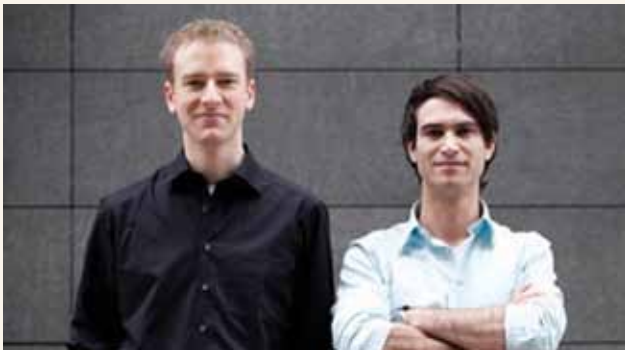




Empress of the bilingual word: Linguee—the world's first web search engine for translations

by Gabi Berghammer

Ever wondered what it would be like to be able to search web content for bilingual phrases or sentences? To check how others have translated a particular expression or solved a translation challenge? I for one have been dreaming of a simple way of retrieving bilingual turns of phrase or sentences from the vast repository of bilingual text available in the worldwide web. Gereon Frahling und Leonard Fink have developed a novel technology doing just that.



Gereon Frahling und Leonard Fink

CEO Gereon Frahling first came up with the idea in the fall of 2007 after working as a postdoctoral research scientist at Google Inc. in New York. He got his old friend and fellow software developer Leonard Fink to join the team. Since spring of 2008, they have been developing the online service Linguee.

When translating text, a good way is to look for translations of entire phrases rather than individual words. With Linguee, you can search millions of bilingual texts for words and expressions and will find pairs of sentences that contain the word or phrase as an exact or fuzzy match. To start with, Linguee offers its free-of-charge online service for the German-English language pair. With their Web-Crawler-based technology being language independent, other languages are planned to follow soon.

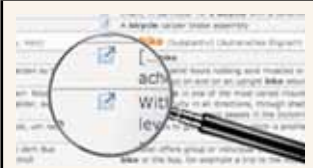



The text material used for the search is about 1000 times that underlying conventional online dictionaries. Linguee works in much the same way as Google. However, Linguee searches only documents that have previously been translated by humans – to whom there still is no viable technical alternative. Thus, Linguee's most important source is the bilingual web. Other valuable sources include EU documents and patent specifications. However, the Frahling-Fink algorithm does not indiscriminately search anything

that's bilingual: it also analyzes the quality of the source material and only selects professionally designed websites, which are more likely to have been professionally translated.

Now that the technology is up and running, Linguee's founders are looking to expand their editorial team to improve the quality of the retrieved entries and to include additional language pairs. To that end, some cash is still needed. Founded as a start-up company, Frahling and Fink are currently in search of venture capital investors. Unlike in the US, most European start-ups are founded by financial experts rather than developers themselves, making the Linguee undertaking all the more remarkable.

Rate, add, and edit

Users can rate and even edit translations, and they can also add their own, thereby constantly improving the ranking of future search results and the overall quality of the system.

 <p>Every text snippet is displayed with its source. Depending on the origin of the text, you are linked to its source website or to the profile of the Linguee user who contributed it.</p>	 <p>The quality of a translation is indicated by the number of yellow stars.</p>
 <p>A green hook signifies that the translation has been verified, the warning triangle indicates that the translation may not be correct. If you consider a translation useful, you can up-rate it. If a translation is suboptimal or wrong, you can down-rate it.</p>	 <p>If a translation appears to require improvement, you can edit it. If you feel an entry is missing, you can add it to the Linguee database.</p>

Choose wisely...

As with any dictionary or translation database, search results should be taken with a grain of salt. For example, you better make sure that the term you intend to use in your translation fits the required context. Whereas all of the translations for *Arzneimittel* in Screenshot 1 are correct, *Arzneimittel* in the context of European legislation is usually translated as 'medicinal product'.

