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THE SPECIFICS OF THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION TERMINOLOGICAL UNITS FUNCTIONING

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Abstract. Nowadays two opposite tendencies are typical of education – unification of terminology and preservation of terminological units with the cultural component of meaning. Since English remains one of the crucial means of cross-cultural communication in general and in the education field in particular, it is of great importance to study the specifics of usage of the English language terminological units in the given realm within the context of the tendencies mentioned. The paper studies the functioning peculiarities of terminological units included in the British and American higher education terminological systems. Special focus is given to the theory of the cultural component of meaning detected in the course of the lexical-semantic analysis of the humanities terminological units is developed in the present paper. The theory is extrapolated to the British and American higher education terminology. The author analyses terminological units with the cultural component of meaning identified by means of territorial markers in terminography or containing the references to the British and American higher education systems in their definitions. The given paper draws on the findings made in the course of analysis of the corpus containing approximately 3000 terminological units belonging to the British and US higher edu-
cation terminological systems. In line with the classification of terminological units with the cultural component of meaning according to the lexical-semantic criterion, the author gives examples of variance and uniqueness of terminological units by the material of various local higher education terminological systems. In conclusion the author determines the peculiarities of functioning of the British and American higher education terms. The functioning similarities and differences between the British and American higher education terminological systems are considered. The author determines four levels (from the level of a particular university terminological system to the level of a national terminological system) of the British higher education terminological units functioning and two levels of the US higher education terminological units functioning. It is demonstrated that terminological units with the cultural component of meaning are more typical of the British higher education terminological systems (25% out of 1500 terminological units analysed) than of the US higher terminological systems (16% out of 1500 terminological units analysed). The findings made in the given paper contribute to developing cross-cultural communication competence.

**Keywords**: terms with the cultural component of meaning; higher education terminological system; levels of term functioning; terminological variance; unique terms

**Introduction**
Modern education is characterized not only by integration processes occurring at the international level but also by the tendency of preserving cultural specificity of local education systems. In terms of lexical units used in the given field these tendencies are reflected in unification of corresponding terminologies on the one hand, and in increased use of terminological units with the cultural component of meaning on the other hand. Since education remains one the most important realms of international cooperation, the study of the English language educa-
tion, particularly higher education, terms considering the peculiarities of particular local terminological systems is of great importance.

In the given paper terminological units belonging to the British and American higher education terminological systems are considered within the framework of the concept of the cultural component of term meaning, developed on the material of Anglo-American legal terminology by V. A. Ikonnikova (Ikonnikova V. A., 2014).

By analogy with the Anglo-American law terminology research, in the present study the term “terminological units with the cultural component of meaning” refers to “the units containing in the linguistic substratum information on historical and territorial values, conceptions, peculiarities and realia of the given historical and territorial community” (Ikonnikova V. A., 2014: 11) (Hereinafter – Translated by Yu. Tsverkun). The main characteristic feature of these terminological units is that the structure of such units meaning contains “the information to explain not only to a non-professional (that is a characteristic feature of specific lexical units, terminological units) but also to a professional in the given field but belonging to another historical and territorial culture” (Ikonnikova V.A., Tsverkun Yu.B., 2017: 134).

Objectives/Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present research is to study the specificity of usage of the British and American higher education terminological units and to define the levels of the corresponding units functioning. To obtain the purpose, the following objectives are necessary to achieve:

- to detect from textual and lexicographical sources terminological units with the cultural component of meaning belonging to the British and US higher education terminological systems;
- to bring the examples of terminological variance and uniqueness according to the classification of terminological units with the cultural component of meaning;
- to define the levels of the British and US higher education terminological units functioning;
- to explain the causes of identified similarities and differences between the corresponding terminological systems.

**Methodology and sub headings**

To study the British and American higher education terminological units the following methods have been applied:
- continuous sampling method;
- dictionary definitions analysis;
- historical and etymological analysis;
- quantitative analysis.

The corpus of the given study contains approximately 3000 terminological units belonging to the British (about 1500 terminological units) and American (about 1500 terminological units) higher education terminological systems. These units have been detected from the following sources:

1) dictionaries of the Modern English language (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2019; Collins English Dictionary, 2019);
2) specific dictionaries (Wallace S., 2019; The Glossary of Education Reform, 2019; Collins J.W., et al., 2011);
3) glossaries published on the official websites of the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2019), the Department for Education and Skills (Wales) (Education and Skills, 2019), the Scottish Education Department (Education Scotland, 2019), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) (Department of Education (Northern Ireland), 2019), The United States Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019);
4) glossaries published on the official websites of the British (Durham University, 2019; Manchester, 2019; The University of Edinburgh, 2019; University of Cambridge, 2019; University of Glasgow, 2019; University of Oxford, 2019; University of St Andrews, 2019; University of Wales, 2019; University of York, 2019) and US (Brown, 2019; Columbia University, 2019; Har-
Results/Findings
The analysis of approximately 3000 terminological units belonging to the British (about 1500 terminological units) and American (about 1500 terminological units) higher education terminological systems has shown that about 350 (25%) out of 1500 British higher education terminological units are terminological units with the cultural component of meaning; about 250 (16%) out of 1500 US higher education terminological units contain the cultural component of meaning.

To study the specifics of the British and American higher education terminological units functioning, the classification of terminological units with the cultural component of meaning should be considered. By analogy with the Anglo-American legal terminology research, the British and American education terminological units with the cultural component of meaning are divided into: 1) units demonstrating terminological variance (synonymy and polysemy); 2) unique (non-equivalent) terminological units.

The phenomenon of terminological variance is shown in two aspects:

1) terminological synonymy (lexical variance)

To illustrate the phenomenon occurring in the US higher education terminology, the terms referring to students studying at the University of Virginia can be considered: First Year, Second Year, Third Year, Fourth Year. These terminological units are used at the University of Virginia instead of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, that are marked US in the Modern English language dictionaries (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2019; Collins English Dictionary, 2019). Therefore, these terminological units are used within the framework of the terminological systems of all the degree-granting institutions in the USA. This fact is corroborated by the definitions of these units published on the US universities official websites. This terminological units functioning specificity is caused
by the fact that “to be a “senior” implies that a person has reached the final phase of learning, a feat that Mr. Jefferson [who founded the university] believed impossible, arguing instead that education is a life-long process” (Students & Traditions, 2019). Another example that illustrates the phenomenon of terminological synonymy occurring in the British higher education terminological systems is the usage of terminological units referring to terms. Let us consider the entry from Oxford Dictionary of Education (Wallace S., 2015):

**Michaelmas Term** - also known as the Autumn Term, it is one of the three terms into which the academic year is traditionally divided, the other two being the Spring Term and the Summer Term. The Michaelmas Term runs from September or October to December. Its duration depends upon the institution in question, but is usually between 8 and 12 weeks. It takes its name from the Feast of St Michael the Archangel, traditionally known as Michaelmas Day, which falls on 29 September, thus marking the beginning of term. It is the traditional name of the Autumn Term at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (where the Spring Term is known as Hilary and the Summer Term as Trinity), and has subsequently been adopted by some other institutions. Thus, terminological units Michaelmas Term, Hilary Term and Trinity Term function within the framework of Oxford and Cambridge terminological systems. Moreover, these terminological units represent the phenomenon of terminological synonymy since common British terminological units denoting academic terms are the Autumn Term, the Spring Term and the Summer Term.

2) terminological polysemy (semantic variance)

To illustrate the given phenomenon occurring in several higher education terminological systems at the same time, let us study the definitions of the terminological unit **professor**:

**professor** – a) a teacher of the highest rank in a department of a British university, or a teacher of high rank in an American university or college (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary &
The definitions of the terminological unit *professor* shown above have been cited from the Modern English language dictionaries. However, in definition *a)* the terminological unit contains two territorial marks (*British* and *American*) that explain the difference in usage of the terminological unit considered within the framework of corresponding terminological systems (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2019). Definition *b)* illustrates the phenomenon of terminological polysemy within the framework of the US higher education terminological system only.

The phenomenon of semantic variance can also occur within the framework of one and the same terminological system, for example, Oxford terminological system. To illustrate this peculiarity let us consider the definition of the terminological unit *collections* (Wallace S., 2015):

*collections* – a) Written examinations organised at the start of term by a college. They are exercises used to monitor progress and help students develop exam techniques. Additional collections may be used by colleges in response to poor performance, with an attached penalty for failure ('penal collections'); b) A report reading organised by a college. The student attends at intervals decided by the college, and reports are discussed in the presence of the head of house.

The given terminological unit is the example of terminological polysemy occurring exclusively within the framework of one and the same terminological system. Moreover, the definitions of this term relating to the field of education have not been found in the Modern English language dictionaries (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2019; Collins English Dictionary, 2019).
The unique (non-equivalent) terminological units are as follows:

**The Ivy League** – a group of eight universities in the northeastern part of the United States, which have high academic and social status (Collins English Dictionary, 2019);

**triplos** (Cambridge University) – the formal university examinations in which undergraduates are required to obtain honours in order to qualify for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (University of Cambridge, 2019);

**V-coding** (University of St Andrews) - the V-coding policy allows, in exceptional circumstances, all grades received in a semester or year to be nullified. Such modules are marked as V without a numerical grade, with the effect as if the modules had never been taken (V-coding, 2019).

The results of the study have shown that British higher education terminological units function at four levels: 1) the higher education terminological system containing terminological units that are common to all the English language higher education terminologies; 2) the British higher education terminological system; 3) at the level of one or several administrative and territorial entities (for example, the higher education terminological system of Scotland, the higher education terminological system of England and Wales); 4) at the level of the terminological system of a particular higher education institution (for example, Oxford terminological system).

American higher education terminological units function at two levels: 1) the higher education terminological system containing terminological units that are common to all the English language higher education terminologies; 2) the US higher education terminological system. Absence of terminological variance at the level of a particular state, district or educational institution is caused by the fact that the unified terminology is fixed in the texts of the official websites and glossaries of the educational institutions (Glossary. An Office of the U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
Discussion
The study of the British and US higher education terminological units with the cultural component of meaning contributes to a fuller understanding of the corresponding higher education systems. The observations made in the present paper may be useful to develop cross-cultural communication competence. Further research of the education terminological systems considering cultural specificity of local education systems is seen in defining specificity of the British and American education (school and higher education) terminology development in order to determine the reasons of the cultural component emergence in the meaning structure of terminological units.

References