

# TranslationManager for Windows

## A radical new approach from IBM

*After more than ten years' exposure to computer-assisted translation systems which attempt to perform a full-blown translingual transmutation (and which generally produce indifferent results with random text), I approached IBM's TranslationManager for Windows (TMW) with a degree of scepticism. I soon discovered, however, that TMW represents a radical new approach based on a clear understanding of what the translation process involves and an accurate appraisal of the areas in which computers can realistically be expected to make a useful contribution.*



by  
John Newton

### **What is TranslationManager for Windows?**

This product, which is aptly named, is not a machine translation system: it does not perform a syntactic analysis and it does not seek to generate target-language structure.

TMW is a translator's productivity tool which exploits a largely untapped resource: the corpus of previously translated material involving related topics which most large translation consumers have available in machine-readable form. Designed with the professional translator in mind, and based around a powerful and flexible dictionary facility and a database made up of entries compiled automatically from the translation in hand and from previous trans-

lations, TMW matches source text lexical items and word sequences with existing target-language equivalents and proposes them to the translator who can then copy them into the translation, editing them as necessary.

TMW draws on the experience that IBM's own translators have accumulated in an environment where tight deadlines are routine and terminological consistency is a prerequisite. These factors are reflected in the strong emphasis placed on productivity improvement and terminology management.

### **Terminological consistency**

Achieving consistency of terminology — not just

within a single document, but right across whole series of related texts — is a major challenge that technical translators and translation coordinators are very familiar with. As the corpus of text on any specific subject within a given organisational context expands, or when time pressure necessitates the involvement of more and more translators, consistency becomes increasingly more difficult to achieve. IBM therefore decided to make consistency a cornerstone of its new system.

Translators have at their disposal a vast and barely tapped resource in the form of the translations that they have already done. These are generally stored on disk or tape and hardly ever reused. It is clear that consistency and productivity would be enhanced if this corpus of existing translations and their source texts could be automatically accessed and their content applied to new translations of similar texts. TMW sets out to do just that, and it succeeds admirably.

### TMW's functions

TMW comprises the following primary functions:

- an editing facility specifically designed for translation;
- Translation Memory: a database that stores translations;
- a terminology management system;
- support for 19 source languages;
- layout protection for file formatting;
- a "folder" concept for organising translation projects;
- an administration system.

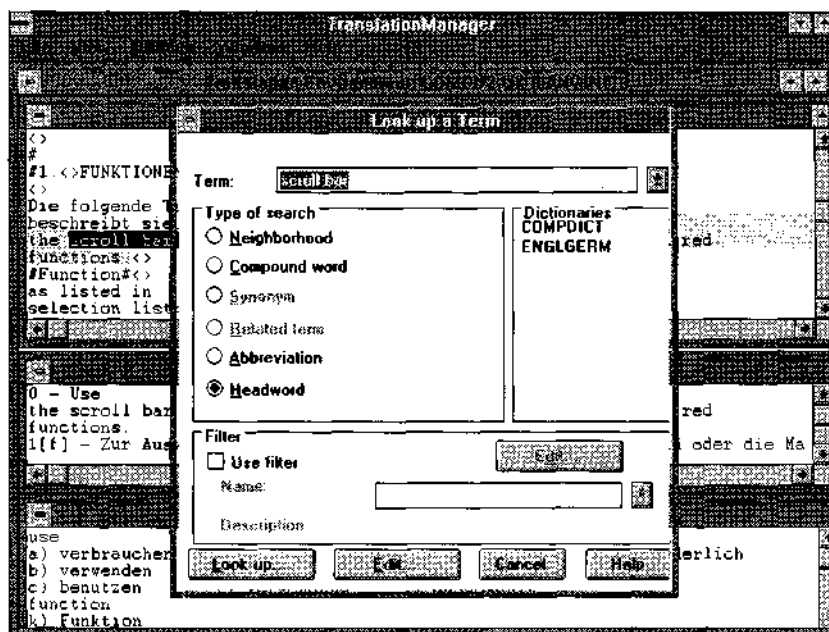
### Methodology

The backbone of the system is Translation Memory, a database which stores all segments translated using TranslationManager, along with their respective translations. A separate Translation Memory is created for each project. Previously translated text is identified by comparing the source text segments with those stored in Translation Memory.

TMW's editing facility (in which new translations are created) can handle a large number of popular DOS and Windows word processing formats, including Lotus Ami Pro, Microsoft Word and WordPerfect. The system automatically detects and adjusts itself to a source text's file format, which is then preserved to ensure that the translation has the same layout as the source text.

In broad outline, the methodology employed is as follows:

1. The information needed in order to process the translation must be specified: source language, target language, the related Translation Memory and the related dictionary
2. The source document (which must, of course, be

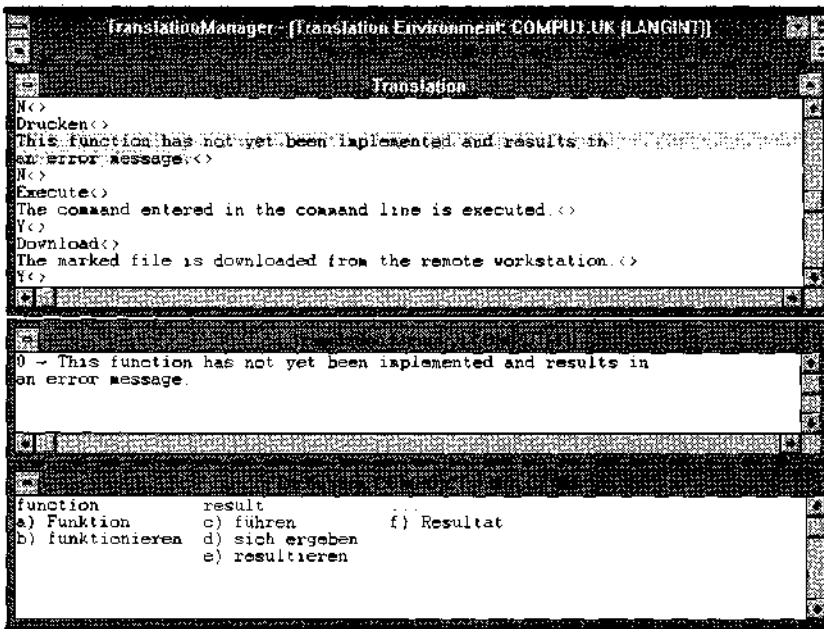
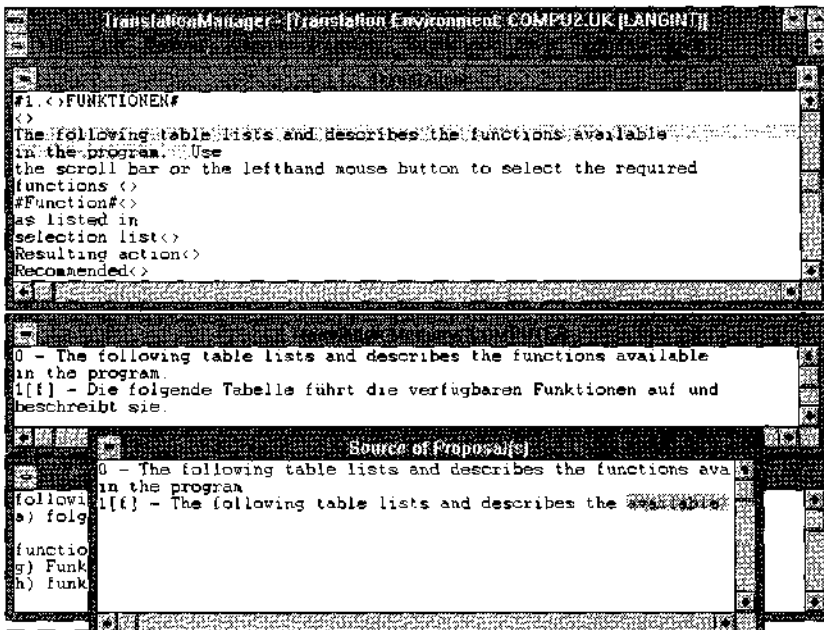


loaded on the computer) is then opened and TMW presents the first text segment to be translated — usually a complete sentence — against a yellow background, with the cursor located on the first character within the segment. The screen at this point is split into three windows: the editing facility, the Translation Memory, and the dictionary — collectively referred to as the Translation Environment.

3. The translation is created by typing directly over the source text using normal editing functions and toggling between insert mode and replace mode as necessary.
4. Once the segment is translated, it is saved to disk, stored in the Translation Memory and replaced on-screen by the next segment. This sequence continues throughout the translating session. If a translation proposal appears in the Translation Memory window, it means that a translation of an identical segment, originating from a previous translating session, is available and can be copied directly into the active translation. Sometimes, several translation possibilities are offered, and proposals are also made in the dictionary window and these can be copied into the translation in the same way.
5. When the whole of the source text has been translated, it can be saved to the user's preferred word processing format and copied or printed in the normal way.

Central to this whole process is the concept of the "folder", which is a collection of documents belonging to a given project, with links to the relevant dictionaries, Translation Memory and terminology list. The "folder" is the primary means of organising information in TranslationManager for Windows.

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### Documentation

TMW comes with two manuals — a “Translator’s Reference” and a “Translator’s Workbook”, as well as a “Quick Tour” and a “Dictionary and Services Catalog”<sup>3</sup>.

In general, the documentation is adequate, but in my opinion it is the weakest element of this product. In places, the English text reads like a rather poor translation: e.g. on page 23 of the Translator’s Workbook we find “You have received, with the TranslationManager program, a folder called WORKFLFR...”. In addition, there are many examples of non-standard usage, with “do” being used with “task” in preference to “perform”, while

“sélectionnez” in the French screen text will no doubt shock the purists.

It also seems incongruous, in a document aimed at professional translators (Translator’s Workbook page 16) to state that “As businesses operate more globally, information needs to be presented in various languages to a greater extent than ever before. Translation is inherently an expensive and time-consuming process...”. This surely belongs in a promotional blurb!

Logic is sometimes completely abandoned, as in “TranslationManager is most effective once a word processing document is finished and ready to be translated. It is even more {more than most?!} useful for documents that have been translated before, but need to be updated” (also on page 16 of the Translator’s Workbook).

The Quick Tour is indeed an extremely brief one which explores only the most basic functions at a superficial level, and there is no on-screen tutorial of the kind we have come to expect from Borland, Lotus, Microsoft and other major software publishers. Moreover the only sample document and related files I could find was for translation from English to German. It would be helpful for the product to be supplied with sample documents and translation memories for all the supported language pairs.

Despite the above comments, the deficiencies in the documentation do not impair comprehension and the diligent user should have no difficulty in learning and using TMW’s functions.

The Dictionary and Services Catalog is a useful resource which lists the ancillary products and support services available from third-party suppliers.

### Windows integration

Although the product supplied for this review constitutes the first-ever release for the Windows environment, the level of integration is, on the whole, good. However, normal Windows editing functions are not supported by TMW’s editor and users will no doubt find this tiresome. After all, anyone who normally works in Ami Pro or Word for Windows will quite naturally expect double clicking a word to select that word, clicking while holding down Ctrl to select the sentence in which the insertion point is located, and Ctrl+Z should “undo”, etc.

### Conclusions

Here we have a product which I can unreservedly state, is practical and useful. Instead of attempting the impossible by seeking to emulate the complex thought processes of a human translator, it concentrates on the routine tasks which a number-crunching computer can always be expected to perform more rapidly and more consistently than a human. As a major consumer of translation, IBM had a vested

interest in developing such a solution, and the combination of IT know-how and practical translation experience brought to bear on this project has yielded a product which any organisation routinely handling large volumes of translation within a specific domain would do well to consider.

Although TMW can be legitimately described as “user-friendly”, there can be no doubt that new users would have much to gain by attending the training courses provided by IBM and its network of authorised third-party suppliers, as this should ensure a much faster and smoother transition to full productivity.

#### **Notes**

1. **Segment:** a small unit of text, such as a sentence, that TranslationManager identifies on the basis of punctuation and markup.
2. **Dictionary** here means a user-compiled collection of source-text lexical items, translation equivalents and other information.
3. American spelling is used throughout the manuals and on-screen.

#### **System requirements**

*Software:* Operating system: Windows 3.1 or higher

*Hardware:* PC with 386 processor or higher; system memory 4MB; Available hard disk space 15MB; Mouse