

## *Terminologist as one of a translator's "professions": the role of teaching terminology in translator training*

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### ABSTRACT

Gouadec (2009) speaks of the parallel roles a translator typically performs in his or her job, and calls them the translator's *professions*. Among them he lists the roles of a documentation specialist, terminologist, lexicologist, etc. Working with terminology is undeniably a key part of any translation process. This is especially true for specialist translations, which constitute the bulk of the market. The authors of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* note that in order to make the right decisions choosing between equivalents or creating a new term, a translator ought to possess a basic knowledge of terminology (Sager, 2000). Terminological skills become especially important when we consider how much of a translator's time is typically spent on looking for the right terms. The aim of this paper is to present the role of terminology teaching in the process of translator training at universities in Poland. We look at how much time is devoted to studying terminology as a discipline, what theoretical concepts are introduced, and to what extent the theory of terminology is used. The situation of terminology teaching as a specialization within language teaching will be analyzed through the available syllabi and curricula. Piotrowska (2007) in her monograph quotes the question which has haunted translation scholars for years now: do translators need translation theory to do their job well? We can paraphrase this question and ask whether translators need a theory of terminology in order to be good in one of their roles, that of a terminologist.

**Keywords:** translator training, terminology, Polish universities

### 1. The translator as terminologist

My point of departure for investigating the work of a translator-terminologist are the thoughts of Gouadec, who writes about the multiple roles a translator must perform in parallel, and calls them the translator's *professions*. Among these professions he lists that of a documentation specialist, terminologist, lexicologist, etc. (Gouadec, 2009). According to him, "when translating a translator assumes a number of roles, one after another: he or she is the first translator (produces the first working copy of the translation), the documentation specialist (finds and applies various kinds of relevant information), the terminologist, lexicologist (phraseologist), the proofreader (who reads and checks the text of the translation), and finally the editor and expert user of various editorial tools" (Gouadec, 2009:53). Gouadec also adds that, in his opinion, this sort of multirole model represents accurately both the daily work of the translators of the so-called general texts, and those who translate specialist texts or do localization.

It would be hard to argue against the statement that a terminologist's job, comprising diverse tasks such as identifying and searching for terms, learning their meanings, mapping the relationships between them, building term banks or databases and managing them, is a necessary step in any translatorial task. This is especially true with regard to specialist translations, and these in turn constitute the bulk of the market. Kątny estimates that "about 90% of texts being translated nowadays are specialist texts" (Kątny, 2001: 23). Hejwowski observes that "when considering whom to turn to when translating a specialist text—a trained modern languages translator or an expert in the field in question, the quality of the resulting translations speaks for the former, which further emphasizes the need to equip language graduates with specific field expertise" (Hejwowski, 2001: 178).

What is more, there is also the quite banal and yet not-banal-at-all issue of time. As various researchers have suggested (Louise Hébert-Malloch and Anna Kuźnik, among others), a lot of translators' time is spent on gathering the expert knowledge necessary to understand and, of course, translate the text. This entails familiarizing oneself with the terminology of the field, and then identifying the right terms for the translation. In this light equipping future translators with a set of terminology-related skills seems the more important, as it can help them perform these tasks faster and with greater ease—which, as we all know, is paramount.

Piotrowska (2007) invokes the age-old dilemma of translation studies: do translators need a theory of translation to translate well? I will not recount here the arguments presented by either of the camps; instead, I would like to paraphrase the question and consider the following: do translators need a theory of terminology to perform well in one of their roles, that of a terminologist? In my opinion, the answer is yes; indeed, we are not the first to voice such an opinion. In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* Sager (2000) observes that in order to be able to make the right decisions with regard to either forming new terms or finding appropriate equivalents of the existing ones, a translator needs a basic understanding of how terminology works. In the entry devoted to terminology, Sager writes:

"Translators and terminologists work in quite different modes, the first dealing with language in use and the second with language as a conceptual system. (...) It is translators who need to acquire a basic understanding of terminology and its various applications, and not vice versa, because translators have to work as terminologists when they are faced with decisions concerning the right choice among alternative expression forms or the creation of a neologism or a paraphrase."  
(Sager, 2000: 251-252).

The aim of this paper is to present the role that terminology training plays in the university level translator training programmes currently offered in Poland. I am primarily interested in investigating where, how and in what timeframe terminology as a discipline is taught, which theoretical frameworks are used, and to what extent the theory of terminology is taken into account, which essentially means: what tools do future translators receive to tackle terminology-related problems in their daily work? As the source for our study of the position of terminology as an academic subject we chose the syllabi and curricula available at

the websites of selected universities. This analysis does not aim to present a full picture of teaching terminology in Poland; it is more of a sketch, intended to be expanded in the future, for instance by consultations with teachers teaching particular modules, or through a more detailed analysis of the training content presented in class.

Before we present the results of the study, a few words will be said about the methodological assumptions we adopted:

- Only courses devoted exclusively to terminology were taken into account. We excluded courses in specialist translation, or specialist language/jargon, because in these cases it was hard to assess what proportion of the time during the course was devoted to studying terminology;
- The scope was further restricted to include only courses taught in the academic year 2015/16 (that is, the winter and summer semester). This is mainly due to significant revamping university programmes underwent in recent years;
- The main focus was on full-time undergraduate and graduate programmes. Evening studies programmes, postgraduate and weekend studies were not taken into account due to their specific nature;
- The sample included curricula from ten major Polish universities.

The picture of teaching terminology in Poland which emerges from the study may not be complete, but the data is in our opinion sufficient to formulate conclusions about the key trends in this respect at universities in the country.

## 2. Teaching terminology in Poland

### 2.1 Place (a higher education organization, an institute) and timeframe

Ten universities were chosen for the study, each of which has a programme in translation, either as a specialization option, a smaller thematic module or an separate course. I analyzed the syllabi and curricula available on the universities' websites and in the USOSweb<sup>1</sup> system for each institution. As it turns out, out of ten universities eight offer dedicated classes in terminology:

Table 1. The list of universities which do/do not offer courses in terminology

Terminology courses available	John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Pedagogical University of Cracow, University of Gdańsk, University of Łódź, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Silesia in Katowice, University of Warsaw, University of Wrocław
No terminology teaching	Jagiellonian University, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive business management application for higher education institutions.

While this may look very good at first glance, when we look at the details the picture becomes a bit less positive. As it turns out, only some institutes actually offer terminology courses. Here we discuss only several examples; the full list of the terminology courses we found, indicating the institution, academic level (undergraduate/postgraduate), and the number of hours assigned to each course, is presented in tabular format in the appendix. For example, at the University of Warsaw one can learn about Terminology in the Institute of Russian Studies (*Terminology and Terminography*), the Institute of Anthropocentric Linguistics and Culturology (*Terminology and Terminography* and *Introduction to Terminology*), and in the Institute of Applied Linguistics (*Terminology for Translators*). At the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań terminology classes are offered by the Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures (*Practical Language Training – Terminology (various disciplines)*), the Faculty of English (*Terminology*), and the Institute of German Studies (*Lexicography with Elements of Lexicology, Phraseology and Terminology*). At the University of Łódź, only three programmes offer terminology courses: French (*Specialist Translation with Elements of the terminology of Selected Fields*), English (*Terminology, Society and Translation*), and Italian (*Advanced Specialist Terminology*). In Gdańsk and Lublin, in turn, separate terminology classes are available only to English students (*Introduction to Specialist Translation and Terminology* and *Terminology and Information Management*, respectively).

As far as duration is concerned, most courses comprise 30 hours per semester, with some limited to 15 hours and one course lasting only 10. What is more, the majority of the terminology courses offered span only one semester. A small number span two semesters, including: *Introduction to Specialist Translation and Terminology* at the University of Gdańsk, *Terminology and terminography* at the University of Warsaw, and courses in specific terminologies offered to French and Italian students at the University of Łódź, where the courses last three semesters. As for the academic level, more than a half of the courses (13 out of 21) are delivered within postgraduate programmes, a quarter (5 out of 21) is part of the undergraduate curriculum; in three cases it was impossible to establish the level at which the course was taught.

## 2.2. Theoretical approaches and educational goals

When we look at the theoretical approaches and educational goals in the programmes analyzed, we can distinguish three profiles of terminology courses:

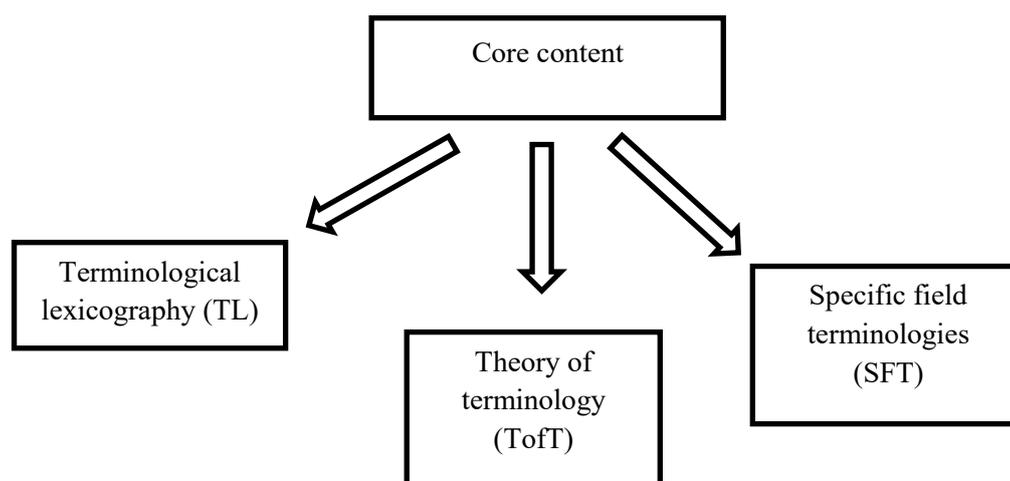


Figure 1. The typical areas terminology teaching covers in Poland.

The first type that I distinguished are courses focused on the terminographic and lexicographic aspects of terminology, that is, primarily on building glossaries, term banks and other terminological resources. These topics are tackled for instance in the *Terminology and Terminography* courses at the University of Warsaw, or in the course titled *Glossaries for Translators – Selected Problems of Lexicography* in the Institute of German Studies at the Pedagogical University of Cracow. As we can see, these courses are aimed strictly at future translators, and their primary goal is to equip students with the key tools necessary for term management. The authors of the *Terminology and terminography* syllabus explain their approach as follows: “Our world today is governed by information. Language barriers fall, mass media develop, people communicate ever-feaster, at ever-greater distances. As the amount of information increases, so does the noise-to-signal ratio, which generates errors in communication. Because of that, the role of compendia increases: reference works storing information about the current lexicons of existing language varieties, especially professional jargon. It is the professionals whom our *Glossary* is intended to help: to communicate better, establish norms, and clarify semantic and stylistic choices.” As we can see, the aim of the course is not only to equip students with basic theoretical knowledge (what is a term, a concept, a conceptual system, how to construct a definition, etc.), but also to teach them skills necessary to use existing glossaries as well as build and manage them effectively. Such skills are clearly essential to translators, who are regularly faced with manifold challenges resulting from the incompatibility of various terminological and conceptual systems.

The second type of courses are the ones focused on terminology as a discipline, including the basic terms and concepts of the field, and the various theoretical approaches. We may observe that these courses are the rarest. Here we have for instance *Terminology in culture* at the Institute of Romance Philology in Wrocław, in which students learn the basics of terminology and familiarize themselves with the current trends in the discipline, e.g. with the proposed approaches: cognitive, sociological or diachronic). Despite appearances, however, the course’s programme is firmly grounded in translatorial practice. The aim of the classes is to make students realize that terms are not merely simple, unambiguous labels for

elements of known reality, but rather nodes in the complex webs of culture and language in which they function. Such awareness of the cultural entanglement of terms is in our opinion very beneficial to a translator. Moreover, it is worth noting that a purely theoretical course in terminology, devoid of any practical goals, is hard to imagine. The theoretical framework for terminology is not being developed for its own sake, but rather in order to solve multiple practical problems, and to equip language users – not only translators – with proper terminology tools.

The third type of classes, as popular as the first one, comprises courses presenting terminologies of various specific disciplines. These courses are first and foremost a form of practical training. Here students interested in specialist translation are expected to familiarize themselves with the terms used in a given field, and be able to use them in their translations. This type of courses includes for instance: *Specialist Translation with Elements of Terminology of Specific Fields (medical/economics/finance)* taught in the French programme at the University of Łódź, or *Polish and German Legal Terminology (business law or family law)* in the Institute of German Studies at the University of Silesia. Such classes aim not only to familiarize students with the essential terminology of a given field, but – primarily – to improve their awareness of the problems of equivalence, and of terms that can be particularly troublesome.

As far as proportions are concerned, courses of the first and third type significantly outnumber those of the second one. At the universities examined, the two more popular types of courses (nine courses of the first type and six of the third type) prevail over the two courses of the second, i.e. purely theoretical, type. Four out of the twenty-one courses analyzed could not be assigned to any type; on the one hand it was impossible to find a specific programme or syllabus, on the other it was difficult to deduce the course content from the titles alone.

### 3. Conclusions and thoughts on teaching terminology in Poland

Out of the ten universities whose programmes were analyzed, courses in terminology (or terminography) are offered at eight. What is thought-provoking, however, is the haphazardness of the approaches presented, or – in other words – the lack of systematicity. If a university offers a course in terminology in one translator training programme, this does not mean the course will be available to students of other analogous programmes; that is, in other translation, philology or modern languages departments. For example, let us look at two institutions: Warsaw and Wrocław. At the University of Warsaw, courses in terminology are available only in three institutes; notably, all three belong to the same Applied Linguistics department: Russian Studies, Anthropocentric Linguistics and Culturology and Applied Linguistics. In the Modern Languages faculty at the same university no terminology courses are taught, despite the fact that these institutes do offer translator training. In Wrocław the situation is the same: a terminology course is offered only at the Romance Philology institute (both to French and Spanish students), but nowhere else.

The reasons seem twofold. The most likely explanation seems to be simply the lack of time. Each specialization within a programme only has a limited number of

hours available. During this time the core modules of theoretical and practical translator training must be included, both for translation and for interpreting. There simply may be no time left for more specialized content such as terminology. Moreover, it is possible that there is a general belief that terminological problems can be *smuggled* into other classes such as translation or analysis of scientific texts, and that a separate course in terminology is not necessary.

That kind of approach leads us to the second reason, which is the lack of specialized teachers. In Poland the number of researchers studying terminology is relatively small, especially compared to the now-growing group of scholars doing research in translation. Consequently, there are few specialists who would know not only the practical problems terminology poses – teachers who are at the same time practicing translators are certainly familiar with those – but also – and maybe most importantly – the theoretical ones. Let us return for a moment to the examples discussed above. That terminology is taught in the Applied Linguistics department in Warsaw should not surprise: it is the organization with a long and rich tradition of research in terminology, so rich in fact that it is known as a separate, Polish (or Warsaw) school of terminology, alongside the Vienna school, the Canadian school or the Russian school (Lukszyn, 2002). The influence of this school is visible in the angle of the courses taught in Warsaw, which focus on terminological lexicography and the problems of glossaries, term banks, etc. Another example is the Institute of Romance Philology in Wrocław. Here, in turn, over the years a certain tradition has been born, consisting in not only teaching, but also extensive research in terminology, largely inspired by the numerous and diverse studies conducted in institutions across the Francophone sphere.

The second explanation seems even more likely when we look at the details of the programmes in question. The bulk of classes in terminology are devoted to either the lexicographical aspect, with the focus on building and managing glossaries and term banks, or to the strictly practical aspect, i.e. the terminologies of individual disciplines such as medicine or law. Therefore, these courses are aimed predominantly at future translators, and can be taught well by either practicing translators or specialists with expertise in a given field of knowledge and its terms, with both of these groups possessing only a basic understanding of the theory of terminology.

It would be useful at this point to invoke the broader context of the problem, that is, the general status of terminology as a field in Poland. Firstly, while the terminologists themselves would surely disagree, it is still believed sometimes that terminology is hardly a separate discipline. This is evident, at least in Poland, when one looks at its weak position at universities. By *weak position* I mean both the small number of people doing research in terminology, and the unspecified status of the discipline itself. While the emancipatory moves of translation studies seem to be largely successful, with the field now seen more and more as self-standing, terminology is still far behind. We as terminologists are never sure to which discipline we will be assigned: linguistics, contrastive linguistics, or translation studies as such. Another problem is the relationship between translation and terminology, which can hardly be characterized as equal. As Gouadec points out:

“(…) it looks more like a case of cohabitation whose occurrence none of the partners is willing to admit. The relationship of terminology and translation studies is one of unequal power, where translation is surely the stronger party. Not only is it recognized as an institutionalized/academic field of study, unlike terminology. In all contexts it is translation that annexes terminology; it is the translator that imposes requirements on the terminologist (and hence onto the field itself), tasking him or her with the creation of tools that will serve translation well. In this relationship translatology is always perceived as “better/more important” than terminology (terminologists, in turn, find consolation in feeling themselves “better/more important” than terminographers).”

(Gouadec, 2004: 25)

In the end, we would like to return to our initial question: do translators need a theory of terminology? In other words, are separate courses in terminology useful at all as a component of translator training? To us, the answer seems yes. Sager's (2000) argument, which we cited earlier, that theoretical knowledge can aid students in making the right translational choices in practice is probably the strongest.

This statement is further confirmed in the findings cited in *Przekład – teorie, terminy, terminologia* [Translation: Theories, Terms, Terminology]: more than a half of the papers discusses the pitfalls awaiting translators of EU texts, law and legal texts, environmental science, but also obituaries and guidebooks (*Przekład*, 2012). Although the authors never articulate the need for teaching terminology as a separate discipline, they are nevertheless well aware of the challenges that terms from various areas of science and social life pose to translators. The articles themselves testify to that best. At this point, let us cite the conclusions formulated by Urban at the end of his article about terminological problems in specialist translation:

The pragmatics of translating environmental science texts demands not only the knowledge of the subject matter in both languages, but also a practical knowledge of ways of dealing with possible problems. Moreover, we must remember that one of the most serious challenges for a specialist translator is filling terminological gaps. This is a task that should be undertaken with utmost care, with full awareness of possible implications, one of which is that one's choice may become the commonly accepted term in the target language.

(Urban, 2012: 114)

We read this observation as symptomatic for the situation of terminology in Poland. On the one hand terminology is treated not as a separate field, but rather as an aid to a translator's daily work. On the other hand the cited passage proves how crucial terminological competencies are for translators, including e.g. the knowledge of how terms are constructed and how they function. A separate course focused on terminology can equip them with such competencies.

But the argument presented above is hardly the only one. Let me again invoke Gouadec (2004), who points to the stunning wealth of sources and terminologies we have at our disposal thanks to the Internet. The amount of new information, and consequently the new terms we use in various areas of life, is overwhelming; it is

hard to master only a fraction of it. Specialized term management software, such as Multiterm, or many others, and more and more term bases, e.g. IATE, are indispensable as sources of terminological knowledge – not perfect, but tremendously valuable, nevertheless. One only needs to know how to use them, how to benefit from their strengths and avoid pitfalls, but in order to know this, one needs a basic understanding of terminology. This is where university teaching of terminology or terminography can help: understanding terminology, building basic term management skills, teaching how to use existing databases, dictionaries, glossaries, corpora, text analysis tools, etc. (Gouadec, 2004). What is more, when we consider the current state of not only the translation market but the market for language services in general, we may conclude that in the near future for many translators the profession of a terminologist may well become their primary role.

*Paper translated from Polish by Paulina Drewniak*

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## APPENDIX

Table 2. A summary of all terminology courses available at selected Polish universities in the academic year 2015/2016

UNIVERSITY	FACULTY / INSTITUTE	COURSE TITLE	ACADEMIC LEVEL / YEAR / SEMESTER	NUMBER OF HOURS	CORE CONTENT (TL, ToT or SFT)
<b>John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin</b>	Institute of English Studies	Terminology and Information Management	MA / 1st year / winter semester	30 h	TL
<b>Pedagogical University of Cracow</b>	Institute of Modern Languages – English	Terminology	MA / 2nd year / winter semester	30 h	data insufficient
	Institute of Modern Languages - German	Glossaries for Translators – Selected Problems of Lexicography	MA / 2nd year / winter semester	15 h	TL
<b>University of Gdańsk</b>	Institute of English and American Studies	Introduction to Specialist Translation and Terminology	MA / 1st year / summer semester + 2nd year / summer semester	30 h (15h + 15 h)	data insufficient
<b>University of Łódź</b>	Department of Romance Studies - French	Specialist Translation with Elements of Terminology 1 (medical, economics, finance)	MA / 1st year / summer semester, 2nd year / winter semester, 2nd year / summer semester	15 h (x 3)	SFT
	Department of Romance Studies - Italian	Advances Specialist Terminologies (including art, trade, business, politics and social work, and the industry)	not specified / winter or summer semester	15 h (all in the field of one's choice)	SFT
		The language	BA / 2nd	30h or	SFT

		of the fine arts, applied arts and design (translational workshop), OR Translating ... (economics/ the humanities and social sciences/ EU law and administration/ IT and mass media/ technology and the sciences/ natural sciences and medicine)	and 3rd year / winter and summer semester	15h, each	
	Institute of English Studies	Terminology, Society and Translation (Proseminar)	not specified	30 h	ToFT
<b>Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań</b>	Faculty of English	Terminology	MA / 1st year / winter semester	30 h	data insufficient
	Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures - English, German and French	Specialist Terminology ABA or CA (various areas, e.g. health and medicine, construction, law, administration)	MA / 1st year / winter or summer semester	30 h	SFT
	Institute of German Studies	Lexicography with Elements of Lexicology, Phraseology and Terminology	BA / 3rd year / winter semester	30 h	TL
<b>University of Silesia in Katowice</b>	Institute of German Studies	Terminology of Polish and German Economic and Business Law	MA / 1st year / summer semester	30 h	SFT
		Terminology of Polish and German Family Law	MA / 2nd year / winter semester	30 h	SFT
<b>University of</b>	Institute of	Terminology	MA / 1st	30 h	TL

<b>Warsaw</b>	Russian Studies	and Terminography	year / summer semester		
	Institute of Anthropocentric Linguistics and Culturology	Terminology and Terminography	MA / 1st year / winter and summer semester	30 h each	TL
		Introduction to Terminology	BA / 3rd year / winter semester	30 h	TL
	Institute of Applied Linguistics	Terminology for Translators	BA / 2nd year / summer semester	30 h	TL
<b>University of Wrocław</b>	Institute of Romance Philology - French	Terminology in Culture, Culture in Terminology	BA / 2nd and 3rd year / summer semester	30 h	TofT
		Terminology for Translators	MA / 1st year / winter semester	15 h	TL
	Institute of Romance Philology - Spanish	Terminology	not specified	10 h	data insufficient
		Terminology with Elements of Lexicography	MA / 1st year / summer semester	30 h	TL