

PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF SPECIALIZED TERMS DISCOURSE

Ro‘zihonova Husnida,

Master’s student in Andijan state

institute of foreign languages

Annotation. This article analyzes the pragmatic features of specialized terms in linguistic discourse. While such terms are traditionally viewed as semantically fixed, their communicative roles often extend beyond literal meaning. Drawing on naturally occurring discourse data, the study examines how domain-specific terms function as speech acts, carry implicatures, signal presuppositions, and reflect speaker stance. The analysis reveals that specialized terms are highly context-sensitive: their pragmatic force is shaped by discourse goals, participant roles, and community norms.

Keywords: specialized terms, pragmatic features, linguistic discourse, speech acts, implicature, terminology.

Introduction. Specialized terminology has long been treated as the most semantically stable stratum of any professional or scientific lexicon. Traditional terminological theory, rooted in the works of Wüster and his followers, posits that a term is a lexical unit whose meaning is fixed by definition and thus independent of context¹. In this view, pragmatic variability is seen as a defect rather than a communicative resource. However, an increasing body of research challenges this static picture. Scholars working at the interface of terminology and pragmatics argue that even the most rigidly defined terms acquire their full communicative value only in actual linguistic discourse².

The shift from a purely semantic to a pragmatic perspective on terminology is motivated by several theoretical developments. First, Austin’s and Searle’s speech act theory demonstrated that utterances do not merely describe reality but perform

¹ Sager J.C. A Practical Course in Terminology Processing. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 1990. – 258 p.

² Faber P. The cognitive shift in terminology and specialized translation // MonTI. – 2009. – No. 1. – P. 107–134.

actions³. Applied to specialized communication, a term such as null and void in a legal document does not simply name a status but performs the illocutionary act of annulment. Second, Grice's concept of conversational implicature has shown that what speakers mean often goes beyond what their words literally encode⁴. In professional discourse, the choice of one synonymous term over another can carry implicatures of authority, precision, or group membership. Third, research on presupposition and information structure has revealed that domain-specific terms frequently trigger presuppositions that speakers exploit strategically to present information as given or indisputable⁵.

Despite these insights, the pragmatic dimension of specialized terminology remains under-researched. Most existing studies either treat pragmatic features as peripheral to terminological analysis or focus narrowly on a single pragmatic mechanism in isolation. A systematic, multi-faceted analysis of how specialized terms function pragmatically across different types of linguistic discourse is still lacking. The present paper aims to fill this gap. Drawing on a corpus of naturally occurring discourse data from professional and academic settings, the study investigates a range of pragmatic features exhibited by domain-specific terms, including their role in performing speech acts, generating implicatures, signaling presuppositions, and expressing speaker stance.

Literature review and methodology. The study of specialized terminology has developed through several distinct stages, each reflecting a different view of the relationship between terms and their communicative context. Early terminological theory, often associated with the Vienna School, was dominated by the principle of univocity – one term, one concept, one meaning – and treated context as a source of noise rather than as a communicative resource⁶. In this paradigm, pragmatics had little

³ Austin J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. – Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1962. – 167 p.

⁴ Grice H.P. *Logic and conversation // Syntax and Semantics*. Vol. 3: *Speech Acts* / ed. by P. Cole, J.L. Morgan. – New York : Academic Press, 1975. – P. 41–58.

⁵ Stalnaker R. *Presuppositions // Journal of Philosophical Logic*. – 1973. – Vol. 2, No. 4. – P. 447–457.

⁶ Felber H. *Terminology Manual*. – Paris : UNESCO, 1984. – 426 p.

to offer: if terms are assumed to be context-independent by definition, there is no room for the negotiation of meaning or for speaker intentions.

A significant shift occurred with the rise of sociocognitive and text-based approaches to terminology. Temmerman argued that many terms, especially in the social sciences, are units of understanding whose meaning is shaped analogically and prototypically rather than by strict definitions⁷. Similarly, Faber demonstrated that the conceptual structure of specialized domains is inseparable from the linguistic contexts in which terms are used⁸. These developments brought terminology closer to discourse analysis and, implicitly, to pragmatics.

Parallel to these changes within terminology studies, pragmatics itself expanded its analytical toolkit. Grice's model of conversational implicature provided a mechanism for explaining how hearers derive meanings that are not explicitly encoded. Searle refined speech act theory, offering a detailed taxonomy that later proved useful in professional discourse analysis⁹. In the study of presupposition, Stalnaker and Levinson showed how speakers package information as already shared or uncontroversial – a strategy heavily dependent on lexical choices, including terminological ones¹⁰. More recently, discourse-pragmatic approaches have highlighted the role of stance-taking, hedging, and metadiscourse in academic and professional writing, each of which relies on the strategic deployment of domain-specific vocabulary. The article adopts a qualitative, discourse-analytic approach supplemented by elements of corpus pragmatics.

Discussion. The analysis revealed that specialized terms across legal, medical, and IT discourse perform four key pragmatic functions beyond their referential meaning: speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, and stance marking. Their distribution, however, is domain-sensitive.

⁷ Temmerman R. *Towards New Ways of Terminology Description*. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 2000. – 258 p.
¹⁶ Verschueren J. *Understanding Pragmatics*. – London : Arnold, 1999. – 295 p.

⁸ Faber P. The cognitive shift in terminology and specialized translation // *MonTI*. – 2009. – No. 1. – P. 107–134.

⁹ Stalnaker R. *Presuppositions* // *Journal of Philosophical Logic*. – 1973. – Vol. 2, No. 4. – P. 447–457.

¹⁰ Hyland K. *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing*. – London : Continuum, 2005. – 230 p.

1. Terms as Speech Acts. Legal terms frequently function as declarations. In a contract, indemnifies and holds harmless does not describe an obligation – it creates it upon signing¹¹. Medical discourse favours directives: indicated in a protocol (“Vancomycin is indicated for MRSA infection”) pragmatically instructs the clinician to use the drug. In IT, representatives dominate. Deprecated in a release note asserts a fact while indirectly warning of future removal¹².

2. Implicature. IT professionals exploit community-specific jargon to convey non-literal meaning. In a meeting, the term yak shaving implicates that a suggested task is a low-priority distraction, allowing a polite refusal without explicit confrontation¹³. In medical reports, vague phrases like of doubtful clinical significance generate the implicature “no urgent action needed,” reassuring the reader without committing diagnostically. Legal discourse occasionally generates implicature by avoiding a precise term: substituting unconscientious dealing for unconscionable conduct signals a weaker legal claim.

3. Presupposition. Presupposition triggers embed assumptions as shared knowledge. The adjective recurrent in “the patient’s recurrent pleural effusion” presupposes a prior episode, presenting it as uncontroversial fact. In legal texts, prior authorization presupposes an existing permission system and the authority of the granter, without stating either. IT discourse uses presuppositions more sparingly, e.g., legacy system implies a prior technological era.

4. Stance. Writers express epistemic and evaluative stance through terms. In medical papers, putative mechanism hedges confidence, while in IT meetings evaluative phrases like elegant solution or ugly hack signal personal attitude and group identity¹⁴.

Conclusion. This study has shown that specialized terms in law, medicine, and IT regularly perform pragmatic functions — speech acts, implicatures,

¹¹ Searle J.R. A classification of illocutionary acts // *Language in Society*. – 1976. – Vol. 5, No. 1. – P. 1–23.

¹² Hyland K. *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing*. – London : Continuum, 2005. – 230 p.

¹³ L’Homme M.-C. Terminological choices as argumentative resources in corporate discourse // *Argumentation*. – 2020. – Vol. 34, No. 2. – P. 213–234.

¹⁴ Temmerman R. *Towards New Ways of Terminology Description*. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 2000. – 258 p.

presuppositions, and stance marking — and that these functions vary systematically by domain. The findings reinforce the sociocognitive view that terminological meaning is shaped by discourse-community norms rather than fixed definitions. Practically, the results support integrating pragmatic awareness into professional communication training and terminological resources. Future research should extend the framework to multilingual, diachronic, and experimental settings to further validate and enrich these conclusions.

References:

1. Austin J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. – Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1962. – 167 p.
2. Faber P. The cognitive shift in terminology and specialized translation // *MonTI*. – 2009. – No. 1. – P. 107–134.
3. Felber H. *Terminology Manual*. – Paris : UNESCO, 1984. – 426 p.
4. Grice H.P. *Logic and conversation // Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3: Speech Acts* / ed. by P. Cole, J.L. Morgan. – New York : Academic Press, 1975. – P. 41–58.
5. Hyland K. *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing*. – London : Continuum, 2005. – 230 p.
6. L'Homme M.-C. Terminological choices as argumentative resources in corporate discourse // *Argumentation*. – 2020. – Vol. 34, No. 2. – P. 213–234.
7. Levinson S.C. *Pragmatics*. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983. – 420 p.
8. Sager J.C. *A Practical Course in Terminology Processing*. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 1990. – 258 p.
9. Searle J.R. A classification of illocutionary acts // *Language in Society*. – 1976. – Vol. 5, No. 1. – P. 1–23.
10. Stalnaker R. Presuppositions // *Journal of Philosophical Logic*. – 1973. – Vol. 2, No. 4. – P. 447–457.
11. Temmerman R. *Towards New Ways of Terminology Description*. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 2000. – 258 p.