

Section Translation

Test Server Feedback

Section Translation provides translation support for individual article sections and is optimized for mobile web. Still in development, a basic workflow became available on a test server in late 2020. In anticipation of 2021 deployment in real wikis, we reached out to a small group of experienced Content Translation users for feedback.

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Translation is important for helping to close content gaps that exist across different language versions of Wikipedia

[Content Translation \(CX\)](#) has been used to create more than 800k Wikipedia articles.¹ The tool allows editors to focus on the quality of their translations by automating many steps of the article creation process (such as adding images and citations). For many languages, it also accelerates the translation process by offering machine translations that the editor simply needs to review and edit instead of starting from scratch.

[Section Translation \(SX\)](#) expands upon CX by allowing editors to translate and publish individual article sections and supporting editors using mobile devices.

Gathering early feedback

In anticipation of Section Translation being deployed on real wikis in early 2021, this lightweight effort focused on quickly gathering some initial feedback from existing Content Translation users while the product was still on a [test server](#). By capturing feedback as early on as possible, editors' experiences

will guide subsequent development efforts. We aimed to address two main questions at this early stage:

- (1) What if any usability problems exist for Section Translation, and which should be prioritized for upcoming development efforts?
- (2) What type of feedback are early adopters providing, and how can we use these learnings to plan subsequent development efforts?

Test server environment

We began reaching out to current Content Translation users after a basic Section Translation workflow was available on a [test server](#). This meant that not every expected functionality of the product was available, but editors could initiate a translation and go through the basic steps of translating an article section and publishing it. Again, due to the test server environment, while testers were interacting with real wiki content, their work was not published into a real wiki, and they were instructed to copy/paste the article section if they wished to publish it.

Another main limitation of the test server environment was that only Apertium machine translation was available. This meant that machine translation options were quite limited and only certain language pairs were supported. Once deployed to wikis,

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:ContentTranslationStats>

this limitation will vanish, but due to this limitation until deployment into a real wiki, for current feedback purposes, we only invited editors who were known to actively work with the language pairs supported well by Apertium. This decision was motivated by machine translation playing an important part of the Section Translation experience.

Feedback process

After the Language Team generated a short list of around 12 potential testers, we invited these existing Wikipedia editors to try SX through talk page invites or email messages. This list included known Content Translation users who would be likely to be interested and provide useful feedback (and not mind certain hassles, such as additional logins, required by the test server environment). We generated links to help participants easily find potential articles for which they could translate sections for existing articles. After trying SX, editors were invited to complete a short survey and/or provide feedback by email or via the SX talk page.

Summary of editor feedback

We received feedback from a total of nine testers. Four provided feedback through survey responses, three provided feedback by

email, and one provided feedback in both ways. This last editor also showed eagerness to use Section Translation through a series of questions about functionality availability on the SX talk page.

Test user demographics and editing experience

Most participants reported Spanish Wikipedia as their primary wiki; other participants included French and Catalan contributors. As for total time as a Wikipedia contributor, participants ranged from 'one to three years' to 'four to seven years' to 'eight plus years'. Total time as a contributor was unknown for three respondents. The frequency with which participants regularly use existing Content Translation also varied; frequency ranged from as often as 'weekly' to 'monthly' and as infrequently as 'a few times per year'.

Ease of use - selecting sections & creating translations

Participants were asked to rate two aspects of SX ease of use. First, how easy it was to select an article section to translate; secondly, how easy it was to write the section by reviewing and editing the machine translation. Participants selected from five response options, ranging from 'very easy' to 'very difficult'.

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All participants who rated the ease of selecting a section to translate provided a rating of either ‘very easy’, with the exception of one who responded ‘neither easy nor difficult’. When asked how it could have been easier to select a section to translate, the participant noted some problems with the mappings between sections for different language versions.

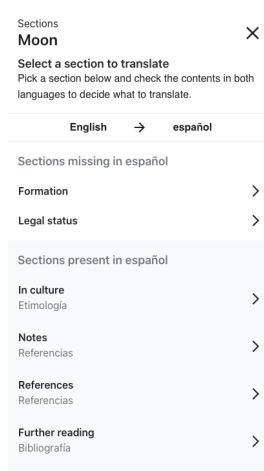


Fig 1. Selecting a section

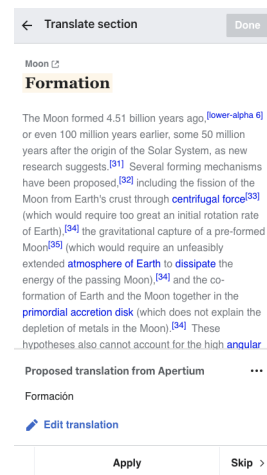


Fig 2. Starting to edit

As for ease of writing a section by reviewing and editing the machine translation, participants were more split between two answer variants. For this question, half answered ‘very easy’ and half answered ‘neither easy nor difficult’. This may be partly attributable to the fact that the process of selecting a section is

shorter (and therefore perceived easier) than writing an entire section, particularly if the section is long. Regardless of overall complexity, one participant did note some confusion at the first step of the editing process. Per the SX mobile workflow, an editor is prompted to review and edit a machine translation for the section title before then moving on to actual section contents (i.e., prose beyond the section title). This participant noted it was somewhat,

“unclear that the first item I had to confirm translation for was the title [...] I was tapping on my screen to select a paragraph to start the translation. I thought everything was blocked. I missed I had first to translate the title.”

This feedback is important for two reasons. First, this issue arose for this participant at the very beginning of the translation/editing process, when first impressions are still being formed. Secondly, this appears to be the same usability issue that arose in earlier prototype testing (see “The ‘I’m ready to start editing the section’ problem” described on slide 39 of [this report](#) for more details.) We should continue to closely monitor for this problem when SX is deployed, both through asynchronous

editor feedback on the talk page and upcoming testing via moderated research sessions.²

Following the two questions around ease of use, participants were also asked what they liked most about the way they were able to view and/or edit the machine translations. Responses focused on aspects of the interface design and general functionalities of being able to translate only a section of an article. More specifically, for interface design, one participant noted how many primary actions throughout the editing flow are located near the bottom of the screen.

“[What I liked most was] the fact that changing and confirming translations is done at the power part [lower portion] of the screen.”

— Section Translation Test Editor & Catalan Wikipedia Contributor

² Some design changes made based on previous testing remain pending for implementation, and progress can be tracked at [Phabricator ticket T271529](#).

Finally, other comments were less specific, but at least three participants described the overall experience and idea of Section Translation as positive.

Device use patterns

Because this initial lightweight feedback was collected from existing Content Translation users, it doesn't come as a surprise that many of these editors might be described as heavy desktop/laptop users, relying less on mobile devices for editing Wikipedia.

Indeed, this was confirmed when participants responded how they felt about using SX again in the future. While generally user estimations of future use should be approached cautiously, it's relevant to note that a few responded that they would use Section Translation again, but on their laptop/desktop device. In the words of one participant, “I find editing on my phone a bit uncomfortable [...] I'd rather edit on a computer.” When SX is deployed, it will be critical that design research recruit for editors who primarily contribute with mobile devices.

Editor-requested features

Finally, after participants had the opportunity to use SX for the first time, we wanted to know what features they felt were missing or would select to add. Participants were asked, “If you could select one missing feature, what’s the most important for improving your experience while translating article sections?” We received three specific requests which included features that help editors understand translation progress and problems, voice-to-text features, and the ability to flag potential articles for translation.

For the first of these, the participant noted that ‘translation notices’ would be useful, including examples such as “template unavailable”, “automatic translation failed”, “missing reference”, “incomplete references,” and “your translation contains xx% of unmodified text”.³ Especially for existing CX users, this highlights how existing CX users will expect SX to have at least all the existing functionality found with CX. It also shows sensitivity to the machine translation limits/alert system, highlighting the opportunity for this interaction to be well-supported and helpful in SX.

The second request around voice features specifically noted that voice transcription would be particularly useful for, “when the machine translation isn’t good enough.” This highlights how, when extensive machine translation modifications are required (or the editor even needs to start from scratch), typing lengthy passages of text on a mobile device may be a pain point. Given that machine translation quality varies by language, and for language pairs, this pain point will vary in severity across different wikis.

Finally, the third feature request was for the, “capacity to add missing links on Section Translation to encourage the creation of articles.” Again, depending on the particular wiki and its size (measured in articles), this may be more/less relevant. For smaller wikis, it is quite common for translators to encounter links to articles that don’t yet exist in the target wiki. A feature such as the one suggested could provide a valuable way for editors to flag articles needing translation. And, because in some cases linked articles represent similar topics, could represent likely areas for an editor to move to editing next.

³ Especially for the last of these requests around machine translation modification, there are two efforts in progress for this work. It can be viewed at Phabricator ticket [T259511](#) and [T260128](#).

“[One missing feature SX needs is] the capacity of adding missing links to encourage the creation of articles.”

— Section Translation Test Editor & French Wikipedia Contributor

Next steps

Summary of main takeaways from early feedback

This very brief and lightweight feedback cycle was intended to collect initial feedback and reactions as soon as a basic Section Translation workflow was available on a test server. The main takeaways may be summarized as follows:

1. **Overall positive responses**

Existing Content Translation users and editors with a range of experience have no serious reservations about Section Translation. Overall reactions to the mobile SX experience were quite positive, and test users specifically highlighted aspects of the interface design they liked.

2. **Section Mappings**

It will be important to continue testing the existing section mapping mechanisms and monitoring to ensure section mapping problems do not create serious issues or block adoption. Future efforts on this topic can be monitored via [Phabricator ticket T270485](#).

3. **Accommodating Multiple Device Types**

Section Translation will open the door for mobile editors to receive translation support, but the functionality it introduces for translating article sections is also wanted by editors who primarily use laptops/desktops. After initial release, the team might consider prioritizing a minimal effort needed for better accommodating non-mobile users. This would also allow editors who use both device types to more easily switch between devices.

4. **Matching the Workflow with Editor Expectations**

There may still exist opportunities to better align the workflow with editor expectations. For example, the existing workflow prompts users to edit the section title before moving to the first paragraph. Many users expect to immediately begin editing section paragraphs.

Subsequent testing will help clarify how widespread this issue is.

Implications for deployment and design research

Development of SX has continued throughout the time that this initial feedback was collected. Current estimates (acknowledging certain development, security review, and community relations dependencies) are for SX to be deployed to the first wiki in late January. At this time SX will have greater functionality and allow editors to not only edit real wiki content, but directly publish it to their real wiki. As such, moderated user testing sessions should be planned to coincide with this deployment of SX. Recruitment should specifically focus on editors who rely heavily or exclusively on mobile devices for editing if possible.