

Béatrice COSTA
University of Mons

Review of: MEDHAT-LECOQ, Héba (2021): *Terminologie comparée et traduction. Approche interdisciplinaire* (= *Collection Interculturelle*). Paris: Édition des archives contemporaines. 247 pp. ISBN: 9782813003737.

This volume is dedicated to the relationship between terminology and translation. It addresses issues situated in the field of tension between content-related considerations and methodological applications. Translators who interact with specialised content are inevitably confronted with terminology. Upon reading specialised texts, they are exposed to the terminology employed, whereas when composing such texts, they either employ or generate terminology themselves. In light of the apparent connection between the two notions, Héba Medhat-Lecoq seeks to clarify this relationship by examining relevant sources. Her book is commendable for drawing attention to this connection and providing a conceptual framework for it. In fact, the author decides to dedicate the first part of her investigation to exploring these two fields.

Titled “Two disciplines. One field of investigation,” the opening chapter (pp. 7-54) lays the foundation for subsequent arguments by introducing fundamental concepts. It defines essential terms such as “technical language”, “common language”, and “specialised language”, which are further explored in subsequent chapters (pp. 11–25). Even if it is a well-known concept, it makes sense that the author defines “technical language” by utilising pragmatic and stylistic analyses, encompassing cohesion, coherence, and connotation, independent of the subject matter. The classification of literary language as a technical language alongside other technical languages isn’t elaborated upon extensively, however, but this should not be construed as a critique of the author’s position. Her particular focus is on the

triad “object/concept/notion”, defined by her as “the fundamental basis on which the science of terminology and, consequently, the translation of specialised texts rests” (p. 39). As Jean-René Ladmiral rightly points out in his preface, “educational concerns are an explicit part of Medhat-Lecoq’s project. Her work primarily focuses on students, with her research seeking to preserve the continuity of the theory-practice-teaching triptych” (p. i). Indeed, the book showcases a distinct external structure complemented by a coherent internal organisation of its content. The presence of well-structured paragraphs, headings and remarks, along with the highlighted text, enhances the reader’s comprehension. The incorporation of supplementary elements, such as summaries and graphs, facilitates a better understanding of connections within the text.

However, while the use of comprehensible language may be beneficial for students, it can also lead to a loss of research perspective and a disconnection from the field of terminology. The author does not always manage to circumvent this danger. Those who are knowledgeable about the relevant literature not only fail to gain new perspectives on research, but also miss out on the true meaning of terminology in real-world applications. It is doubtless essential to emphasise that both the lexical and conceptual levels of terminology are equally important and that the “noun” is intrinsically connected to the “concept” as used in philosophy (p. 28).¹ It is also essential to highlight that

1 Indeed, there is no denying that the term “concept” holds significance in both philosophical and terminological contexts, as it signifies the grouping of diverse elements under a single heading. In this traditional sense, the nature of the concept lies in its comprehension and extension. Unfortunately, the author fails to provide further elucidation on this parallelism. In this respect, it would have been beneficial for example to acknowledge the distinction made by Kant between a priori concepts, which are necessary for attaining knowledge, and a poster-

any concept (whether terminological, scientific, or philosophical) is a construction of the mind (p. 26), and that the concepts circumscribe a set of common characters and properties.² However, if one wishes to explain how the professional world handles this knowledge or how terminologists handle philosophical concepts in their professional lives, a relatively generalised definition of the ‘concept’ is insufficient. Medhat-Lecoq does not attempt to establish a connection here, which is a pity given that terminology databases (that is, those data pools geared toward the creation of terminographical and lexicographical resources) constantly resort to philosophical concepts to describe terminological knowledge. The author thereby renounces the task of providing a standard terminological record, which is the fundamental form, instrument, and purpose of terminographic work.³ The UNESCO initiative “Co-operation on terminological matters”, which was adopted in November 1991, is notably absent in the study. This initiative, which promotes terminological

ori concepts, which are derived from experience. The former encompasses concepts such as unity, plurality, and causality, whereas the latter encompasses a broad range of concepts acquired through experience.

- 2 In short, the concept signs a class of objects, groupings, and categories, and assigns a number of stable invariant characteristics. Thus, a concept is defined by both these properties and the series of objects to which it is applied.
- 3 An analysis of terminological records, such as those provided by the UNESCO Thesaurus, could highlight the significance of interconnections in assessing thematic relevance. The architecture of the platform features a two-pronged approach to search for terms and the relationships they establish, which would have enabled the author to demonstrate her conviction that any concept can only be fully comprehended or activated when it is connected to other thematically related concepts.

activities within the capabilities of member states, established efficient and professional methods for terminology experts. While it is evident that the author's focus is on relevant literature rather than on practical applications, the latest advancements in the field of terminology science have been overly overlooked. It is, however, impossible to deny that this initial part is accurately analysed, and ultimately leads to the correct conclusions being drawn. The author closes the initial stage of her research with the remark that, after defining a term as the vector of a concept, one must consider whether it is also used in discourse, and whether it adheres to the phraseological constraints imposed by its respective field. This rightly leads to the following questions: What terminological variations arise in the defiance of all normative decisions? How is the meaning constructed? How can it be deduced? Can the implicit meaning hidden within discursive meanderings be discerned by those who are not experts in the field? Accordingly, she considers the extent to which the 'concept', once accurately established, ought to be incorporated into discourse and how it should consider the linguistic limitations imposed by the domain to which it belongs.

The second chapter (pp. 55-90), "Thinking translatology in terms of translation," adheres to the same style as the first. Its main purpose is to integrate the existing literature. As with any state-of-the-art review in the field of translatology, the author commences with the commonly acknowledged observation that translation cannot be treated independently of its practical aspects and that theory must not ignore this aspect (p. 93). Although this principle has been presented too often to be considered new, it should be noted here that the author's manner of summarising and presenting authors from two divergent worlds, Arabic and Western, is both original and instructive. Since time immemorial, translation, widely

regarded as one of the world's oldest professions, has been the subject of extensive and remarkably convergent philosophical and translational deliberations. The value of presenting authors who participated in the early Islamic translation movement under the leadership of the first caliphs lies not in the necessity of amalgamating all translation approaches but rather in bringing together seemingly distinct worlds that, in reality, exhibit surprising convergence.

Discussions about translation faithfulness and unfaithfulness were not limited to the Western world; they also occurred in the Arab world. As Islam expanded and the Arabs came into contact with other civilisations, the Abbasid caliphs (750–1258) in particular, desired to learn more about these cultures. To make Baghdad the centre of Arab-Muslim civilisation, they ordered the translation of many literary, philosophical, and scientific works from India, Persia, and Greece into Arabic. Shortly thereafter, one of the most renowned translators of the Baghdad School, Hunayn Ibn Ishāk, emerged. He placed great emphasis on the target language and on rules to ensure that the message reached the target reader without grammatical or syntactic errors. This translation approach contrasted with that of previous generations, whose translators focused more on the letter of the source text (pp. 98–99). The present reviewer hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the intriguing perspectives presented by the Arabic translation schools. However, the text begins its summary of Western translators on page 102, focusing on Cicero, Saint-Jérôme, Étienne Dolet and Joachim Du Bellay—those whose works and views have been extensively discussed in the secondary literature. The emphasis appears to be primarily on the French translation tradition, although further elucidation is not provided here. While these names may be familiar to readers, the text does not present any

new or unexpected insights; instead, it offers a straightforward overview of their contributions.

When it comes to an author like Antoine Berman (pp. 113–115), who has spiritual kinship with Friedrich Schleiermacher, the depiction becomes incomplete. Berman was responsible for producing the initial French translation of Schleiermacher's lecture "On the different Methods of Translation," which was delivered at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1813. He recognised Schleiermacher as the pioneer of contemporary hermeneutics and as the originator of that theory of understanding. Medhat-Lecoq does not see any need to mention that translation, according to Berman, must be both an object and subject of knowledge. For the French translation theorist, it is indeed crucial to reintroduce the concept and significance of the translating subject into the discussion of translation and to refine the approaches of transparency. Berman asserts the historical and ethical necessity of retranslations and advocates for an interdisciplinary approach in theoretical investigations of translation. Regrettably, Medhat-Lecoq mistakes Berman, who was Henri Meschonnic's doctoral student, for the supervisor himself, ignoring thereby that their schools of thought are entirely different. Berman is unquestionably linked to the hermeneutic school of thought, while Meschonnic developed his own theory of rhythm, one which purports to have definitively severed ties with the dogma of dualism, this back and forth between source and target text, and one which established a new translating approach.

Each translation theorist approaches the central issues of translation from a unique perspective; concentrating on one or even two of these would undoubtedly enhance their theoretical stances. Reading through the summary of the second part (pp. 137–139), one cannot help but wonder whether the in-depth

presentation of one single translation theorist would not ultimately have led to the same conclusion, namely that “terminologies as proposed by standards, dictionaries, databases, or any other terminographic medium do not always behave in the same way in discourse, even scientific and technical discourse” (p. 137). Berman, in particular, would have endorsed this sentence without batting an eyelid, but the paucity of information we get during the second part of the book does not allow this conclusion to be drawn. The expectations for the third section of the book are much higher, since it purports to explore the theoretical and methodological intersection at which the disciplines of translation studies and terminology converge.

The third chapter (pp. 141-205), “Where the two disciplines meet. Methodological and theoretical reflections,” focuses on methodological considerations of terminology and translation. It explores the points of convergence between these two activities and the challenges that they present. The originality of this third section lies in highlighting the fact that terminology, with its theoretical analyses and applications, represents a multidisciplinary sector which has developed in parallel with scientific and industrial progress, as well as international exchanges. The aim is to make the founder of contemporary terminology, Eugen Wüster (1898–1977), more widely known, and to make available documentation that was and still is often unpublished or only available in German. Wüster was first and foremost an engineer, preoccupied with industrial objects and anxious to offer a standardised description of them, but it would be wrong to ascribe a rigid and reductive standardising attitude to a terminologist who, on the contrary, included in his approach linguistic reflections that considered a wide spectrum of language variations. His ideas found their way into German-speaking universities, especially

into language and interpreting institutes, documentation and information storage, as well as approaches to standardisation. In the French-speaking world, however, his ideas have gone unheard.

A large part of the third section elucidates the principal linguistic and epistemological postulates advanced by Wüster and it accordingly delineates Viennese school terminology, expounding on its relevance. Medhat-Lecoq's proposal for an onomasiological methodology, which guarantees the terminological exactitude and authenticity of translations, provides, at least for the French-speaking world, invaluable perspectives for both terminological and translation specialists. The author posits that terminology research consists of two primary stages: identifying terms and then defining the concepts they represent. To achieve this, terminologists initially use a semasiological approach, before transitioning to an onomasiological one. Once the concept has been delineated, the terminologist reverses the process of apprehension, starting from the concept to the term, which is crucial in managing the instability of discourse. Moreover, the author underscores a robust association between the onomasiological approach and deverbalisation, which are two essential cognitive processes for effective cross-linguistic communication. Unfortunately, the author does not provide a comprehensive overview of the essential types and positive consequences of terminology systems on the quality of terminology. Her book does indeed present a range of captivating examples from Arabic and French sources; yet, it remains uncertain how translators ought to approach Wüster's methodology on a daily basis. It would have been advantageous for both the reader and reviewer if more definite answers had been provided. Their inclusion, which the present reviewer is convinced of nevertheless, would have been a

Forum

valuable addition to Medhat-Lecoq's innovative presentation of translators from both Arab and Western cultures.