HOT EURO VOCABULARY

Adina Oana NICOLAE
Petroleum-Gas University, Ploieşti

Abstract: *The article discusses the new lexemes brought about by the advent of the European Union and the euro in the lexis of business English (and not only). The lexicographic evidence collected from an extensive business English corpus is then sorted out in order to build up a complex euro-based semantic network. The incomplete reflection of these recent coinages in English dictionaries is finally illustrated with examples.*

Keywords: *lexemes, euro, business, network*

Language is involved in a magical process: whenever people speak or write they tailor what they have to say to fit the actual situation or context of communication. But, simultaneously, how they speak or write creates that very situation or context. It seems, then, that people fit language to a situation or context that language, in turn, helped to create in the first place. This roundabout process testifies the power of language-in-action in the world.

Speakers of a language continually and actively build and rebuild the world, not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, believing, feeling, valuing. Starting from this premise, in this paper I shall focus on a slice of language-in-action and illustrate with the linguistic choices speakers make in English nowadays. The article is a sociolinguistic excursion into the morphological and lexicographical area of the terms *euro/Euro*.

Euro in English: linguistic choices

From a morphological perspective, *euro* is a clipped form of the word *Europe*; it denotes the basic unit of currency among participating European Union countries. Introduced in 1999 as an alternate denomination for non-cash transactions, the euro was scheduled to replace the existing national units in these countries by 2002. The introduction of this term was initiated in the political circles of the European Union. Unlike most coinages in language, it was launched by a legislative initiative. English-language EU legislation postulated the use of the words *euro* and *cent* as both singular and plural forms. The underlying reason for this recommended practice was an intention to facilitate the verbal manipulation of the new banknotes by freeing the term from the clutter of a string of plural morphemes.

As the s-less plural were already a tradition in EU legislation, the Commission's decision was to retain such plurals in English legislation, while freely allowing natural ('s') plurals in other languages. The institution providing the Commission with translation services and linguistic advice for its written communication in all official languages, the Directorate-General for Translation, advocated the use of the 'natural' plurals, *euros* and *cents*, in all documents authored by the commission intended for the general public.

Subsequent rationales were imparted in order to account for the acceptability of the s-less plural, some covering folk etymologies. But it is a matter of fact that, just

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like there are s-less plurals for some currencies in English (e.g. *yen, won, rand, baht*), there are also long-standing plurals in –s for currencies that have singular forms ending in –o, like *pesos* and *escudos*. The latter morphological pattern, corroborated with the extensive use of the regular plural morpheme 's', explains why people did not take the zero plural morpheme form (*euro*) as the natural one and frowned at what seemed to them an attempt at artificial alteration of the good old grammar rules. Their expectations confirm the need for a strong public campaign targeted at enforcing a general usage of the s-less plural.

Euro subcurrencies

As for the terms coined for the euro's subdivisions, the cent pattern used in countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, was successfully borrowed and produced the counterpart subcurrency *euro cent* (to be distinguished from the local coin in these countries). This usage falls outside the scope of official practice; it is understandable, though, in the light of the coins bearing the inscriptions *euro* and *cent* on the common side.

The Irish *Euro*: linguistic evidence

The adoption of the euro in the Republic of Ireland was accompanied by a recommendation coming from the Department for Finance to use the word *euro* for both the singular and plural forms. The zero plural inflection thus made its way into Irish broadcasting and much Irish advertising. This led to the reinforcement of the s-less plural, despite the English advertiser's preference for the regular plurals euros and cents. Usage has thus become a bone of contention: people who have become accustomed to broadcast programmes tend to use the s-less plurals, while the media in the UK prefer the overtly inflected forms.

Euro slang terms

In Ireland, a consistent process of semantic transfer has been noted to take place: the slang term *quid* previously referring to the pound has been applied to the euro. *Fiver* and *tenner* (originally applied to 5 pound and 10 pound-notes respectively) now correspond to euro notes. *Grand* is used for a thousand of any currency, including the euro. The term *yoyo* also enjoys widespread informal usage, especially in the Dublin area.

Euro: Romanian options

Romanian has adopted the official practice forms with the uninflected plural for euro, but has naturalized cent whose plural is morphologically and phonologically shaped by the plural pattern for similarly sounding masculine nouns and adjectives (*cent/cenți, agent/agenți, recent/recenți*). Following this rule – the addition of an –i at the end of the word, accompanied by consonant alternation, euro is paired with the slang plural *euroi*; this plural form is restricted to colloquial speech. The combination of final vowels –o and –i in *euroi* resulted into what looks like a frequent suffix characterizing some Romanian augmentatives and brings to the new term *euroi* a dual connotation: a

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negative one, suggesting lack of grace or refinement, or a positive one, implying solidity and high purchasing value.

Euro vocabulary in the press

One of the most alert areas that instantly react to and take over language change is the media. The press is able to reflect the way in which the euro is built as a complex concept as linguistic tokens point to a series of more or less conventional mental representations of the concept.[1] However, the very lexemes rooted in the *euro* or *Euro*, what and how speakers choose to name in their discourses, can also illustrate their concerns and points of view.

Influenced by the fact that *euro* is defined as a currency and thus conceptually belongs to the field of economics, is have chosen a economy-centred database for the present linguistic investigation. The database, Business Source Complete, is a collection of scholarly business articles published as far back as 1886. Business source Complete is electronically available on the Internet and lends itself to automatic searching of terms. My purpose in the corpus-based inquiries was to put up an extensive, if not comprehensive, up-to-date list of coinages made starting from the lexemes *euro* and *Euro*. The results of the search, together with supporting authentic quotations, are listed below.

1. *Euro/euro* are short forms obtained by clipping. They may lead the reader down one of the following semantic paths: it either acts as a pre-modifier in noun phrases where it denotes 'of or connected with Europe, especially of the European Union' or it has the meaning of 'the common European currency':

*The row over the **Euro elections** disguises a deeper malaise in British politics.*
***Euro Parliament** proposes licence liberalisation.*
*Employers face a new round of problematic **Euro laws** after the European Commission last week set out proposals for information and consultation at national level.*
***Euro Commission** Plans Phase 2 Of Warner/EMI Probe.*
***Euro regulations** governing vehicle emissions and fuel quality have recently been tightened up to bring them in line with those in California, the most stringent in the world.*

The clipped form is especially used in headlines where it saves space and has an informal, reader-friendly touch.
2. *Euro-*, with its phonological variant *Eur-*, is even more extensively used as a combining form (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language) or a prefix (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). It rather qualifies for the status of confix[2], being involved in a phenomenon which lies between compounding and derivation, i.e. confixation. On the one hand, confixes resemble words because they have a rich lexical meaning, on the other hand, they behave like affix because they are bound morphemes. Confixes can occur in initial position (*audio-, hydro-, psycho-*, etc.) and they generally

[1] For an analysis of metaphorical representations of the euro in the financial press, see Semino, E., ' A Sturdy Baby or a Derailing Train? Metaphorical Representations of the Euro in British and Italian Newspapers.' In *Text.* 22,1.2002. pp. 107-39.
[2] Waszink,V., Neoclassical Compounding. http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/jmc21/ichll3abstracts.html

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end in *–o* or *–i*, or in final position (*-logy,-cracy*, etc.). *Euro-/ Eur-* seems to fit these requirement and be a felicitous example of the category that yields neoclassical compounds and is there to remind us of the classical heritage in the lexicon. Nevertheless, spelling conventions fluctuate and solid as well as hyphenated or even separate elements can be found.

Neoclassical compounds made up of classical elements are known to name especially scientific, technical objects. The following corpus samples exhibit the neoclassical pattern, although they do not account for scientific terms:

*After its first day of trading, the euro, which opened at $1.17, climbed to $1.1806 by day's end. **Euro-phoria** extended to the stock markets of Germany, France, Italy and Spain with increases of 5 percent or more.*
*European shares surge on '**euro-phoria**'*
Euro-apathy.
*The second level of **Eurocracy** consists of about 200 directors.*
*The E-Government Conference will bring together European ministers, **eurocrats**, academics, suppliers and users.*
*The company processes one of China's unique resources: a group of rare-earth elements including lanthanum, **europium** and yttrium.*

However, most of the compounds found in the corpus contain one classical constituent and one non-classical element; they have been termed semi-neoclassical compounds:

*How Pervasive are **Euro-Politics**? Effects of EU Membership on a New Member State.*
*It is plain that a gulf exists between Europe's citizens and the **Euro-institutions** created to serve them*
*The new product, dubbed the **Euro-Policy** Dy Atlantic Mutual, also is known as a Freedom of Services policy, referring to the removal of trade barriers among countries in the European Union.*
***Euro-land**: any good for the European South?*
*The next stop was at the **Euroterminal**, opened in 1993 to handle Channel tunnel trains. The equipment used is very different from Roadways.*
*The platform allows clients to execute trades in at-the-money **euro denominated** swaption straddles.*
*Leading European share prices have surged on the first day of **euro-denominated** share trading, although volumes have been low.*
*Even the staunchest **euro-sceptics** in Hungary would have found it difficult to belittle the country's achievement of acceding to the EU on May 1.*
*Criticisms against the constitution raised by **Euro-sceptics** and **Euro-enthusiasts.***
*Hannover, Germany-based Hannover Reinsurance Group has been **euro-compliant** since the beginning of the year.*
*It is arguably the case that left **Euro-scepticism** and the case against monetary union has made even less impact on the British trade unions and certainly trade union policy at the highest level.*
*The company has an opportunity to tap into new emerging markets by developing brands that are not **Eurocentric**.*
*Eurosocialism has a greater impact on the world than **Eurocommunism**.*
***Euro-Communism**: 10 years later.*

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*The results indicate that there is a significant difference between **Euro-Americans** and Hispanic Americans in terms of ethnic identity.*
*The informal appearance of the euro is known in government circles as "**euro-creep**".*

Notice how the spelling options vary, just as the referent of *euro* fluctuates between Europe and the currency, sometimes both being the target, in:

*One such factor is the government's application to join the **Eurozone** in January 2008.*
*We have written to 13 **euro zone** countries.*
*The foreign borrowing cost of Hungary was affected due to the rising rates of **Euro zone** interest.*
*We show that the trends in relative unit labour costs have in several recent cases been worsening relative competitiveness, thereby putting the **euro-zone** under greater centrifugal pressure.*
*So far, the bond market is failing to punish or even recognize the degree of divergence in **euroland.***
*Anything is possible in **euro land.***
*Jobless Rate Declines in **Euro Land**.*

3. *Euro* (the currency this time), a free morpheme, appears in some cases subject to either compounding or derivation:

*The 300,00 **Euro dollar** worth of feasibility study was commissioned to check for environmental impacts if the canal is constructed and to determine if it will be useful to the economy.*
*'A hedging deficiency in **eurodollar** futures'".*
*The most recent **post-euro** period is clearly associated with an important upswing with return dispersions exceeding for the first time their peaks of the early 1990s*
Pre-euro, who could have imagined Olivetti raising over DM18bn or Lit18tr?

Euro entries in online dictionaries

A brief survey of a random choice of online dictionaries, some of them connected to prestigious lexicographic tradition, is transposed in a tabular form below. The online versions of these dictionaries was initially thought to be the most likely to register new coinages in language with lower costs than their printed counterparts. On consulting them, one can easily notice the lexicographic scarcity face to face with the dynamic rich network of coined terms extracted from the media. The frequently quoted irrelevant result was *euro*, a large Australian kangaroo also called wallaroo, whose name has a totally different etymology.

The corpus-based search produced three main morphological areas: *euro* as a clipped form, *euro* as a confix and *euro* as a free morpheme, further combined with two semantic perspectives: *euro* as the single European currency and *Euro* as referring to Europe. But the lexicographic inventory counted as many as 29 combinations of the term, out of which only five are not self-standing lexemes but mere circumstantial collocations. It is one more proof that language is alive and extremely productive in areas of wide interest such as economics and politics.

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Surveyed source	*Lexical entries*
The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language	3 relevant results (Euro=n. currency unit; Euro- = prefix. Euro/European; Euro-American = n./adj.)
Oxford Dictionary Online	2 relevant results (Euro-sceptic n.; Euro = adj. European; n. currency)
Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary	2 relevant results (euro = n. money; Euro = adj. European)
Dictionary.com Unabridged	10 results; 2 relevant results (euro = n. currency; adj. European)
Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary	6 results; 5 relevant results: euro = n/adj. Europe/European; Euro =adj. European; Eur-/Euro-= combining form – Euramerican, Eurocentric, Eurocommunism, Eurocrat; Euro-American, adj./n.

Euro Conclusions

The lexicographic and morphological insights into the linguistic identity of the *Euro/euro* invite to a debate over the identity of the speakers who have coined these recent terms. The conclusions thus takes us to the starting point, where I assumed that speakers use the language they do in inextricable connection with other dimensions of their lives in order to recognize themselves and others as meaning and meaningful in certain ways. The usage of the *euro* terms build up a complex patchwork in discourse and interaction, which sometimes is not ideologically free.

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