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Machine Translation and the Disruption of Foreign Language Learning Activities

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This study examines the question of how language teachers in a highly technology-friendly university environment view machine translation and the implications that this has for the personal learning environments of students. It brings an activity-theory perspective to the question, examining the ways that the introduction of new tools can disrupt the relationship between different elements in an activity system. This perspective opens up for an investigation of the ways that new tools have the potential to fundamentally alter traditional learning activities. In questionnaires and group discussions, respondents showed general agreement that although use of machine translation by students could be considered cheating, students are bound to use it anyway, and suggested that teachers focus on the kinds of skills students would need when using machine translation and design assignments and exams to practice and assess these skills. The results of the empirical study are used to reflect upon questions of what the roles of teachers and students are in a context where many of the skills that a person needs to be able to interact in a foreign language increasingly can be outsourced to laptops and smartphones.

Tags

Keywords: Interactivity, Formative Assessment, Technology Enhanced Formative Assessment, Collaborative Learning

1. Introduction

This article examines the attitudes of university foreign language teachers to machine translation (MT)¹ as part of a project investigating the conditions which afford and constrain foreign language learning in a Swedish higher education context in the 2010s. This particular study was in part inspired by the reaction of a fellow educational researcher and language learner, who was quite surprised when I said that I believed that my language teaching colleagues considered the use of MT in academic contexts to be cheating and a hindrance to language learning. By examining this issue, I hope to contribute to the understanding of how different actors in a higher education context adapt their activities to the rapidly expanding repertoire of available resources.

The results of the empirical study are used to reflect upon questions of what the roles of teachers and students are in a context where many of the skills that a person needs to be able to interact in a foreign language increasingly can be outsourced to laptops and smartphones. The research question is: How do teachers view MT in the context of foreign language

¹ Such as Google Translate, BabelFish, and Bing Translator. "Machine translation" is the term used in the research literature, archaic as it sounds.

courses at a Swedish university that makes extensive use of digital technologies, and what implications does this have for the personal learning environments of students?

Those who view the existence of different languages as a communication problem to be solved, rather than as an example of the richness and diversity of human culture and cognition, would argue that rapidly improving MT technologies, plus the dominance of English internationally, obviate the need for the study of other languages, an argument made by many university administrators keen to save money on instruction (and even by a former president of Harvard University) (Clifford, et al., 2013, p. 109). However, the arguments against MT from educators are sometimes no less instrumental:

We can imagine a nightmarish scenario (for learners) in which automatic speech recognition (AVR) makes possible automatic inter-pretation: the program recognizes the incoming L2 text and translates it. A text-to-speech routine then reproduces the speech in L1. [...] Will such a development discourage well planned work on listening comprehension? (Robin, 2011, pp. 111–112)

Is it really a “nightmare” that MT may render a particular type of classroom exercise obsolete? Clearly, MT is one of a number of recent technological developments which have the potential to disrupt some of the time-tested traditions of the language teaching and learning process.

Several studies on teachers’ attitudes toward MT have been conducted in recent years (see section 2 below); this article attempts to add to existing knowledge by offering the perspective of teachers working in a highly technology-friendly environment, a university in Sweden at which nearly all the foreign language courses are taught by distance, and by adding an activity-theory perspective to the question, by examining the ways that the introduction of new tools can disrupt the relationship between different elements in an activity system. This perspective has implications beyond simply whether it is “good” or “bad” for students to use particular technologies, opening up for an investigation of the ways that new tools have the potential to fundamentally alter traditional learning activities.

2. Previous Research

As a number of researchers (Garcia & Pena, 2011; Niño, 2008; Somers, 2003) have pointed out, the question of whether and how language students should make use of MT goes back to the 1980s, and yet, empirical studies are less numerous than one

might expect for a research field now over 30 years old. In recent years, however, interest has increased, presumably because of the availability of free web-based machine translation (WBMT), replacing the expensive MT software of the 80s and 90s.

There are a number of studies (e.g. Lewis, 1997 La Torre, 1999) which describe methods of training future translators in the skilled use of professional translation software. Somers (2003) provides recommendations for the classroom use of MT in both the context of advanced translation courses and beginner- and intermediate-level proficiency courses. In the overview of the previous literature below, I have mostly excluded studies which are primarily concerned with how to teach the use of MT to future professional translators, as in that context MT is seen as a working resource.

In sections 2.1-2.3 below, I have grouped previous research on the use of MT in second or foreign language proficiency courses in higher education into three categories. Those in the first category examine teachers’, and sometimes students’, attitudes toward students’ use of MT in their course-related work. Those in the second category begin with the assumption that the use of MT by language students is cheating and explore ways of preventing or discouraging the use of MT. Finally, the third category consists of a growing number of studies which have a more accepting, or even positive, view of MT and which seek to incorporate it into educational practices. In Section 2.4, I draw on studies that go slightly beyond the question of MT in language learning contexts in order to raise issues which are addressed in the discussion of the empirical study.

2.1 Teacher and Student Attitudes toward Machine Translation

Clifford et al. (2013) surveyed students and teachers of Romance languages at Duke University. They found that students had a more nuanced relationship to MT than anticipated. Although 88% of the students used MT at least occasionally in their studies, they were aware of the limitations of MT, 91% having noticed an error when using it, but a large majority believed that MT was helpful to them in learning new vocabulary. The teachers Clifford et al. surveyed, on the other hand, were more skeptical. A majority of them said MT was not useful for language learning at the beginner level and that their course syllabi explicitly forbade students to use MT for graded assignments. The reasons given for this were they believed that students would become dependent on MT, that MT is inaccurate, and that even when

MT is used as a dictionary to look up individual words, students miss the opportunity to learn about nuance and alternative translations offered by more traditional dictionaries. However, some of the teachers “envision the greater integration of MT in the foreign language learning process and who demand the acknowledgment of the existence of such tools by the teaching profession” (Clifford et al., 2013, p. 115).

The teachers who responded to Niño’s (2009) study exhibited positive attitudes toward MT. It is possible that this is related to the fact that they were recruited through EuroCALL, a network for teachers and researchers interested in computer-assisted language learning. Niño found that both students and teachers viewed the use of MT (by advanced learners, at least) favorably, and that MT’s shortcomings could be used for “raising [students’] awareness as to the complexity of translation and language learning” (Niño, 2009, p. 253). Baker (2013) explored the attitudes of students and teachers toward the use of MT by students with English as a second or foreign language in the context of English composition courses not specifically designed for language learners. She found that “both students and instructors believed that using translators facilitates language learning and use but also believed translators could be an instrument of plagiarism” (Baker, 2013, p. 95).

2.2 Preventing the Use of MT in Educational Contexts

Although at least one study (Gaspari & Somers, 2007) discusses the need for discouraging students from using MT for single-word-lookup, the majority of studies that problematize the use of MT by students are concerned with the translation of longer texts and the belief that this is a form of cheating. Correa (2011) surveyed 81 university-level language teachers at 22 different U.S. institutions on what they considered cheating in the foreign language classroom. Of a list of 20 activities that could be considered cheating, use of MT was ranked 14th in seriousness, with an average score of 1.58 on a 3-point scale, where 0 was no academic dishonesty and 3 was very serious academic dishonesty.

Somers, et al. (2006) treat the use of MT in language classrooms as a type of plagiarism and seek automated ways to detect it, focusing on “on the errors that MT makes that no human, however inept at translation, would make” (p. 3). They conclude that the results of their study “suggest that there are a number of measures that can indicate that a translation is suspiciously

similar to a free online version” (p. 6). Similarly, McCarthy (2004) identifies the problems that unauthorized use of MT poses for many of the kinds of tasks commonly assigned in language courses, and how teachers may detect and/or prevent its use.

Harris (2010) also focused on the errors made by MT, in particular the English-Japanese translations provided by BabelFish and WorldLingo, and proposed several measures to communicate to students “that unless there is a specific purpose for them, MTs are unacceptable and will have a detrimental effect on the learning process” (p. 28). Groves & Mundt (2015) examined the question of whether Google Translate is currently capable of producing translation into English from Malay and Chinese at the level of an intermediate student of English, to see if, in terms of the quality of the finished product (not the learning process), learners would be better off using MT than struggling to write their own texts from scratch. They conclude that Google Translate is nearly at the same level of accuracy as an intermediate student of English, and will likely only become more accurate with time.

2.3 Incorporating the Use of MT in Educational Contexts

Some of the studies which argue for the use of MT in language learning contexts start with the assumption that use of MT detracts from language learning, but that its use by students is inevitable, or as Williams puts it:

Students are expected to learn how to communicate in a foreign language, thereby rendering the use of Web-Based Machine Translation (WBMT) superfluous, as typing a text and having the software translate it involve neither communicative activity nor language analysis. Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence points to widespread use of WBMT for homework and writing assignments. Rather than looking only at the possible misuses of this relatively new electronic tool, however, we may wish to examine it further for its potentially positive applications in the study of foreign languages (Williams, 2006, pp. 566–567).

Williams’s study is focused on walking students through the use of a WBMT interface as a sort of pre-emptive measure to illustrate the shortcomings of MT. In fact, many of the studies make use of MT’s current shortcomings to generate two types of exercises: post-editing and contrastive analysis. Post-editing exercises involve translating a text into the target language using MT and using one’s skills in the target language to “correct” the “errors” made by the computer. This kind of task is suggested by Belam (2002 & 2003); Somers (2003), Kliffer (2005) Niño (2008), Zanettin (2009), and Groves & Mundt (2015).

Contrastive analysis involves translating from the target language to the students' native language so that students can see the kinds of errors produced in order to highlight differences in language structure, idioms, and collocations (Corness, 1985; Somers, 2001 & 2003; Anderson, 2013). While much of this research has been focused on advanced learners and/or translators in training, (Kenny & Way, 2001; Belam, 2002; O'Brien, 2002; Niño, 2008); others have advocated for and/or investigated their use with beginners as well (Corness, 1985; García & Pena, 2010).

Variations on the above have also been suggested, such as Richmond's (1994) "doing it backwards"; i.e. giving students a text in both their native language and the target language, and having them edit the native language text until, when run through the translator, it produces a result identical to the target language sample. Richmond considered this exercise a success, as students learned grammar structures in a way that they described as amusing and enjoyable and were exposed to error-free text in the target language.

Garcia and Pena (2011) found that using Tradukka, an MT interface which works on top of Google Translate, to write short texts resulted in a group of 16 students of Spanish at the beginner and low-intermediate levels writing more text of higher quality. In a related study testing the integration of a number of different digital tools and online activities of 41 students in a beginner-level university Spanish course, Pena (2011) included the use of Tradukka for pre-and post-editing of texts, and found high levels of student satisfaction.

2.4 The Potential of MT to Transform Learning Activities

The introduction of MT into language learning contexts has been compared to the advent of the calculator (see Luton, 2003, p. 770; Groves & Mundt, 2015, p.120). However, while there seems to be general agreement that children should learn to do basic arithmetic without a calculator before moving on to more advanced operations in which the calculator can be used as a shortcut, it is possible that the parallel to MT and language learning does not extend as far. In the previous research there are indications that MT may be more of a game-changer, transforming the language learning process, than a shortcut: Baker (2013) suggests that "the use of online translators can also be seen as a form of language socialization" (p. 6); Garcia and Pena (2011) claim that MT helped their beginner-level students

produce greater amounts of texts and more engagement with the target language; and Pena (2011) reported that students had a high degree of satisfaction with their work with MT,

identifying the machine translation (MT) interface as a type of scaffolding that together with the other digital tools and online activities presented in this paper can support students in generating authentic language while interacting and collaborating in an enjoyable learning environment, with technology as the facilitator and stimulator of communication" (Pena, 2011, p. 66)

Youngs, et al. (2011) also point out the utility of MT for presenting beginner- and intermediate-level students with authentic language materials², and Williams (2006) suggests that the use of MT can "force students to think about language as a communication tool, not as a set of decontextualized vocabulary words or phrases" (p. 574).

Looking beyond studies focused on MT, a number of researchers have raised theoretical and philosophical questions about the ways that technology is creating in the way teachers and students alike view the language learning process and the nature of the activity. Peters and Frankoff (2014) suggest that "[r]ather than lament[ing] the fact that many of our students are copying and pasting information in their writing assignments, we need to be proactive and tap into these new digital skills that students have acquired" (p. 259), while Clifford, et al. (2013) ask:

Are we using the best practices in pedagogy for students trained in new cultural patterns of multidimensionality, continuous change, flexible structures, collaboration and dynamic reconfiguration? Our discussions with colleagues revealed shared observations of and puzzlement over our students' writing habits, notably their use of multitasking and multiple sources in drafting essays. We had observed that students write with multiple tabs open in their browser; they consult on-line dictionaries; and use almost exclusively on-line sources. (Clifford, Merschel, & Munné, 2013, p. 109).

There are clear indications, then, that constellations of technologies have opened up for different ways of creating text, whether it is in the author's first language or second (or third). The present study attempts to take the question of the role of MT further and consider its potential for transforming the activities and relationships that form students' personal learning environments.

² Texts and other media created for and read/watched by native speakers of the target language and not adapted or simplified for learners.

3. Theory

Previously (Case, 2015), the case has been made for viewing adult foreign language students' personal learning environments (PLEs) as activity systems, drawing on Buchem, Attwell, & Torres (2011), who, in turn, drew from Engeström (1987) (see Figure 1).

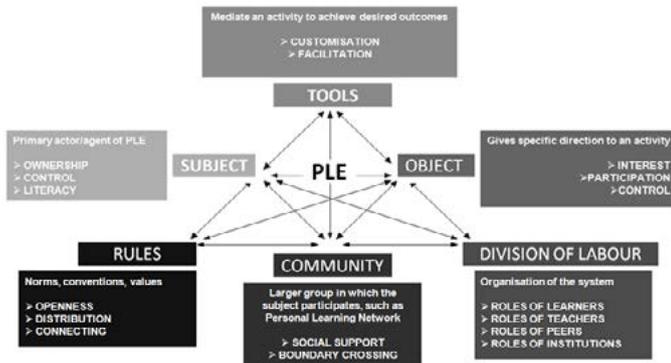


Figure 1. The personal learning environment as an activity system (Buchem et al., 2011)

Figure 1. The personal learning environment as an activity system (Buchem, et al, 2011)

While many studies on the relationship between digital tools and learning are highly technocentric, viewing the PLE as a particular set of applications, this view allows for a wider perspective that takes into account the relationship between a number of different contextual factors that afford and constrain a learning activity. In visualizing students' personal learning environments as an activity system triangle as pictured in Figure 1, the arrows are meant to illustrate that a change in one aspect of an activity system exerts pressure on all other aspects of the system. The study of teachers' attitudes toward MT is a case in examining possible ways that the introduction of a single tool can affect the rules, community, and division of labor of a PLE/ activity system.

Activity can be seen as divided into three levels, the top being "driven by an object-related motive", the "middle [...] by a goal" and the lowest level "by the conditions and tools of action at hand" (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4). In other words, there are three aspects to an activity: the reason for doing it, what is achieved, and the means of achieving it. Wertsch (1981) calls these "activities", "actions" and "operations", respectively (p. 18). However, the introduction of a new tool may have repercussions not only at the level of operations, but on actions and activities as well. In "Development, movement and agency: Breaking away into mycorrhizae activities", Engeström points at the potential destabilizing effect of new digital tools on traditional learning:

When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the division of labor) collides with the new one. Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts but also innovative attempts to change the activity, making the zone of proximal development an invisible battleground. The stiff rules lagging behind and thwarting possibilities opened up by advanced new instruments are a common example. A typical secondary contradiction in the activity of school-going may be, for instance, triggered by the introduction of computers and Internet into the students' work. Internet opens up a huge range of interesting and entertaining objects that potentially jeopardize the school's control over students' attention and effort in classrooms, leading to what is called E-cheating (Engeström, 2006, p. 28).

The introduction of ubiquitous MT into university-level language education is a concrete example of the situation described above: they render some kinds of operations (e.g. translation exercises) obsolete, but may open up for new operations, actions, and activities. The empirical study described below was designed with the assumption that MT has the potential to introduce disturbances, conflicts, and innovative changes in the ways that languages are taught and learned.

4. Method

In spring 2012, a questionnaire was sent to all teachers in the foreign language department at a regional Swedish university (hereafter called RSU). RSU, and its language department in particular, has been a pioneer in technology-mediated distance education in Sweden; since 2003 it has offered distance courses that have real-time, synchronous seminars using video-conferencing platforms (the one used at the time of writing is Adobe Connect). Because of this, the distance courses do not differ in structure from their campus-based equivalents in terms of the type of assignments or the number of seminars. All of the language courses at RSU are available as distance courses, and the majority are taught only by distance, with no campus option. Besides Adobe Connect, the courses rely heavily on their use of a learning management system, Fronter. The teachers in this context, then, are accustomed to using digital tools in their teaching activities.

Respondents included teachers of English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, and Mandarin, most of whom are native speakers of the language they are teaching and who come from a variety of backgrounds other than Swedish. The questionnaire was made available in

Swedish and in English. Responses in Swedish included below were translated by me.

The first item on the questionnaire was a question about which, if any, machine translators the respondents themselves used, while the remainder of the questionnaire was a series of statements to which respondents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement using a 7-point Likert scale. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were given space to write lengthy comments.

Thirty-five of the 90 teachers in the department responded to the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire were presented at a meeting of the language department at which approximately 30 teachers participated (not necessarily the same teachers who responded to the questionnaire). Following the presentation, the meeting participants formed two smaller groups to discuss the findings. I observed these discussions and took notes, but did not participate in them, moving between the groups and presenting the highlights of the discussion to the group as a whole afterward.

The Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The comments were examined using qualitative content analysis, with particular attention paid to the ways that MT can be seen to be affecting the rules, community, and division of labor aspects of students' PLE/activity systems. Several themes unexpectedly emerged from multiple readings of the qualitative data, discussed in detail in section 5, where an overview of the questionnaire results and notes from the group discussion are also presented. Graphs of the complete questionnaire results are included in the appendix.

5. Results

When asked which machine translators the teachers themselves used, seven of the respondents (20%) said that they didn't use MT, while 24 (69%) indicated that they used Google Translate. In addition to Google Translate, some of those who used MT used Dictionary.com, dict.cc, Babylon, BabelFish, The People's Dictionary, multitrans.ru, Babylon, Real Academia Española de la lengua, Rikaichan, and World Lingo, as well as an unnamed "Swedish-English dictionary" and a "Portuguese dictionary online". (Respondents were allowed to select more than one option and write in answers.)

The results for the Likert scale statements are shown in Table 1 below. "Agreed" is the number of respondents who chose 1-3

on the seven-point scale, "Neutral" is the number who chose 4 on the scale, and "disagreed" is the number that chose 5-7. The weighted average is given to show the strength of the agreement or disagreement for the group as a whole.

Statement	# Agreed (1-3)	# Neutral (4)	# Disagreed (5-7)	Weighted average
Machine translators produce poor translations.	21	11	3	2.94
Machine translators will someday be as good as human translators.	10	3	22	4.91
Machine translators are a tool to help human translators save time.	21	7	7	3.11
Machine translators are a good tool to help people communicate when they lack a common language.	22	6	7	2.97
Machine translators may encourage people to try communicating in a new language.	15	12	8	3.57
I would prefer if my students did not use machine translators when they write assignments.	23	6	6	3.03
If my students use machine translators, it will take them longer to learn the target language.	14	9	12	3.88
It is OK for students learning foreign languages to use machine translators to look up individual words.	30	3	2	1.86
It is cheating to use machine translators to translate entire sentences or longer bits of text for assignments in language courses.	22	5	8	3.17
It is obvious when a student has used a machine translator instead of writing the text in the target language.	27	2	6	2.60
I advise my students on how to use machine translators appropriately.	14	4	17	4.31
Even if students use machine translators, they will need good language skills anyway to correct the computer's errors.	35	0	0	1.11

Table 1. Responses to Likert scale questions

Although a majority of respondents (22 out of 35) agreed to some degree that MT was cheating, the weighted average on the seven-point Likert scale was 3.17, fairly close to neutral. Two statements elicited strong agreement according to the weighted Likert-scale averages: 1) "it is OK for students learning foreign languages to use machine translators to look up individual words" and 2) "even if students use machine translators they will need good language skills anyway to correct the computer's errors". There were two statements for which the weighted averages reflected general disagreement: 1) "machine translators will someday be as good as human translators" and 2) "I advise my students on how to use machine translators appropriately".

At the end of the questionnaire, there was a space for respondents to write comments. Eleven respondents took the opportunity to make additional comments, some of them on several different aspects of the issue (all comments are included in the appendix). In the content analysis of these comments, three major themes emerged. The first of these, noted by three of the respondents, is that machine translators do not work equally well for all language pairs; e.g., that Google Translate works better for translations between English and Swedish than between English and Japanese. A second theme, noted by seven of the respondents, was that the acceptability of using machine translators depends on the nature of the task and the level

of the students, echoing some of the previous research that suggested that MT was more appropriate for advanced learners than beginners. A third theme, illustrated in the comments of three of the respondents, was that machine translation is a fact of life and teachers need to adapt, a perspective also found in previous literature.

These results were presented at a meeting of the language department at which approximately 30 teachers were present. Following the presentation, the teachers broke into smaller groups for a 30-minute discussion of the results before returning to the large group to share reflections. Although the questionnaire results indicated that a majority of respondents felt that MT was cheating and they would prefer if their students would not use it, few took this stance in the group discussion. One exception was a teacher who said that in her sub-department they were planning to ask their distance students to have two web cameras on during exams, one pointing at their face and another at their screen and keyboard so that their activities could be monitored. Several other teachers responded that such measures would not be helpful, as students determined to cheat will always find a way.

The discussion in the groups centered on the belief that it was pointless to expect students not to use MT and focused around the kinds of skills students would need when using MT, and how they could design assignments and exams to practice and assess these skills. Suggestions included a renewed focus on grammar, with a view to correcting the errors made by machine translators, much like the post-editing exercises described in Section 2.3 above. They also discussed re-designing courses to focus on oral communication skills, since the development of audio MT seems to be lagging behind text MT.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study reflect nuanced views toward the role of machine translators in language learning. In response to the question that initially motivated this study, whether my teaching colleagues thought that using MT was cheating or not, the answer appears to be “somewhat”.

The study did produce some interesting apparent contradictions. The first is that although a majority agreed with the statements “I would prefer if my students did not use machine translators when they write assignments” and “It is cheating to use machine translators to translate entire sentences or longer bits of text for assignments in language courses”, and many of the comments

indicated that the acceptability of using the technology was highly context-dependent, fewer than half advise their students on the appropriate use of the technology.

The second contradiction is what while the group was near neutral on the statement “if my students use machine translators, it will take them longer to learn the target language”, they unanimously agreed that students would need language skills anyway in order to correct machine translators’ errors. This is reminiscent of some of the studies outlined in section 2.2 above, which argued that MT produces poor results, while simultaneously presenting it as a threat to learning (e.g. Harris, 2010). It would seem that a bigger threat to language learning from the MT-as-cheating perspective would be high-quality machine translation, since that would be much more difficult for teachers to identify and provide fewer teaching opportunities; e.g., post-editing exercises.

What implications, then, do the teachers’ views on MT have for the personal learning environments of their students? A number of the write-in comments on the questionnaire were indicators of the “disturbances and conflicts but also innovative attempts to change the activity” to which Engeström (2006, p. 28) refers. One of the comments from the teachers in the study is a clear illustration of how MT is one of a number of technologies affording changes in the process by which texts are created, requiring some kind of change in teaching practices, as noted in section 2.4 above:

[A colleague] at a department meeting said that for the students of the future it is so completely normal to use Google Translate that they don’t even understand that they can’t do it during an exam in French; in the same way, [another colleague] said that certain contemporary authors work together with, for example, a blog, a Wikipedia article, or through Google Docs: what you write, what I write, everything is blended together into one text. So these modern students don’t understand that we require them to cite properly, and not just reformulate, copy/paste others’ texts, etc. The question is, then, HERE, at the university, is that OK? Is it OK that you and I write together with some copy-pasting of someone else’s text that we run through Google Translate? Or is it OK in general but not at the university? At the same time, how can one PREVENT students from using Google Translate in language courses?

Returning to Wertsch’s (1981) division of activities into three levels—operation, action, and activity—it would appear that there is more at stake here than new course content and different kinds of assignments, which would be at the level of operations. The quote above suggests that educational institutions may have to reconsider the purposes of their

courses and the degree to which new ways of creating text and using language outside the classroom are incorporated into curricula. Language students' ability to create texts and engage with authentic language materials may mean that opportunities for learning outside of institutional frameworks—which have, of course always existed—become more numerous and self-evident, which does not necessarily render educational institutions obsolete, but may change what students need and expect from them. A question for further research, then, is what students see as the role of teachers and formal education in a context where the independent exploration of one's cultural and linguistic interests, and active participation in target language communities early on in one's learning trajectory, is facilitated by technologies which are becoming increasingly ubiquitous.

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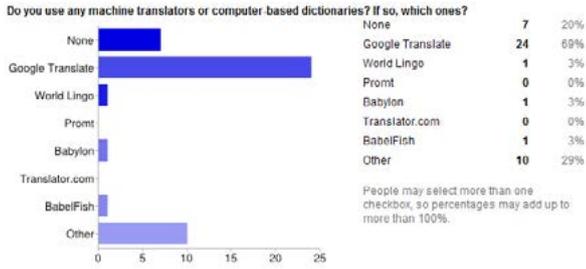
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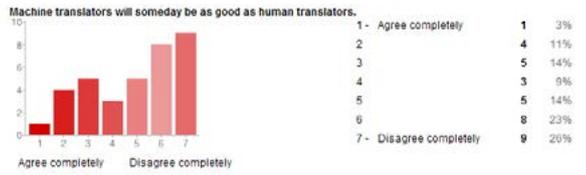
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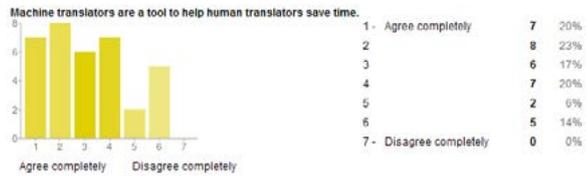
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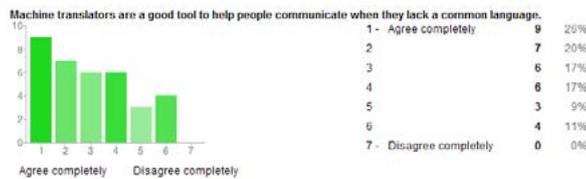
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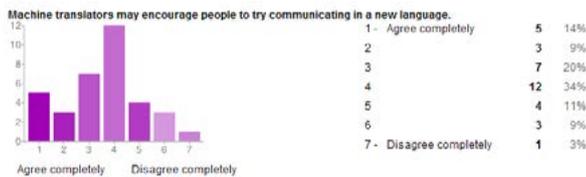
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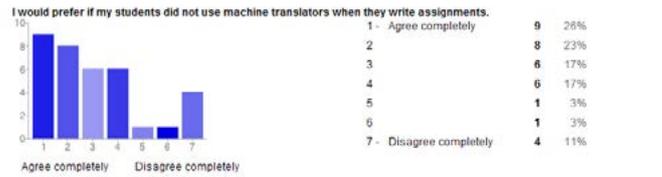
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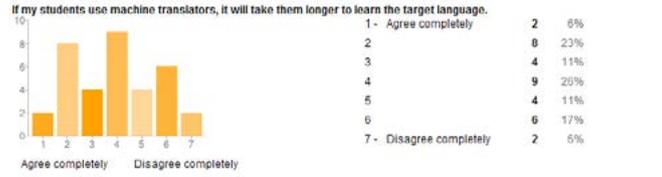
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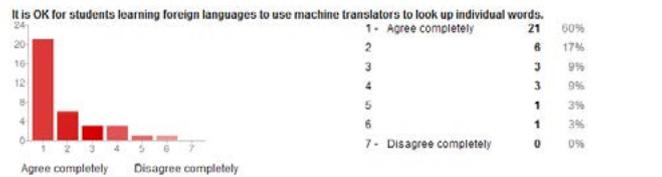
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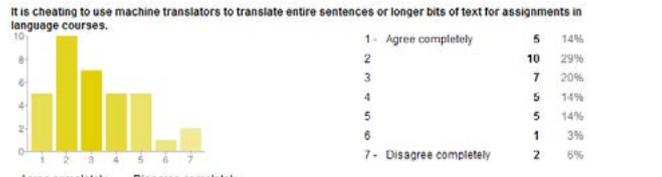
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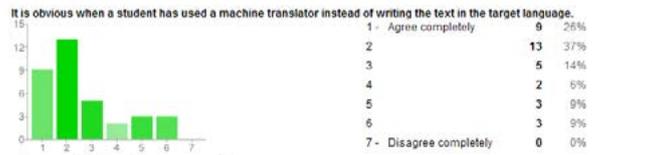
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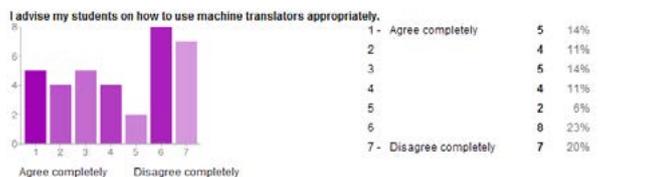
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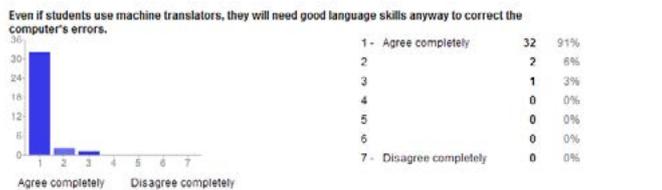
Average: 3.17



Average: 2.60



Average: 4.31



Average: 1.11

Additional Comments:

1. I just wanted to add that it really depends on the language and the level of the student's proficiency. For example, Google Translate works quite well between Swedish and English, but not at all between Japanese and English.
2. I can't really say that machine translators produce "poor" translations, it really depends. If you are going to write a simple sentence from Swedish to French, for example, at the beginner level (the cat is black), then it works very well. If one has more difficult words or longer paragraphs, however, it does not always work so well. I can, however, imagine that certain language combinations work better than others: English/French probably works better than Swedish/French. Maybe that's not true, if many Swedes work for Google Translate (I don't know if it's true, but certain well-known programs were developed by Swedes, like Skype and Spotify, and many computer games too, so maybe they work hard with Google Translate).
3. Also depends on the distance between the languages. Between Swedish and English, it works rather well, but between English and Japanese, for example, the translation is quite unnatural and it is hard to say whether it could be any better than students' translation.
4. For the beginning level students, I don't recommend it as they are not yet able to point out errors in the machine translation. For upper level students, I don't have any problems if they wisely utilize such technology.
5. The answer to question 9 [cheating] depends very much on the nature of the assignment.
6. It is a bit difficult to answer the questions because HOW one makes use of these tools is completely dependent upon the kind of course in question. It depends on the course content and goals whether the tool is appropriate or not. However, it is important to always take them into account in a course instead of categorically calling it cheating to use them without problematizing that.
7. If a person writes a very interesting analysis in Swedish on a literature question, and the answer itself is worth a VG, but they should have answered in English or French, or if they run their answer through Google Translate, then one can just hire a professional translator, really, but then the question is how much the language is weighted in the grade.
8. The purpose of an exercise/assignment can vary, which makes it so that something that is a good working strategy in one situation is bad in another. Machine translation can be obvious cheating in a certain test situation, but not in another type of examination. Etc. etc.
9. In the question "It is cheating to use machine translators to translate entire sentences or longer bits of text for assignments in language courses" the answer can be between 1 and 7 depending on the purpose of the assignment.
10. The question about cheating depends a lot on the context. Naturally, it can be cheating to use such tools for assignments where the point is not to have any study aids, but if that is the case then one can say that the teacher has created inappropriate assignments.
11. The students are going to use the tools no matter what!
12. We have to accept that these tools exist and adapt our way of working to them. The advantage in having these tools today is that we can use authentic material in our teaching to a much greater extent, even at very low levels.
13. [A colleague] at a department meeting said that for the students of the future it is so completely normal to use Google Translate that they don't even understand that they can't do it during an exam in French; in the same way, [another colleague] said that certain contemporary authors work together with, for example, a blog, a Wikipedia article, or through Google Docs: what you write, what I write, everything is blended together into one text. So these modern students don't understand that we require them to cite properly, and not just reformulate, copy/paste others' texts, etc. The question is, then, HERE, at the university, is that OK? Is it OK that you and I write together with some copy-pasting of someone else's text that we run through Google Translate? Or is it OK in general but not at the university? At the same time, how can one PREVENT students from using Google Translate in language courses?
14. I use machine translators but I notice that I must correct the texts.

15. If one works as a translator and chooses to use Google Translate, that's one thing. But as a teacher I don't want to set a grade on Google Translate's language performance. As a translator one can of course use Google, a dictionary, books, neighbors and parents, but as a student, if one uses all of these supports it isn't fair to get a grade for the language.
16. There is a big difference between using a machine translator to find one word and trying to translate an entire text.
17. "It is obvious when a student has used a machine translator instead of writing the text in the target language." Depends on how good/bad the students' own translations tend to be.