

## Pedagogical Specialised Lexicography

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## **Volume 11**

Pedagogical Specialised Lexicography. The representation of meaning in English and Spanish business dictionaries  
by Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera and Ascensión Arribas-Baño

# Pedagogical Specialised Lexicography

The representation of meaning  
in English and Spanish business dictionaries

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*For our families, especially for Fátima and Miguel*



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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

### 1.1 Background

There is no doubt that we are now witnesses to an historic process marked by the specific needs arising from scientific developments and economic change. In this context, beginning in the second half of the 20th century, we situate the linguistic concept “Language for Specific Purposes” (LSP), a term currently used to refer to specialised communication. Although the boundaries of this concept are rather nebulous, since its analysis may be carried out from different cognitive perspectives – for instance, from linguistic, social, pragmatic or computational points of view – authors such as Cabré (2005) claim that a certain consensus exists as regards the main characteristics of LSPs.

First of all, there is agreement on the social dimension of LSPs. The concept of LSP has a socio-linguistic origin. Society does not have a linguistically homogeneous structure. Different varieties exist, like the one referred to by Sager et al. (1980: 36) as sub-languages, a synonym of LSP, characterised as being mono-functional, with a restricted number of users, employed in a specific topic area and of a decidedly utilitarian nature, which means that the speaker learns it voluntarily within a restricted communicative framework.

Secondly, there is acceptance of the functional nature of LSPs, not only as a logical extension of their socio-linguistic dimension, but also for essentially practical reasons relating to teaching. Now the concept of LSP forms part of the study area of applied linguistics, both in its general and more restricted sense. In the *Ariel Lingüística* 2004, Alcaraz Varó and Martínez Linares, for example, maintain that in its general sense it comprises the theory of translation, text analysis, etc. In its more restricted sense, applied linguistics refers specifically to the process of teaching and learning a second language or L2.

Thirdly, recent LSP research is mostly concerned with the lexicon, not only because corpus approaches to the analysis of language tend to highlight the leading role words play in language (Sinclair 2004), but also because there is a strong tradition maintaining that the lexicon is the element which differentiates LSPs (Brumme 1998). Furthermore, this interest in the lexicon has led to the compilation of many LSP dictionaries, some of which incorporate recent lexicographical approaches aiming at developing better reference works which should solve the needs of a specific type of user with specific types of problems related to a specific type of situation. (Bergenholtz and Tarp 2002, 2003, 2004)

These new approaches are understood in terms of the principles of the new lexicography. (Atkins 1996; Worsch 1999; Hartmann 2001) It is now accepted that the content and design of a dictionary are determined by the needs of its users. In practical terms, these principles mean the following:

1. A very rigorous approach to describing language usage facilitated by the availability of corpora. (Herbst 1999)
2. The optimal presentation of the information geared to the user's communicative needs and cognitive resources. (Rundell 1998)
3. A change in the traditionally privileged categories of information, which signifies that meaning has received an absolute priority in the description of the lexicon. Nevertheless, the organisation of the dictionary is becoming increasingly based on the principle of the combinatorial nature of lexical units (Rundell 1998); that is, their syntactic behaviour, complementation patterns of nouns, adjectives, verbs, lexical and grammatical collocations, restricted choices, etc. This has ultimately implied a recognition of the value of context as against the isolationist view of traditional lexicography, thereby overcoming the separation between lexicon and syntax, and consolidating lexical grammar, the functioning of which is a key element in the dictionary.
4. A more precise understanding of the relation between lexicography and other disciplines.
5. Lexicographical decisions should be based on a precise understanding of the function(s) of the dictionary.

Opitz (1983) sustains that the group of users of specialised dictionaries should include both technical experts and interested laypeople. Nkwenti-Azeh (1995: 328) points out that "the SLD (special language dictionary) assumes that its users have an adequate understanding of the language and the subject matter, so that learners and practitioners use the same dictionary representing the same compendium of objects, facts and concepts."

More recently, however, this situation is changing. Bergenholtz and Kaufmann (1997), for example, have made a detailed description of the different typical users in the field of biotechnology. Their typology differentiates between laypeople or potential dictionary users who have no knowledge of basic theories of biotechnology, or only the very basic knowledge associated with educated people, semi-experts or experts from other related fields, such as physicians, biologists, biochemists and true experts. In addition, they also comment that interested laypeople may read periodicals or books on the subject and thus may need the assistance of an encyclopaedic L2 to L1 dictionary.

In our opinion, Bergenholtz and Kaufmann's statement can be completed by adding translators, professional interpreters and LSP students. We believe that until now the majority of specialised lexicographers have not paid much attention to these users who are interested in acquiring a specialised discipline, partially through formal teaching. Hence, the purpose of the dictionary is also to serve as an auxiliary tool in the teaching-learning of the language for specific purposes. Moreover, the fact that they

may acquire knowledge in their own L1 means that the dictionary can equally contribute to the learning of the speciality itself. Thus, we add two more user types to this study: translators and interpreters and LSP students (see Table 1). Both groups must acquire a general knowledge of the LSP in question through formal education; dictionaries and other reference works can help them if the compilers have pursued a pedagogical orientation.

**Table 1.** Typology of linguistic and conceptual needs of the distinct groups of users of LSP dictionaries

User Type	Conceptual information in L1	Conceptual information in L2	Linguistic information in L1	Linguistic information in L2
Expert (bilingual dimension)				•
Semi-expert (monolingual and bilingual dimension)	•	•	•	•
Layman and beginner (monolingual dimension)	•			
Translator and interpreter (monolingual and bilingual dimension)	•	•	•	•
LSP students		•		•

The function of a dictionary is conceived as an intrinsic characteristic of the compilation of the work and as an extrinsic characteristic, as it takes into account the user and the situation of use. We distinguish between (i) the macrofunctions observed in the design and structure of the dictionary, and (ii) the microfunctions related to user needs. Our interest is in this functional aspect of the dictionary as the compilers conceive it. Lexicographers such as Bergenholtz and Kaufmann (1997), Tarp (2005b), and Verlinde et al. (2006) indicate that in very broad terms all lexicographical works attempt to helping the comprehension, production, and translation of texts, the acquisition of conceptual or encyclopaedic knowledge and linguistic knowledge.

In the teaching-learning context, the linguistic tasks carried out by students can be active (encoding) or passive (decoding). Between these tasks there are more specific ones. Decoding covers written and aural comprehension, as well as L2 to L1 translation; encoding covers composition, oral expression and L1 to L2 translation. In general, the passive aspect has traditionally been reflected in the elaboration of lexicographical works. This situation has changed in recent times to the extent that authors like Scholfield (1999) believe that the passive dimension has taken second place,

contrary to empirical data which affirm that the most popular use of dictionaries is connected with reading activities.

In the most characteristic use of the dictionary students consult the reference work in search of the meaning of an unknown lexical unit. For this they may recur to two types of works: (i) a pedagogical monolingual dictionary; (ii) a bilingual L2 to L1 dictionary. It takes a certain time to acquire the necessary cognitive strategies for the correct use of the dictionary in the passive mode. *Grosso modo*, these are:

1. Localization of the article corresponding to the lexical unit in question, resolving any difficulty of a morphological nature and of the dictionary policy in respect of polysemous lexical units and homonyms.
2. Deciding, from among the meanings and senses proposed, which one corresponds to the lexical unit in question; In this book we use “meaning” for referring to the different “senses” of a lemma; i.e., sets of conditions which must be satisfied by a lexical unit in order to denote the extralinguistic reality/ies which correspond(s) to each of its senses considering that a sense is one of several meanings of a lemma or expression. By meaning, therefore, we understand the relationship between a lemma and the object(s) or idea(s) it designates. There is a meaning relation between a lemma and its referent(s) in the extralinguistic world. Most lemmas do not have a one-to-one relation to a referent because there are sense relations such as polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and hyperonymy. Lexicographers tend to acknowledge this division by using “sense discrimination devices”. These may be numbers, letters, punctuation marks, etc., used for dividing the different senses of the lemma or expression inside a dictionary entry. In other words, the meaning of a lemma is what distinguishes it from other lemmas, whereas the sense of a lemma corresponds to a more precise division of the meaning of a lemma. Dictionaries tend to capture the different shades of meaning of a particular word by offering different senses of the same meaning (cf. Section 2.5.2; also Section 3.2).
3. Understanding the definition, to which may contribute (i) the use of definitional vocabularies; (ii) the use of novel definitional formulae (the case of *Cobuild*); and (iii) illustrations. (Jackson 2002)

Scholfield (1999) reviews the new policies incorporated in the latest generations of pedagogical monolingual dictionaries intended for leading the user to the required signifier in the least onerous manner possible. These policies aim at reinforcing the main qualities of dictionaries, namely, comprehensibility, usability and userfriendliness:

1. The use of “guiding words” (“signposts” in the Longman Dictionary 1995 and “guide words” in the Cambridge International 1995). Each sense of the lemma carries a guide word, whose nature varies (hyperonyms, related words, paraphrases, collocations, etc.). It is assumed that the user’s goal is to find a unique sense and not to read the complete entry, and so the process of consulting the dictionary is considerably simplified. Nevertheless, in order to make the best use of this feature,

the user must approach the dictionary with a more or less preconceived idea of the meaning of the lexical unit.

2. Criteria of the division of the article. Scholfield (1999) refers to four distinct policies for the division of articles: (i) all the senses of the homonymous words which belong to the same grammatical category are subsumed in the same article; (ii) to each grammatical category there corresponds an article, without taking semantic criteria into consideration; (iii) distinct articles are assigned to each grammatical category and to each homonymous lexical unit without any links; (iv) each meaning is given a separate article.
3. Each meaning appears on a new line, which considerably facilitates the search for meanings.
4. The ordering of meanings by frequency.

The ruling trends in the teaching-learning of a L2 have put paid to the idea of the dictionary as a mere compendium of lexical forms and have introduced a much more dynamic approach in which the dictionary user becomes an essential instrument in the production of language. Sinclair (1987) acknowledges that this development responds to new focuses caused by the communicative methodology which demands an active participation by the student. In the field of LSP lexicography, this change of focus has led to greater attention being paid to both receptive and productive functions.

The bilingual LSP dictionary tries to satisfy four functions. It attempts to satisfy the translators' needs, as they have to handle both direct or inverse translations. In lexicographical terms, this implies a traditional distinction between the "active" and the "passive" use of the dictionary. In the active use, the dictionary is designed to help the translator in the inverse translation and in the passive one, it is compiled to facilitate direct translation. The characteristic features of this dual approach are three. In the first place, there exists a perfect correlation between the active and the passive character of the dictionary and the lexicographical information offered about the lemma and its equivalent(s). This information is supplied by means of the so-called *explication language*, which Wolski (1988) defined as the language for metalexicographical information and semantic discrimination. It is a general principle that the metalanguage is based on the native language of the person consulting the work. Secondly, the meaning discriminators have two uses: (i) as an index of the polysemy of the lemma, in which case they should come before the equivalent; (ii) as an indication of the semantic or pragmatic differences between a lemma and a necessarily partial equivalent, in which case they should come after the equivalent. Thirdly, the criteria for the selection of entries are different and depend on the degree of specialization of the user.

The bilingual dictionary for active use is concerned mainly with providing information relating to the equivalent, whereas it focuses its information on the lemma when it is used passively. This distinction is basic, and affects the choice and presentation of linguistic information to be offered on either the lemma (passive use of the dictionary), or the equivalent (active use of the dictionary): (i) (meta)linguistic comments and

discrimination between meanings, of prime importance when dealing with bilingual dictionaries for active use, which include the lexical units of a pair of anisomorphic languages; (ii) identifying meanings in the case of bilingual dictionaries for passive use; (iii) giving consideration to collocations and idiomatic expressions; (iv) including grammatical information; and, finally, (v) establishing the nomenclature (Kromann et al. 1991).

Regarding text reception, Nielsen (1994: 53) states that bilingual comprehension dictionaries are designed “for the particular purpose of comprehension of a given utterance by way of a decoding process consisting of the understanding and interpretation in a foreign language.” Nielsen uses Shcherba’s (1940) proposal to compile defining bilingual dictionaries, a concept which follows in the steps of the bilingualised dictionary, but in which the definition in L2 is substituted by a definition which accompanies the equivalent. Thus, it is stated that a dictionary of this type has a set of lemmas in a foreign language (Y) followed by their equivalents in the user’s mother tongue (X) and by definitions of same also in the user’s mother tongue (X).

For the production of texts it is necessary to include the translation equivalent, grammatical information, examples of usage, synonyms, and abbreviated forms. The translation equivalent tells us that to each lemma must correspond, at least, one translation equivalent, which may assume one of two forms: (i) in cases in which the lexical equivalent is complete, a synonymous lexical unit in L2; (ii) on those occasions on which the equivalent is partial or non-existent, a paraphrase of the meaning of the lexical unit. The grammatical information corresponds both to the lemma and to the translation equivalent, and may adopt several forms: (i) information about the grammatical category of the lemma, fundamentally oriented towards clarifying the ambiguity of the homonymous lexical units; (ii) morphological information, especially relevant in the case of irregular forms; (iii) derivational information, given that the derivational patterns of the specialised fields are to a considerable extent idiosyncratic; and (iv) syntactical information. Examples of usage may be of two types: (i) examples which illustrate the usage of the translation equivalent, along with its grammatical properties; (ii) examples which show the translation equivalents of the collocations and idiomatic expressions. The presence of synonyms is a mark of quality of dictionaries. Finally, abbreviated forms are common in LSPs. Fuertes-Olivera and Arribas-Baño (2005) point out that in some bilingual business dictionaries nearly 10% of the nomenclature are abbreviations.

The LSP dictionary must be all-inclusive, as Henne et al. (1978) set out, i.e. a type of dictionary which adds conceptual/encyclopaedic information to the linguistic information normally given. Nielsen (1994: 69–70) states that as a distinction to the information about form, “it may be said that encyclopaedic information refers to the meaning of the lexical units treated lexicographically in a dictionary.”

The modern theory of lexicographical functions mostly advocated by scholars such as Bergenholtz and Kaufmann (1996, 1997), Bergenholtz and Tarp (2003), Nielsen (1994), Tarp (2000, 2001, 2002, 2005a, b) (see also Van Sterkenburg 2003) is in line



with these principles. For example, it makes a very interesting distinction between “knowledge-orientated functions” and “communication-orientated functions”. The former cater to users consulting LSP dictionaries as a source of learning or studying a special subject. The latter meet the needs of users looking up LSP dictionaries in order to facilitate an existing or planned communication. LSP dictionaries, then, should only include data on the basis of their respective functions. For example, there is no distinction between an electronic dictionary and a printed one provided that “they are conceived to solve the type of problems that arise for the same type of user in the same type of user situation.” (Bergenholtz and Tarp 2003: 191)

This lexicographical approach to LSP dictionaries also maintains that the often quoted distinction between LSP lexicography and terminology is of no practical use (Sager 1990). The connection between lexicography and terminology is more or less accepted by a large number of scholars who do not opt for compartmentalization (Lerat 1988; Béjoint 1989; de Bessé 1990, 1997), and do not seem to find clear frontiers or separation between one or the other discipline (Bergenholtz and Kaufmann 1997; Dubois 1979). Most of the authors consulted avoid taking a dogmatic stand on the question, an unmistakeable sign that there exist areas where the link between both may tend to weaken any attempt at differentiation.

In general terms it is stated that lexicography is a science concerned with both compiling, writing, and editing dictionaries (i.e., *dictionary-making* or *dictionnaire*), and making dictionary criticism by means of which the semantic relationships within the vocabulary of a language are analysed and described, and theories of dictionary components and structures are developed (i.e., *metalexicography*, *theoretical lexicography*, *theory of lexicography*, or *academic lexicography*); and that terminography is an applied branch of terminology, occupied with the preparation of diverse terminological products dealing with terms and their uses. Both definitions share a number of features: (i) both are related to linguistics and are applied; (ii) in both cases it is a question of essentially descriptive practices; (iii) both describe lexical units, although these are pragmatically and functionally separated; (iv) to a considerable extent they share objectives. These similarities, besides, are reinforced by an unquestionable fact: technical and social evolution has eliminated the differences between the two with reference to the physical characteristics social purposes, and economic motivation of the product.

We believe, for this reason, that the so-called internal differences are not very significant. On the one hand, although terminography functions in thematically circumscribed fields, lexicography can equally function in the framework of independent semantic fields. It is true that terminological works, influenced by the General Theory of Terminology (GTT), had a marked unifying and normalising orientation (prescriptive terminography). But the same cannot be sustained of elaborate compendia at present, with a firmly descriptive slant (descriptive terminography). For example, words and terms are mostly being differentiated in terms of functional and pragmatic approaches, leaving aside established views which focus on the conceptual component of terms.

There is, then, a methodological confluence between LSP lexicography and terminography. Two fundamental reasons contribute to this. Firstly, the methodological renovation is driven by the incorporation of the text to the work of terminology. This textual dimension, which Bourigault and Slodzian (1999: 30) call *terminologie textuelle*, had already been proposed by Kocourek (1979). It is possible, however, that this change of attitude has been driven by socio-terminology. Numerous authors are openly in favour of the study of terminology in a textual framework arguing, besides, that the new theoretical and methodological models must be presented in such a framework (Arntz 1988; Le Guern 1989; de Bessé 1991; Bowker 1998).

What drives this new state of things is a swing from the concept as the centre of attention and methodological starting point of the GTT to the term. Temmerman (2000: 224) states that “as terminology can only be studied in discourse, it is better to accept that it is the term which is the starting point in terminological description rather than what was traditionally called the concept.” This change of emphasis has deep methodological repercussions, which imply the abandoning of the traditional method of onomasiological work in favour of a semasiological approach which has a great deal in common with lexicography.

What is of greatest transcendence for our research is the fact that descriptive terminography is equally applicable in adjacent fields like specialised lexicography, which may even point to a greater methodological convergence of lexicography and terminography, and the teaching-learning of a foreign language.

We can finish this theoretical discussion by arguing that terminography and specialised lexicography are, basically, the same discipline. They are not exactly homogeneous, but a variable set of complex practices which form a continuum in such a way that at times the point of view adopted in the development of an activity is more terminological and other times more lexicographical (Humbley 1997). Tarp (1997) suggests that both disciplines operate on the same common theoretical support, which of necessity must be lexicographical, as it is in the framework of lexicography where a response can be given to the needs of the users.

This connection or confluence between LSP lexicography and terminography favours a study such as this which is located within the tenets of metalexicography and which is concerned with analysing LSP dictionaries, a coverall term including LSP dictionaries, technical dictionaries, and terminological dictionaries.

These three terms intend to describe a product of specialised lexicography, although from different perspectives (Hartman and James 1998): the LSP dictionary focuses on semi-experts who need it in the context of teaching – learning a language for specific purposes; the technical dictionary describes the technical language of a specialised subject discipline, admitting a high level of internal variation according to the degree of the user’s specialisation; finally, the terminological dictionary provides information about a specialist field as defined by its practitioners. In practical terms, this distinction is mostly ignored, particularly in today’s world characterised by the advent of a new type of users who may simultaneously demand the three kinds of