

## Teaching Types of Semantic Transference in Business English Terms

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### Abstract

The object of the study is business terminology extracted mainly from The Longman Business English Dictionary. The subject of the study is differentiation of non-phraseological terms and terms of idiomatic nature. The research is targeted at revealing the co-relation between terminology and phraseology among business terms on the one hand and between the groups of business terms of different degree of idiomaticity. The theoretical background of the research embraces the following items: (a) the theory of the term suggested by V. M. Leichik, (b) the theory of English phraseology created by A. V. Kunin and the method of phraseological identification introduced by the scholar into linguistics. The research results in the following points (a) revealing the percentage co-relation between non-phraseological terminology and idiomatic terminology, (b) differentiating PU-terms depending on the degree of semantic transfer. The outcome of the study can be used in the course of business English for senior students who are familiar with the courses of English phraseology and terminology.

**Keywords:** terminology, phraseology, full meaning transfer, partial meaning transfer, variability, identity.

### Introduction

The theoretical background of the research embraces the following items: (a) the theory of the term suggested by V. M. Leichik [Лейчик 2009], (b) the theory of English phraseology creat-

ed by A. V. Kunin and the method of phraseological identification introduced by the scholar into linguistics [Кунин 1996] and acknowledged by A. Cowie [Cowie 1998].

### 1. Stable non-phraseological expressions VS phraseological units

The first step of our investigation deals with separating ‘sheep from the goats’ (as The Bible runs), i.e. we concentrate on how to sift out phraseology proper from the whole bulk of business terminology. To achieve that purpose, we consider it effective to appeal to the semantic analysis based on definitions that the business terms are supplied with in dictionary entries.

Let us take for instance a banking term **bank bill**, that is defined in the dictionary entry by means of the same words ‘bill’ and ‘bank’ which proves that the meaning of the term under analysis is quite transparent, showing no trace of any semantic transfer:

**bank bill** [C] — a *bill* of exchange given by a bank and instructing another *bank* to pay money to someone [LBED: 47]. The context shows the true meaning of the term:

*# Andrews’s recent difficulties with the SEC stem from his alleged wooing of Nashville investor Leigh S. Stelmach to invest \$ 1.5 million in a prime **bank bill** of exchange. Stelmach was told he would make an annual return of at least 50 percent from trades of the bill. # But when the money went into Fulcrum’s corporate account, it was used not to buy a bill of exchange [COCA].*

Let us see the accounting term **sales budget**, which dictionary definition — through the identical lexeme ‘sale’ and the lexeme ‘money’, belonging to the same thematic field as ‘budget’ — makes it quite evident that the term *sales budget* does not belong to phraseology as the meaning of its components retains within the frame of terminology:

**sales budget** ACCOUNTING – the sum that a company expects to receive from the *sale* of goods and services during a particular period of time... [LBED: 61]. The actual meaning of the term may be illustrated by the following context:

*The first salesman I worked with (in his mid-50's) had been named "salesman of the year". His reward? they increased his **sales budget** (i.e. his yearly goal) 25%. He told me he had worked harder than he ever had in the previous year, there was no way he could hit his new numbers. He was defeated before he even started. <...> [COCA]*

Practically the same result is achieved by the comparison of the terms and their dictionary explanatory notes in the cases like these: **money market** [C] – FINANCE a *market* for borrowing *money* over short periods of time in the form of commercial papers, treasury bills, etc. [LBED: 325]; **property rights** – LAW the *right* to own and make a profit from *capital, land*, etc. [LBED: 468]; **borrowing powers** – FINANCE *powers* that are given to the directors of a company by its shareholders to *borrow* money [LBED: 405]. Thus, through the definition technique it is possible to differentiate business terms into set non-phraseological expressions, on the one hand, and into those terms that have acquired the status of phraseological units.

The quantitative analysis of the terms in LBED reveals the percentage co-relation between non-phraseological terminology and idiomatic terminology that stands as 61% to 39% of the total terminological stock in the field under study.

## 2. English business terminology of idiomatic nature

The further step of the study deals with the analysis of business terms of idiomatic nature and its segmentation into idioms and phraseological collocations. Idiomatic business terms are far from being a rare occasion in Modern English. The semantic anal-

ysis shows that every tenth business term embraced by LBED is of idiomatic character. In other words, the components of such terms have lost their original meaning and have ceased to be structural and semantic elements of a variable word-combination. For example:

(a) **golden handshake** [C] *BrE* — HUMAN RESOURCES a large amount of money given to a senior employee when he or she leaves a company, especially when they are being forced to leave [LBED: 235];

(b) **equity kicker** [C] — FINANCE when a company raises money by issuing debt, with the right for investors of the debt to exchange it at a later date for shares in the company, perhaps with a right to buy shares at a lower price than usual <...> [LBED: 182].

From hundreds up to thousands of national corpora contexts reveal the idiomatic character of the business terms under study, cf.:

(a) *When Thorp finally did part company with Davis, giving the coach a lucrative **golden handshake** in the process, it was too late. The rot had set in. The Tar Heels wasted one season under an interim coach and now face a long road back under Larry Fedora.* [COCA]

(b) # <...> *Great to see the government actively supporting the startup ecosystem The **Equity Kicker** # ... you live in the UK you probably saw the announcement from the Prime Minister last week that the government here wants to build a tech cluster in East... #* [COCA]

Thus, by means of definition techniques and contextual analysis we find out that complete idiomaticity is characteristic of 33% of business terminology under study.

### 3. Phraseological business terms with partial meaning transfer

The majority of business terminology is presented by phraseological units with partial meaning transfer, which is made

evident by their entry definitions, when one of the PU-term components is repeated in the corresponding dictionary explanation as in (a) and (b), or when it belongs to the same thematic field, as in (c), cf.:

(a) **sinking fund** [C] — a *fund* into which regular payments are made so that future expenses can be paid... [LBED: 224];

(b) **depressed area** — an *area* in a large city or a part of a country where houses and other buildings are in a bad condition, the level of unemployment is high, and a lot of people are poor: <...> [LBED: 25];

(c) **harvesting strategy** — COMMERCE a *method* for keeping as much profit as possible from a business or activity and investing as little as possible in it [LBED: 524].

The numerous corpora contexts illustrate their frequent use in business discourse, cf.:

(a) <...> *an amount equal to the interest on indebtedness contracted pursuant to this section and of the annual requirements for amortization on any **sinking fund** bonds and for redemption of any serial bonds evidencing such indebtedness* <...> [COCA]

(b) *Phosphate mining might benefit some workers in this economically **depressed area** of Florida, but some local activist Jim Tatum says that the environmental cost of a phosphate mine is not worth a few jobs.* [COCA]

(c) <...> *I lead the development of the tax-loss **harvesting strategy** at Wealthfront. Just want to clarify how we swap ETFs — When we detect a harvesting opportunity, we sell the ETF at loss and buy another ETF that tracks a different but highly correlated index.* <...> [COCA]

Thus, by means of definition techniques and contextual analysis we find out that partial meaning transfer is characteristic of 66% of business terminology under study.

#### 4. Variability in Phraseological business terms VS their identity

The structural and semantic analysis of the business terms under study reveals active lexical variability of their components (see also: [Fedulenkova 2021]). The quantity of the variable PU-terms extracted from business dictionaries and national corpora results in 400 pairs.

Variability of the first component, or *adjunct* [Аракин 1979: 149], in PU-terms is quite regular, which allows its differentiation into following lexical sub-types:

1) variability of Noun components:

**press baron** also **media baron** — someone who owns several newspapers and is therefore important and has a lot of influence: *A British-born drug baron was jailed for 15 years yesterday* [LBED: 41];

**fishbone diagram** also **ishikawa diagram** — a drawing that is used for finding the most likely causes for a problem or an unwanted effect [LBED: 151];

2) variability of Adjective components:

**corporate communication** also **organizational communication** HUMAN RESOURCES — the process of providing information about a company for its employees, or for its customers and the public, so that they know what the company is trying to achieve and have a good opinion of the company [LBED: 99];

3) variability of Participle-1 components:

**shipping agent** also **forwarding agent** COMMERCE — a person or company that organizes the documents, insurance etc. necessary goods [LBED: 15];

4) variability of Participle-2 components:

**indexed bond** also **stabilized bond** — a bond issued by a government where the interests rate follows changes in the consumer price index (=the rate of increase of prices of goods that people buy) [LBED: 52];

5) variability of Participle 2 and Adjective components:

***distributable profit*** also ***distributed profit*** FINANCE — profit earned during a particular period of time that a company pays to shareholders [LBED: 421].

The quantitative study of the corresponding dictionary entries shows that variability of the second component, or *kernel* [Arakin 1979: 149], in PU-terms is not so regular, on the contrary it is rather sporadic:

***shopping bot*** also ***shopping agent*** a piece of software that searches the internet for products that you can buy, and compares prices: *If you are shopping online, use the shopping bot to get a better deal* [LBED: 55].

The quantitative analysis reveals that, as a rule, a PU-term has two lexical variants that do not break its identity as a language sign, cf.:

***online banking*** also ***electronic banking*** a service provided by ***banks*** that allows people to pay money from one account to another, pay bills etc. over ***the internet*** [LBED, p. 39]. Compare the contextual illustrations:

(1) While in the West, ***online banking*** is mostly a matter of convenience, the potential of mobile banking — in countries where it can reach sufficient scale — to increase transparency across the Global South could prove far more meaningful. # [COCA]

(2) # In most places, businesses still can't write or accept checks because banks don't offer checking or ***electronic banking*** services. # [COCA]

As to the three varieties of the same business term of phraseological nature, they are quite rare which may be explained by certain limits in the domain restricted by the local varieties of English, cf.:

***small ad*** also ***classified ad*** BrE, ***want ad*** AmE — an advertisement put in a newspaper by someone wanting to buy or sell

something: *He got his first clients through the small ads he put in the newspaper* [LBED: 8],

## 5. Conclusions

The research results in the following: 1. The percentage co-relation between non-phraseological terminology and idiomatic terminology is seen as 61% to 39% of the total terminological stock in the field under study. 2. The differentiation of business PU-terms depending on the degree of semantic transfer in their components leads to the conclusion that (a) PU-terms with partial meaning transfer embrace about 66% of the idiomatic terminology stock and PU-terms with full meaning transfer embrace about 33% of the idiomatic terminology stock.

The nearest perspective of the research consists in compiling a manual on business phraseological terminology for undergraduates studying foreign languages as LSP.

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