Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 2 (51) - 2009
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

TERMINOLOGY DYNAMICS - CONCEPTUAL PATTERNS OF TERM FORMATION

Laura SASU[1]

Abstract: *This paper dwells upon the basic issues concerning the currently increasing necessity of term formation in the perspective of scientific and domain-specific terminology dynamics. It briefly outlines the recommended conditions that must be complied with according to standardised terminology regulations as counter-balanced by thereto marginal specific cases emerging in practice and use, hereby attempting to clearly establish the coordinates for the conceptual patterns of term formation and coherence in use.*

Key words: *terminology, designation, conceptualisation, intra-term relations.*

1. Introduction

The increasing trends of internationalisation, globalisation, and technology development lead to "more and more specialized communication acts" (Muller 193) whereas an increased necessity for communication is hereby merely a logical consequence. The hereby emerging terminology, linguistic, comprehension and cultural barriers that may result in failure of communication in most situations are to be subdued by means of terminology and translation. Despite the high level of standardisation, and internationalisation, there are many deeply rooted cultural, communicational, and linguistic differences in all domain related specialised terminologies. It is the task of the terminology expert or the translator, and the translating activity in general, to eliminate or at least diminish this communicational hindrance, by means of terminology with concrete solutions for each particular existing difficulty.

Recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in the study of " termini tehnici" (technical terms - hereinafter shortly "terms" for conciseness), however the study of terminology, namely the theoretical and applied study of terms as coherent systems of lexical items endowed with creative dynamism, remained so far neither clearly defined nor is there a general agreement about its scope.

2. Function and Purpose of Domain – Specific Terminological Study

For a strict outline of the function and purpose as well as of the practical application scope of terminology (be it in one or parallel in multiple languages, be it a systematic or a punctual analysis of the field specific terms, commonly referred to as "termini tehnici" or terms of art, it is relevant to clearly understand the

[1] Dept. of Foreign Languages, *Transilvania* University of Braşov.

BDD-A20266 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:57:53 UTC)

background and the causes resulting in the current state of this area.

Since the past century has brought about an explosive rate of growth in all fields of science and hence in all related domains of technology domain specific communication has accordingly gained an increasingly important role.

Along with the exponential progress in most scientific domains there is an increase in the area, amount and use of the technical terms herewith related, often resulting in communication hindrances or misunderstandings even between experts in different fields, but sometimes within the same domain and obviously between speakers of different languages.

It is therefore necessary to pinpoint the newly emerging domain specific terms immediately after their emergence, to exactly explain and establish the inherent meaning so as to further ensure the correct use thereof, both in that domain specific language as well as to make them available for common language use.

The relation between terminology and domain-specific language in point of function of practical terminological study in each field should be therefore the following: terminology should aim to be the standardised mediation and communication bridge that makes the transfer process for knowledge in the field of domain-specific language possible.

3. Standardisation and Norms for Term Formation and Use

Therefore standardisation of terminology theory is the basic step in standardisation of terminology practice and application. Terminology is according to Norm DIN part 1 (DIN 1986 7) "the total of concepts and their designations in a specific domain". Since terminology is coined as the vocabulary of a certain domain it has to be considered as a part of that specific language, therefore resulting in the conclusion that terminology is subordinate to the domain-specific language as being a part thereof.

The boundary between domain-specific language and general language is basically easily recognisable, however there are several interference areas of the two that require further analysis. "The core area of a language, used by all members of a language community is designated as general language" according to Norm DIN (DIN 2342 part 11986 2) whereas this definition only raises the rather difficult question on how to set the boundaries and distinguish between the general language and the domain-specific languages on one hand, and between the several existing domain-specific languages on the other hand.

Regarding the relation between domain-specific language and general language it is relevant that there are interactions between the two, some of the most important aspects of this interaction being terminologisation of semantic units—where a known, (usually general language word form receives a new conceptual meaning) and vice versa general language imports terms from the domain-specific language preserving or changing the initial meaning attributed to the.

Statistically there are by far more situations of the latter interaction type accounted for by the intrusion of technology at an unprecedented rate into the every day life of language communities.

However, the more concise and precise a domain-specific language remains the less comprehensible and available it is for the general language community.

The current situation in this respect is on the contrary, one where more and more domain-specific terms enter the general language area that results in a phenomenon perceived as an oversaturation of the passive vocabulary.

BDD-A20266 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:57:53 UTC)

A further consequence is that numerous domain-specific terms that are disseminated by means of mass communication media are interpreted, understood and further brought in use in the general language area as partially or entirely incorrect or ambiguous, which can be therefore regarded as the reverse process of terminologisation, namely a process of determinologisation.

This situation unfortunately exists and continues to occur increasingly, while countless examples of such determinologised terms enter the general language hereby affecting both the correct use and conceptualisation and also sometimes casting a significant reflection upon the actual initial concept attributed to a term in the domain-specific language area.

Hence, the permanent interaction between domain-specific language and general language as well as the thereto related issues imply a coherent transmission of terms between the two fields, starting from standardised terminology rules and completed by the practical study and coinage thereof.

3.1. Term – Concept - Designation Interaction in Terminology Dynamics

The term and its related elements need to be further dwelled upon in order to emphasise all potential interaction possibilities that may emerge in the currently continuous process of term formation and hereinafter use.

As a term is defined as the designation of a defined concept in a special language by a linguistic expression, the central unit that needs to be carefully analysed when forming, or using a newly formed term is actually the concept.

A term may consist of one or several words that is a simple term or a complex term or even contain symbols, acronyms or shortenings and therefore does term formation imply several conditions that are actually not always complied with in practice. A term should be:

- linguistically correct;
- precise (motivated);
- concise.

A term should permit (if possible) the formation of derivatives.

3.2. Actual Shortcomings of Term Formation Resulting in Ambiguity or Misinterpretation

The accuracy (motivation) of a term must be seen as its ability to reflect as far as possible the features that are provided in the definition.

A term should be concise. Undue length of a term represents a serious shortcoming. Firstly it breaches the principle of linguistic economy, and secondly it frequently leads to ellipsis (omission), which in turn can only further create ambiguousness and quite often misinterpretation or even overlapping with a different concept. The resulting alternative designation can lead to misunderstanding.

The requirement of characteristics often conflicts with that of accuracy and the greater the number of characteristics included in a term, the more complete the representation of the concept and the more accurate the term.

Thus, the term is considered to be the central element of terminology the unit consisting in the concept and its designation. However, there are countless examples of terms that do not comply with a desirable condition for term formation, namely the mono-semic correspondence between a term and a concept. It is justly recommended however not attainable to the extend that may exclude misinterpretation, ambiguity or overlapping within the same language but different domain-specific language areas, not to mention correspondence between different languages. For standardized terminology, it is desirable that one term be

BDD-A20266 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:57:53 UTC)

assigned only to one single concept, and that a concept be represented by one term.

In scientific and technological terminology the breach of this principle such as polysemy, synonymy, homonymy may result in serious misunderstandings and above that rather severe translation mistakes, even translation impossibility that is usually solved by importing the term with the designation in the language it was first coined, facts that only further increase the comprehension gap and increase ambiguity and lack of precision in use . Therefore, when creating new terms, elaborating the appropriate definitions and systematizing the already existing terms, several procedures should be followed. Before a new term for the concept is formed it should be ascertained whether any term already exists in that language for the concept to be designated and in case there are several synonyms for a one single concept the one which satisfies the largest number of requirements mentioned above should be selected.

4. Conclusion on Terminology Dynamics in Point of Desirable Theoretical Standardisation Provisions versus the Existing Practice

Designation creation is thus of utmost importance under the circumstances of a continuous unabated and explosive rate of growth in all scientific domains and needs to be investigated, elaborated and applied accordingly. Domain-specific languages should not attempt to merely attribute to designations existing in general language areas new domain-specific meanings and hereby alter the concepts, even if this is one of the most productive processes. The newly emerging concepts need to be accounted for, as much as possible, by new designations hereby coining new terms, since more or less productive word formation pattern exist in each language.

However, term formation is not to be mistaken for absolute term creation in the sense of invention of linguistic elements, which occurs only in exceptional situations, yet generally making use of elements pre-existing in a language and hence increasing the potential for ambiguity of misunderstanding and misuse of terms. The means of term formation accounted for by terminology dynamics refer to basically using all lexical means of the general language including terminologisation, composition, derivatives -by pre-fixation, suffixation of pseudo-suffixation, conversion, import of terms, shortenings, acronyms and term creation.

The basic aspects that need to be observed at the conceptual level refer to the relations between the terms and their constituent aspects or elements, the relations between the constituent aspects as well as the nature of the conceptual formation combination used in the construction of terminology.

References

1. Arntz, Reiner. *Terminologievergleich und Internationale Terminologie-angleichung*. Tubingen und Basel: Snell Hornby Francke Verlag, 1994.
2. Arntz, Reiner and Picht, Heribert. *Einführung in die Terminologiearbeit*. Hildesheim Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag, 1995.
3. Muller, Bernd Dietrich. *Interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunication.* 2nd ed. Munchen: Iudicium Verlag, 1993.
4. Reiss, Katharina and Vermeer, Hans. *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie.* 2nd ed. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991.
5. Stolze, Radegundis. *Grundlagen der Textubersetzung*. Heidelberg: Julius Gross Verlag, 1982.

BDD-A20266 © 2009 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:57:53 UTC)