

Introduction to the Glossary

In 1976 Victor Sadler and I published a small glossary to assist translators of the series Esperanto Documents then being published by the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA). Our goal was to provide help to those who were confronted by occasionally difficult “official” terminology, particularly that used by the United Nations, and by the UEA. We emphasized that our effort was not a traditional glossary “aimed at providing each word with a whole range of equivalents: here we have tried to provide only the most accurate, most appropriate expressions in line with the limited purpose of the glossary.” And, we added, “we hope that the result will be relatively uniform use of the principal terms by the various translators.”

We tried to avoid creating new terms where terms already existed, although we also recognized that normal usage in Esperanto (as in other languages) is constantly changing and that it is necessary to adapt to such changes from time to time. For example, we translated “Universala Esperanto-Asocio” as Universal Esperanto Association, first because that translation was already firmly established (it is registered, for example, with the United Nations) and secondly because the translation retains the abbreviation UEA. However, we translated “Universala Kongreso” as “World Congress” since in that case there was no similar tradition, and also because the word “universal” in this context conveys no special meaning to the outside world.

In the glossary we favoured British usage, in part because this has been, and remains, the preferred UN style. From time to time we had to register two different words (for example the British congress versus the US convention); but, in our view, the British form should be followed where the readership is international.

“Although the glossary is aimed principally at translations into English, we hope that it will become the norm also for Esperanto texts,” we wrote. And that does seem to have come to pass. So we added a few suggestions on style for translators into Esperanto, such as the following:

On the names of countries, use either –io or –ujo in line with your own preference.

Use Esperanto versions of city names only for the most famous (Parizo, Tokio, Pekino etc.), not for the less well known (among other things because the texts in question may be retranslated into other languages and the translators may not recognize the names). Add the pronunciation in parentheses if it is needed.

Translate quotations from national languages into Esperanto, if possible adding the original text in parentheses.

Esperanto names of days and months and ethnic etc. adjectives, should preferably be written in lower case (merkredo, aprilo, germana).

So much for the first edition. I have retained here and in all other editions almost all terms from the first, without change. I have omitted a few terms that are no longer in use, and in a few cases I have modified entries in line with current norms (for example, I have the impression that the use of “organizo” for “organizaĵo” has become less common today – an interesting example of linguistic conservatism. But I have added (and continue to add, in the online version) numerous new entries, among other things in order to assist not only those translating from Esperanto to English but also those translating in the opposite direction (and I hope that, little by little, we can add other languages to the glossary) and those using the glossary for other purposes. Although I have concentrated on UN terms, I have also added terms from the European Union, among others. Finally, I have tried to expand somewhat the number of purely Esperanto terms (e.g. faka asocio, peranto, giĉeto etc.), which are everyday terms for Esperantists but are sometimes hard to accommodate in other languages.

Finally I should add that in a few places I have indicated “false friends” – Esperanto words that are sometimes translated too literally into English (for example, gazeto is normally not gazette, but magazine or newspaper; lando is generally not land but country).

The first edition was checked by Alec Venture, Edward Ockey and Joel Silverman. I hope that similarly thorough editing will be applied to new editions (and additions) – something much easier in the world of the internet and instant communication. I must already thank Brian Moon for his attention to, and correction of, the present edition.

My translation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals was checked and notably improved by Mark Fettes, Brian Moon, and István Ertl. My special thanks to them.

Finally, in the first edition Victor Sadler and I wrote, “It is perhaps important to add that this glossary consists only of recommendations for internal use and has no official standing or recognition” – a point worth repeating here.

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