

The translator's word processor

by Peter Arthem

The juxtaposition in the July issue of *Language Monthly* of the article under the above heading, and Ian Johnson's article on *TRANPRO - the Translation Processor*, raises the question, "What is a word processor?". Ian Johnson refers to it as a computer program ("I decided that the best solution was to write my own word processor. The result was *TRANPRO*, the translation processor") while the Steering Committee for the Translator's Word Processor envisages it as a complete package of hardware and integrated software which the translator should be able to buy off the shelf, take home, plug in and use immediately, following simple (which means very carefully-prepared) instructions.

It should be no more necessary for a translator to understand what is going on inside his word processor than it is for you or I to have a knowledge of mechanics or of thermodynamics to drive a car.

As I have been discovering when setting my recently acquired A..... to work, the quality and simplicity (or otherwise) of the instruction manual supplied with the word processor hardware is of vital importance in getting to work quickly, even when the software comes with the hardware as a supposedly integrated whole.

If you want to use a word processing program with a microcomputer for

which it is but one of any number of possible applications, beware! Insist on seeing the program working on YOUR equipment before you buy it. I recently bought a databank program (not from my computer supplier I am afraid) sold as being specifically intended for my A....., only to have the computer tell me the formatting of the program disc was *perimé* (it communicates with me in French, as I bought it in Belgium, except when you hit the "HELP" key, at which it relapses in to English! I imagine the translators gave up at that point - or perhaps their WP broke down).

As a footnote I report that the July/August issue of *Science et vie micro*, an excellent publication if you want to keep up with developments in this field, carries a reader's letter which states that the printer ribbon cartridges for the A..... PCW 8256 recently on sale in France contained only a quarter of the normal quantity of ribbon. Anyone in the UK noticed this? It seems that the ribbons originally came from South Korea but that the offending newer supplies are made in England.