
Book Reviews

GAUDIN, Francois: **Pour une Socioterminologie**. Rouen, FR: Presses de l'Université 1993. 255p. ISBN 2-87775-036-1

The author lectures at Rouen University and appears to be engaged in terminological research, but his approach in this his doctoral thesis is dictated by his sociolinguistic environment which he attempts to squeeze into terminology, hence the title.

The author brushes an impressionist picture of the French-speaking terminology scene with its institutions and shortcomings, which to tackle he undertakes to widen his vision to include sociolinguistic and praxematic parameters.

The book is quantitatively well-balanced: about half of it is reserved for an assessment of the French-speaking situation against the outside world (Section I) and an analysis of the foundations and practice there (Section II); the other half is dedicated to his argumentation for a wider approach (Section III). The 17 chapters include a flash-back, a status report and jottings on the legal frame-work, a discussion of the scope, ingredients of terminology, and concepts, meaning, standardization under the first half of the volume, and under the second half the following exploratory avenues: cognition, popularization, arranging for meaning, term creation, language ruling, making sense and fixing names, and finally the praxematic way.

The book has 7 appendices listed on p.231 (no page indication): 4 on Quebec and Belgium (French language promotion), and 3 on France (Statute of High Commission for the French language, etc), and an author's index + bibliography, but no subject index. It has also a scornful list of acronyms and abbreviations with but 5 entries on p.229 which is not listed in the table of contents, p.255 (last page), where you look in vain for e.g. Cireel (p.64), Afterm or ALE (p.65), CLE (74), LGP, LSP (91) or VS (137) etc.

The book is not a treatise but a rather anecdotic compilation of data and reflections which legitimate his ideas for improving terminology as a practice. His start off and major argument is that the Wüster model of Terminology meant as an instrument of unambiguous communication in science and technology is far off the beat on the same token as official interventionism in language matters. He claims that the preponderance of this model and the resulting Viennese school on international terminology (ISO) and terminology training is disastrous, since its tenets evolve completely outside linguistic reality which Wüsterians superbly ignore. Thereafter, he discusses the Soviet school (Lotte, Kandelaki) and sympathizes with Marnsenko and his 'modern' approach, which criticizes official meddling with language and stresses the prime importance of usage. The light, however, is not to come from the Orient but from the Occident, read France, yea Rouen! This light seems still dim enough since even usage is to the author but an „obscure sovereign“ (p.41)!. This is a surprising statement from a socio-

terminologist who, *ex officio*, should know better, and one may wonder what contribution could be expected from linguistic experts of his order in a debate he claims should take place among all language users (*citoyens linguistiques*) prior to any linguistic ruling ('glottopolitique', p.32), in which debate such linguistic experts should have the main say, because they know what it is all about. In all logic, reasoning of this sort is nothing but begging the question. Unfortunately, the whole book is rife with such typical stated or implied claims. Two other examples for further illustration: (1) p.133: „popularization is so much the more necessary since it has to develop by all means“, (2) p.66: „the originality of the French school, characterized by 'un enrichissement mutuel des problématiques de la sémantique, de la terminologie et de la lexicologie (dans) les applications des industries de la langue (dont)... la dictionnaire et l'intelligence artificielle contribuent à revivifier tout un pan de la réflexion linguistique', is „quite a clear perception of the continuum which consists of the whole lexica and their applications“.

One cannot but be impressed by the depth and fruitfulness of considerations of this order. The sheer existence of this school appears to be doubted by the author himself on p.68 where he states that it all boils down to what he styles „sensitivity of what we will call a bit hastily a school“. A still further major illustration of what might be called emptiness is patent as the author, while shopping around for a justification of his topic, socioterminology, returns empty-handed admitting in all honesty „on le voit, il n'y a rien de fixé (p.67), mais ce signifiant cerne une possibilité ... le terme (socioterminologie) précède le contenu notionnel“, and concludes resolutely „Socioterminology is hence terminology put again on its feet“, claiming further blatantly that the new term is well formed and useful. Obviously!

Instead of a definition, he offers a quotation from his tutor whereby socioterminology purports in particular to „understand the circulation of terms, the resistance against the impact of official lexica, the difficulties of instituting 'workable' terminological policies“, in short, „retrieving the social dimensions“! He concludes this justification exercise pluckily by asserting: „we have tried to show rapidly that there is a corpus of studies which share the endeavour to found a socioterminology capable of catering for social needs and tackling issues encountered in the development of technoscientific communications, i.e. language industries“ (p.70).

The rest of the book goes about to fill an empty word („Denn wo Begriffe fehlen, da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein“ – Goethe, Faust) with some contents. The challenge is glibly met, quoting some „mots dans le vent“ (p.69), and a query about „les agents propagateurs d'anti-normes“ (ibid). It is flabbergasting to note that the author's essay to define terminology by quoting authors like the late Guy Rondeau (Canada), Alan Rey (France), and Robert Dubuc (Canada) does not suffice to alert him to what strikes even an incipient learner of the art as self-evident, viz. that terminology, well understood, cannot but comprise all the parameters which the author wants to reserve for his 'dada'.

In fact, terminology relies indeed on both a notional system and the practice of those who work with and in that system. Why then labour to shuffle (shovel) the load on a new cart? Yet the author remains impervious to such fundamental considerations, and even his much quoted Alain Rey (p.77) saying that „Terminology is much more a social practice than an abstract science“ is no eye-opener to him.

To appraise one of the major stakes of terminology, viz. concept, the author, after discarding Aristotle in favour of Ernst Cassirer (p.87) (by which criterion?), takes much pains by citing a great part of his reading list to finally avow that he does not want to go beyond ISO 1087, and cannot get clear of whether or not it were useful to draw a line between concept and de Saussure's 'signifié', struggling between unity of thought (ISO) and unity of meaning (linguistic unity – de Saussure), and appealing to the invaluable value of intuition, to move also a psycholinguistic parameter. Czap with his fundamental indetermination of concept definition, evacuating inclusive the concept's utility, a proposition which the author completely endorses, provides him with the shoe he had been angling for: the „socialized perception of reality“ (p.98), whatever that means.

This leads us to the often felt discomfort produced on the reader by the persistent use of undefined yet definition-wanting terms like the just quoted expression or words like 'glottopolitique' (69), 'dictionnaire' (66), 'editologique' (96), 'normaison' (173), or a 'texte en soi' (83), 'praxème' (109), or 'puissance de suggestion' (91), 'vision puissançielle' (110), or 'programme des sens du terme' (109), akin to what we have started off from. This throwing about of guess-words does not make for clear thinking and puts one off, or else the book is meant for restricted circulation among addicts only, but then, what is the point?

„Socialized perception of reality“ must be the guiding star to „terminological negotiation“ (99) with the coming into the picture of the social forces, the labourer and his horse whose nodding will acquiesce to social practice, and language ploughing or, through the looking-glass, ploughing language.

Reverting to the concept as the hub of terminology, the author links it henceforth up with mental activity of the „Exercise of knowledge“ (A.Rey quoted p.77), and as such has a role to play in science; it is hence to the author „a kind of 'précis signifié'“ (p.99) whose contents is negotiated by the community of (indistinct?) speakers. Perhaps conscious of his own method, the author admits that there is science and that there is sociology, and that in ideologically tainted science like the latter the trend is for each school to impose its own „conceptualization of a term“ (ibid). Now, this is self-contradictory to an earlier statement by which the author rightly remarked on the essential independence of language (76) from both referent and concept, so that the origin of a concept cannot lie in a term. Indeed, conceptualization uses language but is *not* its child.

This anomaly (first term, then concept) may be proper to social sciences („la pensée est un produit social“, p.121), and it is, after all, the motive for this laborious thesis, the method being: first coin a fuzzy term, then labour the point and stuff the term with whatever contents you deem fit and you may be

able to sell your product on the mobile market and get a name and hopefully a lot of coins for the effort. This is precisely what the author means by „concepts productifs“ (p.101) likely, so he affirms, to procure research money, consultancy contracts, etc. (ibid).

The second half of the plea for socioterminology (p.119 onwards) mobilizes an input bit of cognition, another bit of semantics, computational linguistics (123), taxinomy (124), the division of labour (126), popularization (130-), and knowledge engineering (132-), the relativity of scientific truth (133, a good point which merits but 14 lines), knowledge circulation and invention (135).

A positive development, for once, is given on p.136-7 with the power drive of science showing the need to impress pairs while hedging new knowledge, submitting to the inexorable law of 'publish or perish', and to secure at the same time general acknowledgement (Nobel Prize) on the strength of popularizing efforts on what the emerging world will look like. This effort is subjacent to the implication of a common language which monitors the rush for reputation and which is liable to blame it on researchers if they persist in blithering ignorance. This reputational necessity involves talking across disciplines and to an open-minded public, lest to remain a club of „searching heads ever more cut off from the social body“ (137).

A similarly well-taken point is on the secludedness of scientists, hedging against all outsiders and on their blissful ignorance of even their own epistemology, let alone the findings of next door colleagues. If such a trend is rampant in science, it is more so in technology.

This notwithstanding, scientific texts purport a double end: communicate knowledge large scale and preempt objections from pairs. This need entails a certain fuzziness of meaning by way of the plurality of discussants who are prone, however, to indulge in shop talk with badge terms which serve the double function of access and exclusion, according to who cares or not.

Finally the author takes up concepts like „scientific logosphere“ (210): the world of scientific ergolect, i.e. the world put into words by scientists who construct meaning on the basis of knowledge about referents; such meaning is relative to the apprehension of the cognizable. The exercise being eminently practical, the author preys on praxematics to further his thesis on the need for implying terminology in the daily work of professionals by citing arthrology, defined as „the science of connexions and relations of referential categories within a semiological system“. This leads us back to taxinomy and the right word. We have come full circle!

At the end, the reader with the necessary stamina may ask what 'grand dessin' is hidden behind this patchwork, what criteria presided over the selection of authors quoted, apart from the obvious who are but a minute minority; is it „l'arbitraire de l'usage“ (136) which prompted the method, if any, used?

If socioterminology is what the author seems to suggest it to be, the message is clear enough.

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