

Frequent errors in the use of French in the economic domain

Ioana Paula ARMĂSAR¹

Abstract: *In the didactic teaching-learning process of the specifically economic discourse in French, a first objective could be represented by the discovery of the difficult structures, which favor the appearance of interferences between Romanian and general French, the errors coming in particular from the usual language in the specialized language. The analysis of the most common errors in the use of French by native Romanian students could be a starting point, by the addition of the psycholinguistic dimension, in the thoroughgoing study of the complex process of teaching - learning. The prevention of the frequent errors by the speakers in the use of French while learning it can be done by the teacher's direct recommendations and by the selection and orientation of the educational material that s/he organized and based on clear criteria, oriented towards the needs and interests of his/ her students.*

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1. Introduction

It is well known that recently, in the didactics of teaching foreign languages the focus is no longer placed mainly on the development of language skills, but on the development of the discourse competence and communication, which requires both the familiarity with the system of the language, with the rules for the production of correct grammatical sentences as well as the students' ability to appropriate means of expression acquired through learning to certain concrete situations of communication and certain types of discourse.

The role of the two actors in the teaching-learning process, teacher and student, is much changed in the new vision of the didactics in general and of the foreign languages in particular, the emphasis is no longer placed on the knowledge delivered by the teacher as a simple product, but on knowledge as a continuous process. Teacher's teaching approaches orient towards the opening of new horizons, which are meant to form abilities and to create skills. He becomes in turns: researcher, trainer, observer, judge, and referee. On the other hand, the student defines his/her own learning objectives, chooses his/her learning strategies and techniques, and establishes his own learning circumstances (which is related to rhythm, progression, duration, etc.) and his/ her own interests.

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, armasar@unitbv.ro

The objectives of teaching specialized language consider using a wide range of linguistic means of both a concrete and speculative nature, general and specific to the domain. What makes the difference between everyday language and technical (specialist) one was summarized by G. Vigneri some decades ago: 'the erasure of the differences between the written and the oral discourse, the impersonal aspect of communication which leads to the reduction of the personal forms and to the marked preference for the impersonal forms, the reduction of the temporal forms as a result of the general and universal character of the scientific and technical (specialist) significance, the objectivity of communication which implies the disappearance of connotations and of the subjective formulations, the tendency towards a more precise and concise expression. (G. Vigneri, 1976: 19)

The approach of the economic discourse according to pragmatic criteria, for the learning of French during higher education, delineates the specific communication acts (the way assumptions can be made, arguments can be brought, conclusions can be drawn, the manner of evaluating and comparing, of describing and formulating, of explaining and correcting, of defining concepts etc.) from the daily communication acts. Given that French is studied by students with an average level of language skills, generally B2, a first possible objective in the teaching of the specific business French discourse would be the discovery of the difficult structures that favor the occurrence of interferences between Romanian and French in the daily discourse. Thus, the analysis of the most frequent errors could be a starting point in the deepening of the complex process of teaching and learning, the focus on students and their needs related to psycholinguistics, student-oriented. It is to be noted that, in most cases, the errors are transferred from the usual language into the specialized language (the examples will generally be from the economic domain, but the problems will go beyond). Due to space constraints, I have selected from the wide range of common errors only a few aspects, but I will resume this research in a larger study.

2. Brief overview of the most common French errors (economic domain)

The practical teaching of the specialized French highlighted more hesitations and common mistakes of the Romanian speakers /learners when they had to use certain special constructions that sounded similar in their mother tongue. The errors occur mainly in the general language, but they persist in the specialized language, as well.

2.1. At the level of vocabulary it should be noticed that the suffix and prefix derivations are very productive, as they distinguish between the formation of the action or agent names. For the formation of the action names French has the suffixes *-age*, *-ement* and *-tion* (the latter also having the variants: *-sion*, *-ssion*, *-ation*, *-ition*, *-isation*). While the suffix *-age* corresponds to the transitive use of the verb (indicating an operation that is performed by someone's intervention), the suffix *-ement* corresponds to an intransitive usage (indicating either the result or a phenomenon), and the suffix *-tion* tends to acquire an international character.

Exemple: *décapage/décapement; abbatage/abattement; déroulage/déroulement; tranchage/tranchement; dimenssionnage/dimensionnement; importation, transition, consommation, transaction, soumission, liaison, rémunération, gestion, distribution, convocation, production etc.*

The agent name is formed with suffixes *-eur /- ateur* (masculin), respectively *-euse / - ateuse* (feminin), designating either an animated agent or an inanimate one. The selection of the gender form is done based on the determined implied word: *appareil* or *dispositif* for the masculin, *machine*, for the feminin.

Example: *transporteur, fournisseur, dérouleuse, fraiseuse, verniseuse, perceuse*

Two very frequent models, but that represent real traps in the learning process and in the use of French, are the complex lexical units:

- noun + à + infinitive: the error transposes the preposition *de* in Romanian: *machine de/à coudre = sewing machine, machine de/à écrire = typewriter, difficile d'/à accepter = hard to accept, etc.*
- noun + à + noun: the error consists in the transposition of the preposition from Romanian, *with = avec: mot avec / à mot = verbatim, délai avec / à échéance = maturity term, chambre avec / à deux lits = double beds, investisseur avec / à initiative = initiative investor, affaire avec / à profit = profit business*

2.2. As for the syntax of the sentence, it is well known the fact that the existence in the scientific specialty discourse of the interrogative sentence is very low and that it can be reformulated either by indirect interrogation or by rhetorical interrogation.

Example: *Le client de l'hôtel a demandé le receptionniste quelles sont les moyens de transport vers le centre de la ville.
On peut se demander si cette affaire nous apportera des bénéfices.
Demandez-moi si je suis d'accord avec les taux préçus par le fisc!
La consommation des ressources naturelles peut-elle être diminuée?*

When the human subject is necessarily expressed, the neuter referent *-on* is used:

Example: *On a été chargé à faire des études de marché dans l'hotellerie de province.
On a été amené à ne pas embaucher ce candidat.*

The objectification of communication translates linguistically by the distribution with priority of the non-animated in the subject position, having as consequence a different organization of the sentence:

Example: *L'augmentation du franc suisse a eu comme conséquence l'appauvrissement de la population.
L'exécution des dépenses et des recettes doit être effectuée chaque année.*

The preoccupation for a concise expression leads to the preference for the reduction of the relative clause to gerund:

Example: *L'accord est suspendu au moyen des avocats ~~qui reportent/~~ reportant des efforts...*
~~Puisque ce contrat paraissait~~ satisfaisant/Ce contrat paraissant satisfaisant, ils ont procédé aux signatures.
Les niveaux des revenus, de production et de commerce des États U.E. ~~sont/~~étant tous extrêmement différents, les experts ont commencé à développer un projet....

2.3. The grammatical errors are the ones that stand out both in daily discourse and in the specialized one, in the oral or written expression alike.

As for the nouns, a frequent mistake is the one that occurs when deriving nouns from verbs, by the help of suffixes. The most troublesome is the tendency to generally use the suffix *-tion* with its variant *-ation*.

Exemple: *~~la diminuation/~~ la diminution de la valeur*
~~l'épuisasion/~~ l'épuisement de la somme
~~l'investition/~~ l'investissement de l'argent

The general tendency of the students with an average level of language proficiency, irrespective of the specialization profile, is to maintain the genres of nouns and qualifying adjectives from Romanian, leading to troublesome chained effects of disagreements. This phenomenon can be prevented by the observations of the teacher who proposes exercises, having the stated aim of highlighting the possible errors on suffixation - *tion*, *-ssion*, *-ation*, *-erie*, *- é*, *-ère*, *-lle*, *-ine* – indicate the feminine gender and *-age* - *ement*, *-er*, *-in* indicate the masculine gender, etc.

Example: *augmentation, importation, discussion, valorisation, hôtellerie, financière, culturelle, hommage, héritage, humeur, payement, abattement, journalier* etc.

To mistake the gender of the noun leads consequently to the mistaken selection of the determinants of the noun:

Example: *~~cette~~ développement (translated from Romanian where it is féminin, instead of *ce développement*), ~~une/~~un remplissage*
~~La/Le~~ livre que vous avez demandée/ demandé est ~~la favorite/le~~ favori de mon amie.

The form identity of some qualifying adjectives with some adverbs in Romanian misleads quite often the user inattentive to the determining relationship in the sentence, to the relationships established between the noun and the adjective, on the one hand and the verb /adverb on the other hand, making him forget the forms of the suffixes specific to the adverb in French (*-ement*, *-emment*, *-amment*).

Example: *La répose du salarié était evasive. - vs. - Il répondait ~~évasif~~/
évasivement aux questions pressantes concernant le budget
de l'entreprise.*
*Le tissu mou du tapis de sa chambre était un souvenir de son
enfance. - vs. - La recrue répondit ~~mou~~/ mollement et
~~prudent/prudemment~~/ prudemment aux questions du
recruteur pendant l'interview.*
*La dame élégante est ma mère.- vs. - Dans ses réunions
d'affaires, le directeur parlait ~~élégant/élégamment~~/
élégamment le français.*

At the level of verbs, the most difficult approach proves to be that of the subjunctive mood in French (the conjunctive in Romanian) in the completive sentences after verbs that express uncertainty, because the easiest variant for the native Romanian student is to use the indicative mood under the influence of the mother tongue.

Example: *Je doute que la solution ~~sera~~ ~~acceptée~~/soit acceptée.*
Je ne crois pas que la solution ~~a été~~ ~~acceptée~~/ait été acceptée.
*Bien que les pays développés ~~ont~~ /aient souvent la possibilité de se
protéger contre les souffrances de la pauvreté, rien ne
garantit que leurs économies résisteront.*

In the expression of negation, the most frequent error is the one of the incorrect positioning of the indices of negation at the passive voice, the past tense and when the verb is at the infinitive.

Example: *La rencontre des présidents des compagnies associées ~~n'a été pas~~/
n'a pas été mise au point par leurs secrétaires.*
*Je ~~n'ai retenu pas~~ /n'ai pas retenu de votre annonce que votre
entreprise leader sur le marché était en pleine expansion.*
*On a décidé de ~~n'employer pas~~/ ne pas employer les fiches qu'il a
remplies.*

The pedagogy of foreign languages in the higher education, focused on students' needs and interests, establishes as a starting point of the methodological approach the three factors involved in the teaching-learning process: teacher - student - teaching material. When teaching the specialized language it will be taken into account the intense interest in the general language and the regular grammar, but the selection of topics, of the terms and of the specific structures, will be one of the necessary steps in the organization and orientation of the activity in order to meet the objectives set for the course. The teaching material will have several features that self impose: the diversity of the thematic content, the adaptability and the anchoring in the realities and progress of that scientific field, the relationship between the specialized language and the usual context, the spontaneity in the use

of the language, the optimal structuring as a working instrument. The appropriate teaching material will constantly contain, every chapter or unit a systematic inventory of the possible errors that are the most frequent in the use of the foreign language, with particular focus on vocabulary (and grammatical structures as well) and the characteristics of the approached scientific domain. The fundamental principle in terms of the approach for the making up of the teaching materials for the specialty French courses restricts the teacher's concern of teaching the language of that particular domain, by the content of the from that domain. The topics, the texts, the units, the modules, the audio-video instruments, etc., represent nothing but the reference framework as learning support in order to meet the didactic objective for the acquisition of the language skills that are meant to prepare the student for life and work.

3. Conclusions

The prevention of the mistakes made by speakers in the use of French throughout its learning, errors from which I selected above only some succinct aspects of the most frequently encountered, can be done by the recommendations of the teacher and by a selection of recommended exercises from general grammar that the teacher should address regularly at the course. As I said before, far from exhausting here the list of the frequently encountered difficulties in teaching-learning and the use of the French the students with economic specialization know (the errors listed above can be made by any French learner irrespective of the academic profile, but the provided examples belong mainly to the economic field). I must emphasize the orientating role in the elaboration by the teacher of the content of the course by compiling lexical and grammatical exercises structured on the commonly observed mistakes in the teaching practice. The role of emphasizing the possible mistakes is to create in the French-speaking students the reflexes for the decoding and production of messages, irrespective of their nature, usual or specialty.

4. References

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