

LEXICAL-SEMANTICAL FEATURES OF TERMINOLOGICAL UNITS RELATED TO “DISTANCE LEARNING”

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The rapid development of information and communication technologies at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries has fundamentally transformed the educational sphere. The emergence and global expansion of distance learning have led to the formation of a new layer of specialized vocabulary. This terminological system reflects technological innovations, pedagogical models, digital platforms, and communicative practices specific to online education.

The relevance of studying lexical-semantic features of terminological units related to distance learning lies in several factors. First, distance learning terminology is dynamically developing and constantly expanding. Second, many terms are borrowed from other scientific domains (information technology, pedagogy, management), which creates semantic shifts and polysemy. Third, in multilingual contexts (for example, English and Uzbek), issues of translation equivalence, semantic adaptation, and terminological standardization arise.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the lexical-semantic characteristics of terminological units related to distance learning, identify their structural and semantic patterns, and illustrate their functioning with practical examples.

Terminology is understood as a system of special lexical units that name concepts within a specific field of knowledge. Unlike general vocabulary, terminological units are characterized by precision, systematicity, monosemy (ideally), and lack of emotional coloring.

However, in practice, many terminological units demonstrate semantic variability. In the context of distance learning, this is especially evident because the field itself is interdisciplinary.

From a lexical-semantic perspective, terminological units can be analyzed according to:

- semantic structure (monosemy, polysemy, homonymy),
- semantic derivation,
- metaphorical and metonymical transfer,
- synonymy and terminological variation,
- borrowing and calquing processes,
- word-formation models.

Distance learning terminology provides rich material for examining all these phenomena. When it comes to semantic structure of distance learning terminology, we accentuate as followings:

- **Monosemy and Precision:**

Ideally, a term should be monosemantic within its domain. For example:

Learning Management System (LMS) – a software application for administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, automation, and delivery of educational courses.

Asynchronous learning – a type of learning that does not require simultaneous participation of teacher and students.

Within the educational technology domain, these terms function as relatively monosemantic units. However, outside this domain, “management system” or “asynchronous” may have broader meanings.

- **Polysemy and Semantic Expansion**

Many terms in distance learning demonstrate polysemy due to interdisciplinary borrowing. For example:

Platform

Originally meaning a physical raised surface, the word developed metaphorically to mean a digital environment (e.g., Moodle platform, Google Classroom platform).

Module

In general English, “module” may refer to a separate component of a system. In distance education, it denotes a structured unit of a course.

The semantic expansion occurs through metaphorical transfer from physical or technical domains to educational contexts.

- Metaphorical Terminology

A significant portion of distance learning terminology is metaphorically motivated:

Virtual classroom – metaphorical transfer from physical classroom to digital space.

Cloud storage – metaphorical use of “cloud” to represent distributed online data storage.

Digital ecosystem – metaphorical conceptualization of technological environment as a biological system.

Such metaphors facilitate cognitive understanding but also create semantic complexity in translation.

- Structural and Word-Formation Features

Distance learning terminology demonstrates specific structural patterns.

- Compound Terms

Many terms are compound lexical units:

Learning, online assessment, video conferencing, blended learning, E-learning platform and etc. Compounding is one of the most productive word-formation methods in English terminological systems.

- Abbreviations and Acronyms

The field is characterized by high frequency of abbreviations:

LMS (Learning Management System)

MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)

CMS (Content Management System)

Acronymization ensures brevity and efficiency but creates challenges in translation and comprehension.

For example, MOOC has no exact Uzbek equivalent and is often transliterated or explained descriptively.

- Hybrid and Borrowed Units

In Uzbek educational discourse, many English terms are directly borrowed:

Platforma, Webinar, Online test, Zoom dars and etc...

These hybrid constructions demonstrate lexical interference and ongoing terminological adaptation.

- Semantic Relations within the Terminological System

Synonymy and Variation

Distance learning terminology shows cases of terminological synonymy:

Distance learning – Online learning – E-learning

Virtual learning – Digital learning

Although often used interchangeably, these terms may have subtle semantic differences. For instance:

Distance learning historically emphasized geographical separation.

Online learning focuses on internet-based delivery.

E-learning may include offline digital materials.

This partial synonymy indicates semantic overlap rather than full equivalence.

- **Hyperonymy and Hyponymy**

The terminological system demonstrates hierarchical semantic relations:

E-learning (hyperonym)

Synchronous learning (hyponym)

Asynchronous learning (hyponym)

Blended learning (related subtype)

Such semantic organization reflects conceptual classification within the field.

Lexical-Semantic Processes in Translation (English–Uzbek Perspective)

The lexical-semantic features of distance learning terms become particularly evident in translation.

- **Direct Borrowing**

Examples:

Webinar → webinar

Platform → platforma

Online → onlayn

Borrowing preserves form but may require phonetic and orthographic adaptation.

Calquing: Distance learning → masofaviy ta'lim, virtual classroom → virtual sinf, Learning management system → ta'limni boshqarish tizimi. Calquing preserves semantic structure but adapts lexical components.

Descriptive Translation:

Massive Open Online Course → ommaviy ochiq onlayn kurs

Learning analytics → ta'lim jarayoni bo'yicha tahliliy ma'lumotlar tizimi

Descriptive translation increases clarity but reduces terminological brevity.

Functional and Pragmatic Aspects:

Distance learning terminology is not purely denotative. It also performs pragmatic functions:

- Institutional legitimation (digital transformation, smart education)
- Technological branding (Zoom session, Google Classroom)
- Academic modernization discourse (innovative pedagogy, digital literacy)

Terms often carry evaluative connotations, especially in promotional contexts. For example: "Smart classroom" implies technological advancement. "Interactive platform" emphasizes engagement and modernity. Thus, terminological units may acquire pragmatic and ideological dimensions.

Conceptualization and Cognitive Aspects

From a cognitive perspective, distance learning terminology reflects how society conceptualizes digital education.

Key conceptual metaphors include:

EDUCATION IS A SPACE (learning environment, classroom, platform)

EDUCATION IS A JOURNEY (learning pathway, course progress, navigation)

EDUCATION IS A NETWORK (online community, digital network)

These metaphors influence lexical choices and semantic structuring.

Conclusion:

The lexical-semantic analysis of terminological units related to distance learning demonstrates that this terminological system is:

- Dynamically evolving and interdisciplinary.
- Characterized by semantic expansion and metaphorization.
- Structurally productive through compounding and acronymization.
- Marked by synonymic variation and hierarchical semantic relations.
- Influenced by borrowing and calquing processes in multilingual contexts.

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Although terminological units ideally strive for monosemy and precision, in practice they demonstrate polysemy, pragmatic loading, and cognitive metaphorization. The English-based global dominance of digital education terminology significantly impacts other languages, including Uzbek, leading to hybrid forms and ongoing standardization challenges.

Therefore, further lexicographic and thermographic research is necessary to systematize distance learning terminology, ensure semantic clarity, and establish standardized equivalents in national languages.

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