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Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

AUTHORIAL TERMS AS PART OF ENGLISH SOCIOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract

The article looks at authorial terms (i.e. those with known authorship) within sociological terminology as a certain model of specialized neology, reflecting its basic patterns. The author believes that the study of authorial terms gives a chance to trace common patterns of terminological neology in general. Known authorship of the term makes it possible to trace its relation to a particular school of thought or a belief system, refine its definition in the light of the author's scientific views, and study the evolution of the concept over time. In the process of individual terminological neology, linguistic means are thoroughly selected, so that the external and internal form of a term could fully reflect aligning parameters of the concept designated by the term. Besides, the article makes an attempt to touch upon principal distinctions of terminology in social sciences as opposed to that of natural sciences. The author comes to conclusion that authorial terms in Sociology should be seen as having an approach-specific rather than general intra-disciplinary nature; over time the concepts they designate might be reviewed and their definitions rectified. The process of individual neology employs a variety of methods of word-formation with special emphasis put on specialization of meaning and metaphor.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, one of the central problems in linguistics has always been the problem of anthropocentricity in language. The entire linguistic paradigm is gradually changing, embracing the idea that “language, as a human establishment, cannot be understood or explained outside its connection with man – its creator and user” (Kravchenko, 1996, p. 6). Kakzanova (2015) maintains that everything the language reflects goes through the prism of vision of a cognizer and is subjected to his/her interpretation. Terminology Studies, in particular, have long been focusing on the role of a scientist as creator of various terminologies across broad-ranging fields of study and practical application. Golovanova (2011) believes that terminology occupies an intermediate position between natural and artificial language; meaning that in an artificial language linguistic means are thoroughly selected, so that the external and internal form of a term could fully reflect aligning parameters of the concept designated by that term. At the same time, this artificial nomination is purely authorial and produced in an individual act of neonymy and at the same time is addressed to a wide audience.

Authorial terms within terminological systems of scientific knowledge are well worth discussing. Generally speaking, any term is authorial, i.e. was once suggested by someone for the use in a particular field. By authorial terms here we understand those with known authorship and, sometimes, circumstances of appearance. Any terminological system arises as a fruit of purposeful cognition to serve professional communication across various spheres. According to Sager (1990), term formation is motivated by scientific innovation, through which new concepts are introduced to a community who needs (and thus creates) a designation for them. Authors coin terms that codify a particular concept and, as a rule, represent solely one scientific perspective. It is in the group of authored terms that any terminological system takes its rise. Known authorship of the term makes it possible to trace its relation to a particular school of thought or a belief system, refine its definition in the light of the author's scientific views, and study the evolution of the concept over time. In addition, the study of authorial terms gives a chance to trace common patterns of terminological neology in general. The fact that sociology as a separate discipline is relatively young plays into the hands of a researcher and in many cases makes it possible to determine the authorship of the term without much difficulty.

It should be noted that terminology of science possesses a number of distinctions in comparison with that of other spheres of human activity. Unlike any other terminology, it is more than just a vehicle of knowledge transfer, helping formalize and transmit knowledge – on top of that, scientific terminology performs a heuristic function, that is, it contributes to the process of acquiring new knowledge. Paradigmatic relations between individual terms might be viewed as a form of externalization of inner structure reflecting constant semantic ties between the terms; hence their analysis makes it possible to systematize concepts, clarify their boundaries, refine their definitions, and localize conceptual gaps, thus basically helping organize knowledge into coherent theories. Terminologies organized in systems pave the way to contouring an epistemological projection of the material world, a “global worldview” (Grinev-Grinevich, 2008).

Scientific systems of knowledge are commonly divided into natural sciences, technical sciences, social sciences and humanities. Another classification divides them into formal or abstract sciences (mathematics, logic, computer science, cybernetics) as opposed to empirical sciences (natural and social sciences). Each field of knowledge is codified in its own terminology featuring peculiar distinctions. In

comparison with terminologies of natural cycle, terms of socio-humanitarian terminological systems (including that of sociology) share certain instability of meaning. Grinev-Grinevich (2008) notes that humanities as a field of knowledge are specifically characterized by a constant struggle of ideas, which may entail non-uniform interpretations of terms by different scholars. Moreover, this very difference in interpretation of terms may be conditioned by the need for self-expression of individual scholars, embodied in authorial terminology or idiolects or in attaching specific meaning to well-known terms. For example, an American sociologist, Merton (1968), describes terminological confusion that violates the rigor of scientific communication, “too often a single term has been used to symbolize different concepts, just as the same concept has been symbolized by different terms” (p. 92).

2. Problem Statement

In view of the fact that sociologists themselves question the very existence of a unified sociological theory as a logical sequence of deductively interconnected laws (Giddens, 1984), an approach to studying its terminology in general, and authorial terms in particular, should be based on the presentation of sociological terminology as a set of partially overlapping sub-systems, actualized in the framework of specific scientific theories and schools of thought.

At the same time, it should be noted that sociology as part of social knowledge (along with economics, demography, ethnography, anthropology, etc.) follows the standards of natural sciences, studying social reality as entirely independent of thought for its existence. Like other sciences of social cycle, sociology seeks to operate with quantitative, mathematically expressible research methods and develop formalized models in a pursuit of unambiguous interpretation of empirical data (Karpenkov, 2005).

Thus, it can be assumed that in an act of conscious individual neology, a sociologist will seek accuracy of the newly introduced term, its univocity and monoreferentiality, relevance to a single area of specialty, absence of synonymy, neutrality in the expression of connotations and affective values, unambiguity, and stability of duration (Díaz Hormingo, 2012). Another fundamental distinction of a term is its motivation, i.e. interdependence of meaning and form, the one that enables a language user to understand the term – at least partially – without resorting to its definition.

3. Research Questions

The research looks at authorial terms within sociological terminology as a model of specialized neology, the one that reflects its basic patterns. In the light of the above-mentioned problems, the paper poses a number of questions:

- Whether the terms with known authorship are confined to isolated sociological paradigms and perspectives;
- Whether they are isolated terms or form a system of well-established relations;
- Whether authorial terms are motivated;
- Whether they undergo further modifications;
- What ways of term-formation authors resort to in the process of individual neology;
- Whether authorial terms include eponyms.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper originates as one of a series towards typology of sociological terminology, terminological consistency and standardization. If such a standard were possible, it would facilitate professional communication, resolve existing ambiguities, and help improve automated search.

5. Research Methods

Authorial terms (i.e. those with a stated author) were handpicked from across a number of sociological dictionaries and encyclopaedias (A Critical Dictionary of Sociology by R. Boudon and F. Bourricaud, The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology by N. Abercrombie, S. Hill and B S. Turner, Concise Encyclopaedia of Sociology by G. Ritzer and J. Ryanhe, Dictionary of the Social Science by C. Calhoun, The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology B.S Turner, Glossary of the Social Sciences by F.W Elwell) and grouped by authors to see whether they form a single conceptual field. Judgments on their transparency were made after their entries were carefully studied and, in some cases, a semantic analysis was carried out. Further analysis included methods of term-formation, variations in interpretation and eponymous terms.

6. Findings

Analysis shows that terminological neologisms appear as part of the author's individual lexicon within a certain theory and are mostly utilized within its framework.

6.1. Systematic nature of terms

The need for a new term is conditioned by the rise and evolution of new scientific concepts within a specific theory or school. Thus, a fresh term arises within a certain terminological system. Lejchik (2009) emphasizes that any terminological system is not just a loose set of concepts, but a system of concepts within a certain theory, which basically makes it possible for several equivalent theories – and therefore several terminological systems related to one special area – to peacefully coexist. This systematic nature of terms, even in the act of individual neology, is conditioned upon consistency of conceptual sphere within a particular scientific field. Facing the task to create an integral picture, a scientist is often compelled to follow up a new term with a set of hyponyms – terms whose semantic field is included within that of the first term, – or terms designating opposing concepts. Thus, Emil Durkheim contrasts the concepts of *organic solidarity* and *mechanical solidarity*; introducing the concept of *social fact*, he distinguishes between *material social fact* and *non-material social fact*. Within the framework of structural functionalism, Robert Merton contrasts the concepts of *functions* and *dysfunctions*, further dividing the former into *manifest functions* and *latent functions*; Erving Goffman in the framework of his dramaturgical perspective distinguishes between *frontstage* and *backstage*, etc.

6.2. Terminological Transparency

Most terms with known authorship feature transparency. One set of examples of well-motivated terms includes such terms as *collective conscience* by one of the founders of sociology as an independent

science Emile Durkheim, *power elite* by Charles Mills, *self-fulfilling prophecy* and *role model* by Robert Merton, *conspicuous consumption* by Thorstein Veblen, *white-collar crime* of Edwin Sutherland.

At the same time, it should be noted that some authored terms feature a somewhat lesser degree of motivation. Note, for example, such terms as *abstracted empiricism* (directions in sociology based on the use of quantitative research methods and statistical analysis of data) by Charles Mills, *affective neutrality* (action performed in cold blood, without the influence of emotions) by Talcott Parsons, *looking-glass self* (self-perception based on the sum of attitudes other people may hold of the person) by Charles Cooley, *humanistic coefficient* (allowance for individual culture-based perception of events) by Florian Znanetsky.

6.3. Further Development

Further development of ideas in sociology, scholarly debate and scientific scepticism may create a need to refine the definition and scope of a term, or even revise the concept it designates. Such was the case of the term *anomie*, coined by E. Durkheim, who understood it as a loss of self-identification by a person, a break in social ties; such a state of individual and social consciousness when the entire system of values and moral standards is decomposed. In his turn, R. Merton understands *anomie* as a gap between the goals and values of society and the ways to achieve them, which may lead to deviant behavior of individual members of the society. Another example is the term *autopoiesis* (self-reproduction of living organisms, when their mere structures allows for reduplication without distinguishing between producer and product). The term was originally borrowed by Niklas Luhmann from evolutionary epistemology and transferred from living organisms onto social systems.

6.4. Methods of Formation

In terms of specific methods of specialized neology, as it can be seen from the above examples sociologists make use of the entire spectrum of term formation, resorting to affixation (*abstracted empiricism, anomie*), abbreviation (*AGIL paradigm* (abbreviation for *adaptation, goal achievement, integration, latency*; the term was introduced by T. Parsons)), interdisciplinary borrowing (*autopoiesis*), specialization of meaning (*functions and dysfunctions*), syntactic method (*power elite, role model*). Another (and most productive) method of terminological neology is using a metaphor (*looking-glass self, frontstage, backstage, white-collar crime, self-fulfilling prophecy*).

6.5. Eponyms

It should be noted that the scientific sublanguage of sociology also include a number of eponyms, i.e. terms whose structural elements are proper names, either designating the author of the concepts, or given as tribute to prominent figures in science or culture. Tabanakova (2013) counts all eponyms in science among authorial terms as having a direct link to a specific person – the author. Following Kakzanova (2011), this paper chooses to distinguish between eponymous terms and authorial ones, that is, terms coined by a particular scientist. Of course, it is not impossible that a known author might propose a term in the name of his predecessor, or even in his own (e.g., see Kakzanova, 2011), but in many cases the authorship of eponymous terms remains unknown. One example of an eponymous term with known authorship is *Blau space*, coined by an American sociologist Miller McPherson in honour of Peter Michael Blau, one of the

authors of the concept of social exchange. MacPherson took over Blau's unfinished work on representing a variety of social forces as a multidimensional space, completed it and named the space after its originator.

7. Conclusion

- Authorial terms as part of sociological terminology are produced and used in the framework of a specific sociological theory rather than across the entire discipline.
- Term-invention in sociology often goes beyond coining a single term and includes a whole system of new terms.
- When choosing a new term, its author strives for its univocity and motivation.
- Over time, the meaning of terms might be refined or even revised.
- Formation of terms in Sociology employs all types of word-formation models with special emphasis on specialization of meaning and metaphor.

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