

ROSEMARIE SAUER-STIPPERGER

SYSTRAN Funnies

Although the post-editing of MT raw output can be a rather frustrating task, it is not without its funny moments.

When asked what they most liked or disliked about MT, some of our users deplored the still mediocre quality of machine translation, but enjoyed a good laugh at the occasionally humorous computer renderings.

The following is a collection of the sort of comical translations that can come up, in particular during the early development stages of a language pair. Often these originate from proper nouns. For example the name of Mrs VAN HOOF was translated '*sabot de fourgonnette*', while the former Israeli premier, BEGIN, came out as a verb form¹:

EN FR

| | |
|---|--|
| US supports <i>Begin</i> proposal | Les supports américains commencent la proposition |
| <i>disabled</i> women | femmes <i>mises hors service</i> |
| the <i>boisterous male</i> | le <i>mâle turbulent</i> |
| the progress towards monetary union must be <i>made concrete</i> by | les progrès vers l'union monétaire doivent être <i>accomplis au béton</i> |
| This is a <i>grave breech</i> of human rights | Ceci est une <i>culasse grave</i> des droits de l'homme |
| residential <i>nurseries</i> | pépinières résidentielles |
| a <i>bunch</i> of people | une <i>botte</i> de gens |
| animal on the <i>hoof</i> | animal sur <i>le sabot</i> |
| <i>aerated</i> drink | boisson aérée |
| Liverpool <i>fan</i> | Liverpool ventilateur |
| <i>addiction</i> to tobacco | attachement au tabac |
| angle of <i>roll</i> | angle de <i>petit pain</i> |

¹ IAN PIGOTT Systran Development at the Commission Luxembourg, 23 October 1992.

FR DE

| | |
|--|--|
| Les conclusions des experts sont édifiantes | Die Schlußfolgerungen der Experten sind <i>erbaulich</i> |
| en raison des températures très douces | wegen sehr <i>zarten</i> Temperaturen |
| l'homme est ainsi fait les coups de téléphone agent pathogène nappe phréatique cerises douces poissons capturés non seulement <i>la mitraille</i> est une matière première indispensable pour la sidérurgie vers de nouvelles régions Les PC qui ne sont pas <i>allumés</i> pendant l'update tissus <i>bouclés</i> | der Mann ist so <i>erledigt</i> die <i>Hiebe</i> des Telefons krankheitserregender <i>Beamter</i> phreatisches <i>Tischtuch</i> <i>zarte</i> Kirschen <i>gefangengenommene</i> Fische nicht nur das <i>Kleingeld</i> ist unentbehrlicher Rohstoff für die Stahlindustrie <i>Würmer</i> von neuen Regionen Die PC, die nicht während des update <i>angezündet</i> werden <i>gelockte</i> Stoffe |

EN DE

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| You can type | Sie <i>Typ</i> der Dose |
| Dear Dr Rump | Sehr geehrter Herr Dr <i>Hinterteil</i> |
| traffic jam | Verkehrsmarmelade |
| The plants were idling | Die Anlagen <i>faulenzen</i> |
| hot dogs | <i>heiße</i> Hunde |
| right holder | <i>rechter</i> Halter |
| EURO Kids Network | EURO Zickleinnetz |
| fuzzy match | <i>flockiges</i> Streichholz |

DE EN

Other comical renderings occur with the decomposition of German compounds or not coded terms and expressions:

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Brandenburg | Fire castle |
| Freiburg im Breisgau | free castle in the mash region |

| | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Essen | chimney stalks |
| Spar gel | saving gel |
| Weih nachts zeit | dedicating night times |
| Funktio nieren | function kidneys |

Whilst for the more mature language pairs a number of these mistakes have been corrected by refining homograph routines and through extensive dictionary coding, strange mistranslations appear regularly in the 'younger' language combinations, especially those involving German.

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