

Introduction

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In my opening remarks at the start of the first session of 'Translating and the Computer 9', I said that the conference sub-title 'Potential and Practice' encapsulates the approach which has always been taken at these conferences. In the early days, there was a lot of potential but very little practice; now the pendulum has swung far enough for the balance to be about equal.

I also drew attention to the tide of the first session, 'Sharing Experience', which is a theme which has been apparent throughout the series; although applied specifically to that first session it was equally relevant to all the other sessions too.

I made these remarks at the start of the conference, i.e. before any papers had been presented, but the reality bore out my opinion. The first two papers, on the kind of equipment the ordinary translator might very well use, revealed two different approaches – John Hayes concentrated on the possibilities (and limitations) of 'Joyce', a.k.a. Amstrad, whereas Cay-Holger Stoll reviewed a range of potential terminology aids for use on a PC. We moved up an entire order of magnitude with Rainer Reisenberger's presentation of the sophisticated and costly desktop publishing system which he uses (and some other translators do too). This paper sparked off a lively debate revolving around the question of whether it was the translator's proper role to do anything other than translate. The morning's session was completed by a presentation by Malcolm Jones of just some of the facilities currently available from British Telecom to help translators in their work, ending with a demonstration of what was (we gather) a rudimentary version of a voice translation system.

The second session, entitled 'Systems', opened with an account presented by Magnar Brekke of the adaptation of the Weidner MacroCAT software system for a new language (Norwegian) and a highly specialised subject (offshore oil technology). Staying with the Scandinavians, Ulla Magnusson Murray contrasted the realities of currently available CAT systems with the ideal

'translator's oasis'. At the end of the afternoon, Timothy Benbow described the Herculean task of the preparation of the *New Oxford English Dictionary*. An up-to-date version of the *OED* would naturally be a valuable asset for all translators who use English as either source or target language, and Mr Benbow was closely questioned as to when the new dictionary would be available (in three formats: hard copy, online and CD-ROM) and how much it would cost. Answer: for the CD-ROM, end 1987; £950.

The following morning's session on 'Termbanks' was launched by John McNaught with his survey of termbanks worldwide. After giving us a very comprehensive account, he asked the question: where is the UK equivalent of these termbanks? Regrettably, the project has never materialised. The remaining three speakers, however, were able to assure us that termbanks are alive and well in Canada (Alain Landry), Europe in general (Wolfgang Nedobity) and Hurth (Erika Hoffmann) though all three also pointed out that setting up and maintaining a termbank is no easy task.

The final session, entitled 'International Cooperation', featured Professor Sieny's paper covering scientific and technical Arabic which has not hitherto received the attention it deserves in this series of conferences, and two papers on different aspects of European cooperation, Jean-Marie Timmermans' dealing with the human side of translation in the form of cooperation between Western European States, which in this instance are not confined to the EC countries, and the other paper on the Eurotra machine translation project: Peter Lau was able to give up-to-the-minute information on this ambitious project which has perforce become even more ambitious as new Community languages are added to the range.

The conference ended with the customary lively exchange of views, comments and queries. For many participants the discussion sessions are one of the most rewarding features of the Conference, which is why we endeavour always to give readers at least a flavour of them. Frequently they initiate topics which cannot be handled there and then but are noted down as potential themes for the next Conference. A good example of this was the discussion which followed Erika Hoffmann's paper, on the thorny question of the incorporation of material from published dictionaries, glossaries, etc., into termbanks with online access. It is to be hoped that this matter can be presented in greater detail at the next 'Translating and the Computer' conference.

As always, no Introduction is complete without my expressing formal but no less genuine thanks to all those who contributed in any way to the Conference: my fellow-members of the Planning Committee, the staff at Aslib and the CBI, and of course the speakers and rapporteurs themselves. And we must not omit those participants who put questions at the discussion sessions which so often give rise to a valuable exchange of views and information.

The next Conference will be the tenth. It will obviously be an occasion for looking back, but perhaps more importantly for looking ahead, to the next ten years at least. . .