Discursive Tradition, Human Resources and Intrinsic Motivation. An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Abstract: - It is known that qualified and motivated employees are the most valuable asset of an enterprise. Wise companies develop wise motivational policies. The human resources specialists are striving to optimize intrinsic and extrinsic motivation tools, in order to ensure employee satisfaction. On the other hand, the everyday social, interaction of people is a dynamic phenomenon with many specific aspects. A typical aspect of human behavior is that people strive, knowingly or unknowingly, to gain social and professional prestige and an increasingly better image in the eyes of other individuals. In this process, their way of speaking is very important. Sometimes they adapt their speech acts to certain discursive types (for instance, when they talk about their job or their professional status). The authors (from management and linguistic fields) have identified situations that were quite extensive in recent years, as for example the replacement of some Romanian labels for professional activities, jobs and job characteristics with English terms. These terms entered the speech acts of employees from several economic fields and lead to changes of the formal in informal discursive tradition. The initial reason of this process could be the so called easy-way-communication, but we are launching the hypothesis that after this initial stage, the new terms and clauses began to be used as an inadequate language tool for suggesting a higher social and / or professional prestige.

Key-Words: - intrinsic motivation, job title, discursive traditions, human resources

1 Introduction
The personnel function in Romania, faced after 1990 a dynamic adjustment to modern human resources management (HRM) techniques [4] similar to other Central and East European Countries [9]. Some of the Western practices were adapted to the specificity of the Romanian cultural space, while others were applied without any adjustments, but the interconnection between HRM and organizational effectiveness [1] was generally accepted.

In the past two decades, the language used by companies’ personnel has imported specific terms and clauses in their internal and external communication practice, borrowing words, terms and expressions from a language that is currently used in strong economic systems. In this paper we will analyse the way in which the employees of Romanian companies are using specific language tools in their professional and social interaction and we will link this with the intrinsic and self-motivation.

2 Problem Formulation
The research was developed after repeated observation of discursive traditions, which have been settled through private, social and work-related communication. The systemic observation of the discursive interaction between employees of different companies, with interlocutors from inside and outside of their companies, has emphasized the
phenomena that have its origins in the last years: the excessive and sometimes abusive use of English technical terms. We assume that we are facing a transgression from tehnoleect (use of professional jargon) to sociolect (use of words in private communication network).

The research that was carried out in the second stage tried to find, among others, plausible answers to following issues: (1) Are the terms “human resources” and “human resources management” used in Romanian companies and in speech acts of employees? (2) Is the discursive tradition within the companies influenced by English terminology? Is there a connection between these traditions and the motivation/self-motivation of human resources? (3) To what extent have the internal discursive traditions (as part of the tehnoleect) migrated into the outside communication) and which is the motivation behind this?

The results and the conclusions formulated by the authors are based on a quantitative research study undertaken between 2008 and 2011 on a sample of 598 subjects, employees of Romanian companies, mostly of them from the NE area. The sample was selected randomly and a structured questionnaire was used, the final goal being both exploratory and descriptive [15], [13]. From the total number of interviewed subjects, 350 were employed in private companies and 248 individuals in the public sector.

3 Research Findings

3.1 Analysis of the Use of the Human Resources Concept in Discursive Tradition

“Language” and “discursive tradition” [12] are terms assigned to fundamental concepts in linguistics and in other various social sciences and humanities. The major changes in economics throughout the past two decades have also been accompanied by the introduction of new professional terms that have started to be widely used. Some of these changes were quite substantial and have resulted in the introduction of new management techniques. Alternatively, the general terms have changed and new concepts have been introduced – sometimes forcibly – to replace the ones that have been associated with the socialist economic practices. The employment of these concepts sometimes preceded the inherent changes or the economic realities that they had been assigned to. For instance, the term “management” has been extensively and sometimes abusively used in all areas of social and economic life, in early ’90s, without a thorough knowledge of its meaning or functions.

Similarly, “human resource management” has replaced “work organization” and the name of that specific department was often changed from “personnel office” to “human resources department/office”. This change does not necessarily require the activities of this department to be adjusted to the modern activities of modern human resource management.

Our first research question addresses the use of the term “human resources management” in the discursive tradition of the companies. The research findings have showed that in the informal internal communication, the most used term is “employee”. Only in the formal communication and in the official documents of most companies, is preferred the term of “human resources”.

Despite the above presented situation, the concept that defines the coordinator/chief of the human resources department - “human resources management/manager' - is used more often. Additionally to this, the following terms are used for this position: “head of the personnel office”, “personnel inspector”, “human resources administrator”, “head/director of human resources office”.

There is a sensible difference between the public and the private sector. From the 350 subjects that are active in private companies, a percentage of 7,7% have mentioned that the most used concept is “human resources manager”, apart from the other eleven different terms that were mentioned. In the public sector, only 2% of the 248 individuals use this concept, while the rest are using the other terms mentioned above.

Even though the term “human resources” has been rather widely used in the economic professional literature of the past 30 years, it has been either questioned or ignored by specialists in the field of humanities. In German and in the standard contemporary economic discursive tradition pertaining to this language, the term “human resources” is translated both as “Humankapital” (human capital) and as “Humanvermögen” (human assets). A panel of prestigious German linguists, whose primary aim was to increase the linguistic awareness and recognition of the German speaking population, has awarded the German economic term of “Humankapital” the title of “Unwort des Jahres“ (the doublespeak word of the year) [17] , saying that its use would severely affect human dignity. Many
other specialists believe that the notion of “human resources” could reflect a deteriorated image of the individual [2], [10]. The arguments against the adequacy of this term (from a denotative, ethical and pragmatic standpoint) are generally based on the following: (1) Even though work is a human function, the individual is not a work tool; (2) The individual is not a raw matter or resource, i.e. something that is dormant and can only be capitalized through the transforming power of an external hand (Lat.: “manus”) that would act upon it (lat. “agree”) and manage it (through the action of a manager).

Conversely, most economists believe that the term “human resources” is both adequate and necessary to describe certain aspects of the economic activity, while those who criticize it do not have comprehensive economic knowledge and are therefore lacking in economic reasoning and analysis [6], [11]. The competent and essential interpretations provided by professionals in the field of human resources, have also failed to reconcile the conflicting perspectives of the economic and humanities scholars [4].

However, the concept of “human resources” has prevailed. Nowadays, it is quite difficult to encounter an extensive economic work that does not include this concept. Linguists have argued and proved that speech and communication is not only conditioned by language and linguistic norms, but also by certain patterns that have prevailed and are used by a group of speakers. Consequently, it is practically impossible to avoid the use of this term, as it is deeply rooted into what linguists would call “the discursive tradition” of economic language.

On the other hand, theorists and specialists in the field of human resources have realized and acknowledged the fact that the analysis, interpretation and summarization of their research subject cannot be comprehensive without an analysis of communication processes.

But communication first entails the use of language. Language is dynamic and changes throughout history, being constantly updated by speech acts that are modeled by customs and traditions (not only by language rules).

3.2 Some Consideration Concerning Discursive Traditions within the Public and Private Companies
It has been a long held belief that language is collateral in the organization and management of economic activities. The difficulties a business operator has to face are mainly related to his position on a competitive market, wise business decisions and the objective he has set in order to make a profit. New economic theories sometimes had to be developed and applied, entailing the need for an enriched professional language that had to include certain new and artificial words.

The newly enriched economic language seemed sufficient, both for the internal and the external communication needs of the organization. However, things have drastically changed with the real democratization of the social (and implicitly, of the working) relationships, especially after the internationalization and subsequent globalization of the economy. It was highly important to align the current practices to these phenomena, and the adjustment was often intuitive and unpremeditated. The free circulation of goods, services and workforce has also increased the role of both external (in order to access the best resources and markets) and internal communication (among others, for the motivation of human resources). That leads to the second question formulated in the research, if the discursive tradition within the companies was influenced by English terminology.

The final results have proven that the percentage of persons using English terms is much higher in the privately owned companies (44%) than in the public administration organizations (12%). In the latter case, we could assume that the external influences are limited. The Code of Civil Servants in Romania sets the internal regulations and the specific functions of human resources management within the organization. Some of the respondents have mentioned that the words used in a foreign language are only the specific ITC terms, but the cases are limited in this situation as well, due the fact that the ITC software is in most cases in Romanian language. From a total of 248 respondents from public institutions, 117 are employed in educational institutions. In these situations, the influences of other languages in the internal communication (including the tehnolect) are scarce and irrelevant.

The situation differs in the private sector. A percentage of 44% of the subjects have admitted that the terms from foreign languages, namely from English, are used in the internal (formal or informal) communication. The most common identified situations are: (1) the name of of departments (sales-marketing, research-development a.o.), (2) name of different tasks (processing, training, coaching, mailing a.o.), job titles (salesman, ticketing agent), (3) title of jobs or managerial positions, (4) name of equipment, components and goods, names of communication tools (memo, planning). In some situations the use of professional jargon is justified.
by the fact that the English terms are much more convenient to be used, compared with the equivalent in Romanian.

Another explanation could be that, once in use, the terms introduced in communication are thus granting a special “status” to the interlocutors: of belonging to a structure, organization or to a code of conduct. The “status” needs are envisaged as an important intrinsic motive by the specialists that have developed the motivational theories [7], [8]. Therefore, we can presume that the use of some specific jargon within the organization could lead to a higher intrinsic motivation of the human resources.

The pressure of the professional jargon in English was so significant, that in the current Classification of Occupations from Romania (COR), English terms were introduced for some job titles, together with Romanian terms. For example, for the position 121118 “manager securitatea informatiei” the English title of “Chief Information Security Officer – CISO” was added in COR.

The new COR – Classification of Occupations from Romania was introduced through the Regulation No. 1.832/856/2011 and new jobs have emerged with the advancements in ITC and other fields. Some occupations were developed and their complexity rose, but new occupations have appeared as well.

3.3 Discursive Traditions and Needs Related to Status and Motivation

The satisfaction factors are: achievements, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, growth [14]. The discursive traditions, especially the job titles could be associated with the “status” and “recognition” factors. Despite the fact that the use of a “nicer job title” could be interpreted as manipulative, it also helps the person appointed in that position to have an improved status and to gain the recognition of others.

All the facts presented, could lead to higher motivation and self-motivation [5]. Rush mentioned in 1971 that “the main purpose of job design is to increase both employee motivation and productivity”. The Two-Hygiene Theory of Herzberg (apud. Rush, 1971), mentions that two categories of factors are very important: satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These factors affect the “employee’s self-esteem and opportunity for self-actualization in the workplace”.

These opinions have brought us to the 3rd question of the research: to what extent have the internal discursive traditions (as part of the tehnolect) migrated into the outside communication and which is the motivation behind this?

The specialists are setting a border between internal and external communication. The results of situational observations and interviews proved that in several situations the internal communication flows are prolonged often outside the company (not only the words, but the type of discursive communication too, verbal but also non-verbal, in terms of attitude and behavior).

In order to understand the migration of tehnolect in the outside environment we have described in the figure bellow the communication flows.

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**Fig. 1. Model of transfer of discursive traditions from the internal to the external environment of the organization.**

A–Internal environment and internal communication flows; B-External environment and different types of communications flows: with clients of the company (B.1.), business partners (B.2.) and friends/acquaintance (B.3.).

As far as the discursive practices and the use of tehnolect and foreign terms, the motivation is different from A to B. In the A situation, the motivation of the use of foreign terms is justified by the previously mentioned reasons (time-saving, easy-to use, easy-to-understand). In this situation all the subjects have a common understanding of the used terminology. In the B. situation, the employee of company uses the specific terms outside the company. The underlying motivation is changed here. It is not about an easy-way of communication anymore, but the motivation to gain a better status.
and recognition in the eyes of the others interlocutors. The need to use such terms in the external environment is influenced by a multitude of factors (the job status, the image of company A in the society, which is transferred on the image of the employee a.o.).

The interviewed individuals have explained that, apart from this, there is also the situation that we could describe/define with the term of “code-switching”, used in language sciences. The explanation of some subjects was that after a long-use of a specific technical term, it is hard to search for another term after the working hours, in the private environment. They also admit that when they are using an English work-specific word, they are experiencing a feeling of “power” or privilege to be able to understand and to use it.

If in B.1 and B.2 situations, the use of specific terms could be justified due professional objectives related to communication process. In B.3 situation the use of words belonging to tehnolect is made mostly due self-esteem reasons. As well, in B.1 situation, the company and the managers are using specific terms in order to raise the motivation of employees or of potential employees (job title mostly). In order to find out in so far the companies are using English in external communication we have analyzed a well known recruitment website from Romania, www.e-jobs.ro and we have selected the list of the most recently posted 500 job advertisements at the time we have accessed the page (4.10.2012).

From the 500 postings, 192 job titles were entirely in English or with English terms (apart from multinationals or the jobs advertised for other foreign countries). Some examples are (citated in English language, as posted on the web page): “Project engineer/ assistant project engineer”, “Transport sales coordinator”, “Medical representatives”, “Account manager”, “Street campaigner” and many others. We can suppose that the reason for posting the information in this manner was the desire to make the jobs more attractive to the potential candidates. Hackmann has defined (1976, p. 256) some core job dimensions, but the job title is not included [7]. It was not the case perhaps at that time, for the indigene society, where English native speakers. In secondary economic cultures, oriented so intensive to the western values in normal and professional life, the job title could become a component of intrinsic motivation too. The job title is delivering a first image of the employee in the eyes of the interlocutors from the external environment (see Figure 1, B.1, B.2 and B.3). In our research, 78% of the subjects have admitted that they are sensitive to their job title and that they relate it to status and recognition. Hackmann also mentions at page 258b that “there is now substantial evidence that differences among people moderate how they react to their work, and individuals’ need for power appears to be a useful way to conceptualize and measure such differences [7]. The basic prediction is that people who have a great need for personal growth and development will respond positively to a job high in motivating potential than people with a lower need for growth”.

4 Conclusion
Motivation is the silent engine of each human action. The intrinsic versus the extrinsic debate or the positive versus the negative motivation is about not arguing anymore about the relevance of human motivation: that is already a widely accepted fact. The complexity of individual behavior at work is difficult to analyze, particularly in the present circumstances of abrupt changes in society. The classical categories of intrinsic motivation are related to the interaction between employees [7]. Apart from these, the present paper tried to analyze a certain phenomenon that can be defined as a tool for intrinsic motivation: the formal job titles, that were defined according to the job specific activities are replaced by new job titles, for the same activities. The new titles could be defined as “optimizing” factors for self-perception and self-motivation, as well as for a better social image.

This phenomena (switching from one language to the other, from one discursive type to another, mixing the stylistic and functional characteristics of each language) resemble those situations that linguists defined as linguistic interference and code switching. Uriel Weinreich defines interference as the deviation from the rules of a language that may occur in the speech acts of a bilingual or multilingual speaker due to the fact that he is used to communicating in more than one language [16]. Code switching is defined as the alternative use of words, phrases or even entire sentences in different languages during a speech or a speech act. For instance, a native Romanian speaker who has spent some time in a foreign linguistic environment may often exhibit both of the above, as they may: erroneously use the customary grammar and pronunciation rules (in Romanian), using specific elements and structures of another foreign language (linguistic interference); alternatively using Romanian and foreign words and phrases during the same speech or speech act.
Such phenomena is common with people who use different varieties of the same language in their personal, social and professional life. Interference and code switching which, as stated above, may occur not only on an inter-linguistic but also an intra-linguistic level, i.e. between the varieties and functional styles of the same language, can be either willing or unwilling (knowingly or unknowingly used by the speaking individual). On the one hand, they can be involuntary (due to the speaker’s inability to adapt to a specific communication situation) or voluntary (intentional).

The presented discursive practices have also developed as certain individuals involved in the communication process presumed that the use of specific terms and languages or certain discourse types could improve their social or professional image in the eyes of their interlocutors and of the recipients of their messages. For some of the communicating parties, the use of certain terms is also related to the augmentation of their social status, thus contributing to their motivation and self-motivation.

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