**INTERVIEW ASTRID**

*Kim*: Okay. Well, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for participating because I know that your time is valuable. And it just is. Yeah. I really appreciate that you are willing to participate.

*Astrid*: You’re welcome.

*Kim*: Do you maybe have any questions beforehand?

*Astrid*: Oh, no. I've read the information sheet. So, it should be clear.

*Kim*: Alright, alright, that’s nice. Oh, yeah. I also wanted to say that I will sometimes look down, but I am still listening, of course.

*Astrid*: No problem.

*Kim*: I would like to start by asking you how you got into the Parliament, how you started working here?

*Astrid*: Well, when I moved to Luxembourg that was because my husband started working as a translator for the Commission, and since I didn't have any work when we moved here, it was the perfect time to join the competition for Dutch translators. So that's how it all got started. Before, I was active in education, I did different jobs in education, in Flanders.

*Kim*: Alright, that sounds interesting. And could you maybe also describe, because you worked at the European Parliament for a couple of years...

*Astrid*: nine years, yeah.

*Kim*: That’s very nice, how does the European Parliament apply technology in their translation process?

*Astrid*: Technology in general, or more specific machine translation?

*Kim*: In general

*Astrid:*Well, when I first started, a lot of processes were still on paper, and that has been gradually changing over the years. So, in these nine years there's almost no paper left. Almost everything is digitally, right now. So that's a big change. And also, the CAT-tools we are using are continually developing and getting new features and new databases and new possibilities to look up information, to compare information, to check information. So, yeah, there are continually new features that we can use. Also, lots of testing groups where you can participate in testing new developments that I also sometimes participate in. So, yeah.

*Kim*: Alright, and you mentioned in the questionnaire that you also work with machine translation for a couple of years. Was it immediately when you started working here?

*Astrid*: No, only from the moment when it was integrated in our CAT-tool, in Trados Studio, and then I started using it more regularly. Before, I didn’t really see the need. Also, because in those periods the work pressure was quite manageable. Last year, I’ve intensively used machine translation. And that’s completely due to the high workload of the past year. And already, since the last couple of weeks, I notice that I use it less. So, it really is for me a tool that is most useful to save time, to save typing.

*Kim*: Alright, so it really takes less time to post-edit than to translate from scratch?

*Astrid*: Yeah.

*Kim*: Alright, and what do you usually think of the output of the machine translation?

*Astrid*: I’m usually surprised by the quality. So, the eTranslation that is developed by the Commission is quite good, what we get. Not in every text, but when I'm translating, for instance, in certain weeks we do resolutions with a very short deadline on Wednesday evenings, and machine translation is a dream for these types of texts, because it has been fed with lots of similar documents. It is always about human rights, so also the topic is already known to the machine, I think. So that's really welcome, you can really race through the segments at a moment like that. In some other texts, for instance, the European Parliament has a, how do you call it, a collection of contemporary art objects. Sometimes they publish brochures with the description of art, and then it’s completely rubbish what you get from the machine translation. You can’t do anything with it. No, nothing is useful.

*Kim*: Alright, so what would you say are some specific aspects of a text that will make it more suitable for machine translation use?

*Astrid:* Predictable formulations, like the resolutions I'm talking about, the structure is really predictable, the kinds of verbs that are used it's really EU-jargon. So, the machine can guess really easily what we want as an output. And yeah, for art descriptions it’s, you know how artists can talk about their object of art, it has a philosophical layer and then another layer and so the machine is lost at that moment. When different interpretations are possible, then you have to be very careful.

*Kim*: Alright, alright. And could you maybe explain a little bit about your own translation process when using machine translation or in general?

*Astrid*: So, in Studio it's possible to add in your settings that it appears immediately in the segments you’re translating. I have not checked that option, because I don’t like when it’s already present in my, in the field where I want to put my translation. So, when I use it, I copy it from the matches that are offered in Studio. So, that’s already a small threshold or a moment for thinking, do I want to use it or am I just going to start typing myself, so I like that aspect. Already a moment to think is it really necessary to use it. And then when I do use it, then I go through it really thoroughly. So, word by word and check with the original that every word is represented and very careful about verb tenses and plural/singular, if everything is, yeah, the concordance between two grammatical structures is correct, because that’s usually a problem. And the consistency of terminology, because the machine sometimes changes words, refer to an earlier segment, suddenly it chooses a new possible synonym. So that's also something that I’m really careful about.

*Kim*: Alright, I can imagine that those are some of the things that are good to look at. And does it also change for which language combination you translate?

*Astrid*: Yes. Although I also translate from French, Italian and Polish. For French I don’t really use it. For Italian, it’s really good. So, I really appreciate it for Italian. And for Polish, it depends. I usually use it as a first basis, but in the end, there are quite a few changes afterwards. So, I’m not 100% content, not compared to the English-Dutch language pair, that is really satisfactory for me. But, so, English and Italian work really good and for French and Polish I do it less, I don’t know why for French, but...

*Kim*: Alright. And what, what are the main difficulties about machine translation, you talked about it a little bit already…

*Astrid*: Like, the things that can go wrong?

*Kim*: Yeah.

*Astrid*: Well yeah, the grammar you have to be really careful, and the consistency, those are the main aspects. And also very literal translation, sometimes. Also word order, that doesn't really sound natural for Dutch, it would be better to change it afterwards. I always read my texts monolingually, in the end. So, without the original and then I check if one sentence connects in a good way to the next sentence and everything. So, that is something that I do with all the texts I translate. So, not specifically only with machine translation.

*Kim*: Alright. Oh, yes, that’s another question. What do you generally think of the final result after post editing, the machine tradition outcome?

*Astrid:* After post-editing? So, what do I think about my own work?

*Kim*: I guess, yes. Or other, I don’t know if you have to review some texts as well?

*Astrid*: Yeah, I think if people are aware of all the possible things that can go wrong, it's usually a good result after post-editing, so there's no problem there.

*Kim*: That's nice. And do you also feel like machine translation holds you back in any way? Because I think in your questionnaire, you said that it can also kind of start your creativity.

*Astrid*: Yeah, sometimes it triggers creativity, because you see nice solutions in what the machine offers. But also, the other way around, sometimes it is also better to start from a blank page and not have any input. But the last thing that I'm describing, it requires time, so when there's no time then the inspiration is usually offered by what the machine presents. And then you, that triggers extra thinking and then other solutions, or you think that synonym could also be useful. So, I think it's both ways. I think that even in the busy times, there has never been a text where I used it from A to Z, it is always a mix. In some, in the first segment I start from the machine translation, but the next one, I start from scratch. It's, it's always, organically I decide which one to choose.

*Kim*: Ah, okay. That's an interesting, yeah interesting way to do it. And, about clear language guidelines, I think you said in the questionnaire that you use them basically all the time. Can you explain a bit about how you apply them, and what these guidelines are for you?

*Astrid*: For me it means that the message should be clear without any confusion about what the text wants to confer. So, even in complicated legislation, I try to eliminate elements in a sentence that makes things more confusing or more complex than it should be. So, eliminating redundant things, so words and then I try to use words that are familiar for most people, sentences that are not too long. I very often decide to split sentences, for instance, things like that.

*Kim*: And is it sometimes also a bit hard to know whether some words are generally known? Because you've been working here for a while, and you start to be more familiar with some terms.

*Astrid*: Well, my background comes in handy, I told you that I worked in education, and specifically I worked with adults with very low education levels, so primary school and a maximum of two years of secondary school, so really low skilled adults. So, that made me very aware of what adults, functioning in society sometimes miss to really participate fully. Because that was exactly what I was doing, trying to fill in the gaps for them to fully participate in society. So, I think that is always in my mind. I have several specific persons therefore in my head, so if I would explain it to this or to that person, how would they understand it. So, that helps a lot.

*Kim*: I can imagine that it helps. And in what way do you think that machine translation affects the way in which you apply clear language guidelines? Maybe it's a bit different because you don't always use machine translation?

*Astrid*: I don’t think machine translation has any specific link with me using clear language guidelines. I don't think machine translation is per se, more difficult or more complex than it should be, because sometimes what it offers is also very clear and structured and easy to understand. So, I don't think there's a clear link between the two.

*Kim*: Alright, I think those were actually all the questions I had. Do you have anything you would like to add?

*Astrid*: No, I can't think of anything now, no.

*Kim*: Alright, well thank you very much.

*Astrid*: You're welcome.