

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION – CREATING A DICTIONARY FOR HOTEL OPERATIONS

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Abstract

The paper analyzes subject matters like professional communication, professional needs, documentation, terminography, and translation and how they interconnect to give a comprehensive insight about the terminology of a broad area of social relevance – hospitality industry. The second part of the paper deals with the importance of creating a dictionary of hotel operations, taking into account that the average language user relies on a dictionary as authoritative source of information. The third part of the paper provides an overview of the Dictionary of Hotel Operations in English-Romanian-Italian, specifically the process of dictionary compilation and its structure, after identifying the needs and skills of the target user.

Keywords: *communication, terminology, compilation, dictionary, hotel operations.*

1. Introduction

Professional communication takes place in all professional contexts and encompasses written, oral, visual and digital communication. Nistor (2006) describes the features of professional communication as follows:

a) *Its predominantly pragmatic nature.* In professional activities, the practical function of language is dominant as the individual aims to produce a change in the behavior or attitude of the person he/she works or interacts with. Some of the purposes of professional communication are: the transmission and obtaining of information, the control over the fulfillment of delegated tasks, the evaluation of the employees' performances, hiring the best candidate for a job, motivating and training the subordinates or partners (colleagues), etc.;

b). *The concern for efficiency.* Efficiency implies that the communication process takes place with as little resource consumption as possible; therefore, the communication has to be concise, precise, with direct reference to the topic in question;

c) *Crafting messages according to the needs of the audience.* In professional communication, it is considered that the encoder has the task of making the message easy to understand.

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d) *Promoting the image of the company.* It is paramount that the businessperson/professional in a specific area must create a good impression on the interlocutor about himself/herself, about his/his organization, products, etc.

(Nistor, 2006:19-20).

2. From Language for Professions to Languages for Specific Purposes

The aspect of language for professions was analyzed by Ehlich (1991) who argues that professionalization means a highly specialized type of linguistic socialization which has major impacts on the structures of society's common knowledge. Moreover, a theoretical foundation for the analysis of languages in the professions could be found:

- by making a clear distinction of the categories text and discourse,
- by referring to a theoretical framework which offers analytical tools for an integrated treatment of linguistic, mental, and instrumental aspects of linguistic action,
- by making a clear distinction between form and function, in combination with the analytic reconstruction of their interrelationship,
- by integration of the concept of linguistic action into a theory of communication.

(Ehlich, 1991: 27-28).

In a changing environment characterized by globalization, technology, internationalization, greater student and worker mobility, English maintains its top position as *lingua franca in all business areas*. As reported by James Lane in the Babel² magazine, English is spoken by 1.75 billion people around the world and is synonymous with opportunity and a better quality of life. The author emphasizes the fact that the relative ease with which English can be acquired (compared with Chinese) and the pervasive soft power of US culture mean that English will continue to dominate the world stage. Moreover, the field of English for Specific Purposes has shaped new teacher and learner roles in this digital era, not ignoring the definition of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998).and its *absolute* and variable *characteristics*:

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
- ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.
- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;

² Babel is a language learning app and e-learning platform.

- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

(Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998: 4–5)

Likewise, the field of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) which has its origins and main impetus in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is evolving in a globalised and technological context which provides teachers and students with greater opportunities to access different discourse communities and tailor courses to students' genuine needs and practices (Arnó-Macià, 2014: 4-5).

3. The Role of Dictionaries in Improving Professional Communication

In order to be successful in a changing world, students need the ability to select information, understand the correlation between the pieces of information, place new ideas and knowledge in different contexts and grasp concepts that are connected to their future jobs. Ehlich predicted that the demand for training members of the society in order to enable them to participate in professional communication was permanently increasing in quantity and in complexity (Ehlich, 1991: 27-28). If terminology studies the ways the terms are formed, their linguistic behavior, their relations with the signification, terminography deals with the collection, management and dissemination of terms. Thus, it has an applicative aspect, aiming at creating databases for different purposes such as: specialized vocabularies, glossaries, dictionaries, databases, etc. (Pitar, 2004: 1)

Dictionaries are used for linguistic purposes and extra-linguistic purposes. From a socio-cultural point of view, the extra-linguistic goals of dictionaries are much more important, as dictionaries target the majority of the population. Thus, the problems solved with the help of dictionaries are currently related to the most varied fields. In the learning of language skills, dictionaries may provide assistance on two levels: indirectly by transmitting knowledge about the native, foreign or special-purpose language's vocabulary and grammar in connection with the systematic study of the language in question; and directly by providing information that can be used to solve specific problems in the actual process of communication – in connection with text reception, text production, and translation (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp, 2011: 150).. In a later study, Fuertes-Olivera (2014) points out the study conducted by Laufer and Melamed (1994) that demonstrated the effectiveness of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries through the combination of the monolingual

information which contains a definition and examples with a translation of the new word into the learner's tongue. At the beginning of the study learners were split into unskilled, average and good dictionary users and were tested on their comprehension of unknown words and production of original sentences with these unknown words in different conditions.

In my opinion, if a language instructor creates a specialized dictionary with the support of professionals from a specific field, the dictionary will become a reliable teaching and learning material which tailors students' genuine needs and practices in contexts that involve communication and collaboration across borders.

4. Creating a Dictionary for Hotel Operations

Hospitality Industry is considered a broad group of businesses that provides services to customers. Mackenzie and Chan gave a contemporary explanation of *Hospitality* indicating the relationship process between a *guest* and a *host*. When talking about the "Hospitality Industry", they referred to the companies or organisations which provide food and/or drink and/or accommodation to people who are away from home (Mackenzie and Chan, 2009:1). In the article "The Most Important Quality of a Leader: Communication,"

Daniela Ciobotar presents a 2016 study of 195 leaders from 15 countries that placed clear and effective communication in the top 10 skills needed in leadership alongside flexibility, ethics, openness and the ability to improve the performance of those around them.

Facilitating effective communication in the hospitality industry is done by: welcoming guests, interacting with guests, assisting guests throughout their stay, handling complaints, accepting different opinions, encouraging discussion, providing feedback, timing, adapting communication to the guest's level of understanding, etc. Also, the empathic component is very important because the hospitality industry employees must respect and care about the guests' feelings. Communicative user situations occur when people need help in connection with ongoing acts of communication. Thus, dictionaries must be designed to meet certain types of user needs by carefully selecting data and specifying the options for accessing the data so that the answers to users' questions match their needs in a number of different contexts (Fuentes-Olivera and Sandro Nielsen, 2014: 219).

The "Dictionary of Hotel Operations" has been compiled and published to promote the development of two Romance languages (Romanian and Italian), with regard to the terminology of a broad area of social relevance - *hospitality industry*, by making a comprehensive source of information for the operations performed in hotels internationally.

The starting point was to collect terms in English that represent the complex *area of hotel operations*, taking account of: the dominant role of English in most

areas of economic and social importance, a large number of students who get a job in the hospitality industry abroad, and students' interest in aspects of specialized communication and translation. Cabré (1999) considers the terms as units of the lexicon with a precise meaning in a given domain, showing the specialized information of that domain. Therefore, terms will appear in all the texts of their specialized scope. When analyzing *terminology* and *translation*, the same author points out that specialized translation inevitably needs terminology to produce an adequate text and the term extraction from original texts instead of translated texts is a priority in the process of elaboration of glossaries.

After investigating a corpus of online didactic texts, textbooks, glossaries, hotel websites, and electronic dictionaries, I collected the lexical units in close collaboration with specialists in the field of hospitality. The selected texts underwent a critical analysis of the hotel operations area, the key activities of hotel departments such as Front-of-House Department, Housekeeping, Maintenance, Accounts, Food & Beverage Department and the key competences of the hotel operations staff. By applying the onomasiological and semasiological principles, I managed to select terms that designate activities in the areas mentioned above and terminology terms/phrases in the specialized texts to identify their meaning.

The dictionary provides 1,800 entries. The headword of each entry consists of a single word or multi-word unit in English, followed by its abbreviation or the specification British English/American English when needed. The dictionary provides the equivalents of headwords (single word or multi-word) in *Romanian* and *Italian* and their grammatical category: For abbreviations and jargon, I included definitions and quotations from specialized texts in all languages of the dictionary, and disambiguation by short contexts to facilitate comprehension, as exemplified below:

Grievance ³ (BrE)
<i>ro</i> Plângere (s.f.)
<i>it</i> Reclamo (n.m.)
Grooming standards
<i>ro</i> Norme de igienă și de îngrijire personală (s.f.)
<i>it</i> Norme di igiene e di cura personale (n.f.)
Gross Operating Profit (GOP)
<i>ro</i> Profitul operațional brut (s.n.)
<i>it</i> Reddito operativo lordo (n.m.)

³ “A complaint or a strong feeling that you have been treated unfairly” <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/grievance?q=GRIEVANCE>

Gross Operation Profit Per Available room (GOPPAR)
<i>ro</i> Profitul operațional brut pe camere disponibile (s.n.)
<i>it</i> Reddito operativo lordo per camere disponibili (n.m.)
Group rate
<i>ro</i> Tarif pentru grup de personae/turiști (s.n.)
<i>it</i> Tariffa di gruppo (n.f.)
Guaranteed booking
<i>ro</i> Rezervare nerambursabilă (vb.)
<i>it</i> Prenotazione non-refundable ⁴ (vrb.)
Guest
<i>ro</i> Client (s.m.)
<i>it</i> Cliente/ospite (n.m.)
Guest balance report
<i>ro</i> Raport privind bilanțul clienților (s.n.)
<i>it</i> Rapporto di bilancio degli ospiti (n.m.)

This dictionary is a theoretical and practical support for the translation of texts with application in tourism, professional communication, hotel operations, and customer service.

Concluding remarks

Language in the professions is a major concern in present-day linguistics and a very quick growth in the field of linguistics for professional communication which was determined mainly by external factors (Ehlich, 1991: 9). Specialized dictionaries have already become paramount in ESP training. The demand for training members of the society in order to enable them to participate in professional communication is permanently increasing in quantity and in complexity. (Ehlich, 1991: 27-28).

To conclude with, acquiring communication skills in foreign language contributes to the creation and evolution of professional cultures that impact the students' role in a future organization. By creating the Dictionary of Hotel Operations, I identified a set of core language needs of learners and adopted teaching materials and practices that facilitated learners to grasp the special vocabulary of hotel operations.

⁴ Viene garantita dalla fase della prenotazione attraverso il prepagamento, o il rilascio dei dati della carta di credito del cliente.

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