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A Combined Taxonomic-Frames Approach to Terminological Verb Collocations

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Abstract. This paper proposes a combined taxonomic-frames approach to terminological verb collocations considered within the broad category of terminological units. The latest approaches to terminology are briefly reviewed. Special attention is paid to the methodology of frame-based terminology, emphasizing its appropriateness for analyzing that type of collocations. The concept designated by the term in the collocation is assumed to be the Patient in a dynamic scene whereas the verb designates a dynamic action/process affecting it with a consequent Result. To perform the frame semantic analysis of the scenes, it is deemed necessary to first categorize those event structures into conceptual groups according to the type of Agent and Result. Such a preliminary taxonomic analysis is required to make the overall analytical procedure more explicit and applicable in a subsequent terminological contrastive analysis involved in multilingual terminological projects. The analytical procedures are exemplified with the term ‘steel’ and its verb collocators.

Keywords: terminological verb collocations; terminological units; frame-based terminology; taxonomic-frames approach;

1 Introduction

Terminological collocations have recently attracted the attention of terminographers as necessary information categories to be used in the entries of modern translation-oriented terminological collections. Of particular relevance for technical translation are terminological collocations in which the semantically autonomous element, i.e. the base, is a nominal head term and the element selected depending on the base, i.e. the collocator is a verb. Those collocations, referred to as terminological verb collocations, have been studied by modern computational and corpus linguistic methods with the aim of organizing and presenting them in specialized dictionaries. However, as compared with general language collocations, the number of studies concerning terminological collocations is considerably smaller focusing mainly on collocation extraction techniques. One reason for that situation is the fact that most terminologists somehow refrain from acknowledging the status of terminological collocations, and especially terminological verb collocations, as terminological units. Another reason for the still scarce investigations into specialised collocations is the lack of a methodology based on sound theoretical underpinnings which can be appropriate for their analysis.

This paper aims to present a proposal for a combined taxonomic-frames approach to terminological verb collocations. To achieve that goal, I will first argue for considering terminological verb collocations as legitimate objects of terminological study, i.e. terminological units. Then I will discuss the recent trends in terminology theory and pay special attention to the frame-based approach to describing terminological relations in a special domain which is assumed to be appropriate for analyzing terminological verb collocations. With respect to the latter, I will adduce arguments to justify a proposal for a taxonomic analysis preceding the analysis of the cognitive frames underlying those collocations. That preliminary analysis is deemed necessary to first categorize the event structures into conceptual groups thus making the analytical procedure more compatible with a possible terminological contrastive analysis which requires identification of systematic sets. The head term ‘steel’ and the terminological verb collocations it forms will be used to exemplify the proposed methodology.

2 Terminological Verb Collocations as Terminological Units

Cabré [1] defines terminological units as being simultaneously language units, cognitive elements and vehicles of communication. As regards the formal aspect of terminological units, she distinguishes between simple and complex terms, the latter involving terminological phrases such as *flat-glass water gauge*,

which could be termed ‘terminological nominal collocations’. Cabré also identifies an intermediate formal category between terminological phrases and free syntactic formations which she refers to as “collocations” exemplified by what can logically be defined as ‘terminological verb collocations’, namely, *reboot the computer*, *propose an amendment*, etc. However, in her opinion these collocations cannot be categorized as terminological phrases because “they do not correspond to established concepts”. From the point of view of the most recent developments in computational terminology and cognitive terminology theories, at least two arguments can be provided against that assumption.

One strong argument for recognizing terminological verb collocations of the type Verb + Term / Term + Verb as terminological units is of purely pragmatic character. That type of collocations has definitely attracted the attention of modern computational terminologists and any attempt at citing publications on the issue of terminological verb collocation extraction would end up in a long list. It will suffice here to refer to most modern term extractors which enable users to extract automatically from text corpora terminological verb collocation bigrams. The heightened interest in those syntagmatic structures can be accounted for by the increasing need to compile collocationally rich entries in dictionaries specially made for technical translators. This need can be compared with the need people once felt for creating units of measuring length which led to introducing the meter, the foot, the centimetre, the inch, etc. They are all necessary measurement units for doing a large number of human activities and nobody has ever asked the question of which one is more or less important or whether one or another should be deleted from the list of length measuring units.

Another argument in favour of classifying terminological verb collocations as terminological units is of theoretical nature. In [2] we argue for recognizing that type of collocations as ‘terminological knowledge units’, a term introduced comparatively recently to denote terminological data extracted by semi-automatic techniques and used to discover semantic term relations, construct definitions and acquire domain knowledge. Our assumption is based on the four levels of knowledge organization in relation to their referents in the real or abstract world within a conceptual framework, postulated by Dahlberg [3]: (a) knowledge elements understood as conceptual characteristics (Level 1); (b) knowledge units equated with concepts (Level 2); (c) larger knowledge units equated with concept combinations (Level 3); and (d) knowledge systems equated with domain-specific terminological systems (Level 4). In this framework terminological collocations in general and terminological verb collocations, in particular, can be interpreted as linguistic exponents of knowledge units belonging to Level 3, i.e. concept combinations, which can be subjected to some categorization/classification (e.g. *steel: melted, cast, rolled – stages* in steel production). Thus, it is possible to identify conceptual groups of lower-level events, expressed by terminological verb collocations, which are subordinate to a higher-level event associated with a basic concept and expressed by a basic nominal term and a generalised predicate. I will develop that assumption further in the following sections. Since the methodology I will propose is a slightly modified version of the frame-based approach to terminology, I will first discuss some of the latest trends in Terminology Theory which have given rise to that approach.

3 Recent Trends in Terminology Theory

Faber [4] in her critical overview of terminology theories concludes that “the study of specialized language is undergoing a cognitive shift” which is expressed in laying greater emphasis on conceptual structures underlying special language text. She discusses some novel approaches to terminology against the background of the classical *General Theory of Terminology* (henceforth GTT) developed by the Vienna School of Terminology. The brief review of that theory states a number of limitations which can be summarized as follows:

- The multidimensional nature of specialized knowledge concepts is not taken into account;
- Concepts are viewed as entities referring to the objective extralinguistic world and the terms are considered to be only their abstract symbols, i.e. labels thus making a sharp distinction between general language words and terms;
- The GTT is focused on eliminating ambiguity in scientific communication by standardizing terminological units thereby excluding terminological variation which inevitably occurs in special language use;
- Since the GTT disregards completely the syntax and pragmatics of specialized language, it is not applicable to technical translation;

- Being exclusively synchronic, the GTT does not account for the diachronic dimensions of terms which are relevant for describing the semantic methods of term formation such as metaphor and metonymy;

Faber then discusses the new approaches proposed since 1990s which “paved the way to integrating Terminology into a wider social, communicative and linguistic context”. Among these are the Communicative Theory of Terminology, the Sociocognitive Terminology and the Frame-Based Terminology, the latter being her own proposal and the one that I will try to apply, with certain modifications, to the analysis of terminological verb collocations. Following Faber [4], I will present brief accounts of the former two approaches to Terminology with the view to pointing out the major differences between the GTT and those theories.

The *Communicative Theory of Terminology* (henceforth CTT) is proposed by Cabré [1], [5]. As has already been mentioned, this theoretical approach highlights the complex multidimensional nature of terminological units which can be seen from three different perspectives: communicative, linguistic and cognitive. Instead of taking the previously constructed concepts, as is the case with the GTT, Cabré takes the terminological units to be the central object of terminological study thus showing preference for a linguistic rather than semiotic approach to terminology. Conceived as indivisible combinations of form and content, terminological units do not only designate but they also mean with all the cognitive consequences of their meaning. Therefore, they behave like general language words, their specific character proceeding from a number of cognitive, syntactic and pragmatic constraints imposed by their functioning in specialized discourse.

Cabré proposes possible ways of accessing terminological units in order to be analyzed by making use of the metaphor “the Theory of Doors”. A terminological unit is compared to a polyhedron, a solid figure having many faces, since it also has three dimensions, viz. cognitive, linguistic and communicative. Each dimension can be a door through which one can get access to terminological units. What is important to note is that the choice of door does not exclude the other two perspectives which remain in the background. The units are usually approached through the language door but always within the framework of specialized communication.

Commenting on the CTT, Faber [4] asserts that it is “a viable, working theory of terminology” which “has led to a valuable body of research on different aspects of Terminology such as conceptual relations, terminological variation, term extraction and the application of different linguistic models to terminology”. At the same time she indicates some shortcomings of the theory which I will sum up as follows:

- The CTT does not adopt any specific linguistic model;
- The conceptual representations and the knowledge structure of the specialised discourse in which terminological units function are insufficiently clarified;
- The organization of the concepts in categories remains totally vague;
- The CTT offers no clear explanation of the components of terminological meaning as it is taken to derive from the general meaning of a lexical unit by selecting semantic features according to its realization in specialized discourse;
- The semantic analysis of terminological units is reduced to semantic decomposition which is typical of Lexical Semantics and which has lately been criticized as regards the nature of word meaning;

Among the cognitive-based theories of terminology to which Faber’s own theory belongs, she chooses to comment on *Sociocognitive Terminology* (henceforth SCT) proposed by Temmerman [6]. The principles of that theory are opposed to the basic principles of the GTT which are claimed to be “unrealistic and incapable of describing or explaining specialized language as it is actually used in communicative situations such as specialized translation” [4]. The GTT premises criticized by Temmerman are:

- The central role of concepts in relation to their designations;
- Concepts and categories have clear-cut boundaries;
- The monosemic reference, i.e. one-to-one correspondence between terms and concepts;
- Terminological definitions should be only intensional;
- Terminology should be approached only synchronically;

In contrast, Temmerman claims that

- Language is relevant for the conception of categories and should not be separated from concepts;

- Only few categories are clear-cut, i.e. can be clearly delineated;
- Synonymy and polysemy are functional in specialised discourse
- Terminological definitions may have different content and form depending on category types;
- A diachronic approach to terminology is unavoidable.

This theory is in line with the CTT since it is descriptive rather than prescriptive and the starting point of terminological analysis is terms and not concepts. Distinctive features of the SCT are its emphasis on conceptual organization and its focus on category structure in terms of cognitive linguistics as well as its combined synchronic and diachronic approach to term analysis.

Unlike the GTT according to which concept systems are organized hierarchically, i.e. hyperonymically (is a ...) and meronymically (part of ...), sociocognitive categories are prototypical. The latter notion is understood as representations of conceptual structures in the form of idealized cognitive models making use of degrees of typicality to configure the conceptual categories or domains. The conceptual map thus obtained takes the form of concentric circles. Concepts are placed intuitively closer or farther away from the prototypical center represented by the most typical representative of the respective category.

Despite its advantages over other terminology theories, such as its focus on the study of terms in a diachronic perspective which contributes significantly to the cognitive analysis of terminological metaphorisation, SCT has its disadvantages formulated by Faber [4] in the following way:

- The prototypes and idealized cognitive models are totally unconstrained since they are based on an open-ended inventory of conceptual relations;
- These models seem to be largely based on the intuition of the modeller;
- Neither prototypes nor idealized cognitive models provide theoretical grounds for analyzing syntagmatic terminological data, i.e. the syntactic behaviour of terms.

In my opinion, it is this latter disadvantage that served as a major stimulus for Faber to propose a new approach to the study of terms which I will discuss in the next section.

4 Theoretical and Methodological Premises of Frame-Based Terminology

Frame-Based Terminology (henceforth FBT), proposed by Faber [4], shares many premises with the two theories discussed above such as the unnecessary distinction between words and terms for modern computerised terminology and the need to study the behaviour of terms in their natural textual environment. In view of providing useful data for translation purposes, the new theoretical approach takes into account not only the compound nominal forms by which most special language units are represented but also their syntactic valence or combinatorial capacity. As Faber rightly contends “The understanding of a terminology-rich text requires knowledge of the domain, the concepts within it, the propositional relations within the text, as well as the conceptual relations between concepts within the domain”. All the elements listed are targeted in her proposal. Below I will briefly present the theoretical and methodological premises of the Frame-Based Terminology which I consider applicable, with certain modifications, for the analysis of terminological verb collocations.

FBT is based on Frame Semantics, a theory developed by the cognitive linguist Fillmore which relates linguistic meaning to encyclopaedic knowledge. Within this theoretical framework a word is assumed to activate a frame of semantic knowledge relating to the specific concept it refers to. Before embarking on the methodological implications of that theory for the proposed model of conceptual category design of a specialized domain, Faber dwells on the conceptual organization of the latter. Pointing out the crucial role of the concept ‘domain’ in Terminology and Linguistics, she criticizes the GTT for not proposing conceptual representations “with explanatory adequacy from a psychological perspective”. Special domains are essential to the CTT and SCT. However, according to Faber, they have not seriously considered how to elaborate, design, and organize such structures but have simply regarded them as “a product of the terminologist’s intuition” later subjected to expert validation. Some other models of conceptual domain structures are mentioned which I will not discuss here except for one particular proposal made by Goldberg [7] who assumes that the “the world is carved up into discretely classified event types”. That view seems to have considerably influenced Faber in shaping up her proposal.

As previously mentioned FBT uses the basic assumptions of Frame Semantics to construct a model of a special domain structure. Frames, being a type of cognitive structuring device based on experience, provide

not only background knowledge of words (terms respectively) and their use in discourse but also make explicit their semantics and syntactic behaviour. In other words, by making use of that device, it is possible to describe the conceptual relations of a given special concept belonging to a special domain as well as the combinatorial potential of the term which designates it. According to Faber, FBT focuses on:

- (a) conceptual organization;
- (b) the multidimensional nature of terminological units;
- (c) the extraction of semantic and syntactic information through the use of multilingual corpora;

The basic assumption of the FBT is that “conceptual networks are based on an underlying domain event which generates templates for the actions and processes that take place in the specialized field as well as the entities that participate in them” [4]. The methodological implications of that assumption can be summarized as follows:

- Special domains are described through the events that generally take place in them;
- Each special domain has its own event template;
- Generic/base-level categories are configured in a prototypical/basic domain event representing action-environment interface;
- This basic domain event provides a frame for the organisation of more specific concepts;
- The specific concepts within each category are linked by both hierarchical and non-hierarchical relations;
- Each subdomain within the event is characterized by a template with a prototypical set of conceptual relations;
- Terminological definitions are regarded as mini-knowledge representations or frames;
- The definitions are based on data extracted by corpus analysis thus providing paradigmatic and syntagmatic information about the term;

Faber exemplifies the methodology proposed with the Coastal Engineering Event which is taken to be the basic event in the Coastal Engineering domain [4]. Within that event she focuses on a typical process, namely, *erosion* which conforms to the process template. From that inference and the following figure representing the Coastal Engineering Event it becomes clear that a template in this view should be understood as a general conceptual category representing, in Fillmore’s terms [8], either an argument or the predicate in a generic semantic frame. Thus, in the particular event discussed the Agent template includes what I would call two basic sub-templates (natural agent and human agent) which, in turn, involve a number of specific concepts. The same applies to the other basic templates specified for the particular event as Process template, Patient template and Result template, respectively. It is essential to emphasize the relationships established between the templates, e.g. the causal relation, which according to Goldberg [7] can be interpreted as basic argument constructions realized linguistically by basic clausal expressions (X causes Y). These basic argument structures represent dynamic scenes, i.e. experientially grounded *gestalts*. Therefore, the conceptual representation of a special domain within the context of the Frame-Based Terminology has the advantage of representing conceptual relations in a dynamic rather than static fashion. Information about the combinatorial potential of a particular concept, e.g. *erosion*, in a particular language is extracted by analyzing corpus data, i.e. concordances which provide the frames and serve as definitional models.

5 Taxonomic-Frames Categorization of Terminological Verb Collocations

In this section I will attempt to use the methodological premises of the Frame-Based Terminology to analyze terminological verb collocations, exemplified with verb collocations of the term *steel*, and justify my proposal for certain modifications in that approach to suit the specific object of study.

Terminological verb collocations are a type of collocations defined as syntagmatic relations of words. There are two major approaches to collocations, viz. frequency-based and phraseological. The former assumes the frequency of occurrence as the main criterion for defining a word combination as a collocation, whereas the latter is semantically oriented and distinguishes between a semantically autonomous element called the base and an element selected depending on the base termed collocator [2]. When analyzing a terminological verb collocation, the term, represented by a noun or a nominal phrase according to most terminologists [9, 10], is taken to be the base and the respective verb is the collocator.

In section 2 above I argued that terminological verb collocations may be treated as knowledge units larger than individual concepts which can be equated with concept combinations conducive to categorization. Within the Frame-Based Terminology context each collocation of that type can be analyzed semantically by assuming that the term (base) is the Patient in a dynamic scene/frame whereas the verb designates a dynamic action/process affecting it with a consequent Result. What is lexicalized, i.e. explicated on the surface structure, are the Patient and the Action/Process, the action being performed by a human agent and the process induced by a natural agent.

If we are interested in representing the verbs that go with a basic term, let us say, *steel* in a kind of a learner's glossary designed for technical translators as proposed by Alexiev [11], we can extract automatically the necessary terminological data by submitting the appropriate text to a term extractor and using the concordances and bigrams it yields. In the case of *steel* I retrieved the following verbs/collocators to the term/base (arranged alphabetically):

<i>anneal</i>	<i>embrittles</i>	<i>rusts</i>
<i>bolt</i>	<i>extrude</i>	<i>solder</i>
<i>braze</i>	<i>forge</i>	<i>splits</i>
<i>cast</i>	<i>oxidizes</i>	<i>stamp</i>
<i>corrodes</i>	<i>quench</i>	<i>temper</i>
<i>cracks</i>	<i>rivet</i>	<i>weld</i>
<i>draw</i>	<i>roll</i>	

In a knowledge-oriented terminological collection [11] the terminological collocations these verbs form with the term *steel* should be represented in different categories. In terms of the frames approach, those categories can be specified according to the type of Agent and the type of Result since *steel* is a building material on which human agents act and which is subjected to natural forces. According to the type of Agent (human or natural) a terminologist with a linguistic background can easily classify the verbs and the collocations, respectively, into two groups, all the more that in the knowledge contexts extracted the processes caused by a Natural Agent are expressed by verbs which in the corpus commonly occur in a grammatically marked form, viz. 3rd person singular, present simple (-s). Therefore, as a first step towards categorization we can represent two generic frames for the verb collocations of *steel*, which according to the type of Agent can be termed the Process Frame and the Action Frame within the general Steel Processing Event:

STEEL PROCESSING

Process Frame			
<i>Natural Agent</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Result</i>
Weather	Corrodes Cracks Embrittles Oxidizes Rusts Splits	Steel	Steel quality deterioration

However, even for the laymen it seems obvious that a second step towards categorizing all other terminological verb collocations in one Action Frame would be an act of very imprecise categorization. A need is intuitively felt for further subdivision of the actions carried out in relation to the material concept 'steel'. A more precise categorization can be performed only with the help of an expert. By applying an integrated top-down and bottom-up approach as recommended by Faber [4], i.e. extracting terminological data from a textual corpus and from reference sources including an expert's opinion¹ I collected the following definitional information on the verbs in question:

¹ I am grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eng. Roumiana Zaharieva from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy-Sofia for her expert assistance in categorizing the verbs which collocate with the basic concept *steel*.

Heat Treating - a group of industrial and metalworking processes used to alter the physical, and sometimes chemical, properties of a material

- *Quench* - To cool (hot metal) by thrusting into water or other liquid
- *Temper* - To harden or strengthen (metal or glass) by application of heat or by heating and cooling
- *Anneal* - To heat (glass, earthenware, metals, etc.) to remove or prevent internal stress
-

Steel Shaping/Forming - changing the shape of a piece of metal

- *Cast* - To form (liquid metal, for example) into a particular shape by pouring into a mold
- *Roll* - To pass metal stock through one or more pairs of rolls to reduce the thickness
- *Extrude* - To produce (moulded sections of plastic, metal, etc) by ejection under pressure through a suitably shaped nozzle or die
- *Forge* - To form (metal, for example) by heating in a furnace and beating or hammering into shape
- *Stamp* - To form or cut out by application of a mold, form, or die
- *Draw* - To flatten, stretch, or mold (metal) by hammering or die stamping

Joining - Bringing two separate materials together through some type of forming. Joining is one of the main ways metals can be formed.

- *Weld* - To join pieces of metal together by heating the edges until they begin to melt and then pressing them together
- *Braze* - To solder (two pieces of metal) together using a hard solder with a high melting point
- *Solder* - To join together two or more metal items by melting and flowing a filler metal (solder) into the joint, the filler metal having a lower melting point than the adjoining metal
- *Rivet* - To hammer the headless end of so as to form a head and fasten something.
- *Bolt* - To secure or lock with or as if with a bolt

As can be seen from the data collected, within the Action Frame we can identify three subcategories: Heat Treating, Steel Shaping and Joining. These subcategories can be represented in tabular form to illustrate the semantic frames to which each terminological verb collocation from the generic Action Frame belongs:

STEEL PROCESSING

Action Frame 1 – Heat Treating			
<i>Human Agent</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Result</i>
Metallurgist	Anneal Quench Temper	Steel	Steel property improvement

Action Frame 2 – Steel Shaping			
<i>Human Agent</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Result</i>
Metallurgist	Cast Draw Extrude Forge Roll Stamp	Steel	Steel shape modification

Action Frame 3 – Joining			
<i>Human Agent</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Patient</i>	<i>Result</i>
Builder	Bolt Braze Rivet Solder Weld	Steel	Steel Joining

Given that comparatively precise categorization, two questions logically arise to which I will try to give reasonable answers. The first question is whether the approach proposed can be considered a frames one or a different one. My answer to that question is that the approach is frame-based but with certain modification involving *taxonomic elements*. The categorization tables presented above show clearly that the procedural steps in my proposal, which can be termed *Taxonomic-Frames Approach*, should start with a preliminary expert-based taxonomy of the basic event frames lexicalized by the respective terminological verb collocations thereby arriving at scientifically accurate categorization schemes. It is important to note that the concept ‘taxonomy’ in this context is understood in a broad sense, viz. as the science of classification. Cruse [12] defines taxonomic hierarchies as “essentially classificatory systems” which “reflect the way speakers of a language categorize the world of experience”. Taxonomic hierarchies are characterized by well-developed levels. Therefore, if we want to subsume all events associated with the concept *steel* described above, we can designate that higher-level event Steel Processing (as denoted above the tables) thus making it possible to represent, if necessary, the categorization scheme in the form of the classical tree-diagram typical of classification representations.

The second question we have to answer is what the particular application of the Taxonomic-Frames Approach can be in Terminology Work and especially in Knowledge-Oriented Terminography. Alexiev [11], in his extended model of a learner’s glossary entry, has shown the applicability of such an approach in creating the microstructure of a translation-oriented, knowledge-based terminographic collection. Another argument for proposing the combined Taxonomic-Frames Approach to terminological verb collocations is that in my opinion the analytical procedure is explicit and applicable in a subsequent terminological contrastive analysis involved in multilingual terminological projects. Such a contrastive analysis requires, as claimed by Alexiev [11], preliminary identification of systematic conceptual groups and the corresponding term sets. In this respect I will provide only one example with the collocations within the Joining Action Frame 3 above, some of which are translated into Bulgarian by adding a gloss (brief explanation) to the verb collocate, e.g.:

1. Braze (EN) – Споявам с твърд припой/Solder with hard solder (literal translation of the BG translation equivalent);
2. Solder (EN) – Споявам с мек припой/Solder with soft solder (literal translation of the BG translation equivalent);

6 Conclusion

A proposal has been made for a combined taxonomic-frames approach to terminological verb collocations. Arguments have been adduced for recognizing terminological verb collocations as terminological units. Faber’s Frame-Based Terminology has been discussed in comparison with two other recent terminology theories, namely, Cabré’s Communicative Theory of Terminology and Temmerman’s Sociocognitive Terminology. I have claimed that Frame-Based Terminology offers theoretical and methodological premises which are appropriate for the analysis of terminological verb collocations. However, I have opted for a combined taxonomic-frames approach involving a taxonomic analysis preceding the analysis of the cognitive frames underlying those collocations, which is deemed necessary to first categorize the event structures into conceptual groups thus making the analytical procedure more compatible with a possible terminological contrastive analysis requiring identification of systematically grouped conceptual and term items.

The approach I propose can handle translation problems because a preliminary categorization of a special domain of knowledge undoubtedly helps in systematizing the object of a subsequent terminological contrastive analysis, in our case terminological verb collocations, in this way assisting the translator in making justifiable translation decisions in case of terminological gaps or long terminological expressions.

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