Escriba, an adaptive web CAT tool

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Since the early days of the software industry, different methods have been employed to assist the user in the process of learning a new software tool. From heavy hard copies of user manuals to digital pets in the shape of a clip, those techniques share a common and well defined goal: increase the learnability characteristics of the system. UI hints, to-do lists, walkthroughs and other methods used to instruct the user usually show up when the user first encounter a new feature and disappear reactively based on the user action. This approach has some challenges associated with it that make users to tend to skip those methods and forget quickly the lessons learned even more when they do not use the system frequently. These challenges can only be solve by devising new approaches that can make easier the process of learning how to use a new system or feature.

This dissertation is an attempt to provide evidences that adaptivity and personalization can be one those new approaches. Escriba, an adaptive web based computer-aided translation tool (CAT), was built to evaluate adaptive user interfaces (AUIs) as a mechanism to increase the learnability of a system when it is presented for first time to the users.

A experiment with two groups of volunteers using two version of Escriba was carried out aiming to provide insights on the impact of AUIs on the learning process faced by first time users of a CAT tool. Participants showed a positive opinion on the easiness of performing translation tasks using the adaptive version of the tool and the learning process experienced whereas the usability score achieved by this version suggests that integrating adaptivity could lead to a reduction of the usability characteristics of a system. The conclusion was that AUIs can increase learnability but further investigation is needed to prove the evidences found during the study.