

## **Translation in the Digital Age: Evolution and Future Prospects**

**S. Lathamani**

**Lecturer (Senior Grade), Department of Computer Engineering  
Ayya Nadar Janaki Ammal Polytechnic College, Sivakasi, Tamilnadu  
[lathasattur1999@gmail.com](mailto:lathasattur1999@gmail.com)**

### **Abstract**

Nowadays the practice of translation relies on multi-level collaboration as a result of the shift in the role of the translator, the nature and amount of the content to be translated, the technologies and platforms available for translation, and the human and business dynamics of the language industry. These factors have influenced the distribution of labour and the structure of translation work. In particular, the Internet as a virtual environment opened the door for a new paradigm of collaboration-driven translation activity. Ancient models of collaborative translation are the starting point of what is known today as community translation, social translation, volunteer translation, fan translation or crowd-sourcing.

The introduction of electronic and digital technology prompted a widening of translation thinking. It soon became apparent that the concept of translation had to enter the realm of visual, musical, multimedia, and hypermedia translations. Digital technology reconfirmed one of the basic driving forces of translation, namely, the constant process of associative thinking. The inherent possibilities of the digital age will facilitate the interpretation of translations from one medium to the next: novels into film, musical sounds into visual images and vice versa, human gestures into rhythmic sounds. The Semantic Web deals with the instantaneous translation of multilingual web content to make searches and retrieval of information universal despite the search language or the language of the information.

**Keywords:** collaboration-driven translation, crowd-sourcing, hypermedia translation

### **Introduction**

In the early days of translation, whenever a document is to be translated a group of people with bilingual abilities would spend months, even years, for translating word-for-word, phrase-by-phrase, making it a tedious process. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the advent of computers changed the field forever. Nearly instantaneous translations are now possible with the help of language translation tools. The extreme flexibility of digital tools generates a wide variety of outputs. An ordinary laptop installed with the correct software and internet connection can perform the functions of an accountant, game console, digital library, photo album, real estate agent etc.

## Need for Translation in the Digital Age

We are living in a Globalized world, where we have to communicate effectively and overcome the language barriers. This led to the increased international demand for translation. In business world also, dealing with international partners and customers is essential for its growth globally. But the consumers prefer to read and buy products and services in their native language only, which makes translation critically important. In political field also, the politicians need to communicate effectively with their counterparts around the world thus making translation a vital part in their election campaigns to influence people and gain support. So, in today's multicultural and multilingual societies, high quality translation is mandatory for efficient interaction with the people.

## Evolution

Translation is witnessing the Golden era of innovations since 1940's due to the developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and Neural Networks by achieving a significant growth in the efficiency of machine translation. Starting from online automatic translation services to crowdsourcing translations as well as translation APPs for Smart phones, everywhere there is a revolution in Digital age. The development of Semantic Web also allowed for instantaneous translation of multilingual web content that made surfing the internet interesting and retrieval of correct information easier with just few clicks.

As computers are popularized among ordinary people apart from academics or professionals, the translation of software is required corresponding to languages of target audience. So collaborative translation projects like FaceBook,Skype,Twitter were developed and used all over the world.

### A. Crowdsourcing Translation

It is a short form for 'crowd outsourcing' wherein the ideas from a large group of open and rapidly evolving users of internet are obtained, to achieve a cumulative result.

Popular examples of crowdsourced projects are:

1. **Wikipedia** – showed that a crowd of passionate volunteers could create a comprehensive Encyclopedia.

2. **The OpenSourceSoftware(OSS) movement** proved that a crowd of passionate volunteers could create tools as efficient as highly paid ones.

Korean T.V serials are liked and viewed by teenage children in South India very much which is possible through 'Fan Translation' – an unofficial translation of TV series,movies based on specific genre made by fans.

Digital revolution triggered the creation of specialized Computer Assisted Translation(CAT) tools such as Linguee,SDL Trados studio,ProZ,MemoQ and smartCAT to ease the burden of translation, thus improving consistency and quality. A CAT tool is not an automatic

translation tool or translation engine but only a tool that helps translator in the translation process and ensures a real human translation but also saves time and resources for clients to re-format translation and speeds up the time to market for books, leaflets and manuals.

Automated subtitling for programmes and web content, enabled the viewers to access them on Television and on Youtube using machine translation.

### **Latest Translation Systems**

- The popularity of internet and smartphones among ordinary people made major Tech companies to invest enormous fund for developing sophisticated translation systems. Last year the Chinese internet giant “Baidu” demonstrated a pocket universal device that can translate spoken sentences in real time. This is achieved using Deep learning neural networks, wherein the device is equipped with programming techniques that enables it to learn from observational data. Advances in the development of such systems provide great opportunity for international business and tourism.
- Google also introduced a new application “Google Translate” in 2016, which can automatically translate complete sentences in more than 40 languages around the world and can understand certain levels of context. Google also designed Pixel Earbuds paired with Pixel 2 smartphone in 2017 that can support real time translation.

### **Future Prospects**

1. Development of automated translation systems help the tourists to manage the practical difficulties of reading road signs, bus/train name boards, understanding menu cards or accommodation booking etc., without looking for the help of local people.

2. Systems that can translate from one medium to another, like sounds into images and vice versa, human gestures into sounds may be developed to support the persons with disabilities.

### **Limitations of Digital translation**

1. Context is the main problem for Digital translation.
2. Automatic translation cannot cope up with culture differences.
3. Word translation is easier but sentence translation poses a problem as it cannot think critically what you had in your mind.
4. A computer cannot grasp minute nuances of the language.

### **Conclusion**

According to Common Sense Advisory (CSA), approximately 14 languages are sufficient to reach about 75% of global Internet users today, reaching the next 20% requires adding about 40 more. Digital translation allows to create a more understanding of a work and possibility to establish continuous interaction with work. Translators has the responsibility to produce texts

which are culturally authentic as their originals. Then only the usage of automated translation systems will be greatly appreciated and become popular.

Rapid machine translation improvements and the development of platforms like Amazon Translate, Google Translate, and Microsoft Translator have lowered to near-zero the cost of translation output that is good enough for many consumer and simple business-to-consumer applications.

=====

### References

1. BASSNETT-MCGUIRE, S. 1980. Translation studies. London: Methuen Co. Ltd.
2. BELL, R. 1991. Translation and translating. London: Longman Group UK.
3. SNELL-HORNBY, M. 1988. Translation studies: An integrated approach. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
4. NIDA, E. A. 1964. Towards a science of translating. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
5. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303769560\\_Book\\_review\\_Translation\\_in\\_the\\_Digital\\_Age\\_Michael\\_Cronin\\_2013](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303769560_Book_review_Translation_in_the_Digital_Age_Michael_Cronin_2013)

=====