



**Kaiutin**

# **Terminology Management in a Translation Company**

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# TOPICS

- **What we do at Mendez**
- **How the localization process works**
- **What good terminology means**
- **Case 1: How one specific term got translated**
- **Case 2: How one specific term database works**
- **What we should learn from all this**

- Localization and documentation services:
  - Production of technical documentation (in English)
  - Translation of technical documentation into multiple langs
  - Associated services
- Largest translation company in the Nordic countries
- 1000 employees worldwide, 120 in Finland
- In Finland, ca. 5000 translation assignments in 2001, 20 to 30 million words translated annually
- Hundreds of thousands of entries in term databases
- 5 largest customers: IBM, Microsoft, Nokia, Oracle, Lotus
- Typical products: MS Office, AS/400, SAP R/3, Windows, Internet Explorer

# The localization process

- Everything is digital, computerized and networked: contents, tools, processes
- An advanced global IT product requires a large and solid documentation set, up to a million words
- A localization project may employ 30 people and take six months to complete
- Products are continuously updated and released in new versions
- A localized product may appear 2 to 12 weeks after the original product
- Web site translations can have a turnaround of just hours from creation to publishing in translation

# The process and terms mgmt

- Large volumes of old translations routinely recycled using automated translation memory systems
  - Translations appear in multiple formats and platforms: print, PC screen, WWW, packaging, mobile screen, phone voice ...
  - In an interconnected world, new translations enter the market quickly and through multiple channels
  - In a technology world, new concepts are created quickly
1. **Creating good terms and translations is hard**
  2. **Changing translations in existing products is hard**
  3. **Managing the market centrally is not possible**

# A good translation

- A word of Finnish origin      sivusto <> saitti
- An existing word      modeemi <> jarsi
- Short      hiiri <> paikannusrasia
- Descriptive      ohjattu toiminto <> velho
- Unambiguous      Internet <> verkko
- Phonetically easy      vierittää <> skrollata
- Easy to use      plug & play -toiminto
- In general use      komentosarja <> juonto

*Few translations can match all of these,  
but one needs to be chosen!*

## Some nice translations that made it

### ■ New Finnish descriptive words

- Valikko (menu)
- Levyke (diskette)
- Kuvake (icon)
- Painike (pushbutton)
- Suoritin (processor)
- Selain (browser)

### ■ Borrowed translations

- Ikkuna (window)
- Hiiri (mouse)
- Sovellus (application)





# What the customer wants

- A good translation (cf. previous slides): existing, descriptive, short etc.
- An internally consistent translation, same in all instances within the customer's product set
- No changes
- Something they personally like
- Some customers do not want to deal with terminology at all; some require full participation
- The customer often has more focus on internal consistency, general practice, ease of application
- The customer often has less focus on linguistic, semantic, syntactic, phonetic etc. considerations

## Case 1: a translation in 1998

- 1) A new internet concept, *certificate*, appears in a text to be translated
- 2) A lookup in our internal resources finds no prior translations
- 3) Translator tags the new term for further processing
- 4) The term is taken up in a routine terms meeting
- 5) The meaning is easily settled (Internet sources, Mendez engineers): *certificate* refers to a way to identify Internet users and resources
- 6) TSK and customer are contacted: no prior translations found
- 7) Possible translations are created in a meeting

## Case 1: a translation in 1998

- 8) The final decision is made between *sertifikaatti* and an alternative of Finnish origin
- 9) *Sertifikaatti* is chosen (safe choice, avoids some risks)
- 10) Over the next 2 years, it turns out that *varmenne* gains ground; appears in press, ends up even in Finnish Law
- 11) We contact the customer and propose a change in the product terminology
- 12) Customer accepts; in subsequent projects *sertifikaatti* will not be used, and instances in old translations will be replaced by *varmenne* at each new project start
- 13) Within two to three years, *sertifikaatti* will gradually have disappeared from the product documentation set

# What do we learn?

- Sometimes you are able to create a good translation, sometimes your choice also becomes market practice, sometimes another choice wins
- Sometimes confusion wins (*kovalevy, umpilevy, kiintolevy...*)
- Term changes are often costly business; customers want to avoid them
- Every change creates some internal inconsistency within a product documentation set
- To be able to push good terminology, we need, aside language skills, a good network of contacts and some market weight

## Case 2: a terms database

A shared Lotus Notes database, accessed over the Internet by Mendez, the customer, and freelance translators, all from their own remote locations

- 1) **Translator** enters a new term into the database, along with context information, possibly also a proposed translation
- 2) **Content validator** (subject matter expert) approves (or makes a new one), may contact **External specialists**
- 3) **Language validator** checks suggestion for its linguistic qualities and approves (or suggests)
- 4) Term becomes visible to **Customer**, who approves
- 5) After this, any unapproved terms (a minor part) will be processed separately, e.g. in a terminology meeting

## Case 2: a terms database

DEMO IN NOTES

# What do we learn?

- Technology is there to help us manage terminology
- The efficiency of the terms management process has dramatically improved over the past years (database tools, Internet, translation memories ...)
- Most physical meetings have been replaced by good groupware
- A term decision involves many cooperating parties
- The terms process needs to be smoothly integrated into the localization process
- Measure twice, cut once: bad translations spread like viruses in a full-speed localization process
- Time and money are of essence

## Our view

Mendez wants to help build a world where technology is easy for people to use

Ease of use depends on the quality of the interface between a human being and technology

Professional terminology management is a key way to improve the interface



# SUMMARY

- Terminology management typically takes place within a localization project ordered by a customer
- A large IT localization project is complex, interconnected, dynamic, hectic, and almost late
- Our challenge is to stay cool and create a steady flow of good term decisions under market pressures

**THANK YOU !**