

Dragoş Cioban: Dragon NaturallySpeaking translates into success for professional linguist.

Profile

- Pioneering projects into optimising translators' productivity
- Lead by industry-respected expert

Challenge

- How to keep translators productive, without compromising their health at work
- Reducing translation error rates

Results

- Productivity increases between 10% and 500% - most commonly reported at 30%
- Less strain on translators as Dragon frees them from the keyboard and mouse

With the ease and speed at which documents can be sent and shared globally, there's even greater demand for quick, but still highly accurate translations.

Even in an age of free online services that provide approximate translations, many industries – from automotive, healthcare, pharmaceutical, legal, manufacturing and advertising – depend more than ever on true multilingual communication experts: professional translators, like Dr. Dragoş Ciobanu, Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Leeds. He runs the MA in Applied Translation Studies (MAATS) and has a background in languages, having started his career as an in-house translator and technical writer for a large multinational communications company. Dragoş now specialises in translation technologies such as Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT), corpus, Machine Translation, and Computer-Assisted Language Learning tools.

During his time at the University of Leeds, he has been involved in several large-scale collaborative projects in the field of CAT-tools training, interpreter training and global online training funded by UK institutions, the EU, or international organisations such as UNICEF.

Creating the translator's toolkit

Today, technology is a translator's ally. In his arsenal of products that facilitate the translation process, Dragoş is using Nuance Communication's Dragon NaturallySpeaking combined with CAT solutions to ensure the speed and accuracy of translated content. Dragon is currently the fastest and most accurate speech recognition software available for the PC. It has been designed to transform the PC experience, by turning the user's voice into text and actionable commands much faster than most people can type, delivering accuracy rates of up to 99%, while allowing users to transcribe at up to 160 words per minute.

Research from one of Dragoş' projects shows that professional translators value the benefits of adding speech recognition technology to their typical work set-up. By making navigation and text-entry tasks dramatically faster and easier, Dragon helps users get more done on their computer, as Dragoş explains: "When combined with the CAT tools, Dragon speeds up the work of the translator significantly. Professionals are more productive when using Dragon for dictation, while the ability to customise commands is also a very useful function which helps them save time. The creation of the first translated draft can be sped up hugely, thanks to the very accurate dictation and on-the-fly vocabulary training which Dragon offers. Professional translators report significant time savings and an increase in quality." Assisting the translator further is Dragon's ability to read aloud the transcribed copy, which makes it easier to spot any errors.

Perfect partners

Ensuring a smooth Dragon deployment at the University of Leeds was authorised Nuance reseller partner, VoicePower. "They were extremely helpful in terms of getting us set up. I really wanted to get Dragon up and running quickly for a high-profile training week we run in the Centre for Translation Studies every year with Heads of Translation Services from the UN and EU. With their knowledge and expertise, VoicePower was able to deploy Dragon within a week," stated Dragoş.

Currently, Dragoş is running a research project funded by the University of Leeds Ignite programme to see how professional translators can further benefit from using speech recognition. "I want to see what functions professional translators use, in order to understand how we can better customise some Dragon commands to optimise their workflow process and increase quality and productivity. In the survey I conducted recently as part of my research, 100% of translators stated they used Dragon, so any improvements I can identify in my current project will benefit many of 330,000 professional linguists globally**" Dragoş isn't surprised that so many professional translators have opted for the speech recognition route: "When you compare the accuracy of a dictated document to one that's been typed, especially one created by non-touch-typists under time pressures, there are far fewer errors." Given that the translation industry standard productivity target is up to 2,500 words a day, the need to minimise mistakes is vital, not just for accuracy, but for speed, too.

A new dynamic with Dragon

Dragoş is impressed by Dragon's performance and ease of use: "I can't deny I'm a big Dragon fan. Not only is it fast and accurate, but with the new version you don't need to train it as much at the start, so you can be up and running immediately."

Beyond its performance and flexibility, Dragon delivers a further benefit to users: in a typical working week, people spend on average five hours and 41 minutes per day sitting at their desk* which can be bad for your physical health, and potentially your mental well-being. With that in mind, Dragoş believes that Dragon contributes to a healthier way of working. "Anyone who uses the keyboard and mouse for a prolonged period of time runs the risk of eye-strain, poor posture or can be exposed to Repetitive Strain-type injuries. With Dragon, many of these very real risks can be avoided."

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Dr. Dragoş Ciobanu

He also points out the value of Dragon's ability to work with a wireless headset: "With Dragon Wireless, you're not tethered to your desk so you can stand up, walk around, shift your eye gaze from the computer, blink – something that users of visual display units often forget, to the detriment of their eye health - and exercise without impacting your productivity. It's a win - win!"

With the role Dragon plays, it is little wonder that Dragoş concludes by stating that, "For professional translators, I would say that speech recognition is an essential tool. Moreover, if you have the privilege of working into English, Dragon is the best tool available."

* British Psychological Society (BPS), January 15, 2012

** p:94 – Status of the Translation Profession in the European Union report.

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