Insikter om insikt : Nordiska teser om fackkommunikation

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Novus Forlag. Oslo 2008. 207 p.
ISBN: 978-82-7099-475-5

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It is paradoxical that much of the writing on specialised communication has had the effect of alienating many of the people it was supposed to convince, thereby creating barriers rather than facilitating exchange. This inward-looking phase was perhaps a necessary step to mark out an area of study and develop appropriate methods, but the publication under review suggests very strongly that those times are over: LSP needs to open up, and indeed has been opening up over the last few years, in two main directions. One is towards semiology, since language is only one ingredient in specialised communication, and the other is toward mainstream linguistics. LSP and terminology, perhaps a little later than lexicography, are demonstrably coming closer to various strands of the language sciences, semantics and text linguistics in particular. But it takes two to tango, and there are signs that some linguists are willing take a step towards LSP and embrace subjects outside the range of the language code itself. Some of these linguists come from a tradition of inductive research on such subjects as scientific language – M.A.K. Halliday is a good example of this orientation – whereas others work in newer fields such as corpus linguistics. The time is ripe, the authors claim, to engage a proper dialogue, though the linguists are given more prominence here than the semioticians.

The title of this essay could be paraphrased as *Knowledge about knowledge: Scandinavian theses on specialised communication.* Thirty years ago, when LSP and terminology studies began to emerge, there was talk of national schools and of a "Scandinavian approach". With the advent of the Internet, research communities have largely lost their geographic specificity, with the possible exception of Northern Europe, where Nordterm is active and many researchers as well as pedagogues work on LSP. This is a long-held tradition, characterised among other features by a multilingual approach. Where else indeed could you find a new book alternating between three languages? It is tempting to equate the chapters in Swedish with Laurén, in Norwegian (nynorsk) with Myking and in Danish with Picht, but the authors claim in the foreword to have conceived and revised the whole work together, so in this review we shall only refer to the collectivity. Many of the wide-ranging themes discussed here were initially presented in the same authors' *Terminologi som vetenskapsgren* (1997), better known outside Scandinavia in its German translation *Terminologie unter der Lupe* (1998), but are developed in this volume with a good deal more urgency.

Perhaps the quickest way to give an overview of the very broad scope of the book is to quote the ten "theses" of the title and comment on them briefly.

1. *Specialised communication is a cultural and semiotic phenomenon.*

One way of opening up LSP studies is to show how broadly based specialised communication really is. By taking the oldest form of specialized discourse, that which is displayed in legal texts, the authors underline the local, cultural roots, and the links with oral tradition that LSP and terminology exhibit, even for international scientific communication. The narrative form which is used for this chapter – itself something of an innovation – is in fact an invitation to revisit the history of philosophy and literature to see how thought patterns portrayed by such diverse figures as Balzac, Zola or Jorge Luis Borges reflect those found in scientific writing, such as that of Darwin for the nineteenth century writers. The relevance of the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of how individual languages "colour" the expression of thought is found to be central to any reflection on that of specialist knowledge. Semiotics is included as LSP and terminology include communication with both verbal and non verbal signs, and iconicity is displayed even in the most strictly text based documents, which calls out for specific study and the development of the best intellectual tools for the task.

2. *Specialised communication is a legitimate subject for linguistic research.*

This chapter can be interpreted as an appeal for linguists to study LSP and for LSP specialists to be proper linguists. Linguistics is a changing scene and voices have been raised to include in its brief more than the accounting for

the native speaker's competence: Robert de Beaugrande's plea for a broadly-based social and cognitive program of research is echoed here in relation to LSP studies. The role of semiotics comes into its own here, when the importance of the non-verbal component of specialised communication, visual in particular, is fully recognized.

3. Research into specialised communication including terminology can be considered as part of linguistics just as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics are.

This short chapter can be seen as the heart of the argument of the book, effectively bringing LSP and terminology back into linguistics. Here it is argued that mainstream linguistics has broadened its scope sufficiently to take in issues of relations between thought, specialised knowledge and its linguistic expression.

4. There is no clear cut-off point between specialised and other communication.

The fourth chapter investigates the relations between specialised and non-specialised communications by analysing several sets of dichotomies, or a least what have been previously portrayed as dichotomies. While it is admitted that terminology and LSP studies in their early stages posited binary differences for purposes of marking territory, the authors take pains to mention those pioneers of LSP (L. Hoffmann in particular) who also stressed the relative nature of such contrasts. These dichotomous classifications have proved to be not only divisive in the academic field but also difficult to apply in field work. On closer inspection, these so-called oppositions have been found to be complementary: terminology and linguistics; concepts and meaning; denotation and connotation; correctness and appropriateness; motivation and arbitrariness; alphabetical and conceptual ordering; monolingual and multilingual… Differing and more useful ways of considering these oppositions are discussed, in particular the usual part/whole or generic/specific relationships. The dichotomies are not all to be found between the LSP world and that of mainstream linguistics, but also within the two groups, so that sociocognitive or socioterminologists declare their opposition to essential features of the so-called Vienna school's teaching. The social aspect of these dichotomies, creating insiders and outsiders are revealed to be particularly prominent. The way out of the sterile opposition is seen to be through researchers of varying options **negotiating** the meanings of their dichotomies, in a similar way to that seen by the Rouen socioterminological school of negotiating meaning in a specialised context. One of the most interesting outcomes is a sketch to show that "LSPedness" can be studied on all language levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, textual…

5. *There are therefore no absolute boundaries between terms and the rest of the lexicon.*

It follows on from the previous that the difference between terms and the rest of the lexicon, a shibboleth of terminology studies of the past, is one of degree or of context or of perspective, and here Teresa Cabré's door model is presented as one way of looking at the question from different angles. The fact that some words become terms and that some terms lose their status as terms as they are popularized is taken as another demonstration of the relativity of the distinction. The typology of terms and how many and what elements they may contain are also important issues, these also prove to be at least partly language specific.

6. *The relation between specialised knowledge and the forms by which this knowledge is represented is arbitrary but not necessarily unmotivated.*

This thesis brings together the verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Starting from the observation that specialised texts are made up of both verbal and non-verbal representations, the authors investigate the relations between the two forms taking into account the parameters of motivation and arbitrariness, iconicity, representation form, needs of specialised communication, convention. In spite of the semiotic framework used for this analysis, the starting point is Saussurian linguistics, and the reader is taken back and forth from the "*langue* planet" to the "*parole* planet". It is pointed out that the "*parole* planet", where conventions are established, is a blind spot for Saussurian linguistics, requiring a "consolidation phase" which is critical for LSP. The time element here is important, which leads the authors to consider terminology in a diachronic perspective, and different models of term formation are discussed. The idea of convention as expressed here is close to Coseriu's norm, obviously a key concept when lexical development, specialised or otherwise, is concerned.

7. *The forms of representation vary according to the needs of communication.*

This is another chapter with a distinct semiotic bias, but the focus on variation in all its forms lends itself to analysis first in the field of verbal communication, then in mixed forms, verbal and non verbal, to end up with analysis of non-verbal communication, especially in graphic forms, of both material and non-material objects. As elsewhere in the book, the authors suggest different parameters lending themselves to a systematic study of the various aspects of the question. As far as variation is concerned, some important parameters are the degree of specialisation and the way the different subject fields influence the forms of representation.

8. *It is always possible to convert forms of representation but the result is not necessarily the same.*

This is the shortest chapter, which takes up the various channels of communication discussed in the previous section and investigates how and to what extent messages transmitted through other channels are altered, a logical point no doubt, but one that left the present reader perplexed as to where it leads, both practically and theoretically.

9. *A subject field has an inherent cognitive order and disorder, which changes with acquisition of knowledge.*

LSP is generally defined pragmatically as the communication of specialised knowledge, but just what is specialised knowledge and how can it be approached? This chapter examines the answers variously suggested by rationalism and by constructivism, the latter relying heavily on Glaserfeld. The use of ontologies to model knowledge is well known and currently an interface between terminology and artificial intelligence, and its relations are briefly discussed here.

10. *Both language use and language system can be planned.*

This long section is divided into three parts, the lengthiest being the history of the Icelandic language and some explanations of its well-known purist tendencies. A more speculative section is devoted to prescriptive and descriptive attitudes in language planning, which turn out to be a false dichotomy, and a six-point scale is suggested in its stead. The final part is devoted to issues of domain dynamics and domain loss. The threat is seen to be the loss of specialised (and even some not-so-specialised) areas to English, which has been felt more acutely in Scandinavia than elsewhere in the world and which has been openly debated even outside university circles. In common with the rest of the work, the aim of the authors is to provide an intellectual – and terminological – framework to structure the discussion of these issues which are claimed to be vital to the societies involved. This framework includes planned terminology development and the treatment of loans. As examples of successful planning the authors cite not just Iceland but more particularly French "won back" in Québec. Though Jean-Claude Corbeil is not quoted, his insistence on the democratic underpinning of any such movement finds an echo here. The section closes on a proviso similar to that of section 8: the planning of language system and language use is possible, but the intended result can never be guaranteed.

Contrary to both English and French language usage, applied linguistics as envisaged here is not limited to teaching preoccupations, and indeed this is not a book which focuses on didactic aims at all, though it is highly didactic in its presentation: each section has an introduction which gives the general orientation, the points to be covered are all enumerated and at the end of each chapter or section there is a summary indicating to what extent the goals

mentioned have been attained. As many of the German handbooks of LSP, it contains many useful tables and graphics.

This volume is a worthy successor to the 1997/8 book by the same authors. It is a challenge to terminologists and LSP specialists to broaden their horizons and at the same time an invitation to mainstream linguists to engage in the dialogue which they open with this book.

It is to be hoped that a translation will soon follow so that the opening which is so eloquently advocated can take place on the international level.

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