

REVIEWS

Teodora Popescu and Mariana Toma, *Dictionary of Business Collocations. With Romanian translation and practice section*. Alba Iulia, Romania: Aeternitas. 2009. Pp 388. ISBN 978-973-1890-54-8.

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The English-Romanian Dictionary of Business Collocations, third edition, co-authored by Teodora Popescu and Mariana Toma, is a revised, updated and completed version of the previous issues of 2002 and 2003. With each edition, over the span of eight years, the authors have enriched the content, diversified the research methods and improved the design and layout of the dictionary with the ultimate aim of enhancing its practicability.

According to the authors' statement in the *Preface*, the target users of the dictionary are “students of business, experienced business people and learners of English in general, with an intermediate to advanced level of language proficiency, who need to speak, read and write English for business purposes. It will prove an extremely useful tool for professional translators and interpreters alike” (p. 7).

The concept of the dictionary is inspired by the lexical approach to language learning advocated most notably by M. Lewis (1993), J. Sinclair (1991), N Schmitt (2000) and Carter and McCarthy (1998), who point out to the pervasiveness of collocational constructions in language. Collocations, i.e. “words that typically occur in association with other words” (Popescu 2007: 163), are the core of word knowledge, and, as Hill (2000) suggests, collocationally competent students are far more communicatively competent. The authors themselves, both experienced practitioners and researchers in the domain of teaching ESP, are convinced that a good mastery of business collocations is part and parcel of business communication, contributing to the fluency, accuracy and appropriateness of utterances.

In the *Preface* the authors explain that the selection of collocations was based on the criterion of frequency of occurrence of lexical combinations in the authentic data they used, namely *The British National Corpus*, *The Brown Corpus*, a self-made research corpus of business articles from *The Economist* (2005-2008) and existing dictionaries of collocations, as well as well-established company sites, all these documenting the actual collocability of words in the wide-ranging domains of modern business.

What are the features of the dictionary under review in terms of content? The *core part* of the dictionary contains 1,228 headwords and approximately 68,000 word partnerships (254 more headwords and 14,000 more collocations than in the

2nd edition) with their core general meanings and business-specific meanings. The dictionary also includes an *index* of the entries in alphabetical order to help the user see which words can be found in it and then find them faster. A new element of this new edition is the *practice section* (with answer key) made up of different types of exercise imaginatively conceived to illustrate its various uses and take the learner from working with isolated word combinations to working with texts.

How are the entries structured? Each dictionary entry contains the grammatical word class of the lexical unit described, the definitions of their meanings in English (from general meaning to business-related meaning), the most frequent collocational patterns and the Romanian translation of each meaning in the right-hand column.

The morphological categories used are easy to handle. The headwords are nouns, verbs and adjectives. Specific patterns of usage are provided for each morphological category as follows:

- (1) noun preceded by verb; noun followed by verb; noun accompanied by adjective;
- (2) verb followed by object; verb followed by adverb;
- (3) adjective followed by noun.

In the noun + verb associations, the verb is used in a mixture of tenses, in active or passive forms, this giving the authors the opportunity to incorporate some useful grammatical information, as in the following examples: *agreement comes into force, agreement will be superseded, plan broke down, plan was dogged by sth, policy bore fruit, policy calls for, policy is aimed/geared at.*

We have mentioned that the meanings in each entry are gradually narrowed down to their specific business usage. The last collocational pattern in an entry is the noun phrase, a more fixed word combination than the others and with very specific meanings. Here are a few examples of such lexical constructions: *terms of agreement, dividend arrears, payment by instalment, approval of debt cancellation, goods on approval, asset disclosure, asset stripping, return on assets.*

How easy is it for learners to make use of the comprehensive information comprised in each entry? Each lexical entry is compartmented into three sections:

- (1) definition(s) of the meaning(s) of the base words;
- (2) Romanian translation of each meaning, if the headword is polysemous;
- (3) collocational patterns of the types described above.

In the collocations section, the meanings are resumed in the form of synonyms or synonymous phrases. The different meanings are numbered and highlighted in bold print. Here are some examples:

authority: 1. power; 2. expert; 3. authorisation; 4. administrative body.

affair: 1. a matter to be attended to; 2. a noteworthy thing or event; 3a. ordinary pursuit of life; 3b. business dealings; 3c. public matters.

accrual: 1. increase; 2. accrued charge; 3. adjusting amounts.

This repetition of the lexical information is a good pedagogical tactic, as it both contributes to the accessibility of and enriches the lexical material of the dictionary.

The definitions and meanings are comprehensive, concise and clear in style. The authors succeed in explaining the meanings without producing elaborate

formulations or engaging technical jargon, as in the case of *know-how*, *audit*, *appointee*, *accrual*, *labour turnover*, *lay off*. To further the delineation of meanings, they did not consider it necessary to give a word-by-word Romanian translation of the definitions. Instead, the authors choose to keep the Romanian translation to a minimum of transparent straightforward equivalents, a feature that the dictionary users may well appreciate.

The dictionary also stands out with the clarity of its layout and print, which are varied according to the information dealt with. Thus, the headwords are typed in bold capitals, the definitions and the Romanian equivalents are given in separate columns in normal print, while the collocates are printed in a compact italicised text. The headwords, numbers signalling meanings and the synonyms are printed in bold. All this contributes to the readability and usability of the lexical resource.

In conclusion, what are the strong points of this dictionary, a unique lexicographic work in Romania?

First and foremost, it reflects the experienced ESP trainers' insights and sensitivity to the needs of the learners for clarity, conciseness and logic in the selection, format and presentation of the information. Second, it incorporates substantial lexical and grammatical information and provides guidance and instructions for training learners in developing their dictionary using skills. Thirdly, its accessibility, practicality, learner-/learning-centredness, and learner friendliness make it a valuable learning/teaching resource suitable both for classroom activities and self-learning.

As M. Lewis (2000) suggests, it remains for tutors of business English to find methodological solutions to the task of sensitising learners to noticing and using collocations appropriately, an approach that provides for increased language awareness and, consequently, increased proficiency in accuracy and fluency and in communicative effectiveness.

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