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## TERMINOLOGY: THE NATURE OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

**Abstract:** *The paper challenges a theoretical and methodical approach towards Traditional Terminology (TT), which was triggered by the Austrian E. Wüster. Wüster's last work Einführung in die Allgemeine Terminologielehre und Terminologische Lexikographie (1979) became the most comprehensive account of the terminology theory. In spite of the fact that it still constitutes the basis for most theoretical approaches towards terminology, Wüster's work has been criticised by many specialists in the area. The following research claims to what extent the rules and principles constituting the theory are proper to the cognitive aspect of terminology on the examples of gender terms.*

**Key words:** *traditional terminology, sociocognitive terminology, cognitive approach, prototype structure, synonymy, gender, metaphorical transfer, categorization, feminization.*

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

The development of any science or scientific discipline urges the existence of an object, the social need, a subject with its own methods and the theory providing the facts related to the object. Today, Terminology is presumed to be an independent discipline and as V.M. Leytchik asserts "Terminology is an independent scientific-applied discipline that has grown from linguistics and "absorbed" the achievements of a number of modern sciences and applied fields of activity [4; 19].

As is known, the importance of studying terminology as a means of specialized communication was discovered in the middle ages due to terminological difficulties faced by translators of the famous Toledo translation school [6], whereas a systematic coordination of terminology has started from the XVIII century, which is marked by Carl von Linné's (1707-1778) work on fundamental botanica. However, a theoretically and methodologically oriented approach towards terminology goes back to the early XX century. This boom of the terminology development was triggered by E.Wüster's [10] fundamental work "Introduction to general terminology teaching lexicography and terminology" (Einführung in die allgemeine Terminologielehre und

terminologische Lexikographie) which is still of the utmost importance. However, this work has always been and remains the subject to criticism by many specialists (Cabre 1999; Temmerman 2000, Kageura 2002; Leitchik 2007) for it did not succeed in representing terminology as an independent discipline in tackling terminological issues from all perspectives.

Nevertheless, we can certainly say that retrospective theory serves as a basis for new approaches and theories, as it provides new prospects to see a problem from different viewpoint.

### Discussion

An Austrian terminologist E.Wüster becomes a doctor of technical sciences at the Technical University of Stuttgart (Germany) in 1931 and publishes his doctoral dissertation "Linguistic Standardization in Technics". His general theory was originally based on the following principles: Terminology studies concepts before terms (the onomasiological perspective); concepts are clear-cut and therefore are placed in a concept system; concepts should be defined in a traditional definition; a term is assigned permanently to a concept; and terms and concepts are studied synchronically.

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R. Temmerman observes the following gaps regarding the theory of Traditional terminology schools and claims that they have been influenced by Saussurian structuralism as follows [8; 51-93]:

– TT disregards the fact that naming of many concepts is a part of their creation in the human mind.

For some concepts, as *discrimination*, *gender* there is evidence that the phenomena existed before they were understood and named, but others are pure products of human activity and understanding as gender equality, *gender mainstream*, *glass ceiling*, *empowerment of girls and women*.

– TT believes that the best way to describe concepts is to determine their position in the concept system, by logical and ontological means and the definition is formulated accordingly.

For some concepts, we claim that many of them are not clear enough, and the assignment of terms may cause some troubles respectively. For instance, the creation of the term *temporary special measures*, or defining the difference between the concepts *non-discrimination* and *equality* by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

– TT believes that the concept acts as an initial point for meaning description, as well as the *term* as a secondary one, as if prescribed to the concept. TT says that the concept exists objectively; it is defined in the concept system and named with the term; it is considered the meaning of the term.

The process of transferring a concept into different culture in the form of “culture blob” [7; 51-93] as described By Yu. Stepanov, urges the terminologist to start with the transfer of the term, thus, the term precedes the concept.

– TT disregards the dynamic study of the language, as it is focused mainly on the concept system; therefore terminology is synchronic.

Regarding the language planning, it is also challenged to be an obstacle against terminological meaning description, since according to the supporters of the modern Terminology theory, standardization supports a univocity following *one concept – one term*, the principle which ignores polysemy and synonymy.

R. Temmerman, in turn, argues on the description limit of the semantic triangle offered by Wüster, which represents a model of relationship between the world, language, and the human mind. Regarding the relationship of a language and mind, she claims that “the creative potential of language is not ignored, but disregarded, brushed aside as irrelevant”<sup>1</sup> in traditional Terminology, asserting that language has a role to play in the mental activity of understanding the world.

However, we disagree that Vienna school ignores this view on a language perspective; the fact

itself that the triangle is represented by three nominations allows speculating that the authors made their argument based on their “experience”, however they did not have any pre-requisite in terms of “cognitive semantics” to make “perfect” conclusions as modern Terminology does.

R. Temmerman highlights the following principles of cognitive terminology:

- the prototype structure hypothesis is viable for the structuring and understanding the category;

- polysemy and synonymy are functional in the special language. Concepts lacking a prototype structure have a natural tendency towards univocity;

- polysemy is the result of a meaning change over time. Why words grow into polysemy can be explained from a prototype structure” [8; 73].

Based on the above mentioned thesis, the following research questions if prototype structures in social sciences (in particular gender mainstreaming (GM) discourse) support a tendency of polysemy of a lexical unit by increasing the informational density and ensuring flexible adaptability enabled to make an assumption that “the possibility to find examples of categories which illustrate cognitive models of understanding are prone to polysemisation and other units of understanding which are not prone to this criteria will therefore resist polysemisation”, which after all has justified itself. Diversification in contrast to polysemiphobia [1] leads to the functionality of polysemy in a special language from sociocognitive Terminology viewpoint.

## Results

We observed that univocity is peculiar to clear-cut categories, however clear-cut categories are rare in the social sciences, in particular in GM discourse. Hence, the case a clear-cut category at one point is likely to evolve into polysemy has been observed.

The basic term of GM discourse *gender*, in fact, has exploited its polysemic potential several times in the course of its history. Our data show that the semantic overloading is part of a more general situation, when generic shifting of *gender* from a special language term to a general one has been observed. However, the term is considered a polyfunctional term as well. Since, it represents a grammatical category in linguistic discipline, whereas it is a phenomenon of social sex in humanities. The prototype of both genders goes back to the biological sex; being considered a notional category initially, it acquired a status of a linguistic category, and then borrowed by the social sciences addressing the issues of masculinity and femininity. It has already entered the vernacular and can be found in newspaper articles, being frequently heard on radio and television, since

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it concerns the issues related to the social existence of a human being.

Two types of shifts in the semantic structure of terms have been observed. The first shift involves a metaphorical transfer of *gender bender* (*gender changer*) – the process of metaphorization from the domain of biology (*gender*) to the domain of electronics, a new ‘value-added’ meaning component is a hardware device placed between two cable connectors of the same type and gender, which in turn makes a new shifted meaning extension possible. It demonstrates that lexicalization is not arbitrary, that polysemy has a role to play in the process of understanding:

*Gender bender* – a person who dresses and behaves in a way characteristic of the opposite sex;

*Gender bender* – ‘in electronics’ – a device for changing an electrical or electronic connector from male to female, or from female to male.

*Gender changer, gender mender, gender blender* – an electrical adaptor, which allows two male or two female connectors be connected to each other.

The second shift in the semantic structure is a case of generic posting. The term feminization gradually applies to a wider range of fields, becoming generic for this kind of process. The result is that we have a broad common category called *feminization*. Next to it, we have separate, more specific units, with their own features, but still called *feminization*. These units have their own partially common and partially distinct subunits. The result is polysemy, which may eventually be eliminated when techniques develop sufficient distinctiveness as their own specialists are working on them.

The term *feminization* has extended its meaning in relevant fields due to new inventions and developments.

*Feminization (sociology)*, the shift in [gender roles](#) and [sex roles](#) in a society, group, or organization towards a focus upon the [feminine](#);

*Feminization (biology)*, the hormonally induced development of female sexual characteristics;

*Feminization (activity)*, a sexual or lifestyle practice where a person assumes a female role;

*Feminization of agriculture*, the measurable increase of women's participation in agriculture;

*Feminization of the face*, a set of reconstructive surgical procedures that alter typically male facial features to bring them closer in shape and size to typical female facial features;

*Feminization of language*, the process of making a word or name female;

*Feminization of migration*, a trend where a higher rate of women migrate to labor or marriage;

*Feminization of poverty*, phenomenon in which women represent disproportionate percentages of the world's poor;

[Feminization of voice](#), the desired goal of changing a perceived male sounding voice to a perceived female sounding voice;

[Feminization of the workplace](#), the trend towards greater employment of women, and of men willing and able to operate with these more ‘feminine’ modes of interaction” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminization>).

The categorization of the term is not just due to its modified meanings. They are the result of understanding through conceptualization a particular concept in different disciplines.

It is worth noting that GM discourse has exploited verbs, which are actively used: Gender as a verb – *gendering* – prescribing a sexual characteristic of activity: *gendered term, gendered gaze, gendered media, gendered vision, gendered society, gendered cyborg* are among them; victim – *victimization, empowerment – empowering*, etc.

The existence of metaphorical terms actively used in GM discourse and glossaries as well, urges to support the proposition that metaphorical terms are formed on the basis of interconnection of a *language, world* and *mind*, whereas the creative potential of the language has to play a significant role respectively.

## Conclusion

The empirical data we deal with, when studying a gender discourse language in human rights texts, will serve to validate the criticism of the principles of the traditional Terminology schools. There are at least two reasons why we have chosen the vocabulary of GM discourse: it is a recent, global and quickly progressing domain within international community and its results are the consequence of interdisciplinary approaches towards GM issues. The interdisciplinary character of a gender science makes its vocabulary an interesting test field for studying categorization and naming, terms operate in different fields from different perspectives and one can observe the effect of this fact on lexicalisation.

Since a special language can be defined as the collection of spoken and written discourse on a subject related to a discipline (Hoffmann 1984; Ahmad & Rodgers 1992, 1994; Kocourek 1982; Sager 1980), the discourse we have been studying was restricted to written sources – human rights texts.

The application of the findings of cognitive semantics to the modern socio-cognitive Terminology enables to demonstrate the cognitive potential of a language. However, in many cases, even modern Terminology remains to be skeptic regarding the questions of *semantics*. In this respect, gender discourse deals with polysemantic terms, the fact which proves its character to be self-regulating and open system, encouraging the introduction of the new methods of Terminology description from a cognitive semantics viewpoint.

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