

Machine Translation versus Human Translation: A Case Study of the European Commission's SYSTRAN

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This paper was prepared against the background of a growing concern among aspiring translators about the role of machine translation in the international arena and its impact on the future of the profession.

Information was obtained from interviews conducted with officials at the translation departments of several international institutions. This, along with literature obtained from these organizations and theoretical material, cemented the foundation of this paper.

This thesis analyzes the differences between translations (one from Spanish, the other from French into English) done by a trained professional and similar translations, executed by Systran, the translation system used within the European Commission. In the final analysis it is proved that Systran is a very useful tool and one of the most highly developed of its kind. However, a machine is unable to think, to draw from past experiences or instinct, to examine context or simply to develop a feel for the language. Against this background, it is understandable why it will be difficult to replace the human translator with Systran and any other machine translation system, in the foreseeable future.

Key words: Human Translator; Machine Translation; European Commission; Systran.