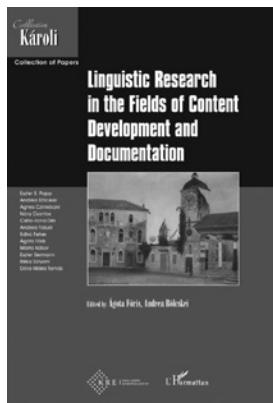


Linguistic Approaches to Technical Documentation and Technical Texts

ZOLTÁN SOMOGYI

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

ORCID id: 0000-0002-3721-6513



Ágota Fóris, Andrea Bölcsei (eds.) 2021:
LINGUISTIC RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF CONTENT
DEVELOPMENT AND DOCUMENTATION,
Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem,
L'Harmattan, Budapest–Paris, 389 p.
ISBN 978-2-343-25167-7.

The main goal of the book *Linguistic Research in the Field of Content Development and Documentation* is to share the unique findings on the linguistic aspects of documentation, content development, and technical writing with a much broader audience. The authors focus on the process of technical documentation, the features of technical texts, and their translation mainly from the aspects of terminology, translation studies, and text linguistic research. The relevance of this research is connected to the advancement of technology and the changes in how we collect, share, and understand information as a result. The selected papers are the English translations of the original Hungarian ones, which were published in two separate volumes in Hungarian. The book is split into three main parts: the first chapter examines technical communication from a broad perspective, the second chapter focuses on the connection between documentation, terminology, and translation, and the book ends with studies about linguistic analysis of technical texts.

The first part begins with Ágota Fóris' paper titled 'Content Development and Documentation from the Perspective of Hungarian Linguistics'. The author explains the aims and methods of the research project ('The Hungarian Language and Professional Culture. Hungarian Linguistic Research in the Fields of Content Development and Technical Documentation') conducted by TERMIK (Terminology and Communication Research Group), whose achievements are presented in the book, as well as the significance and applicability of its results in higher education. She then describes the place and role of linguistic studies in content development and documentation, and in the different possible aspects of such studies. This is followed by a general overview of the characteristics and systems of modern content creation and management practices. The author also outlines the current trends in the field and comments on the impact they have on technical writers and end-users.

The next paper, 'Professional Documentation in the 21st Century', is by Eszter B. Papp. Recent changes in technical documentation can be explained by changes in the way information is created and received; all these new phenomena are subsumed under the concept of 'Information 4.0'. The study provides a detailed overview of how industrial and technical documents in use today can be grouped. Modern information systems are moving away from print and the flowing text. Scalability (providing just as much information as the user needs), searchability, the effortless way of retrieval, reusability, and integration into automation processes are becoming increasingly important. To meet these demands, information is created and stored as self-contained, meaningful units and modules, and the individual modules are organised into larger units along with document maps. The paper concludes, with some case studies, on the benefits of selecting the right information, using controlled language in documentation and enumerates the challenges faced by technical writers who do not write in their native language.

The second study of the same author, 'Documentation 4.0', gives a more nuanced picture of the constantly changing environment in which technical documentation is embedded. One of the direct effects of Industry 4.0 is that paper-based documentation of the past is being replaced by digital, well-structured information, simultaneously available on multiple devices, which can be interpreted by machines and human users alike. Of course, modern documentation also takes the changes in user's habits into

account. The author also points out that English has become the dominant language in documentation due to its global spread. In this context, the author presents some key features of documents produced by native and non-native writers, as well as the specific documentation-related concepts and standards.

This is followed by Andrea Bölcsei's paper 'Practices in Technical Communication and the Latest Challenges', which opens with an overview of the basic concepts of technical communication and documentation. The author discusses the circumstances of and the steps involved in the creation of technical documentation, as well as the legal and standardisation requirements that govern these steps. After this, the paper highlights the future importance of technical documentation, the relevance of the creation of intelligent information products, and the significant role of terminology in documentation. It concludes with an overview of the skills needed for good technical communicators.

The author's next paper, 'What Do Technical Writers Do and What Do They Learn?', provides a detailed description of technical writing as a job and offers an overview of the training courses currently available in higher education and in some other educational programmes in some countries. The author points out that language skills are becoming more valued in a number of professions, including technical writing. The paper appreciates the TecCOMFrame framework, which describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities of technical writers and defines them along six dimensions. The study then gives a general picture of the labour market demand for technical writers, noting that there is an excessively high demand for such professionals across Europe. Examples from Europe, Canada, and the United States show that training courses in technical documentation are offered at several levels (e.g., bachelor and master) and in several forms (minors, specialisations, stand-alone courses, specialised training programmes) in higher education.

This chapter closes with the paper 'How is Technical Content Created? The Lifecycle of Technical Documentation' by Ágnes Czinkóczki and Ildikó Fehér. Since the authors are practicing technical writers, the paper provides first-hand information on the mysteries of technical documentation, complementing the theoretical issues presented in previous articles. In this study, they define the terms *technical content*, *technical documentation*, *technical text*, *technical writer*, *user*, and *target audience*. The definitions also

show the diversity of the work of technical writers who not only write content, but also plan and schedule the process of producing technical documentation, research the relevant subject, which includes gathering information, consulting with experts, and, where appropriate, testing the product. Further on, the authors present their detailed model of the process of technical writing. At the end of the article, the readers learn some basic rules for content creation, including the importance of legal compliance, a thorough understanding of the target audience, and guidelines for keeping content simple and concise.

The second part of the volume starts with Ágota Fóris' and Andrea Faludi's study 'Relations of Documentation and Document Management with Terminology and Translation'. This paper aims to delimit the field of documentation and document management and examine its relationship with translation and terminology management. In this regard, the paper gives a detailed picture of how document management is carried out and how it accompanies the whole life cycle of a document. The authors conclude that terminology management plays a key role in the documentation process, both because professionals use terminology units to organise information and because a well-developed terminology ensures consistency of content in existing and future documents. In addition to the description of the creation of original documentation, the authors also discuss in detail the processes and tools involved in translating documents, including the various tools that assist in translation, publishing software, information management standards, and file formats (e.g., DITA XML) that are present in the field of documentation.

The next paper in the volume, 'Technical Writing and Documentation as Intralingual Technical Translation', is also by the above co-authors. It begins with how the concept of 'documentation' can be interpreted. The authors came up with three different approaches which also leads to making progress in the development of which terms could represent these concepts in Hungarian in this field, which is also one of the aims of the Hungarian version of the book and the research project. Clarity and comprehensibility are two key aspects of good technical documentation. Clarity can be achieved primarily through the appropriate use of concepts and terms, which also enhances the value of a well-developed national terminology. Comprehensibility is ensured by the appropriate 'translation' of technical terms within the language. This sheds light on the aspects and

issues of intralingual translation. The authors conclude that the secondary communication situation that arises during the documentation process can be considered as ‘intralingual translation’, adding that this phenomenon is mainly present in the communication between professionals and laypersons and is reflected, above all, in the correspondence and understanding of the terms.

The next paper is the study ‘Features of Texts on Websites and Characteristics of their Translation’ by Márta Kóbor. The paper aims to present the distinctive features of writing for the web and their implications for translation, and to provide a basis for the development of the curriculum of translation techniques on this topic. The author discusses the typical characteristics of websites and the possible categorisation criteria. She concludes that translating websites requires translators to have a basic knowledge of web technology in addition to their translation skills. Later on, the author examines in detail the foreign and Hungarian language characteristics of the publicly available B2C and E2L websites.

In her paper ‘Terminology Work in the Process of Technical Writing and Translation’, Andrea Faludi presents the results of an interview enquiry on the role of terminology work in the translation process and highlights the role that thorough and well-structured terminology work should play in the first place in the creation of the source language text, before it is translated. The author used the method of structured interviews to investigate the place and role of terminology work and terminology management in the process of technical writing and in translation of technical texts.

Dóra-Mária Tamás’ study ‘Terminology and Documentation in Terminology Databases’ also examines the relationship between terminology and technical documentation. The study begins with defining the concepts of ‘terminology management’ and ‘terminology database’. The terminological work itself involves documentation, which must be present at all three stages of the process (the preparatory phase, the elaboration phase, and the final phase of terminology work). The presence of documentation can also be a guarantee when assessing the quality of a database. One of the end products of this process could be, for example, an editorial guide that serves as a reference for source management, copyright issues, the structure of the terminology database, and the recording of the data associated with terms. It may also be important to create documentation containing information on the use of the ready database for the end users.

This part concludes with the study ‘Concepts Related to the Term Documentation in Cercaterm, a Catalan Terminology Database’ by Eszter Sermann, who gives a comprehensive overview of the changes in the status of the Catalan language and the role of language planning, including terminology planning in this process. The paper presents in detail the Cercaterm database, which records the results of Catalan terminological works. In the second half of the paper, the author examines the term *documentation* and its related terms in the database.

The last part of the book begins with Csilla-Ilona Dér’s paper ‘Scientific Genres – Specialized Genres’, which focuses on the definition and differentiation of scientific genres. These genres are part of a broader scientific discourse that is linked to other professional discourses. The author concludes that scientific genres should be considered in the context of academic, scientific, professional, pedagogical/institutional discourses. In the rest of the paper, the author examines in more detail the genre and classification systems of the Database of Hungarian Scientific Works (Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára, MTMT). After a detailed characterisation of its classification systems, one of the author’s criticisms is the contradiction between the scientific and the educational classifications, which means that, for example, a textbook written for educational purposes cannot be considered a scientific work even if it meets the criteria of scientificity.

Nóra Csontos’ paper, ‘Technical Texts from the Perspective of Text Typology. Text Typology Analysis of Instruction Manuals’, examines the text type of ‘instruction manual’ within the framework of the functional cognitive theory of text typology and pragmatic approach. At the beginning of the paper, the author briefly reviews previous research on text typology and notes that it lacks homogeneous categories: the differences lie in the theoretical frameworks within which the text is approached. The corpus is based on printed and online instruction manuals, with the central theme of the cognitive unit of TECHNICAL SUBJECT and its orientation towards it. The aspects of analysis include the discursive relationship, the focus of attention, conceptual schemas and scripts, the complexity of the technical subject, the purpose of the text, i.e., the speech act, and their typical linguistic construction.

The second paper by the same author, ‘Means of Sharing Knowledge in Technical Texts: “A Possible Interpretation of the Technical Text Types”’, examines technical texts in a socio-cognitive framework and establishes

a possible typology of technical texts. The paper describes the language user's experiential knowledge in connection with technical texts, as well as the components of knowledge in education and other institutionalised and conventionalised contexts, and their relationship to each other. To assess knowledge elements and to investigate the language user's perception of the technical text, the author conducted a questionnaire survey, and, as a result, she found that several knowledge components could be activated simultaneously during the formation of the types of technical text and language users construct categories based on these.

In their study 'Types, and Characteristics of Technical Texts', Ágnes Czinkóczki and Ildikó Fehér also look for common characteristics of technical texts, mainly from a non-linguistic point of view. The main function of technical texts is to provide the reader with complex technical information while ensuring that it is concise, relevant, and accurate for the target audience, and is accessible quickly and easily. In this respect, three subcategories are distinguished: description, instruction, and reference. In this context, the authors describe the DITA authoring standard, which is widely used today in the field of technical writing. Another important aspect to consider is the publishing channel, i.e., how a given piece of content or information is delivered to users. Along these lines, the authors identify several different text types, which they analyse in detail by describing the publication channel, the characteristics, and linguistic features of the content.

In her study 'Semantic Features in the Terms of the Hungarian Version of an EU Regulation', Réka Sólyom examines the relationship between conceptual metaphors and metonymies and EU terminology in a cognitive semantic framework by analysing EU regulations. As a result of her analysis, the author was able to identify distinct types of metaphors, metonymies, and personifications, to group them by their specific characteristics, and determine their proportions in the corpus.

In her second paper, 'Conceptual Metaphors and Metonymies in a Technical Text Related to Quality Management Systems', Réka Sólyom examines the appearance and functions of conceptual metaphors and metonymies in a functional cognitive framework within a specific text, the EN ISO 9001:2009 standard on quality management. While reviewing the theoretical background, the author briefly summarises the main ideas of literature on metaphors and metonymy, which have their roots in rhetorical works. The author points out that the basic function of these linguistic

tools is to help the recipients understand abstract concepts or processes about which they have no or just limited experience. In the analysis, the author does not consider the whole text but focuses only on certain words and phrases. As a result, she finds that there are several types of metaphors in the corpus, mainly verbal metaphors and personification, as well as orientational metaphors, which are also common in colloquial language, making it easier for the readers to understand the text.

There has been relatively little pragmatic research on technical documents in connection with the Hungarian language. In the last study of the volume, 'About the Usage of Discourse Markers in Architectural Technical Documentation', Csilla-Ilona Dér attempts to fill in this gap. First, the author clarifies the concept of discourse markers and explains how they can be classified. The corpus of the study consisted of freely available technical documentation on building architectures, from which the author extracted the discourse markers manually, then identified their functions, sorted them into groups, and used statistical methods to examine their proportions.

All studies in this volume have a strong connection to terminology and terminology management, as they provide a specialised framework for technical documentation in which the theoretical and practical approaches of dealing with terms are embedded. By giving an overview of the characteristics of technical documentation and the related work of technical writers, the process of creating technical documentation, and the various features of specialized technical texts, where proper terminology management has a high relevance, the authors describe the environment where specialised terms and conceptual hierarchies are present in high numbers. The volume can be used by professionals involved in all processes of documentation, especially terminologists, who would like to gain a better understanding of the impacts of terms in creating and reading technical texts, and of terminology management in the whole process. Besides, it can serve as a textbook in current and future higher education courses.

Gauta 2022-08-29

Zoltán Somogyi

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Terminology and Communication Research Group

Reviczky u. 4, Budapest, Hungary

E-mail zoltan.somogyi@protonmail.com