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Cloud-based tools are leveling the playing field in localization training

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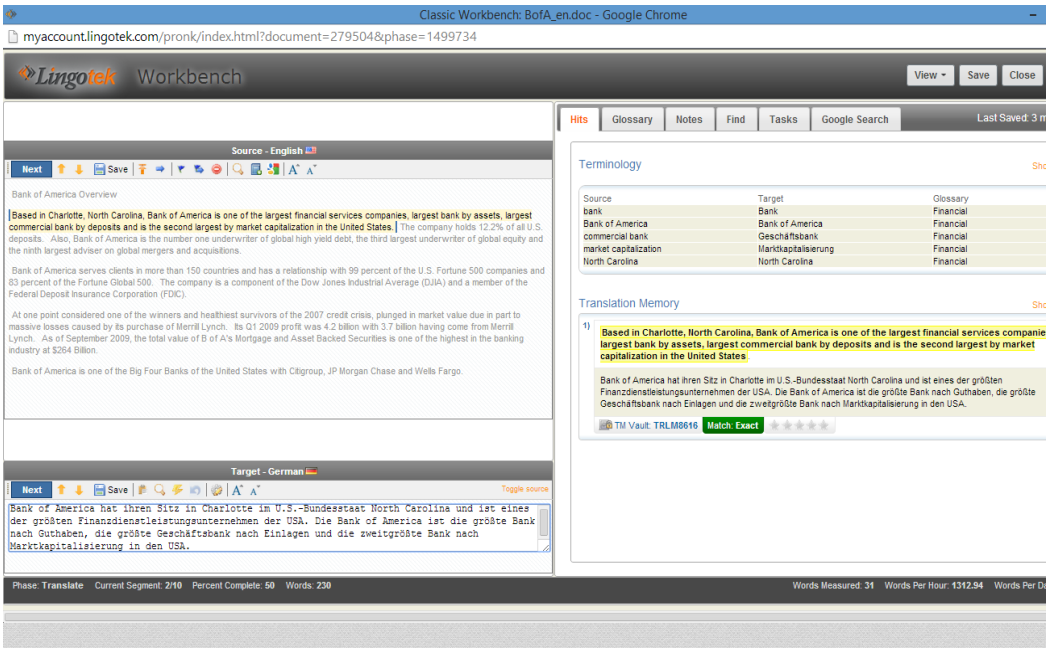
Until recently, teaching a translation technology course required that either the student or the institution make a substantial financial investment in software licenses and expensive hardware. Today, cloud-based technology lets institutions add basic localization courses to their curriculum without investing heavily in infrastructure first.

Wide variety of solutions available that don't require a major up-front investment

Teaching localization means teaching a variety of skills, from (technical) translation and software localization to desktop publishing and project management to machine translation, post-editing, and terminology management. Fortunately, many of today's cloud-based translation technology systems can be used to teach multiple skill sets. Lingotek and Wordfast Anywhere, two cloud-based translation management systems I have been using in class for years, offer translation memory, access to machine translation, terminology management, and workflow/project management functionality. That is to say that for each major localization-related skill set, there is now at least one cloud-based app or service available to teach it! Equally important, by using cloud-based services, institutions no longer need to spend large amounts of money on software licenses and maintenance contracts before they can even begin teaching. Cloud-based software is typically priced on a subscription model, where the institution pays relatively small monthly usage fees and has the option to cancel the service at any time. In fact, all of the cloud-based localization services I use in my courses are completely free for educational institutions - and many are free for commercial users as well.



View of a translation exercise using Lingotek in a browser-based workbench. Students have access to a private translation memory and custom glossary. All students have the capability to assign tasks and share resources.

No need to install software – or worry about updates

In a cloud-based system, most of the data processing happens on the server side, which is why these services require only a standard web browser to make the server's functionality available. With cloud-based translation systems, educational institutions neither have to install software nor make any arrangements to keep it up-to-date as all maintenance is performed on the server-side. In other words: In a cloud-based environment, no IT staff is required on the institution's side for deploying and maintaining a localization application or service.

Windows or Apple laptop, iOS or Android tablet: Bring your own device to class (and make expensive PC labs obsolete)!

One of the changes I am seeing in the courses I teach is the new diversity of computing platforms that students use. While Windows PCs are still dominant, more than 30% of my students use Apple computers, which means that a Windows-only learning environment would not meet student requirements. In addition, a growing number of students own tablet computers and smartphones, which they use not only for media consumption at home but also in the classroom. Fortunately, cloud-based systems, many of which are browser-driven, not only support all major operating systems but run also on multiple hardware platforms. In other words: In a cloud-based teaching environment, students can bring their own device, be it an Apple laptop, Android tablet or in fact any internet-ready device with input/output capabilities.

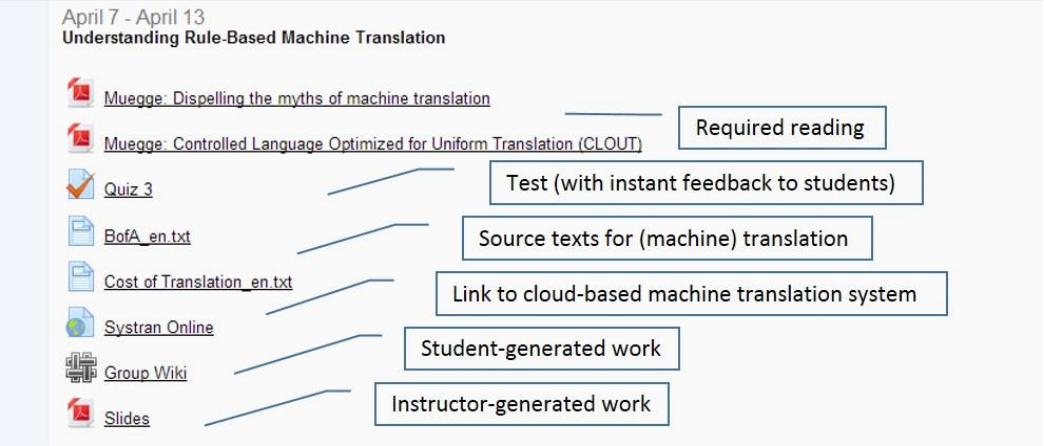
The author demonstrating a cloud-based translation memory system that works in a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) environment. Note the high percentage of students with Apple laptops

Teaching real-time collaboration

Granted, real-time collaboration, where multiple localizers or linguists work together on the same file at the same time, is currently more the exception than the rule. However, as the pressure to deliver localized products sooner increases, the demand for people that have the skills associated with collaborative workflows and processing will increase. Using cloud-based tools, teaching collaboration is much easier than using traditional desktop tools. In a desktop environment, students typically work sequentially and use asynchronous collaboration, if they collaborate at all. For example, an editor can only begin editing a file after the translator has finished translation. During translation, a translator may use a translation memory, but that translation memory only makes past translations available, not the ones fellow translators have been creating since the last export. Using cloud-based tools such as translation memories or terminology management systems for teaching purposes, the instructor can make every student's work available to everyone else in class. For instance, multiple students can work on the same translation project in the same role, where they can see and use their fellow students' translations as those translations are created. Similarly, multiple students can work on the same project in different roles, i.e. a student or an instructor can edit one or more students' work while they are still translating. In both of these collaborative learning scenarios, students have the opportunity to benefit from immediate feedback they receive while they are still engaged in an activity. In a traditional translation teaching environment that uses desktop software, this type of learning with and from each other while still engaged in the activity is much harder to accomplish, if it is possible at all.

Cloud-based localization technology and cloud-based learning management systems go hand in hand

Teaching localization or translation technology involves more than making applications available to students. In a traditional classroom setting, instructors can use cloud-based services likeGoogle Drive or Microsoft OneDrive to share documents such as reading materials, slides, and videos with students. With a learning management systems (LMS) like Moodle, OpenClass orTalentLMS, educators can create online courses that provide comprehensive support for both students and instructors. In an LMS environment, instructors who use cloud-based localization tools can deliver tools-related content, let students experience the tool, and then capture students' feedback using forums, wikis, quizzes, etc. As with localization technology, several large and scalable cloud-based learning management systems are available for free.



Example of a localization teaching unit (Understanding Rule-Based Machine Translation) that uses cloud-based services for both learning management system and translation technology

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