

Case Study

John Deere: Improvements to current language services

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By:

SMART Translations

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This study is in response to your requirement to provide feedback on translations of your documents and to propose a system of improvement.

First of all, please accept our appreciation of your efforts as it is much more usual to provide feedback to the translators, who are only rarely asked to express their own opinions. We have several proposals and hope not to get too wordy about them.

Now to get directly to individual points of your inquiry:

1. **Sufficiency of reference materials**

- Answer:** Reference materials have only been supplied partly.
Proposal: Please ensure that each document to be translated is supplied to the translator along with detailed reference material, such as e.g. PDF print files.
Reason: This helps the translator learn more about the context of the sentence he/she is about to translate, avoids unnecessary inquiries towards the the client and speeds up the entire translation process.

2. **Information supplied**

- Answer:** Fully sufficient.
Proposal: Please ensure that information is supplied in a structured form, e.g. in an Excel table.
Reason: Structured formats help assign importance and/or relevance of information, contribute to translator's better orientation, thus ensuring that your instructions are implemented.

3. **Using several translators for one job**

- Answer:** Using several translators for one project is nowadays usual, provided the rules mentioned under point 9 are defined, implemented and adhered to.
Proposal: Please refer to point 9.
Reason: N/A

4. **Foreign words in source language**

- Answer:** No foreign (non-English) words found in source documents so far.
Proposal: N/A
Reason: N/A

5. **Quality of English source text**

- Answer:** In some cases we have seen **wordiness and unnecessarily excessive use of nominal phrases** at places where using one or two adjectives would have been more appropriate.
Proposal: Please note that not every language possesses the ability to use sequences of four or five nouns. For example in Czech, we have to adjectivize all nouns that come before the last noun in the phrase. Sometimes, this isn't enough though and we have to split one short sentence into two long sentences to make the translation readable. In such cases, the target text may extend considerably

(by one third or even more) and source-word pricing is getting out of place. We **recommend** that your corporate language department develops a system of guidelines your technical writers should adhere to. These guidelines should make the text prepared better for translation.

This also includes **consistency in source text terminology** which lead to considerable savings (e.g. using consistently “*unscrew the bolts*” OR “*remove bolts*” or “*screw*” OR “*bolt*”). In other words, technical writers preparing the documents should bear in mind that the documents are going to be translated and that they should be as little English-centered as possible.

It would also make sense to **have the English documents proofread** by a native speaker with linguistic education, as technical writers are prone to using a language that is incomprehensible to non-technicians. Using “*screws*” and “*bolts*” inconsistently only confuses the translator who, seeing two different terms although in the same or similar context, will immediately consult the dictionary and use two different terms to translate “*screws*” and “*bolts*” even though they should in fact mean the same.

Reason: See above

6. **Amount of time allocated to a job**

Answer: This is very text-dependent. As you may be informed, translating a user’s guide is different from translating a service manual. But as for us, we have never had any major problems with meeting the deadlines. This point is further discussed under point 9.

Proposals: Please refer to point 9.

Reason: Please refer to point 9.

7. **Feedback to QA forms**

Answer: No QA forms have been used.

Proposals: Please ensure that a QA form is implemented to help translators with handling terminology. The QA form should include:

- File name where the term in question occurs
- Context
- Source term
- Suggested translation
- Comments by the translator (if applicable)
- A field for approval by your Department (Term approved: Y/N)

Reason: A clearly structured QA form helps handle questionable terms and maintain consistency of terms throughout multiple documents on a quick-response basis.

8. **Quality of corrections by proofreaders etc.**

Answer: No experience so far.

Proposals: Please make sure that proofreaders’ feedbacks are forwarded to the translator on a regular basis.

Reason: Regular feedback improves translators’ skills and helps them avoid making similar mistakes (if any) in future.

9. Quality of TMs; Consistency of terminology

We have left these two points to be the very last ones as they need some deeper discussion. The TM quality and consistency of terminology are two closely related topics, in fact the quality of TM depends on the quality and consistency of terminology.

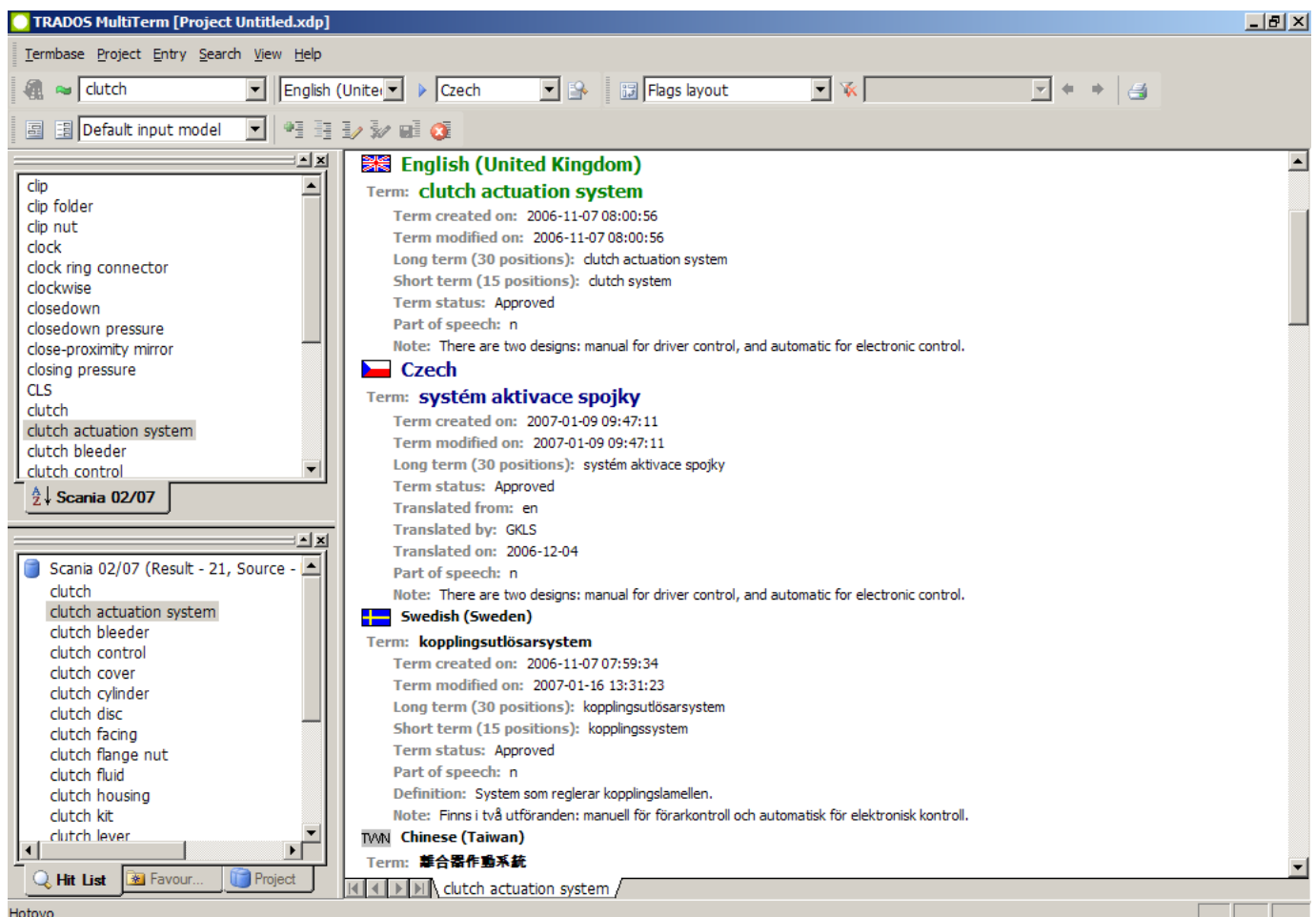
a. Develop a glossary

Without a high-quality (preferably multilingual) MultiTerm glossary, it is virtually impossible to maintain consistency when dividing a translation project among several translators.

I suggest that you:

make a list of key terms based on current materials > have this term list translated into several languages by translators > send the translations to commercial representatives (subsidiaries) in the target-language countries for terminological review > import reviewed terms into MultiTerm > make the termbase and its updates available to translators (via FTP or in a similar way).

Such process takes time but pays in the end. The result may look like this:



b. Perform initial cleanup of current TM

Ask a translator to review the current TM “as it is” and to remove any incorrect and/or stylistically wrong translations. Instruct him/her to prepare a term list for your approval and, once the terms have been approved, to amend the TM target segments accordingly.

Include new key terms in the termbase as soon as possible and provide the translator working on the cleanup with an updated termbase version for final QA-check. This process may cost time and money but it is essential to remove “bad segments” before moving on to next projects.

c. **Develop or let us develop clean-cut guidelines for translators**

Take time to develop complex, yet clear, simple and easy-to-follow guidelines the translators would have to adhere to. The guidelines should provide instructions on:

- use of terminology
- style consistency (not using different language registers in multiple documents of the same type)
- a note that the translation should not read as a translation but rather as a text written in the target language from the scratch
- use of QA templates
- clear, step-by-step description of compulsory translation steps to be taken (**analysis > translation > proofreading > spellcheck > QA check > corrections > one more QA check**); not everybody “loses time” on this process, which results in poor translations and an even poorer TM which again has destructive influence on future translations.

d. **Provide translators with technical information they might not be familiar with**

Not all translators are familiar with QA features included in Trados. For this reason, they should be instructed that such QA features exist and that translators *have to* use them.

For instance you can instruct translators equipped with Trados 2006 to export the translation into SDLX (.itd) format and use the SDLX QA-checker which is more powerful, precise and reliable than the one included in TagEditor.

When processing TagEditor (.ttx) files we recommend making a conversion to and spell-check in Word compulsory because it is more accurate than the TagEditor spell-check, although they are both using one and the same dictionary.

e. **Instruct translators to use the TM not only for retrieving previous translations**

Translation memories have one invaluable, yet underestimated feature: **they are searchable**. Once the current TM is free of bad translation segments, ask translators to use the “**Concordance**” function in case they cannot find a term or phrase in the termbase.

f. **Define clear hierarchy for importance of different sources of terminology**

For example, instruct the translators to look for terminology first in:

- the termbase
- the TM using the “**Concordance**” feature (if the term is not found in the termbase)
- dictionaries (if the term is found neither in the termbase nor in the TM)

Instruct translators to use QA forms for queries when in even the slightest doubt about correct translation or where multiple translations of a term are possible and update the termbase with the new term in all languages for future translations.

g. **Have the translations reviewed from time to time**

by an industry professional (e.g. by educated engineer John Smith, MSc.) working with John Deere's subsidiary in the target-language country to provide **constructive** feedback (not meaningless, meretricious criticism).

h. **Give us more time**

Earlier in this document we have mentioned that we have never had problems with meeting your deadlines. This is true, but it is true for *us* and this statement does not necessarily have to apply to all translators. Please note that a skilled and knowledgeable translator's daily word rate is around 2,000. Our translators' daily word rate is around 3,500 words.

Moreover, if a translator is to stick to the above translation and QA-check processes, the deadlines will inevitably have to be extended.

You might find some points too demanding or too expensive to implement but do believe us, they are not. The initial costs seem high but this investment is not a black hole; it is *investment* that brings results, both in reduced costs and in increased quality. And we will be happy to assist you to achieve both of them.

Kind regards,

Mgr. Stanislav Pokorný

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