CAT seminar in Slovenia

It was the first seminar of this kind to be presented at the Faculty of Arts. The programme was prepared and conducted by Robert Clark, Information Technology Director with Praetorius Limited, UK and Software Editor of *Language International*. The lectures were attended by over 60 participants and the hands-on workshop by 20 translation students of English and German as well as Department staff and commercial translators.

Slovenia, like so many other countries of the world, is preparing to meet the technological challenges which will be posed by the 21st century. The use of computer-based translation tools is already having a great impact on the translation industry and the status of the translator. This is why Robert Clark came to Slovenia — not, as he said, to *persuade* us to use computer-based translation tools, but simply to *show* us that such systems are already available and to *encourage* us to think about them. The lecturer's caution seemed justified as the make-up of the audience was quite varied, ranging from avowed computer-users to those who had no computer experience or were avowed *computerphobes*.

Robert Clark started his first lecture by asking the "doubting Thomases" to express their views about the use of computers in translation. He showed us that the negative feelings about translation technology, particularly Machine Translation, are ungrounded. Machine Translation should only be applied to specific, narrow domains and is normally used to provide the commissioner with a rough translation that can be later post-edited, if required. The overwhelming majority of translation still requires human translators.

Robert Clark gave us an overview of currently available translation tools: word processors, spell, grammar and style checkers, electronic dictionaries, terminological databases, text retrieval packages and others. He discussed the state of the art of the more sophisticated systems (eg. SYSTRAN, IBM TranslationManager, Star Transit, Trados Translators Workbench). He concluded his first lecture by pointing out that, in view of the technological expertise currently expected of commercial translators and the impact of future developments in Language Engineering on the translation industry, computer-assisted translation should be integrated into translator training in order to prepare future translators to meet the needs of the coming century.

In his second lecture, Robert Clark focused on one of the translation memory-based tools, the IBM TranslationManager for Windows. This would be the system participants would use in the workshop.

Using a computer and an LCD panel, he explained to the audience the features of the program, ie. translation folders, translation memory, dictionaries, management features, and how to operate them.

The workshop was held on both days. The participants were given two similar texts in English to be translated into the Slovene language. They first used the system to generate a terminology list which was used to create an electronic English-Slovene dictionary. This immediately led to an animated discussion on terminology management. Since the system automatically accesses the dictionary and proposes the translation of found words, the translator only needs to press a key combination to have the word pasted into the translation *as it appears in the dictionary*. Slovene is a heavily inflected Slavonic language. Because words are usually entered into the dictionary in their basic form, i.e. nominative singular, infinitive, it meant that the proposed word constantly required deletion/addition.

We all felt that it would be more useful to enter the translations of words into a dictionary as stems to facilitate the addition of endings. All participants were willing to learn and Robert Clark had to admit that they were very quick to grasp the program's operation. The students also realised the importance of such a system in technical translation. They suggested that computer technology should be made accessible to translation students. The participants were very satisfied with the seminar. Robert Clark put in a lot of mileage, not only in flying to Slovenia, but also in moving around amongst the workshop participants in the computer room. *(Sylvana Orel)*

Robert Clark gives a demonstration to students