

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ENGLISH TERMINOLOGY FROM THE FIELD OF CARPENTRY

Mariana COANCĂ
Romanian-American University,
Bucharest (Romania)
10.52846/SCOL.2022.1-2.12

Abstract

In this paper, we investigate the English terminology of one of the oldest fields in the existence of mankind. Specifically, we analyze the development of the language of carpentry, the definition and the classification of terms which denote carpentry jobs and carpentry tools and materials. Moreover, we provide a list of action verbs followed by specific nouns from the carpentry field to highlight the carpentry skills and practices. Last but not least, we discuss the etymology and definition of the term “occupation” in order to collect more data and to emphasize the importance of English for Carpentry in the field of English for Occupational Purposes. In order to strengthen the pedagogical feature of English for Carpentry by designing courses to meet students’ various needs, we mentioned the catalytic role of both terminology research in the field of carpentry and the collaboration between teachers, specialists in the field of carpentry, terminologists and translators.

Keywords: *occupational field, English for Carpentry, terminological units, linguistic peculiarities, meaning*

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous étudions la terminologie anglaise de l'un des domaines les plus anciens de l'existence de l'humanité. Plus précisément, nous analysons le développement du langage de la menuiserie, la définition et la classification des termes qui désignent les travaux de menuiserie et les outils et matériaux de menuiserie. De plus, nous fournissons une liste de verbes d'action suivis de noms spécifiques du domaine de la menuiserie pour mettre en évidence les compétences et les pratiques de la menuiserie. Enfin, nous discutons de l'étymologie et de la définition du terme "occupation" afin de collecter plus de données et de souligner l'importance de l'anglais de la menuiserie dans le domaine de l'anglais professionnel. Afin de renforcer le caractère pédagogique de l'anglais de la menuiserie dans la conception de cours répondant aux différents besoins des étudiants, nous avons mentionné le rôle de catalyseur de la recherche terminologique dans le domaine de

la menuiserie et de la collaboration entre enseignants, spécialistes du domaine de la menuiserie, terminologues et traducteurs.

Mots-clés: *domaine occupationnel, anglais de menuiserie, unités terminologiques, particularités linguistiques, sens*

1. Development of the Carpentry Language

As history reveals, “carpentry” is an ancient craft that dates back to 4000 BC. The first signs of carpentry appeared in the Stone Age, when the first people created stone tools to carve wood. Later, the Egyptians developed copper tools, which were used to build furniture. The French influence on the English Lexicon of Carpentry dates back to the Middle Ages when the French took the power in England. The French culture and professional parlance impacted areas such as architecture, literature, law, and music. The vocabulary in many fields (e.g. the ecclesiastical architecture) enriched and the resulted terminology expressed a shift of vision concerning everything from building tools to aesthetic abstractions. However, the number of French loanwords diminished in the 15th century because of the growing influence of Latin, which was the language of religion, science and scholarship.¹ Thus Latin words had a greater impact on the field of carpentry. The words “carpentry” and “woodworking” were synonymous in the past but nowadays “woodworking” is a branch of “carpentry” that can be studied in carpentry schools to acquire the skills demanded for this lucrative job.

The English word “carpenter” originates from Old French “carpentier” (later it was recorded as “charpentier”), which, in turn, was derived from the Latin “carpentarius”, which means “carriage maker”.

New terms came into use with the spread of polyvinyl chloride carpentry (PVC) as new jobs were created and new tools, materials and substances were used in carpentry. PVC carpentry became very popular in the mid-20th century. Due to its biological and chemical resistance, easy production and its reliability, it is the most used material for the construction of doors and windows.

In order to collect more data about the dynamics of this occupational field and to motivate the inclusion of English for Carpentry in the vast field of English for Occupational Purposes, we also analyzed the etymology and definition of the term “occupation”. It was attested in Middle English as *occupacioun* “possession of land, engagement in an activity, vocation, concern,” it was borrowed from Anglo-French & Latin; Anglo-French *occupaciun*, was also borrowed from Latin *occupātiōn-*, *occupātiō* “seizing possession, preoccupation,” from *occupāre* “to grasp, take

¹Crystal, D., Middle English, The British Library, 2018.

possession of, fill up (space, a position)” + *-tiōn-* *-tiō-*, suffix of verbal action. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

According to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), an “occupation” is the activity carried out by a person in an ordinary way, which generates income (in money or in kind). The *occupation* of a person can be expressed by his/her position (the activity carried out by the person in a functional hierarchy of management or execution) or the job (the complex of knowledge acquired through schooling or practice, necessary for the provision of certain services). The distinction between *occupation* and *profession* is obvious: the qualification obtained through studies is the *profession*, whereas the qualification exercised de facto at work is the *occupation*. Therefore, from a pedagogical perspective, we include the field of carpentry in the field of English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The language related to this field is used not only by specialists, by people with different degrees of professional training, but also by non-native students who aspire to work in this field in various international projects. Putting ourselves in the position of the teacher who needs relevant materials for practical activities, and on the other hand, in the position of the student who wants to understand and practise the language of carpentry, we realize that the design of a didactic material for the field of carpentry requires a close collaboration between teachers, specialists in the field of carpentry, terminologists and translators.

2. Corpus and Research Methods

We considered to build a corpus of written texts since the aim of the paper is to provide an overview of the English terminology used in the field carpentry, paying attention to the development of the carpentry language, the definition of terms and the classification of the identified terms. The written texts belong to the three branches of carpentry, namely woodworking carpentry, aluminum carpentry and polyvinyl chloride carpentry. Choosing the texts for the corpus was not a difficult task because there are many materials and glossaries in English. Therefore, the corpus includes texts from articles dealing with the types of carpentry, carpentry trades, carpentry jobs, tools and materials, carpenters’ skills, and texts from Encyclopedia Britannica.

Among the methods relevant to linguistic research, we chose the *observation method*, in order to collect data to identify the linguistic peculiarities that characterize the language of carpentry, as well as information about the development of the terminology used in carpentry and how it was borrowed and preserved across centuries. This method allowed us to identify not only the words to which the word “carpentry” is related by hyperonymy but also the basic terms for the three branches

of carpentry. We also used the *qualitative method* to classify the identified terms, based on rigorous criteria.

3. Definitions

From the perspective of the semic analysis of the carpentry language, it is interesting to delimit some general categories of semes depending on certain values from this field. We identified the following categories of semes:

- Functional features related to the use of proper carpentry tools;
- Features related to the techniques and materials used to achieve carpentry projects.

We found terms whose definitions reflect specific job roles and skills in the field of carpentry. The relational and differentiated approach to meaning (which prevails in modern semantics) can be acquired even by the ordinary speaker when interpreting (reading) the lexicographic definition. If we look into a possibility of selection (interpretation and reading) from the perspective of an ordinary speaker, we realize that it is conditioned by the speaker's system of knowledge, by the objectives of the reading and, last but not least, by the qualities of the definitions of the specialized terms in the general dictionaries.²

For example, a *carpenter* is “a person whose job is making and repairing wooden objects and structures.” (The Cambridge Dictionary) whereas a *joiner* is “a person who constructs the wooden components of a building, such as stairs, doors, and door and window frames.” (The Cambridge Dictionary)

Like other scholars, we also believe there are differences between the lexicographic definition and the terminological definition; the lexicographic definition provides only the information that is necessary to identify the referent, while the terminographic definition is simple and short, and contains indications regarding the related symbols and takes into account the quantitative aspect of the concept and its integration into the system of the respective field.³ The lexicographic definition (see below) also combines relevant features of the common language with features of the specialized language.⁴

² Bidu-Vrănceanu, A., *Lexicul specializat în mișcare. De la dicționare la texte*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2007.

³ Béjoint, H., Ph. Thoiron, *Le sens en terminologie*, Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2000, p. 12.

⁴ Depecker, L., *Entre signe et concept. Éléments de terminologie générale*, Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2002, pp. 72-73.

A *saw* is

“a hand tool for cutting wood or other hard materials, typically with a long, thin serrated blade and operated using a backwards and forwards movement.” (The Cambridge Dictionary)

“a hand or power tool or a machine used to cut hard material (such as wood, metal, or bone) and equipped usually with a toothed blade or disk.” (The Merriam Webster Dictionary)

“a handsaw with a rectangular blade with a reinforcing rib along the back for stability, types include razor saws, veneer saws, dovetail saws, and miter box saws.” (The definition of specialists in the Woodworking Glossary)

An *adze* is

“a tool like an axe with the blade at an angle of approximately 90° to the handle, used for cutting and shaping wood.” (The Cambridge Dictionary)

“a cutting tool that has a thin arched blade set at right angles to the handle and is used chiefly for shaping wood.” (The Merriam Webster Dictionary)

“a tool similar to an axe with a blade perpendicular to the handle, used to carve wood.” (The definition of specialists in the Woodworking Glossary)

A *dowel* is

“a rod, usually made of wood, that is used to hold two parts of something together by fitting into a hole in each part.” (The Cambridge Dictionary)

“a pin fitting into a hole in an abutting piece to prevent motion or slipping also : a round rod or stick used especially for cutting up into dowels.” (The Merriam Webster Dictionary)

“a cylindrical length of wood used for making joints by inserting a length into two corresponding holes and gluing with clamp pressure.” (The definition of specialists in the Woodworking Glossary)

The tasks carried out by modern carpenters depend on the type of carpentry they specialized in. In the carpentry language, a hypernym is a simple term or phrase, and hyponyms are simple terms or phrases that sometimes contain the hypernym. Examples that illustrate the relationship of hyperonymy are the term “carpentry” and “saw” with the series of hyponyms i.e. *rough carpentry*, *trim carpentry*, *ship carpentry*, *cabinet carpentry* and *razor saws*, *veneer saws*, *dovetail saws*, and *miter box saws*.

Thus, modern carpenters usually belong to one of the following categories: *rough carpenters, joisters, trim carpenters, cabinet carpenters, ship carpenters, framers and roofers*. As for the tools used by carpenters, the names of the basic hand tools used by the Egyptians and Romans have been preserved up to the present in the common language such as *athes, wedges, mallets, chisels, hammers, drills, plumb bobs, compasses*, etc. The frequency of these terms in the common language reflects the longevity of wood carpentry which has become a craft and an art nowadays thanks to the work of traditional carpenters. In informal language, “a carpenter” is “a chippy” in Great Britain and Australia. The term has been used since the 16th century and referred to the wood splinters that flew while the carpenters were doing their work. Moreover, the author Jonathan Swift points out in a saying that the best carpenters make the fewest chips (“A carpenter is known by his chips”).

4. Classification of Terms

In all terminologies, the specialized meaning is expressed both by simple units and by compound terms, collocations, phraseological constructions and acronyms. However, the delimitation of the various types of complex units is often difficult and rather less categorical, even if we consider a series of objective criteria (Bidu-Vrănceanu, 2007).

Some features of the carpentry terminology can also be deduced from the analysis at the level of the signifiers, by delimiting the simple (synthetic) forms from the compound (analytical) forms. We used relatively precise criteria to evaluate the analytical expressions and the individuality of the specialized meaning. Therefore, we considered three criteria for the linguistic classification of the terms denoting carpentry jobs, tools and materials:

- The formal criterion
- The semantic criterion
- The lexical-grammatical criterion

By applying these criteria, we classified the terms as follows:

a. Simple terms (traditional terms that have survived over centuries up to the present and current terms)

b. Complex terms (syntagmatic terms) due to the frequency of the noun + noun collocation

c. Acronyms. For non-specialists, PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride), for example, is a specialized term and most speakers do not even know the complex unit and its precise meaning. Other examples include “structural timber composites” such as *laminated veneer lumber (LVL)*, *parallel strand lumber (PSL)* and *laminated strand lumber (LSL)*. The precision requirements (monoconceptual, monoreferential, monosemantic) of the specialized meaning are respected.

d. Interdisciplinary terms (e.g. *adhesives, polyvinyl chloride*). The intersection and interaction of several disciplines in the professional practice has become a necessity these days. We agree with Lerat who claims that interdisciplinarity begins where the specialist knows a useful part of the features of some concepts from another field that he/she needs in his/her professional interaction.⁵ That is why, in the case of carpentry terminology, the interdisciplinarity also results from the collaboration between carpentry specialists and construction specialists who work together to carry out successful projects.

We identified the following representative subsets for this specialized terminology: specific terms (*woodworker, joinery, joint, knot*, etc.); mathematical terms regarding the representation in space, especially in the presentations and instructions regarding the use of carpentry tools (e.g. “The *coping or fret saws use very narrow blades so intricate designs can be cut. The blade can be rotated a full 360° to negotiate tight corners*”⁶); chemistry terms denoting names of substances (*fillers, enamel, epoxy glue*); terms that are also used in the construction field (e.g. *timber construction, construction products, construction blueprints*). We provided a selection of terms in the tables below.

Carpentry Jobs

<i>Construction and Building Inspector</i>
<i>Polyvinyl Carpenter</i>
<i>Roofer</i>
<i>Flooring Installer and Tile and Marble Setter</i>
<i>Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installer and Taper</i>
<i>Woodworker</i>
<i>Construction Laborer and Helper</i>
<i>General Maintenance and Repair Worker</i>
<i>Insulation Worker</i>
<i>Cabinet Maker</i>
<i>Deck Builder</i>
<i>Shipwright</i>
<i>Siding and Window Installer</i>

⁵Lerat, P. (1997). “Le contenu terminologique au péril de l’interdisciplinarité. Le cas de connaissances”. In: *Terminologie et interdisciplinarité*, Louvain La neuve, Peeters, 1997, pp. 8-9.

⁶For more information and visuals, you can find this term and other relevant terms at http://www.sawdustmaking.com/GLOSSARY/glossary_of__woodworking_t.htm

Carpentry Tools and Materials

<i>Hand Saw</i>	<i>Power Drill</i>
<i>Back Saw</i>	<i>Reciprocating Spindle Sander</i>
<i>Tape Measures</i>	<i>Router Tool</i>
<i>Claw Hammer</i>	<i>Drawer Slide Jig</i>
<i>Chisel</i>	<i>Rotary Tool</i>
<i>Nail Gun</i>	<i>Modern Workbench</i>
<i>Quick Clamps</i>	<i>Drill Press</i>
<i>Pencil</i>	<i>Random Orbital Sanders</i>
<i>Carpenter's Square</i>	<i>Belt Sander</i>
<i>Mallets</i>	<i>Framing Nailer</i>
<i>Spirit Levels</i>	<i>Brad Nailer</i>
<i>Rulers</i>	<i>Wood Moisture Meter</i>
<i>Workbenches</i>	<i>Wood Lathe</i>
<i>Pegboards</i>	<i>Biscuit Joiner</i>
<i>Tool Belts</i>	<i>Modern Clamps</i>
<i>Scrap Bins</i>	<i>Center Scriber</i>
<i>Extension Cords</i>	<i>Measuring Tape</i>
<i>Miter Boxes</i>	<i>Multi-mark Tool</i>
<i>Bench Hooks</i>	<i>Digital Protractor</i>
<i>Woodworking vises</i>	<i>Multi-angle Measuring Ruler</i>
<i>Mantles</i>	<i>Dovetail Marker</i>
<i>Plumb Bobs</i>	<i>Power Handsaw</i>
<i>Nails</i>	<i>Edge Ruler</i>
<i>Screws</i>	<i>Shaping Disk</i>
<i>Adhesives</i>	<i>Thickness Planer</i>
<i>Staples</i>	<i>Sanding Drum</i>
<i>Posts</i>	<i>Dovetail Cutting Jig</i>
<i>Beams</i>	<i>Biscuit Joiners</i>
<i>Rafters</i>	<i>Skirting Boards</i>
<i>Architraves</i>	<i>Cornices</i>

We paid special attention to the types of verbs that are frequently used in the carpentry field. Thus, we identified *action verbs* followed by specific *nouns* (verb + noun collocations) from the carpentry field. These collocations highlight the carpentry skills and practices, as shown below:

<i>Interpret blueprints</i>
<i>Translate drawings</i>
<i>Design items</i>
<i>Recommend timber</i>
<i>Build wooden projects</i>
<i>Construct framing/roofing/wooden structures</i>
<i>Build trims/moldings</i>
<i>Build cabinets</i>
<i>Repair wooden projects</i>
<i>Shape timber</i>
<i>Cut timber</i>
<i>Join timber</i>
<i>Fix timber</i>
<i>Install wooden fixtures</i>
<i>Maintain wooden fixtures/repairs</i>
<i>Assemble posts/beams/rafters</i>
<i>Construct floor joists</i>
<i>Fix floor surfaces</i>
<i>Abrade wood floors</i>
<i>Scrape wood floors</i>
<i>Finish wood floors</i>
<i>Make scenic buildings</i>
<i>Construct replicas of built ships</i>
<i>Build ship portions</i>
<i>Plan the roof construction</i>

As for the acquisition of these collocations, we consider that Hoey’s *lexical priming* theory for language acquisition⁷ is relevant: “as we acquire words we take a subconscious note of words that occur alongside (collocation) and of any associated grammatical patterns (colligation). Our brain is like a giant corpus where each word is accompanied by mental usage notes. Language production is not a matter of simply combining words and rules but rather a retrieval of the language we are primed for, i.e. the patterns and combinations we have previously seen or heard.”

⁷ Selivan, L. , *Lexical Grammar – Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

5. Conclusions

This paper discusses the English terminology of carpentry. The language of carpentry connects the past to the present as it contains traditional terms and modern terms which appeared due to the development of industry and the diversification of techniques used in carpentry. We have also noticed that the terminological phrases, especially the bi-member ones (noun + noun), are more frequent than the simple terms. Their frequency shows that the process of syntagmatic composition is productive in the carpentry terminology. The classification of meaning is rigorous and is not entirely accessible to non-specialist speakers hence this terminology has a closed code.

The need for acquiring linguistic competences in professional settings has increased due to the changes in the labor market. In order to apply for job positions abroad many workers need to pursue education programs to enhance their knowledge on concrete aspects and language for specific job roles. The design of EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) courses has been the focus of many studies and their primary goal has been to provide the authentic use of accurate English for workplace communication. In our opinion there is no one size fits all approach to create and adapt teaching materials for EOP. Only the course designers involved in research concerning the lexis, grammar and terminology of occupational fields will manage to design materials that will help students to practise how to use English effectively in their career field.

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