Terminology activities worldwide

Chinese IT Terminology Management in Hong Kong

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1. INTRODUCTION

Terminology work, particularly the harmonization and standardization of terminology, has been carried out by subject specialists of all fields for centuries to facilitate efficient subject communication and knowledge organization. Wherever and whenever specialized information and specialized knowledge are being prepared, processed, represented, transformed and transferred, terminology is accorded a crucial role. Wright and Budin (1997:327) refer to terminology management as "any deliberate manipulation of terminological information."

However, the literature on terminology processing reveals much about the principles of adjusting in general but does not discuss the sources and circumstances of problems. Also, while a fair amount is known about terminology management in Europe and the US, relatively little has been written about in Hong Kong. There are considerable gaps in knowledge in this aspect, both with reference to Hong Kong's situation in general and in particular subject areas. To fill the gaps there are a series of questions which require answers. In terms of Chinese IT terminology, for example, we need to know:

* What are the terminology problems in Hong Kong?
* Why are there such problems?
* Who claims what to be problems?
* Who standardizes the Chinese IT terminology in Hong Kong?
* Why and how do they standardize terminology?
* What if any are the actual discourse problems in using the terminology?
* How do people in discourse, on-line and off-line, manage terminology?

The reason for this neglect is understandable: subject specialists who are capable of identifying and distinguishing the subtlety of technical concepts (such as IT) are not usually interested or linguistically trained to undertake this work; linguists, on the other hand, rarely have the detailed subject knowledge to produce reliable evidence for determining the regularities underlying processes of term formation and adjustment.

Terminology work in Hong Kong seems to be accorded little importance. Where there is no perceived need for terminology development, there are no funds for this work, and where there are no funds there can be no activities. In such cases it is only possible to develop theoretical positions. However, in the absence of testing grounds, these cannot then be developed into practical guidelines and methodologies. The type of terminology work done for many years in Europe, e.g., by TNC (a Swedish Terminological Centre) in Sweden and TSK (its Finnish equivalent) in Finland, is yet an uncharted domain of enquiry in Hong Kong; it is, therefore, not surprising that little progress has been made in developing standardized territory-wide applicable guidelines for the processing of technical terminology including those in IT areas.

Terminology work has always been described as an interdisciplinary activity (e.g. Sager, 1990:3; Cabrè, 1999:9) rather than a subject in its own right. To address oneself to so huge a subject in the context of globalization one to which the next section is dedicated) is to invite trouble. As the subject could be approached in so many different ways, it is important at the outset to set the boundary for the analysis in this paper.

This paper aims at explaining links between kinds of Chinese IT terminology problems and kinds of decision-making. The paper relies on the language management model (cf. Jerneudd and Neustupný 1987, 1991). This paper also aims at describing the Chinese IT terminology work carried out by standardization bodies in Hong Kong. It highlights the significance of terminology unification in achieving efficient communication in such an emerging revolutionary communications environment as that of Hong Kong today.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Cabrè (1999:3) has noted a paradoxical phenomenon in terms of the status of languages in the context of globalization.

"On the one hand there is a trend towards multilingualism across cultures which is justified by the need for direct and efficient communication; on the other hand, national languages are being recognized as the natural mode of communication at all levels of usage, whether general or specialized."

The rapid development of IT as well as worldwide networking of databases has made parallel usage of several languages a matter of course. The very basic need for people to communicate demands a local language. Talk amongst the technologically elite in English is a discourse which has little meaning for a lot of people in many contexts of the society.

"I am convinced that exogenous languages cannot withstand the force of indigenous languages. Indigenous languages may be oppressed or their populations marginalized for whatever social, economic or political reasons to such extents that they persist. But as long as indigenous languages have support in a community of
Like all kinds of businesses, IT of various sorts is expanding its influence across national boundaries into culturally and linguistically foreign territories. Localization follows in the wake of globalization. Most people would prefer to communicate in their own language. This is the same as the preference for people to buy products localized to their country, that is, products that have interfaces and documentation in their usual languages.

It might be true that talk amongst the technologically and educationally elites is in most cases conducted in English, which is the lingua franca in the domain of sciences and technologies. A discourse of such, however, has little meaning for a lot of people in many contexts of the society. Wang (2000:38) highlights the significance of translation (that is, localization) in the present stage of globalization since translation always stands between two languages and societies and thus it assumes an important role of “inter-cultural communication in a context of globalization”.

In Hong Kong, localization of IT terminology in a lot of cases surfaces as ad-hoc bilingual glossaries in newspapers or magazines. It also surfaces as issuance of formal glossaries by professional or governmental bodies. Since 1995, for example, the Hong Kong Computer Society has systematically been trying to further the use of standardized Chinese IT terms to promote effective communications within the trade. Three government bodies, namely the Information Technology Services Department, the Official Languages Agency, and the Curriculum Development Institute Council, have also since 1997 developed standardized IT bilingual glossaries for both internal and external communication.

3. IS THERE A TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEM?

3.1 Laissez-faire?

In Hong Kong today, almost everyone comes in contact with computers. We are increasingly adopting new communications environment such as the Internet, e-mail and video conferencing. In most cases, when it comes to what could be agreed at the Chinese term for a specific IT term, there is variation which requires choice by translators, editors, interpreters, technical writers, and terminologists. How should they choose? And if there is a gap, how should they proceed? The word “Internet”, for instance, has been rendered into at least four different translations (data taken from Chinese Database Development Bulletin 《庫倉建設通訊》17, Sep 1998, published by the Hong Kong Chinese Language Society 香港中文語文學會 1998 年 9 月總第 17 期) and they include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translations</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Literal meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 互聯網</td>
<td>wah lyuhn mohng hu lian wang</td>
<td>聯 united / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 互連網</td>
<td>wah lihn mohng hu lian wang</td>
<td>聯 united / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 網際網</td>
<td>mohng jai mohng wang ji wang</td>
<td>網際網 intern among / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 網際網</td>
<td>mohng gaan mohng wang jian wang</td>
<td>網際網 intern among / 網 nets</td>
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</table>

* top line denotes Cantonese pronunciation; bottom line denotes Putonghua (same for the next table)

The term “Internet” has even more Chinese names (ibidem):

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 國際網絡</td>
<td>gwok jai mohng lohk guo ji wang luo</td>
<td>國際 network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 國際資訊 網絡</td>
<td>gwok jai ji seun mohng lohk guo ji jin wong luo</td>
<td>國際 information network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 國際互聯 網</td>
<td>gwok jai wah lyuhn mohng guo ji lian wong</td>
<td>國際 network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 英特網</td>
<td>jing dahl mohng ying te wong</td>
<td>英特 net trans. of “Internet” / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 因特網</td>
<td>yan dahl mohng yin te wong</td>
<td>因特 net trans. of “Internet” / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 交互網</td>
<td>geau wah mohng jao hu wong</td>
<td>交互 cross-net / 聯 united / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 全球互連 網</td>
<td>chyuahn kauh wah lyuhn mohng quan jiu hu lian wong</td>
<td>全球 global / 聯 united / 網 nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 國際電腦 網絡</td>
<td>gwok jai dhn rouh mohng lohk guo ji jin wong luo</td>
<td>國際 computer network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 國際計算機互聯網</td>
<td>gwok jai gi jin wong wu lyuhn mohng guo ji jin wong jiu lian wong</td>
<td>國際 computer network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many English IT terms have been rendered into various different Chinese translations. Some language authorities claim this is a problem — something which we will discuss below. Examples abound: Java can be jiava 仁者, Java 語言, guava moing 菠萝語言, or Java 語言; a mailing list becomes hanpin jianyjyuguhun 函件發送清單, yujian qingdan 郵件清單, yujian leiting 郵件列表.
3.2 The Problem: Can We Tolerate Ambiguity?

How do people handle this rich offering of vocabulary? Comments in the Newsletter of East Asia Forum on Terminology (31, 1999) highlights the difficulties in standardization work when faced with “bad” translations:

“Bad” terms based on inappropriate translation, once established by popular usage, become hard to revise. We have to accept many of these bitter fruits while we meet with great resistance in popularizing the corrected version. Moreover, few term systems have been established that uniform with the standards set out in GB terminological documents. Loss of inconsistency between the terminology of various fields of science and technology remain to be harmonized.”

When communicating parties attribute different meanings to the same word, or when there is insufficient communication because of choice of imprecise expression or different or inappropriate translation, the consequences can be costly or dangerous. Sometimes it costs only a loss of face but in a technical context it could cost a lot!

The problems can potentially be compounded when the Chinese names are expressed differently in different Chinese-speaking regions, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, and so on. Ways of translating foreign terms into Chinese may be many. Translators and technical writers might wonder which name is more appropriate. 網絡空間 (wàngwù xiàngkùn/ network space), 電腦空間 (diànliǎo xiàngkùn/ computer space), 電腦空間 (diànliǎo xiàngkùn/ electronic space), 網絡空間 (wàngwù xiàngkùn/ multi-dimensional space), etc., are all used to refer to the CyberSpace. Journalists and the public may not understand each other when 黑客 (hēikè/ black guest) and 駭客 (hǎikè/ shocking, horrifying guest) are used for hacker, or when 電子信箱 (diànzi xìnxiāng/electronic mailbox), 電子信箱 (diànzi xìnxiāng/electronic mail) are used interchangeably for email, even though in the same language texts. News from 環球信息網 (huáquán xìnxiāng wéi/ globalized information network) may not be seen as identical to that from 環球網 (huáquán wéi/ globalized networks), 網絡 (wǎnglù/multiple dimensional network), or 全球浏览系統 (quánqíu liúliàn xìtǒng/worldwide browsing system), all of these in fact refer to WEB!

What problems do people claim there are? Who make such claims? Why? What are the actual discourse problems? Do claims and experience of problems coincide?

4. WHO CLAIM WHAT PROBLEMS?

This section examines how individual users such as terminologists, translators and subject specialists respond to terminology problems and what they claim to be the term problems by looking at the decision-making behavior for problem-solving, that is, the links between the kinds of language problem and kinds of decision-making.

4.1 Data Collection

The data discussed in this section is mainly based on the analysis of questions and discussions extracted from journals published in both China and Hong Kong. These journals discuss terminology issues from different perspectives by users (contributors) including subject experts, information specialists, terminologists and translators. There is data on “who asks what questions and on why”.

2 CNCST has provided valuable information and materials to this study, including a generous donation of two complimentary copies each of their quarterly journal, the Chinese Science and Technology Terms Journal 科技術語雜誌, published between Dec 1998 to Jun 2000.

3 They include Chinese Science and Technology Terms Journal 科技術語雜誌 (published by the Chinese National Committee for Terms in Sciences and Technologies 全國科學技術名詞審定委員會); Chinese Science and Technology Translators Journal 中國科技翻譯 (Published by the Translators Association of the Chinese National Science Academy); 國際譯聯(IFT)委員會中國科學院科技翻譯工作委員會; Chinese Language Review 中國語文通訊 (Published by the Hong Kong Chinese Language Society 香港中文語文學會); Database Development Bulletin (Published by the Hong Kong Chinese Language Society 香港中文語文學會); Translation Quarterly 翻譯季刊 (Published by the Hong Kong Translation Society 香港翻譯學會)
and "who claims what are the problems", and the data often includes notes on suggested adjustment. The articles reveal how subject specialists, linguists or translators evaluate Chinese IT terms, they reveal aspects of metalanguage and they offer evidence of peoples' theories, if any, about vocabulary, and reveal both linguistic and non-linguistic interests.

4.2 The Term Conflicts

We organize our discussion according to a classification of term conflicts that characterize sets of term problems:

1. Conflicts between a norm and its variants
2. Conflicts between official norm and common usage
3. Conflicts between two different norms carried by two populations
4. Conflicts in the norm itself

4.2.1 Conflicts Between a Norm and Its Variants

Disk and disc

A major debate flared up around giving an appropriate name for "disk" and "disc". It was apparently initiated by a journal issue No. 1, Mar 2000 of CNCTST, and was followed by a number of articles contributed by subject specialists.

The discussion has provoked heated debate, since a recommended solution to the problem of one single term will mean a solution to the naming of all the other terms and compound words derived from the concept of disk and disc, such as the correct naming of CD, CD-ROM, CD-DA, CD-R, VCD, DVD, etc. Participants to the discussion (and negotiations for a solution) on this particular issue are four subject specialists.

Compact disc and its variants

The norms (i.e., the standard names that were announced by the IT Services Department in Hong Kong) for compact disc is 光碟 (charter gb character gb) or 光碟 (charter gb character gb), but there are also many variants to these norms, especially to the term compact disc. Debaters charge there is confusion in usage because of the availability of variants. One line of thinking (Zhang, Yang and Lin) proposes that disk should be translated into 硬碟 (small hard disk) and disc into 硬碟 (small hard disk), as disk and disc denote different concepts in English. Another line of thinking (Tian) proposes that no differentiation should be made between the two terms in the translation, and both "disk" and "disc" should be rendered into one single translation.

Zhang claims that a serious confusion in the use of translations for two widely used terms disk and disc and their derivatives such as CD, CD-ROM, VCD, DVD, etc., may be noted in discourses, especially in the contexts of "science and technology, manufacturing, commercial communication and daily life". He observes that there are more than ten competing names for the term CD (compact disc), although he has not given any on-line discourse examples. The competing names include: CD 硬碟 (CD disk/CD small hard disk), CD 软盘 (CD soft disk), 光碟 (guangdi) small bright plate, 压印光碟 (yin guangdi) small pressed printed bright plate, and 压缩光碟 (yin zai guangdi) small compressed bright plate, etc. (ibidem). He diagnoses this as a term problem, since these terms derive not only from the norm, but also from the original concepts denoted by the term disk and disc. Zhang evaluates the variation in usage as inadequate, and, therefore, a term problem; and CNCTST asks for suggestions for possible unique terms.

Zhang tries to analyze the source of the problem (ib. 19) as:

"Disk and disc were two same words with the same meaning in the past in China and in overseas countries, especially before the widespread use of disc. There was no distinction between the two terms and so they were used interchangeably. Since the middle of 90s, however, disk and disc have been distinguished as separate terms by some influential and authoritative dictionaries of computing and related subjects published in the US and the UK."

He quotes definitions from references to support his evaluation that disk is "a round, flat piece of non-magnetic, shiny metal encased in a plastic coating, designed to be read from and written to by optical (laser) technology", while disk is a "round, flat piece of flexible plastic or inflexible metal coated with a magnetic material".

He evaluates that disk and disc refer to two different concepts, and anticipates problems in discourse when the two terms are translated into one single Chinese name. From the terminology perspective, if that is the case, the one-to-one correspondence between the terminological and conceptual systems will be violated; the result of which will possibly be misunderstanding and communication breakdown. The need for a semantically motivated distinction between disk and disc is highlighted by Zhang as a means to solve the problem.

Zhang (ib.) hence proposes a solution to the problem:

"Disk is used to signify 硬碟 (small hard disk) and its derived compounds, such as magnetic disk, hard disk, and disk array. Disk and disk are used specifically for 光碟 (small bright plate) and its derivatives, including optical disk, laser disk (LD), compact disk (CD), digital video disk (VCD), and disk array."

The adjustments he recommends is to render disk into 光碟 (small bright plate), or disk (small plate) in

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1. The four participants include: Zhang Wei from Computer Technology Research Center of China National Academy of Sciences, Tian Yang from the Electronics Center of Information Industry Bureau, Yang Shuang of Computer Department of Qiqiun University, and Lin Jian from Computer Center of China National Science Academy.

2. Page 9 of journal issue No. 1 of CNCTST's Chinese Science and Technology Terms Journal (Mar 2000). In Zhang's words, "这些名词在人们日常生活中流传甚广，然而，至今没有一个规范的英语名称，如"磁盘"，'光盘'，'软盘'，等，"
short; and disk into 软盘 (magnetic plate), or 软盘 (plate) in short, so as to distinguish the differences of disc from disk in the conceptual systems to avoid misunderstanding in discourse.

As an authoritative standardization body in China, CNCTST collects views from all these participants in order to develop national standards as a means to facilitate communication. Fang Jing, the deputy head of the editorial office of CNCTST's journal, in one of her letters to the researcher, expresses her recommendation as:

"The terms 光盘 (bright plate) and 光碟 (small bright plate) are problematic enough. We propose to adopt the views as proposed by Liu and Yang in issue No. 1, 1998 and to collate 光盘 (bright) with 光碟 (small plate), and ci 碟 (magnetic) with pan 盘 (plate). Cipan 磁盘 (magnetic plate) will become the equivalent for disk, and 光碟 光盘 (small bright plate) for disk. There are still different views here and we will later call upon a final meeting in order to standardize the names for them." (Fang Jing letter to Xinman Chia, 30 June 2000)

4.2.2 Conflicts Between Official Norm and Common Usage

Another kind of term conflict concerns the enforcement of an official norm over a common usage. A case in point is the negotiation for a more appropriate name for Internet.

Internet: hulianwang VS yintewang

The term hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) has been used widely to refer to the English term Internet. Hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) is also a standard name used in Hong Kong. CNCTST in Beijing unanimously placed itself in 1997 behind using yintewang 因特網 ("yinte" nets), which is the transliteration for Internet, but some users note it as a term problem, and want the simple hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) to remain.

Fang (1999) criticizes the prescriptive function of CNCTST when Internet officially became yintewang 因特網 ("yinte" nets). He also pinpoints its mostly likely cause for the continued use of hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) to refer to Internet in discourse, especially in daily life.

"I am in school every day, and in here you almost cannot hear the word yintewang, since hulianwang has already become part of our school life. Every time when I return to the town or the village, I can only hear hulianwang, and not yintewang. Let's imagine how difficult it is for people to understand you when you after the same word yintewang to a worker or a farmer? Are you making fun of their knowledge?"

Even when Internet was officially named yintewang 因特網 ("yinte" nets), however, it was still referred to, in common usage, as hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) according to Fang. As long as people communicate with each other, hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) serves as a name in common usage to make sure the term refers to the English term Internet and thus the concept denoted by it. This is particularly so as the memory of referring hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) to Internet still remains in people's minds. Communication may simply break down, Fang claims, if people choose to use the "true word yintewang" officially announced by the government to refer to Internet.

Confusion supposedly motivated this claimed term conflict. The simplest adjustment at the moment of discourse (e.g. with a worker) is simply to ask "which net" (Huaen NET vs Yin NET) one is referring to? In the overt management debate, the equivalent sequence of consideration could be described as follows: the expression yintewang 因特網 ("yinte" nets) is noted as a deviation from the common usage hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets), and is therefore evaluated as inadequate and the adjustment to the common usage hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) is suggested which in turn could be implemented as an agreed name which enhances efficient communication. On this ground Fang criticizes the misjudgment shown by CNCTST in suggesting the renaming of Internet into a name which is unfamiliar in common usage.

4.2.3 Conflicts Between Two Different Norms Carried by Two Populations

Term problems in cross-regional communication

Another case to be considered is the existence of overt norms specific to markets. For instance, the norm in China or Taiwan may not be exactly the same as the norm in Hong Kong. Would term conflicts arise from the use of regionalizations or geographically restricted terms? Terminology management may encompass cases where one single term has to be chosen among two or more variants which are also accepted usage but in a different region or territory. In Hong Kong, one could say that certain IT terms are standardized in the sense that the civil service is required to use only one specific "official version" as listed in a government issued glossary, even if it runs against the rules of other official Chinese languages in China mainland or Taiwan. Thus, the term Internet is called hulianwang 互联网络 (mutually united nets) in Hong Kong as standardized by the Official Language Agency and the IT Services Department, although the standardization body in China would dictate another name yintewang 因特網 ("yinte" nets) and in Taiwan guoji wangji wangluo 國際網際網絡 (international inter-network).

The adjustment of switching to a "variant norm"

In contact discourse, deviations from the norm of one region are noted by certain users who are well aware of the differences in norms in different places. The choice of terms of one variety over another in the course of communication, for instance, is a technique to avoid misunderstandings that may occur from the use of words which are perceived differently in the varieties in Hong Kong and China. In such a case, a switching into what I should call a "variant norm" depending on who the audience are.
becomes a strategy that is implemented discursively to facilitate communication. In China, for example, the two terms Internet and Inernet have different Chinese names as they refer to different concepts. The standard name for Internet is yinternet 因特網 ("yinete" net) and the one for Inernet is huarenwang 国际网 ("huaren" net). In Hong Kong, however, no differentiation is being made to distinguish Internet from Internet, and the name huarenwang 国际网 is used instead. Both examples illustrate the term information technology, the standardized name for which in use in China is xinxi jishu 信息科技 (information technology) in Hong Kong.

A norm conflict is noted as a problem, and a repair strategy of switching is selected as adjustment. This can be illustrated by discourse reproduced from the exchanges of faxes between the researcher and CNCST.

In one of her letters to the co-author (Aman Chia), Fang Jing as CNCST notes a deviation of the term xinxi jishu 訊息科技 (information and technology) used by the researcher in his previous letter against the overt norm, which is xinxi jishu 信息科技 (information and technology) used in China. This constitutes a term conflict and thus inadequacy established.

The correction adjustments Fang adopts is to switch to the variant that is adopted by the reader/hearer of the language, although she as a terminologist also makes a remark about the conceptual differences (thus another term problem noted) between the two terms. She said:

"...Concerning your request about a English-Chinese database on xinxi jishu 信息科技 and xinxi jishu 信息技术, the term used by us is another topic which call for discussion..."

In communicating with the co-author, Fang chooses to switch to the norm used in Hong Kong (by the audience she is communicating with), although she also lists the norm used in China in brackets. Standardization of Chinese technical terms is introduced in different regions, and there is a fundamental regional conflict between the need for naming and the desire to unify names. In his reply to CNCST, Chia manages his language in the same manner:

"...I have been working on this research about xinxi jishu 信息科技 (information and technology) (in your term "xinxi jishu 信息技术") terminology after I quit my job as a lexicographer..."

"...Concerning your question about the translation of disc and disk, I have posted the question onto huarenwang 国际网 (the Internet) (in your term "yinete 因特网") for discussion..."

Another example can be cited (Wang 1999:5); the editor of the CNCTST journal switches to the norm expected by the audience of the journal by adding a note to the term made by a contributor from Singapore. The adjustment of switching is a problem-solving technique in anticipation of the incomprehensibility of a foreign norm, that is, xinxi jishu 訊息科技 (information technology) network used in Singapore for the term Internet, to the audience in China.

One can imagine that in discourse contact situations, with different norms being adopted by the two communicating parties, there are instances when one has to make certain adjustments (switching to a variant norm in the above cases) in one’s writing (or speech production), either for the reason of a production or reception problem, the negotiation of meanings or in order to achieve certain intentions, that is, successful communication.

4.2.4 Conflicts in the Norm Itself

Inadequacy of existing norm: Cyberport

Terminology management also encompasses cases where the standard status (norm) that consensus terms acquire is challenged, because of their being evaluated as "inadequate" in meaning. In such a case, a semantic interest directly motivates the adjustment to recommend a new norm to replace the existing one. One of the most convincing illustrations of this phenomenon is the Chinese term shuma shuma 数碼港 (digital port), a translation adopted by the Hong Kong government to refer to the equally new coined Cyberport.

The Chinese rendering is perceived as "inadequate" by Wu (1999). Wu is a former translator in United Nation and currently editor of an electronic publication. Shuma shuma 数碼港 (digital port) was reanalyzed as literally meaning "digital port", and so does not convey the complete sense of Cyberport, which should cover two layers of meanings, including not only the "digital" but also the "analog" perspectives. Wu analyzes the term as:

"The term Cyber in English has the meanings of both telecommunications and control, the means to which include modern telecommunications technology, i.e. digital and analog technology. Shuma simply covers the digital side of the meaning."

The semantic reanalysis of the term Cyberport has led Wu to believe that the existing norm shuma shuma 数碼港 is semantically inadequate and ambiguous because it covers only "half" of the meaning of the original term Cyberport.

In this case, a certain term conflict motivated by the evaluator's semantic interests is noted, and is followed by evaluation from which an inadequacy is established. The evaluation is made against the standard status of the consensus term shuma shuma 数碼港, with an reanalysis of the
semantic content of the original concept. An adjustment is thereafter recommended for implementation.

“It would then be better to render Cyberport into dianxunhui 電訊會 (literally: telecommunication port), as this corresponds better to the semantic components of the term.”

The existing norm is evaluated according to a theory of semantics by analyzing the degree of correspondence in content between the original and its translation, and also on the basis of the pragmatic function of the concrete act of translation. All these factors are immediately interest-based, arising from the evaluator’s linguistic theories, and therefore normative in character and they determine both the translator’s management strategy and the criteria used in the evaluation of the resulting translation.

5. STANDARDIZATION BODIES AND THE END PRODUCTS

5.1 Professional Bodies

It is no coincidence that the development of Chinese IT terms in Hong Kong occurred thanks to the interests of computer subject specialists. Subject matter and methodology develop when there is a need, and are pursued to the extent that they are the result of clear social needs. Like many other countries, technical terms, such as IT terms, are typically authorized by a professional organization. In this regard, terminology concerns specialists on special purpose language.

Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS)

Since 1995, the Hong Kong Computer Society has systematically been trying to further the use of standardized Chinese computer and IT terms to promote effective communications within the trade. Clear designation of translation equivalents at the institutional level, and the recognition of these names internally among the specialists within the society, were essential starting points. Agnes Mak, when elected as President to the society in 1995, stressed that there was “a need to establish the standardization of IT terminology database for Chinese” (South China Morning Post, November 27, 1995) and this need had since then become one of the three essential goals for the society to achieve.

In 1994 the Hong Kong Computer Society won a contract from Hong Kong Industry Department with the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to implement a database on the set of standardized Chinese computer and IT related terminology. They focus on coordinating efforts made by several educational groups. The database was edited and revised by the China Computer Association (CCA) and endorsed by the China National Committee for Terms in Natural Sciences. The development of the project was funded by the Hong Kong Industrial Department, and sponsored by Sun Microsystems, Inc, a technology solutions provider, and Sybase, Inc, an e-commerce applications provider.

The first phase of the Standard Chinese Computer Terminology Project was successfully carried out and the public could get access to the system through the HKCS website. With input from CCA of China and CUHK, HKCS has developed an intelligent database for computer terms incorporating different names used in Hong Kong and China. The whole database serves to promote efficient internal communication within the trade.

5.2 Governmental Standardization Bodies

Besides being authorized by a professional body, technical terms are also typically authorized by a government body - an agency at the government level that tries to influence directly the territory’s attention to the use of standardized terms. In Hong Kong the standardization is being done separately by a number of government departments. They are agencies concerned with IT language problems and they produce standards for their own internal use, through the compilation of bilingual glossaries of IT terms. At this level, the broad target audience in the marketplace, that is civil servants and the public, is clearly identified. That it offers a broad direction can be regarded as terminology management at government level because it helps to co-ordinate all the internal language/terminology activities in relation to the use of Chinese IT terms, and define the general direction of language activities in which the departments are to be engaged - that is the translation activities in which an appropriate use of terms (i.e., a norm) is required.

Primarily there are three standardization bodies within the government which carry out terminology work on Chinese IT terms, and they are:

- The Information Technology Services Department (ITSD)
- The Official Languages Agency (OLA)
- The Curriculum Development Institute Council, Education Department (CDIC)

5.2.1 The Information Technology Services Department (ITSD)

As primarily functioning to “lead the Government and facilitate the community both in the development and the exemplary usage of information technology”, according to its website, the goals of ITSD include 1) promoting and enabling the extensive adoption and use of information technology in the Government; 2) enabling individuals, businesses and the Government to interact easily and securely through the use of information technology; and 3) promoting the wider use of information technology in the community.

In order to achieve these goals, the website reveals that ITSD has produced products and services in order to be “compatible with IT strategy and meet evolving needs of departments and programmes”. One of the services they provide to the government bureaux is a compilation of a bilingual IT glossary. The glossary provides a reference of over 800
5.3 The Big Question: What are the actual problems?

Indirectly, glossaries proposed by these professional or governmental authoritative bodies may exercise a strong harmonizing influence on usage in special subject fields such as IT by the simple fact that a single glossary such as the one developed by ITSD or OLA may become the preferred terminological reference work for IT and its related subjects and thereby establish a virtual standard. Because of their leading position and role representing the government, such names can be seen as endorsement from authority and thus considered standard names regardless of the co-existence of any popular alternative names. With terminology work carried out by different bodies in different ways, not only the degree of consistency among these bodies becomes an issue that matters. Equally important is the way they do the work, the principles they follow, as well as the methodology they adopt in carrying out the terminology work.

The big question is whether these standardization bodies know what actual discourse problems there are in the use of terminology, and what actual usage is.

From the glossaries prepared by the above four standardization bodies, there was no mention about any criteria of terminological collection and the scope of its collection. It seems the selection criteria of what items to be included in an IT database differs from one to another. A terminological database should be a dynamic entity which is regularly undergoing changes as records are entered, completed, modified and deleted. How regularly are these databases kept up to date to reflect changes in usage?

A clear distinction is being made between terminology as evidenced from usage in a diversity of pragmatic situations and the idealizing tendency which sees a one-to-one correspondence between terminological and conceptual system. The top-down listing and implied prescription of terms can be understood in view of the development of the glossaries for very specific purposes by government agencies or departments in Hong Kong which thus have a directive rather than an advisory function.

However, one of the modern attitudes to terminology work is that terms have linguistic variants in spoken and written language and within the same text type and so it is “essential to list these variants in descriptions of terminology” (Sager, 1990). This is in nowhere mentioned in any of the four databases.

Government agencies have not issued any detailed descriptions of the procedures to be adopted in naming a new entity and making this name known. In Hong Kong there is little, if any, guidance about naming and even less about compiling glossaries. Government agencies regularly issue glossaries of terms as standards, but very few have firm guidelines for the selection, definition and publication of terminology.

There is great diversity between the glossaries. The perception that variation is a problem was also clearly demonstrated by the discussions of term problems related above. If standardization uniformity is the goal, the fact that
variation is perceived as troublesome is of course a tautology. However, selection of the one standard term generates much intellectual concern with suitable criteria with which to evaluate the best candidate term.

What does not emerge and what the authors' opinion should be the primary criterion is whether a term functions well in discourse. Once terms are in circulation, communication processes will reveal which terms are troublesome and require adjustment, even sanction of removal when another is available. The process is that of discourse management through which language users note, evaluate, adjust, and as the case may be, implement such language as is troublesome in subsequent turns of discourse. Those are the problems that should occupy the attention of term management agencies in their advisory capacity.

Term management agencies are likely to be successful in their normative, standardization capacity when they register unproblematic usage and bring representatives of specialist groups together to order and define that vocabulary in order to produce glossaries specific to that specialist group.

For general IT "terminology", the language user is always right as long as communication flows without problems of understanding.

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ESTONIAN TERMINOLOGY SOCIETY (ETER)

The Estonian Terminology Society (ETER) was founded on July 19, 2001 in Tallinn, Estonia. The founding members of ETER are private (natural) persons and companies (legal persons) whose common interest is to promote and develop terminology and professional language in Estonia.

The objectives of the Society are the following:

- Co-ordination of terminological activities in Estonia in cooperation with the Institute of Estonian Language and in compliance with relevant legislation in force;
- Organisation of co-operation with the international network of terminology organisations;
- Integration and development of existing terminology collections (databases, libraries);
- Promotion of activities related to LSP planning;
- Provision of terminological services (term recommendations, advice on term usage, expert evaluation, translations of specialized and technical texts, distribution of terminological information);