



CEBIT OVERVIEW

Voice processing and MT get popular

Although the German fair Cebit was mostly about wireless, Internet and the combination of both called WAP, some companies showed language technology solutions. Lode Goukens walked by the booths.

Lernout & Hauspie

introduced a new version of the PowerTranslator in Hannover . The European public could also learn a lot about L&H's iTranslator. 11 percent of the world's population by 2003 will require information in their own language. L&H referred to a Jupiter research report to prove that companies will undoubtedly feel the pressure to make their information multilingual. Machine translation (MT) software can help to rapidly globalize information. Today MT allows to "gist", or draft translation of documents, providing a level of translation that allows a reader to understand the main points of a translated document. The gist quality can be improved using several techniques: documents can be written in a way that makes the software more effective; and the lexical data (dictionaries) that MT software relies on can be tuned to dramatically improve the translation quality. With this customization work, MT can be suitable for some finished documents. However, the majority of critical documents, legal or otherwise, require human translators for high

quality or accuracy. MT software can boost productivity. L&H offered several solutions at Cebit. The PC Applications Group offers end users shrink-wrapped machine translation products. These enable users to translate letters, reports, e-mails and Web sites on the fly from their PC. The products include L&H Simply Translating (regular and Deluxe) and the PowerTranslator Pro ranging from \$50 to \$150.

L&H's Globalization and Internet Translation Group is said to be comprised of more than 800 full-time employees over 3000 contractors and has offices in 18 countries world-wide. The most visual solution is the L&H iTranslator. This client/server human and machine translation solution includes one or more MT engines, the iTranslator Master Server and one client application. For corporate users L&H can customize the Enterprise edition of iTranslator. The Flemish company is also announcing the launch of two other versions (Online and Publish). The German-language version of iTranslator Enterprise was demonstrated at Cebit. The free machine translation service is available via the Microsoft Office Update Web site.

Lingsoft

from Finland was very active at the fair. A pity

that their section of the booth was hidden behind displays from other Finnish companies. The proofing tools package for Microsoft Word Orthografix 2 is now available for six languages: Finnish, Danish, German, Swedish and Norwegian (bokmål and nynorsk). The new Macintosh version made a fine impression. Orthografix 2 includes a spell checker with correction suggestion, a high quality hyphenator and an inflecting thesaurus. The Lingsoft solutions are based on the two level model of morphology (TWOL) The model can describe inflectional forms as well as derivation and compounding of words. Lingsoft also demonstrated a new product: speech recognition for Finnish.

Even more difficult to find (with the display at Corel's booth referring Catalyst users



to visit Halle 16 B54) was SAM Engineering GmbH. On one PC two enthusiast Germans explained in much detail the benefits of Corel Catalyst 3.0. Although SAM stands for Software Adaptation Management and SAM Engineering is a full-service language management company using translation memories and computer-aided translation tools the Catalyst distributor kept focused on the new Catalyst and didn't plug their services including services using Transit, and XL8. The hands-on experience with Catalyst 2.5 and the 3.0 beta might be a good omen for the support and the on-site training.

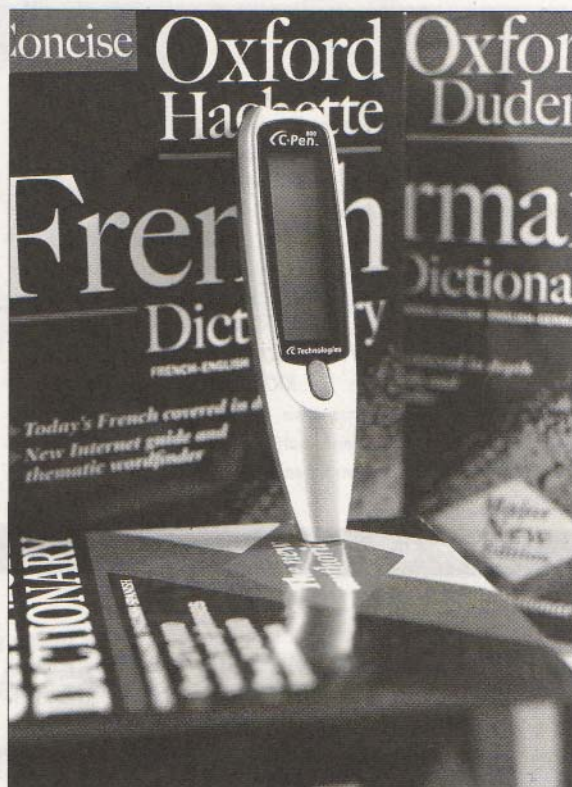
Intelligent speech interfaces have been a promising solution for decades but practical considerations have often put off companies.

Voxi AB

from Sweden showed their ultimate user interface Voxi Intelligent Speech Interface (ISI). The company claims to take a fresh approach to user interfaces instead of just superimposing speech on established design principles. The Voxi ISI interfaces the application and data with third party or Voxi speech recognition engines. The interface deals with disambiguation, reasoning, language independence, language understanding, interfacing to functions and data in a system... Voxi announced that they are looking for partners.

A number of universities and local authorities gave start-up companies a floor. One remarkable start-up is CLT Sprachtechnologie GmbH at the university of Saarbrücken. CLT demonstrated with Corrigo 1.2 a professional tool for spelling conversion (from the old German spelling to the new).

An "old" company with brand new technology and a crispy fresh corporate logo is Alpnet. The self-claimed inventor of translation memories showed the network-centric, Internet-ready translation management computer infrastructure. The



infrastructure - co-developed with Sun Microsystems - uses the power of the Internet to connect Alpnet customers, resources, partners, end-users, employees and suppliers through its own multilingual knowledge base via individual translation portals. Alpnet promoted also the Sirius Content Management System and the EP Uniterm terminology management tools. Sweden's C Technologies AB introduced the C-Pen. This device merges digital camera technology with high speed handheld computing. According to C-Tech the C-Pen combines powerful neural network based image processing and optical character recognition (OCR) techniques. The pen has a StrongARM processor. The C-Pen is a pocket translator that can transfer its files via infrared to a PC with Windows 95/98 or NT. The C-Pen can also send messages via mobile phone to a fax or as a SMS message. The product resembles the popular Quicktionary of WizCom.

EteX-Sprachsynthese AG

from Germany introduced Datenblatt SpeechMail Server. The server integrates speech processing for e-mail and other automatic call distribution purposes over a POP3 Mail Server (common Internet mail server). A German university showed an even better use of voice processing: ordering tickets for movies. A user calls the server and speaks normally. The system repeats. The disambiguation worked fine. It took



five minutes to book a ticket.

A similar solution was shown by Conversa from Redmond (Washington). Conversa develops state-of-the-art speech technology solutions for PC, server and embedded applications which allow people to conversationally interact with computers and other devices. The conversational user interface used in all the Conversa products allows users to effortlessly interact with electronic devices and perform tasks like inputting data, querying databases, placing phone calls, checking voicemail, reading e-mail and exploring the Web. All hands-free using natural language. Conversa's continuous speech engine CASSI (Conversa advanced Symbolic Speech Interpreter) is speaker-independent and accomodates an unlimited vocabulary. The best proof of this technology is the ConversaWeb browser that allows surfing the Web by using a voice. Another product is the Conversa Messenger. This voice-driven unified messaging desktop application offers access to voicemail, e-mail, fax and contact information remotely. For the developers Conversa launched the Web Conversation Developer Kit (CDK). The CDK is a toolkit for voice-powering Internet sites. Web site developers can add voice-elements to interact with site visitors.

Hexaglot Holding GmbH

introduced the BlitzTranslator. This product runs in the back on a PC and allows on the fly translation of words in German, French, English and Spanish. Each language pair includes 590.000

words. Hexaglot also demonstrated a new version of the Quicktionary (a licensed product from Israel's WizCom). The real news came from the German publishing giant Langenscheidt. The already very well established T1 product line of machine translation products for PCs got improved. Version 4.0 includes integration with Netscape products and e-mail clients. The T1 family of products now consists of T1 Standard, T1 Standard Plus and T1 Professional. All three are immediately available in French and English (German being the working language of this bilingual solution). The Professional edition is also on the market in Russian-German.

The most attractive solution for non-language professionals was the translation solution Langenscheidt developed with Materna (a company specializing in solutions for mobile telephones, unified messaging and call centers). Any mobile phone user can send SMS messages to the server and the translation comes back in a SMS message. The service is available in German-English and English-German. French, Italian and Spanish will follow later this year.

For German companies doing a lot of foreign correspondence TextManager 3.0 will help them writing the right letters. Both lay-out and automatic fields are included. Langenscheidt has four versions: English, French, Italian and Spanish. The German publisher offers also an Internet-solution. www.langenscheidt.de/uebersetzung. The service using a pay-as-you-go policy. ■

