

Language in Printing

A Printing Business Coming to Terms with Translation Technology

by Bert Maes and Christophe Declercq

Integrated Language Services (ILS) is the language department of Blondé, a printing business located in Wommelgem, Belgium. ILS was founded in 1999 to meet the growing demand of Blondé's customers for high quality content and increased consistency within

multilingual documents. The staff at ILS are dealing with all language-related issues, including copywriting, translation, translation memories, terminology management, and remodeling and fine tuning language workflows in



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Pan-European communication projects.

It may seem obvious that many printed publications need to be translated. However, in a printing business, text and language tend to be treated in a stepmotherly way while the focus is normally placed on the quality of the materials used in the printing process, such as paper, ink, etc. With this in mind, and in order to safeguard the quality of the language and improve service to customers, this internal language service was created.

The main tasks of ILS are:

- Coordination and streamlining of the translation process

- Creation, hosting and updating of translation memories and terminology databases, online or offline, Web- or desktop-based, to ensure consistent translations throughout various publications as well as the use of validated in-house customer-specific terminology
- Dealing with all editing, copywriting, and localization issues
- Content creation and delivery for multilingual websites, in cooperation with multimedia and knowledge departments
- Source text control and management.

Workflow

Procedures and workflows are designed in close cooperation with customers, but the basic structure of the approach is as follows:

1. Pre-study of existing documentation, including:
 - Style briefing to translators and reference material evaluated by the customer
 - Terminology study of source texts and mapping of inconsistencies

2. Implementation of Machine Aided Human Translation (MAHT)
3. Evaluation by customer and internal evaluation
4. Continue full project execution
5. Follow-up and periodic evaluation

Blondé has many Asian customers in its portfolio. We have realized that working with Asian customers demands an entirely different approach compared to working with European or US-based companies. For example, when a master for a user's manual arrives at our company, we are generally confronted with the following issues:

- Files are in an unknown or incompatible file format
- The text is written in poor English
- The text is not adapted to European market needs

Sometimes, we need to convince the customer that the master source text requires rewriting in order to be suitable for translation. This extra effort and cost is often hard to explain to the customer. The text is not only often grammatically or semantically inconsistent or incorrect, frequently it is written by technical staff, who may be sensitive about textual technicalities but insensitive about market or customer orientation.

In addition, we have realized that rewritten source texts need to be accompanied by comprehensive local market guidelines when sent out to translators. Even with technical information such as owner manuals, there is always the need for some level of localization. For example, technical specifications may differ from one country to another, and even the market orientation of products may differ from one country to another.

Another complication is text expansion. There may not be enough space reserved in the Asian master document for expansion in European languages. This forces us to rebuild the master template and layout and adapt it for the European market.

Moving away from being a mere printing business, ILS now provides a full service for our Asian customers. This is a new evolution in which we are still finding our way.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is the key term covering this evolution. Knowledge exists on the levels of:

- Textual information
- Graphical information
- Corporate identity information

These types of information need to be re-used in various output formats, including CD-ROMs, Web sites, media-neutral databases, printed matter, etc.

It goes without saying that implementing knowledge management requires serious investment, training, and internal restructuring. However, this investment will be returned within the mid-term, since our media output is highly differentiated, including printed matter, Web sites, adverts, and CD-ROMs, while our customers' product range has an average six-month life cycle, allowing extensive re-use of information. Additional advantages of knowledge management include:

- Improved consistency
- Reduction of budget strains resulting from communication errors
- Process streamlining
- Customer binding
- Production cycle cutback
- Corporate identity enhancement
- Market positioning
- Media-neutral storage, allowing further future re-use, for example, using translation memories

While it may be hard to convince a customer of the benefits of knowledge management, it is even harder to convince customers of the necessity of terminology management and MAHT, the two systems we will discuss in the second half of this article.

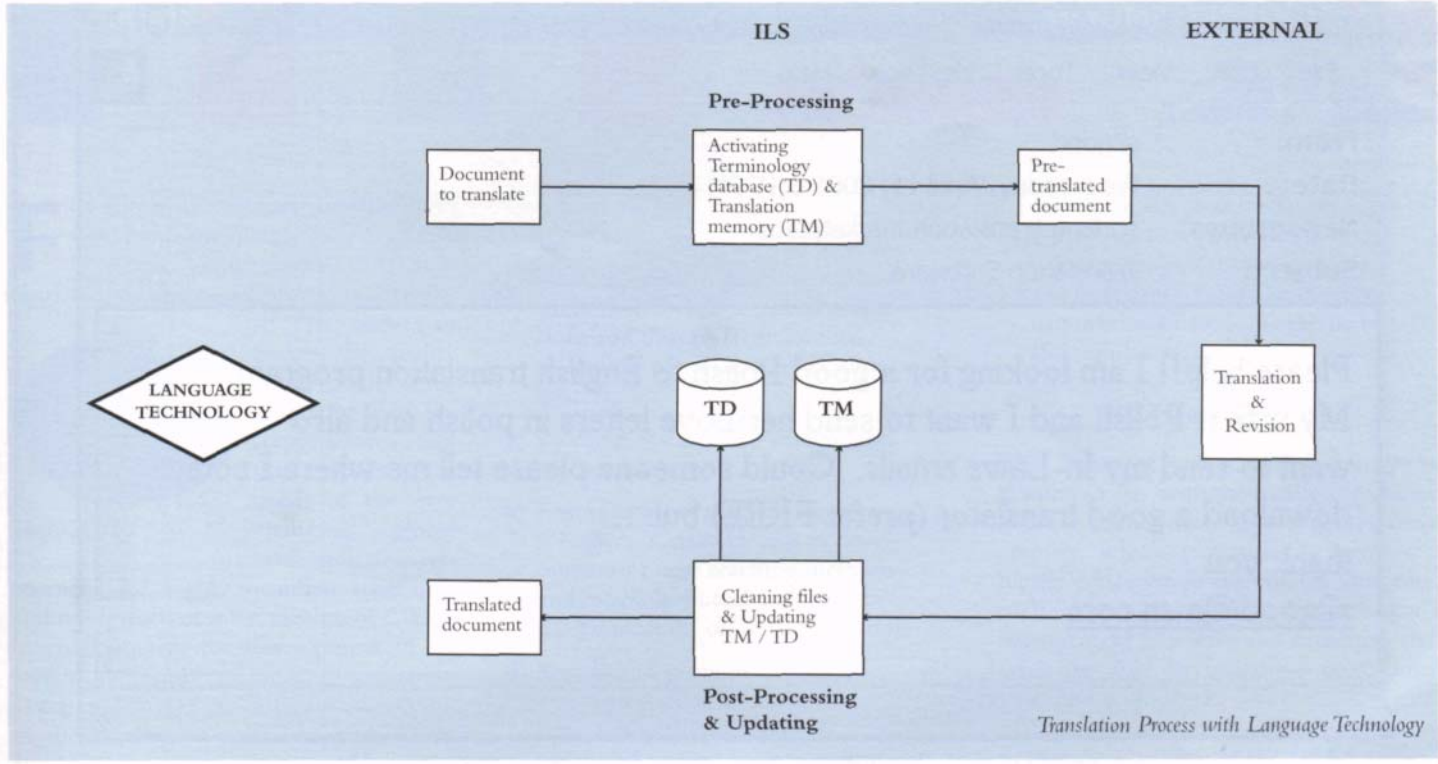
Machine Assisted Human Translation

As an adequate budget is nearly always absent, and the benefits are not immediately visible, 'selling' translation memory and terminology database solutions is not always easy. Customers are primarily interested in cutting back translation costs, and are hesitant to invest in long-term solutions.

In addition, not all documents are suitable for processing with translation software and care should be taken when offering this service to a customer. Indeed, because of the pressure to reduce translation costs and to realize some return-on-investment for the software, there is a strong temptation to implement it whenever possible. However, deliberately not applying translation software may sometimes be a wise decision. Customer expectations will always be high and if you are not sure your department can live up to these expectations, be sure to start with a suitable pilot project and do not hesitate to work without translation tools if appropriate. More important considerations are comprehensive guidelines for the translators who will work on the project. You need to ensure that they are familiar with your workflow and what their role is in the process.

Terminology

In the case of our terminology-related activities for customers, fairly basic



workflows apply. It is nevertheless very important to develop a good methodology, because once a project has started, it is hard and time-consuming to change the process. Lack of a solid methodology may even damage your relationship with your customer and your preset budget scheme.

Our general approach to terminology management includes:

- Evaluate customer needs and available reference material;
- Draw a tree diagram of the concept that will be described. In most cases the concept system will be fairly complex; for linguists it is virtually impossible to map every concept and concept relation in detail;
- Create an entry structure. What is important here is to determine the amount of supplemental information that will be present in the terminology database.

A clear understanding of the issue of definition and context is required. In her *Handbook of Terminology Management*, Sue Ellen Wright discerns three types of contexts: the *associative context*, the *explicative*

context, and the *defining context*. It is on the latter that we focus. A defining context contains descriptors in sufficient quantity and quality to convey a clear image of the concept covered by the term, from which a true definition could be readily inferred.

However, a defining context should not be confused with a definition, the latter being a metalinguistic form, an artificial statement that is neither integrated into any discourse nor related to any instance of communication. In our business and for our customers the defining context proves to be the most useful. It is comprehensible, extensive, and not too elaborate and is directly applicable. Definitions in our environment are too time-consuming and therefore simply too expensive to create.

In terminology projects, cooperation with subject matter experts is indispensable, which sometimes is a problem because not all customers have the resources or bandwidth to work on terminology projects. Many customers also expect that terminology researchers should know all about all possible subject areas, and, as a result, are not readily prepared to make one of their employees available for support.

To conclude, our language department has realized that it is crystal-clear that no language tool or terminology management tool can be implemented without a process and workflow that has been thoroughly thought-through and tested. Sensitization of both internal resources and customers is an on-going and sometimes complicated effort, yet one that is indispensable when confronted with this rapidly evolving and highly competitive market.

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