

TRANSLATION—BREAKING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

This column carries a series on the constitution, components, achievements, activities and services provided by DESIDOC. Beginning from January 1990, this is the fourth article in the series. Each issue features one of the multifarious activities of DESIDOC, highlighting the achievements in the particular area, the facilities available, the services provided to the users, etc. The last three issues have covered an overview of DESIDOC, its publication and information processing and dissemination activities.

It is estimated that 48 per cent of the world's total scientific literature is published in languages other than English. The language-wise break-up of this set of publications is : Russian (18%), German (10%), French (9%), Japanese (6%), and others (4%). The DRDO scientists working in different areas must have access to such literature pertaining to their specialized fields. Towards this end, DESIDOC has organized its translation services backed by its team of well-qualified and experienced translators, who can translate scientific/technical material from the languages, such as German, French, Japanese, and Russian into English.

Translation Activities

The job of translating documents (both classified and unclassified) is accepted (mainly from DRDO) and executed by DESIDOC within a stipulated period. The staff translators are sometimes called upon to render on-the-spot translation of documents, such as manuals, standards, trade catalogues, instruction leaflets, etc of

urgent nature for the Scientific Advisor to Raksha Mantri, Chief Controllers (Research & Development) and DRDO HQrs directors. Apart from DRDO, DESIDOC also caters to the translation needs of other departments of the Ministry of Defence.

Every effort is taken to see that the translations supplied to the indentors are technically correct and precise. The subject of documents translated encompasses all branches of science and technology, both theoretical and applied.

Panel of Translators

To cope up with the ever increasing demand for translation in these four major languages and in those categorized 'others' as above, DESIDOC maintains a panel of external translators. Translation jobs of unclassified matter are sometimes assigned to these translators on contractual basis. In all, DESIDOC is in a position to entertain translation jobs from 14 foreign languages into English.

Scientific Abstracts from Foreign Language Journals

Apart from carrying out the translations on demand, the team of translators of DESIDOC regularly scans through hundreds of issues of about 42 foreign-language periodicals on Defence science subjects, identifies articles of interest to current and future Defence R&D activities, and translates abstracts of these articles into English. These abstracts are circulated to the Defence scientists through a quarterly publication, 'Science Abstracts from Foreign Language Journals,' brought out as a current awareness service. The feedback of this service in terms of requests for full translation of the articles is quite encouraging.

Translation Bank

It has been observed that due to lack of knowledge about the availability of translations, a lot of duplication work is going on which is time consuming and costly at the same time. To avoid duplication in the translation effort, a Translation Bank has been set up, which acts as a central repository of all the unclassified translations already done and procured by DESIDOC. The various activities carried out in this area include :

- (i) maintenance of a manual and machine-readable index of the translations done by DESIDOC;
- (ii) bibliographical details of the translation holdings of other major translation centres in the country, namely, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, Indian Space Research Organization, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd, Bureau of Indian Standards, National Aeronautical Laboratory, etc; and

- (iii) announcement of the citations of DESIDOC translations through various publications for the benefit of the scientific community as a whole.

Every request received for translation is checked for its availability in the Translation Bank through various indexes. If it is found available, a copy of the translation is sent immediately. If it is not available, only then the document is passed on to the concerned language group for undertaking the translation job. In case of urgent and voluminous documents, an access is sometimes also made to the international translation banks for procurement of the translations. All translations done and procured by DESIDOC are announced periodically through the various national and international publications. They are : 'World Translation Index (WTI)' (monthly), published by International Translation Centre, The Netherlands; 'National Index of Translation (NIT)' (monthly), INSDOC, New Delhi; 'DESIDOC Bulletin' (bi-monthly) and 'DESIDOC Transindex' (annually), both published by DESIDOC.

On the basis of information supplied to the scientists through these publications, a large number of requests are being received not only from DRDO labs/estts but also from other government departments, Govt of India undertakings, renowned private enterprises of India, UK, USA, France, etc. The supply of copies of translations to the DRDO labs/estts is significantly high. The supply to the private and foreign agencies is made only in exceptional cases. The total number of translations supplied have increased from 4,000 pages in 1985 to about 7,000 pages in 1989.

Thrust Areas

DESIDOC proposes to set up the following projects in the near future :

- A *terminology bank* to help keep a systematic, machine-readable, correct, and contextual meaning of newly-coined words and expressions, accessible online to the professional translators. This will also help in developing discipline-wise the dictionaries and glossaries in electronic form, which are likely to be a good source of earning revenue.
- A *language laboratory* for a thorough regular exercise of the foreign language in its latest forms through audio/video facilities proposed to be organized in the laboratory. The proposed laboratory will serve the people who are interested to do interpretation job as a profession/hobby or for such scientists as are interested to update their knowledge in comprehension and stylistic expression.

Truth is generally the best vindication against slander.

Abraham Lincoln

A holiday gives one a chance to look backward and forward, to reset oneself by an inner compass.

May Sarton

It is a great misery not to have enough wit to speak well, nor enough judgement to keep quiet.

La Bruyere