

KEY WORDS IN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY DISCOURSE

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Abstract. *A key word is a word that is awarded greater significance in some system of all the words used for some specific purpose. The purpose of this paper is to study key words, as they are termed in the proceedings, or the key terms, which seems to be a better word, that could be found in the proceedings of the papers presented at the conferences 50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia and Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health held in March and October of 2010, respectively. Both conferences covered the same topic, occupational safety, which is the wording left over from the old law, or occupational safety and health, which is the formulation in the current law. There were a lot of papers at both conferences and they were printed in the proceedings together with the abstracts and key words. These key words were the subject of analysis in this paper.*

Key words: *key words, key terms, academic discourse, occupational safety*

INTRODUCTION

A key word is a word that is awarded greater significance in some system of all the words used for some specific purpose. To be more precise, it is an informative word used in this system or text to indicate its contents. Because of that it can be considered to be a gist of the text presented either in the written or oral form. There is, of course, not only one key word following the text, there are several, although their number is not limited or restricted in any formal way. The key words are essential in the way that they represent the central ideas or conceptions of the text. They can also be said to be part of the academic discourse where they are associated with academic paper writing. They are linguistic expressions or phrases that are characteristic of a particular field of study and, because they are the author's choice made according to some definite criterion, they are considered to denote what he or she believes are the most important points in the text. Although these words are frequently called *key words*, it seems that the more appropriate word to be used is the *key term* because in that case the concept need not be limited to one word only but can consist of a few of

them. The word *term* is also more closely associated with the particular area or field of study and is in this way more pertinent for use by experts and scientists.

The purpose of this paper is to study the key words, as they are termed in the proceedings, or the key terms, which seems to be a better word, that could be found in the proceedings of the papers presented at the conferences *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* and *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* held in March and October of 2010, respectively. These two conferences were related in this paper because they both deal with the same topic in a very comprehensive way, i.e. they cover a long period of time during which occupational safety has been studied and practiced in Serbia and a wide variety of disciplines or sciences that are involved in the study and practice of occupational safety. According to the papers presented, they are both leading issues in the field although the former title emphasizes the term *occupational safety* that was used in the old law, *Occupational Safety Law*, and the latter title emphasizes the formulation *occupational safety and health* that has been brought by the current law, *Occupational Safety and Health Law*.

ANALYSIS OF KEY TERMS

There were 48 papers presented at the conference *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia*. They all had abstracts and key terms in English. This is an important fact because this paper deals only with English terms. That is why the number of papers considered in this way, when the other conference *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* is concerned, is somewhat smaller – namely, out of 54 papers presented, there were 45 papers with abstracts and key terms in English. Consequently, the total number of the key terms was 178 at the former conference and 174 at the latter. Considering the average values, there were approximately four key terms per paper at each of the conferences. To be more precise, here is a table relating the number of the papers and the number of the key terms (the percentage values, here and in the whole paper, were rounded to the following whole numbers):

Table 1. Relationship between the number of papers and the number of key terms

<i>50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia</i>			<i>Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health</i>		
number of key terms	number of papers	percentage	number of key terms	number of papers	percentage
2	4	8%	2	1	2%
3	19	40%	3	18	40%
4	15	31%	4	16	36%
5	8	17%	5	9	20%
6	1	2%	9	1	2%
7	1	2%			

Analyzing the table, it could be seen that most of the papers had three key terms (40% at both conferences), followed by four key terms (31% - 36%) and five key terms (17% -

20%). Thus, it could be concluded that a great majority of the papers at both conferences had between three and five key terms which, by deduction, can be considered by the authors the optimum and sufficient number of key terms used to denote the contents of their papers. Fewer than three and more than five key terms could be considered to be exceptions, not typical of the current practice.

As it has already been said, the key terms represent some concepts which are composed of one or more words. For a concept to be denoted or explained fully, the number of words comprising the concept or term is irrelevant. What is important, however, is the fact that the term is directed at some meaning usually fixed in the same or similar way as the term itself. That is why a lot of terms important for some science or field of study frequently acquire the form of collocations denoting a more or less fixed relationship between the concept and its formulation. It seems, however, that it might be interesting for the purpose of this analysis to see how many words the terms consist of. Table 2. shows these relationships in numerical and percentage terms:

Table 2. Relationship between the terms and the number of words comprising the terms

<i>50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia</i>			<i>Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health</i>		
number of words in a term	number of terms	percentage	number of words in a term	number of terms	percentage
1	67	38%	1	66	38%
2	72	40%	2	74	43%
3	20	11%	3	15	9%
4	13	7%	4	13	7%
5	4	2%	5	6	3%
6	1	1%			
7	1	1%			

The table shows that most of the terms (about four fifths at both conferences) consist of one or two words which, according to the authors, might be considered to be the optimum number of the words in a term. This contributes to the fact that succinct formulations are preferred and as such are likely to be easily accepted. In this way they approach the form of collocations. Apart from that, there were a number of terms with three to five words whereas there were even two terms with six or seven words at the conference *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia*. These two terms could be considered to be examples of an unusual practice and there is some space left to discuss whether these formulations were offered as a result of the lack of some other option or of the authors' inexperience.

For the quantitative analysis, it could be useful to see the incidence or the degree of occurrence of the words or terms that are considered to be crucial for the general topics of the conferences – *safety* and its variations:

Table 3. Incidence of *safety* and its variations

<i>50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia</i>		<i>Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health</i>	
term	incidence (number of papers)	term	incidence (number of papers)
safety	3	safety	3
occupational safety	10	occupational safety	8
safety at work	0	safety at work	1
occupational safety and health	6	occupational safety and health	7
safety and health at work	0	safety and health at work	2
	19 (11%)		21 (12%)

Table 3. shows that these terms were more uniform at the conference *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* which might be due either to the fact that the authors had a high agreement as to the concepts' formulations or that the editors were meticulous about the terms. The other *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* conference formulations of the same term were more varied and there were all five variations of the term. According to the table, both conferences preferred the term *occupational safety* followed by *occupational safety and health*. This is in line with the fact that these two formulations of the term were dominant in the laws referring to this topic. What strikes the eye is the fact that the term used in the old law, *Occupational Safety Law*, is a little more frequent than the term used in the current, *Occupational Safety and Health Law*. This might be due to the fact that it still takes time for experts to get used to the change in the wording. The fact remains, however, that approximately one tenth of the authors thought that it was necessary to emphasize this term by including it in their key term lists.

Another interesting thing to analyze is the relationship between the key terms and the terms used in the title. Almost all of the papers at both conferences had one or more key terms that were used in their titles (*50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* - 46 papers or 96%; *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* – 44 papers or 98%) which supports the conclusions that a) the title of the paper as well as the key terms should, according to their authors, reflect the main points of the paper and that, implicitly, b) the titles are almost sufficient as a means of focusing the reader's attention. Eight papers at the former conference and five papers at the latter even had no other key terms than those mentioned in their titles. It is also worth mentioning that only two papers at the former conference, and only one paper at the latter conference, did not have a single key term that was used as a term in their titles. Therefore, the informative value of the sum of their titles and key terms was higher. Finally, it might also be interesting that, out of all the key terms in the proceedings, 82 key terms (46%) at the *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* conference and 81 key terms (47%) at the *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* conference have already been used as part of the paper's title.

Shifting to the contents of the key terms it could be seen that the terms most closely referring to the field of occupational safety and risk were most frequently used in comparison with the other groups of terms (52 terms or 29% at the *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* conference and 66 terms or 38% at the *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational Safety and Health* conference). This was expected because the papers' topics had to be relevant to the conferences' topics. For the purpose of this analysis, the rest of the key terms were divided into five groups denoting a) a field other than occupational safety or aspects of study, b) the agent or participants of the processes and actions involved, c) the consequences with medical references, d) the legal concepts, and finally e) the unified group of concepts containing the psychological, sociological and organizational references. It must, of course, be borne in mind that all these groups of terms are associated with occupational safety and that they are all mutually interrelated. In spite of that they were divided in this way for the purpose of analyzing the terms according to a more specific criterion.

Apart from the key terms denoting the relatedness of the key terms to the field of occupational safety, there were a lot of key terms that denoted some other field of study or methodologically relevant considerations (17% - 23%). What this choice might be a sign of is the fact that the authors thought it necessary to mention this because they wanted to be more specific about their subjects. This implicitly contributes to the conclusion that occupational safety is out of necessity a multidisciplinary subject and that a lot of other fields or sciences can have a rightful place in it. Some of the terms included in this group were *education, ergonomics, nanotechnology, food industry, traffic, economics, engineering, medicine, holistic approach* and even *multidisciplinarity*. Closely related to this group is the b) group of key terms denoting the participants in these processes, be it the people or institutions and organizations involved (11% - 6%). Therefore it is possible to find mention of *man, employees, employers, health care workers, professional drivers, persons with disabilities, or International Labour Organization, occupational health service, Institutes, Faculty, public utility companies* and *trade unions*. Considered together, these two groups covered 28% or 29% of all the key terms. A certain number of terms were dedicated to group c) (10% - 12%) or to what might be the reference to health and the possible outcome of inadequately administered occupational safety. Some of the key terms mentioned were: *work-related injuries, occupational diseases, nosocomial infections, accidents, loss, damage, economic consequences* and *human health*. As regards group d), the participants of the conferences obviously showed a constant effort to demonstrate the inseparable ties between occupational safety and the enforcement of legal solutions and provisions (15% - 14%) which also contributes to the fact that occupational safety has a firm hold in the laws and implicitly in the country's policy. Some of the terms in this group were: *labour relations, legislation, responsibility, prevention of discrimination, protection from tobacco smoke, protection of disabled persons, compensation, disability benefit*. This group of key terms also had a lot of references to the legal documents supporting worker protection: *Risk Assessment Act, Occupational Safety and Health Law, safety standards, international legal regulations, national legal regulations*. Finally, there is group e) consisting of the key terms in psycho-socio-organizational fields. Unlike the previously analyzed groups, there was a marked numerical difference between the conferences: 18% at the *50 Years of Organized Occupational Safety in Serbia* conference and 7% at the *Occupational Safety – Multidisciplinary Realization of Occupational*

Safety and Health conference. This might be due not only to the fact that the experts were more interested in the former conference but also to the fact that they wanted to have a place in the organized efforts to improve occupational safety showing in this way that their contribution was both long-lasting and inevitable. Some of the key terms that they used were: *personality characteristics, transition, organizational culture, institutionalization, management, safety policy, organization of work, quality of life, lost working days*.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the key words or key terms appearing in the conference proceedings shows that the practice is varied and characterized by individual choices of the authors as to the optimum number of terms to be included in the papers and the length of their formulations. This might be a signpost to the organizers of conferences and the proceedings' editors to think about standardizing the practice so that this can contribute to a better and easier way for experts, scientists and professionals alike, to find useful information about the topics that they are interested in.

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KLJUČNE REČI U DISKURSU ZAŠTITE NA RADU

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Ključna reč je reč koja ima veći značaj u nekom sistemu svih reči koje su upotrebljene sa nekim posebnim ciljem. Svrha ovog rada je da ispita ključne reči, kako su nazvane u zbornicima, ili ključne termine koji se mogu naći u zbornicima radova prezentovanih na konferencijama 50 godina organizovane zaštite na radu u Srbiji i Zaštita na radu – Multidisciplinarno ostvarivanje bezbednosti i zdravlja na radu, koje su održane marta i oktobra 2010. godine. Obe konferencije su pokrile istu temu, zaštitu na radu, što je formulacija iz starog zakona, ili bezbednost i zdravlje na radu, što je formulacija u trenutno važećem zakonu. Bilo je mnogo radova na obe konferencije i oni su odštampani u zbornicima zajedno sa apstraktima i ključnim rečima. Te ključne reči bile su predmet analize ovog rada.

Ključne reči: *ključne reči, ključni termini, akademski diskurs, zaštita na radu*