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## CAT tools' impact on the achievement of accessible HTML5 documents: A comparative study

### Student track

#### Abstract

This paper aims at examining the impact that Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) tools have on the degree of accessibility achieved during the localisation process. More specifically, we report on the findings from a two-stage study consisting of 1) a descriptive analysis of two CAT tools, i.e. SDL Trados Studio 2017 and MemoQ v8.7, and 2) a user evaluation carried out by 10 participants to determine whether these tools can support and transfer accessibility features embedded in HTML5 files. Results of the first stage show that the two CAT tools studied do not offer sufficient features and functionalities to transfer all items correctly and, consequently, they can have an effect on the final level of accessibility conformance. In addition, conclusions drawn from the user evaluation highlighted the importance of the localiser's role in dealing with this type of elements, as participants with more knowledge of the subject were able to produce a more accessible target file.

## 1 Introduction

The Internet has become a channel to convey information about an endless number of topics, including health and education, as well as a place where people can have access to both public and private services. In particular, as highlighted by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2011, 183–84), “accessing general information online enables people with disabilities to overcome any potential physical, communication and transport barriers in accessing other sources of information”. Consequently, information and communication technologies (ICT) and services should be designed to benefit not only the wider population but also people with impairments. Nevertheless, less than 10% of websites are accessible in Europe, and 5% of the European population does not use the Internet due to an impairment (European Commission 2019, 1).

In such context, a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach could be optimal to guarantee accessibility: “[g]overnments, industry and end-users all have a role in increasing accessibility” (WHO 2011, 186). We contend that it is fundamental for all actors involved in the web production chain — be it monolingual or multilingual — to gain a certain level of expertise on the topic to ensure an acceptable degree of accessibility.

Yet, web accessibility conformance does not only depend on the knowledge and know-how of those who create web content, but also on the technological aids they rely on to support them in their task. In the case of the multilingual Web, Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) tools are often employed by localisers to translate XML and HTML-based files. During web localisation, described as the process of adapting a web product to a particular linguistic and cultural context, these tools usually help identify and isolate the translatable or localisable information and protect the code that in principle should not be modified. The present paper aims at exploring how CAT tools deal with ‘accessibility features’ in particular. By this term, we understand the characteristics embedded in web pages in the form of mark-up elements, attributes, text units, and relations that help render content accessible. Our initial assumption was that, as certain

accessibility features are hidden in the web page source code, there is a high risk that they might be overlooked or even not supported by the CAT tool in use.

## 2 Related work

CAT tools features have been vastly studied and evaluated in prior work (Bowker 2002, Veiga Díaz and García González 2015, Amato 2016, Moujaes 2016). For the purposes of our study, we concretely focused on research related to web localisation aids. In her doctoral thesis, Morado Vázquez (2012, 8) investigated the “influence that translation suggestions’ provenance metadata has in the behaviour of human translators during their work when using Computer-Assisted Translation Tools” and conducted a study on the main localisation data exchange standard, namely, XLIFF (XML Localisation Interchange File Format). She came to the conclusion that metadata does not have any impact on the translators’ behaviour during the translation process, but the use of CAT tools (specifically of TMs) can have a positive impact on their work and on the final quality of the product itself (2012, 261–63). Sandrini (2008, 16) highlighted the importance of CAT tools in the localisation process and stated that a “good tool” should be able to display all the translatable elements. Their importance has also been underlined by Rodríguez Vázquez (2016), who suggested that CAT tools help process files containing mark-up language, as they isolate translatable data from non-editable strings. However, she also stated that they could hide certain attributes and not show them in the editor. Mata Pastor (2005, in Rodríguez Vázquez 2016, 130) also dealt with this aspect. According to his study, not all CAT tools retrieve all the translatable strings automatically and, consequently, localisers should (i) have the sufficient skills to assess how to deal with other localisable features that may be needed for other purposes, including accessibility and, (ii) if possible, customise the tool’s settings. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no studies examining these issues have been carried out in the past.

Similarly, research efforts devoted to investigating multilingual web accessibility are scarce. It is only in recent years that a number of studies have been conducted, showing that accessibility issues are also frequently encountered in localised websites, both in the public (Casalegno 2018) and private (Pontus 2019) sector. This may indicate that, although the information related to accessibility may be present in the source product, it may not be transferred correctly during the localisation process. As a result, the degree of accessibility achieved in the target product may be lower than in the source file, leading to a degraded user experience among the target audience, including for people with disabilities.

Prior work has attempted to explain why this might happen and how it could be avoided. Several studies suggest that there can be an improvement in the degree of accessibility achieved in the target product when localisers are familiar with this concept and its associated best practices (Rodríguez Vázquez 2013; 2016). Through their study on the transfer of accessibility through localisation and internationalisation standards, Torres del Rey and Morado Vázquez (2019) contributed to the research currently being conducted on localisation and accessibility by asking the following question: “does accessibility have a concrete form or clearly defining characteristics, and can the forms and characteristics that are culture and language-bound be ‘captured’ formally?” (Torres del Rey and Morado Vázquez 2019, 8). The authors underlined the fact that accessibility can be seen as a quality (Jiménez-Crespo 2013, 126–31; Rodríguez Vázquez 2016, 62–64; Torres del Rey & Morado Vázquez 2019) and may not be transferred as such. For this reason, they examined how accessibility could be transferred through localisation and internationalisation standards. Drawing upon a number of criteria from the

WCAG 2.1 (Kirkpatrick et al. 2018) (see Section 3.2), they observed that there is certain accessibility-related content and information included in the source code that can be transferred in an XLIFF document, but the tool used to extract that information should be able to recognise it and display it to the localiser. The study presented in the following sections focused precisely on this aspect.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research questions and study design

We designed a study aimed at answering the following research questions: (1) can CAT tools support and therefore transfer all the relevant accessibility features when processing an HTML5 file? (RQ1); and (2) is the resulting target file accessible? (RQ2).

The study was divided into two main stages: a tool descriptive analysis (Stage 1) and a user evaluation (Stage 2). The first stage consisted in examining both tools from a technical and functional point of view. We processed a test webpage including 80 accessibility features that we would later consider as 'measurable attributes' to obtain a performance score for quantitative analysis purposes. Based on the observation of these attributes, we determined whether the tools supported and transferred correctly all the selected accessibility features. More specifically, we carried out an observational study taking into consideration (1) the specific functionalities provided by the tools related to the file format (HTML); (2) the support of the accessibility features; and (3) how these features were displayed in the tool's editor. This first stage, carried out by the researchers themselves, served as a starting point to understand the overall tools' performance. Based on the existing literature and our expertise on the topic, we formulated the following hypothesis: CAT tools do not support and transfer all the accessibility features included in the source file (H1).

The second stage consisted of a user evaluation, designed according to the '7-step recipe' proposed by EAGLES (1999). We recruited ten novice web localisers to determine (1) the functional suitability (ISO/IEC 2011) of the tools and (2) the influence of the participants' degree of knowledge about accessibility (assessed through a preliminary questionnaire). Participants were divided into two groups: Group 1 had basic knowledge of accessibility and experience with accessibility issues, and Group 2 had no experience with accessibility issues and none or basic knowledge of accessibility. They were asked to localise the test webpage, as done by the researchers during the first observational stage, and modify manually the target file once exported, if they deemed it necessary. The following hypotheses were formulated in relation to the target product: (1) The functional completeness of the tool used has an impact on the final degree of the accessibility achieved (H2); (2) The functional appropriateness of the tool used has an impact on the final degree of accessibility achieved (H3); and (3) The participants' level of knowledge of accessibility has an impact on the final degree of accessibility achieved (H4). A more detailed description of the study's design can be found in Pacati (2020).

### 3.2 Selection of tools, test materials and evaluation criteria

Two CAT tools, namely SDL Trados Studio 2017 and MemoQ v8.7, were examined. The tools were selected to follow up on a prior study conducted by Castro Hernandez (2015), whose work sought to test whether CAT tools were prepared to localise web pages following HTML5 new semantics. She demonstrated that the previous versions of these CAT tools could localise HTML5-format files, and consequently, could be used for website localisation. However, she also pointed out that some improvements could have

been introduced. Our research follows up on Castro Hernandez's work by examining possible improvements in the tools, and by analysing a concrete aspect in more detail, that is, the processing of accessibility features.

To assess the degree of accessibility achieved when using the aforementioned tools, we selected a number of Success Criteria (SC) included in the WCAG 2.1 (Kirkpatrick et al. 2018), based on the study by Torres del Rey and Morado Vázquez (2019) on the transfer of accessibility through localisation and internationalisation standards (see Table 1). The authors made a distinction between 'neutrally transferable' (embedded in the code's structure) and 're-placed' features (in-line formatting), which are usually excluded or protected from editing by the localisation tool. In our study, we tried to include a representative number of both types of features.

Success Criteria	SC code	Example of Recommended Techniques
1.1.1 Non-text Content	SC1	<i>H37: Using alt attributes on <code>img</code> elements</i>
2.4.1 Bypass Blocks	SC2	<i>G1: Adding a link at the top of each page that goes directly to the main content area</i>
2.4.2 Page Titled	SC3	<i>H25: Providing a title using the title element</i>
2.4.4 Link Purpose (in Context)	SC4	<i>G91: Providing link text that describes the purpose of a link</i>
3.1.1 Language of Page	SC5	<i>H57: Using the language attribute on the HTML element</i>
3.2.1 Language of Parts	SC6	<i>H58: Using language attributes to identify changes in the human language</i>
3.2.2 On Input	SC7	<i>H32: Providing submit buttons</i>
3.3.1 Error Identification	SC8	<i>G83: Providing text descriptions to identify required fields that were not completed</i>
3.3.2 Labels or Instructions	SC9	<i>ARIA9: Using <code>aria-labelledby</code> to concatenate a label from several text nodes</i>

Table 1. Selected SC

Once we determined the SC to be studied, we selected two web pages from the Government of Canada featuring the techniques associated to the SC criteria shown in Table 1. The main reasons for choosing these web pages included the country's legal framework in terms of language policy and accessibility. As a bilingual country, Canada must ensure that all institutional websites are available in the two national languages (Secretariat, Treasury Board of Canada 2012, art. 6.6). Since we worked with the English-French pair, the published French version of the pages was used as a reference document during the study. Moreover, in the last few years, Canada introduced several legislations related to accessibility, such as the *Accessible Canada Act: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-free Canada* (ACA), which aims to prevent barriers in information and communication technologies (ACA 2019).

By manually inspecting the web pages selected for the study, we identified what we defined as 'accessibility features', as introduced in Section 1, i.e. elements such as coding elements, attributes or text units that are embedded in the source code to ensure accessibility. For instance, we considered as accessibility features the alternative text included in the `img` element or the language of the page attribute (`lang`). By treating these elements as measurable attributes, we could quantify accessibility and measure it. In order to calculate the percentage of accessibility achieved in the final product, we decided to count the unique instances of the accessibility features. However, since some

elements occur more frequently than others, we also considered the SC as 'tasks' that both the tool and the participants had to accomplish. This allowed us to calculate statistically the success rate.

In order to answer the second research question, we examined the *functional suitability* of the tools — namely, the product quality characteristic that “represents the degree to which a product or system provides functions that meet stated and implied needs when used under specified conditions” (ISO 25000 2019). This characteristic is composed of three sub-characteristics, that we interpreted as follows: (i) *functional correctness*, the degree to which the system produces an accessible target file; (ii) *functional completeness*, the degree to which the tool's features and functionalities cover all the tasks, namely the localisation of all the SC and associated techniques; and (iii) *functional appropriateness*, the degree to which CAT tools facilitate the accomplishment of the abovementioned tasks. We hypothesised that the last two sub-characteristics could have an impact on the final degree of accessibility achieved, i.e. on the functional correctness of the tools.

## 4 Main findings

### 4.1 Stage 1: Tool descriptive analysis

Through the first stage, we observed that the two CAT tools are not able to support and transfer all the selected requirements, that is, SDL Trados Studio 2017 can transfer correctly eight out of nine SC, while MemoQ v8.7 can only support seven (Table 2).

SC	SDL Trados Studio 2017	MemoQ v8.7
SC1	✓	✓
SC2	✓	✓
SC3	✓	✓
SC4	✓	✓
SC5	✓	✓
SC6	✗	✗
SC7	✓	✓
SC8	✓	✓
SC9	✓	✗

Table 2. Results of the tool descriptive analysis summary (✓ = supported; ✗ = not supported)

The main difference between the tools concerns the possibility to modify the settings. While SDL Trados Studio 2017 allows the user to add or edit several elements in the settings related to the file type, MemoQ v8.7 only offers the possibility to modify the import settings. However, it is important to notice that some of the elements are not detected by SDL Trados Studio 2017 by default. This was the case of SC5: *Language of Page*, for which the user has to modify the corresponding settings. This could lead to a lower degree of accessibility achieved in the final product compared to the one that we could potentially obtain with customised settings. For example, as illustrated in Figure 1, SDL Trados Studio 2017 users can modify the settings for the `lang` attribute and can choose among three options: 'change matching source language to target language', which is the default option; 'always change to target language'; and 'do not change'. The

default option does not automatically adapt the `lang` element to the target language. Therefore, to ensure accessibility, it is recommended that users tune the settings and select the second option.

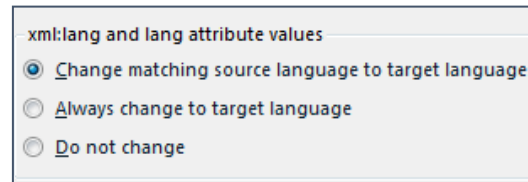


Figure 1. Settings related to the `lang` attribute

In general, we observed that, as the majority of the element and attribute values are detected as simple text units, the two CAT tools can retrieve the information and transfer it correctly. For instance, both tools displayed correctly the title of the page in the editor interface. When embedded content exists, such as in the case of text alternatives, both tools support it by default. However, in features related to the SC6: *Language of Parts*, the values could be modified only manually once the HTML file was exported from the tool.

Furthermore, in relation to additional information support, we noticed that SDL Trados Studio 2017 provides more information about the accessibility elements. Yet, users need to be familiar with the tool, as some of this guidance is not directly displayed in the editor interface, but rather in the document structure information tab. On the contrary, in MemoQ v8.7, the additional information is primarily included in the form of tags protecting the original source code. We also noticed that MemoQ v8.7 offers a built-in QA feature that displays errors related to the `alt` attribute, as seen in Figure 2. This function may be an additional instrument for localisers to deal with the localisation of text alternatives more appropriately.

69	031...	There is an extra space after the span tag
69	031...	Inconsistent translation for Private
73	020...	Attribute "alt" of tag "img" is translatable but contains direct text
73	020...	Tag "img" is missing from the target
73	020	Extra tag in target: "img"

Figure 2. Error message related to the `alt` attribute

The data gathered through this first stage led us to support our main hypothesis (H1): CAT tools cannot support and transfer all the accessibility features. However, although it is true that not all the accessibility features were supported, both tools did transfer the majority of them and offer the possibility of modifying certain settings or displaying additional information that could help users achieve more accessible target HTML-based document.

## 4.2 Stage 2: User evaluation

The results of the second stage confirmed our observations from the descriptive analysis, but they also underlined some positive factors. None of the participants could transfer all the accessibility features included in the requirements due to (1) the limited support offered by the tools, which we had already pointed out during the first stage; and (2) their limited knowledge of and experience with the topic. Only a small number of participants (N=2) in Group 1 obtained a higher performance score using SDL Trados Studio 2017 (being able to transfer 77 and 78 out of 80 accessibility features, respectively), while all

participants transferred the same number of features through MemoQ v8.7 (76 out of 80).

In the post-task questionnaire, participants indicated that both tools offered useful information about the feature's context in the form of tags (in the case of SDL Trados Studio 2017) and by showing the preview of the final target product (in the case of MemoQ v8.7). These two functionalities helped participants retrieve certain accessibility features easily and treat them accordingly. We also collected the participants' opinion on whether these tools could have a positive or negative impact on the achievement of accessibility. The majority agreed on considering these tools to be of great help in localising certain elements, but we still noticed a difference between the two groups, with Group 1 having a more critical opinion compared to Group 2. This difference can also be explained by the fact that, on the one hand, the majority of participants (N=4) in Group 2 did not know certain accessibility features, such as bypass blocks elements (SC2) or the `title` attribute (SC3), that were transferred by default. On the other hand, since participants in Group 1 were familiar with all the accessibility features included in the selected SC, they expected the tools to support and transfer all the elements. Through their answers, we were able to confirm H2 and H3, namely, both functional completeness and functional appropriateness have an impact on the degree of accessibility achieved.

The last step of this study consisted of an analysis of the impact of participants' knowledge of accessibility, in order to confirm or reject our last hypothesis (H4). They were asked to modify the document they exported from the two CAT tools if they considered it necessary. When examining the final product, we noticed that the average success rate of Group 1 was over 100%, as nearly all the participants correctly modified the selected SC and a few other elements related to accessibility that were not included in the study. On the contrary, in Group 2, only one participant modified an element (the `aria-label` attribute) and, therefore, the average success rate of the group was still below 100%. Overall, the data collected seems to indicate that the degree of accessibility achieved can be higher if localisers are familiar with accessibility best practices.

## 5 Concluding remarks

Our study concluded that the CAT tools examined — i.e. SDL Trados Studio 2017 and MemoQ v8.7 — cannot support all the accessibility features selected for the study. To sum up, the two CAT tools transferred more than 75% of selected requirements (around 77% per MemoQ v8.7 and 88% per SDL Trados Studio 2017). All SC except for SC6 (by both tools) and SC9 (by MemoQ only) could be correctly transferred. As we previously pointed out, the main difference lay in the possibility to modify the settings in SDL Trados Studio 2017 and tune the tool to detect more accessibility features.

Through the assessment of the tools' *functional correctness*, *functional completeness*, and *functional appropriateness*, we also confirmed that the tools' functional suitability had an influence on the final achievement of accessibility: the two CAT tools did not offer the sufficient features and functionalities to transfer all the selected SC. Although there are certain items that cannot be transferred through CAT tools, we noticed that the latter offer useful information about the features' context in the form of tags and by showing the preview. These are two factors that helped participants identify the accessibility features easily. According to our observations, another factor that can have an impact on the degree of accessibility achieved is the localiser's knowledge of accessibility. The most notable differences were noticed when comparing the two groups' final product. This finding proves that, when localisers are familiar with accessibility, the overall degree of accessibility achieved can improve. This goes in line

with the studies mentioned in Section 2.

This study presents a number of limitations, such as the limited number of selected SC and techniques included in the test website, and the inclusion of a small number of participants with only novice experience in the localisation field and basic knowledge of accessibility. Similarly, we could only analyse two CAT tools, which also share numerous similarities and produced similar results. Despite these limitations, our work aimed at contributing to the yet scarce literature on web localisation, accessibility and translation tools, focusing on the relation between accessibility standards and multilingual websites, and on the process of adaptation of certain accessibility features. It also sought to contribute to the discussion on the role of localisers in the achievement of web accessibility during the localisation process.

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