

Don't rule out machine translation

Andreas Dürr explains how integrating machine translation into conventional workflows can achieve affordable human translations.

The cost of writing and translating technical documentation and product information amounts to several billions of euros per year and will rise further because of increasing globalisation. For example, complete documentation in the language of the target country is a must for opening up new markets, not only for marketing reasons but also because of legal regulations. For this reason, the optimisation of multilingual content creation and associated processes is one of the central challenges for all enterprises that want to be successful in the international arena. Machine translation can help in overcoming this.

Knowing its limitations

If you have ever tried one of the automatic translation engines on the web, you know how ridiculous the result can be. For the time being, the dream of fully automated high-quality translations will remain what it is now: a dream. Nevertheless, machine translation systems (MTS) have made good progress. Where most machine translations were

based on linguistic rules in the past, they are now based primarily on statistical calculations and this has resulted in substantial quality improvements. Thus, the system learns how to translate from one language to another by analysing previously translated documents. The amount of reference material is an important precondition. The more documents analysed, the better the result will be. Other criteria for the selection of reference material include the timeliness of the texts, the logical coherence of the texts and the consistency of the contents (that is, the uniform use of terminology).

Even if the material satisfies these criteria to a high degree, machine translation cannot substitute for the translator or the translation memory systems that are widely used today. Translation memory systems store previous translations in the form of segment pairs. While translating a text, the system displays localisation proposals from the data pool.

MTS serve as tools by means of which the overall productivity of the translation system and of human translators can be increased. Another use is for texts

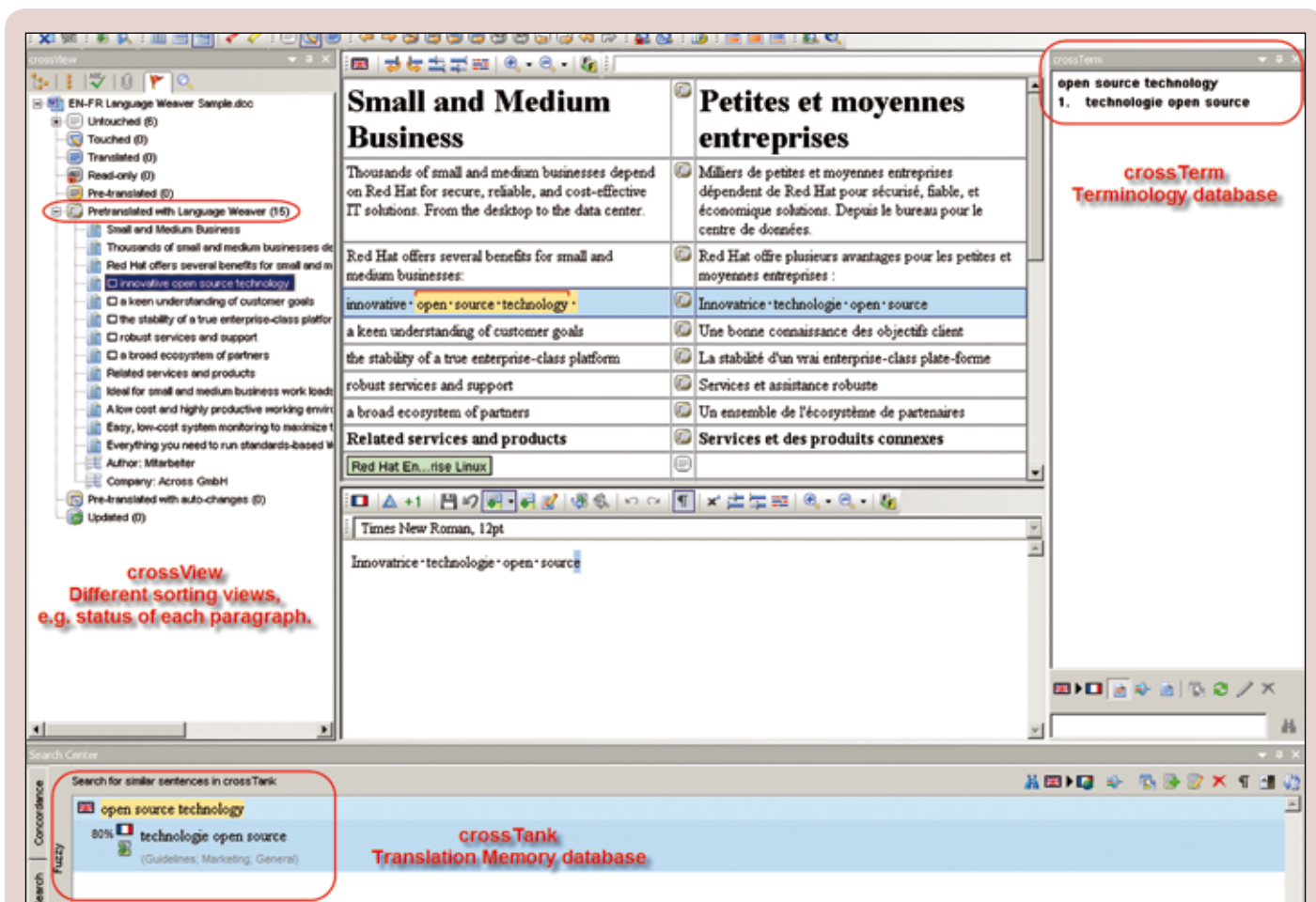


Figure 1. Machine-translated segments offered to a human translator by a translation memory system

that would never be translated without machine translation and of which only an initial draft is needed to understand their essence. An example is the information from knowledge databases and customer relationship management systems.

Playing to its strengths

More often than not, a translation produced by an MTS is only an approximation of the text in the foreign language, and rarely delivers fully acceptable results. However, efficiency can be increased considerably by using machine translation as a supplement to conventional translation methods. For this to happen, the MTS must be part of an integrated holistic solution that merges the various technological translation approaches; that is, a solution that enables interaction between the MTS and the translation memory, as well as workflow and terminology components. The panel shows a typical workflow.

Refining its capabilities

To increase the number of full matches for subsequent translation projects, every new translation represents the most important data source for a translation memory. Depending on system settings, every pair of source and target languages is automatically or manually stored in the database to form the basis for future translations. To further improve the quality of results, the MTS can be trained with the newly created translations.

The networking capabilities of some language technologies contribute to consistent data and contents. In these systems, the translation memory and all the language data it contains are available to everyone

Typical workflow incorporating machine pre-translation

1. In a new translation project, all texts are first compared with translation memory entries—that is, the system checks whether the language database already contains translations with identical wording (and formatting).
2. Text segments for which a full match is found are automatically pre-translated using the translation memory.
3. Text segments for which no full match is found are first submitted to the MTS.
4. The MTS delivers a preliminary translation that is sent to the language specialist for further processing.
5. Translators translate the full text, using one of two approaches as most appropriate:
 - ▶ Reading the machine-translated segments to understand the text, then translating it independently.
 - ▶ Taking the machine-translated segments as the basis for the translation, then adapting and correcting them as necessary.

involved in the translation process, including employees of the organisation and its subsidiaries and also external language service providers or freelance translators.

The art of optimising translation processes is in the tailored embedding of all available technologies. The technology platform should combine the various approaches and integrate them into a seamless workflow. The benefits depend on the type and volume of texts to be translated, the requirements for the translations and the overhead for customer-specific MTS training. In most cases, using machine translation is cost-effective only for medium and large volumes, and only as a supplement to existing processes (that is, as an additional step in the workflow between the translation memory and the human translator). The return on investment can easily be calculated from the productivity increase achieved. **C**

Andreas Dürr is Marketing Director of Across Systems GmbH. Across Language Server can be integrated with Language Weaver machine translation to achieve an optimised translation workflow of the type described. E: press@across.net W: www.across.net

Live & work in Berlin!

OVIDIUS

Ovidius offers you the chance to live and work in Berlin as a **Technical Author**. Will you **accept the challenge** to join our team and explore the German capital?

We are looking for an English native speaker, who is familiar with XML and interested in working with an XML based Content Management System.

Your tasks will be to produce documentation for our software, manage the localisation of user interfaces working closely together with our service department and the development team.

We offer:

- A challenging job developing our documentation processes
- An inspiring atmosphere with a great team

Your tasks will include:

- Set up technical manuals and user documentation for our systems and customised solutions
- Support the development team with the documentation for APIs etc.
- Localisation of GUIs
- Feedback to service and development team

Ovidius Berlin

Magazinstr. 15-16
10179 Berlin
Germany

Contact

Tel: +49 (30) 4081895-0
Fax: +49 (30) 4081895-99
Web: www.ovidius.com

Ovidius is based in Berlin with offices in the UK developing Content Management Systems and solutions. We specialise in software solutions for creating, managing, and publishing of technical and scientific information. TCToolbox is a powerful SGML/XML Content Management System for technical documentation. Ovidius also has a reputation as an expert for complex transformation and conversion solutions. MetaMorphosis, our transformation software, is used in over 20 countries. Current customers include Eurocopter, Schneider Electric, CSR, Bosch and Siemens.

Apply now!

We look forward to meeting you here in Berlin!

>>> ovidius-jobs@arcor.de

Look here for further information:
www.ovidius.com/files/pdf/job.pdf

