

Session 1: Summary of the discussion

Barbara Wilson, in the Chair, suggested that a few specific questions might be asked after each paper.

In answer to several questions from the floor, Brian Forsdick told his audience that Product Manager Workbench would run under MS-DOS on an IBM compatible and that useful results could be obtained after as little as half a day with this particular system. Ultimately, it would relieve translators of the burden of planning their work, allowing them to concentrate more on the quality of the actual translation.

In response to questions about the Translator's Workbench Project, Patricia Thomas explained that, since the corpus to be consulted was enormous, the user would not get the full benefit of this system if it were run on a PC.

After Siegrun O'Sullivan's paper entitled 'Problems of software translation and possible solutions', the discussion proper began.

Jane Mason, Systems Development Manager, Rank Xerox Ltd, Welwyn Garden City, asked Patricia Thomas whether KonText could identify phrases as well as words.

Patricia explained that collocates could be specified, in which case the computer would search for certain words or groups of words. A facility to eliminate 'noise' terms could be built into the system, providing the user with compound LSP terms.

On the same subject, Diana Button, IBM, Sindelfingen, West Germany, enquired whether identification of key terms and the relationship between these was a fully automated procedure. How, in fact, were terms retrieved?

Patricia Thomas explained that the collocation facility enabled the text to be

searched by indicators such as 'if ... then', etc., thus giving the 'cause and effect' relationship between terms and helping the terminologist to build a definition.

In response to Brian Forsdick's paper, Brian McCluskey, Head of Planning and Co-ordination, Translation Services, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, wondered whether the Project Manager Workbench could be integrated on a larger scale. To what extent could it be interfaced with other systems?

Brian Forsdick replied that, since projects generally had a standard structure, templates could be set up which could be modified to meet individual needs. Project Manager Workbench could be interfaced with other systems (there was, in fact, an Interfaces Group to assist in this task). Some of Hoskyns' clients tended to use Workbench as the heart of a bigger system, e.g. banks linked it to their mainframe computer. It could also be linked to timesheets and to graphic representation through LOTUS. The product itself could send files in standard format to other systems.

Referring to Siegrun O'Sullivan's paper and the set-up at the ICL Language Translation Centre, Daniel Baudin, Systran, Paris, wondered how designers had reacted to the guidelines implemented by the translators.

Siegrun O'Sullivan replied that their reaction had been twofold. Some designers felt that translators were not qualified to comment on the actual design of the system, whereas others readily welcomed suggestions. Guidelines, Siegrun explained, were essential if time and costs were to be saved. However, firm management was required in order to ensure that these were adhered to.

Leif Ostling, Manager, Trans-Bus AB, Trangsund, Sweden, felt that if translators were involved from the very beginning, this might result in more work. The designer, for instance, might discover that the concept did not work, and the translator would then have to re-translate.

Siegrun O'Sullivan replied that the translator should not necessarily translate from the onset, or even as the system developed, but rather should be involved in an advisory capacity.

Stephen Lander, Translator, Ciba-Geigy, Basel, referred to Siegrun's comments on the difficulty of ensuring consistent translation practice within one company. As software was used throughout the world, how would the concept of guidelines work in an inter-company context? Furthermore, in-house translators could be involved from the beginning of a project but surely this would be difficult when agencies and several companies were involved?

Siegrun O'Sullivan considered that it was possible for everyone to work along such lines, but it was up to the translators themselves to cite contexts in which the system had worked. If translation agencies were involved, then the translator would have to spend a certain amount of time on site. This was, Siegrun felt, a matter of organisation and careful planning.

Addressing his comments to Brian Forsdick, Paul Doherty, Project Co-ordinator, Rank Xerox, Welwyn Garden City, wondered whether the fact that

Project Manager Workbench stored each task on a separate line would lead to too great an output when printing.

In reply, Brian Forsdick explained that it was possible to print out at different levels (project, phase, activity and task). Reports, for instance, would be printed at phase level only, whereby key items would be selected and printed. However, individual translators would need to receive a detailed report of their particular tasks, i.e. their own schedule. This could also be done by making selections at the appropriate level.

Liisa Peltomaa, Senior Lecturer, School of Translation Studies, University of Turku, Finland, asked Patricia Thomas to elaborate further on the type of text used in the Translator's Workbench Project.

Patricia explained that only recent books and texts were used (1985 and 1987 onwards, respectively). Various types of text were used including extracts from learned journals, news articles and marketing reports. Terminology was constantly evolving and so experts were called in to assist in delimiting areas.

Janet Carter-Sigglow, Translator, Kernforschungsanlage Jülich, wondered whether the fact that this particular system could not be used on a PC was due to a problem of storage and, if so, could not the PC be linked to a mainframe computer?

Patricia Thomas said that this was possible and would be particularly suitable for demonstration purposes.

Lastly, Charles Lucas, Translator, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, enquired to what extent translators had been involved in the Translator's Workbench Project and what feedback had been received.

Patricia Thomas replied that several hundred questionnaires had been sent to staff and freelance translators as well as to students of translation, and that information was being received continually. Translators had been asked to describe the translation aids they currently used and what sort of translating tools/systems they would like to see developed. The results of this survey would be published in due course.

RAPPORTEUR

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