Terminology in South Africa*

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Abstract: This article deals with terminology and terminography in South Africa. It gives the different meanings attached to the term *terminology* and describes points of difference between terminology and terminography. It focuses on the dimensions of terminology, namely the cognitive, linguistic and communicative dimension. Since terminologists need to consult with subject specialists, linguists, language users and mother-tongue speakers during different phases of the terminography process, the role of consultation in terminology work is stressed. Various aspects such as cultural differences that need to be taken care of, are discussed. The current South African terminology and terminography situation regarding terminology work undertaken by the National Language Service is examined. Emphasis is placed on the database system being used and the National Termbank. Terminology training also receives attention.

Keywords: TERMINOLOGY, TERMINOGRAPHY, TERMINOLOGIST, TERMINOGRA-PHER, COGNITIVE DIMENSION, LINGUISTIC DIMENSION, COMMUNICATIVE DIMEN-SION, TECHNICAL DICTIONARY, SUBJECT SPECIALIST, SUBJECT FIELD, SUBJECT-ORI-ENTED, CONCEPT-ORIENTED, LANGUAGE-ORIENTED, STANDARDISATION, PRIMARY TERM FORMATION, SECONDARY TERM FORMATION, LOAN WORDS, BORROWING, TRANSLITERATION, NEOLOGISM, EXTENSION OF MEANING, TOTAL EMBEDDING, TRANSFERENCE

Opsomming: Terminologie in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie artikel handel oor terminologie en terminografie in Suid-Afrika. Dit verskaf die verskillende betekenisse wat aan die term *terminologie* geheg word en beskryf punte van verskil tussen terminologie en terminografie. Daar word gefokus op die dimensies van terminologie, naamlik die kognitiewe dimensie, die taaldimensie en die kommunikatiewe dimensie. Aangesien terminoloë vakspesialiste, linguiste, taalgebruikers en moedertaalsprekers gedurende verskillende fases van terminologiewerk moet raadpleeg, word die rol van konsultasie in terminologiewerk beklemtoon. Verskeie aspekte waaraan aandag gegee behoort te word, soos kultuurverskille, word bespreek. Die huidige Suid-Afrikaanse terminologie- en terminografiesituasie ten opsigte van terminologiewerk wat deur die Nasionale Taaldiens onderneem word, word behandel. Klem word geplaas op die databasisstelsel wat gebruik word en die Nasionale Termbank. Daar word ook aandag gegee aan terminologieopleiding.

Sleutelwoorde: TERMINOLOGIE, TERMINOGRAFIE, TERMINOLOOG, TERMINO-GRAAF, KOGNITIEWE DIMENSIE, TAALDIMENSIE, KOMMUNIKATIEWE DIMENSIE, VAK-WOORDEBOEK, VAKSPESIALIS, VAKGEBIED, VAKGEORIËNTEERD, KONSEPGEORIËN-

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TEERD, TAALGEORIËNTEERD, STANDAARDISASIE, PRIMÊRE TERMSKEPPING, SEKON-
DÊRE TERMSKEPPING, LEENWOORDE, ONTLENING, TRANSLITERASIE, NEOLOGISME,
BETEKENISUITBREIDING, ALGEHELE INSLUITING, OORDRAG

1.   Introduction

Unambiguous communication in all theoretical and applied fields of human
activity is essential, especially for the information age. Such communication is
only possible if unambiguous terms are established for well-defined concepts
and if these terms are known and used accordingly.

Contact between various language groups requires multilingual terminol-
ogy lists or dictionaries. The South African terminologist working at the Termi-
nology Division, National Language Service of the Department of Arts, Cul-
ture, Science and Technology has to supply term equivalents in eleven official
languages in order to facilitate local communication. The South African termi-
nologist also deals with international standards and concepts and therefore also
needs to facilitate international communication.

Various aspects relating to principles and methods of terminology and
terminography will be discussed. A discussion of the South African sociolin-
guistic situation will put the South African terminology practice into perspec-
tive.

2.   Terminology and Terminography

2.1   Terminology

Specialist knowledge is doubling every 5-15 years and most documents consist
of 30-80% of specialist terms (cf. Sonneveld 1997). Terminology is the medium
through which knowledge is disseminated. It is therefore essential for meaning-
ful communication not only among subject specialists but also between the
subject specialist and the layperson. People of different nationalities and lan-
guage groups should also be able to communicate effectively. It is therefore
essential to document terminology in a systematic way to enable subject spe-
cialists, language practitioners and laypeople to communicate by using stan-
dardised terminology. Terminographical principles need to be applied skilfully
for people to be able to document information on concepts and their related
terms. Therefore unified guidelines should be applied to facilitate the exchange
of scientific and technical information on various levels of communication.

Terminology is a strategic resource. With its related fields of terminogra-
phy and lexicography, it has an important role in a multilingual country.
Through the use of correct terminology, the effective scientific and technical
communication skills of all the citizens of South Africa are developed.

The effective management of terms is essential. Collecting information on
concepts may seem superfluous, but a lack of systematic terminology manage-
ment leads to considerable costs and diminished utility or functionality in the

long run (cf. Sonneveld 1997). Even though terminological and terminographi-cal activities are not always cost-effective, they are still of invaluable cultural, social, historical, functional, academic and scientific importance.

The concept and practice of terminology is poorly understood and in some cases even unknown. Terminology is the study of the concepts and terms found in special languages (cf. Sonneveld 1997). It is also the field of activity con-cerned with the collection, recording, documentation, description, processing, systematising, standardising, presentation and dissemination of terms which has a certain coherence by virtue of the fact that the terms belong to specialised areas of usage of one or more languages (Sager 1990: 2, 3). Terminology is therefore the collection of terms systematically naming the coherent system of concepts of a specific subject field, discipline, domain, profession or theme. A terminology would therefore form part of the special language of a particular subject-field. Terminology is concerned with special-field concepts, their defi-nitions and names (Alberts 1990: 102).

In contemporary usage, three meanings of the word "terminology" can be distinguished (Sager 1990: 3; cf. Cluver 1989: 146):

(a)   The set of practices and methods used for the collection, description and presentation of terms;
(b)   A theory, i.e. the set of premises, arguments and conclusions necessary to explain the relationship between concepts and terms which are funda-mental for a coherent terminological activity;
(c)   A vocabulary of a special subject field.

According to Sonneveld (1997) terminology is used for

—   abstracting,
—   indexing,
—   knowledge engineering,
—   translating, and
—   teaching (see Figure 1).

2.2   Terminography

Terminography is one of the subdivisions of lexicography and deals with the documentation of the terminology of different subject fields, e.g. technical and scientific terms. The terminology of any subject field (physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry, etc.) or domain (sport, music, etc.) can be documented in terminographical dictionaries, commonly called technical dictionaries.

Terminography can be considered a separate activity from general lexicog-raphy. The difference lies in "the different nature of the data traditionally assembled, the different background of the people involved in this work, and to some extent in the different methods used" (Sager 1990: 3). One of the main differences between terminography and lexicography is that terminography is
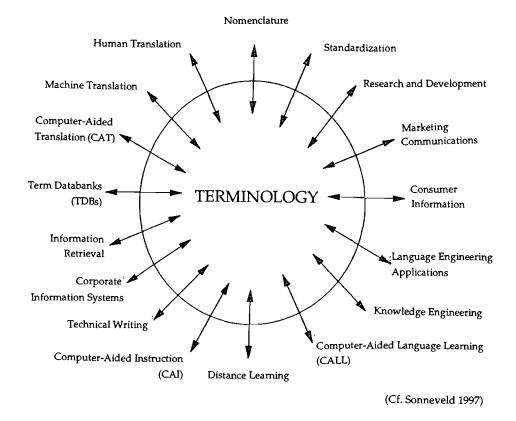
Nomenclature

Human Translation

Machine Translation

Computer-Aided
Translation (CAT)

Term Databanks
(TDBs)

Information
Retrieval

Corporate
Information Systems

Technical Writing

Computer-Aided Instruction
(CAI)

Distance Learning

TERMINOLOGY

Standardization

Research and Development

Marketing
Communications

Consumer
Information

Language Engineering
Applications

Knowledge Engineering

Computer-Aided Language Learning
(CALL)

(Cf. Sonneveld 1997)

Figure 1:   Terminology

concept-oriented and general lexicography is more language-oriented. Termi-
nography is only concerned with a very specialised part of the vocabulary of
the language of any person, namely scientific and technical terms.

2.3   Term

The vocabulary (called terminology) of a subject is the group of words (called
terms) that are typically used when discussing or dealing with the specific sub-
ject.
    Terminological vocabularies are

—   based on concepts,
—   the result of conceptual analysis, and
—   based on relationships between concepts (cf. Sonneveld 1997).

A term is a visual, linguistic representation of a mental concept and can be any
of the following: single term, compound word, phrase, collocation, numeral,

acronym, letter word, abbreviation, chemical symbol, formula, bar-code, icon, mnemonic sign, etc.

The need for unambiguous communication in theoretical and applied fields of human activity is constantly increasing. A terminologist aims to provide unambiguous terms for well-defined concepts. In order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to determine the precise meanings of terms to enable users to comprehend and use them in a universally accepted manner.

Terms can only be used as such if the user already possesses the configuration of knowledge which determines the role of the term in a structured system. A term can be learned contemporaneously with new knowledge, e.g. through text books. However, a term acquired without awareness of the conventional configuration of knowledge to which it relates is communicatively useless. It is possible to codify very strict specifications together with a recommended term, and to seek to achieve agreement on the part of users to use the term with the specified fixed reference. This is then a deliberate attempt to impose uniformity of usage by publicly fixing the relationship between the term and the associated concept and proposing the term as a standard (cf. Sager 1990: 19-20).

Terminology is influenced by the subject fields and areas of activity it serves. The formation of terminology can be regarded as an interdisciplinary activity which is influenced by discoveries, views and developments that occur simultaneously in other areas of knowledge, and different compartmentalisations of knowledge can lead to shifts in the perception of terminology and to changes of terms (cf. Sager 1990: 3-5).
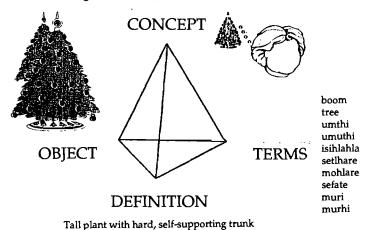

boom
tree
umthi
umuthi
isihlahla
setlhare
mohlare
sefate
muri
murhi

OBJECT

CONCEPT

TERMS

DEFINITION

Tall plant with hard, self-supporting trunk
and branches, that lives for many years.

Figure 2:   Dimensions of terminology: Relation between object, concept, definition and term

3.   Dimensions of Terminology

Terminology has at least three dimensions (see Figure 2):

— a cognitive one, which relates the linguistic forms to their conceptual content, i.e. the referents in the real world;
— a linguistic one which examines the existing and potential forms of the representation of terminologies; and
— a communicative one which looks at the use of terminologies, and especially at standardisation processes.

3.1   The cognitive dimension

The notion "concept" is central to the theory of terminology, and any terminology activity is preceded by concept formation. Concept formation is a process of variously grouping and ordering the material and immaterial objects which we sense, perceive or imagine into abstract categories. Concepts can therefore be defined as constructs of human cognition processes which assist in the classification of objects by way of systematic or arbitrary abstraction. The naming of a concept is but the first step in the consolidation of a concept as a socially useful or useable entity (Carstens 1997: 7). "In the process of concept formation we group the data of our perception and experience according to common elements which are usually called characteristics," states Sager (1990: 23).

3.1.1   Terminology work is concept-oriented

The point of departure in terminology work is the concept and terminology is therefore principally subject- or domain-oriented rather than language-oriented as is the case of general lexicography.

There should be a one-to-one relation between concept and term for exact communication (see Example 1). Terminology is therefore also a standardising process.

Concept	Symbol	Linguistic Representation
■	1, i, I	one, een, uno, eins, tee, nngwe, nngwe, inye, ukunye
■ ■	2, ii, II	two, twee, duo, zwei, pedi, pedi, bobedi, isibini, isibili

Example 1

Exact communication is only possible when there is a one-to-one relation be-tween concept and term. The terminologist describes the concepts of a specific subject field and related domains by means of terms. He/she standardises the concepts and their related terms by defining the concepts.

3.1.2 The role of definitions

—   A definition (sometimes a simplified or abbreviated definition or ex-panded context) is supplied to designate the concept.
—   It is only through the definition of a concept that one is really in a posi-tion to gain enough information on the concept to be able to name such concept or to coin a term.
—   Terminologists supply definitions in the source language and in various target languages.

If a concept is defined, its scope is clearly delimited. This can be illustrated with the terms **arsonist** and **pyromaniac** (see Example 2).

> The terms **arsonist** and **pyromaniac** both describe a person who sets fire to an object, but there is a huge difference between them:
> An **arsonist** is a criminal who deliberately sets fire to something, especially a building.
> A **pyromaniac** is a person who cannot control the desire to set fire to things, often because of a mental illness.

Example 2

3.1.3 Relations between terms: conceptual cluster in a specific subject field

The terms of a specific subject field or domain form a conceptual cluster. They act in a specific relation to other terms in the same subject field. Examples of such conceptual clusters are equivalence relations, hierarchical relations (e.g. generic relations, subset relations) and associative relations (cf. Figure 3).

The various concepts belonging to a specific subject or domain have to be collected in a systematic way because of their special relation to other terms. It is only by dealing with the various related terms and concepts as a whole that the terminologist can ensure the correct naming of concepts.
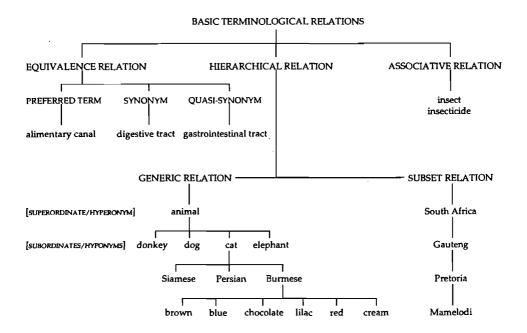
BASIC TERMINOLOGICAL RELATIONS

| | |
| EQUIVALENCE RELATION | HIERARCHICAL RELATION | ASSOCIATIVE RELATION |

PREFERRED TERM   SYNONYM   QUASI-SYNONYM

alimentary canal   digestive tract   gastrointestinal tract

insect
insecticide

GENERIC RELATION ————————————— SUBSET RELATION

[SUPERORDINATE/HYPERONYM]   animal

[SUBORDINATES/HYPONYMS]   donkey   dog   cat   elephant

Siamese   Persian   Burmese

brown   blue   chocolate   lilac   red   cream

South Africa

Gauteng

Pretoria

Mamelodi

Figure 3:   Basic terminological relations

3.2   The linguistic dimension

Terms are the linguistic representation of concepts. Most new terms are formed as and when new concepts are created in such instances as new discoveries, the restructuring of existing knowledge, incidental developments or new industrial developments. This type of term formation, termed primary term formation, accompanies concept formation and is monolingual (Sager 1990: 80). The language in which a concept was originally lexicalised is called the documentation language or source language.

One of the major tasks of a terminologist is to establish the terms belonging to a given subject field or domain. The terminologist excerpts the terms from documentation pertaining to a specific subject field and related domains and documents them according to basic terminographical principles.

Secondary term formation occurs when a new term is created for a known concept. It may happen as a result of a revision of terminology or as a result of the transfer of knowledge (especially scientific and technical knowledge) to another linguistic community. Secondary term formation (providing term equiva-

lents in the target language) is often subject to stricter guidelines than primary term formation and it is the proper concern of terminologists to provide such guidelines on the basis of the term and word formation patterns of the subject field and natural languages in question. Secondary term formation therefore requires of the terminographer a thorough understanding of linguistic mechanisms such as word-formation processes, that are available to him/her to expand the terminology (Cluver 1989: 254, Carstens 1997: 10).

3.2.1   Source Language vs. Target Language(s)

In a multilingual society, the terminologist has to document the terms in the source language and has to provide term equivalents in various target languages.

The Terminology Division of the National Language Service (NLS) of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology is the largest organisation in South Africa conducting terminology work. Other organisations document and create organisation-specific (institutionalised) terminology only, which is often done in co-operation with the NLS, the latter acting in a facilitating and advisory capacity.

The NLS aims to promote multilingualism by supplying terminology in eleven languages in a variety of subject fields. The NLS is developing the various African languages by providing terminology in these languages — thus enhancing literacy in the workplace.

Source language:

—   usually English.

Target language(s):

—   used to be Afrikaans (because of the previous bilingual policy of the country), but
—   now usually the ten other official South African languages (Afrikaans, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, isiNdebele, siSwati, isiXhosa, isiZulu) as a result of the multilingual policy of the country, according to an expressed need (stakeholders, collaborators, private sector, etc.).

3.2.2   Supplying term equivalents

Term equivalents can *inter alia* be supplied by means of:

(a)   transliteration

The classic stem (usually Latin or Greek) is used to coin an equivalent.

> **silver:** ME from OE *seolfor*; akin to OHG *silabar*, *silbar*, *silver*, ON *silfr*, Goth *silubr* — all from a prehistoric Germanic word borrowed from an Asiatic source. Equivalents in South African languages: **silver, silwer, silibera, silefera, selefera, isilivere, isiliva**.
>
> **bail:** ME *bail*, *baille*, from MF *bail*, from *bailler* "to give, deliver", from L *bajulare* "to bear a burden, keep in custody", from *bajulus* "porter, load carrier". Equivalents in English, Afrikaans and Sepedi are **bail, borg** and **peile** respectively. The source language (English) was used to coin the term equivalent in Sepedi. A **p** was used instead of a **b** to get the right pronunciation in Sepedi.

Example 3

(b)   loan words (borrowing)

Borrowing takes place mainly from European languages such as English, Dutch, Flemish, German, French, etc. The principle is to examine the Latin or Greek origin of the term.

> **affidavit:** The term equivalent (e.g. Sepedi equivalent) must be congruent with the word-forming principles of the target language: Latin **affidavit**, English **affidavit**, Sepedi **afidavite**. The **ff** combination is not normally used in African languages. According to the rule a consonant must be followed by a vowel and one should adhere to the rules of the specific language, therefore: **afidavite**.

Example 4

Joseph (1984: 44) distinguishes between two stages of elaboration of the vocabulary of a language:

— an initial period of transference during which heavy borrowing takes place; and

— a nativisation period during which the borrowed elements are changed so that they are incorporated into the indigenous system or are replaced by indigenous terms.

Transliteration and borrowing develop the language. It should not be regarded as wrong to coin terms according to transliteration or borrowing principles (e.g. **book, boek, puku**).

(c)   total embedding or adoption
A term is used in its original form without transliteration. The original term usually stems from Latin (in the case of legal or medical terms) or Italian (in the case of music terms). The term is embedded in the target language without changing or adapting any part of the original source language term. The terms are usually explained in the target language to enable users to use them appropriately.

> **bona fide** (in good faith; te goeder trou)
> *mutatis mutandis* (with the necessary alterations; met die nodige veranderinge)
> **non compos mentis** (not in full possession of his faculties, insane; nie by sy volle verstand nie)
> **sub iudice** (pending; nog hangende)
> **vice versa** (the other way round; omgekeerd)
> **allegretto** (with brisk movement; met lewendige beweging)
> **allegro** (somewhat brisk; ietwat lewendig)
> **andante** (slow; langsaam)
> **andantino** (fairly slow; taamlik langsaam)

> **Example 5**

(d)   extension of meaning
An existing word is used but its meaning is broadened to encompass the new concept.

> **bafanabafana** ("boys"): term for national soccer team that can be regarded as young competitors ("boys") in the international *soccer scene*

> **Example 6**

(e)   neologisms (new coinages)
New terms have to be coined for new inventions, situations, articles, etc.

> **cellular phone** (term equivalents: **selfoon, iselula, selula founo, selula founu** ...)
> **unleaded petrol** (term equivalents: **ongelode petrol** ...)

> **Example 7**

3.3 Communicative dimension

The communicative dimension mostly encompasses various issues concerning the standardisation and functional value of terminology.

The terminology usually exists in the various languages, but it needs to be documented. Language development is possible by documenting the terminology in a systematic way. A language can only be developed if the mother-tongue speakers of such a language work together to give the language a functional value. The *Afrikaans-Japanese Learner's Dictionary* (Sakurai and Kotzé: forthcoming) is a good example of the functionality of a language: the Japanese felt the need to communicate with Afrikaans-speaking South African farmers to sell their farming implements. They therefore compiled a bilingual, bidirectional pronunciation dictionary.

One should try to encode the information in such a way that the user can retrieve as much information as possible. By supplying only term equivalents in a developing language, the terminologist not really assists the user to retrieve or use the dictionary information. In the case of developing languages, a terminologist should rather supply definitions in the target languages. The mother-tongue speaker will then be able to retrieve information on the concept and will be able to put concept, definition and source language into perspective. The mother-tongue equivalent may for instance exist in the language and when the user can place source term and concept into a logical pattern or classification system, he/she may be able to supply the relevant term equivalent. Term equivalents will derive spontaneously from definitions if they do not yet exist. Mother-tongue speakers will also determine which terms will penetrate, and will discard the artificial or forced creations.

Terms that are coined during the developing phase of a language tend to encompass an explanation of the concepts in the newly coined terms (cf. Example 8). This is an attempt at conveying to the user the meaning attached to the term. As the terminology of a specific subject field becomes part of the language, the user will disregard the long, explanatory terms and rather use the shorter ones and the short version will become the standardised term.

English: **wall socket**
Afrikaans: **muursok** (previously **kontaksteekdoos**, probably from German: **Stechdose** (English: **socket**)

Example 8

The lack of standardisation in African language terminology is frequently regarded as a major obstacle for the development of the African languages. However, standardisation is a process which requires time. The development and standardisation of terminology in for instance Afrikaans was a long pro-

cess. Various terms were suggested for specific concepts, some terms penetrated in the language, some terms were discarded, while others remained dictionary entries. The terms **rekenaar** and **komper** were suggested as term equivalents for the term **computer**. Although many Afrikaans-speaking people felt that term **rekenaar** should rather be used for the term **calculator** and that the shorter, transliterated term **komper** should be used for **computer**, the term **rekenaar** penetrated into the language through usage by both subject specialists and laypeople and **komper** was discarded.

The database system at the National Language Service provides for the entering of information on various aspects concerning a term. The preferred term can be indicated by a label and its synonyms (or varieties) can be entered. Geographical preference, rural or urban usage, old or modern varieties, vulgar or offensive terms, etc. can also be indicated Once a specific form is preferred to others (and is therefore standardised), this can be indicated in the database and users can be referred to the standardised term.

4.   Consultation

Terminologists never work in isolation. They consult subject specialists when dealing with the concepts and terms of a specific subject field, and linguists, mother-tongue speakers, and language committees when providing term equivalents or when coining terms.

4.1   Subject specialists and committee meetings

Subject specialists form part of a team during the compilation of a specific technical dictionary. They become part of a committee which will discuss the terminology at regular intervals. Subject specialists also provide input by commenting on draft terminology lists in their subject fields.

4.2   Linguists and language committees

Terminologists usually start from a specific source language. In South Africa, the source language is usually English and term equivalents have to be given in the other official South African languages. When supplying term equivalents or coining new terms, terminologists consult linguists, language practitioners, language users and mother-tongue speakers.

It is important that linguists (such as language specific committees) and mother-tongue speakers comment on the terms so as to lend authority to the term equivalents. By obtaining consent from subject specialists as well as from linguists and mother-tongue speakers, terms will be used by both experts and laypeople in the user's environment. Only terms that are both technically and

linguistically sound will penetrate into a language and will disseminate into the subject field through the language.

5.   Cultural Differences

When dealing with the concepts and terms of the specific subject field, termi-nologists should have a sound background of the subject field as well as the cultural differences between language groups (or even countries). The terms naming numerals may have different values attached to them in different coun-tries and may be confusing. Examples of this can be found in such subject fields as astronomy, physics, mathematics, economics, etc., where **billion = 10^{12}** according to the British/German system but **billion = 10^9** according to the American/French system and **trillion = 10^{18}** according to the British/German system but **trillion = 10^{12}** according to the American/French system (Gove 1976, Sinclair 1995). Afrikaans followed the naming pattern of the Brit-ish/German system (cf. De Klerk 1990, and see Example 9).

Exponent	Scientific Name	Symbol	British/ German	American/ French	Afrikaans
10^{18}	exa-/eksa-	E	trillion	quintillion	triljoen
10^{15}	peta-	P	billiard	quadrillion	biljard
10^{12}	tera-	T	billion	trillion	biljoen
10^9	giga-	G	milliard	billion	miljard
10^6	mega-	M	million	million	miljoen
10^3	kilo-	k	thousand	thousand	duisend

Example 9

A technical dictionary or a terminological database should guide the user with language and style usage, with the differences in the interpretation and trans-lation of certain concepts, as well as with misinterpreting, misstatements and misrepresentations (see Examples 10, 11 and 12).

Culture plays an important role in the translation of terms. The translation equivalent must be acceptable to the community (see Example 10):

Bible translators had to translate the term **fish** with **snake** in the Khoisan Bible.
In another linguistic environment the term **bread** had to be replaced with **por-ridge** because of a lack of contextual knowledge regarding the target users.

Example 10

Cultural differences may entail a difference in concept definition, e.g. the term **prostitute** (see Example 11):

prostitute: In English or another European language context this term
  (a) coincides with the exchange of sexual services for money or goods between two or more people, and
  (b) may refer to a man or a woman.
prostitute: In Gambian context (an African language) this term [Wolof: chagga; Mandinka: cakoo]
  (a) only applies to a woman, but with a different definition to that of a prostitute in Western countries, and
  (b) is used if a woman's conduct includes one or more of the following activities:
    (i)   the exchange of sexual services for money or goods,
    (ii) living unmarried,
    (iii) wearing trousers,
    (iv) smoking in public,
    (v)   drinking beer,
    (vi) walking with a man who is not her kin, husband or husband's friend, or
    (vii) walking too much.

Example 11

Terminologists should also be sensitive to the inclusion of offensive or sensitive terms in the database or terminology list. Terminology is by nature abstract and exact and is therefore to a great extent secure against emotive connotations which may be attached to common words (cf. Example 12):

toordokter (witchdoctor)
  degrading term for: **tradisionele geneser** (traditional doctor)
  wrong term for: **towenaar** (sorcerer)

Example 12

6.   Terminology in South Africa

There are several factors influencing the terminological development of the South African languages. Most of these factors are of a sociolinguistic nature.

The development of terminology in South Africa has been hampered by a number of ideological, historical, and educational factors, "the most funda-

mental of which are the language policies adopted in the Republic of South Africa (RSA)" (Mtintsilana and Morris 1988: 109).

With English and Afrikaans being the official languages in the Republic of South Africa up to 1994, the State actively supported terminology development in Afrikaans in an attempt to ensure parity with English.

Since 1985, structural and policy factors have had an effect on the practice of terminology in South Africa. Some language bureaux have either been dissolved or reduced to perform a minimum of functions. It has also been accepted as the responsibility of the State to also develop and promote the African languages.

The government policy in language promotion before 1994 stipulated that the promotion of the African languages was the task of the former national states and the self-governing regions, and not that of the South African Government. The Language Boards for the African languages responsible for terminological work in the former Republic of South Africa did very little work in this regard.

All these factors stress the importance of the Terminology Division of the National Language Service as an institution working on a national basis to modernise and standardise the various technical vocabularies used in South Africa by compiling multilingual technical dictionaries.

The Terminology Division of the NLS is the largest (and at the moment the only) organisation in South Africa which devotes its time entirely to terminology work. Its mission is to assist with the development and modernisation of the technical vocabularies of all national South African languages. Its aim is to support the Government in the formulation, development, implementation and maintenance of national policy and strategies concerning technical languages in order to promote scientific and technical communication in all South African language communities. It also aims to standardise technical and scientific concepts and definitions and to provide equivalents (i.e. development or elaboration of terminology) in all the official languages and in different domains — from grassroots level up to the highest tertiary level.

The Terminology Division of the NLS has the infrastructure to perform this task. It employs language practitioners (terminologists) for all the indigenous languages and with these appointments, the office has attained the human resources and skills to produce the relevant terminology products.

The Terminology Division of the NLS aims to provide a service to the community. Clients of the office include all persons in South Africa who are concerned with education and training, as well as interpreters, translators, copywriters, journalists and all other career groups involved in communication in one way or the other. An important function of the Terminology Division of the NLS is to provide a terminology query service.

The Terminology Division of the NLS documents terminological information and disseminates this information in various ways. The best known way is by means of dictionaries, but the office is also researching possibilities to make this information available in electronic form.

In the past, bilingual technical dictionaries in English and Afrikaans were primarily compiled, but at present there is a pressing need for multilingual dictionaries with the addition of extra information such as definitions and explanations (especially in the various African languages), in various domains and levels of communication.

The Terminology Division of the NLS is steadily acting in a more supporting capacity through guidance, project facilitation and outside liaison. Various exhibitions are held annually in order to market the activities and facilities of the NLS as well as to draw attention to the availability and advantages of the on-line National Termbank.

The Terminology Division of the NLS plans to disseminate terminological information through the Internet, which gives rise to various questions concerning copyright on terminology and technical dictionary products.

7.   Training

Apart from in-house training sessions, the Terminology Division of the NLS offers training sessions to individuals and bodies outside the NLS. The purpose of these sessions is to explain the principles underlying terminology work. A part of the training involves the demonstration of computer applications in the processing of terminology and terminography.

Due to a lack of personnel, the Terminology Division of the NLS cannot fulfil in all the expressed terminology needs. Therefore the office aims to extend its training programme in the near future. Various workshops and winter schools (with terminology experts from abroad as trainers) are planned to train collaborators in the principles and practice of terminology work. The training will enable collaborators to work according to fixed terminological procedures and to provide the National Term Bank with terminology related to their various specialist fields and domains. The Terminology Division of the NLS will then be in a position to serve as a clearing house which specialises in the standardisation, presentation and dissemination of terminology in all official languages.

"The grassroots creativity of every speech community should be exploited and channels should be created to enable new terms at this level to be introduced into the central termbank," suggests LANGTAG (1996: 84). "Schools, universities, newspapers, local administrations, etc. should be encouraged to send in their new terms to the National Terminology Services."

At the moment terminology training receives little attention in lexicography or translation modules of South African universities. The training of terminologists and terminographers should receive more attention at tertiary level. Training should be offered either in a department of languages (e.g. English, Afrikaans or African languages) or in a department of linguistics. "It should be an optional topic that students can take as part of their undergraduate studies," proposes LANGTAG (1996: 82). "Training should include basic

lexicography, terminography and translation studies. Students can then spe-
cialise in their Honours studies."

8.   Conclusion

Irrespective of how well-trained and resourceful the terminologist may be and
irrespective of how elegant and sophisticated the set of terms is that he or she
creates, large scale term creation will remain a wasteful endeavour unless the
end product is appreciated and fully utilised by all those involved in the rele-
vant subject domain — i.e. in research, teaching, translating, etc. "Important,"
stresses Louwrens (1996: 7), "is that this appreciation must emanate from the
people themselves, since one can never succeed by forcing a language onto its
speakers."
    The development of the languages is to a certain extent the task of the
Government, but every citizen should make it his/her task to develop the ter-
minology of his/her mother-tongue — at least in his/her own workplace. By
these means all languages will be developed and be given a functional value.

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