

TRAINING TERMINOLOGISTS FOR TERM BANKS

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ABSTRACT: A general classification of terminologists according to training and background, followed by a brief survey of terminology training programmes up to the present time, and the various different backgrounds of those who participate in them.

A review of the central content of general terminology training programme with especial reference to the projected content of training programmes offered to term bank terminologists. Conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

In the course of the last few years, the professional profile of the terminologist has undergone a process of clarification. Yet even today there is no uniform conception of who can be described as a terminologist and what specific functions he is expected to perform. This state of affairs is evidenced, for example, by a comparison of descriptions of the professional tasks of those employed in the field of terminology by various organisations and institutions.

One may, however, distinguish 2 major categories(1), which differ in respect of their professional training:

- The technical or other expert engaged in terminology work, chiefly within his own field.
- The LSP (Language for Special Purposes) trained translator, who concerns himself mainly with translation-oriented terminology work, which is necessarily multilingual.

TRAINING UP TO THE PRESENT DAY

Where any training of terminology workers whatsoever has taken place, this generally has had a pronounced practical bias and has been tailored to the needs of a particular institution.

Usually, no basic theory has been offered. This applies both to many terminologists in the terminology departments of language services and to standardisations.

Where, however, terminology is embedded in a language study programme - principally LSP studies - a more systematic approach is observed. Here, though, particular aspects which serve the purposes of the particular subject fields, are given prominence.

In the early and middle '70's, the question constantly arose of what was to be taught and to what level, in order to provide training with a sufficient range to equip the trainee with a valid foundation for his multi-faceted work.

Today, terminology training is generally thought of as a supplementary discipline, which is generally coupled with LSP studies, in some cases also with general language studies. There are, however, an increasing number of plans afoot to expand training programmes to include instruction in the specialist disciplines.

These efforts have led to clearer outlining of the contours for projected training. In several countries, there are already plans to provide terminology training as a subsidiary course, combined with a major degree course.

WHY HAS IT HITHERTO PROVED SO DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH A RELATIVELY HOMOGENEOUS TRAINING PROGRAMME?

The answer to this question must be sought in various factors which cannot all be examined here. But one or two deserve a mention.

1. Terminology is a relatively young discipline, which borders on various other disciplines. None of the established disciplines could on its own fulfil the functions of terminology. A process of integration - also within the field of theory - was therefore essential.
2. There were - and still are - different views or schools of thought as to what should be regarded as the basic theory, although it is my opinion that the differences should rather be regarded as aspects with different emphasis, since the real questions concerning terminology and its functions are, after all, fairly homogeneous.
3. One considerable problem confronting those who wish to plan terminology training lies in the wide diversity of backgrounds and qualifications of the potential trainees. The following groups with different interests in terminology may be identified,
 - a) Linguists, to whom LSP is not infrequently virtually a closed book
 - b) LSP translators whose linguistic background is limited
 - c) Specialists in their own field who, however, lack the necessary language training

- d) Standardisation experts, most of them not language specialists, who regard terminology from the admittedly restricted viewpoint of standardisation
- e) Documentalists whose special attention is naturally directed to the pragmatically-oriented aspects of terminology within their own special field
- f) Classification experts who, besides the documentational aspect, are interested in the conceptual and terminological aspects within the framework of classifications and thesauri
- g) Lexicographers working in LSP areas, taking their point of departure in common core language.

Each of these groups manifest gaps in their terminological knowledge which require filling in, if we are to obtain a reasonably homogeneous professional profile of the terminologist.

WHAT COMPONENTS ARE VIRTUALLY OMNIPRESENT IN TERMINOLOGY TRAINING - ALBEIT WITH VARYING EMPHASIS?

As far as I am aware, training programmes(s) include the following subfields:

1. In many cases the framework of terminology is mapped out through an introduction to LSP and its nature.
2. This is supplemented by a definition of the aims of terminology theory and a classification of the object to which it applies.
3. The heading theory of concepts covers the following principal subsections:
 - Introduction to the various different interpretations of "concept"; this section frequently includes a brief insight into the philosophical principles of the concept as such.
 - Analysis of the concept, i.e., identification of characteristics, types and their classification, as far as possible, and the correlation of characteristics within the concept.
 - Definition theory; this section is chiefly concerned with the formal composition of a definition and the requirements it must satisfy with regard to certain essential aspects, for example, for whom the definition is intended.
 - The relationship prevalent between the various concepts of any special field, with particular reference to the types of conceptual relationships and their correlation within a system of concepts. In this connection the attention should be drawn to the aims of the conceptual system, and also to the various different types which are often closely related to the subject field.

In the case of multilingual, contrasting work, the demand for the determination of equivalence is of the greatest importance; this aspect should therefore be accorded considerable scope: while in the field of technology, equivalence may be assessed with comparative ease, in the "soft sciences" such assessment is problematical and has so far been insufficiently studied.

4. Term Formation. The content of the term has been dealt with under the conceptual aspect. The concern of the present section is to indicate the relationship between expression and content. For this purpose, the "familiar" models are employed. The following points are also discussed:
 - Term versus Word.
 - What universally applicable requirements may be stipulated for terms (Question of motivation)?
 - What particular problems should be considered? Chiefly concerning language or special field-specific questions to do with the formation of terms.
 - Synonymy, polysemy, homonymy within the field of terminology.
5. Lexicography. In this part of the training programme an analysis of the existing forms of dictionaries is generally undertaken; concluding not infrequently in a critical review entailing the differentiation between common core or general dictionaries and LSP dictionaries. In an increasing number of cases, an introduction is offered to the modern aids of the lexicographer i.e. computer-assisted lexicography is mentioned, with a summary of its potential and limitations. At many institutions, this training is limited to an introduction since it is only in a very few cases possible to demonstrate the operation of a terminological data bank. However, it should be borne in mind that this section in particular will witness many changes in the course of the next few years - necessarily so, in view of the rapidly increasing importance of this aspect.
6. Documentation. It is not, in fact, possible to offer a short course in documentational training, but in most cases the basic elements of documentation are presented, with particular attention being paid to points which have a bearing on the theory of terminology.
7. Apart from these points, instruction is offered in the historical development of the theory of terminology, standardisation, language planning, and the organisation of work in terminology on a national or international scale.
8. It has proved necessary for pedagogical reasons to supplement the theoretical sections with practical exercises and to conclude the training programme with a terminology project which seeks to touch on all aspects of the training.

These remarks, broadly speaking, cover the first part of my theme, and it should be noted before we proceed, that this part is fundamental; without it, it would scarcely be possible for any truly valuable work in the field of terminology to be performed. However, let us now consider the training of terminologists within the framework of a term bank.

WHAT TRAINING COMPONENTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED, IN ORDER TO PREPARE A TERMINOLOGIST FOR HIS TASK WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A TERMBANK?

The training programme outlined in this section presupposes a basic knowledge of terminology which corresponds roughly to that which I have just mentioned. It should, furthermore, be borne in mind that there are two aspects in this training: both a knowledge of term banks in general and the specific knowledge of, and familiarity with, one term bank in particular. In connection with this aspect, all the following points should be considered and included in this special part of the training programme.

1. A survey of all the various types of term banks and their function and purpose. At this stage, in one or two typical cases, the origins and development should be briefly presented, since a complete review proves thought-provoking and stimulating for the learner.
2. A thorough introduction to the system of the term banks for which work is to be undertaken upon completion of training. Here, it is essential that the basic conception, the purpose and the technical possibilities of the system are made quite clear.
3. An essential feature is the complete command of the record, and not that of the "home" bank alone, but also the records of those other banks with which an exchange of terminological data is carried out (see also point 6).
4. Of equally great importance is a command of the relevant system of classification. This means besides the ability to operate a system mechanically, the ability to carry out unaided, complex tasks of classification in accordance with the system. To achieve this, familiarity with the conception of the classification system is imperative. A command of the classification systems of exchange partners is, likewise, indicated.
5. It appears almost banal to stipulate that the technical operation of the bank should be mastered faultlessly, not only - and this is essential - as a user of the bank, but also as a termbank specialist; that is to say, the potential and limitations of the bank's functions should be known in order to permit the use of the bank already during the stage of collation of terminologies. In other words, the bank should also serve as an instrument for processing.
6. The exchange of terminological inventories sounds - especially in theory - extremely simple. However, in practice, matters are somewhat different. In this section such questions as: unaltered transfer? Adaptation by machine processing (where at all possible)? Supplementation, breakdown or summarising of individual items of information - in short: adaptation to the record of the "home" bank - should be thoroughly discussed.

- 7, An operation which will be of great importance in the future is the maintenance, renewal and continuous checking of inventories. Many banks have, for a wide variety of reasons, allowed their enthusiasm to run away with them, and have ended up storing vast quantities of terminological information despite the fact that its quality was known to be far from satisfactory in many cases. How such "polluted" inventories are to be purified - even when this is feasible - or how a new processing operation can best succeed, should in any event be the object of study during training. There are, after all, a number of unfortunate examples to act as an object lesson.
8. Lastly, research-related aspects of a term bank should be considered. These might include, for instance, various areas such as the further development of the bank, the study of term formation, the analysis of definition, etc.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be stated that term bank workers should possess

- a) training in terminology as an essential basis for terminology work, irrespective of whether traditional or electronic lexicographical methods are used
- b) term bank-specific knowledge, which
 - 1. is of general character and applicable to general matters
 - 2. refers to the "home" bank and may only be acquired by working in association with it
 - 3. includes all banks operating in a linked file system.

This division has the practical and paedagogical consequence that points a) and, to a certain extent, point b)1, can be learnt without access to a term bank; points b)2 and b)3, however, necessitate intensive practical training which can hardly be simulated and therefore ought only to take place in conjunction with a term bank.

The principal difference in training terminologists for term banks and terminologists for other purposes, lies not in the area of the theory, but rather in the area of the technical means and methods of LSP lexicography, sometimes known as terminography.

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