

Book Review



Terminología y Sociedad del conocimiento

Amparo Alcina, Esperanza Valero & Elena Rambla
(eds.)

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As pointed out by the main editor in her introductory chapter, the idea of this book developed during the running of two summer courses ('Terminología y Sociedad del Conocimiento' and 'Terminología e Ingeniería Lingüística'), both of them held at the Universidad Jaume I of Castellón (Spain) in 2004 and 2006 respectively. The aim of those activities was to present the progress in language technologies that could have an impact on terminology. And it is in fact to this idea that we can ascribe the main virtues and the inevitable limitations of the edition.

Among the virtues, we should single out a good selection of authors from the world of Spanish research, as most of them are leading researchers in the fields of their respective contributions. Some of the authors offer panoramic reviews of the state of research in their field: Ricardo Baeza-Yates, from Yahoo Research, on information retrieval; Celia Rico, from Universidad Europea de Madrid, on automatic translation; Antonio Moreno, from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, on linguistic engineering; Jordi Porta, of the Real



Academia Española, on quantitative techniques of corpus exploitation; Rosa Estopà and Jorge Vivaldi, of the Institut Universitari de Lingüística Aplicada at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, on automatic extraction of terminology; Horacio Rodríguez, from Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona, together with the group made up of Guadalupe Aguado, Inmaculada Álvarez and Antonio Pareja, from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, on semantic annotation for the processing of natural language.

Other contributions, even preserving the tone of panoramic presentations typical of the teaching framework for which they have been created, focus on the development of specific linguistic resources, or on the use of specific computing tools: Carlos Subirats of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona introduces the FrameNet Español project; Pamela Faber of the Universidad de Granada, and Ismael Sanz and Ernesto Jiménez-Ruiz of the Universidad Jaume I of Castellón, illustrate the edition of ontologies through their respective research experiences; Rosa Castro explores the use of the Pathfinder Network terminology tool, developed for the indexation of publications; Amparo Alcina of the Universidad Jaume I of Castellón and Clara Inés López-Rodríguez of the Universidad de Granada focus in their respective chapters on the use of various combined techniques for the extraction of knowledge – Alcina in her Ontodic project, and López-Rodríguez in her Onco Term and Ingeniería de Puertos y Costas projects, of the group co-ordinated by Pamela Faber.

Differently from the two groups of contributions above is that of Purificación Fernández Nistal of the Universidad de Valladolid. If the previous contributions focus on the development of technologies and of use for terminological work, she carries out a critical reflection on the competencies on the training of translators, and shows its concern that translation studies and staff focus exclusively on technological skills and leave aside the necessary acquisition of expert knowledge for a specialised quality translation.

Once the theme review of the contributions by the various authors has been done, it must be pointed out that one of the limitations of the edition is the non existence of a unitary conception for the book. If the editors sought to elaborate a manual for students, the selection of the first block of contributions could have been extended to other aspects of terminology related to the non-attended technology – terminology data banks, automatic classification of documents, follow-up of terminological implementation, and so on. If the editors, on the other hand, had sought to elaborate a monographic work on specific advances in the binomial terminology and language technologies – what some have come to call terminotics – the second group of contributions would have become insufficient, as there is a mixture of presentations about own developments with experiences of use of commercial tools. In summary, it would be two books in one – a university manual and a monographic piece of research. And both would have resulted a little too short.

The second limitation of the book, which cannot be attributed to the authors nor probably to the editors either, is the period of time that has taken place between the summer courses (2004 and 2006) that evolved into the elaboration of the final version of the texts by the authors, and the publication of the book (2009). In the first case, five years is too long a period of time in the field of technology, and evidently the book lacks an up-to-date bibliography, as could not be otherwise. When publications suffer such delays, it would be advisable that those responsible for the edition should fill this gap by providing a list of additional references.



The third weak point of the edition is the reduced level of interweaving between terminology and language technologies in some of the chapters. Terminology is missing in some of the contributions. Amparo Alcina, the main editor, already warns us in the introduction that the approach is a multidisciplinary and not an interdisciplinary one, but the reader cannot help asking herself how do they relate or how could some technological developments in terminology have an impact, as such is the main objective of the book. If in addition we take into account to whom the edition is addressed, basically postgraduate university students, it would not seem acceptable to think that those same readers should be the ones asked to fill the gaps of relevancy or of the applicability of the language technologies to the terminological activity. Thus a certain coming closer to the needs of terminology is missing in the chapters dealing with information retrieval (Baeza-Yates), linguistic engineering (Moreno) or semantic annotation of corpus (Rodríguez), to name but three of the more generalist chapters.

After this review of the least successful aspects of the edition, we should retake the positive elements that are obviously there. The selection of authors, as stated at the beginning, has been handled with care and appropriateness. Not all the important ones are there, but they constitute a representative sample of the leading points of research activity in terminology and in language technologies in Spain, and above all, in Spanish.

Some authors given excellent accounts on the state of the art, from which stem out proposals of future work. Ricardo Baeza-Yates talks about the use of the processing of natural language for the so-called systems for the retrieval of the future – prediction of future news. Celia Rico calls for the need to integrate advances in terminotics – formalised resources and management tools – in automatic and assisted translation systems. Antonio Moreno, despite championing automatic translation of spontaneous speech as one of the priority items of the future, also states that there is a comeback of the theoretical models towards the symbolic orientation versus statistics, and that the applications of the future will be multi-modal and should incorporate more languages, as both are challenges of the future of a great interest to terminology. Rosa Estopà, for her part, introduces as challenges of the future for automatic extraction of terminology the reduction of silence (non-retrieved pertinent units) through additional strategies and the adaptation of extractors to the needs of the different professionals that use them.

Some contributions can be considered to be fairly complete monographic works, as they offer the reader a clear synthesis of the techniques used in certain applications. We should single out here the contribution of Jordi Porta on the methods of quantitative analysis and the chapter on semantic annotation systems by Guadalupe Aguado, Inmaculada Álvarez and Antonio Pareja.

We have left for the end a reference to the introductory chapter by the main editor, Amparo Alcina. As may have been noticed, we have not in this review used the label of Knowledge Society to refer to the subjects dealt with in this book, as we consider that the selection of authors and of subject matters bring us closer to linguistic technologies exclusively, and they would only in part cover the so-called Knowledge Society. If we exclude this minor dissension, we would like on a closing note to acknowledge the valour shown by the editors in carrying out an edition of such characteristics, with content geared towards the training of young researchers.
