STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ADOPTION OF TRANSLATION TECHNOLOGY: A SURVEY-BASED STUDY

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Abstract - Despite the growing popularity of translation technology, only limited studies have been conducted to explore students' perceptions and adoption of it. This paper reports on the results of a survey-based study on translation undergraduates' attitudes, use, and familiarity with respect to translation technology tools for English/Chinese translation.

The data was collected from an online questionnaire designed to investigate 64 Hong Kong students' beliefs about and use of translation technology in their translation practice. The results generally revealed that there were mixed views about translation technology. While some participants were skeptical about its quality and reliability, many students made frequent use of translation technology and online tools. The respondents tended to rely more on electronic and mobile devices mainly because of their convenience rather than accuracy. While the majority believed that translation technology could increase translation efficiency, they were aware that it produced errors, especially when handling complex structures, long segments and cross-cultural references.

It was also found that free online machine translation tools were considered to be the most accessible form of translation technology. The students generally evaluated the overall accuracy of machine translation tools to be higher than their specific capacity for handling grammatical structures. Thus, they used machine translation mainly for getting the gist of a text. The results also indicated that genre, translation segment length and type of translation technology tool affected the participants' judgment of quality.

In terms of students' self-rated understanding of translation technology, over 78% of them reported that they were 'familiar' or 'almost familiar' with free online fully-automatic translation; this was followed by machine translation software (about 11%), while only less than 5% of students were familiar or almost familiar with computer-aided translation tools. 70% of the respondents had received no or little training in translation technology. The results indicated that students' skills in translation technology were not keeping pace with the rapid development of state-of-the-art systems. It appears to be essential for translation students and practitioners to understand the potential and limitations of translation technology and to learn how and when to use it effectively in order to meet the challenges and expectations of this fast-changing market.