USING CAT TOOLS IN FREELANCE TRANSLATION: INSIGHTS FROM A CASE STUDY, BY PAULINA PIETRZAK & MICHAL KORNACKI

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Paulina Pietzzak and Michal Kornacki are two computer-assisted translation instructors at the University of Lodz, with recent but consistent research work on translator training. In *Using Cat Tools in Freelance Translation: Insights from a Case Study*, the authors attempt to "explore the technological evolution in translation and its effects on the process of translation" (p.1), based on a vast literature review and their previous research. Moreover, they describe "the demographics and attitudes of freelance translators" (p.1), whose native language is Polish, towards CAT tools, based on the findings of a survey-based study. "The study was designed to explore the attitudes and preferences of freelance translators working with various language pairs, whose native language is Polish" (p. 66). Another purpose of the study findings, although not explicit in the title, and therefore likely the object of a future publication, was to help the authors "identify priorities and objectives for translator training" (p. 70) as they "advocate for the implementation of the "technological toolkit" […] in the translation classroom" (p.1).

The book is divided into 7 well-organized chapters, where the first four present an overview of the freelance market, the freelance translator tech profile, the development of translation technologies over the last decades and its impacts on translation and the translator. This overview is supported by relevant literature, albeit some references could be replaced by more up-to-date research, especially when referring to technology trends. Also, many translation concepts are addressed and presented in a relevant way and the authors

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naturally focus on the evolution and application of technology in the translation process, enhancing both pros and cons of translation technology interaction (pp.46-65).

In the second chapter, *Application of Technology in the Process of Translation*, the authors present their categorisation of translation technology, "based on two principles; a) type of translation that the tools are used for, and b) a freelancer perspective" (p.17). That categorisation is divided into three categories - "regular translation", "audiovisual translation" and "interpreting" – with some tool subcategories, reflecting how they perceive the freelance use of technological tools. The term "regular translation" seems to mean "written" translation (p. 18) and be "based on tools that are in actual use by contemporary freelancers" (p.18), such as "word processors, CAT tools, machine translation, CMS, TMS and graphic software" (p.17).

I must say that the author's typology is not completely clear to me. The term "regular" gives the idea that there is some "normal" use of translation technology, but there is no evidence that audiovisual translation or interpreting are less regular or "normal" than "written translation". Although no facts and figures are presented, I understand that most translation jobs in the freelance market are still texts and their volume is measured accordingly to the number of words/characters. Nevertheless, many of those texts are online (namely websites) and need to be localised, not only translated. Moreover, audiovisual translation is in some ways also text-based and can also use CAT tools as supporting translation technology. Finally, the adjective "regular" does not describe a type of translation (such as audiovisual and interpreting) but expresses a value. In a categorisation, the semantic value of the terms, at the same level of conceptualisation, should be similar and define the type of translation, not its frequency or popularity. Moreover, in this category – regular - the authors include "machine translation" as a subset. We would thus expect that this technology is regularly used by freelance translators. However, there is no evidence in this chapter of the

percentage of machine-translation users, and the findings of the study (p.83) also give no evidence that machine translation is one of the "regular" tools used by freelance translators. Finally, in this category, the subset "graphic software" is, as the authors well explain (pp.27-28), also not only related to written translation, although the authors focus on OCR and pdf edition tools.

Also, placing "localisation tools" under "audiovisual translation" "due to the nature of the translated content" (p.30) is not a very good argument… Localisation is related to digital content, namely software and website localisation, but much content is still "written", not only multimedia. Moreover, some CAT tools are also localisation tools (ex.: Trados Studio, Memsource, MemoQ, etc).

To understand better the criteria and the model, the authors should have explained better what they mean by "type of translation" and "freelance perspective", since some more questions could be asked to the authors concerning this typology, which I believe they would be open to answering since their intention was "to discuss the complexity of translation from a freelancer's perspective" (p.18).

Following in the chapter, the authors interestingly explore five levels of translator-technology (TT) interaction, from basic to full, profiling most of the translators and describing how different degrees of affinity with technology can impact a translation career.

In chapter 3, the authors attempt to present a *Freelance Translator Profile*, but they only focus on technological competence, dividing translators into "users and non-users of CAT tools" (p.41). Agreeing that this can be a good and easy-to-understand label, "CAT tools" do not include all the tools (namely machine translation) the authors refer to in their categorisation and levels of TT interaction in the previous chapter. Maybe they should have chosen a broader term like tech skilled/unskilled translators, also in different levels, aligning

the "multifaced and fast-changing profile of the translator" (p. 43) with the list of tech skills

that the authors consider every contemporary translator should have, which they designate

as "technology-related translation competence model" (p.40). Once more, I disagree with

the designation "model", since a model is, in my opinion, a more structured representation

of skills (not only a list) which could include, for instance, a sub-categorisation of the

different skills. Nevertheless, designations aside, the authors present a relevant and thorough

"technological toolkit" (p.43), which they consider a "set of conceptual tools […] that helps

[the translator] to effectively function and handle technology".

Chapter four, *Technological Evolution in Translation*, ends the first part of the book,

making a balanced evaluation of the impacts of technology, especially CAT tools, in the

translation work. Although the authors are clearly for the use of CAT tools, as experienced

translators, researchers and instructors, they point out both pros and cons of its use, not only

by professionals but also in the classroom. They also lay some focus on the cognitive and

metacognitive aspects of TT interaction and how translation technology affects the

"translator's psychological self" (p. 56) of the translators and can make them feel anxious,

which I consider being relevant issues for any CAT instructor/ user.

The second part of the book, comprising the last chapters (excluding the conclusion)

is focused on the study carried out by the authors to attempt to present a panorama of the

use of CAT tools by contemporary translators in Poland. Although the subtitle of the book

refers to the study as a case study (qualitative research), it is, in fact, a survey research study

(quantitative), aimed "to show the existing tendencies and mechanisms in the use of CAT

tools and explore reasons for the apparent reluctance towards those tools in the freelance

market" (p.67). The research question "was to determine [the freelancers'] attitudes and

preferences regarding the use of CAT Technology in general and CAT tools in particular"

(p.67). The authors don't explain, however, how they are aware of the "reluctance" of

freelancers and who these freelancers are: Polish freelancers? Global freelancers? According to the title and after reading the first part of the book – focusing on freelancers in general - I would expect this study to have a global approach since the aim and research question focus on tools and not on language pairs. However, and again without explaining why, the study had as its target group " freelance translators working with various language pairs whose native language is Polish" (p.66). Why the authors decided to survey only Polish native translators is, therefore, unclear.

Still about the target group, even if language pairs may be a criterium, since not all CAT tools include all pairs, it is also surprising that the language pairs were considered and not the type of text/translation that the translators mostly work with (technical, literary, legal, website, multimedia, etc…). The translator's specialisation or text typology, apart from other criteria considered in the study (editable texts, price, full-time/part-time job, clients' demand, learning curve, etc) are certainly important factors to consider before deciding using or not a CAT tool. Since "data suggest that the choice of whether or not to use CAT tools is directly related to the format of the documents for translation" (p.107) was it not also important to know the content type of such documents?

Notwithstanding, the data is methodologically well analysed and the findings, although limited to 141 answers from native Polish translators are interesting, showing that there is still a considerable reluctance of freelance translators to use CAT tools, especially when their age is over 50. This may come as a surprise in the 21st century, if we are aware of the last reports of the translation industry, or not, since we are dealing with freelance translators and not with professional language service providers (LSPs). Studying freelance preferences is in fact not very common and there are not many studies focusing on the use of CAT Tools by freelance translators. The findings of Pietrzak and Kornacki (2021) are, therefore, quite relevant and open new research paths in this field, namely to find out if these

findings are a local reality or a general panorama, by extending the study to other countries and have more insights that would allow us to have a more comprehensive and general panorama of how translators are "using CAT tools in freelance translation".

Finally, as instructors, the authors are naturally thinking of the implementation of technological skills in the classroom (p. 44) and the "implications [of the findings] for translator training" (p.102) but they mainly focus on young translators. Having already the knowledge that the market has tech-skilled and tech-less-skilled translators, and that some Polish freelance translators feel that academia has little to offer them (p.70) maybe it would also be worth considering implications for training professional translators and not only the young translators, apart from suggesting improvements to translation software developers (p. 104).

In *Using CAT Tools in Freelance Translation: Insights from a Case Study*, Pietrzak and Kornacki (2021) promess a bit more than they offer, since the insights, although interesting, are limited to a study carried out in Poland and only focusing on CAT tools. Nevertheless, it is an important study, that can open paths to further research and training designs and likely shows the real freelance market, contrasting to the industry reports, focusing on the big LSPs. The only way to make sure that young translators will have success as freelancers in the market is to know the market and prepare them for the threats with good training that can allow them to have good opportunities. The (Polish) freelance market is apparently very competitive and translators tend to compete amongst themselves instead of cooperating, especially when new translators, better prepared, arrive at the market (p. 70-71). I would say, not only the Polish market… Studies like this help instructors, students, software developers and translators understand the market well and do their part to improve it. And they are needed in a more representative way among the freelance population, both demographically

and geographically, to be able to have a real panorama of the use of CAT tools in the freelance market.

Finally, the first part of the book offers an important overview of the translation market and the implications of using technology that also can save bachelor's and master's students and, of course, professional translators, much research time contributing to answering some "whys" of not liking or using translation technology (yet) or "hows" to use it.

Pietrzak, P., & Kornacki, M. (2021). *Using CAT Tools in Freelance Translation: Insights from a Case Study* (1st ed.). Routledge.