The Interpreter’s Toolkit: Intragloss - a useful glossary-building tool for interpreters

Intragloss particularly excels for its glossary-building tools, which make preparing for a conference fast and easy. In document annotation feature is innovative, but somewhat buggy.

By Josh Goldsmith
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Intragloss is one of the most expensive pieces of interpreting software I use; at $49 per month, $99 for three months or $269 per year, an Intragloss subscription is rather pricey. But I’ve found that “Intragloss is a professional glossary-maker that gives you everything you need to prepare for assignments.” While I find this claim to be slightly hyperbolic – I’ll discuss some shortcomings over the course of this article – Intragloss is indeed a robust, time-saving tool.

Intragloss is one of the best tools I’ve discovered for preparing for a conference. It’s a software program for creating bilingual and multilingual glossaries. Although it is expensive, I find that “Intragloss is a professional glossary-maker that gives you everything you need to prepare for assignments.” This is certainly true for me, as I save a ton of time using this program.

Intragloss is organized hierarchically, into domains and assignments. Domains generally reflect specializations, and assignments usually represent a single interpreting job. For example, the user’s manual, “Cell Phones,” “Cars,” and “Psychology” are domains, while “Paris Expo 2015” and “Madrid Expo 2015” are examples of individual assignments.

Every Intragloss assignment is by default bilingual, and includes a bilingual assignment glossary. Each assignment glossary has at least two columns, for the source and target language terms. You can customize your assignment glossary to include columns with acronyms and remarks in both the source and target languages.

Intragloss offers a suite of tools for reading and comparing documents, identifying terms, searching for equivalents online, and creating term lists and multilingual glossaries. Innovative features allow you to quickly generate assignment glossaries from preparation materials and automatically annotate a document with translations of terms from your glossary.

Once you find a good translation, highlight it, click “Translation,” and the translation is automatically added to your bilingual glossary.

Intragloss also offers search features to quickly pull up terms while in the booth, but these tools are in comparison to other glossary management programs, like Termium and Linguee.

Nevertheless, Intragloss is a versatile, easy-to-use program that significantly decreases my preparation time. Despite a few minor bugs, it’s my go-to tool whenever preparing for a novel interpreting assignment.

Intragloss is available for Mac computers, a Windows version is in the works. Intragloss supports over 180 languages and is Unicode-compatible, which means it can handle characters, special characters, and non-SIICHI languages like Russian and Hebrew. The software includes a user’s guide and fast customer support via email.

Intragloss is one of the most comprehensive programs for interpreting, software-wise. For example, Intragloss supports over 180 languages, and is Unicode-compatible, which means it can handle characters, special characters, and non-ASCII languages like Russian and Hebrew. The software includes a user’s manual and fast customer support via email.

Intragloss also offers an online search function. You can search for a term in your glossary and Intragloss will find all the related terms. This is particularly useful if you’re preparing for a conference and need to find terms quickly.

Building glossaries using the online search function

Building glossaries with Intragloss is quick and easy. Create a new assignment (and a new domain if needed) open any related documents or websites in that assignment, and start tagging through your documents and fleshing out your glossary.

Intragloss offers two different tools for building glossaries: online terminology search and terminology extraction from parallel documents.

The online search feature, shown above, demonstrates the online terminology search function worked.

I’ve also found that Intragloss creates duplicate entries in the domain glossary when the same source language term appears in two assignments. For example, if I input “attachment” in the English/French “Paris Expo 2015” assignment and “attachment” in the English/Spanish “Madrid Expo 2015” assignment, instead of merging them into a single (English-only) domain glossary, Intragloss creates two separate bilingual entries in the domain glossary. If you work with multilingual assignments often, like I do (I will probably get my own nerves), my workaround is to create a bilingual glossary with parallel corpora tools like Linguee or Terminius.

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The nuts and bolts

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Finally, you can search an assignment glossary by order of appearance or synchronize your document(s) to see where the ... is handy for seeing a term in context, but the search feature is slow, and alignment in parallel documents is often off.

sometimes temporarily disappear. I would also appreciate the option to hide the “acronyms” and “remarks” columns while in tabular mode.

Tabular mode displays all the terms, acronyms and remarks in your glossary. You can also search all the entries, acronyms or remarks – although your search is limited to the language displayed on the screen (in this case, English). On ProZ, the source and target languages are not shared with the website, so you are translated via a variety of languages not relevant for your current project. If the way Intragloss handles multi-word terms, acronyms, and plural terms were improved, the program would save you even more time.

Comparing documents and building glossaries from parallel documents

Since I do a lot of work for international organizations, I often review sets of parallel documents in various languages.

With Intragloss, you can build a glossary from parallel documents in no time flat.

After you attach a translated file to a document you’ve imported, Intragloss displays the original and translated files side by side.

The process for setting up a glossary is described above. Highlight a given term and click “entry.” Then highlight the translation in the parallel document and click “translation,” and voila – you’ve created a glossary entry without extensive copying and pasting or jumping back and forth between programs.

Intragloss' online search feature makes it easy to scroll up and down in both documents simultaneously. This feature is useful when preparing glossaries and even more helpful when a speaker quotes from a text and you can pull up the original and translation side by side.

Creating a monolingual terminology list

If you’re reading through a document (or speech record), but don’t have much time available, you can use Intragloss to create a monolingual terminology list. Simply highlights terms, clicks “entry,” and your term is added to your monolingual vocabulary list. You can download and print out this list, which is useful if you want to look up terms later in a real-time or discuss them with colleagues.

You can also use the “merge” feature to create documents where these terms are highlighted, providing context if you’d like to ask a colleague or the speaker about difficult terms.

Comparing documents is probably my favorite part of Intragloss, and the feature I use most frequently. It works nearly flawlessly, although I have occasionally found a slight glitch in the scrolling feature. Of course, comparing documents is even better with more screen real estate, so I especially love using this feature to prepare on my desktop at home. But since I can easily switch to the booth if I need a godsend.

Intragloss offers handy keyboard shortcuts, making the process of searching for a term and adding entries, translations, acronyms and remarks even faster. It is also cleverly programmed to eliminate unnecessary punctuation when you enter a term (although it would be even better if it could remove articles, e.g. “the” in French, and it’s occasionally removes spaces between words).

Intragloss’ “en-bloc” mode makes it easier to see similar terms in parallel documents.

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Intragloss also allows you to import pre-existing glossaries. Since these are imported as domain glossaries, you can import multilingual lists, too.

Intragloss can import Word (.doc) files, although these are preferred. Excel (.xls) and tab (.txt) files. Column headers can be language names, two-letter ISO 639-1 language codes, acronyms (e.g. “English Acronym”) or remarks (e.g. “English Remark”).

I tested out the import feature, using a 50,000-word and a 80,000-word glossary I had created for previous assignments. Intragloss imported the 50,000-glossary in 26 seconds and the 80,000-glossary in 52 seconds, for an average import speed of 857 seconds / term in both cases. Regardless of whether I labeled column headers using language names or ISO codes, Intragloss currently only imports those column headers.

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Although synchronized search might sound useful at times, I generally find that Intragloss’ search features aren’t up to scratch. Intragloss doesn’t ignore diacritics when searching, slowing you down since you have to type out every term carefully. Columns cannot be reordered, and you can’t easily search across multiple documents at once. Intragloss’ strengths are its ability to create annotated PDFs for sight translation or simultaneous interpreting, but after tests for searching through them while on assignment.

Quickly preparing an assignment glossary

Once you have imported one of your pre-existing glossaries, you can take advantage of two innovative features: quickly preparing an assignment glossary and merging translations of terms into documents you have received to create an annotated PDF for sight translation or simultaneous interpreting. By default, when you import one or more documents into Intragloss, the program automatically highlights all the terms that are already in your document and creates an assignment glossary including all of these terms and their translations. Click on a term to see it in context, scroll through and search the glossary, see a glossary for a single document, or create a new document from scratch.

Automatically extracting terms from a document to create a searchable assignment glossary

This feature is relatively fast. I tested it out with my 500- and 1000-term glossaries on a series of different real-world documents. Intragloss prepared these assignment glossaries in 16 and 29 seconds, respectively (about 0.03 seconds/term) — regardless of the length of the document! The automatic extraction is from 77 page background paper, Intragloss processed the document and created a 144-term assignment glossary from it in fewer than 15 seconds — impressive indeed!

Merging documents with glossaries to create simultaneous interpreting documents

Imagine being sent a speech that will be read out during a meeting, but with translations for all of the key terms provided. That’s what Intragloss’ merge feature aims to do: annotate a document to include the translations of every term in your glossary. Here’s a screenshot from the Intragloss demo video:

To put Intragloss through its paces, I took my 500- and 1000-word glossaries and tested out the merge feature with two speeches of varying length: a 73-page background paper and a 7-page speech. Intragloss took an average of 0.75 seconds per term (and 0.25 seconds per unique term) to merge these documents, which printed them between 8 and 108 seconds per margin document — about 16 – 29 seconds to import the document, and a lot of other essential clicking. All in all, Intragloss took anywhere between 90 and 180 seconds to spit out these annotated documents.

And it wasn’t particularly accurate, either. Although Intragloss identified hundreds of unique terms, it only came up with their translations 32% of the time. I think that the merge feature has great potential, but would encourage the developers to fine-tune the algorithm so this feature could work better. It would obviously be faster to run the speech through the program, but faster, more accurate processing would make the merge feature an incredible boon in the booth.

Conclusions

Intragloss sets its sights high, and is packed with tons of useful features. Given the breadth of these features, and the strong implementation of many of them, it comes as no surprise that professional and researchers alike consider Intragloss one of the leading glossary tools for interpreters (Drechsel 2016; Rütten 2015; Costa, Corpas and Durán 2014).

Personally, I think Intragloss’ strengths lie in its suite of features for reading and comparing documents, identifying terms, searching for translations online, and creating terms lists and multilingual glossaries. These work well, are well designed, and are definitely the feature I value most.

However, the glossary search features in Intragloss are weaker and buggier than those in other software on the market, and implementation is inconsistent for some of Intragloss’ most innovative features: the assignment glossary tool is killer, while the merge and annotate functions in the booth are inconsistent but too slow to use on a daily basis.

Despite these minor glitches, I strongly recommend Intragloss. It does what it claims to do: cut down preparation time significantly, and make it easier to prepare glossaries for an assignment. And what busy interpreter doesn’t want to prepare faster, smarter and better?

References


Josh Goldsmith is a UN- and EU-accredited interpreter and AIIC pre-candidate working from Spanish, French, Italian and Catalan into English. A lover of all things tech, he frequently shares his experience using technology for interpreting at conferences and courses, as well as on Twitter as @Goldsmith_Josh.

Recommended citation format: