

GeekSpeak

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Good News!

In the past year or so—maybe even a little longer than that—something happened with translation environment tools that requires more from us than passive usage. Suddenly, we need to become experts. Why? Because the number of features offered by the typical professional translation environment tool (TEnT) has expanded so much that our computers can no longer deal with all of them at the same time. Often they actually get in the way of each other.

Here is a list of features that most TEnTs offer in some way or another during the translation process:

- Automatic display and insertion of perfect and fuzzy matches from the translation memories (TMs).
- Automatic display of matches from the termbases and optional automatic insertion.
- Subsegment searches within the TM that are suggested as part of an auto-completion process or as matches in a separate pane.
- Automatic assembly of matches from the TMs and termbases (and possibly machine translation sources).
- Automatic correction of TM matches with termbase and machine translation data.
- Real-time quality assurance checking for formal, non-linguistic errors and inconsistent terminology.

- Real-time spell-checking with a squiggly underline.
- Suggestions from several machine translation engines and other mixed sources like MyMemory.
- Automated suggestions from online dictionaries and TMs like TDA.
- Voice recognition as a preferred way of entering text.

If you compare this to just a few years ago, you will realize quickly that this list has grown considerably. And unless you are working on some kind of miracle computer or with very small TM and termbase resources, there is essentially no way to do all of this at the same time without a significant lag time. Now it is true that some of these features might not even collaborate very well—say, voice recognition with some of the insertion or assembly features—and it is even more true that not all features are helpful for everyone to start with (that is cer-

tainly the case for machine translation, but also for any of the other features). But my point is that to use your TEnT as your ultimate productivity tool, you have to understand how to mix and match the available features so they cater optimally to what *you* need them to be. No more relying on (and praying for) “just” perfect TM matches. You have to become better than that. (Well, you do not *have* to. You also do not *have* to sleep enough, eat well, or exercise, but you are better for it.)

I think this is really good news! Not only does it force us to look at ourselves and understand how we actually translate (and how we can possibly optimize it), but it also encourages us not to sit on our technology laurels that we earned several years ago. It should force us to stay interested in new developments and maybe even engage with some of the developers. Plus, employing translation technology adequately for your needs and your clients’ needs has now truly become a professional activity, just like the ability to “simply” translate. ■

Information and Contacts

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.