
Lexical-Semantic Features of the Term “Protocol” in English Diplomatic Texts

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Abstract: The article presents a lexical-semantic analysis of the lexical unit “protocol”, which appears in the texts published in English-language diplomatic newspapers and magazines. The interpretation of the meaning of the word “protocol” has been analyzed based on comments given in Russian and English dictionaries. The lexical-semantic meaning of this diplomatic term differs in diplomatic texts in English, and these changes have been discussed with some examples. The analysis presented in the article is based on texts from the English-language journal “The Diplomat”, and the theoretical views of a number of Russian, English scholars have been examined in the analysis of lexical units within texts. The choice of the term “protocol” as a research object in scientific article is based on a number of theoretical views. The analysis of lexical-semantic meaning of the term “protocol” and its lexical word combinations have been compiled.

Keys words: protocol, Protocol department, International Protocol, a diplomatic protocol, an international agreement, a diplomatic etiquette, a paradigmatic collocation, a diplomatic text, and so on.

Diplomatic discourse is a form of communication that involves certain aspects. These include the correct selection and use of lexical units, which serve as indicators of the functional style of a particular discourse. In diplomatic communication, which is recognized as a special form of communication, one can observe the predominance of the terminological lexicon. This type of lexicon is used in speech and written texts in direct interaction with words in common use.

In any discourse, semantically common words of general use can be distinguished as well as terminological lexicon. The main reason for this is that the terms and words in both groups have different meanings. Simply put, the terminological lexicon is limited to a specific social, economic, and political domain, while the common words represent concepts in everyday life.

Specific terms in any discourse are used with their own meaning within the context. That’s why it’s important to be very accurate in terms of vocabulary. Terms can be incorporated into the vocabulary of a language as a separate part of it, as words with a limited meaning. The terminological lexicon is distinguished from other common words by a number of peculiarities. There are a number of linguistic theories. Some argue that terms should have a clear meaning, be functionally limited, not contain expressive or modal content, not to be stylistically abstract, and instead be neutral and specific.

The boundaries between the meaning of special terminological lexicon and the meaning of words in everyday life are being eroded. The emergence of factors related to the change of time and space, the change of the semantic meaning of special terms, leads to the emergence of polysemy more strongly.

The Russian scholar Shevchuk analyzed the semantic meanings of words and terms in the military, political, and diplomatic spheres, and gave an interpretation of the 7 semantic meanings of the word day in English. In addition, the word “protocol” has three semantic meanings in Russian: 1) Protocol (a type of international document); 2) a set of rules of conduct in public places, including etiquette; 3) the Protocol department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Shevchuk, 1983]

The word “protocol” comes from the original Greek word “protokolon”, which literally means “to glue together” the first sheet (the date of writing and the name of the scribe) of a papyrus letter, proto...+ collao.

According to the Dictionary of Diplomatic Terms by I. Shamsimukhamedov, the term “protocol” originally meant a document confirming an event, fact or agreement. Later, the semantic meaning of the word expanded significantly. In the Middle Ages, this term referred to the rules for keeping and archiving documents. Later, the word “protocol” came to refer to diplomacy and diplomatic service. Its structure has also been expanded: in addition to the rules for the processing of diplomatic documents, the rules of etiquette and ceremonies have been incorporated into the diplomatic protocol. Now, the diplomatic protocol is changing from year to year, influenced by political events, scientific and technological advances, and international life. [Shamsimukhamedov, 2021]

The Cambridge English Dictionary gives the following definitions of the term:

1. the rules and system of a conduct applicable to official ceremonies and events;
2. an official international agreement;
3. an official international agreement between governments relating to a specific activity;
4. a set of rules and protocols of conduct that people or organizations should follow in formal situations, such as when conducting formal negotiations.

[<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/protocol>]

*I acknowledge the cooperation from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially our dear Director, **Protocol** and Host Country Affairs Department, Ms Dominique Kühling who has been of tremendous support since I landed in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. [The Diplomat magazine, 2024]*

*The reception commenced with a grand procession as guests arrived at the Royal Palace, adorned in national dresses, uniforms, or elegant afternoon attire. They were received with the utmost respect and **protocol**, being presented to the King and Queen in the Troonzaal in order of precedence.*

*The journey commenced with the grace and passion of the Argentine tango, as the renowned duo Tango Matter, comprising Geraldine Rojas and Ezequiel Paludi, guided a group of diplomats through the fundamentals of this elegant dance form. In three master classes, participants immersed themselves in the intricate footwork and intimate connection that define the essence of tango, gaining insights into Argentine culture beyond diplomatic **protocols**.*

Semantically analyzing the word “protocol” in the context of these examples, we can see that it transcends the meaning of an official document actively used in the diplomatic lexicon and is represented by the official label or the meaning of the Department of Protocol under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which corresponds to Shevchuk's definition. We have analyzed these examples and found out that the term “protocol” is used more often in a semantically broader sense in various diplomatic texts.

We have also seen, from the above perspective, the term interacts with other lexemes to form a set of compound paradigms. Examples include: *the royal protocol, the safety protocol, the security protocol, the specific protocol, the standard protocol, the sign a protocol, the protocol requires, a breach of protocol, the protocol of diplomatic visits, the first Geneva Protocol, the diplomatic protocol, the medical protocol, a treatment protocol, the Kyoto protocol, the internet protocol*. It can be seen that the term “protocol” comes within two or three component word combinations. These combinations are

mainly built in the form of *noun+ protocol, adjectives+protocol, noun+of+protocol, protocol+of+noun, numeral+noun+protocol*. Nouns, adjectives and other parts of speech that come first hold syntactical function of attributive in the collocations, however, collocations might have syntactical functions of a subject, complement and a noun-predicate.

“Protocol” is an official document in diplomatic sphere. However, in the process of analyzing the semantic meaning of this term in various English diplomatic texts, only 2 cases of using this term in the meaning of a diplomatic official document have been revealed.

*EU member states that had insufficient legislation were encouraged to modify it and include criminal penalties that incorporate the three criteria of article 5. In the U.S., where most remedies are not bound by a “ceiling” amount, companies and third parties will be held responsible and charged with multi-million-dollar fines or forced to hefty settlements. Note also, the only universally ratified treaties in UN history, the Vienna Convention of 1985 and the following **Montreal Protocol**, serve to protect the ozone layer.* [The Diplomat: 2022]

In the above statement the term “protocol” comes in the meaning of international agreement/global treaty, the type of an official document.

Having made a thorough survey of this term within diplomatic written texts, it has been revealed that the semantic circle of the following term has expanded significantly. In 16 cases out of 19, this term carries the meaning of a department or a group of people dealing with various typed of diplomatic documents.

*After having provided a lesson learned workshop to the organisers of the Invictus Games in Düsseldorf in October 2022, I was truly humbled to receive a request of the German Armed Forces to become their **International Protocol** Director for the next edition from 9 until 16 September, 2023.* [The Diplomat: 2024]

*The core **Protocol Team** could not have completed its mission without our fabulous team of volunteers: we have been blessed with more than 100 committed individuals from all walks of life.* [The Diplomat: 2024]

*Mark Verheul is Partner at **Protocol International**, a training and consultancy firm based in The Hague, with projects around the world.* [The Diplomat: 2024]

The following lexical units with the term “protocol” have been commonly used in English diplomatic magazines: *Director of Protocol, Head of Protocol, Chief of Protocol, Protocol International, core Protocol team, protocol services, security protocol.*

Based on the above examples, it can be noted that the semantic field of the term “protocol” has stayed stable in English for the last decades and can be interpreted as an agreement, set of rules or protocol department in various English texts.

It can be concluded that the meaning of the word “protocol” in English diplomatic texts is exactly the same as the meaning given by the Russian scientist Shevchuk. There has been no significant change in the semantics of this word in the English language for the last 40 years. Nevertheless, we have observed a relative increase in the dynamics of the English texts in which this lexical unit comes in the form of two-, three-, four-component paradigmatic compounds, as well as in the form of single-component ones. English dictionaries like Longman, Webster, Cambridge, Oxford give the same definitions Russian dictionaries do. However, further and more thorough research is needed to make more precise conclusion, especially, if comparison is decided to be made with other languages, for example, with the Uzbek language.

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