Terminological unit
Points to discuss

- Definition
- Types of terms
- Term formation
A terminological unit (term),
is a conventional symbol
that represents a concept
defined within a particular field of knowledge
Term

- its expression is a symbol
- it results from a convention
- its content is its most important trait
- the concept it represents is explicitly defined
- the description of a concept leads to the field of knowledge in which it occurs
Term

- occupy at a specific level (that of lexical units) within linguistic system
- are related to the other units on the same level
- are related to the units on the other levels with which they build the discourse
Term

can be analyzed from three points of view:

• the formal (the designation)
• the semantic (the concept)
• the functional (grammatical category and distribution)
Designation

Formally terms are phonological units that can be articulated phonetically (and represented graphically) with an internal structure made up of morphemes.
Concept

Semantically terms are units of reference to objects of the real world and, as such, have a meaning that can be described as a set of distinctive features.
Grammatical category and distribution

Functionally terms are distributional units requiring a certain linguistic environment, and in discourse they are often found combined with other terms.
Term

From the point of view of linguistic theory, terms are base-level phonological representations which have a phonetic form.
Term

Morphologically, terms are structures of constituent morphemes which form the basis of their meaning.
Pronunciation and written form

- The form of a term is considered a sequence of sounds or letters representing a phonological base form, in accordance with the rules governing the phonetics of the language.
- A written form is represented in accordance with the orthographic conventions of each language.
Pronunciation and written form

- thermometer
  phonetic form [θə'mɔmɪtə]
  written form thermometer
- keystroke
  phonetic form [kiːstrəʊk]
  written form keystroke
- bronchitis
  phonetic form [brɔŋ'kætɪs]
  written form bronchitis
Pronunciation and written form

• Phonetically, terms are not obviously different from words
• The written form of terms does not differ from that of words
Morphology

A term is a unit that can be broken up into separate elements and may be made up of smaller, identifiable and meaningful units known as morphemes.
Morphology

lexical units are:

• simple if they contain only one morpheme
• complex if they have more than one morpheme
• The meaning of a compound unit is in principle the combination of the meanings of its constituent morphemes but this is not always the case
Morphology

Stems and affixes usually have one form; they may occur with variants (allomorphs or written variants)
Types of terms

Terms are generally classified by the criteria of

- form
- function
- meaning
- origin
Form

Terms are classified according to the criteria, which are not mutually exclusive:

a. The number of constituent morphemes.

- simple: acid, molecule, niter, nimbus, enzyme, cell
- complex: acidification, intramolecular, nitrify, nimbostratus, enzymologist, cellular
Form

terms are classified according to the following criteria, which are not mutually exclusive:

b. The types of morphemes that play a role in forming a complex term.

- derived words (formed by adjoining an affix to a lexical base): ulcerous, illness, receiver, emotional,

- compounds (combining lexical bases or a combining form and a lexical base, to which affixes can then be adjoined): telephotography, transmission, antibody, Afro-Caribbean, countercyclical, infrabhuman, afterburner
Form

terms are classified according to the following criteria, which are not mutually exclusive:

c. Complex terms can be made up of a combination of words that follow a syntactic structure. These structures - terminological phrases - are more frequent in terminology than in the general language lexicon:

- batch processing
- cardio-pulmonary resuscitation
- optical character recognition
- dilation and curettage
Form

terms are classified according to the following criteria, which are not mutually exclusive:

d. Finally there are terms that appear to be simple, but upon further examination turn out to be complex: initialisms, acronyms, abbreviations, and short forms, all of which are examples of truncation processes
Initialisms

units made up of the combination of the initials of a longer expression

• **MIT** Massachusetts Institute of Technology
• **CIA** Central Intelligence Agency
• **WHO** World Health Organization
Initialisms
can be phonetically realized in different ways:

• it can be pronounced as a word:

  GUI ['gu:i:] (graphical user interface)
  RAM [ræm] (random-access memory)
  PET [pet] (positron emission tomography)
Initialisms

- it can be pronounced by reading the letters:
  - **UFO** (unidentified flying object)
  - **AC** (alternating current)
  - **UPI** (United Press International)
Initialisms

- the above two possibilities may be combined:

**CD-ROM** (compact disc read-only memory)
Acronyms

words formed by combining segments from a developed phrase which are pronounced syllabically
they can combine the initial segments of the first and second elements of the phrase:

- **Amex**: American stock exchange
- **hazmat**: hazardous material
- **FORTRAN**: formula translator
- **COMSAT**: communications satellite
• they can combine the initial segment of the first element and the final segment of the second:

**bit**  binary digit
Abbreviations

Forms that are usually established by consensus. They reproduce a part of a word and practically act as a symbol for the word:

vol    volume
1      liter
3rd    third
short forms/clippings

Used to make discourse more economic. They are based on using the first part of a longer word, or the first word of a phrase:

- super: superintendent
- hypo: hypodermic syringe
- hyper: hyperactive
- macro: macroinstruction
Function

Terms can be classified into various functional groups:

nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs
Meaning

Terms can be classified by the class of concepts they designate.

Concepts can be grouped into classes and subclasses in accordance with the features they share and the relationships they have with one another.
Meaning

four major conceptual classes are identified:

• objects or entities
• processes, operations, actions
• properties, states, qualities
• relationships
Meaning

Each one of these classes of concepts is expressed by a particular functional class

• objects or entities - nouns

• processes, operations, actions - verbs, nominalizations of verbs

• properties, states, qualities - adjectives

• relationships - adjectives, verbs, prepositions
Meaning

Each conceptual system is a structure that can cover several classes of concepts:

- objects (car, airplane, helicopter, ferry, etc.)
- properties of these concepts (visual, auditory, perceivable, material, shared, etc.)
- relationships (equivalent, subordinate, derived, etc.)
- operations (weld, solder, dissolve, etc.)
Linguistic origin

terms can be

• created by means of applying the rules of the language itself (derivation and conversion)

• borrowed from another code or subcode
Linguistic origin

different types of borrowing, depending on the code from which the borrowed units comes:

• loan words from Greek or Latin, often called neoclassical borrowings
• loan words from another, contemporary language, i.e. true borrowings
• loan words from other geographic or social dialects, or other subject fields from the same language, which are usually not considered borrowings
Linguistic origin

We often find

• neoclassical words consisting of formatives from both Latin and Greek: bigamy, pluviometer, tripod, mammography

• words combining a neoclassical formative with an English formative: infrared, lumpectomy, microwave
Linguistic origin

In English blending of the first syllable(s) of one term and the final syllable of another is used to create terms that sound neoclassical:

- **ballute** (*balloon*+*parachute*)
- **electrocute** (*electro*+*execute*)
- **tangelo** (*tangerine*+*pomelo*)
Linguistic origin

Scientific and technological transfer is the most frequent cause behind the high number of borrowed terms from a language in which the product or idea was created.

English terms widely used in other languages: camping, cashflow, compact disc, mouse
Linguistic origin

Once a borrowing has been fully accepted by the importing language, it can generate derived words that follow the morphological rules of this language:

- **Blitzkrieg** (from German) blitz(verb)
- **Karate** (from Japanese) karateist
- **Machine** (from French) machinist, machine(verb)
In many cases borrowings are unnecessary because most languages have enough resources to create their own terms.

- **hoi polloi** - (common people)
- **terra incognita** (uncharted territory)
- **opus** (work)
Term formation

New terms that are the result of a formation process are usually classified according to the strategy speakers have used to create them.

These strategies can be formal, functional, or semantic in nature.
Formal methods

• the combination of morphemes and words, including derivation, compounding, and creation of phrases
• the formal modification of existing units by means of truncation processes, including initialisms, acronyms, and clipping
Formal methods

**Derivation** - addition of affixes to lexical bases to form new words

Prefixing, suffixing, and mixed cases in which both a prefix and a suffix are added to the same base:

- prefixation: *reopen, untie*
- suffixation: *processor, transmitter*
- preffixation + suffixation: *unconstitutional, disarmament*
Formal methods

Compounding – combination of two or more lexical bases for creation a new lexeme. Three types of combination are used:

• combination of native contemporary forms: *greengrocer, roadsweeper*

• combination of neoclassical forms: *electrolyte, lysosome*

• combination of contemporary and neoclassical forms: *bio-science, megacity*
Formal methods

The use of phrasal units – formation of a new unit from the organized syntactic combination of words

- random access memory
- magnetic resonance imagery
**Formal methods**

**Truncation** – reduction of a unit to one of its parts. It includes the formation of initialisms, acronyms, and clippings.

- **initialisms** are abbreviated complex terms made up of the first letters of the term element:

  - **FBI** (Federal Bureau of Investigation)  
  - **EU** (European Union)  
  - **IOC** (International Olympic Committee)
Formal methods

**Truncation** – reduction of a unit to one of its parts. It includes the formation of initialisms, acronyms, and clippings.

- **acronym**: ALGOL (algorithmic language); bit (binary digit)
- **clipping**: jumbo (jumbo jetliner), narc (narcotics agent)
Functional methods

Conversion or zero derivation - changing the category of an existing word without changing its form

- record (verb)  record (noun)
- pigeon hole (verb)  pigeon hole (noun)
Functional methods

Lexicalization – conversion of one of the inflected forms of a lexeme into a new word with a different grammatical category

- VERB       NOUN
  - harden    hardening
  - weld      welding
Semantic methods

modify the meaning of a term
Semantic methods

Two prime criteria are used to classify the terms that result from this kind of formation process:

- provenance of the base form
- type of semantic modification produced in the process
Semantic methods

By provenance of the base form, the two most frequent sources are the general language lexicon and the terminology of other special subject
Semantic methods

b. Modification takes one of three forms:

- extending the meaning of the base form
- **pin** (straight piece of wire with a sharp point)
- **pin** (pegs on a printer platen engaging holes at the edges of paper)
b. **Modification** takes one of three forms:

- narrowing the meaning of the base form
- **printer** (one or something that prints)
- **printer** (the part of a computer system that produces printed matter)
Semantic methods

b. **Modification** takes one of three forms:

- changing the meaning of the base form
- **washer** (one who washes, extended to appliances)
- **washer** (flat disk used to relieve friction, prevent leakage, ordistribute weight)
Term formation

Beside the formal, functional, and semantic methods, all languages also have other ways of creating new terms. Borrowing and loan translation or calquing incorporate units that belong to one language code into another.
Term formation

- Borrowings - taking over a word or expression with its spelling: *hors d’oeuvre, coup d’état*
- Loan translations - translating the components of a foreign word:
  - *wintergreen* (English, from Dutch *wintergreen*)
  - *rascacielos* (Spanish, from English *skyscraper*)