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Uwe Muegge

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A few words about Uwe:

Uwe Muegge has more than 15 years of experience in the translation and localization industry, having worked in leadership functions on both the vendor and buyer side. He has published numerous articles on translation tools and processes, and taught computer-assisted translation and terminology management courses at the college level in the United States and Europe. Since 2008, Uwe has been working for China-based [CSOFT International](#), one of the world's top 30 language service providers, and currently serves as Senior Translation Tools Strategist for North America. Uwe Muegge is a frequent contributor to [CSOFT's blog](#) and [twitter account](#). Uwe also has a [personal twitter account](#), you can find him on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#), and he makes his publications available for free download through [SelectedWorks](#).

What aspects do you emphasize most in educating future technical translators and localizers?

One of the first things students learn in my Introduction to Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) course is how technical translation is different from translation in the literary tradition. The most important characteristic of a typical technical translation project (if there is such a thing) is that the text to be translated is linked to a product or service, whereas a text in a literary translation project typically stands alone. The fact that there is a strong connection between the source text and a product or service has many implications. First of all, consistency within and across documents and versions is of the utmost importance across the entire spectrum of technical translation projects. How do you make sure that multiple translators working on multiple text types within a large project, e.g. GUI, software strings, online help, tutorials, etc. all use the same terms in the target language? How do you ensure stylistic consistency between translated documents in the current release and those in previous releases (think usability and corporate identity)?

So the big question is: How does a freelance technical translator meet the consistency requirement, while also being accurate, and do all that in the most efficient manner possible? Unlike in literary translation projects, buyers of technical translation services typically have made heavy investments in research, development, and marketing prior to the launch of a new product or service. That's why buyers of technical translation services lose revenue every day a translation is not available and the company is not able to sell on international markets. Helping students understand the business reasons that drive technical translation projects and how to meet these needs using state-of-the-art translation tools and processes is the primary goal of all of the courses I teach.

In addition to developing skills in translation core technologies like terminology management, translation memory, and machine translation systems, I strongly believe in teaching the fundamental skills any knowledge worker in the 21st century needs. For instance, I offer a module on Advanced Web Search, where students learn to use search operators like *filetype:*, *definition:*, or “*phrase*” to perform more targeted Google searches. Helping students sharpen their online research skills enables aspiring linguists to find translation-related information of any kind faster and more efficiently. In another module I familiarize incoming translation and localization students with basic social networking skills and strategies. Students learn that LinkedIn is a people and solutions search engine that rewards those who understand basic search engine optimization principles. I’m also emphasizing that a presence on LinkedIn, twitter, and facebook helps students get hired in emerging roles like social media marketing that more and more language service providers start offering.

Are there any emerging technologies and practices that you currently use in your classroom?

I’m glad you ask! I have been very excited about the potential of cloud-computing ever since this technology arrived on the horizon at the beginning of the 21st century. For those of you not familiar with cloud-computing: In this technology paradigm, the application that processes your data resides on a remote webserver, not on your local computer. Cloud-computing has many benefits: Applications are basically maintenance free, don’t cause compatibility problems on the local computer, and many run on all major operating systems. And because cloud-based applications are typically offered as SaaS (software as a service) on a monthly subscription basis, using this type of software does not require a major upfront investment in software licenses.

I have started using cloud-based translation memory systems in the classroom in 2008, and since last year, I deliver all course materials and activities in my CAT courses using cloud-based systems. Students access all materials online, from instructor-generated content (articles and slides), to student-generated content (results of group discussions), to testing (with instant feedback!), to translation exercises in a CAT tool. Best of all: Students can do all that 24/7, from any place that has an internet connection, using the computing device of their choice (desktop, laptop, tablet, or smart phone).

Currently, I am using four types of cloud-based applications in my courses:

- Cloud-based course delivery system cross-platform, topic-based, self-service kiosk where students access course content, collaborate with other students, submit assignments, participate in tests, receive performance feedback/grades, etc. (e.g. [Moodle](#))
- Cloud-based terminology management system cross-platform system where students create terminology projects, create rich termbase entries that include mandatory definitions and a hierarchical data category structure, perform batch uploads from external resources, etc. (e.g. [TermWiki](#))

- Cloud-based translation memory system cross-platform system where students set-up simple termbases and translation memories, analyze new documents, translate using termbases and translation memories, perform simple quality assurance, share translation memories and termbases, etc. (e.g. [Wordfast Anywhere](#))
- Cloud-based translation management system with integrated machine translation component cross-platform system where students set-up and manage simple translation workflows, post-edit machine-generated translations using termbases and (human-generated) translation memories, collaborate with fellow students in real-time, etc. (e.g. [Lingotek](#))

Here is a brief [video on how I am using cloud-based translation tools in the classroom](#).

Do you have any tips for freelance translators who are interested in terminology management?

That's an excellent question! In my opinion, terminology management is one of the areas that many freelance linguists neglect in their professional practice. I tell my students that terms are the words that clients particularly care about. As a service provider, you want to make sure that you are using the client's preferred terms within and across projects – and you want to do that as efficiently as possible. But how?

First of all, and this may sound trivial, use a translation memory system for every project you work on. It is amazing to me how many professional translators only use a translation memory system for repetitive text or if the client specifically requires it. I know that many industry professionals look at translation memory systems primarily as productivity tools. However, translation memory software also offers many quality features that help translators with every translation project, be it repetitive or not. For a brief overview of the benefits of using translation memories, consult [Ten good reasons for using a translation memory](#).

Secondly, create or update a project-specific termbase for every translation project using the terminology management component of the translation memory system. It is true that once a linguist processes all translation projects in a translation memory product, terminology from previous translations is accessible through the concordance or translation memory search function. However, there are two problems with relying solely on the translation memory database for terminology management. 1) concordance searches are a manual and therefore slow process and 2) concordances typically produce multiple search results, which necessitate time-consuming navigation of search results and decision-making. And even after spending all that time on identifying the best translated term, the linguist may still pick the 'wrong' one! Using the terminology management component of a translation memory system to create a project-specific termbase is the most efficient way of ensuring terminological consistency within and across translation projects.

Finally, I strongly recommend that translators have their multilingual termbases validated by the client early in a translation project. With more than ten years of freelance translation experience, I know that this is easier said than done. Having the client review a termbase before translation begins is the best way of ensuring that the target-language terms to be used in a translation meet the client's needs. Consider this scenario: The linguist has done his or her due diligence during terminology research and each target term in a glossary comes from a reliable source. However, the client has been using different target terms consistently in internal and external communications. What's the most likely outcome after the client reviews the translation after delivery: a) The client changes the terminology in all product-related publications so that the client's website and catalogs are now consistent with the current translation or b) The reviewer marks all terms that deviate from established usage as translation errors?

For those interested in a more detailed discussion of terminology validation as part of a translation project, see [Ten good reasons why you should validate your translated terminology](#).

Can you recommend any best practices and tools for translation quality assurance?

Based on my experience working on the translation buyer side, many freelance translators have an uneasy relationship with translation quality assurance. In my opinion, there are a number of reasons for this sorry fact:

1. In traditional translator training, translation quality is frequently defined purely in semantic terms (i.e. how well does a translation convey the meaning of the source text, serve the intended purpose, etc.);
2. Conversely, aspects of what I call 'formal translation quality' have traditionally been neglected (i.e. consistency issues within and across documents (terminology, numbers, punctuation, tagging, etc.);
3. Most translation tools developers do not have a long history of providing comprehensive translation quality assurance features and functions.

My advice to (aspiring) translators on how to ensure high translation quality is this:

- Accept only projects for which you have the required competence (domain and text-type expertise);
- Process every translation project in a translation memory system (all commercial translation memory products offer many quality assurance features, e.g. completeness check, consistency check [TM / terminology lookup], easy formatting [tags / placeables]);
- Use the four-eye principle (i.e. have your translations edited) whenever possible.

While there is not exactly an abundance of free translation QA tools, there are a few worth mentioning:

- The [Across Personal Edition](#), a powerful translation memory solution, which is available for free to freelance translators, offers a wide range of automatic translation QA functions;
- The free [ApSIC Xbench](#) is primarily a concordance tool for searching translation memory and glossary databases but also offers many translation QA features;

- Both [Wordfast Classic](#) and [WordfastPro](#), which are free in demo mode (up to 1000 translation units), offer very useful translation QA modules. In fact, Wordfast Classic has included translation QA features for more than a decade!

Which translation and localization standards should freelance translators be familiar with?

I use a variety of standards in teaching my translation technology courses, and I tell my students that standards are basically best-practice documents. Standards initiatives typically reflect the combined wisdom of some of the most experienced practitioners in an industry. That's why these standards have something to offer to both novice translators and seasoned professionals. I am particularly fond of the following three translation standards:

- [ASTM F2575 Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation](#): This is the standard I use the most in the classroom, and the primary reason for that is the fact that ASTM F2575 has the largest scope. This translation quality standard not only covers the translation process, but also gives recommendations for selecting translation service providers based on competencies, including competence in various types of translation technology. From the perspective of a freelance translator, the most valuable part of ASTM F2575 is probably Section 8 titled "Specifications Phase". In this section, the standard lists on two-and-a-half narrowly printed pages the various areas which translation buyer and translation vendor need come to an agreement before translation begins.
- [SAE J2450 Translation Quality Metric](#): Even though this standard was originally developed specifically for use in the automotive industry, SAE J2450 is probably the most widely used translation standard today. As the 'metric' in its name implies, J2450 is a standardized methodology for measuring the quality level of a translation. This translation quality metric was designed so that translation reviewers could rate translations in an objective and repeatable fashion. Freelance translators should be familiar with this standard because chances are that their clients are either already using this methodology or are thinking about it.
- [ISO 704:2009 Terminology Work – Principles and Methods](#): One of my pet peeves is that many of the freelance translators I have professional contact with either do not manage terminology efficiently or don't manage terminology at all. Anyone who has a basic understanding of linguistics and is looking for a concise guide to terminology management should seriously consider ISO 704. This standard has answers to many terminology-management-related questions, like "What is a concept?", "How do I write a definition?", or "What is the difference between homonymy and synonymy?"

But a word of warning: While reading these standards can be rewarding in many ways, they are not exactly light fare!

Uwe, many thanks for you super-informative answers and practical advice!