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STRATIFICATION OF ECONOMIC TERMS BY THE CRITERION OF ABSTRACTNESS IN ENGLISH-UKRAINIAN TRANSLATION DICTIONARIES

Abstract

The article examines the stratification of economic terms by the criterion of abstractness in English-Ukrainian translation dictionaries. The relevance of studying this problem is substantiated stemming from the heterogeneity of economic terminology regarding the level of concreteness/abstractness, which reflects the complexity of economic phenomena. Particular attention is paid to identifying the consequences of ignoring the level of abstractness of terms for the effectiveness of scientific and business communication, modeling accuracy, and decision-making. This study notes the insufficient development of scientifically grounded criteria and methodologies for classifying economic terms on the “concrete-abstract” scale.

An original methodology for the stratification of economic terms based on componential analysis is proposed and tested using Anna Shymkiv's “English-Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary of Economic Lexicon” as empirical material. The paper analyses philosophical and linguistic approaches to understanding the categories of abstract/concrete. This study summarizes the state of research on abstract vocabulary and highlights the difficulties involved in its definition and classification. It demonstrates the feasibility of applying the componential analysis methodology as a tool for decomposing lexical meaning. The analysis identifies five key semantic components (semes) of abstractness relevant to economic terminology: non-concrete reference, generality, conceptuality, distance from empiricism, and theoretical saturation. A three-level scale (1–3 points) is developed to quantify the degree of expression of the identified semes. Based on the cumulative scores (5–15), three levels of abstractness for economic terms are determined: concrete terms, mildly abstract terms, and abstract terms. The proposed methodology proves to be effective, and its testing confirms the presence of all three levels of abstractness in the economic terminological system.

The study establishes the theoretical significance of the conducted research for terminology studies and economic linguistics, and emphasizes its practical value for improving communication and understanding of economic texts. It demonstrates that the systematic linguistic analysis of abstractness constitutes a fundamental stage in stratifying economic terminology in dictionaries, as it reflects deep cognitive features of economic concepts, which are critically important for their further classification into micro- and macro-spheres. At the same time, the research acknowledges the complex nature of stratification, which also includes criteria of scale, object of study, sectoral differentiation, and functionality, and identifies promising directions for further scientific research in this field.

Keywords: stratification of economic terms, componential analysis, economic lexicography, levels of abstraction, systematic classification.

Анотація

Статтю присвячено дослідженню стратифікації термінів економічної галузі за критерієм абстрактності в англійсько-українських перекладних словниках. Обґрунтовано актуальність вивчення цієї проблеми, зумовленої гетерогенністю економічної термінології за рівнем конкретності / абстрактності, що відображає складність економічних явищ. Особливу увагу приділено виявленню наслідків ігнорування рівня абстрактності термінів для ефективності наукової та ділової комунікації, точності моделювання та ухвалення рішень. Констатовано недостатню розробленість науково обґрунтованих критеріїв і методик для системної класифікації економічних термінів на шкалі “конкретне-абстрактне”.

Запропоновано й апробовано оригінальну методику стратифікації економічних термінів на основі компонентного аналізу на матеріалі “Англо-українського тлумачного словника

економічної лексики” Анни Шимків. Проаналізовано філософські й лінгвістичні підходи до розуміння категорій абстрактного / конкретного. Узагальнено стан вивчення абстрактної лексики та висвітлено труднощі її визначення й класифікації. Обґрунтовано доцільність застосування методики компонентного аналізу як інструмента для декомпозиції лексичного значення. Виокремлено п’ять ключових семантичних компонентів (сем) абстрактності, релевантних для економічної термінології: ‘неконкретність референції’, ‘узагальненість’, ‘концептуальність’, ‘віддаленість від емпірії’ та ‘теоретична насиченість’. Для кількісної оцінки ступеня вираження виділених сем розроблено тривірневу шкалу (1–3 бали). За сумою балів (5–15) визначено три рівні абстрактності економічних термінів: конкретні терміни, терміни середньої абстрактності та абстрактні терміни.

Запропонована методика виявилася ефективною, у результаті апробації якої підтверджено наявність усіх трьох рівнів абстрактності в економічній терміносистемі. Зроблено висновки щодо теоретичної значущості проведеного дослідження для термінознавства й економічної лінгвістики, а також наголошено на його практичній цінності для покращення комунікації та розуміння економічних текстів. Доведено, що системний лінгвістичний аналіз абстрактності є фундаментальним етапом стратифікації економічної термінології в словниках і відображає глибинні когнітивні особливості економічних понять, що критично важливі для їхньої подальшої класифікації за мікро- та макросферами.

Ключові слова: стратифікація економічних термінів, компонентний аналіз, економічна лексикографія, рівні абстракції, системна класифікація.

Introduction. Economic terminology serves as the foundation of scientific discourse in the field of economics. It ensures the necessary level of precision for effective communication among specialists and also serves as the basis for developing theoretical models, conducting empirical research, and formulating and justifying economic policy. Development of economic science as such is impossible without clearly defined and systematically organized terminology. Economic science, by its nature, covers an extremely broad spectrum of phenomena – from material objects and processes subject to direct observation and measurement to complex theoretical constructs that exist primarily within the realm of scientific models and abstract thinking (Гузеп, 2022). This circumstance determines one of the key characteristics of the economic terminological system – significant variability of its units in terms of their level of abstractness (Товстенко, 2022, с. 103). The economic lexicon contains terms denoting entirely concrete, sensorily perceived objects (*banknote, factory*), terms indicating measurable processes and indicators (*price, wage*), and simultaneously, terms representing highly abstract concepts that lack a direct physical referent and function as elements of theoretical systems (*market, capital, GDP*).

Importantly, the dualism of abstract and concrete is a fundamental characteristic of the linguistic expression of economic concepts; however, it is not so much a rigid dichotomy as a spectrum on which terms occupy different positions depending on their level of generality, contextual dependence, and possibility of empirical measurement (Marinov et al., 2019). Understanding a term’s position on this scale is critically important, as ignoring or inadequately assessing the level of abstractness can have serious consequences. For example, perceiving a highly abstract term (like *market efficiency*) as a simple description of reality can lead to erroneous conclusions in policy or investment decisions. On the other hand, excessive abstractness in communication can create barriers to understanding economic processes for non-specialists, complicating public dialogue.

The relevance of the scientific problem of studying the stratification of economic terms by the criterion of abstractness is driven by a range of theoretical and practical factors. Theoretical significance lies in the need for a deeper understanding of the semantic structure of the economic terminological system, identifying patterns of conceptualization of economic reality, and the role of language in forming economic knowledge. Practical relevance is determined by the need for:

- analysis of the classification of economic terms in Anna Shymkiv's "English-Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary of Economic Lexicon" by the criterion of abstractness to further avoid semantic discrepancies and ambiguity;
- improvement of lexicographical practice: data on the level of abstractness can be used when compiling dictionaries for a more accurate description of term meanings;
- systematization of economic terminology: the stratification methodology can be applied to other criteria (scale, object, sector, functionality) for the further stratification of economic terms by micro- and macro- economic spheres (Силованюк, 2024).

Despite the obvious relevance, the scientific literature analysis indicates that the issue of systematic stratification of economic terms by the criterion of abstractness remains insufficiently developed. While several studies address specific terminological domains such as finance (Петрина, 2018) and audit (Бардаш & Баранюк, 2016), and explore the role of abstract vocabulary in communication (De Angelis et al., 2017), the field still lacks a unified methodology for classifying economic concepts on the "concrete-abstract" scale. The main difficulties are associated with the complex, often fuzzy, semantic structure of abstract concepts (Полюга, 1991; Тома, 2012) and the absence of unified criteria for the quantitative assessment of abstractness (Піскозуб & Кость, 2019).

Therefore, there is an objective need to develop a scientifically grounded methodology for the consistent stratification of economic terms by level of abstractness, which will not only structure the terminological system but also contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of economic concepts and the effectiveness of their use.

Statement of the research aim and objectives. The aim of this article is to test the methodology for stratifying economic terms by the criterion of abstractness in Anna Shymkiv's "English-Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary of Economic Lexicon" based on the method of componential analysis. To achieve this aim, the study sets the following objectives: (a) to analyze philosophical and linguistic approaches to defining the categories "abstract" / "concrete", and to summarize the state of research on abstract vocabulary; (b) to justify the feasibility of applying componential analysis to identify semantic features of abstractness; (c) to identify key semantic components (semes) of abstractness for economic terms; (d) to develop a quantitative scale for assessing the expression of semes and determining the level of abstractness of a term; (e) to test the methodology by classifying a sample of economic terms using the material of A. Shymkiv's "English-Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary of Economic Lexicon" (Шимків, 2004).

Analysis of recent research and publications. The understanding of the "concrete-abstract" dichotomy has deep philosophical roots. G. Hegel viewed them as dialectical categories of cognition: the concrete as a synthetic unity, and the abstract as an analytical moment of isolating a property (Заєць, 2018). Philosophy considers abstraction as a cognitive process of generalization (Shivhare & Kumar, 2016), which has been interpreted differently: from Aristotle's selective attention (Bäck, 2006) to constructive symbolization of W. James and J. Dewey (Winetroun, 2014).

In linguistics, these categories are also central, although their definition and demarcation remain subjects of discussion (Піскозуб & Кость, 2019). Concrete vocabulary denotes objects and phenomena directly perceived by the senses, while abstract vocabulary verbalizes concepts that lack a direct sensory correlate – qualities, states, processes, ideas (Словник української мови: в 11 т., 1970–1980; Єрмоленко та ін., 2000). Abstract vocabulary is an extremely productive layer of the lexicon, but its study is associated with significant difficulties due to the complexity and fuzziness of its semantic structure (Вовкодав, 2020; Полюга, 1991; 2003).

Defining clear criteria for abstractness remains challenging. The semantic criterion (absence of a material denotatum) is key but insufficient due to contextual variability and transitional cases (Тома, 2012; Schmidt, 2000). Grammatical (limitations in number forms, compatibility) and word-formation (specific affixes) features are only tendencies (Schmidt, 2000). Consequently, most researchers lean towards the need for a comprehensive approach (Тома, 2012), but the issue of unified criteria and classification remains open (Гордійчук, 2016).

In Ukrainian linguistics, abstract vocabulary has been studied in historical (Полюга, 1991; 2003; Тома, 2014) and synchronic aspects, particularly in general and terminological lexicon (МИКИТЮК, 1997). These works highlighted the dynamics of semantics, word-formation models, and functional features of abstract nouns.

Contemporary global research increasingly views abstractness not as a binary opposition, but as a continuum – the idea of S. Hayakawa’s “ladder of abstraction” (Cui et al., 2023); empirical scales of concreteness (Brysbaert et al., 2014) – and as a multidimensional construct encompassing various aspects such as referent domain, fact status, etc. (Nirenburg & Raskin, 2004). Cognitive theories investigate the “grounding” of abstract concepts, suggesting their mediated connection with sensorimotor, emotional, and social experience, where language plays a key role (Kousta et al., 2011; Lupyan & Winter, 2018; Martínez & Borghi, 2022). Linguistic correlates of abstractness likewise continue to receive scholarly attention (Lievers et al., 2021).

Given the complexity of the phenomenon and the need for an objective methodology, the application of componential analysis seems promising. This method, which involves breaking down lexical meaning into minimal differential semantic features – semes (Форманова, 2021, с. 43; Nida, 1975), allows for structuring semantics and conducting comparative analysis. Developed in the works of E. Nida (1975) and related to the ideas of A. Wierzbicka (1996), componential analysis is actively used in modern linguistics (Форманова, 2021; Choudhary & Bhattacharyya, 2022; McNally, 2024). Applying this method to the concept ABSTRACTNESS in economic terminology allows for identifying its key semantic dimensions and developing a tool for term stratification based on them.

Results and discussion. To address the task of stratifying economic terms by the criterion of abstractness, this study employs the method of componential analysis. This method allows moving from an intuitive understanding of abstractness to a formalized assessment procedure based on identifying and quantifying key semantic features.

The methodology is based on the decomposition of the concept ABSTRACTNESS into five key semantic components (semes), which reflect different aspects of an economic term’s distance from the concrete, empirically given world. Semes, key components of a linguistic sign’s semantic structure, are classified according to various criteria such as fixation to meaning, regularity, and function within paradigms (Сіденко, 2015). The selection of these semes is based on the generalization of philosophical and linguistic approaches discussed above and their adaptation to the specifics of economic terminology. The five semantic components are as follows:

Non-concrete reference: This seme reflects the degree of absence of a direct equivalent for the term in the physical world that can be perceived by the senses. Low expression (1 point): The term denotes a specific physical object or substance (e.g., *factory, oil*). Medium expression (2 points): The term denotes a measurable quantity, state, or action that has empirical manifestations but is not a separate physical object (e.g., *price, wage*). High expression (3 points): The term denotes a purely conceptual entity, process, or system that has no direct physical referent (e.g., *inflation, free market*).

Generality: This seme shows how broad a range of diverse phenomena, objects, or processes the term covers. Low expression (1 point): The term denotes a specific type of object or phenomenon with a relatively narrow meaning (e.g., *a specific company's stock*). Medium expression (2 points): The term denotes a class of objects or a standard concept (e.g., *stock exchange, factory as types*). High expression (3 points): The term is a broad generalization covering diverse manifestations (e.g., *capital, demand, resources*).

Conceptuality: This seme indicates the extent to which the meaning of the term is determined by its place within a system of theoretical knowledge, models, and abstract constructs. Low expression (1 point): Understanding the term minimally depends on special theoretical knowledge (e.g., *safe, office*). Medium expression (2 points): The term is a generally accepted economic category, but its understanding does not require deep theoretical knowledge (e.g., *price, wage, banknote*). High expression (3 points): The term is a theoretical construct, an integral element of economic models; its full understanding requires knowledge of the theory (e.g., *marginal utility, GDP, fiscal policy*).

Distance from empiricism: This seme characterizes the complexity of direct empirical verification, observation, or measurement of the concept denoted by the term. Low expression (1 point): The concept can be directly observed or easily measured by simple methods (e.g., *presence of a banknote, physical dimensions of a factory*). Medium expression (2 points): The concept requires certain procedures for measurement or data aggregation but has clear empirical indicators (e.g., *price of a product, size of a wage*). High expression (3 points): The concept is aggregated, requires complex calculation methods, statistical processing, or expert assessments for its measurement and verification (e.g., *GDP, inflation rate, economic growth rates*).

Theoretical saturation: This seme reflects the degree of dependence of the term's interpretation on a specific economic theory, school, or paradigm. Low expression (1 point): The interpretation of the term is practically independent of theoretical disagreements (e.g., *table, pen*). Medium expression (2 points): Minor differences in interpretation or emphasis are possible depending on the context, but the core meaning is stable (e.g., *banknote, factory, price*). High expression (3 points): The meaning and interpretation of the term significantly depend on the theoretical school or model within which it is used (e.g., *capital, value, economic growth, fiscal policy*).

To obtain a quantitative measure of abstractness, each term is assigned a score from 1 to 3 for each of the five described semes. The sum of scores (ranging from 5 to 15) determines the integral level of abstractness of the term according to a three-level scale:

Concrete terms: Sum of scores 5–8.

Terms of medium abstraction: Sum of scores 9–12.

Abstract terms: Sum of scores 13–15.

This methodology allows not only assigning a term to a specific category but also seeing its abstractness profile across individual semantic dimensions. The effectiveness of the methodology was tested by analyzing and classifying a sample of 10 economic terms. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

The analysis results demonstrate the methodology's ability to differentiate terms by the level of abstractness.

Concrete terms (*banknote, factory, natural resources*) received a score of 8. They have a clear referent (non-concrete reference = 1) and are easily verifiable (distance from empiricism = 1). Their moderate generality, conceptuality, and theoretical saturation (2 points each) reflect the fact that they are still economic categories, not just everyday words. For example, *natural resources* is a class of objects identified and classified in economic theory.

Table 1

Level of Abstraction of Economic Terms

Economic Term	Non-specificity of Reference	Generality	Conceptuality	Distance from Empiricism	Theoretical Saturation	Sum of Points	Level of Abstraction
Banknote	1	2	2	1	2	8	Concrete
Plant	1	2	2	1	2	8	Concrete
Natural Resources	1	2	2	1	2	8	Concrete
Price	2	3	2	2	2	11	Medium Abstraction
Wages	2	3	2	2	2	11	Medium Abstraction
Supply and Demand	2	3	2	2	2	11	Medium Abstraction
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)	3	3	3	3	3	15	Abstract
Inflation	3	3	3	3	3	15	Abstract
Economic Growth	3	3	3	3	3	15	Abstract
Fiscal Policy	3	3	3	3	3	15	Abstract

Terms of medium abstraction (price, wage, supply and demand) scored 11 points each. They are characterized by high generality (3 points), as these concepts apply to a wide range of markets and situations. Other semes have medium expression (2 points each). This shows their dual nature: they have empirical manifestations (a specific price or wage), but are themselves conceptual tools for analyzing market mechanisms, requiring a certain level of abstraction and potentially different interpretations.

Abstract terms (GDP, inflation, economic growth, fiscal policy) reached the maximum score of 15. This indicates their high abstractness across all five dimensions (3 points for each seme). These terms denote complex macroeconomic phenomena, processes, or policy tools that lack a direct physical analogue, are the result of significant generalization and aggregation, function as key elements of economic theories, require complex measurement methods, and largely depend on theoretical interpretation.

Thus, the testing confirmed that the proposed methodology based on componential analysis allows not only assigning an economic term to a certain level of abstractness but also characterizing its semantic profile across key dimensions, contributing to a deeper understanding of its nature.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. The study developed and tested a methodology for stratifying economic terms based on the criterion of abstraction, which is relevant for both terminology studies and economic science. The complexity of the phenomenon of abstraction was confirmed, and the necessity of creating a special toolkit for the analysis of economic vocabulary was substantiated. The method of component analysis was identified as an effective approach to identifying features of abstraction, and five

relevant semes were distinguished: non-specificity of reference, generality, conceptuality, distance from empiricism, and theoretical saturation. A quantitative scale for evaluating the level of term abstraction was created, and three levels of abstraction were identified – concrete, medium abstraction, and abstract.

The testing of the methodology confirmed its validity, demonstrating the presence of terms of different semantic natures in economic discourse. The theoretical contribution of the work is the adaptation of component analysis to the needs of researching economic terminology, which opens up prospects for further stratification of economic terms according to other relevant criteria (scale, object of study, sectoral differentiation, functionality) and their classification into micro- and macroeconomic spheres. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying the developed methodology to optimize the organization of dictionary entries, which will facilitate the search for terms and increase the accuracy of their translation. In addition, the results can be used to improve professional communication, lexicographical practice, and the development of tools for automated processing of economic texts.

Further research directions include expanding the empirical base, expert validation of the methodology, in-depth semantic analysis, interlingual and diachronic studies, application of computational methods of analysis, study of cognitive aspects of perceiving abstract economic vocabulary, and analysis of communication strategies for presenting abstract concepts.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

No artificial intelligence tools or materials were used in the manuscript.

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Дата надходження до редакції 11.04.2025

Ухвалено до друку 30.06.2025

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