



THE SPECIAL TERM AS A SEMANTIC PHENOMENON (IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPING TRANSLATOR'S DICTIONARIES)

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Abstract

The principles of modeling the semantics of a term, taking into account the requirements of terminology, translation studies and lexicography, are presented. Today, these three approaches to the term are methodologically based on the theory of communication and the theory of sublanguages. A universal questionnaire of the principal design characteristics of any term is proposed.

Keywords: lexicography, terminology, principles, vagueness, translation.

Introduction

Scientific and technical translation (and - more broadly - translation of written or oral speech in the field of business communication) is the object of study primarily of two disciplines - terminology and translation studies. Each of them is complex in nature, in contact with a number of sciences, but we have the right to consider these disciplines as belonging to the science of language, because the term is primarily a linguistic unit, and translation is a kind of linguistic communication [1; 2].

Each of the two disciplines under consideration is now experiencing a period of rapid development in all three methodological directions - theoretical, descriptive and applied. The latter seems to be especially important: it is the applied models of terminological systems and applied models of the translator's activity that are directly included in the linguistic support of translation. The prospect of development of both disciplines is connected with their significant integration: after all, we are dealing here with a single reality – terminological translation activity. When studying and modeling it, translation studies highlights the activity context of the use of terms, and term science sets a scientific understanding of the objects of this activity. Therefore, we are talking about the creation of unified applied models. They should contain the tools of the activity and the rules for the implementation of its processes. The main type of the model is a terminological translation dictionary (TPD). Ultimately, the efforts of terminology science, which is increasingly acquiring an activity orientation, are ultimately aimed at its improvement. Our conclusion about the special status of the dictionary allows us to assert that the link between terminology and translation studies is the science of dictionaries - lexicography.





What are the key concepts and principles of modern translation studies, considered as part of the theory of language communication? The central activity unit here is a bilingual communicative act, the structure of which includes the following components: a set of communicants (original author, translator, readers or listeners of the translation); the circumstances of communication (covering both the socio-production and cultural background, and the act of a specific joint activity of communicants directly accompanying communication); practical goals of communication; communicative goals serving the implementation of practical goals and underlying texts and their individual components; processes of understanding and verbalization; and finally, the business texts themselves created and understood as symbolic formations [3].

When determining ways to improve translation activities, one should take into account the specifics of all these aspects of a communicative act, or rather, determine and study the types of communicative acts, taking into account all these aspects. For each type, further, it is necessary to establish classes of potential communicative failures - a characteristic feature of human communication, especially bilingual. This is the phenomenon of A.M. Peshkovsky called "a necessary companion of literary and cultural speaking" [4].

The classes of communication failures are related primarily to their sources; this is where the constructive interaction between the science of translation and terminology arises: the sources of failure most often lie in terminological systems, in the terminological knowledge of communicants, in the peculiarities of the terminological structure of texts, in the processes of understanding (misunderstanding) and verbalization, in the clarifying role of circumstances, etc. . Therefore, the TPS (together with the rules for using it) should be a means of preventing, identifying and overcoming communication failures. This is how one could interpret the task of increasing the degree of adequacy of translation activities in the field of business communication.

Actual problems of terminology are associated with an in-depth objective study of the nature of the term in the light of the activity paradigm outlined above and with the development on this basis of new methods for constructing and using TPS.

Attempts to define the term have been made repeatedly, and, perhaps, the lack of unity in the understanding of the term "term" is the most convincing evidence of the fundamental vagueness of the meaning of any term, although just the opposite is often stated. This characteristic is one of the background, essential properties of the term, which help to more realistically assess its other constructive properties, which are often in dialectical contradiction with the background properties. (For vagueness,





such an antipode is, in particular, the desire for accuracy inherent in the term as an object of artificial regulation.)

The property of vagueness has a significant impact on translation activities. We encounter it in seemingly central terms of the humanities: compare, for example, the English name of the scientific discipline anthropology or the linguistic term phrase.

The vagueness of the term is present in all areas of scientific communication and at the same time has a variety of manifestations. The fundamental incompleteness of any definition is connected with it: everything cannot be reflected in it, if only because knowledge is constantly developing and enriching. The approximate content of the term is associated with the inexhaustibility of the material world, with mutual transitions of concepts (cf. consideration of elementary particles as cosmological objects), with an increase in the information capacity of terms (for example, the concept of an electromagnetic field made it possible to combine electricity, magnetism and light), with the development of common terms for different sciences (including - humanitarian and natural: cf. the terms control, redundancy, invariant, etc. [5]). At the same time, vagueness itself is relative: the term ensures continuity in the development of knowledge, the transition from individual knowledge to collective knowledge, and the establishment of intertheoretical relations in science [6].

Of the other background properties of the term, essential for understanding its nature, it is necessary to highlight the pragmatism of its semantics, i.e. the dependence of the content of the term on the practical activity in which it is used, on the intentions and attitudes of the people using it (practical activity is understood here broadly and includes any activity within which linguistic communication takes place). Further, it should be noted the dynamism of the semantics of the term, understood both in the historical aspect and in the aspect of synchronous variation in various communicative situations.

Finally, we will name such a background property of the term, which has already become the traditional postulates of terminology, namely the structurality of this linguistic unit. Thus, any consideration of a single term (including in this article) is purely conditional. The essence of the term is determined by its structural (system) properties [7]. The key question in the study and description of the term boils down to the following: in what semantic and formal structures is this term included? However, at the present stage of the development of terminology, the property of structurality should be taken into account in close connection with the mentioned properties of vagueness, pragmatism and dynamism.

It is also important to note that the concretization of the property of structurality in modern applied linguistics has led to the identification of such a category as





sublanguage as a reference concept reflecting the reality of language functioning [8; 9]. It is defined through the notion of substructure. The latter refers to the totality of closely related units together with their connecting relationships within the language structure. There are many substructures in the language, they can stand out for various reasons, they can overlap with each other. The sublanguage of a given language is its certain substructure, capable of functioning as a language in a certain sphere of communication, i.e. fully determining the structure of a certain set of texts. In other words, the structural elements of the sublanguage are necessary and sufficient for understanding and producing a certain set of speech works. For example, we can talk about the sublanguage of football reports, the sublanguage of legislation in the field of environmental protection, the sublanguage of court records, etc. Each term primarily belongs to a certain sublanguage or complex of sublanguages. And the language as a whole can be considered as a supercomplex of sublanguages. And yet, let's return to the definition of the term. To a number of existing definitions (including in our previous works), we will add one more. A conventional term is a word or phrase of a certain sublanguage, taken in a fixed conventional meaning, for which there exists in a more or less explicit form a consciously developed definition within a specific type of human activity, and the carriers of the sublanguage when using the term consciously focus on this definition. We consider the above formulation as a definition of a typical term and as a starting point for highlighting a more fundamental concept, namely, the degree of terminology as a property from the point of view of which any word or phrase of the language can be evaluated. Ideas about the degree of terminology have been expressed repeatedly and, in our opinion, deserve all-round attention and development [10]. Researchers paid attention to the fact that terms are inextricably linked with natural language, that terms have all the properties of a word, and that it is often difficult to draw a line between terms and non-terms. This implies the need to explicate the property of terminology inherent in words (and phrases) in varying degrees and in different modes. The available facts suggest that terminology is a complex property. But it is necessary to try to identify the leading factor in it, and such a factor is, in our opinion, the degree of definition, i.e. the degree of conventional attachment to a fragment of a knowledge system, the degree of conscious definition within a specific sublanguage and specific human activity.

The definition of a term can manifest itself in different ways: in the presence of lexicographically fixed definitions, in the existence of detailed theories, in the ostensive (indicative) characterization of the relevant subject with the help of drawings or simply with the help of practical actions with it, in educational and





didactic descriptions and techniques, in ways of using the word, assuming the obviousness of the definition, which, if necessary, can be easily explicated by each of the communication participants. In other words, definiteness (explicit or implied) is a property that is highly marked for the consciousness of sublanguage speakers by the most typical terms of this sphere of communication. In principle, the degree of definition can decrease smoothly (depending, for example, on the practical need for it for a given word or, say, depending on the stage of cognitive development of reality). There are, therefore, various transitional cases between terms and non-terms - quasi-terms. Thus, the distinctive property of the term is its high degree of definition (which, we emphasize once again, should be interpreted taking into account the above background properties of all terms).

The theoretical basis for the construction of one or another variant of the TPN, focused on a certain type of business communication, can be a universal questionnaire of the fundamental design characteristics of any term. Our list of such characteristics includes two sections: global and private. The first includes the following global characteristics.

Degree of definition. About each given term, we can obtain specific information regarding whether there are explicit definitions in the relevant dictionary and textual sources, to what extent they are debatable, which contexts of its use indicate the implied definition of its meaning, and which contexts indicate "free" dealing with this word. For example, in the sublanguage of the financial sphere of communication, the term estimate is more defined than the term market; in technological documents on mechanical engineering, the term edge is more defined than the term product. The property under consideration, when applied to phrases, makes it possible to distinguish between compound terms and free combinations of terms (or terms with non-terms). Compare: flux welding and pipeline welding.

General structural determinism. This refers to the definition of the place of the term in the language through a sublanguage. The question is in which sublanguage the studied usual term is considered in this model. In the end, the feature profile of the sublanguage should be designated, which, as our experience shows, it is advisable to set through the features of texts served by this sublanguage (based on the study of the text flow, combinations of features receive "weights"). The enlarged groups of relevant features of texts look as follows: the sphere of communication (in particular, the authors of the texts), chronological framework, genre, communicative and





practical goals of the text, subject matter, nature of information (concrete-subject, abstract-hypothetical, etc.), the volume of texts, external structure (composition) [12].

Narrow-system determinism. This property concerns the place of the studied unit in the system of terms that exists within a fixed sublanguage and covers its units with the highest degree of terminology. Conscious definition often characterizes the system as a whole, rather than a separate term. The system of terms in a typical case is, in turn, a system of systems, has a complex structure that does not always obey the principles of hierarchy. Accordingly, the connections of the term in the system are diverse and often do not have clear boundaries [11; 13; 14].

Functional-activity load. Each term performs certain functions in speech activity, woven into the context of the practical activities of sublanguage speakers. The term can be a tool for naming objects, putting forward hypotheses, can perform a heuristic role in the process of constructing a theory, serve as a means of exercising a controlling influence on a person, on a team, on a machine, embody a learning potential, etc.

The degree of artificiality. Any term carries an element of artificiality, but the choice of a plan of expression and a plan of content may deviate to varying degrees from the laws of a given language.

The degree of uniformity. It is known that many terms are individually authored (idiolect) either in terms of expression or in terms of content (and often in both plans). On the other hand, there are, of course, terms that are maximally unified both in form and semantics, universally understood in the same way. There are many varieties between these poles, which it seems necessary to take into account in translation activities.

Cognitive saturation. This property unites such aspects of the term as the degree of accuracy of existing definitions, the degree of their completeness, the presence of a developed system of knowledge (theories) in which the meaning of the term is embedded, the level of this knowledge according to its degree of globality or specificity, the place of this system of knowledge in the chain of historical development of cognition.

The second section of the questionnaire under consideration provides for the following main groups of particular semantic characteristics.





Semantic layers in the content of the term (types of information transmitted by it). When analyzing the denotative layer, one should keep in mind the fundamental mobility of the boundaries of denotation (or reference). It is from this point of view that nomenclature terms are distinguished. The other pole is terms with an empty reference (they are used in some situations of theoretical scientific search). The most difficult to analyze is the significative layer of semantics. Here it is essential to note the insufficiency of the "one term – one concept" scheme. The bundle of conceptual connections is usually very saturated and includes, in addition to the main concept, a number of categorical and secondary, peripheral connections. The expressive layer of terms is not always "empty" (cf. the facts of the preference of some terms by others, differences in sociolinguistic parameters of communication, etc.). The syntactic information contained in the term also deserves attention, because it determines the ways of its formal entry into the text.

Semantic-relational characteristics. It includes, firstly, internal semantic correlations between the components of a compound term (they are significant even in adjectival combinations that seem to be transparent in their semantics: double point, double window, double play, double floor, double star, double hole, double bass). Secondly, any term has potential external semantic correlations that regulate its compatibility with other sublanguage words, for example: cold pressing (relation of "related circumstances"), nut pressing (relation of "product"), rubber pressing (relation of "auxiliary tool"), hydraulic pressing (relation of "main tool") The expanded semantic-relational model of a term can be described using the frame apparatus.

Semantic and correlation characteristics. It should describe all semantic correlations that link the usual term with other units of the sublanguage as part of the lexico-semantic field, as well as (in the case of polysemy) with other usual meanings of the same formal unit (i.e. within the integral meaning of the lexeme). Correlations of the semantic field include hyponymic, paronymic, synonymic, antonymic and many other types of relations that require special research for a particular term in a particular sublanguage. Dependence on the sublanguage structure is manifested even in the case of seemingly the most common semantic relations. Cf. antonyms in the sublanguage of computer science: programmed dump – rescue dump. Polysemic correlations link the usual meanings included in different semantic micropoles: cf. artillery-1 ("guns"), artillery-2 ("branch of the armed forces") and artillery-3 ("military unit").





Morpho-semantic structure. The meanings of morphemes and semantic correlations between them within this term are described [11]. Correlations are especially relevant for compound words: cf. oil-carrier, oil-paper, oilway, oilcloth etc. The considered questionnaire can be useful when comparing the semantics of the source and translating languages. Within the framework of the proposed concept, the main problems of improving TPS are as follows: (1) functional typology of dictionaries; (2) structural typology of dictionaries (i.e. by the composition and organization of information); (3) procedures for the construction and maintenance of dictionaries.

In conclusion, we note that the methods of terminology require today to focus on two main areas. These are (a) experimental knowledge of the properties of terms, the nature of cognitive processes occurring during translation, and (b) the development of methods for applied computer lexicographic modeling of a specialist's communicative competence.

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