

BOOK REVIEW

“The Terminology Papers” (on the New Terms of Science and Technology), by Dr. Attash Durrani. Published by the Oriental Society for Knowledge, Islamabad, 1999, pp.223. Price Rs. 200/- ISBN: 969-8216-02-2

Science-terminology science is a new field, there is a dearth of authentic publications in this field. The author has claimed this publication to be the first book in the field of “Terminology Science” published in Pakistan. Dr. Durrani’s book is a welcome publication, especially for readers having interest in Urdu terminology.

The purpose of this publication is to provide basic source-material for the students working in the field of translation and terminology. It is a collection of papers published by some renowned scholars in the field of terminology-science. The first three chapters are written by the author, Dr. Attash Durrani. Chapter 3 is based on the abstract of doctoral dissertation of Dr. Durrani, entitled “Urdu Terminology”. The remaining 19 chapters are based on the papers written by other scholars. Although the standard of these papers is high, some of these are highly technical and only advanced students in terminology-science will be in a position to benefit from these.

Dr. Durrani has mentioned the names of some of the earlier scholars in the subcontinent who had written papers on the development of Urdu terminology and the problems encountered in the implementation of standardized terminology. Some of the pioneers who made significant contributions are Moulvi Abdul Haq, Major Aftab Hassan, Syed Hussain Bilgrami, Dr. Shaukat Sabzwari, Rai Sohan Lal, Dr. Sved Abdullah and several others.

Tracing the history of Urdu terminology, Dr. Durrani has mentioned that the first dictionary of English-Hindustani terms was compiled by Thomas Roebuck, a teacher at Fort William College, Calcutta, in 1811. Since then, some 211 dictionaries and 419 indexes and glossaries were published by the year 1990. The standardization conferences and the preparation of principles for coining terms in Urdu began in 1840 in Delhi College, whereas the standardization work in English started much later, in 1867. The author

has pointed out that the development of terminology has become a big challenge. As new branches of science and technology emerge, the West is expanding its terminological vocabulary at a rapid pace. It has been estimated that more than 25 terms are being added daily to the existing one million terms. No language can possibly cope with the gigantic task of translating all the terms completely. The task of the experts in Eastern languages is even more difficult. Apart from other difficulties, the impossibility of transliterating makes it difficult to convey the exact meaning that was originally meant when a certain technical term was coined with a “different language-culture” behind it. At times, grammar does not permit the inclusion of foreign mode of expression, which the term conveys. An alternative approach to this is “transnationalization of terms”, through taking Latin and Greek morpheme roots and making our own derivatives, according to our own system and grammar.

The problems of differences in syntax, phonetics and in writing-systems will need to be resolved; the other new challenge is the changing and mutating of terms. If one accepts internationalism or transnationalism to some degree, even then it is *not* possible to keep pace with rapid changes in the meanings and concepts of words and terms in various fields. A student who graduated earlier, say ten to fifteen years ago, may find himself ignorant of the new words coined for the same concepts he knew or for the new concepts of the same term he had used before.

The author has discussed the different trends and approaches in the making of Urdu terminology. The school of puritans consider Urdu as strong as other academic languages. They recommend retaining previous words in terminology derived from sources in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, etc. Maulvi Waheed-ud-Din Saleem and Ch. Barkat Ali, amongst the earliest scholars of terminology, belong to this school. Then there are other scholars who recommend rejection of previous terminology-terms and internationalization through adoption of English and Western terminologies. The author has quoted opinions of some eminent scholars on this subject. Prof. Abdus Salam, Nobel Laureate, had recommended: “We have to invent an Urdu, in

Book Review

which international science should remain international and Urdu as a better Urdu". The late Major Aftab Hassan, Secretary, Scientific Society of Pakistan, and enthusiastic advocate of Urdu terminology, had suggested:

- i) The names of chemicals should *not* be changed,
- ii) Latin names of order, genus and species of plants and animals should *be retained* as such,
- iii) Pharmaceutical and generic names of drugs should *not* be changed.

Zygmunt Stoberski from the World Bank of International Terms (WBIT), Warsaw, has also recommended internationalization of terminology.

Dr. Durrani has made the following recommendations in his doctoral dissertation:

- i) Modern science of terminology should be introduced in the making and teaching of Urdu terminology.
- ii) An eclectic approach with hybrid terms should be used.
- iii) A comprehensive collection of all Urdu terminology should be compiled, merged and published with the assistance of computers. This would comprise more than 250,000 terms.
- iv) New work in this field should be launched with the help of international organizations, such as Eurodicautom, WBIT, IOUTN, Term Net, etc.

The author has done a creditable job of bringing under focus relevant issues in development of terminology, with special emphasis on Urdu terminology in the field of science and technology. He is eminently well qualified to undertake this task, having done his doctorate in Urdu terminology, and possessing broad experience as head of Bureau of Translation, Dictionaries and Terminologies, National Language Authority, Islamabad.

In spite of many praiseworthy aspects of this publication, there are a number of short-comings, which undermine its usefulness to the readers. The ad-hoc arrangement of 22 chapters of the book, ignoring the logical sequence, has made it difficult

for the lay reader to grasp the essential elements and the dimensions of the field of terminology. Chapter 6, which deals with the basic issues, such as "what is terminology", "why is terminology so important", etc., should have come at the beginning of the book, so as to familiarize the reader with the basic concepts. The purpose of this publication, as stated by the author, is to provide basic reading-material for the students of translation and terminology. This objective can not be achieved easily due to the scattered nature of the basic information required by the students and scholars of technology-science. The problem is further aggravated by the absence of a glossary of terms and acronyms, for quick reference by the reader. A glossary of technical terms, such as, internationalization, transnationalization, terminology, neologism, etc., could have saved valuable time of the reader in searching through the book for a definition of these terms. Similarly, the glossary could have provided quick reference to the acronyms used in the book, such as, INFOTERM, WBIT, IOUTN, COTSWE, etc.

The book has been burdened with unnecessary personal data of the author on p.19 which is not relevant to the topics being discussed. The author has mentioned the details of his doctoral dissertation, its duration, name of his major professor alongwith the names of some other persons who provided him with literature related to his field of study. Since complete information about the author is given in his curriculum vitae on the last page of the book, as well as on the back cover, the information given on page 19 is a mere repetition.

Frequent typographical errors, coupled with ambiguity of ideas in the first three chapters, makes it difficult to understand what the author wishes to convey to the readers. This may be seen from the following quotation from pp. 12 & 13:

"If as a result of over emphasis on brevity, Terminology turns educated persons into illiterate, every quarter-century, humanity will end up by making no progress at all.... The International Media working towards One World-Language of One World-Order is working towards into own destruction. The illiterates of future generations will

Book Review

rise to finish the Literates of Neologism. It is astonishing that the Muslim intellectuals have not yet reacted to this challenge. The media of Muslim lands is making the mistake of falling into the trap by offering science and technology through the seemingly literated mental attitude of Internationalism. Those who point out the pitfall are termed fundamentalists and uncultured retrogrades.....We need to make aware our media so that, as an Ummah, we do not fall into the trap of turning us into the chaos of Science and Technology through accepting International Terminology”.

There appears to be some contradiction in the views expressed above with those stated in later chapters, where the author says: “Mr. Stoberski has very rightly said in his paper on Theory and Practice of Internationalization of Terminology, and we are of his opinion for Urdu also, that if we will not internationalize our language, we will hinder our development”. Furthermore, the author has

grouped the problems of terminology-development for the Muslim Ummah as a whole, ignoring the fact that the Muslim countries have a diversity of languages, differing in script, grammar and syntax. The problems of terminology-development in the Arab countries, Russian Republics (C.I.S.), South Asian Countries and the Far East are different according to the language spoken and taught in their educational system. They have different policies in respect of the adoption of national language for transaction of official business.

An appropriate revision in the 2nd edition would make this monograph much more usefu to the intelligent reader.

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