

## RELEVANCE AND INFORMATION PROCESSING IN THE DESIGN OF SPECIALIZED GLOSSARIES

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### ABSTRACT

In the current globalized setting, electronic media have proved a useful tool to provide access to institutional discourses and specialized knowledge. For example, Brazil's Supreme Federal Court's official website displays an English legal glossary with the translated definition of courtroom and legislative terminology/concepts. The aim of this article is to discuss the definitions provided in the glossary in the light of relevance and information processing. We claim that relevant information available can be undermined due to inconsistency and lack of standardization in the definitions and that a multidisciplinary cooperative approach could surely improve the quality of specialized online glossaries.

**KEY-WORDS:** Legal discourse; relevance; information processing; translation; glossary.

### RESUMO

Atualmente, a mídia eletrônica é uma ferramenta útil para acessar discursos institucionais e conhecimento especializado. Por exemplo, o sítio oficial do Supremo Tribunal Federal no Brasil apresenta um glossário jurídico em inglês com a definição traduzida de terminologia/conceitos extraídos da legislação e decisões judiciais. O objetivo deste trabalho é discutir as definições deste glossário a luz da relevância e processamento de informação. Sustentamos que a relevância da informação disponível pode ser minimizada pela inconsistência e falta de padronização sistemática nas definições e que uma abordagem multidisciplinar iria certamente contribuir para o aprimoramento da qualidade de glossários eletrônicos especializados.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Discurso jurídico; relevância; processamento de informação; tradução; glossário.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The awareness that law and language are strictly connected is shared by several areas of knowledge, including information technology. According to Francesconi *et al.* (2010b, p. 96), they are “characterized by the coexistence of two autonomous but structurally similar systems: both are endowed with rules that underlie the construction of the system itself, that guide its evolution and guarantee its consistency.” In the current globalized setting, electronic media with the aid of information processing and new trends in legal translation have proved quite useful to provide access to institutional discourses and specialized knowledge to a wide range of users across countries, languages and legal systems.

The Brazilian Supreme Federal Court’s (hereinafter STF) official website displays information about its history and operation in English (and Spanish) in an attempt to interact more effectively with foreign users under legal globalization.<sup>1</sup> It also includes an online legal glossary with the definition of some key terminology/concepts of Brazil’s civil law system mostly translated in English extracted from legislation and court cases. Although specifically aimed at the “international reader,” the glossary intends to be a reference tool for law students, legal linguists, translators and laypeople as well.

The initiative seems to be in line with the current context of legal globalization clearly influenced by the North American legal approaches and legal English as *lingua franca* in which asymmetries across legal systems and languages have been gradually overcome due to the intense interactions of actors acting globally.<sup>2</sup> As to Zeno-Zencovich (2009, p. 40), the making of this type of glossary does not seem to be “an exclusive problem of lawyers” anymore because, in the current information society, it has to involve at least experts on terminology processing, computer technologies, linguistics and legal translation as well.

In this study, we discuss the design of the STF’s online bilingual glossary in the light of Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) principle of relevance. We also intend to show how information (and terminology) processing can improve the quality of online specialized legal glossaries as a whole. The material comprises the compilation of terminology/concepts extracted from a representative body of legislative and court texts in Portuguese which was further translated into English without any reference to authorship. Therefore, we assume that the selection, compilation and translation of terms/concepts were designed by Brazilian legal experts and both controlled and supported by information technology to ensure free and effective access to the glossary. For our purposes here, we focus on the definition of the single class concept ‘appeal’ and its subordinate concepts as provided in the glossary.<sup>3</sup>

The article is organized as follows. In Section 1, we present an overview of the theoretical framework of the study, the principle of relevance, and also the role of information processing in the definition

1 <[http://www2.stf.jus.br/portalStfInternacional/cms/verPrincipal.php?idioma=en\\_us](http://www2.stf.jus.br/portalStfInternacional/cms/verPrincipal.php?idioma=en_us)> retrieved on 23/02/2014

2 It is worth pointing out that other countries have also been adapting their legal principles and practices to the common law principles and practices and legal English under the current globalized context. See mainly and Šarčević (2009) and Bhatia *et al.* (2003).

3 The original glossary is available at <[http://www2.stf.jus.br/portalStfInternacional/cms/verGlossario.php?sigla=portalStfGlossario\\_en\\_us](http://www2.stf.jus.br/portalStfInternacional/cms/verGlossario.php?sigla=portalStfGlossario_en_us)> retrieved on 23/2/2014.

and translation of legal terminology/concepts. In Section 2, we analyse the organization of the STF's glossary and how the concept 'appeal' and its subordinate concepts are defined and translated. In Section 3, we discuss the findings in terms of relevance and consistency showing how new trends in information/terminology processing can improve the quality of online specialized glossaries. We conclude pointing to further studies towards standardization in the design of the glossary.

## 2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

### 2.1. Relevance

There are many ways of defining relevance apart from the default meanings of 'relevance' as appropriateness, suitability and pertinence.<sup>4</sup> For example, Clark (2013, p. 106-107), discusses relevance in terms of positive cognitive effects and processing effort insofar as "the more effects a stimulus have the more relevant it is [and] the more processing efforts deriving from this effects, the less relevant it is." On the other hand, Bruce (2008:414) claims that "in Google's world, relevance is a function of popularity." And Smith and Wilson (1979:177) refine the concept within a pragmatic viewpoint:<sup>5</sup>

A remark P is relevant to another remark Q if P and Q, together with background knowledge, yield new information not derivable from either P or Q, together with background, alone.

Under a cognitive perspective, Sperber and Wilson (1986, p. 48) approach relevance in terms of the dichotomy old-new information, effort and contextual effects. Old information means information which is "already present in the individual's representation of the world" (Sperber and Wilson 1986:48). It may be the case that some old information is easier to access and therefore "is not worth processing at all"; on the other hand, if some new information is "unconnected with anything in the individual's representation of the world" and implies in too much processing cost "for too little benefit" it is still not worth processing either according to (Sperber and Wilson 1986:48). Moreover, if the addition of new information does not modify old information but merely duplicates it, then it will not improve the contexts and will be rendered irrelevant.

Information processing involves efforts to draw someone's attention so as it seems "relevant enough to him to be worth his attention" (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p. 49). The degree of relevance is often associated with the processing effort insofar as "other things being equal, the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance" (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p. 124). One of the necessary conditions for relevance is that new information is contextualized in old information, modifying or improving it, and giving rise to "contextual effects" (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p.108). Therefore,

these interconnected new and old items of information are used together as premises in an inference process, further new information can

<sup>4</sup> See the Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (2001: 1628).

<sup>5</sup> The authors' interpretation of relevance is based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, the Maxim of Relation 'Be relevant.'

be derived: information which could not have been inferred without this combinations of old and new premises. When the processing of new information gives rise to such a multiplication effect, we call it relevant. The greater the multiplication effect, the greater the relevance. (Sperber and Wilson 1986:48)

As to Sperber and Wilson (1986, p. 119-125), “intuitions of relevance” complement the necessary conditions as people can “consistently distinguish relevant from irrelevant information or, in some cases, more relevant from less relevant information” and then refine the definition by adopting “an extent-conditions format”:

#### Relevance

*Extent condition 1:* an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large.

*Extent condition 2:* an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent the effort required to process it in this context is small.

This cognitive framework of relevance may be directly applied to the design of specialized glossaries with the aid of processes of “compilation, storage and retrieval assisted by or directly carried out by a computer” (SAGER, 1990, p. 129).<sup>6</sup> Our claim is that: a) the glossary will contain relevant information if and only if the definitions are partly assumed by earlier acts of comprehension; b) information provided in the definitions will be relevant if it is able to produce contextual effects and c) information provided requires the least effort on the part of the reader in order to be worth processing, otherwise it will not fulfill the necessary and sufficient conditions for relevance in this specific institutional context.

Let us consider a compilation of legal terms/concepts wherein the terminologist or translator makes use of the storage of legal texts on computers for terminological analysis. These texts can be analysed and compared with a machine-readable legal text to produce a list of common items contained in them in order to: a) eliminate the “spurious items” which are of no interest to the user; b) add a significant number of new terms to the list, and c) identify terms which lack equivalents in English (SAGER, 1990, p. 131).

Apart from more traditional methods of compiling terminology/concepts from print dictionaries, running text or discourse, new trends in compilation include other computer techniques to extract legal unstructured knowledge in the web and to identify specific features from legal texts.<sup>7</sup> For example, the making of online mono-, bi- or multilingual legal dictionaries and glossaries can be facilitated by the: a) reutilization and compilation of terminology and concepts extracted from various sources, such as printed lexical material available in dictionaries, legislation and case law; b) storage in terminological data bank or term bank and c) retrieval, allowing the input and output modes to be

<sup>6</sup> See also Pala, Rychlý and Šmerk (2010) and Quaresma and Gonçalves (2010).

<sup>7</sup> See also Francesconi, *et al.* (2010b) and Peruginelli and Ragona (2009).

managed by various suppliers to “supply data for a number of users of terminological information” (SAGER, 1990, p. 189).

In turn, not only can semantic information be provided in the definitions to show the relationships the legal concepts establish among themselves, but also hyperlinked remissions may enhance new information in each entry to prevent redundancy and duplicity of information (CORREIA; GUERREIRO, 1995, p. 49). Such information processing applications would enable terminologists and translators to select and “declare relevant” (SAGER, 1990, p. 29) legal concepts and their relationships for the purpose of organizing and ordering an online legal dictionary.

## 2.2. Definition and translation of legal concepts

Legal concepts are legal system-bound and context-free as they have the same intension or reference on the assumption that “the same types of meanings and their use is on the whole controlled by the clearly defined areas of usages (levels)” (SAGER, 1990, p. 41). The purpose of defining legal concepts in reference works gives rise to a type of definition to fix “the ‘intensional’ definition [...] used by the subject specialists for determining the precise reference of the term” (SAGER, 1990, p. 48). A definition must give the essential, or relevant, characteristics of a concept and also the “features which distinguish or differentiate a concept from its immediate hyperonym and co-hyponyms,” also according to Sager (1990, p. 44). On the linguistic and conceptual levels, the terminologist may need to create new words, introduce new meanings or use borrowing to define concepts. Various methods of defining concepts may be applied assuming the specialists’ minimum familiarity with the subject field and the terms used in the definition (old information), and the sources of difficulties to be expected in the comprehension of the concepts in this given context (new information).

On the other hand, legal concepts have achieved the status of semi-technical words and their meanings have been “interactionally established over time, in the history of practices” (LINELL, 1998, p. 121). They may be readily understood though not readily applied and are open to accommodation in new contexts in the future. As to terminology, civil law operators also “continue to reach for familiar words or phrases out of habit” (TIERSMA, 1999, p. 59), including terms of art, non-colloquial or archaic Portuguese and Latin terms and phrases. As in common law, the civil law terminology has its share of “system-bound words” (CAO, 2007, p. 60-67): words associated with the legal profession (*advogado, juiz, ministro, procurador geral* etc.); words associated with courts (*apelação, jurisprudência, súmula vinculante, acórdão* etc.) and words associated with areas of Law and institutions (*Lei da Consolidação de Trabalho, Lei Orgânica dos Municípios, medida provisória, ordem de service, Ministério Público* etc.).<sup>8</sup> Owing to the “fixed background of the civil code” (ORBAN III, 2001, p. 55), terms and phrases in civil law are more concise and need no comprehensive definitions since their meanings are to be found in the codes.

As far as legal translation, it has been considered a highly sensitive area mainly due to “profound differences in categories and concepts between legal systems” (GARZONE 2000, p. 4). Although traditional translation theory still aims at “preserving the letter of the original as much as possible”,

<sup>8</sup> See Frade 2004 for more on Brazilian legal terminology.

more recent approaches have assumed more communicative and pragmatic factors placing it “as a communicative and intercultural action” (GARZONE, 2000, p. 1-5). The translation of domestic legal terms and concepts aimed at multilegal and multilingual jurisdictions has become quite common in the current global context, with possible situations which also include the translation between related and unrelated languages (CAO, 2007; KOCBEK, 2009).<sup>9</sup> There are two types of translating domestic legal terms and concepts: one is used for normative purposes in multilingual jurisdictions where two or more languages are the official languages, as in the European Union, Canada and Switzerland; and the other, generally in English, used for informative purposes only in monolingual jurisdictions, as in Brazil.

Due to lack of tradition in the lexicographic, terminological and translation specialized-domain fields, the publication of print bilingual dictionaries and, in particular, bi- or multilingual legal dictionaries, is rather limited in Brazil. The few print legal dictionaries available take into account “the caprices of legal terminology” and do not analyse terms “corresponding to the system of concepts that form the focus of interest” (MATTILA; GODDARD, 2013, p. 21).<sup>10</sup> For example, the lack of consistence and uniformity displayed in both macro- and microstructure of three print Portuguese-English legal dictionaries is approached in Carvalho (2006). The author claims that the basic tools of corpus linguistics could improve our dictionaries and be used by translators not to understand legal terms but rather “to search elements that allow them [translators] to *produce* a text” (CARVALHO, 2006, p. 309). As far as electronic glossaries are concerned, if one tries the customized search “*glossário jurídico português-inglês*” on Google, it will provide several types of bilingual legal glossaries, including the STF’s, from different sources. Nevertheless, almost all of them lack consistency and relevance concerning reference sources, authorship and methodology used for terminology processing.

### 3. THE BRAZILIAN STF’S LEGAL GLOSSARY

#### 3.1. The organization

In the introduction, the STF’s legal glossary is presented as “a project designed for the international reader”:

the entries do not only come from legislation, but also from the STF caselaw. From simplified definitions, the vocabulary is connected by hyperlinks that intend to make the understanding of the searched term easier, through a common semantic field.

On the macrostructure level, the 108 entries of the glossary are comprised of simple, compound or complex terms presented in alphabetical order under the ‘top-down’ approach, whereby knowledge is divided “at the smallest number of items which can be grouped under a common descriptive label” (SAGER, 1990, p. 37).

The selection of the entries is questionable and does not seem to have a strict scientific support as there are concepts related to other subject fields (domains). For example, there seems to be no

<sup>9</sup> See also Part II in Francesconi *et al.* (2010b)

<sup>10</sup> See Mello (2008), Goyos Jr. (1998) and Castro (1994).

reasonable explanation why terms like “joint capital company”, “amnesty” and “stem cells” have been classified as belonging to the domain “legislative and court” (BRATANIĆ; ILIJEVSKI; ANIĆ, 2009, p. 252). Moreover, several entries of Latin terms and expressions presented in the glossary are overlapping as they stand for identical references in other legal systems meaning that “the coincidence of their co-usage is clearly due to the lack of a systematic approach to the structure of the term base” (BRATANIĆ; ILIJEVSKI; ANIĆ, 2009, p. 252).

The translated equivalents in English are simply converted into entries which, in many cases, do not refer to “an authentic concept in the [legal] culture of the target language” (SAGER, 1990, p. 139). The entries are immediately followed by the original term in Portuguese between inverted commas, in brackets and highlighted in bold.

Most of the entries display mixed definitions, ranging from single descriptions to the listing of characteristics and description of “legal consequences,” in line with Sager (1990, p. 46) who claims that “with definitions constructed for term banks [...], [it is] difficult to satisfy both layman and the specialist with a single definition.” In some entries (but not all), the source references, denoted as ‘legal basis,’ are presented at the end of the definition and include abbreviations, legislation and internal rules of the court which, according to Sager (1990, p.152), “can be of great value because the origin of a term may be its best indication of quality and usage.”

Although not displayed consistently, the basic data categories of the STJ’s glossary entries are comprised of:

- the equivalent entry term(s) in English
- the original term(s) in Portuguese
- mixed definitions
- an indication of the usage, i.e., the context (procedure, legal consequences)
- indication of the source references (legal basis).

Different from words which can be defined by synonyms, concepts are defined “by all concepts surrounding it in the special field of reference in which it occurs” (SAGER, 1990, p. 41). This is the case of the class concept ‘appeal’ and its subordinate concepts in the STF’s legal glossary. The generic relationship between the class concept and the subordinates (X) is to be understood by the formula ‘X is a type of appeal’ are schematically depicted in Figure 1 entailing both a horizontal and vertical relationship.

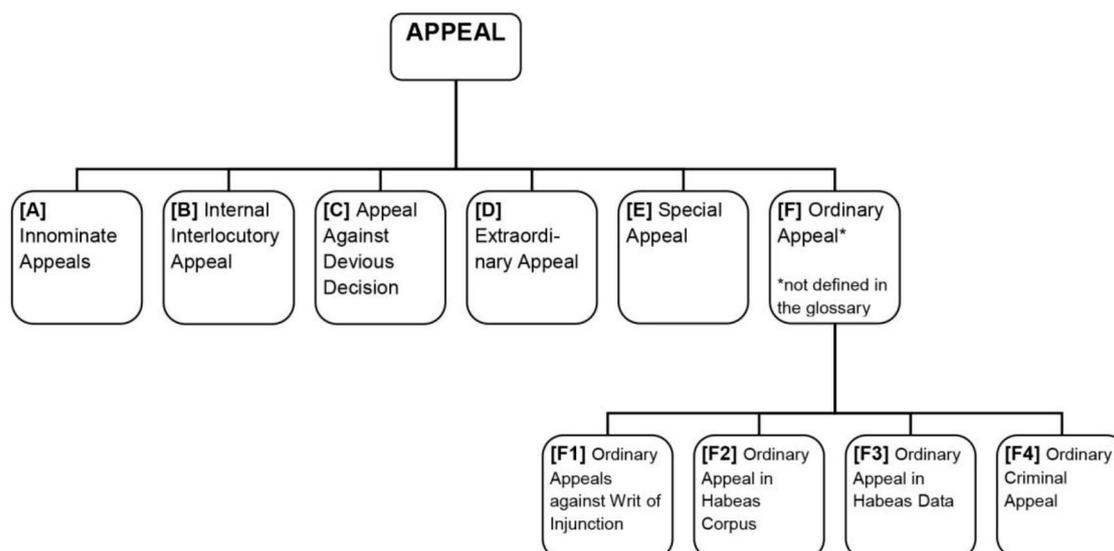


Figure 1: The class concept ‘appeal’ and its subordinate concepts

For ease of reference, the entries are classified in capital letters, except the definition of the class concept, as follows: the concepts [A] to [E] correspond to different subordinate concepts from the class concept ‘appeal’ and the concepts [F1] to [F2] correspond to variations of the same subordinate concept ‘ordinary appeal’ [F] not defined in the glossary.

### 3.2. The definition and translation of the concept ‘appeal’

The entry of main class concept ‘appeal,’ the basis for the other subordinate definitions, is defined by description and extension. The descriptive part of the definition is quite plain though it is not explicit if ‘person’ may also refer to a legal entity. To avoid this potential ambiguity, the Black’s Law Dictionary (1996) defines the concept in the passive voice omitting the subject of the action as

a proceeding undertaken to have a decision reconsidered by a higher authority; esp. the submission of a lower court’s or agency’s decision to a higher court for review and possible reversal.

Two courtroom terms ‘first instance’ and ‘superior instance’ are axiomatic in civil law while, in common law, the equivalent terms are ‘higher courts’ or ‘lower courts.’ In this case, as there is not lack of equivalence between the legal concepts, the terms in English could have been appropriately applied. However, the reader may be able to infer their meaning from the more general context of courtroom structure and appealing as a whole. On the other hand, the extensional definition is not complete as it exemplifies the case in which ‘the superior instance decides to judge the merit of the appeal’ and its consequences but does not mention what would happen otherwise.

The reference to two new concepts in the form of a binomial expression ‘devolutive or suspensive effect’ may not be unfamiliar to the reader and thus it cannot be inferred in the immediate context as only one of them, ‘suspensive effect’, is defined somewhere else in the glossary. As pointed out in Frade (2004, p. 59-62), while binomial and multinomial structures are “typical integrative devices to make legislative writing technically accurate and all-inclusive” in common law, they are rather sparse in civil law and do share the same rhetorical and historical values. The search of the meaning of the undefined concept in the binomial above would require additional effort on the part of the reader out of the immediate context without its precise (and consequently not reliable) source reference or a hyperlink.

The entry of Concept A ‘Innominate Appeal’ is defined by negatives and does not provide the intension of the concept, which differentiates it from its co-hyponyms. In general, while positive statements are easier to process, negative are difficult “to fasten upon meaning with precision or clarity” (MELLINKOFF, 1982, p. 28). Its context of application is not provided in the immediate context and should be found somewhere else by the reader requiring more effort to process the information.

The definition of the entry of Concept B ‘Internal Interlocutory Appeal’ describes the cases it applies to and, by extension, provides the source reference of the concept in court. It also provides a synonym ‘internal motion’ which may differ from the entry term by usage and context and represents a cross-reference in the entry structure (SAGER, 1990, p. 151). Again, in the description there is some ‘negative’ information creating a context in which the concept does not apply to ‘the elaboration of a [sic] instrument is unnecessary, since the process [...]’. Such a “less accessible context” (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p.142) would require the reader’s greater effort to process the information in the right context, minimizing its relevance. The extended definition provides further information about the meaning of “internal” as a characteristic of the concept. If not already taken for granted by the reader, “its strength is unaffected by the newly presented information” (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p. 121) and it will be rendered irrelevant. The synonym ‘internal motion’ is neither defined in the glossary nor included in a usage note despite the reference in ‘See also: motion and instrument motion.’

The main entry of Concept C ‘Appeal against devious decision’ is the typical case of the definition cited instead of the term ‘Divergence Motions.’ However, at the end of the paragraph, the reader is provided with new information that ‘Divergence Motions’ is synonymous with ‘appeal against devious decision,’ possibly as another source reference to the main concept. Inconsistency here results from two different terms referring to a single meaning in the same domain. The definition is extended by describing the cases the concept applies to and one exception to the case. However, whenever the terms express different concepts in other domains, “they require separate entries in order to be consulted and retrieved individually” (BRATANIĆ; ILIJEVSKI; ANIĆ, 2009, p. 246). The former is presented in double negative ‘are not suitable’ and ‘except in the cases’ which requires the reader’s greater processing effort. The piece of information seems to be unconnected to the context as it does not define the meaning of ‘return effect’ rendering it irrelevant. Two references are inconsistently displayed in the definition: a) the statement ‘the feature exists in the Labour Court, CLT’ is not as specific as the one described in “Legal Basis: Law No. 8.950/94, CPC, Art. 546” and b) abbreviations

such as ‘CLT’ and ‘CPC’ which, without the full expression of their forms (new information), may not be immediately recognized and processed by the reader.

The entry of Concept D ‘Extraordinary Appeal’ starts with a descriptive definition of the concept and is followed by an extended definition listing the cases ‘a ruling may be appealed extraordinarily’. The negative attribution ‘Parties to Appeal: Anyone’ seems to lack the specification required in definitions. Surprisingly, the rest of the extended definition refers to ‘Special Appeal’ and not to the concept in question which renders it irrelevant as it is unrelated to the immediate context. The definition ends with the source reference to both ‘Legal Consequences’ and ‘Legal Basis’ and the original term of the concept in Portuguese redundantly repeated.

Likewise, the entry of concept E ‘Special Appeal’ is defined by description followed by the three cases where “a ruling may be appealed especially”, displayed in list structure which is “appropriate for giving examples” (CHILD, 1992, p. 352). Again, the negative attribution ‘Anyone’ in ‘Parties to the Appeal: Anyone’ lacks relevance as it does not add any new information to the context. The extension includes the processing of the concept, the characteristics of the special appeal in list structure though displayed in inconsistent paralleled items. The source reference ‘Legal Basis’ includes precise and reliable references.

The entries of Concept F1 ‘Ordinary Appeal against Writ of Injunction’ and Concept F3 ‘Ordinary Appeal in Habeas Data’ are definitions and not terms. In both cases, the definition-entries are circularly defined in their explicative contexts. In fact, the tautology renders both definitions irrelevant “in words others than those of the immediate context, without imparting additional force or clearness” (Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary 2001, p. 1947).

The entry of Concept F2 ‘Ordinary Appeal in Habeas Corpus’ begins with a descriptive definition with an exception ‘the appeal will only be hear’ followed by the negative sentence ‘[it] may not be interposed against [...]’ and another negative describing the consequences of such negative event. However, it seems to be the case that inference can be derived from the context with which ‘might combine to yield contextual implications’ (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986, p. 120) in the understanding of the general definition of the concept. The definition is extended with two indications of usage ‘Processing of the Appeal,’ ‘Legal Consequences’<sup>11</sup> and one reference source ‘Legal Basis.’

Lastly, the entry of Concept F4 ‘Ordinary Criminal Appeal’ is defined by description and extended to include its procedure and new information, improving the definition as a whole. The legal terms or concepts ‘records of the proceedings,’ ‘prosecutor’ etc. used in the definition are generally axiomatic in law and should be part of the specialist user’s previous knowledge.

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11 For unknown reasons, the sentence is suddenly interrupted rendering the whole new information incomplete and thus irrelevant as it does not result in any change in the context.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the analysis point to evidence of some key problems involving the design of bilingual specialized glossaries in Brazil, in particular legal glossaries. According to Aodha (2009, p. 263), “Law dictionaries share many of the failings of specialist dictionaries in general.” The apparent lack of a systematic work engaging an interdisciplinary team of actors and experts fails to take advantage of the most recent and useful tools available for the task in the subject areas of linguistics, law and information science.

To start with, it is safe to say that terms/concepts extracted from the corpus are not representative due to the small number of entries provided (108) considering the wide scope of the subject area. It is, for instance, beyond comparison with the online version of the Black’s Law Legal Dictionary’s “over 15 [of] law definitions and legal terms [for] your legal business and research use.”<sup>12</sup> There is an overemphasis on nouns at the expense of other linguistic information commonly associated to the genre, such as verbs and adjectives, register, binomials, collocations and legal vagueness (Aodha 2009). Moreover, there is no indication that the glossary has been going through “an ongoing revision and up-dating process” (SAGER, 1990, p. 154), which may raise questions about the validity and relevance of the data. Nowadays, we can count on efficient legal information retrieval approaches to structure and organize documentation “from external electronic archives using the tools of formal, linguistic and conceptual analysis” as, for example, the design of the *Sistema Intelligente Integrato per l’Acquisizione e la Manutenzione dell’informazione giuridica in linea* (SIAM) reported in Cammelli and Fameli (2009, p. 361).<sup>13</sup>

Inconsistent translation of the terminology/concepts and the structure of the definitions in dictionaries and glossaries can often result in irrelevant implications and unwanted interpretations even by the expert user. The STF’s glossary includes both existing concepts with equivalents in common law, such as ‘motion for clarification,’ (civil law) and ‘motion for more definite statement’ (common law), ‘provisional remedy,’ ‘legal opinion’ etc., and non-equivalent ones, such as ‘administrative process,’ ‘full-bench jurisdiction,’ ‘prevention detention for extradition’ etc. However, there is a noticeable preference for “localisms over internationalisms” which may result in terminological inconsistency (BAJČIĆ, 2009, p. 227). On the other hand, the lack of consistency in the methods of defining the terms/concepts can be explained by the fact that the glossary was produced by different people without previous agreement on the criteria to be used (Correia and Guerreiro 1995:56). In the STF’s glossary, it is quite easy to identify sets of similar definitions (entry of Concepts C, D, E; Concepts F1, F3 and Concepts B, F4) in contrast to others and even sets with similar technical mistakes (entry of Concepts D, F2). In general, not only are the essential attributes of many terms/concepts poorly presented in the definitions, but it is not clear how they differentiate from the other concepts either. Definition by contrast is not applied to link one concept to other concepts in the system, and definitions with negative statements and tautology are quite common so new information is not connected with old information or the immediate context.

12 See <thelawdictionary.org.>, retrieved on 18 July 2014.

13 See also Sager (1990), Francesconi *et al.* (2009a) and Peruginelli and Ragona (2009).

On the linguistic level, the definitions of the terminology/concepts display inconsistent and irregular syntactic constructions which may be the outcome of the lack of “collaboration of all interested parties [and] general consensus” (SAGER, 1990, p. 119). According to Child (1992, p. 367), “it is a sign of trouble when a new sentence begins in the midst of a definition” which it is the case in most definitions in the glossary under analysis.

As to Sperber and Wilson (1986, p. 125), “readers should try to resist the natural tendency to supply much richer and more appropriate contexts” and therefore consistent terminology and watertight definitions should be pursued when translating domestic legislation and court cases. This can be achieved if the terminologist/translator has legal and technical input from experts in the linguistic, information processing and legal areas to a minimum, as well pointed out in Bajčić (2009, p. 227). Also, standardization can provide the principles and methods to avoid inconsistency in the interest of precision, economy (and thus relevance) and appropriateness.<sup>14</sup> Considering Portuguese the source language (SL) and English as the target language (TL), a standard output format for the STJ’s glossary online retrieval, which seems “to satisfy the needs of most translators” (SAGER, 1990, p. 200-201) when consulting monolingual information could be:

SL term/concept + TL equivalent (or synonym, if available) + TL definition + SL source reference

Nowadays, the terminologist/translator is able to focus on achieving high standards of compilation due to automatic processing and computer-assisted terminology/concept compilation.<sup>15</sup> Different from the compilation of terminology in conceptual systems, “conceptual structures can be built according to perceived necessity and inter-relations can be declared on the basis of fuller information after a substantial amount of data has been collected” (SAGER, 1990, p. 137). On the whole, these tools would also check for the selection of inadequate and spurious entries from other subjects of knowledge, duplication and omission of data, changes and updates of meaning etc.

The principle of relevance is always at stake due to lack of consistence in terms of information processing and the amateur approach used in the making of the glossary. Although presented in a reader-friendly system, it does not “attract users with different levels of subject specialisation” (SAGER, 1990, p. 196). If stored in a formal, structured and more consistent manner, it should be able to meet the needs of more distinct specialist users rather than only legal experts, such as translators, students, lexicographers and language planners. Unfortunately, it is not the case here.

The STF’s online legal dictionary requires a deep and careful review regarding concept database, methods of definition and information retrieval in order to provide more accurate and relevant information to the expert reader. As to Bajčić (2009, p. 228-229), “creating terminology databases is essential for ensuring uniformity and consistency” as well as the translator’s sharing information with professional linguists and other subject experts.

<sup>14</sup> See Sager (1990) for a comprehensive description of standardization under a communicative dimension.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Dozier *et al* (2010:27-43).

Brazil's judicial power, together with the executive and the legislative, are granted authority to formulate policies to disseminate their respective specialized language by means of compilation of terminology/concepts. The ideal to achieve a type of standardization and harmonization of legal terminology and concepts in English for international use can start by compiling, storing and retrieving open term banks, such as Euroterm.<sup>16</sup> Examples of more recent advances include tools, such as the semantic tool SIAM (CAMELLI; FAMELI, 2008), the web-oriented online dictionary IS-LeGi, developed by the *Istituto di Teoria e Tecnique dell'Informazione Giuridica* (ITTIG), as reported in (Cammelli and Mariani (2008, p. 408) and methods for “name entity recognition” in the semantic processing of legal texts (DOZIER *et al.* 2009, p. 27), just to name a few.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The growing need for free access to specialized knowledge has motivated a considerable amount of interdisciplinary research in the subject areas of linguistics and information processing. In particular, the design of online bi- or multilingual legal dictionaries and glossaries has gathered groups of different actors in the current global context, including from translators, linguistics, legal and computer experts. The result is a wide range of “new information and communication technologies available at relatively low cost as well as in the increasing demand of open and reliable access services to law material” (PERUGINELLI; RAGONA, 2008, p. 9).

This article discussed how concepts were defined in the Brazilian Supreme Federal Court's online legal glossary in the light of the principle of relevance (SPERBER; WILSON, 1986). We also approached the criterion of compilation of the entries, the quality of the translated version of the definitions and discussed how they can be improved using some tools in information processing. The result of the analysis evidenced that much has to be done in designing specialized glossaries for international use in Brazil not to mention the urge to build databases to provide for appropriate, reliable and high standard data.

Our claim is that this is not an impossible task if conducted in cooperation with interdisciplinary scholars, translators, legal experts, computer scientists, terminologists and paralegals from Brazil and foreign countries. The purpose could be two-fold: for human use, to support legal and linguistic professionals and for use in “expert- systems and knowledge-based systems” (SAGER, 1990, p. 228), as part of a broader language policy initiative. As legal terminology and meanings can always be changed or expanded due to the emergence of new uses, practices and jurisprudence, so can term banks be always improved by their users.

Further investigation may include investigate some linguistic and discursive features of the definitions provided in the glossary and make an attempt to set the parameters for the standardization of key Brazilian legal terminology/concepts. The dissemination of our legal knowledge surely relies on the latest trends in information technology combined with linguistics and translation theories to provide free access to the public by means of simple, reader-friendly and accurate information processing techniques.

16 See <<http://www.eurotermbank.com/>>, retrieved on 20 July 2014.

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