An approach on the special terminologies delimitation

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Abstract

The current explosive development of science and technology, the increase of the inter-cultural changes and the great deal of knowledge acquired in different activity fields determined the emergence and development of terminology. The concept terminology has two meanings: the interdisciplinary branch of knowledge and the number of terms specific to various terminologies (specialty languages) providing knowledge in different fields of professional activity. As a specialized language, terminology represents a linguistic system that uses certain terms and other linguistic means in order to eliminate ambiguity in a particular field. In different activity fields the specialists use certain linguistic systems – the functional styles of the language, each of them with its own specific features as well as with some common characteristics which create an “interference area”. There is an outstanding trend to borrow neological terms, especially the American-English ones hence careful attention should be paid while introducing them in the specialized languages, the linguistic and socio-linguistic criteria are therefore to be taken into account. The terminological „bank” of every language is currently enlarged with more and more borrowings and they undertake rapid changes in order to continuously support the wide range of activities and the progress as such.

1. Introduction

The current explosive development of science and technology, the increase of the inter-cultural changes and the great deal of knowledge acquired in different activity fields determined the emergence and development of terminology. The concept terminology has two meanings: the interdisciplinary branch of knowledge and the number of terms specific to various terminologies (specialized languages) providing knowledge in different fields of professional activity.

2. Aspects regarding terminology

As a branch of science, terminology deals with the thematically organised system of the lexical units belonging to science and technique. All the changes in the sciences system entail others in the denominations system and the role of terminology is to solve this problem. „The implication of terminology as a specific method of science must
be functional especially in technology, law and in all the fields where there is a large circulation of sciences” (Rey, 1995).

Terminology has a strong interdisciplinary character, “the terminology of different scientific fields being connected with linguistics, ontology and the informatic sciences.” (Sager, 1990).

From a practical point of view, terminology is also different from lexicology as far as methodology is concerned. The lexicological methodology follows a semasiological pathway – starting from a linguistic form it studies all the possible semantical values; whereas the terminological methodology has an onomasiologic character since the research starts from the concept towards the sign.

Both lexicology and terminology study the relation between the denominative units and the objects, but while the former deals with the vocabulary, all the words existing in a language, the latter refers to the specialised lexical units.

Besides drawing up dictionaries, lexicography, a linguistic branch, deals with sciences and terminology as well. There is a terminological lexicography, a special lexicography relying on the concepts of the special and general languages. We can notice an obvious and mutual relation between terminology and lexicography as all the described objects are identical but the conceptual field of the mentioned system is the specific object of terminology; lexicography studies the words functions and „conducts” in society. F.W. Riggs pointed out that lexicography aims at helping the readers to interprete the texts while terminology deals with helping the authors to write them.

Another meaning of the concept of terminology is that of specialized language, „a linguistic system that uses a terminology and other linguistic means referring to the accuracy of communication in a particular field.” (Lerat, 1995) International organisations study terminology from this perspective: International Federation of National Standardizing Associations (IFNSA), International Organisation for Standardisation (IOS), The French Association of Terminology (FAT), New Term.

3. The functional styles

In different activity fields, the specialists use specific linguistic systems the functional styles or the language styles. Similar to the language, the style is a group of verbal skills used in a community with a particular socio-cultural orientation. Extra-linguistic elements enable the occurrence of the functional styles (the belletristic style, the journalistic one, the legal-administrative style), each one with its particularities depending on the linguistic factors and their relations. The functional styles emerged from the interaction of some extra-linguistic elements, but the involved linguistic factors and their relations make the difference.

In the publicistic style, the speaker wants to keep a balance between the sent information and his ability to persuade the interlocutor, showing his own personality through his expressiveness.

Among all these functional styles, the scientific one represents an extreme term on the stylistic scale of the language as it is opposed to the belletristic style, the other extreme term, a means of using the language in the field of artistic comprehension of the world. Therefore, in the scientific style, the specialist is mainly concerned with the message transitivity and the accuracy of the scientific text, the receiver being only partially involved.

The legal-administrative style is a language variant and it reflects the relation between the citizen and the public institutions. More than in the publicistic style, the author plays an important role in the linguistic text organization, but in this case, the relation text-reader prevails over the personal style of the author.

Every „functional style” has, on the one hand, its own features which make it special and, on the other hand, common features making up an interference area; this area is very large between the scientific style and the legal-administrative one as compared to that between the scientific style and the belletristic one.
4. On terms

Regardless the professional activity field, all terminologies are made up of colloquial words and strictly specialized ones which individualize every special language.

The terms are systematically organised lexical units, belonging to a certain specialized field; they are usually mono-referential and mono-semantic and therefore independent of context, these features making them different from the colloquial words, the latter ones being used in casual conversation.

The terms may be created in different ways: using the well-known resources, changing the existent resources or creating new linguistic entities. The terms are formed also changing the existent resources: derivation, compounds, conversion, abbreviation, acronyms.

In the Romanian technical-scientific languages there penetrated many international affixes used to form new terms for new concepts (monetarism, liberalist). Other new words have been made up by joining other words, used independently as well (phantom-profit, parent-company) or some other elements which are not used independently in Romanian (Euro-currency, macro-economy). To denominate the verbal concepts there are used nouns coming from long infinitives (ensurance, accreditation) or from past participle. Very often acronyms are used to denominate institutions, indexes, or parties (I.M.F, WTO).

However the main source of new terms is the lexical borrowing and nowadays, the scientific terminology shows an enormous ability and an international talent to borrow terms, the quantitative mobility being acquired mostly by lexical borrowings as such (but also by loan translation) in all its stages of adjustment to the receiving language.

There is an outstanding trend to borrow neological terms, especially the American-English ones hence careful attention should be paid while introducing them in the specialized languages, the linguistic and socio-linguistic criteria are therefore to be taken into account. This attraction for neological words is reasonable from two points of view: on the one hand we consider that the neological term with the best meaning of the defined concept is more largely used in a language than the created or translated terms, which need time to be considered specialized terms as such; on the other hand the specialist is more certain regarding the accuracy of the information sent by the original term.

In the last ten years, the Romanian terminology of certain special languages has considerably changed. Significant changes have occurred especially in the socio-economic and political field, as a consequence of the capitalist system implementation.

5. Special terminologies

The special terminologies specific to a professional activity or to certain fields like science and technique, philosophy, informatics, economy, arts have particular terms and rules to word the linguistic statement.

In the scientific and technical field, the specialists try to be very precise and in order to be clearly understood they resort ot typical formulae, bypassing the new ones whenever possible. Nevertheless all the changes in the scientific field entail modifications in the denominations system. The names for the new concepts are either borrowed or created. Therefore there is a special relation between terminology and technology, consisting in the utilitary relation between invention (the technical progress) and the denomination system.

The medical terminology is characterized by: non-ambiguity, univocality, mono-reference; most of the terms in this domain have only one meaning (appendicitis, phlebitis, acupuncture), so their definition must provide very clear information. Usually the medical terms are context free even if the context increases the accuracy of the message, for a more precise communication.

As for the exact sciences and informatics, the statement may be worded through letters, figures or other symbols, but in case of other terminologies (medicine, arts, journalism) the concepts are denominated resorting to the natural language.

In the philosophical terminology, the logical terms are the most specialized, sometimes non-verbal signs being used and, they are useful for the precision of the argument more than for the terminological accuracy and they
make a general communication beyond the limits of a certain natural language” (Bidu-Vranceanu,1990). Some less specialized philosophical terms may be found in the common language as well (conclusion, certainty, consequence).

The informatics, a science that has recorded a spectacular progress in the last decade, is „invaded, by a lot of specialized terms dificult to be decoded even by the initiated persons. Once the computer occurred in our life, the informatics penetrated all the professional fields, hence the interested persons must understand and use the specific terms of informatic technique, especially English words: hardware, software, mouse, commander, options, windows, listing etc.

In the economical terminology more and more English words are used (marketing, factoring, off-shore companies, holding, leasing, audit ...etc.), terms introduced in Romanian in their original form as they are to be used by the businessmen and other people in commercial communication. These terms are largely spread mainly by means of written communication (economic magazines, reviews, financial and governmental publications, companies correspondence).

The terms in the fine arts are used both in the specialized languages and in the colloquial one. In the fine arts, a special category of „the visual arts”, only few terms are univocal and mono-referential, less known by the ordinary people, most of them being polisemantic therefore ambiguous ones; in this case the context is very important as it should clarify their meaning: painting may refer to the branch of the plastic arts, the range of paintings in a country/ in a period of time (the French painting of the ...century) or associated with another word it may refer to the type of painting (oil-painting, mural-painting...)

„The juridical terminology together with several sets of denominations organized in a coherent system may be conditioned by the prescriptive discourses.” (Rey,1995) The juridical texts consist in chapters, sections, articles partly available only to the specialists. In this code there are two groups of terms: the ones specific to the juridical and administrative institutions and the terms from the common literary language, a great deal belonging to the vocabulary used in the juridical-administrative style.

The socio-political terminology is well represented in the publicistic style. Most of the socio-political terms are neological (diplomacy, delegation, independency, trade union... ) the French ones prevailing. Some terms from other styles or from the common literary language were semantically changed: they are either neological terms (economic development, market economy) or old Romanian words with new meanings (chamber, underdevelopment).

Many English terms which have been lately introduced in the publicistic style still keep their foreign form (play-back, happy-end, summit, discount, horror etc.). We write the English words keeping the written form (market, consulting, meci, trening), reflecting the phonetic form (lider, ghem) or the morphological one.

The written and oral press make the terms very popular while informing the audience on the different aspects regarding the national and international socio-political and cultural-scientific life. Sometimes in the written and oral press, the terms are used in a wrong way without taking into account their correct form, indicated in the dictionaries, either to impress by a more sophisticated style or because of the author’s carelessness. The dictionaries provide the correct form of the terms and their right meaning as the definitions comprise both the strict scientific elements and the information useful for non-specialists.

The specialized vocabulary is transitional, dynamic and versatile, as it has to continuously keep up with the wide range of activities and rapid progress.

Conclusions

Terminologies represent a strictly specialized vocabulary, the amount of special words used by sciences, arts, research and all the professions as well as by scientists As compared to the casual vocabulary, terminologies are relatively closed since very accurate knowledge in a certain field is sent through terms. Terminology is wholly integrated in linguistic structures and aims at finding perfect correspondences between conceptualization and the language system entailed by communication.
References