention need not be typical translation tools.

Figure 1. Questionnaire item addressing how tools are used to complete tasks

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred and two individuals attempted the Survey of Translators and Online Translator Educators. Of these, approximately 28 % (56) did not meet the inclusion criteria. Respondents were classified as follows: translator (63,4 %, 90), instructor (28,2 %, 40), or coordinator (8,5 %, 12). Fifteen instructors were also translators; three coordinators were instructors; two respondents were translators, instructors, and coordinators; and 18 respondents were only instructors.

Translators-only provided translation services in 39 countries, with over one-fourth (27,4 %, 17) providing services in more than one. Translator-instructors (13) provided translation services in 13 countries. The two translator-instructor-coordinators provided translation services in five.

Over the past five years, instructors-only had taught at 14 universities, while translator-instructors had taught at 17. Coordinators-only had coordinated at three, and instructor-coordinators at three. Both translator-instructor-coordinators had taught and coordinated at one university.

4.1. *Education and Experience*

Most translators reported 11 or more years of translation experience (54,4 %, 49). Almost half of translators-only (41,4 %, 12) had taken an online translation practice course, though only one-fourth (25 %, 3) of these believed this coursework had prepared them to interact effectively with others while translating. Two-thirds (66,7 %, 8) noted that too little or no emphasis was placed on interacting with others while translating. When asked if they were to take an online translation practice course, how much emphasis should this course place on interacting effectively with other translation project

participants, 88,2 % (15) responded a moderate amount to a lot. One hundred percent (5) of translator-instructors responded in kind.

4.2. *Assessment of Interaction*

Educators often claimed to have concrete outcomes addressing interaction with others during translation. However, a follow-up probe yielded unclear results. Several responses focused on interaction and interaction assessment in ways that may not be directly translation-relevant. Notably, over one-third of instructors said they were unsure of whether translation-relevant interaction was assessed.

4.3. *Translation Tasks*

Responses regarding which constellations of tasks participants considered important to their translation work and/or to translation practice favored translating, followed by proofreading and/or editing translations, then working in teams. The frequency of responses of translators clustered most closely around translating, proofreading and/or editing translations, and working in teams. Non-translator educator selections were more widely distributed.

4.4. *Tool Uses*

Responses very frequently addressed interaction, at 919 mentions, reinforcing the need for interaction-related learning outcomes. First, the ways respondents reported using tools and tool features were logged. Then, multiple sources were consulted alongside the responses to categorize tool names, features, and uses. Responses were normalized for comparability across respondent types. Table 1 contains the full normalized list of ways in which respondents used tool features when interacting.

adding images to termbases	packaging files	streamlining translation
annotating the translation product	instant messaging	synching files
annotating the translation process	keeping track of resources used to translate	taking notes
annotating terminology	maintaining linguistic consistency	word processing
assigning roles in translation workflow	managing projects	workshopping translations
communicating with clients	managing terminology	writing for translation
communicating with instructors	organizing term entries by translator	streamlining the translation process
communicating with	planning payments	taking notes containing

instructors acting as clients	when working in teams	questions for project stakeholders
communicating with team members	providing feedback	
comparing document versions	prospecting for clients	
converting files	quality assurance	
creating termbase definition and entry structures	recruiting translators	
discussing terminology	requesting research assistance	
discussing translation proposals in class	researching	
discussing translation work	retrieving previous translations	
drawing inside files	sharing screens to demonstrate tool features	
editing files simultaneously	sharing files	
educating clients	sharing resources	
ensuring interoperability	socializing with translators	
importing/exporting files	splitting or combining documents	

Table 1. Normalized tool uses

Table 2 contains a list of general uses arrived at by combining overlapping categories from Table 1. Text production was the most frequent use (463). It covers annotating, which often overlaps with discussing translation choices, comparing document versions, and maintaining linguistic consistency outside systematic terminology management. Sharing materials and resources was the second most frequent use (298). It includes sharing files, editing files simultaneously, importing and exporting files, sharing resources, packaging files, synching files, researching and requesting research assistance, converting files, creating termbase definitions and entry structures, and splitting or combining documents. Workflow management was the third most frequent use (148). It covers managing projects, managing terminology, and streamlining the translation process. The «other» category encompasses educating clients, planning payments when working in teams, prospecting for clients, recruiting translators, sharing screens to demonstrate tool features, socializing with translators, and taking notes containing questions for project stakeholders.

Tool use	No. of responses by respondent type						Total
	Coordinator-only	Instructor-only	Instructor-coordinator	Translator-instructor	Translator-instructor-coordinator	Translator	
Text production	16	80	40	78	29	220	463
Sharing of materials and resources	30	75	20	40	15	118	298
Workflow management	14	21	13	27	14	59	148
Other	0	2	0	2	0	6	10

Table 2. General tool uses

Tool features were often used for multiple—up to 10—purposes. Additionally, some features can be further divided into other features. For example, annotation features (Table 3) consist of comments, track changes, color-coding, drawing, and translation memory editor view, segment status and user ID. Comments alone were used for both text production and sharing materials and resources, that is, when annotating terminology, the translation product, and the translation process; communicating with clients, with instructors, with instructors acting as clients, and with team members; comparing document versions; discussing terminology; discussing translation proposals in class; discussing translation work outside of class; editing files simultaneously; providing feedback; sharing resources; and workshopping translations.

Tool	Total mentions
Adobe Acrobat	6
Box	1
Canvas (SpeedGrader)	1
Google Docs	7
Google Drive (view a file)	1
Google Sheets	9
memoQ	5
memoQ Server	1
Memsource	1
Microsoft Word	60
Microsoft Word (online)	15
MotaWord translation platform	1
VoiceThread	1
Scrible Toolbar	1
SDL Trados Live	1
SDL Trados Studio	8
Smartcat	2
Straker Translations: Workbench	1
Wordbee Translator	1

Table 3. Tools that afford annotation

4.5. *Conceptions of Translation Tools*

A pattern pointing to a narrow conceptualization of translation tools emerged during follow-up interviews. One instructor-coordinator emphasized the importance of linguistic transfer over technology. However, the same person used discussion forums extensively for student interaction, to discuss various aspects of posted translations. Another mentioned that their program had no translation technology modules due to the student profile and their resulting focus on transfer, leaving the professional students completing their program to complete tool-related training using other means, such as webinars. This person did not list tools for a variety of constellations of tasks because «we don't use any» and «given our goals and outcomes, there's no time for that . . . A lot of the texts we use are not technical or repetitive» This last comment appears to address computer-assisted translation tools with a translation memory feature. Educators may be assuaged to know that multiple widely supported «generalist» tools are nevertheless translation-relevant and can be integrated into curricula.

Another example of a disconnect between academia and industry concerns the use of online discussion forums. Responses point to a disjunct between the way forums are employed in pedagogical versus professional contexts. Though translator respondents consulted forums while translating, forums were used primarily to request research assistance in ways that did not directly involve producing texts or sharing materials, that is, for guidance on terminology and not for collaborative interaction when working on a shared translation project. Educators made use of discussion forums for multiple purposes, many of which are certainly relevant to the virtual learning environment. It could be that technology oftentimes leads pedagogy, however, given that widely supported non-translation-specific professionally relevant tools could be used for all or most of the purposes mentioned by instructors and coordinators.

4.6. *Fostering Technology Competence*

Certain tools are used for a wider range of translation-relevant actions than others. The ways in which translators reported using these tools is evidence that the tools lower the threshold for executing—that they afford—multiple translation-relevant actions. This should be considered when designing, developing, facilitating, and revising translation practice coursework, especially since non-translation-specific tools (e.g., Microsoft Word) were mentioned by the surveyed translators to share knowledge more frequently and while engaging in more translation-relevant tasks than tools designed specifically for translation (e.g., SDL Trados Studio). This is to be expected, given that translation-relevant interaction regularly takes place among individuals not using the same tools and because final deliverables are often not submitted using the translation-specific tool file types.

4.7. *Fostering Personal/Interpersonal Competence*

Survey responses point to a clear need for preparing students to interact effectively with others while translating and to an insufficient emphasis on interaction during practice. Personal/interpersonal competence could be fostered alongside technology competence by creating a translation-relevant interaction-related learning outcome aligned with an assignment that students complete while working in groups. Table 4 contains an example of a revised outcome addressing interaction. Meeting this outcome while using an industry-relevant tool would ensure that the three overarching technology competence-related affordances described in Table 2 are fostered alongside personal/interpersonal competence.

Original learning outcome	New learning outcomes
Produce and follow translation briefs in conjunction with translation tasks.	Interact using industry-relevant tools and approaches to produce translation briefs.
	Follow translation briefs in conjunction with translation tasks.

Table 4. Creating an interaction-related learning outcome

Students could also use a rubric (Figure 2) to assess the efficacy of peer interaction. To promote the development of «soft» skills, the rubric should prompt students to provide constructive feedback while managing group workflows, sharing materials and resources, and drafting or iterating a deliverable—the three tool affordance types from Table 2—while brainstorming and requesting feedback, help, or advice from group members; creating and sharing a plan of action with group members; justifying why actions were taken; and following through with delegated tasks.

Name
Peer Assessment of Interaction during Pre-Translation

Description
Use this rubric to assess how your group members interact while completing the Pre-Translation assignment. Provide a description for e score in the Feedback box that appears after entering the score. Be clear, respectful, and constructive in your assessment. Complete one rubric per group member. Your assessment will be submitted to each group member anonymously.

Rubric Detail

	Levels of Achievement		
Criteria	**Weak**	**Satisfactory**	**Strong**
Brainstorming and requesting feedback, help, or advice from group members **Weight 25.00%**	**25.00 %** Group member does not engage in brainstorming. Group member does not request feedback, help, or advice from other group members.	**75.00 %** Group member adequately engages in brainstorming in some modules. Group member adequately requests feedback, help, or advice from other group members in some modules.	**100.00 %** Group member actively and effectively engages in brainstorming. Group member actively and effectively requests feedback, help, or advice from other group members in some modules.
Creating and sharing a plan of action **Weight 25.00%**	**25.00 %** Group member does not participate in creating or sharing a plan of action.	**75.00 %** Group member adequately participates in creating or sharing a plan of action in some modules.	**100.00 %** Group member actively and effectively participates in creating or sharing a plan of action in some modules.
Justifying why actions were taken **Weight 25.00%**	**25.00 %** Group member does not justify why actions were taken.	**75.00 %** Group member adequately justifies why actions were taken in some modules.	**100.00 %** Group member adequately justifies why actions were taken in most modules.
Following through with delegated tasks **Weight 25.00%**	**25.00 %** Group member typically does not follow through with delegated tasks.	**75.00 %** Group member typically follows through with delegated tasks.	**100.00 %** Group member always follows through with delegated tasks.

Table 5. Rubric for peer assessment of interaction

4.8. *Addressing Constraints*

Educators indicated the following primary constraints on incorporating tools into practice: the time needed to ready students and instructors to use tools, the ability to provide technical support for tools, and the ease of integrating tools into a virtual learning environment. Table 5 depicts a data-driven way to select tools used to share knowledge in translation practice taking place in the course revised in Tucker (2021). The five stakeholder-related criteria are each assigned a weight based on their relative importance.

Online Translation Practice Tool Evaluation Matrix							
		Knowledge-Sharing Tool Options					
Criteria	**Weighting**	**VoiceThread**		**Blackboard Groups**		**Google Workspace: Drive and Docs**	
		Score	**Total**	**Score**	**Total**	**Score**	**Total**
Professional relevance	5	2	10	2	10	5	25
Institutional support	5	3	15	5	25	5	25
Ease of student readiness	4	4	16	4	16	4	16
Ease of instructor readiness	4	4	16	5	20	4	16
Ease of VLE integration	3	3	9	5	15	4	12
	TOTAL:		**66**		**86**		**94**

Table 6. Tool evaluation matrix

5. CONCLUSIONS

Educators must embrace operationalizations of technology competence beyond translation-specific tools as well as foreground interaction and collaboration to ensure that students can work with a range of professionals in a rapidly changing industry landscape. The results of the Survey of Translators and Translator Educators illustrate how translators interact using multiple tools and provide educators with information needed to facilitate industry-relevant interaction during translation practice, as well as methods of identifying relevant tool affordances, which can then be incorporated into courses in light of situational constraints. It is hoped that these results will encourage

researchers to design granular surveys of tool use for the benefit of educators and students of translation alike.

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