



TERMINOLOGICAL UNIT

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- 1. Definition and Peculiarities of Terminological Units**
 - 2. Classification of Terms**
 - 3. Term Formation**

1. Definition and Peculiarities

DEFINITION:

A term, or terminological unit, is the name or designation of a concept in a particular subject field.

Terms versus Words

Terms do not differ from words when we consider them from the **formal** or **semantic** point of view; they differ from words when we consider them as pragmatic or communicative units.

Terms versus Words

TERMS

GDP
standard of living
unemployment
trade union
life expectancy
stock exchange

WORDS

with
fall
attitude
which
small
some

Characteristics of terms in a specialised language

According to Gutiérrez Rodilla (1998) the characteristics of terms are

- precision,
- emotional neutrality (free of affective, personal or subjective components) and
- stability over time.

A term may be:

- ▣ **a word:** *proliferation, cosmetics;*
- ▣ **an expression:** *nonproliferation treaty;*
- ▣ **a symbol:** \$; ©; °C; ↓;
- ▣ **a chemical or mathematical formula:** H₂O;
- ▣ **a scientific name in Latin:** *Ferrum (iron);*
- ▣ **an acronym, an initialism:** *UNICEF, laser;*
- ▣ **the official title of a position, organization or administrative unit:** *CEO (Chief executive officer),*
- ▣ *etc.*

Some clues that may help in identifying a term:

- The designation is consistently associated with the same concept.
- The designation is consistently used within a particular subject field.
- Terms are generally nouns.
- The designation seems to have a specific meaning within the subject field and is not part of general vocabulary.
- The designation recurs in documentation from the same subject-field.
- The designation is set off by typographical devices such as *italics*, **boldface print**, “quotation marks” or is preceded by words like **known as**, **called**.
- The designation is used in opposition to or in contrast to another term.
- The designation tends to co-occur repeatedly with the same noun, verb, or adjective.

- There are variations in the use of terms depending on the specialisation of the discourse - the **terminological density**.

2. Classification of Terms

Terms are generally classified by the criteria of

- form,
- function,
- meaning,
- origin and
- subject field they belong to.

From the point of view of form

a) Simple terms consist of just **one word** (compound or derived).

acid, cell, enzyme, acidification;

b) Complex terms are made up of a combination of words that follow a syntactic structure and form a **terminological phrase**.

c) Abbreviations: *flu (influenza), lab (laboratory).*



From the standpoint of function
they have in discourse

Terms can be classified into:
**nouns, adjectives, verbs, and
adverbs.**

In terminology the number of
nouns is highly disproportionate
in relation to the number of
adjectives or verbs.

From the point of view of meaning

Terms can be classified by the class of concepts they designate:

- objects or entities (nouns): *borrower, share, etc.*
- processes, operations, actions (verbs, nominalisation of verbs): *notify, purchase, etc.*
- properties, states, qualities (adjectives): *irrevocable, unconditional, arbitrary, etc.*
- relationships (adjectives, verb, prepositions): *equivalent, subordinate, etc.*

From the point of view of their linguistic origin

- native terms:

refrigerator, cooker, etc.

- borrowed terms:

*prêt-à-porter; haute couture,
boutique, mannequins,
couturier, foie gras.*



From the point of view of the
subject field they belong to