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STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTION TERMINOLOGY

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Abstract. The article examines the structural and semantic features of construction terminology in contemporary Russian. Based on data from dictionaries, regulatory documents, and professional texts, it describes the main thematic zones of construction vocabulary, its word-formation patterns, and the correlation between single-word terms, terminological phrases, and abbreviations. It is shown that the terminological system of construction combines a native Russian layer, established European borrowings and more recent Anglicisms, which reflects both the stages of development of the construction industry and current processes of globalization [2, pp. 45–47; 4, pp. 146–148]. The article notes a tendency for some construction terms to extend beyond strictly professional use and become metaphorical in the general language. It is concluded that the structural and semantic properties of construction terminology must be taken into account when compiling bilingual dictionaries, training construction-related specialists, and translating technical documentation [3, pp. 5–7; 7, pp. 25–30].

Keywords: construction terminology, terminological system, word formation, terminological phrase, abbreviation, borrowing, contemporary Russian.

INTRODUCTION

Construction terminology is traditionally regarded as one of the most developed and stable professional subsystems of the Russian language. Its formation began long before the emergence of modern linguistics: Old Russian written monuments already attest names of the main parts of residential and religious buildings, construction trades, and tools [2, pp. 45–47]. In subsequent centuries, the general stock of construction vocabulary was consistently enriched as architectural forms grew more complex, new materials and technologies appeared, and specialized engineering education took shape. As a result, by the beginning of the twenty-first century the terminological system of construction had become a complex formation that includes both long-established, traditional words and recent borrowed and hybrid nominations [1, pp. 7–9; 8, pp. 5–7].

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The relevance of addressing construction terminology is determined by several factors. First, construction remains one of the key sectors of the economy, which presupposes intensive development of professional communication at both national and international levels. Second, in recent decades the use of construction terms in mass communication has noticeably expanded: media, advertising and everyday speech actively use such words as pereplanirovka ‘replanning’, evroremont ‘Euro-renovation’, fasad ‘façade’, karkas ‘frame’, fundament ‘foundation’, korobka doma ‘house shell’ and others, extending beyond strictly specialized usage [5, pp. 132–135]. Finally, the translation of construction documentation and the training of bilingual professionals have become highly significant practical tasks, which presuppose a sufficiently precise understanding of the structure and semantics of Russian construction terminology [3, pp. 5–7; 7, pp. 25–30].

The aim of the present study is to describe the most important structural and semantic characteristics of the contemporary Russian terminological system of construction on the basis of professional discourse. To achieve this aim, the following tasks are set: to identify the main thematic zones of construction terms; to describe their structural types and word-formation models; and to outline certain developmental tendencies, including those related to borrowing and to the diffusion of terms into the general language.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material of the study is drawn from three groups of sources. The first group comprises specialized construction dictionaries and reference books that record terms and provide their definitions [1; 3; 8]. The second group consists of fragments of current regulatory documents—codes of practice, state standards, and technical regulations—where construction vocabulary functions in its most regulated form [6, pp. 90–93; 8, pp. 10–13]. The third group includes texts published on the websites of construction and development companies, as well as informational brochures and project descriptions; in these texts, terms are used in a freer professional-advertising context, often in combination with elements of colloquial speech and marketing clichés [5, pp. 135–137].

The total sample comprises about 900 lexical units related to the construction field. A representative subsample of 400 terms regularly occurring across different types of sources was selected for detailed analysis. The selection criteria included frequency of use, affiliation with different semantic zones, and structural diversity.

The study employs descriptive and structural-semantic analysis to identify thematic groups and term types [6, pp. 90–92]. Word-formation analysis is used to reveal productive models for

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the formation of construction nominations, including those based on borrowed stems [4, pp. 146–148]. Elements of quantitative analysis make it possible to estimate the approximate ratio of single-word terms, terminological phrases, and abbreviations. A comparative approach is used to examine differences in the use of construction terms in regulatory versus freer professional texts and to discuss their diffusion into the general language [5, pp. 135–137; 7, pp. 27–29].

RESULTS

The analysis shows that the terminological system of construction covers several major semantic domains. One of them is associated with designations of structural elements of buildings and constructions. This group includes fundament ‘foundation’, tsokol ‘plinth’, perekrytiye ‘floor slab’, plita ‘slab’, kolonna ‘column’, balka ‘beam’, rigel’ ‘girder’, nesushchaya stena ‘load-bearing wall’, peregorodka ‘partition wall’, krovlya ‘roofing’, stropil’naya sistema ‘roof truss system’, okonny proyom ‘window opening’, dvernoi proyom ‘door opening’, lestnichny marsh ‘stair flight’, ploshchadka ‘landing’. These terms denote spatially organized parts of an object, fix in the language a representation of the structure of a building, and perform a system-forming function within the terminological network [1, pp. 15–29; 8, pp. 40–45]. Another major block is formed by names of construction materials and products. Traditional items include kirpich ‘brick’, izvest’ ‘lime’, pesok ‘sand’, shcheben’ ‘crushed stone’, beton ‘concrete’, zhelezobeton ‘reinforced concrete’, armatura ‘reinforcement’, keramzit ‘expanded clay aggregate’, shifer ‘asbestos slate’. Alongside them, more recent foreign and hybrid units are actively used: gipsokarton ‘gypsum plasterboard’, mineralovatnaya plita ‘mineral wool board’, sendvich-panel’ ‘sandwich panel’, proflist ‘profiled sheeting’, saiding ‘siding’, laminat ‘laminate flooring’ [1, pp. 210–236; 4, pp. 146–148]. This domain clearly reflects the link between technological development and lexical renewal: the emergence of new types of insulation, façade systems and composite materials leads to the formation of corresponding terms, some of which become fixed in standards and dictionaries [4, pp. 148–150; 6, pp. 93–95].

A significant part of the terminology consists of terms denoting processes and technological operations: opalubka ‘formwork’, armirovaniye ‘reinforcement work’, betonirovaniye ‘concreting’, kladka ‘masonry’, shtukaturka ‘plastering’, shpaklyovka ‘puttying’, gidroizolyatsiya ‘waterproofing’, teploizolyatsiya ‘thermal insulation’, demontazh ‘dismantling’, montazh ‘installation/erection’, ostekleniye ‘glazing’, oblitsovka ‘cladding’. Structurally these are most often deverbal nouns with the suffixes -niye, -ka, -ovka, derived from corresponding verbs; their meanings encode typical actions that constitute construction activity [1, pp. 310–325].

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Another semantic domain is associated with the designation of equipment, tools and machinery: ekskavator ‘excavator’, avtokran ‘truck crane’, betonosmesitel’ ‘concrete mixer’, perforator ‘rotary hammer’, shurupovyort ‘screw gun’, nivelir ‘dumpy level’, lazerny uroven’ ‘laser level’, vibroplita ‘vibrating plate compactor’, stroitelnye lesa ‘scaffolding’. These units reflect the technical dimension of the construction sphere and are often borrowed together with the corresponding machines and tools [8, pp. 220–230]. A particularly interesting zone is that of terms referring to documentation and participants in the construction process. Here belong such nominations as proyektnaya dokumentatsiya ‘design documentation’, rabochiy proyek ‘working design’, tekhnicheskoye zadaniye ‘technical specification’, smeta ‘estimate’, akt priyomki ‘acceptance certificate’, general’ny podryadchik ‘general contractor’, subpodryadchik ‘subcontractor’, zastroyshchik ‘developer (builder)’, developer ‘property developer’, tekhnicheskiy zakazchik ‘technical client’, stroitelnïy kontrol’ ‘construction supervision’. This part of the terminological system is linked not so much with the material as with the institutional dimension of the industry and reflects the legal and organizational aspects of construction [6, pp. 93–95].

Structural analysis shows that in the examined sample simple single-word terms and terminological phrases are roughly comparable in number, while there is also a substantial layer of abbreviations. Simple terms comprise both native and borrowed words and are characterized by a high degree of semantic “density”: a single lexical item encodes a complex set of features (for example, fundament ‘foundation’ as the base of a building of a particular type, performing a load-bearing function) [1, pp. 15–17].

Terminological phrases are predominantly nominal and typically follow the “modifier + head noun” pattern: lentochniy fundament ‘strip foundation’, monolitnaya plita ‘monolithic slab’, sbornoye perekrytiye ‘precast floor slab’, oblitsovochnyy kirpich ‘cladding brick’, nesushchaya stena ‘load-bearing wall’, vnutrennyaya peregorodka ‘internal partition’, krovlya iz metallocherepitsy ‘metal-tile roofing’. Regulatory texts feature multi-component constructions with specifications of material, location and function: monolitnaya zhelezobetonaya plita perekrytiya ‘monolithic reinforced concrete floor slab’, vnutrennyaya nenesushchaya peregorodka iz gipsokartonnïkh listov ‘internal non-load-bearing partition of gypsum plasterboard sheets’ [1, pp. 120–124; 6, pp. 94–95]. In oral professional communication such nominations are often reduced to shorter forms, which leads to the emergence of stable reduced variants (monolitnaya plita, gipsokartonnaya peregorodka). Abbreviations form a specific zone of construction terminology. The material includes ZhBI (железобетонные изделия ‘reinforced concrete

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products'), FBS (фундаментный блок сплошной 'solid foundation block'), PGS (песчано-гравийная смесь 'sand-gravel mix'), SNiP (строительные нормы и правила 'construction norms and rules'), SP (свод правил 'code of practice'), TU (технические условия 'technical specifications'), TZ (техническое задание 'technical assignment'), SRO (саморегулируемая организация 'self-regulating organization'), OSP (ориентированно-стружечная плита 'oriented strand board') and other shortening types [8, pp. 10–13]. Many of them are fixed in official documents and are the only form in use, whilst the full wording is given only at first mention, mainly in educational and reference texts [3, pp. 70–72]. In oral speech, abbreviations are pronounced as whole words and are perceived by specialists as familiar lexical units.

Word-formation analysis confirms the productivity of suffixal models (armirovat' → armirovaniye; uteplit' → utepleniye; shtukatirit' → shtukaturka), prefixal models (podshivka, nadstroyka, pristroyka) and compounding (gazobeton, penobeton, steklopaket, metallocherepitsa). In the case of English-based borrowings, hybrid formations are clearly visible, where a foreign stem combines with Russian affixes: saidingovaya otdelka 'siding finish', laminatny pol 'laminate floor', developerskiy proyekt 'development project' [4, pp. 148–149].

Etymological analysis reveals several historical layers within the terminological system. The oldest layer consists of native Russian and Old Church Slavonic words that have long been associated with construction: dom 'house', krysha 'roof', stena 'wall', pech' 'stove', plotnik 'carpenter', kamenschik 'stonemason', stropilo 'rafter' [2, pp. 46–47]. The European layer is linked with the influence of German and French engineering traditions, from which beton 'concrete', tsement 'cement', shtukaturka 'plaster', armatura 'reinforcement', fasad 'façade', profil' 'profile', rigel' 'girder', balkon 'balcony' were borrowed [2, pp. 47–48; 8, pp. 40–45]. The contemporary English-language layer reflects market globalization and the spread of international standards; it includes borrowings such as saiding 'siding', sendvich-panel' 'sandwich panel', klinker 'clinker', laminat 'laminate flooring', developer 'developer' [4, pp. 146–150; 5, pp. 132–134].

DISCUSSION

The results obtained make it possible to view construction terminology as a dynamic subsystem of contemporary Russian that combines features of a classical terminological system with characteristics of an open, evolving lexicon. On the one hand, there is a clear orientation toward unambiguity, systematicity, and regulation, which is particularly evident in the domain of terms designating structural elements and regulatory documentation [1, pp. 7–9; 6, pp. 90–93]. On

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the other hand, construction terminology is highly receptive to external influences and actively interacts with the general language.

Recent borrowings, which enter Russian predominantly from English, form an additional layer of nominations, especially in areas connected with innovative materials and technologies. In many cases, foreign stems are integrated into Russian through traditional word-formation models, which facilitates their incorporation into the lexical system and their perception by native speakers [4, pp. 148–150].

It is noteworthy that many construction terms move beyond the professional sphere and acquire secondary, metaphorical meanings. In journalistic and everyday discourse, expressions such as fundament lichnosti ‘the foundation of personality’, karkas syuzheta ‘the framework of the plot’, fasadnoye blagopoluchiye ‘façade well-being’, pereplanirovka zhizni ‘replanning one’s life’ are widely used. This indicates the high figurative potential of construction concepts and their involvement in the conceptualization of abstract domains [5, pp. 135–137]. Such uses bring construction vocabulary closer to the general lexicon, creating a transitional zone of terms and “terminoids”. The structural properties of construction terminology are important to consider in bilingual description and translation. The substantial number of multi-component Russian terminological phrases does not always have direct structural equivalents in English, where more compact compounds and different patterns of collocation are often preferred [3, pp. 72–74]. This requires translators to go beyond mechanical calquing and to take into account terminological traditions in both languages and the specifics of the professional discourse. Abbreviations may also be problematic: Russian shortenings do not necessarily coincide with established English abbreviations, even when they refer to similar objects or concepts [3, pp. 74–75].

The findings are also relevant to the methodology of teaching Russian as a first and foreign language in technical universities, particularly in construction programmes. Awareness of typical word-formation models, structural types of terms and their semantic organization facilitates students’ acquisition of professional vocabulary and makes it possible to design language-for-specific-purposes courses on a more informed basis [7, pp. 25–30]. Focusing on authentic regulatory and professional texts helps to develop students’ skills in working with technical documentation and specialized literature.

CONCLUSION

Construction terminology in contemporary Russian is a complex, historically layered and dynamically developing terminological system. Analysis of dictionaries, regulatory documents and professional texts shows that it covers a wide range of semantic domains: structural elements

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and parts of buildings, materials and products, processes and operations, equipment and tools, documentation and participants in the construction process [1, pp. 15–29; 6, pp. 90–95]. Structurally, construction terminology combines simple single-word terms, a developed system of nominal terminological phrases, and an extensive layer of abbreviations. In terms of word formation, suffixal, prefixal and compound models, as well as hybrid formations based on English stems, are highly productive [1, pp. 310–325; 4, pp. 148–150]. Etymologically, the terminological system unites a native Russian layer, older European borrowings and recent Anglicisms, reflecting the history of architecture and construction in Russia and current processes of globalization [2, pp. 45–48; 4, pp. 146–148].

One of the important tendencies is the diffusion of some construction terms into the general language and their metaphorical use, which testifies to the high cognitive significance of construction concepts for Russian speakers [5, pp. 135–137].

Future research may focus on a comparative analysis of Russian and English construction terminology, a description of discourse-specific patterns of term usage in different text types (regulatory, educational, advertising, media), and the dynamics of new borrowings and hybrid formations. The results can be applied in compiling bilingual terminological dictionaries, developing Russian and English courses for construction-related specializations, and solving practical translation tasks for specialized documentation [3, pp. 70–75; 7, pp. 25–30].

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