THE USE OF TRANSLATION-ORIENTED TERMINOLOGY METHODOLOGY IN THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

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How can a small government service manage to fulfil national translation needs in the Europe of today? This paper reviews the growing need for translation within the Norwegian government administration, examining how new technology may be implemented to increase efficiency and improve consistency between translators. In this context the role of terminology is analyzed as a primary instrument of quality control in the field of translation. Some simple methods enabling translators to incorporate computer-based terminological support into their daily work are proposed

INTRODUCTION

The accelerating process of internationalization, not to mention integration, has had a direct impact on the need for skilled linguistic consultants in Norway. In the past twenty years, our markets have expanded and the arena for our political participation has shifted dramatically, as has been the case for all of the countries of Europe, and indeed, the world as a whole. This growth is reflected in the number of translations that the Translation Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has to deal with. In fact, statistics over the last 5 years reveal that the number of translations carried out for the government administration has quadrupled. And that does not take into account the enormous amount of translation which has been done in connection with Norway's participation in the European Economic Area, or EEA, which requires the translation of much of EU legislation into Norwegian.

It goes without saying that, in a world of government cutbacks and fluctuating economies, staff resources have not grown at the same rate as the need for translation services. As a result, the Translation Division has been forced to take a new look at the way translation work is done, and to find ways to streamline procedures and work more efficiently. We must find ways to help the same number of people do a greater number of tasks. In other words, we have been forced to think about how we best can standardize things.

The standardization of procedures and routines, of the ways in which decisions are made and the methods used to record expertise, is the best means an institution has of enabling the greatest number of people to do the greatest number of tasks in as similar a fashion as possible. In the context of translation work, one of the most important objects to focus on for standardization purposes is the terminological information found in the texts. The quality of a translation can be measured partly in terms of linguistic elements such as style and grammar, and partly in terms of the accurate use of the vocabulary involved. In some types of texts, such as literary works or advertising material, variation in vocabulary may be used to enhance text quality. In other types of texts, such as technical documentation or legal treatises, the quality of the text depends entirely on the consistent and correct use of a specific vocabulary, or *terminology.* Thus, one of the best ways to ensure quality is to record, standardize and circulate the terminology to be used.

USE OF TERMINOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Most translators readily understand the need to remember what they used in text A when the same word or phrase appears in text B. The problem is that sometimes the difference in time between text A and B may be weeks, if not months. Obviously, many translators write down such words for later use, historically on index cards, and now in many computerized forms as well. In fact, as translation work increasingly involves specialized texts, translators find themselves more and more in need of ways to record and, not least, to retrieve text-related information such as specialized terminology, source institution addresses, commonly used phrases of etiquette, names of organizations, etc. Such information will, for the purposes of this paper, be defined as *terminological information.* In translation-oriented terminology work, an important distinction is made between *terminology* as defined in purist terminology science circles, and *terminological information* which encompasses all types of information that translators may need to recall, including terminology proper, which can be recorded and retrieved using *terminological methodology.*

Terminological Methodology in Translation

The application of terminological methodology to the translation process involves storing text-related terminological information in a *standardized, pre-defined format* (index card, term record template) and in addition identifying specific *categories of information* which are to be included for each record. There are a multitude of computer products available which claim to help translators do just this, but in many cases these products are not easily adapted to specific user needs, i.e. cannot be easily tailored to keep track of exactly the information that a given translator might wish to record.

The Translation Division is a case in point. We know that one of the best, most efficient means we have of ensuring the quality of work done in or outside our office is the compilation and circulation of standardized collections of terminological information. Our problem, however, is that our users and freelancers work with many different types of equipment and software, making it extremely difficult to introduce any one type of translation or terminology tool. Another, equally difficult problem, is the time factor. Storing terminological information is a time-consuming process, particularly in the beginning phases. Once sufficient information has been stored, it rapidly becomes a time-saving endeavour, but there will always be a certain investment required in the form of the time it takes to update and add to the information stored. So how have we decided to surmount the problems of software and time?

A New Work Method

The Translation Division is in the process of introducing a very pragmatic solution that utilizes the potential contained in each and every word processing program. As each translator works, he or she compiles a list of terminological information using a simple, standardized format and pre-defined information categories. This list is written in the user's word-processing program and stored as a separate text document. The term list is used as a working document in which the translator both notes down questions and records decisions. These lists may be circulated to other translators for comment, or to clients for approval of terminology prior to completion of a text Once a translation has been completed, the accompanying term list is converted into an ASCII file, which makes it easy to circulate to most users of other word-processing programs and easy to convert into appropriate database formats. Most importantly, these term lists are accessible immediately, without any further conversion to a database whatsoever, simply by using the regular search function of the word-processing program. The catchword here is simplicity: By introducing a uniform format, translators are able to simplify their work methods and simultaneously benefit from the ability to exchange terminological information, whether or not they all have the same software. This enhances consistency and improves efficiency at little cost

It is surprising how many translators devise complicated tables and lists producing entries resembling those found in printed dictionaries. Although such tables and lists are very impressive to look at, they are in fact very time-consuming to make, which means that the process of storing terminological information becomes that much less of a time-saver, and that much more tempting to hop over. Moreover, such formats are not easily convertible or accessible to other users in any other form than as a print-out. For example, a translator may choose to record a term and its synonym on the same line of a list, using italics as the means of identifying the synonym. Although the italics are easy to see on screen and in a print-out, they may well be lost in the conversion process, leaving another electronic user with no way to tell the difference between the main term entry and its recorded synonym. The use of boldface, underlining, italics and other typescript formatting elements will only help translators to identify terminological information at a surface level. Thus, a different kind of system is required to represent the information at a deeper, more structural level.

Term Record Format

To represent terminological information at this structural level, the Translation Division has chosen to utilize the basic *term record format,* which is the traditional means of storing terminological information used by terminologists. A *term record* is the basic unit of a collection of terminological data, made up of various categories of information relating to a terminological entry, grouped together according to specific criteria. In our case, we are using the Nordic term record format, which has been introduced by the national terminology institutions in the Nordic countries.

Each entry in a term record is written as straight text, Courier typescript, with no other typescript formatting such as boldface or italic or underlining allowed. Each separate information category is stored in its own field, identified by a pre-defined field code, consisting of a language symbol (lower case) and a field type code (upper case) or just a field type code. Each field code is followed by a tabulator stop, which helps to align the text in each field neatly and will keep the format uniform after conversion as well. Each additional line within a field also begins with a tabulator and all lines end with a carriage return, again to keep the format uniform. Fields grouped together in each term record are always listed in the same order. Term records are always separated by an "=" sign, followed by a carriage return. The basic term record format is either stored as a macro, or as a standard template in a document which can then be copied and filled in according to need. Figure 1 is a sample of the basic term record format (empty).

Figure 1.
Basic Term Record Format (empty)

```
field code1 ------{ noTE} [TAB]     [CR]
                  [ SOURF [TAB]     [CR] -------] field
                    noSY [TAB]      [CR]
                    SOURF [TAB]     {[CR] ----} carriage return
                    enTE [TAB]      [CR]
                    SOURF [TAB]     [CR]
                  [ CX [TAB]        [CR] -------] field
                    DEF [TAB]       [CR]
                    REMK [TAB]      [CR]
                  [ NOTE [TAB]      [CR] -------] field
                    CLAS [TAB]      [CR]
                    SOURC [TAB]     [CR]
                    CRDAT [TAB]     [CR]
term record -------  =
   separator
```

<u>Categories of Information</u>

The information recorded in each term record is subdivided into various *categories,* and each category of information is represented in an individual *field.* Each term record will include a certain number of mandatory categories that constitute the minimum required information to be included for an entry to be complete. In translation-oriented terminology work, the minimum categories required in every collection of terminological information comprise the source language term, the target language equivalent, source information indicating where the terms came from, and a date with the initials of the person who made or updated the entry. There are, of course, many optional categories which may be added to the term record according to specific user needs. It should be kept in mind that each translator or institution is ultimately responsible for defining which optional categories, (such as "CLAS" (classification) or "SY" (synonym)) are to be made mandatory for the purposes of their own collections of terminological information.

[1] The field code **noTE** consists of a language symbol (**no**=Norwegian) and a field type code (**TE**= primary term). Language symbols are only used in fields containing language-specific information.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an exhaustive list of the optional information categories which may be included in a given term record. Readers are referred to the forthcoming ISO standard 12 616, which will contain an annex describing the various information categories (called *data categories)* in more detail. It would instead be of more practical use to participants in this forum to present a typical term record used by the English-language translators at the Translation Division and discuss some features of how term records are used (Figure 2 below).

The sample term record presented in Figure 2 below contains a Norwegian main entry term and its source, a Norwegian synonym and its source, and English equivalent and its source, a context, a remark, a note, a classification and a date. An example of field content is given in the middle column of the table. The right-hand column contains a brief explanation of the type of information entered in each field.

Figure 2
Sample Term Record

FIELD CODE	FIELD CONTENT	EXPLANATION
noTE[TAB]	etter hjemmel i	*Norwegian main entry* *("no" here is the language symbol for Norwegian)*
SOURF[TAB]	Jnr. 893/95	*field source: source for the above field*
noSY[TAB]	ifølge	*synonym term: here used for a Norwegian synonym*
SOURF[TAB]	UD-OVK/rw 95-08	*field source: source for the information in the above field*
enTE[TAB]	pursuant to	*English equivalent main entry* *("en" here is the language symbol for English)*
SOURF[TAB]	B&V 1993	*field source: source for the information in the above field*
CX[TAB]	Etter hjemmel i norsk lov...	*authentic context surrounding the text string*
DEF[TAB]	(empty)	*field for definitions - rarely used by translators*
REMK[TAB]	I wonder if George used this in his article. Check.	*field for remarks or any other information which may be useful for internal purposes.*
NOTE[TAB]	used chiefly in legal texts.	*field for additional information to external users*
CLAS[TAB]	TERM Jur	*field for classification, subject field, etc.*
SOURC[TAB]	(empty)	*source for an entire term record or large parts of it*
CRDAT[TAB]	95-05 cbe	*date created or updated, with user initials*
=		*term record separator*

Categories of Particular Use to Translators

As has been stated previously, translation-oriented terminology work differs somewhat from traditional terminology work, in that translators need to process many types of terminological information, not just pure terminology. This difference is reflected in the substance of the content of certain fields. In the following, the discussion will therefore outline ways of tailoring the content of the term record to fulfil the special needs of translators. The fields which have proven to be of particular use to translators include the main entry term fields, the remark field, the classification field and the source fields.

Main entry term field (**TE**). In traditional terminology work, this field has been used to identify and name terms in a concept hierarchy based on definitions. A translator, however, is often not as concerned with delineating concept hierarchies as with keeping track of terminological information in a source language and its equivalent expression in a target language. Thus, it is important not to limit the contents of this field merely to terms proper. This field can also be used to record phraseological units, standard text segments, collocations, names of institutions and many other types of information not usually found in traditional terminology collections. Here, it is up to the individual translator's creativity to determine what kind of information is needed. For instance, this is an ideal way to record and retrieve a standard sentence, or even paragraph, that is repeated in the texts of international treaties. The Norwegian main entry in Figure 2 is an example of how to record a phraseological unit in this field.

Remark field **(REMK).** The remark field is intended as a field for comments for internal use only. The contents of this field would thus traditionally not be available to outside users. In a multi-user translation environment, however, this field can be used to ask for and receive comments from other translators, or to provide them with additional information that would not be included in print-outs circulated outside the internal network. Moreover, this field can play an important role during the translation process, as it provides the translator with a place to record questions, either about a term or a whole sentence, with the item in question entered in the main entry term field (see above). If a translator records questions systematically, with reference to the text (source field), the accompanying term list actually serves as a working document for clearing up ambiguity when talking to clients. Alternatively, this field may be used to direct comments to clients who have been sent a term list for approval prior to completion of a text.

Classification field **(CLAS).** The classification field can be used to group together information that belongs together. Terminological information may be classified in many different ways, for example according to subject field (e.g. chemical engineering, economics), type of information (e.g. names of institutions, job positions), or type of text (e.g. legal treatise, speech). As the translator's collection of terminological information grows, there may be a need to break it down into smaller segments. Systematic use of the classification field will facilitate this task, as each category forms the basis for a smaller collection of related terminological information. Again, it is up to the individual translator or institution to devise a classification system specially suited to their needs.

Source fields (**SOURF** and **SOURC**). Accurate source information is one of the only ways to tell whether an entry can be trusted or not. Far too often, translators list terms and equivalents without properly indicating their sources. Without a proper source, there is no way of knowing where an entry has come from, and whether or not it can be used in a different context. Source information provides the *history* of an entry, and without proper source references, a user must often conduct exactly the same search process once again to verify the correctness of a word or usage. This is a classic case of reinventing the wheel, and one of the areas where translators stand to gain the most in terms of time. Another important point to remember is that sources can be anything. A source can be a dictionary, a textbook, a person (another translator, a specialist in the field involved), a television program, etc. In some cases, different fields will have different sources, each of which should be recorded in a SOURF field directly following the field involved. In other cases, an entire term record or a major portion of it will come from the same source, for example a journal number or a collection of parallel language texts, which should then be recorded in the SOURC field. Translators are advised to keep a master list of their sources readily available for updating. That way, they can keep typing to a minimum by using fixed abbreviations to designate sources in the source fields.

CONCLUSION

The decision to implement a system for recording and retrieving terminological information requires a good deal of forethought. The first decision a translator or institution must make is not *how* to store terminological information, but *what kind* of terminological information they wish to store. Once this decision has been made, it will be easier to find and utilize an appropriate computer tool. This paper has identified specific categories of information that should be included in a collection of terminological information. A simple method for incorporating terminological methodology into the translation process has been outlined as one way of providing a standardized structure for the task of keeping track of source language terminological information, and target language solutions. By recording, standardizing and circulating terminological information, translators can enhance text quality and increase efficiency. Whether we work alone or in a team, translation-oriented terminology work is the key to keeping track of our hard-won expertise, making it possible for us to reuse our knowledge at little cost, and allowing us to share what we have learned with others.

List of references

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