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EU Terminology in Swedish: Compiling an English–Swedish Vocabulary

Abstract

The paper presents a recently completed English–Swedish vocabulary of words and expressions found in the texts of the official documents of the European Communities/European Union (EU). As the largest group of prospective users are translators, the vocabulary combines the features of a terminological dictionary and a reference guide to the current usage of the EU language. The general features of the Vocabulary are outlined and two important problems involved in the compilation of special language vocabularies are discussed – identification of headwords and providing access to multiword lexical units.

1. Introduction

The English–Swedish vocabulary *EGs ord och uttryck (EC Words and Expressions)* has been intended to meet the needs of Swedish users interested in or professionally associated with the European Communities(EC)/European Union and its terminology, primarily the translators of EU documents into Swedish. The Vocabulary has been compiled by the Swedish Centre for Technical Terminology (TNC) and appeared in September 1993.

The Vocabulary is based on the material collected in TNC's EU term bank containing excerpts from parallel English and Swedish texts of the EU documents relative to the Agreement on the European Economic Area. These include the Treaty Establishing the European Community, the Treaty on European Union and a selection of EU directives, recommendations, etc. published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

The EU documents cover a wide range of subject fields: law, economics, administration, industries, etc. and contain a large amount of special terminology. The language of the EU documents can therefore be viewed as a kind of special language which we call the EU language. The EU language includes various types of lexical units of which we chose only those that might be of interest to translators such as terms from diverse subject fields, fixed expressions that are specific to legal and administrative languages in general and the EU language in particular, and names of EU organizations, programmes and documents.

Compiling a translator-oriented vocabulary of a special language involved the use of both terminological principles for e.g. the selection and evaluation of terms, and lexicographical methods that allow to depict the

current usage of the EU language. The distinguishing features of the present vocabulary are that it describes various types of special language units, including those that are ignored by traditional terminological dictionaries, and that it has been compiled on the basis of a combination of terminological and lexicographical methods.

The compilation of the Vocabulary posed a number of interesting problems related to the representation of special language units, particularly with regard to identification of headwords and providing access to multiword lexical units. These are discussed below following a brief outline of the general features of the Vocabulary.

2. General features of the Vocabulary

2.1 Selection of headwords

The Vocabulary contains about 3,500 headwords which fall into the following three groups:

- terms proper, e.g. *key interest rate* (economics), *waste disposal* (environment),
- fixed expressions of the EU language, e.g. *confer power*, *incur an obligation*,
- names of EU organizations, programmes and documents, e.g. *European Monetary System*, *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade*.

The guiding principle for selecting terms was thematic. Preference was given to terms relating to law, economics, trade and general administration. A small number of terms from various technical fields, e.g. industries and engineering was also included. The evaluation and selection of terms were carried out with the help of subject field experts.

All fixed expressions found in the documents that had acceptable Swedish equivalents were included.

Names of EU organizations, etc. were selected with a view to their importance for EU matters.

2.2 Content and arrangement of the Vocabulary entries

The Vocabulary includes two types of entries:

- term entries with a term or fixed expression as the headword,
- name entries with the name of an EU organisation, programme or document as the headword.

A term entry (Fig. 1) includes the following information: English term, Swedish term, English context, Swedish context, source reference and in

some cases also cross–references. A term entry may also include information on synonyms, acronyms, grammatical information and information on special subject area.

expenditure	(English headword)
utgifter, pl	(Swedish equivalent, grammatical information)
The revenue and expenditure shown in the budget shall be in balance	(English context)
Budgetens inkomster och utgifter skall balansera varandra	(Swedish context)
[Rom art 199,2]	(source reference)
→ <i>defray expenditure</i>	(cross–reference)

A name entry (Fig. 2) contains the English headword with its Swedish equivalent. It may include synonyms and abbreviations as well as explanations in one or both languages which issue from authoritative sources.

Fig. 1 Example of a term entry

AIM;	(English headword)
Advanced Informatics in Medicine	(English synonym)
Aim–programmet	(Swedish equivalent)
Community action in the field of information technology and telecommunications applied to health care	(English explanation)
(program för utveckling av avancerad informationsteknik inom hälso– och sjukvården)	(Swedish explanation)

Fig. 2 Example of a name entry

2.3 The attitude towards the usage

The Vocabulary contains both descriptive and prescriptive features. This is at least in part due to our attempt to keep the balance between the terminological practice that requires a high degree of prescriptiveness and the desire to depict usage as fully as possible.

The term entries are, for the most part, descriptive, they show how a headword has been translated in a given context. If there have been several

equally good translations of a headword in the corpus, all are listed in alphabetical order in the respective entries.

The name entries are clearly prescriptive, as the Swedish equivalents of the names of EU organizations, programmes, etc. were approved by competent bodies and the spelling and use of capital letters in Swedish are recommended by TNC.

2.4 Means of access

The Vocabulary is strictly alphabetical, and all the multiword units are entered under the first letter of their first component, e.g. *infringement proceedings* appears under *infringement* and not as a subentry of *proceedings*. We have thus followed the principle 'one entry – one headword' which is common to terminological dictionaries. To ensure access to terms that are not first components of multiword units a cross-reference system has been elaborated (see Section 4).

3. Identification of headwords

The identification of headwords involves making some important distinctions. We started with the premise that the headword in a special language vocabulary should be a special language unit, i.e. a word or word combination belonging to some defined subject domain no matter how wide it might be. General language words and expressions are thus left out.

We distinguish between the following types of special language units: single-word terms, names, free word combinations and restricted word combinations. The distinction between free word combinations and restricted word combinations has been considered very important, since the former are of little or no value to the user due to their occasional character, while the latter are of major interest to the user. Single-word terms, names and restricted word combinations have been included as headwords whereas free word combinations have been left out, e.g. *new policy*, *general measure* (cf. restricted word combinations *agricultural policy*, *take measures*).

We distinguish between the following types of restricted word combinations:

- concept-bound word combinations or *terms* (multiword terms), i.e. word combinations denoting a single concept in a specific subject domain, e.g. *balance sheet* (accounting), *judicial record* (law), cf. 'concept-bound collocations' (Martin, 1992),
- grammatically-bound word combinations or *grammatical phrases* containing a term and one or several function words co-occurring with the term, the choice of the latter being restricted by grammatical usage, e.g. *with effect from*, *by common accord*, cf. 'grammatical collocations' (Benson, 1986),

- lexically-bound word combinations or *lexical phrases* containing a term and a number of other lexical items co-occurring with it, the choice of the latter being restricted by the lexical character of the term in question, e.g. *initiate a proceeding* (one *initiates a proceeding*, but *embarks upon a procedure* and *enters into consultations*), cf. ‘lexeme-bound collocations’ (Martin, 1992) and ‘lexical functions’ (Mel’chuk, 1987).

While no-one would question the inclusion of multiword terms in a special language vocabulary, the presence of lexical and grammatical phrases in such vocabularies is fairly unconventional. We consider lexical and grammatical phrases to be of great importance to the users of special language vocabularies, particularly translators, as the translation of a word may vary depending on the restricted word combination in which it occurs, cf. *issue a loan* (*emittera ett lån*), *issue a directive* (*utfärda ett direktiv*), *issue a report* (*avge en rapport*).

We have used the following criteria for identifying the restricted word combinations to be included as the headwords.

A restricted word combination has been identified as a term if:

- it represents a single concept (which implies that it may be placed in an appropriate concept system),
- it appears in a term-specific construction, e.g.:
noun + noun, cf. *health monitoring*.

A restricted word combination has been identified as a phrase if:

- it does not represent a single concept (that can be placed in some concept system),
- its elements are lexically or grammatically bound,
- it appears in a phrase-specific construction, e.g.:
verb + (prp) + noun, cf. *impede trade* (lexical phrase),
prp + noun + prp, cf. *by virtue of* (grammatical phrase).

The listed criteria serve to identify the headwords, they are not intended for distinguishing between terms and phrases since we decided to present them in the same way in the Vocabulary entries. The difference between the two is displayed only in the cross-reference system. Cross-references are always made to lexical phrases, often to grammatical phrases and only in a small number of cases to terms (see below).

4. Providing access to multiword units

Given the strictly alphabetical arrangement of the Vocabulary entries and the fact that the majority of headwords are multiword units, it was necessary

to establish a functional cross-reference system. In most cases the purpose of cross-referencing has been to prevent the loss of information by directing the user's attention to interesting terms and phrases that either do not have separate entries in the Vocabulary or have different translations depending on the word combination in which they occur.

The most important cases of cross-referencing in the Vocabulary are:

1) cross-references *from* terms that occur only as parts of other terms and do not have their own entries *to* terms that include them, e.g.:

dispatch

-> free at point of dispatch

where *dispatch* does not have its own entry as it has only been found in the corpus as part of the term *free at point of dispatch*. The cross-reference here is placed in a 'dummy' entry, i.e. an entry which includes only the headword and the cross-reference to another 'genuine' entry, in this case *free at point of dispatch*;

2) cross-references *from* terms that have their own entries but are translated differently when they are parts of other terms *to* terms that include them, e.g.:

conformity

likformighet

-> certificate of conformity

certificate of conformity

intyg om överensstämmelse

3) cross-references *from* terms that may or may not have their own entries *to* lexical phrases which include them as their central terms, e.g.:

measure

åtgärd

Community-wide measure

-> bring measures into force

bring measures into force

sätta bestämmelser i kraft

where *measure* has been translated as *åtgärd* in a free combination *Community-wide measure* and as *bestämmelse* in the phrase *bring measures into force*;

4) cross-references *from* terms that are not first components of grammatical phrases *to* grammatical phrases which include them, e.g.:

prejudice

-> to the prejudice of

-> without prejudice to

The extent of cross-referencing in the Vocabulary can be illustrated by the entry **power**. It has cross-references to three terms and phrases in which the term *power* has three different translation equivalents:

power

-> confer power (ge befogenhet)

-> exchange full powers (utväxla fullmakter)

-> misuse of powers (maktmissbruk)

5. Conclusion

The compilation of the Vocabulary has called our attention to a number of theoretical and methodological questions that are relevant both to terminology work and lexicographical practice in general. Our efforts to identify special language units, investigate the nature of restricted word combinations in special languages and provide access to multiword units made us more aware of the need for elaboration of a translator-oriented approach to the compilation of special language vocabularies and term banks. Translator-oriented special language vocabularies and term banks should, in our opinion, contain information not only on terms proper but on lexical and grammatical phrases as well. They should also include contexts to illustrate the current usage of special language units.

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