Terminographic Contexts

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Rezumat
În lucrare sunt abordate probleme referitoare la rolul contextului în terminografie. În prima secţiune sunt incluse precizări cu privire la rolul contextului în definirea şi înţelegerea conceptelor. Din diversitatea de tipuri de contexte se acordă atenţie specială celor mai reprezentative. Analiza efectuată pe marginea corpusului de contexte selectate vizează desprinderea unor tipare de analiză contextuală care pot genera noi câmpuri în înregistrarea terminologică precum şi noi modalităţi de abordare.

Introduction

The present paper is aimed at clarifying aspects of the recent tendency in terminology that favours the role of context in understanding and recording concepts. The traditional strong belief that term understanding is not dependent on context has been replaced by a more flexible approach, by taking into consideration the whole environment that surrounds each term.

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By tradition, when dealing with terms terminographers focus their attention first of all on definitions; contexts are meant to assess the presence of a term in a certain subject field and round up the definitions. Only some contexts reveal the syntactic behaviour of terms, and, occasionally, morphologic peculiarities different from the canonic form of a term. It is mainly the translator, used to deal with idioms in general language, who misses phraseological information in LSP texts; such information has been, as a rule, absent in terminographical products.

Our analysis is based on a corpus of contexts selected from *Vocabular în domeniul telefoniei mobile român – englez – francez* (Ciobanu coord., 2004), which records more than 300 entries.

**The context – basic concepts**

To begin with, the context is the point of departure for all terminographic work. The analysis of the contexts present in the text corpora makes possible the description of the whole conceptual environment, respectively, of the terms embedded in this environment. In the literature (for example, de Bessé, 1991) the terminographic context is defined as the linguistic environment of a term. The context is the statement (the words) that surrounds the term, conditioning its existence, form, function, meaning, value, usage. That is, the context has two functions: to clarify the meaning of a term and to illustrate its function.

The most common classification of contexts is based on the relationship of the context a) to the concept and b) to the term; as the name says, the context related to the concept brings information about the concept, ignoring the functioning of the term, while the latter is mainly concerned with the term usage.

From among the context types (see de Bessé, 1991) we mention the following as being of special interest for our analysis:

By tradition, the defining context is considered the ideal choice, as it contains a number of elements that are useful and necessary to describe a concept but do not replace the definition. On the other hand, the defining contexts contain structures prone to various interpretations, which creates ambiguity in defining. Still, defining contexts are considered most helpful for some fields, such as legal terminology, being, occasionally, the only element that makes possible the description of a context (de Bessé, 1991:113).

The conceptual context associates a term with other terms belonging to the same field. Thus, it is linked to the conceptual system and indicates the place of the respective term in the whole system; this information rather belongs to the notes field.

The encyclopedic context brings along additional information to definitions; still, such information does not belong to proper terminological definitions, being part of the notes field.

The phraseological context is linked to the so-called phraseogicul method which consists of presenting parallel phrases in various languages, similar from the semantic point of view, meant to highlight equivalents by their comparison; its main drawback is that it does not reflect the actual functioning of language, giving no information about the concept.
The linguistic context illustrates the term and its behaviour in a certain language, presents the syntactic structures it is associated with and highlights its characteristic collocations.

The usage context specifies the usage of the term; it has a metalinguistic nature and does not illustrate the actual functioning of a term, representing more specifically a usage note.

The big problem with contexts is the fact that most often they disappoint the user, as contexts very rarely provide information about the functioning of terms. Terminographers focus their attention on the definition, which is not always enough for the user, especially the translator. The solution is the presentation of real term usage in discourse, which helps the user insert correctly the terms in the text structure, observing syntax and register.

Any discussion on context requires clarifying of other kin concepts that result from the analysis of contexts, respectively, collocation, cooccurrence, phraseology.

The study of collocations, previously limited to the general language, has gained ground in LSP as well. For terminology a collocation represents possible combinations of terms, the usual and frequent presence of lexical elements clustered around the term.

According to de Bessé (1991:112), cooccurrence refers to associations of words established by usage.

The borderline between these two labels is very difficult to establish; ‘collocation’ has gained ground and its basic characteristic is the fact that the elements associated to a term are associated regularly, frequently, in a specific way.

Phraseology in languages for special purposes „studies the syntactic connections and the semantic relationships, and also the semantic modifications of those linguistic elements which are capable of being combined with the nucleus (the term ) or which may become capable of combination with it” ( Picht, 1987:151 ).

**Analysis**

Considering our analysis, we have to examine the collocational nuclei in our corpus of contexts and identify patterns in the way context elements are clustered around the term entry.

As long as terms are still bound to words as means of naming concepts, terminologists think of categorizing, grouping, organizing information belonging to terms as used with words in general language. Such a possibility would be the use of traditional grammatical categories as nuclei for the clusters of collocations present in the various contexts. The following example has been developed by Betty Cohen ( 1986 ) in one of her papers dealing with cooccurences, the nucleus term being budget:

v. ( sujet ) : équilibrer, déséquilibrer;
v. ( objet ) : augmenter, diminuer, dresser, émarger, établir. ( ... );
adj. : considerable, élevé, énorme, en déséquilibre, ( ... );
n. : augmentation, compression, diminution, ( ... ).
Examining the corpus of contexts selected for our analysis (the sources for our contexts are books, glossaries, dictionaries, data bases, journal articles, web sites related to mobile communications) we notice the following:

In order to record a relevant number of collocations it is necessary to examine a very rich corpus.

Most of the collocations in our corpus have verbs as the nucleus, which confirms a statement of Herbert Picht (1987) in his analysis of LSP phraseology. From among these examples we can mention: a asigna un canal, a atribui un canal, a aloca un canal, a mapa un canal, a elibera un canal, a solicita un canal, a comuta un canal.

Some of the verbs present in various collocations are common to more collocations. It is the case of such verbs as: a iniția – a iniția un apel, a iniția o comunicare (cu un abonat), a iniția accesul la rețea, a iniția un handoff; a înregistra – a înregistra un utilizator, a înregistra prezența stației mobile.

At a closer examination of the verbs present in these collocations we can say the field under analysis includes very many verbs specific for mobile communications, for example, a redirecta un apel, a mapa un canal, a asigna un interval temporal. There are several cases of terminologization as well, such as a acoperi un semnal radio, a înscrie un abonat în sistem, a înregistra un utilizator. The lowest figure is represented by simple verbs present in everyday general language as, for example, a face (un apel), a căuta (un MS), a avea (o cameră la bord).

Comparing the above information about contexts including a verb as the nucleus of a collocation with the example developed by Betty Cohen (see above) we notice a few differences.

First of all, we realize the selection of collocations has to be based on a very rich documentation.

Our contexts selected for mobile communications do not include plenty of adjectives; we presume this situation depends on the special language peculiarities of the subject field. That is, we expect a greater number of adjectives in the field of economics, and less in various fields of science and technology.

Also, this situation may create doubts about the criterion of presenting collocations clustered around nouns (as exemplified by Betty Cohen). Moreover, the noun-nucleus collocations of our corpus of contexts cooccur with two types of nouns: common nouns such as canal, celulă, apel, abonat, and verbal nouns such as fixare (pe celulă), campare (pe celulă), difuzare (în celulă).

Do we have to treat them in a similar way?

In the example developed by Betty Cohen (1986) there are some attempts at specifying prepositions that collocate with certain verbs, for example, émarger au. Seemingly, this aspect does not create special difficulties to French-speaking people, or its importance has been under-
estimated. Still, the translator of LSP texts might encounter difficulties in this respect. The use of prepositions in LSP collocations is definitely a serious problem for a Romanian translator of ESP texts.

As distinct from Cohen’s choice, we opted to select longer collocations, in order to help the translator with a more extended environment of the nucleus term, and, implicitly, provide information about actual usage; for instance, *a suporta un apel pe o anumită frecvență, a suporta un număr de stații mobile pe un canal, trafic transmis pe un interval temporal*.

Having in view the above, we suggest the possibility of considering a multi-modal approach of presenting collocations for a term record associated with the corresponding context.

Additionally, there exists a set of collocations in our corpus that are characterized by a word order specific for LSP texts which becomes clear due to the context as, for example, *protecție ecran, abonat destinație, e-mail client, frecvență baliză*. Consequently, the syntactic aspects deserve a special attention; also, they may become a component in our suggestion of a multi-modal approach.

**Conclusions**

The brief examination of our corpus of contexts results in the following conclusions:

- any analysis on collocations has to be based on rich corpora;
- a multi-modal flexible approach is likely to encompass the complex problem of context analysis;
- factors such as the subject field have to be taken into consideration;
- the framework of collocations in contexts may vary function of a certain language, which could require new fields in a terminographic product.

**References**

1. (de) Bessé, B “Le contexte terminographique”, in *META*, XXXVI,1,1991,111-120.

