Boeing Announces Agreement To Commercialize Simplified English Checker

The Boeing Company has signed an agreement with Lernout & Hauspie (L&H) to commercialize and market the Boeing Simplified English Checker. The tool helps authors increase the readability of mission-critical documentation, and also can improve the translatability of documents into foreign languages.

The agreement grants L&H exclusive commercialization rights in Europe and non-exclusive rights for the rest of the world.

Commercial availability of the Boeing SE Checker is expected by third quarter 1999. Licensing prices will range between $500 and $1,500 per user on average, depending on the version of the product.

"We are pleased to execute this agreement with Lernout & Hauspie," said Al Erisman, director of Mathematics & Computing Technology, Boeing Phantom Works. "Boeing uses the Checker to produce high-quality maintenance information in a cost-efficient manner. The tool ensures a consistent level of Simplified English compliance and reduces the cost of training writers."

Boeing started developing the Simplified English Checker nearly 10 years ago to assist engineers in writing documents that conform to the Simplified English standard (as defined by AECMA, the European Association of Aerospace Industries). Technical documentation in the civil aviation industry is provided to customers in English, but this can be a source of difficulty for users whose mother tongue is not English.

By specifying a limited vocabulary and a set of grammar and style rules, the Simplified English standard is intended to increase the readability and accuracy of commercial aviation documents. In the past few years, European members of NATO have moved to make Simplified English a requirement for military aircraft as well. At Boeing, all commercial aviation maintenance materials are supplied in Simplified English, and both the Chinook and Apache helicopter programs also write their maintenance procedures in Simplified English.

Studies conducted by Boeing and the FAA have found that Simplified English makes documentation clearer for all readers, and it also enhances the translatability of text into foreign languages. The Simplified English Checker helps technical writers by providing detailed critiques of texts, indicating both where a text does not conform to the Simplified English standard and suggesting alternative words and phrasings that will make it conform.

"L&H considers it an honor to be a business partner of Boeing in making the Simplified English Checker the standard compliance tool in the industry," said Geert Adriaens, senior director of Enterprise Consulting, and Controlled Language Expert. "This tool is one more building block in our full chain of speech and language products and services. In particular, it extends our line of proofing tools to the aerospace market, and it creates additional potential for enterprise consulting and services in the area of technical writing."

"The Boeing Simplified English Checker is mature technology that runs on a variety of computing platforms," said Jim Hoard, manager of the Natural Language Processing group, which developed and manages the Simplified English Checker program. "No other product can provide its level of support."

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