



MET CAT TOOL SURVEY 2020

In December 2020 MET ran a second computer-assisted translation (CAT) survey among its members. It consisted of eight questions and a section for additional comments. The survey was anonymous and attracted 157 responses. On the survey closure date MET had 533 members, about 90% of whom had translating listed in their profile.

The questions were

1. Do you use a CAT tool?
2. If you answered “No, I’m not interested”, please explain why.
3. Which of the following CAT tools do you use?
4. Which of the following is your main CAT tool?
5. Rate your level of proficiency with your main CAT tool.
6. Which operating system do you use?
7. Have you done any formal CAT tool training?
8. What type of CAT tool training would you like if any?
9. Any other comments?

The main objectives of the survey were

- to evaluate changes in CAT tool use since the previous survey in March 2016
- to evaluate MET members’ CAT training needs

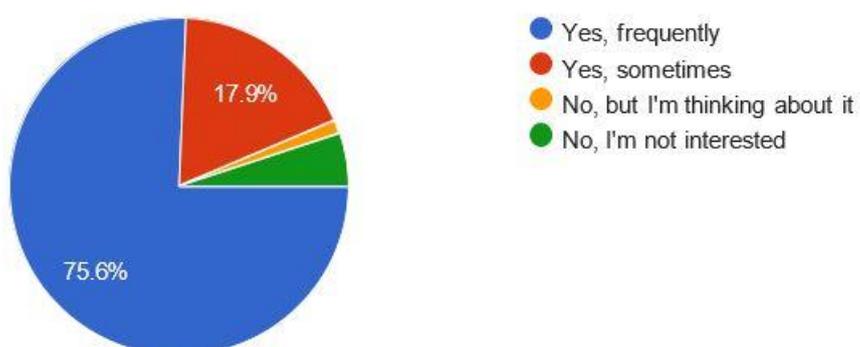
Results

Who uses CAT tools?

Of the 156 respondents to this question, 108 (76%) claimed to use a CAT tool frequently, 28 (18%) sometimes, two (1%) were thinking about getting one, and eight (5%) said they were not interested. These results show a clear shift towards increased CAT tool use with respect to March 2016, when 59% of respondents reported frequent and 24% occasional use.

Do you use a CAT tool?

156 responses



If not, why not?

The reasons for not using a CAT tool were varied: some respondents were mostly editors, others found CAT tools not useful or suitable for the kind of texts they translated – in terms of subject matter or format (uneditable PDFs were mentioned). Interestingly, two respondents felt that by dividing texts into segments, CAT tools broke up the flow of the text to the detriment of the translation.

[A CAT tool is] too much of a distraction. My aim is to focus as much attention as possible on getting my translations to flow and reorganising the information to suit the reader, not the software's segmentation logic.

Which CAT tools do MET members use?

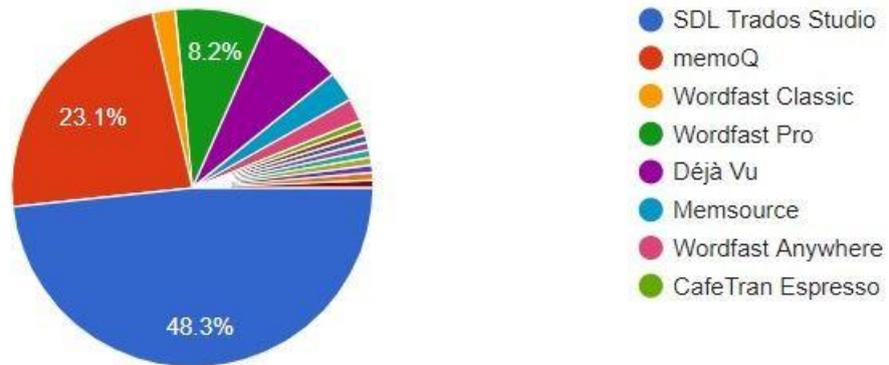
Twenty out of 149 respondents reported using three or more tools and about one-third used two. The most frequently mentioned tools were SDL Trados Studio (84 users), memoQ (63), Memsource (28), Wordfast Pro (20) and Déjà Vu (16). Other tools mentioned by more than one user were Wordfast Classic, OmegaT, CafeTran, Transit NXT, Smartcat and XTM.

With respect to the 2016 survey results, when Trados Studio was used by 30 of 74 respondents, Déjà Vu by 23, Wordfast by 22 and memoQ by 17, there has been a conspicuous shift away from Déjà Vu in favour of memoQ. The likely reason is that Déjà Vu, despite its popularity among translators, is no longer being updated by its developers: its latest major release dates back to July 2015. Also Wordfast has lost ground over the past five years.

A similar picture appears when we look at respondents' main tool.

Which of the following is your main CAT tool?

147 responses

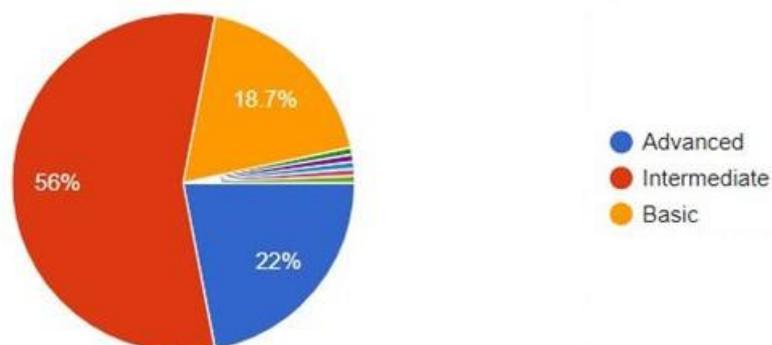


How proficient are CAT tool users?

More than half of the 150 respondents to the proficiency question claimed to have an intermediate level of proficiency in their main tool, with the rest fairly evenly divided between advanced and basic levels, a similar result to 2016.

Rate your level of proficiency with your main CAT tool.

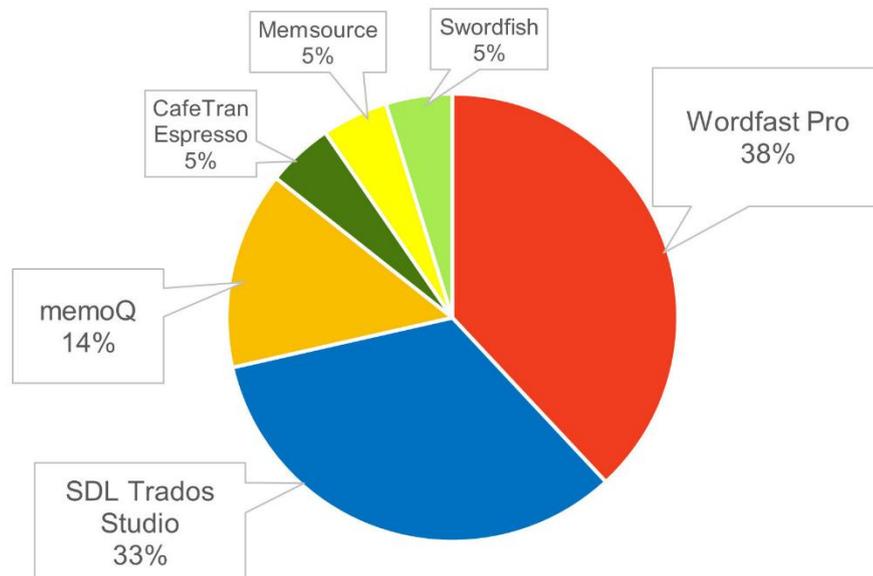
150 responses



Operating systems and CAT tools

Windows was used by 83% of respondents, Mac by 16% and Linux by 0.6% (just one person). Of Mac users, just over half (53%) reported that their main tool was one that could be used natively (Wordfast Pro, CafeTran, Memsourse or Swordfish) and the rest (47%) resorted to a virtual Windows environment to use SDL Trados Studio or memoQ.

Mac users' main tools



Training

Just over a third of respondents (39%) had mastered their CAT tool(s) without any formal training, while 31% had received training from a CAT tool provider and 30% from another source. In 2016 the majority (53%) had had no formal training, with roughly one-fifth having received training from a CAT tool provider and one-fifth from another source.

When asked which CAT tool they would like to receive training in, the respondents of the 2020 survey overwhelmingly mentioned SDL Trados Studio (45), followed by memoQ (16), Wordfast Pro (9), Déjà Vu (2), Memsourse (2), OmegaT (1) and CafeTran (1). The most sought-after topics by frequency of mention were:

- Advanced features of Trados
- Advanced features of memoQ
- New features in CAT tools
- Translation memory and termbase management
- Productivity improvement
- Regular expressions
- CAT tool tips and tricks
- Workflow optimization
- Advanced features of Wordfast Pro
- Studio Live
- Feature comparison of different CAT tools
- Translation memory and termbase exchange between tools

A noticeable difference with the 2016 survey results was a decreased demand for basic training and an increased demand for training in new or advanced functions of the tools.

Further comments by respondents

Several respondents remarked that their main CAT tool wasn't their chosen tool but the one their clients required them to use. Trados Studio, Memsource and Across were mentioned in this respect, with the respondents in question expressing a strong dislike of these tools. memoQ on the other hand was blamed for "pull[ing] the wool over your eyes" about cost.

With regard to training, one respondent expressed a clear preference for a workshop format with a small group rather than a webinar, while another requested hands-on training including live troubleshooting. Someone else said they could do without further CAT tool training because all tools offer the same features, but would be interested in another course on PerfectIt or Sketch Engine. Another respondent asked for a session showcasing minority tools rather than the big players.

There were several mentions of highly successful one-on-one training by colleagues, and one respondent described a buddy system where the more experienced user of the software helped a beginner colleague with early problem solving and specific questions.

Conclusions

The main conclusions we can draw from these findings is that CAT tool use among MET members has increased in the five years since the previous survey. Use of multiple tools by the same person also appears more frequent. Not using a CAT tool, on the other hand, seems to have become a deliberate choice rather than reluctance to face the learning curve. Several changes have occurred in the CAT tool landscape: SDL Trados Studio is taking up an even greater share of the market, memoQ is on the rise, Wordfast use is diminishing and Déjà Vu seems on its way out. Among the minor players, some have disappeared altogether and others have taken their place; these remain marginal though worth looking into according to several respondents. Training demand has shifted from basic, getting-started instruction towards new and advanced features of the tools, tips and tricks, memory and termbase management, productivity and workflow.

Many thanks to everyone who took part in the survey; MET will take all responses and suggestions into account when developing future CPD initiatives on the subject of CAT tools and related topics. Finally, a special thank you to those who came forward as potential trainers for various tools.