Lexical and semantic challenges in teaching and learning political and legal specialised language at the *Preparatory Programme of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens*

Andreea-Victoria GRIGORE[1]

The present paper is related to an on-going research into the lexical and semantic challenges posed in the process of teaching and learning the specialised political and legal language. In fact, the analysis of these challenges is based on the author's extensive experience in teaching the respective specialised language at the Preparatory Programme for Foreign Citizens (University of Bucharest). The aforementioned challenges are caused by two semantic relations (i.e., polysemy and synonymy), which disregard the unambiguous communication essential for any terminology. To address this issue, the paper argues that teachers of specialised languages should regularly raise the students' awareness of the various meanings and potential synonyms that a term may have. Additionally, the paper advocates the necessity of a glossary of terms and contexts of usage that should accompany a textbook dedicated to a specialised language.

Keywords: *lexical and semantic relations, Romanian as a foreign language, specialised political and legal language, teaching and learning, challenges*

1. Introduction

This paper examines the challenges posed by polysemy and synonymy in teaching and learning specialised political and legal language to foreign students. These challenges represent preliminary findings from an on-going research into the lexical and semantic difficulties encountered in this educational context. The abovementioned political and legal language is taught in a six-hour, optional seminar for a group of foreign students (referred to as *the Social Sciences group*). Held weekly during the second semester of the academic year, this seminar is part of the *Preparatory Programme of Romanian Language for Foreign Citizens* at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest.

---

[1] University of Bucharest, victoria.grigore@unibuc.ro

Taking into consideration the aforementioned context, this article aims to: (1) describe the current state of teaching this specialised language to foreign students; (2) discuss the lexical and semantic challenges this language poses during the seminar dedicated to the Social Sciences group; (3) explain the causes underlying these challenges; and (4) find practical solutions in order to prevent them.

One premise of this paper is based on our extensive experience teaching the specialised language of politics and law in the *Preparatory Programme*, which began in the second semester of the 2010–2011 academic year. In the course of time, we have observed various challenges arising from the abstract nature and complexity of this specialised language, challenges rooted in the fields of politics and law. Many of these issues have been discussed in previous studies (Grigore 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2018, 2022, 2024), while other contributions (Grigore 2016c, 2020, 2021a, 2021b) have emphasised the need for a textbook dedicated to the language, despite the lack of a precise methodology of Romanian for Specific Purposes. Another premise of this article is a personal interest in the linguistic study of terminologies and, more specifically, in the study of political and legal terminology, which lies at the core of the specialised language under scrutiny.

Before delving into the contents of our research, we find it essential to outline the structure of this paper. Following the introduction, the second section explores theoretical aspects related to the process of teaching and learning languages. The third section considers the diverse backgrounds of students, a factor that presents unique challenges when learning a specialised language. The fourth section examines lexical and semantic challenges, dividing them into two categories, based on the semantic relations involved (polysemy and synonymy). It also explains the causes of these lexical challenges and proposes valid solutions to address them. Finally, the fifth section consolidates the findings from the linguistic analysis of these categories.

2. Theoretical aspects

A discussion of the complex process of language learning and teaching must take into account the six proficiency levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Developed by the Council of Europe, this six-level framework helps to identify a learner's proficiency in a specific language. Among these levels, a particular emphasis is placed on *the threshold level*, situated at the B1 stage, which corresponds to achieving an independent level of proficiency in a foreign language (Moldovan et al. 2001, 10–11).

Recent collective studies on teaching Romanian to foreign students have referred to the B1 level, offering methodological suggestions on how it can be mastered (Sâmihăian, Spătaru Pralea (eds.) 2014; 2016; 2021; Platon et al. (eds.) 2018; 2020; 2022; 2024). Many contributions within these studies have drawn attention to the teaching of Romanian vocabulary. Some of these works have highlighted lexical and semantic difficulties that arise in the teaching and learning process (Stoica 2012), while others have provided solutions to address these issues (Vasiu 2022). Further research has proposed minimal vocabulary lists for effective communication in Romanian (Biriş, Burlacu, Şoşa, 2011; Biriş 2012) and even non-grammatical, vocabulary-based textbooks, especially for beginners (Ursa 2022).

Although dictionaries for native speakers, such as DEX or *The Explicative Dictionary of Romanian*, are frequently used in teaching and learning Romanian as a foreign language, research has demonstrated that these lexicographic sources are not always suitable for foreign learners. They often contain irrelevant information (e.g., archaisms, regionalisms) or lack adequate contexts for the use of synonyms (Uşurelu 2014). Moreover, some studies have advocated for lexicographic resources specifically designed for foreign students (Platon 2020), including an electronic version of a general language dictionary for non-native speakers (Sacalâş 2022).

Over the past decade, specialised vocabulary (i.e., terminology) has attracted the attention of researchers, despite the absence of a dedicated methodology of Romanian for Specific Purposes. As a result, specialists in Romanian as a foreign language have developed both useful textbooks and insightful studies concerning specialised languages. A notable example is represented by the two series of didactic resources produced at *Transilvania* University of Braşov (Buja et al. 2016; Săftoiu (ed.) 2022), which cover several specialised fields, including law and politics.

Nevertheless, since the majority of non-native students enrol in medical schools, many specialists in Romanian as a foreign language have investigated terminological aspects specific to *medical sciences*. In fact, in the last 10 years, numerous textbooks and studies have been published on the language of *chemistry* (Levonian 2024), and especially on the language of *anatomy*, given the complexity of this scientific domain (Biriş 2014; Busuioc 2018; Vesa Florea 2018; Kohn et al. 2018; Boc-Sînmărghiţan et al. 2020; Dafinoiu 2023; Kohn 2024). To a lesser extent, other authors have examined terminologies from fields such as *technical (engineering) sciences* (Tudor 2020; Simina-Suciu 2024), *economic sciences* (Spătaru-Pralea 2019), *humanities and arts* (Tonţ 2024), and *social sciences*, particularly *law* and *political science* (see our works listed in the *References* section of this paper).

3. The students' profile – another challenge?[2]

As it has been previously mentioned (see above section 1.), the optional seminar on specialised political and legal language is reserved for the so-called *Social Sciences group*. This group is formed at the start of the second semester with the sole aim to provide foreign students with 14 introductory classes, which correspond to the 14 weeks of the semester. These classes are based on fundamental terminological concepts in the broad field of social sciences, particularly in political and legal language. However, the group itself is heterogeneous, a feature which is highly influenced by factors such as students' backgrounds, their intended academic and career paths, and their level of Romanian proficiency by the end of the *Preparatory Programme*'s first semester.

To begin with, the heterogeneity is found in the *students' backgrounds*. Most of them come from outside the European Union and therefore represent different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, which significantly impact their learning styles. For example, students in the 2023–2024 class came from the following countries: Albania, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, France, Greece, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ukraine, and Vietnam. Furthermore, some of these students were from mixed-nationality families, with one parent or grandparent being Romanian. Others came from Romanian families who emigrated when the students were young and have now decided to return to their homeland. In both cases, these particular foreign students have had some exposure to the Romanian language since childhood, unlike their classmates, who began studying Romanian only in the *Preparatory Programme*.

Another aspect which contributes to the heterogeneity of the group is linked to the students' *educational goals*, more specifically, their intended studies in Romania. The majority of the students plan to pursue B.A. degrees, and their knowledge of terminology (if any) is based on high school courses taken in their home countries. Yet, some students are to be enrolled in M.A. or even Ph.D. programmes at Romanian universities. This means that they already have a high level of specialisation in fields such as law and political science.

Closely related to the students' educational goals are their *professional aspirations*. While most career paths are connected to law and political science, some students have chosen to study in Romanian faculties a variety of

---

[2] The main ideas discussed in this section were analysed in some of our earlier works (Grigore 2020; 2021a; 2021b). Nonetheless, we have chosen to briefly revisit these ideas, so as to maintain the internal coherence of the present paper.

interdisciplinary fields, such as sociology, history, defence and security, and international relations. In the last couple of years, the Social Sciences group has even included students pursuing academic paths in communication, education sciences, or psychology, a fact which has further contributed to the heterogeneity of the group.

The heterogeneity of the group is ultimately influenced by the students' *level of Romanian at the end of the first semester*. Unfortunately, in some cases, their language proficiency depends on when they actually begin studying Romanian. This start time, in turn, is often determined by bureaucratic factors such as receiving their letter of acceptance from the Romanian Ministry of Education or securing a visa for Romania. Consequently, not all students begin their studies in the *Preparatory Programme* on October 1st, since some experience a delay of at least a few weeks. By the start of the second semester, these delays result in proficiency levels ranging from A2 to B1, or even higher for students with Romanian ancestry.

In order to solve the issues described above, we have elaborated a textbook on the specialised language of politics and law. Although the textbook is currently in its final stage of preparation, the students have been given access to the manuscript, which has been continuously updated and refined to meet the needs of their future studies. The textbook is organised into 14 units, corresponding to the 14 weeks of the second semester, and covers topics as follows: *1. International Community (I). United Nations. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*; *2. International Community (II). European Union. Schengen Area*; *3. Council of Europe*; *4. The state. Forms of government. Political regimes*; *5. Romanian politics. Political parties in Romania*; *6. The separation of powers (I). The legislative power. The Parliament of Romania*; *7. The separation of powers (II). The executive power (1). The Government of Romania*; *8. The separation of powers (II). The executive power (2). The President of Romania*; *9. **The Constitution of Romania**. Citizens' rights, freedoms, and duties*; *10. Law. General concepts of law*; *11. The separation of powers (III). The judicial power*; *12. Legal professions in Romania*; *13. Legislative documents. Case study: **The Family Code of Romania***; *14. Revision*[3].

Given this structure, it can be argued that a major feature of the textbook is its thematic organisation, which gradually moves from a macrostructural level (covering general topics that are widely familiar to foreign students) to a microstructural level, focusing on more specific topics related to Romanian politics and the judicial system.

---

[3] The textbook is planned to end with a Romanian glossary, whose presence will be explained in section 4.

4. Lexical and semantic challenges

Irrespective of the significant challenge posed by the students' profile, especially within the context of a (planned) textbook thematically organised, it is essential to remember that the greatest challenges in the teaching and learning process originate from the specialised language of politics and law itself.

Referring to specialised language in general, Lerat (1995, 32) defined it as "a linguistic system that uses *terminology* and other linguistic means aimed at achieving *an unambiguous type of communication* within *a particular field*" (our translation and emphasis). Thus, the effort to avoid ambiguity and achieve clear communication in a scientific domain relies on three conditions that a term must fulfil: *single-conceptuality*, *single-meaning*, and *single-reference*. Of these, the fundamental condition is *single-conceptuality*, as it directly influences the other two (Depecker 2002, 60–61, 103).

With respect to the interrelation between terminology and semantics, certain relations studied in the latter play a significant role in the success of the teaching and learning process. Both *polysemy* and *synonymy* (as *semantic relations*) are thought to introduce ambiguity into terminology, and therefore, should be eliminated (Bidu-Vrănceanu 2012, 20–21). Nonetheless, their presence in terminology can sometimes be justified. Polysemy may naturally reflect the variation in concepts and meanings (Gaudin 2003, 153), whereas synonymy often appears in newer terminologies that lack full standardisation, in which one term in a series of synonyms has not yet managed to prevail over the others and become the prototype term (Bidu-Vrănceanu 2012, 21).

All these aspects concerning the two semantic relations have been mentioned to provide a general framework for understanding the challenges encountered in teaching and learning specialised political and legal language to foreign students. These challenges, as well as relevant examples, will be analysed in the following subsections.

4.1. Challenges posed by polysemy

Within the specialised language of politics and law, we encounter verbs which have multiple meanings and can be challenging for non-native speakers to understand (see examples (1)–(3) below). One issue which has constantly appeared over time is related to the Romanian verb *a executa* ('to execute'). Like its English counterpart, the verb has various meanings depending on the context – whether military and political (examples (1) a. and b.) or legal (example (1) c.). However, since this specialised language is taught in the second semester of the *Preparatory*

Programme, after the foreign students have already acquired basic linguistic knowledge in Romanian, relying on English may not be a viable option.

(1)   *a executa* ('to execute')
       a. *a executa ordinul generalului* ('to execute the general's order')
       b. *a executa un condamnat la moarte* ('to execute, to kill a person sentenced to death')
       c. *a executa testamentul defunctului* ('to execute the will of the deceased, to make sure that the instructions in the will are followed')

As a result, we decided to provide clear examples of usage contexts to help non-native speakers fully grasp the common semantic components of the three related meanings of the verb *a executa*. Of particular interest to future students of political science and law, all these meanings involve performing an action based on a carefully made decision, with significant future implications, such as (possibly) escalating a military conflict, ending someone's life, or carrying out the instructions of a will. Through our examples and careful attention to contexts, non-native speakers were able to infer the subtle semantic distinctions of the verb *a executa*.

Another key factor that contributed to the comprehension of the three meanings was the timing of their introduction in our classes. The first two meanings, which are related to politics, are introduced in the first part of the second semester, in the units covering the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Council of Europe, respectively (see the topics of our planned textbook in section 3). In contrast, the third meaning appears in Unit 12, which focuses on legal professions in Romania. The recurrence of the verb *a executa* in different units of our textbook allowed us to constantly remind our students of the previously studied meanings. Moreover, this recurrence provided opportunities to clarify misunderstandings and ensure that students finally comprehended the terminological material.

The complexity of the challenge increases when polysemous verbs also have meanings in general, everyday language, not only in the specialised language. This situation is exemplified by the Romanian verbs *a încheia* and *a sesiza* (examples (2) and (3)). In its range of meanings, *a încheia* conveys the notion of finishing an action or ending an event, often referring to something that has reached completion after a certain period of time. As a result, a context like *a încheia un curs* (example (2) a.) is perfectly correct from a lexical and conceptual viewpoint. Similarly, *a încheia* is used in contexts such as *a încheia un contract, un tratat* (example (2) b.), as both a contract and a treaty can only be concluded after the parties have discussed and agreed upon the terms.

As far as the verb *a sesiza* is concerned, its core meaning resides in understanding or perceiving something, usually based on what one literally sees. It is therefore expected that *a sesiza* conveys the sense of noticing something, such as an error (example (3) a.). In addition to this, it can refer to someone who formally or officially informs an authority about something that has drawn their attention because it may not comply with an established set of rules (example (3) b.).

(2)   *a încheia*
         a. *a încheia un curs* ('to complete a course')
         b. *a încheia un contract, un tratat etc.* ('to conclude a contract, a treaty, etc.')
(3)   *a sesiza*
         a. *a sesiza o greșeală* ('to notice a mistake')
         b. *a sesiza autoritatea competentă* ('to notify the competent authority')

In these instances, we had to pay attention to the explanations we provided non-native speakers with, and most importantly, had to emphasise the contextual synonyms that the verbs *a încheia* and *a sesiza* have in both general and specialised language. Additionally, we frequently insisted on the fact that contextual synonyms are not always interchangeable. For example, the contexts *a termina un curs* and *a semna un contract* convey identical meanings to those expressed with *a încheia*. Furthermore, *a observa o greșeală* and *a informa autoritatea competentă* have an equal significance in those contexts where the synonym *a sesiza* is used.

Nevertheless, as practice has shown, the students' equally high degree of attention to detail is required, complemented by their strong eagerness to learn. For example, in a test conducted at the end of the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year (see section 3. above), students were given an exercise requiring them to fill in the blanks with appropriate synonyms of various words that had been previously studied during the semester. One sentence in the exercise was: *Cele două state vor încheia = _____ un tratat de pace luna viitoare* ('The two states will conclude = _____ a peace treaty next month'). Out of the 22 students who took this test, 14 (almost 64%) correctly identified the answer as *vor semna* ('will sign'), while more than a third failed to do so. Four of the remaining 8 students wrote *vor termina* ('will finish'), while the other 4 either left the blank empty or wrote a verb with a general meaning, such as *vor face* ('will do'). Beyond the uncertainty in selecting the appropriate synonym, this result demonstrates that attention to detail and eagerness to learn are essential for mastering any specialised language, particularly in the fields of politics and law.

On other occasions, the precise desire to learn more served as the basis for further refinements in understanding the contextual synonyms of the polysemous verb *a încheia*. More specifically, a few years ago, during a class on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, we reached the point of explaining the contextual synonyms of the verb *a încheia*. After our explanation of the occurrences of the verb (such as *a încheia un curs* and *a încheia un contract, un tratat, etc.*, i.e., examples (2) a. and b.), the discussion progressed to the point where one student asked whether contexts such as *a semna un curs* ('to author a written course or textbook') and *a termina un contract* ('to finish writing a contract') made sense in Romanian. At that moment, we were able to confirm that both structures were valid, although their respective meanings differed slightly from those previously discussed.

The same applies to *a observa*, which is one of the contextual synonyms of the verb *a sesiza*. This verb is introduced in Unit 8, which discusses the institution of the President of Romania, and appears in the context of one of the President's responsibilities: notifying the Constitutional Court of Romania about the potential unconstitutionality of certain laws (example (3) b.). During the ensuing discussion, we were asked whether the phrase *a observa autoritatea competentă* is ever used in Romanian. Thus, the student who raised this question correctly understood that *a observa* is primarily associated with the sense of seeing (example (3) a.). We clarified that, while *a observa autoritatea competentă* does appear in Romanian, it typically means 'to literally see the competent authority, i.e., the person representing it'. Consequently, the student himself concluded that it had no connection to the more specialised context of *a sesiza autoritatea competentă*.

4.2. Challenges posed by synonymy

The previous subsection has already pinpointed a series of problems caused by (contextual) synonymy in relation to polysemy. Subsequently, it has offered a brief insight into the reasons for which various terminologists have argued that synonymy should be eliminated from terminologies (see section 2. above). Nevertheless, practical experience has long shown that synonymy exists in specialised vocabularies, and, furthermore, poses challenges. Accordingly, when teaching and learning a specialised language, even to non-native speakers, teachers play a fundamental role in clearly explaining the subtle differences in meaning that two or more synonyms might have.

In the course of time, a constant issue related to synonymy has involved the coexistence of a general language term and its more sophisticated, scientific counterpart found in specialised contexts. While the former can appear in a wide

range of scientific and non-scientific settings, due to its broad spectrum of meanings, the latter is confined to specific, standard situations. To illustrate, one can think of the synonymous pair *a lupta* and *a milita* (see example (4) below).

(4)   *a lupta* ('to fight') vs. *a milita* ('to advocate, to campaign')
   a. *a lupta pentru salarii mai bune, democrație, drepturile omului, libertate, respectarea Constituției etc.* ('to fight for better salaries, democracy, Human Rights, freedom, abiding the Constitution, etc.')
   b. *a milita pentru drepturile omului, dreptate, libertate, respectarea Constituției etc.* ('to advocate for Human Rights, justice, freedom, abiding the Constitution, etc.')

The common core between the verbs *a lupta* and *a milita* lies in the fact that both denote the act of taking part in a conflict (whether it be a war, a battle, or simply an argument), usually with the aim of achieving a specific outcome or benefiting from the support received during that conflict.

      Due to its general meaning that encompasses so many conflicting situations, the verb *a lupta* (example (4) a.) can be used in contexts involving support for concrete issues (such as better salaries, as in *a lupta pentru salarii mai bune*). It also applies to abstract notions, like causes, ideals, principles, or sets of rules or beliefs. An attentive and hardworking future student in Political Science or Law can easily exemplify these concepts with democracy, human rights, freedom, or constitutional articles (*a lupta pentru democrație, drepturile omului, libertate, respectarea Constituției*). On the other hand, because of its specificity, the verb *a milita* (example (4) b.) is restricted to contexts related to abstract concepts (*a milita pentru democrație, drepturile omului, libertate, respectarea Constituției*).

      Over time, there have been occasions when the specialised term *a milita* has replaced the more general word *a lupta* in unusual contexts. For instance, in the 2023–2024 class, after we discussed Unit 5, regarding the political parties in Romania, we asked our students to write a short composition (approximately 120 words) expressing their opinion on whether political pluralism is essential in any democracy. At the same time, the students were provided with 10 political terms and expressions that they were required to use in their compositions. Among these 10 terms was the verb *a milita*. The result was that, in one composition, we encountered the context *a milita (cu) Guvernul*, which should have been *a lupta cu Guvernul* ('to fight against the Government'). Similarly, in another composition, we found the context *a milita pentru a rezolva (o) situație*, which should have been *a lupta pentru a rezolva o situație* ('to fight in order to solve a situation').

These strange occurrences have been attributed either to a partial or incomplete understanding of the scientific term *a milita*, or to the students' desire to impress by using a more sophisticated form of expression instead of the common *a lupta*. While these constructions may be semantically acceptable, they sound awkward to native speakers because they are not used in Romanian.

To some extent, the pair formed by the verb *a începe* (a polysemous word) and its partial synonym *a demara* is similar to the previously discussed verbs (see example (5) below). The verb *a începe* can be used in a wide range of linguistic contexts, referring to both concrete and abstract activities. For example, it applies to starting a class or a course at a faculty or college, as well as the beginning of a semester. It can also denote the starting point of more abstract activities, which involve various stages or operations, such as a procedure or a project (example (5) a.).

In contrast, the verb *a demara* has a more technical meaning, emphasising the stages of complex activities. Because of this specificity, *a demara* cannot be used with words that denote concrete processes (example (5) b.). Consequently, phrases such as *a demara o procedură* or *a demara o conferință de pace* are entirely correct both lexically and semantically.

(5)   *a începe* ('to begin, to start') vs. *a demara* ('to launch, to start')
       a. *a începe un curs, un semestru, o procedură, un proiect cu fonduri europene, o conferință de pace etc.* ('to begin a course, a semester, a procedure, a European fund-based project, a peace conference, etc.')
       b. *a demara o procedură, un proiect cu fonduri europene, o conferință de pace etc.* ('to start a procedure, a European fund-based project, a peace conference, etc.')

However, based on our extensive experience in teaching specialised political and legal language, we have observed that foreign students still struggle to clearly distinguish between the correct usages of certain verbs, particularly when comparing one to another. Moreover, it is important to consider the timing of when the distinction between *a începe* and *a demara* is introduced, namely, in Unit 2, which is dedicated to the topic of the European Union (see section 3. above). This unit is taught during the second week of the second semester, a period when some students have an A2 level of proficiency in Romanian. This level appears insufficient to fully grasp the subtle differences between the two verbs under discussion.

For example, in the 2023–2024 class, after students were provided with detailed explanations about the synonym pair *a începe – a demara*, they were

assigned a worksheet the following week. One of the exercises required them to form sentences using, among other terms, *a demara* specifically. The goal was to assess how well the students had understood the explanations provided during the prior lesson. Of the 20 students who completed the worksheet, only five (most of whom had Romanian ancestry) successfully constructed correct sentences using the verb, while another four students misunderstood the meaning entirely. Six students chose not to write any sentence at all, whereas five remembered that the verb was a synonym of *a începe*, but used it in incorrect contexts. For instance, they wrote sentences like *Cursul demară (sic!) la ora opt.* (instead of *Cursul începe la ora opt.*, 'The class starts at 8 o'clock.') or *Eu demarez un document.* (instead of *Eu încep un document.*, 'I start (writing) a document.').

When we returned the worksheets, fully checked and annotated, these latter eleven students, in particular, recalled the discussion about the distinction made between the two synonymous verbs. However, they had also looked up the meaning of the verb *a demara* in a general dictionary, such as DEX. In this lexicographic work they discovered that *a demara* is defined as semantically equivalent to *a începe* because both can refer to the initiation of an action (DEX, *s.v. a demara*). Consequently, they assumed that the definition provided there was sufficient for understanding the meaning of the word. Nevertheless, practice demonstrated that this was not enough for them to produce a (coherent) example.

In fact, what DEX lacks is the inclusion of relevant examples that illustrate as clear as possible the appropriate contexts for *a demara*. In the current form of the definition found in this general dictionary, the verb appears to refer to the initialising point of any action. Hence, a non-native speaker wrongly assumes that *a demara* is interchangeable in all contexts with its synonym *a începe*, and this can lead to further confusions.

To prevent errors caused by synonymy (and equally by polysemy), we propose that the ideal solution is to develop not only general language dictionaries for foreign students (as it has already been proposed in the literature, see section 2.), but also lexicographic materials for specialised languages. These materials should take the form of glossaries or lists of terms, entirely written in Romanian. Given that these glossaries are meant to be used in the second semester of the *Preparatory Programme*, when students have a minimum A2 level of linguistic knowledge, they should not rely on an intermediate language. Instead, the glossaries should include terms with (almost) identical meanings, as well as clear

and relevant contexts (i.e., examples) to help non-native speakers discern the defining differences between terms[4].

5. Concluding remarks

As part of an on-going research, this paper has highlighted some of the lexical and semantic challenges posed in the process of teaching and learning the specialised political and legal language.

An example of Romanian for Specific Purposes, the specialised language concerning politics and law is taught in an optional seminar, which takes place every week in the second semester of the *Preparatory Programme of Romanian for Foreign Citizens* (Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest).

The seminar is dedicated to the so-called *Social Sciences group*, which reunites foreign students who intend to pursue an academic (and career) path related to the field of the social sciences, most specifically, law and political science. In fact, the requirements of the academic system and the professional aspirations of the foreign students pinpoint the need for a specialised seminar (and its planned textbook) on political and legal language.

Apart from the challenges posed by the diversity of the Social Sciences group (including various cultural, religious, and social factors), learning a specific vocabulary proves to be a difficult task at times. The lexical and semantic difficulties associated with the specialised political and legal language involve two semantic relations, namely, polysemy and synonymy. According to terminologists, these relations are not supposed to exist in specialised vocabulary, since they contravene the unambiguous communication that any terminology is supposed to deliver.

The analysis undergone has shown that polysemy, and especially synonymy, bring an additional set of challenges in the teaching and learning process of the specialised political and legal language for foreign students. In order to solve this issue, we strongly recommend that students be encouraged to consider the multiple meanings and, sometimes, synonyms that a term might have.

Moreover, during both individual study and classroom activities, foreign students should avoid relying on lexicographic works designed for native speakers.

---

[4] For this reason, in our textbook designed for the specialised language of politics and law, we are currently working on the glossary that explains and clarifies the terms.

As it has been proved in this paper, such sources can lead to extra confusions and, consequently, incorrect usage of certain words or terms.

With respect to classroom activities, we believe that the teachers' explanations, rooted in the scientific content found in (planned or current) textbooks, should be supplemented with well-elaborated glossaries. These glossaries should offer clear contexts for the usage of specialised terms, taking into account not only their meanings within the specialised field, but also (when applicable) their possible meanings in everyday general language.

In the absence of a clear methodology for teaching and learning Romanian for Specific Purposes, we believe that all these actions could significantly facilitate the foreign students' smooth and thorough acquisition of a specialised language.

References

Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela. 2012. "Terminologia: interpretări și reinterpretări." In *Terminologie și terminologii*, vol. 2, ed. by Angela Bidu-Vrănceanu, 18–32. București: Editura Universității din București.

Biriș, Gabriela. 2012. "Vocabularul minimal al limbii române: stadiul cunoștințelor, perspective." In *Noi perspective în abordarea românei ca limbă străină/ca limbă nematernă*, ed. by Elena Platon, Antonela Arieșan, 173–181. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Biriș, Gabriela. 2014. *Limbaj medical. Anatomie. Curs pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor*. București: Editura Universității din București (includes CD).

Biriș, Gabriela, Diana Viorela Burlacu, Elisabeta Șoșa. 2011. *Antonime. Sinonime. Analogii. Vocabular minimal al limbii române (cu traducere în limba engleză)*. București: Editura Saeculum I.O.

Boc-Sînmărghițan, Diana, Daniela Kohn, Daniela Șilindean. 2020. *RLSmed. Româna ca limbă străină – limbaj medical. Nivelurile B1–B2+ de competență lingvistică*. Timișoara: Editura „Victor Babeș".

Buja, Elena, Gabriela Cusen, Mădălina Matei, Stanca Măda, Corina Micu, Răzvan Săftoiu. 2016. *Limba română ca limbă străină. Caiete didactice pentru limbaje de specialitate*, vol. 1 – *Medicină generală și farmacie*, vol. 2 – *Științe economice și juridice*, vol. 3 – *Științe socio-umane*. Brașov: Editura Universității *Transilvania* din Brașov (includes three CDs).

Busuioc, Aliona. 2018. "Vocabularul de specialitate al mediciniștilor străini ca parte componentă în formarea competenței de comunicare profesională". In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele Conferinței internaționale **Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS)**, ediția I (Cluj-Napoca, 20–21 octombrie 2017)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia-Iunia Vasiu, Antonela Arieșan, 135–142. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Dafinoiu, Cristina. 2023. *Anatomia și fiziologia omului. Manual de limbaj medical pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor*. Constanța: Editura Universității *Ovidius* din Constanța.

Depecker, Loïc. 2002. *Entre signe et concept. Éléments de terminologie générale*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle.

DEX = Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (ed. by Ion Coteanu and Lucreția Mareș), ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită. București: Univers Enciclopedic Gold. 2009.

Gaudin, François. 2003. *Socioterminologie. Une approche sociolinguistique de la terminologie*. Bruxelles: De Boeck et Larcier/Éditions Duculot.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2016a. "Dificultăți în predarea limbajului politico-diplomatic la Anul pregătitor. Studiu de caz: *grup* vs. *grupare.*" In *Limbă și identitate românească în continua reconfigurare culturală a Europei*, volumul I, *Didactică*, ed. by Gina Nimigean, 201–216. Novi Sad/Iași: Izdavač Univerzitet u Novom Sadu (Filozofski Fakultet)/Editura Vasiliana '98.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2016b. "Variația discursivă în predarea limbajului politico-diplomatic la Anul pregătitor." In *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 14-lea și al 15-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 29 noiembrie 2014 și 28 noiembrie 2015)*, ed. by Florentina Sâmihăian, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea, 152–159. București: Editura Universității din București.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2016c. "Elaborarea unui manual de limbaj politico-diplomatic adresat studenților străini. Stadiul actual." In *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 14-lea și al 15-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 29 noiembrie 2014 și 28 noiembrie 2015)*, ed. by Florentina Sâmihăian, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea, 160–169. București: Editura Universității din București.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2016d. "Socio-cultural Difficulties in Teaching Political and Diplomatic Language at the Preparatory Year." *Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies* VII, 1 (13): 63–73.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2018. "O propunere pentru utilizarea unor documente de corespondență diplomatică în predarea limbajului politico-diplomatic la Anul pregătitor". In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele Conferinței internaționale **Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS)**, ediția I (Cluj-Napoca, 20–21 octombrie 2017)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia-Iunia Vasiu, Antonela Arieșan, 280–296. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2020. "În prag de alegeri prezidențiale... Utilitatea unei unități de învățare despre Instituția Președintelui României într-un manual de limbaj specializat politico-juridic dedicat studenților străini." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a II-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 18–19 octombrie 2019)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 171–190. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2021a. "«Curat constituțional!». Unitatea de învățare «Constituția României. Drepturi, libertăți și îndatoriri cetățenești» dintr-un manual de *Limbaj specializat. Științe sociale (Științe politice și drept)* adresat studenților străini." In *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 18-lea și al 19-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 23–24 noiembrie 2018 și 22–23 noiembrie 2019)*, ed. by Florentina Sâmihăian, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea, 141–163. București: Editura Universității din București.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2021b. "«Imperfecta lume perfectă...». Despre unitatea de învățare «Statul. Exercitarea puterii politice în stat. Forme de guvernământ (monarhie vs republică). Regimuri politice» dintr-un manual de limbaj specializat politico-juridic pentru studenți străini." In *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 18-lea și al 19-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 23–24 noiembrie 2018 și 22–23 noiembrie 2019)*, ed. by Florentina Sâmihăian, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea, 164–188. București: Editura Universității din București.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2022. "Utilizarea surselor audiovideo autentice în receptarea discursului oral la opționalul de limbaj specializat juridico-politic pentru studenți străini." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a III-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 29 octombrie 2021)*, ed. by

Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 97–117. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Grigore, Andreea-Victoria. 2024. "Câteva sugestii pentru dezvoltarea competenței de producere a discursului oral la opționalul de limbaj specializat juridico-politic pentru studenți străini." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a IV-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca (6–7 octombrie 2023)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia Vasiu, Diana Roman, Cristina Bocoș, 240–254. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Kohn, Daniela. 2024. "Dinamica progresiei în însușirea bagajului lexical. Vocabular general în context medical la nivelurile A1 și A2 (RLS)." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a IV-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca (6–7 octombrie 2023)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia Vasiu, Diana Roman, Cristina Bocoș, 64–82. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Kohn, Daniela, Diana Boc-Sînmărgițan, Daniela Șilindean. 2018. *Vitamina. Româna ca limbă străină – limbaj general și medical. Culegere de exerciții pentru nivelurile A1, A2, B1*. Timișoara: Editura „Victor Babeș".

Moldovan, Victoria, Liana Pop, Lucia Uricaru. 2001. *Nivel prag. Pentru învățarea limbii române ca limbă străină*. Strasbourg: Consiliul pentru Cooperări Culturale. Available online, *Institutul limbii române*, last accessed on 23.10.2024 (https://www.ilr.ro/wp-content/uploads/nivel_prag.pdf).

Lerat, Pierre. 1995. *Les langues spécialisées*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Levonian, Raluca. 2024. *Limbaj de chimie. Curs de limbaj medical pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor*. București: Editura Universității din București.

Platon, Elena. 2020. "Un proiect utopic de lexicografie didactică în RLS." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a II-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 18–19 octombrie 2019)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 357–378. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Platon, Elena, Antonela Arieșan (eds). 2012. *Noi perspective în abordarea românei ca limbă străină/ca limbă nematernă*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Platon, Elena, Lavinia-Iunia Vasiu, Antonela Arieșan (eds.). 2018. *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele Conferinței internaționale **Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS)**, ediția I (Cluj-Napoca, 20–21 octombrie 2017)*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Platon, Elena, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu (eds). 2020. *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a II-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 18–19 octombrie 2019)*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Platon, Elena, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu (eds). 2022. *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a III-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 29 octombrie 2021)*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Platon, Elena, Lavinia Vasiu, Diana Roman, Cristina Bocoș (eds). 2024. *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a IV-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca (6–7 octombrie 2023)*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Sacalîș, Anca-Lorena. 2022. "Dicționarul electronic al limbii române ca limbă străină (DERLS)". In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a III-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 29 octombrie 2021)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 149–161. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Săftoiu, Răzvan (ed.), Georgiana Argăseală, Alice Bodoc, Elena Buja, Georgiana Burbea, Gabriela Cusen, Alina Felea, Mădălina Matei, Stanca Măda, Corina Silvia Micu, Andreea Petre, Violeta Rus, Răzvan Săftoiu, Raluca Sinu, Oana Tatu, Noémi Tudor. 2022. *Limba română pentru străini. Limbaje specializate*, vol. 1 – *Științe medicale*, vol. 2 – *Științe sociale*, vol. 3 – *Științe umaniste și arte*, vol. 4 – *Științe exacte și inginerești*, vol. 5 – *Științe economice*, vol. 6 – *Științe juridice*. Brașov: Editura Universității *Transilvania* din Brașov.

Sâmihăian, Florentina, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea (eds). 2014. *Abordări și cercetări didactice în domeniul disciplinelor filologice. Actele celui de-al 12-lea și al 13-lea Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 14–15 decembrie 2012 și 13–14 decembrie 2013)*. București: Editura Universității din București.

Sâmihăian, Florentina, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea (eds). 2016. *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 14-lea și al 15-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 29 noiembrie 2014 și 28 noiembrie 2015)*. București: Editura Universității din București.

Sâmihăian, Florentina, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea (eds). 2021. *Limba și literatura română. Perspective didactice. Actele celui de-al 18-lea și al 19-lea Colocviu internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 23–24 noiembrie 2018 și 22–23 noiembrie 2019)*. București: Editura Universității din București.

Simina-Suciu, Maria. 2024. "Platformele online în predarea limbajului tehnic." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a IV-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca (6–7 octombrie 2023)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia Vasiu, Diana Roman, Cristina Bocoș, 374–381. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Spătaru-Pralea, Mădălina. 2019. *Achiziția limbajului economic românesc. Repere teoretice și practice*. București: Editura Universității din București.

Stoica, Gabriela. 2012. "Dificultăți lexico-semantice în achiziția limbii române ca limbă străină." In *Noi perspective în abordarea românei ca limbă străină/ca limbă nematernă*, ed. by Elena Platon, Antonela Arieșan, 182–191. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

Tonț, Anamaria-Bianca. 2024. "Limbaj specializat la Anul pregătitor de limba română pentru cetățenii străini. Științe umaniste și arte." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a IV-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană de la Facultatea de Litere a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca (6–7 octombrie 2023)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia Vasiu, Diana Roman, Cristina Bocoș, 83–93. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Tudor, Carmen Livia. 2020. "Concluzii selective referitoare la predarea unui limbaj de specialitate: domeniul tehnic." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a II-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 18–19 octombrie 2019)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 89–96. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Ursa, Anca. 2022. "*La început a fost cuvântul.* Un manual A1 nongramatical de limba română pentru străini." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a III-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 29 octombrie*

2021), ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 85–95. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Ușurelu, Camelia. 2014. "Preliminarii la un dicționar de sinonime pentru străini." In *Abordări și cercetări didactice în domeniul disciplinelor filologice. Actele celui de-al 12-lea și al 13-lea Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de lingvistică (București, 14–15 decembrie 2012 și 13–14 decembrie 2013)*, ed. by Florentina Sâmihăian, Mădălina Spătaru-Pralea, 189–192. București: Editura Universității din București.

Vasiu, Lavinia-Iunia. 2022. "*Ce e într-un cuvânt?* Strategii de descoperire și consolidare a cuvintelor în RL2." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele celei de-a III-a Conferințe internaționale organizate de către Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană (Cluj-Napoca, 29 octombrie 2021)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, 339–370. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Vesa-Florea, Viorica. 2018. "Optimizarea predării limbajului medical la grupele de studenți străini. Instrumente de lucru." In *Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Actele Conferinței internaționale **Discurs polifonic în româna ca limbă străină (RLS)**, ediția I (Cluj-Napoca, 20–21 octombrie 2017)*, ed. by Elena Platon, Lavinia-Iunia Vasiu, Antonela Arieșan, 280–296. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.