

METAL

TRANSLATION HEAVIES

METAL – the dysintuitive near-miss acronym stands for *Machine Translation and Analysis of Natural Language* – came of age in 1988. The Munich-based Applications Software Division of German electronics giant Siemens first exposed METAL to the full glare of commercial production last year.

Originally developed at the University of Texas, the MT system's German-to-English module is now commercially operational at several sites in West Germany and a handful of locations in Switzerland and the Netherlands.

METAL is a hardware-software standalone system, based on two minicomputers: the Sinix MX2 and the Symbolics 3610.

The Sinix provides the multiuser interface, on which source text is input and deformatted *before* translation, and reformatted, manually postedited and output *after* translation.

The translation itself takes place on the Symbolics. The dictionary, pre-analysis, transfer and synthesis programs are all written in the LISP artificial intelligence programming language.

Siemens is vaunting METAL as the first commercially operative MT system to make full use of AI, with a translation speed of one word per second or 200 pages per day.

The system also includes an Ethernet communications network and a laser printer.

METAL was designed for the large-volume translation of technical texts such as user guides, operating manuals, service handbooks, technical journals and scientific publications. It is therefore being targeted at industry, commerce, public services and large translation bureaus.

The German-to-English module is currently running at Siemens' own Corporate Translation Center in Munich. And it's been bought by the Dresdner Bank's head office in Frankfurt, Philips' German subsidiary in Nuremburg, and a number of government and academic institutions in Germany and Holland.

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In addition, it's being used at Hildesheim University, West Germany, to teach translation students MT.

Siemens plans to expand METAL's language-pair portfolio. English-to-German is now nearing production-readiness and should be on the market in the spring of 1989.

Meanwhile, Siemens-France and Wallonia's Regional Council are working on French-Dutch. Plans for the development of further combinations of English, German, Spanish, French and Dutch are all afoot.

The whole German-to-English METAL rig sells for DM 250,000 (US\$140,000).