Lexical and Syntactic Features of the Romanian Information Letter

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Rezumat

Comunicarea eficace reprezintă un deziderat al organizațiilor administrative întrucât asigură îndeplinirea scopurilor acestora și contribuie la realizarea unor relații adecvate între membrii comunității discursive. Studiul de față se ocupă cu comunicarea organizațională externă, realizată prin intermediul genului profesional - adresa externă. Lucrarea identifică trăsături lexicale și sintactice ale acestui gen utilizat în instituțiile administrației de stat din România, oferindu-le ca ipoteze privind proprietățile lingvistice ale genului.

Introduction

The study of organisational communication is not new, but it has only recently achieved recognition as a field of academic study, having largely grown in response to the needs and concerns of organisations. Myers and Myers (1982: xv) define organisational communication as “the central binding force that permits co-ordination among people and thus allows for organised behaviour” while Rogers and Rogers (1976: 3) consider that the behaviour of individuals in organisations is best understood from the way they communicate.

Organisational communication is the exchange of messages between two or more persons inside or outside an organisation in order to achieve objectives by means of specific channels. An effective communication is of capital importance for an organisation as it ensures the accomplishment of its goals and contributes to the establishment of adequate and cordial relationships between employers and employees, co-workers, and partners. According to Kathryn A. Baker (2002: 5), organisational communication evolves at three levels: micro, meso, and macro, where micro refers to

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interpersonal communication; *meso* refers to group, organisational, inter-organisational communication; and *macro* refers to mass communication. The *meso* level of communication, which is of interest to our study, is characterised by some distinctions such as formal/informal, vertical/horizontal/diagonal, internally versus externally directed communication.

A useful concept for studying how group members use language to communicate in specific institutionalised settings is that of *genre*. Yates and Orlikowski (1992: 299-326) define the *genres of organisational communication* - for example, memo, meeting, résumé - as socially recognised types of communication that are habitually enacted by organisation members to realise particular communicative purposes. Each of these genres has a particular role and meaning that has become associated with certain kinds of work practices and interaction norms. The use of such genres thus, does not only mediate organisational communication, but it also controls work and interaction inside and outside organisations. In another definition, Yates and Orlikowski (1992: 299-326) state that a *genre of organisational communication* is a typified communicative act having *socially defined* and *recognised communicative purposes* with regard to its audience. The purpose of a genre is not found in a single individual's purpose for communicating, but in a purpose that is recognised and reinforced within a community.

A genre achieves its purposes through aspects of substance and form, every genre being recognised by certain specific properties. Starting from this assumption, the paper sets out to identify the major lexical and syntactic features of the information letter, a written organisational genre used for externally directed communication by administrative organisations in Romania. Our study focuses on this genre because - as far as we know - there are no Romanian studies of it and linguistic insights into it can help to improve the exchange of information between institutions and other discursive communities, which leads to effective goal accomplishment and adequate inter-organisational relationships.

**Lexical Features**

The study was based on a corpus of 35 information letters that were provided by Timișoara, Lugoj, and Șiria City Halls. The lexical analysis focused on the identification of the types of lexical units. Firstly, we identified the macrostructure of the vocabulary in the corpus, i.e. the vocabulary levels to which the lexical units belong. Following the description of vocabulary by Robert Stockwell and Donka Minkova (2001: 3), we saw that the word stock in our corpus can be divided into:
a) Core vocabulary; and
b) Learned vocabulary:
   - General administrative vocabulary;
   - Specialised administrative vocabulary.

Since administrative organisations deal and work with citizens and for the citizens' welfare, many of the lexical items pertaining to the specific learned vocabulary have passed into the colloquial vocabulary, being used by people in their everyday life. The structure of this vocabulary can be represented graphically as follows:

![Diagram of vocabulary structure]

The core vocabulary shares its lexical units with the general core of the Romanian language, whereas the learned vocabulary consists of terms specific for administration. The general administrative vocabulary contains special terms which have passed into the general core vocabulary, while the specialised administrative vocabulary consists of specialised legal and financial terms.

Of these classes, we shall discuss the general administrative vocabulary, more precisely its microstructure.

**Words**

As we have mentioned above, the words belonging to the general administrative vocabulary, were initially created or borrowed for the specific needs of administration, but in time have migrated to the Romanian general core vocabulary. Here are examples that have been grouped morphologically by parts of speech:

- **Nouns:** primărie, prefectură, minister, poliție, primar, prefect, ministru politist, raport, donație, buget, avizare, implementare, finanțare, cofinanțare, deviz, notificare, logistică, copiator, referent, documentație, facilități;
- **Adjectives:** teritorial(ă), desemnat(ă);
- **Adverbs:** în mod expres, legal (constituită);
Verbs: a defalca, a se institui.

Earlier borrowings have been adapted phonetically and morphologically, but recent borrowings, e.g. acquis (comunitar), (sistemul) e-tax, have preserved the original spelling and pronunciation.

Some words have changed the morphological class. For example the adjective prezenta originally used in the collocation adresa prezenta has become a noun in the phrase prin prezentă, e.g. Prin prezentă vă rugăm să publicați…

A special case is represented by the names of organisation divisions, of public services or of administrative units under the authority of an institution. These words were initially part of the general core vocabulary, later they entered the administrative vocabulary, where they acquired a special meaning and finally re-entered the general core vocabulary but with a new meaning. The following examples are eloquent:

Serviciul (Acte Administrative, Buget, Juridic și Contecios), Direcția (Generală Economică, Fiscală, Regională de Poștă, pentru Tineret și Sport), Compartimentul (de Asistență Socială), Corpul (Gardienilor Publici).

Phrases

According to Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1996: 1460), a phrase is “a sequence of two or more words that make up a grammatical construction, usually lacking a finite verb and hence not forming a complete clause or sentence”. Syntactically, the phrases are either noun phrases or verb phrases. The noun phrases fall into three main patterns: Noun +Adj., Noun + Prep.+ Noun, and Noun + Prep.+ Noun + Adj. Lexically, they are collocations.

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>administrație publică</td>
<td>acțiune în justiție</td>
<td>extras de carte financiară</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alesii localii</td>
<td>baza de date</td>
<td>informație de interes public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asistență socială</td>
<td>caiet de sarcini</td>
<td>proiecte de acte normative</td>
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<tr>
<td>bugetul local</td>
<td>centru de plasament</td>
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<td>cooperare transfrontalieră</td>
<td>comisia de validare</td>
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<tr>
<td>dezbatere publică</td>
<td>declarație de avere</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>fond funciar</td>
<td>declarație de interes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funcționari publici</td>
<td>impozitul pe venit</td>
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<tr>
<td>gardian public</td>
<td>ordinea de zi</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>imprimat tipizat</td>
<td>pagina de internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrare europeană</td>
<td>proiecte de hotărâri</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>organizație</td>
<td>rectificarea de buget</td>
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<tr>
<td>neguvernamentală</td>
<td>secretar de stat</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizație umanitară</td>
<td>somație de plată</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>plan urbanistic</td>
<td>strategia de dezvoltare</td>
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<tr>
<td>presa locală</td>
<td>studiu de fazeabilitate</td>
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<tr>
<td>proces-verbal</td>
<td>transportul din comun</td>
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<td>transparentă decizională</td>
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The verb phrases are formed from three constituents into the syntactic pattern Verb + Prep. + Noun. Lexically, they are idioms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb + Prep. + Noun</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a aduce la cunoştinţă</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a intra în vigoare</td>
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<tr>
<td>a pune în aplicare</td>
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**Abbreviations**

The senders of information letters make use of abbreviations in the following superstructural components of the information letter in order to save space and language:

- in the letterhead: S.C. (Societate Comercială), S.R.L. (Societate cu răspundere limitată), S.A. (Societate pe acţiuni), CCIAT(Camera de Comerţ, Industrie şi Agricultură Timişoara), Tel., Nr;
- in the salutation: D-nului (Dlui), Dra;
- in the body of the letter (IIrd person plural personal pronoun): Dvs, D-voastra;
- in the signature (senders' titles or positions in the organisation): Ing. Dipl.(inginer diplomat), Sing.(subinginer), Cj (Consilier Judeţean)

Another class consists of abbreviations of genres, for example: OUG (ordonanţă de urgenţă), HGR (hotărâre guvernamentală).

**Syntactic Features**

As far as the syntactic features of the information letter are concerned, we have identified the characteristic kinds of sentential syntactic relations and syntactic structures with frequent occurrence.

**Syntactic relations**

1. The *co-ordination relation* is signalled by the commonest conjunctions and conjunctive phrases. The copulative co-ordination is formally effected by și and precum și.

Examples:

- Prin prezenta vă rugăm să ne asigurați transportul a două module de toner la sediul Primăriei, precum și transportul a două module de toner goale de la Primărie la sediul (…).
- Toate declarațiile de avere sunt date publicității pe site-ul Consiliului Județean și vor apărea și pe portalul Consiliului Local.

Copulative co-ordination is also realised through juxtaposition, the clauses being ordered vertically and marked with dashes as the following example shows:

*Example:*
Declarațiile de interese
- au fost depuse în termenul prevăzut de lege.
- au fost înregistrate în Registrul special al declarațiilor de interese.
- nu s-au depus până în prezent notificări privind schimbări intervenite în declarațiile de interese).

The disjunctive co-ordination is effected by iar.

Examples:
- Proiectele privind instituirea de taxe sau modificarea celor existente se afișează cu 15 zile înainte de discutarea acestora, iar cetățenii au posibilitatea să-și exprime părerile.
- Vor avea loc spectacole și manifestări în aer liber….., iar în data de vor lansa artificii.)

2. The most frequent subordinate syntactic relations are expressed by the direct object clause, the relative clause, and the adverbial clause of cause.

The direct object clause follows performative verbs and is introduced by the conjunctions că and să.

Examples:
- Vă aducem la cunoștință că în vederea eliberării documentului solicitat de d-voastră avem nevoie de …
- Menționăm că pentru premiere sunt necesare un număr de …
- Vă informăm că Primăria (...) a primit o donație din partea unei organizații umanitare din Danemarca…
- Vă sugerăm să vă adresați unor fundații sau organizații neguvernamentale.
- Vă rugăm să desemnați un reprezentant din partea instituției dumneavoastră…

The relative clauses are either defining or non-defining and are introduced by the relative pronoun care.

Examples:
- Consiliul Local poate aproba o rectificare de buget numai pe baza unei solicitări scrise care să cuprindă …
- Declarațiile de avere și cele de interese au fost depuse de către toate persoanele care aveau această obligație.

The adverbial clause of cause is also signalled by the commonest conjunctions deoarece și intrucât și they are placed either after or before the main clause.

Examples:
- Prin prezenta vă comunicăm că instituția noastră nu vă poate ajuta intrucât nu dispune de mijloacele și de resursele financiare necesare.
- Deoarece în data de 1 iunie vor avea loc spectacole (…), vă rugăm să luați măsurile ce se impun…
**Syntactic Structures**

Another feature of the information letter is the frequent use of syntactic structures that in time have become formulas, which occur mainly at the beginning and at the end of the letter. Our corpus has shown the existence of three kinds of formulas: *salutation, closing, and miscellaneous.*

1. **Salutation formulas**

The usual salutation in the information letter is *Către,* e.g. Către Guvernul României, Către Consiliul Județean, etc. When the recipient is a person, the formulaic structure *În atenția Domnului/Doamnei,* is added. Some senders replace the structure *În atenția* by the simple salutation *Domnule (Comandant)/Doamnă (Director)* or by the more polite salutation *Stimate domn/doamnă.* Other senders (though very few) use both the expression *În atenția,* and the salutation *Domnule/Doamnă.*

2. **Closing formulas**

The closing formulas are similar to those in general formal letters. **Examples:**

- Cu mulțumiri
- Cu stimă/Cu deosebită stimă
- Cu respect/Cu deosebit respect

3. **Miscellaneous formulas**

These formulas either a) introduce the subject of communication or b) specify the purpose of communication. **Examples:**

a)  
- Prin prezenta…
- Referitor la…
- Urmare a adresei d-voastră nr…/ca urmare a adresei dvs. nr…

b)  
- Venim la dumneavoastră cu rugămintea ca…/Ne adresăm Dvs.cu rugămintea ca…
- Vă trimitem alăturat spre avizare/vă transmitem anexat…

Some of these formulas are rigidly bureaucratic, others are polite expressions aimed at initiating or maintaining cordial relationships with the receiver.
Conclusions

This study of the information letter has identified the characteristic lexical and syntactic features in the genre texts of our corpus and proposes them as hypotheses to be investigated in further statistic studies.

At the lexical level, the vocabulary consists of words, phrases, and abbreviations which belong to three segments: the core vocabulary, the general administrative vocabulary and the specialised administrative vocabulary.

At the syntactic level, the sentences evince both co-ordinating and subordinating relations, relations effected formally through juxtaposition and by conjunctions. As far as the syntactic structures are concerned, the most characteristic are the formulas which have specific uses and usage.

References