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Introduction to Thematic Section

The original purpose of this thematic section of *Hermes* was to open or reopen the discussion on the similarities and differences existing or not existing between specialised lexicography and terminology. During the years I've been working in the field of specialised lexicography, I've been caught by a feeling of growing frustration because of what seemed to me to be artificial contradictions or even »cold war« between these two traditions which, after all, deal with the same subject field, i.e. the so-called Language of Special Purpose, or to be more accurate, the preparation and elaboration of reference »books« or tools to facilitate the production, reception and translation of LSP-texts or to provide knowledge of special subjects.

When professor Henning Bergenholtz and I, three years ago, edited the Danish version of our *Manual on Specialised Lexicography*, we were strongly criticized, especially by Humbley 1995, for not dealing with this complicated and sentimental question. When, two years ago, we prepared the English version of the *Manual*, we therefore decided to include a special chapter to compensate for this evident deficiency. Here we argued that a number of important arguments put forward to postulate an alleged abyss between LSP-lexicography and terminology were founded more on unacquaintedness than on a meticulous and scientifically based comparison between the two traditions. To our great surprise, we were criticized once more, not for our argumentation, but for the presentation of the whole complex of problems. Terminology cannot only be considered to be the Wiener School, we were told. The criticism was correct. Our eyes, indeed, had been somewhat blinded by the fact that this school has been almost completely dominant in Denmark and Germany where we have our main lexicographical roots. As can be clearly seen from the following pages, terminology, just as lexicography, includes a number of different and competing trends or »schools«, some of which have even, to a certain point, integrated with the lexicographical tradition.

This »discovery« was very much welcomed by the editor of this thematic section and has influenced and to some degree even changed the original plan, although the discussion on the similarities and differences between specialised lexicography and terminology remains as the basic issue.

In this light, LSP-lexicography and terminology can be understood as two interrelated – and up to a certain point integrated – traditions with the same subject field as mentioned above. This conclusion, however, leads to another conclusion, namely that it would be possible and even beneficial if they were mutually reconstructed and put on the same theoretical platform. And as both terminology and LSP-lexicography – independent on their differences in terms of concepts, criteria, methodology, presentation etc. – are traditions which in the final analysis are aimed at the elaboration of different kinds of reference »books« or other tools to help certain groups (or types) of users to resolve certain problems which arise in certain situations (production, reception and translation of LSP-texts or acquisition of special knowledge), i.e. the making of articles or products satisfying certain needs, this theoretical platform can be nothing else but the so-called lexicographical, or dictionary, functions deriving from the needs and necessities of the corresponding group of users in concrete user situations (see Tarp 1994).

But dictionary functions do not only determine, or ought to determine, the way concrete dictionaries are made. They also have major consequences for the whole process, including methodology, from the very beginning of the lexicographical or terminological work which in the end leads to the production of the above mentioned articles of use. On the basis of the system or typology of the different functions it should be possible to develop an improved theory (and praxis) integrating the strong points of the various trends of the two traditions.

This, however, takes time. The contributions in this thematic section of *Hermes* will hopefully inspire the future discussion on how – or if or up to which point – it will be possible to integrate specialised lexicography and terminology for the benefit of a society which increasingly demands quality and requires the practical results of the lexicographical and terminological work.

Literature:

- John Humbley: [Recension de] Henning Bergenholtz, Sven Tarp (red.) : Manual i fagleksikografi. In: Cahier de lexicologie. *Revue internationale de lexicologie et lexicographie* 58, 1995, 186-194.
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