
FORMAL VARIATION IN ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN LOGISTICS TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract: This paper reflects on logistics terminology and the phenomenon formal variation which is treated controversially by various scholars. The analysis and conclusions are part of a detailed exploration into the English and Bulgarian logistics terminological systems. The methods applied are a comparative approach implemented on the basis of the principles of synchronicity and systematicity when relating English terms to their Bulgarian equivalents and a semantic-syntactic method when revealing the relations between components in noun compounds and phrases with a component analysis of their semantic structure. Based on the examples included in the corpus developed especially for the study, the paper offers a typology of formal variation determined by the level of manifestation into phonetic and orthographic, morphological, syntactic, word formation, lexical and stylistic variants, syntactic and lexical variants being most recurrent. The findings can be relevant when teaching English for Logistics.

Keywords: logistics terminology, formal variation, classification of variants

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended to focus on one particular type of variation in the terminological system of logistics and offer a classification of formal variants depending on the level of manifestation. It is part of a larger study dedicated to the tendencies in the development of English and Bulgarian logistics terminology with regard to the processes evolving in it (Velikova, 2017, 2018b). The study itself is centred on a large corpus of terms excerpted from existing dictionaries, online glossaries, related websites and course materials (Velikova, 2018a; Velikova, Toncheva, 2009) created for students in the specialty “Logistics”, B. Sc. and M.Sc. at the “Nikola Vaptsarov” Naval Academy in Varna, Bulgaria. The methods applied are a comparative approach implemented on the basis of the principles of synchronicity and systematicity when relating English terms to their Bulgarian equivalents and a semantic-syntactic method when revealing the relations between components in noun compounds and phrases with a component analysis of their semantic structure.

2. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Present-day scholars assume “variation in terminology means that the same word is interpreted as multiple concepts depending on aspects such as context, aim of the text, and so forth”. (Carrió Pastor, 2015, p 32). The question about the existence and use of variants is of little avail. “There is, in fact a considerable variation of designation in special languages because of the higher concentration of reference terms”, as Sager points out, and the means of alternate designation do not differ considerably between general and specialized language (Sager, 1990, p 214).

The term formal variation first appears in Cabré’s classification of term variants where she defines three types:

1. Term variants that semantically coincide but formally differ (also referred to as synonyms);
2. Term variants that are semantically and formally different, but still refer to the same ontological concept (also known as partial synonyms). Each variant may highlight one facet of the same concept or serve a certain purpose (style, register, level of specialization), but this is not conceptually relevant or it is not explicitly manifested in the conceptualization taken as reference;
3. Term variants that are semantically and formally different and point to two related, but also different, ontological concepts in generic or partitive relations (Cabré, 2008, pp 9-36).

Manolova views formal variants as “terminological doublets” in which two, sometimes three and four words name the same scientific and technical object or phenomenon (Manolova, 1984, p 24).

However, they differ from what Popova chooses to name formal variation in relation to the two aspects of the linguistic sign. Under formal variation she understands “the use of parallel language means that differently express an identical (the same) terminological meaning”, which implies “there is more than one linguistic form referring to the unity of referent and concept” (Popova, 2012, p 588). She also introduces a distinction between an ideal and real term, the latter being the term functioning in scientific and specialized texts (Popova, 2017, p 298).

3. TYPES OF FORMAL VARIATION

The typology of formal variation is determined by the level of manifestation but it does not cover term variation across languages. So depending on the unit where variation is observed we can distinguish the following types of formal variation in logistics terminology:

1. Phonetic and Orthographic Variation which is common for direct borrowings in the process of adaptation, e.g. *cluster* – *кълстър, кластър*; *trailer* – *трейлър, трейлер* where there is a difference in pronunciation; or *lean management* spelled *лийнмениджмънт* and *лийн мениджмънт*. In fact *lean* has entered logistics terminology from Toyota production system with the meaning *икономичен*, and professionals choose to borrow it directly in Bulgarian, even make it part of collocations associated with the idea - *лийн мениджър, лийн методология, лийн мислене, лийн производство*. (http://www.karieri.bg/mojata_kariera/profesii/2589594_profesiia_liin_menidjur/) Another interesting case of phonetic variation due to wrong and/or outdated pronunciation is *demurrage* – *забавяне, магазинаж*. In shipping English it also refers to the charges that the charterer pays to the shipowner for not keeping the laytime agreed as per charter party and is pronounced either *дѐмюрѐйдж* or *демураж* or even *контрасталия* (from Italian *controstallia*).

Finally, very rarely but there are still some variants in spelling such as *travelift* – *travel lift*, *way-bill* – *waybill*, etc.

2. Morphological Variation involves assigning gender and number to nouns and making verbs fully functional in terms of valence and conjugation. In this way nouns and adjectives are inflected for gender and number – e.g. *exchange* → *обмяна, обмен*; *marketing* → *маркетингане, маркетинг*, but *marketing process* → *маркетингов процес*, etc.

3. Syntactic Variation is due to difference in syntactic models. It can range from simple words to compounds and prepositional phrases. In order to restrict the classification it is intended to cover only phrases. The following subtypes were found to exist in our corpus:

a. phrases with the same lexical components but in different order, e.g.

purchasing policy – *policy of purchasing* → *политика на закупуване*

terms of delivery – *delivery terms* → *условия на доставка*

transport mode – *mode of transport* → *вид транспорт*

снабдителна логистика – *логистика на снабдяването* → *procurement logistics*

логистика на входа – *входяща логистика* → *inbound logistics*

аутсорснати дейности – *дейности, възложени на подизпълнител* → *outsourced activities*

This type of variation is common both for English and Bulgarian terminology but it tends to prevail in Bulgarian. It is typical of terminological compounds and phrases with a N+N surface structure which are paraphrased with a prepositional postmodification, the most recurrent being with an *of*-phrase or *for*-phrase. They are commonly rendered by using Bulgarian patterns either with an *Adj/Participle + N* or *N + prep + N* phrase.

b. phrases with a common lexical component, whether attributive or not, e.g. *логистика на проявите* –

логистика на събитията → *event logistics*,

водещо време – *време на изпълнение на заявка* – *време на цикъл на заявка* → *lead time*,

cargo manifest – *goods manifest* → *товарен манифест* – *товарна декларация* where the former is generally in use in maritime business and the latter – in road transport.

expiry date – *expiration date* → *срок на годност* (if it refers to goods) or *с валидност до* (if it refers to documents).

The variations are either due to a number of equivalent translations co-existent in Bulgarian or to the scope of application.

c. phrases with different lexical components but the same meaning, e.g. *examination by customs officers* –

customs clearance → *митническа проверка*,

work-related accident – *occupational injury* → *трудова злополука*

where the variations stem from synonyms expressing the same concept or from a borrowed and native component used in the phrase.

With the next two examples the differences are only in the surface structure because in *intermodal logistics complex* – *freight village* – *интермодален логистичен комплекс* – *център за товарни превози* both terms denote a node in the transport chain where transfer of cargo is executed from one mode of transport to another.

The next pair *road-rail transport* – *piggyback* – *вагони, превозващи автомобили заедно с товара им* illustrates difference in type and method of transport, hence the variation in terms.

d. a compound/phrase shortened to a single word as a result of substantivization, e.g.

товарач на зърно – *зърнотоварач* → *grain loader*

суров материал – *суровина* → *raw material*

условия на доставка – *франкировка* → *INCOTerms*

e. a compound/phrase shortened as a result of decomposition

*контейнер с повишена височина – хай куб → high cube container – high cube
отворен контейнер – опън топ → open top container – open top*

In Bulgarian substantivization and suffixation occur most frequently while decomposition is generally a result of direct borrowing from English. However, we must bear in mind that sometimes the shortened form may need to be disambiguated, otherwise it will lead to misunderstanding. Thus *товарителница* in Bulgarian is a document accompanying cargo and an evidence of a contract of carriage. The problem is that in English it varies across the types of transport – *air waybill* – in air transport, *CIM waybill* – in rail transport and *bill of lading* – in shipping. Therefore, it needs to be specified in Bulgarian, too, which type of transport it will be used in – *автотранспортна* or *ж. п. товарителница* or *коносамент*.

4. Word-formation Variation occurs with single words having the same stem but different affixes – e.g. *outsourcing* → *аутсорсинг*, *аутсорсване*; *billing* → *документация*, *документирание*.

There is still hesitation in the way the verb related to logistics and the term for the agent (nomen agentis) coined in Bulgarian are rendered. So the verb in English is *to logist*, e.g. “The company is logisting the current operation”. In Bulgarian it is either *логистира* or the descriptive *осъществява логистични дейности*. Similarly, *logistician* is conveyed in Bulgarian either as *логистик* or *експерт логистика*.

5. Lexical Variation here will be confined to absolute synonymy depending on the origin of the terms. Three major classes are distinguished here:

a. parallel use of a foreign and native lexeme, e.g. *acquisition* (Latin) – *merger* (English) → *сливане на две или повече фирми в една нова фирма*; *cargo* (Latin) – *freight* (Dutch or German) → *товар – фрахт*.

This type of variation in English is relevant for foreigners only if there is a stylistic difference in the terms, too, as with the latter pair. It actually gives rise to another type of region-specific variation as in *cargo ship* – *freighter* → *товарен кораб* because the former term is preferred in Great Britain and the latter in the USA.

In Bulgarian this variation is exemplified with direct borrowing and loan translation, e.g. *джиро* (Italian) – *заверка* → *endorsement*; *авизо* (Italian) – *известие за изпратена стока* → *advice of dispatch*, etc.

With compounds and phrases it is even more frequent, e.g.

смесено предприятие – джойнт венчър → *joint venture*

застраховка за стоката – карго застраховка → *cargo insurance*

револвиращ акредитив – многократен акредитив → *revolving letter of credit*.

b. parallel use of two foreign lexemes

This type of variation in English is worth discussing if it gives rise to variation in Bulgarian as well, e.g. *charter* (Latin) – *affreight* (German) → *чартирам – фрахтовам* and *barge* (Latin) – *lighter* (Middle Dutch) → *баржа – лихтер*.

The situation with such borrowings in Bulgarian requires greater attention. Sometimes the pairs are easy to interpret even if they are different because their usage is a matter of personal preference, e.g. *несертифицирано копие* (English) – *незаверен екземпляр* (Russian) → *uncertified copy*; *ричстакер* (English) – *терминален спредер* (English) → *reach stacker*.

Not so with *диспонент* (German) – *диспечер* (English) denoting the person scheduling, coordinating and monitoring fleet management routes in freight forwarding companies. The term *disponent* (owner) in shipping English signifies a person or company which has commercial control over a vessel's operation without owning the ship as in a bareboat charter – *диспонентен корабособственик*, therefore this type of interlanguage homonymy has to be highlighted.

Another problem is presented by the pair *стифадор* (Latin) – *докер* (English) where probably because of its earlier entry in Bulgarian a dockworker is used instead of a stevedore to indicate a person who loads and unloads cargo from a ship whereas it is a shortening of a dock worker. So Bulgarian users tend to use a dockworker as *докер*, *хамалин* and *stevedore* as someone in charge of cargo handling operations.

c. parallel use of two native lexemes

The reasons for this type of variation may be synonymy again as in *rest area* – *lay-by* → *отбивка (от магистрала)* or *build-to-order* – *make-to-order* → *конструирание по поръчка*. In Bulgarian most frequently it is connected with the trend to convey the meaning of a term descriptively with a long explanation as in *кораб за превоз на дървен материал – дървовоз* → *timber carrier* or *камион за превоз на дрехи – дрехарка* → *hanging garment truck*. Not rarely the variation may result from the purpose of designation, e.g. *бордови автомобил* (*according to design of cargo space*), *прицеп (by means of attachment)* – *tilt trailer*.

6. Stylistic variation is observed where the relation is between a term and a professional word (slang), therefore it is context-related. Here belong verbs such as *turn to* – *започвам работа* and *knock off* – *свършвам работа*, *освобождавам се от работа* used colloquially. *Маршрутка* and *маршрутно такси* – *routing taxi* in Bulgarian

illustrate a choice of vocabulary depending on register. The relation between a *GP container* and a *dry van* illustrates region-specific variations.

An interesting case of stylistic variation occurs with eponyms such as a *bobcat* – a piece of equipment employed for trimming cargo named so after the American-based manufacturer – *бобкам*, or *UPS* which is a *heavy vehicle* belonging to US-based trucking company *United Parcel Service*. The list is long and differs across geographic areas and users.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Variation in logistics terminology is abundant in both English and Bulgarian and points to its unsystemic character which is only natural for a terminology in progress. It was stated initially that terminological variation must be admitted as well as the degree to which it can be tolerated. Furthermore, it views terms not only in linguistic but also in situational context.

Formal variation is determined by the level of manifestation into phonetic and orthographic, morphological, syntactic, word formation, lexical and stylistic variants. Syntactic and lexical variants are recurrent in our corpus. Syntactic variation is common both for English and Bulgarian terminology, however prevalent in Bulgarian. It is observed in terminological phrases with a N+N surface structure with the following subtypes: multi-word terms with the same lexical components but in different order, multi-word terms with a common lexical component whether as a modifier or not, multi-word terms with different lexical components but the same meaning and multi-word terms shortened to a single-word term.

Lexical variation is limited to absolute synonymy only depending on the origin of the terms with three major classes where there is a parallel use of a foreign and native lexeme and a parallel use of two foreign or two native lexemes. Formal terminological variants are especially useful in creating ontologies.

Term variation does exist in a terminological system still in progress. Analyzing it in terms of equivalence, hierarchy and association, we can make use of it when representing knowledge in terminology, while aiming at harmonization and standardization in the logistics terminological system. Furthermore, we can try reducing it by choosing the most appropriate Bulgarian equivalents that meet the requirements of term formation as close as possible.

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