

LOSS OF MEANING IN TERM TRANSLATION BETWEEN LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article examines the mechanisms behind semantic loss in the translation of terms between different languages, including natural, professional, and specialized discourses. The study analyzes the features of terminological systems, the influence of cultural and cognitive factors on term interpretation, and typical cases of meaning transformation during cross-linguistic transfer. Special attention is given to issues of accuracy, unambiguity, and contextual dependence of terms, which make their translation a complex and multidimensional process. Strategies for minimizing semantic loss and methods for ensuring adequacy and equivalence in terminological correspondences are also explored.

Keywords: term translation, semantic loss, cross-linguistic equivalence, terminology, linguistic interpretation, cultural factors, cognitive models, professional discourse, polysemy, translation accuracy, translation adequacy, specialized vocabulary

Introduction

The translation of terms represents one of the most challenging areas of cross-linguistic communication, as terminology is closely connected not only to language, but also to systems of scientific concepts, cultural experience, and cognitive models that shape world understanding. Unlike general vocabulary, terms strive for precision, unambiguity, and stability of meaning; however, when transferred from one language to another, these properties are often at risk. Semantic loss—a phenomenon manifested in partial alteration, dilution, or shift of a term's meaning—can occur at different levels: lexical, semantic, conceptual, and cultural.

The relevance of studying semantic loss arises from the increasing globalization of scientific and professional communication. Specialists from different countries and scientific schools need to interact, exchange research results, and develop joint projects. Differences in terminological systems and conceptual frameworks often complicate this process, leading to misunderstandings, erroneous interpretations, and protracted discussions.

Despite active development of translation strategies and methods, the problem of term equivalence remains unresolved. Some terms have no direct equivalents, others carry culturally conditioned meanings, and still others differ in scope and conceptual structure. Translators must not merely select words but reconstruct the underlying conceptual models embedded in the terms.

The aim of this article is to investigate the nature of semantic loss in term translation between languages, identify the main types of such losses, determine the cultural and cognitive mechanisms behind them, and consider strategies that minimize or compensate for meaning loss. The article seeks to provide a holistic philosophical-linguistic perspective on term translation as a process of interaction between different worldviews and scientific frameworks.



Theoretical Foundations of Term Translation

Term translation is a specialized area of translation studies where linguistic, philosophical, and cognitive approaches to meaning intersect. Unlike common vocabulary, a term does not merely denote an object or phenomenon; it situates it within a specific scientific worldview. Therefore, translating terms requires consideration of the conceptual structure of the discipline, its methodology, core categories, and logical framework of description.

1.1. Term as a Unit of Specialized Knowledge

Terms are words or phrases that possess a set of specific properties: precision, systemacity, unambiguity within a particular knowledge domain, and stability of usage. However, these properties are not absolute. In different languages, the same term may have a different conceptual scope or carry additional semantic nuances. This is because the process of term formation depends on scientific traditions and methods of conceptualizing the world.

1.2. Equivalence as a Key Principle

The primary goal of term translation is to achieve equivalence—correspondence in meaning, function, and communicative role of the term. However, equivalence in terminology is difficult to formalize, as it involves several dimensions: Semantic (meaning), Pragmatic (function in scientific communication), Cognitive (conceptual structure), Cultural (integration into the traditions of scientific schools). Semantic losses occur when at least one of these dimensions does not match across languages.

1.3. Specific Features of Terminological Systems in Different Languages

Terminological systems are formed under the influence of specific scientific histories, cultural norms, and linguistic structures. For example, English medical terminology often emphasizes practical description of functions and pathologies (e.g., heart failure), whereas Russian terminology tends to follow the Latin tradition and focus on classificatory precision (e.g., *сердечная недостаточность* — “cardiac insufficiency”). In Uzbek, terminology is actively developing in the process of modernizing medical and scientific discourse, so some terms have not yet been fully stabilized.

1.4. Philosophical Aspects of Term Translation

From a philosophical perspective, term translation is an act of transferring concepts between different “linguistic worlds.” Each language represents a particular worldview within which scientific concepts are formed. Therefore, translation is not merely about selecting equivalents, but involves reconstructing conceptual content. Inevitably, semantic transformations occur because different languages structure experience in different ways.

The theoretical foundations of term translation demonstrate that semantic loss is not an exception but a regular phenomenon, explained by differences in cognitive models, linguistic structures, and cultural traditions. Understanding these mechanisms allows for more deliberate strategies in handling terminology and enhances the precision of scientific communication.

2. The Nature of Terms and Their Relation to Meaning

A term, as a linguistic unit, possesses distinctive characteristics that set it apart from everyday vocabulary. It functions within scientific, professional, or technical discourse and serves not



merely as a label but as a bearer of a specific concept. Therefore, understanding the nature of terms is essential for analyzing the mechanisms of semantic loss.

2.1. Term as a Conceptual Unit

A term is associated with a concept—an abstraction that unites the essential properties of an object or phenomenon. Concepts are formed within a scientific discipline and then receive linguistic expression. Consequently, translating a term involves translating a concept rather than merely a lexeme. Semantic losses occur when conceptual structures differ across languages.

For example, the English term *disease* and the Russian term *болезнь* partially overlap but are not fully equivalent: the former emphasizes the pathological process, while the latter emphasizes the state of the organism.

2.2. Multilayered Meaning of a Term

The meaning of a term includes several levels:

Denotative — what it denotes; Connotative — additional nuances it carries; Pragmatic — the functional role it plays in discourse; Cognitive — the explanatory model it represents. When translating, any of these levels may be lost or transformed, creating gaps in meaning.

2.3. Term as an Element of a System

Terms do not exist in isolation but within a system of relationships: hierarchies, classifications, logical oppositions, and associative series. Even a slight change in a term's meaning can disrupt the system. For instance, translating *cell culture* as *культура клеток* is correct; however, in certain contexts, the term *клеточная культура* is preferred, and the choice affects both style and precision.

2.4. Dynamism of Terms

Terms are not static: their meanings may evolve with scientific development, paradigm shifts, or the emergence of new technologies. For example, the term *genome* acquired its modern meaning only in the late 20th century. This dynamism adds difficulty in translation, as a term in one language may reflect the contemporary state of science, while in another it retains older meanings.

2.5. Influence of Cultural and Disciplinary Differences

The same scientific field may develop differently in various countries, leading to variability in terms and concepts. For example, in English-language medicine, the term *compliance* (patient adherence to treatment) is widely used, whereas in Russian medicine there was until recently no direct conceptual equivalent, creating challenges in translation.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that semantic loss in term translation is a multilayered phenomenon affecting both linguistic and cultural-epistemological bases of communication. In scientific discourse, a term exists not only as a linguistic unit but also as a bearer of conceptual structures, knowledge, and professional practices. Consequently, transferring a term from one language



system to another inevitably involves changes in semantic nuances, transformations of conceptual boundaries, and shifts in interpretative emphasis.

Particular difficulty arises from differences in cognitive models, cultural traditions, scientific schools, and historically established meanings of terms. The translator must balance accuracy, conventional usage, scientific correctness, and comprehensibility for a new audience. It is evident that no universal solution exists: the optimal strategy depends on the context, the purpose of communication, the audience's level of expertise, and the specific knowledge domain.

Thus, semantic loss in term translation is not a defect of the translation process, but a natural consequence of the interaction between different linguistic worldviews. Recognizing this feature allows for a more reflective approach to scientific interaction, improves the quality of intercultural communication, and deepens understanding of the mechanisms of knowledge formation and transformation.

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