

Session 4: Summary of the discussion

This report is less full than we would have wished, because there was a discussion after the first two presentations, as well as after the final presentation, instead of all questions being taken together at the end. Consequently neither the rapporteur nor the tape recorder were in position. The following report has been compiled from sketchy notes made at the time by the editor of the *Proceedings*.

Mr I.P. Jones, SHAPE, asked Ron Fournier which MT system was used by Lexi-Tech; how and why was it selected?

Mr Fournier: The Logos system, which at the time was the best on the market.

Daniel Baudin, Systran, Paris, asked Patrick Little about simplified language (German or English). Were texts simplified for METAL?

Patrick Little replied that they were not, although it was possible for a customer to stipulate that documents need not be highly polished.

Mr J. Acheson, BSI, referred to the quality of the METAL output – ‘nach’ rendered as ‘after/according to’, for instance, and the faulty phrase ‘depends of’. Patrick Little said that the system was not as yet fully developed. Whether ‘abhängig’ is rendered as ‘depend of’ or ‘depend from’ involves quite a complex coding process. Post-editing takes care of minor blemishes. What was really important was consistency of terminology.

Brian McCluskey, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, asked Larry Rogers about the volume of translation produced by Lexi-tech in terms of pages per day, and what level does it aim to achieve?

Larry Rogers: From memory, 20,000 to 25,000 pages would be produced between January and December 1989. In two years’ time, output should have gone up to 60,000 pages, which would be cost effective.

Alan Goodwin of Miele asked about the aptitude testing of potential post-editors. Ron Fournier said that their candidates had been given a test specially prepared by psychologists to discover their suitability for a totally automated environment. Patrick Little said that Philips had recruited a totally new team so that they did not have to overcome a psychological barrier. Ron Fournier added that the test given at Lexi-tech was not foolproof!

Gerry Brace of the Institut Français du Pétrole asked Larry Rogers about the translators' output. Larry Rogers said that the 21 translators each produced about 2,100 words a day, including graphics.

Mr M.P. Swithinbank of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, asked if it was expected that this degree of productivity would level off.

Ron Fournier said that it was hoped that it would not, just yet; the aim was to achieve 3,000 words/day per translator.

In answer to a question about Lexi-tech's annual turnover in Canadian dollars, Ron Fournier replied that it was \$7 million.

Tom Byrne, of Techtrans Ireland, commented that Lexi-tech's figures were impressive to an engineer (and translator). But in his view a translator was a creative being with a soul. Ron Fournier agreed that Lexi-tech is a production line, but nevertheless the translator is still there with a part to play.

Peter Barber, Able Translations, said that both papers talked of translator productivity, but what about the overall efficiency of the whole operation, from the start to the finished printed text?

Larry Rogers said that it was his job to keep track of production. His figure of about 2,000 words a day related to the whole process. Ron Fournier reminded delegates that all input texts vary.

Patrick Little said that with the METAL system, pre-editing work was not necessarily done by translators. The machine translation process was done at night and human editors went over the text during the day. He stressed once again that the big problem has always been consistency.