

Coming to Terms

New tools give localizers ever-greater flexibility in managing terminology—when you know the tricks of the trade

by Bert Esselink

A Practical Guide to Software Localization by Bert Esselink was published by John Benjamins in October 1998. It focuses on software localization from a translator's, engineer's, as well as project manager's viewpoint. Due to the nature of the software-localization industry, certain sections in the book date rather quickly. Apart from Web updates at www.language-international.com, this column will elaborate on particular topics in software translation and localization that might require a greater level of detail or updating.

Appendix A of *A Practical Guide to Software Localization* discusses different glossary types, terminology-management tools, and available terminology resources. One issue not discussed in

**Use the search keywords from an
online-help file or the index entries
and table of contents of a printed manual
to start your project glossary.**

much detail is terminology setup and management in software-localization projects. Even though most software-localization service providers will not have the time and resources to maintain professional terminology-management systems that include definitions, concept information, examples, and grammatical specifications, each localization vendor will have to pay attention to the way in which terminology is used and maintained in localization projects.

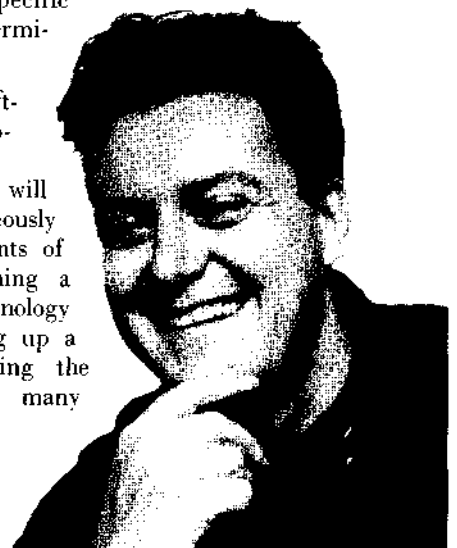
Below you will find some of the most common problems, and tips and tricks that might help localization vendors gain control over their use of terminology.

Known Issues

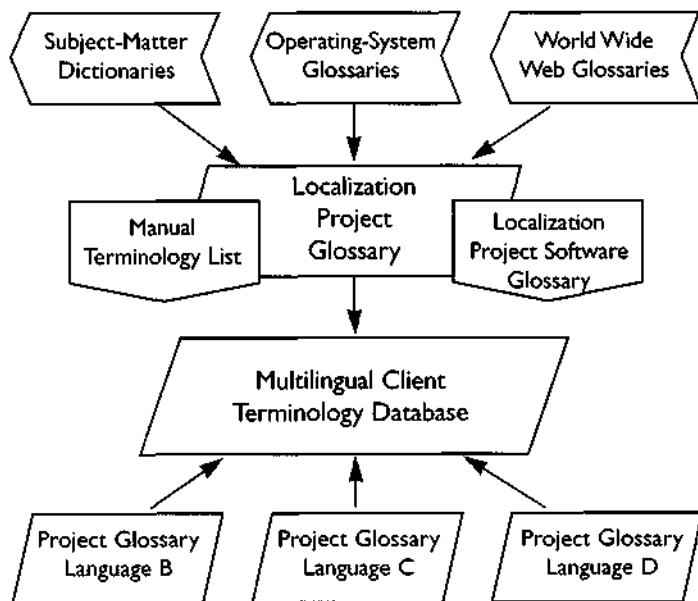
These are some examples of common problems encountered with regard to terminology in software-localization projects:

- How should the terminology setup for a new project or new client be handled?
- How can consistent use of terminology be guaranteed when a large team of translators, editors, reviewers, and proofreaders is working on a project?
- Who is responsible for setting terminology standards, maintaining terminology lists, and ensuring consistent use of terminology?
- How can consistency with the target operating environment be guaranteed?
- What is the best way to set up a client-specific multilingual terminology database?

Because in most software-localization projects several translators and editors will be working simultaneously on different components of the project, maintaining a consistent use of terminology can be tricky. Setting up a project glossary during the project can prevent many problems.



Terminological Reference Material



Terminology Setup

Typically, a software-localization project will start with the setup and translation of a terminology list. The project glossary will mainly be based on this terminology list.

There are several ways in which you can create a terminology list from scratch; below you will find some tips and tricks that might be useful in doing this:

- Check if the online help or printed documentation that comes with the English product contains an explanatory glossary of terms. This glossary can be used to start your terminology list, and it will automatically provide translators with a definition of the term.
- Use the search keywords from an online help file or the index entries and table of contents of a printed manual to start your project glossary.
- Check if your client's technical-documentation department, i.e., the people writing the documentation and online help, are maintaining a glossary of English terms for internal-consistency purposes.
- Run a terminology-extraction tool on the online help or documentation source files.
- Include all product names, help-file titles, manual titles, and possibly chapter titles of the product. You might also include verbs or phrases that are commonly used in the documentation or online help, for example "right-click".
- If possible, extract the core software user-interface terms, i.e., the options in dialog boxes and menu items, to be included in the terminology list. Most software-localization tools will enable you to do this.

The translator of the terminology list should be provided with sufficient reference material, such as a copy of the running software, including the online help and printed documentation, and glossaries of the target operating environment of the application, for example Macintosh or Windows.

When the terminology list has been translated, it is very important to have it validated immediately by your client. Usually soft-

ware publishers will assign a sales representative or product manager in the country of the target language to validate the terminology translations. Since these language validators will be actively involved in selling the translated product and therefore really have to feel comfortable with it, try to get approval before translation actually starts. Make sure that new terms or changes in terminology are communicated to them as well. Try to establish direct communication between your lead translator and this validator to prevent any problems with the final acceptance of the localized product.

Terminology Reference Materials

Ideally, translators working on a software-localization project would have access to the following terminology resources:

1. The project glossary. This glossary is active and is constantly being modified and extended during the project. The project glossary is a combination of the terminology list that was created during the terminology setup and the software glossary which was created from the main user interface translations, for example all menu items and dialog-box options.
2. The multilingual client-terminology database, if available. This is a terminology database which is project-independent and contains key terminology and translations used for this particular client (see page 32).
3. The operating-environment glossary. These glossaries are typically static and should be accessible in some sort of searchable online format. A quick way to search all Microsoft glossaries with one query is to convert all glossaries to Adobe Acrobat PDF files. After indexing these files using Acrobat Catalog, your translators need only download the free Acrobat Reader with Search plug-in to query the complete set of glossaries.
4. Subject-matter or industry-specific dictionaries. For example, if you are translating an application that deals with financial administration, acquire multilingual dictionaries or glossaries specific to this subject.
5. The World Wide Web. Now that many Web sites are available in multiple languages and search engines support

A quick way to search all Microsoft

glossaries with one query is to convert all glossaries to Adobe Acrobat PDF files. After indexing these files using Acrobat Catalog, your translators need only download the free Acrobat Reader with Search plug-in to query the complete set of glossaries.

queries in different languages, the World Wide Web has become an invaluable source of terminology information, both monolingual and multilingual.

In each translation team, one of the senior translators will be responsible for adding new terms to the project glossary and reviewing the other translator's work to see if it is consistent with the glossary. To make sure the project glossary is complete, ask each translator in the team to maintain a list of key terms they encounter while translating. The lead translator then assembles all lists and enters new terms in the project glossary.

Typically, this project glossary will be linked to a networked translation-memory tool to perform automatic terminology lookup. This means that terms in the source text which are found in the project glossary will automatically be displayed along with their translations.

Multilingual Client-Terminology Database

When you are working on several versions or languages of projects for a particular client, it might be a good idea to start implementing a terminology database that stores all terms specific to that client. A client terminology database typically contains:

- Key terms from the client's products
- Terms from the marketing or documentation group
- Feature and concept names

Basically, what you need to do is assemble all bilingual project glossaries from the different languages and products, and merge them into one database. A record in a client-terminology database would typically contain the following fields:

- English term or concept
- Definition of the term or concept
- Synonyms or acronyms

- Translations of the concepts/terms and synonyms
- Source or product/version specification

The illustration below shows a record from one of the sample databases shipping with Trados Multiterm, one of the terminology-management programs available on the market.

When the size of the terminology database is manageable, you might also choose to combine the terminology databases of several clients into one general database, along with a client specification. For example, if you have localized several products for clients that all produce software in the field of Enterprise Resource Planning, you can create an ERP Terminology Database that includes the key terminology used for *all* these clients.

By implementing the above tips, localization vendors and managers should be well on their way to successfully tackling terminology.

Bert Esselink has been active in localization since 1990. After graduating in technical translation and doing coursework in computational linguistics, he worked for several years as a software translator, localization engineer, and technical project manager. Two years ago he joined Alpnet in Amsterdam as localization manager, training new engineers and localization specialists, and coordinating all technical aspects of software-localization projects.



The screenshot shows the TRADOS MultiTerm '95 Plus! interface. The title bar reads "TRADOS MultiTerm '95 Plus! - GUIDEMO.MTW <View>". The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Search", and "Help". Below the menu bar, there are two dropdown menus: "Index" set to "English" and "Target" set to "German". There are three input fields labeled "edit box", "ellipsis", and "group box".

The main content area displays the following information:

- Entry Number: 13
- Subject: Boxes, Menu commands
- Source: Microsoft GUI Guide
- English: **ellipsis**
- Definition: An ellipsis (...) after a command indicates that a dialog box will appear when the user chooses that item.
- German: **Ellipse** *f*
- German: **Auslassungspunkte** *mpl*
- French: **points de suspension** *mpl*
- Spanish: **puntos suspensivos** *mpl*
- Portuguese: **reticências** *fpf*
- Italian: **puntini di sospensione** *mpl*

At the bottom, there is a "Target Term" field which is currently empty.