

# Is there a project-specific terminology? Considerations focussing a public health project

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**Abstract:** Internationally and interdisciplinarily collaborating academics in research projects communicate with several LSPs, embedded in an individual language used by all project members. Commonly, English is appropriate as lingua franca for such purposes. During the course of these projects, a kind of “common language” accrues, including a project-specific terminology. This article will describe this developing terminology based on one project involving partners from Europe, Africa and India where intercultural communication in interdisciplinary research teams is a daily practice. In this research project, the terminology was not created and implemented consciously – so how can this evolving project-specific terminology be defined and classified? For answering this question, the data sources of this paper include minutes from meetings attended by representatives of all project partners, notes from participant observation as well as the outcomes from surveys conducted with the project participants. Additionally, as to the characteristics and function of this terminology, the acquisition will also be discussed in this article.

**Keywords:** terminology, LSP, project communication, interdisciplinarity, science communication, international communication

## 1 Introduction

The topic of this article is the project-specific terminology of an international research project.

“Science is a global enterprise” (The Royal Society 2011: 5): Many research questions are too complex for being answered only by researchers from one subject area and often, these researchers do not work all together in one country. So today, research practice often consists of research collaborations with changing partners in different projects, limited in time. Research practice would be unthinkable without such projects (Janich/Zakharova 2011: 187). Increasingly, these research collaborations are international and inter-professional. Referring to Janich and Zakharova (2011: 191), we define inter-professional here as the cooperation of researchers from different subject areas. These research projects require considerable coordination throughout, including harmonisation of data collection and analysis as well as collective research outputs. This can be a formidable challenge for any project but it can be compounded by a multi-country dimension, such as those required by European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme (EU FP7). The backbone of these research projects with a large consortium is communication. Without efficient project communication, the whole collaboration fails. The project members communicate by using English as lingua franca. Like business collaborators, researchers “are specialists in their own fields and use English consciously as a tool, simply to do a job, with little interest in the language itself or ambition to perfect their language skills to any native-speakerlike degree” (Charles 2011: 29). In addition to the differences between native speakers and non-native speakers (Lutz 2014a), the heterogeneous terminology based on the different professional/scientific background causes some challenges for a comprehensive and therewith efficient communication. A corporate terminology not only improves the comprehensibility of the internal communication, it also helps to create a sense

of togetherness. It gives “a sense of identity and helps shape corporate image, gives organizational members a sense of belonging” (Zander et al. 2011: 297).

All these benefits are known and documented for corporations and business projects as well (Ottmann 2006), as terminologies are implemented regularly. In academia, it is much less common to implement a terminology specific to one research project. As to the research project observed in this article, no corporate terminology was created and implemented. However, in the course of the collaboration within such heterogenic groups, a common language or just terminology might obviously develop by itself by an invisible hand process (Keller 2005). At least in the described research project, no effort was made for creating and implementing a common language or terminology.

The aim of this article is to outline the project-specific terminology of this particular research project – first for verifying the existence of this terminology and second for describing its idiosyncrasies. We consider this paper as an essential basis for further studies. With respect to the methods and strategies of project terminologisation and the results of this present study, this could be a starting point for further research and strategies on terminologies specific to research projects. Therefore, we will introduce the examined project, before considering the scientific background and our research aims.

## 2 Literature review and conceptual background

There is plenty of literature about communicating in international, intercultural and interdisciplinary teams. Many of these publications focus solely on English as a commonly used language within these teams. By discussing ELF (English as lingua franca) (Jenkins 2009, Hülbauer 2009), BELF (Business English as lingua franca) (Bargiela-Chiappini 2006, Louhiala-Salminen/Kankaanranta 2012), or EAP (English for Academic Purposes), there is often a focus on collaborative publications (Lillis/Curry 2010, Curry/Lillis 2010) leading then to discussions about collaborative authorship (Jeffery 2014). Other literature discusses managing communication (Delisle/Olson 2004) or collaboration (DeMarco et al. 2007) in such project teams more generally. The specific terminology, including its development and characteristics, is neglected in this literature as well as in literature about internal communication of research projects, although a common language is discussed (Janich/Zakharova 2011: 196). Based on a symbiotic relationship, terminology and specialised communication cannot exist without each other (Picht 1998: 117). Therefore, in the area of business communication, there is plenty of literature about terminology and corporate wording (Förster et al. 2010), respectively, mainly prioritizing the benefits for internal and external business communication and also including recommendations and guidelines for creating and implementing terminology.

The reports and publications of the European Commission focus on external project communication only, for instance with guidelines for project participants (European Commission 2012), but they neglect the issue of internal project communication, including terminology. Project-specific terminology in an EU FP7 project is thus a new field for study.

In linguistics, terminology is a long-established field. In 1931, Wüster wrote his pioneering thesis on the international standardisation of technical languages, which later became the standard text for terminology (Arntz et al. 2009: 3–5, Lang 1998: 14). Based on this, Wüster later established the “Allgemeine Terminologielehre” as a linguistic discipline (Baum 1991: vi). Reflecting on fifteen years of research and development on terminology, Kageura and L’Homme write about “evolving research activities in the field” (Kageura/L’Homme 2008: 156)

moving towards topics such as corpus-based terminology, ontologies or phraseology (Kageura/L'Homme 2008: 156). Not only is terminology itself a well-elaborated research subject widely mentioned in the specialised literature, but also how terminologies are implemented in texts is efficiently analysed and defined, following the concept of terminologisation (Roelcke 2013: 1). Terminologisation is usually “defined as the semantic transformation of a common language word of LSP” and – in more recent interpretation – the implementation of terminological systems (Roelcke 2014: 1–18). There is no literature on the implementation of terminology on a complex research project as the one examined in this article but Janich/Zakharova (2014) describe the implementation of terminology in a project including scientists from political science and physics. Additionally, there is no literature on terminology developing by itself within project communication, without being consciously created and implemented. This article will fill this gap by describing the project-specific terminology of this research project and its characteristics.

Within this research project, the commonly used project language is English – English used as lingua franca (ELF). ELF can be defined as “a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language” (Firth 1996: 240). Following Canagarajah/Wurr (2011: 4), ELF is a “locally achieved practice”. By using English for contact purposes, they suggest that no common code (as standard British or American English) is adopted (Canagarajah/Wurr 2011: 4). Contrary to this, Jenkins (2009: 201) writes that ELF “involves both common ground and local variation”. This common ground persists of “linguistic forms that it shares with ENL (English as a Native Language), but it also contains forms that differ from ENL”, such as “code-switching, repetition, echoing of items” (Jenkins 2009: 201). There is a “conceptual gap” (Seidlhofer 2001) in describing ELF and there are many approaches for solving this – for instance by describing phonology or pragmatics (Seidlhofer 2001: 142). Perhaps ELF is just a variety of English (Groom 2012: 50)?

This paper will not enter more deeply into this ongoing discussion about ELF. Referring to Björkman, we extend the definition of ELF to “English is used by those who need it as a vehicular language to communicate with each other” (Björkman 2013: 28) – in this way we define ELF as a manner of use of English, because here also persons with the same English mother tongue (American English or British English) communicate with each other by using ELF.

This paper focuses on the project-specific terminology of a research project, embedded in its project communications using ELF. The terminology consists of several technical terms with specific characteristics. Arntz et al. define a technical term based on DIN 2342 as a matched pair of a term and its designation as an element of a terminology (“das zusammengehörige Paar aus seinem Begriff und seiner Benennung als Element einer Terminologie”, Arntz et al. 2009: 37). Following Fluck, in the narrow sense of the word, technical terms have the purpose to designate a term or an object, which is unambiguously and with only one designation defined related to a professional discipline (“einen im betreffenden Fach exakt definierten Begriff oder Gegenstand eindeutig und einnamig zu bezeichnen”, Fluck 1985: 47), pertaining to Beneš (1986) therewith, he defines technical terms in relation to single professional discipline. By defining a technical term as the smallest meaningful and likewise freely usable unit of a professional language system, that is used for the communication within a specific area of human activity and its expressed texts (“kleinste bedeutungstragende und zugleich frei verwendbare sprachliche Einheit eines fachlichen Sprachsystems, die innerhalb der Kommunikation eines bestimmten menschlichen Tätigkeitsbereichs im Rahmen geäußerter Texte gebraucht wird“,

Roelcke 2010: 56), Roelcke allows for an extension of the communication situation. Instead of being restricted to a professional discipline, this definition of technical term refers to terms of one area of professional activity – in which also persons of different professional background could work closely together. So the terminology could also refer to a specific collaboration of a group of members, such as the research project described here. However, technical terms follow different characteristics, elaborately described in the literature. Sager stated: “we may postulate that terms were introduced as a corrective of the fuzziness and vagueness of general language words” (Sager 1998/1999: 45). Following the same approach, Wüster demands bi-uniqueness as the prescriptive target norm for technical terms (Gerzymisch-Arbogast 1996: 10). However, there is a notable discrepancy between the linguistic understanding of technical terms and the reality of their use. On the one hand, we have the qualities ascribed to technical terms by linguistics: precision, unambiguity and independence of context; and on the other hand their real qualities: vagueness, ambiguity and context dependence (Roelcke 1995: 394). In contrast to biuniqueness, polysemy and synonymy are regularly appearing characteristics of technical terms. As polysemy and synonymy already suggest, there are paradigmatic semantic relationships between technical terms. As a result, some technical terms stand in semantic relation to each other, which evoke the association of a semantic field. Technical terms do not occur singly in a LSP; they are embedded in semantic systems of technical terms – terminology systems. This paper will focus on the terminology only, without searching for a project-specific language. A project-specific language would require a whole language system (terminology *per se* does not constitute a language) and would go too far. This paper will analyse the project-specific terminology by considering the characteristics mentioned above – after describing the project first.

### 3 The AMASA project

This article focuses on the internal communication of the research project “Accessing Medicines in Africa and South Asia” (AMASA), led by the University of Edinburgh and funded by the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme (EU FP7). In collaboration with partners in Belgium, India, South Africa, Switzerland and Uganda, over 70 researchers examined access to seven different tracer medicines in Africa and South Asia. As a consequence of the immense geographical distances involved, the project collaboration was based on web-based tools and communication media. The lack of face-to-face meetings of course influenced communication and also knowledge transfer within this project. For conducting this research, project members from several different professional backgrounds (for instance Anthropology, Medicine, Sociology, Political Science, Economics and Law) worked together in heterogeneous working groups on a daily basis.

Leading the knowledge management and communication working group including members from all partner institutes at AMASA, Kristina Pelikan was deeply involved in the project. She attended the regular meetings of the project management consortium, was in close contact with the project Principle Investigators (PIs) and attended the project workshops in Uganda, South Africa and the UK. Therewith, she had the chance to collect the data by doing surveys with project members, collecting meeting minutes and participant observation.

Being a member of AMASA for the whole course of the project was essential for obtaining these data; this would not have been possible for an external person.

### *The AMASA project language*

Within the AMASA project, English was used as lingua franca (ELF) and was supposed to be the common language for this project. As the leading house of this project is based in Great Britain and all internationally operating researchers are supposed to be fluent speakers of English, there was no discussion about which language to choose. On the one hand, there was no awareness for the need of a common project language or even terminology to be created prior to the project collaboration; on the other hand, elaborating this was not included in the project proposal. For external communication (for instance, in policy briefs), support by native speakers was requested. For the internal communication, no proofreading or other form of support by native speakers was used. There was no kind of language or communication training, neither at the beginning nor during the course of the project, despite the fact that some project members had no experience with communicating in such an international and intercultural setting. Based on the different local and professional backgrounds, the project communication was influenced by several mother tongues, as for instance Marathi, Slovak, Dutch, German and eight different local languages in Africa (such as Lusoga, Kinyarwanda, Runyakitara or Shona) as well as by several languages for specific purposes (LSPs).

Based on their educational background, the project members came from several different disciplines. Additionally, some project members work in disciplines, which are different from their educational background and as a consequence they have also acquired additional terminologies. We can compare this situation to that described by Kalverkämper, who defines all communication as specialised. With a scale of professionalism in mind, he distinguishes between highly featured and less featured communication (Kalverkämper 1990: 112). Applying his approach to the internal project communication within AMASA, it can be defined as specialised. We can distinguish between communication that is highly featured (for instance a discussion about specific research matters) and less featured (for instance a talk about the weather in Edinburgh). However, the specialised communication cannot be switched off during the breaks, so it only becomes less featured. Within the AMASA project, the project members used their own idiolect consisting of the mother tongue (influencing the used ELF), the LSP and that part of the project-specific terminology, which the person acquired during the course of the project.

The project language can be defined as the area of overlap of different idiolects, which leads to a variety of ELF. Schmidt/Herrgen (2011: 51) differentiate between complete varieties and sectoral varieties (with respect to lexical inventories) – referring to this, ELF can be seen as a complete variety with the thematised project language as a sectoral variety.

Altogether, this causes a significant heterogeneity which increased the need for a common language during this project even more. There was no conscious creation or implementation of a common project language – nevertheless a common project language developed during the course of the project. Furthermore, some project members within AMASA confirmed the development of a project-specific language, something that more project members experienced with international collaboration (involved in at least three international projects) confirmed than did less-experienced members. “Project teams interacting as long as AMASA usually take on language characteristics” (4SR1<sup>1</sup>), was the comment of an experienced project member. So contrary to other collaborations (for instance described by vom Brocke 2010: 59), at least some project members started this collaboration with the awareness that a common

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<sup>1</sup> 4SR1 is the ID of a project member who participated in this survey.

project language might be needed or might develop. What do the linguistic idiosyncrasies, developed during the course of this project, look like?

#### 4 Research questions, data sources and methods

The project-specific terminology was not implemented at the AMASA project consciously, so there was no survey providing for the existence of a project-specific terminology at the beginning. Within a study on the comprehensibility of terminology used frequently in project meetings, carried out with some project members during a project workshop in Cape Town, different project-specific terms were found by chance. A terminology including terms with project-specific meaning<sup>2</sup> was developed as a result of this finding. In a survey, conducted at the end of 2012, the existence of a project-specific terminology was confirmed by the project members who predominantly acknowledged the development of a project-specific language including a specific terminology. In another survey also conducted with the project members in early 2012, the participants were asked for synonyms (in English and in their mother tongue) of specific terms used regularly in internal communication. As the results show, there are specific terms without synonyms. Complementing this finding, in the survey conducted at the end of 2012, project members were asked for examples of – in their opinion – project-specific terms and they indicated several examples.

These results led to the following research questions:

- (1) Is there a project-specific terminology within this research project?
- (2) If so, how can this specific terminology be defined and classified?
  - a) Are there newly coined terms?
  - b) Are there project-specific meanings?
  - c) Is there a specific selection of already existing terms?
  - d) Is there a specific selection of already existing meanings?
- (3) How does this specific terminology arise and which functions does it fulfil?
- (4) How does the acquisition of this terminology happen?

#### *Data sources and methods*

One part of the internal project communication are regular meetings conducted using the web-based communication tool Skype. One of these meetings is the regular project management meeting, led by the project investigators. All current issues of the project are discussed. All these meetings are minuted, which is a determined proceeding, and the minutes are available for all project members afterwards. As all different research topics and current proceedings of the projects are discussed at this project management meeting; the minutes provide an entire overview of the project – the actual state. As these minutes of the project management meeting cover all different working areas of the project (scientific and administrative ones), they include a significant use of project-specific terms. The data sources of this paper constitute the project management minutes: 15 sets of minutes from 2010, 15 sets from 2011, 15 from 2012 and 10 from 2013, supplemented by notes (participant observation) taken during these meetings. Additionally, the terms found in the minutes were compared with the

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the difference between meaning and reference, we want to confine ourselves here to meaning without elucidating the differentiation. Further, we understand the fundamental terms word, concept, meaning and expression based on Roelcke (2010: 61f.) but do not explain these here due to space limits.



results of surveys conducted with project participants in 2012 (already mentioned above). The surveys consciously asked for project-specific terms and not for terms with a project-specific meaning in order to keep this question as easy as possible. From these minutes, several terms with a project-specific meaning have been identified and extracted. Afterwards, the meanings of these terms used within AMASA have been searched by using the search functions of Google, ScienceDirect<sup>3</sup> and PubMed<sup>4</sup>. The terms for which the AMASA-specific meanings did not occur in another context have been listed as terms with a project-specific meaning related to AMASA. These terms have then been compared with the list of project-specific terms noted by the project members within the mentioned survey. The aim of this comparison was to find out if the identified terms matched or if there are different terms identified as project-specific by single persons.

## 5 Analysis and results

By analysing these meeting minutes, some terms with a project-specific meaning have been identified. All these terms were used in the internal project communication regularly and they belonged to the daily terminology used by all project members. This terminology was influenced by the idiolects of the project members and the project proceeding (including organisational structures as well as research methods) and sociological (degree of familiarity), psychological (mental and physical shape or obligation of this communication) and semiotic circumstances, supplemented by communication science based circumstances (communication media, geographical and temporal situation). This project-specific terminology is based on creation and selection; new terms have been coined or at least influenced by the project proceeding. These terms and meanings from different LSPs as well as from the general vocabulary have been selected and implemented into the project-specific terminology. Through terminologisation (Roelcke 2013: 1), these terms became part of the project-specific terminology. They lost their initial meaning when they were adopted as project-specific. Based on the four groups introduced by the research questions in section four, this classification can be made (for further examples please refer to the appendix):

### 5.1 Newly coined terms

New terms have been coined consciously, based or at least influenced by the project proceeding. For example the abbreviation<sup>5</sup> *AMASA* (*Accessing Medicines in Africa and South Asia*) with *project title* as project-specific meaning or *amasa-all* which stands for the mailing-list for all project members.

*Gap group* is an example for a new binominal compound, created out of two free lexical morphemes for the AMASA terminology. In the general vocabulary, *gap* has different meanings. It stands for “an empty space or hole in the middle of something, or between two things”,

<sup>3</sup> Database of the publisher Elsevier.

<sup>4</sup> US National Library of Medicine.

<sup>5</sup> Although we are aware of the differentiation between abbreviation, acronym and clipping, we use here abbreviation as umbrella term without differentiating further. “Terminological distinctions are not always so clear-cut” (Mattiello 2013: 83) and “acronyms and initialisms are two general labels, allowing further analysis and subcategorization” (Mattiello 2013: 87). Outlining the terminal distinctions and different approaches to analysis on this topic is not feasible in this research paper due to space limitation.

“a difference between two groups of people, two situations, etc.” or “something that is absent and stops something from being complete” (Cambridge Dictionary online 1), whereas *group* refers to “a number of people or things that are together in one place or are connected” (Cambridge Dictionary online 2). Beyond AMASA, this compound is polysemous as it refers to different semantically related meanings: it might stand for a group with gaps (a group missing some members) or a group of gaps (a number of gaps in a defined multitude). In the AMASA terminology, however, *gap group* is defined as group of project members, working on the gaps within the specialised literature about a specific research topic. Each *gap group* consisted of project members of different partner institutes. So both of these morphemes underwent a semantic narrowing by becoming a compound of the AMASA terminology, which was confined to one meaning. The compound with three constituents, *wg gap analysis* (meaning the identification of gaps in the specialist literature, done by working groups) was also newly created at the AMASA project, and it stands for a specific research process.

### 5.2 Specific meanings

Due to the collaborative proceeding of the project, several specific meanings (significances) occur – for instance based on the developed research methods of this project. As there is no corresponding expression (signifier) within the terminology of the project members, this causes a significant need for specific terms (signifiers) for these project-specific meanings (significances). For example, for the project-specific meaning *cross-site paper number seven*, *CS07*, a combination of an abbreviation with a number was chosen – without considering that this term refers to several meanings in the medical terminology where it stands for cancer cell lines. All IDs of project papers are created following the same approach; an abbreviation combined with a number: *CS07*, *UG06* etc. The two letters refer to the country where the data used for this paper was collected, followed by the number of this paper. So *CS07* is the seventh paper based on data from different countries, accordingly *UG06* is the sixth paper based on data collected in Uganda only. Another example is *instruments folder*, referring to a folder within the project data management system for storage of the research instruments. Here, project-specific folders in this system for project-specific instruments were named by a new term, so this compound was chosen.

### 5.3 Selection of already existing terms

Words existing in the general vocabulary were selected for the AMASA terminology and used with a different meaning. *TC* is an example for an abbreviation that occurs in the general vocabulary with several meanings (Wikipedia lists over 70<sup>6</sup>), for instance *testicular cancer* (medicine). In the AMASA terminology, it stands for *Teleconference* – a web-based meeting using Skype. So in its function, it differentiates Skype meetings from phone calls, as it refers to Skype meetings only and not to other kinds of verbal web-based communication. Further examples are *VC* (*Video conference* using an IP-to-IP System, not Skype) and *PMTTC* (*Project Management Teleconference* – a regular internal meeting via Skype).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TC> (5.7.2014).



#### 5.4 Selection of already existing meanings

*Proposal* is an example for a term with several meanings. For the AMASA terminology, one meaning was chosen as it refers here only to research proposal. This could be specific to research projects (meaning domain-specific) and not only specific to this research project.

Another example is the idiom *to take it offline* which stands for discussing a topic internally by using web-based communication but only with a very few project members and without sharing minutes with all project partners at AMASA. Beyond AMASA, it is for instance also used for taking electronic devices from a network.

#### 5.5 Misleading identification

The comparison of the list of terms identified in the project minutes and the terms which were named by the project members in the survey outlined above led to this assessment: project members classify terms as project-specific, if they did not become acquainted with them earlier than during the course of this project. Several terms were listed which also occur in different other contexts, for instance *wiki* or *deliverables and milestones*. These terms can be selected from the official project proposal, terms for communication tools that were used or technical terms from different LSPs. One example is the abbreviation *SSRIs* (*Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors*), a psychiatric medicine against depression – this abbreviation has no project-specific meaning. These terms are marked in the appendix with an asterisk.

### 6 Project-specific terminology

Further, the terms of the groups 5.1 to 5.4 as introduced above will be characterized in more detail, by starting with their genesis and function followed by the word formation and their relations within the project-specific terminology. As we consider this part as the interesting centrepiece, it is discussed in a separate chapter and not included in chapter 5, outlining the results.

#### 6.1 Genesis and function

“At the project team level, practitioners may either develop their own vocabulary or make a commitment to use the sponsoring organizations resources if applicable.” (Delisle/Olson 2004: 336) There is no guidance from the European Commission specific to research projects and the existing concepts for corporate wording of the partner institutes in South Africa and Belgium are only used by very few project members and only for external communications. So it can be assumed that these concepts do not influence the genesis of a project-specific terminology. During the course of projects, a specific language might be developed based on – or even forced by – the collaboration within the team (vom Brocke 2010: 59). There are different functions of this specific terminology;

the first function of these terms is to refer to something which does not exist outside of AMASA. Keeping the four groups mentioned above in mind, this includes a project-specific signifier (which needs a significance) as well as a specific significance (which needs a signifier). Within AMASA, interdisciplinary research was carried out by using commonly elaborated methods and research instruments. Therewith the project-specific terminology does not in-

clude only terms related to project management (for instance *instruments folder*), but also terms related to research methods (for instance *tracer medicines* or *wg gap analysis*).

The second function is related to language economy (as well as exactness, objectivity etc.; cf. Roelcke 2010: 23–28). Language economy shall here be defined as minimization of the linguistic effort by achieving a defined linguistic outcome (Roelcke 2002: 26).

By using compounds and abbreviations resp. abbreviations only instead of a syntactic phrase, linguistic effort will be reduced – analogous to corporate wording used in business communication. Additionally, project-specific terminology also “promotes the sense of belonging to something important” (5RA2<sup>7</sup>), as a project member described the common identity. Project terminology enhances the sense of togetherness, which then leads to a third function – creation and strengthening of team spirit within this group of project researchers. This third function is the basis of a circulatory effect; the project terminology strengthens the team spirit and enhances the collaboration, whereby the project terminology will be extended then again, which strengthens the team spirit of the established communities of practice (Lave/Wenger 1991, North et al. 2004) anew. This highlights the often neglected relevance of a specific terminology found in research projects.

### *Diachrony*

The project-specific terminology also follows the project proceeding. So as soon as a new project proceeding is developed, new terms for describing it will be needed. After this part of the project proceeding is finished, these terms disappear from the daily communication. For example, the terms of the subject group *field research* (see appendix) did not occur in the minutes of 2010, as no field research had been carried out yet. At this time, literature research was done – followed by the corresponding terms. The terms for the project products appear only in 2012 and 2013, as there were no project products earlier. The project-specific terms for the subject groups *communication* and *collaboration* are used during the whole course of the project.

### *Exceptions*

There are also very few terms which were not coined based on their function for the project. One example is *UMAK* which refers to Makerere University in Uganda (with the abbreviation *MAKU*), but actually it is the abbreviation for the name of the Makati University<sup>8</sup> (Philippines) as well as the name of a small island belonging to Alaska<sup>9</sup>. Within AMASA, this extended four-letter abbreviation was adapted for common use by the northern project partners, where the term *University* comes first: *University of Edinburgh* or *University of Basel*. Based on this, *MAKU* has become *UMAK* for this project-specific usage.

## 6.2 Characteristics

Within the AMASA terminology, there are several idiosyncrasies. Commonly structural, these idiosyncrasies are not surprising, but in concrete phenomenal terms, they are specific to the AMASA project and therefore special; they help to describe the structure of the project-specific terminology.

<sup>7</sup> ID of a project member.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://umak.edu.ph/v2/> (5.11.2013).

<sup>9</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umak\\_Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umak_Island) (5.11.2013).

### **Phrases**

In the sense of describing something that does not exist outside of AMASA, different phrases with a project-specific meaning were also found in the analysed corpus; *bringing gaps into country reports* is one example. *Gaps* is a term with a project-specific meaning which should be mentioned in these – also project-specific – country reports. Outside AMASA, this phrase might generate the association of taking something out of the reports for creating gaps.

### **Word classes**

Mainly, these are nouns as technical terms with project-specific meaning. Only few adjectives (only as hyphenated adjective compounds, as *country-specific*) and verb constructions (as *take it offline*) can be found.

### **Morphology**

The major category of word formation in this specific terminology is composition. In this form of word formation, terms existing in the general vocabulary are combined to form a compound. In this project-specific terminology, mainly determinative compounds with two and more constituents have been found; compounds of two nouns as *Basel* (modifier) *workshop* (head) and compounds of three nouns as *field work instruments*. All compounds with three constituents follow the same hierarchy, no matter whether the compound consists of three nouns or two nouns and an adjective as in *country specific instrument*. The first two constituents (here *field* and *work*) act as modifier and the last constituent (here *instrument*) is the head of the compound. This project terminology also contains compounds of an abbreviation (*WG* = *working group*) and two nouns (*WG gap analysis*) or an abbreviation and a noun (*WG coordinator*). Among the compounds whose constituents are nouns, only open and neither solid nor hyphenated forms are found. The only examples of hyphenated compounds are those created with *cross* – for instance *cross-site* (consisting of an adjective and a noun) or *cross-cutting* (consisting of an adjective and a verb). There are also adjective compounds, such as *country-specific*.

Within the AMASA terminology, there are also different abbreviations. Combined, they form a new abbreviation, for example the two abbreviations *PM* and *TC* form the new abbreviation *PM TC*. Abbreviations occur in combination with numbers as *WG10* as well; here the abbreviation and the number form a solid compound. A few of these compounds can be extended; *WG* (an internal working group) can be extended to *WG10* (one specific working group), can be extended to *WG10 member* (a member of this specific working group).

### **Project-specific biuniqueness**

Biuniqueness may avoid communicative misunderstandings and thus lead to a more precise utterance. In reality, some technical terms differ from this target norm. As several empirical studies (Roelcke 1991) have shown, biuniqueness appears so rarely that it is only a questionable characteristic for technical terms. The AMASA terminology contains terms with a project-specific meaning (which does not occur in another context), as well as terms without a project-specific meaning. Some terms with a project-specific meaning follow the concepts of being monosemic and heteronymic and are neither polysemous nor synonymous. This is reminiscent of the concept of biuniqueness developed by Wüster, where every designation refers to a single object and every object has only one single designation (Roelcke 1991: 195). This one-to-one correspondence can only be fulfilled in the frame of the project – the gen-

eral vocabulary is just too extensive. However, fulfilling the concept of biuniqueness by some terms indicates a contextual biuniqueness within the AMASA terminology. Here, context is defined in a wide sense as containing “a social and a cultural context (*context* [...]) and a textual context (*cotext* [...]) as well” (Roelcke 2002: 30; cf. Roelcke 1994: 7–17). This concept of context is based on the categories: place, time, people and activities which are “obviously fundamental characteristics of solutions” (van Dijk 2009: 35) and not for being represented in context models only. So the project-specific context consists of place (referring to the virtual workspace of the project members), time (referring to the project duration, 3.5 years), people (referring to all project members involved in the internal project communication), and activities (referring to the proceeding of this research project, for instance field research). Only within this framework of place, time, people and activities can a term be defined as belonging to this project-specific context. Based on this definition of context, contextual biuniqueness can be seen as biuniqueness in this project-specific framework. This leads to a concept of contextual biuniqueness, specific to the terminology of this project. A term, biunique within this project-specific context, is contextual biunique within the AMASA specific terminology. Fulfilling this concept is for instance the term *Northern Partners*; *Northern Partners* refers to the project members in Belgium, Great Britain and Switzerland. Within this project context there is no alternative designation for this term and no other term for this meaning, so this term is biunique. Outside of AMASA, it might also refer to persons in other countries.

### ***Paradigmatic semantic relations***

Referring to Olsen (2000: 898), “especially noun-noun compounds often depend for their interpretation on an element of meaning that is not overtly expressed in the combination and, as a consequence, are at least potentially ambiguous semantically”. Compounds often show not only a semantic but also a syntactic ambiguity as shown in the following examples. If we assume there is ambiguity within the AMASA terminology, there might also be different semantic relations between the project-specific terms:

**Polysemy:** For example, the term *discussion* refers to a conversation about a specific topic (which could be several topics at AMASA) and it refers as *pars pro toto* to the discussion forum and its threads within the collaboration platform, used at this project. So here *discussion* is polysemous as it expresses different interpretations.

**Synonymy:** Some terms are used synonymously within AMASA, for instance *SA workshop* and *cape town meeting*. On the denotation level, *cape town meeting* is synonymous to *SA workshop*, but on the connotation level, the differences in meaning can be highlighted by looking at the seme. *SA workshop* appears in the analysed data more often than *cape town meeting*, so it is obviously more frequently used. The less frequently used terms can be defined as occasional compounds. As this terminology was not established or implemented consciously, there is no direct control of what terminology is used. So the project members can also use as many occasional synonyms as they like, as long as it can be understood by the project members easily. So the reason for this synonymy here is linguistic negligence and not the attempt to create semantic differentiation, as described by Roelcke (1991: 2004f.).

**Hyperonymy:** The terms for designating the different papers written at the AMASA project fulfil the concept of hyperonymy. For example the expression for the data source (country

or cross-site) combined with *paper* to the determinative compound *cross-site paper* is a hyperonym to the hyponym *SA03*. *SA* refers to data collected in South Africa and all papers are numbered consecutively. These semantic relations within the project-specific terminology lead to the assumption that other specific terms might also occur in a network based on different semantic relations instead of appearing isolated.

**Semantic fields:** Such relations between terms in semantic fields as shown in the section above suggest word field theory, saying only the whole semantic field makes a sense within a terminology, not each single term. The term word field suggests fixed field boundaries between the individual word fields, which cannot be fulfilled here. Here, the boundaries are blurred and the different word fields overlap each other by sharing different terms (see figure 1).

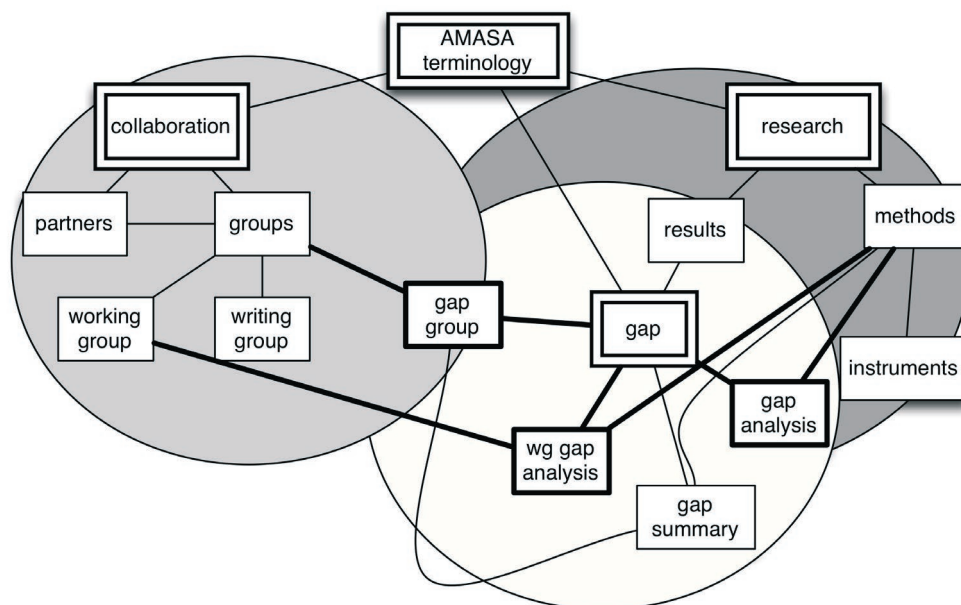


Fig. 1: Overlapping semantic fields in AMASA's project terminology

This figure shows a part of the AMASA terminology, consisting of several terms related to each other either with semantic or associative relations (not denoted here). Within this section there are three project-specific semantic fields, overlapping each other by sharing common terms; the semantic field *collaboration*, the semantic field *gap* and the semantic field *research* share the common term *wg gap analysis*. The term *gap analysis* is shared by the semantic fields *gap* and *research*, whereas the term *gap group* is shared by the semantic fields *collaboration* and *gap*. All these fields combined lead into a highly branched terminology system within the AMASA project terminology.

### 6.3 Acquisition

For acquiring the project-specific terminology, there was no kind of training within AMASA. All project members had to fulfil the obligation to perform and acquire the terminology

by themselves. As the results of a survey conducted among the project participants in 2012 show, the consciousness raising about the project-specific terminology had not been done by all project members at that time. This leads to a differentiation between conscious and unconscious acquisition. The majority of the project members acquired this terminology consciously (mainly project members experienced with international collaboration), a minority was still unaware of its existence. They searched in the internal project wiki, as well as via Google, Wikipedia and PubMed or asked their colleagues for the meanings of unknown terms. For example, in cases of homonymy and polysemy, searching via different search engines led to confusion as the project-specific term and its meaning could not be found this way. The meaning of some terms could also be deduced from the context. Following the concept of situated peripheral participation (Lave/Wenger 1991), the project members acquired the project-specific terminology by participating in the AMASA project collaboration. Referring to Canagarajah/Wurr (2011: 3), language acquisition in such communities works differently: ELF users are able to monitor each other communicating with a high level of awareness and learn the language as they use it.

## 7 Conclusion

Project communication is often equated with dissemination neglecting the relevance of internal communication. Within business communication, this need has already been recognised. “During the past decade, it has become obvious that the role of an organization’s internal communication is at least as decisive for operational success as has traditionally been the case with external communication.” (Louhiala-Salminen/Kankaanranta 2012: 262) Therefore, the relevance of a specific terminology should not be underestimated. The proceedings of creating and maintaining a corporate-specific terminology are meanwhile standard and well documented – for corporations, but not for research projects. Research projects often face the same challenges and needs, however, based on international, interdisciplinary and also intercultural collaboration, so the requirements are comparable. Beside the wish for a common identity as quoted from an AMASA member, also various difficulties in comprehension arose at AMASA. The usage of ELF is not a guarantor for comprehensive project communication (Pelikan 2014). Project-specific terminology helps to improve the comprehensibility by reducing vagueness due to many synonyms, not known by all project members. The used ELF is very heterogenic anyway but it could at least be improved a bit by implementing a specific terminology. As the results of this study show, a project-specific terminology was created and acquired by the project participants, although this was not implemented consciously. The project-specific terminology has at least three different functions:

- (1) To refer to something which does not exist outside of AMASA.
- (2) Language economy (as well as exactness, objectivity etc.; cf. Roelcke 2010: 23–28).
- (3) Creation and strengthening of team spirit within this group of project researchers.

As the analysis has shown, the terminology specific to AMASA can be classified as follows:

- a) Newly coined terms
- b) Terms with new project-specific meanings
- c) Selection of already existing terms
- d) Selection of already existing meanings



The explained functions and characteristics enhance the need for a specific terminology implemented in a thoughtful way. They established and maintained a need for internal communication – not only in business.

Considering this, the present paper could emphasize the need for in-depth research to be carried out on project language and especially terminology of research projects. Further, recommendations or even guidelines for the implementation of terminology for research projects could be an aim in the future by analogy with projects in business. Additionally, the results of this study could be substantiated by a quantitative study using these data complemented by additional data which might be done in future.

## Appendix

Sorted by the main groups *project collaboration*, *research* and *funding*, some project-specific terms are listed below. These terms constitute just an excerpt of the project-specific terminology of the AMASA project, without any guarantee of completeness. These terms are sorted by subject groups and not alphabetically (following Dornseiff 2004). As the project-specific terminology mainly consists of nouns, these are listed first. For each term, the term most commonly used is mentioned first, followed by the project-specific synonyms. Additionally, all terms are grouped, based on the four groups introduced in section 5 of this paper:

- a) Newly coined terms
- b) New project-specific meaning
- c) Selection of already existing terms
- d) Selection of already existing meanings

All terms which are not project-specific, but identified as being this by at least one project member, are marked by an asterisk.

### 1 Project collaboration

#### 1.1 Project partners

- a) Newly coined terms
  - *AMASA* (abbreviation for *Accessing Medicines in Africa and South Asia* – project title)
  - *STPH* (abbreviation for *Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute*)
- b) New project-specific meaning
  - ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms
  - *MUK* (abbreviation for Makerere University)
  - *Northern Partners* (project partners in Great Britain, Belgium and Switzerland)
  - *Partners* (all project partners)
  - *Project partners* (members of this research project) – synonym to *Sites*
  - *Southern Partners* (project partners in Uganda, South Africa and India)
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
  - *country team* (team of project partners based in one country);

#### 1.2 Communication

- a) Newly coined terms
  - *amasa-all* (internal mailinglist subscribed by all project partners)

- *project management committee teleconference (regular meeting with representatives from all partner institutes via Skype) – synonym to PM TC – synonym to project management TC – synonym to Mgt committee TC – synonym to management TC – synonym to management call, synonym to Tuesday TC*
- b) New project-specific meaning
- ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms/phrases
- *discussion (discussion forum within the internal DMS) – synonym to forum*
  - *Month + VC (videoconference with the month in which it took place, for instance March VC)*
  - *TC (teleconference via Skype) – synonym to Skype TC – synonym to Skype meeting – synonym to Skype – synonym to Skype call*
  - *VC (videoconference not via Skype) – synonym to video workshop – synonym to video meeting*
  - *website (project website, used for external communication/dissemination)*
  - *\*wiki (wiki within the internal DMS)*
  - *to discuss bilaterally (to discuss between members of two partner institutes only)*
  - *to take it offline (to discuss a topic without letting all project partners follow the discussion – a meeting without minutes shared with the project partners)*
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
- *the committee (the project principal investigators and the site principal investigators)*

### 1.3 Collaboration

- a) Newly coined terms
- ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
- *gap group coordinator (coordinator of one gap group)*
  - *theme group (team of project members from all partner institutes working together on one theme)*
- c) Selection of already existing terms
- *Basel workshop (meeting of representatives from all partner institutes in the city Basel) – synonym to methods workshop (as this workshop was for discussing the research methods)*
  - *Cape Town workshop (meeting of representatives from all partner institutes in the city Cape Town) – synonym to May workshop (as it was in May) – synonym to South Africa workshop – synonym to SA workshop – synonym to cape town meeting*
  - *Edinburgh workshop (meeting of representatives from all partner institutes in the city Edinburgh) – synonym to April workshop (as it was in April)*
  - *Kampala workshop (meeting of representatives from all partner institutes in the city Kampala) – synonym to Uganda workshop – synonym to Kampala meeting*
  - *knowledge management system (internal DMS) – synonym to KM system – synonym to Alfresco (brand name of the used DMS)*
  - *working group 1–working group12 (team of project members from all partner institutes working together on one topic build a working group, there are 12 internal working groups) – abbreviations: WG1–WG12*
  - *workshop (annual meeting of representatives from all partner institutes) – synonym to project workshop*

- *WG coordinator (coordinator of one working group)*
  - *WG member (member of one working group)*
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
- *cross-site work (work done by project partners from different partner institutes)*
  - *cross-site activities (activities done by project partners from different partner institutes) – synonym to activities across sites*
  - *gap group (team of project members from all partner institutes working together on one thematic gap, found in the specialised literature)*

## 2 Research

### 2.1 Data/Topics

- a) Newly coined terms
- ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
- ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms
- *Monitoring table (table created in Excel for monitoring research activities) – synonym to monitoring sheet – synonym to monitoring tool*
  - *Tracer Medicines (specific medicines which are the centre of the project research) – synonym to tracer drugs – abbreviation: TM(s) and TMS*
  - *\*CSTM, LAM, RIF, OXT, FLU, ATM (abbreviations of the names of the tracer medicines)*
  - *\*SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors – psychotropic medicines)*
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
- *country-specific (specific to one of the countries where the project partners are based) – synonym to site specific*
  - *cross-country (across different countries where the project partners are based) – synonym to cross-site*
  - *data (pars pro toto for different kinds of research data)*

### 2.2 Literature Review

- a) Newly coined terms
- ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
- ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms
- *country-specific literature (literature specific to one of the countries where the project partners are based)*
  - *Lit reviews (literature reviews to the different defined research topics of this project)*
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
- *Gap (thematic gap, identified in the specialised literature about different topics)*

### 2.3 Field research

- a) Newly coined terms
- ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
- *Instruments folder (folder within the internally used DMS for storage of all research instruments)*

- c) Selection of already existing terms
    - ---
  - d) Selection of already existing meanings
    - *Instruments* (research instruments, for instance surveys)
    - *Instrument catalogue* (table with research instruments listed)
- 2.4 Research products
- a) Newly coined terms
    - *wg gap analysis* (*identification of gaps in the specialist literature, done by working groups*)
  - b) New project-specific meanings
    - *CS + number* (*paper based on data collected in different countries*)
    - *IN + number* (*paper based on data collected in India*)
    - *SA + number* (*paper based on data collected in South Africa*)
    - *UG + number* (*paper based on data collected in Uganda*)
  - c) Selection of already existing terms
    - *Project papers* (*publications written by project members based on the research data of this project*)
  - d) Selection of already existing meanings
    - *Outlines* (*outlines of project papers*) – synonym to *draft outlines*

### 3 Funding

#### 3.1 Official project documents

- a) Newly coined terms
  - ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
  - ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms
  - *Report* (*pars pro toto for different kinds of project reports to be submitted to the European Commission*)
  - *\*PIP* (*Project Implementation Plan*)
  - *\*Consortium Agreement* (*agreement signed by all project investigators*)
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
  - *Proposal* (*project proposal*)

#### 3.2 EU FP specific

- a) Newly coined terms
  - ---
- b) New project-specific meanings
  - ---
- c) Selection of already existing terms
  - *Form* (*pars pro toto for different forms to be filled in for submitting to the European Commission*)
  - *\*Deliverables and Milestones* (*commitments defined by the EC*)
  - *\*Work Packages* (*in the official technical annex, the project tasks are allocated to different work packages*) – abbreviation: *WP*
- d) Selection of already existing meanings
  - ---

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