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## Google and Wikipedia in the professional translation process: a qualitative work

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### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explore how translation professionals use and perceive tools, especially generic tools such as Google and Wikipedia, during the translation process. With a qualitative approach, two focus groups sessions were held with the participation of a total of five Spanish speaking translation professionals. The subjects reported using a wide variety of tools – with Google and Wikipedia being among the most popular– to solve translation difficulties.

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*Keywords:* professional translation, technologies, translation tools, Google, Wikipedia

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### 1. Introduction

This work explores the interactions which take place between translation professionals and technologies in the translators' context from the conceptual framework established by the Sociology of Translation (Wolf and Fukari, 2007). According to Alonso and Calvo (forthcoming publication), it is possible to propose an approach to Translation Studies that envisages technology as a central element – rather than subsidiary element, as has been the case to date– in human-produced translation workflows. A number of previous works have dealt with these interactions using different methodologies (interviews, focus groups, surveys, analysis of translators' forums, ethnographic observation, etc.). In this paper, we set out to examine the interaction between translation professionals and tools –especially generic tools (Google and Wikipedia)–, and the way these tools are perceived by the professionals who work with them.

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## 2. Methodology

Our methodology is empirical, qualitative and interpretative, and is based on two focus group sessions held in May 2013 with a total of five Spanish-speaking translation professionals. Since the sessions were carried out in Spanish, the participants' quotes presented in this paper have been translated into English by the author. Each session lasted for approximately one hour.

The subjects had been previously selected to cover different professional profiles in terms of age, sex, experience and specialization.

The two sessions followed a semi-structured script of questions designed to determine the respondents' professional profile, their way of carrying out translation briefs, the difficulties they commonly experienced, and their use and perception of tools and resources in general and of Wikipedia in particular.

Adhering to the qualitative research method of interviewing proposed by Soriano (2007, pp. 190-198), the researcher transcribed the focus groups' sessions, identified the main categories of topics dealt with by participants and tagged the transcription according to a proposed code set.

As stated above, the participants had been selected beforehand in accordance with our research criteria, i.e. they had to be able to contribute meaningfully to our focus group sessions; in no way was it intended that our sample should be representative of the translation industry as a whole. From the focus groups sessions we extracted the following profile descriptions:

- S1 (the “senior translator”): a professional translator with more than 30 years of experience specialized in legal, financial and technical translation.
- S2 (the “translator-trainer”): a professional translator of general texts, also specialized in technical and medical translation; he worked as a translator and trainer.
- S3 (the “freelance localizer”): a professional translator with 12 years of experience specialized in technological translation and localization.
- S4 (the “project manager”): a professional translator and project manager; she was the head of a team of translators (vendor). The project manager had over 15 years of experience and habitually received briefs on all topics (mostly, technical, localization, insurance, tourism, etc.)
- S5 (the “in-house translator”): a professional translator with 8 years of experience; she worked on all kinds of translations.

## 3. Results

In the following section, we present some of the results obtained from the analysis of the participants' statements during the focus group sessions. We will also very briefly revise the totality of tools mentioned by participants and examine their use and perception of Google and Wikipedia in greater depth.

As stated above, participants in the focus group sessions also talked about many other topics, like for example their way out of approaching a translation brief and their interactions with other humans during the translation process; these other topics are covered in further works produced by the author (Alonso, 2014a; Alonso, 2014b; Alonso, 2015).

In general, the participants alluded to tools (Internet, general tools and translation tools) as allies when approaching translation difficulties. The principal uses mentioned were:

- Documental: to obtain a general idea of the topic referred to in the source text (the "big picture")
- To find reliable sources for a topic
- Terminological: to find the meaning of a term or equivalent terms in two or more languages
- To understand the source text
- To view images associated with a term or idea
- Translation-related: to find previous translations of a term or sentence, or check solutions suggested by other translators
- Corpus-related: to check the use of a translated term or sentence in context

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