Recycling DLT

Distributed Language Technology (DLT), the illustrious, ten year-old MT project at the second-largest systems house in the Netherlands, Buro voor Systeem Ontwikkeling (BSO), has come to a close, or perhaps more accurately, entered a new phase in 1991. "On January 1st, the DLT team officially became BSO/Language Technology," says Project leader Klaus Schubert. "It's been recast as an independent operating unit within the BSO/Multimedia Group." Its mandate is a broad one, according to Schubert, encompassing information retrieval, natural language database interfaces, and speech processing.

"With DLT, we reached the development stage," explains Schubert. "The prototypes and patents are now in place for systems for us to build in collaboration with larger partners." BSO, he points out, is a service-based organization which lacks the sales and marketing network necessary to turn such advanced research into market-ripe products. Moreover, adds Schubert, DLT will never be an end-product, but rather an individually tailored solution to the requirements of a specific organization.

Under the direction of former project leader Ton Witkam, the DLT team—as MT pundits know—took the daring approach of implementing Esperanto as the interlingua at the heart of this knowledge-based system. "Of course, DLT remains something of calling card for BSO/Language Technology," says Schubert. "With it, we acquired a great deal of knowledge and experience in the field of natural language processing." The way Schubert puts it, the DLT project will form the technological base for finding ways to overcome the semantic threshold in information retrieval. "It's the point," he remarks, "where the content of the text becomes relevant."

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