

Vorwort

Wie im Editorial des letzten Heftes angekündigt, sollen in Zukunft „normale“ Ausgaben von *FACHSPRACHE* mit Themenheften wechseln. Dieses zweite Heft, für das wir als neues Herausgeber-Team verantwortlich zeichnen, ist ein solches und präsentiert Beiträge der englischsprachigen Tagung „Methodological Issues in Economic and Business Terminology“, die im November 2008 an der Wirtschaftsuniversität in Wien stattgefunden hat. Den Veranstaltern der Tagung, Prof. Dr. Franz Rainer und Dr. Elisabeth Peters, sei an dieser Stelle sehr herzlich für die Übernahme der Herausgeberschaft dieser Beiträge gedankt.

Susanne Göpferich, Nina Janich, Jan Engberg

Preface

As indicated in the previous issue editorial, future issues of *FACHSPRACHE* will alternate between standard issues and special issues focused around a topic. The current issue offers an example of a special issue presenting selected contributions from the conference “Methodological Issues in Economic and Business Terminology” held in November 2008 at the WU Vienna University of Economics and Business. We would like to thank the organizers of the conference, Prof. Dr. Franz Rainer and Dr. Elisabeth Peters, for their thoughtful work as special issue editors.

Susanne Göpferich, Nina Janich, Jan Engberg

Editorial

On November 29–30, 2008 the first WU Symposium on International Business Communication took place at WU Vienna, dedicated to “Methodological issues in economic and business terminology”. The present issue of *FACHSPRACHE* contains four papers selected from the 17 given at the symposium.

The label “economic and business terminology” had purposefully been interpreted in the broadest possible sense, including neighbouring fields such as sociology, politics or law as long as the focus was on topics relevant for economics or business. This generous conception is also reflected in the four papers presented here, which cover subject areas as diverse as sociology, law, marketing, and developmental policy. In view of this broad coverage, it seemed preferable to drop in the title of the present issue the reference given to economics and business, referring instead more generally to “terminology research”.

However divergent the four contributions may be with regard to the targeted subject areas, they form a highly homogeneous collection from a linguistic point of view. In accordance with the central theme of our symposium, in fact, they all focus on methodological issues of terminology research. The four papers can naturally be divided into two subgroups, one concentrating on the nature of meaning of terms (or more generally, words), while the other group focuses on the relevance of diachrony for the synchronic study of terminologies and the help one can get in this respect from corpus linguistics.

The nature of meaning is notoriously a highly elusive subject which has kept busy an army of philosophers and linguists from the dawn of Western philosophy up to the present day. Therefore, it wouldn't be surprising if the announcement that the first contribution of the present issue contained a new theory of meaning were met with skepticism by some readers. Nevertheless, we think that the opening article by Martin Hummel warrants careful attention by all students of terminology. Hummel's proposal reflects a truly oecumenic spirit, apt to reconcile to some degree scholars as diverse as Structural Field Theorists and Cognitive Semanticists. The author believes that meanings are clear-cut in the intention of the speaker (a referee has a neat meaning of *offside*, though he may hesitate whether a particular situation qualifies as such or not), and that Prototype Theorists consequently are misguided when they want to import the fuzziness of reality into semantics. He also believes in core meaning, as opposed to encyclopedic meaning, but the difference is said to be gradual, contrary to what Structural Semanticists have claimed. Nevertheless, these clear-cut core meanings are internally complex entities, according to the author, consisting of at least three dimensions: a morphosemantic dimension (e.g. 'one who works' in the case of *worker*), obviously restricted to morphologically complex words or figuratively used words, a paradigmatic dimension (along the lines of Semantic Field Theory, but practiced in a less dogmatic manner), as well as a referential dimension (representing the thing meant, for example the imagistic representation that we have of a rose). As Hummel convincingly demonstrates, all three dimensions may, to varying degrees, be relevant in the description of a single term or word. Terms, by the way, are claimed not to differ from ordinary words in principle, though some dimensions may turn out to be more relevant in terminologies than in non-specialised registers.

In the second article on terminology and meaning, Jan Engberg starts out from a Wittgensteinian conception of meaning, which leads him to focus on the relationship between individual and collective use of terms. Recall that for Wittgenstein the meaning of a word is the set of rules or conventions which determine the word's use in a particular speech community. Consequently, a sound description of meaning, according to the Austrian philosopher, should start out with an accurate description of how speakers really use the word in question ("Denk nicht, sondern schau!"). And this is exactly what Engberg undertakes with the example of the legal term (*criminal*) *liability of corporations* in US law. Abstracting, for the sake of simplicity and manageability, from differences in legislation and court decisions at the state level in the US, the author applies the deductive approach elaborated by Klaus-Peter Konerding to nine texts on the subject of (*criminal*) *liability of corporations*. This approach consists in reconstructing the cognitive landscape associated with a term by extracting relevant passages from texts, guided by a list of questions which Konerding has elaborated for each of his "matrix frames" (State, in our example). By this procedure, Engberg identifies 15 different "knowledge elements" and then assembles these knowledge elements in a hierarchical structure according to the logical relations obtaining between them. As the author shows, the term (*criminal*) *liability of corporations* is still unstable in the sense that judges, lawyers and law professors do not yet agree about the exact conditions under which corporations should be considered liable, or even whether they should be considered such at all. This is therefore a case where the meaning of a term is still negotiated in society, or more specifically among experts. Contrary to Hummel's example of *offside*, where the meaning was said to be clear-cut even though the application in concrete situations may not be straightforward, in the present case the impression of "fuzziness of meaning" is, in the first place, a consequence of the coexistence of several

proposals concerning the exact definition of the concept. Individual proposals may be as sharply delimited as the notion ‘offside’, but taken together the proposals form a fuzzy set at the level of the speech community.

The other two papers, as we have already said, share both a diachronic and a corpus-linguistic approach. The diachronic dimension, to be sure, is rather shallow in both cases, since the terminologies considered – that of developmental policy of the EEC/EU in the case of Judith Kast-Aigner and that of marketing in French in the case of Regina Göke – were essentially elaborated in the second half of the 20th century. But it is precisely this limited time-depth which warrants the claim of both authors regarding the relevance of diachrony even for the synchronic description of terminologies: Terminological usages attributable to different chronological layers necessarily coexist at a certain moment, in a kind of “Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen”, to borrow a formula from the philosopher Ernst Bloch. That speakers are perfectly aware of the coexistence at a certain point in time of usages pertaining to different chronological layers is proved by the relatively high frequency of metalinguistic observations alluding to the chronology or synchronic validity of terms. Examples could be piled up indefinitely. Here are some for illustrative purposes, culled from the Internet:

- “‘Post-modern’ is an *obsolete* term.”
- “Perestroika’s premise was not destruction of ‘real socialism’, *as we used to call it.*”
- “Mr. Lévi-Strauss [...] transformed the West’s understanding of *what was once called* ‘primitive man.’”
- “Geomorphology, or ‘physiography’ *as it was called fifty years ago* [...]”
- “I don’t think suspension, or ‘exclusion’ *as young people call it these days*, is a punishment.”, etc.

This “chronological awareness” of speakers goes far beyond what dictionaries would have us believe. Diachrony – at least the latest stages thereof – is part and parcel of synchrony.

Both papers tackle this problem by dividing their electronic corpus into chronological layers (arbitrary five-year periods in the case of Göke, according to the different EEC/EU treaties on international cooperation in the case of Kast-Aigner). By comparing the use of single terms at different points in time, the authors are able to follow their evolution quite closely, both from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. On the one hand, they show how certain terms spread and become established, or recede and disappear, while on the other the detailed analysis of the contexts also allows them to describe semantic changes undergone by single terms in this short stretch of time. Another interesting aspect of both studies is that they try to link these quantitative and qualitative changes to the general evolution of the respective fields, marketing and developmental policy. It turns out, unsurprisingly, that the changes observed can be intimately tied to the evolution of the relevant field: The history of the terminology reflects the history of the field. But at the same time, the results of terminological studies could certainly also be helpful for students or practitioners in the respective fields who want to gain a clearer picture of the way they speak, as well as the history of their discipline.

Franz Rainer & Elisabeth Peters