

Enter Eurolang

The latest in translator workstations (or translation environments, to use a new jargon term), the Eurolang Optimizer was launched at a major media event at the Paris Hilton on February 28.

Eurolang is machine-assisted human translation (MAHT), but with the possibility at a later stage of incorporating fully automatic machine translation, a modified version of the METAL system. METAL is offered by Siemens-Nixdorf, a major partner to the French documentation company SITE in the development of Eurolang.

A team of 70 researchers has been working on the development of the new system in the Eurolang premises at Maisons-Alfort, a suburb of Paris. This does not include 35 researchers working on the METAL machine translation side of the activity in Munich.

The development, which began in November 1991, benefited from funding under the EC Eureka programme, which aims to foster technical innovation. The total development budget is believed to be of the order of \$100 million, and an off-the-cuff calculation is that the development so far has taken 1,500 man-years. The achievement of a marketable product in the space of 2 1/2 years shows a remarkable turn of speed, but it has benefited from 20 years of earlier research in France, including SITE's heavy involvement in the French MT-oriented *Projet National*, and SITE's acquisition some five years ago of the MT research company B'Vital, which in turn had been able to draw on the French GETA programme of MT research at Grenoble going back to 1969. Siemens' development of METAL goes back to 1979.

Eurolang has made much of a major marketing breakthrough, illustrated by the fact that the computer giant Microsoft has chosen Eurolang for its product localisation in various languages, and will be insisting its translation suppliers will be equipped with the new technology. Eurolang, which hopes to capture a major share of the market for large-scale throughput translation, considers that the potential market for translation is ten times as great as the existing market. As well as work produced by translators, there are considerable multilingual documentation and communication needs among engineers, technical writers, bilingual secretaries and sales forces. The Eurolang marketing philosophy is based on the premise that the amount of translation, or more precisely multilingual documentation (since it is often a question of text re-creation in his own language by a domain specialist rather than pure translation), done by non-translators has been overlooked in the past by developers of translation tools.

What is called the Eurolang Optimizer, the first of what will be a stable of translation and documentation tools, includes translation memory and terminology databases in the server which can handle several hundred thousand entries. The server operates in batch mode, and can

therefore run "pre-translation" day and night.

The pre-translation and interactive translation phases are completely separate, so that it is possible to work with a pre-translated document on a portable machine.

There is going to be a stand-alone version designed for the management of small volumes of documentation, and this will operate pre-translation and interactive management under Windows 3.1. The databases used for pre-translation in this version can handle up to 10,000 multilingual entries. However, the client/server version is the pivot of the Eurolang approach, and in marketing terms is an indication that the developers have their eyes firmly fixed on the large volume market.

Versions of the Eurolang Optimizer can be acquired to work with a variety of software, including Frame Maker 4, Sun, Oracle, Interleaf, as well as with Microsoft.

The new products are competitively priced, starting at around 21,000 French francs for a client licence and 35,000 francs for a server licence. A client licence allows the handling of interactive translation in the selected word processing or desktop publishing software, while a server licence includes pre-translation, administration of translation memory and terminology databases, alignment tools for building the translation memory, and a range of distributed network administration tools. The licences come with a choice of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, as source languages, and the target languages Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

Later this year (possibly in July) it is hoped to add as target languages Czech, Danish, Finnish,

Document à traduire

Document pré-traduit

Gain 30%

Mémoire de traduction

Mémoire des termes techniques

Greek, Hungarian, Norwegian and Polish, and later still (October is the target date) Chinese, Japanese, Romanian, Russian and Turkish.

A "folder" is created for each project, and there is an administration facility to handle this. This pre-processing work, it is envisaged, is done by a translation or technical publications manager.

The first phase proper is called document pre-translation, in which the system's translation memory analyses the document, identifies sentences and technical terms already translated, and then generates a colour-coded document showing "perfect matches" (previously-recurring sentences for which there is a complete translation), "fuzzy matches" (sentences which are more or less the same as previous sentences), and technical terms.

This pre-translation analysis, it is claimed, can yield savings of up to 30% over translation using conventional means. The way to efficiency in translation is not to keep re-inventing the wheel. The analysis phase is therefore crucial; the idea, according to *Joël Colinet*, who is head of test equipment, is to use the analysis capability to the full, and identify everything which is re-usable.

When the product is first demonstrated, the variety of colours and the mass of detail on screen looks bewildering (different colours can be used for the various types of difference from the original in fuzzy matches) but within minutes the eye and brain have got it all co-ordinated. Eurolang has a lot of confidence in the user-friendliness of its system and the ease with which it can be mastered, and Mr *Pascal Gidea*, a commercial engineer who was showing the system to *Language International*, admitted at one point that he had joined Eurolang only a few days before. When the Hilton launch took place, demonstrations were given by translators who had only been recently introduced to the system, rather than by specially trained sales demonstrators.

The second phase is interactive translation (because the pre-translated document is integrated into the selected word processing or desktop publishing system, there is no deformatting or reformatting). For future translations, due to the repetitive nature of much technical documentation, the "hit rate" of perfect matches and fuzzy matches increases, thus cutting down on translation time.

It is hoped that the METAL machine translation system, specially re-written for Eurolang, will be integrated into the system in September 1994. Machine translated sentences could then be shown, in yet a different colour, on the screen.

As a long-term goal Eurolang are looking forward to the establishment of a European network of Eurolang translation centres, as well as becoming the world leader in the machine-assisted processing of European languages.