An Interpreters' Guide to Selecting Terminology Management Tools

Hernani Costa
University of Malaga
Malaga, Spain
hercos@uma.es

Gloria Corpas Pastor
University of Malaga
Malaga, Spain
gcorpas@uma.es

Isabel Durán Muñoz
University of Malaga
Malaga, Spain
iduran@uma.es

Short Abstract

Time is golden… especially in the case of interpreters. Prior to a service, it is essential to search for relevant information and domain-specific terminology within a very limited period of time. During the interpreting service the information gathered needs to be easily accessible at all times. Similarly, after a given service, interpreters should be ideally able to store terms and any other documentation for future reference. In this context, choosing the right tool for a specific project can have a significant impact on the amount of time required to extract, manage and consult terminology before, during and after the interpreting service. Saving time from searches and management could have a positive impact on the overall quality of interpreting. This paper focuses on terminology management tools. We offer a set of measurable features that can be used to guide interpreters when choosing the most adequate terminology management tool for a given interpretation project. Then, we present the better-classified tools based on our findings. And finally, we briefly describe three semi-automatically terminology extraction tools that can be used during the preparation stage to identify relevant terms from text.

Extended Abstract

Interpreters often work in a wide range of domains and have limited time to prepare themselves for a given interpreting service. To ensure the best possible results during the interpretation process, interpreters usually perform an extensive search for specialised knowledge and terminology as they need to familiarise themselves with concepts, technical terms, and proper names in the interpreters' working languages. Moreover, especially in consecutive interpreting and in a booth, they rely on these findings to help them during the interpretation process. Unlike translators, for whom computer-assisted tools make part of their translation pipeline for several years already, interpreters have not benefited from the same level of innovation. We can even say that their work relies by and large on traditional or manual methods. Fortunately, there are currently several terminology extraction and management tools capable of assisting interpreters before and during an interpretation service. Our communication aims not only to show how interpreters can benefit from these technology tools in their daily work but also how to evaluate them. In detail, we intend to demonstrate that it is possible to create a set of measurable features that can be used to access and distinguish the different Terminology Management Tools (TMT) available on the market and consequently ensure the choice of the best tool for a given interpretation project. Apart from that, we mention the most complete TMTs based on our findings. And finally, we briefly describe three semi-automatically Terminology Extraction Tools (TET) that can be used to identify relevant from text during the preparation stage.

As we know TMS differ from one another in their functionalities, practical issues, degrees of user-friendliness and target audience (i.e. individual or enterprise usage). Therefore, it is necessary to establish a set of specific and measurable features that permit us to assess and distinguish the different tools concerning individual's and company's needs in such a way that the results would be useful for both potential customers as well as to the designers of such systems. Departing from the conclusions drawn from the literature review (cf. Bilgen, 2009; Rodríguez and Schnell, 2009; Costa et al., 2014a and Costa et al., 2014b) and a careful analysis of the priorities for the design and features to be included in a TMT, we identified 15 measurable features. For instance, the "freedom to define the basic structure" identified by Rodríguez and Schnell (2009) was reformulated into several practical measurable features, such as "No. of descriptive fields", "No. of working languages" and "No. of languages

per glossary". Moreover, the possibility of "developing multilingual mini-databases", also identified in their study, was reconsidered as measurable features by means of the following criteria: "Manages multiple glossaries" and "No. of languages per glossary". Another example is the "Remote Glossary Exchange" measurable feature, which was inferred from the study conducted by Bilgen (2009), who identified the need to exchange terminological information. For more details about these features see Costa et al. 2014b. Based on this comparative analysis, none of the investigated TMTs exhibit all the desirable features. Nevertheless, SDL MultiTerm was the best classified standalone TMT with 77 points out of 100. Another interesting finding in our research was that web-based TMTs are more useful to share terminology and all the 6 web-based TMS that we analysed got similar scores, ranging from 74 (Acrolinx) to 78 (flahterm). Despite mobile TMS do not get acceptable scores when compared with standalone and web-based TMTs - Glossary Assistant got 53 and The Interpreter's Wizard 39 points - and they do not offer the necessary comfort to manage terminology, they still play an important role when a quick search for terminology is required, e.g. while in a booth. Although TETs are not totally accurate when used to semi-automatically extract terminology, they are the faster option available to identify for example the most frequent words or lexical units. For example, TermSuite (Daille, 2012) is an open-source and platform-independent TET that allows to extract bilingual terminology from comparable corpora in five European and two non-European languages. Also using statistic-based methods, Rainbow and ExtPhrJ are two examples of open-source platform-independent TETs that can be freely used to extract terms, from monolingual text, in almost any language.

To conclude, our main findings suggest that most TMT are not envisaged to be used by interpreters. Therefore, TMT do not fulfil completely their needs and technology-assisted interpreting tools still have a long way to go when compared with computer-assisted tools for translators. In the future we intend to identify the most relevant features that a TET should have in order to help interpreters before the interpretation service.

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