Quality Assurance in Translation Crowdsourcing: The TED Open Translation Project

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Abstract : The participatory culture enabled by Web 2.0 technologies has led to the emergence of online translation crowdsourcing, which mainly relies on the collective intelligence of volunteer translators. Due to the fact that many volunteer translators do not have formal translator training, concerns have been raised about the quality of crowdsourced translations. Some empirical research has been done to examine the translation quality of for-profit crowdsourcing initiatives. However, quality assurance of non-profit translation crowdsourcing has rarely been explored in detail. Using the TED Open Translation Project as a case study, this paper investigates how the translation-review-approval method adopted by TED can (1) direct the volunteer translators' use of translation strategies as well as the reviewers' adoption of revising strategies and (2) shape the final translation products. To well examine the actual effect of TED's translation-review-approval method, this paper will focus on its two major quality assurance mechanisms, that is, TED's style guidelines and quality review. Based on an anonymous questionnaire, this research will first explore whether the volunteer translators and reviewers are aware of the style guidelines and whether their use of translation strategies is similar to that advised in the guidelines. The questionnaire, which will be posted online, will consist of two parts: demographic information and translation strategies. The invitations to complete it will then be distributed through TED Translator Facebook groups. With an aim to investigate if the style guidelines have any substantial impacts on actual subtitling practices, a comparison will be made between the original English subtitles of 20 TED talks (each around 5 to 7 minutes) and their Chinese subtitle translations to identify regularly adopted strategies. Concerning the function of the reviewing stage, a comparative study will be conducted between the drafts of Chinese subtitles for 10 short English talks and the revised versions of these drafts so as to examine the actual revising strategies and their effect on translation quality. According to the results obtained from the questionnaire and textual comparisons, this paper will provide in-depth analysis of quality assurance of the TED Open Translation Project. It is hoped that this research, through a detailed investigation of non-profit translation crowdsourcing, can enable translation researchers and practitioners to have a better understanding of quality control in translation crowdsourcing in the digital age.
Keywords : quality assurance, TED, translation crowdsourcing, volunteer translators
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