

Results of the Questionnaire for Translators

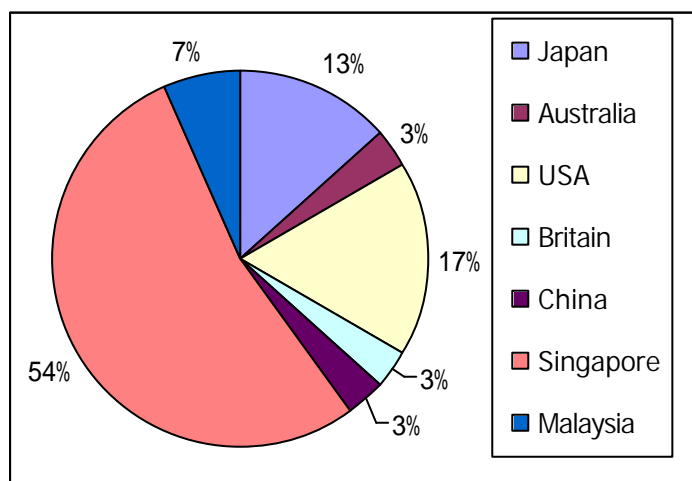
By Junko Ogawara, *LinguaNexus International*

Questionnaire Profile

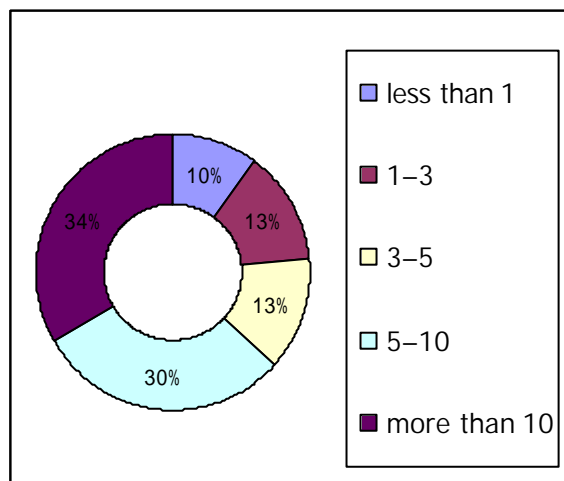
1. Period: 27 October to 27 November 2002
2. Total No. of respondents : 30 (12 responses from participants to the conference)
3. Responses obtained from: 7 countries
4. Purpose: To present results during the 1st Professional Translators Conference on Nov. 30, 2002 in Singapore.

I. General information about yourself

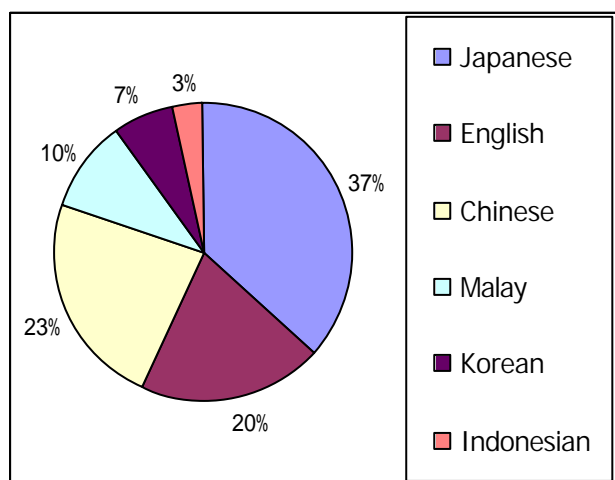
1. Country you live in now:



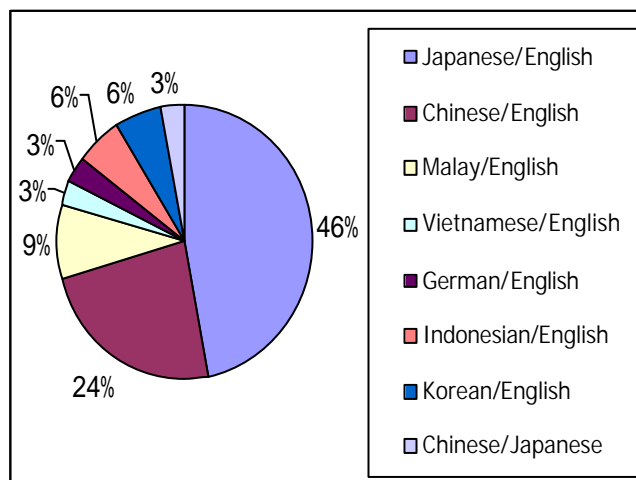
2. Years of translating experience



3. What is your mother tongue?



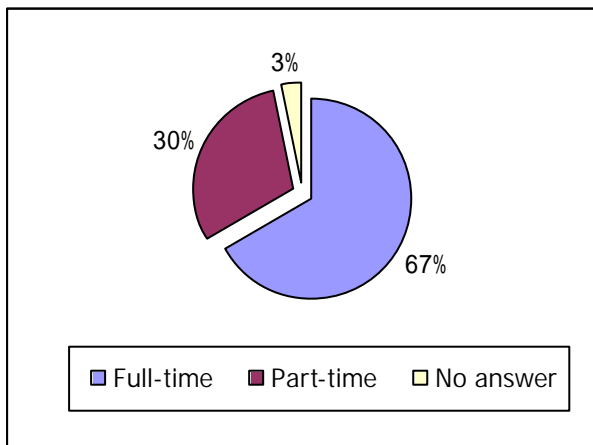
4. What are your source and target languages?



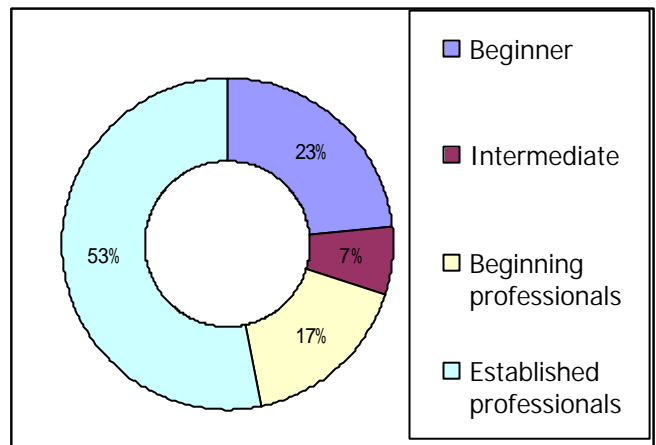
5. Why did you choose to become a translator?

No.	Description	Responses
	Love of languages and writing	6
	Proficiency in languages	6
	Enjoy the cross-cultural aspects of translation	4
	Challenging nature and educational benefit of the profession	3
	To make use of expertise from my previous work career	3
	To make a living	2
	I am living in the foreign environment	1
	I wanted to work at home	1
	I wanted to work for myself	1

6. Full-time or part-time?



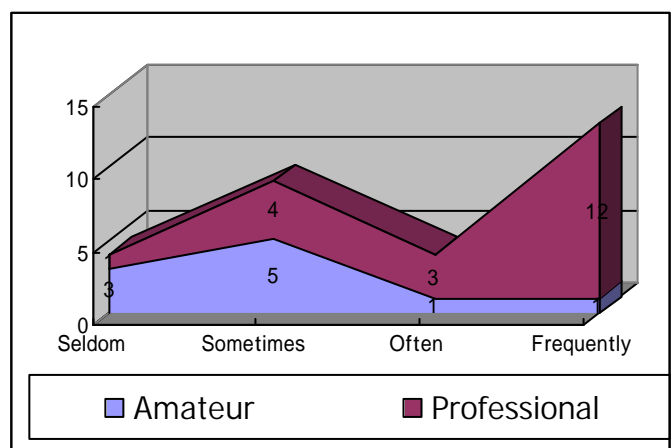
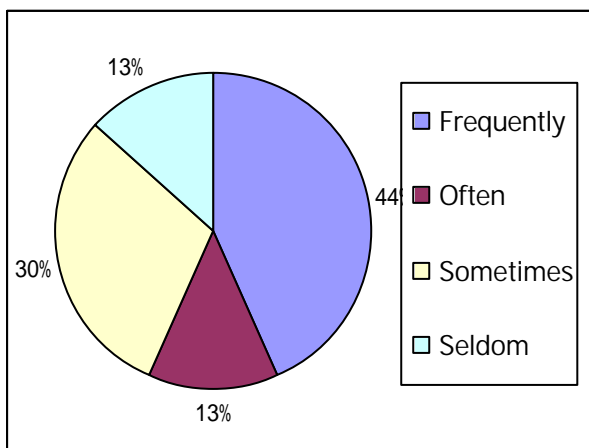
7. How do you evaluate yourself as a translator?

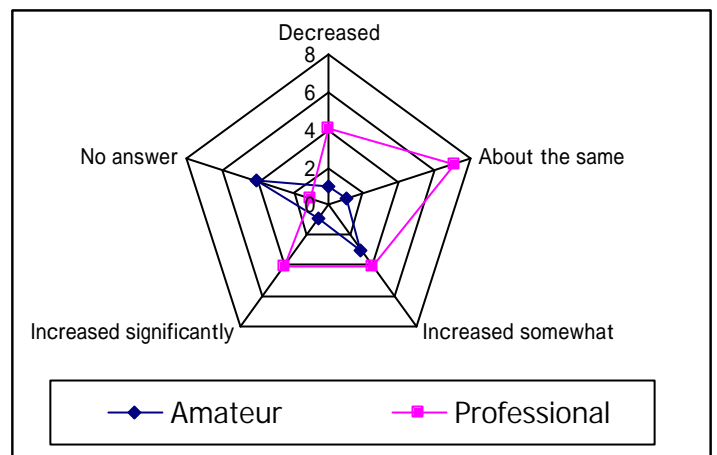
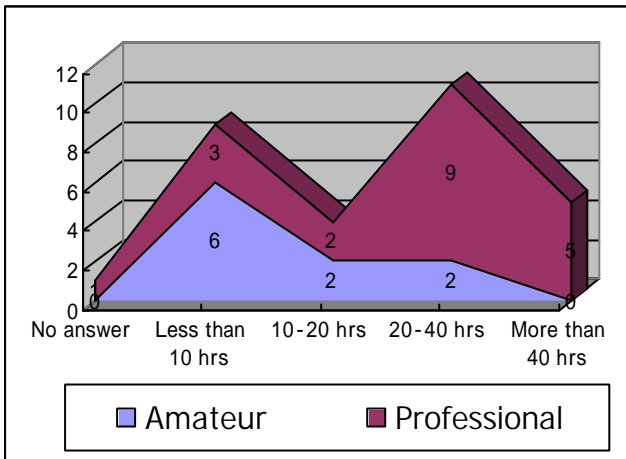


* From here onwards, "beginner" and "intermediate" translators are defined as "amateur," whereas "beginning professionals" and "established professionals" are defined as "professional."

II. Amount of work

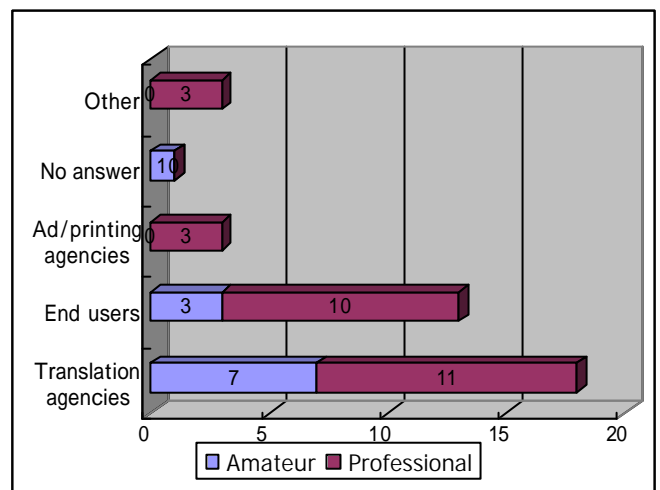
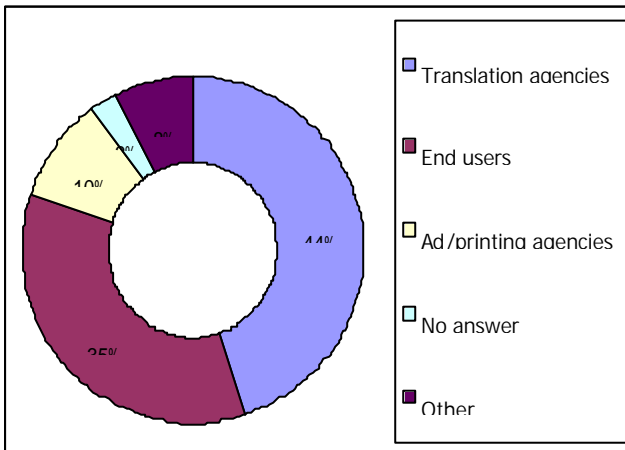
1. Do you get translation projects / assignments regularly?



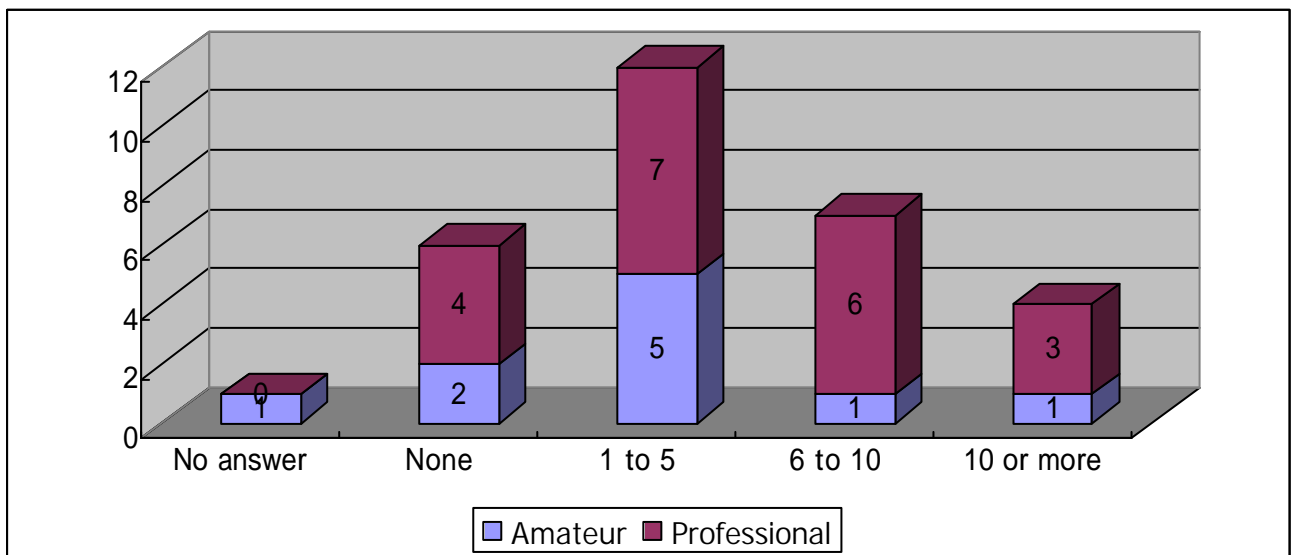


III. Clientele

1. Who are your major clients?

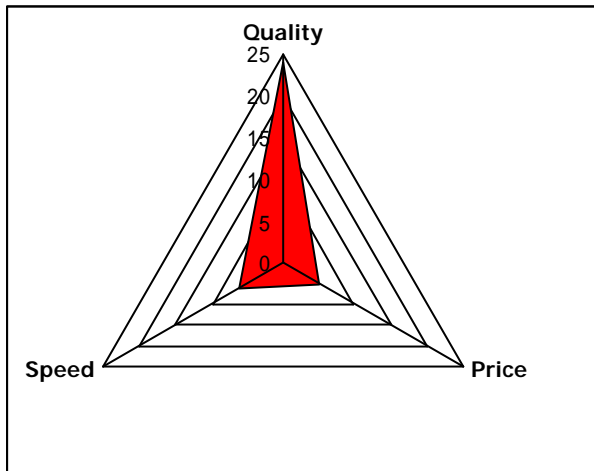


2. No. of translation agencies registered with (regardless of their location)

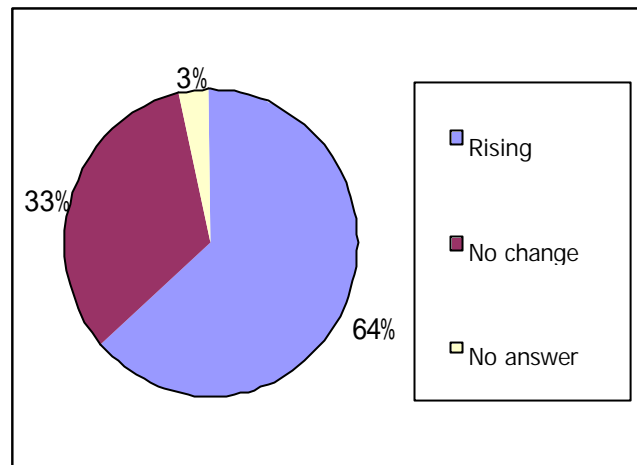


IV. Expectations of your customers

1. What customers are most concerned about?



2. Are customer's expectations rising?

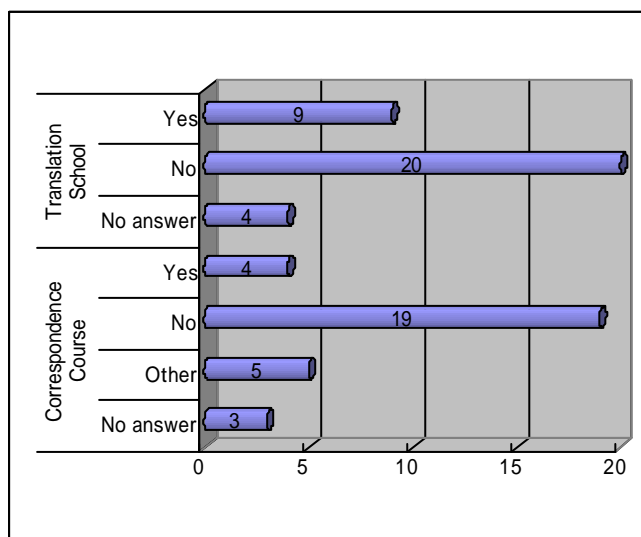


2. If your answer is Yes, in what sense?

No.	Description	Responses
	Quality (Better understanding of subject material and technical knowledge is required, greater need to keep up-to-date, greater need to write well in the target language, customers expect value-added work from professional translators, sometimes customers get a second opinion or a counter-translation to check the quality of translation, etc.)	14
	Price (especially for volume projects)	8
	Faster turnaround	5
	More customers are requiring certification or accreditation	2

V. Translation skill

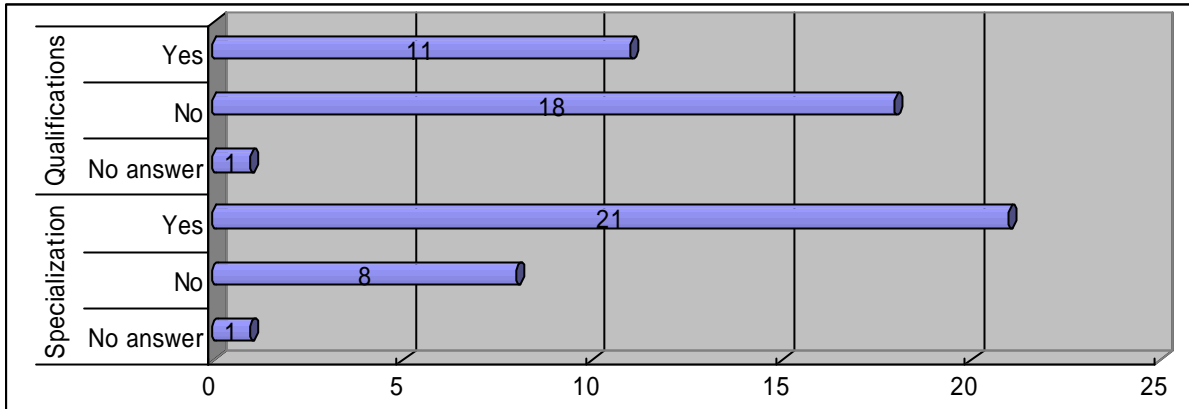
1. Have you learned or are you learning translation skills from an established institute?



Other:

- ✓ I had hands-on experience under the guidance of other more experienced in-house translators
- ✓ I was trained as a trainee in a translation agency.
- ✓ I studied foreign languages at language schools.

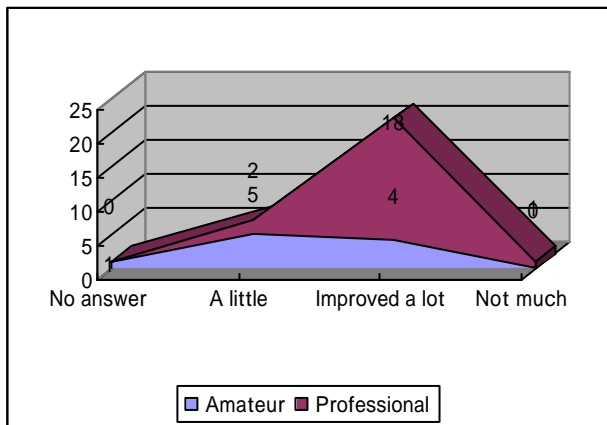
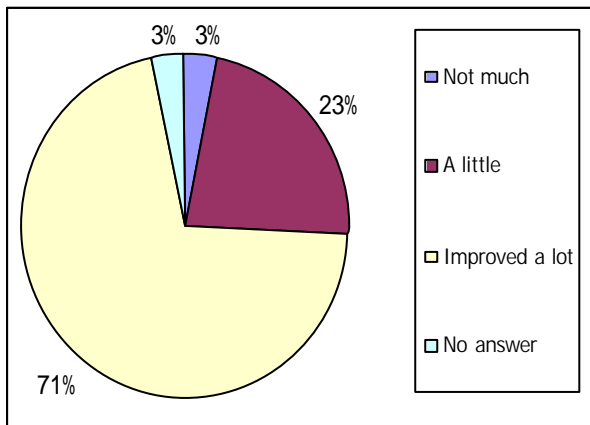
3. Have you taken any official translation exam(s) before? Do you have any specialized field(s)?



What field(s), if any?

Specialized field	Responses
IT	6
Business	5
Advertising / Marketing	5
Medicine / Pharmaceuticals / Dentistry	4
Electronics / Electrical devices / Manufacturing / Machinery	4
Government / Law / Subtitling	2
Finance / Accounting	2
Telecommunications	2
Economic s	1
Education / Training	1
Arts / Humanities	1
Forestry / Agriculture	1
Scientific work	1
Police & security-related	1

4. Has your translation skill improved in relation to when you had just started?



5. What do you normally do if you encounter a sentence or technical term that you do not know how to translate?

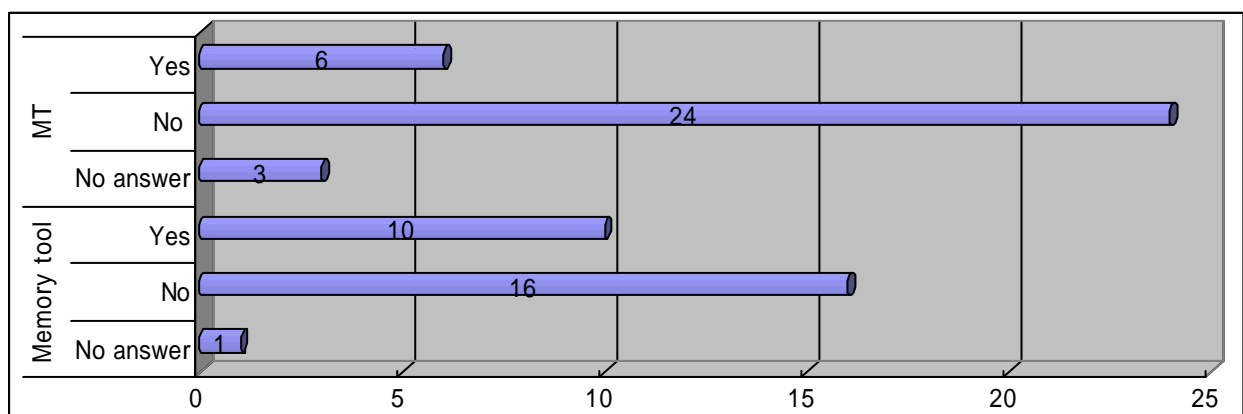
	Description	Responses
	Check reference material on the subject (including search engines)	16
	Look up the word in dictionaries for the specialized field (including online dictionaries)	14
	Ask peer translators (incl. translator's ML)	8
	Consult people in the field	5
	Consult client or author	4
	Read the sentences repeatedly, do grammatical analysis, and try to understand the context.	2
	Consult own glossaries	2
	Ask native speaker to explain what the sentence means	1
	If grammatical mistakes are found, try to follow the author's intention and context	1
	Overlook them	1

6. What do you think you should do to improve your translation skill?

	Description	Responses
	Read more to remain up-to-date with the latest terminology and technology	13
	Take some courses and attend workshops and seminars, do online trials	10
	Undertake more projects with wider scope, more exposure	8
	Network with other translators in my subject area (have a mentor)	5
	Improve writing skills	2
	Always consult dictionaries	1
	Read grammar books	1
	No idea	1

VI. Tools

1. Do you use translation tool(s)?



2. If you are not using any tools now, do you wish to use them in the future? Why?

(1) Yes, because

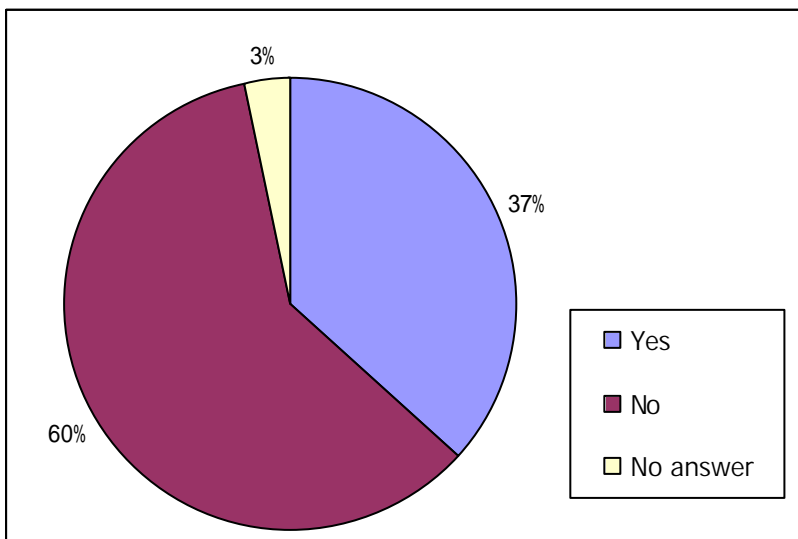
	Description	Responses
	it would help to improve productivity	5
	it is useful for standardization of terms throughout the project	2
	it seems to be a trend in the industry	2
	it is more accurate	1
	it makes my work easier	1
	it can be helpful	1

(2) No, because

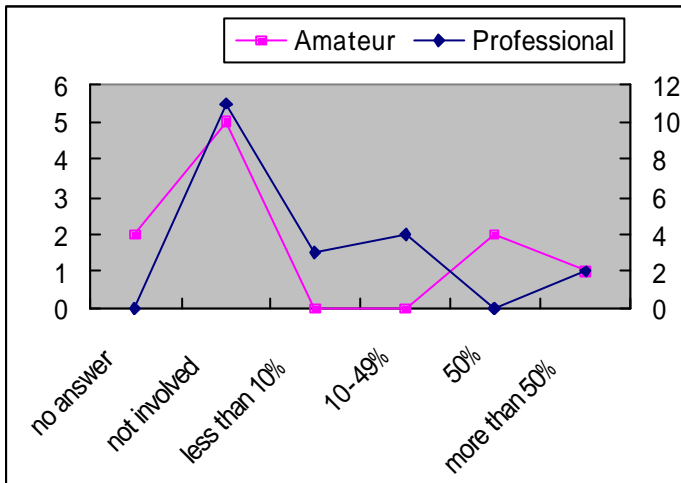
	Description	Responses
	I have not found any computer program that has the judgment needed to render difficult technical material into a readable target language translation related to the subject matter. I believe only a human can make sense of complicated materials.	2
	it may conflict with other software in my PC.	1
	reliability of the work might be affected.	1
	have little prospect of breaking even regarding the cost of the software.	1
	we should use our own brain to translate.	1
	my work does not involve much repetition of earlier matches.	1

VII. Localization

1. Do you often translate materials for localization projects?



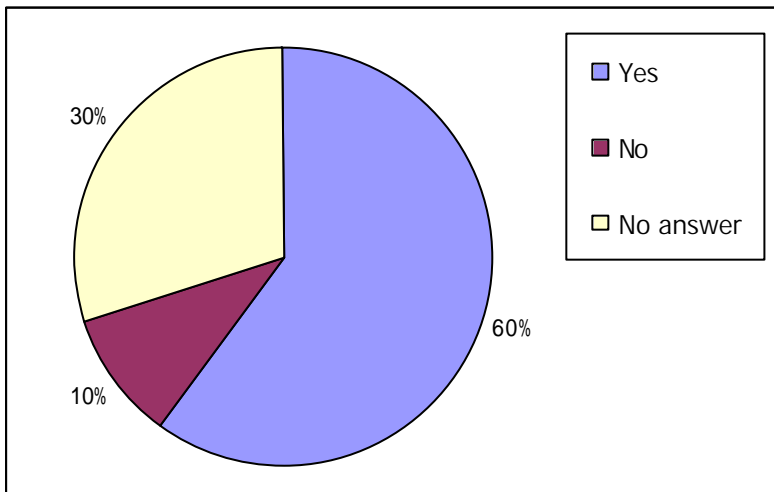
2. If Yes, how much time is spent for such projects as part of all of your translation work?



<Comment from a translator>

Although more localization should be done, companies who are really interested in penetrating a market should spend more to get top quality translations of their materials. There is too much poor translation passed off in the area of localization.

3. Do you feel translation needs for localization projects are increasing?



VIII. Other

Please write freely if you have anything that you wish to share with other translators or questions that you may have.

Advice

- (1) Learn to write well in your target language. Read widely in your target language. Network. Find colleagues that will help you improve. (Your clients, especially translation agencies, usually won't take the trouble). Specialize. Good luck!
- (2) For new translators, do not think about price or when payment will be made. Try to find out how your customers evaluate your work.
- (3) Learn continuously. Keep up-to-date with terms in your foreign languages and in your own language. Keep up-to-date with the subject matter you are translating. Share your translations of new terms with other translators so that the profession improves.

Suggestions

- (1) There's a need for a Singapore association of private-sector translators.

Views

- (1) How do you cope if you have more work than you can take on? Do you recommend other translators who work in the same language pairs as you to your clients? Are you concerned about the fact that your rivals / fellow translators may have contact with your clients? Should we, translators, work co-operatively or treat each other as rivals? I believe in co-operation and that it is the way forward in terms of fostering stronger links and strengths in the industry. But I somehow feel that many of my colleagues don't share my view.
- (2) In the past several years, online translation job posting sites, such as Proz.com and Aquarius, have become a growing means for finding translation work and have revitalized the freelance translation industry. While these sites are providing work for both language professionals and amateurs, there is growing debate over whether these sites are also allowing amateurs to sacrifice quality and undercut the rates of more experienced language professionals, thereby driving down the standard rates of the industry.
- (3) Language expression is a technology as well as an art. It is never cast iron. There are always different ways of expression. Only a translator or interpreter can convey the message well.
- (4) Since there are so many new technologies being developed every day in so many fields, the situation has made it more and more difficult for one translator to catch up with or cover them all. There are simply too many technical terms that can be only understood by those specialists.
- (5) It is regrettable that there are few seminars or workshops for E/J translators who live outside Japan.

Questions

- (1) What is the best way to efficiently organize finished translation work and glossaries on computer?
- (2) Benefits of having your own website. Do translators get customers through their website?
- (3) Are translation courses really useful for one's career?
- (4) How many translators / interpreters agencies are there in Singapore?
- (5) How many practicing translators are there in Singapore?
- (6) How can I improve my research skills in order to find appropriate translations of technical terms?

Thank-you notes

- (1) I would like to thank the organizer for hosting this event. As we live outside Japan, we don't get to experience many such opportunities.
- (2) Thank you to all those who have set up translation forums and mailing lists. It is through such forums and mailing lists that I gained a great deal of knowledge about the world of commercial translation.

Disclaimer:

As the pool of survey respondents were small and the survey had a limited scope of coverage, the answers in this survey may not adequately represent the international population of translators in the same field or industry.