

Current Trends in the Development of Professional Discourse Terminology of Logistics

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Abstract — The article focuses on the study of logistics professional discourse terminology. The study revealed the tendency towards simplification of the morphological and syntactic structure of logistics terms, discovered new productive patterns for abbreviating logistics terms, found out that the existing problem of terminological homonymy of abbreviations can be solved through applying new patterns for creating abbreviations.

Keywords — professional discourse, logistics, term, morpho-syntactic classification of terms, logistics abbreviation, terminological homonymy

I. INTRODUCTION

Professional discourse is a specific form of verbal communication in professional settings. This term refers to the language used by professional communities (e.g. logicians, lawyers, doctors, economists) which reflects some shared professional knowledge and use of the same terminology in their intra-community interaction.

Professional discourse has been under close study for the last three decades both by foreign and Russian scholars. There have been numerous attempts at contrasting various terms referring to languages people use in the workplace such as professional discourse [1], [2], workplace discourse [3] and specialized discourse [4]. In this study Kong's definition of professional discourse is applied as it blends the three major features of the notion: professional, specialist and workplace. Kong defines it as "the language produced by a professional with specialist training to get something done in the workplace" [2: 2].

In Russian linguistic research a noticeable increase in the interest in linguistic dimensions of professional interaction occurred at the end of the 20th century. The study of professional discourse emerged from the overall discipline of discourse analysis (N.D. Arutyunova, V.Z. Demyankov, V.I. Karasik, Yu.S. Stepanov and others), in which discourse is understood as a form of human communication, including texts and extra linguistic aspects necessary for their generation

and interpretation. Professional discourse is interpreted as "a communicative action carried out in the context of a specific communicative situation of professional communication", and based on "knowledge and use of strictly selected linguistic and stylistic means reflecting a specific objective and mental world of communicants" [5]. Strict compliance with all the conventions of a professional discourse is an essential condition of its effectiveness [6].

If compared, both concepts emphasize the idea that professional discourse is a specific language variant but the Russian approach is more theoretically-oriented and presuppose a more detailed study of extra linguistic context in which professional discourses appear. Conversely, the English-language analysis has a more practice-oriented touch.

Logistics is a greatly functional area; the second approach has been therefore followed in this study.

Linguistic research of professional discourse is focused on its verbal representation in the form of oral and written texts. Logistics documentation (including official business correspondence) should be recognized as an integral component of logistics activities and the leading type of verbal representation of logistics professional discourse.

The main lexical unit of professional discourse from the linguistic research perspective is the term [7]. According to the definition by V.M. Leychik, "a term is a lexical unit of a specific language for special purposes, denoting a common — concrete or abstract — theoretical concept of a specific specialist field of knowledge or activity" [8]. So terminology becomes the main object of linguistic analysis of certain professional discourses, both logistics, as in [9], [10], [11], [12], and others such as, for instance, election campaign discourse [13]. In the studies of the logistics terminology system of recent years the leading role of the English-language terminology is recognized. Mastery of logistics terminology is viewed as a means "to get something done" and the easier and quicker it is done by "professionals", the more skilled the "specialist training" is.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study was focused on the analysis of logistics terminology with the view of revealing current tendencies of its development. The materials for the study were both the logistics terminology selected from dictionaries and lists of logistics terms and the logistics abbreviations found on the logistics operators’ websites.

The resulted data for Part A in the Results Section were obtained by means of:

- secondary data analysis of the 1994-year logistics dictionary by A.K. Kuptsova [12];
- quantitative morpho-syntactical analysis of the contents of the 2008-year “English-Russian Dictionary of Logistics Terms” [14] to measure the frequency of the detected types of logistics terms;
- further comparative analysis of the data obtained to find out if there had been any changes in the morphological structure of the present-day logistics terminology.

The resulted data for Parts B-D in the Results Section were obtained by means of

- qualitative analysis of the abbreviations found in [15], [16], [17] in order to observe and describe the most productive and innovative patterns of abbreviations within logistics professional discourse;
- interpretation of how certain innovative patterns may become a response to the challenges from terminological homonymy of logistics abbreviations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Morpho-Syntactic Composition of Logistics Terminology

From a viewpoint of structural composition, a term can be either a word (single-word or one-word terms) or a combination of two or more elements (multi-word terms). Both were detected in “English-Russian Dictionary of Logistics Terms” published in 2008.

The group of single-word terms falls under the morpho-syntactic classification of terms developed by Russian linguist V.S. Grinev-Grinevich [18] who suggests three groups of terms belonging to the category of single words:

1. Simple, e.g. *damage*. They are root words; the stem coincides with the root.
2. Complex, e.g. *palletization*. They consist of the root and some affix (es).
3. Compound, e.g. *europallet*. They consist of several stems, which may occur in the language as free forms.

Multi-word terms, in their turn, are presented by

1. two-word terms, e.g. *accumulator area*;
2. three-word terms, e.g. *advanced shipping note*;
3. word combinations of four or more words, e.g. *fast moving consumer goods*.

The examples for the classification above are selected from the 2008-year “English-Russian Dictionary of Logistics Terms”.

Further quantitative analysis of the logistics terms measured the frequency of the detected types of terms and found that the multi-word terms (61 %) outnumber the single-word terms (39 %); the complex terms (72 %) outnumber the simple (22 %) and compound ones (6 %)

The multi-word terms represented by two-word, three-word and four-word terminological phrases display the following percentage ratio: the percentage of two-word terms (87 %) exceeds that of the three-word terms (11 %) and four-word terms (2 %).

The results of the analysis are presented in Table I. The groups of logistics terms were arranged in the descending order from the largest to the smallest ones in percentage points.

TABLE I. MORPHO-SYNTACTIC GROUPS OF LOGISTICS TERMS

Group name	Percentage value (%)
Two-word terms	53
Complex single-word terms	28.3
Simple single-word terms	8.5
Three-word terms	6.3
Compound single-word terms	2.5
Four-word terms	1.4

^a based on [14]

The table clearly shows that the groups of two-word terms and one-word complex terms (consisting of a root and affixes) are more represented in the logistics terminological system.

In 2015 A.K. Kuptsova analyzed the percentage distribution of the English-language logistics terms according to their morphological and structural features. The study of the terms included into the dictionary “Terminology in Logistics” published in 1994 allowed the scholar making a conclusion about the prevalence of nominal terms having a two-word structure [12: 71].

In order to reveal current trends in the development of the English-language logistics terminology, the authors of this study conducted a quantitative morpho-syntactic analysis of the contents of the 2008-year “English-Russian Dictionary of Logistics Terms” to measure the frequency of certain types of logistics terms with a view of further comparative analysis of the data of these two studies. The results are shown in Table II.

TABLE II. COMPARISON OF DATA

Combined group name	Percentage value (%)	
	1994 ^a	2008 ^b
single-word terms (simple and complex words)	15	36,7
compound terms and multi-word terms	85	63,3
Group name	1994 ^a	2008 ^b
two-word terms	55	83,8
three-word terms	21	10,1
single-word or hyphenated compound terms	18	3,9
word-combinations of four or more words	6	2,2

^a based on [12]
^b based on [14]

Thus this study also revealed the prevalence of the compound and multi-word terms over the single-word terms but with a decrease in the percentage (63,3% in 2008 vs. 85% in 1994) and the numerical dominance of two-word terms over three- and four-word terms with an increase in the percentage (83,8% in 2008 vs. 55% in 1994).

Therefore, there is a significant increase in the number of simple (single-word) terms and two-word terms, which indicates a general tendency to simplify the logistics terminology of the English language, and taking into account its leading role in this professional sphere, logistics terminology as a whole.

B Abbreviations of Logistics Discourse

Another manifestation of the tendency to simplify the logistics terminology is considered to be an extensive use of shortened forms of logistics terms, i.e. logistics abbreviations. It accords with Zipf’s law of abbreviation which states that frequently used words tend to be shorter [19]. Logicians abbreviate the terms which are frequently used in logistics documentation.

Logistics is a professional area where speed, accuracy and precision of the execution of a contract, clarity and conciseness of documentation are valued. In trying to save space and time logicians use commonly recognized abbreviations for the most frequently used terms.

The high proportion of abbreviations in the corpus of logistics terminology is evidenced by the data obtained from a study conducted by O.S. Karavaevskaya. According to the author, the share of abbreviations as a percentage of the total number of analyzed terms was 12,9 per cent [20].

In order to respond to the needs of their customers in the most efficient way logistics documents should be precise and easy to understand for logistics operators. In logistics documentation abbreviations perform the function of text

compression by shortening a terminological phrase to one word. However, an abbreviated term acquires the status of a word, which is expressed in the presence of lexical meaning, only within a specific professional discourse.

The terminological character of an abbreviation is based on the agreement of discourse community members to use it as a language representation of a certain professional concept, thereby defining the status of the abbreviation as a professional term. So the obligatory requirement imposed on an abbreviated term is its institutional uniformity, which is understood as universality within a certain professional discourse and inclusion into professional terminology lists. It is also required that the abbreviation is easily and unambiguously interpreted by the professional community.

The abbreviated terms are unmotivated, “non-transparent”. Unmotivated terms only refer to concepts, not indicating their features [8: 22-23], therefore, the terminological nature of logistics abbreviations is based on the agreement of the discourse community to use it as a language representation of a certain professional concept.

Such an agreement was reached, for instance, in order to provide internationally accepted definitions and rules of interpretation for the most common commercial terms used in international trade and transportation. Incoterms [21], e.g. *CPT* for “Carriage Paid to”. A professional logistician of any nationality is able to adequately understand these English-language abbreviations on the basis of their generally accepted interpretation and implement them in the most efficient way in their contracts.

Another way to conventionalize the present-day logistics abbreviations is including them into logistics terminology dictionaries, professional glossaries of logistics and lists of terms and abbreviations published by many logistics operators on their websites.

C Some Innovative Patterns for Creating Logistics Professional Discourse Abbreviations

In her study of logistics abbreviations O.S. Karavaevskaya [10: 1007] identified the most productive patterns for creating them:

- initials, e.g. *MV* for “mother vessel”; including abbreviations containing numbers, e.g. *2PL* for “second party logistics”; graphic symbols “/” and “-” replacing prepositions, e.g. *L / C* for “letter of credit”, *THC-D* for “terminal handling charges in destination”; and conjunctions, e.g. *CIFI & E* for “Cost, Insurance, Freight, Interest and Exchange;
- acronyms, e.g. *IATA* for “International Air Transport Association”;
- apocopes (clippings),

e.g. *dim* for “dimension”;

- syncopes (contractions),

e.g. *cnee* for “consignee” and *cnor* for “consignor” [17].

The analysis of contemporary resources of logistics terminology, including lists of abbreviations suggested by logistics operators, revealed some innovative patterns for logistics abbreviations formation:

Pattern 1. Abbreviations including the punctuation mark “.”, the Period. This pattern is observed in newly created

- initialisms written in uppercase letters,

e.g. *C.Y.* for “container yard”;

- acronyms written in lowercase letters,

e.g. *e.oo.e* for “errors or omissions excepted”;

- acronyms written in both upper- and lowercase letters,

e.g.. *Q.w.Q.* for “quantity with quality”;

- apocopes (clippings),

e.g. *occas.* for “occasionally”;

- syncopes (contractions),

e.g. *mfst.* for “manifest/ shipping manifest” [17].

Pattern 2. Acronyms written in lowercase letters,

e.g. *remy* for “referring to my”, *retel* for “referring to telegram” [17];

Pattern 3. Abbreviations (initialisms, acronyms, syncopes) starting with a capital letter,

e.g. *Anny* for “annuity”, *Qp* for “quality products”, *Rly Stn* for “railway station” [17];

- 4. syncopes (contractions) using brackets,

eg. *ql(t)y* for “quality” [17].

D Terminological Ambiguity of Logistics Abbreviations. Synonymy and Homonymy

The logistics terminology system is an area under development. A significant number of websites of logistics operators publish their own lists of frequently-used English-language terms and abbreviations with keys and translation. As a result, the issue of terminological ambiguity of logistics abbreviations, namely terminological synonymy [22] and homonymy [23], is currently quite pressing.

The terminological synonymy of logistics discourse abbreviations is expressed in the existence of several parallel abbreviations. They can be found in the same and different terminological reference sources. The study detected two types of abbreviation synonyms: spelling synonyms which differ in spelling and structural synonyms which differ in structural composition.

TABLE III. SPELLING SYNONYMS

Synonymic Abbreviations	Abbreviated Term / Common Meaning
<i>BL</i> ^a	Bill of Lading
<i>B/L</i> ^b	
<i>B.O.L.</i> ^b	
<i>B/lading</i> ^b	

^a found in [15]
^b found in [17]

As Table III shows, the abbreviations *BL*, *B/L*, *B.O.L.* and *B/lading* are shortened forms of the same term “Bill of Lading” but there are differences in their spelling, so the synonyms of this type can be labelled as spelling synonyms.

TABLE IV. STRUCTURAL SYNONYMS

Synonymic Abbreviations ^a	Abbreviated Terms	Common Meaning
DTHC	Destination Terminal Handling Charges	charges paid for handling a shipment at the port of destination
DHC	Destination Handling Charges	
THC-D / THC/D	Terminal Handling Charges in Destination	

^a all the abbreviations are found in [17]

As Table IV shows, the reason why there may exist variants of abbreviations with the same meaning is that it can be conveyed in various, yet synonymic, terms by means of

1. omitting words adding no specific information as in “Destination Handling Charges” if opposed to “Destination Terminal Handling Charges”;

2. changing the order of the lexical components within a term as in “Terminal Handling Charges in Destination” if opposed to “Destination Terminal Handling Charges”;

3. using various graphical symbols as in *THC-D* and *THC/D*. Both the hyphen “-” and the slash “/” are symbols used in abbreviations as substitutes for prepositions.

Thus in the examples from Table IV we can observe synonyms of both types: structural and spelling (Line 3). Later research may be done to measure the frequency of these types by means of quantity analytical methods.

Similar to logistics synonymic abbreviations, terminological homonymic abbreviations can also be found both in the same and different terminological reference sources. Homonymic abbreviations have the same spelling but absolutely different meanings as they are shortenings of different terminological phrases.

TABLE V.HOMONYMS

Homonymic Abbreviations	Abbreviated Term / Different Meaning
T/T	Transit Time ^a
	Telegraphic Transfer ^b
D / A	Disbursement Account ^c
	Deposit Account ^c
	Documents Against Acceptance ^c
	Documents Attached ^c

^a found in [15]
^b found in [16]
^c found in [17]

The emergence of new patterns for abbreviations is most likely due to the need to solve the problem of terminological homonymy of abbreviations, as shown in the juxtapositions:

e.g. *a/w*, *A/W* for “along with” vs. *AW*, *a.w.* for “actual weight”;

n.p. for “notes payable” vs. *n/p* for “nonpayment”;

est for “estimated vs. *est.* for “established” [17].

The spelling representation of abbreviations having similar letter composition is a means to contrast the abbreviations in the examples above.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The study of current trends in logistics professional discourse terminology revealed a general tendency to simplify logistics terms. The evidence from this study shows that the number of terms having the structure of words and two-word phrases considerably grew in the 2008-year dictionary as compared to the 1994-year dictionary.

This tendency is additionally proved by the growing number of logistics terminological abbreviations. Along with existing logistics dictionaries and professional glossaries which include conventional terminology, many present-day logistics operators suggest their own lists of terms, mostly abbreviations. This is supposedly an attempt to conventionalize the terminology they add to their documentation.

One of the most frequent types of terms to appear in logistics operators’ terminological lists is a logistics abbreviation. In order to provide opportunity for creating more abbreviations new patterns have been invented. Among the most interesting findings of this study are the new patterns for logistics abbreviations which add the punctuation mark “.”, acronyms spelt in lowercase letters.

However, the abundance of logistics abbreviations has led to a considerable terminological ambiguity. It is manifested in existence of synonymic (structural and spelling) and homonymic abbreviations. Nevertheless, the study found out that the problem of terminological homonymy of logistics abbreviations can be resolved through applying new patterns for creating abbreviations.

The present analysis of the English-language terminology of logistics professional discourse is merely another step in linguistic research of logistics terminology, given that logistics is a currently evolving professional area. Further comprehensive study is supposed to follow.

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