



# Translating with the Internet, translating with Speechy Project



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## 1. The Speechy Project

Paramount to carrying out professional translations we need to have at our disposal a rich array of tools on-hand. Up to now, translators have relied solely on their dictionaries, basic software (web translators) and of course, their common sense. However, since the rise of the Internet and the integration of the WEB 2.0, translators have become part of the network and therefore have been able to share their concerns, compare their work and communicate with individuals of the same kind. Thus in approximately fifteen years, the Internet has gone surprisingly from the ridiculous to the sublime. Nonetheless, due to this massive input of data on the Internet now we are facing an information overload that leads us to invest a great deal of time in searching for and selecting online resources.

Under these circumstances, *Speechy Project* (and therefore the *Translation* section) seeks to bring peace to this online overgrowth by doing the laborious task of filtering the Internet by relying on what I call the *Internet Cooperative Principle*. This obviously, depicts a variant of the *Gricean cooperative principle* of communication<sup>1</sup> "Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1975: 45). *Speechy Project* (SP henceforth) is maintained by its volunteers and fed by its users; this means that users are the ones who generate the main input of the site. Their contributions are vital but they have to be relevant and adequate for the website's purpose. That is, SP only includes in its lists registration-free, reliable, free and high-quality websites. As a result, as long as SP moves through this type of context we expect users to adhere to these "behavioural norms" and reply in the same conditions (James 2010).

## 2. Translation section

The making of the *Translation* section implied, first of all, to observe the online behaviour of translators and their main concerns on the net. This previous work helped us to

decide the best division for the section that eventually ended up separated into their five initial categories: *Dictionaries*, *Glossaries*, *Grammars*, *Resources for translators* and *Terminology Database*.

1. The first category undoubtedly has been by far the most visited by SP's users. This is evidently owed to the wide use of monolingual/bilingual dictionaries in general second language acquisition. However, professionals who want to profit from dictionaries for specific purposes (or just gain a broad insight into a word) are able to run into other type of dictionaries in this category as follows:

- Monolingual dictionaries
- Bilingual dictionaries
- Thesauruses
- Etymological
- Idioms
- Synonyms
- Neologisms
- Technical
- Acronyms

2. Secondly, the *Glossaries* category comprises an accurate selection of online glossaries covering a wide range of topics (such as finances, tourism, linguistics, Internet, cookery, etc.). Particularly and as far as we are aware, this category needs further development and therefore to embrace more topics in order to be really useful to translators. Eventually, it should contain a selection of glossaries dealing with the main translated topics. Surprisingly enough, up to now the general input done by users has been significant in this category and we expect to achieve our goals in the forthcoming months.
3. The category *Grammars*, gathers web links that redirect users to either English grammars or Spanish grammars in order to shed light on confusing grammar points that might appear when translating a text. This category be-

<sup>1</sup> Since the Internet is a communicative channel, we might easily shape this statement and adapt it to our concerns.



comes particularly utilitarian for novice translators who still do not have a good command of the target language.

4. *Resources for translators*, focuses on the computer-based side of translation. As a result, this list displays material ranging from free downloadable software to social networks or linguistic corpuses. It is widely assumed that computer-assisted translation is a major field of research in these current times and brand-new software is emerging every day. These facts unveil an important need to be constantly proficient and continuously working with this category.
5. *Terminology Database*: This category is actually addressed to professionals. Its aim pivots in collecting databases that have been designed to archive and manage terms of specific linguistic fields and offer their equivalents in other languages. Generally, the web links comprised in this category redirect users to terminological databases generated by the European Union.

### 3. Internet cooperative principle

As stated before, this website relies entirely on its users and their contributions, without them, SP would not be able to operate. We know that the first movement for users is to use *Google* when looking for information. Despite the high-quality material offered in SP, users like to visit other sources and thereby see what *Google* recommends. On this note, the *Translation* section (and the whole of the website) waits for these users to return from their profitable searches and then encourages them to share their experiences through an entry form (accessible from the top menu). Nevertheless, this is not a frequent activity since today's inherent passivity of the Internet user (in terms of "donation") is rising with the emergent technologies. That is to say, in an era in which everyone can express their concerns and easily spread their words on the net it is when they do it less. Users are getting more and more comfortable when navigating. In fact, only a small percentage is really contributing and building data on the Internet. Ask yourself the following questions; "How many times have you posted a blog entry?", "How many times have you published an article on *Wikipedia*?", "How many times have you contributed to a forum to help with others' problems?" The answer to these questions is rather straightforward for a common net-surfer. Believe it or not, despite the contributor's passivity aforementioned, the facts are promising as SP mirrors through their categories.

On reflection and considering the facts and the figures for SP, we can devise the assertion that there exists a small cooperative group that generates data for the whole passive community. As means of evidence, up to now, the general participation in SP has been 3.52%. This small amount has given rise to 596 reviewed web links that fulfil all our sections. These contributions have been performed following the *Internet cooperative principle* mentioned above. If we adapt the four Gricean maxims of communication to our newborn principle we shall apprehend that they fit perfectly (Grice 1975).

- Quality (Be Truthful): They are *true* since the 100% of the links provided are available online and therefore they are not offline.
- Quantity (Be Informative): They are *informative* since each contribution goes along with a detailed description of the contents of the site.
- Relation (Be Relevant): They are *relevant* since the websites suggested are not encompassed in our categories yet.

- Manner (Be clear): They are 'crystal clear' since they are supplied by filling out a form entry which results in an ordered, brief and unambiguous explanation of the website given.

On the after-the-fact account, we could argue that the *Internet Cooperative Principle* would stand for online input of data pooled by the reduced percentage of individuals who follow the four *Gricean* maxims and give knowledge back to the net. In fact, it is about time to stop draining the Internet and start putting a bit of us in (Prensky 2007).

All in all, the *Translation* section of SP has adapted its facilities to the passive and "lazy" modern user (James 2010). All its contents are displayed in a simple and user-friendly interface whereby everything is accessible "in two clicks". On the contrary, we especially home in on the cooperative group and strive to improve their accessibility to the website. Its contributions feed the site and consequently, we have to put an extra effort in smoothing the online path for this special audience.

### 4. Self-assessment

Recent breakthroughs have been carried out on the field of translation (and computer assisted translation) these days. It seems that computers little by little are gaining ground in the translation process. In fact, we can barely translate a text without checking on the Internet or using any software. However, as stated before, the large amount of information contained on the net requires of a desperate sieving. New websites have mushroomed while writing these lines, others have disappeared and others have migrated to other locations. Therefore, in SP we not only need input but also management of data. Hence, our volunteers have to meet the challenge of overhauling, managing and classifying all the contents supplied by SP's users. As demonstrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> *Conference of Innovative Education* in July 2010 at *Universitat de València*, our volunteers carried out successfully the heavy burden of filtering all the contents provided by the virtual community (James 2010). Unfortunately for us (and fortunately for users) this task did not end there and must be pushed forward.

In the end, the *Translation* section seeks to house punctual websites that are worth selecting them and thereby attract translators into a cross-referenced place, a spot where sharing concerns and finding easily the pursued material. After six months of the creation of the *Translation* section, we might concur with the fact that this section has overcome this test with flying colours since the statistics underscore a constant "strolling around" in the website. As a consequence, some of the sites comprised in the section put forward more than two hundred hits (a case in point is *ODLT: The Online Dictionary of Language Terminology* with 224 hits) whilst the rest outstand with around a hundred visits. Notwithstanding, as exposed above, this work is not finished yet and it will never be. Volunteers and users still have to shape the *Translation* section and expand its categories up to the point of having an unabridged selection of web links embracing the whole of the translation field. We still lack in terminological databases and glossaries but we are rather convinced that this gap will be fulfilled by summer 2011. Currently, the number of visits is increasing every day and participation is becoming finally visible through our website. We shall therefore, keep up with the good work and always stay ready to adapt the section to upcoming challenges.

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