

Preface

Machine translation has become a key technology in present-day globalized communications scene, a truly cross-disciplinary technology which should not be used without a certain level of understanding. As a result, many universities and academic institutions teach courses on machine translation, both as graduate and as undergraduate courses. Courses may be aimed, on the one hand, at translation and linguistics students, and, on the other hand, at computer science or computer engineering students, but they may also be of interest to any person involved with information technologies in a multilingual setting (electronic commerce, localization, multilingual documentation, cross-language information retrieval). The cross-disciplinary nature of the discipline poses important challenges on instructors, who have to deal either with computer science and engineering students without an adequate background on linguistics and translation or with translation and linguistics students without experience with computers. The existence of widely-spread preconceptions, fears, and expectations about machine translation, which interfere with the learning process, needs also addressing by instructors.

On the other hand, due to the growth in the internet, both commercial and experimental machine translation systems are more readily available than ever, and, if adequately used, may be very beneficial for education. The world-wide web may also be seen as the medium used for teaching, as it may naturally integrate real MT systems as part of the learning environment.

In view of these concerns, Derek Lewis and Mikel Forcada set out to organize what eventually became the Teaching Machine Translation workshop, which will be held on September 22, 2001 as part of Machine Translation Summit VIII in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, with assistance from Margrethe H. Moeller, Federico Gaspari and Juan Antonio Pérez-Ortiz. This volume collects the papers that will be presented at that workshop; as expected, the papers address a good fraction of the general concerns expressed above.

Invited speaker Lorna Balkan addresses the use of the world wide web for the teaching of machine translation. Dorothy Kenny and Andy Way look at the contrasts when teaching to translation students or computational linguistics students, while Viviane Clavier and Céline Poudat focus on non-computer-science students and Elia Yuste-Rodrigo focuses on translation students; Harold Somers adds a novel group of students which may also benefit from exposure to MT: language learners. Judith Belam addresses the transferability of skills acquired during a MT course, while Federico Gaspari describes how a survey can be used before and after an MT course to evaluate its effectiveness. Etienne Blanc addresses a very special group of trainees: those involved in a MT development project, and describes the use of hypertextual views of the MT systems in action as a learning tool. Finally, Juan Antonio Pérez-Ortiz and Mikel Forcada show how to use a commercial MT system in the laboratory so that students start to discover the strategies used beyond the basic word-for-word model.

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