Post-editing creative texts vs specialised texts: Investigating translators' perceptions and performance

Maria Stasimioti, Vilelmini Sosoni,
Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting,
Ionian University, Corfu, Greece

Translating and the Computer

INTRODUCTION

Neural Machine Translation (NMT) models:

- have led to improved MT outputs especially for resource-rich language pairs (Deng and Liu, 2018), mainly at the level of fluency (Castilho et al., 2017a; 2017b).
- have been increasingly used in the language industry for generating raw output to be then post-edited by professional translators (Lommel and DePalma, 2016) and have been associated with productivity gains (Guerberof, 2009; 2012; Plitt and Masselot, 2010; Gaspari et al., 2014; Toral et al., 2018; Moorkens et al., 2018).

However, this scenario has been predominantly reserved for specialised, repetitive texts, given that creative texts still remain a great challenge for MT (Toral and Way, 2018) and are thus considered to be the last bastion of human translation.

Translating creative texts

Creative texts have a **clear expressive or aesthetic function** and it is not sufficient to merely preserve their meaning.

Translators have to employ all their artistic resources and awareness of both content and context to create translations that offer the reader a comparable reading experience with that enjoyed by the reader of the original text (Toral and Way, 2018).

- ✓ Translation should “undo the original” (de Man, 1986) to deal with the uniqueness of the source and target languages and the source and target cultures. This ‘undoing’ requires not only linguistic competence, but also creative competence.

Perception MT and PE

Many translators of creative texts continue to shun MT or believe it is “inadequate for their purposes” (Cadwell et al., 2016: 237).

Post-editing of machine translation (PEMT) or post-editing (PE) is considered to be restrictive, allowing limited opportunities for creativity, and requiring the correction of ‘stupid’ errors (Cadwell et al, 2016; 2017; Moorkens and O’Brien, 2017), which result in “imperfect translations” (Besacier, 2014: 121).

Aim of the study

The study seeks to:

- Compare the translators' performance when post-editing a promotional text from the domain of tourism to their performance when post-editing a specialised medical text.
- Investigate their attitudes and perceptions vis-à-vis MT and PE of creative texts and medical texts.

Methodology

01. Questionnaire

9 Questions

02. Edit Distance

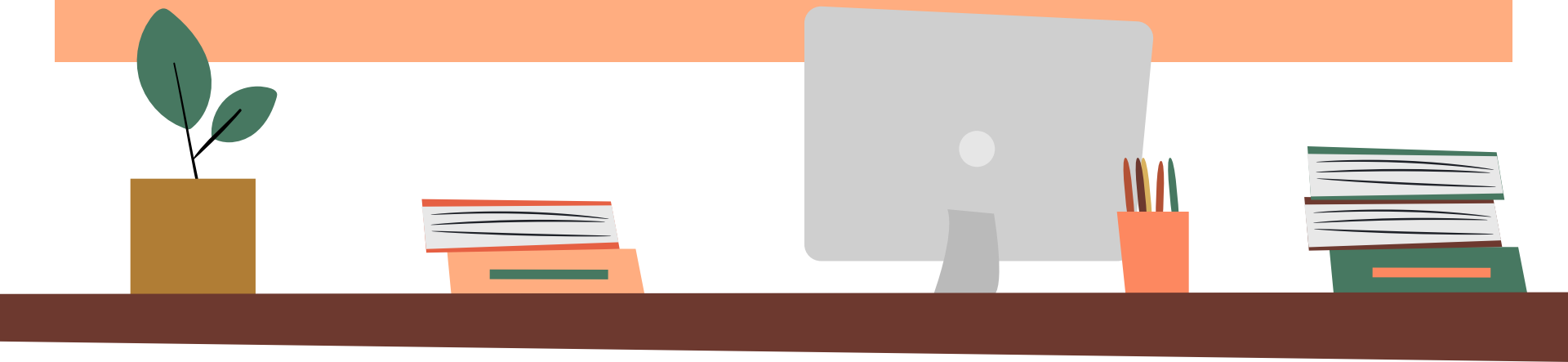
Translation Edit Rate (TER)

03. Adequacy & Fluency Rating

5-point Likert Scale

04. Error Classification

MQM-DQF Error Typology



METHODOLOGY

2 TEXTS

Text 1: promotional text (online holiday brochure)
Text 2: medical text (clinical trial)
400-word excerpts

MT OUTPUT

The NMT system used: Google Translate

10 PARTICIPANTS

MA students from the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting at the Ionian University

2 ANNOTATORS

Professional Greek translators, each with over 10 years of experience

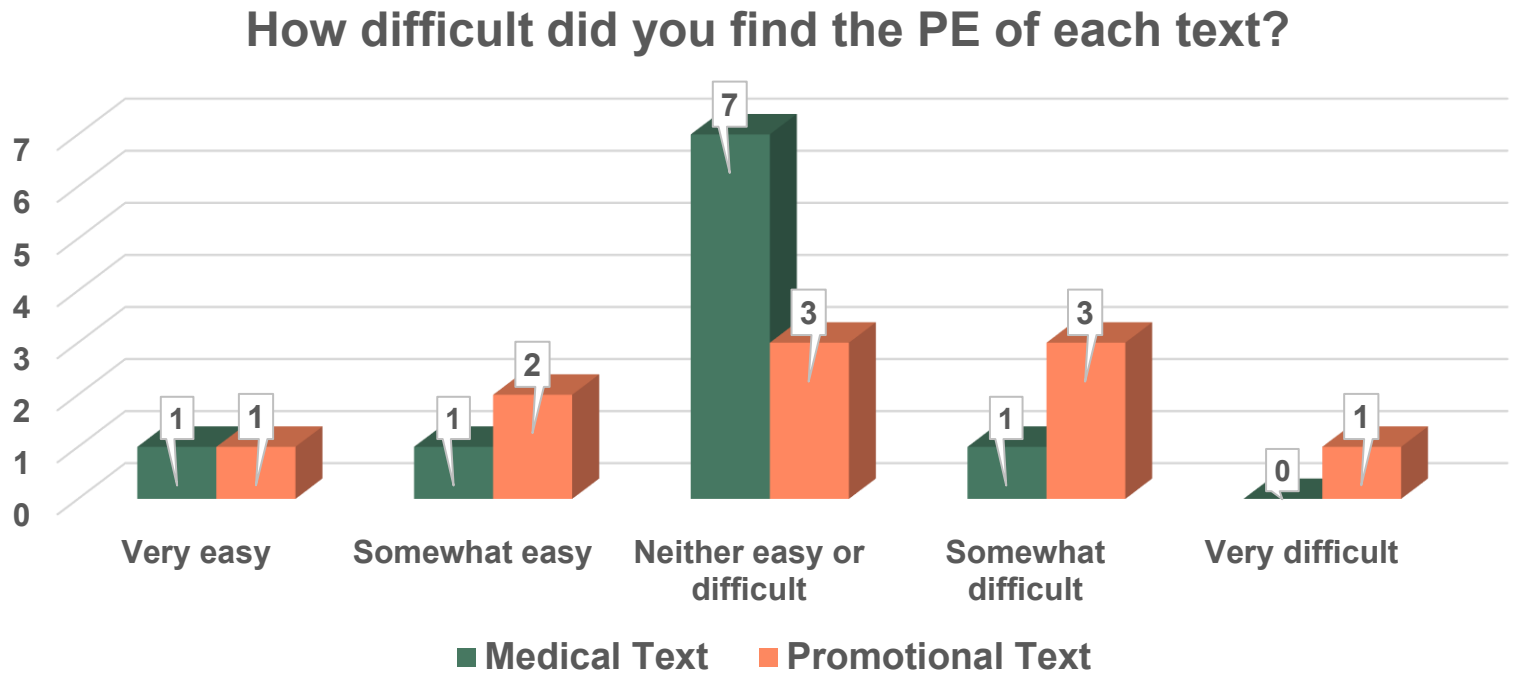
PE TRAINING

“Translation tools” compulsory module

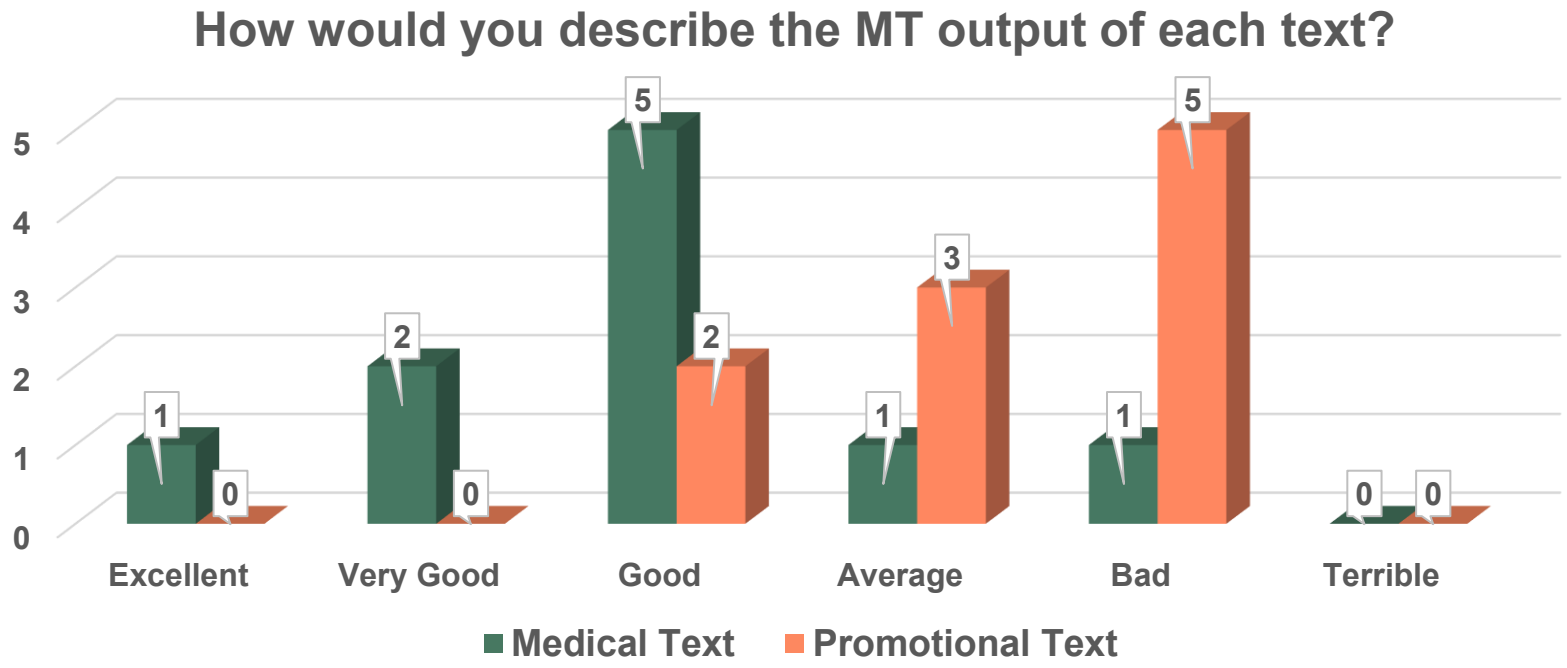
- Theory and history of MT and PE,
- Basic principles of MT technology,
- Analysis of the dominant systems in the market,
- Importance of controlled language and pre-editing for MT,
- Quality metrics and evaluation of MT output,
- PE levels of quality,
- PE effort and productivity,
- MT output error identification,
- MT engine implementation in the translation workflow,
- Post-editor profile and associated skills

Findings and discussion

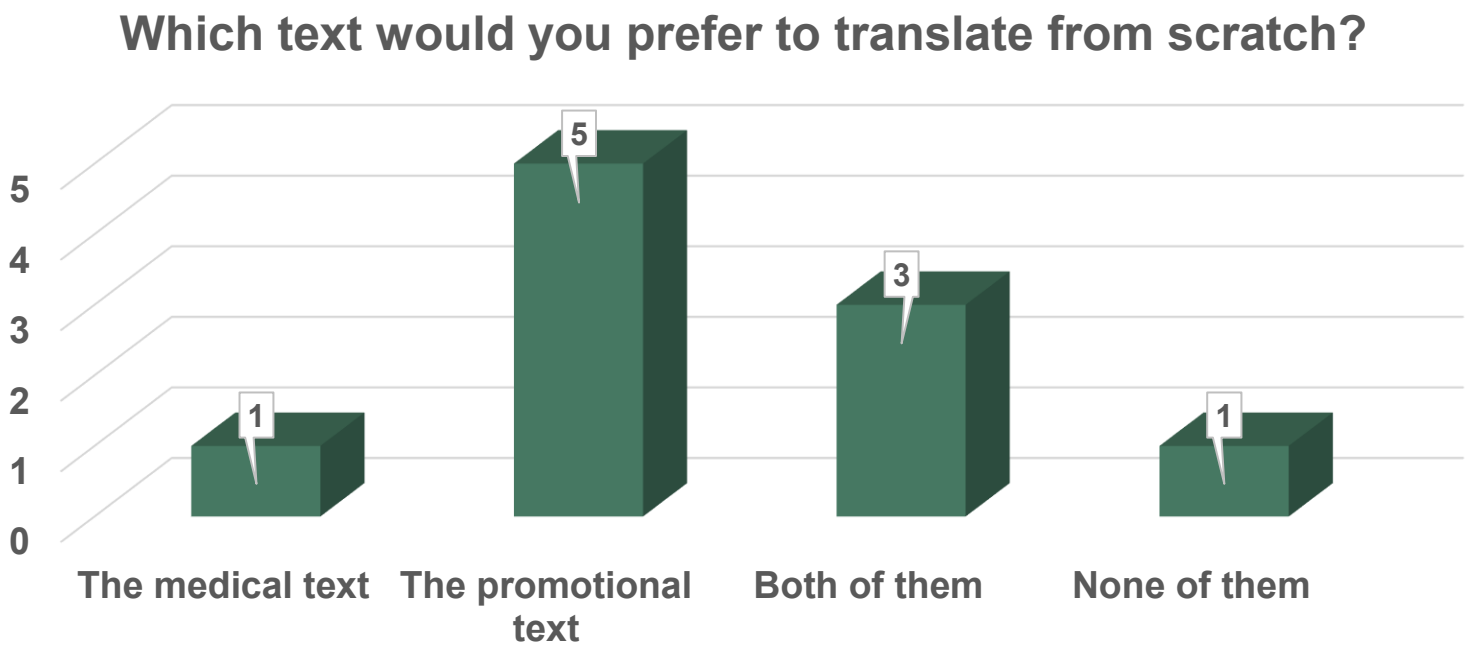
Questionnaire



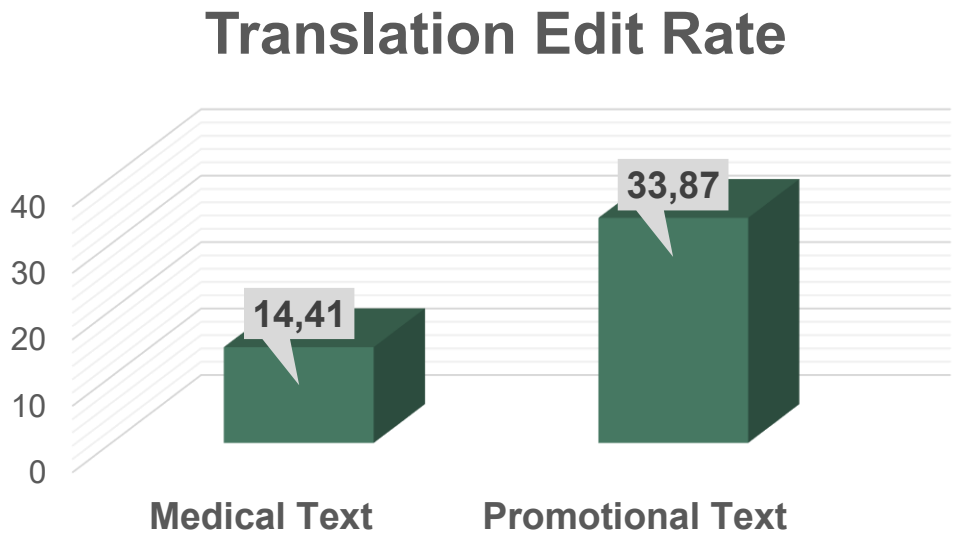
Questionnaire



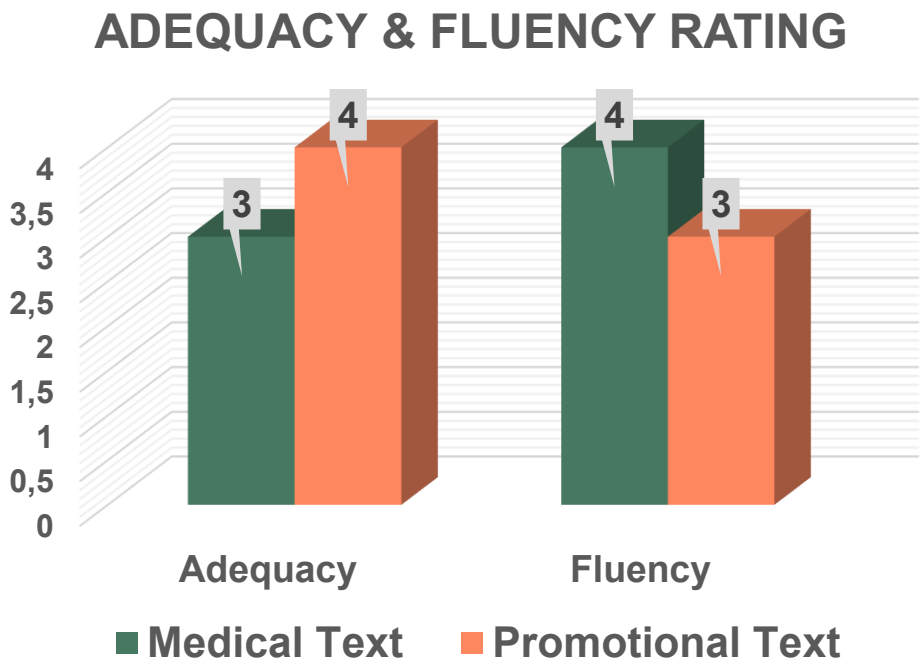
Questionnaire



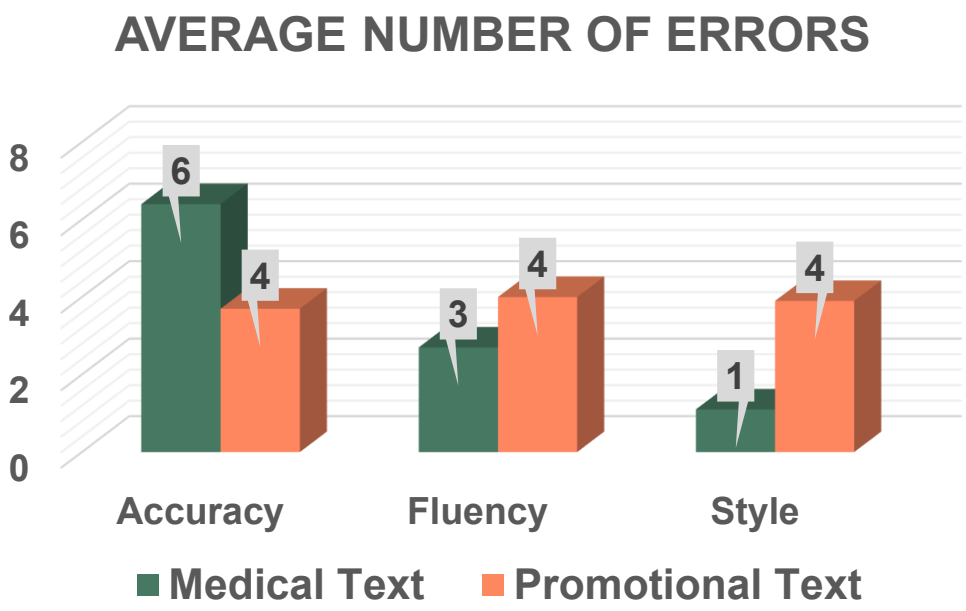
Translation edit rate



Adequacy & Fluency rating



Error classification



EXAMPLES

MEDICAL TEXT

ACCURACY

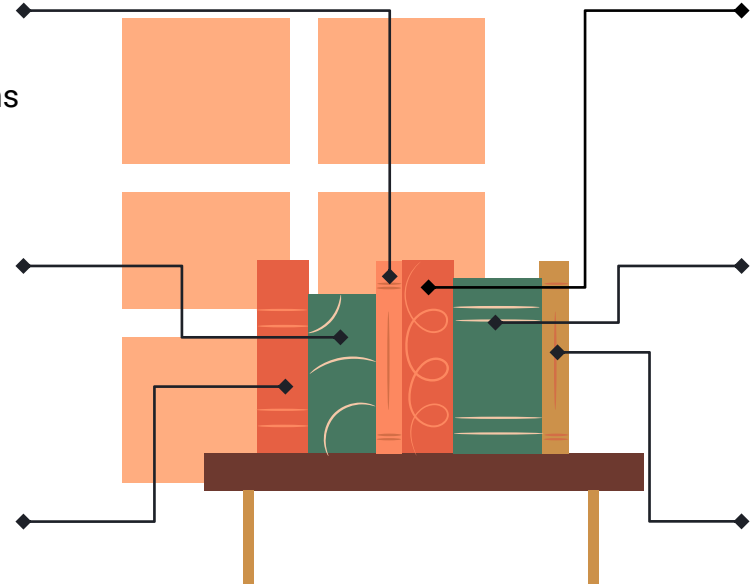
- oral therapeutic vaccine
- tumor clearance
- tumor regression
- computed tomography scans
- open-label clinic trial
- tableted vaccine

FLUENCY

- Phase II
- hepcortespenlisimut-L-an oral therapeutic vaccine

STYLE

- formerly known as V5



PROMOTIONAL TEXT

ACCURACY

- enchantment
- Bar 3674
- social hub

FLUENCY

- when it comes to conveying you to your end destination

STYLE

- reverberating through the air
- get caught up in the giddy excitement
- social hub
- alluring experience

FINDINGS

- Translators consider the PE of the medical text to be easier than the PE of the promotional text, claiming that the MT output of the latter was of lower quality.
- The majority would rather translate the promotional text from scratch.
- The PE of the promotional text required more edits and therefore more effort than the PE of the medical text.
- The quality of the post-edited texts was comparable, but the types of errors found therein were different. The post-edited medical text contained more errors at the level of accuracy, while the post-edited promotional text contained more errors at the level of fluency and style.

THE VERDICT?

Although translators prefer to translate creative texts from scratch and find PE more effective in the case of specialised medical texts as they expend less effort to correct them, the final post-edited texts do not appear to differ in terms of quality.

THANK YOU!

Does anyone have any questions?

Maria Stasimioti
stasimioti@ionio.gr

Vilelmini Sosoni
sosoni@ionio.gr