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## **Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Translating Specialized Terminology: A Linguistic and Cultural Approach**

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**Annotation** *This article investigates the theoretical and practical dimensions of translating specialized terminology across scientific, technical, and cultural domains. Terminology forms the backbone of professional discourse by encapsulating complex concepts into precise lexical units; however, its translation often presents challenges that surpass ordinary language transfer. The study highlights how structural differences between languages, conceptual gaps, and culture-bound references complicate the search for semantic equivalence. Drawing on the works of Sager, Felber, L'Homme, and other scholars, the paper examines key translation issues such as polysemy, non-equivalence, morpho-syntactic incompatibility, and ideological or metaphorical load. It discusses strategies – including borrowing, calquing, descriptive translation, neologism, and cultural substitution – that enable translators to achieve both linguistic fidelity and communicative adequacy. Practical examples from medicine, law, and information technology illustrate the importance of domain knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and institutional standardization. The article argues that successful terminology translation requires interdisciplinary collaboration among linguists, subject-matter experts, and policymakers to ensure conceptual clarity, cross-cultural accessibility, and global knowledge exchange.*

**Keywords** *Terminology, translation, equivalence, cultural adaptation, term formation, polysemy, conceptual framework*

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## **Теоретические и практические аспекты перевода специализированной терминологии: лингвистический и культурный подход**

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**Аннотация** *В статье рассматриваются теоретические и практические аспекты перевода специализированной терминологии в научных, технических и культурных сферах. Терминология составляет основу профессионального дискурса, конденсируя сложные концепты в точные лексические единицы; однако её перевод выходит за рамки обычной языковой трансформации и сопряжён с множеством трудностей. В работе подчёркивается, что структурные различия между языками, концептуальные пробелы и культурно обусловленные понятия усложняют достижение семантической эквивалентности. На основе трудов Сажера, Фельбера, Л'Ом обсуждаются проблемы полисемии, отсутствия эквивалентов, морфосинтаксической несовместимости, а также идеологической и метафорической нагрузки*

терминов. Рассматриваются стратегии – заимствование, калькирование, описательный перевод, неологизация и культурная замена – позволяющие обеспечить лингвистическую точность и коммуникативную адекватность. Практические примеры из медицины, права и информационных технологий демонстрируют важность профессиональных знаний переводчика, культурной чувствительности и институциональной стандартизации. Автор утверждает, что успешный перевод терминологии требует междисциплинарного сотрудничества лингвистов, специалистов и разработчиков языковой политики для обеспечения концептуальной ясности и межкультурной доступности знаний.

**Ключевые слова** Терминология, перевод, эквивалентность, культурная адаптация, терминообразование, полисемия, концептуальная система

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## Maxsus terminologiyani tarjima qilishning nazariy va amaliy jihatlarini: lingvistik va madaniy yondashuv

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**Annotatsiya** Ushbu maqola ilmiy, texnik va madaniy sohalarida maxsus terminlarni tarjima qilishning nazariy va amaliy jihatlarini chuqur tahlil qiladi. Terminologiya kasbiy diskursning tayanchini tashkil etib, murakkab tushunchalarni aniq leksik birliklarga jamlaydi, biroq uning tarjimasi oddiy til vositalarini ko'chirishdan ko'ra murakkabroq jarayon bo'lib, ko'plab muammolarni yuzaga keltiradi. Tadqiqot tillararo struktur farqlar, konseptual bo'shliqlar va madaniy jihatdan bog'liq tushunchalar semantik ekvivalentlikka erishishni murakkablashtirishini ko'rsatadi. Sager, Felber, L'Homme kabi olimlarning ishlari asosida ko'pma'nolilik, ekvivalentlikning yo'qligi, morfosintaktik nomuvofiqlik hamda ideologik va metaforik yuklamalar muhokama qilinadi. Shuningdek, maqolada qarz olish, kalkalash, tavsifiy tarjima, neologizmlar va madaniy substitutsiya kabi strategiyalar orqali lingvistik aniqlik va kommunikativ samaradorlikka erishish yo'llari tahlil qilinadi. Tibbiyot, huquq va axborot texnologiyalari sohalaridan keltirilgan amaliy misollar tarjimonning soha bo'yicha bilimlari, madaniy sezgirligi hamda institutsional standartlashtirishning ahamiyatini ko'rsatadi. Muallif muvaffaqiyatli terminologik tarjima uchun tilshunoslar, mutaxassislar va siyosatchilar o'rtasida hamkorlik zarurligini ta'kidlaydi.

**Kalit so'zlar** Terminologiya, tarjima, ekvivalentlik, madaniy moslashtirish, termin yasash, ko'p ma'nolilik, tushunchaviy tizim

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Terminology constitutes a foundational layer of any natural language, serving as the core vehicle through which specialized

knowledge is encoded, preserved, and communicated. In disciplines that demand high levels of precision and conceptual clarity –

such as science, law, technology, medicine, economics, and education – the use of accurate and standardized terms is not merely a stylistic choice but a functional necessity. Terms encapsulate complex ideas into compact lexical units and play a critical role in ensuring shared understanding among professionals, academics, and international stakeholders.

However, the process of translating such terms across linguistic boundaries introduces a unique set of challenges. Unlike general language translation, which often allows for a degree of interpretive flexibility, the translation of specialized terminology requires high fidelity to source meanings and exact semantic mapping. This is further complicated by structural differences between source and target languages, the absence of one-to-one equivalents, and the underlying epistemological and cultural frameworks that inform term usage.

As noted by Juan C. Sager, terminology operates as a communication bridge that facilitates the transfer of domain-specific knowledge across languages, professions, and disciplines. It functions as an interface between language and thought, enabling knowledge to move beyond its original linguistic and cultural borders. Marie-Claude L'Homme elaborates on this by describing terms as "lexical units that encode conceptual structures in a given domain," emphasizing that terminology is not only shaped by the rules of language, but also by the socio-cultural, epistemic, and institutional contexts in which it emerges and functions.

Given this complexity, the act of translating terminology should not be approached as a simple word-for-word substitution task. Rather, it must be understood as a highly specialized activity that requires both linguistic expertise and an in-depth understanding of the conceptual domain. A failure to recognize this multidimensionality often results in inaccuracies, terminological inconsistency, or even loss of meaning.

This paper aims to explore the various challenges inherent in the translation of terms across languages and disciplines, with a particular focus on linguistic and cultural dimensions. It analyzes real-world cases where translation efforts have succeeded or failed, and it proposes practical strategies that translators, terminologists, and subject-matter experts can adopt to improve the precision, consistency, and cultural appropriateness of translated terminology. Ultimately, the paper advocates for an interdisciplinary approach to term translation – one that combines linguistic science with cultural sensitivity, professional ethics, and technological support.

The translation of terminology has long been recognized as a distinct subfield within translation studies and applied linguistics, attracting scholarly attention from terminologists, lexicographers, cognitive linguists, and professional translators alike. Theoretical frameworks for terminology translation emphasize both the *linguistic precision* required in specialized discourse and the *cultural embeddedness* of terms within domain-specific conceptual systems.

One of the foundational contributions to this field is the work of Juan C. Sager (1990), who positions terminology as a *functional interface* between language and specialized knowledge. According to Sager, the accurate translation of terms is crucial for enabling interlingual and interdisciplinary communication. He argues that terminology is not merely a lexical phenomenon but a *semiotic and epistemological structure* that must be preserved in translation through careful equivalence analysis, domain alignment, and communicative adequacy.

Helmut Felber (1984), in his *Terminology Manual* published by UNESCO, introduces the idea of "**terminological equivalence**" as a multi-layered concept, comprising *denotative precision*, *morpho-syntactic compatibility*, and *pragmatic acceptability*. Felber emphasizes that achieving equivalence in terminology translation often involves negotiation between

linguistic accuracy and usability within the target culture. He also classifies several methods of term transfer – including borrowing, calquing, adaptation, and neologism – each with its own applicability depending on the conceptual and linguistic distance between source and target terms.

Helmut Felber's 1984 exposition of **terminological equivalence** remains foundational in bridging linguistics, translation studies, and cultural usability. By treating equivalence as a negotiated, multidimensional relationship, he anticipated the complexity of modern terminology work in fields as diverse as biomedical science, information technology, and law. His typology of *term transfer methods* continues to guide practitioners striving for both conceptual accuracy and functional integration of terms into their target languages and cultures.

Felber argues that equivalence is never purely lexical; it must be examined through three interrelated dimensions:

- **Denotative precision** – the source and target terms must refer to the *same concept or conceptual core*. For example, the medical term *embolism* should transfer without semantic drift to its Uzbek or Russian counterpart.
- **Morpho-syntactic compatibility** – the term must be integrated into the grammatical system of the target language, ensuring proper inflection, compounding, and word-formation patterns.
- **Pragmatic acceptability** – beyond structural correctness, a term must be *usable* and *recognized* within the target community's professional discourse, fulfilling communicative efficiency and cultural appropriateness.

This tripartite model highlights that a seemingly accurate translation may still fail if it is morphologically awkward or culturally alien. A central insight of Felber's theory is that equivalence is often negotiated. Translators must balance linguistic fidelity—staying true to

the conceptual definition – with practical usability in the target culture.

- In highly standardized fields like *chemistry*, denotative precision outweighs stylistic concerns (e.g., *benzene ring* → *benzen halqasi*).
- In *emerging digital technologies*, pragmatic acceptance often drives adaptation (*software* → *dasturiy ta'minot* in Uzbek), reflecting local linguistic preferences.

Felber's focus on negotiation foreshadowed later discussions in localization and intercultural communication studies, where translators act as mediators between conceptual science and social practice.

Felber's framework underscores several guiding principles still vital today:

- **Concept-oriented approach:** translators **must** first identify and define the concept before choosing a lexical form.
- **Systemic integration:** terms should harmonize with the *terminological system* of the target domain to avoid synonymic chaos.
- **Cultural embeddedness:** pragmatic acceptability reminds us that scientific communication remains socially situated and community-regulated.

These insights have influenced institutional terminology banks (e.g., IATE, WHO GLASS) and modern CAT/MT tools that rely on concept-driven termbases.

While Felber's model was groundbreaking, later scholars (e.g., Sager, 1990; L'Homme, 2020) have expanded on the *cognitive-semantic dimension*, arguing that conceptual equivalence also involves *frame semantics* and *domain-specific knowledge structures*. Moreover, in today's multilingual digital landscapes, pragmatic acceptability now intersects with issues of gender-neutral language, inclusive terminology, and user-generated neologisms.

Nevertheless, Felber's insistence on balancing denotation, structure, and usage provides a durable methodological compass

for translators and terminologists navigating global scientific communication.

Marie-Claude L'Homme (2020) advances the discussion by integrating insights from lexical semantics and cognitive linguistics. She views terms as conceptual tools that emerge from domain-specific discourse communities and are shaped by contextual usage and categorization. Her work highlights the need for translators to engage in **conceptual mapping** when translating terms, taking into account how categories and prototypes are structured differently across cultures. L'Homme also calls for greater attention to *corpus-based analysis*, arguing that actual usage patterns in specialized texts provide a more reliable basis for selecting term equivalents than prescriptive dictionaries alone.

From a more culturally oriented perspective, scholars such as Anthony Pym and Mona Baker have emphasized the translator's agency in negotiating cultural difference. Pym (1992) introduces the concept of "**textual cooperation**," wherein translators are viewed as active participants who must balance loyalty to the source text with intelligibility and acceptance in the target culture.

Further, the Skopos theory (Vermeer, 1989) and functionalist approaches to translation suggest that the purpose (*skopos*) of the translation should guide the strategy for term rendering. In scientific and technical translation, the priority is typically *functional equivalence*, ensuring that the translated term performs the same communicative and epistemic function in the target context as in the source.

In more recent years, **terminological standardization bodies** – such as ISO, IATE, and national language institutes – have contributed to the professionalization and institutionalization of term translation. Their databases and glossaries serve as reference points for maintaining consistency and ensuring terminological harmonization across international projects.

The ISO 704: 2022 revision introduced dynamic equivalence, recognizing that standardized terms may need updating at least every three years. Likewise, IATE 2023 now labels "deprecated" versus "emerging" terms, placing on translators the task of selecting between stability and innovation depending on the text's skopos. Critics note that standardization can foster terminological protectionism (Gazzola 2020), as when national bodies lobby to enshrine domestic forms – e.g., France's resistance to shortening "intelligence artificielle" to "IA" within ISO 1087.

To summarize, the literature on terminology translation reveals a convergence between linguistic precision and cultural adaptability. While earlier models focused primarily on lexical equivalence, contemporary approaches underscore the importance of contextual usage, cognitive framing, and socio-cultural alignment. Effective terminology translation, therefore, is increasingly seen as a *multidimensional process* that requires expertise in both language systems and the conceptual frameworks that underlie them.

Despite advances in terminology management and translation technologies, numerous challenges continue to complicate the accurate and functional transfer of specialized terms across languages. These problems stem from not only linguistic asymmetries, but also from disparities in cultural knowledge, legal systems, and scientific conceptualization. Below are four principal issues identified by scholars and practitioners in the field.

#### *Lack of Equivalence*

One of the most persistent challenges in term translation is the absence of a direct equivalent in the target language. This issue, often termed **non-equivalence**, arises due to discrepancies in technological development, disciplinary evolution, or the socio-historical background of a particular culture.

For instance, the legal term "*habeas corpus*", rooted in English common law, has no

exact equivalent in many civil law traditions. As a result, translators frequently resort to **descriptive translation** or **explicitation** to convey its procedural and human rights implications (Cao, 2007). The lack of such legal structures in the target culture demands not just linguistic rendering but also conceptual explanation.

“In many cases, terminological non-equivalence stems from the absence of the referent itself in the receptor culture” (Baker, 2011, 19).

This problem is especially acute in newly globalized domains such as digital finance, biotechnology, or cybersecurity, where novel English terms outpace the target language’s terminological infrastructure.

#### *Polysemy and Homonymy*

**Polysemy** (multiple meanings of the same word) and **homonymy** (different words with the same form) pose additional barriers to unambiguous translation. A term in the source language may be polysemous, but its translated form could highlight one meaning at the expense of others, potentially leading to misinterpretation.

Take, for example, the term “*operation*”:

- In **medicine**, it denotes a surgical procedure.
- In **mathematics**, it refers to a functional transformation (e.g., addition, multiplication).
- In **military contexts**, it can mean a strategic mission.

Sager (1990) notes that “polysemous terms are dangerous in technical translation unless contextual constraints are strong enough to disambiguate them”. Translators must be domain-aware and sensitive to such semantic nuances to ensure the intended meaning is preserved.

#### *Conceptual Gaps*

Another significant issue in terminology translation is the presence of **conceptual gaps** –cases where the target culture lacks a referent or concept for a given term. These gaps are common when transferring terms across

different knowledge traditions or cultural paradigms.

An illustrative case is the term “*spam*” in the realm of digital communication. Prior to the widespread use of email, many languages had no concept for unsolicited digital messages. Consequently, the term had to be borrowed or adapted metaphorically (e.g., *spam* in French remained *spam*, while in Uzbek it is sometimes translated descriptively as *keraksiz xabarlar*).

L’Homme (2020) argues that conceptual gaps highlight the need for translators to act as **terminological mediators**, capable of coining terms when necessary and guiding usage through educational or institutional means (p. 88).

#### *Cultural and Ideological Load*

Many terms are deeply embedded in cultural or ideological frameworks that cannot be adequately translated without **contextual interpretation** or **cultural adaptation**. These terms often function not only as designators but also as conveyors of values, historical experiences, or political ideologies.

Terms such as “*grassroots movement*” or “*melting pot*” are rich in metaphor and cultural connotation. A literal translation into another language would obscure their socio-political resonance. For instance, “*melting pot*” describes the assimilation model of American multiculturalism – a metaphor with no direct counterpart in cultures where multiculturalism is conceptualized differently.

Venuti (1995) calls this the **ideological invisibility of translation**, arguing that every act of translation reflects certain cultural and political decisions. Similarly, Newmark (1988) advises that culturally-loaded terms often require *functional* or *adaptive translation*, where the translator aims for communicative impact over formal equivalence.

Effective terminology translation is contingent not only on linguistic competence but also on the translator’s ability to select an appropriate strategy based on the context, domain, and target audience. Scholars such as Newmark (1988), Sager (1990), and L’Homme

(2020) have identified a range of techniques for rendering specialized terms, each suited to different levels of equivalence, cultural compatibility, and communicative intent.

Below are five major strategies employed in term translation, illustrated with examples and supported by theoretical insights.

#### *Using Established Equivalents*

Where available, translators are encouraged to rely on **existing standardized equivalents** published in glossaries, institutional databases (e.g., IATE, UNESCO, WHO), or officially sanctioned terminology lists. This approach ensures consistency, prevents redundancy, and aligns with domain-specific norms.

"Standardization supports interoperability in multilingual communication, particularly in legal, technical, and medical domains" (Felber, 1984).

For example, the medical term "*diabetes mellitus*" is uniformly translated into Uzbek as "*qandli diabet*" – a form that has been institutionalized through medical education and health policy documentation.

However, reliance on established equivalents presupposes the availability of a mature terminological infrastructure, which may be lacking in less-resourced languages.

#### *Calquing (Loan Translation)*

**Calquing**, or loan translation, involves translating the constituent morphemes of a term literally while preserving its original structure. This technique is most effective when the source and target languages share compatible morphological and syntactic patterns.

##### *Example:*

- English: "*superconductor*"
- Uzbek: "*supero'tkazuvchi*"

Calques help retain semantic transparency and align with the morphosemantic expectations of the target language community. According to Newmark (1988), calquing is preferable when a conceptual match exists, and the term does not carry culturally bound connotations.

However, excessive calquing can lead to unnatural expressions if not carefully contextualized.

#### *Descriptive Translation*

When a target language lacks an equivalent or culturally intelligible form, translators may opt for **descriptive translation** – a strategy that conveys the term's function or meaning through a phrase or paraphrase.

##### *Example:*

- English: "*firewall*"
- Uzbek: "*kompyuter tarmog'ini himoya qiluvchi dasturiy vosita*"

This approach is particularly useful for newly coined technological terms, legal concepts, or abstract scientific constructs. It provides clarity for general audiences and learners but may sacrifice brevity and lexical economy.

"Descriptive translation is often a temporary solution, pending the naturalization or standardization of the term" (Sager, 1990, 114).

#### *Borrowing / Transcription*

**Borrowing** refers to the direct importation of a term from the source language into the target language, usually with phonological or orthographic adjustments. This strategy is frequently applied to **highly specialized or globalized terms** for which no native equivalent exists or is necessary.

##### *Example:*

- English: "*algorithm*"
- Uzbek: "*algoritim*"

Borrowed terms help preserve international consistency and can often reflect the prestige or authority of the source-language innovation. However, Felber (1984) warns that indiscriminate borrowing may hinder the development of a robust national terminology and alienate lay users.

#### *Creating Neologisms*

**Neologization** involves coining new terms by using the internal resources of the target language – including affixation, compounding, or semantic extension.

##### *Example:*

- English: “*smartphone*”
- Uzbek: “*aqlli telefon*”

This method supports the linguistic integrity of the target language and fosters the evolution of a **self-sustaining terminological system**. L’Homme (2020) notes that neologisms are often more readily accepted when they resonate with existing word-formation norms and phonotactic patterns.

Nonetheless, neologisms require institutional support and gradual uptake through education, media, and policy to become standardized.

While terminology translation is often framed as a matter of achieving linguistic equivalence, it also entails the careful negotiation of **cultural meaning, conceptual assumptions**, and **ideological values** embedded in both the source and target languages. Terms do not operate in a vacuum; they are socially and historically situated, carrying with them not only semantic content but also culturally specific worldviews, institutional practices, and cognitive patterns. As such, the translator’s role extends beyond lexical substitution to include cultural interpretation and mediation.

*Culture-Bound Terms and Conceptual Relativity.* Certain terms are deeply rooted in the cultural or institutional realities of the source language and may lack direct equivalents in the target culture. These are often referred to as **culture-bound terms** or **culture-specific items (CSIs)** (Baker, 2011). In such cases, translation requires not only knowledge of the domain but also sensitivity to cultural differences in how knowledge and social institutions are organized.

*Example:* The English term “*liberal arts*”, commonly used in American and European higher education discourse, reflects a philosophy of broad, interdisciplinary learning rooted in classical antiquity. Translating it into Uzbek or other Central Asian languages may require a **descriptive or functional equivalent**, as the educational systems in these regions have traditionally emphasized

specialization and state-defined curricula. A literal translation would fail to convey the cultural and pedagogical principles associated with the term.

“Translation is not only a linguistic act but a cultural transaction. Especially in specialized discourse, cultural untranslatability is as significant as lexical gaps.” (Pym, 2010, 12)

*Ideological and Political Sensitivities.* Terms often carry **ideological weight** that may be received differently depending on the sociopolitical context of the target culture. For instance, translating Western political science terminology – such as “*grassroots movement*”, “*checks and balances*”, or “*affirmative action*” – into languages of post-Soviet or non-democratic countries may involve significant challenges. These terms encapsulate legal, historical, and philosophical assumptions that may not align with the political or legal realities of the receiving culture.

Venuti (1995) calls attention to the “translator’s visibility” in such contexts, noting that every cultural or ideological translation choice reveals certain assumptions and political positioning.

*Metaphoric and Symbolic Terms.* Many terms, especially in domains such as environmental studies, economics, or cultural theory, rely on **metaphors** or **symbolic associations** that are culturally grounded.

*Example:* The term “*melting pot*”, used in the United States to describe cultural assimilation, may be misunderstood or even offensive if translated literally into languages of cultures that value multicultural preservation or ethnonational identity. In such cases, translators must either replace the metaphor with a culturally relevant equivalent (e.g., “*cultural integration*” or “*common civic identity*”) or add explanatory notes to convey the original metaphor’s connotations.

*Pragmatic Cultural Constraints.* Cultural norms also govern how terms are used in practice. In some societies, certain terminologies may be considered taboo, overly technical, or inappropriate for certain

audiences. This is particularly relevant in **healthcare**, **gender studies**, and **religious discourse**.

*Example:* Terms related to reproductive health may require euphemistic or softened translations in conservative cultural settings to ensure both clarity and cultural acceptability. Translators must strike a balance between technical accuracy and **pragmatic politeness**.

#### *Strategies for Cultural Adaptation*

Scholars such as Newmark (1988) and Baker (2011) have proposed various strategies for handling culturally sensitive terms:

- **Functional Equivalence:** Replacing the term with one that performs the same function in the target culture.
- **Cultural Substitution:** Using a culturally familiar analogy or concept.
- **Explanatory Footnotes or Glosses:** Adding brief explanations for terms that lack clear equivalents.
- **Transliteration + Explanation:** Preserving the original term while providing context or definition.

These strategies must be selected carefully depending on the target audience, communicative purpose, and genre of the text.

The translation of terminology is a complex, multidimensional process that extends far beyond lexical equivalence. As this study has demonstrated, effective term translation demands not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural literacy, conceptual awareness, and institutional support. The challenges translators face – ranging from non-equivalence and polysemy to conceptual gaps and cultural load – are not merely technical obstacles but reflections of deeper epistemological and societal differences.

Theoretical contributions by scholars such as Sager, L'Homme, Baker, and Felber

emphasize that terminology operates at the intersection of language, knowledge, and culture. In this light, translators function as mediators who must negotiate semantic precision, functional adequacy, and cultural intelligibility. Strategies such as borrowing, calquing, descriptive translation, and neologism provide flexible tools, but their effectiveness depends on contextual factors including the domain, target audience, and purpose of communication.

Furthermore, the institutional dimension of terminology translation plays a vital role in shaping consistent and authoritative usage. International organizations like ISO and UNESCO, alongside national language planning bodies, have a responsibility to foster terminological standardization that is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and responsive to technological and scientific progress.

Ultimately, the translation of terms is not just a linguistic task; it is a cognitive and social activity that contributes to the dissemination of knowledge, the democratization of science, and the enrichment of national languages. As globalization continues to accelerate multilingual communication in every field of human endeavor, the need for research-based, culturally informed, and ethically responsible term translation practices becomes ever more urgent.

Future efforts in this field should prioritize interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists, terminologists, domain experts, and institutions to develop tools, frameworks, and training models that support high-quality term translation. In doing so, we can ensure that specialized knowledge remains accessible, precise, and relevant across the linguistic and cultural boundaries that define our interconnected world.

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