This presentation is a compilation of information by InMyOwnTerms based on the sources provided on the last page. Texts are summaries, adaptations, and textual quotes from those sources. The information is intended for readers who approach terminology theory for the first time. I believe that even if you haven’t had any previous contact with theory, and even if you don’t read each item on every page, I believe you will at least get a general idea on each approach. Please keep in mind that authors quote other authors, and for ease of reference, I only mention the author and page number where the information was taken from. If you’d like to contribute with more information or suggestions for improvement, please contact me.
It is no secret that, unless you are a hard-core linguist, terminology theory would not be something that you would willingly read unless, of course, you were getting ready to take an exam! Quite an overwhelming task for a blog for beginners to try to present it in an easy-to-read format, and, yes, I am aware that some ideas are hard to grasp. (I myself have learned a lot!), but I’m sure that having a basic knowledge of theory, as many experts agree, will give you a better understanding of how terminology work is done. In any case, I believe the theory pill can be more easily swallowed if we encapsulate them in this format. Let see if you agree.

1. How many theories/approaches are there?

The list varies among authors, but they all agree that the major theories or approaches that have lead terminology research and whose main objective has been to make terminology stand out (and be acknowledged) as a discipline on its own are:

1. The General (Classic or Traditional) Theory of Terminology –GTT– (Eugene Wüster)
2. The Extended Theory of Terminology, developed posthumously by Wüster’s followers
3. Socioterminology, François Gaudin
5. Sociocognitive Terminology of Rita Temmerman at the Centrum voor Vaktaal en Communicatie (CVC) research group.
6. Frame-based Terminology (Pamela Faber Benitez) at the Lexicon Research Group, University of Granada (Spain).
7. The Cultural Approach, by African linguist Diki-Kidiri
8. The Textual Approach
1. The General (Classic or Traditional) Theory of Terminology – GTT – (Eugene Wüster) which is based on five principles (Temmerman 2000)

(i) Terminology work starts from a concept and its goal is to clearly delimit the concepts from each other (onomasiological approach).

(ii) Concepts are clear-cut; they should not be studied in isolation but as elements in a concept system through an analysis of concept characteristics.

(iii) In order to be able to place concepts within a concept system, definitions must be intensional (define its characteristics).

(iv) Each concept should be designated by only one term and each term should be refer to only one concept (univocity principle); synonymy and polysymy are excluded.

(iii) Since emphasis is on the concept system, which is the basis of special language, terminology does not study language development/evolution, therefore it takes a synchronic perspective (analysis of terms from a specific point in time).

“The main purpose of traditional terminology was to assign a new term to a new concept that appeared in a language. In the naming process, terminologists started from the concept, which they placed into a concept system, on the basis of which it had been defined before being named as a term (the onomasiological approach). Their main focus was on exploring the ways in which to make terminology as efficient and unambiguous as possible. They were adherents of monosymy (the precision of concepts) and univocity of term (absence of synonymy). Their objective was to achieve a standardization of terminology – a tool for reaching unambiguous and clear communication, independent of cultural differences. (Cabré 2010)
2. How did the GTT originate and why did other theories arise?

Wüster developed his theory based on experienced gained from his UN-sponsored French and English dictionary of standardized terms (The Machine Tool–1968) as a model for future technical dictionaries.

His objectives were to standardize terminology to eliminate ambiguity from technical languages, sell the idea of standardized terminology to technical experts, and give terminology the status of a science. Therefore, he set out to develop standardized international principles to describe and record terms, formulate the general principles of terminology (mostly set out as guidelines rather than a theory on itself) and, lastly, create a training center (InfoTerm, sponsored by UNESCO) to collect, disseminate and coordinate information on terminology.

However, new theories started to arise based on new approaches and challenges to his theory. Controversy arose mainly from his approach to terminology principles (onomasiological perspective, clear-cut concepts, traditional definition of concepts, univocality, and synchrony) centered on standardization, and disregard for syntax and pragmatics of specialized language. Nevertheless, according to Campo (2012) the reception of Wüster’s work has been more positive than negative, and thus other theories have worked on giving new perspectives, but always keeping Wüster’s approach in mind.
2. The Extended Theory of Terminology, as denominated by Cabré (2003), was developed by “loyal” followers of Wüster as an enlarged vision of the GTT.

From 1980–1989 the posthumous reception of Wüster’s work was positive and peaceful as terminology was just taking its first academic steps, but from 1990–1999 it was fully implemented and reception of his proposal was somewhat dissenting. It was from 2000 to 2009 that researchers started to approve and disapprove his pioneering theory. (Campo p.251)

The Extended Theory of Terminology, which modulates and complements Wüster’s ideas, is summarized as follows (Protopopescu, p.3):

(i) The objective of international standardization is extended by suggestions of terminology development as part of language planning.
(ii) Controlled synonymy is admitted. Wüster’s posthumous work already concedes this point.
(iii) A certain degree of synonymy is accepted though its avoidance is recommended in terminology intended to be standardized.
(iv) Phraseology is added to the study of terminological units.
(v) The meaning of spoken forms is recognized in contexts of language planning.
(v) The model is made dynamic by introducing the description of the process of formation of new terms.
(vi) The representation of non-hierarchically-ordered conceptual structures is introduced.

On the other hand, the following were not modified: The priority of the concept over the designation, and consequently its autonomy; the precision of the concept (monosemy), even though dimensions such as parameters of classification are admitted; the semiotic conception of designations.
3. **Socioterminology, (François Gaudin)** focuses on the study of terms in the linguistic, pragmatic, social, and historical contexts in which they appear.

Socio-terminological reactions to the general theory of terminology propose that: (Campo p.142)

(i) Concepts and definitions evolve all the time because information and theories related to them change as well, and they develop over time meaning that concepts are not static.

(ii) A concept is not a fixed entity placed before the discovery of designations; rather, it is built in discourse where it suffers many tensions and changes according to social and historical variables.

(iii) Specialized subject fields are impossible to define because almost all of them involve, in some way or another, interdisciplinary knowledge.

(iv) Analysis of terms (emergence, formation, consolidation and relationships), is done from a linguistic perspective in social interaction.

(v) Polysemy and synonymy belong to the nature of language so they inevitably occur in specialized discourse.

(vi) Terminology cannot overlook its diachronic nature because history, polysemy and synonymy are a natural and inevitable part of language.

“The objective of socioterminology is, first, that terminology theory and practice should recognize the cognitive and social aspects of terminologies, and second, that terminology research should be based on the actors of communication and their communicative situations, on the treatment and dissemination of terminologies as well as on terms and concepts.” (Campo p.148)
Professor Johan Myking established three types of positions by Wüster’s critics with respect to the GTT (Cabré 2003) and concluded that Wüster’s critics are exaggerating and in most cases, are also wrong (Campo p.120)

(i) Those who are moderate and loyal (sociolinguist and the cognitive-linguist) to the theory and try to integrate terminology with linguistics without abandoning the established theoretical and methodological foundations.

(ii) Those who are radical and “subversive” (the socio-critic current) and completely reject traditional terminology, separating terminology from linguistics.

(iii) Those who are radical and “loyal” (a linguistic inspiration quite similar to the “radical and subversive” tendency) and stress the need to study Wüster to complement and adapt him to the achievements in cognitive and functional linguistics. (Campo 2012)

Rita Temmerman, in her book “New Ways of Terminology Description: The Socio-cognitive approach” lists Juan C. Sager; Peter Weinssenhofer; Britta Zawada and Swanepoel; M.T. Cabré, Ingrid Meyer; François Gaudin; and Kyo Kageura as the sources of recent criticism (p.22–33). According to Campo (2012), some authors even have said that Wüster has been misinterpreted.

These and other experts started discussing and analyzing the GTT in 2003 through several seminars that took place in different locations, particularly in Barcelona (Spain) and Vaasa (Finland) (Cabré). In any case, it is evident that criticism, positive or negative have brought forward a few interesting approaches.
The approach is mostly distinguished by a linguistic component indicating as the main topic terminological variation. Cabré proposes that “jargon (specialized technical terminology) is an ordinary language and that terms are lexical units that belong to the lexicon of language. The emphasis of the approach is on the pragmatic conditions of specialized communication where the cognitive, the communicative and the linguistic functions of terminology come into play.” (Campo)

- Cabré (2003) starts from two assumptions. Under the first assumption, terminology is “a set of needs, a set of practices to resolve these needs and a unified field of knowledge”. The second assumption is that terminology operates with terminological units which are multi-dimensional and which are simultaneously units of knowledge, units of language and units of communication.

- The description of these “terminological units” should cover the concept, the term and the situation components. This is what differentiates them from other units of language with the same structural features, i.e. words, and from the units that also express specialized knowledge, i.e. specialized, morphological and phraseological units.

- In approaching and accessing the object of terminology as a field of study, and in an attempt to formulate a theory in which the different strands of terminology can be combined, she introduces a model which she calls the theory of doors. The model represents the plural access to the object in a way that directly addresses the terminological unit, whether starting from the concept, term or the situation.

- The choice of the door of entry to describe and explain terminological units is conditioned by the adaptation of a theory suitable for its door of entry, i.e. a theory that does not deny the multi-dimensionality of the object. Such an approach allows the description of the real data in all their complexity.

For an expanded description see Daria Protopopescu. Source 3 (p.5)
“This model attempts to represent the plural, but not simultaneous, access to the object; and in such a way that, whether starting from the concept or the term or the situations, the central object, the terminological unit, is directly addressed” (Cabré 2003)

The terminological unit seen as a polyhedron with three viewpoints: the cognitive (the concept), the linguistic (the term) and the communicative (the situation)
4. What are some of Cabré’s views of the GTT?

By 1996, Cabré had contributed to the dissemination of Wüster’s work by translating it into Catalan and editing and collection of some of his selected readings. She argued that Wüster’s theory had come under the microscope due to the fact that his experience was limited to his Machine Tool.

Maybe a way to understand her theory vis-à-vis the GTT, is by her view of her communicative approach as a representation of knowledge “in vivo”, the spontaneous and natural production of language that favors the descriptive method, in contrast with the representation of knowledge in vitro, standardized language, of the GTT that favors the prescriptive method.

According to Cabré, “traditional terminology had a number of dogmatic principles, confused the principles with facts and converted wishes into reality. It failed to create a theoretical framework that would support its own principles and methods. In essence, research was impeded by the interests of standardization.

The main criticism of the general theory of terminology coming from the communicative approach is that it does not take into account the complexity and the diversity of specialized units in their global communicative environment (Campo).
Her research concentrates on languages for special purposes (LSP). Terminology research carried out by her group focuses mainly on case studies of categorization and naming in the life sciences such as biology, genetics, microbiology, molecular genetics, biochemistry, biotechnology, as well as in social sciences (Campo p.154).

Benítez (2009) claims that “What makes sociocognitive terminology different from other theories is its emphasis on conceptual organization, and its focus on category structure from the perspective of cognitive linguistics approaches. While GTT concept systems are organized in terms of type_of and part_of conceptual relations, sociocognitive categories are said to have prototype structure, and conceptual representations initially take the form of cognitive models. Another significant difference is that sociocognitive terminology is perhaps the first approach to truly take on board the historical or diachronic dimension of terms” (p.117).
5. What are Temmerman’s criticism of the GTT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of traditional Terminology</th>
<th>Our observations concerning the terminology of special language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First principle:</strong> Terminology starts from the concept without considering language.</td>
<td>Language plays a role in the conception and communication of categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second principle:</strong> A concept is clear-cut and can be assigned a place in a logically or ontologically structured concept system.</td>
<td>Many categories are fuzzy and cannot be absolutely classified by logical and ontological means.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third principle:</strong> A concept is ideally defined in an intensional definition.</td>
<td>An intensional definition is often neither possible nor desirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fourth principle:</strong> A concept is referred to by one term and one term only designates one concept.</td>
<td>Polysemy, synonymy and figurative language occur and are functional in special language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fifth principle:</strong> The assignment concept/term is permanent.</td>
<td>Categories evolve, terms change in meaning, understanding develops.</td>
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Figure 1.1. *Contrast between the principles of traditional Terminology and the reality of the terminology we have been studying in the special language of the life sciences.*
Frame-based terminology (proposed by Pamela Faber Benitez) at the Lexicon Research Group, University of Granada (Spain) is a cognitive approach to terminology

“Frame-Based Terminology is a very recent cognitive approach to terminology, which shares many of the same premises as the Communicative Theory of Terminology and Sociocognitive Terminology.”

“For example, it also maintains that trying to find a distinction between terms and words is no longer fruitful or even viable, and that the best way to study specialized knowledge units is by studying their behavior in texts. Because the general function of specialized language texts is the transmission of knowledge, such texts tend to conform to templates in order to facilitate understanding, and are also generally characterized by a greater repetition than usual of terms, phrases, sentences, and even full paragraphs. This is something that specialized translators capitalize on when they use translation memories. Scientific and technical texts are usually terminology-rich because of the quantity of specialized language units in them, and they also are distinctive insofar as the syntactic constructions used.”

“Specialized language units are mostly represented by compound nominal forms that are used within a scientific or technical field, and have meanings specific of this field as well as a syntactic valence or combinatory value. Naturally, such noun phrases have configurations that may vary from language to language. The heavy concentration of such units in these texts points to the specific activation of sectors of domain-specific knowledge. As a result, understanding a terminology-rich text requires knowledge of the domain, the concepts within it, the propositional relations within the text, as well as the conceptual relations between concepts within the domain. This is the first step towards creating an acceptable target language text. All of these elements are targeted by frame-based terminology.”

(Taken from Lexicon’s webpage, where you can read more details on the approach.)
“Diki–Kidiri suggests that it is the way to see the world that determines the way people classify, order, name and categorize everything that is perceived or conceived, and in fact their own identity. Diki–Kidiri adds that culture is what conditions the way people perceive the world and that the cultural approach to terminology takes into account that man is the only one with access to the real world through mentally and culturally conditioned representations.” (Campo p.160)

“The cultural approach seeks to utilize terminology that can contribute better knowledge of and a more relevant development of technology. The proposal is to transform terminology into a discipline for knowledge creation and the appropriation of a particular culture.” (Campo p.165)

Temmerman (2010) also acknowledges the Cultural Approach and explains how Diki–Kidiri illustrates his methodology for neologism creation taking into account domain knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and cultural knowledge (pg. 8)
8. The Textual Approach

“The amount of criticism the general theory of terminology is receiving is due to new proposals that comprise the incorporation of lexical semantics in terminology, work that integrates corpus–based methods and computational approaches” (Campo, p. 168)

The working group *Terminologie et Intelligence Artificielle* (TIA), under the leadership of Didier Bourigault and Monique Slodzian who contributed with a detailed tutorial on textual terminology, suggested the following methodology that is currently used by the *Centre de Recherche en Ingénierie Multilingue* (CRIM) in France (Campo, p.173):

- Creation of a corpus
- Exploration of corpora for terminological acquisition
- Exploration of corpora to find relations between terminological units
- Validation of candidate terms and relations between these candidate terms with a subject–field expert
- Exploration of corpora to detect multilingual equivalents in target languages and validation of these proposals by experts
6. What the future holds

Since Angela Campo’s work is very recent (October 2012), and if you wish to read more, I would suggest to read “Tomorrow: Possible steps ahead” (pp. 134–5), which gives an excellent overview of what might be coming ahead for terminology research and theory. Here are a few extracts:

- “From a practical point of view, recent research concludes that the future of terminology will be in applied terminology and knowledge engineering.”

- “Advanced corpus techniques will contribute to the transformation of automatic extraction of candidate terms. In this sense, the conceptual and the textual terminology approach have already played a decisive role in the development of modern terminology.”

- “From a broader point of view, the future of terminology, like its past, is linked to the developments of other closed disciplines such as linguistics, communication science and technology. According to Picht’s (2007) conclusion, the growth will head for an integrated, future approach to linguistics and professional communication.”

- “The pioneering work of Wüster opened up a completely new field of terminological research. Wüster exists in the past, in the present and in the future of terminology. Terminology has a complex and controversial history dating back to antiquity, and continues to evolve in the present era of communication science. Its modern origins are linked to the period of unambiguous international communication. Today, the future of terminology is technologically promising as it is the time to bring tomorrow’s future closer to a reality and write its history.”
In her article “La Terminología, una disciplina en evolución: pasado, presente y algunos elementos de futuro”, M.T. Cabré (pp. 10-11), provided a few hints:

- The coming years will see the consolidation of a framework theory of terminology, and Wüster’s approach will be a knowledge theory (cognitive theory) limited to specialized areas with standardization purposes.

- With the development and dissemination of technologies, application of those technologies will be fully implemented to all terminology work in the preparation of glossaries. We will go from using tools to building integrated work platforms to generate glossaries automatically or semi-automatically.

- Digital resources and information management tools will lead to the creation of virtual knowledge portals that will include text, terminology, documentation, images, and sound, which we will use to look for information and create new resources.

- Thanks to new scientific and technological automated processes and identification of new terms and concepts, neology will give languages their own terminology will take place, without recourse to systematic loans, from the moment a new concept is created in their social use by experts in a knowledge domain.
3. **Theories of terminology – past and present**, Daria Protopopescu (2013)
4. **La Terminología, una disciplina en evolución: pasado, presente y algunos elementos de futuro**, María Teresa Cabré (2011)
7. **The cognitive shift in terminology and specialized translation**, by Pamela Faber Benítez (2009)
9. **Frame-based Terminology**, Lexicon Research Group (webpage accessed 14/XII/14)
10. **Practical course on terminology processing**, Juan C. Sager (1990)
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