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**LINING, RELINING
AND THE CONCEPT OF UNIVOCITY**

*By
Cecil Krarup Andersen*

The Greenwich Lining Conference in 1974 was the first international conference where conservators discussed lining treatments and their consequences. At the conference, a glossary was issued with definitions of the words used by conservators in an attempt to move towards consistency in the English terminology used by conservators worldwide. In the glossary, lining was defined as the treatment where a new support is attached to the back of a canvas. Relining on the other hand was defined as the repetition of a lining. After the conference extensive research was done in structural conservation and a number of new lining methods were introduced. The question is whether the terminology used was now more consistent with the Greenwich definitions. The aim of this article is to establish how and when the words referring to lining treatment have been used from 1974 till now in an attempt to clarify to what degree the definitions from the Greenwich Conference have been accepted and used among conservators. The analysis is based on a search in the bibliographic database AATA Online resulting in 363 abstracts written by authors mainly from Europe and USA. It has been assessed whether the words in these abstracts and their titles have been used according to the Greenwich definitions or not. Surprisingly the investigation shows a decreasing consistency in the use of terminology. The consequences of the lack of consistency in the terminology are discussed.

Introduction

In structural conservation of paintings there is a range of words that young conservators have to learn. They describe the many types of structural treatments that are given to paintings on canvas. The amount of words in use is large, and some of the words are more or less synonymous. An example that will be discussed here is lining and relining, words that in some traditions have the same meaning and in others have different meanings. To understand the conservation language requires a vast amount of knowledge about the history of conservation and the use of words in different regions of the world. This article focuses on the terminology in structural conservation of paintings on canvas, but the diversity in terminology seems to be a common issue in many fields of conservation. When Gaël de Guichen received the Forbes price in 2006 he said: 'I have the impression that we live in the tower of Babel' [1], referring to the discussion concerning the terms 'conservation' and 'restoration'.

The European Committee for Standardization has begun working on standardization of English

terminology within the conservation field (CEN/TC 346 WG1) [2]. This is a task that involves conservators from many European countries. In the Second Draft from the CEN working group concerned with terminology, it is stated that the purpose of the work with standardization is to "bring greater understanding and better collaboration amongst those who have responsibility for cultural heritage" [2, p. 4]. The working group wish "to avoid confusion, to ensure that what one person means by a word corresponds with what another person means" [2, p. 4].

We find it difficult to agree on common understandings of words, and the need for univocity – the character of being univocal or having one voice – has been expressed in order to ensure uniform communication in a common language. This need arise from the increasing demand to communicate work and research results to colleagues, the public, museum staff and so on. Many conservation and research projects are crossing country boundaries, which is why the CEN working group expresses a need to make sure that conservators speak the same language and use the same words. Consistency in our

language also becomes an issue in the literature searches that are the basis for all research. Searching words in bibliographic databases require agreement on common terms.

Otherwise stated, the word *lining* will be used here to describe the treatment where a support is attached to the back of a painting and the word *relining* to describe the removal and replacement of a support attached to the back of a painting. *Delining* is used to describe the removal of a lining.

The lining treatment (Figure 1) has been one of the most discussed subjects in conservation literature. In the 1960s an increased lining activity resulted in a discussion of the negative effects of the lining methods used at the time. Painting conservators had realized that many lining treatments changed the appearance and texture

of the paintings and the situation called for international consensus on degrees of intervention and the choice of methods and materials. It was what Schaible later called 'Doublierungskrise', or 'lining crisis' in English [3].

The crisis showed a lack of consensus about what was good lining praxis, and this lack was reflected in the confusion in the terminology. Lining, transfer, relining and backing were all words used about the same thing. Two important and comparable handbooks written by Stout and Keck illustrate the confusion, as one used relining and the other lining [4, 5].

Conservators realized that there was a need for international cooperation on the subject, and in 1974 the first international lining conference was held at the National Maritime Museum in

Figure 1. A glue-paste lining in progress on a suction low pressure table. The tensioned painting is placed on top of a new canvas. Both the original canvas and the new canvas have been prepared with glue-paste adhesive. The painting will be attached to the lining canvas using heat and negative pressure. Photo by Mikkel Scharff. © The Getty Trust.



Greenwich, England. At the conference, conservators discussed lining treatments and their consequences in an international forum. This required a common understanding of the different words in use, and a glossary was issued in an attempt to move towards consistency in the English terminology used by conservators worldwide.

The concept definitions from the Greenwich Conference represent the starting point of this article, since they represent the first international standard for the terminology of structural conservation.

In the glossary from the Greenwich conference lining was defined as “The sticking of a fabric (traditionally a fine linen canvas) to the reverse side of a canvas picture. The purpose of which may be to counteract structural weakness in the original canvas itself and/or to secure cleavage between the paint ground and the canvas layers” [6].

Relining was defined as “The lining of a painting which has been lined before. Removal of the old lining canvas and adhesive and mounting on a new lining canvas with new lining adhesive” [6].

In the following years there were more attempts to define conservation terminology in reference works, and they define lining and relining in a similar way [7, 8].

After the Greenwich conference there was reason to believe that there would be a movement towards consistency in the terminology, but when going through the literature on structural conservation written since, the confusion is still evident: in 1975 an article came out that summarized replies from conservators on a questionnaire regarding lining [9]. The title alone, *‘Relining: Materials and techniques: Summary of replies to a questionnaire’* illustrates this point. Even though

all three authors had been editing the ‘Handbook of terms used in the lining of paintings’ from the Greenwich Conference [6] they still used the term relining in the heading for their article one year later. In 1984, the article was followed up by a similar article, ‘Lining in 1984: Questionnaire replies’ [10], and the updated answers to similar questions were discussed. In this article the Greenwich definitions were followed.

Etymology in European Lining Words

In 2005, Hackney wrote that relining in some cases means lining [11] and a search in the Abstracts of International Conservation Literature (AATA) [12] and the Bibliographic Database of the Conservation Information Network (BCIN) [13] confirms this confusion. Articles using the word relining go back to the 1930s [14] and perhaps further back. On the other hand, a book title shows that the word lining is used as early as 1853 [15]. Etymology offers a plausible explanation for the reason why both words are used about the same phenomenon.

The verbum ‘line’, meaning ‘to cover inner side of...’, goes back to the late 14th Century. It is derived from lin (linen cloth), because linen was frequently used as a second layer of material at the inner side of garment in the Middle Ages [16]. The word lining can be compared to the Spanish ‘forración’ and the Italian ‘foderatura’. These words mean lining (of paintings) and can also be translated as ‘to cover the inside of a garment’.

Another tradition is the one where words for lining come from words for doubling. In German ‘doublieren’, Dutch ‘doubleren’, Danish ‘dublere’ and Swedish ‘dubblering’.

The most common French word for lining is ‘rentoilage’. Linen in French is again ‘lin’ but a

canvas is 'toile'. This comes from Latin tela (web). 'Entoiler' means to cover the inside with canvas, but 'rentoiler' means to line a painting. 'Rentoiler' is also connected to the Spanish word 'reentelado' ('tela' is canvas) and the Italian 'rintelatura' that also both mean lining.

'Rentoiler' was earlier used about the more radical treatment where the original canvas on a painting was removed and replaced with a new one. Since it was a replacement of the canvas the prefix 're-' was used. Methods became less radical but the word 'rentoilage' remained the same. It now also meant 'to apply a new canvas on top of the old one'.

It is a reasonable assumption that the English relining with the same meaning as lining, comes from the direct translation of 'rentoiler', 'reentelado' and 'rintelatura' into English 're-linen' / 're-lining'.

Searching for Lining and Relining in Bibliographic Databases

As previously mentioned, the conservation field has two major international bibliographic databases: AATA [12] and BCIN [13]. In this article, AATA is used because it provides the reader with an abstract in English on records in all languages. This makes conservators able to compare the translations and the use of English terms in different parts of the world.

One of the aims of this article is to establish how and when the English words referring to the lining treatment have been used from 1974 till 2010 in an attempt to clarify to what degree the definitions from the Greenwich Conference have been accepted and used among conservators worldwide. A search in AATA with a combination of the index

words 'lining' and 'paintings' resulted in more than 500 records. The titles and/or abstracts from 1974 to 2010 that include the words lining or relining in any form have been chosen as the basis for this analysis. Records that dealt with works of art on paper, parchment panel or leather were also disregarded.

The result was 363 abstracts written by authors mainly from Europe and USA although other continents are also represented. It was then assessed whether the words in these abstracts and their titles have been used according to the Greenwich definitions or not. Not all the abstracts to the articles were written by the authors themselves. In some cases another conservator had been responsible for the English abstract. Nevertheless, their words are searchable in the database.

Results

Figure 2 shows how many records were found each year and how the words were used according to the titles and abstract texts. 'Follows the Greenwich definition' means that lining is used as 'the sticking of a fabric to the reverse side of a canvas picture' or that relining is used as 'the lining of a painting which has been lined before. Removal of the old lining canvas and adhesive and mounting on a new lining canvas with new lining adhesive' [6].

Three records from the 363 used 'new lining' instead of relining and they were not regarded as following the Greenwich definition. 110 records used the word relining, and in some cases it could not be established from the abstract text whether it was in fact a repetition of a lining or a use of the word that was not consistent with the Greenwich definition. In the cases of doubt a special category was used called 'not clear'. Only 27 records from the 110 using relining could without doubt be

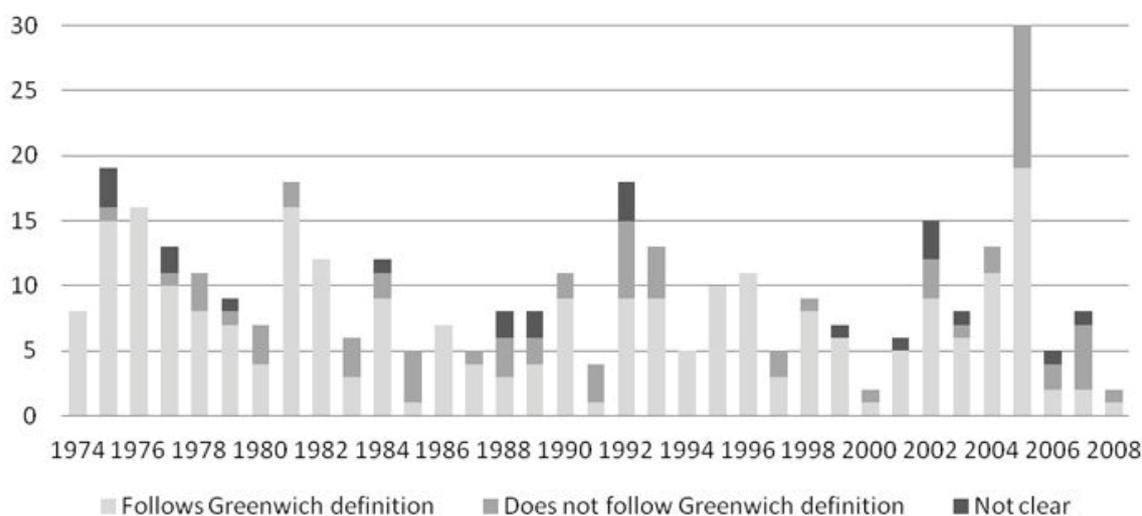


Figure 2. The use of the words lining and relining in records from AATA-online, abstracts of international conservation literature (<http://aata.getty.edu/NPS/>).

identified as dealing with relining as defined in the Greenwich glossary.

In Figure 3 the results are divided in decades and shown in percent (numbers at the bottom are the actual number of records). It is clear that a decreasing percentage (and number) of records follow the Greenwich definitions through the decades. In the last decade the conservation vocabulary has become so inconsistent that only 60% of the abstracts and titles follow the Greenwich definitions. In some cases both lining and relining are used in the same abstract about the same type of treatment. The word relining is most common in Central and Southern Europe, whereas records from Northern Europe, Great Britain and the USA seem to use the word lining according to the Greenwich definition.

The topics considered in the records are shown in Figure 4. Most of them describe lining methods and materials or the history of lining methods and materials. The number of these articles is, however, decreasing. A smaller, but increasing amount of records are considering concerns with

lining methods and recommend avoiding linings. The same pattern is seen for the group where alternative methods are described and for the group where relinings and delinings (repetition of linings and removal of linings) are described. This shows that there is a still growing concern about the use of linings and the challenge of relining and delining comes up more and more often. This information can only be retrieved by reading all the abstracts or articles since the terminology is not used consistently enough to allow us to get access to the appropriate records by searching in index terms. The conservator who is interested in the challenges of relining will have a lot of sorting to do before he finds the right articles to read.

It is interesting how the word minimalism is also a complicated word to search. Because minimalism is argued in so many different cases it cannot be related to a certain type of treatment. When conservators use cold lining, strip lining, delining and not lining they may claim to be minimalists. The words 'non-intervention', 'non-interventionist'

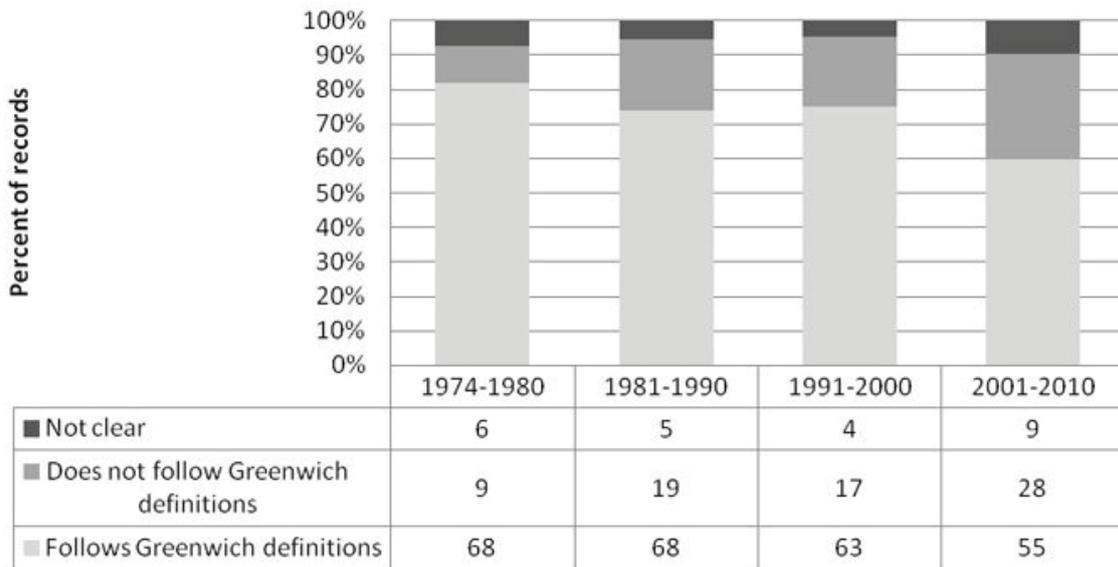


Figure 3. Percentage of records following the Greenwich definitions. Under each column is the actual number of records in each category.

and 'minimalist' became common in the 1980s [10]. In earlier days conservators would sometimes define themselves as 'liners' but with the new terms conservators now define themselves by their choice of refraining from lining. The term 'not lining' was also used [17] and a number of articles have been published describing how conservators had succeeded in not lining paintings [18-21]. Yet in 2003 the minimalistic ideal was questioned by Ackroyd and Villers in an attempt to move the discussion towards a post-minimalistic paradigm [22].

Implications of Inconsistency

It is clear that we have not standardized our terminology and the question is whether univocity is what we want to aim for. Temmermann argues that the univocity ideal can be questioned according to Socio-cognitive Terminology [23]. This concept is based on the assumption that differences in terminology can be used to achieve a more precise perception of the meaning of a

concept. Lining and relining are not only used in different geographic areas. They are also used in different traditions of understanding the concept of structural conservation. This implies that there is a lot we can learn from studying the words we use, and forcing everyone to use the same words may deprive some conservators of the possibility of expressing themselves in a way that can be precisely perceived in their area (geography, language, etc.). However the areas in which conservators move have been enlarged over the years, and whenever we need to communicate internationally it can be an advantage to agree on common rules for the use of language.

The results presented here suggest that there is a language barrier between countries making our communication difficult. Central and Southern European countries are using a different terminology which is confirmed by the etymological explanation of the differences in the use of words. This means that research results from some countries are in risk of being misinterpreted by conservators from other parts of the world and vice versa. The

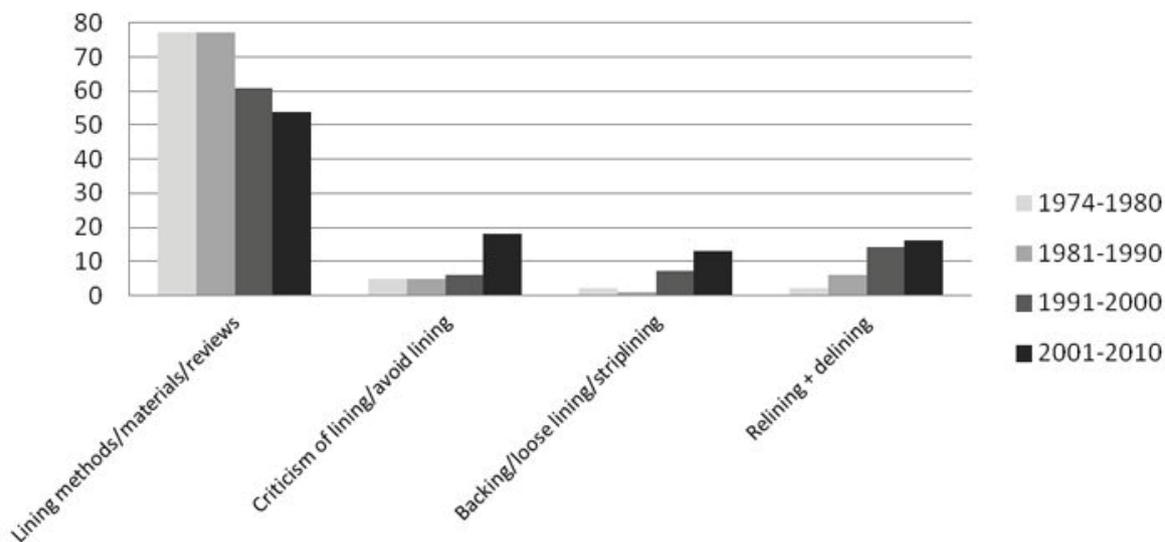


Figure 4. The most common topic in lining literature is reviews or descriptions of methods and materials. However retreatment and alternatives are considered with increasingly frequency.

written evidence of the work conservators do is increasingly important and the consequences of inconsistent terminology can be manifold. Cases like condition reports when paintings are lent out, insurance cases, exchange of research and conservation treatment records are examples of the increasing international corporation and exchange that has called for agreement in the definition of terms.

Conclusions

The study shows a growing inconsistency in the use of structural conservation terms but the implications may cover much more than inconsistency. When conservators insist on diversity in the use of terms related to lining it could be a symptom of diversity in opinions in different regions, schools and traditions. The study offers a platform for further research into the more philosophical issues and differences of opinion within the subject of structural conservation. To uncover different

definitions of words can be to map our differences and degree of communication both when it comes to geographic areas and philosophical schools. The study implies that we do not agree on the definitions of concepts and the premises behind concepts.

However, communication at international levels is being complicated by the inconsistency in terminology. Time, resources and information are spent on trying to understand the state of the art in lining of paintings and it becomes unclear how the field is evolving. It is clear that a univocal definition of certain words is desirable as a working tool for international communication between disciplines within the investigation and conservation-restoration of cultural heritage. The CEN initiative may offer a unique opportunity to move forward into a common interdisciplinary understanding of our working language within the European Babylonian continent. The Greenwich definitions or definitions similar to them seem to be the obvious choice for a common definition of words since they offer a possibility to differentiate

between linings and relinings. As shown earlier, delining and relining are increasingly significant subjects, a fact that can be difficult to recognize if it is not possible for the next generations of conservators to appreciate the differences between lining and relining. It is therefore to be hoped that other non-European countries will be invited to listen and comment on the CEN progress in order to accept the same definitions in due course and hereby achieve a common tool for reports, papers and so on on an international level.

Standardization and univocity may however not bring greater understanding. With Temmermanns arguments we may want to embrace our differences and explore what the real reasons for them are. Our diverse use of terms may help us to point out issues of importance or even point directly to the heart of the concept of conservation. Why do we do it, for whom do we do it, what is our final goal and what means can be used to achieve it?

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