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METATEXIS .0999G

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TRANSLATION TOOLS

MetaTaxis .0999g

150+ LOCALES. METATAXIS. WORD 2000, XP. \$30 (LITE), \$150 (PRO).

Innovative, low-cost translation tool
offers ease of use, job statistics

Feature-rich and relatively unobtrusive, MetaTaxis has clearly been developed by a professional translator *for* professional translators. Consistent with other recent arrivals on the translation-tool scene, MetaTaxis runs inside Microsoft Word, offering an alternative to all stand-alone translation tools with self-contained editing environments. By integrating directly with Word and offering some features not often found on the market, MetaTaxis provides functionality on a par with established desktop translation solutions for translators of long Microsoft Word documents. Microsoft Word is a powerful editing tool, familiar to translators of large documents and often bundled with personal computers. Leveraging the ubiquitous nature of Word and entering the market with an attractive price point, MetaTaxis is a good buy for translators whose work consists primarily of Word documents.

Installation. At the time of this review the MetaTaxis program was a 3.7MB download, with an optional 5MB download of Microsoft ADO components for database functionality (unnecessary if those components are already installed with the user's operating system). Installation is fast and easy. The version reviewed, .0999g, is

the final beta. Release Candidate 1 version was due to ship about the time that this review went to press.

Platforms/requirements. MetaTaxis requires Microsoft Word 2000 SR-1a or XP for Windows. No Macintosh version is currently available. Future versions are planned for Sun Microsystems' Star Office on Unix and Linux.

Architecture. MetaTaxis is a COM-based add-on application to Microsoft Word that uses Microsoft ActiveX Data Objects (ADO) for TM and terminology database creation. MetaTaxis can be deployed on a Local Area Network or Wide Area Network in that translation memories, terminology databases and documents for translation can be located in accessible network locations. Workgroup functionality was not tested for this review, and no public information is currently available regarding performance in workgroup scenarios (number of concurrent users, TM search and retrieval speed with heavy loads and so on).

MetaTaxis leverages many internationalized functions in Word, Access and the Windows 2000 and XP operating systems, such as multi-language/locale support (150+ supported locales at the time of this review), support for

input methods for non-Latin languages, as well as spell-checking and so forth. This review does not cover testing MetaTaxis for double-byte, complex single-byte or bidirectional character set support.

Technical support. Technical support is available by e-mail and via a Yahoo! user group. No phone-based support was available at the time of review. Interaction is directly with the developer in Germany. Response time is characteristically personalized and quick for a new tool supported by an individual developer.

On-line help was available, but not complete, in the reviewed version. Many topics were headings only. Supporting documentation was similarly incomplete. Both help and documentation cover installation, setup and configuration, as well as background information on translation memory and a complete reference list of keyboard shortcuts for the application. The developer indicates in the release notes that documentation and help are growing with each release.

Features/functionality. *Project configuration.* Both the Pro and Lite versions of MetaTaxis feature an intuitive six-step project creation wizard, "Start Assistant," as well as the

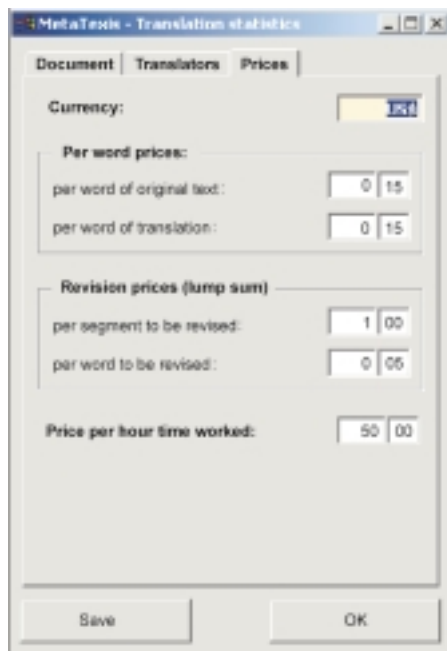
option to save settings as a reusable profile. More advanced users can manually create and manipulate all individual components of project setup. Settings configured at startup include source/target language of the document, translator, TM and terminology database selection and/or creation.

Translation memory and terminology management. Translation memory options include primary and secondary segmentation rules, user-defined high and low fuzzy match thresholds, user-defined segment-breaking exceptions, primary and secondary TM databases, ranking of exact matches, special treatment of duplicate translations, user-defined color schemes for match types and the ability to leverage from multiple locales within a given language, such as all Spanish locales or just Spanish for Mexico. The Pro version offers batch translation; TM alignment; TM and terminology database import/export for TMs in TMX format, TRADOS native text format and others; integration with external applications such as machine translation and term management; and numerous TM search and matching controls. Users can also specify options for automating leverage. MetaTaxis Lite offers no external application integration, no TM import/export, no aligner and no batch functions.

Both the Pro and Lite versions are available with a direct integration to the KudoZ terminology and phrase forum in the ProZ translation services portal, www.proz.com. MetaTaxis includes a form for submission of term/phrase requests.

Segmentation. MetaTaxis offers flexible segmentation, allowing users to choose segment delimiters for overall structure in a document as well as the option to split and combine segments in-process. Segment delimiters can be toggled on/off and can be removed post-translation.

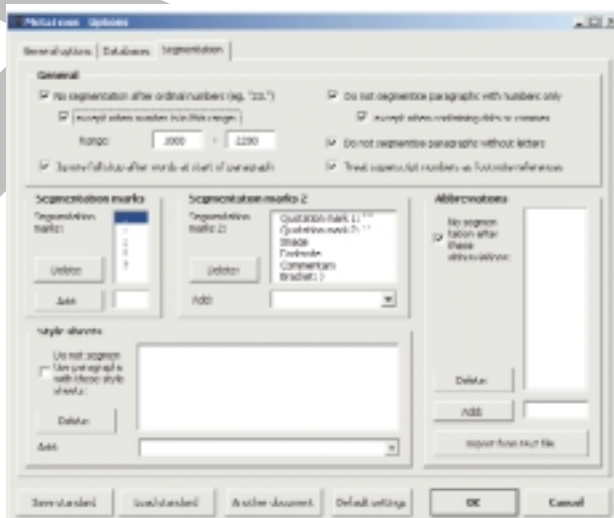
Statistics. MetaTaxis offers a statistics feature that provides detailed project, document and segment-level information. Job-cost and speed-of-work statistics are unique features in this class of CAT tool. In the Pro version, translators can enter unit-based rate information for cost (in a user-defined currency) and time in a profile-based dialog, and can view completion results per document, per segment as a function of time, cost and activity such as automatic leverage, manual revision, first-time translation and



The prices dialog

so on). This provides translators with a snapshot of their efficiency over the course of a job and can also be used for comparison of hourly to per-word rates. MetaTaxis Lite offers statistical information only for individual segments and documents.

One of the most unusual features of MetaTaxis is localization of the application's menu items. MetaTaxis isolates all menu items in a convenient dialog for translation, thereby allowing a user to define a new interface language and localize the entire application from within the application itself or to



Segmentation options

customize an existing interface language. MetaTaxis ships with both German and English interfaces.

Supported content formats. MetaTaxis supports any file that can be opened in Word 2000 for Windows, but is currently designed for translation of Word and RTF documentation/help files only — not software resource or binary files, tagged formats, spreadsheets or desktop publishing formats such as QuarkXPress and Adobe FrameMaker. The documentation indicates that future versions could support HTML, other Office application formats such as Excel and PowerPoint and desktop publishing formats. For this review, an XML file was opened in Word to see how MetaTaxis would segment it. Some functions were available, but MetaTaxis became unstable shortly after starting to translate the file. Again, the tool is currently intended to serve as a Word document translation solution.

Extensibility/integratability. There is no apparent mechanism for integrating MetaTaxis within applications other than Word. No published API appears to be available, and MetaTaxis licensees are not provided source code with purchase. MetaTaxis does feature out-of-the-box integration with external machine translation applications and external terminology resources, but not at the API level.

Performance. This review covered beta releases of the software, in which some instability was noted and is to be expected. Performance must also be considered a function of the system used for testing, so to that extent many of the results noted could be directly or indirectly related to the reviewer's setup. In one case, the application crashed when selecting an alternative view in Document Statistics, after which no functions were available and Word had to be closed and re-opened for MetaTaxis to work properly. Batch functions tested (alignment and batch leverage of a 15,000-word document) consistently used 100% of the computer's processor, and Word frequently reported running out of memory. One unfortunate side effect of running batch processes on one Word file was that any other open Word file could not be processed, indicating that the application is not multi-threaded at this point.

TM import of an 11,000-segment TM from a leading tool provider took

approximately 30 minutes on a Pentium III 700MHz with 256MB RAM running Windows 2000 Professional and Microsoft Word 2000 SR-1a.

Alignment of a previously translated 2,000-word file containing no graphics, tables, text boxes, footnotes, comments, fields or macros took approximately 10 minutes and produced batch translation coverage in the original source file of 90%, which is normal for documents translated using few combined/split segments.

Interactive translation varied in speed and stability. Search and retrieval in the translation memory as tested — with one large TM and no secondary reference TM or terminology database — took as little as a couple of seconds but were also occasionally endless processes that had to be manually stopped, which in turn “crashed” the application and required closing and re-opening Word. Occasionally segments in the TM were not retrieved, at which point the main TM dialog had to be opened and the search criteria manually entered and

executed. This is how concordance searches must be carried out at this point.

Usability. All critical interactive translation functions have keyboard shortcuts and colorful toolbar icons, both important features for high-productivity translators. The user also has options for customizing segment boundary colors and characteristics. Unfortunately, TM concordance searching is not currently available while interactively editing segments and requires opening the TM database from the main MetaTaxis menu or via a keyboard shortcut.

In summary. MetaTaxis brings many innovations to the TM space overall and to translation of Microsoft Word documents in particular. Ease of use is a compelling differentiator in the current TM tool market, and with its intuitive project wizard MetaTaxis is well positioned relative to other tools in its class. Another important differentiator is its unique translator productivity function for calculating job cost and speed of work. MetaTaxis also covers the more common TM features elegantly with its built-in alignment interface, rich TM management console and a

true database back-end for TM/terminology storage. MetaTaxis also has a low price point relative to some, but not all, available TM tools. MetaTaxis does not run on the Macintosh operating system, but Linux is in on the development horizon, so maybe there is hope for Mac OS X.

Like other tools in this space, MetaTaxis offers interoperability with leading commercially available TM applications via TM import/export. This makes it attractive both to translators with brand-name TM deliverables who are not willing to invest in more established and in some cases expensive technology, as well as to translators who can simply benefit from lightweight, highly functional reuse technology for Word document translation.

According to the product documentation, “the philosophy of MetaTaxis can be described with three words: usability, information, customization.” MetaTaxis is definitely a tool to watch as it grows to handle other content types and is road-tested by a wider pool of users.

—CLOVE LYNCH

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