

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIALIZED TEXT TITLES

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1. Background, purpose and structure of the research

The research presented in this paper compares three sets of specialized text titles concerning two subject fields: horse riding and linguistics. The idea of investigating specialized text titles emerged in the course of writing my PhD thesis concerning the equestrian specialized vocabulary [Pawłowicz 2014], which resulted in gathering a substantial list of linguistic references on LSP (language for special purposes) as well as two corpora of texts concerning horse riding. Text titles were not investigated at that point, but the equestrian ones attracted attention with their frequently informal style and various stylistic devices such as antonyms, neologisms and outstanding grammatical structure. LSP text titles, on the other hand, demonstrated significant length and careful, formal structure aimed at providing sufficient information about the content of the texts. Since elaborateness and stylistic devices are not readily associated with precision that public opinion expects of specialized discourse, the present research shifts attention from specialized texts to their titles in order to examine the observed features and functions of LSP titles in greater detail.

The equestrian titles belong to non-scientific (knowledge-popularizing) articles written by horse riding professionals (trainers, instructors and competition riders) for all enthusiasts interested in improving their riding skills and schooling their horses. They form two sets, one representing each of two most widespread riding styles: classical (English) and Western [Edwards 1996]. They both evolved in the 19th century from practical applications (military trials and cattle breeding, respectively), but then they gave rise to popular disciplines of modern equestrian sport such as show jumping, dressage, eventing and reining, beside many others. Therefore, it seems reasonable to maintain the division of horse riding into these two subfields in the present research.

The linguistic titles belong to scientific articles and books concerning LSP and related disciplines of lexicography and Terminology (capitalized as recommended in Temmerman 2000). Such structure of title sets allows for comparing not only two different subject fields, but also the influence of formality level on the titles.

2. Statistical analysis: word count, grammatical structure, special elements and terms

First of all, the titles were analyzed statistically in terms of word count, grammatical structure, selected special elements and the most frequent terms. The results are presented in Tables 1-4.

Regarding the word count (Table 1), the linguistic title set is the biggest one though it includes the fewest titles; this gives a substantial average of nearly 10 words per title. Furthermore, it contains the fewest titles consisting of 1-3 words. These results confirm the abovementioned preliminary observation concerning the elaborateness of those titles. The equestrian titles are much shorter and few of them reach or exceed the average length in the linguistic set, i.e. 10 words. Nonetheless, there is an interesting difference between the classical and Western riding titles as the latter are on average nearly a word longer and their longest items significantly outrun the longest ones of the classical set. This suggests a tendency to greater elaborateness and a less strict approach to discourse in the Western riding community in relation to the classical riding one. However, length does not necessarily equal greater precision or more information, as demonstrated by the longest titles of each set (mentioned in Table 1). In the classical riding set, these are:

- a) Are you making this deadly mistake to get your dressage horse on the bit?
- b) Put your horse on the bit to help you sit the trot
- c) Understand how to ride the horse “forward into the bridle in balance”
- d) When can I start training new work with my training level horse?
- e) Does your dressage horse cross his legs enough in leg yields?

All of them are full sentences, but their grammatical structure (three questions and two imperatives) attracts the reader’s attention by establishing contact with them. The content is clear and relevant because each title concerns one specific activity (e.g. bit acceptance in a) or new work in d)), adding a piece of information for greater precision regarding the article’s content (e.g. the purpose in a) and b) or the horse’s level of skills in d)). Thus, the length is justified by the pragmatic aspect (the form) rather than the semantic content. In the Western riding set, the six longest titles belong to the series of articles about Cowboy Dressage – a new training form combining classical and Western riding [Cowboy Dressage 2015]. Thus, the length stems from the presence of ordering elements (“article”, “part”) and titles identifying the whole series (“Cowboy Dressage...”, “Training your horse...”):

- f) Cowboy Dressage™ article 8: Training your horse for Cowboy Dressage™. “The best of both worlds”: Trail horse and show horse all in one (Part 1)
- g) Cowboy Dressage™ article 2: Training your horse for Cowboy Dressage™. Controlling each part of the horse to achieve a unified whole

h) Cowboy Dressage™ article 5: Training your horse for Cowboy Dressage™.

The importance of the horse's back: Exercises for achieving self carriage.
The parts denoting the content of individual articles ("The best...", "Controlling..." and "The importance...") do not address the reader directly, but they maintain the structure of combining an activity with its purpose. However, they are placed at the end, which gradually narrows the meaning and complies with the rule of putting given information before new [Tomlin et al. 1997], yet the overall length and the division of the title into several parts may require the reader to concentrate more intensely and spend more time in order to learn the content of the article. This task becomes even more difficult in the case of the longest LSP titles:

- i) On *quid iuris* of the theoretical status of the study of terminology; and a sketch of a possible framework for the theoretical study of term formation and terminological growth (or when quality meets quantity)
- j) The problem of polysemy in the first thousand words of the General Service List: A corpus study of secondary chemistry texts
- k) EURALEX'92 proceedings I II. Papers submitted to the 5th EURALEX International Congress on Lexicography in Tampere, Finland. Part II.

Again, length does not necessarily equal more information or precision because the reader is first and foremost required to possess substantial assumed/shared knowledge: they will find it hard to guess the article/book content without knowing the meaning of the Latin words *quid iuris*, the General Service List and EURALEX. In j) and k), the content is partially clarified in the second part of the title, where the relevant science and the topic of the conference are mentioned, respectively. However, a similar attempt of adding a catchphrase in brackets does not seem to work in a), where numerous repetitions of longish terms make it even more difficult to grasp the article content.

Table 1

Quantitative characterization of the analyzed title sets

Feature	Equestrian titles: classical riding	Equestrian titles: Western riding	Linguistic titles: LSP
Types of texts	Articles	Articles	Articles and books
Number of titles	125	115	103
Word count	742	770	985
Average word count per title	5.94	6.70	9.56
Titles of ≥ 10 words	10	14	53
Longest titles in words (no. of titles)	14 (1); 12 (3); 11 (1)	25 (1); 21 (2); 18 (2)	34 (1); 21 (1); 19 (1)
Shortest titles in words (no. of titles)	1 (4); 2 (5); 3 (11)	1 (2); 2 (5); 3 (9)	1 (1); 2 (7); 3 (6)

Regarding the grammatical structure (Table 2), the majority of titles in all three sets are homogeneous, i.e. they either consist of one structure (e.g. one noun phrase) or two or more structures of the same type. The share of mixed structure is most significant in the Western riding title set (nearly one fourth), constituting another proof of a less strict approach to formality and conciseness. Examples of such mixed structure in this set are titles f)-h) above (NP + gerund phrases) and the two titles below (NP + affirmative sentence; imperative sentence + GP):

l) Dangerous patterns: In horsemanship & in the world, harmony or conflict begins with us

m) Control your horse's movement – connecting down to the feet.

All sets are dominated by NPs, followed by GPs, but to a varying extent: over three fourths of LSP titles are NPs, albeit those are usually very elaborate, as in these examples:

n) Concrete treatment of culture-bound terms and collocations in translational dictionaries

o) A multidisciplinary approach to specialized writing and translation using a genre based multilingual corpus of specialized texts.

Similar complexity is found in NPs of the Western riding titles, e.g.:

p) Freestyle inside the finesse: The paradox of riding in connection with the reins

q) The best exercise to do when you don't have much time,

while the length of NPs and GPs in the classical riding set stems from enumeration of items described in the text rather than from prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses. Accordingly, those titles carry more information and are more precise, but they also seem less attractive:

r) Suppleness: Lateral bend, longitudinal flexion, elevation, and permeability

s) Bending and turning: Riding correct corners, circles, voltes, and serpentines.

Regardless of the form, the prevalence of NPs seems to be consistent with the fact that specialized vocabulary is often dominated by nouns, as demonstrated i.a. by equestrian terms, where nouns and NPs constitute an overwhelming majority [Pawłowicz 2014]. An interesting phenomenon, though, is a significant share of imperatives in the classical riding title set (approximately one fifth). Like questions, they provide precise information (compare a), d) and e)) and establish contact with the reader, encouraging active participation: out of 20 verbs with which these titles begin, 12 are associated with learning (*become, create, develop, get, improve, keep, learn, motivate, realize, tame, teach, understand*). This is consistent with the knowledge-popularizing and instructing character of the texts mentioned in section 1. Examples include b), c) and the first part of m) as well as the following titles:

t) Develop the quality of submission in your horse

u) Learn how to build a good connection.

Interestingly, there are only five encouraging imperative titles in the Western riding set and they are short, but they utilize other stylistic devices to attract attention (see section 3). As expected, the imperative is not used in LSP titles due to their scientific formality, but I have found four titles using questions combined with stylistic devices to announce the article's content (see section 3).

Table 2

Grammatical structure of the titles

Structure type	Equestrian titles: classical riding	Equestrian titles: Western riding	Linguistic titles: LSP
Affirmative sentence(s)	4	4	-
Yes/No question(s)	4	1	-
W/H question (s)	5	1	-
Imperative(s)	26	4	-
Adverbial clause(s)	5	8	-
Noun phrase (s)	57	53	81
Gerund phrase(s)	15	17	3
Adjective phrase(s)	1	-	-
Prepositional phrase(s)	-	-	1
Mixed structure (≥ 2 structure types per title)			
NP(s) + GP(s)	6	17	9
NP(s) + sentence(s)	-	5	5
Other	2	5	4

The inspection of title sets also allowed for noticing a number of special elements, whose frequency reveals further title characteristics. In scientific texts it is often necessary to mention their founding events (such as conferences) as well as volumes and parts, hence the presence of dates and numbers in LSP titles. Symbols are not used in the formal scientific style, while the abundance of proper names denotes renowned researchers (e.g. *M.A.K. Halliday*), conference locations (*Tampere*), journals (*HERMES*) and organizations (*EURALEX*). In turn, proper names in equestrian titles denote important riders and trainers whose recommendations and exercises are cited, using either the Saxon genitive or the preposition *with*:

v) Shoulder-fore with Richard Davison

w) Clinton Anderson's 3 great horse training tips, as well as horse schooling systems (e.g. *Cowboy DressageTM* – see f)-h)). Series of articles favored in Western riding result in the high frequency of numbers (denoting parts) as well as proper names and symbols (which are repeated). Finally, words from other languages reveal correlations of a given subject field: Latin used to be “the portal to all learning” [Murray 2004], while Germany has long been powerful in classical riding [Radtke 2010].

Since the titles belong to specialized texts, the most frequent terms were also checked. They are consistent with the main topic of the texts to which each title set belongs, showing that the authors tried to delimit their subject fields precisely. However, one notices the difference in quantity and quality between the two equestrian sets.

Table 3

Special elements in the analyzed title sets

Elements	Equestrian titles: classical riding	Equestrian titles: Western riding	Linguistic titles: LSP
Dates	0	4	5
Numbers	3	20	4
Symbols (+, =, &, #, TM)	1	19	0
Proper names	7	15	20
Words from other languages	5 (German)	0	4 (Latin)

Numerous instances of *dressage* (a classical riding discipline) and *training* in the Western riding set do show that the two riding styles have much in common, but two facts point to the abovementioned greater linguistic diversity of the latter set. First, it features 150% more terms that exceed 5 occurrences despite similar word count (see Table 1). Second, these terms include two neologisms (*mythunderstanding* and *training tree*); though their frequency stems from the fact that they were coined by an author of an article series, they reveal interesting linguistic creativity not usually associated with specialized languages. *Mythunderstanding* is a compound (*myth* plus *understanding*) with meaning and form consciously referring to those of *misunderstanding*, while *training tree* is the author's new concept, devised and named in parallel to an existing equestrian concept and term *training scale* [Radtko 2010], but consisting of more elements [Meredith 2015b]. In fact, all three title sets utilize various stylistic devices, which deserved a separate section and are thus discussed below.

Table 4

The most frequent (>5) terms of the analyzed title sets

Equestrian titles: classical riding		Equestrian titles: Western riding		Linguistic titles: LSP	
Term	Instances	Term	Instances	Term	Instances
horse	40	training	52	terminology	32
dressage	23	horse	41	language	18
training	12	mythunderstanding	31	LSP	14
level	6	dressage	17	lexicography	12
-	-	cowboy	12	specialized	12
-	-	training tree	11	approach	11
-	-	riding	9	English	10
-	-	control	8	purposes	8
-	-	aid	7	-	-
-	-	pressure	6	-	-

3. Semantic analysis: stylistic devices in specialized language

Although the titles belong to specialized texts, whose main purpose is to convey information precisely and sufficiently [Nowicki 1978, 1986], they demonstrate a number of stylistic devices/rhetorical structures [van Dijk 1997] typical especially of literature, but also of general language. These are present in 70 out of 343, i.e. 20.41% of the titles (33 Western riding titles, 22 classical riding titles and 15 LSP titles). It is worth analyzing them in detail in order to ascertain if such phenomena in specialized language are really contradictory to the abovementioned purpose.

Apart from imperatives and questions addressing the reader (see section 2), which are not counted or discussed here, the first interesting phenomenon is that in 17 titles, there is no direct reference to the subject field in question via specialized vocabulary, as in these examples:

- x) Can you pat your head and rub your stomach?
- y) Putting the relationship first
- z) Talking across frontiers.

This apparent lack of precision by concealing the topic [Tomlin et al. 1997] has a purpose, though: it attracts the reader's attention, facing them with a riddle which can be solved by reading the article. A similar role is played by wordplays (in 15 titles) utilizing spelling similarities, rhythm and even rhyme:

- aa) Reins and gains
- bb) Lunge line logic
- cc) *Class, codes and control. Vol. 5, Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language,*

as well as (in 23 titles) by a contrast obtained by juxtaposing antonyms or words from one semantic field:

- dd) Smaller steps for greater balance
- ee) Pressure motivates release teaches
- ff) "Do I know what I don't know?" The communication of non-knowledge and uncertain knowledge in science.

This contrast is also employed on the title-title level, as evidenced by these two examples, where two related articles describe two sides of one equestrian phenomenon:

- gg) How patterns can get you into trouble
- hh) How patterns can keep you out of trouble,

as well as on the title-text level:

- ii) Training mythunderstandings: The three times you should punish your horse.

The text belonging to title ii) actually states that the horse should be punished "never, never and never" [Meredith 2015a], thus carrying an opposite meaning to the verb *should*, whose presence in the title makes the reader expect that there are indeed situations where the horse needs to be punished. Moreover, 14 titles feature metaphors:

- jj) Create a dancing partnership with your horse
- kk) Pearls from the manure pile IV – July 2010

- ll) Lexicography at a crossroads: Dictionaries and encyclopedias today, lexicographical tools tomorrow,

but one must admit that in the titles with metaphors, the effect of an encouraging catchphrase was commonly achieved at the cost of precision and information. The same could

be stated in relation to several colloquial phrases (e.g. “deadly”, “putting it all together”; see also examples gg) and hh)). Finally, the Western riding title set features four neologisms (*freestyle*, *finesse*, *mythunderstanding* and *training tree*) which also attract attention, but they only appear in titles of texts written by founders of riding schools and systems who coined them, possibly to promote their institution names as brands [Gola-Brydniek 2011] by creating an impression of possessing specialized knowledge unavailable from other schools and trainers. These terms are only precise and informative to those who know their meaning and scope; others need to read the texts or possibly even learn the meaning beforehand.

4. Conclusions

Genette [Gola-Brydniek 2011] states that the functions of texts are: identification of the work, indication of its subject matter and tempting the public. As this paper attempted to show, all the analyzed titles fulfill the first function, but only a part of them accurately reflects the text content or attract the readers. In the former case, scarce specialized knowledge or its lack in the title often has a purpose: rhetorical structures aimed at drawing the readers take its place. Thus, precision is sometimes sacrificed for obtaining audience effectively. This is typical of the horse riding text titles (especially those related to Western riding). All the LSP titles but one include subject field terms which, in combination with careful, elaborate structure resulting in high word count, accurately reflect the text content (though one can spot exceptions, as in example i), where excessive elaborateness acts to the contrary). However, this official and complex style seems to contradict the third function: the reader must often be very interested or determined in order to understand the title fully and proceed to the text. These scientific titles can be said to expect quite a high level of assumed knowledge on the reader's part. This confirms the hypothesis made in section 1 that the formality level influences the precision of titles. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the subfields exert a similar influence: the title sets concerning two different riding styles vary in statistical and stylistic features, reflecting the extralinguistic context of the subject field (in this case, the development and nature of the riding styles and of the discourse produced by people who practice them). Finally, it has been proved again that specialized languages share numerous features (such as stylistic devices) with the general language, proving that the descriptive approach is more fruitful in LSP linguistic research than the prescriptive one. To conclude, one could state that paratexts such as titles are certainly no less interesting to a linguist than huge corpora of texts.

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Summary

The characteristics of specialized text titles

The paper presents the characteristics of specialized text titles by comparing three English sets of such titles concerning two different subject fields: horse riding (classical and Western) and LSP (specialized linguistics). The analysis consists of three parts: statistical, structural (grammatical) and semantic. The statistical survey reveals that high word count does not always equal accuracy, even in the case of theoretical texts of scientific subject fields such as LSP. Regarding the grammatical structure, one discovers the domination of noun phrases as well as numerous questions and imperatives addressing the readers in order to attract their attention and keep them sufficiently interested to start reading the text itself. Semantically, the titles utilize various rhetorical structures such as wordplay and metaphors. Although frequently compromising precision, which is usually associated with specialized discourse, these phenomena draw the readers and distinguish the authors. Owing to the comparison of two different subject fields, the paper also proves that scientific discourse possesses a higher degree of formality, while knowledge-popularizing texts can afford a more attractive style.

Key words: *horse riding, LSP, paratexts, titles, headlines*

