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# ABB is standardizing terminology

To global companies, consistent use of foreign terminology is of crucial importance. If different terms are used for the same things, the customer will be confused and precious time will be lost. Power and automation technology corporation ABB have tackled their translation problems by implementing a shared global terminology database.

**Text:** Elina Korkeamäki **Photo:** Mikko Lehtimäki

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**A** year and a half ago, ABB's Distribution Automation unit decided to move ahead with standardizing the terminology used in their documentation. Global product development had resulted in several distinct multilingual glossaries with conflicting terminologies.

To take an example, the unit's primary product – *protection relay* – was referred to within the company using three different English terms. While Finns preferred the terms *protection relay* and *protection terminal*, Swedish employees favored the acronym *IED*.

Since there was a need to clear up the confusion, the unit set out to establish a standardized terminology database in cooperation with AAC Global. AAC Global researched term specifications, created term descriptions and investigated standards for established terms.

### Ease of use for the customer

Documentation Manager **Jiri Ahlvik** from ABB's Distribution Automation unit says that incoherent terminology will, in the worst case, confuse the customer. The primary motivator for the standardization of terminology is providing ease of use to customers.

"We may have two different products with the same functionality. But if we use different names for the same function, the customer has no way of knowing whether it is the same thing or not. The goal is to make the customer see our product range as an integrated whole," he says.

In addition to ease of use, standardized terminology is also a matter of speed and costs.

"The goal is to utilize existing materials without a separate documentation cycle. And, of course, the quality of documentation is also a matter of corporate image.

### Simplifying documentation

The purpose of the terminology base is to provide engineers with the correct terminology already during the writing of the preliminary versions. This facilitates the documentation process. When terminology remains aligned throughout the entire process, the translators' job will be easier as well.

"Translators greatly benefit from this. We use a great deal of specific terminology the translator may not be familiar with," says Ahlvik.

In future, ABB is going to research the possibility of integrating the terminology database into translation tools. In addition, the database will be used in personnel language training.

### Global terminology database for new product generation

The unit's prior investment in terminology is demonstrated by the electric power systems' relay protection glossary. However, technological progress always creates a need for new terminology. This means that the terminology database can never be said to be complete.

AAC Global is currently analyzing the documentation already completed for the new products in different countries. ABB will use the analysis to validate the terminology for the new generation of products. The resulting terminology database will be used by the company globally.

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### A carefully compiled terminology database is only useful if it is updated regularly and published in a format easily available to all translators.

- AAC Global's terminology management system is a complete service offering that supports both internal and external communication. AAC Global's personnel handle all the terminological work and manage the update process of the core terminology.
- With **AAC TermTOOLS** the terms can be validated and published using the same user interface.
- **AAC-MOT-Gateway** desktop solution is another alternative for publishing terms. Using AAC-MOT-Gateway, users can quickly search for terms in all company-specific glossaries and general dictionaries.

AAC Global and WSOYpro have come together to provide a new brand of competence and communication solutions. We combine different forms of training and communication with multilingual and multicultural expertise to best support our customers, needs and success in a global business environment.

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