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## CUADERNOS DE SOFÍA EDITORIAL

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#### THESAURUS MODELLING OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL TERMS

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#### **Abstract**

Within the educational discourse of English-speaking countries, there are many concepts that denote various objects and phenomena that do not completely coincide in their meaning with Russian educational terms. As a result, Russian people working in the educational sphere often do not understand the meaning of translated terms and are confused in their use, especially when it comes to terms from different variants of the English language. The current research is aimed at systematizing English and Russian educational discourse and terms within it via thesaurus modelling of terms related to the educational discourse of American and British variants of English and comparing them with Russian terminology. The research showed that systematizing terms via the construction of the English-Russian thesaurus could help not only differenciate the nuances in meaning due to the new thesaurus entries but also illustrate the relations among these terms due to the schemes made for the main terms in the constructed semantic field.

#### **Keywords**

Thesaurus modelling – Terminology – Educational discourse – Semantic relations

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#### Introduction

Linguists have been researching educational discourse for a long time. Any types of discourse contain different words, phrases and terms. Our research supposes investigating terms related to the British, American and Russian educational sphere. The current research is supposed to systematize terms under study through thesaurus modelling. Despite the variety of methods focusing on the research and analysis of terms of different social science and linguistic disciplines (such as *methods* of qualitative, statistical and content *analysis*, sampling *methods*, *etc.*), thesaurus modelling has been successfully applied by a number of Russian scholars to systematize the terminology of the following subject fields: French grammar<sup>1</sup>, English morphology, morphosyntax and lexicology<sup>2</sup>, English cognitive linguistics<sup>3</sup>, English text linguistics<sup>4</sup>, French business terminology<sup>5</sup> etc.

In modern linguistics the most important difference between a monolingual dictionary and thesaurus is that the latter is "a book that lists words in groups of synonyms and related concepts". It should be stated that all dictionaries help to systematize lexical units and show their definitions. However, these approaches do not reflect any relations between terms and do not show the whole "picture" of the discourse. Now thesaurus modelling is widely used in lexicography and discourse study. Taking into account the fact that there is no thesaurus containing educational terms of American and British English, the first objective of the paper is to sample educational terms and to choose key terms. Another objective is to build semantic fields and to find relations between the terms with the help of thesaurus network.

We follow the definition of "term" given by the soviet linguist R.G. Piotrovskij, because his understanding makes building thesaurus network possible. According to R.G. Piotrovskij, "the term is an elementary, compound or complicated sign, which, serving within the framework of a specific scientific and business communication, embodies in its intended meaning a concept relating to a specific subject area of science, technology, and cultural, administrative or political activity". Our research showed that all educational terms are connected with each other with the help of hierarchical and equivalence relations. Our thesaurus network allowed finding out more information about the terms under study by making visual schemes and helped to create new entries by listing various semantic relations in the constructed thesaurus of English-Russian terms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> E. Yu. Gorbunov, Francuzskaja grammaticheskaja terminologija: Opyt tezaurusnogo issledovanija (Saint Petersburg: RGPU Publ., 2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> E. Yu. Gorbunov, "Thesaurus Modelling of the Semantic Field of the Term "Word" in the Subject Field "English Lexicology", Journal of Perm State National Research University, num 4 Vol. 32 (2015): 30-38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Y. V. Vedernikova, "Thesaurus Modeling of Terminological Field "Encyclopaedic Semantics" in the "English Cognitive Linguistics" Subject Field", Philological Sciences, Vol. 12 num 4 (2015): 44-46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> I. I. Zhuchkova, Discourse Styles, Registers Genres and Text Types: Clarifying the Concepts and Modeling a Set of Semantic Relations", Young Scholars' Developments in Philology (2018): 3-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> R. Y. Dmitrieva y I. I. Zhuchkova, "Thesaurus Modeling of French Business Communication Terminology: Semantic Field "Enterprise", Volga Region Pedagogical Search num 3 Vol: 25 (2018): 38-44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Oxford Living Dictionaries. 2019. Available at: www.en.oxforddictionaries.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> R. G. Piotrovskij, Linguistic automat (in research and constant teaching) (Saint Petersburg: RGPU Publ., 1999).

The research may be continued in some ways. First, it will involve more educational terms to expand the semantic network and make a bigger thesaurus dictionary. The next stage will be the investigation of educational terms from other variants of English.

### **Methods**

In our research we studied educational terms from English educational discourse. The terms were selected from British and American online dictionaries. Sampling was taken according to the frequency of occurrence of these terms in literature, special glossaries. In order to conduct the analysis we observed the following contemporary dictionaries of linguistic terms:

- 1. Association of American Colleges and Universities<sup>8</sup>
- 2. Family Dictionary of Educational Terms<sup>9</sup>
- 3. The Glossary of Education Reform<sup>10</sup>

as well as general purpose online dictionaries famous all over the world such as MacMillan Dictionary<sup>11</sup>, Merriam-Webster Dictionary<sup>12</sup>, Oxford Living Dictionaries<sup>13</sup>, Cambridge Dictionary<sup>14</sup>, Collins Dictionary<sup>15</sup> in order to find, compare and analyze the definitions of terms under study. Our investigation involved analyzing dictionaries with two different arrangements of entries: alphabetical and semantic. Alphabetical entries are based on the formal shape of the lexical unit. Semantic entries are based on the semantic content of the lexical unit.

Alphabetical dictionaries are connected with the formal approach of studying discourse. In most western dictionaries, the list of words is ordered alphabetically. It is habitual for many people. But this method has an obvious disadvantage - semantic structure of vocabulary is not reflected there. In specialized dictionaries with controlled vocabulary "lexical items are arranged according to their meaning with specified types of relationships, identified by standardized relationship indicators" <sup>16</sup>. Such kind of dictionaries are called thesauri.

According to NISO Z39.19: Standard for Structure and Organization of Information Retrieval Thesauri, there are three types of semantic relations used in the semantic approach: equivalence, hierarchical, and associative. In the current study we use only two of them: equivalence and hierarchical. The following relations were found in our research:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Association of American Colleges and Universities, Available at: www.aacu.org

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Family Dictionary of Educational Terms (Washington: Office of the Education Ombudsman, 2010-2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The Glossary of Education Reform, Available at: www.http://edglossary.org

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> MacMillan Dictionary, Available at: www.macmillandictionary.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Merriam-Webster, Available at: www.merriamwebster.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2019. Available at: www.en.oxforddictionaries.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, Available at: www.dictionary.cambridge.org

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Collins Dictionary, Available at: www-collinsdictionary-com.cdn

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> NISO Z39.19: International Standard for Structure and Organization of Information Retrieval Thesauri. Paper presented at the Taxonomic Authority Files Workshop, Washington DC, June 23, 1998. Available at: www.bayside-indexing.com/Milstead/z39.htm.

- synonymy
- variance
- quasisynonymy
- antonymy
- hyperonymic relation ("generic-specific" relation)
- meronymic relation ("part-whole" relation)

The description of the meaning of terms using structured sets of semantic features via the well-known method of componential analysis<sup>17</sup> was carried out at the first stage of the performed analysis. We were able to analyse terms in two dimensions: 1) vertical, enabling us to find hyperonyms, hyponyms, holonyms and meronyms, and 2) horizontal, comparing the meanings of the same hierarchic levels and allowing us to identify synonyms, antonyms and other related semantic relations. Therefore, the purpose of the first stage was to compare the meanings of terms of different hierarchic levels. The second stage allowed us to identify equivalence relations.

### Results

As outlined in the methods section, the first stage of the investigation involved identifying hierarchic and equivalence relations, which link terms into a single semantic field. It is worth mentioning that there are several main categories in the constructed thesaurus such as types of education, academic degree and educational institutions (Figure 1). These categories reflect the key terms of the analyzed educational discourse and each has its own scheme of semantic relations, which helps users to visualize the relations among various terms in this field (Figure 2).

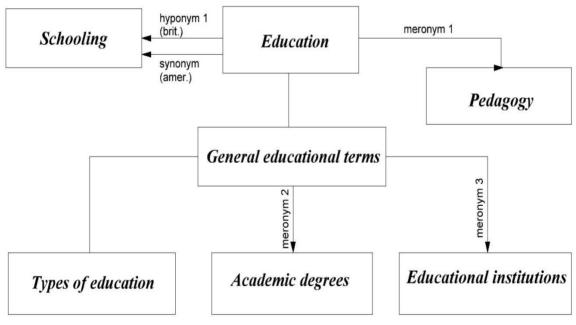


Figure 1
Semantic field of the term "education"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ju.A. Najda, The procedure of analysis of the componential structure of the referential meaning. New in foreign linguistics. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Moscow, Progress Publ., 1983).

To show how the thesaurus approach enabled us to systematize educational terms under study we suggest analyzing the term "academic degree" which is one of the key terms of the constructed thesaurus. The term "academic degree" is related to the semantic field of the term "education". The term "education" is the main term in the semantic field of the educational terms, and the term "academic degree" is a part of it.

First and foremost, it is advisable to consider the definition of the term "academic degree" itself. "It is a qualification awarded on successful completion of a course of study in higher education, normally at a college or university" 18. This term could be attributed to meronyms of the basic term "education", because such phenomenon as obtaining a scientific degree at the end of the training is considered to be part of a large education system. This was evidenced by the phrase "study in higher education".

As it is seen in Figure 2, there were four main types of academic degrees: "associate degree", "bachelor's degree", "master's degree", and "doctoral degree".

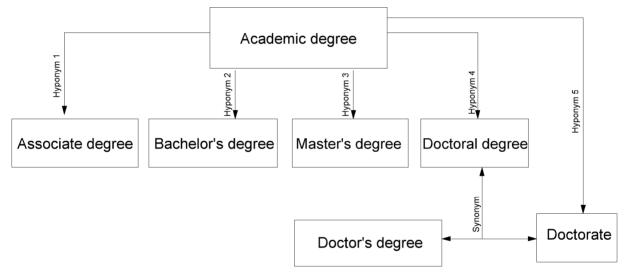


Figure 2 Semantic field of the term "academic degree"

Our first step was to find hierarchical relations between the terms. The research allowed us to find out that the term "academic degree" had five hyponyms. Our second step was to identify equivalent relations. We found that some kinds of academic degrees have synonyms (Figure 2). Due to the researching of the semantic field of the term "academic degree" we found the term which was related mostly to the Russian educational discourse. This term was "The Candidate of Sciences". This term could be used in English educational discourse but only while describing the Russian system of academic degrees.

Unexpectedly, the research also helped us to find out that some terms had full synonyms. The terms "doctoral degree", "professional doctorate degree" and "doctorate" are considered to be synonyms (Figure 2). D.S. Lotte stated that terms had no synonyms<sup>19</sup>. We managed to find synonyms of the term "doctoral degree". We concluded it from the componential analysis of their definitions and origin. "Doctoral degree is defined

<sup>19</sup> D. S. Lotte, How to Work With Terms: Basics and Methods (Moscow: Nauka, 1968).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Oxford Reference, Available at: www.oxfordreference.com

as an academic degree achieved by universities that is, in most countries, a research degree that qualifies the holder to teach at the university level in the degree of the field, or to work in a specific profession"<sup>20</sup>. "Doctorate" comes from Latin and means "to teach". "Doctor" is translated "teacher" from Latin, and could be considered as "degree of a teacher".

Having analyzed and described the semantic relations of the term "degree" we took another step. The next step in our research was to make a thesaurus entry. The entry in the constructed thesaurus consists of the term itself, its translation, terms linked to this term via various hierarchical and equivalent relations, each with the Russian translation. Therefore, the main term in the entry is explicated through other terms belonging to the same sematic field and linked to it via different semantic relations. In other words, making any entry in the constructed thesaurus involves listing generic and distinctive characteristics of the term under study. This type of entry shows the main features of the term and its place among other terms. Moreover, the applied thesaurus approach focusing on the relations between terms allowed us to exclude definitions of educational terms from their entries because in this case to understand what the term means the user does not need to see its definition. The definition of the term becomes optional.

To prove this we list different sematic relations for the term "academic degree" in its entry from the constructed English-Russian educational thesaurus:

## Academic degree

Trans.

Научная степень

Holon. 1

Education (образование)

Schooling (Amer.) (образование)

Holon, 2

College (колледж)

Community college (общественный колледж)

Junior college (младший колледж)

University (университет)

Private university (частный университет)

Public university (государственный университет)

Institute of technology (технический институт)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Oxford Reference. Available at: www.oxfordreference.com

### Hypon.

Associate degree (степень ассоциата)

Bachelor's degree (степень бакалавра)

Master's degree (магистерская степень)

Doctoral degree (докторская степень)

Doctorate (докторская степень)

Professional doctorate (докторская степень)

PhD (доктор философских наук)

The componential analysis of different definitions of the key term "academic degree" helped to identify some features of the term "academic degree" which were not mentioned in its definitions in other dictionaries. However, these features are reflected in the above-mentioned thesaurus entry. They are the following:

- 1.- the term "academic degree" has a hierarchical structure of its subtypes;
- 2.- this term is connected with the educational system;
- 3.- an academic degree can be got only after graduation from certain educational institutions.

By opening this entry in the constructed thesaurus the user sees that the term "academic degree" can be easily defined through a set of semantic relations. The first implicit sematic feature mentioned above is revealed in the entry of the term "academic degree" through its 7 hyponyms. The second one is revealed through the meronymic relation with the terms "education" and "schooling". The third feature claiming that any academic degree can be awarded only after graduating from educational institutions is revealed in the entry of the constructed thesaurus via various kinds of colleges and universities.

It should also be noted that all the terms in the entry have hyperlinks, which makes it possible for the user to have a quick access to various related terms in one field and shift from one term to another. As a result, the user can easily compare various thesaurus entries and find common and different features between them.

### **Discussion**

Our research considers the hypothesis that the thesaurus modelling may be the most effective way to systematize English and Russian educational terms. This hypothesis was confirmed.

The semantic modelling seems the most effective way to study educational terms. Thus, it could be used to:

- explain the meaning of educational terms via schemes of semantic fields they belong to;
  - make more complete dictionary entries of the terms under study.

Our research showed that thesaurus modelling helped to work with lexical units. We could give students definitions of the terms and relations between them. It may help to see the exact location of terms among other terms in the educational discourse. It could be used to explain all the differences and nuances of meaning.

The hierarchical structure of the key term is also showed. Thus, semantic modelling might help to choose the correct words without checking their definitions. The constructed thesaurus dictionary could also be used by interpreters. They could choose the most appropriate word for the translation. For example, they may find out that "master's degree" cannot be replaced by "doctor's degree". But "doctor's degree" can be replaced by "doctorate".

Our research proved that thesaurus modelling may help to make complete definitions of educational terms. We studied several definitions of each term. The componential analysis of corpus of English-language definitions of educational terms has revealed implicit semantic features of terminological signs with further description of the semantic relations linking these units by frameworks of a dictionary entry.

The disadvantage of the work is that we investigated only the key terms of educational discourse. But despite of the fact that the number of the terms is not large, we could make a conclusion about the effectiveness of the approach. It also may allow continuing the research through investigation of more terms related to English educational discourse.

#### Conclusions

The main aim of the research was to construct the English\_Russian educational thesaurus and therefore systematize the terms within the educational discourse on the example of the semantic field of the term "academic degree". According to our results, this approach made it possible to differentiate the signified of analyzed terms and therefore not only arrange the terms in hierarchical order but also unite them all into a coherent semantic field. Semantic modelling showed different semantic relations between the terms: hierarchical and equivalence.

This approach helped to find out more information about all types of academic degrees that allowed making more full entries of the terms. The new type of entry in the constructed thesaurus reflected all sides of the key term while previous definitions found in English-English and English-Russian dictionaries showed the main features separately. Although in our work we have investigated only the key educational terms, the research allowed us to build the structure of general outline of educational system and make a thesaurus of English-Russian educational terms with more than 100 entries.

Further, we are intended to investigate the educational discourse of other variants of English. Our findings can also be used to investigate other types of discourse.

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