

Could a free CAT tool like MateCat really be of use to translators? Naomi Sutcliffe de Moraes, chair of ATA's Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee, interviews Fernando Furlani, a translator of 28 years, to find out.

TOOL NAME, VERSION: MATECAT 0.6.6 (FEBRUARY 18, 2016)
www.matecat.com

Company:

MateCat is the result of a three-year research project led by a consortium composed of the international research center Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Translated srl, the Université du Maine (France), and the University of Edinburgh.

Cost:

Free. The MateCat website says: "It is and will always be free for all users: enterprises, translation agencies, freelancers, universities, etc. Unlimited users, projects, and storage."

Category (Translation Environment Tool (TEnT), word counter, etc.):
 TEnT

Platform (online or download to computer):

Online interface only

Reviewed by:

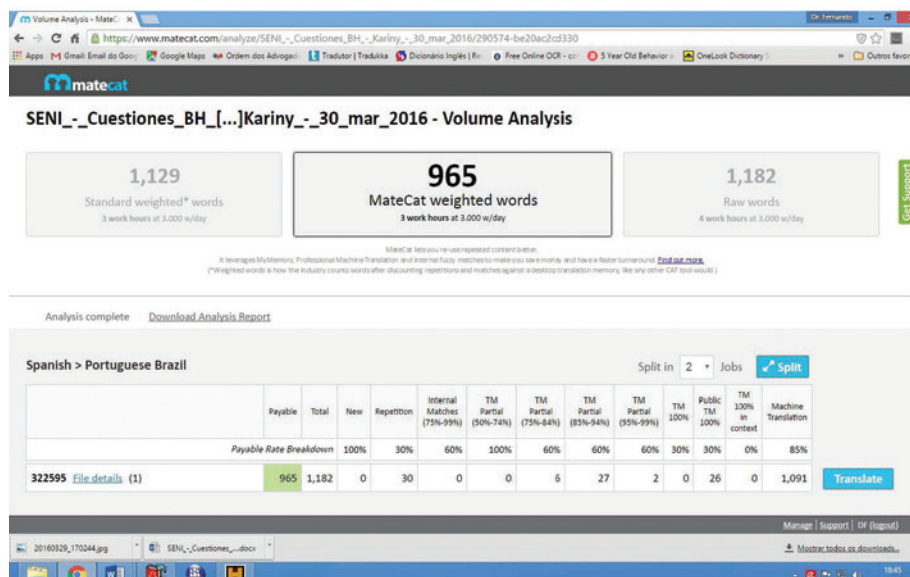
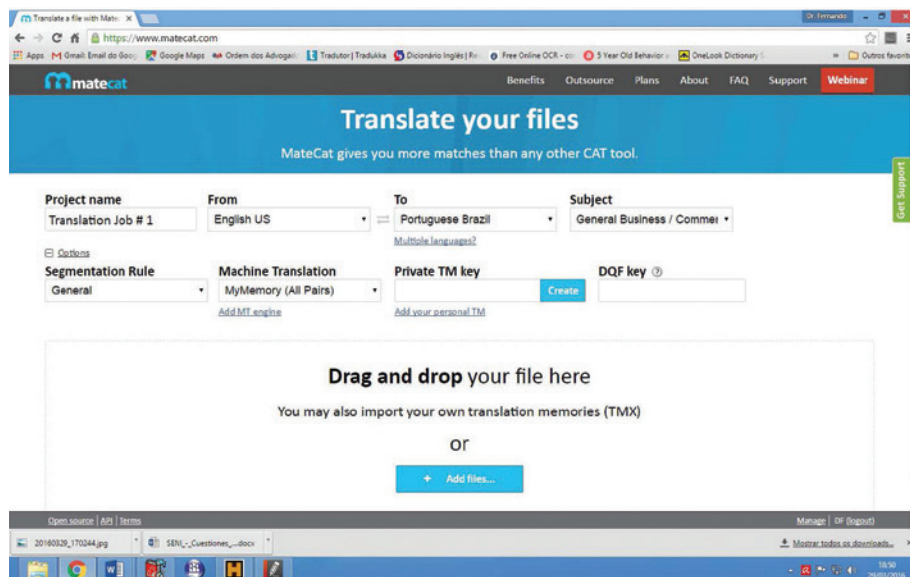
Fernando Furlani

Ease of Use

Was the tool easy to use right from the start, or was there a steep learning curve?

MateCat was very easy to use from the beginning. I had just a few questions on the first day, which were clarified quickly online by the support team. Questions were answered, on average, 15 minutes after posting. Depending on the time zone, answers can take up to eight hours. I was really surprised by the fast, high-quality support service.

Had you ever used this type of tool before (thus making the learning curve easier)?



(Image top to bottom) MateCat starting page; MateCat job analysis

Yes. I had used SDL Trados 2007 before, but, in my opinion, SDL Trados 2007 was an outdated and complicated application. MateCat was a great surprise in the sense that it's easy to use and intuitive.

Now that you're using MateCat and are familiar with it, is it easy to find what you are looking for in the interface or help files?

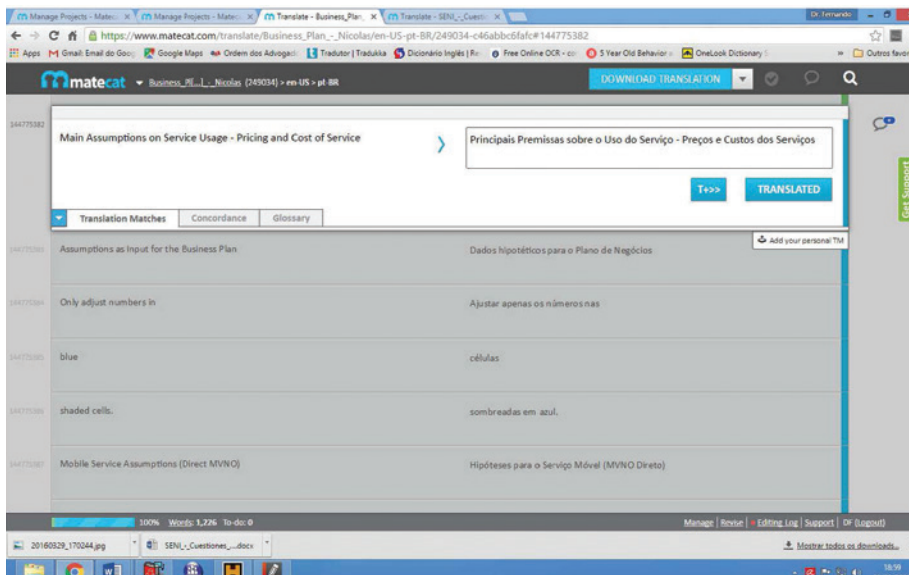
Yes, it is, since everything in MateCat is done through its online interface. There's a tab called "Support" on the website, and then a bunch of Help Topics are displayed on the screen, right below a blank field

for users to type a keyword to search for a related article.

Training

Is training available? At what cost? Is it useful, or unnecessary because the tool is so intuitive?

I'm not aware of any training available besides what's provided on MateCat's website. In my opinion, getting started with MateCat is so intuitive that additional training would be unnecessary. On my first day using this tool, I managed to finish a real translation job earlier than



MateCate translating page

expected. After that, I took my time to read up on a few topics in the “Support” and “FAQ” sections to become more familiar with MateCat’s features and to learn how to use the program better. At most, this took 60 minutes. Other questions were clarified easily by clicking on the “Get Support” tab that is available at all times through the online interface while users work. As mentioned previously, support questions are usually answered within a few minutes. When the time zone is unfavorable, answers come via e-mail a few hours later.

Features

What are MateCat’s best features? What do you love about it, compared to not using the tool, or compared with using some other tool you have used for the same task?

For me, MateCat’s best feature is the fact that it’s online, requiring no installation or license, since it’s free (and “it always will be,” as stated on its website). In addition, my translation memories are always saved and ready in the cloud.

Translators usually need to finish their jobs punctually, no matter where they are on the planet and no matter what happens. Even high-end computers eventually fail, and even the best technical support takes a while to fix them. If I have a translation job to finish and my computer suddenly breaks, with MateCat I just turn on another computer, whether new or used, mine or

If I have a translation job to finish and my computer suddenly breaks, with MateCat I just turn on another computer, whether new or used, mine or borrowed from someone else, to finish the job.

borrowed from someone else, to finish the job, without having to install any software or uninstall a license from my broken computer. If I’m away from home and my computer breaks, I don’t worry because I know that I can just buy another computer or even go to an Internet cafe and finish my job, as my translation memories and my job will be there in the cloud! So, all you need to work with MateCat is a computer connected to the Internet—no need to install software, memories, or anything else.

In other words, before MateCat, I was worried before finishing a job because I was very dependent on my three computers that were “super-prepared” with my CAT tools and licenses. Computers can break, be stolen, freeze, etc., but now that I use MateCat I know I’ll be able to finish my job without any pre-installed software.

What are MateCat’s worst features (or missing features)? What leaves you most frustrated?

MateCat doesn’t allow you to “join” or “split” segments. I don’t like this, but I have accepted it because the advantages of this tool outweigh the problem. Another drawback is that you can’t work offline. If you lose your Internet connection temporarily, you can translate up to 30 segments and MateCat will synchronize the segments when the connection is reestablished.

Does MateCat have integrated machine translation?

Yes. MateCat recommends selecting “MyMemory” when creating a project. It uses a combination of Google Translate and Microsoft Translator to provide machine translation suggestions. You can also disable machine translation by selecting “None” from the drop-down menu. In addition, you can connect machine translation engines provided by Microsoft Translator Hub, IPTranslator, Tilde MT, or DeepLingo, or your own Moses engines directly to MateCat.

Can you consult the translation memory (TM) and terminology database (TB) when not using MateCat to translate (for example, when you’re translating a document received on paper)?

As far as I know, I believe that you cannot consult your TM or TB through the online interface. However, you can import and export translation memories. MateCat does allow you to store your private TMs and assign them to your projects when creating a new project or during translation. After creating a new TM you can import TMX files into MateCat so you can re-use your previously translated content. You can also export TMs in TMX format for all your active and inactive TMs once you finish translating or during the translation process itself.

How does MateCat maintain the formatting in the original document? Does it use tags or something else? How easy are they to deal with?

MateCat uses tags to keep the same layout and formatting of the source files. MateCat is great at maintaining the same appearance of the original document. Throughout 2015, I had many problems with “tag

mismatches” that I believe were caused by a software bug, but since January 2016 this bug seems to have been fixed. A tag mismatch could still appear, so I highly recommend that users read the special section called “Understanding and fixing tag errors and tag issues in MateCat” on the “Support” tab of the online interface.

Would it be easy to work with a partner on a large translation with this tool?

Have you tried it?

Yes, I’ve tried it once, and it worked perfectly and was very easy. MateCat provides an easy-to-use split functionality to split large translation jobs among several translators. It also lets you work simultaneously using the same translation memories and glossaries, and even allows users to comment on any issues related to the translation right within the tool itself.

MateCat provides an easy-to-use split functionality to split large translation jobs among several translators.

Before starting a translating job, MateCat asks if you would like to split the job and into how many parts. Then MateCat checks the text and divides it into the number of words indicated, avoiding overlaps between segments. Next, you see a detailed analysis of the split jobs and a “Translate” button for each part. You just need to send each translator the “Job URL” (created by MateCat) for the part on which they will be working.

When clicking on their link, translators will see only the part of the document assigned to them as editable. They can also see the rest of the file, but they will not be able to edit it. They will see the rest of the document being translated in real time and can refer to the other parts for comparison, as well as leave comments for the other translators.

They will also share a private TM, if previously associated, where all translations will be stored. This means that each translator will also receive matches for segments already translated by the other

MateCat uses tags to keep the same layout and formatting of the source files. MateCat is great at maintaining the same appearance of the original document.

translators within the same project. They will also get matches from the public TM.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I just can’t believe that so many translators I know don’t use MateCat. I presume that this is due to the fact they are used to their tools and don’t want to leave their comfort zones. Some professionals are also concerned with privacy issues, as MateCat is also owned by an Italian translation services company. Moreover, I believe that some may think “A free CAT tool can’t possibly work even better than the costly CAT tool I have been using and paying for all this time.”

I had to use SDL Trados from 2000 to 2007 because clients required it. I was so badly traumatized by that unfriendly, complicated software that I almost gave up on using CAT tools altogether. I admit that I tried MateCat for the first time in early 2015 because I enjoy trying new things, and I’m now a satisfied user of MateCat. ○



Fernando Furlani has been translating English and Spanish into Brazilian Portuguese for 28 years. He is also an attorney-at-law in Brazil. He provides legal and business translations.

Contact: furlani.tradutor@gmail.com.



Naomi Sutcliffe de Moraes has a PhD in linguistics (University of São Paulo), a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and a master’s degree in physics (University of California, Los Angeles), and a bachelor’s degree in law (University of London). She translates both Portuguese and Italian into English. She is currently a visiting professor at the Federal University of the ABC Region, Santo André, Brazil. She is chair of ATA’s Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee.

Contact: naomi.linguist@gmail.com.

**GET AN EDGE.
GET A DEGREE.
100% ONLINE.**

MASTERS IN SPANISH TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING AND GRADUATE CERTIFICATES IN

- Audiovisual Translation and Localization
- Court Interpreting
- Literary Translation
- Translation and Interpreting

Hone your practical and theoretical translation skills, cultural-mediation competence and professional interpreting capabilities.

Earn a degree by the prestigious University of Texas System.

- Flexible biweekly modules
- 5-course certificates — one or two years
- 12-course master’s — two or more years (*builds on certificates*)
- Extensive know-how in online delivery

Fall Semester

- English-Spanish Translation
- Translation Technologies
- Topics in Translation
- Audiovisual Translation

Spring Semester

- Spanish-English Translation
- Translation Theory
- Translation of Legal Texts
- Literary Translation
- Court Interpreting
- Translation Projects

Summer Session

- Business and Finance Translation
- Intro to Spanish-English Translation
- Medical Interpreting and Terminology
- Consecutive Interpreting (and/or)
- Simultaneous Interpreting

www.utcoursesonline.org/programs/graduate.html
(956) 882-8215 | tio@utrgv.edu



The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley
BROWNSVILLE | HARLINGEN | EDINBURG