The Use of Machine-Aided Translation and Machine Translation: An Enquiry on Pedagogy and Professional Translation in Sri Lanka

Jayamal de Silva

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

jayamaldesilva91@gmail.com

Machine-Aided Translation (MAT) is a strategy whereby translators use computer programs such as dictionary, word-processing and desktop publishing software to perform part of the process of translation. This contrasts with Machine Translation (MT) which refers to translation performed wholly or partly by computer, with translation tools. The aim of the present study is to enquire the use of MAT and MT in pedagogy and professional translation in Sri Lanka, in translating from English into Sinhalese and vice versa. Data were collected by enquiring translators of the Government Translators Service and the Department of Official Languages, and lecturers engaged in Translation Studies degree programmes of University of Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. According to the findings of this study, it was discovered that though MAT has become commonplace in professional translation and translation studies, MT is far from being commonly studied and utilized. Attempts on developing machine translation tools suitable for translating from English into Sinhalese and vice versa have been made recently, but they are yet to be available for professional translation and pedagogy. The experience with Google Translator and the common perception that machines cannot compete with the creative power of the human mind related to natural languages, appear to have made the translators reluctant to think positively of such tools. With regard to pedagogy, focus on both MAT and MT in relatively new. Despite the recurrent focus on translation theories, practical translation and language proficiency, focus on both MAT and MT was lacking in 'Translation Methods', the first ever degree programme on translation studies offered by a Sri Lankan state university. This deficiency has been eluded with 'Translation Studies', the newly introduced special degree programme, by including course units on both MAT and MT.