

MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENTAL VIEW OF MACHINE TRANSLATION

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The government of Malaysia is implementing the National Language Policy and National Education Policy that makes Bahasa Malaysia the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education. In carrying out both policies, the government, through the activities of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, undertakes the responsibility of translating and publishing reference books used by seven local universities. Government financial commitment to translation is with the objective of promoting higher standard of education through the use of our national language. Translations is almost wholly done from English sources or via English translations.

The government of Malaysia views machine translation as a possible long-term solution to meet national requirements for more and more scientific and technical translations. Encouragement is given to universities to undertake machine translation and related research through cooperation programmes. Meanwhile Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, gives support to universities through the activities of its terminology, lexicography and translation departments. In such cooperation programmes, the Malaysian role is to recruit researchers and to carry out research on Bahasa Malaysia. At present their number is small and limited to university academic staff and research students. Financial constraint is the main obstacle of recruiting substantially large number of full-time staff dedicated to linguistic analysis and dictionary construction work.

There are three universities engaged in machine translation R&D and related areas. The University of Science cooperates with French Government to develop English-Bahasa machine translation. The University of Technology has deep interest to take up and play major role for Japanese-Bahasa-Japanese system. The University of Malaya recently formed its own English-Bahasa research team.

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka has an 800,000 scientific and technical data base of English terms and its Bahasa equivalents. It also has a lexicography department compiling various types of dictionaries. University research groups are given wide access to utilise the data base and consult its experts.

Although there is enough interest for machine translation, in view of recessive economic situation faced by Malaysia, only minimal finance may be given to machine translation R&D, thereby, research groups will continue to depend on foreign aids and grants to support their work.