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Practical guidelines for socioterminology

Lignes directrices pratiques pour la socioterminologie

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

In exceptional circumstances, when a technical committee has collected data of a different kind from that which is normally published as an International Standard ("state of the art", for example), it may decide by a simple majority vote of its participating members to publish a Technical Report. A Technical Report is entirely informative in nature and does not have to be reviewed until the data it provides are considered to be no longer valid or useful.

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ISO/TR 22134 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Principles and methods*.

Introduction

Terminology standardization has always been the prerogative of experts in terminology, the latter dealing exclusively with technolects. In this context, the principles, method and vocabularies drawn up by terminologists are not always suitable for the speakers' communities which are heterogeneous. This situation does not lend itself to permitting mutual understanding between these linguistic communities.

Socioterminology which is linked to localization facilitates communication between different socioprofessional groups. It studies terminologies, placing them within the social context where the concepts appear, are defined and are named. It unites the specialized concepts with a community of speakers. In this way, socioterminology enables terminological practices to be adapted to the target languages and linguistic communities addressed by the linguistic work.

The drafting of practical guidelines for socioterminology is an attempt to match what is said and what is done in the daily life of speakers. Although the methodological principles drawn up by planning terminologists seem to have a relatively universal spread, the ensuing practices on the other hand shall be adapted to the targeted linguistic communities. It is in this context that this Technical Report will be used for the interpretation and usage of the other TC 37 documents within the perspective of cultural and linguistic diversity and, therefore, within the meaning of terminology planning practice on the world scale.

This Technical Report will also be used as a basis for future work within TC 37/SC 1. In 2007, this subcommittee intends to undertake the preparation of a series of practical guidelines derived from ISO 704 and ISO 860 in order to facilitate the implementation of these International Standards in the terminology practice.

Practical guidelines for socioterminology

1 Scope

This Technical Report proposes guidelines for socioterminology principles, methods and vocabularies.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 1087-1:2000, *Terminology work — Vocabulary — Part 1: Theory and application*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 1087-1 and the following apply.

3.1
language planning
any intervention of a national, international or social body aiming at the definition of the functions or the status of one or more concurrent languages in a territory, or aiming at the standardization or instrumentalization of one or more languages so that these languages can fulfil their assigned functions in the frame of a predetermined linguistic policy

NOTE   Language planning can include status planning as well as corpus planning.

3.2
terminology planning
activity aimed at developing, improving, disseminating and implementing the terminology of a subject field

NOTE   Terminology planning involves all aspects of terminology work and has among other objectives that of achieving vocabulary control through such normative documents as thesauri and terminology standards.

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.6.4]

3.3
subject field
domain
field of special knowledge

NOTE   The borderlines of a subject field are defined from a purpose-related point of view.

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.1.2]

3.4
concept harmonization
activity for reducing or eliminating minor differences between two or more concepts which are already closely related to each other

NOTE   Concept harmonization is an integral part of standardization.

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.6.5]

3.5
term harmonization
activity leading to the designation of one concept in different languages by terms which reflect the same or similar characteristics or have the same or slightly different forms

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.6.6]

3.6
special language
language for special purposes
LSP
technolect
language used in a subject field and characterized by the use of specific linguistic means of expression

NOTE   The specific linguistic means of expression always include subject-specific terminology and phraseology and may also cover stylistic or syntactic features.

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.1.3]

3.7
localization
adaptation of a product or communication to a community of speakers with respect to cultural, linguistic, legal, political and technological factors

3.8
neologism
new term coined for a given concept

NOTE   Although neoterms sometimes rename established concepts, they usually name new concepts.

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.4.7]

3.9
terminology standardization
establishment of terminology standards or of terminology sections in technical standards, and their approval by an authoritative body

[ISO 1087-1:1990, 8.3]

3.10
linguistic policy
any kind of decision made by a state, a government or a recognized or authorized organization, aiming at the orientation of the utilization of one or more languages in a virtual or real territory

NOTE   A linguistic policy stands at the level of the determination of objectives. The fields of intervention of linguistic policies are various and may cover any category of activities of a society.

3.11
socioterminology
approach of terminology work based on the sociological, cultural and sociolinguistic characteristics of a linguistic community, aiming at the study and the development of its technolects in accordance with those characteristics

3.12
terminology work
work concerned with the systematic collection, description, processing and presentation of concepts and their designations

[ISO 1087-1:2000, 3.6.1]

4   Object of the document

The ultimate object of this Technical Report is to provide methodological guidelines for the interpretation and use of other TC 37 documents within the perspective of cultural and linguistic diversity. It aims to establish a system of concepts applicable to terminology work in the sociolinguistical context and to reinforce the social character of terminology. In the short term, it provides the necessary foundations to implement these methodological orientations. This Technical Report aims to meet the requirements of the linguistic market which oscillates between the localization pole and the intercomprehension pole and to lead to a new concept of standardization and terminology harmonization that takes account of social linguistics. Three sections make up the framework of this Technical Report; they are

— basic concepts,

— general principles,

— methodological principles of socioterminology.

5   Basic concepts of socioterminology

5.1   Socioterminology

5.1.1   General

In socioterminology, everything that is spoken, even in scientific and technical fields, constitutes an act of language. Every act of language is based on a mode of perception, on a mode of appropriation and on a mode of expression of the actual situation, all of which include cultural and sociolinguistic characteristics.

Socioterminology (3.11) was born from a quite precise need to unite specialized concepts to a community of speakers. It is concerned with the dissemination of terms and their development and perceives the scientific and technical term from a purely communicational viewpoint, in contrast to the normative attitude, which favours a conceptual viewpoint.

Socioterminology does not renounce to important acquired knowledge of theorization and practical know-how, but seeks to link all that to use analysis in technolectal discourse of the target group. Thus, the socioterminological approach provides the drive to revise or to readjust the concept of the field, and the role and actions of the expert (Gambier,1994/1995: 106 [6]).

Socioterminology takes a diachronic approach, whereas standardization follows a more synchronic approach. Indeed, socioterminology incorporates the dimension of diachromy, i.e. the evolution of linguistic facts in the study of vocabularies, by considering that the terms concentrate accumulated knowledge and reflect the dominant concepts of the experts, whereas terminology standardization can only be conceived of synchronously, i.e. according to a set of linguistic facts regarded as forming a functional system, at a specific moment in the evolution of a language.

In this regard, socioterminology makes it possible to humanize terminology standardization as conceived at the time, i.e. with rules and strict criteria to be followed. As a discipline, socioterminology is more open in that it takes account of human elements. It mirrors man in his sociolinguistic, cultural and socio-economic concerns and illustrates his everyday life.

Thus, socioterminology, as a practice, starts with the analysis of specialized discourse, whether written or spoken. It makes it necessary to construct textual corpuses corresponding to the various scientific, technical and professional communication situations. These corpuses are then analysed in order to extract from them the terminologies in use, as well as all the terminological data and terminological material used for terminology work.

A corpus is built up continuously nowadays, in order to have permanent access to an updated collection of data. A well-constructed corpus shall comprise the following characteristics: actuality of the texts, representativeness of the communities of the speakers of the technolect under study and relative exhaustivity[1].

This approach can be combined with the other methodological approaches in terminology: textual approach and the traditional conceptual approach, which are well documented particularly in ISO 704.

5.1.2 Methodological approaches of terminology

5.1.2.1 The cognitive or conceptual approach

This approach to terminology is the one that underlies ISO 704 that recommends the preparation of terminology on the basis of the analysis of concepts and their structuring in coherent sets that give an account of the knowledge in a field of experimentation. This approach specifically uses analysis grids of categories and sub-categories of concepts made up of elements such as entities (principles, material objects, non-material objects), properties (quantities, relations, qualities), activities (operations, procedures), dimensions (times, space, position). These grids can be developed as and when required according to the nature of the conceptual field analysed.

5.1.2.2 The textual approach to terminology

Another approach to terminology consists of starting from scientific and technical discourse where this is the privileged position for drafting and naming concepts[2]. This concept is called "corpus terminology", as it consists of examining the corpus of texts produced freely by experts in a field in order to extract from it significant factors that enable the concepts to be reconstructed and to extract the data essential for drafting definitions, and terms or "candidate terms" that designate the concepts. The practice of corpus terminology includes strict methodological requirements regarding the choice and critique of the texts to be used and the method of analysis of the texts[3].

5.1.2.3 The socioterminological approach

There is finally the so-called socioterminological approach based on the analysis of "discursive practices" that accompany socioprofessional practices in their sociocultural establishment and in their sociolinguistic environment (communication, level of technicality, etc.). This approach involves the conditions of discourse production and examines the cultural methods of drafting concepts, and the process for creating or adapting terminology in the language tradition of the languages and linguistic communities targeted in this sociocultural environment. This approach that is the subject of this Technical Report naturally includes the study of terminology variation.

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1) See Jennifer Pearson's book, *Terms in Context* (Reference [13]).

2) See on this subject: Loubier, C. and Rousseau, L.-J. (Reference [11]).

3) This approach to terminology and its requirements have been described in detail by Jennifer Pearson (see Reference [13]).

It is obvious that the three approaches to terminology mentioned above are not mutually incompatible. On the contrary, it is often the case that, in the current practice of terminology work, they are used simultaneously with success in an attempt at obtaining good quality.

The socioterminological approach also assumes a concerted terminological development that is based most of the time on terminology research for which the methods differ according to the organizations involved. In all cases, it is a question of orientation of usage, whether it is freely agreed or not by the users. However, even if the user lends credibility or, at the very least, a certain legitimacy to the terminology planners, if only because of the generally official character of the action they take, he often remains sceptical and exercises his linguistic feeling by comparing the proposed usage to his personal usage or the usage he observes in his immediate professional environment.

Experience shows that the critical awareness of the speaker is more acute when a term is proposed to him in his own language than when he adopts a foreign term without examining it. This will be even more the case if it is proposed to him to replace a term in his language with another term thought to be more suitable in the same language. This critical awareness is a quite legitimate manifestation of the linguistic competence of the speaker who provides terminology judgement based on criteria personal to him.

The use of a term by the speaker is not therefore automatic because of the single fact that it is recommended by an official body; all terminologists know that well. The reasons that explain the effective usage of a term remain unforeseeable most of the time, but successful introduction requires nevertheless that the terminologist ensures that certain methodological conditions are met.

5.2   Terminology planning

Terminology planning (3.2) is a specific case of code planning. It is generally based on a linguistic policy, formulated or not, and includes all the aspects of terminology work, from research to implanting terms in the targeted professional environment. Terminology planning, if performed according to the book, is an application of socioterminology. Other concepts shall be mentioned to describe the socioterminological approach of terminology.

5.3   Technolect

Technolects (3.6) are made up essentially of terminologies and other linguistic means of expression (for example terminological phrases) or non-linguistic means, such as pictograms or symbols. In each language, there are technolects that correspond to the various specialities. Technolects may include differences in language level, differences of professional point of view or regional variations for the same given language. These technolects are constructed and developed according to terminology and linguistic traditions on which the terminology planning work shall be based.

5.4   Neology

Neology consists of the creation of a new term (unedited form), or of a new meaning for a form already in the language, or of borrowing a term from another field of knowledge. An example of the latter is the borrowing by the field of IT security of a collection of virology terms. There are numerous methods for forming new terms in each language. This creation obeys the rules, specific to each language, which should be followed.

6   General principles in socioterminology

6.1   General

This clause on the general principles of terminology deals essentially with the objectives of terminology work, standardization, socioterminology and its contribution to terminology standardization, as well as with the links between socioterminology and localization.