

The challenges and relevance of computer-assisted literary translation



TRANSLATION TOOLS

CAT-tools

EDITING

Translation Editors

Terminology management

Translation memory editors

Dubbing tools

Subtitling tools

AutoQA

Review

MANAGEMENT

TMS

Business Management for LSP

Localization for developers

Proxy & JS-based website loc for marketers

TMS for LSPs and buyers

Enterprise TMS from vendors

Trainable

Adaptive

MT aggregators

MT Toolkits

Custom/Niche

Generic Platform / API

DELIVERY

INTERPRETING TOOLS

Remote interpreting apps

Wearables

Interpreting scheduling

Speech recognition

MARKETPLACES AND PLATFORMS

Data and Terminology

Marketplaces

Platform LSP

DATA

SPEECH REC. SCHEDULING

PLATFORM LSP RESOURCES

Source:
[www.nimdzi.com /](http://www.nimdzi.com/)
 Starlander (2019)

SDL*



WORDFAST



memoq

across[™]

✕ déjàvu



CafeTran
ESPRESSO

Summary

- I. Translation studies, literature and technology
- II. Arguments against computer-assisted literary translation (CALT)
- III. Case study
- IV. What next?
- V. Concluding remarks

I. *Translation studies, literature and technology*

II. *Arguments against CALT*

III. *Case study*

I. Translation studies, literature and technology

- ◇ Literature has always held a unique place in the field of translation studies (especially in contrast to technical translation).
- ◇ Theories arguing in favour of a more comprehensive and unifying view of translation still have reservations about 'creative texts' (e.g. Lederer 1997; Reiß & Vermeer 2014).
- ◇ Literary translation has always raised objections:
 - when scholars defended the very possibility of human (literary) translation (Mounin 2016);
 - when computers and word processors were first introduced (Ladmiral 1994);
 - now that CAT tools (and MT) are becoming a more and more essential part of the work.

I. Translation studies, literature and technology

- ◇ More specifically, the idea of computer-assisted literary translation, as a field of study is very recent one. (First conference next year!)
- ◇ Computer scientists have been looking into it for some time, but from a wholly different perspective.
- ◇ There is a growing number of contributions from translation scholars and sociologists since 2018.
- ◇ More and more professionals are opening up to the idea, and there is a real interest from various players in the translation industry, including associations.

I. Translation studies, literature and technology

- ◇ Today, sharp division between the common idea regarding CALT:
 - “inadequate”
 - “offers little help”
 - “we never use it”
 - “inappropriate”
 - “completely ineffective”
 - “inferior quality”
- ◇ and a growing number of voices and publications discussing their experience in combining CAT tools and literary texts.
 - ↳ Try it and see for yourself.

I. Translation studies, literature and technology

// Funny how it seems that most of those who are saying a firm 'no' are probably those who have never used any CAT tools or never bothered to learn how to use them properly. I should know: not too long ago, I was one of them, and I am now the first person to admit that.

//

("Do you use Trados for literary texts, too?")

I. *Translation studies, literature and technology*

II. *Arguments against CALT*

III. *Case study*

IV. *What next?*

II. *Arguments against CAT*

- ◇ Practical objections (“CAT tools are too tedious”):
 - These tools are useless and overly complicated.
 - These tools restrict the translator’s liberty.

II. Arguments against CAT

// There is nothing in these tools that prevents you from varying the sequence of words, sentences and paragraphs. There is nothing that imposes consistency or lack of it, curtails your production speed, lowers the writing quality, sterilises your work, or imposes a structure. What matters is how you use the tool. //

("Do you use Trados for literary texts, too?")

II. Arguments against CAT

- ◇ Practical objections (“CAT tools are too tedious”):
 - These tools are useless and overly complicated.
 - These tools restrict the translator’s liberty.

 - ◇ Theoretical objections (“CAT tools offer no benefits”):
 - Literature is not repetitive enough.
 - Literature is too ‘sophisticated’.
- ↳ How can CAT tools help reproduce the style of an original?

I. *Translation studies, literature and technology*

II. *Arguments against CALT*

III. *Case study*

IV. *What next?*

V. *Concluding remarks*

III. Case study

- ◇ *Septimus Heap* (heroic fantasy).
- ◇ 7 books in English (Angie Sage), 6 in French (Nathalie Serval).
- ◇ First 6 volumes were used as a translation memory (TM).
- ↓
- ◇ Resulting TM was used to translate the 7th novel in French.

III. Case study (results)

◇ The real barrier is learning how to use these tools.

↳ Does involve a significant change in the way we work.

◇ Work environment/interface better suited to translation.

↳ Multiple tools and features in addition to translation memories.

Ergonomics, project management, group work, bilingual interface, segmenting, terminology glossaries, online dictionaries, TQA tools, backups through TMs, no cluster of paper/digital copies (original, draft, translation, revision in one place), support of numerous file formats and text extraction, tag management (e.g. html), cloud, dictation... and now machine translation.

⇒ Regardless, of the 'scientific' or 'literary' nature of the texts.

III. Case study

- ◇ TMs, if relevant and large enough, are as effective as in any other field.
(N.B. Different idea of what an *effective* TM would be?)
- ◇ Being able to compare and choose from various matches is much more useful than a perfect match.
- ◇ CAT tools help speed up the translation and research processes, giving the translator more time to focus on creativity, all the while reinforcing stylistic coherence.

III. Case study

- ◇ Three remarks and possible improvements:
 - paragraph segmenting would be best suited to the task
(allowing for more liberty, resolving alignment issues, making TMs more useful);
 - *Trados* does not do well with very long or very short segments
(possible solution: fragment matches and repairs, and possibly the introduction of MT);
 - CALT currently involves a more active role on the translator's part
(diversity outweighs precision; emphasis on research).

II. *Arguments against CALT*

III. *Case study*

IV. *What next?*

V. *Concluding remarks*

IV. What next?

TraduXio (Goncharova & Lacour 2011)

- ◆ Free and open-access software (beta project).
- ◆ (Re)translation of “cultural texts (non-commercial translation)”.
- ◆ Two fundamental principles:
 - relevance of translation memories;
 - multiplication and confrontation of possible translations.

IV. What next?

καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ
ἵππος χλωρὸς, καὶ
ὁ καθήμενος
ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ,
ὄνομα αὐτῷ ὁ
θάνατος, καὶ ὁ
ἄδης ἠκολούθει
μετ' αὐτοῦ· καὶ
ἐδόθη αὐτῷ
ἐξουσία ἐπὶ τὸ
τέταρτον τῆς γῆς,
ἀποκτεῖναι ἐν
ρόμφαίᾳ καὶ ἐν
λιμῷ καὶ ἐν
θανάτῳ καὶ ὑπὸ
τῶν θηρίων τῆς
γῆς.

et ecce equus
pallidus et qui
sedebat desuper
nomen illi Mors et
inferus sequebatur
eum et data est illi
potestas super
quattuor partes
terrae interficere
gladio fame et
morte et bestiis
terrae

And I looked, and
behold a pale
horse: and his
name that sat on
him was Death,
and Hell followed
with him. And
power was given
unto them over
the fourth part of
the earth, to kill
with sword, and
with hunger, and
with death, and
with the beasts of
the earth.

Et je vis :
c'était un cheval
blême.
Celui qui le
montait, on le
nomme « la mort
», et l'Hadès le
suivait.
Pouvoir leur fut
donné sur le
quart de la terre,
pour tuer par
l'épée, la famine,
la mort et les
fauves de la
terre.

Je vois, et voici un
cheval, un vert.
Celui qui est assis
dessus, son nom: la
mort;
le Shéol le suivait.
Puissance leur a été
donnée sur le quart
de la terre,
de tuer par l'épée, par
la famine, par la
mort, par les bêtes de
la terre.

Et je vis ; et voici
un cheval verdâtre
; son cavalier se
nommait la Mort, et
l'Hadès le suivait.
Et il leur fut donné
pouvoir sur le quart
de la terre de tuer
par l'épée, par la
famine, par la
maladie mortelle et
par les bêtes
sauvages de la
terre.

IV. *What next?*

◇ Elmar Tophoven (1987)

- European Translators Association : meetings, discussions, collegiality ⇒ authorship?
- Transparent translation

◇ Gilbert Musy (1989)

- Embrace and familiarize ourselves with these tools
- Adapt new technologies to better serve literary translators

IV. What next?

- ◇ Combining the expertise of the translator and capabilities of the machine.
- ◇ CALT: “a way in which translators can interact with technology as part of the translation process - a way which neither dilutes nor deskills the art of translation, but actually enhances it by revealing information about a text which even close reading is unlikely either to measure accurately or to detect at all” (Youdale 2019).
- ◇ Deeper understanding of the text and a stylistically better informed translation.

III. *Case study*

IV. *What next?*

V. *Concluding remarks*

V. Concluding remarks

- ◇ The way we can use CAT tools when dealing with creative texts is *slightly* different than in other cases,
- ◇ but it is still as 'effective',
- ◇ and it can help professionals and scholars alike to identify the problems and challenges posed by literary translation.
- ◇ We think that machine translation could also help in that regard; we'll see in a few years.

Translation studies, literature and technology

// D'une façon générale, la tentation a été pour d'aucuns [...] de diaboliser la technique. Il pourrait sembler que la traduction, qui d'une certaine façon est le plus vieux métier du monde (avec d'autres...), se trouve confrontée au spectre inquiétant et fantasmatique d'une *question de la Technique*, que le tumulte médiatique [...] rend d'autant plus présent. La technique viendrait abîmer *la belle ouvrage* d'antan (elle nous ferait *saloper* le travail !). Dans un tel naufrage de l'artisanat, la traduction irait *s'abîmer* dans une utopie techniciste, négative, le rêve y ayant fait place au cauchemar et l'outil de la libération du travail y étant devenu l'instrument de l'aliénation du travailleur. De fait, il y a quelques années encore, la perspective de l'informatique inquiétait beaucoup d'entre nous : le corps des traducteurs réagissait avec véhémence à la seule mention de *l'ordinateur* qu'on nous présentait, il est vrai, sous l'aspect fanfaronnant d'une prétendue *machine à traduire*, censée menacer du chômage l'ensemble des traducteurs à plus ou moins court terme. En quelques années, les choses ont totalement changé : [...] maintenant, nous avons apprivoisé le *bidule* informatique. L'ordinateur est devenu un petit animal familier, comme dit joliment Françoise Cartano, dont beaucoup d'entre nous ne pourraient plus se passer.

// (Jean-René Ladmiral 1987)