

Translation automation survey among translators

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This document presents a summary of the results of a survey on translation automation conducted in September 2011, in which 180 translators participated. This feedback served me in the preparation for the ProZ-Taus debate on whether "translation automation is good for the translation industry" and for the open IAPTI webinar on "Translation tools - the financial aspect" to be held on Saturday October 8, 2011. (See details of the webinar [here](#).)

Data collection

There are various ways of approaching translation automation (aka IT-based language transfer, machine translation, MT). I chose the one in which professional translators, working in their established ways and fields, share their views on using MT. Their methods of using MT does not necessarily follow the best practices recommended by MT developers.

Four different samples were collected, as the survey invitation was initially posted in different places:

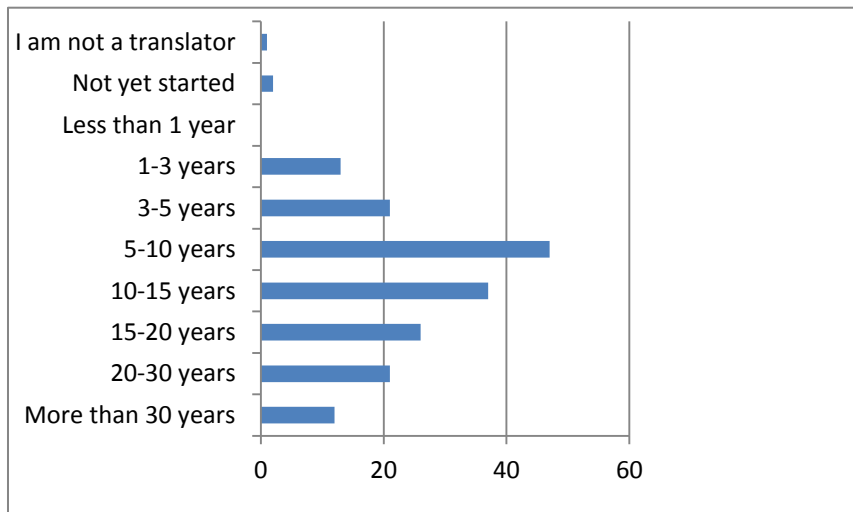
- 1.) On the forum page and facebook wall of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI) – **61 replies**
- 2.) On the open forum of ProZ.com – **27 replies**
- 3.) On the "Certified Pro" forum of ProZ.com – **90 replies**
- 4.) In the discussion workspace of the exam graders of the American Translators Association – **12 replies**

Survey respondents shared a multitude of different viewpoints, for and against MT – often quite passionately, as you will see. While it would have been impossible to present each individual answer, I made sure to make a balanced selection of comments (typeset in blue). All the replies included in this summary are taken verbatim from the survey replies; only a small number of obvious typos have been corrected.

Results

Q1. How long have you been a translator?

More than 30 years	12
20-30 years	21
15-20 years	26
10-15 years	37
5-10 years	47
3-5 years	21
1-3 years	13
Less than 1 year	0
Not yet started	2
I am not a translator	1

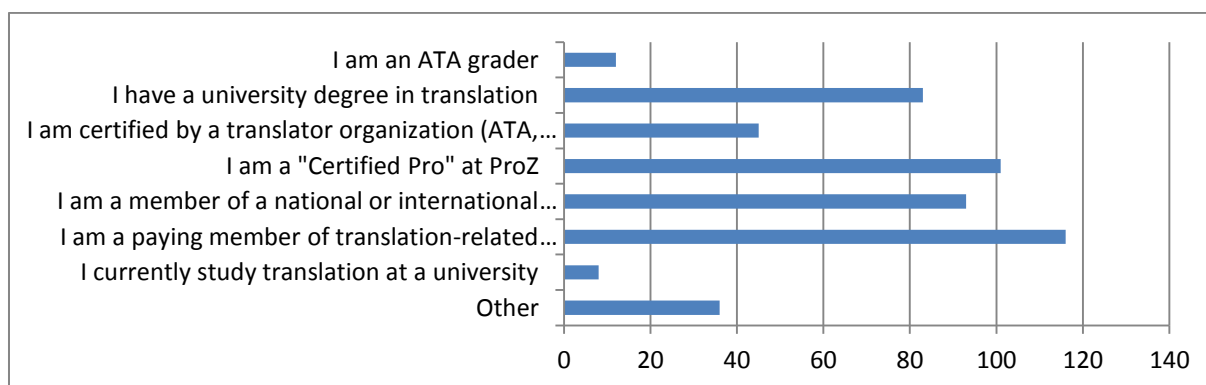


Using mid-interval values (and 35 years for the first category), this corresponds to as much as 2325 years of experience!

In the comments part of the question, translators were asked to specify their language pairs. English to Spanish was mentioned most often (47 times), followed by other English-FIGS combinations. Over 50 different (directional) language pairs were mentioned.

Q2. What kind of translation-related background, certification and membership do you have? Please select all that apply.

I am an ATA grader	12
I have a university degree in translation	83
I am certified by a translator organization (ATA, IoL, etc.)	45
I am a "Certified Pro" at ProZ	101
I am a member of a national or international translator association (ATA, IoL, ITI, SFT, IAPTI, etc.)	93
I am a paying member of translation-related websites (ProZ, GoTranslators, Translators Café, etc.)	116
I currently study translation at a university	8
Other	36

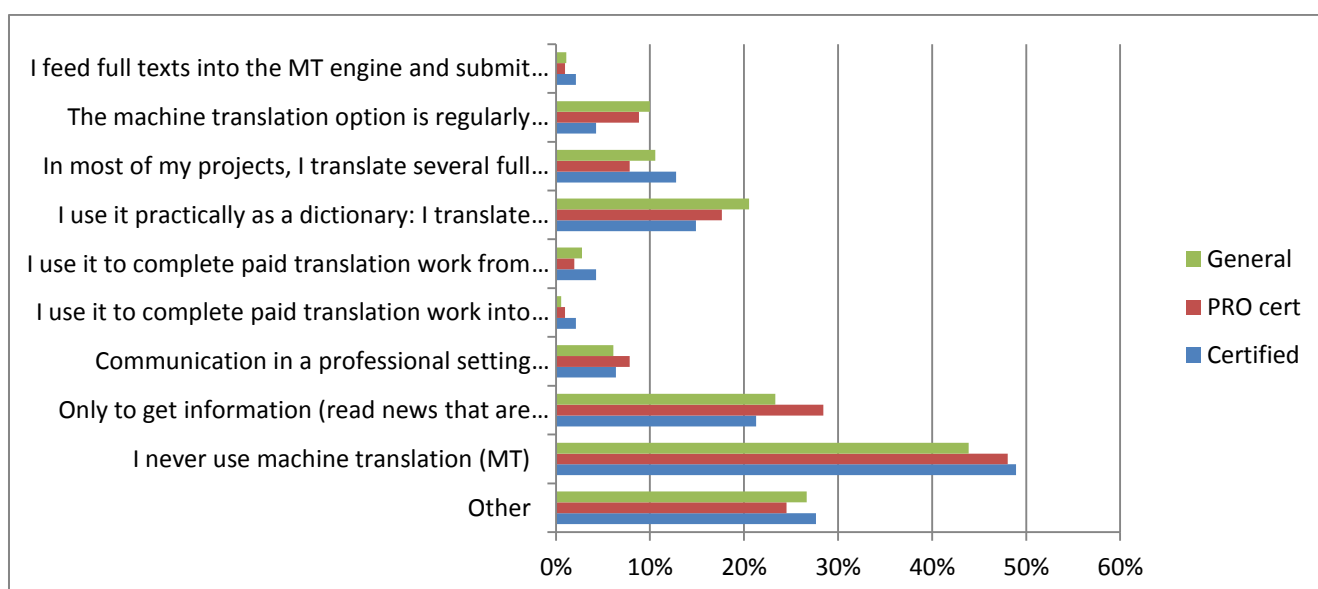


The option "I am an ATA grader" was added after publishing the first three surveys (IAPTI, ProZ, ProZ-CPN).

With the restricted number of options, many respondents felt like sharing more information about their backgrounds. Among them were moderators of translation-related websites and lists, university teachers, translators who have completed or were completing their postgraduate translation studies, several professionals with degrees in other fields, and even an academician.

Q3. In which ways do you use / have you used machine translation (MT) in your (paid) professional work? Please select all that apply.

	Certified	PRO cert	General
I feed full texts into the MT engine and submit the translation without checking it	1	1	2
The machine translation option is regularly ticked in my CAT tool. I revise the pretranslation produced by MT	2	9	18
In most of my projects, I translate several full sentences using MT, then revise them.	6	8	19
I use it practically as a dictionary: I translate individual terms or parts of sentences using MT, then insert them into my sentence.	7	18	37
I use it to complete paid translation work from source languages that I do not understand adequately (for example, source text contains some sentences in another language).	2	2	5
I use it to complete paid translation work into languages that I do not master.	1	1	1
Communication in a professional setting (emails with clients who do not speak my languages, etc.)	3	8	11
Only to get information (read news that are written in languages I do not master, etc.)	10	29	42
I never use machine translation (MT)	23	49	79
Other	13	25	48



Other surveys have confirmed a sharp rise over the past years in the percentage of translators using MT. Advocates of MT point out that the actual numbers are likely to be higher than those revealed by surveys, as some translators may not feel comfortable to admit their using MT tools.

It is quite important to separate MT usage for non-professional activities, such as getting information (e.g., read news about a particular hobby/sport via Google Translate). Such usage of MT tools say little about their utility in professional settings.

The usage in professional settings means in most cases using it practically as a dictionary, for the translation of individual terms. MT then serves as a terminology research tool - much like the plain vanilla google search engine. Hooking a CAT tool on an MT engine is a technique used by about 10% of translators over the entire sample, while it remains under 4% for certified translators. This significant difference may be due to the different working methods as well as project types (see the comment in bold below). Here is a small selection of insightful comments from respondents.

I only use machine translation in the Catalan > Spanish and Spanish > Catalan combinations. The similarity of both languages makes it work really well and they usually just need thorough revision and it's faster than translation.

I only use MT from time to time to check how it is progressing, but never as a working tool.

I use MT rarely. When I really can't find a proper translation I may try my luck with a translation machine, but in these case the machine never really comes up with something useful.

I find Google Translate extremely helpful, although often, of course, hilariously wrong. On the "pro" side: It puts tags where I need them. It gets changes in decimal styles right between German/Russian and American English, saving a lot of bother and keystrokes. It gives me a "first guess" translation, which can be helpful if I have not yet fully woken up (!) or am having particular trouble. In other words, it can help overcome the "oh shit, I have no idea what this means" mental block.

I live in a country where I don't speak or write the language fluently. This means that I rely heavily on machine translation for correspondence with authorities and public organisms like health care insurers and chamber of commerce.

I don't do translations that call for standardized language, so have never been inclined to look into MT. However, when I want to prove to client doubting that they do need my services, I refer them to one of the free online MT services (such as Babelfish) and encourage them to feed a section of our e-mail exchange into the translator, then to translate it back to their own language. :-)

For me is more cost-effective to translate directly without having to correct the machine translation.

Actually I use Google Translate for exchanging e-mails with customers

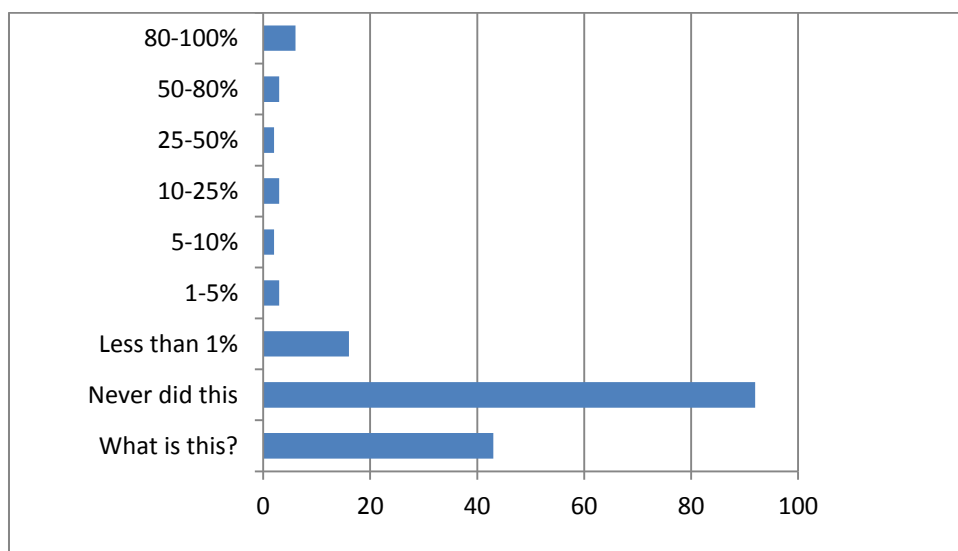
I have tried turning on the MT option in my CAT tool. Unfortunately, for the high-level professional texts that I translate, the information provided by the MT option was almost never of suitable quality and would take more time to edit than simply translating, or editing sentences from translation memory. Thus, I leave it turned off.

I have experimented with MT eg Google Translate in Trados. I find it's a total distraction and the product is worse because you waste time trying to adapt the rubbish that comes up instead of just doing your own translation.

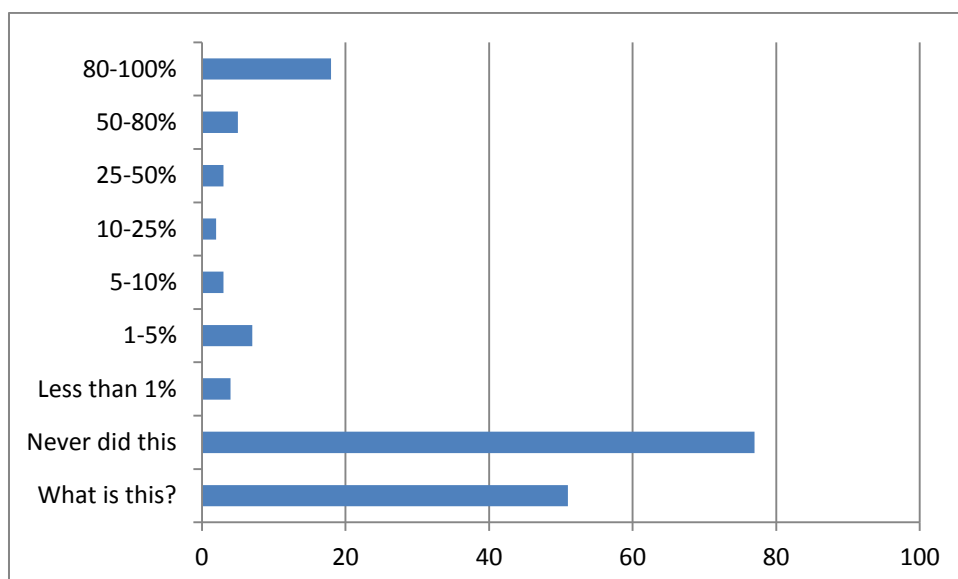
Q4. How much of your revenue came from a) "translation for gisting purposes" b) "translation of texts written using controlled language"?

	Gisting	Controlled language
What is this?	43	51
Never did this	92	77
Less than 1%	16	4
1-5%	3	7
5-10%	2	3
10-25%	3	2
25-50%	2	3
50-80%	3	5
80-100%	6	18

Gisting



Controlled language



As MT advocates claim, for some language pairs and some tasks, particularly if the source has been pre-edited (i.e., controlled language is used), raw machine output may be good enough for gisting purposes without requiring prior human intervention. Therefore human translators who work on texts written using controlled language and are required to produce translations for gisting purposes, are (or will be soon) competing with raw machine translation.

The purpose of these questions was therefore to see how important these segments are for professional translators.

While most translators have never done any work in these segments or are not even aware of their meaning, the average over the entire sample shows that translations for gisting purposes makes up an average of 4.97% of the translator's income, while the same average is 11.88% for the translation of texts written using controlled language.

A selection of insightful comments:

When translating for gisting purposes having a professional background and training might not be important for the client. They could ask this to any person who speaks the language. No editing, proofreading skills are needed or even important. Translating texts using controlled language requires training, expertise, flexibility, resourcefulness, language proficiency (both in the source and target language).

I spent many years working on controlled language and writing for translation combined with professional human translation and machine translation.

Does anyone pay for "translation for gisting purpose"? Really?

I have been a strong advocate of controlled English (is there any other controlled language) for many years, but its use has not apparently extended beyond a few large companies, and I don't get to translate for these.

Gisting interests me a lot but I have yet to find anyone willing to pay reasonable sums for it.

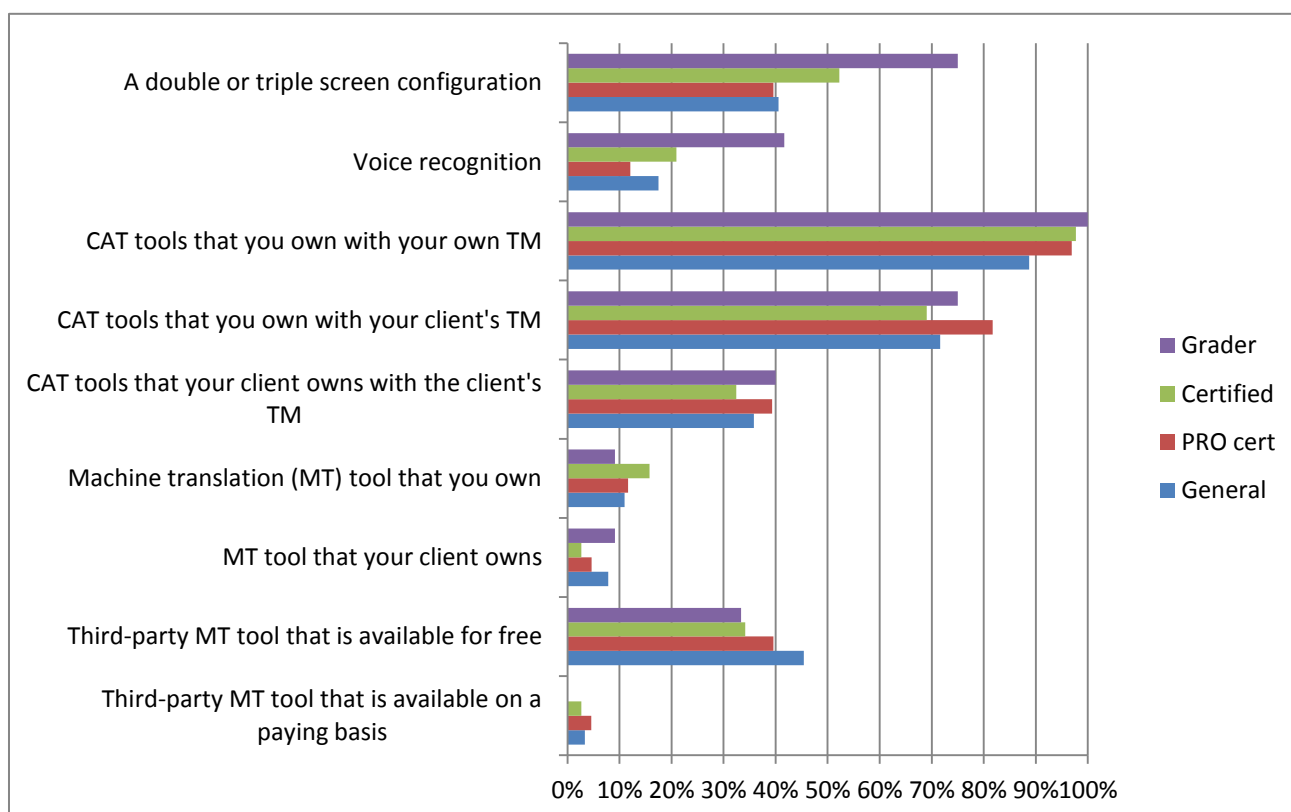
Much of the market may be heading in this direction. I offer a fairly specialised service, and so not much of this kind of work comes my way (nor am I looking for it)

The best translator for this task is a beginner. Usually "fresh translators" focus on understanding and are not paying much attention to grammar and style. It is easier for them to receive instructions how all the sentences and structures should look like. Also, it is a good start into the translation industry, I am glad I did it.

I wouldn't call it a skill, but a translator working with this should be extremely flexible and adaptable. One has to put aside one's ego and I have noticed my language skills started decreasing, that is why I was glad to get away from this kind of projects.

Q5 Do you use...

	General	PRO cert.	Certified	Grader
A double or triple screen configuration - Yes	69	38	23	9
A double or triple screen configuration - No	101	58	21	3
Voice recognition - Yes	29	11	9	5
Voice recognition - No	137	80	34	7
CAT tools that you own with your own translation memory (TM) - Yes	157	95	43	12
CAT tools that you own with your own translation memory (TM) - No	20	3	1	0
CAT tools that you own with your client's TM - Yes	121	76	29	9
CAT tools that you own with your client's TM - No	48	17	13	3
CAT tools that your client owns with the client's TM - Yes	57	35	12	4
CAT tools that your client owns with the client's TM - No	102	54	25	6
Machine translation (MT) tool that you own - Yes	17	10	6	1
Machine translation (MT) tool that you own - No	138	76	32	10
MT tool that your client owns - Yes	12	4	1	1
MT tool that your client owns - No	141	82	37	10
Third-party MT tool that is available for free - Yes	74	36	14	4
Third-party MT tool that is available for free - No	89	55	27	8
Third-party MT tool that is available on a paying basis - Yes	5	4	1	0
Third-party MT tool that is available on a paying basis - No	146	83	37	11



Productivity can be improved in various ways. Many translators confirm that a more comfortable and ergonomic working environment can be created by adding a second (or third) screen. About 40% uses this option, and the percentage is considerably higher among certified translators and graders

who are usually senior translators. Changing the hardware configuration has no discernible effect on the mental process in which translation is created.

Voice recognition is a mature tool in several languages - and not yet developed in many others. Several advanced users of this technology reported that voice recognition changed their way of producing translations; similarities with interpreting have been noted.

CAT tools and own TMs are extremely widely used by translators: close to 90% of the entire sample confirmed using it, and the figure climbs to over 95% for certified translators. The percentage drops significantly for using the client TMs, and even much further for using tools owned by the client (e.g., proprietary on-line translation environments). This trend clearly shows the importance that translators attribute to the control over the linguistic data. As noted by many, when using not one's own TM, the tool often suggest a ready interpretation of the segment that can be quite different from how the translator without any hint would have translated it from scratch.

Own (and customizable) MT tools are not yet widely used; most translators turn to free online resources if they use MT at all. Reworking MT suggestions, which often require heavy editing, requires a very different approach from translating from scratch. Especially if editing guidelines impose restrictions on what the reviser should modify.

Some comments:

My tool has my information, and my revisions and corrections. This assures quality. Also assures privacy and confidentiality. Your CAT tool is only as good as what is in it!

I only used the client's tool once, and when I submitted my work I felt that I was submitting much more than my translation, that I was submitting my intellectual property. Never did it again. For one of my long-term clients, for whom I do editing, I do use their translation memory, which I also update after every project. They share that TM and the updates with all of the translators on the team. I'm more than OK with that because it ensures consistency, and I don't need to change the same things again and again since the translators see my updates/changes after every project and before they begin a new one. So I'm in favor of sharing the TM among translators and editors working on the same project. I'm against machine translation in general.

I use the DéjàVu "Big Mama" approach to building a TM--it served me very well over the eleven years I've been building my TM.

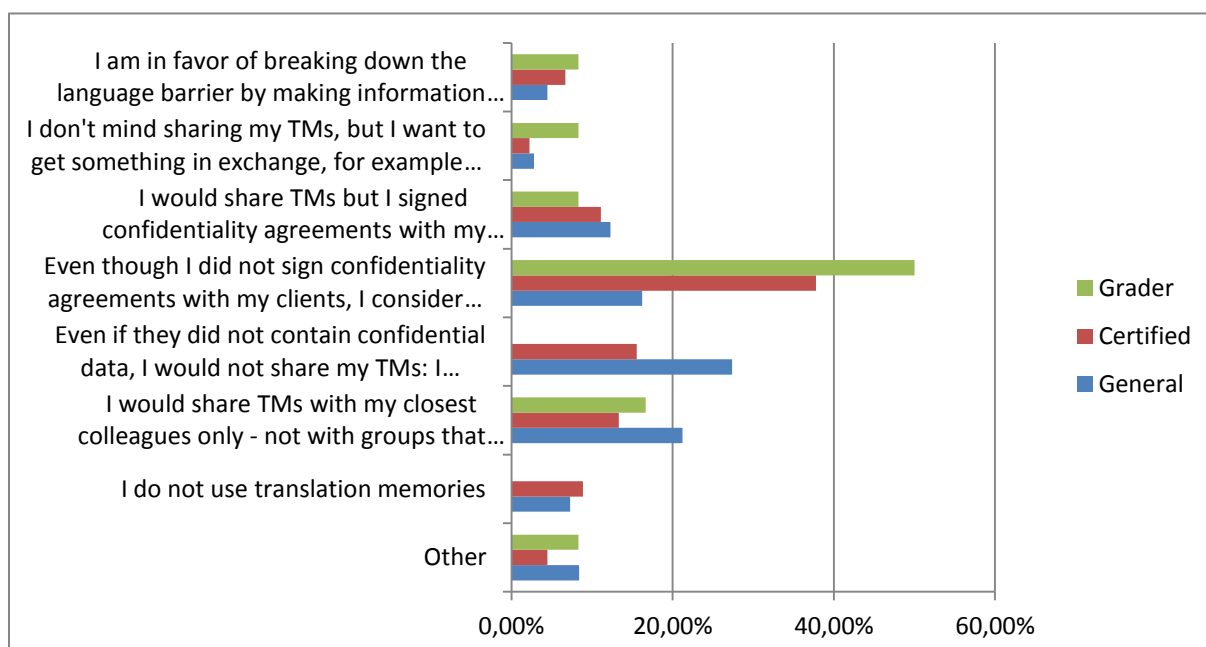
I like being in control of the whole process. I like building up my own TMs. I like the sense of progression that gives, eg with Trados Autosuggest - the more you translate the more useful it gets.

The important things are quality control and confidentiality. My clients do not want their texts "in the cloud" or submitted to an MT/TM tool that may be shared or stored on a third-party site. Thus I need to keep my texts on my own computer. As noted above, the quality of MT is not sufficient for high-level texts.

My CAT tool, OmegaT, uses Google Translate, but that is going to end in December because of GT's decision, and I don't know what will happen then. I tried Prompt once, to see if I could benefit from one that I would own and could train, but it was too labor-intensive for a sole proprietor/freelance translator.

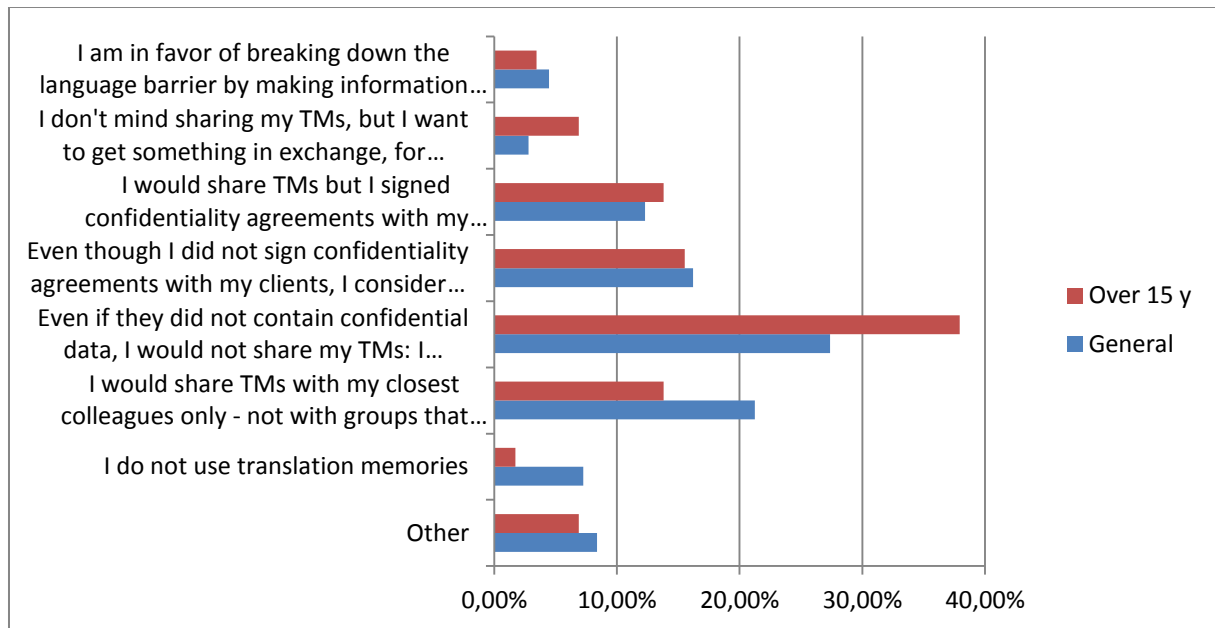
Q6. Which statement describes best your attitude towards sharing your translation memories (TMs)? Please select one answer.

	General		Certified		Grader	
Other	15	8,38%	2	4,44%	1	8,33%
I do not use translation memories	13	7,26%	4	8,89%	0	0,00%
I would share TMs with my closest colleagues only - not with groups that can use it to improve machine translation.	38	21,23%	6	13,33%	2	16,67%
Even if they did not contain confidential data, I would not share my TMs: I invested my time into creating them, and they are my intellectual property	49	27,37%	7	15,56%	0	0,00%
Even though I did not sign confidentiality agreements with my clients, I consider this to be confidential information, so I do not share my TMs	29	16,20%	17	37,78%	6	50,00%
I would share TMs but I signed confidentiality agreements with my clients that prevent me from doing that	22	12,29%	5	11,11%	1	8,33%
I don't mind sharing my TMs, but I want to get something in exchange, for example a ten times larger TM in one of my specialty fields	5	2,79%	1	2,22%	1	8,33%
I am in favor of breaking down the language barrier by making information available, and will gladly share my TMs and glossaries with anyone who is interested	8	4,47%	3	6,67%	1	8,33%



While CAT tools and TMs have been with us for a good while, TM sharing has become a major issue/trend only recently. In the ProZ-Taus debate, the question whether "it makes sense for translators to share translation memories" received a slight majority of "Yes" votes.

In the current survey, Yes and No had several modalities, but "No" came out clearly on top. Among translators with over 15 years of experience is taken, the following results are obtained:



"My TM is my intellectual property" - this opinion is held more strongly by seasoned translators than by younger colleagues.

Many respondents noted that it was quite difficult to choose one answer, as they were not mutually exclusive. Here is a bunch of interesting comments:

Oh, I wish I could select more answers here. I would select answer 4 (Even though I didn't sign...), 5 (Even if they did not contain...), and in the case of answer 6(I would share with closest colleagues) I would say that I would share it with close colleagues only if we worked on the same project.

Only with colleagues that work on the same project for the same client.

The "Big Mama" approach to TM management means that all the data I have accumulated over the years in my TM is together. As such, I could not share it. Also, it contains, in large part, my own translation solutions/phrasing; that is, I am the author of that data.

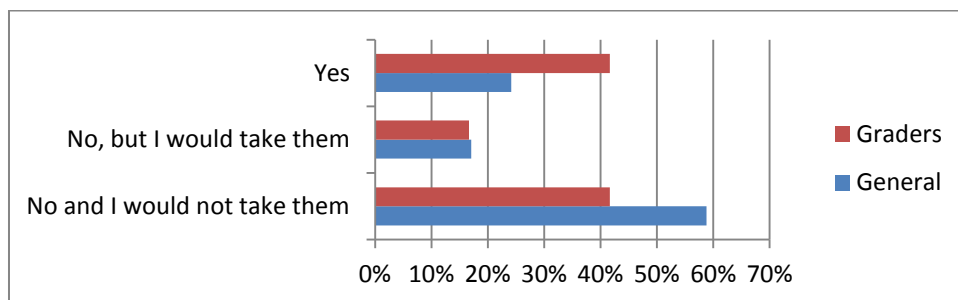
Even if I shared my TM and received a ten times larger TM in exchange, there are still quality issues and I may find the TMs received of little or no use to me. The risks associated to this are currently too high.

I would share my TMs in order to improve machine translation. Why not? Btw, I have seen such automated translation websites that use TMs offered by volunteer translators and these were not quite correct. In case someone imports TMs, they should at least be verified for accuracy before being made available to the large public.

I agree with the statement that I have invested my time into creating my TMs and I also signed confidentiality agreements with almost all of my clients. And besides, why would I give my knowledge to my competition? The only thing that distinguishes me from my competition? And what guarantee would I get that the received TMs are really that good that I can use them without worrying they include "wrong" translations?

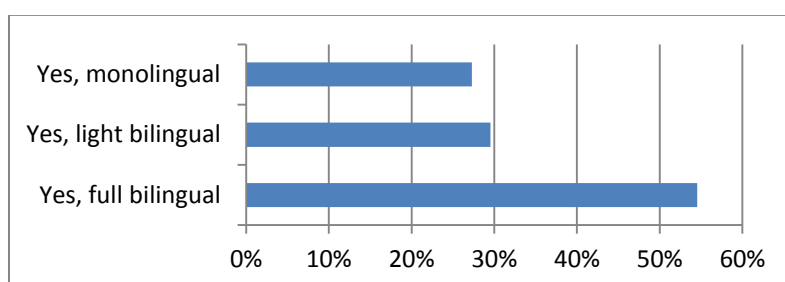
Q7. Have you ever accepted projects in which you were given a raw machine translation output to revise? Please tick all that apply.

	General	Graders
No and I would not take them	107	5
No, but I would take them	31	2
Yes	44	5



Among the Yes answers,

Yes, and I had to do bilingual check, with more or less the same guidelines as for the revision of human translation	24	55%
Yes, and I had to do bilingual check, with stricter restrictions on what I should NOT correct than for assignments involving the revision of human translation	13	30%
Yes, and I had to do monolingual check only	12	27%



(The sum is not 100%, as respondents could select multiple options.)

While almost half of the experienced grader group have already completed post-editing assignments, their comments showed that a "Yes, but I would not do it again" option would have been necessary.

Below are **all** the comments graders added:

In case this is not asked below: In the past, it has taken me longer to post-edit than to make my own translation, with only one exception.

Did it once, won't do it again.

Depending on the specifications, I might accept such work.

I have studied post-editing, and I believe that, unless raw MT output improves in quality, often the time taken to edit is the same or longer than the time to re-translate. Thus MT output is best for "information-only" translations, or in situations where the client uses controlled language and style is not as important, as in manuals. Any text where style and quality are important is not suitable for MT.

The client did not say that it was from a MT, but the quality of the translation was so bad and the sentence structure etc so strange, that I concluded it must have been. I told the client of my suspicion and charged for the extra time it took.

Only for testing purposes (that is, testing and improving the MT program)

And here is a selection of comments from all other survey participants:

Too much work and the compensation is not really worth it most of the time.

Usually far more work than only revising. You end translating the whole lot again.

[No] Unless I were paid my translation rates, or higher.

No and whenever I'm offered such jobs I make sure to tell those outsourcers that I do not edit garbage.

In my experience, MT produces usable results (ie., post-editing is feasible in a reasonable of time and effort) only on controlled-language texts. I have encountered pre-translated that a customer had submitted to one of the free internet MT systems. Not only was it instantaneously obvious, but it was completely unusable. Direct clients usually accept that such "translated" text needs to be redone completely.

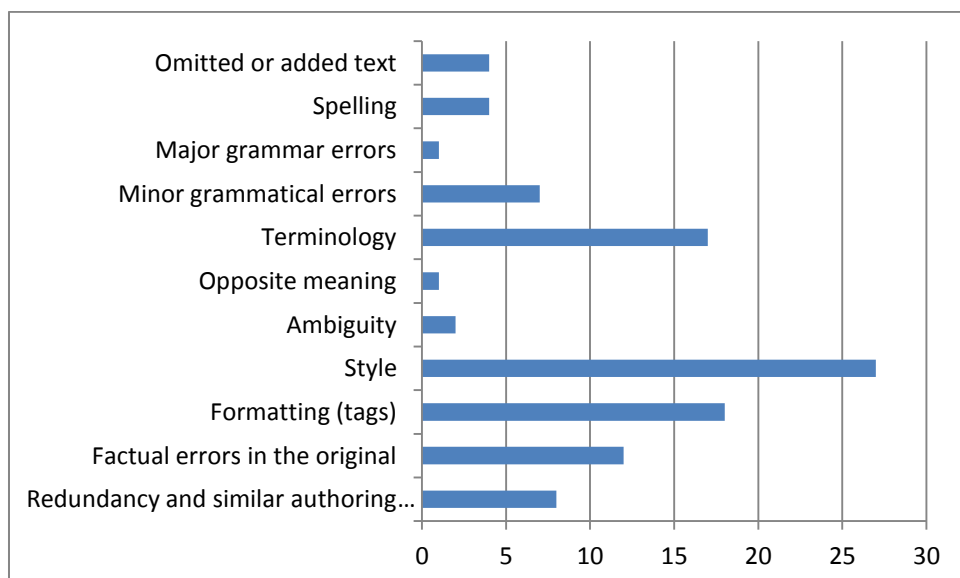
But that was in a time where I was strapped for cash. I currently offer MT post editing at higher rates than proofing and a lower rate than translating, but there are limits to what I am willing to put up with. I also demand proof of ownership of the source text, because it wouldn't be the first time that people rip a few text of the internet without checking if they are allowed to use the text, run it through Google Translate and ask a poor sod to correct the poor output into something legible. Pure theft of intellectual property, if you ask me...

In general, in my view, revising MTs will lead to lower overall quality (which goes against my own high standards) and is intellectually much less stimulating, so I am not interested in taking on such work.

I am a monolingual "quality consultant" for a Polish agency (I know not one word of Polish) and this happens from time to time. Some parts are no worse than non-native texts but others are complete rubbish. Sometimes I have no idea but fortunately my contract allows for rejecting the translation rather than trying to correct it.

Q8. If during your "post-editing" assignments you have ever been asked NOT to make corrections/suggestions/comments of the following types, please mark all that apply. I have been asked NOT to correct...

Redundancy and similar authoring errors in the original	8
Factual errors in the original	12
Formatting (tags)	18
Style	27
Ambiguity	2
Opposite meaning	1
Terminology	17
Minor grammatical errors	7
Major grammar errors	1
Spelling	4
Omitted or added text	4



Some comments:

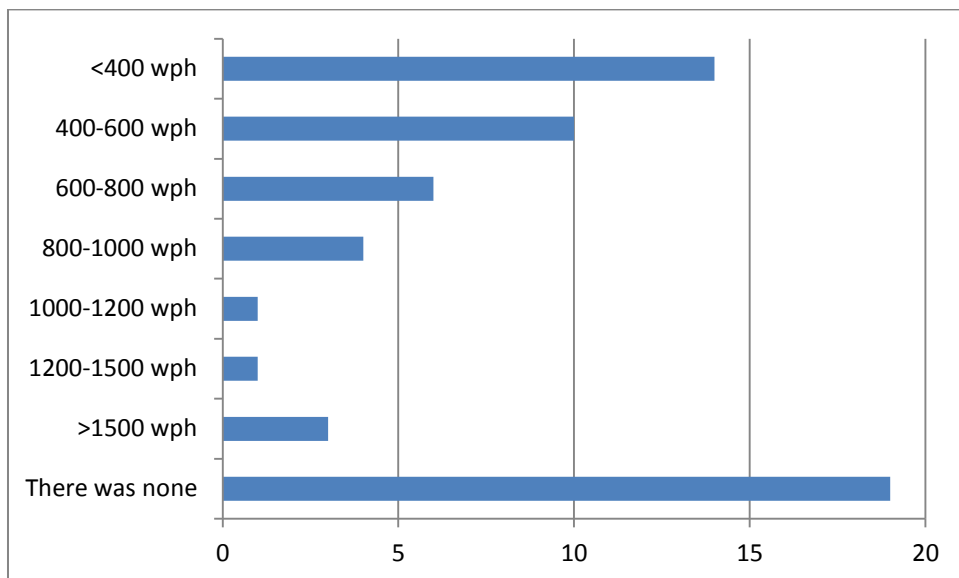
I do always make suggestions, though, when asked not to make corrections.

Post-editing much more intractable because more unknowns in the equation.

Post-editing with the type of restrictions mentioned above is disagreeable, and I don't accept it anymore.

Q9. When taking on the revision of machine-pretranslated text, what are the throughput expectations?

There was none	19
>1500 wph	3
1200-1500 wph	1
1000-1200 wph	1
800-1000 wph	4
600-800 wph	6
400-600 wph	10
<400 wph	14
N/A	103



Comments:

Most of my translations are specialized, highly technical. I do not hope to see "quick job" done, so my eventual expectation about revising MT texts is of a very low throughput.

I can easily average 1000 words per hour (sustainable non-burst throughput) for my strongest language directions. this is without dictionary building. Combined with dictionary building and depending on the expectation of the quality (minimal PE vs maximum full PE), I have reached up to 300 % the translation speed of average translation processes (2500 words per day), that is to say 7500-8000 words per day for translation publication and even higher for content gisting purposes only.

Those were customer's expectations. I managed that only because my actual translation speed is about the same.

Translation: How much can we squeeze out of translators if we force them to swallow this crap? It still takes time to READ and COMPREHEND.

10. If you have any further comments on post-editing, especially quality related ones, please write them here.

There were lots of insightful comments in the answers provided for this question. Here is a selection.

I am not opposed to the idea of post-editing. What gets me is that it is being sold as "the future of translation". Besides, it is being promoted by translation wholesalers who have no consideration for the translation profession or ethical standards.

I don't oppose to translators using MT for their own benefit: nobody gets too much rich, nobody is left out of work and no machine is fed. I strongly oppose to accepting to post-edit documents translated by agencies with MT.

I don't agree with post-editing and MT in the way they are being used today. It's ok if translators want to use this for their own benefit, but not if it is used for the benefit of a few people and large companies and in detriment of our jobs.

I did it because the MT matches were paid in full and rightly so, because the result was useless. However, it was IT, so one would expect it to be a good candidate for MT, but the use of short segments puts the MT engine at a loss for meaning.

I am against Post-editing because I'm convinced it only suits the purposes of big companies that want to make profit out of the services of non-professional people or unexperienced translators. Even though companies speak of this as new opportunities for the translation industry and freelancers, I think that's the strategic way this issue is exposed to y they use to draw the attention of young or unexperienced translators. No wonder why they want to reach out universities to gain acceptance and recruit qualified people at a low cost. I do not think Post-editing is win-win situation. It only benefits one side of the industry.

I have likely published the most practical experience case studies and information about MT + postediting and controlled language as a single contributor to these topics. My estimate is that currently about 50-75% of projects conducted under the name of MT projects are done in non-customizable MT situations and are poorly planned. Experience has shown me that only well-planned and well-prepared MT projects with customizable MT is successful. This means that the majority of MT projects today are giving MT a bad reputation because it is similar to poorly qualified and poorly planned professional translation jobs. After carefully qualifying MT projects, there have been many that I have refused because I stated that the project had inappropriate expectations and even impossible technical requirements compared with what is possible and feasible based on existing current MT technologies and workflows. Therefore, not all MT projects are good MT projects from the start, just as not all professional human translation jobs are good projects from the start. Similar to an experience translator refusing a translation based on low level of opportunity for it to be successful (with a variety of factors), there are also many requested MT projects which should be refused and reworked to fit within the technical, logistical and quality expectations for custom projects.

I think that, within a short span of time, there will be a lot more work on post-editing MT texts. If the task is well paid or pleasant is another matter, but somebody will accept it, and some will not. It will be a personal choice and, for many, it will depend on the need to work, whatever the task required. Some lucky translators will find it unpleasant and will have a situation that allows them to refuse such work.

My feeling is that post-editing could become common practice for texts with highly predictable content (e.g. user manuals of cell phones, computers, etc.) which are not really a key part of the product being sold. I don't think post-editing will ever become the norm for the translation of literature, or other texts which require a certain "art", such as marketing texts, journalistic articles, or texts on which a legal procedure is based (agreements, lawsuits, etc.).

Post-editing is not inherently evil, as many less technologically savvy would have you believe. It is in fact a very useful tool that translators can use in their own workflow to improve and speed up their work. It is silly to let agencies abuse this new tool.

I think it is largely sector-specific. I specialise in disciplines such as Law, Architecture, Construction, Real Estate etc., so I do not fall in the areas which the MT gurus are aiming at.

One time SDL sent me a test for post-editing a MT. They claimed that they were using an advanced MT tool, but it was like redoing maybe 70-80% of the MT. Only two or three-word sentences were correct.

I was involved in the French Machine translation project of the mid- to late eighties as a test user for the system. I ultimately designed and ran a final "measurement" experiment, which demonstrated without ambiguity that the proposed system was unusable in a production environment. Inadequacy of the translation output was not the only criteria for the shelving of the project which ensued. I was the only remaining member of the testing team, after the other members bailed out, because I was enthusiastic about the possibilities. Unfortunately, in the 25-some years since, I have not seen much improvement in usability. I don't believe in MT outside of a controlled-language environment for technical texts. Google Translate and Microsoft Translate (the only ones available as part of Wf) can't even get simple grammar such as noun plural or verb agreement correctly in simple sentences!

It is rapidly becoming a niche industry within the wider realm of translation, if it hasn't already reached that status. Questionable or not, it is a reality that the translation industry in general, and freelance translators especially, better face. The desire from freelance translators for rates as high as possible, translation agencies trying to drop the rates asked by freelance translators without passing that advantage on to the end client and the low standing of the translation as a profession have opened the market for MT post-editing. I think the industry should first and foremost set standards to what is required of translators and increase awareness of the fact that it is a profession, and freelance translators should in my opinion become more aware of the fact that translation has to come down in price, same as any other profession.

Never accepted machine post editing, but actually I would not mind taking these jobs, if the quality would be at least as good as "medium" output quality from humans. My opinion regarding MT: MT is here to stay MT will get better sooner or later I always try to implement new technology or processes, why not MT. I see no benefit from TAUS, in my opinion these are just a group of self assigned gurus who try to sell "stinking cheese". The real development for freelancers does take place at other places (e.g. the development departments of the CAT suppliers). I am looking forward at the big debate, but doubt it that we will hear anything really new/useful from the TAUS gurus

I would be willing to work on these types of files if the quality was already pretty good and I was paid on a per-word basis. That way I would be able to maximize my efficiency and dollars/euros per hour. My preference is translating myself first, and second editing a human translation that was well done.

Post-editing tends to assume that the target text is appropriately structured when in fact it often calques the format of the source language. Sadly, reformulation of the source text into the structural conventions of the target languages is the last skill aspiring translators (and MT algorithms) learn. Since vocabulary is easier to adjust than the underlying notional equivalence of language, it often transpires that texts submitted for "post-editing" are lexically reasonably correct but still need to be radically restructured. In practice, I only post-edit texts translated by translators with whose style I am familiar

I would worry about doing post-editing that will update MT databases - that seems rather suicidal. I am less worried about editing such texts when my work will not be used to update a database e.g. where a non-professional (even one who expects to be paid for it) has used MT and I then step in to make it useable. But it is a very uninteresting and frustrating job, I find. I don't feel any real threat to my own job in marketing, at the age of 55, but I do think the profession will see a lot of changes over the coming generation, with MT taking over a lot of the translation for comprehension purposes (emails etc) and a smaller number of professionals producing polished texts. Quality will become even more important.

The use of MT directly by agencies/clients, with raw processed texts then passed on for post-editing is likely to increase. This will reduce the translator's role to a mere corrector of mediocre text, lowering rates and job satisfaction with it. I can't see much way round this, sadly, except perhaps to try and opt out of the race completely by specialising (in my case legal and wine - two areas which are not very MT-friendly-. Yet...)

Although post-editing MT does not appeal to me personally, it may be a reality in the future, and I think we should respect colleagues who wish to add this service to those they are already offering. There have been a lot of condescending remarks from some of the top translators on post-editing MT, such as comparing it to cleaning toilets, etc., which I feel is completely uncalled for.

It's the classical comment, but I think that it is completely true: while one day we could reach an acceptable level of MT in some fields (i.e., manuals), there are other texts in which it will

be impossible. Even human translators have to go back to the clients several times to ask for clarifications, and MT can't do that!

The few times I had to deal with MT translations, it was such gibberish it practically required a complete rewrite. I suppose that in certain fields where meaning are unambiguous, it could be very useful. I am open minded about it, I just did not see good results so far. Also, I don't usually translate for gist, but mostly for publication grade or very precise medical documents on clinical trials that require proofing and back translation.

Thanks

Thanks again to everyone who participated in the survey. Any further feedback – on the issues covered in the survey, the survey itself, the current summary, the ProZ-Taus debate and any other related issues – is welcome at translation [at] pirothattila dot com.

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