

PERSPECTIVE PAPER: TERMINOLOGY*

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Terminology uses both linguistic and documentation techniques. However, it is a branch of linguistics and I do not think documentation could do without terminology.

We terminologists are somehow halfway between these two disciplines. As we know perhaps more about linguistics than many documentalists do and more about documentation than most linguists do, it would be fortunate if we could form a link between the two.

As head of the terminology office of the Commission of the European Communities in Luxembourg, working in close cooperation with the General Directorate XIII, "Scientific and Technical Information and Information Management," I have a personal interest in these matters. We have to cope daily with the problem of multilingualism in documentation and the setting up of a documentation system that provides terminological information.

As far as I, a documentalist, am concerned, I distinguish two types of documentation systems:

1. Systems based on keyword or descriptor access.
2. Systems based on title or abstract access.

The first case is purely a matter of terminology. The only problem is to try to establish some compatibility between the real terminological usage of the professional in the field concerned, on the one hand, and the need for a coherent system of descriptors for the documentalist, on the other.

In the second case, it is necessary to give more than just terminology, although even here terminology will be the major factor.

In the terminology offices of the Commission of the European Communities in Luxembourg and Brussels, the terminological information put into the computer of the Commission's terminology bank (Goetschalckx, 1975) is preferably presented in a phraseological form. We feel that this generally guarantees a greater accuracy at the retrieval level. Moreover, it provides the translator with a good example for the use of the term he was looking for, both from the technical point of view and the linguistic point of view.

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This technique has, however, its weak point. Terms put into the system in a phraseological form are not always in their standard form. For inflecting languages such as German and Danish, where the article is a kind of suffix, the terms are almost never in their standard form. The well-known technique used to deal with this kind of problem is, of course, truncation.

For reasons of efficiency, on the one hand, and *user appeal*, on the other, we are working out a batch processing system and an on-line retrieval procedure which will enable any translator to put his own questions to the data bank without have to learn and practice several tricky manipulations. Translators are allergic to this kind of thing.

To meet the need for automatic devices, we are trying to develop an automatic truncation procedure. Until now, this procedure has been of a mathematical type, so it varies according to the length of the words. It is quite clear that it will be necessary to develop a linguistic instrument for this operation. A first step could be an automatic truncation system based on linguistic criteria. The second step should be a morphological reduction system.

As soon as the Euronet project comes into effect, it will be necessary to provide any user wanting to consult a data bank in another country and another language with all the linguistic instruments necessary to formulate an adequate question on the basis of what the user wants to ask in his own language. This may simply be a series of descriptors, but it may also come to a translation -- if possible, a machine translation -- of the original question.

There is clearly a need for contributions from theoretical or formal linguistics both in documentation and in terminology, since the latter is itself a tool for documentalists.

Reference

Goetschalckx, J. "Practical Aspects of Terminology Work." *Second International Colloquium on Terminology*, Lac Delage, 5-8 October 1975.