

SIN-WAI, Chan. *The Future of Translation Technology: Towards a World without Babel*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 302 p.

Thomas Kelahan
St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, US.

Chan Sin-wai is a professor and chairman of the Department of Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen. Additionally, he is the director of the Center for Translation Technology as well as the university's MA Program in Computer-aided translation. In 2016, he published *A New Comprehensive Chinese-English Dictionary*, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Technology* and *Routledge Encyclopedia of the Chinese Language*. His newest book, *The Future of Translation Technology: Towards a World without Babel*, is described as “an essential read for scholars and researchers of translation studies and computational linguistics, and a guide to system users and professionals.”

In his book, Sin-wai focuses on the development of computer-aided translation and translation technology throughout the past 50 years, develops a theoretical framework for computer-aided translation studies, and makes suggestions as to where the technology is headed in the future. He defines translation technology as “a branch of translation studies that specializes in the issues and skills related to the computerization of translation.” In the process of writing of his work, he acknowledges it as a collection of his lectures and talks



at universities in Taiwan, China, and Hong King over the last nine years. To begin, he finds it appropriate start to with the story of the Tower of Babel. This story from the Bible birthed the need for translators as humans could not inherently communicate with one another. However, the development of translation technology may prove the need for translators unnecessary.

Sin-wai organizes the contents of the book among six chapters. Each chapter title is noteworthy as it indicates how he compartmentalizes the book. Chapter 1; The development of translation technology: 1967-2014, Chapter 2: Major concepts in computer-aided translation, Chapter 3; Functions in computer-aided translation systems, Chapter 4; Free and paid systems, Chapter 5: A theoretical framework for computed aided translation studies, Chapter 6; The future of translation technology. Further, Sin-wai uses the first chapter to briefly review the history of translation technology since its inception in the 1960's. He explains how the machine translation world experienced a period "germination" from 1967-1983, where the technology began to slowly to develop. 1984-1992 is a "period of steady growth" and 1993-2002 is a "period of rapid growth", citing the development and dissemination of the Windows operating system as an integral part of these growth periods. The most recent period, 2003-2014, his defined as a period of "global development". From the mid 1990's on, Sin-wait provides a year-by-year update of the technologies that were released or updated. He then goes on to explain how computer-aided translation develops out of machine translation. He also identifies the wants and needs of translations to define the seven major concepts of computer-aided translation. He says, "simply put, translators want to have a controllable (controllability) and customizable (customizability) system that is compatible with file formats and language requirements (compatibility) and behaves as well as (simulativity) or even better than (emulativity) a

human translator to allow them to work together (collaborativity) to produce quality translations (productivity)” (31). Each term within parentheses is one that he identifies as a major concept within the world of computer-aided translation.

As he continues through the third chapter, he delves into the exact functions of how computer translation systems work using the nine most popular paid translation software on the market in 2014. These systems are SDL-Trados Studio 2014, XTM v7.3, Across, Omega T 3.0, Déjà Vu X2, MemoQ 6.2, Wordfast Classic V6, Snowman V1.33 and Yaxin V3.5. He picks these systems due to their continents of origin, Europe, America and Asia, being the most prevalent users of computer-aided translation systems. He continues to discuss these systems through the five stages in the process of computer-aided translation; the initiating stage, data preparation stage, data processing stage, data-editing stage, and then the finalization stage. Sin-wai extensively outlines the technical processes that occur in each stage as well.

After his discussion on the functions of these paid systems, he explains and compares how free and paid systems of translation compare. First, he differentiates between standalone systems and network systems, which require a network online connection to be used. After making this clarification, he goes into depth both explaining and evaluating each computer-aided translation software on the market from A-Z. He explains the pros and cons to each system in his evaluation based on other offerings available. With the explanation of computer-aided translation systems complete, he shifts his focus to that of machine translation systems. He notes that machine translation has experienced exponential development within the last 65 years, with 22 different theories having been developed to deal with text and content involving translations. He also compares how hybrid systems, systems that use aspects of both computer-aided and machine translation, compare to the

previous two categories. The development of these systems both online and offline is incredible, but Sin-wai indicates that there are problems with accessibility of these systems due to price, as well as the data processing ability of online machine translation versus computer-aided translation.

In his fifth chapter, Sin-wai builds upon his discussion of various translating softwares by proposing the first theoretical framework of computer-aided translation studies. He introduces past frameworks and then justifies the creation of a new theoretical framework based on the quantity of research, publications, and conferences that have been focused on this topic. It is interesting how that Sin-wai points out the need of this development because of how prevalent translation has become on a global level. He divides theoretical computer-aided translation studies across four subdivisions; Medium-related, Language-related, Computer-related, and Goal-related. He goes on to describe the contents of each subdivision and their relevance to the applicable theory in much detail, along with explaining their practical applications.

After outlining his framework, he finishes the book with his sixth chapter on the future of translation technology. He argues that due to the changes in technological advancement, the Tower of Babel will likely “collapse” as we know it. He analyzes these advances on both a macro and micro level, paying attention the big picture of technological advancement in human-aided machine translation while also emphasizing important details within this large scope.

In the future, he strongly argues we will be able to communicate without the language barriers that we face today. “What seem to be gimmicks nowadays might turn out to be practical tools for us to understand each other in the future”, referring to the use of a Word Lens that has been invented to automatically translate words

without having to photograph them. The current technology we possess has no limit and he argues that it will continue to develop just as it has over the past seven decades.

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