

Polysemy and synonymy in sporting language terminology

VARGA Mihaela¹

Abstract

Polysemy is a rather complex and productive phenomenon in sporting language terminology. It is proof of the unlimited and varied possibilities that the Romanian language has to enrich itself from a lexical point of view. Enriching a Romanian word with a new meaning is possible by borrowing a term from another language, a term that has another meaning except for the one corresponding to the Romanian word.

Perfect synonymy in sporting language is generated by the influences of other foreign languages, by paraphrasing borrowed words, or by the attempt to create a genuine new word with a recent neologism. In sporting language, synonymy is the result of trying to replace a neologism with a word from common language.

Key words: *polysemy, synonymy, terminology, sporting*

Rezumat

Polisemia este un fenomen lingvistic destul de complex și de productiv în terminologia limbajului sportiv. Ea este o dovadă a posibilităților nelimitate și multiple pe care le are limba română de a se îmbogăți din punct de vedere lexical. Îmbogățirea cu un sens nou a unui cuvânt românesc este posibilă prin împrumutarea dintr-o altă limbă a unui termen care are și un alt sens decât cel corespunzător cuvântului din limba română.

Sinonimia perfectă în limbajul sportiv este generată de influențele exercitate de limbile străine, de parafrizarea unor împrumuturi sau de încercarea de a crea un cuvânt autohton alături de un neologism recent. În limbajul sportiv, sinonimia este rezultatul încercării de a înlocui un neologism printr-un cuvânt din limba comună.

Cuvinte cheie: *Polisemie, sinonimie, terminologie, sportiv*

¹Assistant Professor PhD, Politehnica University Timișoara, e-mail: mihaela.varga@yahoo.com

Introduction

Science builds “special languages” starting from usual language. These special scientific languages are fragments of the natural language. A special language consists of everyday language and special terms.

Scientific languages differ from usual language through greater accuracy, through the effort to achieve a univocal correspondence between sign and significance, to eliminate ambiguities from everyday language. The study of any science begins with the terminology.

The everyday language – the usual language – that every native speaker uses is characterized by maximum polysemy of its signs.

In this study, our goal was to highlight the presence and the influence of linguistic phenomena such as polysemy and synonymy in sporting language terminology.

In the following pages we will describe and exemplify polysemy and synonymy in sporting language, starting from various terms which can be found both in common language and in sporting language.

Polysemy and synonymy in sporting language

Polysemy is one of the characteristics of those words that form the main fund of words. It is known that the new meaning does not replace the old meaning and it produces new examples similar in form, but different in value. The result of polysemy is determined by certain factors, but foreign influences have a decisive role for modern terminologies.

Enriching a Romanian word with a new meaning is possible by borrowing a term from another language, a term which has a different meaning than the corresponding one of the Romanian word. The term *balon* which can be found in the field of physics and chemistry also has the meaning of “ball” or “training bag”, under the influences of French and English.

Sometimes polysemy results from not exactly knowing the meaning of borrowed foreign terms or of terms specific to a sport: *aruncare*, *senior*, *bara*, *bataie*. It can be noticed that *aruncare* has the meaning of *kick* in *kicking the ball*, expression through which we refer to *football*. The word *senior* also has the meaning of an “experienced sportsperson”. The noun *bara* also has the meaning of “gate”: *the ball went out of the gate*. In the combination *penalty kick*, the noun *kick* also has the meaning of “lovitura” [1].

The phenomenon of polysemy is not very widespread because sporting language, like any other specialized vocabulary, is characterized by accuracy

and logical coherence, which implies especially the use of monosemantic words.

While sporting language terminology is becoming a rigorously organized assembly, a process of stabilizing the meanings of words emerges out of the necessity of ensuring the accuracy of communication, as well as an expression of the international character of sport and of its terminology. Neologisms from international sporting terminology take over the meanings that polysemous words lose [1]. Thus, the word *bataie* does no longer refer to the “procedure of putting the ball in the game” (in tennis, table tennis and volleyball); its meaning has been taken over by the neologism *serviciu* (cf. fr. *service*), which refers to “a hit of a ball that starts the play in a game” [2].

Another noun is *timp* (en. *time*) which has lost its meaning of “the successive period of time that divides in equal parts the total duration of a sporting event”. Nowadays this meaning is expressed by the word “repriza” (cf. fr. *reprise*) which refers to “one of the two equal periods of time into which a sporting event is divided”. Out of the meanings of the word *trecere*, which was used at the beginning of sporting language, we will refer to: “passing the ball to a teammate” (in football and rugby), “foot kick given to the team that has made an attempt” (in rugby), “jump” (in athletics) [4]. We can no longer run across the first two meanings which are expressed by the words *pasa* (cf. fr. *passé*) and *transformare*. There are some polysemous words (*bomba*, *jumatate*, *maner*) which no longer have any of the initial sporting meanings [3].

The process of cutting down on some meanings can be seen in neologisms as well, but to a lesser extent. In this case, *a executat* does no longer have the meanings “to take place” and “to compete”; *final* is no longer used to name a “defender” or “a final”; *partida* no longer refers to “a sport team” [5].

Synonymy has been defined in different ways. Today there is a consensus to consider that two or more terms are synonyms if they can substitute each other in the same context. In sporting language, as in the case of other languages, synonymy is the result of the attempt to replace a neologism with a word from common language.

Thus, simultaneously with the clear definition of the rules of various sports and sports disciplines, one can also follow the competition among neologisms, recently borrowed words and older words. According to the origin of the terms that come into making synonymous meanings, one can speak about three term categories: the first category comprises of recently borrowed words, the second category of older terms, and the last one includes both types of terms. As examples for the first category we can refer to *manivela*, *pedala*, *ambala*, *demara* [6]. For

synonymy among older terms we can refer to *saritura, sarire, salt, saltare*. As for examples for the third category we can refer to *aparator, baci, capitan, matca, sef* or to *tragator – scrimer – tragaci; ceata – echipa – partida – tabara – team; alergator – cursier*.

According to the number of the components, the synonymous series in each category presented above can integrate two or more terms: *alergator – cursier; mergere – mers – umblare; exersa – antrenă; cadere – aterizare*.

For the period of constitution of the Romanian sporting language, the series of multi-member synonyms are significant:

- a. Synonyms for apparatus, instruments, fittings: *javelot – darda – sulita – lance; bariera – gard – obstacol – piedica; carma – maner – ghidon; but – poarta – bara*.
- b. Synonyms for exercises, phases and technical procedures: *aparare – defensivă; atac – ofensivă; pluton – pachet – batalion – caravana; pasa – paseu – trecere; placaj – oprire – tinut; ofsaid – afara din joc – scos din joc*.

Synonyms can be perfect or approximate. Perfect synonyms are rare because the meanings of a word change according to context or situation. In this category we can find especially technical terms which are total synonyms. Perfect synonyms form bi-member or multi-member groups: *alpinism – carpatism, dare cu patinele – patinagiu – patinare, jucator de tenis – tenisor – tenisman*. The following series are relevant: *mijlocas – demiaparator – half; back – jumătate – intermediar – laturas – mijloc – sfert* (developed from the French *demi* and the English *half –back*)[4]; they are perfect synonyms. In rugby and football, the player called midfielder plays at the center of the field as an intermediate between strikers and defenders. Midfielders can be central or lateral, according to the position occupied by the player over the longitudinal axis of the playing field. Perfect synonymy in sporting language is generated by the influences of foreign languages, by paraphrasing borrowed words, or by trying to create a new native word accompanied by a recent neologism [7].

Among approximate synonyms we can find: *aripa-stanga and aripa-dreapta; velocipedie – calatorie pe roate – velocipedare – biciclistism – ciclism; urma – pista – partie*. In the first example, *aripa* is a polysemous word, whereas *stanga* and *dreapta* are monosemantic terms and they both have a common meaning, *extrema* (in a football or handball team), meaning that the adjective restrictively refers to: *extrema de pe partea dreapta*. The series of

synonyms of the word *ciclism* is made of borrowed words – *biciclistism, ciclism* – and they refer to the sport itself; *velocipedare* and *velocipedie* mean “riding a bike”, but also the combination “*calatorie pe roate*”, which means “*turism pe bicicleta*” or “*cicloturism*”[8].

Discussions

There is a strong competition among synonymous terms which, in time, leads to acceptance of only one term. In sporting language we can notice the following types of synonymous eliminations:

- Romanian words according to foreign patterns (*carpatism*);
- Combinations of words created according to Romanian rules which do not have a specific meaning (*aruncarea mingei cu piciorul*)
- Romanian terms borrowed from other terminologies of limited spread (*baci, matca*)
- Neologisms which are not adapted to the Romanian phonic and morphological system (*cross country, half-back*)
- Romanian lexical units which approximately express the new realities they have to name (*jumatate, mijlocas, cercetas*);
- Meanings of some polysemous terms (*tinta “transformare”, tragaci “scrimer”*).

Conclusion

The main issue of a study on specialised languages, including sporting language, is to track the origin of loans and to place them in the lexico-semantic and grammatical system of the loan language, in our case – Romanian.

We have especially referred to loans because sporting language is overwhelmingly formed from terms taken especially from French and English (as well as from American English).

Even though, nowadays, we are surrounded by English words, (English being considered the main source of sporting terminology) research has shown that most terms come from French.

Lastly, we must consider the fact that terminology has become internationally used because of the English language. The percentage of the words borrowed from other languages, such as Italian, German, Polish is absolutely insignificant.

References

1. Constantinescu I. (1972), *Influența limbii engleze în vocabularul sportiv românesc (I)* „Limba Română”, Bucuresti, 21 ,nr. 6.
2. Gheție I. (1957), *Observații asupra limbii folosite în „Sportul popular”*, în LR, nr. 4.
3. Graur A. (1953), *Unele probleme de vocabular profesional*, în LR, nr. 6.
4. Comsulea E. (1957), *Terminologia educației fizice și sportului*, în EFS, nr. 1.
5. Coteanu I., Bidu-Vrânceanu (1962), *Cuvinte și sensuri noi în presa actuală*, în LR, nr. 2.
6. Coteanu I. (1973), *Stilistica funcțională a limbii române*, I, II, Bucuresti, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România.
7. Diaconescu P. (1974), *Structura stilistică a limbii române. Stilurile funcționale ale limbii române literare moderne*, în „Studii și Cercetări Lingvistice”, nr.3.
8. Trofin A. (1967), *Observații cu privire la adaptarea terminologiei sportive de origine engleză în limba română*, „Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai”, Series Philologia, Cluj-Napoca, nr. 2.