

The Linguistic Term, Between Translational Plurality and Conceptual Chaos

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Abstract:

The world is currently witnessing an explosion of knowledge in various fields, followed by a massive secretion of terms, which has prompted the receiving nations to transfer this knowledge through its translation. However, the translation process has resulted in many problems related to the terms, the most important of which is the problem of the multiplicity of the term and the chaos of the concepts. This article will attempt to answer this problem, by tracing the reality of the linguistic term textual in modern Arabic linguistic discourse.

Keywords: translate, term, text linguistics, , cohesion, coherence.

Introduction:

The realm of linguistic research has witnessed a swift and remarkable evolution since the early 20th century. A continuous reevaluation of its intricacies, perspectives, methodologies, and conceptual frameworks has paved the way for the emergence of text linguistics. This transformative field of study has a profound impact, steering linguistic analysis from traditional sentence-based examination into a more holistic exploration centered on the text's structure, discourse, and reception. Within the Arab scholarly community, this shift was hailed as a 'new enlightenment,' expanding the horizons of Arabic grammatical studies beyond mere sentence mechanics while respecting the basic principles enacted by ancient grammarians. (Abu Afra, Muhammad Salim, 2010, Introduction).

Despite its increasing popularity in the Arab world, the endeavor to translate the intricate concepts of text linguistics into Arabic has unearthed a fundamental

challenge: the proliferation of translations for a single term and the ensuing conceptual disarray. Thus, the central problematic emerges:

- Have Arab translators successfully captured the essence of textual linguistic terminology?
- This overarching question branches into several key inquiries:
 - What Arabic equivalents have been coined for the terms "text linguistics," "coherence," and "cohesion"?
- What factors contribute to the multiplicity of translations for a single term?

This study endeavors to provide an overview of textual linguistic terminology in the Arab milieu, drawing insights from seminal Arabic works that introduced this field to Arab readers and elucidating the diverse terminologies employed to encapsulate its core. Employing a **descriptive methodology** for theoretical elucidation complemented by practical analysis, the study embarks on an exploration of the following axes:

1- Terminology:

“Knowledge cannot exist without terminology” epitomizes the pivotal role of terminologies across various domains of knowledge. Indeed, terms serve as the very keys unlocking the realms of scientific research. Embracing cross-cultural exchange requires the translation of terminologies unique to each discipline. But what is ‘term’?

While specialists across disciplines offer varied definitions, a term remains fundamentally "a linguistic construct crafted to encapsulate the essence of a specific entity, gaining consensus among experts." (Sassi Ammar, 2009, p. 94). Clarifying further, Al-Fassi al-Fahri expounds that "a term embodies specialized linguistic currency, functioning as a sectoral lexicon curated and disseminated by experts within a particular field of knowledge. Mastery of the subject matter it represents is requisite for its comprehension and effective utilization." (Al-Fassi al-Fahri,

Abdelkader, 1985, p. 396). Hence, the comprehension of terms is inherently contingent upon specialized expertise.

Mustafa al-Shihabi elucidates the prerequisites for term establishment, asserting: "It is evident that consensus among scholars regarding a term is an imperative condition. It is impermissible to attribute more than one terminological expression to the same scientific concept, and the proliferation of scientific terms across Arab nations stands as an affliction of our linguistically affluent heritage." (Tabi Mohammed, 1992, p. 39).

The term 'linguistic term' pertains to the field of linguistics, serving as "a vehicle employed by linguists to articulate linguistic concepts and significations, often serving as a conceptual umbrella encapsulating scholarly endeavors probing linguistic terms rather than general lexicons." (Astitya Samir Sherif, 2008, p. 341). Hence, a term embodies a specific expression, delimited in meaning, imbued with clarity, and specific to a particular subfield, exemplified by the textual linguistic term under examination in this study.

2- Text Linguistics:

Text linguistics emerges as "a branch of linguistics dedicated to the examination of both spoken and written discourse... elucidating the manner in which textual components are structured and interconnected to convey a cohesive whole." (Sabahi al-Faqi, p. 35). Pioneering figures in this domain include Fadiq, Halliday and Raqia Hassan, De Bojrand, Drisler, among others.

3- Translation:

Translation, as an art of language and literature, boasts an ancient lineage that has captivated linguists for its instrumental role in cultural and knowledge transmission among diverse civilizations. Especially during the contemporary era marked by an explosion of knowledge propelled by technological advancements across varied domains, translation serves as a conduit bridging the gap between knowledge-producing and knowledge-receiving nations. In our Arab milieu,

endeavors to align with the quick-paced cognitive advancement entail the transfer of knowledge through various mechanisms, with translation in the lead.

This mechanism eclipses alternative methods such as Arabization, derivation, metaphor, and adaptation. Translation "occupies a central locus within the framework of term establishment in our Arab realm. It transcends mere linguistic transference from source to target language, embodying a process of acculturation. Stakeholders engaged in the translation of foreign terms must traverse the path of meticulous translation, supplemented by preparatory mechanisms facilitating the seamless integration of borrowed linguistic elements into the fabric of the target language, harmonizing with its lexicon, and seamlessly disseminating among its speakers." (Nouwi, Hanan, 2020, p. 15). Mastery of both source and target languages, alongside a comprehensive understanding of the target environment's linguistic, social, historical, and political distinctions, constitutes a prerequisite for translators. Hence, Al-Jahiz delineates specific criteria for translators, of the most significant among them :

- The translator should possess eloquence.
- Profound knowledge of the subject matter being translated, demonstrated in the clarity of expression.
- Proficiency in both the language being translated from and into.
- Possession of translation skills, where training and practice are essential components. (Al-Jahiz, 1996, pp. 76/77)

These conditions enable the translator to convey information in a sound linguistic form and with a seamless style. Considerable efforts have been exerted to convey this knowledge, undertaken by individuals (translators and terminologists) as well as by institutions and associations. Nevertheless, these endeavors to render Western knowledge into Arabic continue to be afflicted by deficiencies. We observe numerous translations of identical terms and conceptual perplexity, resulting in terminological disorder and leaving the Arabic reader disoriented.

4- The causes of this diversity:

One significant factor contributing to this terminological complexity is the division among Arab translators into two ideological camps: those who emphasize heritage and those who advocate modernity. Those defending heritage argue for maintaining a continuum between the past and present, striving to conserve the existing terminological wealth within heritage. Mazen Al-Waer contends: "To convey Western technical linguistic concepts, we must revert to Arabic terms capable of expressing the same Western notions. By doing so, we simultaneously achieve two objectives: first, preserving our heritage while endeavoring to modernize it; second, clearly, accurately, and comprehensively conveying Western linguistic concepts" (Al-Waer, Mazen, 2003, p. 60). Mahmoud Fahmi Hajazi concurs, affirming that "heritage terminology constitutes a shared asset that should be clearly leveraged in developing contemporary linguistic expressions" (Hajazi, Mahmoud Fahmi, 1994, p. 233).

On the other hand, proponents of the modernist stance argue that this knowledge imported from the West necessitates the creation of new terms to prevent confusion and semantic discrepancies with heritage terminology. Al-Saraan contends: "This knowledge embodies concepts unfamiliar to Arab linguists, and it may be inappropriate to render them with Arabic terms whose meanings are firmly established. It may be preferable to avoid their usage to prevent conflating their authentic significance with the intended modern interpretation" (Al-Saraan, Mahmoud, n.d., p. 29).

5- Textual Linguistics in Arabic Literature:

A survey of the early milestones in Arabic linguistic scholarship reveals the pioneering efforts made to introduce this field into the Arabic language:

- Nihad Rezkallah's 1989 research, "Methodological Studies in Text Analysis."
- Saad Maslough's work "From Syntax to Discourse," published in 1989.

- Some scholars argue that Saeed Yaqteen employed specific text linguistic tools in his 1989 book, "The Opening of the Novelistic Text (Text and Context)."

Following these initiatives, a series of translations ensued, including Said Hassan Bahiri's translation of Van Dijk's "Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction," and Mahmoud Jad Al-Rab's translation of Brand Schubert's "Language Science and Literary Studies: A Study in Style, Rhetoric, and Text Linguistics" in 1987. Furthermore, Said Hassan Bahiri translated Wolfgang Heinemann and Dieter Wunderlich's "An Introduction to Text Linguistics" in 1991. Subsequently, a variety of Arabic foundational works embraced the term 'Text Linguistics,' exemplified by:

- Muhammad Khatibi's 1991 book "Text Linguistics: An Introduction to Discourse Harmony."
- Saad Maslouh's study "Towards a Grammaticalization of the Poetic Text: A Study of a Pre-Islamic Poem" in 1991.
- Jameel Abdul Majeed's exploration of "Eloquence Between Arabic Rhetoric and Textual Linguistics" in 1998.
- Ilham Abu Ghazaleh and Ali Khalil Hamad's "An Introduction to Text Linguistics (Applications of the De Boisguérin Theory and Wolfgang Dressler)" in 1999.
- Omar Abu Kharmah's work "Towards the Text, Critiquing Theory and Constructing Others..." and others.

6- Arabic Equivalents for Selected Terms:

Through previous works, we observe that researchers employed several Arabic translations for the foreign term 'Text linguistics.' It was translated as Science of the Text, Science of Textual Language, Science of Text Language, Text Linguistics, Syntax of the Text. In other books, it was translated as Theory of the Text, Science of Textuality, Science of Texts, Textual Discourse, Linguistic Analysis of the Text, Textual Phonetics (Saadia Nayima, 2016, p. 129).

From a structural perspective, the term ‘Text Linguistics’ is a compound noun consisting of Linguistics + Text. This structure aligns with the foreign format text+linguistics, where linguistics translates to linguistics and text. This word comprises:

The lexical unit:..... linguist

The functional unit indicating methodology and science.....Ic

The morphological unit indicating pluralization.....S

The Arabic translation thus comes out to match this format in ‘Linguistics’ (Rabah Bouhoush, 2007, p. 220).

Abdul Rahman Al-Haj Saleh distinguished between ‘linguist’ and ‘language’ in the choice of terminology. As for the term Science of Text Language, it is a complex construction where Science is attributed to ‘Language,’ which, in turn, is attributed to ‘Text,’ resulting in an extended translated term. This additional attribution may cause confusion for some recipients, leading to interpretations like ‘Science/ Language of the Text’ when ‘Science of Text Language’ is intended because ‘Language Science’ is the translation given to the term ‘Linguistics’ by Eastern scholars.

Regarding the term ‘Science of Textual Language,’ its structure is multifaceted, with ‘Language Science’ as the first part followed by an adjective structure with the word ‘Tex.’ The term ‘Textual Linguistics’ is a translation of the French term ‘La linguistique textuelle’ ‘Textual Linguistics,’ as translated by Abdulkader Al-Mahiri and Hamadi Samoud in Patrick Charaudeau's dictionary. This adjectival structure corresponds to the foreign compound format; however, what is notable about these translations ‘Science of the Text,’ ‘Text Linguistics,’ and ‘Syntax of the Text’ is their preservation of the concept.

Alongside these terms, other equivalents indicating the same concept were used. Salah Fadl used the term ‘Science of the Text’ interchangeably with ‘Discourse Analysis’ and ‘Text Linguistics’ in his work ‘Rhetoric of Discourse’ and ‘Science of the Text’ (Salah Fadl, 2004, p. 319).

Saad Maslouh employed the term ‘Text Grammar,’ equating it with ‘Syntax of the Text’ and ‘Text Linguistics’ in his research titled "Towards a Grammaticalization of the Poetic Text," stating: "This study is an initial attempt to examine aspects of the measures and procedures that constitute the features of the idea of text grammaticalization equals Text Linguistics in Arabic text especially poetry (Saad Maslouh, 1991, p.153), the term in question is of cultural heritage. Ahmed Afifi introduced the term ‘Text Grammar’ and made distinctions between it, the science of textual analysis, text linguistics, and text theory.

Meanwhile, Azhar Al-Zanad used the terms ‘Text Linguistics’ and ‘Syntax of the Text’ instead of simply ‘text’ He stated: "Text linguistics or text grammar studies the text in terms of its abstract structure, encompassing everything we hear and identify as text." (Azhar Al-Zanad, 1993, p.18)

As for the terms ‘Cohérence’ and ‘Cohésion,’ they have also not escaped translation multiplicity. **The first term** has been translated into Arabic in over seven different ways, including: cohesion, lexical cohesion, collocation, interconnectedness, and various other translations.

The second term has also been translated into Arabic in more than eight ways as: cohesion, coherence, semantic cohesion, language pair, and other translations.

We can observe a clear overlap among these translations, with the term ‘cohesion’ being used for both foreign terms despite their differences, and likewise, the term ‘Consistency, which inevitably leads to confusion between concepts.

Regarding the term ‘Collocation,’ introduced by researchers Ilham Abu Ghazaleh and Ali Khalil as a translation for ‘cohésion’ (with the note that they did not provide the foreign term in their research in writing), the translation is muddled and overlaps with the translation of ‘Collocation,’ which was rendered as ‘Collocation’ or lexical accompaniment as a component of lexical coherence.

As for the terms ‘Cohesion’ and ‘Coherence,’ they are two heritage terms mentioned by Saad Maslouh. He justified this borrowing from heritage by stating: "...

Many attempts have been made to translate the terms 'cohérence' and 'Cohésion,' the most notable of which are their translation as cohesion, harmony, consistency, and integration. After much thought and deliberation, we found out that these two Arabic counterparts characterized by clarity and expressiveness." (Saad Maslouh, 1991, p.116). These terms are found, for example, in the works of Al-Jahiz, Abu Hilal Al-Askari, Al-Walai, Osama bin Munqidh, and others.

Conclusion

The terminological diversity surrounding text linguistics poses a significant challenge to Arabic scholarship, resulting in confusion and complexity for readers and researchers alike.

Upon completion of the research and analysis, the study yielded the following findings:

- The term 'text linguistics' has encountered diverse translations primarily due to challenges in translating its initial component. However, upon revisiting translations of this field in Western contexts, such variability is notably absent. For instance, in America and Britain, it is rendered as 'linguistics'; in France, 'linguistique'; in Italy, 'linguistica'; and in Germany, 'linguistik.'
- Each translation of the terms 'cohérence' and 'cohésion' presents a straightforward linguistic form, except for 'Lexical Cohesion' and 'Semantic Cohesion,' which are compound adjectival constructions. Nonetheless, in terms of semantic content, a single Arabic translation suffices for both terms.
- The translations 'Cohesion and Coherence' are prevalent in contemporary Arabic research within the domain of text linguistics.
- The variations observed in the translations of these three terms are attributable to disparities in source languages (French, English, German) and their respective linguistic theories and schools.

- Failure to discriminate between the terms 'Text' and 'Discourse,' despite differing perspectives, results in a conflation of concepts between text linguistics and discourse analysis.

Therefore, individuals entrusted with translation tasks, be they translators or terminologists, must collaborate and standardize their efforts. This concerted approach aims to rectify the terminological disorder prevalent in the field of text linguistics and other related disciplines. By doing so, the intended term will be firmly established in the minds of Arab readers, averting fragmentation, conceptual overlap, and loss of clarity. As articulated by Al-Boushiki (1999, p. 765), success in establishing scientific principles for formulating, generating, translating, and endorsing terminologies will significantly contribute to the harmonization of Arabic scientific terminology. This, in turn, facilitates cultural and scientific exchange, fostering interdisciplinary interaction and development. Conversely, neglecting these principles or failing to adhere to them fosters terminological chaos, potentially leading to intellectual isolation and stagnation within cultural and scientific spheres.

- Arab researchers are encouraged to adopt the translation 'Text Linguistics' exclusively, as the term 'Linguistics' garnered consensus during the Tunis conference in 1978, where a unified glossary for linguistic terms was established.

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