



EVOLUTION OF TERMINOLOGICAL CONCEPTS: THE TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL THEORIES TO COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES

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Abstract

This article examines the stages in the formation and development of terminology studies from historical, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. Beginning with the principles of traditional prescriptive terminology, the paper explores the scientific foundations of cognitive and communicative approaches that emerged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Conceptual, discursive, and pragmatic interpretations of the notion of “term” are comparatively analyzed. The study employs systematic analysis of scholarly literature, content analysis, and comparative research methods.

Keywords: Terminology, traditional approach, modern approach, cognitive approach, communicative paradigm, evolution of terms, concept, discourse, semantics.

Introduction

It is well known that, although the history of terminology, like lexicography, dates back to ancient times, its systematic study and recognition within the system of sciences do not have such a long history. In world linguistics, countless studies have been conducted on the comprehensive investigation of terminological



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systems, particularly specialized vocabulary, and on revealing their significance as an integral part of the general language system.

In their work *Selected Readings in Terminology*, published in Vienna in 1993, K. Lauren and H. Picht identify three major schools associated with classical terminology: the Vienna School of Terminology, the Prague School of Terminology, and the Moscow School of Terminology. In addition, they also mention several research centers located in Canada, the Nordic countries, and the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST). [8:493]. Later, a number of modern national schools emerged that approached terminology on the basis of new conceptual frameworks, which led to the distinction between two major trends in terminology studies:

- a) traditional (classical) terminology;
- b) modern terminology.

Research Methodology: In this study, several scientific methods were employed in order to analyze the evolutionary development of terminology theory through a systematic and comprehensive approach. In particular, systematic literature analysis, comparative-analytical methods, conceptual analysis, and descriptive methods constituted the main methodological foundation of the research. The integrated application of these methods increased the scientific reliability of the research findings, enabled a multidimensional interpretation of problems within terminology theory, and provided the basis for drawing generalized conclusions.

Analysis and Results: The formation of world classical, or traditional, terminology dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. According to A. Rey, the word terminology was initially used in French with a negative connotation, referring to “jargon words that nobody could understand.” In sources written between the 1830s and 1840s, however, the term began to acquire its modern meaning, referring both to specialized names with precise meanings and to the branch of science concerned with their organization and standardization.

Although the term had also been used much earlier in English, it did not attract attention as an independent scientific discipline until relatively recent times. By the twentieth century, the rapid development of science and technology, together with the growing need for international standardization, created the foundation



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for the emergence and development of terminology as a distinct field of study [11:16].

The foundation of classical terminology theory is directly associated with the scientific research of Eugen Wüster (1898–1977), an Austrian scholar and leading representative of the Vienna School of Terminology, and Dmitry Semyonovich Lotte (1898–1950), a Russian scholar representing the Moscow School of Terminology. Their studies mainly focused on the problems of standardization and unification of technical terminology.

This theory gained particular significance after being supported by the International Organization for Standardization, which was established in 1947 with the aim of developing universal standards to improve international communication and cooperation, as well as to reduce barriers in international trade [10].

In scholarly sources, special attention is given to the contributions of Eugen Wüster, Dmitry Semyonovich Lotte, S. A. Chaplugin, E. K. Drezen, H. Felber, G. O. Vinokur, A. A. Reformatskiy, O. S. Axmanova, and V. P. Danilenko in the development of traditional terminology. Meanwhile, the advancement of modern terminology theory is closely associated with the works of M. T. Cabré Castellví, R. Temmerman, S. V. Grinev, V. M. Leychik, A. V. Superenskaya, G. G. Hakimova, V. P. Danilenko, and others.

One of the prominent representatives of modern terminology, the Spanish terminologist Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví, challenged the view that terminology is an autonomous discipline isolated from other fields in her book *Terminology: Theory, Methods and Applications*, published in Barcelona in 1993. According to her, “In any case, terminology cannot be considered an autonomous discipline. It is necessary to approach terminology from a general scientific perspective, since it is connected with other sciences and incorporates certain concepts related to them” [1:36,71]. Later, in her 1998 article entitled *Materials for a Theory of Terminology: Towards an Alternative Paradigm*, she firmly concluded this idea as follows: “From a transdisciplinary point of view, there is no discipline that does not use terminology to study specialized knowledge and context” [2: 59,70]. Moreover, in recent years, discussions at various international conferences and forums devoted to terminology have increasingly focused on the inconsistencies



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between the long-established and dominant principles of classical terminology and contemporary approaches. This situation has firmly placed on the academic agenda the necessity of combining traditional theories with new and modern paradigms in the study of terms.

As a result, a number of articles addressing these criticized issues and proposing possible solutions were published. In particular, the innovative theoretical, methodological, and practical views of Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví on modern terminology are reflected in her works such as *On Diversity and Terminology* (1995), *Terminological Resources for Translation* (1998), *Elements for a Theory of Terminology: Towards an Alternative Paradigm* (1998), *Terminology: Concepts and Communication* (1999), *Is a Temporary Theory of Terminology Necessary?* (1999), *A New Theory of Terminology: From Concepts to Communication* (1999), *Terminology and Documentation* (2000), *On the Cognitive Representation of Concepts: A Basis for an Attempt at Modeling* (2000), *Terminology in Applied Linguistics?* (co-authored with A. Adelshteyn, presented at the National Congress, 2000), and *Theories of Terminology: Description, Prescription and Explanation* (2003), among others.

These works clearly demonstrate the author's revolutionary perspectives on modern terminology from theoretical, methodological, and practical points of view.

After Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví, the issue of reforming terminology theory attracted the attention of many terminologists. Most debates centered on Eugen Wüster's theoretical view that a term is a two-sided unit consisting of a sign (in any language) that refers to a concept, that is, a conceptual unit. Accordingly, the International Organization for Standardization defined terminology as "the scientific study of concepts and terms used in specialized languages." In general, scholarly discussions mainly revolved around the relationship between concepts and terms.

Another prominent representative of modern terminology, Silvia Montero, emphasizes that for all of the above-mentioned traditional terminology schools, the concept serves as the starting point of terminological analysis, and an onomasiological strategy predominates within them. According to her, "Wüster even argues that a concept may exist outside language, and that the best way to



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define it is to determine its place within the conceptual system, which is essentially the formalization of logical and ontological relations. From this perspective, terminology is nothing more than the representation of a single, pre-existing conceptual system. Terms denote the same historical, non-temporal, socially and ideologically neutral concept; that is, objects or realities are conceptualized in a universal and identical way” [10].

M. Trojar points out that Eugen Wüster was originally an engineer and entrepreneur by profession, and that he also worked as a translator, Esperantist, and interlinguist who wrote monographs and articles on Esperanto lexicography and terminology. For this reason, Wüster viewed language as a tool that could be adapted to the needs of any user from an engineering perspective, and, as an Esperantist, he believed that language could be invented and artificially created. According to Trojar, “Wüster’s theory of terminology possesses an onomasiological character. He emphasized that the basis of a term lies not in naming, but in expressing a concept. In Wüster’s view, a term does not necessarily need to acquire semantic (conceptual) essence in order to represent a particular concept. It should rather be accepted according to the meaning explained in dictionaries” [9:56].

Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví explains the criticism directed toward Wüster’s theory by pointing to several factors: the onomasiological nature of his terminological theory, the assumption that the methodological foundations of most fields are universal and identical, and Wüster’s attempt to unify and idealize terms without taking empirical dimensions into account. In addition, she argues that he failed to pay sufficient attention to communicative-pragmatic and socio-cultural factors that directly influence the use of terms in professional communication [3]. According to Cabré, “language is a system that reflects speakers’ perceptions and understandings of reality and enables people to express their intentions and ideas” [4:3].

Furthermore, other scholars have also questioned Wüster’s view that the conceptual system precedes and is more significant than the terminological system. As they argue, “An ideal term should correspond to the concept under consideration, and these relations should be transparent and as universal as possible. The conceptual system is understood independently of the



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terminological system, and therefore, unlike ordinary words, terms are considered independent of context: the meaning of a term is the concept itself. Thus, terms are merely labels for different elements of reality” [7:31].

In 2003, Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví published her article entitled *Theories of Terminology: Their Description, Prescription and Explanation*, in which she sharply criticized existing theories of terminology. She begins the article with the following statement: “During the last decade, terminology theory has become the subject of various debates. This article clarifies the reasons why this topic has recently attracted considerable interest. First, the theory developed by Wüster is analyzed and the motivations underlying his model are identified. Then, the reasons why Wüster’s theory remained unquestioned and uncriticized for such a long period are explained” [5:169].

In this article, Cabré argues that the emergence of a term is connected with a terminological need — the necessity to express a new concept in a precise and concise way within a particular scientific, technical, or social field. According to her, this process should be examined within the framework of the Communicative Theory of Terminology. This theory is considered one of the key concepts of modern terminology studies. It suggests that terms are not only means of expressing concepts, but are also shaped, popularized, and function within communication under the influence of linguistic, cognitive, and communicative factors. Terms develop within discourse and textual contexts in order to facilitate communication among specialists in a given field.

Cabré’s views on the communicative theory of terminology are elaborated in detail in her book *Terminology: Cognition, Language and Communication*, published in 2023, which represents the culmination of more than a decade of extensive research. This new theory focuses not merely on the term, but rather on the terminological unit, and is based on three interrelated perspectives: cognition (concept), linguistics (term), and communication (interaction). The author also addresses methodological changes in terminology studies, the use of text corpora in specialized vocabulary research, and issues related to translation. According to Cabré, terminological units do not possess autonomous status independently; rather, they acquire terminological value through practical use within specialized discourse and are regulated by experts in the field. She further emphasizes that



translators' competence in both the scientific field and linguistics ensures the accurate interpretation and transfer of terms in the process of translating scientific texts [6:182].

To this day, despite continuous criticism, the General Theory of Terminology developed by Eugen Wüster, a representative of the Vienna School, remains dominant in most studies conducted in the field. At the same time, the countless definitions of term and terminology found in specialized literature can generally be summarized as follows: a term is a word or phrase accepted by specialists of a particular field to denote specific concepts related to science, technology, or another sphere of human activity. Terminology, in turn, is the discipline concerned with the theoretical study of collecting, analyzing, translating, and interpreting specialized words and expressions belonging to medicine, information technology, philosophy, grammar, language, literature, mathematics, music, and virtually all branches of science, as well as those found in the common language.

In most theories, the concept of terminology is used in three meanings:

1. A specific theory describing the relationships between concepts and terms;
2. The activity of collecting, describing, and presenting terms;
3. The vocabulary system of a specialized scientific field.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, despite the long history of terminology studies, debates in world linguistics still continue regarding the genetic layers of terms, their historical-etymological foundations, lexical-semantic, grammatical, and derivational features, naming criteria, as well as the distinctions among the notions of term, designation, nomenclature, and professionalism.

In Uzbek linguistics as well, although numerous studies on terminology have been carried out and modern linguistic paradigms are increasingly being applied alongside traditional approaches, many issues remain aktual.

These include phenomena such as terminologization, determinologization, and reterminologization associated with the emergence, semantic transformation, or disappearance of terms within specific terminological systems; factors influencing the creation of new terms; and concepts related to different stages of



the derivational process, such as pre-term, quasi-term, terminoid, proto-term, candidate term, term token, and hybrid term [12:983].

Furthermore, issues connected with the discursive nature of terminology — including professional jargon and professional argot — as well as terminological needs, terminological variation, corpus-based analysis in the digital language environment, and the automatic processing and application of terms, continue to remain highly relevant in contemporary terminology research.

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