



Examining the precision of terminology: a comparative analysis

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ABSTRACT

The article explores a critical issue in contemporary terminology: the status, use, and challenges of scientifically describing terms in linguistics and literary studies. Its relevance is underscored by the need to address this problem. A comparative analysis of terms in these fields is deemed crucial, as it can enhance the principles for organizing the conceptual frameworks of both disciplines and reveal the similarities and differences between their respective terminology systems within the broader field of philology.

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Terminologiyaning aniqligini tekshirish: qiyosiy tahlil

ANNOTATSIYA

Калит сўзлар:

tilshunoslik,

atama,

terminologiya,

terminologiya tizimi,

qiyosiy tahlil,

adabiy tanqid.

Maqolada zamonaviy terminologiyaning muhim muammosi: tilshunoslik va adabiyotshunoslikda atamalarni ilmiy tavsiflashning holati, qo'llanilishi va muammolari ko'rib chiqiladi. Uning dolzarbligi ushbu muammoni hal qilish zarurati bilan ta'kidlanadi. Ushbu sohalardagi atamalarning qiyosiy tahlili hal qiluvchi ahamiyatga ega, chunki u ikkala fanning kontseptual asoslarini tashkil qilish tamoyillarini kuchaytirishi va filologiyaning kengroq sohasi doirasida ularning tegishli terminologiya tizimlari o'rtasidagi o'xshashlik va farqlarni ochib berishi mumkin.

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Изучение точности терминологии: сравнительный анализ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

лингвистика,
термин,
терминология,
терминосистема,
сравнительный анализ,
лингвистическое исследование.

Статья исследует критический вопрос современной терминологии: статус, использование и проблемы научного описания терминов в лингвистике и литературоведении. Ее актуальность подчеркивается необходимостью решения этой проблемы. Сравнительный анализ терминов в этих областях считается критически важным, поскольку он может улучшить принципы организации концептуальных рамок обеих дисциплин и выявить сходства и различия между их соответствующими терминологическими системами в более широкой области филологии.

INTRODUCTION

Terminology comprises a collection of lexical units that represent specific concepts and facilitate professional communication. A term is a lexical unit used within a specialized sublanguage. Each scientific or specialized field has distinct linguistic and semiotic characteristics [Danilenko, 1977, p. 201]. The terms within each domain or scientific discipline form an organized system of concepts that are interrelated [Leichik, 2007, p. 25]. Unlike general literary language, terms are deliberately constructed to accurately reflect concepts. The complexity of scientific and professional phenomena requires contributions from various specialists, including logicians, linguists, and subject experts. Researchers propose a "triune basis" for terms, encompassing subject knowledge, logical understanding, and linguistic expression [Superanskaya et al., 2012, p. 17]. Terms should be precise and unambiguous, with polysemy, homonymy, or connotation being undesirable traits.

The ongoing advancement in science, industry, and human knowledge necessitates meticulous recording, observation, and management. This need to study and systematize specialized vocabulary has led to the establishment of a field dedicated to the study of terms and terminology systems. This field is dynamic and evolving, with many of its core issues still subject to debate. For example, the terminology for this discipline itself—whether to use "terminology" or "terminology"—remains unresolved [Leichik, 2007, pp. 13–15; Superanskaya et al., 2012, pp. 9–11]. However, this article will not delve into that issue. For this discussion, "terminology" will refer to the continuum of terms, while "terminology" will denote the discipline that develops and organizes various terminology systems within specific fields.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a comparative analysis approach to examine the terminology systems of linguistics and literary criticism. The study involves a detailed review of existing literature, including seminal and contemporary works on terminology within both disciplines. Primary sources include academic articles, dissertations, and dictionaries relevant to the terminology of linguistics and literary criticism. The analysis focuses on identifying and contrasting the characteristics of terms in both fields, such as

their definitions, applications, and the influence of external factors like ideology and literary language patterns. By synthesizing insights from various scholars and examining the diachronic evolution of terms, the research aims to elucidate the similarities and differences in the terminology systems of these two humanities subfields, highlighting trends in their development and integration with common language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguists examine the terminology used across various fields of human activity, encompassing not only technical and specialized scientific vocabulary but also terms from the humanities, including linguistics and literary criticism.

B.N. Golovin and R.Yu. Kobrin categorized terms into four broad groups: scientific terms, technical and industrial terms, management terms, and cultural and sports terms [Golovin, Kobrin, 1987, pp. 14–15]. They note that a defining feature of scientific terms is their direct link to concepts [Golovin, Kobrin, 1987, p. 15], whereas technical and other types of terms are more associated with the objects they name [Ibid.]. They propose that only scientific terms prominently feature the "word–concept" relationship and are perceived as distinct from everyday language. In contrast, the other three categories of terms do not emphasize the "word–meaning" connection and are not recognized as terms outside of their specific context [Golovin, Kobrin, 1987, p. 15]. This distinction arises because scientific knowledge deals with abstract concepts and aims to develop theories.

Examining both classical and contemporary research on linguistic terminology reveals various insights.

S.E. Nikitina categorizes the conceptual framework of linguistics as scientific terminology [Nikitina, 1987, p. 20]. She highlights the unique aspects of terms within the humanities and points out that the metalanguage used in these fields is particularly challenging to describe and systematize. This difficulty arises because the "meaning" component in the humanities differs from the concept of "significance," complicating the precise definition of terms. Nikitina notes, "For social sciences, the openness of scientific language is crucial, which involves the integration of different languages within a single scientific text and even within a single theory" [Nikitina, 1987, pp. 20–21]. It is also worth mentioning that in her monograph, Nikitina uses "social sciences" and "humanities" interchangeably.

S.E. Nikitina describes the characteristics of linguistic metalanguage as follows: "The underdevelopment of issues within the field of humanities is largely attributed to the complexity of subject-object relations in these languages. In linguistics, for instance, the immediate object of study is speech activity, where the ultimate focus–language and its user – is intrinsically intertwined. Thus, linguistics examines the man-language relationship as a subject-object structure, and during introspection, the linguist's focus shifts to their own linguistic consciousness. The diverse manifestations of linguistic objects, the inherent theoretical weight of linguistic terms, the presence of exceptions to established linguistic rules, and the ability to test many hypotheses beyond the discipline itself all contribute to the complexity of linguistics as a subject for logical and philosophical analysis" [Nikitina, 1987, pp. 20–21].

The quotation indicates that the author highlights the heightened theoretical nature of linguistic terms, which stems from the fact that the object of linguistic research is natural language itself. Language, as a research subject, is described through language, and this description is conducted by a researcher with a personal perspective on the

object of study. This situation creates interpretive discrepancies, leading to an expansion of the terminological framework, as well as increased polysemy and synonymy. Moreover, the integrative and open nature of linguistic metalanguage complicates the process of organizing it, as it often involves borrowing concepts from other fields. This results in blurred definitions, which is problematic for terms. S.E. Nikitina notes that terms in the humanities "often lack precise definitions" [Nikitina, 1987, p. 28], whereas T.L. Kandelaki views having a definition as an essential characteristic of a term [Kandelaki, 1977, p. 7]. However, Nikitina does not argue that terms are absent in the humanities; rather, she points out that terms in the natural sciences tend to be more precise and defined compared to those in the humanities.

The issue of linguistic metalanguage remains pertinent today, with contemporary research exploring various aspects of linguistic terminology systems. V.V. Antimirova's dissertation focuses on the derivational aspects of Russian linguistic terminology from a cognitive perspective [Antimirova, 2011, p. 4]. This anthropocentric approach offers a distinct interpretation of linguistic metalanguage compared to a functional perspective. Antimirova observes: "As a crucial part of the metalanguage of linguistics, linguistic terminology is particularly challenging to study due to the inherent overlap between the object language and the metalanguage: they fully coincide in expression, despite being outwardly the same language" [Antimirova, 2011, p. 8]. This view aligns with S.E. Nikitina's earlier work and is considered a foundational principle in studying linguistic metalanguage. However, Antimirova's dissertation also presents several points that diverge from the functional paradigm, particularly regarding the status of linguistic metalanguage compared to terminology systems in other humanities disciplines.

V.V. Antimirova classifies the terminology system of linguistics as part of the scientific domain. She notes that the metalanguage of linguistics is gradually becoming distinct within the broader metalanguage of the humanities, achieving a degree of independence. However, she acknowledges that this independence is relative, as linguistic metalanguage remains an open, integrative system with connections to various fields of human knowledge [Antimirova, 2011, p. 8]. Antimirova defines it as follows: "The linguistic terminology system, as a segment of the overall Russian terminological continuum, is an open, integrative system of linguistic signs at all levels. It is designed to represent a specific conceptual domain and to facilitate the application of scientific knowledge within the linguistic sublanguage" [Antimirova, 2011, p. 9].

Like B.N. Golovin and R.Yu. Kobrin, V.V. Antimirova adopts a functional perspective on the nature of terms. She posits that the meanings of words and terms are essentially the same when considered separately; a word functions as a term only in specific contexts. Utilizing theories from the anthropocentric approach, Antimirova concludes that the distinction between specialized and general vocabulary disappears in this framework: "Overall, terms and words are ontologically identical; their differences arise from the specific functions they serve" [Antimirova, 2011, p. 10].

Modern researchers, as indicated by these views, recognize linguistic terminology as distinct within the humanities metalanguages. They agree that it is an open system and that its object of study is the descriptive tool itself, namely language. When addressing issues such as vague definitions, polysemy, and the incorporation of terms from natural sciences into linguistic terminology systems, contemporary scholars emphasize that such

inconsistencies and ambiguities are not unique to humanitarian terminology systems [Antimirova, 2011, p. 14].

Now, let's examine the terminology used in literary studies. As part of the humanities, literary studies employ terms that fall under scientific terminology. Despite ongoing debates about the status of literary studies within the scientific community, the prevailing view is that it is indeed a scientific discipline: "Literary studies is a field that investigates the features of fiction, its evolution, and its reception by contemporary audiences" [DLT, p. 181].

The term "literary criticism" in the Dictionary of Literary Terms (DLT) is defined as follows: "The term literary criticism (from the Latin terminus – boundary sign, border, limit) refers to a concept in the science of literature that is established in the commonly accepted verbal expression" [DLT, p. 407]. V. Grigoriev highlights the typical features of literary criticism terms within the humanities. He points out that these terms lack the clarity and organization found in those of natural sciences and technical disciplines [DLT, p. 408]. This situation is attributed to several factors: 1) the complexity and uniqueness of the subject matter; 2) the high susceptibility of even "fundamental literary concepts" to historical change; and 3) the need to introduce occasional terms into the literary criticism terminology system [DLT, p. 408]. Grigoriev notes that the terminology system of literary criticism is open and frequently incorporates concepts from other fields, which expands the terminological framework and complicates its systematic description. Literary criticism borrows the most terms from linguistics, semiotics, and mathematics [DLT, p. 408]. Grigoriev asserts that using terms from "relatively more precise sciences" benefits the terminology system of literary criticism only if these terms are meaningfully integrated and align with the existing system. He believes that striving for accuracy enhances scientific development. Streamlining terminology helps resolve issues in professional communication and improves research and teaching methods. According to Grigoriev, the most organized subsystems within literary criticism terminology are versification and, to some extent, poetics [DLT, p. 408]. The structure of these subsystems has positively impacted research methods in these areas.

V. Grigoriev argues that the terminology system of literary studies is generally disorganized and underdeveloped, which often results in the borrowing of terms from other fields. However, he contends that merely borrowing terms from "relatively more rigorous" sciences will not resolve the issues of disorder within literary studies terminology. Grigoriev states, "The advancement of science benefits from the thorough development and organization of the terminological system. Both superficial adaptation of familiar concepts into new but unstructured terminological forms—such as the trendy use of mathematical and cybernetic terminology—and the dismissal of literary terminology or the belief that it is entirely satisfactory are equally flawed" [DLT, p. 409].

The continued relevance of studying literary criticism terms is demonstrated by the emergence of dissertations focused on various aspects of the literary criticism terminology system. Contemporary scholars argue that this system cannot be uniform, as the terms are designed to describe a specific object—literary texts. To fully capture the object of study, a literary criticism term should embody "a certain unity of philological, linguistic, and cultural elements related to the portrayal of a literary work" [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 3]. I.A. Degtyareva examined the substantive elements of terms in Russian and English literary criticism, identifying several common features shared by these terms.

The researcher asserts that a literary criticism term is “a significantly more complex unit than terms used in the natural and exact sciences” [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 3], because it not only represents a scientific concept but also conveys aesthetic information intended to affect the reader. This characteristic results in an expanded meaning for literary criticism terms, allowing for varied interpretations within different literary movements and among different scholars using the same term [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 3]. Consequently, dictionary definitions cannot fully capture the scope of a literary criticism term. The meanings of such terms can vary significantly across the works of different literary scholars, leading to a degree of imprecision.

It is observed that literary criticism terms are influenced by ideology, which impacts their precision. To account for changes in meaning, each term should be examined from a diachronic perspective [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 4]. Additionally, personal perspectives of literary scholars significantly affect these terms. As Degtyareva notes, “The variety of expressive contexts and manipulations with meanings arise because each author, writing at the end of the 20th century, often adds their interpretation to a term’s original meaning, showcasing their individuality in texts where the term appears. Literary criticism, more than many other fields, offers ample opportunity for authors to express their unique viewpoints, especially in non-dictionary critical articles” [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 6].

The researcher recognizes that the terminology of literary studies is also an “open integrative system.” This is due to the ongoing development and integration of scientific knowledge, which has led to a noticeable trend towards synthesizing methods and techniques for a more precise and comprehensive description of the subject matter. This characteristic is evident in the literary studies terminology system, which is shaped by a range of “linguistic, sociolinguistic, and even psychological factors” [Degtyareva, 2002, p. 6].

CONCLUSION

Based on a comparison of the features of terminology systems in linguistics and literary studies as noted by various researchers, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Both terminology systems are part of the humanities sublanguage. Currently, in line with the anthropocentric approach in linguistics, it is valid to discuss the “autonomization” of the metalanguage and terminology system of linguistics within the humanities sublanguage. In contrast, the metalanguage and terminology system of literary studies do not form a completely isolated, independent terminology system from the humanities sublanguage.

Both systems are open and exhibit a tendency to borrow terms from other fields, with literary studies showing a greater extent of borrowing compared to linguistics.

In both terminology systems, terms often have multiple definitions.

The unique aspect of linguistic terms is that they are designed to describe natural language, while also being a part of it, as they belong to the sublanguage of general literary language. Although the influence of literary language patterns on the terminology system of linguistics can help reduce ambiguity and imprecision, it cannot eliminate these issues in constructing a linguistic terminology system.

In contrast, literary criticism terms are distinguished by their aesthetic and evaluative content. The evolution of their meanings is heavily influenced by ideology, making the diachronic analysis of these terms not just an auxiliary tool but a crucial element for fully understanding their meanings.

A key trend noted by contemporary researchers in both literary criticism and linguistics is the increasing overlap between specialized terms and everyday language. This trend is aligned with the anthropocentric paradigm, reflecting the integration and humanization of knowledge.

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