

Communication Through A Multilingual Glossary

(or, The Power of Personal Communications)

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How does one identify or describe an "aitch bone?"

This would throw most of us who are not meat scientists. And even if we were, we could have difficulty comparing notes with a Russian at an international conference, or while traveling abroad anywhere.

A step toward a solution has been completed by one who has had such experiences at international conferences, and who saw the need. He is Dr. Donald Kinsman, professor of animal industries, The University of Connecticut, Storrs. He observed that terms used by meat scientists are not easily translatable to other tongues from English or from other tongues to English — or, for that matter, not always surely from the English of England to that of the United States.

Does this involve many terms?

Sure does! Even if people in France comprehend "le hotdog," and various spellings or pronunciations of "beefsteak" are mutually intelligible throughout the world, that does not do much for science and its needed vocabulary.

Dr. Kinsman conferred with meat scientists and teachers from several countries and decided that a several-language glossary would be valuable. So he developed a list of almost 900 words, in American English. These he mailed to select contact persons whose mother tongues were Russian,

French, Spanish, German, and "England English." Those persons translated them into equivalents in their languages. This was not always so simple as one-word into another; sometimes a brief phrase in one language was needed to "match" a single word in another.

But Dr. Kinsman and his "other-countries" counterparts had no financial backing — no grant, no institution funds, no financial angel. He then turned to communications, mostly interpersonal. His high popularity as a person and respect for him as a teacher and a scientist helped: the identity of a communicator affects the receivers of the message, as had been proven repeatedly in communication research.

The writer of this article and the staff artist of the department of agricultural publications were delighted to provide some assists through publication advice, graphics, and other helps. More important, a Kinsman contact in a corporation that makes saws used in the meat industry was willing to provide some printing and binding; its printer conferred with this author on preparing mechanicals. Advanced planning such as this was needed as the several-language glossary was to be typed for camera-ready pages.

The University of Connecticut Research Foundation consented to provide a typist and typewriter. Fortunately one was found who was familiar with several languages and able to add needed components. For example, some correspondents provided nouns without indicating gender. One may assume that persons born to the languages needing gender on nouns might readily supply them for their own use, but others who are corresponding, say, in a less familiar language could not use these without going to a dictionary — in fact, some of these meat terms might not be found in a typical dictionary, or any. This is a technical field.

Physical arrangement of copy had to be planned carefully. National language pride is real and Dr. Kinsman is sensitive to this. He and his contacts in the American Meat Science Association and at international conferences at Bern, Switzerland and Malmo, Sweden in 1975 and 1976 agreed that the most practical form was to list the English word first, then the definition in English, then the translations (not definitions) in succeeding columns.

How many languages?

The number first hoped for had to be scaled down to five because of page limitations, lack of subsidy, and other factors. If this volume, the first of its kind in the meats field, becomes a success Dr. Kinsman hopes to have a larger or supplemental version with other languages, such as Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Greek, and Esperanto. An English-Esperanto glossary is offered on a custom basis to those who request it. This facet was facilitated by this writer, with help of an Esperanto lexicographer in Baltimore, Maryland. It may be that this trial announcement in the book and elsewhere of a special glossary will lead to requests for glossaries in other tongues.

The first "order" for the book is from Japan for 50 copies, and Japanese is not one of the basic five.

Dr. Kinsman finds that international interest in the book that he is compiling and editing is high. Not only in Russian one of the languages (requiring a typewriter with the cyrillic alphabet of course) but he visited Russia late in the summer of 1977 while attending an international conference at Moscow.

Incidentally, he has recently been elected president-elect of the American Meat Science Association. It's membership is approximately equal in numbers to that of AAACE. It's purpose is to promote the application of science and technology to the meat industry, to provide a forum for interchange of meat science information, and to develop and to promote sound research and educational training techniques.

The new glossary is expected from the press in October 1977.

So, is this new glossary a communication project? Certainly is, in many ways. First, face to face discussion by Dr. Kinsman and counterparts in several countries, at conferences and on sabbatics; next, preparatory correspondence, with its modest cost absorbed by the postage funds of the University of Connecticut Department of Animal Industries; next, interpersonal with agencies and corporations that might each lend some support, but none of which could underwrite the project.

Communication through Dr. Kinsman's persuasiveness, aided by his enthusiasm and firsthand observation of the need for such a book, obviously helped. His wide contacts with industry brought the offer — with a bit of good natured nudging — to do the presswork and binding with an in-house shop about 30 miles from the University of Connecticut. His professional reputation helped get typing assistance from the University Research Foundation. His years of cooperation with and support of the information staff of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources made that staff more than willing to contribute its bit to this non-Extension project.

In my book, this is all good communication, heavily interpersonal — a facet we in mass communications may too often overlook.

And when all the pieces came together, we weren't clear WHO, or WHAT was the publisher of the book. Clearly Dr. Kinsman was the originator, the expeditor, the coordinator, the only one who could make it possible. But surprisingly the book was not published by ANY agency, any college, any department, any association, any corporation. It just "grew." A-credit page thanks the many who contributed. The price will be only large enough to cover handling and mailing costs.

In this case the "publisher" is a sort of communications complex — an embodiment of an idea, a concept, a wish, a seen-need. It may be a unique communications model — made possible by Animal Husbandry Professor Donald Kinsman. I wish we had more communicators like him.