

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING OF GERMAN ECONOMIC TEXTS FOR THE AIMS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Summary

Focusing on the topic of the specific features of economic texts, the article presents a descriptive textlinguistic model which can be applied to their analysis. On the basis of their textlinguistic features, the author offers a number of tasks so as the selected texts can be employed in a consistent practice aimed at the development of reading and summarizing skills of students at the CEFR levels when teaching German for Specific Purposes.

Key words: German for Specific Purposes, textlinguistic analysis, economic texts
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Introduction

Nowadays the ultimate goals for economic students who learn a foreign language are to use the studied language as a means of achieving professional targets by accessing foreign language sources in order to gain specialized information and master communication among professionals.

When assisting them on the path leading to the achievement of these goals through the use of activity-based course books, the teacher often encounters difficulties in the building up of the reading comprehension skill. (Rezeption schriftlich, Leseverstehen). Moreover, while working with homogeneous Bulgarian groups, translation into and from the native language remains at the background, which is the starting point of the problematic situation analysed in our research.

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In our study we have adopted Buhlmann and Fearn (2000, 87) definition for activity-based learning. They understand it as the skill of the learner to become informed through the target language in an appropriate way (angemessen) and to communicate successfully in it. "Getting information in an appropriate way means that the learner is able to obtain maximum information from the texts employing his or her language resources and using work strategies". "Realizing successful communication in an appropriate way" means that at the level of their knowledge learners can express the essence of their intended message clearly and unambiguously enough.

We also subscribe to the definition of specialized language suggested by Buhlmann and Fearn (2000, 12): "Specialized language is the set of all specialized languages, i.e. all linguistic resources used in a definite specialized field, namely economics, through the successful communication of everybody acting in this field."

Goals and objectives of the study

The goal of the study is to create a set of criteria for text selection. The object of analysis in this piece of research is economic texts and the objectives are to reveal their special features by applying text linguistic analysis. The results can be used to design reading comprehension tasks promoting students' reading skills.

Following the CEFR level descriptors (Der Gemeinsame europäische Referenzrahmen) we selected the global ones needed for the development of reading comprehension, translation and transformation skills at B2-C1 levels. They can be used as goal-identification criteria as well as skills yardsticks of language proficiency at a particular level. It is on their basis that the skills to work with specialized texts related to students' professional fields can be identified. In their essence, these skills represent a unified concept comprising all kinds of translating and text transformation strategies in the same language. By itself this can be an object of a thorough analysis and design of learning materials which enhance learners' development. At the beginning of our study we are going to give an example of reading comprehension.

Detailed objectives – reading comprehension of a written text (Rezeption schriftlich):

Learners can:

- understand detailed reports, analyses, and comments in which interdependencies, opinions, and viewpoints are discussed, e.g. company management economics students can interpret all positions in favor of or against the increase of VAT presented in a German-language economic journal (Gaboniat, et.al., 2005)

- understand the content of a narrative as well as the information about the social, historical, and political reasons for the events, e.g. they become acquainted with the position and the opinion of the author in a longer report of the economic and political situation of a country (Gaboniat, et.al., 2005)

In our research we used: a critical source analysis, descriptive analysis of texts, and an opinion poll.

For the purposes of our study 100 journalese texts from the digital base Genios. de were selected and the following procedural steps were fulfilled:

Text analysis was carried out according to the following model:

Table 1. A model of textlinguistic analysis

1 Text situation:	Number of words, heading, lead, subheading(s); Source; author; local and temporal orientation; iconicity; media.
2 Topic development as main topic and subtopics:	Descriptive Argumentative Explicative
3 Text function and indicators	Main and minor:
	3.1. explicitly expressed indicators without sender's attitude towards the content; 3.2. explicitly expressed indicators with sender's attitude towards the content; 3.3. contextual indicators.
4. What is the topic development and what are the linguistic means of expression of the denotata? Topic development	4.1. Denotata (carry the reference) 4.2. Linguistic features of the denotata: 4.2.1. recurrence 4.2.2. synonymy 4.2.3. metonymy 4.2.4. word formation type
5. What is the level of specialization?	5. Level of specialization: 5.1. lexical features 5.2. syntactic features 5.3. linking words
6. What are the sources?	6. Source references

From the analyzed texts we are going to give partial examples of the linguistic resources for the means of expression of the denotata as well as linguistic specialization of descriptive texts. Synonymic and metonymical relationships are

preferred only if they express specific and clearly defined aspects of the denotatum and do not create ambiguity or vagueness of meaning but, on the contrary, they are easy to understand and remember, e.g.:

- Most often country and company names as well as personal nouns keep the first place in frequency of occurrence: *Deutschland, BMW, Gasprom, Frankfurter Sparkasse*
- Pronominalisation is avoided and thus conditions for full and partial recurrence are created: *das Unternehmen – DAX Unternehmen*
- Use of the definite article when the denotatum is mentioned for the first time: *das Product, die Creme*

There are metonymical relationships:

- Substitution of the country with the nationality: *die Firmen in Russland – die russischen Unternehmen*
- Substitution of the name with the object of activity: *BMW – der Autohersteller*

There is also synonymy: *druzhestvoto* (entity) – *predpriyatieto* (company)

Kinds of attribution:

- Attributes which agree in gender and number with the modified: *Der älteste bulgarische Skiort, ein ganz anderer Urlaub, 200 verschiedene Steuern*
- Compound adjectives: *börsennorierte Unternehmen*
- Participles: *verkaufte Fahrzeuge*
- Attributes which do not agree in gender and number with the modified: *Die Zahl der Erwerbstätigen, Die Übernahme der Gemeinschaftswährung als strategisches Ziel*

The denotata, which carry the reference relationship, are the intersection of the expression of the specializedness and the text theme. This makes the text refer in a clear and concrete way to the specialized theme. Without exception the level of specializedness is below 10%, which is quite low and can be attributed to the fact that the texts are journalesque. For example, we can identify:

- A comparatively high frequency of abbreviations with specialized meaning: *ifo, WSI, BIP*
- A lot of compound nouns with the same root: *Erhöhung-Steuererhöhung-Tabaksteuererhöhung; Erwerbstätige- Erwerbslose- Erwerbspersonen*
- A preference of prepositional phrases of the type *nach Angaben, von 300.000 um 10 000 auf 310 000 Mio,.. Im Vergleich zum Vormonat*
- A preference of simple sentences and compound sentences with the conjunctions *und, den, das, obwohl*
- A lot of compound nouns and a combination of abbreviations and full nouns: *EU-Raum, Euro-Zone, BIP-Rückgang, OECD-Länderbericht*

- A rich variety of occasionalisms, metaphors and comparisons. On the one hand, they are directly related to the economic problem, but on the other, their presence is due to the journalese style and the particularly employed.

It has been noticed that the macrotheme in economic discourse "state of a company" comprises the following recurring structures: **the position of the company on the market, the source, a comparison with a previous period, reasons for change, shareholders, (shareholder meetings), the ratio output-capacity-prices-gains, planned investments and final goals.**

Having completed the text analysis, we proceeded as follows:

1. Tasks design
2. Revision
3. Trial
4. Assessment of interim results
5. Revision
6. Final variant creation

As a result of the analyses, three main groups of criteria are formed, in which a leading position has the thematic one.

Thematic orientation

A national economy – economies of German-speaking countries and Bulgaria, historical processes, events and personalities, processes of integration and globalization, European economic space, world economics

B business economics – the history of world corporations, the road to success, crises and upheavals, examples of successful businesses

C trade relationships, distribution, marketing and advertisement – representatives and trade partners of German speaking companies in Bulgaria, the road to the market, product policy: product characteristics, innovations, brand policy, market research; new markets opening. Roles: end-user, client, commercial agent and distributor, producer

D tourist sector – Bulgaria as a tourist destination, kinds of tourist travels, tourist services market, tour operators and examples of successful marketing strategies in tourism

E the positive image of Bulgaria in the German media

The second group comprises structural-functional criteria based on the text analyses. Depending on their style, this group includes three subgroups:

Functional-structural text linguistic criteria. The texts are expected to:

- tell in a narrative or descriptive communicative aspect about a specific event, subject, personality, phenomenon, or process in the field of economics;
- appear in specialized editions or headings
- have clearly expressed genre characteristics

- have clearly expressed plan/structure of the text
- have a medium degree of specializedness
- have a good linguistic style and current word-formation models
- give sufficient information about the source of the communicative channel, the author and the recipient, and the viewpoint
- be the means of gaining of socio-cultural information
- be authentic and of current interest.

Didactic-methodological criteria. The texts are expected to:

- meet the global and detailed objectives to build up the skills of reading and text transformation (Sprachmittlung) at C1 level at CEFR; texts should respond to the requirements of maximum efficiency of the text in didactic aspect
- be appropriate for global, selective and detailed reading as well as suitable for the design of particular linguistic-structural units as:
- summarizing of the text content from Bulgarian into German or from German into Bulgarian at C1 level (the Sprachmittlung skill)
- true/false tasks (B1-B2)
- missing subheadings
- verbal expression or sentence transformation tasks (B2)
- a gapped summary text containing the denotata expressed through the various synonymic relationships we discussed earlier.

In a specialized translation course the focus should be on the terminology as well as non-terminological specialized vocabulary. Lack of specialized knowledge and access to other information sources about the reported event (lack of context) could give rise to difficulties.

Noticing the denotata prepares the learner to work with terminological concepts and can serve as a solid base for the teacher to design tasks in which the following are employed:

- providing synonyms and definitions of meanings as well as distinguishing between them
- working with thematic fields and thematically related concepts
- compiling of terminology banks in a limited volume
- tasks for grouping and classifying of word-formation types in both languages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, due to the specifics of the curriculum in foreign language learning with general economic orientation, it is not possible to focus on strictly specialized teaching of a the specialized language related to economy, finance, business, transport, or tourism. The learners are at the initial stage of acquiring of basic economic disciplines, their knowledge in the corresponding fields is limited and the number of classes is small. Thus the content of some texts would come in advance of the basic knowledge in the specific subject. In this way, of course, besides its foreign language learning target the text can be seen as possessing an informative value, which will motivate learners significantly, but will not correspond to the objectives of foreign language teaching.

Working with thematically selected texts and doing the number of didactic tasks, in particular, is a way for academic lecturers to offer an autonomous knowledge organization and to fulfil their aim to create multimodular, engaging, and activity-based conditions, which affect the subjective experience of every learner. Moreover, they give students the opportunity to create a new field of knowledge individually, to compare and overcome the possible differences in their initial expectations and knowledge about how to act in a specialized environment. They should choose the productive option – reconstruction, deconstruction, and construction.

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