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Teaching administrative terminology in Catalan

Anna I. Montesinos López*

Universitat Politècnica de València, camí de Vera s/n, 46.120, València, Spain

Abstract

This paper deals with terminology teaching in the administration field in Catalan language in the context of the specialisation subjects that are offered in the Public Administration Management Degree of the *Universitat Politècnica de València* (Polytechnic University of Valencia). In this sense, we start from the idea that in order to develop a good system for the teaching of terminological units, previous descriptive studies are required regarding the lexical and specialised combinations which allow us to get to know which aspects are the most problematic and thus, to direct teaching to their resolution. Firstly, we analyse the environment and teaching audience, since this fact presents some tendencies which will determine the teaching and learning methods. On the other hand, in order to be able to anticipate and solve other previous problems we must also analyse learners´ needs, taking into account that this is all about learning a minority language of social and professional restricted access. Finally, we have outlined three different phases in the teaching-learning terminology process, as well as the type of activities that have to be performed to achieve terminologic competence in the administrative and terminology field of the abovementioned subjects.

1. Introduction

Currently, in the specific context of the university, specialised languages are studied in order to achieve communicative competence in a specific knowledge field. In this article, we consider the field of public administration, which has been widely considered in Catalan, following the linguistic normalization in public administration of the Catalan-speaking areas (Andorra, Principality of Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Valencian

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 0-34-96-3877530; fax: 0-34-96-3877539.
E-mail address: amontelo@idm.upv.es

Region). However, the consideration of the Catalan language has been mainly focused for professional and consulting use and from a didactic point of view. So numerous are the collections of administrative documentation and phraseological terminology, as well as the collections of administrative documents, since Catalan terminology has received special attention because it is directly related to the normalization process of this language (Cassany & Lorente, 1996: 5).

Catalan terminology has an organizational model that has become a reference point (Franquesa, 2008: 111). In this sense, public institutions and universities have produced use manuals (Andreu, 2009; *Generalitat de Catalunya-Escola d'Administració Pública de Catalunya* (Government of Catalonia-Public Administration School of Catalonia), 2007)) and language dictionaries and vocabularies of this specialised language. However, the number of publications of didactic nature is negligible compared with the existing reference literature for language professionals and public administration. For this reason, the teaching approach implies a review of the teaching-learning context for creating effective proposals that can be implemented in the classroom environment. Thus, the first section analyses the context in which the administrative terminology teaching-learning process in Catalan is carried out at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Secondly, we establish the principles throughout which we will perform terminology teaching. Thirdly, we will think about how to effectively manage administrative terminology teaching in the classroom environment. Finally, we will expose the conclusions of the work, result of teachers´observation and thoughts as well as from analyses and studies which were previously performed.

2. The teaching-learning context in administrative terminology

In this particular case, terminology is taught as part of the subjects of specialised language belonging to the Management of Public Admininistration degree of the Faculty of Administration and Business Administration of the Polytechnic University of Valencia (located at the Valencian Region, Spanish state).

These two subjects are called: *Valencià (*Valencia´s Region dialect) for public administration and and *Valencià* for public administration II. They are optional subjects, and for that reason, students pick them in order to complete their training in the abovementioned Degree. This aspect has certain consequences regarding students´ motivation towards their learning process. This fact generates a positive attitude in students in the classroom, as well as a relatively high internal motivation. Therefore, this situation generates, on the one hand, willingness to participation in the learning process itself and, on the other hand, interest in the different aspects that have to be considered and learnt in order to achieve communicative competence in the public administration field.

Regarding the legal scope, the Valencian linguistic setting establishes in Article 7 of the *Llei d'Ús i Ensenyament del Valencià* (Law for the use and teaching of the Valencian language) the following two items:

1. The Valencian language, as an own language of the Valencian Region, is also the language of the *Generalitat* (Valencian government) and its public and local administrations as well as from the other corporations and public institutions which at the same time depend on others.

2. Valencian and Spanish are the official languages of the Valencian Region

However, there are other contextual factors which have to be taken into account when facing teaching. Thus, we must take into account that students studying the Management of Public Administration degree do not study other subjects in Catalan, but in Spanish. Although students study this for academically achieving this degree, they only do it in one of the two official languages of the Valencian Region. Students and generally know the concepts, but they know them in Spanish, as it is the language by means they learn and achieve expertise in the field of their studies. Consequently, terminology follows the same path. Terminological units constitute a knowledge production element and a linguistic expression resource that favors the transmission of knowledge in the specialised context (Vargas, 2007: 43).

Besides this, the linguistic community from the Valencian Region usually know the two official languages (Valencian and Spanish), but not in the same way. According to Cabré (2000: 85), Spanish is much more socially and politically consolidated than Catalan, whilst Catalan is socially weaker due to the lack of full autonomy that it has. So, Catalan is a minoritised language. In this sense, the skills, uses, practices and students linguistic attitudes

can be compared to those found in other sectors or the set of the Valencian population. (Aparici & Castelló, 2011: 10).

Therefore, students in their language production in Catalan produce numerous interferences and linguistic *calques* which have as an origin Spanish. Students identify Spanish as a closer language and adopt similar or identical solutions as they would do in Spanish when using Catalan, especially in the context of specific terminology and administrative phraseology. For example, students use the following terminological forms: *recaudació, rebre jurament, celebrar, cobrament revertit* o *a data fixa*, en lloc de *recaptació, prendre jurament, tenir lloc, cobrament a destinació* o *a dia cert*, which are the correct forms in Catalan. The first ones are linguistic *calques* from Sapnish: *recaudación, recibir juramento, celebrar, cobro revertido o a fecha fija*. Therefore, we have to try and anticipate the terminological forms that are unknown for students in order to be able to solve interferences.

3. Teaching foundations in administrative terminology

The main objective of the teaching-learning process of administrative terminology in Catalan is part of a higher objective, which is the formation of communicative competence (linguistic, textual and pragmatic competences) and linguistic abilities and strategic competence (Alcón, 2007: 260) in the Catalan language framed in the specific scope of public administration. For this reason, administrative terminology learning is one of the specialised subjects´ objectives. So, the general contents of the administrative language subject are the following:
1. Definition and features of the administrative language.
2. General criteria of administrative documentation
3. Drafting of administrative documents
4. Types of administrative documents:
    4.1 Request form
    4.2 Letter
    4.3 Court-appointed
    4.4 Certificate
    4.5 Diligence
    4.6 Citation
    4.7 Call for meeting
    4.8 Meeting minute
    4.9 Report
    4.10 Resolution
    4.11 Appeal
5. Administrative terminology and phraseology.
6. Linguistic conventions:
    6.1 Capital and lower case letters
    6.2 Formal treatments
    6.3 Punctuation signs
7. Ortographic, morphosintactical and lexical remarks.

In the education field, specialised terminology is essential, as students of any level are subjected to a much higher terminological input in terms of quantity and quality than those who usually speak one language (Cassany & Lorente, 1996: 6). We understand that the process of acquiring or learning a language for a specific purpose is innately and cognitively- based, and it should take into account both internal and external factors (Morell, 1996: 39). The first ones are linked to the individual (aptitude, motivation, instrumentality, etc.) and the second ones are mainly, although not solely, related to the nature of each specialty.

According to Alcón (2007: 260), both the learning objective and the didactical methodology show the *raison d´être* of languages with a specific purpose; in other words, it would be convenient for the didactic action to be preceeded by the identification of the communicative needs which determine the specialised discipline, as well as the the specification in the form of objectives and educational intentions. At first, we must analyse the contents studied

in the programme (degree itself) and extractic the necessary semantic fields which are necessary for the formation of communicative competence in the language specialty. In this sense, we should start from the previous descriptive studies based on specialised lexical combinations which would allow us to determine which aspects are the most problematic ones and thus, direct teaching towards the resolution of these (Vidal & Cabré, 2006).

Following Alcon (2007: 260), so the aim of learning as teaching methodology account for the reason of specialized languages; in other words, it is advisable to go didactic action preceded the identification of communication needs that determines the discipline of specialization, as well as in the form of goals precision educational intentions. At first, we must analyze the contents studied in the program and extract the semantic fields necessary for the formation of communicative competence in the language of specialty. In this regard, it should be based on previous descriptive studies on combinatorial lexical specialized shows which aspects are most problematic and to direct teaching to the resolution of these (Cabre & Vidal, 2006).

One factor to consider is the emotional and affective side related to the purpose of study, in this case terminology in Catalan, which some students present. Thus, as it occurs in other specialised contexts (Montesinos, 2014: 56), the students who are more motivated are those who have a broader knowledge of public administration terminology in Catalan and those who commit less mistakes and *calques* when transferring terminology from Spanish in Catalan. Moreover, students who have a broader knowledge about planned terminology suggest spontaneous terminological solutions in Catalan, while the students who are less motivated or have little affection for Catalan frequently produce spontaneous terminological solutions in class. In this sense, according to Cabré (2004: 17), in Catalan, unlike what happens in other languages which are socially stronger, speakers act more prudently and hesitate a lot before using an spontaneous neologism in a public and formal context.

Alcón (2007: 260) expresses, following Chamot (1987), that inside learning strategies we can include metacognitive ones, or in other words, the ones which regulate the learning process (including techniques aimed at planning, organising and self-assesing the learning process); the purpose of cognitive ones is leaning the language; and social and affective ones are focused at searching for help or controlling the possible affective factors that affect the learning process. Therefore, we must take into account different strategies in all the learning process.

Finally, to be able to carry out terminology teaching in the classroom we must take into account that particular behaviours of students tend to diverge. Due to this, for didactics it is very necessary and useful to conduct a necessity analisys early in the process.

4. Proposal for administrative terminology teaching

As a result of what we have exposed in the previous sections, we now present a proposal consisting of a didactic action for learning terminology, considering the objectives and contents shown below:
- Objectives related to knowledge learning:
    a) Acquire the specific terminology and phraseology for the administrative sector.
    b) Understand mechanisms in terminology formation
- Objectives related to procedural learning:
    a) Identify incorrect terms and Spanish forms in administrative documents and substitute them for the correct forms.
    b) Use the appropriate terminology in different administrative contexts.
    c) Develop terminological and phraseological precision.
- Objectives related to attitude and moral values learning:
    a) Be aware of the importance of using administrative terminology and phraseology in a correct way.
    b) Develop a thoughtful and critical attitude towards more adequate terminological options.
    c) Reflect on the terminological learning process itself.
- Contents:
    a) Terminological formation mechanisms
        Derivation
        Composition

        Abbreviations
        Others
   b) Administrative terminology
   c) Administrative phraseology

As for derivation, below are the prefixes and suffixes which are mostly used in the formation of administrative terms, for example:

        Preffixes: *acomiadament, assegurar; contraordre, contraprestació; desacatament, decomissar;*
           empadronar, endeutament; extralimitació; inajornable, imperfecte, il·legal;
           intercanviar; prejudicial; quasicontracte, quasiusdefruit; recàrrec, recaptar, etc.
        Suffixes: *fiançador, fiançament, fiançar*
           usdefruit, usufructuari, usufructuar
           traïdorament, traïdoria, traïdorenc
           adjudicació, adjudicar, adjudicatari, -ària
           administració, administrat -ada, administrador -dora, administrar, administrativista,
           administratiu -iva

As for composition, an important section is dedicated to syntagmatic terminology, where we analyse how the same word can generate different sintagmatic terms, as we can see in the following two examples (Termcat, 2014):

        - *segell de certificació*
     segell de temps
     segell electrònic
     - *signatura electrònica*
     signatura electrònica avançada
     signatura electrònica reconeguda
     signatura embolcallant
     signatura separada

Abbreviations and acronyms in the administrative sector are numerous and they must be taken into account in the teaching process. Hence, we show the main features of abbreviation and acronym formation in Catalan language. They are immediately applied in practice.

Lastly, although students have administrative terminology and phraseology lists both in Catalan and Spanish, due to the large number of *calques* that are produced, we have considered the observation and detection of these situations and their subsequent practice as convenient. For example, some cases are selected and discussed and they are then disordered in order to reorder them according to their subsequent correspondence in both languages:

Spanish	Catalan
a ciencia cierta	*amb certesa*
acto seguido	*tot seguit*
a destajo	*a preu fet*
de antemano	*per endavant*
por adelantado	*a la bestreta*

As for terminology didactics we propose three distinct phases. In the first phase of the teaching-learning process it is essential to conduct a survey to find out the level and terminological knowledge, as well as interferences in order to amend them later.

Initially, to be able to understand the actions of individual students, there is a questionnaire in which they have to answer questions of different nature. On the one hand, questions are metacognitive and self-reflective, such as: In which language are you a competent speaker? Or in which languages are you competent when dealing with public administration terminology? On the other hand, there are questions related to linguistic behaviour, more specifically terminological one, in the students´Catalan language, such as: What is the correct term: *finiquir, liquidament, quitança*?

Furthermore, it is very appropriate to incorporate some questions in the survey related to the way students think that they learn terminology better and more easily. In our case, the chosen option was the one that considered that

the learning process had to be carried out by means of terminological games in the classroom.

The second phase is the central phase of the process and contains different types of terminological activities about contents that must be learnt and improved. Generally, there are traditional activities such as the ones that follow:

- Complete blank spaces in administrative documents, sentences, etc., without specifying or giving a synonym, translation, etc.
- Complete administrative documents and multiple-choice answer sentences.
- Relate terms: terms and origin words, terms and derivatives, terms and definitions, etc.
- Electronic terminological search activities.
- Writing of administrative documentation including terms and proper and specific phraseology according to the type of document.

In this phase, an activity that involves the production of one terminological newspaper per student and that will conclude in the next phase begins, resulting in a terminological memory. Cognitive strategies are worked on with administrative documents and texts. In relevant activities and as a result of these, students create a newspaper which includes the relevant terminology and concepts that they are currently acquiring.

Finally, in the third phase, evaluative tests with terminological contents are carried out, where students must create, translate and correct administrative documentation, so that each student can check their acquired knowledge. In addition, the revision the self-assessment and of the terminological newspaper is carried out as it was developed in the previous phase, and then comes the writing of the individual terminological memory, which expresses the exposed terminological problems, possible solutions, non-regulated terms or terms that have not been regulated yet, etc. This task of learning terminology gives better results in learning, as well as a higher rate of satisfaction among students of the abovementioned specialised subjects.

5. Conclusions

There are not many previous studies regarding administrative terminology and their didactic approaches, especially when compared to the numerous existing terminological works and administrative documentation, as institutions and universities have published several materials. In didactics, terminological objectives are part of the communicative objectives of learning administrative language. Terminological contents include administrative terminology and phraseology, as well as mechanisms for terms formation. In this sense, a methodology and a learning proposal for administrative terminology have been proposed in which a necessity need is carried out in order to approach teaching in a more conscious way due to students´ lacks.

We conclude with the idea that learners do not know administrative terminology and phraseology in Catalan in a considerable way. Moreover, learners who achieve greater terminological competence in the second phase of the learning process are the most motivated ones, have done greater linguistic reflection and thus perform less interferences and *calques*. Finally, we consider that in teaching terminology for specific purposes we must take into account the context in which it occurs as well as the individual needs of learners, thus preparing the daily newspaper and terminological memory contribute to fill individual gaps and make a significant terminological learning process focused on students.

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