

ON STANDARDIZATION OF INFORMATION-LIBRARY TERMINOLOGY IN VIETNAMESE

VƯƠNG TOÀN (*)

A library used to operate with archiving function; then expanded to documentation function; and in recent years, has been associated with information analysis, processing, archiving, searching and dissemination. Major resources of the libraries now are not only limited to books. Significant developments have been seen in all areas related to library operation: from target groups, contents, operational means and ways ... to the information-library connectivity, a series of services which are friendlier to users.

Due to different perceptions and practices, the understanding of new jargons as well as changes to the existing terms is inconsistent, causing debates. This article attempts to prove that standardization of information-library terminology is one of the most desperately urgent tasks of not only the linguists circle.

1. Library-information or information-library?

A library used to operate with the archiving function, then expanded to the documentation exercise, and now is associated with information analysis, processing, archiving, searching and dissemination.

With such development and linkage, the name of library science (or bibliothéconomie in French) is usually associated with the archivistique. This complementarity is necessary. However, viewpoints on how to call the name are still divided. Some have said that the name should be called *information-*

library science (for instance, authors from the Department for Library, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) or vice versa, *library-information* (such as authors from the National Centre for Science and Technology Information)**), or *information-library science* or vice versa

(*) Associate Prof. and Dr., Institute of Social Sciences Information

(**) These viewpoints can be found in the recently published books: Tran Thi Bich Hong and Cao Minh Kiem, *Access to information in library-information activities*, H. Culture University, 2004, 312 pages; Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thuan (ed.) and Nguyen Huu Gioi, Nguyen Thanh Duc, *Libraries and Information-Library Centres in Vietnam*, H. 2006, 336 pages.

library and information science, similar to *science de la bibliothèque et de l'information* in French. Though there is a close relationship between them, *information science* should be understood as a *science on information* (and library), which is differentiated with *informatics*, a science on information theory that is merely used in information technology, etc.

Similarly, though professionals can access to information from the Vietnam *Information-Library Network*, the name of an agency or unit that used to be called as *library*, thanks to modernization and particularly its operation surpasses the limit of a *traditional library*, is now linked with *documentation* and/or *information*, such as the National Centre for Science and Technology *Information and Documentation*. Later, the Centre's name is shortly called as the National *Centre for Science and Technology Information* (which also implies the old Library of Science and Techniques). There are some other institutions named as *Information Centre*, such as the Vietnam Youth *Information Centre*; or the *Information Institute...*, under which there is a *library* whose interwoven relationship as such is not known to every researcher, for example the *Social Science Information Institute* under which there is the *Social Science Library*.

It is not basically a matter of different work. In Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (according the *Telephone Directory*, Hanoi, April 2006), *Library Division* is a name commonly used in a

majority of specialized institutes. Head of the Division is considered as the manager. In Vietnam Institute for Economic Studies, the Head of the *Library Division* is titled *Director*. The name *Documentation-Library Division* is used in the Literature Institute and the Archaeology Institute, which have a history of more than half a century existence. *Information-Documentation-Library Division* is a name used in the Sociology Institute, the Psychology Institute, and Vietnam Social Sciences Magazine. Still, the *Information-Library Division* is established in the Institute for Africa and Middle East Studies, which is one of the newly established institutions [or the *Information-Library Division* under the Oceanographic Institute in Nha Trang].

The Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF), which is now known as the Organisation intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (OIF) – or the International Organization of French – has the *Centre international francophone de Documentation et d'Information* (Cifdi) or the Centre for International French *Documentation and Information*; the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the *Centre de Ressources et Documents* or the *Centre for Resources and Documents*; and, in Russia, there is an institution named Otdelenije Bibliotekovedenija or the *Library Science Department* (under the International Informatics Academy).

University libraries also can not get out of this impact. Some retain the name *Library* (University of Natural Sciences,

Hochiminh city); some change to *Centre for Information-Library* (University of Social Sciences and Humanity, Hanoi National University; Hochiminh city National University); additionally, *library* should be understood to be implied in the *Learning and Information Resource Centre* (Da Nang) whose former name was the *Centre for Information-Documentation* or in French *Centre de l'Information et de la Documentation*. And, some even have a straightforward name, such as the *Learning Resource Centre* (Thai Nguyen University, Can Tho University), etc.

A movement of 'hundred flowers blossoming' in seeking for an appropriate name also takes place in training institutions. One names the *Library-Information Department*, the other simply changes order of words. We can see the *Library Department* of the Culture College (Hochiminh city); the *Library-Information Department* of the Teacher Training College, which is now Sai Gon University (Hochiminh city); the *Library-Informatics Department* of Hanoi Culture University, School of Social Sciences and Humanity (Hochiminh city National University), etc. In other countries, we are aware of the *Library and Information Science College* (in the United States, Switzerland, etc.), Division of *Information Services* (in Griffith University, Australia), the *Ecole de Bibliothéconomie et des Sciences de l'Information* – EBSI (in Université de Montreal, Canada); *Ecole de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de*

l'information en Europe, *Ecole de bibliothéconomie, archivistique et documentation* à l'Institut Supérieur de Documentation (Université de Tunis),...

Notwithstanding perceptions and practices may vary, we see the *mixture of traditional library with modern library*, and the *application of information technology to library modernization*. It is popularly understood that a state-of-the art library does not only need Internet-connected computers or CSDLs to be *circus-integrated*. If the data are *admitted* (from different resources), but not *integrated* (with the code number used for alike documents admitted in different occasions, but still put in not the same placements in a CSDL), the library as such is not efficient.

It is highly recommendable that arbitrary usage of jargons in scientific arguments should be avoided. Thus, it is necessary to arrive at the standardization and synchronization of scientific terms in all aspects (including the phonetics, word conversion). The existing difference (even the inconsistency of one writer himself/herself) is preventing the terms from being accurately comprehensible.

In reality, it is not all jargons coated with the same scientific color. Sometime, the differentiation is of a relative nature, for instance the classification of *multi-disciplinary* or *specialized library/public library* (which, in our opinions, should be named as *mass or popular library*, because should a *specialized library* no longer be a *public library* (Cf. *Public library/Specialized and multi-sectoral libraries*).

Though libraries used to be considered as public institutions, they now can be "privatized", or are allowed to exploit the services as a source of income. Hence, we desperately need to work out Vietnamese definitions that help us to clarify the concept of every single term. These definitions are more often than not systemized in an explanation dictionary.

2. Information-library terminology in science Vietnamese

2.1. Science language is differentiated with general language through its vocabulary stock, which is the science terminology, and types of words used in scientific arguments. Any science does need a collection of words strictly established, which are used to present and indicate objects, phenomena, activities and characteristics of the branch. That vocabulary collection is called as the terminology for the science, contributing to shaping the scientific language, and in our country it is science Vietnamese language. The scientific character of terminology is presented by its accuracy, systematization and internationalization, about which we once discussed (1).

Science workers should not confuse between jargons and common words that have the same pronunciation. In a scientific document, misunderstanding often happens when concepts are vague; scientific terms are not clearly distinguished with general connotations. There are jargons whose usage scope is broadened because the relevant science is closely associated with the daily activities of society members. For these

jargons, their scientific color is partly faded, thus one must be cautious in using them in scientific documents. Regrettable confusion may happen if concepts are not accurately interpreted, particularly where phonetics of the terms are not much different from those of common Vietnamese (e.g: *open* in *open stock*, *open library*,... which differ from *open economy*, *open tertiary training*,...).

As a word-saving rule of language, the quantity of vocabulary is less than that of objects to be named, thus many terms or words signify different objects, phenomena and targets (in respect of nature or broad/narrow scope) within various sciences. For example, natural *language* and news searching *language*, programing *language*, commodity *circulation* and document *circulation*, *ghost* spirit and *ghost* card, natural *resources* and information *resources*, *first*, *second* and *third* grade and *first*, *second* and *third*-level documents, etc. are just a few to name.

In principle, any one scientific word is coated on with its scientific color and character. This color is clearly represented in narrow scope jargons, which for instance in the information-library faculty are: *service* (providing information), structural *classification* and digit *classification*, etc. External persons can not fully understand such concepts as: *invisible library*, *document accounting*, *thematic classification*, *format standard*, *conversion*, etc. especially when they are popularly abbreviated, like: ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description),

ISBN (International Standard Book Number), ISDS (International Serials Data System), ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), etc. As a matter of accuracy, some information-library terms are borrowed and hybridized, such as *catalo* (catalogue; cf: *list*), *phich* (fiche; cf: *card*), *mo-nu* (menu; cf: list of dishes (for food)), *vi rut* (virus), etc.

Even within the information-library sector, terms vary from one to another country, school to school, and writer to writer in order to express their own ideas. We had discussed various forms of summarized documents that transmit partly different contents. Thus, it is not virtually equivalent of terms among languages. For example, in Vietnamese we use *tóm tắt*, *giới thiệu sách*, *điểm sách*, *lược thuật*, *bình thuật*,... (the *Social Sciences Information Review* always has one column titled *Introduction of new entries in the Library*); in French, it says *resume*, *lecture* (de livre); *compte-rendu* (the *Bulletin de la Societe de la Linguistique de Paris*, which is a biennial magazine and the second edition of which is designed specifically to review linguistic works around the world accessed by the Editors' Board of this publication), *annotation* (in the *bulletin signaletique*), etc.; in English, the terms are *summary*, *abstract*, *book review*, etc. (the Vietnam Social Sciences magazine always spares one column title *Book Review*); and in Russian, it says *referat* (the Russian Social Sciences Information Institute possesses the *referativnyi zhurnal*), which is often translated into Vietnamese as *lược thuật*

(*extract*), and *obzor* translated as *tổng thuật* (*general summary*) or *tổng quan* (*executive summary*), etc.

Generally observing, accuracy always requires that terms must be expressed in a manner that is most appropriate with its scientific content. In information-library activity, absolutely accurate usage of terms shall not make news receivers (listeners or readers) misunderstood or confused with one and another concept. Good matching of terms form and concept content is a necessary deed in scientific arguments. However, this comment should not be machinely understood, considering it an absolute truth. Because it should be admitted that in some cases where word forms are not as virtually appropriate with the concept contents as the absolutely objective fact.

Still, in other cases where compatibility was acknowledged in the beginning, but late on when human beings become more knowledgeable, the concept content has changed, the word forms remain the same. It must be straightforward that subjectiveness of human beings are sometime compatible with objectiveness of the term content.

The same story is also for the information-library faculty, because daily common connotations can be used as definitions in specific disciplines. Consequently, such definitions sometime are interpreted differently among the studies. Furthermore, science is always in progress, thus expressions used to transmit specialized information are also supplemented and even altered.

Whilst facing financial problems and having to select supplementary literature, traditional libraries continue playing a role as rich information resources for research. However, there is one thing for sure that additional information resources are not only printed publications. Information space has changed. Personal publications on-line have gradually been acknowledged; *electronic list* has a role to play as the old *punched coupon*. Hence, a library may not possess the resource documents (i.e. not keep stock). The data base is kept in the library in the form of CD-ROM, which is considered one of the *electronic resources*. By undertaking modern controlling measures, data base sharing banks are set up available for readers who can visit directly the *electronic texts*.

2.2. In preparing or translating a scientific document from one to another language, it is necessary to make full use of word formulation method. Thus, terms formulation is a fully conscious action. It must, on the one hand, guarantee the accuracy of components; terms formulation, on the other, must be compatible with the positions and relations of concepts expressed vis-a-vis other concepts. For instance, in the classification work, there are: *fixed classification number*, *selected classification number*, *making classification number*, etc.

In science, whether one presents his/her own viewpoints or deliberates another's opinions, it is necessary first of all to determine intended terms. If necessary, the writer or translator need to clarify

the meaning of each intended term, and where possible, to indicate the meaning equivalence of one to another term (used by other writers or as compared to the original word) for reference convenience.

The emergence of electronic tools in information society has exerted fundamental changes in library, a field that has a long history but operates in a conventional manner. And, in the recent decades, the organizational structure and training content in this science have followed the above-mentioned changes.

Potential information resources can now that be identified by new technologies. Furthermore, electronic news in general and on-line information can be sought with the support from these technologies, facilitating information search and storage. Above all, the new technologies have brought in unprecedented prospects for activities in the combined information-library field.

Currently, one can look into a huge load of on-line materials, from popular to specialized dictionaries in various languages, or textbooks accompanied with analytical papers and mass documents collecting "the most interested issues". Now that, readers do not necessarily have to be physically at library, but they still can utilize the information resources by visiting the library's own website. Library operation is not only evaluated by enthusiasm of the clerks and the number of visiting readers and books used (as it used to be done so), but (today) it is assessed by the number of website visitors and their visiting time, as well as the convenience

of modern libraries.

Professionals have started talking about *library computerization*, creating *digital library*, *electronic library*, *electronic address*, *on-line newspapers/journals*. These terms seem to be duplicated from foreign (often English) connotations. Thus, consistent definitions for Vietnamese terms are still absent.

Not long ago, the question "Is there any *digital library* in Vietnam yet?" provoked relatively exciting discussions, following an article titled *Urgently set up digital libraries* by Dao Tien Khoa, published in the *Tia sang (Sun Light)*, <http://www.tiasang.com.vn/news?id=1488>. The article said, "there is a desperate need for scientists, which is creation of a digital library as the soonest possible for our home country's scientist community". However, there was no further explanation of how the author understood of *digital library*. Subsequently, one professional proposed that the debate should turn back to the most fundamental issue, which is the concept *digital library*. *Digital Library* is often translated into Vietnamese as *Thư viện số*. It should be noted that the term *library* does not necessarily always mean a room/office (where we work). And due to such perception, according to this professional, *digital library* is also understood differently.

These terms represent defined scientific concepts, thus they should be used not in an arbitrary but a thoughtful manner by choosing appropriate terms.

2.3. It is known that development and standardization of Vietnamese scientific

terms have drawn attention in our country from the 60s of the last century. The process was marked by the set up of a Terminology Unit within the State Science Committee. The Unit was then renamed as the *Terminology and Science Dictionary Unit* within the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. In 1968, this Unit was merged with the Linguistics Unit into the Linguistics Institute. This research faculty blossomed, and during this period, the *Russian – English – French – Vietnamese Library Terminology Dictionary* was collectively drafted by library workers in the North, and later on edited and corrected by the Linguistics Institute. The dictionary covers terms in the library science, cartobibliography and some jargons in the relevant branches, such as publication, printing, science information, etc (3). The main section of the dictionary is a Russian – Vietnamese cross-reference table, which is followed by the cross-reference English-Vietnamese and French-Vietnamese (with a cross-reference through Russian). And, the final section is the opposite cross-reference Vietnamese-Russian, English and French.

In the 1990s, the research went steadily down, leaving a vacuum in terminology research. Nevertheless, to meet the practical demands, composition and translation of specialized disciplinary terms continued to progress. Instead of giving scientific instructions and professional training, which used to be concentrated only in one science institution, in recent years professionals

have often met together to collectively compose and publish volumes of terminology; to deliberate to arrive at agreement on interpretation and/or cross-reference for their respective host sectors.

Being aware of theoretical and practical activities on library science, documentation and information science that have uninterruptedly developed in the world as well as in our country in particular, inspired by initial results of the new terms have been standardized, with support from the International Bank for French-Speaking States (Banque International d'Information sur les etas. Francophones), a *French-Vietnamese Documentation and Library Science Dictionary* was composed and published by the National Centre for Science and Technology Documentation and Information in 1997(4). The dictionary contains terms and jargons selected from various fields, such as library, science information, informatics, archives, publication, distribution and printing; additionally, it also collects phrases and words that are not jargons/terms but more often encountered in press and occupational materials, allows users to translate French terms (for instance, *disque souple* and *disquette*, *rayonage en metal* and *rayonnage metallique*, which are unique vocabulary section) into Vietnamese (*đĩa mềm*, *giá kê kim loại*, respectively). It does not include the conversions.

As such, the above-mentioned dictionary only allows users to look cross into equivalent terms. So far, *there is not yet any explanatory dictionary for the*

information-library sector, which is composed on a vocabulary table with Vietnamese as the first language. Nevertheless, it is necessary to count a radically important contribution of the Vietnam Library and Education Assistance Foundation (LEAF – VN). Through activities of the Foundation, some overseas Vietnamese librarians (in the United States and Canada) translated and published with the scholarship given by the American Library Association the *English-Vietnamese Glossary of Library and Information Science* (5). Interestingly, the translators constantly update the dictionary and inform their colleagues in Vietnam of new relevant developments.

As mentioned above, the *information-library sector* has not yet had a terminology dictionary based on a vocabulary table with Vietnamese as the first language. A dictionary as such will help to clarify individual concepts, rather than being the one built up by "temporary" translations from a foreign language. Adversely, those concepts need to be cross-looked with popular foreign languages in the world, helping professionals in the sector to arrive at a consistent understanding of the terms in the integration for development.

Towards that end, the information-library sector needs to cross-look into the terminology used by the Federation Internationale de Documentation and another international organization whose name in different languages may interest us, which is IFLA - International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (English) or Internationaler

Verband der Bibliothekarischen Vereine und Institutionen (German), Mezhdunaodnaja Federatsija Bibliotechykh Associasii i Uchrezhdenija (Russian), Federation Internationale des Associations de Bibliothecaires et des Bibliothèques (French), Federacin International de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas (Spanish), and *Liên hiệp hội Thư viện Quốc tế* or *Hiệp hội Thư viện Thế giới* or more comprehensively *Liên đoàn các Hiệp hội Thư viện Quốc tế* (Vietnamese)(6).

Building the science terminology and composing a Vietnamese terminology explanatory dictionary for the information-library sector is currently an urgent task in order to meet one of the practical needs in the linguistic life. Thus, attention must be drawn to this task. In this article, we want to emphasize the linguistic aspects of this task, which is aimed at synchronizing the terminology used in the information-library sector, contributing at the same time to perfectionation of science Vietnamese language.

3. Synchronization and standardization of the information-library terminology, contributing to perfectionation of science Vietnamese

Swift and robust progress of sciences has produced unique languages. People have started talking about *mathematics language*, *medical language*, *information language*... along with *speaking language*, *writing language*. The "languages" are specific science languages, co-existing and constituting science Vietnamese.

The usage of jargons in an arbitrary, inadequately systematic and inconsistent manner will certainly jeopardize the accuracy of documents. Thus, synchronizing the terminology used in individual sciences has become a urgent need towards the standardization of a popularized language.

Developed information technology has facilitated the continued enrichment of Vietnamese terminology in the information-library sector, meeting the linguistic demand in the renewal period. Updating fresh knowledge in the information-library sector by making science terms used in this sector systemized and clearly defined is both scientifically and contemporarily worthy. That is not yet included that this sector is closely linked with other social activities and sciences.

In that context, it is an urgent task now to compose and publish a *explanatory and/or reference* dictionary, in which a *vocabulary table with Vietnamese as the first language* is developed to cross-look other popular foreign languages, helping professionals in this domain to arrive at a consistent understanding and *standardization* in using the information-library terminology. Should have this task magnificently accomplished, it would contribute to the integration without being dissolved, make science Vietnamese perfectionized in the age of industrialization and modernization with a view to having Vietnamese language standardized.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the perception on language standardization is no longer rigid. Discussing the

variation of language standardization, Claude Hagege wrote: "All languages in the world, including those you realize in the most literature form, produce masterpieces of literature though, they in all times embody "errors". The errors of yesterdays are the standards of today. And, today's errors are tomorrow's standards" (7, p. 58).

REFERENCES

1. Vuong Toan, *Science Language and Language in Social Sciences Information*, Social Sciences Information Review, No.1, 1987.
2. Vuong Toan, *A proposal on the automation of summarizing science documents*, Bulletin of Library-Information Technology, University of Natural Sciences, Hochiminh city, March 2007
3. Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Linguistics Institute, *Russian-English-French-Vietnamese Dictionary of Library Science Terminology*, H.: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1972, 394 pages
4. National Centre for Science and Technology Documentation and Information (ed.), *French-Vietnamese Dictionary of Documentation and Library*, H. 1997, 140 pages
5. Glossary of Library and Information Science, translated by Pham Thi Le Huong, Lam Vinh The and Nguyen Thi Nga, first publication, Arizona: Galen Press, Ltd. 1996, 279 pages
6. World Sciences, translated by Chu Tien Anh and Vuong Toan, edited and introduced by Pham Khiem Ich, H.: Hanoi National University Publishing House, 2006
7. Claude Hagege, *Le Plurilinguisme – Ethique de l'avenir*, Assises de l'enseignement du français et en français, AUF, 1998.