



# Developing information literacy of LSP translators experimental classes

Joanna Sycz-Opon, PhD  
University of Silesia  
Poland



## The scenario of the classes based on the results of the observation study into students' information behaviour (Sycz-Opoń 2015)

### The methodology of the study:

- During the experiment sessions the participants were divided into pairs. One person in each pair was assigned the task of translating a legal text with the use of available sources of information (printed, desktop and online).
- His conduct was observed by another participant sitting nearby, who was asked to observe their colleague's information behaviour and fill in a special Observation Protocol.
- The experiment sessions were also registered by means of a screen and audio recorder.

### Research questions:

- frequency of look-ups in various sources;
- reasons for choosing particular sources;
- information searched (equivalent, meaning, collocation, etc.);
- number of sources used during translation;
- satisfaction with search results;
- reasons for dissatisfaction.



### The study revealed:

- **hunt for equivalents** (in bilingual sources) as the most popular search strategy,
- **overreliance on dictionaries**, unwillingness to form one's own translation solutions
- **haste and impatience** during information seeking
- **anxiety** due to inability to verify the specialist information found in a source
- **Dictionaries most popular**, minimal knowledge of other sources of information
- **Habitual information seeking**, following established paths
- The general conclusion was that translation trainees **possess only basic information skills**, not sufficient for effective performance of translation tasks, which suggests the need for developing information literacy during translation courses.

## TRANSLATION CLASSES FOCUSED ON INFORMATION SKILLS 1 semester - 30 HOURS SYLLABUS

Subject	Proceedings of the classes	Comments related to the results of the study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015)
STAGE ONE	<b>AIM: DISCOVER NEW SOURCES OF INFORMATION LEARN HOW TO USE THEM</b>	
Introductory classes – 3h	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion about the <b>nature of LSP translation</b> (highlight on information skills).</li> <li>2. Introduction into a given <b>specialist subject matter</b>.</li> <li>3. Discussion devoted to <b>incongruency of LSP terms</b>.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Teaching method: <b>classroom discussion rather than a lecture given by a tutor</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Incongruent terms</b> proved problematic for the participants in the study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015).</li> </ul>
Presentation of dictionaries – 1,5h	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A short introduction of the concepts of dictionary <b>macrostructure and microstructure</b></li> <li>2. Presentation of various dictionaries available on the market, with highlight on LSP dictionaries.</li> <li>3. Students do the <b>quiz</b> containing detailed questions referring to the macrostructure and microstructure of various dictionaries.</li> <li>4. Special focus on the presentation of <b>multi-word lexical items</b> (phrases, idioms, collocations, etc.) in dictionaries.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The students participating in the study exhibited <b>only rudimentary knowledge of the structure of dictionaries</b>, insufficient for their effective use for the purposes of LSP translation.</li> <li>✓ Teaching method: <b>practical approach (inductive learning)</b></li> </ul> <p>The study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015) suggests ineffectiveness of the theoretical „lecture-like” approach. The participants had obtained a theoretical presentation of available sources of information during regular translation classes, yet they did not use them during the experiment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Multi-word lexical items</b> proved very problematic for the participants in the study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015), thus require attention.</li> </ul>
Strengths and limitations of dictionaries – 1,5 h	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are divided into groups. They are <b>asked to find equivalents to several terms in dictionaries</b> distributed among them. <b>Each group uses different dictionaries.</b></li> <li>2. The results of their search (equivalents from the dictionaries) are compared and evaluated in classroom discussion.</li> <li>3. The class ends with students forming conclusions about the strengths and limitations of the dictionaries.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The students participating in the study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015) had <b>unrealistic expectations towards the dictionaries</b>. Thus, the aim of the classes is to show that there exists no ‘perfect’ dictionary.</li> <li>✓ <b>Moreover</b>, the students should <b>discover differences in content and structure of the dictionaries</b> available on the market, so that they would know which dictionary is most likely to contain required information.</li> <li>✓ Teaching method: <b>discussion + practical exercises (inductive learning)</b> – students test the quality of various dictionaries through trial and error.</li> </ul>
Presentation of other sources of information – 3 h	<p><b>The tutor presents various online sources</b> and demonstrates their use on the screen. Simultaneously, <b>the students practice navigation of the sources</b> on their computers.</p> <p>Sources discussed: MT programmes (e.g., Google Translate), translators’ forums e.g., (proz.com), encyclopedias, online text corpora (e.g. Google Books, Google Scholar), parallel texts (e.g., EUR-Lex, Glosbe, Linguee), websites devoted to specialist subjects (e.g. legal matters), that can be treated as LSP corpora or a source of specialist knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Teaching method: <b>workshop</b></li> <li>✓ As the study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015) revealed, the participants did not know of the existence of many sources other than popular bilingual dictionaries.</li> <li>✓ What is more, they did not know how to navigate the sources effectively. Only few participants utilized search options provided by the sources that could make search more effective and faster (e.g. use of asterisk in Google search).</li> </ul>
Strengths/limitations of other sources – 1,5 h	The class scenario <b>the same</b> as the class devoted to dictionaries (above)	Teaching method: <b>the same</b> as the method used in the class devoted to dictionaries (above)
STAGE TWO	<b>AIM: FORM EFFECTIVE INFORMATION-SEEKING HABITS</b>	
Translation of LSP texts – 12h	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are divided into groups and <b>asked to translate an LSP text</b>. While translating they are <b>expected to mark all sources used</b> (by means of footnotes or comment boxes).</li> <li>2. During the class the tutor walks around the room and observes the students. <b>The tutor is expected to correct search techniques used by the students.</b></li> <li>3. The students read their translations out loud and explain how they arrived at their translation solutions: what information they found, in what sources and how they used it.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Aim: <b>habit formation</b>. The study (Sycz-Opoń, 2015) revealed that information-seeking is an automatic activity. Thus, after the phase of experimenting with sources, the students are expected to <b>practice ‘good’ information-seeking patterns until they become their habits.</b></li> <li>✓ The students feel that <b>the aim of the class is not just to complete translation, but to learn on the way</b>. Teaching method: <b>process-oriented</b> rather than result-oriented.</li> <li>✓ The students should not be left alone when translating, because they might reinforce the ineffective information-seeking habits that they already possess, rather than learn new ones.</li> </ul>
Translation of LSP text using limited range of sources – 6h	<p>Students are divided into groups and <b>asked to translate an LSP text using only a certain type of source</b>, e.g. only parallel texts.</p> <p>The class scenario the same as the class devoted to translation of LSP text (above)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Aim: <b>motivating students to use new sources of information.</b></li> </ul> <p>The observation of the students during classes revealed that they are unwilling to try out new sources, even when they realize that it might be beneficial for them in the long run. Most people stick to their old ways, because using a new source of information requires effort at the beginning before one learns its efficient navigation.</p>
OPTIONAL CLASSES	<b>AIM: LEARN HOW DICTIONARIES ARE CREATED</b>	
Dictionary compilation – 1,5h	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are divided into groups and assigned the role of lexicographers. They are <b>asked to prepare dictionary entries of several specialist incongruent terms.</b></li> <li>2. The results of their work are compared in classroom discussion. Students formulate conclusions about the difficulties related to dictionary compilation</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Aim: <b>to familiarize the students with the process of dictionary compilation</b></li> <li>✓ Teaching method: <b>practical, task-oriented approach.</b></li> </ul> <p>Experiencing the process of dictionary compilation should help students interpret the contents of dictionaries. They should be able to identify incongruent terms and recognize translation techniques applied to render original meanings in lexicographical works.</p>