"*TREND*" VS. "*TENDINTA*" – A CASE STUDY OF SYNONYMY

ASIST. UNIV. ARINA GREAVU
Facultatea de Stiinte Economice, Universitatea Lucian Blaga Sibiu
E-mail: arinagreavu@yahoo.com

This paper studies the relationship existing between two Romanian synonyms –"trend" and "tendinta" – by looking at the conceptual common ground they share as well as at the grammatical and semantic differences that individualize each of them. A central part in this analysis is played by the idea of collocation and collocational restrictions, the lexical items with which the two words tend to co-occur being identified and analysed both in terms of frequency of occurrence and meaning.

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that lexicological variance in the Romanian specialized language of business and economics is realized today in pairs of words where one member is a word borrowed from English. Alongside lexical items such as "*numerar*", "*afacere*", "*bancomat*", "*cu amanuntul*", "*tendinta*", etc, there are roughly synonymous expressions – "*cash*", "*business*", "*ATM*", "*retail*", "*trend*" – choices often offering shades of meaning as well as stylistic appropriateness. Thus, we have alternatives like:

1) *Practic acesta a fost si nivelul cu care a crescut piata de retail din Romania./ Directorii din sectorul comertului cu amanuntul intrevad o tendinta usoara de crestere a activitatii.*

2) *(…) dar nu va fi vorba de o tranzactie de genul cash contra actiuni. / Tanzactia se va realize printr-un aport in numerar de 145 milioane de dolari.*

While the large number of these examples prove the artificiality of purist attempts aiming to "protect" the language from foreign influences, one can show how these synonyms have developed and how it would appear, in fact, that the borrowing phenomenon underlying much synonymy in a language is a natural, normal and apparently necessary feature of human language in general. In specifying precisely the relations that exist between the items of such a pair, it can be shown how the English borrowings contribute to the enriching of the Romanian language, and how they can add new shades of meaning to the already existing words**.**

Method, presentation and interpretation of results

The purpose of the present paper is to explore the relationship between "*trend*" and "*tendinta*", a pair which illustrates in a typical and yet interesting way the place of English borrowings in the Romanian vocabulary: valuably extending the lexicon without touching our expression with repetitiveness on the one hand, and introducing a new word which is not arbitrarily unrelated to any other in the language, on the other. The paper is concerned with the occurrence of the two words in a corpus of contemporary journalistic prose amounting to approximately one million words; there are altogether 145 examples with "*trend*" and 146 with "*tendinta*". For example:

1. *Dobanzile se afla pe un trend evident descrescator.*
2. *(…) trendul pietelor mondiale s-a inversat.*
3. *(…) si in acest an, sectorul costructiilor va urma o tendinta ascendenta.*
4. *(…) sondajul subliniaza tendinta constanta de scadere a economiilor in valuta.*

We have analyzed the whole material in terms of broad grammatical and semantic distinctions, to investigate contrasting features in the meaning of the two words, according to the definition of synonymy in general. In our approach to the problem of synonymy we have adopted the view that synonyms are lexical items whose senses are identical in terms of "central" semantic traits

or of "conceptual meaning", but differ, if at all, only in respect of what might be described "minor" or "peripheral" traits (D. A. Cruse). In other words, they must not only manifest a high degree of semantic overlap, but they must also have a low degree of implicit contrastiveness. This view is closely linked with the widespread opinion that "absolute" synonyms do not really exist, as it is difficult, if not impossible, to find complete equivalence of communication effect; this is why – Leech concludes – "there is much convenience in restricting the term synonymy to equivalence of conceptual meaning". As it can be seen from this introductory discussion, the problem of meaning becomes essential in any attempt to define synonymy. Classifications of meaning are numerous and it is not the purpose of this paper to dwell upon this theoretical aspect exhaustively. However, we are going to use "conceptual meaning" as defined by Leech[1] and "presupposed" meaning as defined by D. A. Cruse[2] in our case study of synonymy. While the former will help us in establishing the common conceptual ground that the two words share (namely *"a general tendency in the way a situation is changing or developing"* or *"evolutie intr-un anumit sens"*), the latter will be the instrument we are going to use in determining the contrasting features in this pair of synonyms. Presupposed meaning (sometimes called collocative meaning) refers to those associations a word acquires from the meaning of the neighboring words, and it is an idiosyncratic property of individual words. Two words can be synonyms, that is, they can share common conceptual ground and still be distinguished by the "company they keep" or by the range of lexical items with which they are likely to co–occur or collocate. Collocation or collocational restrictions can thus become an important criterion in any case study of synonymy and we have adopted it in the present study in order to test the synonymy of the *trend/tendinta* pair, paying special attention to several types of combinations: noun + adjective, noun + preposition + noun, noun + infinitive. It was felt that these structural patterns could yield the most relevant information related to the differences between the two words, allowing for the highest degree of variation as regards lexical choice. The results of the analysis according to syntactic criteria are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Syntactic patterns with *trend* and *tendinta*

Syntactic pattern	*trend*		*tendinta*	
	No. of occurrences	**%**	**No. of occurrences**	**%**
noun + adjective	109	75	53	36
noun + preposition + noun	13	9	59	40
noun + infinitive	0	0	7	5
unmodified noun	23	16	27	19
Total	145	100	146	100

Corpus source: *Capital* 2003

The one result that most obviously stands out from a brief analysis of the table is the predominance of adjectives with *trend*, 109 instances out of the total of 145 occurrences of the word being accompanied by an adjective, as opposed to *tendinta* where only 53 occurences out of 146 (an approximate proportion of 36%) consist of combinations with adjectives. While in 23 of all cases *trend* is used without a modifier, in the rest of the cases it is followed be a noun preceded by preposition - *de stagnare* (3), *de majorare* (2), *de diminuare* (1), *de separare* (1), *de apreciere* (1), *de scadere* (2), *de crestere* (3); these expressions formed with nouns represent a slim proportion of the total and are employed mainly in order to express notions of increase and decrease. With *tendinta* the situation changes: with 27 instances of unmodified use, the vast majority of the modifiers used in the remainder of the situations are made up of prepositions and nouns: *de reducere* (2), *generala* (7), *de diminuare* (2), *de stagnare* (1), *de supraapreciere* (1), *de acumulare* (1), *de vanzare* (2), *de focalizare* (1), *de redresare* (1), *de mimetism* (1), *de adaptare* (1), *de micsorare* (1), *de concentrare* (1), *de interpretare* (1), *de a majora* (1), *de spalare* (1), *de economisire* (2), *de dezvoltare* (1), *de incurajare* (1), *a scaderii* (1), *de scadere* (16), *de crestere* (13), with a large proportion of these lexical items

---

[1] Referring to conceptual meaning which he equates with sense, Leech says that it is the "logical, cognitive, or denotative content" of a linguistic unit, or "the overt or face-value meaning of a text: it is to all appearances what the text is about'".

[2] He says that "the expression presupposed meaning is used (…) in a pre-theoretical sense to refer to semantic traits which are, as it were, taken from granted, in the use of an expression, or lexical item, but not actually asserted, denied, questioned, or whatever, in the utterance in which they appear."

being used in order to indicate a rise or fall in the phenomena described. In the rest of the cases *tendinta* is followed by an infinitive: *de a neglija* (1), *de a conserva* (1), *de a inlocui* (1), *de a trece* (1), *de a deveni* (1), *de a se plange* (1), *de a atinge* (1). A close look at the table above is enough in order to reveal a clear syntactic difference between the two words in question: while *trend* prefers a noun + adjective construction, *tendinta* seems to be more often post-modified by a noun preceded by preposition. The reasons for these structural differences can only be discussed at a speculative level, and they are based on our intuition rather then on any empirical data. It is however felt that since *trend* has been borrowed from English, it is employed in most cases in such noun + adj constructions, as they are more concise than the other ones, and come closer to the structural picture of the language from which the word has been taken (it can be argued that the English language is more concise and precise as scientific language than Romanian, which tends to be more long – winded and elaborate in its expression of ideas). Thus, it would appear that it was not only the lexical item *trend* that was borrowed from English, but alongside with it a preference for a certain kind of structural pattern which mirrors the original construction with this word in English. Whether this is true, and the lexical penetration of English into Romanian is accompanied by a more subtle grammatical one can be the topic of further research; however, it is not the purpose of the present paper to test the veracity of this hypothesis.

The amount of contrastiveness between the two words under consideration becomes even more obvious if we separate the adjectives from the rest and analyze them in terms of the semantic field they belong to. Table 2 gives the results of this analysis and it can be seen from it that more than half of all adjectives used with *trend* indicate notions of increase or decrease, with a striking concentration of lexical choice in the area of *ascendent, descendent, crescator, descrescator,* while only an average of 11% of the adjectives used with *tendinta* refer to upward or downward movements in the economic phenomena described, the rest displaying a higher degree of dispersion and variety in the range of lexis used.

Table 2. Collocation range: noun + adjective

Lexis (adjectives)	*trend*		*tendinta*	
	No. of occurrences	%	No. of occurrences	%
ascendent(a)	32	22	4	2.8
descrescator/-oare	18	12	6	4
descendent(a)	14	10	1	0.7
crescator/-oare	14	10	4	2.8
pozitiv(a)	5	3	0	0
negative(a)	3	2	1	0.7
acest/aceasta/aceste/ acelasi etc	15	10	16	11
alte	*inflationist (2), economic (2), general (2), asemanator (1), invers (1)*	6	*generala (7), majora (1), imbucuratoare (1), inflationista (1), internationala (2), clara (2), reala (1), noua (1), accentuata (1), depreciativa (1), evidenta (1), mondiala (1), constanta(1)*	14
Total	109	75	53	36

Corpus source: *Capital* 2003

In order to investigate more accurately the relationship between *trend/tendinta,* and notions of increase and decrease, all lexical items related to such upward or downward movements have been selected and analyzed, especially as regards frequency of occurrence in the corpus studied. The results of this analysis confirm the conclusions arrived at by means of less systematic observation: namely that the English - origin *trend* more often calls to mind the idea of some kind of movement or change in a situation, phenomenon, indicator, etc. than its Romanian synonym. Figure 1 presents this conclusion in a graphic form.

Figura 1: Increase/decrease expressions with *trend/tendinta*
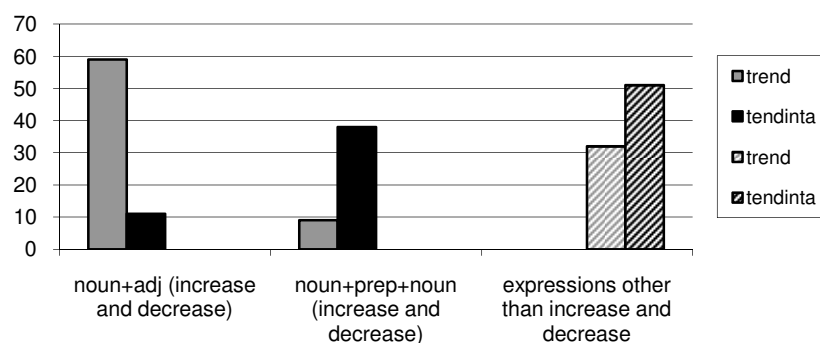
Conclusions

Several conclusions stand out from this analysis, as regards the differences that distinguish *trend* and *tendinta*. The first one is that while *trend* and *tendinta* carry the same conceptual traits, having the same message conveying potential, the former displays greater collocational restrictions in that the words accompanying it are more predictable from the rest of the sentence. In other words it displays greater semantic cohesion as it requires, in most cases, its neighboring words to be adjectives expressing notions of increase and decrease. *Tendinta* on the other hand, prefers constructions with preposition + noun, allowing for greater dispersion of lexical choice in the words used with it and "leaking" less information as regards its potential neighboring words. To return to the concept of presupposed meaning explained at the beginning of this paper, it seems that notions of "increase" and "decrease" count less as presuppositions of *tendinta* and more as presuppositions of *trend*. This can be an important idea to those working in the field of translating, as well as to professional or academic economists writing and reading in English.

Bibliography:

1. Academia Romana, Institutul de Lingvistica "Iorgu Iordan", *Micul dictionar academic*, Univers enciclopedic, 2002
2. Cruse, D.A., *Lexical Semantics*, Cambridge University Press
3. Crystal, David, *Introducing Linguistics*, Penguin English, 1992
4. Kempson, M., Ruth, *Semantic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1989
5. Leech, Geoffrey, *Semantics – The Study of Meaning*, Penguin Books, 1990
6. Levitchi Leon, Bantas Andrei, *Dictionar Englez- Roman*, Teora 1998
7. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman, 1995
8. Longman Business English Dictionary, Longman 2000
9. McCarthy, Michael, *Vocabulary*, Oxford University Press, 1990
10. Patras, Mihai, Patras Corina, *Dictionar Economic si Financiar Bancar Englez Roman*, Litera Chisinau 2002