Book Review

Human Issues in Translation Technology

Reviewed by Hua Tan, Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China

Most works discussing translation technologies focus on technologies per se, neglecting the user’s perspective on the actual use of them. Human Issues in Translation Technology (2017) edited by Dorothy Kenny is a good attempt to shift the focus on the human issues in translation technologies, investigating such issues as translators’ experience, feel, need, preferences, etc. of using translation technologies.

The volume consists of eight chapters that fall into two parts. Part one is made up of the first four chapters, discussing the status quo of translation technologies from the user’s perspective. It addresses issues like how translators with different profiles and from different contexts feel about their experience of using translation technologies. Part two is made up of the rest four chapters, which shifts the focus on anticipating the future, exploring such issues as translators’ needs and preferences, emerging possibilities of translation technologies, and possible human interventions that may facilitate future translation practice and research.

Chapter 1 by Koskinen & Ruokonen, “Love or hate mail? Translators’ technology acceptance in the light of their emotional narratives”, investigates how translators engage themselves emotionally in translation technologies in their translation practice. Through a detailed analysis of more than 100 letters from European translators on what they like about the technologies and how they feel about using them, the authors find out that in general these translators are emotionally positive towards translation technologies, though “they do dislike non-functioning technology and poor usability” (Koskinen & Ruokonen, 2017, p. 22). The study implies that user involvement is essential in improving the usability of translation-specific tools. As this study reveals user experience from Europe, follow-up study, if any, of user experience from other continents like Asia and America, is bound to provide more solid evidence of feedback from users of different geographical locations.

Chapter 2 by O’Hagan, “Deconstructing translation crowdsourcing with the case of a Facebook initiative: A translation network of engineered autonomy and trust?” deals with crowdsourced translation of Facebook drawing on Latour’s (2005) actor-network theory. As an emerging and highly controversial mode of translation technology involving a network of volunteer translators, crowdsourced translation has already received scholarly attention from translation community (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Yet, there are few sociological analysis of translators’ role in crowdsourced
translation employing actor-network theory. This chapter is a good attempt in this direction and a trigger of more in-depth empirical studies in this line of research.

Chapter 3 by LeBlanc, “I can’t get no satisfaction! Should we blame translation technologies or shifting business practices?” addresses translators’ autonomy and affect in different context. Based on data collected through ethnographic observation from three Canadian translation service providers, the author examines how translation practice changes with the implementation of translation memory technology and how translators perceive such changes. The author observes that the translators’ perception of such changes was mixed and the relation between translation technologies and their agents call for further investigation.

Chapter 4 by Wang & Lim, “How do translators use web resources? Evidence from the performance of English-Chinese translators”, probes into how translators in Macau use resources like online bilingual dictionaries and machine translation to complete timed translation tasks. With data collected through an experimental research on two groups of translators—junior group of MA students and senior group of experienced translators, the authors investigate what resources the two groups used, how they used such resources and how they felt about using the resources. As the analysis shows, junior group relied more on online information than the senior group did. Further research needs to be done about what implications such difference has for translation practice or training, especially of junior group.

Chapter 5 by Garcia-Arógn & López-Rodriguez, “Translators’ needs and preferences in the design of specialized termino-lexicographic tools”, looks into translators’ information needs and preferences when they use lexicographical tools. Drawing on an online survey on the experience of MeteoTrad, an online specialized dictionary, the authors investigates the translators’ reference needs, preferences for traditional and new termino-lexicographical resources, and the way the translators interact with such resources. As the analysis shows, users’ involvement in the design of translation tools did help designers to win more positive feedback on the tools. This finding has practical implications to the designers of translation tools.

Chapter 6 by Moorkens & O’Brien, “Assessing user interface needs of post-editors of machine translation”, discusses what professional translators and post-editors want from the technologies they use. With an extensive survey and follow-up interviews, the authors investigate the ideal features and functions of translation and machine translation post-editing user interface. The research aims to “create user-focused specifications for editing interfaces to better support the post editing task” (Moorkens & O’Brien, 2017, p. 112). The research results reveal that human-computer interaction input is a common complaint among user of popular translation tools. For the developers of translation tools, this study provides useful insights through its scientific research design and in-depth analysis.

Chapter 7 by Doherty, “Issues in human and automatic translation quality assessment”, reviews and highlights a series of general issues in translation quality assessment, with a particular focus on human decision-making in the design of translation assessments in the context of modern technology-enhanced environments.

The last chapter of the volume by Secără, “C³ U read ths? The reception of txt language in subtitling”, is concerned with changing practices in subtitling. With the data collected from two experiment groups through an eye-tracking technology in a lab, the author considers the use and reception of the non-standard txt language in subtitling, to what extent viewers of audiovisual products tolerate such creative subtitles, and how their reading of such subtitles differs from their reading of the traditional standard subtitles. It is evident from the findings that social changes have led to changes in the way subtitling is viewed, which in turn has challenged the professional practice of subtitling.

Technological advances impact upon humans in all sorts of ways. They not only influence how we work and study, but also how we live and communicate. Translation as a means of communication has been no exception in this trend. Since the first idea for machine translation was developed in the 1940s, the technology has evolved considerably from rule-based system to corpus-based system. Such translation technological advances have caught attention from the academic field, like Booth
Human Issues in Translation Technology

Kenny, Dorothy

© 2017 by Abingdon & New York: Routledge

196 pp.

$120.00

ISBN 9781138123298
FUNDING AGENCY

Open Access Funding Provided by Shandong University (Weihai), China

REFERENCES


Hua Tan works at the Research Center for Translation, Interpreting and Communication, School of Foreign Languages, Central China Normal University (Huazhong Normal University); and Research Center for International Communication of Hubei Culture in Central China Normal University, lecturer, PhD., academic visitor at The University of Manchester during Dec. 2017 and Dec. 2018; research areas include studies of literary translation, the history of translation theories, translation studies from linguistic approach (especially Appraisal Theory, SFL, and Pragmatics), and CTS (Corpus-based Translation Studies). https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8842-1210