

Vocabulary Semantics

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Discussion

Vocabulary semantics defines meaning through governed vocabularies, business terms, term relationships, usage constraints, preferred terms, deprecated terms, controlled values, and domain-specific naming conventions.

A vocabulary expresses semantic content when it identifies the terms a community uses, defines the meanings of those terms, relates terms to one another, and constrains how those terms appear in models, schemas, reports, rules, policies, APIs, messages, ontologies, and implementation artefacts.

Vocabulary semantics differs from terminological semantics. Terminological semantics focuses on terms, definitions, designations, sources, notes, examples, and usage constraints. Vocabulary semantics focuses on the governed set of terms and relationships that a community uses to express meaning across work products.

Vocabulary semantics also differs from [ontology](#). An ontology captures selected semantic commitments through concepts, relationships, distinctions, and constraints. A vocabulary governs the words, labels, identifiers, and relationships among terms used to express and communicate those commitments.

A [Semantic Business Vocabulary Model \(SBVM\)](#) provides vocabulary semantics when it defines business terms, meanings, relationships, and usage constraints within a defined domain.

Vocabulary semantic content includes:

- Preferred terms
- Alternative terms
- Deprecated terms
- Business terms
- Technical terms
- Acronyms
- Abbreviations
- Controlled values
- Term relationships
- Broader terms
- Narrower terms
- Related terms
- Usage constraints
- Naming conventions
- Vocabulary governance
- Traceability to [domain](#) meaning

A governed architecture preserves [traceability](#) from vocabulary semantics to the terminology records, conceptual model, SBVM, ontology, schema, report model, rule set, policy source, implementation

artefact, or conformance test that uses the governed vocabulary.

Definition

meaning defined through governed vocabularies, business terms, term relationships, controlled values, usage constraints, and naming conventions within a defined domain

Source

DIDO Solutions usage, informed by terminology practice, controlled-vocabulary practice, SBVM usage, semantic modelling practice, and standards-development practice.

Note

Vocabulary semantics does not define all [semantics](#) of a domain. Vocabulary semantics governs the terms and term relationships used to express meaning. Conceptual models, ontologies, schemas, reports, rules, policies, type systems, and implementation artefacts express additional semantic content.

A vocabulary without governance creates semantic risk. Different teams can use the same term for different meanings, different terms for the same meaning, or uncontrolled values that break interoperability.

Example

An FX vocabulary defines governed terms and relationships for trade processing.

Vocabulary item	Example value	Vocabulary semantic meaning
Preferred term	settlement date	approved term for the date on which settlement occurs
Alternative term	value date	related term whose use requires context or mapping
Deprecated term	payment date	term not used for settlement date in the governed vocabulary
Business term	counterparty	party that participates in the trade
Controlled value	Confirmed	governed lifecycle-state value
Related term	trade date	date concept related to but distinct from settlement date
Broader term	lifecycle date	broader category that includes trade date and settlement date
Usage constraint	use settlement date only for settlement occurrence date	prevents confusion with other trade lifecycle dates

The vocabulary establishes the governed words and values used across the architecture. A schema field named `settlementDate`, a report element named `Settlement Date`, an RDF predicate named `hasSettlementDate`, and a validation rule that compares settlement date with trade date all preserve vocabulary semantics when they trace to the governed vocabulary meaning.

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