



GeekSpeak

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Cloud Illusions?

I've looked at clouds from both sides now,

From up and down, and still somehow,

It's cloud illusions I recall . . .

Both Sides Now, Joni Mitchell

I am not a low-maintenance columnist, as the very kind editor of this magazine would surely share with you. Rarely—if ever—have I managed to turn in my column on time. After all, I am a freelance translator, and most of you know what it means to live that kind of unstructured life. This month is once again no different, with my column sliding in at the very last minute, long after the official due date.

But sometimes things happen for a reason, and that may be particularly true today. Just as I sat down to write my planned column, someone on Twitter mentioned an article from *Forbes* magazine entitled “Cloud Computing’s Vendor Lock-In Problem: Why the Industry Is Taking a Step Backward” (see <http://tinyurl.com/6uelto4>). And I have to tell you, I am sure glad that I had not already written about something less important.

Here are some excerpts:

For more than a decade, IT managers and advocates have been working tirelessly to enable solutions based on common standards and protocols that can be built, supported, swapped out and replaced, regardless of vendor. And they almost succeeded—until lately.

Cloud computing may be erasing the gains we've made in terms of vendor dependence lock-in. Going with a cloud solution means buying into the specific protocols, standards and tools of the cloud vendor, making future migration costly and difficult. How is this so? Because standards are still being formed, and cloud computing is still too immature to reach the point where customers are demanding vendor independence.

No, this is not talking about language technology, but I still feel vindicated.

For several years now I have been trying to communicate that the most important problem we face with translation technology is the new capture mechanism in which most tool vendors are participating. While we have data exchange standards that are more or less well supported (TMX for translation memories, TBX for termbases, XLIFF for the translation data, and the upcoming Linport for translation packages), there are no mechanisms that enable Tool A to enter into the server- or cloud-based workflow of Tool B. So, if your client sends your project not as data but as a login that you can use within a tool to access an online-based project or—even more simply—actually to log into an online-based tool that gives you access to online-based data automatically, all the hard-fought-for advances

in widely accepted data exchange standards are nullified. Ironically, the data you access might even be in one of those standards—translation data especially could be in XLIFF format—but that does not help you much if no other tool can get to it.

You may be getting tired of all the rallying cries surrounding exchange standards, but this is what I think. We have reached a certain level of independence with our translation environment tools by being able to use almost any tool when we receive a translation project as an e-mail attachment or downloaded from an FTP server. However, now that many tool vendors are moving toward online-based workflows, this independence will soon vanish. I believe that we should join forces and voices to stand against this unless we want to lose the freedom to choose our work environment. To quote the much more eloquent author of the *Forbes* article:

Only one thing will eliminate or reduce the risk of vendor lock-in in the long run: if end-user customers start demanding standardization and interoperability, just as they have in the past with on-premises applications. Once it dawns among organizations that use third-party clouds that they need to demand this from cloud providers, then the cloud providers will fall in line.

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Interpreters Forum Continued

analysis by Holly Mikkelsen¹ of the different types of interpreting, particularly her fourth point regarding the qualities of interpreters.

Note

1. Mikkelsen, Holly. “Interpreting Is Interpreting—Or Is It?” *AIIC Webzine* (Winter 2010),

www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/page3356.htm.

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