Technology impact assessment: translation studies and its contribution to MT evaluation

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Recent developments in the field of Machine Translation (MT) and Machine-Aided Translation (MAT) constitute a considerable challenge not only for system designers or computer linguists but also for translation theorists in so far as they are expected to be responsible for the analysis and definition of the once human domain of translation. On this occasion, we shall discuss professional translators' experiences with MT/MAT and the implications for theoretical models of translation, concentrating on psycholinguistic aspects of translation and multilingual text production.

The main focus will be on problems resulting from splitting up the complex task of translation through MT/MAT and on accompanying changes of linguistic and cognitive processes.

We shall discuss post-edition as one of the "by-products' of MT/MAT and the implications for the process of human translatory activity. In a short overview, we shall discuss contemporary models of translation and their relevance for Technology Impact Assessment purposes.

It will be argued that with regard to future MT evaluation approaches it is essential to develop a specific contribution emphasizing scientific aspects of translation, thus trying to ensure translation studies an adequate role in cross-disciplinary Technology Impact Assessment, e.g. in cooperation with MT system engineers, teachers and translators.

The talk is based on the results of a research project on Technology Impact Assessment at the Department of Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpretation at the University of the Saarland in Saarbrücken (Germany).