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Terminological uncertainty and the Greek LSP translator

One of the most troubling phenomena facing today's translator and especially the translator of LSP texts is that of "terminological uncertainty". The Greek translator's job is burdened by the fact that, more often than not, the same term – usually of English origin - is translated in many different ways, that newly coined terms are quite often arbitrarily rendered into the target language with complete disregard of the complexities and lexicological rules of the target language or given a literal translation and sometimes are even left in the original English form. Valuable tools in dealing with this are various lexicographical reference books, be they printed, electronic or online, the proper usage of which is a skill preferably developed by the translator during his or her studies. The properly trained translator should be capable of overcoming issues of terminological uncertainty. In order to ascertain the validity of this proposition we conducted a survey among professional translators. Its aim was to collect data as to the use of terminology resources and documentation. We attempted to analyze the prevailing circumstances as regards the use of translation aids, such as dictionaries/glossaries or online resources (terminological databases, electronic/online dictionaries, ontologies, etc.). Professional Greek-language translators, specializing mostly in technical-scientific translation, were given a questionnaire and asked to provide answers on questions such as the type of translation aid s they most frequently use, their methodology in dealing with terminological uncertainty, unknown terms/neologisms (not, as yet, translated terms or poorly translated terms), how they use the internet and search engines to find terminologically relevant parallel texts and how they evaluate such relevance, and how they determine the validity of a given translation of an novel term. The present paper will draw on the data collected from said survey to arrive at a conclusion regarding the prevailing approach(es) adopted by professional translators when faced with terminological uncertainty and propose a method for dealing with said terminological uncertainty which could become part of the translator training curriculum.