

# Language Technology Wiki: A Project “Devoted to Helping Evolve the Next Generation of Language Technology with *Your* Help”

At the end of last year I made a list of personal and professional achievements from 2017, which made me feel very positive about the upcoming year. Interestingly, some of the things I was patting myself on the back for I hadn’t actually done anything to achieve—I just encouraged others to do something and they implemented the idea far better than I could.

Back in 2016 at ATA’s Annual Conference in San Francisco, I had a talk with Henry Liu, then president of the International Federation of Translators, about what could be done to help translators and interpreters have a clearer voice when it comes to shaping how their technology will develop. We didn’t really come to any particular conclusion, but I carried the question around with me for several months until an idea took shape. I started to imagine a loosely structured open web space that was specifically untethered from any commercial offering or sponsoring, but otherwise presented open room for debate.

I eventually issued a call for participation—and for leadership, as I wasn’t going to take part in this—and lo and behold, six very high-profile volunteers showed up: Tom Alwood, Alexander Drechsel, Martin Kappus, Marie-Sophie Petit, Barry Slaughter Olsen, and Iulianna van der Lek-Ciudin. These experts built

Language Technology Wiki (www.langtech.wiki), a site that offers space for discussions, ideas, and ways to propel forward the technology that we use day in and day out—or that we will use day in and day out.

Under “Rules” and “About” on its website, you’ll find reminders that Language Technology Wiki is “is not focused on specific issues in existing tools.” The goal is “to point toward a new generation of tools,” so no griping about the latest bug in Trados or the poor fit of some remote interpreting headsets—there are plenty of existing outlets for that. Instead, you’re encouraged to share with others (we’ll discuss who those “others” are in a second) what you think technology should be able to do for you.

Who would be interested in that? First, other translators and interpreters. There’s no doubt that we’ve all developed our own sets of idiosyncrasies for how we go about using (or how we wish we could use) technology to make our lives easier. Sharing these can go a long way in terms of helping our colleagues, and their responses will help us improve our processes.

A second user group includes project managers, owners of language services providers, and translation buyers. As you can see in the list of topics that will follow, the technologies under discussion are not limited to individual translators, but really include every professional in the

world of translation. If the topic burning under your fingernails isn’t listed, there’s no reason not to add one. (If it’s a new general topic, it will have to be approved by the site moderators, but that shouldn’t be a problem.)

Another reason for this second group to come to Language Technology Wiki is to learn about translators. Yes, there are project managers and translation buyers who don’t have much personal interest in seeing how translators actually work—but there are many who have a very keen interest. (Many project managers harbor the dream of making the tried-and-true career move from project manager to freelance translator or interpreter in the back of their minds.) Translators and interpreters are also encouraged to see what “the other side” is discussing or hoping for.

Then, of course, there are the developers—either those currently developing translation and interpreting technology or those thinking about it. While they’re certainly welcome to chime in on the exchange of ideas (though I imagine it won’t be easy for some of them to toe the line in terms of not promoting their own products), the more likely role I see for them is to use Language Technology Wiki as a fabulous resource where users openly share their needs, aspirations, and dreams about what technology could do for them. Did you hear that, developers? This is going to be a gold mine for you!

Here are the main topics that have already been set up (as I mentioned above, more topics can always be added):

- Audiovisual translation
- Authoring and translation
- Computer-assisted translation project management
- Collaboration
- Impact of language technologies on the translation process and skills
- Interpreting delivery platforms



Figure 1: Adding tags to a subtopic (tag associated with a particular topic is shown here circled in red)

## Machine Translation

Machine translation, or MT, is the use of software to translate text or speech from one language to another based on computational methods not involving humans.

### Best Practices on how to use machine translation in a translation workflow

Collecting "Best Practices" for working with machine translation in existing (or not yet existing) environments should help developers to adapt their technology to match the expectation of translators.

Here is one: Have several MT engines connected within your translation environment simultaneously, don't look at the MT suggestions as a whole and only use them if they match your typing through AutoSuggest/AutoWrite etc. The benefit is that you are not unduly influenced with sub-par suggestions (which can be a big problem), you speed up the translation process because the system completes "your thoughts" and you drive the process vs. the machine driving you.

### Integration with translation memory

Enter your topic

### Interactive exchange of MT suggestions, termbase hits and TM fragments

Arguably the three most important assets are MT suggestions, TM matches and fragments and termbase hits. What we need is a deep integration of these retrieval features with each other so that

Figure 2: Listed subtopics under a main topic

- Interpreting management systems
- Machine interpreting/ speech-to-speech translation
- Machine translation
- Quality
- Terminology management
- Translation management systems
- Translation memory
- Usability/accessibility/learnability
- Voice recognition
- Web resources

As you can see, the Language Technology Wiki committee tried very hard to do right by all the different groups and sectors represented in the world of translation.

Here's what I would suggest for you—and for us all—to give this project the needed kick start. Whatever position or role you have within the world of translation, at some point during any given workday you'll get frustrated that whatever set of tools you're using doesn't work the way you think it should, or doesn't work at all in a certain way. (I'm not talking about bugs, but about badly implemented or nonexistent features.) Or maybe there's just no tool for what you want to achieve.

The next time this happens, open [www.langtech.wiki](http://www.langtech.wiki) and register as a user (which takes about a minute). Then look

through the existing topics and subtopics to see whether your particular issue has already been addressed. (If it has, be sure to add your insights to whatever has been said). If your issue hasn't been addressed, add a new subtopic (or topic if it doesn't fit anywhere else).

Here's a quick tutorial on how to add a subtopic (not because I think you couldn't figure this out on your own, but because—ahem—I couldn't figure it out when I first did it):

1. Select "Topics" in the header bar.
2. Locate and open the topic that matches your concern most closely.
3. Note the tags that are associated with that topic (you can find those listed underneath the subtopics. (In Figure 1 on page 29, this tag is circled in red.)
4. Type in a title for a new subtopic in the text field in the lower right corner and click "New Subtopic."
5. Describe your subtopic in the window that will open and click "Save."
6. At the bottom of the page, you'll see a list of commands. (The bar in Figure 1 has the mouse cursor pointing to "Tags.")
7. Select "Tags" and enter the tag(s) with which you want your subtopic associated. Note that you have to type the tag exactly like you saw it when you looked up the tags above.

This is important, otherwise your contribution won't show up anywhere.

8. If you did all that, your subtopic will be displayed under the topic and other people can comment.
9. If this doesn't work for some reason, use the "Contact" command in the header bar to alert the administrator, who will be delighted to lend a helping hand.

Of course, it's totally okay to come to Language Technology Wiki just to learn. Feel free to scroll through some of the existing content during a work break. (Once you're there you should also register so you don't have to do it when you enter something for the first time.) While there isn't as much data in there as there could be, there's already some interesting stuff to be found. For instance, do you know what TAPICC stands for and why this might be important to you? If not, check out the entry under "Collaboration" and you'll be the wiser for it.

I think this might be the start of something really special—a place where we as a large and very diverse community can come together, suggest ideas for how to improve translation and interpreting technology, and see those ideas realized in the tools of tomorrow.

Thank you for becoming part of this. The next time you talk to Tom, Alexander, Martin, Marie-Sophie, Barry, and Iulianna, be sure to thank them for making this a reality. ○

**If you have any ideas and/or suggestions regarding helpful resources or tools you would like to see featured, please e-mail Jost Zetzsche at [jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com](mailto:jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com).**



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