A Different Kind of Text:
Students' Glossaries in Moodle

Igor Kudashev
Department of Modern Languages
University of Helsinki

Suosittu verkko-opetusympäristö Moodleen kuuluu erittäin hyödyllinen, mutta harvemmin käytetty sanastomoduuli, jonka avulla opiskelijat voivat laatia omia sanastoja. Tämän artikkelin tavoitteena on kertoa positiivisesta kokemuksesta Moodlen sanastomoduulin käytöstä kääntäjänkoulutuksessa Helsingin yliopistossa ja antaa suosituksia sanastotyön organisoinnista sekä sana-artikkeleiden mahdollisesta rakenteesta. Moodlen sanastomoduuli on alun perin tarkoitettu vaikeiden sanojen varustamiseen määritelmällä, mutta mikään ei estä lisäämästä sana-artikkeleihin muitakin tietoja, kuten vieraskielisiä vastineita, erilaisia merkintöjä ja käyttöesimerkkejä. Sana-artikkeleiden rakenteesta ja muotoilusta on kuitenkin sovittava etukäteen, mieluummin laatimisohjeiden muodossa. Käsittelenkin tässä artikkelissa leksikografisia kysymyksiä, jotka on otettava huomioon kaksikielistä sanastoa perustettaessa Moodleen.

Keywords: glossary, language learning, Moodle, terminology, vocabulary

1 Introduction

Despite increasing competition, Moodle remains the most popular course management system in Finnish universities and currently ranks second in the top 20 most popular learning management systems in the world (Top LMS Software 2015). One of the reasons for Moodle's success is that it comes with a handy toolkit of various modules required in the learning process (Olander 2013). In this paper, I would like to draw attention to a very useful yet underestimated Moodle module for compiling glossaries and share the positive experience with its use in the training of translators and interpreters at the University of Helsinki. I also discuss basic lexicographic issues that have to be explained to the students in order for the glossaries to be well-structured and user-friendly.

2 Benefits of students' glossary compilation

The traditional way of introducing new lexical items to language learners and students of translation is to provide them with ready glossaries compiled by the author(s) of the textbook or the teacher. From the pedagogical point of view, this method is somewhat outdated because it represents passive individual learning while modern pedagogical theories (such as social constructivism) stress the importance of "learning by doing" as well as active interaction and teamwork (e.g. Nevgi & Lindblom-Ylänne 2009).

Some sensory modalities are known to be more effective for learning than others, and the more they overlap, the better. This idea is summarized in Table 1, which is

attributed to William Glasser and has been quoted in many sources (e.g. Biggs & Tang 2007: 96):

Table 1. Efficiency of various learning activities

Most people learn . . .	
10%	of what they read
20%	of what they hear
30%	of what they see
50%	of what they see and hear
70%	of what they talk over with others
80%	of what they use and do in real life
95%	of what they teach someone else

While percentage in this table is only indicative, it provides a clear support to the hypothesis that compilation of glossaries by students is much more effective than their passive learning. The positive effect can be further reinforced by teamwork and discussions.

Efficient and critical use of dictionaries and glossaries is one of the most important competences of translators which deserves a separate course. Unfortunately, such luxury is rarely affordable taking into account constant pressure for shrinking training programmes.

Glossary-making allows students of translation to better understand the structure, potential and limitations of dictionaries. In particular, it has a positive impact on the following translators' competences (cf. to a more general list of competences in Gambier 2009):

- The ability to identify terms in context.
- The ability to process dictionary entries and locate the required information.
- The ability to disambiguate between different meanings.
- Understanding of polysemy, homonymy, and synonymy.
- Understanding the difference between dictionary equivalents and context equivalents.
- Better understanding of lexicographic traditions and conventions.
- Understanding of various models of dictionary organization and access structure.
- Critical approach to information sources, including dictionaries.
- Precision, accuracy, and punctuality.
- The ability to work in a team.
- The ability to carry responsibility for one's decisions and to provide arguments in their defence.

A number of empirical studies (e.g. Stanley 2007; Hirschel 2012; Breeze 2014) has also confirmed the benefits of using student-generated glossaries in teaching of both general and specialized languages. For example, according to the results of a survey performed by Hirschel (2012: 102), over 90% of university students of languages found Moodle's glossary module useful. My own experience and feedback from the students of translation studies keep in line with these results.

3 In what courses Moodle's Glossary module can be used and how

Moodle's glossaries can be used on virtually any course which involve vocabulary acquisition and (preferably) homework. Below are a few examples from my own curriculum:

– Translation courses, especially domain-specific ones (e.g. translation of legal, economic, technical, and scientific texts).
– Interpretation courses.
– Courses on the history, culture and institutions of a foreign country.
– Courses on foreign literature.
– Scientific writing.

Glossary compilation suits best for homework, as a part of preparation for a new topic. Students can pick headwords from the home translation, text for discussion or background texts which may also be parallel or semi-parallel. An optimal number of glossary entries is 10–15 per student per week. In this way, a group of 8 to 10 students can produce a collective glossary with 80–150 entries in it for each topic. Another option is to appoint each time one or two students who will be in charge of the glossary.

4 Motivating students

The role of motivating students can hardly be overestimated. Both my own and other researchers' experience (e.g. Stanley 2007: 123; Breeze 2014) show that at first students are often cautious about glossary compilation. They may feel insecure about a new form of activity, lack teamwork skills, feel shy about sharing their work with other students and so on.

However, after overcoming the initial barrier and gaining some experience, most students start to enjoy glossary compilation and consider it a useful and interesting activity. Motivation building may include the following measures:

– Explaining the advantages of glossary-making for building translator's competence and effective memorizing of new words and expressions.

– Demonstrating examples of common words and expressions missing from generally available dictionaries and glossaries.
– Explaining the power of collaborative work and its positive impact on glossary volume and quality.
– Demonstrating the best glossaries compiled by other groups.
– Explaining that the ready glossary will become a valuable asset for future work.
– Introducing "the fast eat the slow" principle: fast students can pick the words of their choice from the text while slower ones have to deal with what is left.
– Stressing the weight of glossary compilation in the overall course mark (e.g. 20%).

At later stages is also important to avoid demotivating factors, such as unconstructive criticism from fellow students or the teacher, too fast a pace and too much pressure, lack of attention to students' results and achievements as well as routinization.

5 Prerequisites for successful compilation of students' glossaries

Glossaries represent a specific kind of discourse which differs from a regular narrative text in many respects. They are highly structured and based on common and/or specific conventions, have a systematic character and typically involve compression of information.

If students have no previous experience in compiling glossaries, standard and/or specific conventions of glossary-making should be explained to them by the teacher. With advanced students, contents and structure of the glossary can be designed collaboratively. This allows to better take student's needs and preferences into account, which increases their commitment to the glossary project.

Elaborated conventions should be written down in the form of a compilation manual and pinned to the top of the course page in Moodle. Instructions should be illustrated by authentic examples.

Experience shows that in spite of detailed instructions and examples, almost all students make mistakes in the beginning. Enough time for the correction of mistakes should be reserved to the first 2–3 lessons.

6 Overview of Moodle's Glossary module

The scope of the article does not allow presenting Moodle's Glossary module in detail. Its full description can be found in Moodle's documentation (https://docs.moodle.org) and in various guides to using Moodle (e.g. Cole & Foster 2008; a comprehensive list of books on Moodle can be found at https://moodle.org/mod/data/view.php?d=55).

Moodle's Glossary module is far from being a full-fledged dictionary writing system or terminology management system. It was originally designed to provide definitions of difficult concepts. However, it can be used to present other useful types of information in the entries as well, including translation equivalents, usage labels, examples, and so on.

An entry is not split into data fields in Moodle glossaries which means that entry structure should be quite simple and clearly described in the compilation manual. Moodle allows for adding inline formatting, such as bold font or italics (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Entry edit window of Moodle's Glossary module

Entries can be sorted by alphabet, category (if specified), chronologically or by author. They can be searched by headword, keyword (if specified) and by full-text search. Glossary organization, permissions and entry layout can be customized in glossary settings (see Figure 2).
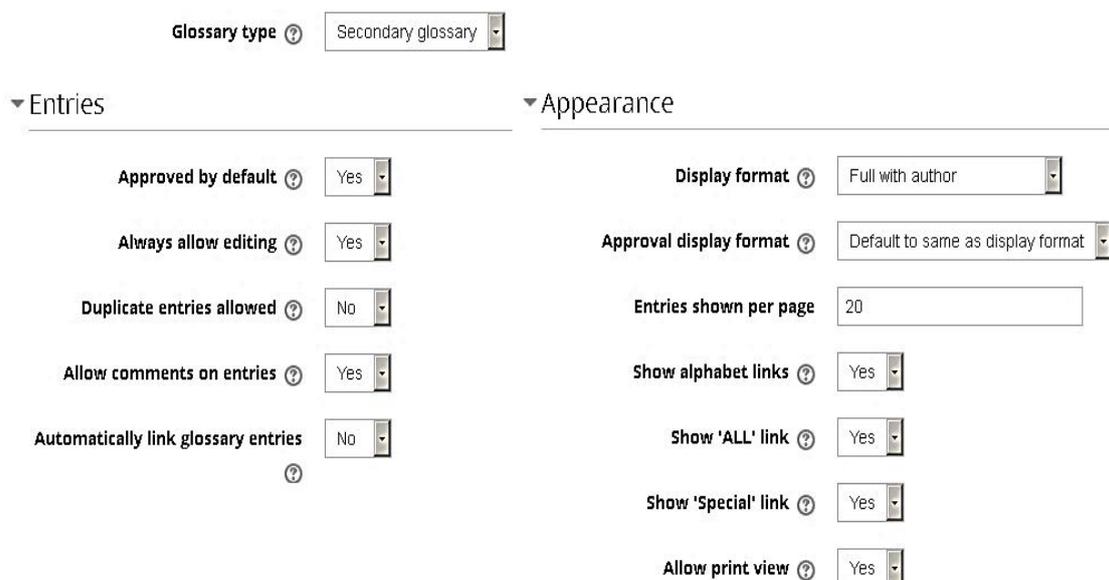
Figure 2. Glossary settings

Moodle can automatically link glossary headwords to other texts on the course page (but not attached files). Some teachers find this function very useful. However, autolinking is sometimes disabled by system administrators as too processor-intensive (Cole & Foster 2008: 134).

7 Compilation manual

For a bilingual glossary, the following basic lexicographic issues have to be covered by the compilation manual (cf. Kudashev 2013):
– Headword selection.
– Form of the headwords and equivalents.
– Splitting into meanings and use of disambiguation notes and comments.
– Presentation of synonymous headwords and translation equivalents.
– Use of labels.
– Presentation of usage examples.
– Ethical principles.

7.1 Headword selection

Students' glossaries may include a wider range of headwords than a prototypical special domain glossary. Examples of acceptable headwords include:
– One-word nouns (e.g. credit; debit; capitalization).
– Adjectives and participles (e.g. pre-paid; sovereign; privileged; progressive).
– Verbs (e.g. to deposit; to bargain; to overproduce).
– Productive term elements / parts of compound words (e.g. pseudo-; exo-).

- Lexicalized word combinations (e.g. credit history; public company; goods and services).
- Free word combinations if they are challenging or just frequent (e.g. economic growth; accumulation of capital; allocation of resources).
- Collocations (e.g. to dump prices; to lay out the principles).

Only meaning(s) relevant for the current course or topic should be included in the glossary. For example, the Finnish word *korko* can mean *heel*, as in *high heels*, and interest, as in *bank interest*. Obviously, only the second meaning should be included into a glossary on economics. However, if a word has more than one meaning relevant for the domain in question, it is reasonable to include all of them and not just the one from the text at hand.

Inclusion of certain headwords may be problematic from the lexicographical point of view. The following types of headwords should be avoided:

- Words which are difficult to translate outside a word combination or a context (e.g. Finnish *sääntömääräinen – statutory / regular* – when translating into Russian). Providing the whole word combination is a better idea in such cases, as it removes ambiguity and allows to select a concrete equivalent (e.g. *sääntömääräinen vuosikokous = regular annual meeting*).
- Entire sentences, as the glossary is not a translation memory.
- Very general and polysemous verbs (e.g. to make, to have, to do). They should be provided as collocations in sub-entries (e.g. *survey -> make a survey*).

The optimal way of presenting collocations is sometimes disputable. For example, should *raise taxes* be presented as an entry in its own right, under *raise* or under *tax*? The answer is usually glossary-dependent. It depends on the total number of entries in the glossary, on the size of candidate entries, on language-specific lexicographic traditions, and so on. The rule of thumb is to ask oneself: where would I look for this word combination first of all the next time I need it?

7.2 Form of headwords and equivalents

Headwords should be given in a *f*ull, *u*nambiguous and *n*atural form. The mnemonic rule for remembering this is FUN (Kudashev 2012: 120–121). In particular, this means

- no capital letters unless required by orthographic rules (e.g. not *FINNISH PATENT AND REGISTRARION OFFICE* or *Bank transfer* but *WTO-agreement* is ok)
- no inversion (e.g. not *letter, open* but *open letter*)
- no compression, e.g. not *(pro) gradu (-tutkielma)* but *pro gradu -tutkielma*; *pro gradu*; *gradu* (= master's thesis).

Students should be aware of the cases when nouns may be provided in the plural:

– pluralia tantum (e.g. *earnings*; *valuables*)
– when nouns don't have a singular form in the given meaning (e.g. *beads*)
– when nouns have a singular form but are typically used in plural (e.g. *chemicals*).

In the latter case, the noun may be provided twice, in singular and in plural.

The FUN rule is applicable to equivalents, too. In particular, equivalents should not be compressed in any way, for example by omitting repeating elements and substituting them with commas, slashes, brackets, etc.:

Table 2. Applying the FUN principle to synonymous equivalents

Incorrect	Correct
pääomavirta миграция, ввоз и вывоз капитала	**pääomavirta** миграция капитала; ввоз и вывоз капитала
varainsiirtovero налог на передачу/переход имущества	**varainsiirtovero** налог на передачу имущества; налог на переход имущества
tytäryhtiö дочерняя компания (предприятие)	**tytäryhtiö** дочерняя компания; дочернее предприятие

Synonymous equivalents should be separated by a semicolon instead of a comma. This helps avoid ambiguity when one or more equivalents already contain a comma.

7.3 Splitting into meanings and use of disambiguation notes and comments

Polysemous words should be put in different entries and provided with a disambiguation note. In a bilingual glossary, it is reasonable to also take the target language into account, so that target language equivalents for each meaning are more or less interchangeable. For example:

(1) **kauppa (1)** (*ostaminen ja myyminen*)
     trade
     kauppa (2) (*osto- ja myyntitoimenpide*)
     deal; transaction
     kauppa (3) (*liiketoiminta*)
     commerce; business
     kauppa (4) (*myymälä*)
     shop

Correct disambiguation allows the avoidance of long strings of equivalents referring to different meanings. For example, the Finnish word *talletus* (*deposit*) has two basic meanings: (1) the process of depositing something and (2) deposited property. Each of the meanings can be translated in several ways into Russian, and without proper disambiguation there would be a long string of equivalents, some of which are interchangeable and some are not:

Table 3. Disambiguation helps choose a correct set of equivalents for each meaning

INCORRECT	CORRECT
talletus вклад; депозит; депозитный вклад; сдача на сохранение; депониро-вание; хранение; сохранение	**talletus (1) (tallettaminen)** сдача на сохранение; депонирование; хранение; сохранение **talletus (2) (talletettu omaisuus)** вклад; депозит; депозитный вклад

Students often provide too specific equivalents for headwords thus narrowing their actual meaning. This usually can be avoided with the help of disambiguation notes and comments. Comments on headwords and equivalents should be visually separated from the headwords and equivalents themselves, for example with the help of brackets and italics:

Table 4. Notes help avoid narrowing of the meaning

INCORRECT	CORRECT
kartoitus market survey	**kartoitus** surveying (*e.g. of a market*) **kartoitus** (*of a market*) market survey **markkinakartoitus** market survey

7.4 Presentation of synonymous headwords

In order to avoid duplication of entries if one or more full or near-full synonyms exist in the source language, synonyms can be combined into a single entry with two or more headwords separated by a semicolon. This is particularly handy in the case of full and abbreviated forms:

(2)　**European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; EBRD**
　　　Euroopan jälleenrakennus- ja kehityspankki; EBRD

However, if lexicographic description of the synonyms is not identical, for example, if they are translated differently into the target language, they should be placed into separate entries.

7.5 Use of labels

Labels provide additional information about headwords and equivalents. Pragmatic labels, such as indications of register, are the most useful type of labels in students' glossaries. Labels may be provided in the full or abbreviated form; they are visually separated from headwords and equivalents with italics, optionally also with brackets:

(3)   **Act on the National Management of Structural Fund Programmes; Structural Fund Act** (*informal)*
         laki rakennerahasto-ohjelmien kansallisesta hallinnoinnista; rakennerahastolaki (*epävirall.*)

Labels should be provided in the same standard form throughout the glossary, which means in practice that the list of labels should be rather short and their form easily memorable.

7.6 Presentation of usage examples

Usage examples are very useful, as they demonstrate collocations and functioning of headwords and equivalents in contexts. In Moodle glossaries, usage examples can be provided at the end of the entry, for example:

(4)   **kauppa (1) (ostaminen ja myyminen)**
         trade
         käydä kauppaa – to trade

         kauppa (2) (osto- ja myyntitoimenpide)
         deal; transaction
         tehdä hyvät kaupat – to get a good deal (*on smth.*)

Examples can be searched with full-text search in Moodle. Layout of the examples should be clear and unambiguous. I usually suggest that each example should start on a new line. Usage example and its translation should also be separated by a dash. Italics is optional but it can be used to visually separate examples from the rest of the entry.

8 Ethical principles

Ethical principles allow the avoidance of collisions between contributors, "editing wars" and other negative aspects of collaborative content production. Students should not be allowed to edit or delete entries by other students. However, commenting on the entries

through the Moodle platform or otherwise, for example, suggesting corrections or additional equivalents, is very much welcome.

9 Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to draw teachers' attention to a very useful yet underestimated Moodle module for compiling glossaries. The glossary module can be used in virtually any course which involves vocabulary acquisition. It is a valuable tool for language learning and raising translators' competence level. Glossaries are highly structured texts based on conventions, which is why their compilation requires clear instructions in the form of a compilation guide. On the other hand, Moodle's glossary module is not a full-fledged dictionary writing system or terminology management system, so the structure of students' glossaries may not be too complex. The compilation guide should be concise yet detailed and illustrative. Students may at first feel insecure about a new type of activity, so motivation building and encouragement are very important. After overcoming the initial barrier and gaining some experience most students find glossary compilation very useful and interesting.

Works Cited

Biggs, John & Catherine Tang (2007). *Teaching for Quality Learning at the University: What the Student Does*. 3rd ed. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education; Open University Press.

Breeze, Ruth. (2014). Moodle Glossary Tasks for Teaching Legal English. In: *Languages for Specific Purposes in the Digital* Era, 111–128. Eds. Elena Bárcena et al. Springer International Publishing Switzerland.

Cole, Jason & Helen Foster (2008). *Using Moodle*. 2nd ed. Beijing, etc.: O'Reilly.

Gambier, Yves (2009). Competences for Professional Translators, Experts in Multilingual and Multimedia Communication. [online] Brussels: EMT expert group. [Cited 30.3.2016]. Available at:http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf

Hirschel, Rob (2012). Moodle: Students' Perspectives on Forums, Glossaries and Quizzes. *JALT CALL Journal*. Vol. 8, № 2. 95–112.

Kudashev, Igor (2012). International Medical Classifications from the Terminological Point of View (case: International Classification of Diseases and Terminologia Anatomica). Teoksessa: *Kielet liikkeessä. VAKKI-symposiumi XXXII. Vaasa 10.–11.2.2012*, 118–129. Toim. Niina Nissilä & Nestori Siponkoski Vaasa: Vaasan yliopisto.

Kudashev, Igor. (2013). *Quality Assurance in Terminology Management: Recommendations from the TermFactory Project*. Helsinki: Unigrafia.

Nevgi, Anne & Sari Lindblom-Ylänne (2009). Oppimisen teoriat. Teoksessa: *Yliopisto-opettajan käsikirja*, 194–236. Toim. Sari Lindblom-Ylänne ja Anne Nevgi Helsinki: WSOYpro.

Olander, Ilkka (2013). Miksi Moodle on vanhanaikainen? Oppimisalustoista (LMS) kohti henkilökohtaisia oppimisympäristöjä (PLE). [online] Sometek.fi. [Cited 30.3.2016] Available at: http://sometek.fi/kohti-henkilokohtaisia-oppimisymparistoja.

Stanley, Iain (2007). Creating a Student-generated Glossary in Moodle: How is it done and how effective is it? *JALT CALL Journal*. Vol. 3, № 1–2. 116–131.

Top LMS Software (2015). Moodle tops list of the "20 Most Popular LMS Software Solutions" [online] Capterra.com. [Cited 30.3.2016]. Available at: http://www.capterra.com/learning-management-system-software/#infographic.