



## The role of terminology and its comparison with lexicology in linguistics

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### ABSTRACT

This article illustrates the importance of terminology and also the comparison of terminology and lexicology. In this article general information about terminology is given. Terminology helps individuals realize the interaction between the units of specialized texts and the whole context which is often a subconscious mechanism of knowledge acquisition. It also develops interests in the formation of new words and terms.

### Keywords:

terminology, lexicology, linguistics, terminography and lexicography

Terminology plays an important role in the understanding of contexts and specialized texts. Understanding the intricate terminological details of the technical and scientific contexts helps students comprehend what the main message of the document is, and it helps specialists to transmit the content more effectively.

A common problem of terminology work is that the importance and indeed the very nature of terminology is poorly understood. Thus many people simply have no idea at all of what it is, while others, searching for an explanation of some sort, end up associating it with "thermal science" and hence radiators. Related professions in the communications field, such as translation and technical writing, will often be aware of the word without having precise knowledge of what it entails.

The communication of specialist knowledge and information, whether monolingual or multilingual, is thus irretrievably bound up with the creation and dissemination of terminological resources and with terminology management in the widest sense of the word. This process is not restricted

to science and engineering, but is also vital to law, public administration, and health care, to quote just three examples. In addition, terminology plays a key role in the production and dissemination of documents, and in workflow. Terminology as an academic discipline offers concepts and methodologies for high-quality, effective knowledge representation and transfer. These methodologies can be used both by language specialists and by domain specialists after appropriate training. In addition, they form the basis for an increasing number of tools for the identification, extraction, ordering, transfer, storage and maintenance of terminological resources and other types of knowledge.

In fact, terminology is a many-faceted subject being, depending on the perspective from which it is approached and the affiliations of the person discussing it:

- a resource,
- a set of methodologies and procedures to be used in creating this resource,
- a factor in communication,
- a community of actors, and
- an academic discipline.

Three major points need to be made here:

- Firstly, proper terminology is concerned with the relationship between concepts, and between them and their designations, rather than with designations alone or with the objects they represent. This point is essential if quality is to be achieved, especially with synonyms and in multilingual environments.
- Secondly, a designation does not necessarily have to be a word or phrase, although it often is. Thus terminological resources may comprise symbols, drawings, formulae, codes, etc. as well as, or even instead of, words. This point is especially important given the move to multimedia systems.
- Thirdly, terminology is inextricably linked with specialist knowledge and hence with special languages or languages for special purposes (LSPs).

In addition, the word "structured" needs some explanation: it should be noted that, in practice, terminological collections may well contain not only well structured standardised terms and concepts, but also innovative, vague and unstructured conceptual and linguistic information.

This basic definition of terminology is supplemented in this Final Report by two other terms:

• *terminology work\_- i.e. the work performed in the creation or documentation of terminological resources »*

and

• *terminological activities - a broader term which includes not only terminology work but also such areas as training, tool development, and organisational and administrative measures. »*

### **Terminology and lexicology, terminography and lexicography.**

One particular area of confusion highlighted by the pointer project is that of the differences between terminology and lexicology, and terminography and lexicography. Not only many non-specialists, but even many individuals working in such fields as language engineering and translation

frequently confuse these concepts, and it is hoped that the explanations given below will contribute to a clearer understanding of the distinctions between these fields of activity.

While lexicology is the study of words in general, terminology is the study of special-language words or terms associated with particular areas of specialist knowledge. Neither lexicology nor terminology is directly concerned with any particular application. Lexicography, however, is the process of making dictionaries, most commonly of general-language words, but occasionally of special-language words (i.e. terms). Most general-purpose dictionaries also contain a number of specialist terms, often embedded within entries together with general-language words. Terminography (or often misleadingly "terminology"), on the other hand, is concerned exclusively with compiling collections of the vocabulary of special languages. The outputs of this work may be known by a number of different names - often used inconsistently - including "terminology", "specialised vocabulary", "glossary", and so on.

The work and objectives of lexicographers and terminographers are in many ways complementary, but there are a number of important differences which need to be noted.

Method, organisation and presentation. Dictionaries are word-based: lexicographical work starts by identifying the different senses of a particular word form. The overall presentation to the user is generally alphabetical, reflecting the word-based working method. Synonyms - different form same meaning - are therefore usually scattered throughout the dictionary, whereas polysemes (related but different senses) and homonyms (same form, different meaning) are grouped together.

While a few notable attempts have been made to produce conceptually-based general-language dictionaries - or "thesauri", the results of such attempts are bound to vary considerably according to the cultural and chronological context of the author.

By contrast, high-quality terminologies are always in some sense concept-based, reflecting the fact that the terms which they

contain map out an area of specialist knowledge in which encyclopaedic information plays a central role. Such areas of knowledge tend to be highly constrained (e.g. "viticulture"; "viniculture"; "gastronomy"; and so on, rather than "food and drink"), and therefore more amenable to a conceptual organisation than is the case with the totality of knowledge covered by general language. The relations between the concepts which the terms represent are the main organising principle of terminographical work, and are usually reflected in the chosen manner of presentation to the user of the terminology. Conceptually-based work is usually presented in the paper medium in a thesaurus-type structure, often mapped out by a system of classification (e.g. UDC) accompanied by an alphabetical index to allow access through the word form as well as the concept. In terminologies, synonyms therefore appear together as representations of the same meaning (i.e. concept), whereas polysemes and homonyms are presented separately in different entries.

In the electronic medium, similar considerations apply in principle to the organisation of entries with reference to synonyms and polysemes/homonyms. However, the retrieval of data still operates at present largely through the term (or a component ! of the term) rather than through the concept. Conceptually-based solutions for the representation and retrieval of data are being sought in the techniques of artificial intelligence.

Work organised conceptually may also be presented alphabetically, whereas the converse, i.e. the presentation of work originally organised according to the form of the word in a thesaurus-type structure, is highly problematic.

In dictionaries, related but different senses (or "polysemes") of the same word form are usually presented within one entry, e.g. *bridge* (of a violin, crossing a river, over a gap in teeth); unrelated different senses ("homonyms") of the same word form are normally presented as separate head words or entries, e.g. *pupil* (of the eye) and *pupil* (in a school). Synonym relations are not always made explicit in dictionaries, and the division of word

forms into different senses tends to vary considerably between dictionaries. This lack of clear division into senses reflects the "slippery" nature of general-language words, compared to the more precise nature of terminological meaning.

In terminologies, homonyms and polysemes within the same subject field are treated as separate entries in a terminology (because the definition of the concept is different), e.g. in Automotive Engineering *emission* (the process of emitting exhaust gases) and *emission* (the exhaust gases themselves). Homonyms and polysemes of other subject fields are excluded. Synonyms, on the other hand, are always included as a part of the same entry in a terminology.

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