

**Faber, P. & L'Homme, M.-C. (2022). *Theoretical perspectives on terminology. Explaining terms, concepts and specialized knowledge.* John Benjamins Publishing Company. ISBN 978 90 272 1106 4.**

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## **Content and organization of the book**

The present volume offers a panorama of various theoretical approaches to terminology as a field, along with reflections as to what makes – and how to make – a terminology (as a body of terms), down to perspectives on the concept of term itself. Through 500 pages (references excluded) and 22 chapters, it (re)introduces the reader to the theories and approaches that have allowed for the emergence and evolution of terminological research, from Wüster's General Theory of Terminology (GTT) through Socioterminology, Textual terminology, Sociocognitive terminology or Corpus-based terminology among others, all of this under the pen of authors who have largely contributed to this development, and while taking into consideration topics which have been central to the theories aforementioned. Notable examples of such topics are variation, standards and standardization, multidimensionality, diachrony, genre – all of which are defined and illustrated through concrete examples.

The 22 chapters are categorized into 7 thematic parts, supported with 72 pages of references and an index. The first part focuses on Wüster's General Theory, followed by a part presenting approaches that have drawn on the GTT's knowledge-based perspective and equipped it with the most recent tools available for concept and knowledge treatment and representation. As such, these first two parts tend to stand out from the rest of the volume by considering terms abstracted from texts and as belonging to a conceptual system. At the same time, the second part of the book and the contemporary perspectives it offers on the knowledge-based approach show that the latter is far from being out-dated, as each chapter highlights its applications, especially in regard with other fields.

With part 3, the reader is invited to more radically shift away from the GTT through two perspectives that have developed in reaction to the latter and which have had the study of variation as their cornerstone, namely Socioterminology and Cultural terminology. Drawing on the principles formalized by the two latter, the two approaches presented in Part 4, Textual terminology and "Terminology and lexical semantics", respectively show how studying terms in discourse and how taking the linguistic dimension of terms into consideration might be fruitful for terminological work, while Part 5 highlights the importance of corpora as both a tool for term and knowledge extraction, and as an entity whose defining features might influence the semantic and formal characteristics of terms. In part 6, the authors draw on neurosciences and cognitive linguistics to highlight the relationship between terms, concepts and cognition and invite one to use this principle as a basis for term analysis and description. As for part 7, it is dedicated to the study of terminological variation and equivalence. It starts with an article by Freixa that provides a most useful typology of the different types and causes of variation and which, as such, helps situate the following chapters.

All in all, this organization in parts allows for the identification of broader trends of research in terminology, which might help the reader make sense of the wide array of research conducted in the field.

## Recurrent themes

In spite of the great variety of approaches presented in this book, several themes and ideas tend to run through many of the chapters. First, several authors argue that terminology has to incorporate – but also to deal with – new technologies. The latter, which tend to come from neighbouring fields such as Natural Language Processing, Corpus Linguistics or Knowledge Engineering, are often presented as unavoidable, as what had driven terminology onward, but also as presenting a challenge to terminologists. While some authors thus call for collaborating with other disciplines to facilitate their use, others have already incorporated advanced technological tools into their methodological frameworks, thus redefining the skills necessary for the terminologist who would want to adopt these more tech-savvy approaches.

Consequently, a second thread is that terminology is at the crossroads of several disciplines and that it is in part through this collaboration with the latter that the field has evolved. Paradoxically enough, by highlighting the role of other disciplines in reference to terminology as a field, the authors also allow the latter's outlines to take shape. While terminology shares some features with ontology, for instance, Montiel-Ponsada (pp. 149-173) makes it clear that these are two different fields, notably putting forward how the latter can complement one another.

Finally, an idea that is either demonstrated or mentioned in most chapters is that terms are not the monoreferential and unequivocal units that the GTT was aiming for: rather, they are multidimensional, incorporating a cognitive, linguistic and social dimension. As such, the book tends to demonstrate the relevance of Sager's definition of terminology (1990) and of Cabré's Communicative Theory of Terminology (CTT) (2000), while leaving us to wonder whether the latter constitute the new overarching theory for contemporary terminology. One might in fact regret that no chapter was dedicated to explaining the CTT, all the more so as it is mentioned in several chapters through most of the parts. But does terminology really need an all-encompassing theory that would explicitly connect, harmonize and constitute a framework for all the perspectives that have emerged since its institutionalization as a discipline? While this question is left unanswered, the diversity and richness of the book in terms of the different approaches it covers suggest that the field actually thrives the most when it is not bound to one particular approach.

## Contributions

One of the first contributions of the book is a reappraisal of Eugen Wüster's General Theory of Terminology by John Humbley and Danielle Candel who, by presenting and assessing the criticisms that have been levelled at this theory, are able to highlight its merits through three main arguments: Wüster was more nuanced than has been assumed as regards variation and synonymy, his prescriptivism and guidelines for standardization are useful if not necessary in certain contexts, and he largely initiated the institutionalization of terminology as a field of research. At the same time, the authors acknowledge the limits of Wüster's approach, which are such that it appears difficult today for a terminologist to fully embrace the theoretical and methodological framework he has devised. The result of this reappraisal is a relatively balanced picture of Wüster's ideas and contributions, which might in fact more be seen as a tribute to the latter than as a call for reconsidering his framework as a valid and sufficient theory of terminology. Quite telling of the persistence of the criticisms directed at Wüster's theory is the fact that many of the chapters in the book tend to start with a presentation of the limits of his approach, which they somehow constitute a response to. As such, it seems that

the merits of the GTT also lie in its limits, which have allowed for the development of a great variety of reactions to emerge, as illustrated by the many perspectives and methodological approaches presented in this volume.

All in all, without aiming at exhaustiveness, this book offers a thorough overview of the theories, standards and methodological frameworks that have guided terminological work since its institutionalization as a scientific discipline. Regarding what is not covered in the book, one might regret the absence of a chapter that would offer a reflection around central concepts in terminological work such as expertise and domains, whose boundaries and definitions might be challenged by terminological studies that tackle topics which are at the frontier of these meta-categories, such as planned obsolescence, feminism or climate change (Bordet, 2013; Delavigne, 2022).

In spite of necessarily uncovered topics, the volume might be of great assistance to researchers and students who need to determine the theoretical and methodological framework that fits most their research project, providing them with a wide array of possible perspectives, while also offering elements of answer to questions that typically arise when elaborating a research project: how to build a corpus? Which tools to use for term extraction? Which forms of variation to consider? What are the standards to follow when building a term bank? In that regard, a thematic index – along with the alphabetically one that is already in the book – could have proved useful, enhancing the propensity of the book to become a key tool in the terminologist’s toolbox.

Bordet, G. (2013). Brouillage des frontières, rencontres des domaines: Quelles conséquences pour l’enseignement de la terminologie et de la traduction spécialisée. *ASp. la revue du GERAS*, 64, 95–115. <https://doi.org/10.4000/asp.3851>

Cabré Castellví, M. T. (2000). Elements for a theory of terminology: Towards an alternative paradigm. *Terminology. International Journal of Theoretical and Applied Issues in Specialized Communication*, 6(1), 35–57. <https://doi.org/10.1075/term.6.1.03cab>

Delavigne, V. (2022). La notion de domaine en question: À propos de l’environnement. *Neologica – Néologie et environnement*, 16, 27–59. <https://doi.org/10.48611/isbn.978-2-406-13219-6.p.0027>

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