A Survey on the Perception and Adoption of Localization Tools by Iranian English Language Translators

Abdul Amir Hazbavi

Department of English Translation & Teaching

Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch

Bandar Abbas, Iran

E-mail: Hazbavi1984@yahoo.com

Abstract

In recent years, there have been increasing requests in the field of translation studies to develop software facilitating the analysis of corpora. One of the specialized tools in that regard are Localization Tools. Briefly explaining, Localization Tools are applications developed to facilitate the process of altering software products and web services for marketing to people who speak different languages. While it has a long history and an established ground in translation market in most parts of the globe, the Iranian translators and translation market still seem to be unaware or unfamiliar with Localization Tools. In order to provide a preview on the perception and adoption of Localization Tools by Iranian translators, the present survey was carried out among 224 last-year undergraduate Iranian students of English translation at 10 different universities across the country. The study revealed a very low level of adoption and a very high level of willingness to get familiar with and learn about Localization Tools by Iranian translators.

Keywords: Translation, Translation technology, Localization tools, Localization survey

1. Introduction

There is a wide range of technologies available to translators today, including both general-purpose software applications and special purpose software. According to Dennett (1995), whilst it is true that many translators are not great enthusiasts for exploiting translation technologies in their work, most informed translators believe that it will no longer be possible to survive in the marketplace without becoming more aware of and familiar with such technological tools.

Today with the migration of the task of final translation production to the workstation level through various computer programs, translators are increasingly being asked to produce final copy, with layout, illustrations, etc. Consequently, translators are becoming increasingly familiar with the opportunities for enhanced productivity and efficiency gained through applying different specialized translation tools –such as Localization Tools- to the task of natural language translation (Dennett, 1995).

As defined by Lopes (2003) localization is the process of taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country, region and language) by adapting the differences in distinct markets through translation.

In this paper, the findings are reported of the second section of a countrywide research project administered at 10 universities, set up to investigate the adoption of Localization Tools by Iranian translators of English language.

The main purpose behind this research project is to present the potential users perspective about Localization Tools and to supply data on the application domain, that is, information on frequent work practices and on the tasks related to Localization Tools. More specifically, the aims of Localization Tools survey can be summarized as follows:

• To estimate familiarity with Localization Tools among Iranian translators of English;

• To investigate the perception of Iranian translators of English of Localization Tools

• To estimate Localization Tools penetration among the Iranian translators of English

• To help understand the reasons behind any probable low usage of Localization Tools

• To uncover user satisfaction levels for existing Localization Tools systems

Therefore, the focus of this survey is on gaining information from users on the use of Localization Tools in relation to the utility of Localization Tools as well as the productivity and quality gains they may bring to the work of the user. The survey also includes an investigation on training issues related to Localization Tools.

2. Questionnaire Design

In the present research project, a questionnaire survey was deemed appropriate for conducting the exploratory study in the first phase of the research. One of the strengths of conducting a questionnaire survey is that it permits the collection of data from a large number of subjects, in this case from last-year Iranian undergraduate students of English translation

from 10 universities.

Such data can then be subjected to quantitative analysis in the testing of inferences, leading to the presentation of an overview of a broad section of the Iranian freelance translator community. There is then the potential to generalise the findings to a broader community.

Besides, there is an established body of research literature in which questionnaires have been used to study information technology adoption in a variety of small business contexts (Raymond, 1987; DeLone, 1988; Raman, 1992). Such studies provided a valuable source of ideas and insights on design and development of the questionnaire formulated to be used in this study.

As in every information elicitation process which precedes the collection of requirements for a system (Griffin et al., 1993:1-27), there were several important issues that had to be considered carefully during the design of the questionnaire. For instance: how can the researcher get information on what the users need, if they do not know what they need? Moreover, if they do know, how clearly can they express themselves? In addition, how can the researcher be sure that he/she interprets what the respondent says in the correct way? Or vice versa, how can the researcher be sure that the respondent understands the questions asked the same way as he/she does?

In order to minimise any misunderstanding or loss of information due to the issues above, the draft questionnaire was initially validated through a series of pre-tests, first with some experienced researchers, and then, after some modifications, it was re-tested with some translators. The pre-testers were asked to review the questionnaires, focussing primarily on issues of instrument content, and question wording and validity, before providing detailed feedback. The pre-tests were very useful, as they resulted in a number of enhancements being made to the structure of the questionnaire and the wording of specific questions.

Having refined the questionnaire, a pilot study exercise was also undertaken in Payame Noor University at Bandar Abbas among 14 last-year students of English translation, which provided valuable insights into the likely response rate and analytical implications for the full survey.

The pilot study was done in order to produce simpler, clearer, less ambiguous questions that the participants of the survey would later have no difficulty in responding to. Other measures taken into considerations in order to mitigate the above risks were:

- the use of as little technical jargon as possible in the questions
- the standardisation and ordering of questions in such a way that a question does not influence the response to subsequent questions
- the suggestion of options i.e. use of five-items likert scale (formed in collaboration with the participants of the pilot study)
- An effort was also made to avoid lengthy and irrelevant questions. The average time needed to complete the survey was only 7 minutes.

To ensure steps needed for established approaches to survey administration, the participants

were provided with clear explanation of the purpose of the research project and instructions on how to fill out the survey forms (Dillman, 1978).

3. Questionnaire Layout

The questionnaire was organised into the following sections:

3.1 Participants Profile

Containing three items, covering demographic data on gender of the participants, level of translation competence and qualification as well as level of computer literacy and skills.

3.2 Localization Tools Familiarity and Usage

Containing three items, one item on familiarity of the participants with Localization Tools, one item on any previous training that they might have received on Localization Tools and one item on the usage of Localization Tools.

3.3 Localization Tools Perception

Containing seven items, 4 items on translators' opinions and thoughts about the use of Localization Tools in their translation workflow and their perceptions of Localization Tools as well as three items on their willingness to attend any training course on Localization Tools.

4. Discussion of Survey Findings

In order to collect data, a total 224 usable responses were analysed from the questionnaires given out. The following table and figures drawn by MS Excel 2010 are the survey findings resulted from data analysis:

Table 1. Distribution of participant by university

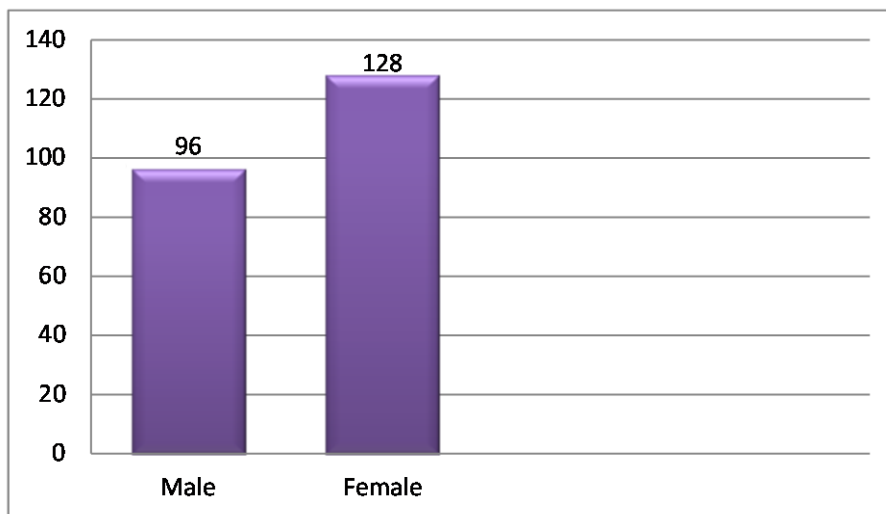|			
Islamic Azad University of Bandar Abbas	26	Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon	20
Imam Reza University of Mashad	23	Bahonar University of Kerman	21
Applied Sciences University of Yazd	26	Khorasgan University	27
Islamic Azad University of Abadan	22	Hamedan University	18
University of Kazerun	23	Payam Noor University of Shiraz	18

4.1 Translators Profile

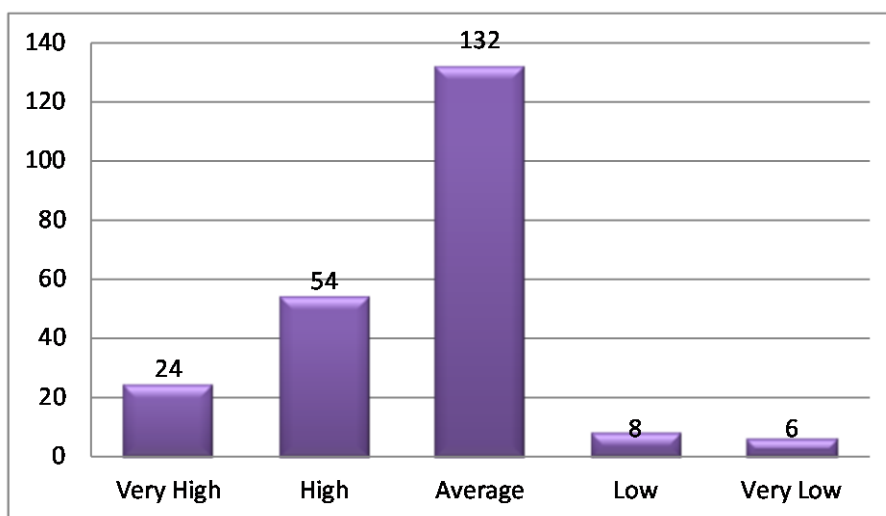Figure 1. please indicate your gender

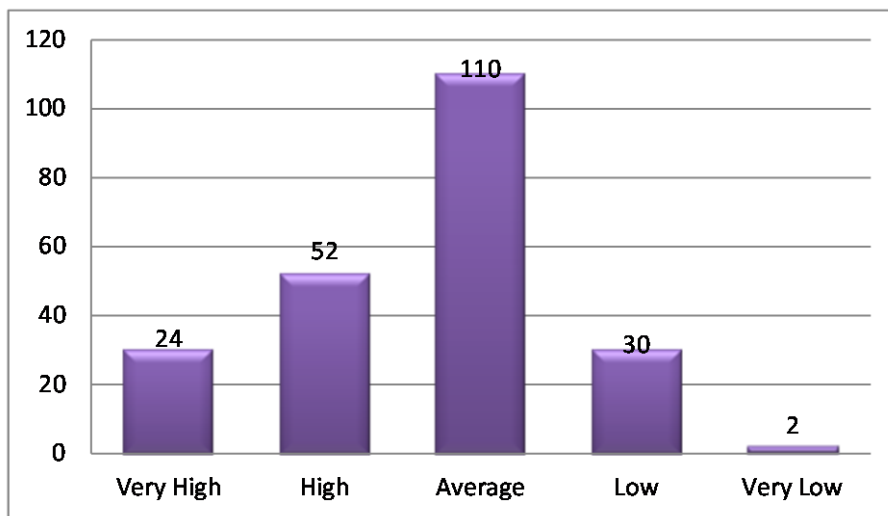Figure 2. what is the level of your translation competence?

Figure 3. what is the level of your computer skills?

The findings of the survey show that survey participants -of that 43% were male and 57% were female- had good translation competence as only 6% of them responded that their level of translation competence is low or very low. Also only 15% of the survey participants stated that their level of computer skills is low or very low. These percentages indicate the overall high level of computer competence of the sample unit, which in turn is used as evidence to the fact that translators have reached a certain maturity in using computers; therefore, one can expect that they should feel more confident in applying Localization Tools to their work.

4.2 Localization Tools familiarity and usage
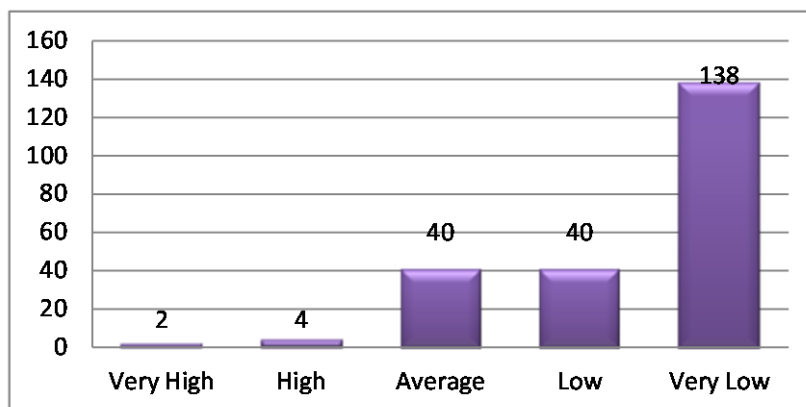
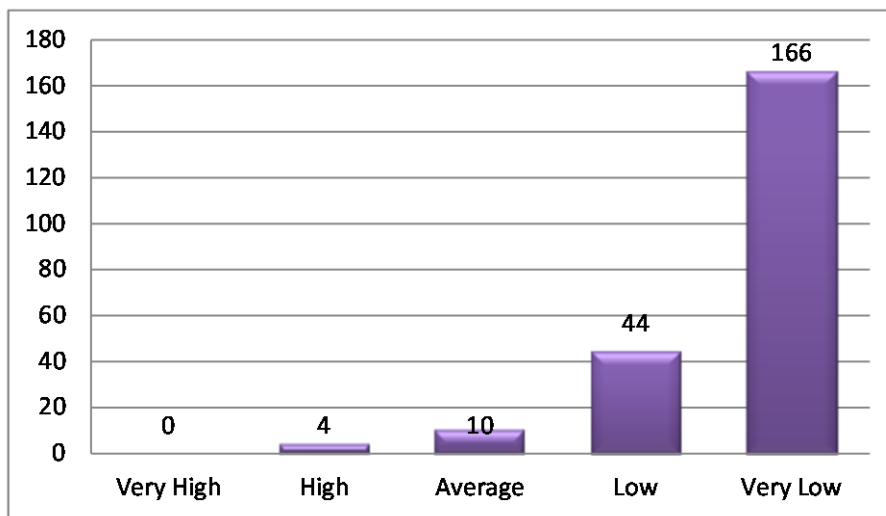Figure 4. what is the level of your familiarity with Localization Tools?

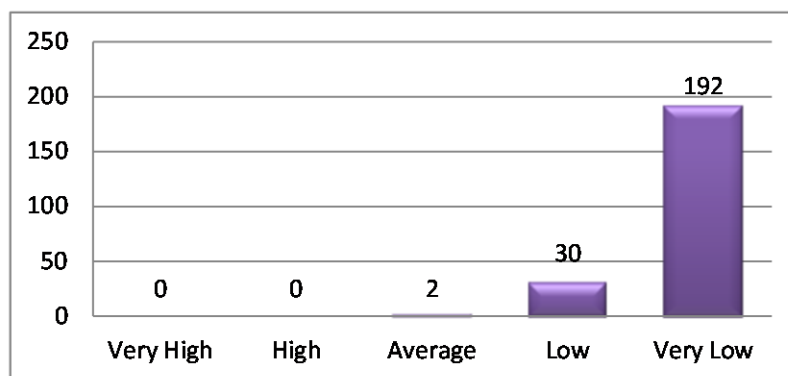Figure 5. what is the level of training you have received on Localization Tools?

Figure 6. which item describes the level of implementation of Localization Tools in your translation works?

The findings of the survey reveal very low level of familiarity with Localization Tools was low, and most of participants seemed unfamiliar with Localization Tools as 79% of them responded that the level of their familiarity with Localization Tools is below average. The reason for such a low level of familiarity with Localization Tools might be discovered from the responses received on item 5, which showed that only 6% of respondents have stated that the level of training they have received on Localization Tools is average or above average. As predicted from the low level of familiarity with Localization Tools, level of adoption of Localization Tools by Iranian students of English translation was very low, as 99% of participants responded that level of implementation of Localization Tools in their work is low or very low.

4.3 Localization Tools Perception

The participants were asked to answer items 7, 8, 9 and 10 if the level of implementation of Localization Tools in their translations is average, low or very low. The aforementioned four items were developed to ask the perception of participants about Localization Tools in order to discover the reason behind any probable low implementation of Localization Tools.
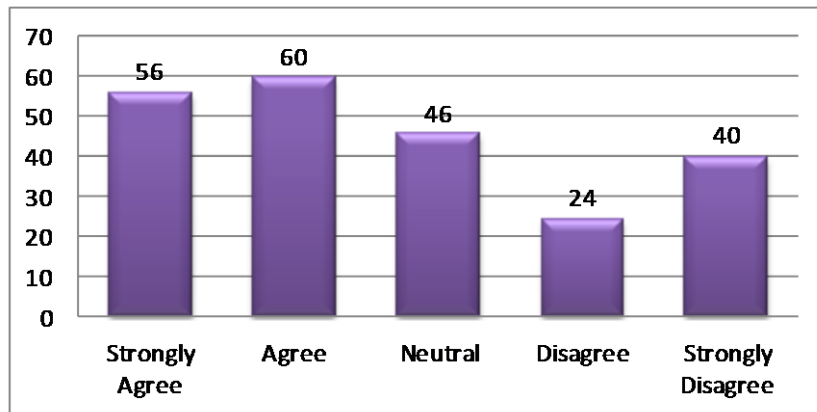

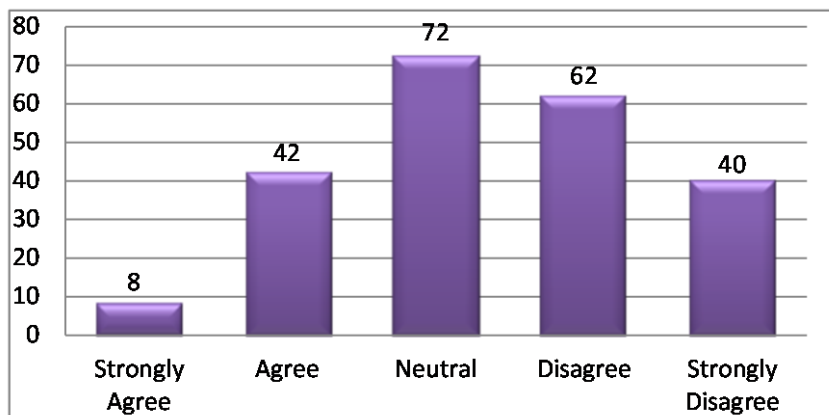Figure 7. I have heard nothing about Localization Tools

Figure 8. I think it costs me a lot to get a Localization Tools Tool
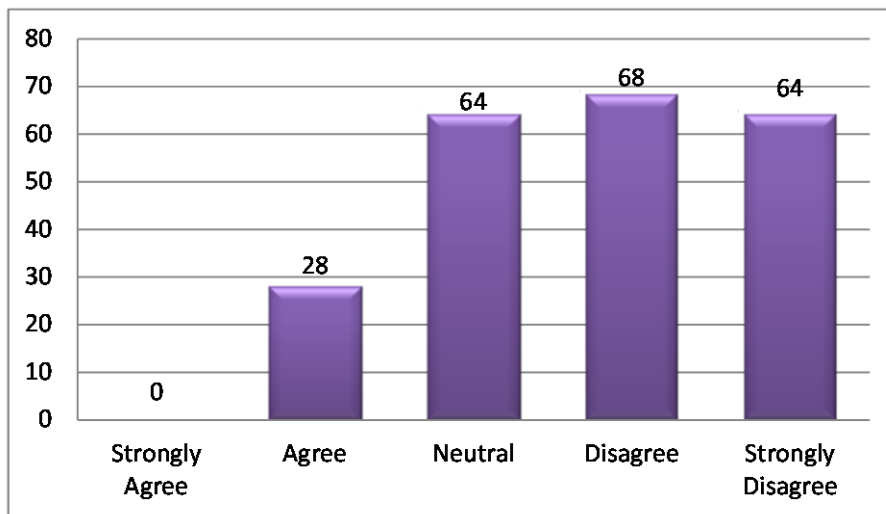
www.macrothink.org/ijl

Figure 9. I think Localization Tools does not bring real benefits to my translation works
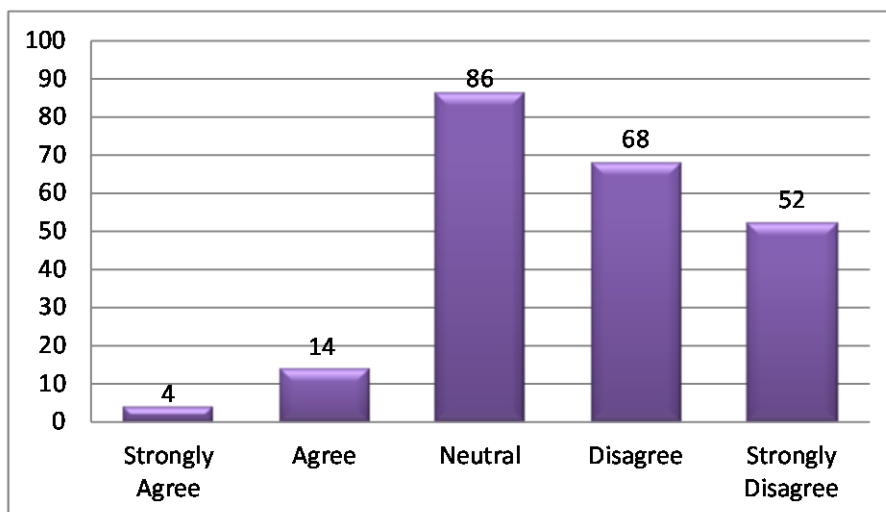
Figure 10. I have tried Localization Tools but it is not suitable for my translation works

In addition to the low level of implementation of Localization Tools, the survey showed that the strongest reason behind such a weak level of adoption of Localization Tools is unawareness, as stated by 51% of the participants. Unlike the survey findings on implementation of Localization Tools, the study revealed a very positive perception and attitude towards Localization Tools among Iranian translators of English as 59% of respondents believed that Localization Tools can bring real benefits to their translation works. Furthermore, 78% of respondents did not believe that Localization Tools applications are of great costs. Also, the majority of survey participants believed that Localization Tools is suitable for their work as only 8% of responses were opponent to this. These percentages clearly indicate the positive attitude of Iranian translators towards Localization Tools, which in turn might be considered as a strong motivation for Localization Tools developers to pay more attention to the virgin Iranian translation marketplace.
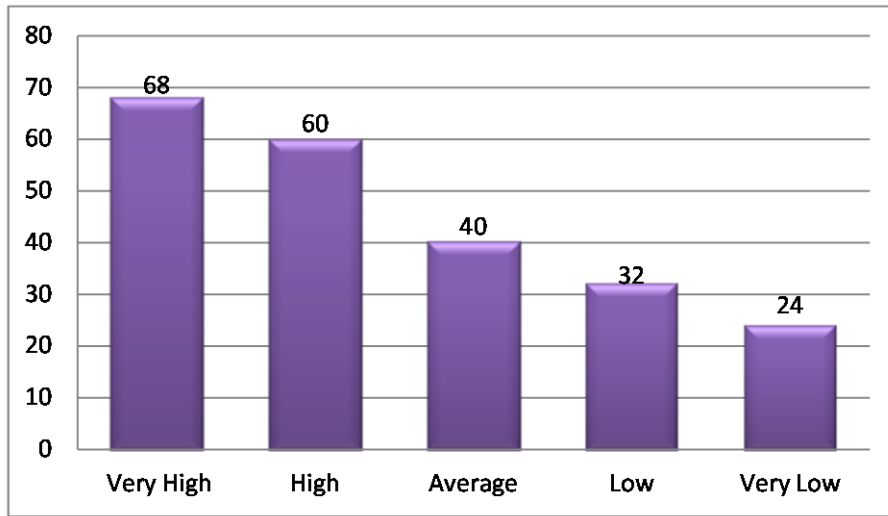
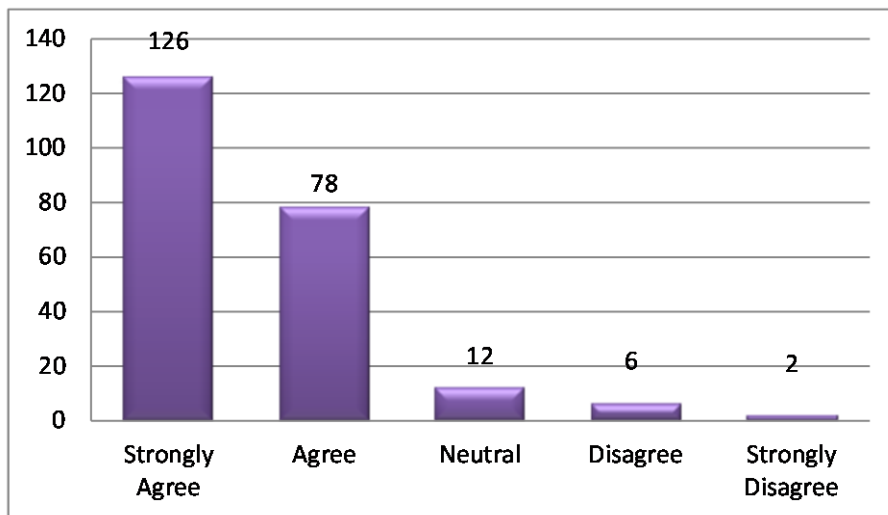Figure 11. What is the level of your willingness to get familiar with and learn about Localization Tools

Figure 12. I believe that university should offer an academic course on Localization Tools
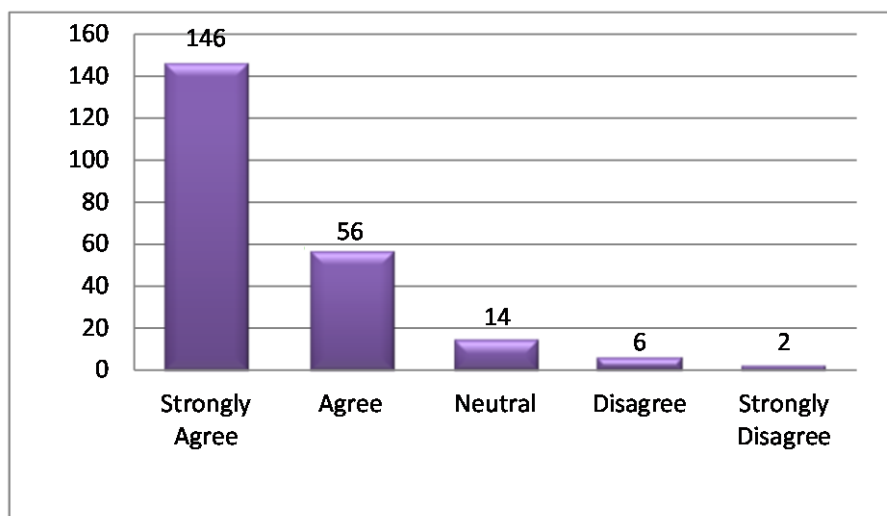
Figure 13. I believe that university should organize training workshops on Localization Tools

However, one of the most significant findings to be emerged from this study is the high level of willingness - as high as 57% - among Iranian translators of English to get familiar with and learn about Localization Tools. Besides most participants of the survey showed their satisfactions on two suggestions put forth by the survey as means of promoting level of familiarity with Localization Tools among Iranian translators. As indicated in Fig. 12 and Fig. 13, more than 90% of participants agreed that an academic course or training workshops should be planned by universities in order to make future translators familiar with Localization Tools.

5. Conclusion

The implications of the survey findings are to be taken into consideration for a number of stakeholders in the translation sector, including existing freelancers, newly qualified translators, translator trainers, professional bodies for translators, and the developers and distributors of translation technologies.

The results also reveal a range of future directions in Localization Tools research as those for identifying the reasons behind such a drastic low level of familiarity with and implementation of Localization Tools among Iranian English translators.

The findings of the present study might also be used in order to establish the ways by which the Localization Tools might gain greater acceptance in the marketplace and amongst the translation profession, with the objective of expanding the use of Localization Tools in the Iranian translation marketplace thus improving the quality of the work produced by the human translator and increasing the productivity.

In addition, the survey implies that Iranian translator trainers and translation communities and associations need to focus their attentions as well as their activities on programs and courses on Localization Tools.

Reference

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