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Term selection methodology for the study of an underresearched subject field: The case of equestrian specialized language

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Abstract. Contemporary study of terms emphasizes the role of context in formation and use of specialized languages; accordingly, it utilizes corpora of subject field texts. The aim of this paper, however, is to demonstrate that the extralinguistic factors come in much earlier, i.e. during term selection. This stage is different for underresearched subject fields, which do not enjoy huge dictionaries, big international conferences or extensive linguistic research. Regarding those fields, it would not be beneficial to depart from a niche subfield; it is the extralinguistic context that helps the researcher to determine the relevant scope of research. My PhD thesis, which concerns equestrian language, shall discuss terms used in general horse training and the related sport discipline of dressage rather than terms of the very specific, less popular subfields of vaulting or endurance. The paper presents the delineation of scope (subfields), availability and selection of term sources, selection of terms from these sources and a preliminary grouping and description of selected terms, all these performed with a view to conducting a possibly universal research of a less common subject field, thus forming the basis for its future studies.

Keywords. Languages for special purposes, specialized languages, subject fields, terminology.

1. Introduction

The role of context in formation and use of specialized languages is now generally acknowledged. Despite respect and attention due to language planning activities, one should not be tempted to view terms as sets of labels isolated from their practical use (Temmerman 1997). Accordingly, contemporary linguistic research of specialized languages utilizes corpora of subject field texts. This will also be the procedure employed in my PhD thesis investigating the English and Polish equestrian specialized language – a domain, to my knowledge, largely neglected by linguistics thus far.

The aim of this paper, however, is to demonstrate that the extralinguistic factors come in much earlier than at the stage of corpus compilation: they play a key role in term selection. Though it concerns all subject fields, this stage is different for underresearched subject fields, which do not enjoy huge dictionaries, big international conferences or extensive linguistic research. When a given study is supposed to pave the way for, or draw more attention to, a given subject field in linguistics and Terminology, it would not be beneficial for that subject field to be represented by a niche subfield. It is the extralinguistic context that helps the researcher to determine the relevant scope of research; accordingly, my PhD thesis shall discuss terms used in general horse training and the related sport discipline of dressage rather than terms of the very specific, less popular subfields of vaulting or endurance. The paper aims to present the process of obtaining an optimal subfield by discussing the delineation of scope (section 2), availability and selection of term sources as well as selection of terms from these sources (section 3) and a preliminary grouping and description of selected terms (section 4). The conclusion provides some basic assumptions for the corpus research proper. All these stages were performed with a view to conducting a possibly universal research of a less common subject field, thus forming the basis for its future studies.

2. Delineating the scope: selection of subfield(s)

All subject fields are divided internally and so are their specialized languages. The latter can be seen as “a superordinate construct, a conceptual cover term for varieties associated with a particular domain but employed in different settings” (Lewandowski 2013: 37). For an underresearched subject field it becomes particularly important to select the most representative subfield for specialized language analysis. This also applies to the equestrian subject field, so let us begin by examining its extralinguistic structure.

The International Equestrian Federation (FEI) is a governing body for the equestrian sport, which supervises seven disciplines of the latter: jumping, dressage, eventing, driving, endurance, vaulting and reining (the last one being the only FEI-supported Western riding discipline) (Fédération Equestre Internationale 2011-2013). The first three disciplines are Olympic sports. However, many other equestrian sports and games are practiced worldwide with a varying degree of formal supervision; their brief presentation below is based on Edwards (1996):

- (1) Western riding disciplines (beside reining) – supervised by relevant organizations:
 - (0.1) Judged: trail, Western horsemanship, Western pleasure, Western riding;
 - (0.2) Rodeo: bareback bronc riding, bull riding, calf roping, cutting, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, team penning;
 - (0.3) Speed: barrel racing, pole bending.
- (2) Horse racing – supervised by organizations:
 - (0.1) Flat horse racing;
 - (0.2) Steeplechase;
 - (0.3) Harness racing.
- (3) Games – a varying degree of supervision by organizations:
 - (0.1) Hunting;
 - (0.2) Polo (brought to UK from Asia);
 - (0.3) Polocrosse (Australia);
 - (0.4) Traditional games: buskashi/kokpar (Afganistan), gymkhana (brought to UK from India), tent-pegging (India) and many other.

All these disciplines and games have their own specialized vocabulary, but are not representative for the whole equestrian subject field. They constitute specific, centuries-old directions of the man-horse relationship development and demonstrate skills that man and horse can achieve together (traditional games are additionally unsuitable for a study of English specialized vocabulary because they are practiced in non-English-speaking countries). However, the same can be stated in relation to six of the seven FEI disciplines mentioned above; the only one with a truly universal range in the equestrian world is dressage because it is in fact a formalized way of showing the training results concerning a given horse. This dependence is best visible in the Polish terms *ujeżdżanie* (the process of training a riding horse) and *ujeżdżenie* (1. the level of a horse’s riding skills; 2. dressage – the sport). As regards meaning, the two terms can be viewed as imperfective and perfective respectively: dressage is a finite demonstration of a continuous training process. In the official documents, FEI defines and describes dressage in a similar manner:

ARTICLE 401 OBJECT AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DRESSAGE

1. The object of Dressage is the development of the Horse into a happy Athlete through harmonious education. As a result, it makes the Horse calm, supple, loose and

flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the Athlete.

These qualities are demonstrated by:

- The freedom and regularity of the paces.
- The harmony, lightness and ease of the movements.
- The lightness of the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters, originating from a lively impulsion.
- The acceptance of the bit, with submissiveness/throughness (*Durchlässigkeit*) without any tension or resistance.

2. The Horse thus gives the impression of doing, of its own accord, what is required. Confident and attentive, submitting generously to the control of the Athlete, remaining absolutely straight in any movement on a straight line and bending accordingly when moving on curved lines.

3. The walk is regular, free and unconstrained. The trot is free, supple, regular and active. The canter is united, light and balanced. The hindquarters are never inactive or sluggish. The Horse responds to the slightest indication of the Athlete and thereby gives life and spirit to all the rest of its body.

4. By virtue of a lively impulsion and the suppleness of the joints, free from the paralysing effects of resistance, the Horse obeys willingly and without hesitation and responds to the various aids calmly and with precision, displaying a natural and harmonious balance both physically and mentally (*FEI dressage rules 2013: 10*).

Not every horse needs to participate in polo, carry gymnasts in vaulting or assist in catching cows, but every horse requires training compliant with principles described in the cited fragment in order to perform its respective discipline well. Article 401 summarizes the background and at the same time the result of good riding. Thus, one can expect that general horse training and dressage vocabulary will enjoy the most widespread use in the whole equestrian discourse. That vocabulary was therefore chosen as the subject of research to represent the equestrian subject field.

3. Availability and selection of term sources; selection of terms

According to the abovementioned subfield choice, the sources of terms for this research shall be publications concerning general horse training and dressage. Sources pertaining to other horse sport disciplines and other aspects of the man-horse relationship such as horse breeding were excluded because they are likely to focus on discipline-specific vocabulary. Accordingly, the following sources of English terms were found:

1. Primary source: the only English encyclopedia of dressage so far – Diggle (2005). It provides extensive definitions and clearly identifies synonyms and spelling variants.
2. Secondary source: *USDF glossary of judging terms* (2011) – an official glossary issued by the United States Dressage Federation. 2011 is the latest update (update frequency: every few years).

Such selection of term sources increases the probability of the terms being factual units established in the equestrian world. Gathering Polish terms is, unfortunately, much more problematic in this respect because Polish equestrian vocabulary is not so well codified. The Polish Equestrian Federation – PZJ or other official equestrian institutions do not issue any glossaries or guides. The only existing Polish equestrian dictionary is Baranowski (1989), characterized by several disadvantages. First, it is an old book: it was originally published in London in 1955, while 1989 is the date of Polish edition issued after the author's death in 1965. Second, it demonstrates insufficient quality and internal organization from the lexicographic point of view:

- subject matter mistakes, e.g. *lewada* [levade] and *pezada* [pesade] are listed as synonyms (Baranowski 1989: 100), while they actually denote two different exercises (Diggle 2005);

- spelling mistakes, e.g. łopatą do wewnątrz instead of łopatką do wewnątrz [shoulder in] (Baranowski 1989: 98);
- poor onomasiological layout: repetitions of several terms in more than one thematic section;
- inconsistent use of number: some terms are given in singular, other – in plural;
- inconsistent use of brackets and punctuation: for some terms they separate optional parts, for other – explanations (possibly attempts at definitions) and yet other – synonyms. Deciding on the function of brackets and punctuation and on the final form for a given term is virtually impossible for a layperson and problematic or at best irritating even for semi-experts and experts. This is visible in the following examples (Baranowski 1989: 88): zmienić nogę (w galopie) co skok jeden takt [literal translation: change the leg (in canter) every stride one beat] and zatrzymanie (w miejscu na wodzach) (w zebraniu) [literal translation: a halt (in place and with rein contact) (in collection)].

Certainly, Baranowski's work deserves respect and inclusion in the research as the first and only Polish equestrian dictionary so far. However, due to the discussed drawbacks, it could not be ascribed a status parallel to that of Diggle (2005). It was selected as a secondary source with a hypothesis that many of its terms are obsolete or are not actually fixed, established terms (compare the examples above) and thus would be scarce in or even absent from the corpus. Thus, such a term source can be expected to give an essentially synchronic research a diachronic dimension by displaying a certain evolution in vocabulary use. Therefore, the final list of Polish term sources is as follows:

1. Primary source: Radtke (2010) – a book on dressage training featuring an index of terms. It is a translation from German, but term consistency visible throughout the index and the text as well as translation quality (the publishing house is known for high-quality equestrian books) ensure sufficient reliability.
2. Secondary source: the only Polish equestrian dictionary so far – Baranowski (1989), section “Horse and Rider”.

After delineating the subject field scope and indentifying relevant term sources, the last stage consists in deciding which terms from the sources shall be used in the research in order to comply with the previously established scope. As the scope herein is general horse training and dressage, the following terms appearing in the sources were not taken into account:

- proper names of persons associated with horse training and dressage (past and contemporary trainers and riders);
- terms relating exclusively to dressage as a competitive sport (names of organizations, rules of competitions etc.);
- terms relating exclusively to other horse riding disciplines;
- terms relating exclusively to other aspects of the man-horse relationship such as veterinary science and horse breeding.

Excluding the first two term types ensures lack of limitation by the formalized, institutionalized and history-dependent form of horse training, while leaving the last two provides for accurate examination of the previously established scope.

4. Characterization of selected terms

The procedure described in sections 2 and 3 yielded two sets of general horse training and dressage vocabulary: 653 English and 765 Polish terms. They subsequently underwent formal and semantic characterization in order to enable formulating preliminary expectations and assumptions before the corpus research.

The first formal characteristic of both sets is the domination of nouns and noun phrases (76% for English and 83.3% for Polish). However, the second position is occupied by adjectives and adjective phrases (16.7%) in English and by verbs and verb phrases (11%) in Polish. Therefore, the English vocabulary seems to pay more attention to features, while the Polish one – to activities. However, Polish verb terms come only from Baranowski (1989); terms from the translated source – Radtke 2010 – are exclusively nouns and their phrases, which may point to the influence of translation on the grammatical form.

The second formal characteristic is the share of foreign terms, which include terms fulfilling at least one of the following criteria, in that order: 1) they are loans, i.e. they contain formal elements absent from the English language (e.g. *de Gogue*, *durchlässigkeit*) and have not undergone naturalization (hence terms as *longeing* or *tuszować* [a Polish verb term from French ‘toucher’] are not counted herein as foreign); 2) their language of origin is explicitly mentioned in the term source definition. Given the historical background of dressage, many English terms used currently come from other languages (mainly French), but they have become so well-established that their foreign origin seems to be barely perceived nowadays (e.g. *baroque*, *fatigue*, *levade*). Applying the two criteria allowed for exclusion of such terms from the foreign term count. In short, foreign terms are nearly absent from the Polish set (2), but quite numerous in the English one (50). However, all of them come from Diggle (2005), so one may ascribe this to a more profound, encyclopedic nature of that work, whose author aimed at providing possibly exhaustive information on dressage, including its cultural and historical background. By contrast, the USDF glossary is limited to officially used terms; the institutional character (being a document) usually also presupposes the use of one, official language in order not to introduce confusion. In turn, the very small share on foreign terms in Polish may be attributed on the one hand to the fact of translation, while on the other – to the fact that Baranowski (1989) is a quadrilingual dictionary. Thus, foreign terms did not need to be included in the Polish part in order to be shown to the reader: they are provided as equivalents in the columns concerning the three remaining languages (English, French and German).

The third formal characteristic is the greater length of terms in Polish as regards both the number of words per term (2.1; English: 1.7) and the share of terms longer than one word (68.9%; English: 45.8%). This might be caused by the concise nature of English as well as by the drawbacks of terms from Baranowski (1989) described in section 3: as was mentioned there, many of those terms are lengthy phrases whose fixed nature is doubtful and which are frequently difficult to separate from their explanations.

The semantic characterization was supposed to trace possible meaning regularities in term sets. The first attempt aimed at classifying the terms into the following semantic fields: AIDS, EQUIPMENT, EXERCISE, HORSE ACTION, HORSE BODY PART, HORSE FEATURE, HORSE GAIT, HORSE TYPE, RIDER ACTION, RIDER FEATURE, RIDER TYPE and (ABSTRACT) TRAINING NOTION. However, it proved impossible to divide terms unequivocally in this manner because many terms fell into several categories. Compare the following examples:

- (1) *accepting the bit* – the fact that “the horse responds willingly to the action and signals of the bit” (Diggle 2005: 14). The term thus fits into AIDS, EQUIPMENT, HORSE ACTION, HORSE FEATURE and TRAINING NOTION;
- (2) *change of lead* – “[in] canter a change from leading the gait with one foreleg to leading with the other” (Diggle 2005: 50). This term fits into EXERCISE, HORSE ACTION, HORSE GAIT, HORSE BODY PART and RIDER ACTION.

Reducing the number of semantic fields to, for example, HORSE, RIDER, TRAINING NOTION and EQUIPMENT does not solve the problem, which remains for terms such as the two examples above. This intermingling of semantic fields may be astonishing at first, but after examining the extralinguistic context it becomes understandable. One should remember that:

- the rider and the horse are physically and psychologically close during training: they move and communicate together, triggering each other's actions;
- many horse features (e.g. elasticity, collection) are also abstract training notions denoting objectives which the rider wishes to achieve in every horse they train;
- many exercises (e.g. change of leg, shoulder in) are named after the main horse body part which performs them;
- several aids – the rider's means of communication with the horse – are themselves equipment (e.g. reins, whip, spurs);
- all exercises take place in a specific gait.

Thus, it only proved possible to sort the terms according to the most frequent concepts. By pointing to the most important elements of horse training, this method displays its linguistic image because it allows for grouping terms related to the same concept; *jazda* [a ride], for instance, is a base for a number of terms: *jazda*, *jeździć*, *jeździec*, *ujeżdżać*, *ujeżdżalnia*, *ujeżdzeniowy* etc. Tab. 1 and Tab. 2 show the results of such term grouping, listing concepts with at least ten instances. Obviously, two-word and longer terms may feature more than one frequent concept (e.g. *change of leg* – *change* + *leg*), in which case both concepts from such a term are included in the count.

Key to the tables: A – adjective, ADV – adverb, N – noun, P – preposition, V – verb.

Concept	Inflection in the term set	Meaning clarification	Number
rein	rein (N,V), reining (N)	-	34
hand	hand (N)	-	18
aid	aid (N)	means of communication with a horse	16
change	change (N,V)	-	14
side	side (N), sided (A)	-	14
leg	leg (N)	of horse/of rider	13
bit	bit (N)	bridle mouthpiece	12
over	over (P), over- (prefix)	-	11

Table 1: The most frequent concepts in the English term set

One notices that prominent positions in both sets are occupied by aids – the rider's means of communication with the horse which include seat, legs, hands, voice, whip and spurs (Diggle 2005). Rein (1st position in both sets) is not an aid proper, but it transmits signals given by the rider's hand and is therefore necessary for the hand aid to function. Reins are attached to a bit placed in the horse's mouth, hence the presence of bit on the English list. The advantage of manual action (rein, hand, bit) over leg action (leg) in the English set complies with the fact that humans tend to perform most activities using hands; in addition, proper use of reins is a complex issue, so this channel of communication with the horse remains central in the equestrian discourse. The image is completed by change and side, which underline the nature of horse training: dynamism and diversification of exercises in order to focus the horse's attention and improve its fitness. The Polish set is more varied, which can be attributed to inflection and a greater number of terms in comparison to English, but the aids remain significant (*wodza*, *łydka*, *siad*, *pomoc*). However, attention is also paid to the horse's gaits (*step*, *kłus*, *galop*), which scarcely appear in the English table. The same concerns *jazda*, *koń* and *szkolić* – the background concepts of the subject field in question (whereas the English set seems to build the image with use of its parts, without referring to the superior concepts). The dynamism is conveyed by *noga* (leg – of a horse only, because it is the horse that actually walks and because the rider's leg is referred to as *łydka*) and *zmiana*; however, this energy needs to be controlled by the rider, hence the prominence of *stawiać*, *trzymać*, *zbierać* and *zginać*, which denote various methods of guiding the animal. Therefore, the image of horse training which emerges from both sets of terms has three main features: communication, dynamism and control. This structure may be

attributed to the horse – a powerful, living being which the training contrasts with the human desire to dominate. Horse riding is the only Olympic sport distinguished by the participation of animals and this unique character is conveyed by the relevant vocabulary.

Concept	Meaning	Inflection in the term set	Number
wodza (N)	rein	wodza (N)	76
jazda (N)	ride	dojezdek, jazda, jezdność, jeździec, jeździectwo, podjezdek, ujeżdżacz, ujeżdżalnia, wjeżdżanie, wyjeżdżanie (N); jechać, jeździć, podjeżdżać, ujeżdżać (V); jeździecki, ujeżdżeniowy, ujeżdżony (A)	75
galop (N)	canter	galop (N); galopować (V)	42
noga (N)	leg	noga (N)	33
koń (N)	horse	koń, koniarz, koniuszy (N)	32
stawiać (V)	position	postawa, postawienie, przestawienie, staw, stawianie, ustawienie (N); podstawić, stawać, ustawić (V); podstawowy, przeciwstawny (A)	32
łydka (N)	calf	łydka (N)	28
stęp (N)	walk	stęp, ustępowanie (N)	26
szkolić (V)	school	szkolenie, szkoła (N); szkolny (A)	24
kłus (N)	trot	kłus (N); kłusować (V)	23
zmiana (N)	change	zmiana (N); zmieniać (V)	23
siad (N)	seat	dosiad, dosiadanie, półsiad, siad, zsiadanie (N); wsiadać, zsiadać (V); wysiadywany (A)	22
pysk (N)	muzzle	pysk (N)	20
ręka (N)	hand	ręka (N); oburącz (ADV)	20
zad (N)	croup	zad (N); zadni (A)	19
trzymać (V)	hold	podtrzymujący, powstrzymujący, wstrzymujący, wytrzymujący (A); trzymanie, zatrzymanie (N); zatrzymać (V)	18
wnętrze (N)	inside	wewnętrzny, zewnętrzny (A); wewnątrz, zewnątrz (ADV)	18
przód (N)	front	naprzód (ADV); przedni (A); przód (N)	15
ruch (N)	movement	odruch, ruch (N); ruchliwy (A); ruszać (V)	14
zbierać (V)	collect	zbierający, zebrany (A); zebrać (V); zebranie (N)	13
głowa (N)	head	głowa, ogłowie (N); główny (A)	12
pomoc (N)	aid	pomoc, pomocnik (N)	12
skok (N)	jump	podskok, skakanie, skoczek, skok (N); skokowy (A)	12
grzbiet (N)	back	grzbiet (N)	11
zginać (V)	bend	zgięcie (N)	11
ciągnąć (V)	pull	ciąg, podciągnięcie, półciąg (N); ciągnąć (V); wyciągnięty (A)	10
prowadzić (V)	lead	prowadzący (A); prowadzenie (N); prowadzić (V)	10
temperament (N)	temperament	temperament (N)	10

Table 2: The most frequent concepts in the English term set

5. Conclusions

The formal and semantic introductory characterization presented in section 4 revealed the most significant features of the examined equestrian specialized vocabulary: domination of nouns and the linguistic image based on communication, dynamism and control. Still, these discoveries are based on static, isolated terms, so they need to be verified on the basis of a corpus in order to provide a reliable linguistic image of horse training conveyed by the relevant specialized vocabulary.

The corpus compiled for this research is discussed here by way of conclusion because its structure is yet another feature determined by the extralinguistic context. The study is contrastive, so the corpus is divided into two main subcorpora – English (338,525 words) and Polish (99,596); however, each of these demonstrates specific internal organization. The English subcorpus has two parts: the classical (English) and the Western riding part because these are two most widespread riding styles in the world. A research of horse training vocabulary needs to take that fact into account; therefore, the use of English terms in literature generated by the two equestrian environments shall be compared. The texts were classified into the two groups on the basis of the author's affiliation, i.e. the riding style that they predominantly practice in their work (even if a trainer practices both styles, as is quite frequently the case, one of them is their original/preferred/dominant style/environment). Thus, terms mutual for both English text sets shall be presumed to show the core, mutual part of schooling horses regardless of style. Many distinguished horse trainers share the opinion expressed by Arthur Kottas-Heldenberg, the former Chief Rider of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, that good riding has no style and is guided by a universal goal (Radtke 2010: 6), the latter clearly outlined in Article 401 of the *FEI dressage rules* in section 2. Corpus research of terms is expected to demonstrate that this opinion is conveyed by the specialized language in question.

As the research focuses on English, the Polish subcorpus is employed for comparison, hence its smaller size. Sadly, it must also be mentioned that the availability of Polish texts on horse training is much more limited in relation to the English equestrian environment, especially as regards online resources. The number of institutions and horse trainers sharing their writing is incomparably smaller and, in addition, often based on translation of foreign texts, available in abundance. Therefore, the Polish subcorpus will also serve to check the influence of translation on term use: it has an original and a translated part. Its structure cannot be identical with that of the English subcorpus also because the Western riding style is still less widespread in Poland than the classical style and cannot therefore serve as an appropriate division criterion.

Describing corpus properties is the last stage of preparations preceding corpus research. The latter might appear to be the main and/or the only phase where the context of term use comes to the fore. However, as I hope to have shown, that context accompanies the researcher from the very beginning, when they select a subject field whose language to analyze, through choosing term sources till collecting term sets. From this point of view, corpus research becomes a logical consequence of the preceding activities. Accordingly, the whole study is cohesive and likely to yield interesting results concerning the fascinating language-world relation.

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I. Domain-specific languages

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