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STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES IN THE FORMATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH LEGAL TERMINOLOGY

СТРУКТУРНІ ТА СЕМАНТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ФОРМУВАННЯ ТА КЛАСИФІКАЦІЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЮРИДИЧНОЇ ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЇ

Khatser G. O.,*orcid.org/0000-0003-0601-5572**Scopus ID: 57224997931**Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of Theory and Practice
of Translation from English,
Zaporizhzhia National University*

The article is devoted to the relevant issue of studying various types of classifications and the formation characteristics of English legal terminology based on its structural and semantic features. The paper examines the main approaches to the classification of legal terms: vertical, horizontal, by the degree of specificity, and by historical criteria. The vertical classification is based on the hierarchy of legal sources, while the horizontal classification relates to the branch affiliation of terms, including civil, criminal, administrative law, and others, each forming its own terminological layer. Depending on the field of use, legal terms are categorized into: legal doctrine terms, terms of legal practice, the terms of legal acts, the terms of law enforcement acts, and terms of interpretative acts. The article emphasizes the dynamic nature of English legal terminology, which is influenced, on the one hand, by the process of determinologization due to the active use of terms in general language contexts, and on the other hand, by the constant renewal of the terminological system under the influence of scientific and technological progress and the emergence of new legal realities across both English-speaking countries and the EU.

The study found that the main models for the formation of legal terms include compounding, affixation, the creation of multi-component terms, conversion as a means of linguistic economy, and the active use of abbreviations, which acquire standard status in legal discourse. It was also revealed that the meaning of English legal terms depends on legal context, jurisdictional features, and the genre of legal texts. All these peculiarities require extralinguistic knowledge for accurate interpretation. Additionally, the semantics of legal terms is shaped by metaphorical constructions and legal fictions, which define their specific interpretation and usage.

Key words: English legal terminology, legal term, classification of legal terms, legal text, structural and semantic peculiarities.

Стаття присвячена актуальному питанню вивчення різних видів класифікацій та особливостей формування англійської юридичної термінології на основі її структурних та семантичних характеристик. У роботі розглянуто основні підходи до класифікації юридичних термінів: вертикальний, горизонтальний, за ступенем конкретизації, а також за історичним критерієм. Вертикальна класифікація базується на ієрархії правових джерел, а горизонтальна на галузевій належності термінів. Наприклад, належність до цивільного, кримінального, або адміністративного права та інших видів, кожна з яких формує власний термінологічний пласт. Залежно від сфери вживання, юридичні терміни було розподілено на: терміни правової доктрини, терміни юридичної практики, терміни нормативно-правових актів, терміни правозастосовних актів та терміни тлумачних актів.

У статті наголошується на динамічному характері англійської юридичної термінології, зумовленому, з одного боку, процесом детермінологізації внаслідок активного вживання термінів у загальномовному контексті, а з іншого постійним оновленням термінологічної системи під впливом науково-технічного прогресу та появи нових правових реалій не тільки в англійських країнах, але й на території Європейського Союзу. У ході дослідження також виявлено, що до основних моделей утворення юридичних термінів належать слово-

складання, афіксація, багатокomпонентні терміни, конверсія як засіб економної виразності, а також активне використання аббревіатур, що набувають стандартного статусу в юридичному дискурсі.

Дослідження виявило, що значення англійських юридичних термінів залежать від правового контексту, юрисдикційних особливостей і жанру правового тексту, що вимагає позалінгвальних знань для коректного тлумачення. Також встановлено, що семантика юридичних термінів формується під впливом метафоричних конструкцій і правових фікцій, що визначають специфіку їх інтерпретації та вживання.

Ключові слова: англійська юридична термінологія, юридичний термін, класифікація юридичних термінів, правовий текст, структурно-семантичні особливості.

Problem statement. Modern legal regulation can hardly exist without a clear and unified legal language, the foundation of which is legal terminology. It provides the accuracy and uniqueness of legal norms, avoids double interpretation, and is a key tool in legal communication. English legal terminology is of particular importance, as it has become a widely used tool in the context of globalization. It has begun to be used in international treaties, business communication, and cross-border transactions. It is the spread of these terms that determines the need for a deeper understanding of their structural and semantic features, as the accuracy of these terms directly affects their effectiveness in the international context. In addition, unlike general vocabulary, legal terminology is closely tied to specific legal systems, carries a substantial semantic load, and often lacks a direct equivalent in other languages. This creates great challenges not only in the proper use of terms but also in the corresponding translation into different languages within various legal systems.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The study of legal terminology and ways of its formation has gained significant attention from scholars across a range of research interests and areas, including linguistics, jurisprudence, comparative law, and translation studies.

The study of the legal terminology system, along with the patterns of its development and functioning over different historical periods, is addressed in the works of both domestic and international researchers. For instance, the word-formation and structural-semantic characteristics of legal terms in various languages have been explored by E. T. Derdi [1], M. Bázlik [2], Ch. Williams [3], and H. Mattila [4], who extensively study legal terminology from a comparative perspective.

Issues related to the translation of legal terminology take center stage in the works of N. V. Rybina, N. Y. Koshil, and O. S. Hyryla [5], F. Prieto Ramos [6], O. Klabal [7], and P. Giampieri [8], among others.

The aim of the research. This article aims to examine and systematize the formation and classification of English legal terms based on their structural and semantic features.

Results and Discussion. The English legal terminology can be considered as a result of gradual development influenced by Latin, Norman French, and Anglo-Saxon traditions over many centuries. Such an impact of various cultures has led to the development of a complex system with a rich vocabulary, which often blends archaic forms with contemporary usage. According to Ch. Williams and other leading scholars in the field, English legal vocabulary maintains its historical trilingual roots, i.e., Latin, Norman French, and Anglo-Saxon. However, modern legal English has also experienced lexical simplification and globalization that is influenced by international law [3].

Due to the simultaneous use of three languages, English, French, and Latin, a unique linguistic and legal phenomenon emerged in the medieval English legal sphere. People began to use synonymous pairs from different languages as a single term, providing maximum accuracy and uniqueness in legal practice. For example:

deem and consider (both mean «вважа́ти»), had and received («отримати»), keep and maintain («зберігати»), pardon and forgive («пробачити»), terms and conditions («умови»), and more.

It was only in the second half of the fourteenth century that the English language gradually began to attract the attention of lawyers and government officials as a language of legal documentation. The French dominated the legal discourse but lost influence by the seventeenth century. Due to the lack of a developed English legal vocabulary, lawyers did not create their own terms at that time. Instead,

they literally translated or directly borrowed legal phrases from French or Latin without any adaptation. This resulted in many legal terms in English remaining unchanged, because there were no suitable equivalents capable of conveying an accurate meaning at that time.

Also, historically, Roman Law had a significant impact on the evolution of English legal terminology. As a result, Latin became a fundamental source for the development and formation of English legal vocabulary. Thus, Latin expressions are still actively used in legal communication. For example:

Pro Bono («заради загального блага»), *affidavit* («заява під присягою»), *per diem* («щоденно»).

As for the language of legal discourse, a longstanding debate centers on the extent to which legal language should be accessible to the general public. A number of scholars and practitioners believe that laws should be formulated with the help of a specialized legal language that may not be understood by the general public. In their view, the completeness and accuracy of legal norms are impossible within everyday language. The German “theory of style and law” proposed by Hans Doelle states, for example, that the legislative language should be intentionally abstract, formalized, and remote from ordinary speech. Its simplicity and accessibility are not considered obligatory, since the main addressee is the judiciary, not an average citizen. [9, p. 89].

Currently, there are numerous approaches to the classification of legal terms and understanding ways of their formation. Researchers such as O. F. Skakun [10] and L. I. Chulinda [11] divide legal terms into three groups: common terms, special-legal terms, and special-technical terms. However, M. Lyubchenko [12] argues that it is also necessary to distinguish words, which “in the field of jurisprudence do not receive any specific content, neither narrowing nor expanding their meaning.” Furthermore, we support the view of the scientist according to which each common word used as a legal term in legislation or legal science, in any case, undergoes a process of rethinking, that is, it gains a specialized meaning [12, p. 64].

According to individual researchers, such as I. V. Kyselevich, legal terms are also classified according to the phenomena they represent and describe:

- terms that describe elements or aspects of justice;
- terms that refer to collective bodies or employees within the judiciary;
- terms that reflect procedural actions;
- terms indicating the relevant sources of evidence, etc. [13].

Legal terminology can also be classified according to vertical and horizontal approaches. The vertical approach is based on the hierarchy of legal sources in which the respective terms are codified. According to this principle, the highest level consists of terms enshrined in the Constitution, as the fundamental legislative act. Lower levels include terms used in ordinary laws, bylaws, and other regulatory legal documents.

The horizontal classification, on the other hand, is based on the legal branches in which the terms function, such as civil, criminal, administrative, or labor law. Each branch forms its own distinct layer of legal terminology, reflecting its specific nature and subject of legal regulation.

Depending on the scope of application, legal terms are divided into:

- legal doctrine terms: scientific and theoretical concepts and categories;
- terms of legal practice: jurisprudence or precedent decisions;
- the terms of legal acts: official vocabulary of laws;
- the terms of law enforcement acts: acts of law enforcement agencies;
- terms of interpretative acts: terms used by courts to interpret norms [14, p. 10].

Legal terminology can also be classified according to the degree of specificity into two categories:

Terms with precise meaning, whose interpretation is strictly defined by legal statutes and derives exclusively from legislative provisions.

Evaluative terms, whose meaning depends on the specific circumstances of the case under consideration, may vary accordingly.

When examining the formation of English legal terminology, legal vocabulary represents one of the most dynamic elements of a language's lexical system. Two main factors have led to this dynamism. On the one hand, the active usage of legal terms can offer an opportunity for broader understanding, though it may also lead to a gradual blurring of their specialized meanings as they become part of everyday language. This process is known as determinologization. On the other hand, the continuous development of scientific and technological progress contributes to the steady expansion of legal terminology through the introduction of new units that reflect contemporary legal concepts and realities.

Recent terminology studies emphasize both formal and cognitive approaches to term creation:

1. Compounding and affixation. They remain dominant word-formation strategies in legal English. For example: *co-defendant*, *non-disclosure agreement*, *enforceability*, and more.

2. Multicomponent terms can be classified into the following categories: terms formed by literal translation of international phrases; terms formed by descriptive translation of the international phrase without preserving the first internal form, but with partial retention of international roots; terms formed by descriptive translation of international phrase without preserving the international internal form and international roots. For example: *an order of discharge* («наказ про звільнення»), *committal proceedings* («процедура ув'язнення»), *restitution orders* (накази про відшкодування збитків).

3. Conversion is also frequent in legal texts and allows economical expression and fluidity between grammatical categories. For example, *appeal*, *claim*, or *contract*.

4. Acronyms and initialisms, such as *ALJ* – *Administrative Law Judge*, *UAJC* – *United States Judicial Code*, or *A/S* – *Arrest/Summons*, are increasingly standardized in law.

According to historical classification, legal terminological vocabulary is divided into several groups. The term archaisms includes outdated units, which gradually fall out of active use as a result of the development of legal science and evolving interpretations of legal concepts. For example, *chattel* («рухоме майно») that is now replaced by terms «personal property» or «movable property»; *heriot*, *feoffment*.

Terminological historisms, in turn, are related to specific historical realities, events, or epochs that have lost their relevance but remain important for the reconstruction of a certain period, such as *wergild*, a monetary compensation for homicide in Anglo-Saxon law, or *curia regis*, the royal council in medieval England.

Neologisms refer to newly coined terms or those still in the process of formation. They can denote both individual concepts and form holistic terminology according to the needs of new fields of knowledge. For example, *cybercrime* refers to crimes involving the use of computer technologies; *whistleblower* designates a person who reports illegal or unethical activities within an organization; and *smart contract* describes an automated digital agreement executed through blockchain technology.

In addition to the structural mechanisms of English legal term formation, it is essential to analyze the semantic characteristics, which significantly shape how legal concepts are interpreted, internalized, and communicated. Recent research in legal linguistics has highlighted the complex nature of conceptual equivalence and terminological ambiguity, both of which are essential for the classification and practical application of English legal terminology.

A defining feature of English legal terms is their polysemy. One legal term may possess multiple, contextually determined meanings; for example, consideration, trust, and liability represent the difficulty of establishing constant conceptual correspondence across legal systems. The notion of consideration in English contract law lacks a direct counterpart in many civil law traditions, thereby complicating both its translation and functional equivalence. As H. S. Mattila observes, this type of semantic variability presents a core challenge in the field of comparative legal translation and terminological harmonization [4, p. 110].

The context-dependence of legal terms often requires extralinguistic legal knowledge for accurate interpretation. Legal terms are embedded in broader doctrinal, procedural, and cultural frameworks, and their meanings may shift depending on jurisdictional practice, institutional norms, or even the genre of the legal text. In multilingual legal systems such as the European Union, there is a valuable opportunity to promote clarity and consistency. It is essential that terminology is not only linguistically precise but also aligns doctrinally across all member states. This approach can enhance communication and understanding within the legal framework. Studies by L. Biel [15] highlight the interpretive strategies employed to manage such semantic variability in legal translation, underscoring the importance of functional and conceptual equivalence over mere lexical similarity.

Moreover, the semantics of legal terminology is shaped by the frequent use of metaphors and legal fictions. They serve as cognitive frameworks for abstract legal reasoning. Terms like corporate veil or constructive possession do not denote material realities but instead represent complex legal relationships and principles through metaphorical constructs. The analysis of such terms through cognitive metaphor theory, as explored by S. Šarčević [16] and K. Peruzzo [17], reveals how metaphor operates not merely as a rhetorical device, but as a fundamental mechanism for structuring legal thought and facilitating legal classification.

Conclusions. The formation and classification of English-language legal terms represent a dynamic and multidimensional field that operates at the intersection of language, law, and culture. Legal terminology is not a static inventory of specialized words but a dynamic and evolving subsystem shaped by historical, cognitive, and sociocultural factors. Structurally, legal terms in English have emerged through a variety of mechanisms, including borrowing, especially from Latin and French, compounding, affixation, and the use of multi-component terms. This historical layering has led to a robust and often redundant vocabulary, where synonymic pairs and binomials coexist. It enhances legal precision but at the same time complicates interpretation. On the semantic level, legal terminology demonstrates a high degree of polysemy, contextual variability, and metaphorical abstraction. Many legal terms cannot be fully understood without reference to the broader legal system they operate within. Further research may focus on the systematic analysis of legal term variation across jurisdictions and discourse types.

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