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THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC PARADIGMS ON TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Abstract: *The paper focuses on the impact of economic paradigms on teaching business English. We made up paradigmatic methods beginning from a number of common traits, which are essentially in the meaning structure. Other distinctive traits are added to the above mentioned ones and the identification of these significant traits is needed for a proper definition, which is a very useful tool in the teaching process of the English business terms. The analyzed material showed that there is not easy to make the economic paradigms. Thus, in most definitions for the economic terms, one can notice the conceptual interference with other economic terms. This aspect hinders the identification of common and distinctive traits. The identification of the difficulties to divide the selected economic terms in lexical-semantic paradigms has relevant variations (see ENTERPRISE, FIRM, COMPANY, CORPORATION or TITLE, BOND, SHARE). The semic analysis of the selected paradigms outlines the importance of the relation between the lexicographic and the terminographic definition to decode the specialized meaning and helps the teaching process in learning business English. In many cases we noticed the lexicographic definitions are not clear, because they offer insufficient dates. For this reason, sometimes general dictionaries are not recommended in teaching economic terms because they are not updated or the definitions lack a lot of important details about economic terms. Nevertheless, we noticed that in other dictionaries (DEXI, NDU) the definitions for the economic terms are close to the terminographic definitions because they contain not only relevant economic details but also necessary information for the teaching process and the students' further understanding. On the other hand, the lexicographic definitions, unlike the terminographic ones, indicate the polisemy of the economic terms, thus warning the non-specialists on the risks of ambiguity.*

Keywords: *Economic Terms, English, Learning, Paradigm, Teaching*

I. ECONOMIC PARADIGMS AS TRIGGERS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The paper focuses on the impact of economic paradigms on teaching business English. Whatever pedagogic approach is taken, the interaction of the class and the assignment of different kinds of participant role, which mediates between teaching and learning are very important. This leads to a better understanding of the economic concepts through the elaboration of paradigms in online glossaries. Materials help to organize the teaching-learning process by providing a path through the complex mass of the language to be learnt. They provide a clear and coherent unit structure which will guide teacher and learner through various activities in such a way as to maximize the changes of learning. This structure should help the teacher in planning lessons and encourage in the learner a sense of progress and achievement. Furthermore the paradigms should not be so tightly structured as to produce a monotonous pattern of lessons. Paradigm model must be clear and systematic, but flexible enough to allow for creativity, diversity and acquisition (Hutchinson and Waters 1990: 107).

This work aims to present a *relational and differential approach* of meanings specialized into classes called *lexical or lexico-semantic fields*. In drafting this type of paradigmatic class, we started from a number of *common semes*, which have priority in the structure of the meaning and it is a very useful tool in the teaching process of the English business terms. Language processing activity is the important factor. Distinctive semes

are added to such semes, whose identification is very important for a rigorous definition. The selection of several paradigms to be submitted to an analysis starting from the material under study revealed that there are certain difficulties in their formation. Most definitions of economic terms indicate the conceptual interference with other economic terms, which leads to difficulties in detecting both common and variable semes. Correlating lexicographic and terminographic definitions with the purpose of identifying semes, although constantly used, supports the semic analysis only partially. The detection of difficulties that occur when dividing the economic terms selected for the analysis into lexical-semantic paradigms registers certain variations. In paradigms such as: ENTERPRISE, FIRM, COMPANY, CONCERN, CORPORATION etc. or STORE, SUPERMARKET, HYPERMARKET, MALL etc., MONEY, AMOUNT, CASH, LIQUIDITY, etc. or PRICE, COST, FEE, the semic analysis follows regular principles. For instance, in the first paradigm, the common semes are “economic unit”, which receive the distinctive semes “± superordinate” and “± size”.

The semantic relations in other paradigms as the one made of: TITLE, BOND, SHARE, ROYALTY, ASSETS, LIABILITIES are set onto various layers. The common classification as “financial instrument” is clear for part of the paradigm terms, but less direct and clear for ROYALTY. Conceptual interdependencies are a difficulty in formulating variably distinctive semes and in setting direct relations among terms. In the paradigm “debts”, there are certain difficulties in detecting the common semes in the relation between DEBT, ROYALTY, PAYABLES (outstanding debts) and SUBSIDY, COMPENSATION (received amounts).

Text updates indicate sometimes the paradigmatic relations by directly relating the paradigm archilexeme to its members (for instance, COMPANY as opposed to FIRM).

The study of texts is useful since it demonstrates that not all the terms of a paradigm are updated to the same extent. The higher frequency of some terms can be relevant to the economic terminology from different perspectives, going as far as imposing newer terms, which seem less significant in general, specialized and online dictionaries.

However, text updates reveal higher dynamics which sometimes neutralizes the distinctive features of a paradigm (for instance, FIRM as compared to COMPANY). Other times, on the contrary, they exploit contextual opportunities to mark differences of meaning (for instance, terms such as HOLDING, CONCERN, CORPORATION, GROUP are systematically marked by various determinants, the feature “+ superordinate”).

In delineating *lexical-semantic paradigms*, we will comply with a series of principles envisaged by modern semantic analysis (principles that apply both to common lexis and to the specialized one, cf. A.Bidu-Vrănceanu 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010): only one meaning is included in the paradigm (if the word or even term is polysemantic); the first common seme is represented by the part of speech - in a paradigm, terms belong to only one part of speech; then, several *common semes* (or an archiseme) are necessary, which depend on the hyponymic relation which can be set on several levels. Finally, the analysis per se envisages the detection of variable semes or differences of meaning which contribute to a rigorous definition.

The more rigorous definition of meaning provides more efficiency to definitions, with positive effects on the identification and memorization of the specialized meaning for students in a higher education curriculum.

Given the fact that the *conceptual interdependence, the interference* to be met in definitions and even in text updates of economic terms is remarkable and many times creates problems in interpreting (understanding) the specialized meaning by non-specialists, another method to approach paradigmatic classes is that of *complementary or operational fields* (v. A.Stoichițoiu-Ichim 2001: 117). The relevant features for this type of field refer to the *interference (complementarity)* with other fundamental concepts necessary to define a given term belonging to the same field. Numerous economic terms involve such defining conditions, both at specialised level and in a broader interpretation (which raises certain difficulties from this perspective). We will provide a few examples of such structures, in order to identify the specifics of **economic terminology**. These examples are structures created around terms such as AFFIDAVIT, DEBT, BOND and ROYALTY. Thus, DEBT refers to **debtor, creditor**, BOND, to **creditor, fix income** and **interest**, DIVIDEND to **(joint stock) company, shareholder, share** (this last one referring to **capital**) etc. These conceptual implications lead to semantic diversifications within the said structure (even if they cover a common referential area).

II. INSTANCES OF PARADIGMS

One of the paradigms that has already been analyzed in general dictionaries (cf. A.Bidu-Vrănceanu 2007:93-95, 128-129) is that of the terms ENTERPRISE, COMPANY, FIRM, TRUST, (company) HOLDING, which can be completed with CONCERN, CONSORTIUM, MULTINATIONAL, OPERATOR. Some of these terms were imposed by including the determined in the determinant. Thus, HOLDING and MULTINATIONAL were initially adjectives accompanying COMPANY and were only subsequently turned into nouns. In this paradigm, we could also include FACTORY and PLANT which are defined as “enterprises” + “productive”, less frequent in modern Romanian as opposed to other stages of the language (cf. A.Bidu-Vrănceanu 1993: 72-73, id. 2007: 128-129).

In order to provide arguments for the interpretation of meaning components, we will provide a synoptic and comparative analysis which emphasizes common and differentiating semes of terms (according to the reading model of definitions, cf. A.Bidu-Vrănceanu 2007: 71-103). We are of the opinion that the archilexeme or hyperonym of this paradigm, the term ENTERPRISE, also known in everyday language, and which has the semes common to the entire paradigm (archiseme): “economic unit” + “of production, service provision, trade etc.”. Since the lexicographic definitions (DEX, MDA, NDU, DEXI) are many times incomplete, we will present in parallel the lexicographic definition of every term (in which we will combine data from several general dictionaries) and a synthesis of the terminographic definition. Another term that could also be considered an archilexeme or hyperonym is SOCIETY, but it contains specialized data in all types of dictionaries (general, economic, online). See the data presented below:

<p><i>In general dictionaries</i> SC – Association or enterprise – under a <i>contract between natural persons</i> SV – based on <i>common capital investments</i> – for obtaining <i>benefits</i> from the <i>invested capital</i></p>	<p><i>In economic dictionaries</i> – legal entity – gathers together various titles, assets, activities – for financial purposes, depending on the type of <i>trading companies</i>, which are designated with the help of numerous hyponyms: <i>trading company, limited liability company, capital company, leasing company, financial companies, multinational (transnational) companies</i></p>
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FIRM

<p>G.D – conventional name under which an enterprise operates</p>	<p>Ec.D. SC – abstract entity with economic role SV – the specific differences depend on the <i>types of FIRMS</i>, each being defined: FIRM <i>with several products</i> “enterprise” + “using a mixture of production factors” – in order to manufacture a large array of products FIRM <i>controlled by the manager</i> – company – which does not have a shareholder that owns a sufficient number of share and voting rights FIRM <i>controlled by the owner</i> – company – which has an identifiable group of shareholders – which has enough votes to decide on the strategy</p>
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COMPANY

G.D.

SC – enterprise
– industrial, trading, transport
SV – large

Ec. D.

– name equivalent to a *joint stock company* or a legal entity
– with trading or industrial purposes
SV – with distinct objectives, depending on the different types of companies:
Limited liability company
Holding company
Private company
Public company
Companies listed on the stock market

We cannot ignore the insufficient definition of the term FIRM, for which only certain dictionaries (DEXI) indicate all the components coinciding with the field archiseme. Consequently, in this interpretation, FIRM equals COMPANY, a meaning which is also updated in texts.

The comparison between these general terms in the paradigm under study reveals that it is difficult to classify meaning “by association”, even if there is clear indication of the perspective. It would be more convenient to classify the terms as “economic unit”, which could be a common seme for all the paradigm terms. The economic dictionary prefers “legal entity” as an equivalent to “economic unit”. Variable semes bring clarifications which condition the interpretation of the term COMPANY as a hyperonym on a lower generalization level: “the need of a contract between natural persons (which are set as a legal entity)”, “the need of a common capital”, “(association) for the purpose of obtaining (capital) benefits”. Certain general dictionaries (NDU) take over the relevant data from economic dictionaries, synthetically expressed in the lexicographic definition.

The comparison between the terms FIRM and COMPANY allows the following observations: the common seme is not clearly visible from either definition; it should be reformulated as “economic unit”; according to the definitions, both terms are “enterprises” (another relatively convenient method of classification). The worst definition is the one provided by general dictionaries, which is confusing due to the formulation “conventional name”, especially since no specific differences are indicated.

The economic dictionary brings some clarifications with respect to the specific differences resulting from the types of FIRMS (hyponyms), but which envisage distinct features: “manufactured products”, “number of shares”, “voting right”. If, on the general level, the classification is “economic unit”, at the level of hyponymic structures, the classification is either “enterprise” or “company”. For some hyponymic structures, the classification as a type of “company” leads to the interpretation of the two terms as being equivalent, which is confusing with respect to the lexicographic definition of COMPANY, that indicates for this term the specific difference “large. In the economic dictionary, this distinctive feature between FIRM and COMPANY is visible only at the level of hyponymic structures such as **holding company**.

The semic analysis of the selected paradigms revealed the significance of the relation between the lexicographic and the terminographic definition in decoding specialized meaning for economic students. In numerous cases, it was noted that lexicographic definitions are not clear and have insufficient data. Correlating the two types of definitions and clearly identifying the components (definition “reading”) show that economic terms used in everyday language are only known at a superficial level. They also demonstrate that numerous definitions of economic terms in general dictionaries present various problems. In this respect, dictionaries remain far behind the evolution of economic realities or simply ignore the conditions of an efficient definition. Under the circumstances, differences are often registered between dictionaries and texts. It was noticed that in more recent dictionaries (DEXI, NDU), definitions are closer to the terminographic ones, including economic data which are not only relevant, but also necessary. On the other hand, lexicographic definitions, unlike terminographic ones, have the advantage of indicating term polysemy, when it exists, and thus of warning non specialists onto the risks of ambiguity. Dictionary deficiencies are more significant when several economic terms frequently used in economic media are not recorded at all.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The study of contextual updates of terms belonging to the paradigms under study revealed the frequency of *referential synonymy*. In countless cases, various terms of the same paradigm refer back to the same referent (for instance, Auchan is designated by several terms of the same paradigm: French RETAILER, EUROPEAN SHOPPING CENTER, HYPERMARKET, SUPERMARKET, COMMERCIAL CHAIN, MALL).

The analyzed texts emphasize the *important dynamics of the field*. There are two significant and somewhat contradicting trends: one the one hand, *the tendency to remove any ambiguity and to clarify* the specialized meaning through various contextual means and to reflect new economic realities. On the other hand, *the freedom of some texts belonging to mass media* indicates a series of neutral terms, which demonstrates their contact with everyday language. The superposition of several types of paradigmatic structures of the meanings of economic terms may contribute, separately or on the whole, to their decoding. This leads to the idea that learning a language, like the learning of anything else, is essentially a personal achievement in any learning environment. But such a semantic study could especially reveal the specifics of economic terminology as compared to others (cf. A.Bidu-Vrănceanu 2007, 2010, cf. E.Museanu 2010, 2011). Language learning of paradigms is not just a matter of linguistic knowledge, but students can improve their expertise in identifying the lexical and semantic relations of the economic terms. During the teaching process this paradigmatic approach is very productive because the students can synthesize the levels that cover the vocabulary specific to a specialized terminology.

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ELECTRONIC SOURCES

<http://dexonline.ro/>
<http://www.dictionare-online.ro/dictionar-economic.php>
http://www.dictionar-economic.ro/component?option=com_glossary/lang,en/
<http://www.economist.com/research/economics/>
http://www.banknews.ro/dictionar_financiar-bancar/
http://www.conta.ro/dictionar_online_economie.html
<http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/dictionary>
http://www.rubinian.com/dictionar_detalii.php?id=1597
 TAL(N) – electronic corpus
 EURODICAUTOM / <http://europa.eu.int/eurodicautom/controler>
<http://www.papillon/dictionary.org>
http://w3.granddictionnaire.com/btml/fra/r_motoclef/index1024-1.asp
http://www.terminometro.info/modules/divers/recherche_termes.index.php.ln=es
http://www.terminometro.info/public/soc_franc.termino_16.pdf
www.termisti.refer.org/melanges.htm
http://europa.eu.int?scadplus/glosary/index_fr.htm