

Some Tendencies in the Development of the Terminology of Hermeneutics in the English Language

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Abstract—Although terminology is a branch of linguistics with a long history, a number of terminological systems have not been thoroughly analyzed. One of the areas that falls into this category is the terminology of humanitarian subjects because the way their terminology is formed differs from the term formation of STEM disciplines. Sublanguages of humanitarian disciplines quite often borrow general language words, which can be explained by the fact that the area of their studies is related to general rules of society functioning. In the course of transfer from the general language to domain-specific language, the semantic and/or morphological structure of words might undergo modifications. This article analyses the methods of formation of the English terminology of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a theory and methodology of text interpretation. One of the distinguishing features of its sublanguage is the fact that it is formed with the use of a considerable number of general language words that are used by text interpreters in a specialized meaning. This paper presents the analysis of the semantic transformations of some of these words after they became part of the sublanguage of hermeneutics.

Index Terms—terminology, hermeneutics, semantic change, term formation

I. INTRODUCTION

Terminology started forming its shape as a branch of linguistics in 1930s and boomed in 1980s when language planning proliferated, and computerized data analysis became available. Summing up the most widely accepted understandings, a term is a specialized linguistic unit which denotes a concept (Riggs, 1979; Sager, 1990; Sonneveld & Loening, 1993; Pearson, 1998). However, there is an ongoing discussion about the line of demarcation between a general language word and a subject specific term.

The main objective of terminology as a science at the initial stage was standardization of terms and concepts in technical communication among specialists. Over the decades of the development of terminology as a science, sublanguages of multiple disciplines have been researched. However, alongside with standardization of the terminology of technical sciences, there arose a need for researching terminology of humanitarian subjects. It has been observed that standardizing terminology of STEM disciplines involves less disagreements compared to the studies of terminology of humanitarian subjects such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc. In general terms, the reason why analysis of terminology of social sciences might be problematic is that these terms are not mono-referential. In other words, the meaning of terms might be vague and largely dependent on context, specific area or field as well as casual restrictions.

Hermeneutics is the art and science of understanding and interpreting texts which dates back to the deciphering of the gospel. It was brought to life by the necessity to explain religious texts to the wider audience of followers. However, having originated as a science of revealing the meanings of holy texts, hermeneutics broadened its subject and was applied to interpreting a range of texts. Therefore, modern hermeneutics studies any texts that require understanding and interpretation. Terminology of hermeneutics, however, has never been a subject of systemic studies.

Multiple linguistics theories on term formation and basic principles of terms standardization provide the foundation of this research. Having analyzed the corpus of 1658 terms used by the theoretician of hermeneutics, we made an attempt to draw conclusion on some of the tendencies this sublanguage follows.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the research papers on terminology start with defining what the term is. Consequently, one can find over fifty definitions. However, many of those definitions agree that the distinctive feature of a term is its specified meaning. “A term is created when precise boundaries are defined” (Steurs & Kockaert, 2014, p. 7).

A common topic discussed in the papers on terminology is the distinction between words of the general language and terminology. In this argument, we take the side of those linguists who believe that term is a part of the language system

and, therefore, cannot be separated from it. Academician Reformatzky (1961) defined terms as special words limited in their peculiar purpose. If within the general language a word may be polysemantic, it, being used in a specific terminology, becomes mono-semantic. Contemporary researchers seem to support this point of view. For example, some researchers argue that terms are not crucially different from words (Temmerman, 2000; Condamines, 2019). “A term is a unit with similar linguistic characteristics used in a special domain” (Cabr e & Sager, 1999, p. 35). “Terms are a type of word distinguished by their function” (Kageura, 2002, p. 51).

Accepting the claim that terms are not special words, but rather words used in special function, linguists extrapolate the characteristics of terminology from those words of general language possess, for example: ability to collocate, possibility to have synonyms, word formation principles, etc.

“The general linguistic rules of word formation equally apply to term formation” (Kageura, 2002, p. 45). Invention of new linguistic elements occurs only in exceptional situations. Generally, terms are formed making use of elements pre-existing in a language. Therefore, ways of coining terminology can be to a great extent similar to the lexical formation rules in general language (Grinev-Grinevic, 2008). Among them:

- semantic transfer,
- metaphoric use of a common word’s meaning,
- compounding,
- derivation,
- abbreviated forms,
- homonyms,
- borrowing foreign lexemes and term elements, metaphorization etc.

As it is pointed out by several researchers, although for a long time monosemy was considered the ideal of traditional terminology, this point of view has been questioned over the last decade (Bertels, 2011). Linguists argue that the breach of the principle that one concept is represented by one term might result in polysemy, synonymy, homonymy, which in its turn may cause serious misunderstandings and rather severe translation mistakes. Although a one-to-one relation between concept and term in a clearly delineated specialist domain is preferable, very often, polysemy and dynamic changes in the meaning-form relation are witnessed.

Therefore, our work is founded on the belief that any word of the general language can be considered a term as long as it is used in a specific function and denotes a concept of a specific context. Being part of a language system, terminology follows the rules that apply to other linguistic units of this system.

III. METHODOLOGY

To analyze the main tendencies in the development of the terminology of hermeneutics we reviewed the corpus of 1658 terms of hermeneutics that were used by the authors in the reviewed articles, books, conference proceedings, and research papers explaining the concepts of hermeneutics. This method is referred to as textual terminology’s semasiological approach which relies essentially on texts for specialised vocabulary extraction (Buitelaar et al., 2005; Kageura et al., 2004). This allows to understand the terms in context and analyse its linguistic features (morphological characteristics, collocations, syntactic functions).

Both statistical and analytical methods were applied to identify the key tendencies of the linguistic items under study. Quantitative analysis was used to illustrate the ratio of terms formed by different methods to identify the most productive methods of term formation. Qualitative analysis was applied to explain the meaning of the terms and to draw the borderline between the word of general language and the terminology of the sublanguage of hermeneutics.

Elements of etymological analysis were applied in the attempt to trace the development of the terms. Elements of socio-linguistic analysis involved the analysis of conditions of discourse production.

IV. THE USE OF GENERAL LANGUAGE WORDS IN THE TERMINOLOGY OF HERMENEUTICS

The first and foremost goal of hermeneutics was interpreting texts to common people and translating the ideas into simple and comprehensible language. This feature influences the formation of terminology of hermeneutics. As a result, some words of general language were borrowed, some of which underwent semantical changes. Besides, interpreting texts involved creativity and a degree of freedom for the interpreter, which also reflected on the terminology of hermeneutics that was formed quite spontaneously with little attempt to organize it as a system.

In our research we accepted the point of view of those linguists who believe that there cannot be a strict borderline between terminology and common language since they are interdependent and inter-penetrable (Reformatzky, 1961; Sager, 1990). “Individual terms constantly interact and intersect with general words because they share the same linguistic forms” (Kageura, 2002, p. 14). Many terms were created as semantic neologisms due to the shift of meaning of a general language word.

Having analyzed the corpus of 1658 terms of hermeneutics, we came to conclusion that more than a third of these terms are the result of terminologization of common words. Apart from specific words that denote subject-specific concepts (e.g., alcoranist, hermeneutist, euhemerism, intertextuality), texts on hermeneutics are full of general language words (e.g., moment, text, web). However, these words should be considered as part of terminology because they are

used in a specific function and denote concepts studied by hermeneutics as a science. In other words, the following principle comes into action: the term is a known word but its use in corpora does not correspond with that of the dictionary and the term admits unknown constructions (Condamines, 2019).

Table 1 lists the methods of terminologization of common words that were identified as the most productive for the terminology of hermeneutics.

TABLE 1
SEMANTIC METHODS OF TERMS FORMATION IN THE TERMINOLOGY OF HERMENEUTICS

Method of term formation (type of semantic change)	Number of terms (out of the corpus of 1658 terms)	Percentage
Narrowing of meaning	633	38,2%
Widening of meaning	7	0,4%
Metaphorical use	32	1,9%
Total number of general language words that underwent terminologization	672	40,5%

A. Semantic Patterns of Term Formation

The corpus of terms that have been collected based on publications on hermeneutics contains a number of terms that were coined as a result of the transformation of the semantic structure of general language words that are used by interpreters/hermeneutists as terms. The following semantic derivation mechanisms contributed to changing the semantic structure of the general language words into terms that denote specific concepts of hermeneutics.

- Broadening of meaning – a word already in existence in general language obtains a wider meaning.
- Narrowing of meaning – a word already in existence in general language obtains a specialized meaning.
- Metaphorical use – the meaning of the word already in existence in general language is shifted based on the similarity of function.

(a). Broadening of Meaning as a Term-Formation Method

As Table 1 states, only 7 terms (which is equivalent to 0,4 percent of all the selected terms) have undergone the process of broadening of semantic structure. Compared to the meaning in which these words are used in general language, in the sublanguage of hermeneutics, they denote more general concepts.

The first example is the word *dialogue*. According to the dictionaries, this word can be used in two meanings: 1) a conversation between two or more people and 2) a literary work in the form of a conversation. Specialists in hermeneutics widely use this word referring to excerpts of written texts or spoken conversations that require interpretation and commentary. However, they also use it in a broader meaning: the process of interaction between the text and its interpreter. The principle of such dialogue was introduced by a German philosopher and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835) and later elaborated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834). Schleiermacher compared the reader's approach to a text with the efforts of participants in a dialogue to understand each other, and he depicted the dialogue in terms of a speaker who puts together words to express his thoughts and a listener who understands this speech as part of the shared language and as part of the speaker's thinking (Thompson, 1981; Rojtman, 1998). In other words, Schleiermacher understands text interpretation as a dialogue between the author of the original text and the interpreter of this text. In the course of such dialogue, the reader reconstructs the texts and achieves its comprehension. Therefore, the term *dialogue* preserves the original meaning "form of communication that involves two or more participants," but the meaning of the word is broadened since the role of one of the participants of the dialogue can be performed by a written text that is being interpreted.

Another example of a general language word that is used in the terminology of hermeneutics after modification of its meaning is the word *text*. According to the etymological dictionary, the word *text* was borrowed by the English language from Latin via French in the 9-11th centuries, when the influence of the French language increased considerably due to the Norman invasion. The original meaning of this word was "Holy Writ." This is the meaning in which the word became the term of hermeneutics. In common language, however, the word gained a broader meaning and since 1841 has been used in the meaning "the wording of anything written or printed" (Klain, 1973, p. 2273). Dictionaries of contemporary language record this as the main meaning of the word *text*. As for the term *text*, its meaning has also broadened since it is used to refer to the text of Bible as well as to any written source that the interpreter comes across. Consequently, the object of research for hermeneutics has also broadened, which led to a new epoch of hermeneutics when the techniques, principles, and laws of interpretation are applied to interpreting a variety of texts. However, the meaning of the term *text* continues to broaden because the distinguishing feature of *text* as "anything written or printed" is lost. Hermeneutics perceives any object of interpretation as *text* regardless of the form it is presented in. Thus, hermeneutical interpretation can be applied not only to the interaction of the readers and the written text, but also that one of the listeners and the musical piece, or the spectators and the play. Therefore, modern hermeneutics can be applied to interpreting any form of communication. "Originally used to interpret and explain biblical texts, its use expanded to literary history and poetry and has now broken free of being solely a text centric interpretative device. Its use has also extended to so-called "text analogues" that constitute forms of action including performance and other creative acts" (Ramshaw, 2005, p. 3). Consequently, the term *text* in this broad sense can be used

in reference to any written piece as well as to illustrations, commercials, or songs. As a consequence of this broad understanding of the term *text*, specific branches of hermeneutics have been identified depending on the type of text it deals with: scriptural hermeneutics, philosophical hermeneutics, philological hermeneutics, historical hermeneutics, judicial / legal hermeneutics, literary hermeneutics, musical hermeneutics.

Having become the part of terminology, the term develops a web of new semantic links; for example, the term might be used in collocations that are not typical for the word in its initial meaning or create synonymic groups that correlate to its new terminological meaning. For example, the term *text* that lost some shades of its meaning in the sublanguage of hermeneutics is used in its broadened meaning of “any object of interpretation.” Therefore, it appears to belong to the group of other terms that denote such objects: *creation, illustration, law, original, statement, work of art*. According to *Roget's International Thesaurus* (1977), these words are not interchangeable with the general language word *text*. However, after *text* has acquired specified meaning, its semantic relations with other words changed.

(b). *Narrowing of Meaning as a Term-Formation Method*

Narrowing of meaning of general language words is more productive compared to the one described in the previous section. General language words are used as terms in the sublanguage of hermeneutics to denote specific concepts of the discipline. 633 terms (which corresponds to 38,2 percent of the whole corpus of selected terminology) were borrowed from general vocabulary and used in a specialized meaning and function.

The term *environment* is one of such examples. The word *environment* was introduced by the British historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who used it as an equivalent of the German word *Umgebung* (a concept that conveys surroundings or contexts that could be natural and spiritual). In the terminology of hermeneutics, the word *environment* (in combination with attributes) gets specialized meaning: environment/surrounding in which the text occurs. For example, *grammatical environment* being taken in consideration by the interpreters does not let them distort the meaning of the text. *Contemporary environment* (cultural events, political or economic situation) impacts interpreter's understanding of the text and may result in the interpretation of the text that differs from the one that the interpreters could have arrived at if they were analyzing the text at the age when it was created.

As it was noted, in most cases, general language word is used in a collocation which narrows down its meaning.

(c). *Metaphorical Use of a General Language Word as a Term-Formation Method*

Some general language words underwent semantic transfer to be used as terms of hermeneutics. In the selected corpora, we discovered 32 words that fall under this category (which corresponds to 1,9 percent of all the words borrowed from general language).

For instance, the word *blank* changed its semantic structure to denote a specific concept of hermeneutics. The common language word *blank* has the following meaning: a space in a piece of writing or on a form, left empty for information to be added. In the sublanguage of hermeneutics this word has been redefined. Interpreters and specialists in hermeneutics use it in the meaning “a piece of writing that is unclear” or “gap in understanding.” We may use the following extract as an example: “... a student familiar with studying..., who has mastered the tradition, will naturally be led to reread – in the future – this text and its “blanks”, and to (re)discover in it an undeciphered, radically new meaning” (Rojtman, 1998, p. 1-2). There is a metaphorical transfer of meaning as both words denote the concept of emptiness. In the general language word, this emptiness is physical and is represented on paper/form. However, in the term, this emptiness is not tangible and denotes lack of understanding in the mind of an interpreter.

Another word whose semantic structure changed due to metaphorical shift is the term *society of texts*. The word *society* conveys the meaning of “group, community, company” and denotes “the state of togetherness.” This connotation is preserved in the term *society of texts* as it denotes a group of written sources created over the centuries. These creations coexist and interact (the same way as people interact in a society) and the result of their “togetherness” is expressed in the form of allusions, reminiscences and citations.

A similar semantic transfer based on the similarity of functioning occurs in the term *text surface*. The meaning “part that is not hidden or difficult to see” of the word *surface* is preserved. The same way as people can see mountains and rivers on the surface of the Earth, the readers can see some features of the text like its paragraphing, word choice, or punctuation. However, the readers need to dig deeper to understand what is out of sight. Special tools of interpretation are required to discover the meaning of the text that is hidden under its surface.

B. *Other Methods of Term Formation*

As it has been mentioned, in our research we share the point of view of those linguists who believe that “terms are a type of word distinguished by their function” (Kageura, 2002, p. 51). Therefore, any rules and conventions that the language follows are applied to the terms used in this language. Particularly, word formation patterns are applied to terms. For example, affixation is a productive method of word-building in the English language which is also used for coining terms of specific branches of science. One of the examples is the suffix *-ist* which is used to form nouns that describe a person with a particular set of beliefs or a way of behaving. In the texts on hermeneutics, the following nouns with this suffix can be found: *alcoranist* – Koran interpreter; *constructionist* – one who construes a legal document; *harmonist* – one who shows the agreement of parallel passages of different authors; *hermeneuticist*, *hermeneutist* –

interpreter; *literalist* – one who adheres to the exact letter or the literal sense; *textualist* - a person who adheres strictly to a text.

The process of further derivation after general language word started being used in its specialized meaning is inevitable. For example, the term *text* is a stem for multiple derived terms: *textualism*, *textualist*, *textuality*, *architextuality*, *context*, *contextualization*, *endtext*, *homotextuality*, *hypertextuality*, *hypotext*, *hypotextuality*, *intertext*, *intertextuality*, *intratextuality*, *metatextuality*, *paratext*, *paratextuality*, *transtextuality*.

Although some terminologists insist that term is always a single word, it has been argued that “single-word terms are too polysemous and too generic” whereas multiword terms “represent finer concepts in a domain” (Bourigault & Jacquemin, 1999, p. 15). In other words, terms are combined with other words to form collocations. However, after a common word becomes a term, it might weaken the existing lexical collocations and start new ones. The word *horizon* can serve as an example of this statement. In the papers on hermeneutics, the word *horizon* is used in its secondary meaning “the limit of person’s ideas, knowledge, and experience.” According to the etymological dictionary, this meaning was introduced in 1607 and was used in phrases like “beyond somebody’s horizon” or “broaden one’s horizon.” In the terminology of hermeneutics, alongside with collocations *reader’s horizon* and *interpreter’s horizon* (which correspond to the meaning mentioned above) we can see collocation *text’s horizon*. This collocation comprises the idea suggested by Hans-Georg Gadamer according to which the text and its reader interact and enrich each other with ideas and experience. Text in this meaning lives a life similar to that one of a human being. At different stages of its “life,” the text undergoes various interpretations. With every new explanation the text’s horizon is broadened. Gadamer (1976) and later Bakhtin (1979) perceived reading as a two-way process, as a dialogue between the reader and the text. In the result of such interaction, the readers/listeners/spectators are enriched by the text. The overall goal of text interpretation is to reach *fusion of horizons*, which is the main prerequisite for understanding and interpretation.

V. DISCUSSION

This study examined 1658 terms of hermeneutics to analyze how general language words penetrate terminology and what changes they undergo. We came to conclusion that terminologization of the words of the general language is one of the widely used methods of term formation for the sublanguage of hermeneutics. 40, 5 percent of terms from the corpus of selected terminology of hermeneutics are the words of the general language. These words were borrowed from the common language and underwent certain semantic changes (broadening or narrowing of meaning, metaphorical transfer of meaning) as a result of which they denote subject-specific concepts. Modified meaning allows the term to develop new web of semantic links, which leads to creation of new collocations and synonymic groups that are not typical for this word in its general language use.

We believe the fact that this method of term formation is so productive in this sublanguage can be justified by the subject and nature of the discipline. Some researchers of terminologies of other humanitarian disciplines (e.g., studies of literature) also noted that using a general language word in a specific function is a non-stop process which illustrates mutual interdependence and penetration of the two subsystems. This tendency of borrowing general language words might be justified by the objectives of hermeneutics. Its primary goal was to explain the meaning of complicated texts to the general public. Therefore, a widely accepted view on terminology that “the more concise and precise a domain-specific language remains the less comprehensible and available it is for the general language community” (Sasu, 2009, p. 172) does not prove effective in the situation of hermeneutic analysis. In case with the terminology of hermeneutics, this tendency of using common language words as terms might be justified by the fact that the interpreters are trying to help a wide audience comprehend the meaning of the text. Hermeneutists are aiming at minimizing misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The use of common easy-to-understand words helps achieve the desired result.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relations of general language words and terminology. Setting the boundaries and distinguishing between the general language and the domain-specific languages has always been an issue for the linguists. The interdependence of these two fields is inevitable, an important aspect of this interaction being terminologisation of semantic units when a known, (usually general language word) form receives a new conceptual meaning.

The corpus of 1658 terms of hermeneutics was compiled to analyse how general language words penetrate terminology and what changes they undergo. The analysis revealed that more than a third of the selected terms were borrowed from the general language.

Hermeneutics first appeared as a response to the growing demand of explaining and interpreting the meaning of religious texts, which might partially account for the fact that general language words are so widely used in its terminology. Despite the similarity of morphological structure, these words should be considered as terms because they are used to denote subject-specific concepts. The analysis of the semantic structure of these terms demonstrated that their meaning was modified in one of the ways: broadening of meaning (0,4 percent), narrowing of meaning (38,2 percent), or metaphorical transfer of meaning (1,9 percent).

Other methods of term formation like borrowings from other languages (Greek, German), transterminologization (Mockiene, 2016), and compounding are also used to form the terms of hermeneutics. This should be analyzed in further publications.

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