

# Terminology triumphant

*Terminology is fundamental to any translator's or interpreter's work. Dominik Kreuzer reports on a four-day event focusing solely on this topic*



Dominik Kreuzer MITI is a professional technical translator (DE<->EN) with more than 20 years of experience in the field. Having lived in the UK for 21 years before returning to his native Austria, he is a native speaker of both English and German. He holds a degree in Manufacturing Systems Engineering from The University of the West of England in Bristol.

Having acquired a taste for terminology work at a pre-conference terminology day at last year's International Translation Technology Terminology (ITT) Conference in Bled, Slovenia, I decided to attend this year's four-day Terminology Summer School in Vienna, this July. This is held annually by TermNet, the Austrian-based International Network for Terminology, and attended by practitioners from a range of disciplines and countries.

Klaus-Dirk Schmitz, Professor of Terminology Studies at the Technische Hochschule Köln, started by covering first the basics of terminology and terminology theory and then the practical aspects of structuring a terminological entry in a termbase and defining termbase structure. An important concept here is *term autonomy*: managing all terms belonging to one concept as autonomous. In practice, this means, for example, that each term associated with a concept should have its own term-level entry under the index level, complete with all fields relating to that term, such as source, context and status.

In the afternoon, Georgeta Ciobanu, a professor at the Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania, talked about how to implement terminology management and assure the quality of terminological entries. She went through the many specific rules for term entries: for example, the definition belongs in the entry level of each language, not the term level

(as it defines the concept and not the term), and should be phrased in such a way that it can replace the term within a sentence as it stands.

The first day ended with a keynote address by Klaus Fleischmann, chair of the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA), in which he also presented his approach to selling terminology management to organisations – a topic that we would deal with in more detail later on.

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## Managing the managers

On the morning of day two, the topics included how to select a terminology management system (Klaus-Dirk Schmitz again) and terminology extraction – which is, he feels, one of the most underrated aspects of terminology work. It yields no terminological information besides information about terms and context, while it also generates a lot of work checking and assigning a long list of term candidates to a concept. It can be useful, however, for preparing terminology for large translation projects and for feeding a new termbase.

Following lunch, Gabriele Sauberer, an experienced project and quality manager, and director of TermNet, talked about how to present the business case for terminology, and how to calculate and argue costs and return on investment – a topic that we often refer to as 'client education' in the UK and that is rarely missing in any conversation among translators. Although we were dealing purely with terminology here, many of the principles covered apply equally to, say, standardising language, formatting documents or introducing new in-house style guides. Gabriele gave an example from a presentation to one of her clients: after praising the company for its achievement, she highlighted the costs of operating without terminology management before listing the concrete benefits cited by stakeholders. The point here is that the top management needs to be prepared to invest the cash, and the stakeholders need to be prepared to invest their time.

In the day's final session, Gabriele went into the practical aspects of developing a terminology policy and of involving relevant stakeholders – also important issues, as standardised terminology is of no use unless it is readily available throughout the organisation (company), and its members (employees) actually accept and use it. This involves identifying the stakeholders (essentially anyone working with terminology – from product development to sales and marketing), assessing their importance in deciding the success of the terminology project, and developing the processes for involving them.

On day three, the long evening conversations over dinner and drinks with the other participants and speakers were taking their toll on the coffee machines. Beate Früh, based on her own experience as a self-employed consultant for terminology and translation management, talked about how to manage terminology projects and how to design and integrate terminology processes and workflows in a business environment.

Following a case study by Frieda Steurs, president of TermNet and a lecturer at KU Leuven in Antwerp, on the use of controlled language in technical documentation, the day's

final talk covered ISO terminological standards. Expecting this to be a rather dry subject, I was surprised to discover that ISO standards can actually be very helpful in terminology work. Hendrik Kockaert, a certified auditor for ISO 17100 certification, the chairperson of standards development subcommittee ISO TC/37/SC 1 and a member of NBN, the Belgian Bureau for Standardisation, showed us some of the practical applications of standards for translation and terminology – such as ISO 704 on the Principles and Methods of Terminology Work – and how they can help, for example, in defining a termbase structure that meets the needs of all stakeholders.

In the optional 'terminology breakfast' sessions, further topics included terminology knowledge organisation systems (KOS) and specific software applications presented by some of the summer school's sponsors: the Coreon

Multilingual Knowledge System; and Sketch Engine, a language corpus management and query system. Sketch Engine is a statistical web-based tool for analysing texts and has many functions that are useful for translators and interpreters, including concordance searching, word frequency analysis, collocation and thesaurus. During the demonstration, we were amazed at the accuracy with which statistical text analysis is capable of identifying synonyms. The platform can analyse both single-language corpora and language pairs, and users can either upload their own corpus for analysis or use one of the sizeable corpora available on the platform.

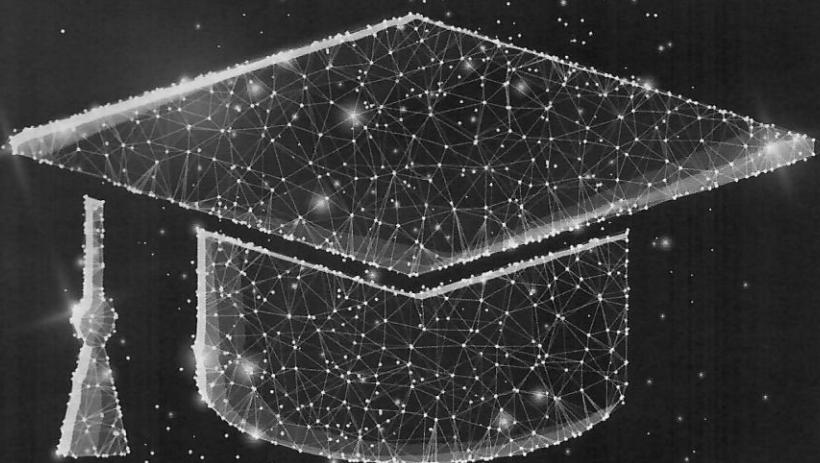
On the final day, course participants had the opportunity of presenting their own terminology projects before a Q&A session, moderated by TermNet deputy director Blanca Nájera Villar. This was particularly interesting as it led to an animated exchange between

the participants, and highlighted potential for future collaboration among them. These presentations also counted as the oral part of the European Certification and Qualification Association (ECQA) certification exam, which all course participants were encouraged to take.

One of the sponsors said that with the rapid advances in neural machine translation, translators might have a difficult time ahead, while terminologists could look forward to a rosy future, since both larger organisations and machine translation (MT) itself will continue to rely on terminology management. Whether he is right remains to be seen. What is certain is that the practical skills involved in managing terminology, and an ability to present to clients the business case for terminology management – and for a controlled authoring and translation workflow overall – are invaluable for freelance translators and larger LSPs alike.

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