Session 3:

Summary of discussion

Rapporteur: Peter Barber

The discussion on Session 3, 'More practical translation systems', began with brief comment on the appropriateness of the ambiguity in the session title. Then the following points were made.

(1) Ralph Hawes described the semantic part of Logos as essentially a table structure, a series of tables which could refer to each other and so offered an open-ended approach.

(2) Asked why infrequent lexical items were removed from MT dictionaries at the Pan American Health Organization, Muriel Vasconcellos explained that they hoped to have dictionaries of some 30,000 high-frequency terms on microprocessor in about two years' time. While Logos at present had about 100,000 terms on 67 megabytes, such a number would not fit on a micro and so they had to select terms for inclusion on the basis of frequency of occurrence.

(3) Logos policy was to give all customers the opportunity of adjusting or modifying the system to meet their specific needs. This influenced both the dictionary and the semantic structure of the system. While the former was relatively simple to amend, the latter was not. However - in confidence - it was planned to allow users to add their own semantic capability as part of the system, but as a user extension, not in the core of the system.

(4) All the session speakers were asked to comment on the question of synonymy: given alternative statements with the same essential meaning but different syntax or phrasing and perhaps slight changes in nuance, how were they handled by

the various MT systems? In particular, what was obtained for sentences like the following which made the same statement in syntactically different ways:

(1) Beaucoup d'équations sont résolues par itération
(2) On résoud beaucoup d'équations par itération
(3) Beaucoup d'équations se résolvent par itération
(4) Il se résoud beaucoup d'équations par itération.

Muriel Vasconcellos said that for each variant in the source text Spanam and Engspan would give one corresponding variant in the target. They did not attempt to map a series of derived sentences to a common kernel; in their situation the cost would probably outweigh the benefit, and any problem could be simply and adequately handled at the post-editor level.

Merle Tenney said that in ALPS it would be handled in two steps. The first would be to consult the (MT) dictionaries relevant to the text and compile one which was specific to the text and the terms it contained. In real time, during translation, options arising were shown on the screen for decision; if only one version was applicable, consistently, to the text, alternatives might be temporarily suppressed (not permanently). It was ultimately a post-editor decision.

Ian Pigott said that at the European Commission such differences in phrasing were expected, and it was felt that MT should be able to cope with these differences (whether it succeeded was another matter).

RAPPORTEUR

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