Hunnect's 2021 survey of Hungarian translators on the acceptance of and trends in machine translation – summary

November 2021

Introduction and copyright

The present summary was compiled by Hunnect Ltd. (hereinafter Hunnect) based on its online survey conducted between 8 and 22 November 2021, in which it asked Hungarian translators questions about the acceptance and popularity of Machine Translation (MT) and Machine Translation Post-Editing (MTPE). The identity of the participants was not verified, but the survey was posted primarily on translation-related websites and social media groups, so it can be assumed that there were no submissions by those who do not understand the subject.

Exactly 150 responses were collected in the survey, but not all questions were mandatory, and there was a "fork" after the first question, so the number of responses differs from question to question. The sample is obviously not representative, but it is significant in view of the size of the Hungarian market.

Below there is a summary of the results of the survey, which were communicated to all the participants who requested it and will be posted on our social media channels.

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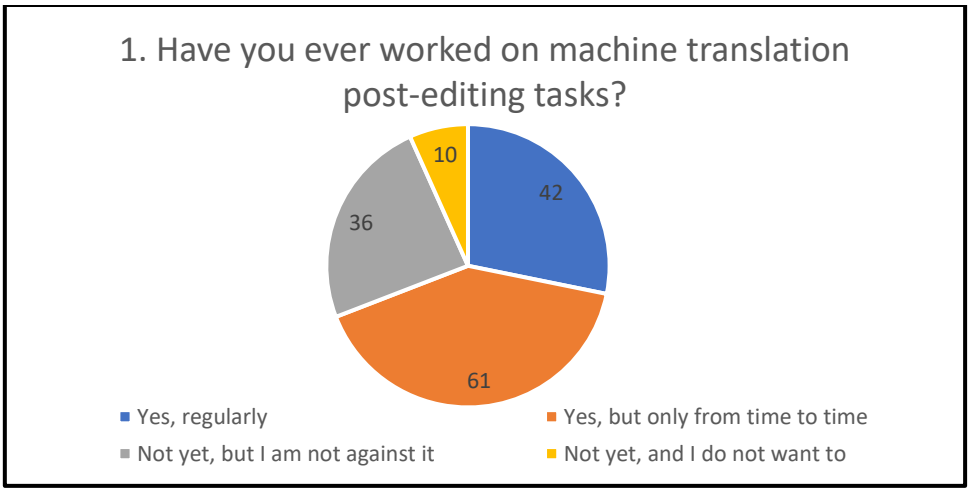
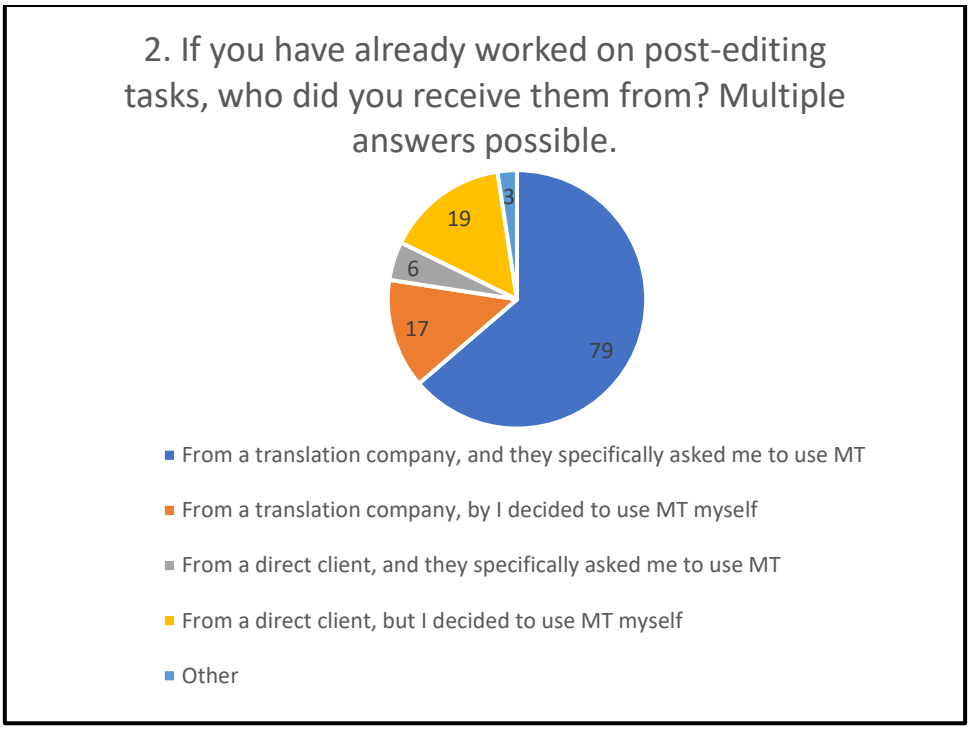
If you have any questions about the above, please write to our Vendor Manager, Ms Viktória Fehér at vfeher@hunnect.hu.

Presentation and short analysis of the answers

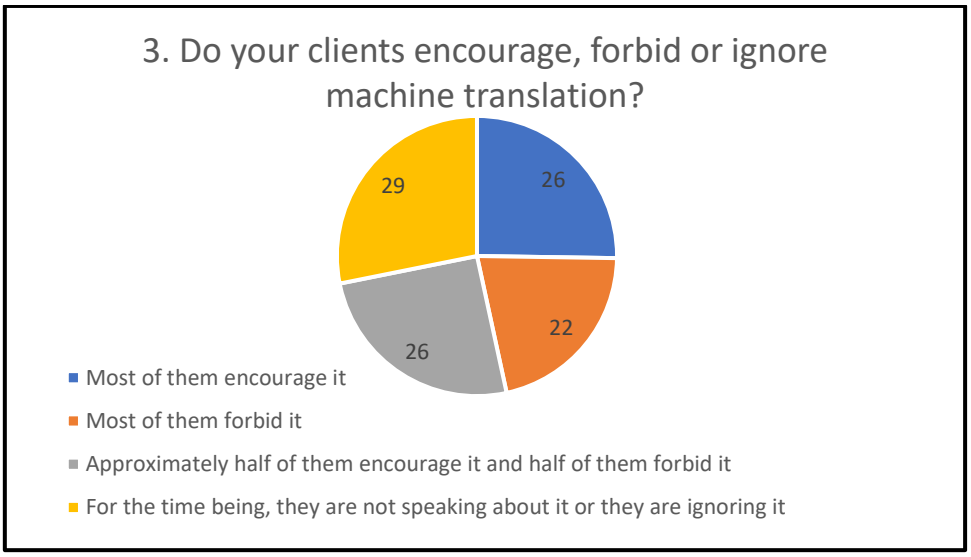


The most popular answer (41%) is **Yes, but only from time to time**, followed by **Yes, regularly** (28%) and **Not yet, but I am not against it** (24%) as close runners-up. The answer **Not yet, and I do not want to** (7%) is significantly behind in fourth place. So, it seems that machine translation is already established among the majority of Hungarian freelancers, and it is even more obvious if we consider the 69-31% ratio of "yes" to "no" answers.

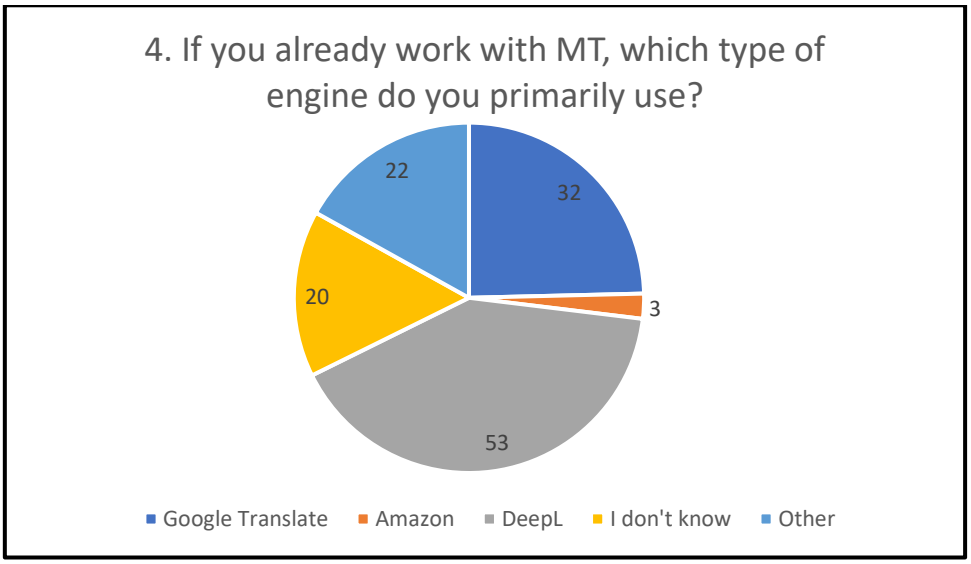


For this question (and those up to an including question 6) only those who had already worked on MTPE could reply. The most popular answer is clear: **From a translation company, and they specifically asked me to use MT** was chosen by 64%. Here too, the second and third place was a very

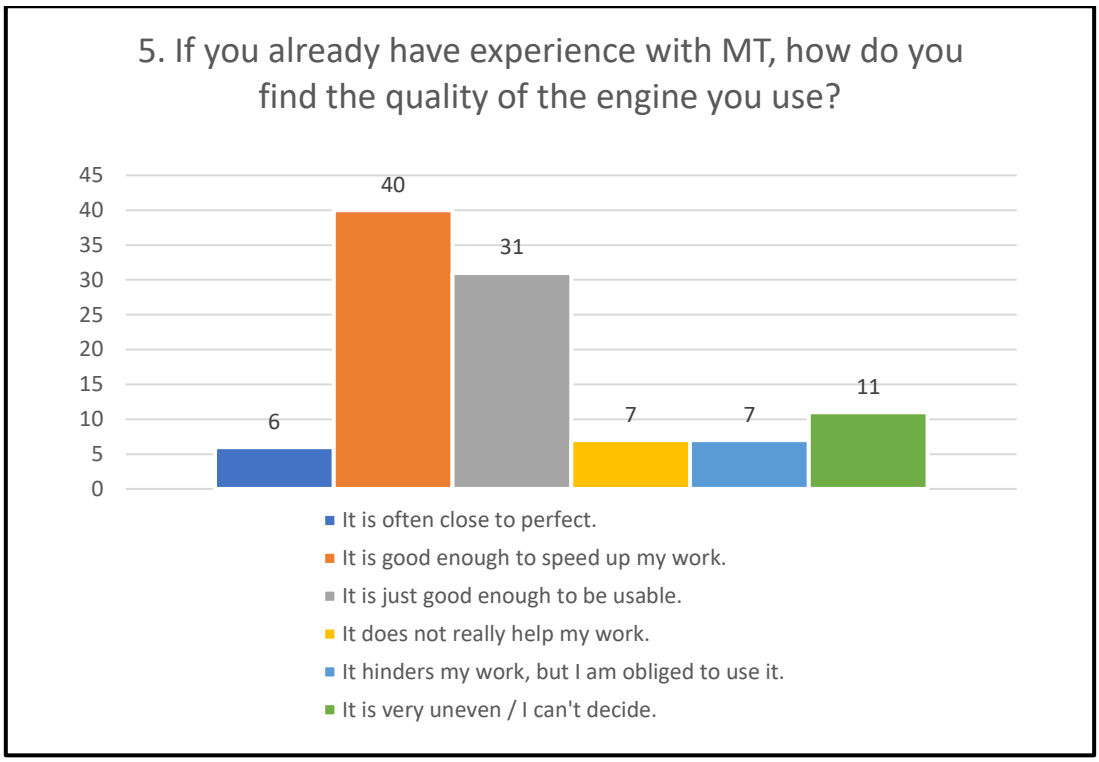
close race: **From a direct client, but I decided to use MT myself** is second (15%) and **From a translation company, but I decided to use MT myself** is third (14%). If we add up these two, we can say that 30% of translators voluntarily use MT. It seems that direct clients do not yet require the use of MT (5%), and 2% of respondents chose **Other** (mainly due to other types of assignments or the optional use of MT).



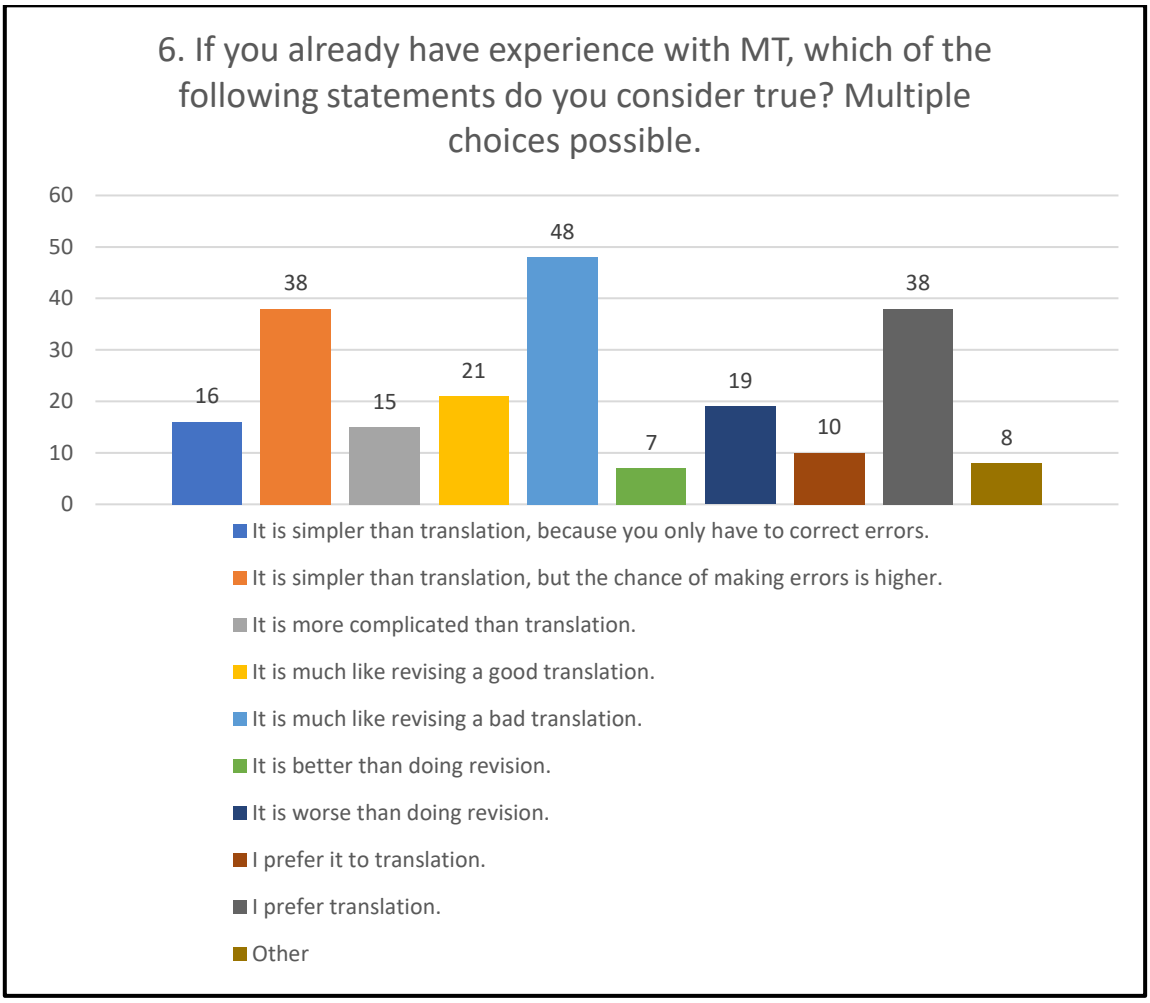
The answers for this question are very evenly spread and they show a very tight race: the diagram represents almost four equal slices. The most popular answer is **For the time being, they are not speaking about it or they are ignoring it** (29%), the second place is a tie (25%) between **Most of them encourage it** and **Approximately half of them encourage it and half of them forbid it**. A little behind follows the fourth choice, **Most of them forbid it** (21%). So, the acceptance and popularity of machine translation among translation buyers is very diverse, and many of them still do not care about it. However, its prohibition, even it if is the least popular answer, is not insignificant either.



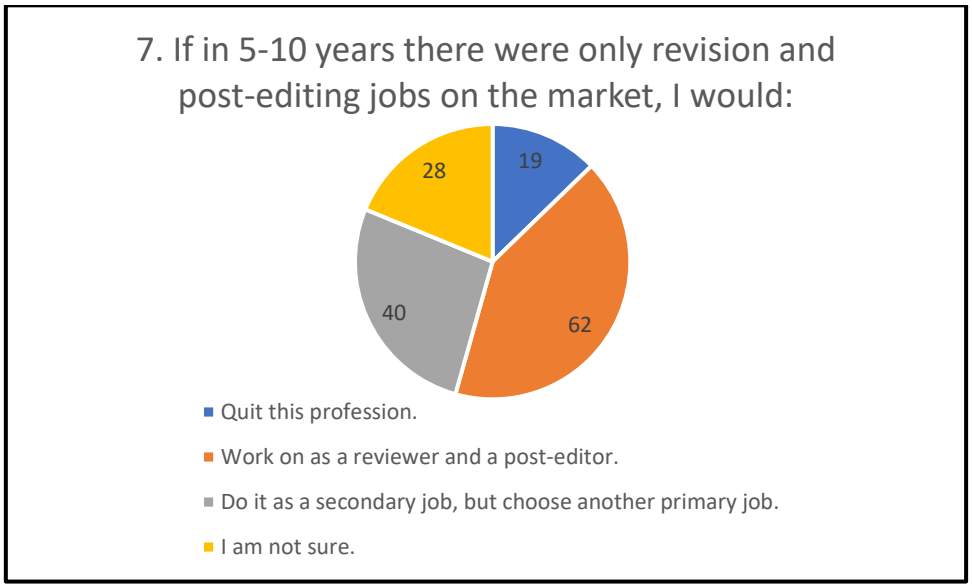
This question has a clear winner, the **DeepL** engine (41%), and the runner-up also received a significant number of replies (**Google Translate**, 25%). The proportion responding Amazon (at least as a primary choice) is minimal at 2%, however 15% of respondents are not aware which engine they use. The share of the answer **Other** is relatively high at 17%, and in the optional comment *SDL NMT* was specified by the majority. The combined result for DeepL and Google is rather convincing: they dominate the translation market with a two-thirds majority (66%), especially if we consider that part of the **I don't know** replies could also belong to them.



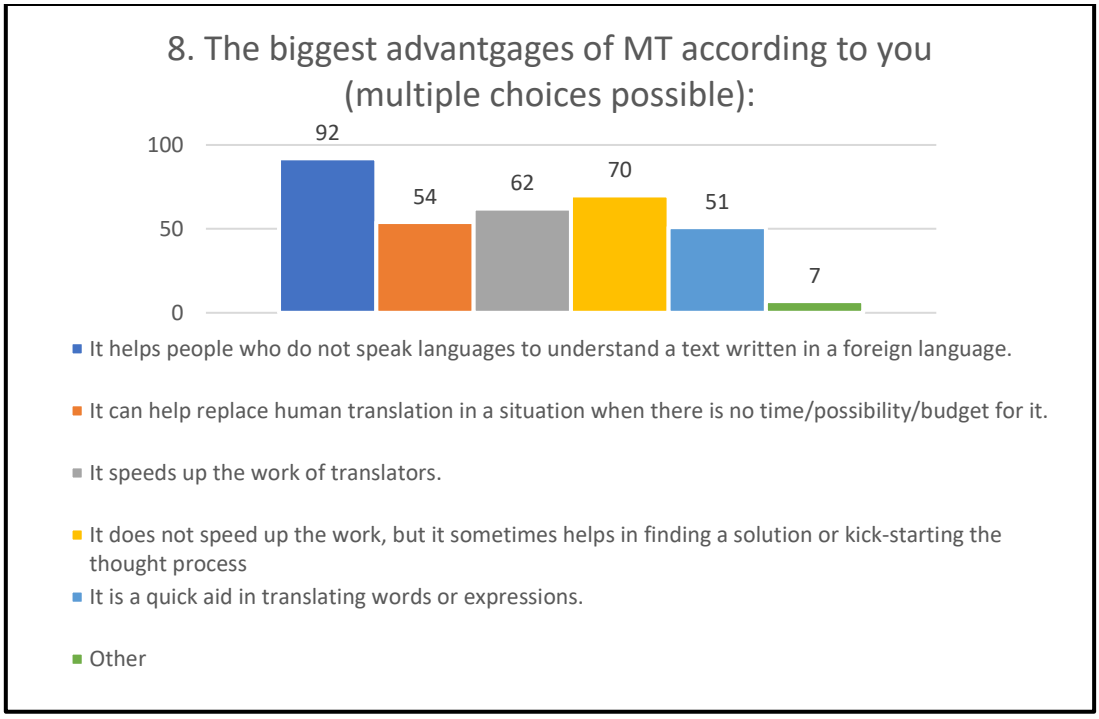
The next two questions do not have a pie chart and absolute percentages, as they were multiple choice questions. However, we can still calculate percentages, but only *for the total number of answers* and not for respondents. The answers **It is good enough to speed up my work** (39%) and **It is just good enough to be usable** (30%) strongly lead the other choices. The answer **It is very uneven** has a 11% share, while the rest (**It is often close to perfect / It does not really help my work / It hinders my work, but I am obliged to use it**) performed even worse, with around 6%. We can draw the conclusion that those that have adopted MT mostly make some use of it, but its quality is not yet ready to use without post-editing. Nevertheless, the proportion of "good enough" replies is 70%, which tells a lot.



The results are varied here, especially because of the many possible choices; the most popular was **It is much like revising a bad translation** (around 50 replies). Similarly popular is the answer **It is simpler than translation, but the chance of making errors is higher** (orange column) and **I prefer translation** (dark grey column). The next is **It is much like revising a good translation** (yellow column), which received approximately as many votes as **It is worse than doing revision** (dark blue column). **It is simpler than translation, because you only have to correct errors** and **It is more complicated than translation** are almost equally unpopular choices. The proportion of those that prefer it to translation (10 votes, dark brown column) is small but not insignificant. In brief, it can be stated that for the majority of translators post-editing is a less attractive and more energy-intensive type of work, similar to revision, but nevertheless they prefer revision. The "other" replies could be commented on, and it is worth noting the following comment: "this depends entirely on the engine: some of them are almost perfect and others are useless".

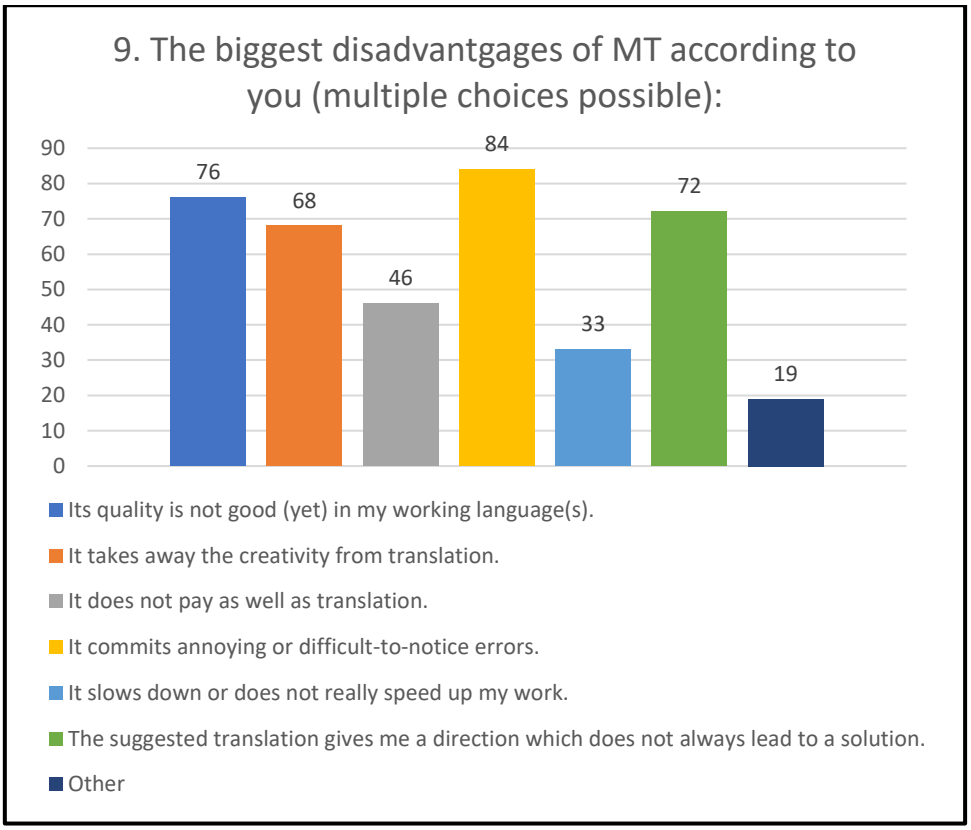


For this question, only one answer could be chosen. The proportions and the order of the replies are meaningful: (I would) **Work on as a reviewer and a post-editor** (41%) is a strong winner, (I would) **Do it as a secondary job, but choose another primary job** (27%) is second, while the following two replies lag behind: **I am not sure** and (I would) **Quit this profession** gained 19% and 13% respectively. So even if the acceptance of post-editing is broad, less than half of translators would be willing to make a living *exclusively* from such projects, and the proportion of those who would quit the profession is not insignificant either (minimum 13%, as part of the undecided respondents could also leave this job). So it seems sure that if the industry is headed in this direction, there will be a need for substitutes, because the quantity of content to translate rises every year all across the world.



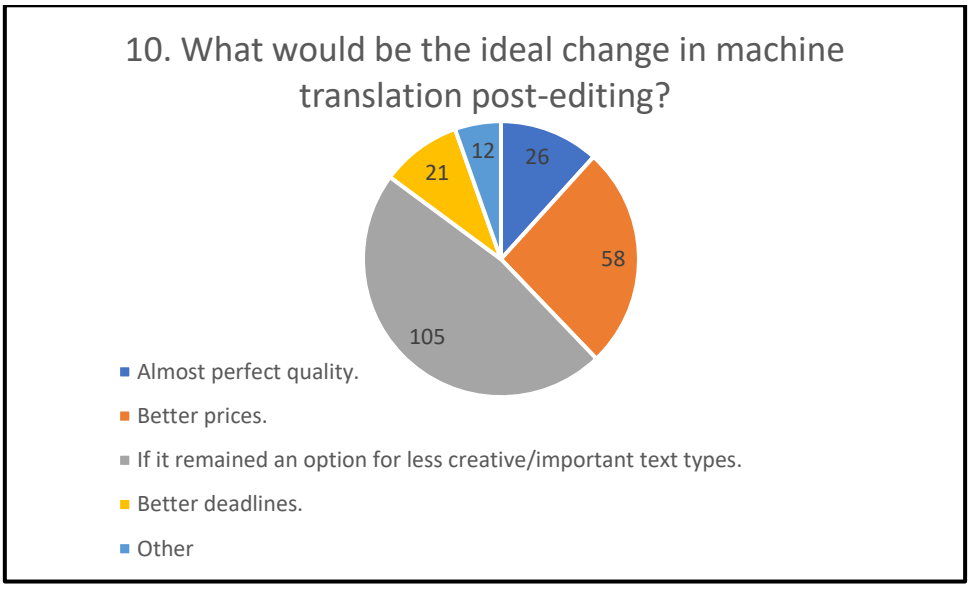
For this question too, multiple answers were allowed. The total number of 336 replies also means that most of the respondents chose at least 2 options. The figure shows that all choices were popular except **Other** (2%). The most popular was **It helps people who do not speak languages to understand a text written in a foreign language**, with 27% of the total number of answers. Second place is taken by **It does not speed up the work, but it sometimes helps in finding a solution or kick-starting the thought process** with 21%, and it is followed by **It speeds up the work of translators** (18%). The following two answers gained almost equal percentages: **It can help replace human translation in a situation when there is no time/possibility/budget for it** and **It is a quick aid in translating words or expressions** were at 16% and 15% respectively. Therefore, it is worthwhile noting that professionals see the main advantage of MT in non-professional use, and all the professional advantages only come afterwards.

After the advantages, we asked the respondents about the shortcomings of MT, and here too multiple answers could be selected. The distribution of the total of 398 answers (which means that 2-3 answers were selected per respondent) can be seen below.



The first four choices almost come side by side, their order is as follows: **It commits annoying or difficult-to-notice errors** (21% of all answers), **Its quality is not good (yet) in my working language(s)** (19%), then **The suggested translation gives me a direction which does not always lead to a solution** (18%) and **It takes away the creativity from translation** (17%). Compared to these, the remaining choices were selected much less. Ranked fifth is **It does not pay as well as translation** (12%), while the sixth is **It slows down or does not really speed up my work** (8%), followed by **other**. The latter attracted different comments, including the following: "It can predominantly be used for general text

only; it does not give any help (yet) in specialized texts and terminology" and "lack of contextuality (background knowledge); lack of cohesion between segments; lack of sense; too closely following the structure of the source". Altogether, we can state that issues related to quality and usability overcome other problems such as personal dislike of MT or the financial aspects.



This last question also allowed multiple choices, but many respondents chose only one (due to the wording 'the ideal change'). The ranking is very clear: the strong winner is **If it remained an option for less creative/important text types** with 48%. Another popular choice is **Better prices** (26%), which is followed by a somewhat closer race between **Almost perfect quality** (12%) and **Better deadlines** (9%). Among the comments of **Other** (5%) replies, it is worth noting the following: 'more attention and professionalism on the client side when setting up and applying MT'. This question indicates that almost half of translators consider it vital that MT is required only in cases where it is technically justified and useful based on the type of text. All other objections follow after that, which shows the open-mindedness of translators in this respect.

Conclusions

In our opinion, the survey was very insightful as it shows both the growing spread of MT among Hungarian translators, mostly generated by translation companies for now, and the persisting problems and potential pain points in this area of our industry that require improvement. What is most important for translators is dealing with quality issues, and the freedom of choice whether to use MT or not. However, a lot of them already work with MT even if they have objections, and not only because of the clients' expectations, but also because of the upsides.

The bigger picture allows us to state that MTPE is a reasonable and acceptable way of working, but it is liked less than translation or revision. Its main advantages lie in accelerating the translation process and providing 'hints and tips', and its disadvantages are inadequate quality and the typology of errors.

The majority of linguists imagine a future for themselves in the industry if its main direction is MT. However, they would like to see it as an option for less important jobs, and not as a mandatory requirement.

We hope that our readers have also found the survey useful. We are planning to do similar surveys and research in the future, so we recommend that you follow our news on social media. You can find us at:

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