

LEXICOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO SEMANTIZATION IN BILINGUAL LEARNER’S DICTIONARIES

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Abstract. *Semantization, understood as the process of explicating lexical meaning in dictionaries, constitutes a central concern in bilingual learner’s lexicography. Unlike general dictionaries, learner-oriented bilingual dictionaries are expected to facilitate not only lexical comprehension but also accurate usage across linguistic and cultural boundaries. However, the effective semantization of lexical units remains problematic due to differences in semantic structure, cultural specificity, and pragmatic conventions between source and target languages. This article examines major lexicographic approaches to semantization in bilingual learner’s dictionaries, focusing on definition strategies, contextualization, equivalence selection, and the integration of pragmatic and cultural information. Drawing on descriptive and analytical perspectives, the study highlights recurring shortcomings in meaning explication, including overreliance on direct equivalents, insufficient contextual support, and limited attention to learner needs. The paper argues that successful semantization requires a multi-layered approach that combines semantic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions in order to enhance learners’ comprehension and productive competence.*

Keywords: *semantization, bilingual learner’s dictionaries, lexicographic approaches, semantic representation, meaning explication.*

Lexicographic semantization plays a pivotal role in bilingual learner’s dictionaries, as it directly affects how language learners perceive, interpret, and use lexical units. In the context of foreign language acquisition, learners often rely on dictionaries as primary reference tools for understanding unfamiliar words and expressions. Consequently, the way meaning is represented in dictionaries significantly influences vocabulary development and communicative competence.

In bilingual learner’s lexicography, semantization is not limited to providing direct translation equivalents. Instead, it involves a complex process of meaning explication that must account for semantic distinctions, usage constraints, and cultural differences between the two languages. Lexical items rarely exhibit perfect equivalence across languages; many words carry language-specific semantic features or pragmatic nuances that cannot be conveyed through simple translation. As a result, insufficient or overly simplified semantization may lead to misunderstanding, inappropriate usage, or semantic interference.

Previous lexicographic research has demonstrated that bilingual dictionaries frequently prioritize formal equivalence over functional explanation, particularly in learner-oriented resources. This tendency often results in entries that offer minimal semantic guidance, lacking contextual examples or pragmatic clarification. For learners, such representations

are inadequate, as they do not support the development of deeper lexical knowledge or accurate language production.

Against this background, the present article aims to explore lexicographic approaches to semantization in bilingual learner’s dictionaries. It seeks to identify dominant strategies used in meaning representation, examine their effectiveness from a pedagogical perspective, and highlight existing limitations. By focusing on semantization as a multi-dimensional process encompassing semantic, pragmatic, and cultural aspects, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on how bilingual learner’s dictionaries can better meet the needs of language learners.

The description of term meaning constitutes one of the most fundamental and cognitively demanding tasks in explanatory terminological dictionaries. Within terminography, the semantic level—often referred to as the zone of meaning description—occupies a central position in the analysis of dictionary microstructure. It is at this level that the conceptual content of a term is systematically organized and interpreted.

The explication of terminological meaning may rely on several complementary methods. These include scientific definitions formulated in accordance with the principles of formal logic; descriptive dictionary explanations that provide preliminary semantic clarification; referential definitions that redirect the user to related entries; illustrative definitions supported by visual materials such as diagrams, formulas, or tables; contextual definitions that reveal meaning through usage in authentic discourse; and encyclopedic definitions that incorporate extensive extralinguistic and explanatory information (Grinev, 1993).

This diversity of explanatory techniques demonstrates that definition is not the sole means of conveying the semantics of specialized vocabulary. Nevertheless, among the available methods of semantic representation, definition remains the most authoritative and systematic. First, it enables the identification of the conceptual dimension of a linguistic sign. Second, it is characterized by conciseness, precision, and structural clarity. For a number of scholars, the presence of a definition constitutes an essential and defining property of a term. As Shelov (2003) notes, the investigation of the conceptual content fixed through definition becomes central to the study of terminological semantics and the internal organization of terminological concepts.

The primary objective of the present research is to conduct a comparative analysis of definitions as the principal mechanism of semantization in dictionaries of linguistic terms in Kazakh, Russian, and English. In scientific and technical lexicography, semantization is understood as a semantic and logical–conceptual process that encompasses all possible means of revealing term meaning within a specialized dictionary.

A terminological definition is designed to clarify meaning by specifying the essential characteristics of a concept and establishing an equivalence relationship between the concept being defined (definiendum) and the defining concept (definiens). According to the rules of formal logic, an effective definition must be objective, concise, precise, equivalent in scope to the definiendum, and free from circular reasoning.

As a distinct lexicographic genre, terminological definitions contribute to the structuring and systematization of scientific knowledge. They interact with one another through various conceptual and logical relationships, reflecting different stages and levels of scientific abstraction. Since scientific concepts may assume multiple forms of expression depending on the development of a discipline, definitions tend to foreground the most essential and stable features of a concept. Consequently, different types of definitions correspond to higher levels of abstraction and theoretical generalization (Gerd, 2005).

The issues associated with the treatment of definitions in dictionaries of linguistic terms in Kazakh, Russian, and English necessitated the application of a descriptive research framework. Within this framework, a synchronic analysis was conducted to examine definitions as a primary mechanism of term semantization. In addition, typological and definitional approaches were employed to identify the principal categories of terminological definitions, while a comparative method was used to reveal both shared features and language-specific distinctions in their semantic structure.

The descriptive method was applied to analyze the current state of definitional content in contemporary dictionaries of linguistic terms. Through typological and definitional analysis, three major types of terminological definitions were identified: generic-specific definitions, enumerative definitions, and operational definitions. Furthermore, comparative examination of definitions across the three languages demonstrates that the structuring of definitional content is influenced not only by differences in conceptual and knowledge systems underlying the definiendum, but also by the individual methodological preferences and theoretical orientations of dictionary compilers.

A term emerges through the interaction of cognitive processes and professional communication within a specialized domain. The presence of a definition serves as a key criterion for identifying a lexical unit as a term within languages for specific purposes. In terminological theory, a definition does not function as an isolated element; rather, it constitutes an integral component of the informational framework that codifies a term.

Accordingly, the definition represents only one element of a broader semantic specification, which may also include morphological, syntactic, and, in certain cases, pragmatic characteristics. When formulated with sufficient precision, a definition is capable of capturing the essential properties of the referent by clearly identifying it, distinguishing it from other entities, and highlighting its systemic features. Definitions thus play a crucial role in determining the conceptual scope and domain-specific application of a term.

From a lexicographic perspective, a linguistic description of meaning is generally adequate for definitional purposes. Therefore, the primary objective of any terminological dictionary is to identify and fix the meaning of a term in definitional form. A carefully constructed definition possesses considerable scientific value, as it reflects a selected set of defining features that enable the term to be distinguished from other related concepts within the terminological system.

This study has examined the role of definition as the core mechanism of semantization in terminological and bilingual learner’s dictionaries, emphasizing its function in the accurate representation and systematization of specialized knowledge. The analysis

demonstrates that the definition is not an isolated descriptive unit but an integral component of a broader semantic specification that interacts with morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic features of the term. As a result, effective term description requires a multidimensional lexicographic approach rather than reliance on definition alone.

The findings confirm that accurately formulated definitions contribute significantly to the conceptual clarity and communicative precision of terms within specific professional domains. By highlighting essential and differential features, definitions enable the identification of terminological units and facilitate their distinction from related concepts in the same semantic field. Moreover, the study underscores that the structure and type of definitions used in terminological dictionaries are influenced not only by the nature of the underlying scientific knowledge but also by lexicographic traditions and authorial choices.

Overall, the research supports the view that definition remains the most scientifically reliable and functionally effective means of fixing term meaning in lexicography. The results suggest that future terminological dictionary compilation should prioritize methodological consistency in definitional practices and integrate logical, linguistic, and conceptual principles to ensure greater accuracy and usability. Such an approach will enhance the descriptive power of terminological dictionaries and contribute to the standardization and development of specialized vocabularies across languages.

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