

## **Session 2:**

### **Summary of the discussion**

Commenting on Ulla Magnusson Murray's paper and the existing gap between translators' and suppliers' goals on the one hand and users' goals on the other, Professor Sager suggested that more translators should use their professional associations. Only through those would they be able to bring enough pressure to bear upon suppliers and translation users and thereby satisfy their own requirements.

Cecilia La Paglia, freelance translator, wished to know what the position of recent graduates and inexperienced translators was within professional associations. She felt strongly that they did not provide enough advice to young translators or show enough understanding of their situation, and called for them to do so. Ulla Magnusson Murray suggested that she join the 'guardian angel' service provided by ITI.

Remarking on Magnar Brekke and Roald Skarsten's paper, Peter Lau, a member of the Eurotra project team at the European Commission, said that he found it surprising that they had found such a high percentage of parsing errors in their English-Norwegian Weidner MT system. Did they think these were inherent in the Weidner system in general or were these errors specific to the Bergen system? Magnar Brekke replied that because current systems tended to extend their mistakes from one component of the system into another, it was risky to give error percentages as he had done. To the extent of his knowledge, parsing went wrong in a number of cases but the cause of these errors was difficult to pinpoint.

Tony Hartley (Bradford University) remarked that two of the speakers had spoken of the poor quality of MT input, and the necessity for text critiquing. This was crucial to the improvement of the output quality of the present

systems. He asked whether there really was a solution to the problem. Ulla Magnusson Murray suggested that a text critiquing facility could not offer a solution on its own, but that it should be combined with educating authors to write in a way more compatible with MT systems.

Magnar Brekke agreed and added that the texts which the Bergen team had looked at had shown that texts written in English by non-native speakers were more easily handled, possibly due to the fact that sentence structure was simplified to some extent. He felt that text critiquing systems should be looked at in terms of providing language expert systems.

However, Tim Ward (European Investment Bank, Luxembourg) felt that such a strategy might encourage people to write specifically for machines and undermine creativity, a view which was shared by Ulla Magnusson Murray who said that many people already did write specifically for MT and that efforts should be made not to ruin our creativity. But Magnar Brekke, while agreeing that we should be aware of the danger of shaping the human mind to increasingly automatic writing systems, felt that there were definite advantages to be gained by it.

On the subject of the *New OED* project, Timothy Benbow was asked from the floor how their computer had been taught to handle all international characters. He replied that the complexity of the problem had made them turn to the United States, where they regularly used people who could identify rare characters.

Catriona Picken then asked whether, once the online version was available, it would be constantly updated and therefore be preferable to the book. Timothy Benbow replied that with the online version, updating was envisaged on a quarterly basis, and that for the CD-ROM version, the production of interim versions every two years would be aimed at, thus making these two options far preferable to their paper equivalent.

Brian McCluskey (CEC) wished to know what likelihood there was that translators would be able to plug into an *OED* and get the foreign language versions of entries, to which Timothy Benbow replied that it would be extremely difficult to match the different language versions, and that although they would love to do it, the heavy editorial overheads were discouraging and that for this reason it was not high on their list of priorities. In reply to a question from Jean Gordon (NATO) concerning its price, he replied that it would be marketed at £950.

Finally, on the subject of MT, Jean Gordon wished to point out that at NATO pre-editing geared to SYSTRAN was used extensively and that it rapidly solved a number of SYSTRAN problems. She added that pre-editing could be done at a rate of 7,000 words of text per hour, thus saving the post-editor a lot of time.

**RAPPORTEUR**

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