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MODULE 2
SPECIALIZED LANGUAGES AND TERMINOLOGY
AND TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

Today, the easy accessibility of information is absolutely relevant in each and every field of human activity, be it to advance in that field or to communicate findings and / or discuss results with others. That is why a basic knowledge of Terminology elements and practice is of utmost importance in the modern world, if we are to deal with a particular specialized field of knowledge.

The main goals of this second module are listed below:

- Understanding the main differences between general and specialized languages.
- Introduce the nature of terminological units and understand the “term” as the main lexical unit of specialized languages.
- Identify the nature of borrowings or naturalized loanwords and calques or loan translations.
- Learn to confront the study of Terminology practice and management, so as to know how we can manage Terminology personally.

There is no doubt that the rapid exchange of information that is taking place nowadays and the effective management of large amounts of data for different types of purposes are the key elements to updated learning.

2.1. General language and specialized language

A **specialized language** is used to communicate within a certain specialized area, so we cannot speak of one specialized language but of a

considerable number of different specialized languages. These specialized languages are directly related to a general language.

A **general language** is a complex and heterogeneous linguistic system, made up of several subsystems. In order to achieve effective communication, a language presents a series of varieties.

First of all, according to the situation, we may find diverse linguistic registers, both formal (standard, scientific, literary...) and informal (familiar, colloquial, slang...). Other varieties of a different nature are the so-called linguistic varieties or dialects that depend on the way different groups of speakers use a particular language. These linguistic varieties can be generational or historical (child language, teenage language, adult language, XIII century language...), territorial (London English, Dublin English, Boston English...), or even social (upper-class, middle-class or lower-class language).

Specialized languages constitute a subsystem within this complex structure of general language and this subsystem is expressed through a formal register (technical and scientific). In order to understand specialized languages, it is useful to differentiate them from another subsystem, standard language, one of the registers that have already been mentioned. Standard language uses unmarked words and rules; it does not identify any group of speakers in particular and it is neither too formal nor too colloquial. This register is normally applied to situations of mass communication and so it typically uses a neutral and more or less objective tone, which makes it an optimal reference for comparison.

It should be noted that specialized languages (law, economy, medicine, sports...) have sometimes been considered artificial. This assumption is clearly wrong because, as it has been stated above, they are part of a more complex system: general or natural language. Obviously, a natural language (such as English, German, Spanish or French) is inherited and learned at the core of a particular linguistic community. It is used to communicate in everyday life and allows the diverse human groups to elaborate and transmit their experiences to others. Natural languages are very useful in everyday communication but they contain structures and units that can generate ambiguities (e.g. due to polysemy), with double meaning or misleading intentions, vague precision, etc. An artificial language, on the other hand, is an invented language created to fulfil a particular need in order to precisely and clearly formulate a series of objects and relationships that should never

lead to misunderstandings. Examples of artificial languages are: algebra, chemical symbols, driving signs, etc. Therefore, specialized language should never be considered artificial.

To distinguish specialized languages from other subsystems, particularly from the standard variety, it should be borne in mind that they are mainly characterized by three variables: **topic**, **users** and **communicative situations**.

1. As far as the TOPIC is concerned, specialized languages focus on restricted thematic areas or fields, outside the general knowledge of speakers. However, not all specialized languages exhibit the same degree of specialization and abstraction. It must be noted that we cannot distinguish a specialized text by merely taking into account the topic, since we sometimes deal with specialized topics in everyday communication where we may use some specialized terms: for instance, when we explain our university studies to a non-expert, when we comment on a tennis match, or when we discuss the contents of the TV show "House", a banalization of the Terminology takes place, yet we are not using a specialized language.
2. USERS must also be considered in order to distinguish a specialized language from a standard language. Naturally, specialized language users are fewer in number when compared to standard language users. They often belong to a professional subgroup, have gone through a learning process of their area of specialization, and possess a more or less extensive knowledge of the main concepts and terms belonging to the field. In general, we distinguish two groups of users: the producers and the receivers of Terminology. The former are always specialists in the area, while the latter may be specialists but they may also be non-specialists. Additionally, as there are areas which are more or less specialized, there are also different degrees of specialization among users: a scientist, a specialized journalist or translator, a teacher, a student, general public interested in a specific area...The top level would correspond to a specialist addressing specialists, and the bottom level would be a specialist talking to a non-specialized audience. Between both extremes, there is a gradual progression, where we may find, for instance, a specialist addressing a student or the discourse of specialized journalists or translators.

3. The third factor that characterizes specialized languages is the **COMMUNICATIVE SITUATION**. Specialized communication is usually formal, be it oral or written, so it is always rigorous, precise, coherent and unequivocal. In its written form, it is often found in specialized books or scientific publications, while its oral form may be found in conferences, seminars, labs or research institutions. It is not common to find specialized languages on TV, press, radio or in the street.

A final defining feature of specialized languages is that they display both **variety** and **uniformity** at the same time. They exhibit **VARIETY** as a result of the different communicative situations, the degree of abstraction or specialization, the type of text (oral or written), the users, the various communicative goals (they can be used in descriptive, explicative or informative texts), historical differences (the linguistic evolution of a specific specialized field as time goes by cannot be forgotten), territorial differences (even if they are specialized, they are inserted in British English, American English, Australian English, etc.), and even the individual style of the specialist. On the other hand, specialized languages share a number of features that provide them with certain unity and **UNIFORMITY**, and this allows us to consider them a subsystem of general languages. At the textual level, they often share the quality of being concise, precise, and adapted to the communicative situation. Being concise, they reduce redundancy and they allow for the elaboration of dense texts from an informative point of view. The technical, scientific and professional context, as well as the rapport among specialists, requires precision, in terms of lack of ambiguity. They adapt to the communicative situation, especially as regards the degree of specialization of the interlocutors. Furthermore, the main linguistic characteristics shared by specialized languages are listed below:

- The use of specialized lexical units, that is to say, a Terminology of their own.
- A systematic use of those lexical units, something that implies a greater coherence in the lexical use than that exhibited in standard languages. For example, fewer synonyms are used in specialized languages, even if this may account for a wider lexical repetition.
- There is a frequent use of terms with Greek and Latin prefixes and suffixes.

- An important number of notions are expressed through phrases and not through single words, for example, *rental payment*, *diminishing returns*, *level of production*, *equity of redemption*, etc.
- Abbreviations, acronyms and symbols are very common.
- There is a preference for nominalizations instead of the corresponding verbal forms (*specialization* instead of *specialize*).
- Short sentences are very frequent and there is little complex subordination.
- Digressions and explanatory sequences are also quite common when information is presented.
- Some specialized languages incorporate other semiotic systems into the text, such as the language of phonetics, which makes use of the phonetic alphabet (an artificial language).
- Other specialized languages produce their own type of documents that possess a series of linguistic conventions and a specific design and organization of the information; a clear example is administrative language, with its contracts, certificates, etc.
- Finally, there is a clear tendency towards impersonalization and objectivity, that is achieved through strategies such as the use of the passive, impersonal sentences (third person singular *it*), etc.

TASK 2.1. Search for a specialized text of approximately 500 words and list the features that help you identify it as a specialized text. Then, list all the Terminology that it contains. This list must be ordered alphabetically and it must follow dictionary-like rules: verbs must be shown in their neutral form, nouns in singular, etc. Remember you may also find terms that are formed by whole phrases, e.g. *Statute of frauds*, *assistant lecturer*, etc.

2.2. Terminological units

In the previous section we have seen that specialized languages are characterized by a series of specialized terms. These specialized terms, though, can be shared by another specialized language or even by the

common or standard language, and we must never forget that there are different degrees of specialization.

The main goal of specialized texts is to communicate information about a specific specialized topic, and from a textual-linguistic point of view, there are a series of sequences that perfectly fulfil this goal: definition, description, classification, reference, quotation, listing, exemplification, calculation, etc. All these sequences make use of the main terminological unit: the TERM. The term is the designation, normally through a linguistic unit, of a specialized concept or notion. A term can be made up of one or several words (e.g. *goalpost*, *database*). What matters the most is that such a formula is used, understood and accepted by specialists in the field as the materialization of a particular notion in a given area.

What distinguishes terms from the rest of linguistic units is their functionality. Terms, as grammatical categories, only work as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The rest of lexical units also include articles, determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns or interjections. Another difference between terms and the other lexical units, from a pragmatic point of view, is that the former are used, almost exclusively, in specialized communication, while the latter are used in all types of languages.

Terms share the following features with the other lexical units of the language (linguistic signs):

- They contain a formal or material part, formed by graphs (when they are written) and sounds (if they are spoken); this formal part is known as **designation**. Within linguistic signs, it is known as “signifier”.
- The term possesses a signifying part, which in Terminology is known as concept. In a linguistic sign this is referred to as “signified”.

The DESIGNATION or denomination, the formal or material aspect of a term, exhibits the following main similarities and differences with the general lexicon of a language. As to the spelling (graph) and sound, terms are built by a combination of the same repertoire of graphs and orthographic rules (when they are written) and the same repertoire of sounds (if they are spoken) the general lexicon uses. However, some terms coming from other languages (loans) that have not been adapted to the phonetics and orthography of the language may present foreign graphs and sounds, e.g. *pizza* or *holding* (in Spanish).

The CONCEPT is the idea that the formal designation refers to. Concepts can be objects, subjects, processes, actions, properties, qualities or relationships. Concepts are, in fact, mental representations of objects and subjects belonging to reality; they are the result of a selection process of the main features that define each type of object and subject. For example, a concept formed by the following features (that define a type of object) —*an electronic device, it is designed to accept data, it performs prescribed mathematical and logical operations at high speed, and it displays the results of these operations*— has the corresponding designation: computer.

These features constitute the concept's **definition**. Dictionaries and vocabularies present concepts through definitions, although we may sometimes find concepts described through images or icons. In Terminology, a definition is a description of a notion that allows it to be distinguished from other notions within a specialized field. There are a series of conditions that definitions have to follow:

- They must be precise and concise, containing just the essential and relevant information needed to describe such a concept and that may allow for a conceptual differentiation from other terms belonging to the same field.
- The degree of complexity of the definition must be adapted to the dictionary or vocabulary goals, as well as to the addressees.
- The terms that are used within a definition must also be defined in the dictionary if they belong to the same specialized field.
- The definition must be written in a single sentence and it must use correct punctuation.
- The definition must use an initial capital letter and it must always end with a full stop.
- The definition must start with a *descriptor*, that is, a word semantically wider than the defined term. Such a descriptor must belong to the same grammatical category and the same number as the term being described, except in the case of adjectives (where we can also find a participle, a prepositional phrase, a relative clause or other expressions). For example:
 - contract: An *agreement* between two or more parties to carry out something specified or not.

- enact: To *make* into an act or statute.
- headquarters: A *centre* of operations, as of the police or a business, from which orders are issued.
- electronic: *Of or pertaining* to electronics or to devices, circuits, or systems developed through electronics.
- It is important to note that the definition must not contain meta-linguistic information (**a word that...*, **a noun that...*), nor must it indicate the area the term belongs to (**in the field of biology ...*).
- Finally, circular definitions should be avoided. For example, **information: The act or fact of informing.*

TASK 2.2. Choose a specialized area and make a list of 5 key concepts. Say whether they designate an object, a subject, a process, an entity, a property, a quality, a state, a relationship, etc. Point out their grammatical category, and write a proper definition for them (try not to use an already existing one).

Concept	Specialized Field	It designates	Grammatical category	Definition
<i>goalkeeper</i>	sports	a subject	noun	The team player who stops the goals

2.3. Borrowings and calques

Terms may have different origins:

1. They may have been created by applying the word-formation rules of the language, derivation, composition, etc. In this case, they are called **neologisms**.
2. Terms may be **borrowings** (or loan words), that is, words coming from other languages. The following examples are Spanish loan words in English: they can be adapted (*avocado, alligator, cocaine...*) or they may not be adapted at all (*burrito, salsa, siesta...*).

3. They may be **calques** (or loan translations), that is, words translated into another language, for example, *rest in peace* from Latin *Requiescat in Pace*; *that goes without saying* from French *cela va sans dire*; or *blue blood* from Spanish *sangre azul*.

Borrowings and calques are two word-formation resources that are very commonly used in specialized languages. However, there are a series of recommendations that should be borne in mind when these strategies are used.

As far as the criteria for the acceptance or rejection of loans in general are concerned, it is essential to find a balance between extensive acceptance and systematic rejection; besides, loans must not be considered a necessary evil, but a normal procedure for the formation of terms. Hence, the main goal must be to achieve coherence in the acceptance or rejection of loans. In the end, the criteria adopted must lead to a series of results that may be widely accepted by the users of a specialized Terminology. It should be noted that in the adaptation of loans, the phonetic and morphologic structure of the TL should be respected as much as possible.

If we focus entirely on the ACCEPTANCE of **borrowings**, the following can be considered the main criteria for acceptance:

- Loan words coming from Latin or Greek, such as *technology*, *Terminology*, etc.
- Fixed loan words, which are often incorporated in common lexicographic works, such as *access*, *advertisement*, *camp* or *diligence* (from French into English).
- Unsteady fixation loan words, which are widely used and easily adaptable to the TL, such as *disquette* / *disquete* (from French into Spanish).
- Widely used borrowings coming from registered brands, such as *rimel*, *celo*, or *aspirina* (from English into Spanish). These cases may present restrictions in terms of their adaptation. That is why, whenever there is a possible alternative, this should be used instead, for example *cinta adhesiva* instead of *celo*.

On the other hand, the main criteria for the REJECTION of **borrowings** are listed below:

- Unnecessary borrowings, when they designate the same concept another already existing word does, for example, *item*, when in Spanish the word *elemento* designates the same concept.
- Recent loan words that may be easily substituted. For example, *estheticienne* in Spanish, coming from French, can be easily substituted by *esteticista*.
- Loan words that present a difficult integration into the graphic and phonetic system of the language. For example, *brainstorming* (in Spanish), when *lluvia de ideas* can be used instead.

As to the criteria for the ACCEPTANCE of **calques**, the following can be considered the most relevant:

- Fixed calques, often integrated into common lexicographic works, such as *brainwashing* (from Chinese), *pineapple* (from Dutch), or *loan word* (from German).
- Integrated calques that are combined using the morphological rules of the TL, such as *Adam's apple* or *Governor-General* (both from French).

And finally, the main criteria for the REJECTION of **calques** are:

- Unnecessary ones, given that the TL contains words or phrases designating the same concept, e.g. *literatura* (in Spanish, coming from English 'literature' meaning 'bibliographical references') instead of *bibliografía*.
- Calques that contain elements that may distort the TL syntax or semantics.

TASK 2.3. Look for a specialized text in Spanish that contains plenty of borrowings and calques. Underline the former and use bold for the latter. Mark those that have been adapted to the TL with a different colour, so that they can be distinguished from those that keep their original form.

2.4. Principles of terminological practice

First of all, we should note that when talking about terminological practice, we are speaking about "terminography". When we discuss this

practice, we refer to the resolution of particular problems related to the use of specific terms, as well as to the elaboration of terminological repertoires (dictionaries, lexicons, vocabularies, etc.).

There are a series of differences between terminological practice and translation practice that must be identified. When we translate, we turn a SL text into a TL text through a process where different linguistic levels (syntactic, lexical, textual, etc.) take part. Therefore, the main task of the translator is translating, and not the practice of Terminology. However, some translations may present terminological problems that must be solved, and in these situations a terminological role becomes activated within the translator.

The result of terminological practice is the elaboration of a series of terminological documents and products that can take diverse forms, depending on the main goal, the potential addressees, the number of languages, the topics, the support, etc., as was commented in the previous module.

Terminological practice can be classified according to the number of languages described and to its systematic or unsystematic nature:

- According to the first criterion (the **number of languages**), the terminological research can be monolingual or bilingual.
- According to its **systematic or unsystematic** nature, we can carry out either systematic or specific research. The former aims at covering the totality of the terms used in a particular specialized area (this is normally done by the terminographer). Specific research, on the other hand, is restricted to a single term or a small group of terms of a specialized area or a group of areas (this is normally performed by translators or specialists).

Both criteria can merge, and we can perform a monolingual or bilingual systematic or unsystematic/specific terminological research. Be it as it may, the performance of terminological research must follow a regular and common process that is distributed through different stages. Let us look at specific or unsystematic research in more in detail.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH focuses on a single term or on a limited number of terms of a particular thematic area. It is normally performed when a language user seeks advice from a terminological service, so as to receive an

answer to a problem related to one or more terms. The typical motivation of such research is the need to solve a particular problem that a user may have, related to the Terminology of a particular specialized area.

This type of terminological practice usually follows the following steps:

1. Query. Users encounter a terminological problem that they cannot solve because the lexicographic or terminological works at their disposal do not offer a suitable solution. Hence, users address a terminological service with their query (e.g. Termcat- www.termcat.cat/) in a clear and precise manner.
2. Research. The terminological service receives the user's query and analyzes it. It checks that there is really no answer to that problem in the existing lexicographical works and repertoires. In the case of a clearly new query with no direct solution, the service undertakes specific research to answer the user's question.
3. Answer. Once the terminological service arrives at a conclusion, it communicates the result of the research to the user and includes it in the automatic batch or database in card format, so that it can be available for future consultation. These cards contain all the information a terminologist needs to know about a particular term: the data obtained during the query and the research, as well as the answer provided.

TASK 2.4. Find a specialized text where there is at least one term that requires specific research. Go to Termcat (www.termcat.cat/) and follow the steps recommended in this section. After you have made the query, wait for the answer. If you receive an answer, share it in the forum. If you do not receive an answer, try to find it on your own.

2.5. Terminology management

SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH, on the other hand, is more related to Terminology management *per se*, since it involves a whole Terminology research work. This type of research can be divided into six stages, according to Cabré & Sages (1999):

1. **Work definition and delimitation.** In this stage, a series of activities needs to be performed, so as to be able to work systematically and thoroughly.
 - a. The research topic needs to be chosen and visibly delimited.
 - b. The addressees need to be clearly defined since, depending on the type of addressees, the work will be oriented in one way or another.
 - c. The goal of the work needs to be specified: descriptive (to perform research where the main goal is the description of the Terminology of a specific area) or prescriptive (to perform a normalization study of the Terminology of a specific area, where some terms will be recommended and others rejected).
 - d. The extension of the work needs to be fixed in advance. This may depend on the available time and resources (material and economic), the number of authors, the needs of the area, etc.
2. **Work preparation.** In this stage, we need to gather information about the topic we are dealing with. During this phase, we should follow a series of steps:
 - a. Gather information. In order to possess the necessary knowledge of a certain area, the author conducting the search will need the help of specialists in the field, as well as that of linguists. These persons can solve questions that may arise, related to the topic, the concepts, the elaboration of the work, and information management.
 - b. Selection of advisors. Once the information about the professional field is acquired, the author may select those persons that will assist him in the course of the research. Hence, if the author happens to be a specialist in the field, he will require the help of linguists and terminologists, and the other way around: if the author is a linguist or a terminologist, he will need the help of one or several specialists in the field.
 - c. Selection of information. At this stage, the author must select the documents that will allow him to obtain the information needed to reach two main goals: acquire the documents that may allow him

to get a good corpus where he can get the terms needed, and find the reference documents that will provide him with information about the various aspects related to the specialized field and to the research method to be used.

- d. Corpus establishment. Authors must select the corpus very carefully, since that will be the point of departure for the elaboration of the Terminology of the area they are researching. The documents used for the establishment of the corpus must have the following features: they must be relevant and representative of a particular field, include all the aspects of the research topic, be updated, and be original (i.e. written originally in the language of the research).
 - e. Conceptual structure of the field. Once the information is acquired and the corpus established, the author can proceed to perform a conceptual organization of the field; this is normally done through a conceptual tree structure. This conceptual tree should show all areas and subareas that can be found in the field that is being researched, with their corresponding terms, as well as the relationships that may exist among those areas.
 - f. Proposal of a work plan. Here, the author must draw up the plan to be followed; this plan should include the points already mentioned, as well as other aspects that will be discussed afterwards: title of the work, work delimitation, goals, addressees, information about the terminological and linguistic situation of the area, the professional organization of the field, as well as field structure and corpus establishment.
3. **Terminology elaboration.** In this stage, authors must compile the list of terms belonging to the defined field of research, and they must also give relevant information about them; the latter will depend on the type of terminological resource they are willing to create. Three steps should be followed:
- a) Corpus drawing. This step consists of the extraction of all the segments considered terms belonging to the specialized field from the selected corpus. First, the terms must be found, and then the segment that represents them must be delimited (a single word, a phrase, etc.).