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EAMT2018

Proceedings of the
**21st Annual Conference of
the European Association
for Machine Translation**

28–30 May 2018
Universitat d'Alacant
Alacant, Spain

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Universitat d'Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

transducens
research group

Pre-professional pre-conceptions

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Abstract

While MT+PE has become an industry standard, our translation schools are not able to accompany these changes by updating their academic programs. We polled 100 pre-professionals to confirm that in our local context they are reluctant to accept post-editing jobs mainly because they have inherited pre-conceptions or negative opinions about MT during their studies.

1 Pre-professionals and MT+PE

Following global trends, the translation industry in Latin America has dramatically changed over the years and Argentina is emerging as an important translation provider. However, our local context is quite different from that of the USA, Canada or Europe, as we are a monolingual country and placed at the end of the supply chain, with more intermediaries between MT producers and Post-Editors. While the emergence of new MT+PE technologies has had an impact on businesses and companies, our translation schools have fallen short of this challenge and failed to update their academic programs. Therefore, our soon-to-be professionals are not acquainted with the MT+PE process and they inherit old prejudices that sometimes do not even hold anymore. We felt the need to ask those future translators their opinion about the technologies they will come across once they enter the labour market. So, we polled 100 advanced undergraduates students in their 4th and 5th year (i.e. *pre-professionals*) and invited them to answer 8 questions about their experience and opinion on MTPE. For space reasons the questions and detailed results are not included in this abstract. Our sample consists of 90 non-bilingual informants from the School of Languages, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, *UNC* and 10 bilingual (Spanish-Catalan) informants from the School of Arts, Dept. of English and Linguistics, University of Lleida (*UdL*). We decided to include students from these two institutions to compare the results obtained as both groups of informants have a different academic and cultural profile and background, but none of them reported any experience in PE. When compiling the results we found that opinions about MT were mostly negative in 40% (UL) and 50% (UNC) of the cases while opinions about PE were mostly positive 43% (UL) and 40% (UNC) of the cases. When looking at the participants' comments, we found that most negative comments revolved around the payment model, MT producing awkward output or errors, and not having the chance to practice PE during their studies. On the other hand, positive comments were about recent improvements of MT quality, MT+PE speeding-up their tasks and helping them develop other skills. These results are consistent with our expectations and confirm that new professionals in our local context are reluctant to accept post-editing jobs mainly because they already have prejudices or negative opinions about MT. To tackle this issue, we are currently working on extra-curricular training on MT+PE to help them take more informed decisions and to give them the opportunity to gain expertise on this technology. Obtaining and analyzing feedback from future translation professionals is an essential step and will also help shape an alternative course methodology to be implemented at an early stage rather than introducing MT + PE in the final academic years.