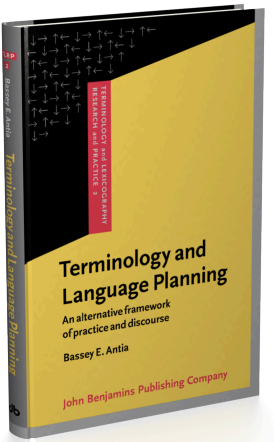
Introduction

https://doi.org/10.1075/tlrp.2.02int



Pages xv–xxiv of
Terminology and Language Planning: An alternative framework of practice and discourse
Bassey E. Antia
[Terminology and Lexicography Research and Practice, 2]
2000. xxiv, 264 pp.

Introduction

This book draws new outlines for a paradigm that may be referred to as *language planning (LP) oriented terminology management*, with such variant or synonymous designations as *LP-oriented terminology(management)* and *term(inology) planning*. Central to this paradigm is the discourse and practice of terminology in the context of LP. Terminology and LP, as academic communities, have had precious little contact between them. As a result, neither has been able to benefit from the other at that point where objects and needs demonstrably coincide.

The terminology community focuses, not on Latin, Greek or some such misconception, but on specialised or specific subject areas within which it studies knowledge (units, structure, representation, evolution, acquisition, etc.) in its relation to expression. As labels (linguistic or non-linguistic) for specialised concepts, terms are a means of acquiring, retrieving, creating, communicating, storing, representing and operationalising specialised knowledge. If the field of terminology is occasionally associated with language regulation, it must be in the third sense of the verb, *regulate*, as stated in the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*: "adapt to requirements". On the other hand, the LP community, seen from the most abstract of levels, is interested in the co-evolution of society and language, under conditions specified or constraints manifested by one or the other co-variable, and along a transformation path that is at some point controlled.[1] An example of a specific research object in LP would be the functional extension of a less widely used language as a planned response to aspirations or ideology, expressed as social policy. Clearly, the implementation of a decision to extend the range of functions of a language into a specialised domain would

1. As increasingly used in the social sciences, *evolution* is not strictly Darwinian in its acceptation (that is, selection). Interestingly, Durham (1991: 21) has defined it negatively as not being coterminous with progress or improvement, nor the preserve of genetic systems. Applying the disclaimer on improvement to LP would, for instance, enable one to restate the point made already by Haugen that LP could also aim at suppressing, rather than promoting, a language.

benefit from insights offered by an academic community that has knowledge and expression in specialised areas as its research object.

But the foregoing perhaps belies the scope of the book. Constructs or positions in both fields are subjected to sustained scrutiny in a way that allows for independent contributions to be made to each. Translation process analysis, text linguistics, LSP theory, epistemology, documentation science, lexical semantics, concept theory, corpus linguistics, artificial intelligence, knowledge representation, language engineering technologies are some of the areas dealt with. It is in the nature of the enterprise for the goal to be as important as the means.

Globalisation, Language Planning and Terminology

In any case, why the interest in *terminology, planning*, *less widely used languages* and the like, when many of the momentous events and topical issues of the late 20th century point to, or are believed to point to, the dismantling of frontiers, non-interventionism, etc.?

With the lowering, shifting or redefinition of disciplinary borders (referred to severally as inter-, trans-, cross-, multi-, para-disciplinarity), it has indeed become more compelling than ever before to relate one's research in a specific area to a broader intellectual framework. In the *Gutenberg Galaxy*, where electronic technology is seen as recasting the globe in the mould of a village in a pre-literate era, Marshall McLuhan writes that "compartmentalizing of human potential by single cultures will soon be as absurd as specialism in subject or discipline has become" (McLuhan & Zingrone 1997). Incidentally, globalisation could very well be one of the strongest candidates for interdisciplinary paradigm status on the eve of the 21st century.[2] In the sense adopted here, such a status would not refer to the scientific achievements that constitute the orthodoxy prevailing in any single discipline, as the first occurrence of *paradigm* is understood by Thomas Kuhn in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Rather, this status would refer to that broad thematic framework into which research in many fields is collapsible. Pretty much like conservation or democra-

2. Globalisation is used here in a broad and in a narrow sense. In the latter acceptation, it occurs in the context of a world-wide development and marketing strategy that calls for culture-sensitive product design, documentation and client support. In the former acceptation, globalisation is an all embracing phenomenon, and an issue in sociological theory, economic theory, political theory and the like. Deborah Fry's assistance is acknowledged here. She is working on a useful glossary of terms in the translation and localisation industries.

tisation, globalisation may be seen as the construct in terms of which many model problems and solutions are contemporaneously defined by scholarly communities of various descriptions.

A book that seeks to provide a framework for enhancing the terminological development of less widely used languages might be viewed as running against the centripetal grain of globalisation. In the broader sense of space-time compression, globalisation is a phenomenon that is frequently seen in terms of increased mobility of capital, goods and labour, the formation of trans-national economic and trade blocs, interlinkage of money markets, increased information sharing across national frontiers, world-wide action plans, the increasing substitution of residency for nationality, hegemonisation of the English language, faster means of transportation, advances in information technology, etc. But these oft-cited features engender great illusions of a global village to whose square or centre-stage all are guaranteed access. Let us consider three different scenarios.

The first has to do with trade. The Manager in charge of South Asia for computer software giant, Microsoft, has been cited as saying that because "most Indians have to first learn English to use a computer […] the use of computers could go up tenfold if programs were made in local languages".[3] Had the former situation not obtained, Microsoft just might have been able to reap huge profits in this potentially huge market of one-sixth of humanity without doing anything (translating out of English, adapting user interface, etc.) to its U.S. product releases and the accompanying documentation. The fact that Microsoft's shipments to countries where English is a dominant language are outstripped by sales in countries where English has no such status is perhaps partial evidence that the company's success resides, not in fostering U.S. hegemonies, but in a measure of sensitivity to local environments. And there is no shortage of clamours. In the July 1, 1998 telecast of *Europe Direct*, a programme on BBC World, Microsoft was taken on by the President of the Icelandic Association in the United Kingdom for the company's alleged refusal to localise its applications into Icelandic.[4] Interestingly, the question was not so much one of the ability or inability of Icelanders to use applications in English as that of checking the erosion of cultural identity. In an apparent appreciation of how business could be affected by the assertion of cultural rights, even in a country of 270,000 inhabitants, Microsoft stated its willingness to enter into localisation talks with governmental authorities in Iceland, as it had done previously with the Catalan

3. *AsiaWeek* (6–9–96) quoted by Björn Jernudd (1997).

4. A similar Icelandic campaign is documented in *Language International* 9.4 (1997).

and Basque governments.

The second scenario has to do with international travel. In her book, *The Coming Industry of Teletranslation*, Minako O'Hagan points out that through (and in spite of) information technology, the backbone on which many facets of globalisation ride, language problems arise today with a poignancy that was unknown in the age of limited cross-border transactions. Consider the following example which she cites:

> March 1989, an international hotel in Auckland, New Zealand. A Japanese businessman with very limited English is experiencing some frustration on the phone. As he doesn't know the correct number to dial he calls the hotel reception. The English-speaking receptionist can't understand her Japanese guest, but assumes he wants to make an international call to Japan. She connects him with the international operator. The operator also has difficulty communicating with him, but is able to determine that he is Japanese and puts him through to an international operator in Japan. There is a brief conversation in Japanese. The bilingual Japanese operator passes a message to the New Zealand operator who then informs the hotel reception that the man would like to order breakfast delivered to his room.

The third scenario deals with programmes requiring world-wide synergies. The increasing numbers of global summits and action plans on the environment reflect awareness that environmental problems do not know national frontiers. The forest-fires induced smog in Indonesia recently made nonsense of Malaysia's territorial integrity. If rural communities in Indonesia are not given alternative means of land-clearing as well as environmental education in a language they understand — not the working languages of Rio, Kyoto, Buenos — summit recommendations will remain just what they are. To the extent that language is the only means of receiving information, linguistic access is critical to the success of plans requiring global synergies. Seun Ogunseitan of the Nigeria-based African Centre for Science and Development Information might have mentioned language in warning that:

> An uninformed Africa is as much a threat to Europe, the Americas and Japan as it is to Africa and the Africans themselves. Access to information is vital for every country, but there is an enormous imbalance in the world in which one part lacks even the most basic information. [And] the lack of adequate and effective information flows to developing countries has made a holistic approach to global problems essentially impossible (quoted by Beaugrande 1992).

The foregoing scenarios — global product marketing, international business travel and world-wide (environmental) action plans — show that there are important linguistic correlates of globalisation. It is a moot point whether the gap

between the *haves* and the *have-nots* in some of these scenarios is increasing or has only become accentuated and better appreciated. What is not in doubt is that, for many peoples around the world, only the obverse side of the stunning strides associated with globalisation is seen, and this side spells as i-n-s-u-l-a-r-i-s-m. Interestingly, this insularism is source of frustration for the major actors in the global village square.

Localisation, a solution to the challenge of globally marketing computer software requires, among others, research into the culture and languages of target-markets. For instance, terms have to be created, and issues of iconicity (*sensu* preferential information staging or presentation patterns) need to be researched into. Terms being the information and knowledge control centres which they are, there is little hope that without attention and resources being apportioned to terminology, the following piece of knowledge on protecting the environment, taken from the *Oxford Reference Dictionary*, could be readily expressed in more than a few hundred of the world's six thousand languages (and understood by those who might otherwise have been expected to):

> CFCs are nonflammable, non-toxic, and unreactive synthetic compounds which have been used since the 1930s as working fluids in refrigerators and propellants for aerosol sprays. They have now been shown to be harmful to the earth's ozone layer, as well as being major contributors to the greenhouse effect […]. CFC molecules which have been released into the environment are broken down by the sun's ultraviolet radiation in the upper atmosphere, forming chlorine which reacts with ozone.

That many national populations speak more than one language must not be seen as suggesting that a language of modern science is comprised in such repertoires. If the speculation over the number of languages that can readily express the above text has some merit, it would show just how ludicrous it is to expect meaningful and informed debates in the world's legislatures — debates that are meant to ratify the Rio, Kyoto or Buenos protocols. In consonance with the democratic spirit, some legislatures in the developing world have ceased to make knowledge of English or other colonial languages an eligibility criterion for membership.

It follows from the foregoing that investment in local eco-systems by way of creating or planning terminology in less widely used languages is actually very much in tune with globalisation. It is perhaps no odd quirk that in the software industry, localisation and globalisation or internationalisation aim at the same goal. An electronic search for literature on globalisation at the Bielefeld University Library turned up the felicitous book subtitle, *Globalization is a Local*

Process.[5,6] Further search of the literature on sociological theory revealed an on-going debate as to whether globalisation is reducible to hegemonisation, as to whether locality is overridden by globalisation, etc. A leading scholar, Robertson, answers these questions in the negative.[7] In positing the concept of *glocalisation* (note spelling), Robertson seeks to make the oft-missed point that, as social processes, globalisation and localisation are not antithetical, and that the relationship into which they enter is not unidirectional.

The reflexivity of both processes, when seen from a linguistic standpoint, allows for the argument that there is no conflict between the terminological enhancement of less widely used languages and much of what globalisation is generally believed to represent.

In an age of globalisation, the patron-saint of the terminology planner in a less widely used language could very well be Leibniz, the 17th century German philosopher. Leibniz did not only cultivate a *universal* symbolic language but also a natural one, his native German, which was then an impoverished and *restricted* language.[8] Many of Leibniz's reasons for urging the terminological enrichment of German, in an era of the hegemony of Latin and French, bear striking resemblance to what would be revealed by a contemporary sociology of less widely used languages. Leibniz was concerned about language-based social stratification within Germany (the learned people spoke French — oft badly — while the common people spoke German). Like Gottsched and others in Germany, he was intensely concerned about the quality of German. He deplored the fact that "few straightforward books are written in Germany" in contrast to the situation in England, France or Italy where "the splendor of wisdom is not reserved to learned men only but has trickled down to the mother tongue".

While the mother tongue, then, was largely defined at national levels and by contrast to whatever languages were used for international communication, today it has to be defined in subnational terms as well. Policy-making and sociolinguistic thought have come a long way, from the programmatic report for Post-Revolutionary France which a radicalised Abbé Grégoire presented in 1794 to the French National Convention under the title *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens*

---

5. See Eade (1997).

6. George Amposem is thanked for indicating names of globalisation theorists, and for serving as sounding board to this discussion.

7. See Robertson (1992, 1994) among other works by Roland Robertson.

8. See Coulmas (1988) as well as Leibniz's 1683 admonition to the German People titled *Ermahnung an die Deutschen, ihren Verstand und ihre Sprache besser zu üben, samt beigefügtem Vorschlag einer deutschgesinnten Gesellschaft.*

d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française,[9] to the view in the 1960s and 1970s that multilingualism (believed to be characteristic of states south of the Atlantic) was a liability because it correlated with poverty, marginalisation, ignorance, political instability, etc.[10] With the emergence of new states around the world and renewed ethno-linguistic self-assertion in existing states, multilingualism has become a fact of life. It is no longer seen as incongruous with the directive principles of state policy or with *thinking globally*. Europe even has a Multilingual Action Plan (MLAP) for creating a Multilingual Information Society (MLIS). Terminology, incidentally, is playing an important role in the MLIS.

Today, one world-wide challenge of language planning (LP) research and terminology scholarship lies in working out the details of how to create specialised discourses for functional (as opposed to mere symbolic or demonstration) purposes. In other words, the concern is one of ensuring that many more languages are able to serve as means for communicating specialised information and knowledge, so crucial to the pursuit of goals on the global agenda, for example, the environment, international public health, empowerment, democratisation and good governance, etc. The world today is one in which timely access to specialised information and knowledge determines what rung of the social, political and economic ladder exclusive speakers of certain languages find themselves.

About this book: Specific motivations and contents

This book derives its broader context from the foregoing discussion. The book seeks to establish the bases for alternative needs analysis, work methodologies as well as modes of theorisation in LP, specifically planning in respect of terminology. Africa, an important source of impetus for the formalisation of LP as a branch of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, serves to illustrate the discussion. With respect to its more specific African context, the book suggests that (1) there often

---

9. An English translation by Antia & Brann has been published as *Report on the Necessity and Means of Suppressing Local Dialects and of Generalising the use of the French Language (in France)* as an appendix to Brann (1991). According to Brann, Abbé Grégoire, a representative of the clergy in the National Assembly, appears to have been receptive to the idea of other languages co-existing with French at the time (1792) he sent out his questionnaire on language use in France. This attitude changed when it was obvious that reactionary forces to the French Revolution rallied in the other languages. Barère's language report of 1794, the same year as Grégoire's, is instructive in this regard.

10. See, for instance, the essay by Joshua Fishman on "Some Contrasts between Linguistically Homogenous and Linguistically Heterogenous Polities". In: Fishman *et al.*, eds. (1968: 53–68).

is a gap between the stated goals of work on terminology planning and the resulting products; (2) an inadequate, if not *austere*, theoretical framework is employed in conceptualising the goals and challenges of terminology planning as well as in evaluating resulting products; (3) there is insufficient appreciation of: (a) the nature of specialist language (in particular from science theory perspectives, syntagmatic dimensions, etc.), (b) the mission of specialist language, and (c) the place of terminology in this agenda.

The corollary of inadequacies of theory and practice is that constitutional and other policy provisions on the use of indigenous languages[11] are not being implemented at all, or haphazardly so. Language continues to be an instrument of exclusion. In spite of this, sound development thinking continues to accord indigenous languages more, not fewer, new roles. The following are but a few examples taken from the domain of legislative or parliamentary procedure. South Africa is currently faced with the task of developing nine indigenous languages on which the post-Apartheid constitution has conferred co-official status with English and Afrikaans (the two official languages under Apartheid). It is the expectation that any of these languages can be used to address Parliament. In Zimbabwe's Parliament provision exists for the use of English and two indigenous languages. Nigeria's abrogated constitutions (1979 and 1989) explicitly provided for the use of three indigenous languages in addition to English at the National Assembly, and an indefinite number in state legislatures. Now, in much of Africa, official languages of European origins are spoken by about 30% of national populations. The measures in the examples cited above reflect awareness of the fact that erstwhile colonial languages cannot continue to be the sole media of discourse if the sector of recruitment for representative political leadership is not to be narrowly defined in linguistic terms. The local and global implications of stable, participatory democracy are such that this streak of successes in policy formulation needs to be urgently backed up by new approaches to corpus enrichment (specifically, expanding terminology). This would also be one way of ensuring that the conditionality or practicability provisions in the policy measures cited earlier are not used as escape clauses for maintaining the *status quo ante*.[12]

---

11. In this book, the use of the term *indigenous language* does not carry with it any value judgement, and invites none. Indigenous simply means endogenous.

12. Section 6(3) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa says, *inter alia*, that "National and provincial governments may use particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, *practicality*, […]" (my italics). The abrogated 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates at Chapter 5(51) that "The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba *when adequate*

Using process analysis studies in translation and approaches to knowledge processing in text linguistics, the book evaluates a legislative terminology resource, and uses the findings to discuss elements of an alternative framework for LP-oriented terminology.

The first three chapters of the book give a detailed account of terminology as an issue in social and language planning. Chapter 1 reviews some of the literature on language planning and situates terminology within the language planning paradigm. Taking several parts of Africa as case study, Chapter 2 examines the discourse on, and practice of, terminology within the classical language planning framework. Chapter 3 uses experiments on translation and knowledge processing, among other criteria, to critically review a terminology resource produced within the classical language planning tradition.

With the problems observed in the experiments in view, the three chapters that follow present theoretical positions in terminology as they contrast with, draw from, or extend work in semantics, lexicology, philosophy of science and documentation science. The goal here is to develop a framework for understanding the problems and challenges raised by the translation and knowledge experiments reported in Chapter 3. Thus, Chapter 4 discusses concept theory in terminology. It shows, among others, that traditional accounts of the linguistic sign in general language, because of the epistemological positions that underpin them, are inadequate to deal with the sign in specialised language. It is suggested that a number of problems observed in the experiments result from the implications of the distinction between these two sign models or model constellations not being fully realised. With the experiments still in retrospect, Chapter 5 discusses collocations and communication in specialised languages. It describes the importance of, as well as approaches to, the syntagmatic dimension of terms and discoursing in specialised languages. Chapter 6 examines issues of concept and term representation as they impact on questions of knowledge. Models in thematic lexicography and documentation science are examined.

The premise of Chapter 7 is that terminology is currently in a phase of rapid evolution, and that pathways offered in Chapters 4–6 to problems raised in Chapter 3 would have to be integrated in a number of other frameworks for enhanced results of terminology planning. Chapter 7 therefore examines the relevance of the following to work on terminology: special language text linguistics, corpus linguistics, artificial intelligence, and language engineering

---

arrangements have been made therefor" (my italics). There could of course be other reasons for seeking to maintain the *status quo*. A discussion of the politics of language in Nigeria's Second Republic National Assembly can be found in Antia & Haruna (1997).

technologies. Chapter 8 describes the creation of a model terminology resource that employs insights and tools offered by preceding chapters.

Among other issues which it addresses, the conclusion proposes the concepts of *optimisation* and *reengineering* of terminology resources, and suggests how some of the evaluation methods discussed in earlier sections of the book might facilitate the implementation of these concepts.