

PRECIS in a Multilingual Context

Part 4: The application of PRECIS in French

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1 Introduction

1.1 This fourth paper in the series on PRECIS will consider the theoretical model of the indexing operation proposed in an earlier paper,¹ and extend its application to one of the Romance languages, namely French. The present author has noted, throughout the publication of this series, how closely these logico-linguistic explanations could be applied to indexing in the French language. It is realised that experiments into PRECIS as a multilingual system are not complete, and that a new phase has undoubtedly started with the current British Library investigation of its translingual potential. Nevertheless, it would appear that the major problems still facing the researchers, such as the treatment of inflections, infixes, etc., are mostly related to the Germanic languages. As far as French is concerned, it is a relatively simple matter to give a positive answer to the question posed in the first paper:²

“... Do the codes and procedures developed so far (including the specified additions) amount to a general system which is capable of operating in any of the major European (and other) languages?”

1.2 A point which was made in an earlier paper¹ is again stressed here, i.e. that the proposed model “... is an entirely abstract conception, and as such does not purport to describe the real-world performance of indexers”. This paper, too, is largely concerned with establishing abstract correspondences between the model and the act of indexing in French. It is *not* offered as a course on PRECIS in French. Without doubt, there is an increasing need for a version of the 'Manual'³ intended specifically for French indexers, but that is still in the future. However, this paper will conclude with a brief account of some of the practical issues met during a pilot French indexing project undertaken by the present author. A specimen of this index is reproduced as an Appendix.

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