

User Information and Support for Word Processing



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One of the main conclusions of the major report called *Les industries de la langue: un marché en devenir* (The language industries: a constantly evolving market)¹ was as follows: "There seems to be a real need for training. If this is not met, the intelligent and full use of the increasing potential offered by programs risks becoming the prerogative of a few specialists" (p. 79). The measures proposed in the report entitled *Des industries de la langues pour quoi faire?* (What purpose do the language industries serve?)² thus include "user information and support" (p. 149). Together with database management systems, when these are not used with the aid of a program, and spreadsheets, word processing systems are amongst the most widely used software programs, offering some of the greatest potential.

However, this potential is decidedly under-exploited. The main professional users of this tool are secretaries, translators, editors (particularly editing secretaries), journalists, authors and notaries. Not to mention all the occasional users (teachers, students writing their theses and papers, executives drafting reports and correspondence, etc.) Chronologically speaking, and in terms of the volume of operations, word processing is also the main software used on microcomputers.

Under-use of Word Processing Programs

A series of indicators reveals that word processing programs are systematically under-used by all writers.

A survey conducted among specialised editors in the context of the CTB research for the Ministry of Technological Development and Employment of the Walloon Region of Belgium³ highlighted, amongst other things, a serious lack of knowledge of word processing procedures among writers. The editors deplore not only the fact that "working on manuscripts where the layout has been done by the author sometimes costs as much as (or even more than) the final production of a manuscript provided as a flat file (or even keyed in abroad)", but also the fact that many writers use "the space bar instead of tabulations, mix up ls and ls, etc.", cannot use "simple functions such as hard spaces or hard hyphens", or "produce columns manually".

Moreover, a survey on word processing knowledge amongst journalists, quoted by R. Laufer and Scavetta,⁴ revealed that journalists "use relatively few functions" but "are convinced that they have a good level of knowledge in relation to their own needs" and that at the same time, as they do not manage to manipulate the text exactly as they would wish, they would like "to have a word processing

program designed by journalists for journalists". The "all-purpose" courses given by private software-teaching institutions and in tutorials only explain the commands, and not the advantages of the programs for a specific profession.

Besides, surveys carried out among translation agencies and self-employed translators, our own experience in teaching word processing to translators and interpreters, and the people who consult our word processing manuals, reveal that translators systematically under-use their word processing programs (which are often old versions!), whether this be as regards the layout functions, editing and revision or file management (storing, etc.). In particular, they fail to make the connection between the commands and the applications which can be computerised. This is particularly true of translators who left translating colleges over ten years ago, or those from some institutes where a rapid and non-targeted initiation into word processing is provided outside the institute itself.

What commands are they familiar with? Moving and copying text, global search and replace, printing individual pages, bold, capitals, italics, underlining, single or double line spacing, pagination, and footnotes. That is about all. Worse still, at certain famous international institutions, not all the translators have a word processor, far from it; in fact, their trade unions are opposed to the widespread use of word processors, which, they say, will make the secretaries attached to the translation departments superfluous. In making such an assertion, the trade unions are reducing the word processor to a simple aid when typing up translations.

As for surveys carried out among smaller SMEs and self-employed persons who do not have a secretary, they show that the knowledge of university graduates with commercial or legal training is even

more restricted. Like the authors of scientific or technical works, they use their word processor like a typewriter, centring text with the space bar or tab key, for example.

The bodies responsible for languages are proposing to write programs which, benefiting from costly subsidies, would repeat word processing commands, macro-commands which are easy to program in a word processing macro-command language or a programming language which uses word processing commands (DDL or DDE routines). In its eighth working plan proposal,⁵ DG XIII at the Commission of the European Communities lists for instance amongst the "interactive text generators": "development of prototype interactive text generator producing multilingual user parameter derived semi-standard text".

Renewed power of Word Processing programs

The number of word processing commands has tripled over the last three or four years. These days, a word processing software program also offers a spreadsheet (and a large number of documents contain tables, the data in which can be calculated using a word processor), a graphics package, a drawing program and an increasingly sophisticated DTP program. These modules make the use of specialised software programs unnecessary.

Word processing programs also offer "services", such as hypertext, which "can be used to create direct links, in the form of buttons, between various points in a document. These spots can then be easily run through using the mouse"⁶, or a document management system which has a far greater capacity than the WINDOWS file management system in particular and can be used to manage textual archives.

The demands of the hardware also require increased knowledge on the part of the user: laser printers call for quality close to that of the editing of printed documents, in particular from the authors of specialised articles, which the editors of non-commercial journals are increasingly requesting in camera-ready form.

The most recent word processing programs are referred to as "intelligent". In other words, they carry out certain tasks in the background, such as checking spelling mistakes frequently made by the author whilst the text is being edited. However, they have to be taught how to do so.

The most recent word processing programs can be fully parameterised, not only for the user but for types of work or text (menu colour, default character size and font, directories to be borrowed).

Increased difficulties for the user

All this is not as easy to learn as it might seem.

Some designers trim the documentation, "trans-

ferring major sections of it to the online help, which does not really lend itself to systematic learning"⁷. Some commands disappear altogether or change when versions are modified: the character counter, which is correct in WORD 2, ignores the spaces in WORD 6, although these are included as full characters when calculating translation invoices.

Moreover, the most recent versions of word processing programs are supplied with remarkable utilities, but no relevant documentation is provided for them, owing to a lack of space.

The word processing macro command language is now a complete programming language, with all the syntax problems which this implies (WORDBASIC, in WORD 2 and WORD 6 for WINDOWS). Consequently, although it can be used to carry out very complex repetitive applications automatically, it requires more programming knowledge than that of previous versions.

Through WINDOWS, Microsoft has contributed towards greatly increasing the user-friendliness of the most recent versions of word processing programs, and the interface for DOS versions of word processing programs has been completely reprogrammed in order to have them run under WINDOWS. In doing so, however, Microsoft has obliged word processor users to relearn this interface and consequently, their whole word processor.

Applications for translation and interpretation

Below is a list of the jobs and services which can be carried out automatically by word processing systems, without even having to use macro command language programs. The name of the word processing commands used by these applications is given in italics.

For translators

- Quotes, invoices, invoice reminders for translations, revisions, adaptations, rewriting and fees for specific language courses, including the automatic calculation of amounts: *mailing and calculation commands*
- Classifying and filing translated texts: *global document management commands*
- Administrative management of translations for the month: work schedule management, form letters (requests for documentation, orders for books, etc.): *WINDOWS mailing and agenda management commands*
- Dispatching and reception by fax of quotes, short translations, experts' comments, replies from experts or clients to requests for explanations of the text: *print commands interfaced with a WINDOWS fax software program*
- Personal documentation management: *global document processing commands*

Automatic text generation:

- a. direct insertion into document or selection of standard paragraphs for signatures, courtesy phrases, legal expressions: *paragraph library commands* (also known as "automatic inserts" in some word processing software programs)
- b. insertion of variable text into a "form" (translations of contracts, invitations to tender, schedule of conditions): *"form" type documents*;
- c. copying repetitive texts (refrains in translations of songs, poems): *"copy and paste" commands*;
- d. merging a list of prices which vary every quarter with the set text of a letter (translation of commercial correspondence): *document merger commands* (or *inclusion*, depending on the software);
- e. global search and replace of incorrect terms in technical translations: *global search and replace commands*.

- (Semi-)automatic editing of texts in a foreign language (commercial correspondence, contracts, etc.): *paragraph library commands (automatic insertions)*
- Checking syntax and spelling in the translated text: *speller and grammatical check commands*
- Corrections in "temporary correction" mode for translations submitted on diskette by a specialist, a reviser or a colleague: *temporary correction commands*
- Rereading in "temporary correction" mode of translation proofs intended for publication: *idem*
- Consultation of a resident general language dictionary during translation (advertising adaptations, literary and journalistic translations), without exiting the translation and offering the possibility of inserting the equivalent term in a foreign language into the translation by pressing a single key: *commands for resident dictionaries which can be interfaced with word processing software*
- Consultation of customers' glossaries or glossaries specific to a particular field during translation (specialised translations), without exiting the translation and offering the possibility of inserting the equivalent or definitions, or graphics, in a foreign language into the translation by pressing a single key: *commands for glossary management systems* (managers of semi-textual data bases adapted to the creating, sorting and consultation of glossaries and vocabulary lists with definitions) *which can be interfaced with the style sheets of word processing software and their macro commands*
- Consultation of term banks without exiting the translation before translating, such as the BELGOTERM information technology vocabulary bank (Ministry of Economic Affairs of the

Belgian federal government) or TERMIUM (term bank of the Federal Government of Canada) on CD-ROM : *commands for banks which can be interfaced with WINDOWS*

- Manual and automatic presentation (leaflets, certificates, newsletters, company magazines, memos, *curricula vitae*, tables, press releases, etc.) of translations of certain documents: *document creation on the basis of models*
- Expansion of general dictionaries of spelling checkers: *speller commands*
- Specific expansion, from within the word processing program, of customer glossaries and vocabulary: *commands for glossary management systems which can be interfaced with style sheets of word processors and their macro commands*.

For interpreters

- Quotes, invoices, invoice reminders for language courses and interpretation assignments (plus related allowances and costs), including the automatic calculation of amounts: *mailing and calculation commands*
- Administrative management of interpretation assignments for the month or the quarter (diary management: notes, travelling and printing of dates, topics and venues of conferences): *WINDOWS file and diary management commands*
- Dispatching and reception by fax of quotes for interpretation assignments, preparatory documents for conferences, hotel reservations, colloquia timetables, session transparencies, files and conference leaflets, summaries or press releases: *print commands interfaced with a facsimile software for WINDOWS*
- Consultation of specialised glossaries before sessions (possibly with print-out in order of appearance of terms in the text of statements): *commands for glossary management which can be interfaced with style sheets of word processing software and their macro commands*
- Consultation of terminology banks before sessions: *idem*
- Compilation of pint-point specialised glossaries: *commands for glossary management systems which can be interfaced with style sheets of word processors and their macro commands*
- Expansion of general speller dictionaries: *speller commands*
- Personal documentation management: *global document processing commands*
- Search for synonyms and words with a similar meaning in the general language multilingual dictionary to enrich one's vocabulary (and thus increase one's verbal fluency): *thesaurus commands*
- Specific expansion, from within the word

processing program, of customer glossaries and vocabulary: *commands for glossary management systems which can be interfaced with style sheets of the word processors and their macro commands*, etc.

Word Processors: The new interface

Our survey for the Belgian Ministry for Technological Development showed that word processors are increasingly being used as interfaces.

Word processors are first of all used as interfaces between book translators and printers, between journalists and DTP software for newspapers and magazines.

Besides, the glossary management systems are now resident and can be consulted without exiting word processors operating on WINDOWS. They are closely linked to these programs: for MULTITERM and WORD/WORDPERFECT, via a style sheet connected to macro commands and DDL commands.

Dictionaries on hard disk and on CD-ROM and certain term banks can be consulted from within the word processor or are also more closely linked to it through OLE or DDL.

Word processors are the entrance to (pre-editing) and exit from (post-editing) automatic translation software programs.

Last but not least, word processors can be used to send facsimile messages by computer, either with the aid of style sheets automatically typing the facsimile header or via linking print functions to facsimile dispatch software programs (TEMPO from Télindus for example).

Training

The translation training institutes in the Walloon Region and in Brussels offer all students a word processing course. The training plan which we are currently organising is therefore aimed at professional translators of a Belgian ministry. The program includes:

- Advanced word processing retraining.
- Targeting examples and exercises to the specific applications to be used by translators (see list above).
- Extending these by providing tips on integrating word processing into daily practices.

Information

Information could be provided via publications from national associations for translation, for instance the associations members of the FIT (*Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs*); this would take the form, in particular, of short texts giving advice, along the lines of this example on WORD 2 for WINDOWS:

How to reverse the direction of a glossary

You can use a Microsoft integrated macro command to do this. Click FILE, then OPEN, then type the name of the glossary and click OK. Click TOOLS, then MACRO, then type TABLECOLUMNROTATION and click RUN.

How to merge, to save typing, a translation containing a section of fixed text (letter) and a text containing variable data (price list), i.e. respectively the documents, a price list with a price quotation, for example.

Click FILE then OPEN. Type the name of the document containing the offer of services immediately, then click OK. Place the mouse pointer in the position where the prices should be inserted, then click. Click INSERT, then FILE and immediately type the name of the document containing the price list, then click OK.

Many translators do not use the grammar checker of their word processor, although that of WORD is for example better than some "linguistic" grammar checkers sold separately which claim to be based on sounder morphological and syntactic analyses. In WORD, the weak spots are the style checker and certain punctuation signs (colons are wrongly seen as repetition). Fortunately, pointless rules or those which do not function correctly can be deactivated systematically or on a case by case basis.

Click FILE then OPEN and type the name of the document to be checked. Click TOOLS, then GRAMMAR to check your text. Launch the check by clicking START.

If the speller sees a mistake but does not offer the correct solution, click SUGGESTIONS then REPLACE if it suggests the correct solution. If it does not suggest the correct solution at the top of the list but does so further down, move down the list using the arrow key until the correct solution is highlighted, then click REPLACE. If the system does not offer a solution, or does not offer the correct solution, correct the wrong word and click REPLACE. If the speller proposes a correct substitute for an error, click REPLACE and this will be transferred to your text.

If the grammar check proposes a correct solution, click this twice and it will be transferred to your document. If the grammar check notices an error but lets you correct it by asking you to check (an ending, for example), you can make the correction in the text itself, outside the check box, after having clicked twice in the position where you wish to make the correction (by using the DELETE key and typing one or more correct letters), then click START to relaunch the grammar check.

If the speller or grammar check makes a mistake and stops on a correct word, click IGNORE.

When the check is completed, to save your corrections click on the icon of the small diskette, to the left of the scissors icon (below FILE). Then click FILE, and CLOSE to remove the document from the computer's memory.

This heading, which could be entitled The word processing page, would also include macro commands and programs in macro command language accompanied by their instructions for use, which could, moreover, be written upon request.

Survey among other Word Processor users

We do not yet have any precise information about the needs of secretaries, journalists and other writers. No survey has been carried out, at least in Belgium, on the way in which such people use word processors, the way in which they reorganise (or do not reorganise!) their daily work around them, on macro commands or macro-command languages programs really used in word processors. A detailed survey would be necessary before information and support can be offered to these categories of users. This should be backed up by close observation of their daily practices involving word processors. According to our experience in the now yearly replacement of word processor versions, the obligation (for temporary secretaries, self-employed translators and journalists paid at piecework rate) to change software programs is a real hindrance in increasing knowledge of the advanced potential of this tool.

Notes

1. *Les industries de la langue: un marché en devenir. Résultats d'une enquête menée auprès des utilisateurs francophones potentiels.* E. Biren, A. Moulin, F. Pichault, Observatoire wallon des industries de la langue, Lige University, Lige, 1990, 98 p.
2. *Des industries de la langue pour quoi faire? Technologies, usages et marchés.* Observatoire wallon des industries de la langue, Liège University, Liège, 1993, 173 p.
3. *Informatisation de la terminographie. Exploitation des index pour pointer les termes.* Centre de Terminologie de Bruxelles, Institute Libre Marie Haps, Brussels, 1993, 209 p.
4. *Texte, hypertexte, hypermédia.* R. Laufer and Scavetta, PUF. coll. "Que sais-je?" Paris, 1992.
5. *Language and Technology. Synthesis of Proposal for an RTD Programme by Users, Industry and Research.* Commission of the European Communities, DG XIII, September 1992.
6. Improve your word processing. E. Oehmichen, in *Windows Plus* N 9, June 1994, p. 126.
7. Improve your word processing *op. cit.*