

SESSION 3: CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

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Translators have always considered terminology work as part of their task, even if consulting original, monolingual literature and preparing terminology card files for their personal use has not expressly been referred to as such.

Today the translator and the terminologist are emerging as two distinct professions. Both are sustained by a theoretical basis: there is a recognised science of translation(1) and a science of terminology or terminology theory, the Vienna School of which(2) goes back to the Austrian Eugen Wüster. It might be interesting to note that the late E. Wüster spoke of a 'Berufsterminologe', a professional terminologist, as early as 1965 on a tape-recording discovered among his hitherto unfinished and/or unpublished manuscripts and drafts that have been examined in Vienna in the course of a three-year research project, the results of which are now being presented in Vienna in a four-volume final report(3). But while translators and interpreters are trained in specialised university courses - thus for instance I myself am teaching at the University of Vienna's Institute of Interpretation and Translation, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary next May - and while their professional status is already recognised by law-givers in a number of countries (c.f.4), the formal training and professional status of a terminologist is still in the stage of development.

A terminologist is obviously someone doing terminology work; which according to Felber(5) can either be what he calls 'terminology work proper': the creating or standardising of systems of concepts in a given subject field, the finding or standardising of a concept term assignment, i.e. assigning a term to a concept or vice versa, and finally the describing of concepts by means of definitions or the standardisation of such definitions. In addition it can also consist of what Felber calls the 'documentation of terminology': the collecting and recording of terminological data, such as terms, definitions, explanations, contexts, conceptual relationships and - last but not least - equivalents in other languages.

A 'terminologist proper' might be envisaged as an expert-terminologist (c.f.6), a subject specialist rather than a philologist, He will work in terminology commissions of a technical or professional organisation, in standardising bodies or with vocabulary-type data

banks(7). A professional whose task it is to collect and record terms or rather terminological data, has sometimes been called terminographer (c.f.8). Thus for instance Sager(9) enumerates terminologists and terminographers as those professionals concerned with the creation, collection and ordering of the vocabulary of special languages for the benefit of users of special languages, such as information or communication mediators. Accordingly a translator or interpreter would be an interlingual communication mediator, while the professional who is to provide the terminological information that is to facilitate his task, for instance within the setting of large-scale language services with access to computer facilities, would be a specialist in computerised interlingual terminography (c.f. also 7). I have at one time called such a person a translation-oriented terminologist(10), one who caters for and appreciates the needs of translators and interpreters.

So much for the terminologist. His formal training and professional profile will be discussed in the first two of this afternoon's papers.

How about the translator, who figures in the title of the third paper? What are his particular needs, what does he expect from a terminologist, what can he contribute?

As every translator knows, we do not translate words, dictionary words, but rather texts, words and phrases in context. Translation is not effected on the level of language (langue) but rather on the level of speech (parole), a fact that is sometimes not readily understood by subject specialists, or even by terminologists. For a translation task a mere listing of dictionary words in the source language (SL) and target language (TL) will not suffice. The minimum set of terminological data elements required for translation purposes has yet to be determined and translators are invited to cooperate in this respect(11).

If, however, we want to reach some degree of objectivity and do not want to rely solely on intuition, as in using a so-called 'operational' - I would like to call it here 'contextual'-approach to meaning, we will have to operate on the level of the language system by comparing concept systems and definitions of terms, preferably standardised, in both SL and TL. In linguistic parlance we say that the semantic structure of a word can only be analysed by using a method combining the approach of the 'semantic field' as a paradigmatic lexical structure with a complementary analysis into 'meaning components' of the semantic content of the units constituting this paradigm, using the method of componential analysis(12). In other words, SL and TL terms can only be matched reliably if we know the pertinent concept systems (i.e. semantic areas) and the definitions for which characteristics (i.e. meaning components) are used. This is why in quoting a passage from this morning's lecture on 'Computerised Terminography'(7), where Felber held that 'for the language mediators a data bank of the dictionary type (which is term oriented in contrast to a data bank of the vocabulary type, which is concept-oriented) will be more or less sufficient', I would suggest that it would be less rather than more likely to be sufficient.

The translation-oriented terminologist or terminographer is thus asked by translators to serve as the connecting link between the terminologist proper or subject specialist, taking advantage of the

resources of vocabulary-type data banks, and the language mediators. The latter would like to be relieved of the burden not only of finding SL and TL equivalents but also of having to evaluate them. The question of the reliability or equivalents still remains essentially unsolved. With whom does the ultimate responsibility for choosing an equivalent rest? With the monolingual subject specialist or terminologist? With the terminographer, recording SL and TL equivalents and grading them as to their reliability according to varying criteria? With the translator or interpreter, with his revisor or chef d'equipe? It is to be hoped that interlingual communication mediators will receive support in this respect by close cooperation among all professionals concerned with special language terminology.

In conclusion, I would briefly like to touch on a subject that I have been working on for a number of years. How can the translator or interpreter be trained routinely and with a minimum expenditure of time and money to understand the work a terminologist or terminographer will do for him; how can he learn to articulate his needs; how can he learn to cooperate successfully? Some years ago I suggested that user reluctance towards term bank facilities could perhaps be reduced by familiarising translators with terminology work routinely at an early stage of their training(10). Since in my opinion a minimum of theoretical background would suffice for such a purpose, a low-level user-oriented approach to the theory of terminology has been developed and recorded on a 30-minute video cassette(13) as part of a pilot course offered to translation students on University level in the United States(14). At present a model seminar course is being tested within the framework of the Institute of Translation and Interpretation at the University of Vienna in cooperation with Infoterm with the goal of developing the social skills of future interpreters and translators to take full advantage of the terminology work done for them by specialists (15). This seems all the more important since in the foreseeable future such terminological data will be available also to freelance translators working outside the scope of language services and their terminology units(16).

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