

Session 3:

Summary of the discussion

Asked by John Alvey whether there had been any significant differences between the various countries in their response to the Digital survey on translation practice in Europe, David Smith answered that the major response had come from the United Kingdom and West Germany. Loll Rolling, Head of the Multilingual Action Programme at the EC Commission pointed out that since the results of the survey had not been weighted, a single response might well have come from one person representing a whole group of other people and that therefore they might not truly reflect the situation.

Claude Fleurent, of May & Baker Ltd, Dagenham, added that another variable to be considered in translation practice was the fact that staff translators have to provide a quality control that very few freelance translators can achieve.

Val Butterfield of Staefa Control System UK commented on the low input by translators to machine software to which David Smith replied that improvement in machine design depended on a closer link between the users and the suppliers, adding that it was the realisation that such a link was needed which had inspired the survey.

Remarking on an observation by David Smith that translators did not provide the manufacturers with enough feedback on their needs, Thomas Evenson of Framatome, Paris, wished to point out that the survey had shown that it was employers and not translators who were machine shy. There was an added comment from the floor to the effect that translators mostly received their input on paper and not on disk. This led to a suggestion that the customer needed to become computer wise and that it might be worth reducing the fee for disk input.

Jean Datta was then asked about the cost of establishing input controls. Were they not too expensive? She replied that training might not be expensive with in-house trainers and that cost tailed off very fast anyway, whereas the cost of not establishing them was high as too much time was spent on documents which were not controlled at input.

Dr Habermann of Kernforschungszentrum Karlsruhe did not agree that a gradual layered approach to computer literacy within a translation service in a large organisation was essential, saying that they had introduced fully automated MT with success.

Yvonne Pulver-Sieber, freelance translator, suggested that to simplify language by introducing input control might lead to a general impoverishment of language. While agreeing that this was a possibility, Jean Datta felt that input control nevertheless had to be done if we were to face economic realities.

Doug Embleton from ICI was of the opinion that we should not adapt our drafts to computers, but that the reverse should be the rule. However, Jean Datta stressed the importance of the economic argument, saying that even manual translation would be cheaper if input language were controlled.

Pamela Mayorcas-Cohen congratulated Jean Datta on the clarity of her paper and enquired whether the input control she had mentioned was synonymous with pre-editing, saying that the EEC had abandoned pre-editing for MT systems. Jean Datta answered that she had not been referring to pre-editing but simply to giving guidelines to drafters.

On being asked why the SUSY project was started with a Russian-German language pair, a seemingly complex combination, Karl-Heinz Freigang replied that the particular language pair had been chosen because syntactic analysis was easier as Russian was a strongly inflectional language. English had come last because its syntactical analysis was far more problematic.

On the subject of revision, Professor Sager was asked if it would be possible to set up a research project on the revision of translation, which would be carried out on a statistical basis. However, Jean Datta felt that a statistical analysis would in this case prove very difficult since it was difficult to gauge, when a translation had been revised, whether its revision had been necessary or not.

RAPPORTEUR

Guyonne Proudlock, freelance translator and research student, 73 Wavendon Avenue, London W4 4NT, UK.