



From Terminology to Terminocriticism: Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives on Arabic Linguistic Discourse

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Abstract

This article examines the shift from traditional terminology to terminocriticism, an epistemological approach that investigates how language constructs scientific knowledge. It argues that terminology is not merely a neutral labelling system but a dynamic process that shapes and transforms concepts in specialised discourse. Focusing on Arabic linguistics, the study highlights how inherited traditions, translated theories, and terminological proliferation have contributed to conceptual instability. Drawing on socioterminology, discourse analysis, and computational linguistics, it emphasises variation, context, and the cultural dimensions of terminology. The article concludes that critically analysing terminological practices is essential to strengthening conceptual clarity, scientific rigour, and effective knowledge transfer.

Keywords: Terminocriticism, Terminology Studies, Arabic Linguistics, Metalanguage, Socioterminology.

Introduction

A review of linguistics' history shows that its development has been driven not only by new terms but also by the continual reorganisation of conceptual systems. Terminological innovation has often accompanied the emergence of new theoretical paradigms, as stable terminologies are repeatedly reshaped to accommodate new concepts. Arabic linguistic studies, however, have followed a different path. Rather than developing a coherent linguistics of Arabic grounded in empirical research on the language and its social uses, they have largely produced a discourse that adopts modern linguistic terminology while remaining closely tied to the classical grammatical tradition. As a result, contemporary approaches have often reinterpreted inherited grammatical concepts instead of fundamentally renewing the study of Arabic as a living language in actual communicative practice. The epistemological challenges of Arabic linguistic studies stem from a dual tension: continued reliance on the classical grammatical tradition and the translation-based adoption of modern linguistic theories. This has made terminology increasingly central, often shaping the field rather than simply supporting it. While terminology is essential to all linguistic inquiry, its prominence in Arabic linguistics raises important questions about the relationship between terminology and linguistics, and about the role of terminology studies in critically assessing conceptual and terminological practices. Because linguistic analysis necessarily relies on an evolving metalanguage, terminology cannot be treated as neutral. Without critical reflection, terminological practices risk becoming an autonomous framework that constrains, rather than



advances, linguistic inquiry. This article argues for a second-order critical approach that systematically evaluates the conceptual and terminological foundations of linguistic research.

1. Epistemological foundations of Terminocriticism

This section addresses the study's central questions: What is terminocriticism, particularly in linguistics, and how can linguistic terminology be critically evaluated in practice? It also asks who assesses terminological usage, what criteria should guide that evaluation, and who should anticipate and shape future terminological developments.

1.1. The Serendipitous Emergence of Terminocriticism

In 1998, François Gaudin introduced terminocriticism in response to the fragmentation of terminological practices and the uncontrolled proliferation of terms in specialised fields. He argued that terminology should not be limited to description and standardisation but should also examine the conceptual, social, institutional, and cultural conditions governing the creation and circulation of terms. Thus, terminocriticism views terminology not as a neutral system of labels, but as a critical field concerned with the relationships between language, knowledge, and scientific authority. Gaudin highlighted the lack of systematic documentation of neologisms and terminological innovations emerging from research activities (Gaudin 54–55). Along with Holzem, he emphasised terminological monitoring as a continuous process for identifying, evaluating, and integrating new terms into language planning (Perron, 1996, pp. 32–47). In the Arab context, such monitoring is crucial to understanding how Arabic terminology evolves amid social diversity, regional variation, and linguistic interaction. Managing the growing production of specialised terms requires stronger scientific, institutional, and technological support (Mokrane, 2020, p.146–174).

Goffin proposed integrating the theoretical and applied study of specialised terms into university research to support both disciplinary knowledge and terminological development (Goffin, 1978, p.303–304). Similarly, Widad Mustafa Hadi advocated creating a platform to publish and critically evaluate new terms before adoption, making terminocritical assessment a continuous practice (Hadi, 2000, p.65–70). Hadj-Salah promoted the creation of an Arab Internet as a strategic project to strengthen Arabic in digital communication and scientific research (Hadj-Salah, 2006, p.26–27). Saadia Aït Taleb's work on the Lexar database reinforced this vision by highlighting the role of computerised terminology, corpora, and digital tools in organising and disseminating Arabic scientific knowledge (Aït-Taleb, 1991, 1996). A central aspect of Hadj-Salah's thought was his criticism of uncritically adopting Western linguistic models without developing Arabic linguistic corpora (Hadj-Salah, 2008, p. 25). For him, corpus-based research provides the empirical foundation necessary for dictionaries, terminology, and linguistic analysis. It allows the study of terms in authentic contexts, improving their evaluation, standardisation, and integration into scientific discourse.

1.2. Terminology between Conceptual Analysis and Interpretation

The main risk is reducing terminology to a discipline of conceptual interpretation rather than one concerned with organising and analysing concepts. Labels such as Conceptology reflect this tendency by implying an autonomous field of conceptual study. Terminology should instead be seen as a mediating framework that links concepts, terms, and specialised communication. Concepts are examined only insofar as they clarify naming processes and the structures underlying them. Unlike philology, which interprets the content and meaning of texts, terminology focuses on the relationship between concepts and their linguistic representations in specialised domains (Malmberg, 1972). Although this perspective may seem straightforward, it entails profound epistemological transformations in



the foundations of terminology (Gallo, 2001, pp. 78-98). Experts' concepts are not always expressed through fixed or standardised terms; they vary, revealing a gap between terminological forms and conceptual representations (Rastier, 1995, p.35-65). Therefore, terminological analysis should not be limited to identifying neologisms but should also examine how new meanings emerge and are structured. While ISO defines terminology as the scientific study of concepts and terms in specialised fields (ISO 1087, 1990), Lerat (1995, p.23) emphasises that specialised discourse is not merely a matter of content: concepts are language-independent, whereas terms are their linguistic designations within specific communicative contexts.

Terminology encompasses all aspects related to terms, including their designation, concepts, and characteristics derived from studying their referents. It rests on a triadic relationship among the term, the concept, and the object it refers to, whether real or imagined. The term thus links reality to its linguistic representation. Unlike the semasiological view of the signified, the concept in terminology is a mental construct that precedes its designation and is not naturally bound to it. However, this conceptual dimension should not be extended beyond terminology's scope, as other disciplines, such as epistemology, also examine the nature and formation of concepts. Concepts, designations, and disciplinary specialisation have developed across sciences to the point that any scholarly study must consider their various dimensions. While all fields of knowledge describe concepts, modern terminology specifically examines how linguistic systems designate these concepts (Lerat, Op. Cit., p. 17). It does not define scientific concepts, which specialists do, but focuses on the relationship between concepts and their linguistic expressions. This distinction requires balancing the conceptual and terminological levels and avoiding excessive prioritisation of abstract theoretical approaches.

1.3. Rethinking the Alleged Absence of Terminological Critique

The second risk is assuming that terminological criticism did not exist before this modern orientation emerged. However, previous studies reveal valuable critical contributions that, although limited in scope, provide an important foundation that should not be overlooked. Because these studies were rooted in the tradition of *riwāya* and focused mainly on commentaries and transmission rather than new texts, linguistic terminology expanded through repetition rather than innovation. This issue grew more complex as transmitted sources multiplied and diverged (Mokrane, 2023, pp. 78-140). This approach persists because it prioritises preserving and transmitting knowledge over critically examining it, reinforcing continuity through repetition and authority.

2. The Critical Turn in Contemporary Terminology Studies

2.1. The Institutionalisation of Critical Terminologies

Terminocriticism represents an advanced stage in terminological studies, moving beyond term creation and standardisation to analyse the conditions that govern the production, circulation, and acceptance of terms. It considers terms as dynamic cognitive and cultural constructs shaped by disciplinary, social, and historical contexts, rather than as fixed labels for concepts. This approach examines semantic change, variation, competition, and how terms integrate within linguistic and cultural systems. Influenced by the linguistic turn, it views terminology as an active component in knowledge construction, reflecting epistemological and institutional contexts. Consequently, terminocriticism has become an interdisciplinary field combining linguistics, sociology, philosophy, and corpus analysis. Since the late 1990s, terminological criticism has expanded from technical standardisation to



evaluation, reflection, and anticipation (Humbley, 2009, p. 5–8). While linguists analyse terminological developments within their fields, terminologists adopt a broader perspective by evaluating concepts, planning terminology, and anticipating future needs in accordance with principles such as those outlined in ISO 1087:2019.

2.2. The Socioterminological Shift

2.2.1. Socioterminology and the Social Turn in Terminology

Socioterminology emerged at the intersection of theoretical and applied sociolinguistics, redefining the scope of terminological studies. It examines the circulation of terms in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, while analysing meanings, conceptual structures, and the social conditions that shape terminology. Rather than treating terms as mere labels, it views them as linguistic signs embedded in social practices, whose diffusion, appropriation, and use those practices shape. The field developed along two main traditions. In France, Louis Guilbert and the Rouen research laboratory influenced it, with major contributions from Yves Gambier, Louis Guespin, and François Gaudin. In Québec, Pierre Auger, Jean-Claude Boulanger, and Jean-Claude Corbeil advanced it through their involvement in language planning and policy. In both contexts, socioterminology maintained a strong sociolinguistic orientation and later spread across Romance-language countries (Gaudin, 2005, p.81).

Sociolinguistics' influence became evident in the 1980s through pioneering studies by Monica Heller and colleagues, who examined workplace communication and the social factors driving lexical change (Heller et al., 1982). Denise Daoust and Jacques Maurais later introduced a diachronic perspective, highlighting that terminological systems are dynamic rather than fixed (Daoust & Maurais, 1987, p.05–46). This perspective brought Québec terminology research closer to socioterminology, as both view terminology as a socially situated, historically evolving phenomenon. By emphasising variation and social practice, socioterminology departs from the Wüsterian tradition, which largely rejects terminological variation. As a branch of applied linguistics, it has also been closely linked to language planning and policy, moving terminology beyond technical standardisation into the broader public and democratic sphere (Gaudin, 2003, p. 173). Although standardisation experts play an essential technical role, their work differs from terminology's broader public dimension. Since the 1960s, governments have increasingly incorporated terminology into language planning, particularly in science and technology, to regulate usage and shape linguistic practices. However, terminology extends beyond institutional language policy. Terminological criticism, together with socioterminology, offers a reflective and evaluative approach to specialised vocabularies. Rather than merely describing or standardising terms, it examines how they emerge, acquire meaning, circulate, and evolve within scholarly communities. It bridges linguistic and conceptual analysis by viewing the term not simply as a lexical unit, but as a cognitive tool that supports the construction, organisation, and transmission of knowledge.

2.2.2. A Critical Approach to Terminology

A critical approach to terminology rests on the principle that conceptual clarity is essential to scientific communication and knowledge development. A term is considered adequate only if it accurately represents a well-defined concept and functions coherently within a system of knowledge. Its value therefore depends on its capacity to distinguish concepts precisely, avoid ambiguity, and facilitate scholarly exchange. At the same time, this approach recognises that concepts are inseparable from their linguistic expression. A term's



effectiveness also depends on its morphological, syntactic, and semantic coherence, as well as its usability in academic discourse. Accordingly, terminological analysis considers both conceptual structures and the textual contexts in which terms are created, used, and interpreted. Socioterminology reinforces this perspective by emphasising terminology's social and cultural dimensions. Specialised vocabularies emerge within communities of practice and are shaped by institutional, historical, and cultural contexts. Consequently, terms often reflect the intellectual traditions of the communities that use them. This is especially true in the humanities and social sciences, where concepts often evolve from ordinary language into specialised terminology, making critical terminological analysis essential to understanding shifts in meaning and disciplinary use. Conceptual transformation is particularly evident in literary studies, philosophy, cultural studies, and the social sciences, where new terminology often emerges through metaphorical extension, semantic change, or the reinterpretation of existing words. As it moves across disciplines, everyday vocabulary may acquire specialised theoretical meanings or be reshaped. This analytical perspective examines these processes to explain how concepts evolve and how shifts in terminology reflect broader changes in intellectual frameworks.

A critical approach to terminology is especially valuable in disciplines with limited terminological standardisation. Unlike the natural sciences, the humanities are marked by conceptual diversity, where the same term may carry different meanings or new terms may express distinct theoretical perspectives. While this flexibility encourages innovation, it can also create ambiguity and hinder communication. This approach addresses these challenges by comparing usages, clarifying distinctions, and identifying areas of convergence and divergence. Its objective is not rigid standardisation or unrestricted variation, but a balance between conceptual stability, which supports clear communication and cumulative knowledge, and the flexibility needed for theoretical innovation. A critical approach to terminology also promotes interdisciplinary communication by clarifying how key terms differ across disciplines. As research increasingly crosses disciplinary boundaries, it helps identify conceptual overlaps and misunderstandings rooted in divergent terminological traditions, fostering clearer scholarly dialogue. More broadly, this critical perspective on terminology is not merely a technique for managing specialised vocabulary but an epistemological approach that examines how language shapes knowledge, supports intellectual exchange, and influences the development of disciplines. By analysing relationships among terms, concepts, discourse, and social context, it explains how specialised knowledge is created, negotiated, and transformed over time.

3. The Mechanism of Criticism in Linguistics

3.1. Metalanguage, Linguistic Discourse, and Terminological Inquiry

The relationship between terminology and criticism is best understood through the concept of metalanguage. Originally developed in literary criticism, this concept extends to linguistics, where language itself is the object of study. Linguists describe and analyse linguistic phenomena, while external scholars may also evaluate their theoretical frameworks. In this sense, language exists independently of linguistic inquiry, and linguistics constitutes the primary level of analysis. However, the object of critical terminological analysis is different. Rather than examining language directly, it investigates the metalanguage and linguistic discourse through which scholars describe and conceptualise language. It therefore evaluates the coherence, adequacy, and conceptual consistency of linguistic descriptions. From this perspective, linguistic discourse differs from linguistics as a discipline, an approach



notably developed by Abdelkader Fassi Fehri (1993, p.43–63) and complemented by studies of the descriptive language of the Arabic linguistic tradition (Maslouh, 1989).

Linguistics is embedded in multiple, interconnected discourses that circulate through conferences, journals, and academic institutions, shaping how linguistic knowledge is produced. Rather than studying linguistics in isolation, the terminologist examines these discursive formations, which structure, transmit, and mediate linguistic activity and provide access to the discipline itself. Roland Barthes's distinction between the language of the writer and that of the critic provides a useful framework for understanding terminological analysis. In *Critical Essays*, he argues that writers use language to represent reality, whereas critics employ a second-order language for analysis and interpretation (Barthes, 1964, p.255–256). Similarly, linguists treat language not as a means of expression but as an object of scientific inquiry. The terminologist extends this analytical process by examining not language itself, but the language of linguistics—the metalanguage through which linguistic knowledge is constructed. This layered perspective shows that knowledge is shaped by multiple levels of discourse and theoretical frameworks, each offering a distinct view of the same object (Baylan & Fabre, 1990, p. 36). Michel Foucault likewise argues that discursive formations—such as grammar, medicine, and economics—shape the concepts, objects, and forms of knowledge produced within a discipline. As these discourses gain coherence, they develop into influential theoretical systems. He illustrates this with early grammatical theories on the origin of languages and the emergence of Indo-European linguistics, showing how philological discourse framed and transmitted such ideas (Foucault, 1969, p.64, 142–145). This perspective highlights the gap between scientific reality and the discourses that represent it. Albert Einstein similarly observed that concepts are mental constructions rather than direct products of sensory experience (Einstein, 1979, p.49–50). Although concepts often reflect reality, abstraction and theoretical interpretation shape them.

3.2. Beyond Standardisation: A Critical Perspective

Although classical terminology viewed standardisation as essential to organising scientific knowledge, this position has been widely challenged. Socioterminology, in particular, rejects the assumption that concepts can be universally standardised and instead emphasises their social, linguistic, and cultural variability. From this perspective, terminological unification must be treated with caution, since concepts are shaped by the intellectual contexts in which they emerge and evolve. This debate highlights the importance of a critical approach to terminology, which has become a key methodological perspective in terminological studies. Rather than accepting terminology uncritically, it evaluates the relevance and adequacy of specialised terms. While it discourages the unnecessary multiplication of competing designations, it also recognises that terminological innovation is justified when new concepts or evolving theories require new forms of expression. The relationship between terminology and critique has also been examined through translation. Just as Madame de Staël linked translation to critical activity (Wilhelm, 2004, p.692–705), terminology can likewise be viewed as part of a broader critical process. If theory provides the conceptual framework of scientific knowledge, terminology gives it operational form. Because theories evolve through revision and debate, their associated terms must also remain open to critical evaluation. Their validity depends on their conceptual adequacy within changing intellectual and cultural contexts (Gad, 2002, p.85–86). Thus, theory, terminology, and critique form a dynamic relationship that promotes conceptual rigour while avoiding both excessive subjectivism and rigid standardisation.



The influence of critical terminological analysis extends beyond the sciences into literary criticism, where scholars increasingly examine the language of criticism itself. By analysing the terminology critics use to formulate judgments and theoretical positions, they seek to improve the clarity and coherence of critical discourse rather than merely comment on literary texts. This concern is reflected in numerous scholarly initiatives. The Egyptian journal *Fusul* devoted a special issue to “Issues of Literary Terminology”, while the Lebanese journal *Contemporary Arab Thought* published a double issue on “Criticism and Critical Terminology” (Benhaddou, 1988, p.13–24). Similar attention appears in works on literary terminology and in the growing practice of introducing critical studies with terminological discussions, underscoring the central role of terminological reflection in contemporary scholarship.

4. The Role of the Terminologist in Linguistics

4.1. The Status of the Terminologist

Not all scholars engaged in terminology accept the title terminologist. Some prefer labels such as terminology expert or subject-field terminology specialist, arguing that terminological work depends on expertise in a specific domain. Others even question whether terminology constitutes an autonomous discipline (Jongen, 2000, p.209). Similar debates have long existed in criticism, where critics' identities and roles have also been contested. Despite these reservations, contemporary scholarship recognises both terminology as a distinct discipline and the legitimacy of the term terminologist. As in criticism, methodological diversity does not undermine the field's disciplinary status (Gouadec, 1997, p.13–14). Jean-Jacques Perrot highlights the terminologist's importance through the notion of terminological issues, referring to the challenges and responsibilities of terminological work (Perrot, 1991, p. 116). Unlike the lexicographer, who records established usage, the terminologist identifies, monitors, and sometimes anticipates new terms emerging in specialised fields. This forward-looking role may even encourage terminological innovation as new concepts develop. From this perspective, the terminologist occupies a strategic position in organising knowledge. Just as morphology structures linguistic systems, terminology structures specialised knowledge by analysing concepts, refining designations, and promoting coherence within scientific conceptual systems (Hamlawi, 2001, p. 7).

4.2. Analysis of Linguistic Concepts

Linguists were the first to analyse and evaluate linguistic concepts. As Hadj-Salah notes, this task involves explaining and clarifying concepts, despite the difficulties posed by the abstract nature of linguistic knowledge, technical language, and persistent misconceptions about science (Hadj-Salah, 1971, p. 11–12). Terminological inquiry supports this process by organising and refining conceptual systems, not only in linguistics but also in all fields that require precision (Mokrane, 2018). A similar perspective appears in translation studies. For Mathieu Guidère, conceptual analysis is a fundamental step in translation, as meaning emerges from the interaction between source-text concepts and the translator's knowledge. Because terms rarely have exact equivalents across languages, translation requires interpretation, analogy, and conceptual reconstruction (Guidère, 2009, p. 428). This process also involves analysing mental representations, forming communicative intentions, and selecting the most appropriate target expression (Gile, 1995, p.101–102). Thus, translation is a dynamic analytical activity grounded in an accurate understanding of the concepts conveyed. Conceptual analysis accompanies the entire translation process, operating at the cognitive level of perception, interpretation, and intention. Terminological research therefore



relies on conceptual systems to limit linguistic interference, especially in interpretation (Pavel, 1993, pp. 66–82; Gile, Op. Cit., p. 166). The terminologist is not merely a compiler of glossaries but a critical mediator who evaluates concepts, validates terminological choices, and ensures coherence between meaning and designation.

Unlike the lexicographer, who records established usage; the terminologist takes an evaluative, prospective approach, assessing terms for conceptual adequacy and their place within knowledge systems (Duval, 1991, p.79–80). Terminology thus combines descriptive and normative functions by promoting precision, consistency, and effective scientific communication (Mazière, 2005, p.60). By analysing translation practices and terminological choices, the terminologist identifies patterns that corpus-based research can systematise (Altomonte, 2020, p.76). This perspective, developed in discourse analysis and emphasised by Cabré (1998), links terminology to the organisation of specialised knowledge. Positioned between description and standardisation, terminological work remains dynamic, adapting to conceptual change while balancing linguistic usage with the need for terminological coherence (Auger, 1980, p. 146).

4.3. Reviewing Linguistic Terminology

From this perspective, the terminologist works at two complementary levels: evaluating the term and analysing the concept it designates to ensure their coherence. The objective is not to question the specialist's authority but to assess how well the relationship between concept and designation works within its theoretical and cognitive context. This task requires close collaboration with domain experts to integrate conceptual knowledge and terminological analysis. We then review, validate, and, where appropriate, incorporate proposed terms into terminological databases and other specialised resources. In this regard, we have proposed a method for identifying and classifying terminological treatments to establish Arabic equivalents based on their source languages. The term *hypertext* illustrates this approach: we collect, document, and systematically organise its proposed Arabic equivalents before terminologists, subject specialists, and language academy committees evaluate them. This process supports critical assessment and informed decisions on term standardisation and adoption.

5. Linguistic Discourse and Its Characteristics

5.1. Examining the Hypothesis

In the introduction, we argued that the Arab context is characterised less by linguistics as a fully established scientific discipline than by linguistic discourse. Rather than being driven by a stable community of specialists, the field is often shaped by influential commentators whose contributions do not necessarily strengthen its scientific foundations. As a result, many participants engage in discourse about linguistics without clearly distinguishing it from linguistic research itself. A terminological analysis of this discourse can help explain this situation. Such an analysis requires identifying the defining features of linguistic discourse and the methodological tools for studying it, which the following section examines. The present section thus provides the conceptual framework for that analysis. The term *linguistic discourse* has also been used to describe regional differences in how the Arab world receives and develops linguistic thought, particularly in its treatment of concepts and terminology. Fatima Hashimi Bakouch argues that studying Maghrebi linguistic discourse highlights its distinctive contributions while recognising the foundational role of Mashriqi scholarship, especially the Egyptian linguistic tradition (Bakouch, 2004, p.12). Similarly, Abdessalem Mseddi notes that Arab scholars devoted considerable attention to semantic



overlap within linguistic discourse (Mseddi, 1986, p.317). As linguistic research increasingly incorporated critical reflection, attention shifted from linguistic works to the discourse through which they are interpreted. Josette Rey-Debove provides a parallel example by applying linguistic analysis to metalanguage itself (Rey-Debove, 1986). This reciprocal relationship illustrates how linguistics and terminology enrich one another through the analysis and refinement of scholarly discourse.

5.2. The Discourse of Definition and Classification

Linguistic discourse builds definitions of linguistic terms on other related terms, creating an interconnected network of concepts and definitions. By linking terminology to specific theoretical issues and contexts, it organises and classifies linguistic knowledge. Consequently, linguistic discourse develops as a structured body of specialised terms and definitional systems within different branches of linguistics. Its coherence depends on the relationships among concepts, reflecting terminological practices shared by researchers and scholars who analyse and formalise linguistic knowledge. Because definitional practices concern both terms and concepts, they lie at the core of terminological inquiry and help standardise specialised discourse. Terminologists must therefore examine the classificatory mechanisms underlying linguistic discourse (Bouacha, 1984). As Danielle Candel (1993, p.34) argues, definitional discourse reflects an ongoing activity of defining and a broader reflection on lexical meaning. This prominence of definitional activity in linguistic discourse raises an epistemological question: why does linguistic discourse rely so heavily on definitions?

This proliferation reflects the uncertainties involved in constructing linguistic knowledge. This explains the abundance of encyclopedic works, such as *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language Sciences* (Ducrot & Todorov, 1972), whose dense network of definitions synthesises numerous linguists' contributions. These reference works have themselves become subjects of terminological, linguistic, and lexicographic critique. Ben Taleb Othman (1989, p. 93) defines definitional discourse as the semantic construction of specialised concepts that clarifies referential features and situates terms within a terminological system. Accordingly, definitional discourse should identify the concept's defining semantic features, describe its referent, and establish its relationships with other terms within the conceptual system.

5.3. Linguistic Discourse and Its Pedagogical Orientation

While linguistics generally adopts a descriptive approach to language and distances itself from pedagogy except in applied linguistics, linguistic discourse is strongly pedagogical. It seeks to make linguistic knowledge accessible to non-specialists through various forms of mediation. As a result, the dissemination of linguistic knowledge has become a major outcome of terminological reflection, leading to the widespread production of introductory books and manuals, sometimes at the expense of linguistics as a strictly scientific discipline. Introductory works may therefore rely heavily on pedagogical simplification to explain linguistic concepts. Although this approach is valuable, it has not always fully realised its educational potential. More systematic instructional design and specialised research on linguistics pedagogy could have yielded greater benefits, comparable to the well-established field of language pedagogy (Hornsby, 2014).

5.4. Linguistic Discourse as a System of Representation and Communication

As a scientific discipline, linguistics is expected to provide a structured system for organising and representing its concepts (Certeau, 1998, p.79). However, it has developed a



distinctive status because its object of study has itself become a form of discourse, making linguistics both a science of language and an object of critical reflection. Its metalanguage functions as a second-order representational system rather than a purely communicative one (Laporte, 2000, p.43). Nevertheless, linguistics also pursues communicative aims, and many of its terminological challenges stem from the effort to develop effective conceptual and mediating tools. These dimensions converge in what we call linguistic discourse: a representational system that identifies, organises, and stabilises linguistic facts through language itself. Although it may appear communicative, its primary function is representational, remaining open to continual revision and conceptual refinement until provisional standardisation is reached. This reflects the Paradox of the Object's Non-Finitude (Mokrane, 2016) and also characterises linguistic discourse as an object of terminological construction. Consequently, terminological work within linguistics is an ongoing process of regulating and restructuring concepts, inevitably generating conceptual shifts, instability, and reformulation. From this perspective, metalanguage remains fundamentally a system of representation rather than communication.

The same principle applies to other representational systems. Mathematics, for example, organises data before communicating it through formal notations. Language engineering faces similar challenges with syntactic representation. Abeillé and Blanche (2000, p.56) note that, unlike relatively standardised lexical representation, grammars vary widely in their modes of representation, lack consistent links with the lexicon, and remain only partially standardised. This perspective aligns with Sylvain Auroux's concept of grammatisation, the historical process through which language becomes an object of systematic knowledge. Through grammars, dictionaries, and other forms of metalanguage, language is described, classified, and analysed, reflecting a community's capacity to view its own language as an object of scientific inquiry rather than merely a means of communication. Writing systems, grammars, and dictionaries do more than transmit language; they create metalinguistic tools that promote linguistic awareness. As Auroux (1994) argues, grammatisation is the historical process through which language becomes an object of knowledge, while linguistic awareness emerges as one of its main cognitive outcomes. Grammars and dictionaries are therefore not only descriptive resources but also cognitive tools that shape knowledge and cultural understanding. This distinction between grammar as an internal system and its metalinguistic description justifies efforts to simplify grammar, placing them primarily within language education and educational linguistics rather than theoretical grammar. The distinction between school grammar and scientific linguistics has become a defining feature of modern grammatical thought. As Chevalier (1994) notes, school grammar primarily transmits linguistic norms, whereas linguistic research seeks to explain language through evolving theories. During the nineteenth century, historical and comparative linguistics challenged traditional grammar by presenting language as a dynamic system. The institutional rise of linguistic research after 1875, along with the influence of the New Sorbonne, further integrated scientific advances into grammar teaching. By the twentieth century, communicative approaches and modern linguistics had transformed grammar from a mainly prescriptive discipline into one that also accounts for language use, variation, and change.

5.5. The Recurrence of the Relational Term (Hypertext)

A relational term remains linked to its source-language equivalent until it becomes fully established in the target language. It is most visible in texts that repeatedly present the



Arabic term alongside the foreign original, indicating that readers still rely on the source form to grasp the concept. The term remains relational until it functions as an autonomous conventional sign in Arabic. It also appears frequently in definitions, references to the original coiner, and terminological commentary. These textual features support a textual-linguistic analysis of linguistic discourse and reflect A. Hadj Salah's criticism of approaches that translate Western terms mechanically without examining their actual use in authentic texts. Terminological planning has addressed the recurrence of relational terms through what may be called the traditional model: the early effort to transfer Western linguistic terminology into Arabic by creating Arabic equivalents. It is called traditional because it reflects the initial stage of Arabic terminological development while still influencing later coinages. In this model, translators often retain the Western term alongside the Arabic equivalent, revealing the latter's continued dependence on the source language. As Ducrot (2001, p.86–87) shows, foreign terms may make up a significant portion of the text, underscoring this reliance. Consequently, the Arabic term remains conceptually tied to its Western counterpart, requiring researchers to trace the source term's meanings, usage, and historical development.

The Arabic equivalent is thus introduced together with the conceptual framework of the source tradition, including its structure, usage, defining features, and examples. At this stage, it mainly extends the original concept, while terminological analysis also helps trace its historical development. As Khaoula Taleb Ibrahim (2000, p. 35) notes, the strict distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics has weakened, since languages simultaneously preserve elements of the past, the present, and emerging change. This raises the question of whether to abandon outdated terms or retain them as historical traces of earlier theories. Like expressions such as "the sun rises" and "the sun sets," they often persist as linguistic remnants even after the scientific concepts that inspired them have evolved.

5.6. Linguistic Discourse as Interpretive and Referential

Linguistics has gradually evolved into linguistic discourse, shifting from a purely descriptive science toward a more interpretive enterprise. As a result, description often becomes inseparable from theoretical interpretation. Scientific explanation increasingly depends on identifying and organising the conditions of understanding rather than merely describing linguistic facts. Influenced in part by jurisprudential modes of reasoning, linguistic discourse remains open to multiple interpretations. It evolves through new readings of foundational texts and the evaluative perspectives scholars bring to them. These judgments concern both content and form, both of which are relevant to terminological inquiry, although terminologists often focus on form. Consequently, linguistic discourse increasingly relies on references to leading scholars and established authorities.

Conclusion

This discussion shows that the relationship between terminology and linguistics goes beyond naming and standardisation. It is an epistemological process that conceptualises, organises, and continually revises scientific knowledge. Terminology demonstrates that scientific concepts are dynamic, evolving through discourse, usage, and theoretical change. In the Arabic linguistic tradition, the dominance of linguistic discourse has often encouraged extensive terminological production without equivalent conceptual development, reflecting tensions between inherited grammatical traditions and imported theories. In response, Abderrahmane Hadj-Salah's advocacy of corpus-based research promoted greater empirical rigour. At the same time, Saadia Aït Taleb's work in computational terminology has



advanced the integration of Arabic terminology into modern digital environments. These developments confirm that terminology is not merely a tool of designation but a key factor in producing, transmitting, and renewing knowledge. They call for stronger links between conceptual analysis, empirical research, and technological innovation to improve the coherence of Arabic linguistic scholarship. In this context, terminological criticism becomes essential, as it examines not only how terms are regulated but also the epistemological, social, and cultural conditions that shape their emergence and evolution. Terms are therefore viewed not as neutral labels, but as cognitive and institutional constructions reflecting the practices of scholarly communities and the contexts of knowledge production. Terminological activity occupies a dual position between description and prescription, observation and conceptual organisation. Unlike the lexicographer, who records usage, the terminologist works with specialists, translators, and language planners to ensure the coherence of conceptual systems. Terminology thus extends beyond naming to support scientific communication, knowledge transfer, and specialised information management. Linguistic discourse, both object and medium of inquiry continuously produces and revises definitions and classifications. The emergence of terminological criticism reflects the understanding that scientific language does not merely transmit knowledge but also shapes its construction and transformation. It therefore shifts terminology from a technical practice of designation to a reflexive field examining how concepts are created, circulated, and renewed across languages and disciplines.

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