

# Book Reviews

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Book Review Editor

KAGEURA, Kyo. **The Dynamics of Terminology: A descriptive theory of term formation and terminological growth**. Amsterdam/Philadelphia : John Benjamins, 2002. 322 p. ISBN 90-272-2328-9 (Eur) / 1-58811-314-0 (US).

Terminology is generally understood to be the activity that is concerned with the identification, collection and processing of *terms*; terms are the lexical items used to describe concepts in *specialized subject fields*. Terminology is not always acknowledged as a discipline in its own right; it is sometimes considered to be a subfield of related disciplines such as lexicography or translation. However, a growing number of researchers are beginning to argue that terminology should be recognized as an autonomous discipline with its own theoretical underpinnings. Kageura's book is a valuable contribution to the formulation of a theory of terminology and will help to establish this discipline as an independent field of research.

The general aim of this text is to present a theory of term formation and terminological growth by identifying conceptual regularities in term creation and by laying the foundations for the analysis of terminological growth patterns. The approach used is a descriptive one, which means that it is based on observations taken from a corpus. It is also synchronic in nature and therefore does not attempt to account for the evolution of terms over a given period of time (though it does endeavour to provide a means for predicting possible formation patterns of new terms). The descriptive, corpus-based approach is becoming very popular in terminology circles; however, it does pose certain limitations. To compensate for this, Kageura complements his descriptive analysis of conceptual patterns with a quantitative analysis of the patterns of the growth of terminology.

Many existing investigations treat only a limited number of terms, using these for exemplification purposes. Kageura argues strongly (p. 31) that any theory of terms or terminology must be based on the examination of the terminology of a domain (i.e., a specialized subject field) in its entirety since it is only

with respect to an individual domain that the concept of "term" can be established. To demonstrate the viability of his theoretical approach, Kageura has chosen to investigate and describe the domain of documentation, using Japanese terminological data. The data in the corpus are derived from a glossary (Wersig and Neveling 1984), and although this glossary is somewhat outdated (a fact acknowledged by the author), the data provided are nonetheless sufficient for demonstrating the viability of the approach, which can later be extended and applied to other languages and domains.

The book is divided into four main parts, the key elements of which are summarized and commented on below.

## *Part I: Theoretical Background (Chapters 1-2)*

This part opens with a chapter that provides an overview of both traditional theories (e.g., Felber 1984, Picht & Draskau 1985) and recent trends (e.g., Pearson 1998, Temmerman 2000) in the discipline of terminology. For readers who come from a terminology background, this section will be largely a review; for readers coming from other backgrounds, it provides an important introduction to the seemingly basic – though in reality quite complex – notions involved in the discipline of terminology (e.g., *term*, *concept*, *characteristic*) and elaborates their relationship to one another. As part of the literature review, Kageura points out some of the limitations of existing studies. In particular, he identifies a crucial piece that seems to be missing in the theory of terminology: the position of the description of terms within the theory of terminology (p. 21).

In chapter 2, Kageura examines the conditions for the theory of terminology, explains the basic hypothesis for his study and outlines the methodological framework adopted in pursuit of this study, which incorporates both a descriptive analysis and a quantitative analysis using the domain "documentation" as the subject field.

*Part II: Conceptual Patterns of Term Formation (Chapters 3-6)*

The first of the two complementary approaches adopted by Kageura is conceptual analysis. Part II of this book therefore presents Kageura's investigation and description of the conceptual regularities in existing terms. This involves observing the relationships between terms and their constituent elements as well as relationships among the constituents and the type of conceptual combinations used in the construction of terms. Examples are plentiful (both in the text and in appendices) and are well explained. Though Kageura's focus is on Japanese terminology, all examples are glossed into English for the benefit of readers who do not speak Japanese.

Part II of the book is the part that will probably be of most interest to readers of *Knowledge Organization* since it focuses on issues relating to the organization of knowledge, including conceptual categories and subcategories, concept systems and conceptual relations.

*Part III: Quantitative Patterns of Terminological Growth (Chapters 7-9)*

As Kageura observes (p. 37), the description of conceptual patterns undertaken in Part II must necessarily remain somewhat general, at a level where the general regularities of term formation patterns in a given domain can most properly be described. This naturally raises the question as to whether there is any way of describing more fine-grained regularities of the dynamics of terminology. To do this, Kageura sets out to explore the quantitative patterns of the occurrence of lexical or conceptual items as a mass, within the conceptual patterns. In this way, he is able to provide a more detailed description of the dynamics of the potential directions of growth of the terminology of a domain.

Part III is the most technical and challenging part of the book for readers since it presents and analyzes statistical data. To fully appreciate this part, it would be useful to have at least a fundamental understanding of statistics; however, Kageura has done a good job of explaining his approach, and his judicious use of figures and tables help those readers who are not statisticians (the present reviewer included) to follow along.

*Part IV: Conclusions (Chapter 10)*

This section contains a brief review of the main points examined in the book, along with some

thought-provoking suggestions for future research in the area of term formation and terminological growth.

Unlike some terminology researchers, Kageura has been careful not to overgeneralize the applicability of his work, and he points out the limitations of his study, a number of which are summarized on pages 254-257. For example, Kageura acknowledges that his contribution should properly be viewed as a theory of term formation and terminological growth *in the field of documentation*. Moreover, Kageura notes that this study does not distinguish the general part and the domain-dependent part of the conceptual system, nor does it fully explore the multidimensionality of the viewpoints of conceptual categorization. Kageura's honesty with regard to the complexity of terminological issues and the challenges associated with the formation of a theory of terminology is refreshing since too often in the past, the results of terminology research have been somewhat naively presented as being absolutely clear-cut and applicable in all situations.

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