

Personal Translator 2000 Office Plus

Review by Heather Morgan and Bob Clark

Munich-based Linguattec Language Technologies, in collaboration with the dictionary publishers, PONS, have recently released an updated version of their Personal Translator. There are 3 versions available: PT 2000 Home, PT 2000 Office and PT 2000 Office Plus.

Personal Translator is a machine translation software program, based on IBM's Logic-Based Machine Translation System, which translates English into German and vice versa (a French version is planned for later release). Updated features in PT2000 include:

- improved grammar analysis
- increased translation speed
- choice of traditional or new German spelling
- translations from the Internet directly in the browser
- more detailed dictionary entries and in Office Plus only:
 - Word 2000 compatible
 - simultaneous search in up to 10 archives
 - voice output for English and German

Formats

RTF and TXT files can be processed directly in PT2000 and the Word interface option allows the user to access PT from within the familiar Word for Windows environment. Once installed, a PT+ icon appears in your Word toolbar and, by clicking on this, Word documents can be translated without having to launch PT. (PT is already set up to support Word 2000.)

Dictionaries

Besides the PT Office Plus system dictionary, which has been expanded to include 360,000 words

(compared with 280,000 in the other two versions), up to 16 user-defined dictionaries can be accessed simultaneously. Before commencing the translation process, the subject field of the text can also be defined within <options/translation options>. Here science and technology can be sub-defined down to highly specific levels, e.g. science / biology / microbiology / virology or indeed, technical / electrical/electric power engineering / power supply systems / electrical installation and yet rather curiously, sport is further sub-divided into only tennis or boxing!

As with any computer software, the more information you can supply initially the better the end

result will be. Consequently, for longer texts it is worthwhile spending some time using the "unknown words" facility before beginning the translation, then reviewing these words and attempting to define as many as possible in your own user dictionary before translation takes place.

There is also an idioms dictionary which appears to be particularly useful as it can be used as a stand alone feature even if you are not using the software itself to carry out a translation.

Note: Translators will find that the idioms dictionary is both expansive and explicit in every sense of the word!

Sentence Archives

Translators take note - you can also build up sentence archives in PT. The Archive can be searched for matches before automatic translation takes place. Not only can this be done from texts processed by PT but any previously translated document stored in its source and target languages, and aligned, can also be added to an archive.



Anywhere else, this archive would be called a "translation memory" and that is exactly what it is. Sentence pairs, separated by a user-defined delimiter, can be imported into an existing archive or a newly-created archive. We even successfully imported an English-Russian file and PT happily extracted the sentences for us. Obviously, if a match were not found in the Archive, the system would then translate the text into German. This means that if a translator wanted to use PT purely as a Translation Memory facility, theoretically, there is no limitation on the language pairs involved. This also means that translation memories exported from other systems, e.g. Trados TWB, IBM TranslationManager, etc., can be easily imported into PT. We encountered problems when we first attempted to import sentence pairs using the English interface. We reported it to Linguatéc's technical support and received a fix immediately.

So, who should use PT2000? We can safely divide users into two categories. The first, those with little or no knowledge of the source text, which we will call occasional users, and the second, professional translators hoping to increase productivity by using Machine Translation.

Occasional Users

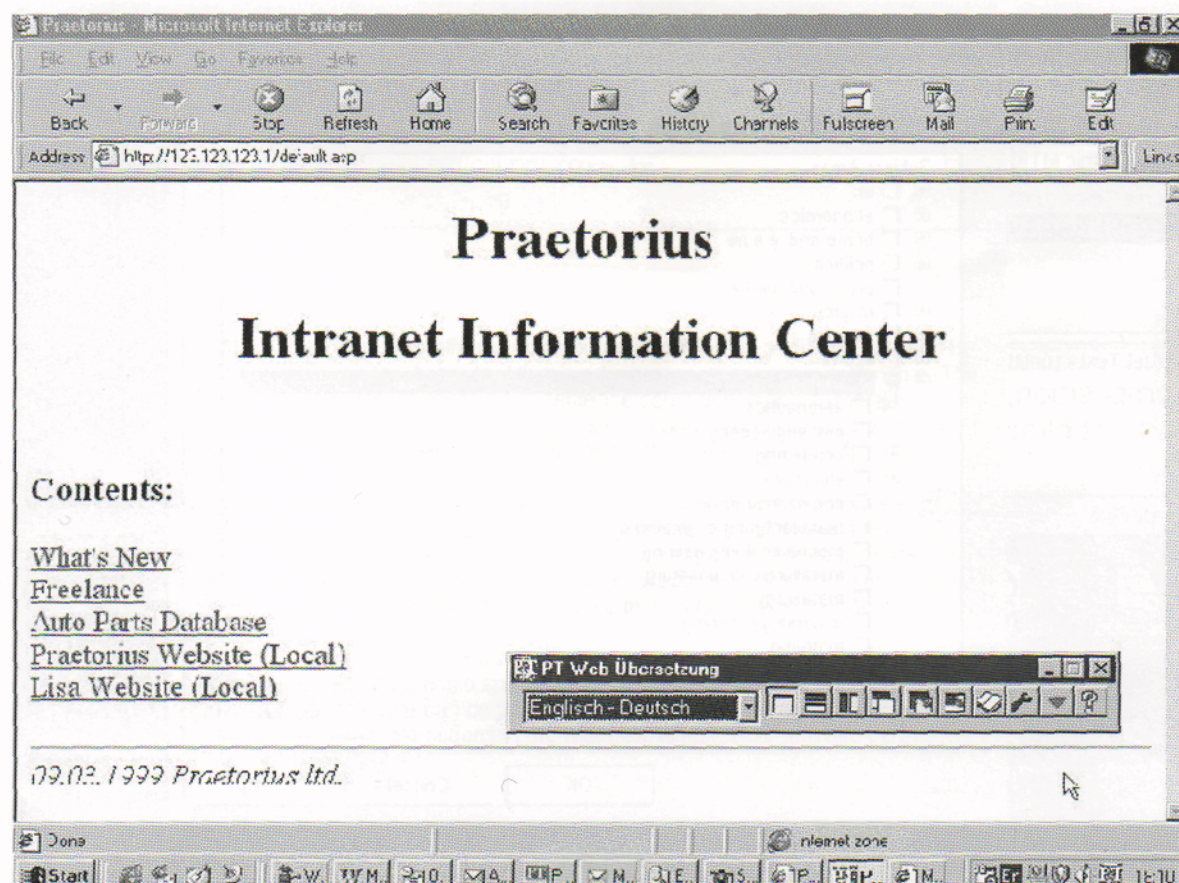
More often than not, this type of user is only interested in getting a reasonably accurate gist of the source text. PT2000 will certainly provide this.

Even before adding terms to the user-defined dictionary, we were getting a very understandable result. As long as the user is aware that syntax and word translations can go a bit wild, and that the result should NEVER be treated as material suitable for further dissemination, he or she should be satisfied with this product.

Professional Translators

This is a much harder nut to crack. Historically, translators immediately assume that it will take much longer to clean up raw Machine Translation output in order to produce a polished translation than to translate the source document from scratch. For the purpose of this review, we carried out a little test. Bearing in mind that the person who ran this test agreed entirely with the above point of view, the results were very interesting:

"From a couple of simple tests carried out, it appears that it is possible to cut translation time by approximately 50%. A straightforward German business letter, with no technical details, took approximately five minutes to translate into English using PT and a further 30 minutes to post-edit into a useable form, as opposed to an hour to translate "manually". Similarly, an extract taken from a catalogue of approximately 1000 words was translated using PT in about 5 minutes. If we assume that a translator working from scratch would



translate somewhere in the region of 280 words per hour, whereas post-editing this amount of text took only half an hour, it is easy to see how much time can be saved.

It is, therefore, apparent that even without accessing the user-defined dictionaries or archives, a translator can save substantial amounts of time just by using PT without supplying any additional information. The changes made during post-editing do look somewhat daunting on the screen but the majority of the necessary modifications are a matter of changing word order or choosing a more apposite word, although the one provided is not technically "incorrect". The time saved would soon recoup the initial outlay. However, I think that time spent filling user-defined dictionaries and archives would only be worthwhile for a translator who is certain to translate repetitive documents, perhaps for regular clients or such like. In the end, whether to use PT or not is a subjective decision and although it certainly saves time, for ad hoc translations I found it somewhat distracting to have one German text, one English and one somewhere in-between!"

German Spelling Reforms

Obviously one of the main reasons for an update has been to incorporate the recent German spelling reforms, enabling the user to make a choice between the traditional and new spelling systems. This choice is further refined between *new*

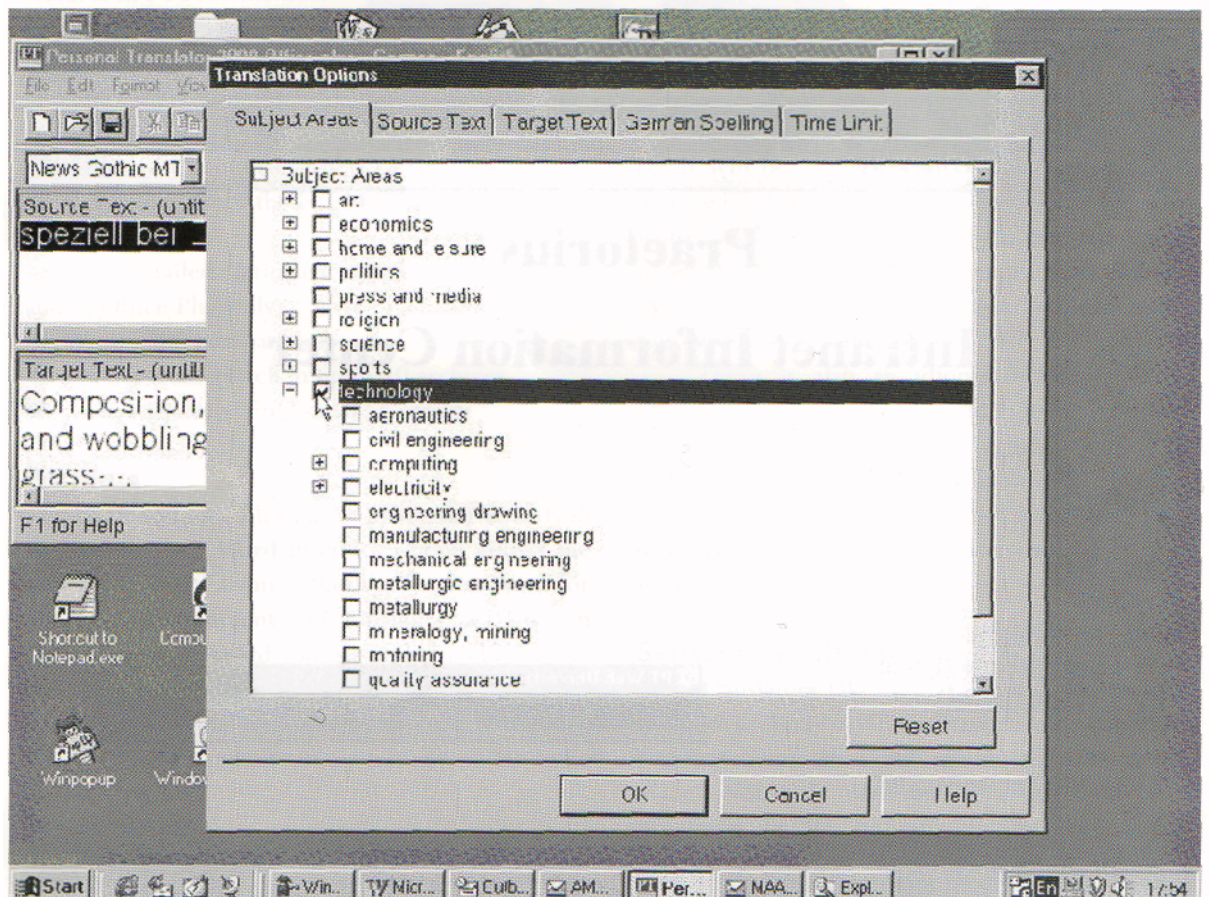
conservative and *new progressive*. Thus, when translating English into German, 3 possible translations can be produced depending on the German spelling norm selected.

"I know that a dolphin is not a fish" becomes:
 Ich weiß, daß ein Delphin kein Fisch ist. (Old)
 Ich weiß, **dass** ein Delphin kein Fisch ist. (New conservative)
 Ich weiß, **dass** ein **Delfin** kein Fisch ist. (New progressive)
 (examples taken from the German user manual)

For translations from German into English the translator is also able to define rules for the use of commas according to the new spelling system: old or new liberal. The user's handbook recommends the use of *new progressive* spelling together with *new liberal* for comma usage, if in doubt as to which spelling system has been used in a German source text.

PT Web

PT can now translate html files directly from the Internet enabling pages to be translated from the Internet whilst retaining their original layout. This facility can be accessed from start menu/programs/PT Web. This translates web pages as they appear in the Internet Browser, although it must be noted that this facility is rather slow. Nonetheless, there is an icon which shows the progress of the translation whilst it is taking place.



Another useful little feature on the toolbar is an icon which allows you to look up individual words that appear on the web site. By highlighting the word in question and then clicking on the dictionary icon, a translation of that particular word will be displayed in a dialogue box. Note: Archives are not available from PTWeb.

If you do not wish to work directly in PT Web, pages that have been downloaded from the Internet as HTM files can be translated directly in the PT software (provided you have a Web browser or at least Word 97 which is able to display html documents). To do this, select the option <translate html file> from the main file menu within PT.

PT Direkt

This option can be accessed from start menu/programs/PT Direkt. It enables you to translate text from within any Windows application via the clipboard. Note: Archives are not available from PT Direkt.

Voice Output

PT 2000 Office Plus now offers a voice output facility. This additional function is also new, although to what extent this is advantageous seems questionable. The handbook suggests that mistakes in sentence construction and semantics become more obvious when read aloud rather

than when read, but, bearing in mind that the target text is usually quite rough, this seems doubtful.

Text-to-Speech Output

Obviously, there are limitations to what a machine translation program can achieve and the advantages are best seen in simple, straightforward texts. For longer, more complex documents, the time taken to post edit texts produced by machine translation or to make the necessary preparations before beginning must be weighed up against the time saved by machine translation.

Overall, PT is a simple-to-use package provided with a straightforward step-by-step manual. The on-screen display is clear and the commands are fairly self-explanatory, so that one can begin using the tool immediately after installation; but, by following the instructions in the manual in detail, optimum use can be made of this handy tool.

The most basic version, PT 2000 Home, aimed at the freelance market can be purchased for just under DM 100 (£35) whilst the deluxe PT Office plus version is DM 498 (£178). For owners of a previous version there are preferential deals on the above prices with savings of up to 50%.

For those seeking further information there is a Web site available at www.personal-translator.de (English version also available at this site).

