

## TERMINOLOGISTS AND THEIR SETTING: THE CEC EXPERIENCE

Jacques Goetschalckx

*Commission of the European Communities, Luxembourg, Luxembourg*

At every congress or meeting where translators are together one hears many of them complaining that they feel lonely, that they are isolated with their many problems.

In larger translation services this is certainly no longer true. In international organisations such as the United Nations or the European Community, but also on the national level in Canada and in Germany with its Bundessprachenamt, and even in industry - Siemens, Philips, Aerospatiale, Bell Canada - the translator is part of a team, belonging to a specialised department with considerable resources. Even freelance translators have started working on a cooperative basis, especially in Italy and in Germany, to speak only from my own knowledge. They decided to share a secretariat, a library and in Stuttgart also a computer.

A translation department in a big organisation is composed of documentalists, terminologists, revisers and translators, with the work organised through a planning section. According to the degree of sophistication the staff make use of text processing equipment, facsimile facilities, documentation databases and terminology banks.

This tendency leads to a certain degree of specialisation, with translators becoming documentalists or terminologists. Unfortunately only very few translation schools provide training for these activities in the translation field. As far as I know, this kind of training exists only in Vienna, Copenhagen and Antwerp as far as Europe is concerned, and of course in Quebec and Montreal.

Consequently, the training of terminologists in the European Community translation and terminology department is carried out on the job.

What is required in order to become a terminologist? Firstly a good knowledge of the target language as well as a sound knowledge of the source languages; secondly, a maniacal desire to find and to use the right term or the appropriate term - which is not always the same - and derive real pleasure from a long and complicated search through the various available sources; and thirdly, checking and rechecking what one has come across with what one has already. A terminologist must have the capacity to associate and combine pieces of information, put them

together logically and make sure that they really fit. Furthermore he must have a feeling for technical matters.

The consequence of this is that he must have a talent for spotting information or information sources. It presupposes also a lot of psychology to obtain cooperation from documentation centres or experts in the field. Most important of all, maybe, is to let your partner feel that you are ready to give and not only to take.

As the training facilities for terminologists are very limited, the EC terminology bureaux apply the rough method of throwing their terminologists in the deep end and making them swim. The best starting point is what we call SVP, which consists of solve the problems raised or submitted by translators. This work provides direct contact with the end user of the information, which enhances the terminologists motivation. It also brings the terminologist into contact with various experts and after some time gives him a feeling of how to handle them. It gives him the opportunity of getting fully acquainted with all the available documents, books and other information sources.

The next step could be compilation of thematical glossaries. In this work is it not only necessary to collect solid information and documentation but the terminologist also has to pursue his investigation further to obtain a certain command of the terminology in a given field: mining, steelmaking, occupational health and safety, data processing, etc.

The last step in the process is the setting up and development of the EURODICAUTOM terminology bank where the same capabilities are required but where there is also the need for sound knowledge of data processing, and last but not least, the need for managerial skills.

The place of the terminologist in the general organisation of the translation department depends on the translators. The role of the terminologist can be limited to making available the required documentation. It can also lead to a joint search through all the information available. The translator can leave the full responsibility for the terminology search with the terminologist if he wants to and this can of course, be very practical when his translation has to be delivered at very short notice. He can also decide to do the whole job himself without making use of the facilities offered.

Another task of the terminologist is to initiate translators in the use of the classical card files or more specifically to use EURODICAUTOM and eventually to help them access other databases.

Furthermore, the task of the terminologist is to improve the translators' working conditions by compiling, developing or setting up card files, thematical glossaries and work on the EURODICAUTOM terminology bank.

I think it should be pointed out, however, that the translator remains fully responsible for his translation whether he does it with or without the help of a terminologist.

This brings us back to the training of terminologists for the eighties. I should say that in addition to a good knowledge of

languages - in our multilingual situation the passive knowledge of many languages can be very valuable - the terminologist requires a knowledge of data processing which enables him to judge what can be done, and done well, by a computer and what can be done better or more easily by man. Furthermore he should be well versed in documentation techniques and theoretical linguistics. He will in any case need to have a good grasp of human psychology.