Multilingual 3.0
Predictions for the language industry in 2025

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White Paper

Part 1: The future of machine translation by Guylaine Tritton

As the first part of our series of predictions for the language industry, we talked to Alpha's Solutions Architect Guylaine Tritton about her thoughts on probably the hottest topic in any discussion of the sector: machine translation.

As someone with extensive language-industry experience who works with some of Alpha's biggest global clients to help train their machine translation engines, Guylaine is ideally placed to provide insight into some of the key trends that will continue to evolve in the next few years.

Discussed by Guylaine in more detail below, here are her top four predictions:

1. **With the Internet of Things, neural machine translation (NMT) will play an even bigger part in our daily lives.**
2. **But NMT is not about to make the human translator extinct; the role of the translator will, however, continue to evolve.**
3. **Translation tools will make it easier to track the quality of NMT – and know where human input is required.**
4. **We're moving from a translation-based approach to a language-based approach – and technology platforms will evolve accordingly.**

Prediction #1: With the Internet of Things, neural machine translation (NMT) will play an even bigger part in our daily lives.

Neural machine translation (NMT) has already been a game changer in the translation industry; it's been well documented how it has dramatically improved quality of machine translation. And it's now freely available to global audiences via apps such as Google Translate. You don't have to be a big business to experience the benefits of NMT.

With continued heavy investment from tech giants such as Google, Amazon and Microsoft, the quality of NMT will continue to develop year on year, particularly because they have such huge data sets of language to work with. Because it's based on machine learning, the more content NMT engines process, the better the quality of their translations.

Of course, many of us already interact with NMT on a daily basis– when we ask a digital assistant to check the weather forecast for us, for example, or use a chatbot to interact with a website.

This trend is only going to increase. Expect to see an ever-greater number of voice-enabled smart devices working across an ever-broader range of languages. The Internet of Things, powered by voice recognition and NMT, is going to make talking to our gadgets, apps and appliances an even more integral part of our daily lives for users in more and more languages.

Prediction #2: But NMT is not about to make the human translator extinct; the role of the translator will, however, continue to evolve.

It is too early to say that the translator is becoming extinct. Their role has already changed and will continue to change, but language specialists will always be required.

For "bulk" translation, where quality, tone and accuracy are not always the most important features, you'll see a market that is even more dominated by NMT with AI-driven post-editing.

But, at the other end of the spectrum, you'll continue to see translators develop as subject-matter experts (SMEs) or brand experts in a more evolved sense. So rather than translators who are only experts in one domain, we will see translators, or transcreators, working in closer collaboration with writers and businesses to emulate the original message in slogans and campaigns as closely as possible.

It's also important to understand that improvements in the quality of machine translation can also present their own problems. For example, because the grammar and flow of machine-translated content may be high, it can be hard to discern whether something has been missed out or the meaning has been significantly altered. Even with developments in NMT, post-editing of machine translation by human editors will continue to be vital in ensuring quality in many types of projects.

Prediction #3: Translation tools will make it easier to track the quality of NMT − and know where human input is required.

While NMT plug-ins are integrated into many industry-standard translation platforms, at the moment not many provide much insight into the quality of the machine-translated output. But this is already changing and will continue to do so.

Some NMT providers now push confidence scores about the quality of the machine translation output back into the translation environment. If the score is 95%, the translator knows that they won't need to spend much time post-editing the segment. If the score is 75%, they know they will need to spend a little longer. But they still do not know which part of the segment they need to focus on.

MT will have taken a huge leap when translators are no longer able to differentiate a fuzzy match (a source segment that is similar to a segment that has been translated before, which benefits from a scored translation memory suggestion as well as an indication of which parts of the suggestion need to be edited) from an MT segment (in which no hints are provided). The translator will be given an accurate quality score and will know which parts of the segment they need to concentrate on when post-editing.

Prediction #4: We're moving from a translation-based approach to a language-based approach −and technology platforms will evolve accordingly.

Although traditional translation management systems are not going to disappear any time soon, there will continue to be a paradigm shift in the way we use technology in the language industry driven by globalization, digitalization and personalization across multiple markets and channels.
Perhaps we need to broaden our scope and think in terms of language rather than translation or even transcreation.

Of course, there are many content management systems or digital asset management systems on the market for managing brand communications across multiple markets. But I have not come across many platforms that make it possible to create content in several languages within the same project.

The approach to language and content is becoming much more market-specific and of course customer-specific too. So we are no longer talking about source and target languages here, but of several source languages, each following specific brand guidelines.

In October 2020, Adobe entered into a strategic collaboration with Skyword which is aimed at powering "intelligent content experiences for the world's leading brands". We're going to see more of these kind of collaborations based on the quality of content and its relevance to specific audiences. Platforms won't just be about delivering content at scale, but also content that is more directly personalized to individual customers and markets.

Biography

Guylaine Tritton, Solutions Architect, Alpha CRC

Guylaine began her career as a Localization Engineer in 1998 and joined Alpha CRC in 2002 as a Senior Project Manager. Guylaine has held the positions of Head of Project Management and Operations Manager at Alpha CRC.

As a Solutions Architect, Guylaine's role is to work as a consultant to strategic accounts. She is also part of Alpha CRC's on-boarding team and advises on best practices, workflows and technology.

The future is multilingual 3.0

Look out for new insights over the coming weeks from Alpha's team of in-house experts on how digital transformation in the language industry is going to affect the role of human translators, internationalization strategies, e-commerce localization and individual sectors such as games and lifestyle.

As ever, if you have any thoughts on the above or predictions of your own, please drop us a line at:alphamarketing@alphacrc.com.

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