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Lexical Ambiguity in Ukrainian Economics: Paronymy And Professional Communication Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Lexical ambiguity presents a significant challenge in professional communication because closely related word forms may differ in meaning, semantic scope, and contextual appropriateness. In Ukrainian economic discourse, paronymy is particularly relevant to the interpretation of specialized terminology, the preparation of financial and administrative documents, and the communication of economic concepts across professional settings. This article examines the relationship between paronymy, lexical-semantic differentiation, and communicative accuracy through a theoretical review of the supplied literature. The study employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical methodology combining conceptual comparison, semantic classification, and hypothetical analysis of economic communication scenarios. The theoretical framework draws on research concerning distributional semantics, word-formation rivalry, terminology, Ukrainian lexicology, and the differentiation of paronyms. The analysis develops a functional classification of paronymic risks and proposes a context-sensitive framework for identifying and resolving potentially confusing lexical forms. The findings suggest that effective differentiation requires more than formal resemblance or dictionary definitions: semantic compatibility, grammatical behavior, disciplinary context, and communicative purpose must also be considered. The article contributes a conceptual model for terminology education, editorial practice, and the development of language-support systems for Ukrainian economic communication. Its conclusions are theoretical and require validation through empirical corpus research.

Keywords: Paronymy, lexical ambiguity, Ukrainian economic terminology, professional communication, distributional semantics, terminological precision, semantic differentiation, economic discourse, linguistic analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem statement

Professional economic communication depends on the precise interpretation of terminology. Economic reports, contracts, analytical assessments, educational materials, and regulatory documents require words to convey distinctions that may have direct practical consequences. When two lexical forms are similar in pronunciation or spelling but differ in meaning or usage, their inappropriate substitution can produce ambiguity, weaken the coherence of a document, or distort the intended economic argument.

Paronymy concerns lexical items that exhibit formal

similarity without being fully interchangeable in meaning. Unlike complete homonymy, which involves identical forms associated with different meanings, paronymy typically involves a resemblance that may encourage confusion between distinct lexical units. Ukrainian lexicographic scholarship provides a foundation for examining such relationships, particularly through work on paronyms and the semantic organization of the modern Ukrainian language (Hrynchyshyn & Serbenska, 1986; Lyshychenko, 2009).

The problem becomes more complex when lexical choices occur within specialized economic discourse. A word may appear appropriate because it resembles a familiar term, yet its semantic properties may not match the concept being discussed. Consequently, professional accuracy depends on the interaction between lexical knowledge, disciplinary competence, and contextual interpretation.

1.2. Research relevance and significance

Economic terminology is not an isolated vocabulary system. It develops through word formation, borrowing, semantic extension, institutional usage, and changes in professional practice. Research on terminology formation and the conceptual preparation of economists therefore provides relevant perspectives for understanding how lexical distinctions become established and maintained (Dyakov et al., 2000; Koval & Hladka, 2012).

Distributional semantics offers an additional theoretical perspective by examining meaning through patterns of linguistic occurrence. Boleda (2020) reviews the relationship between distributional semantics and linguistic theory, providing a basis for considering how contextual usage can help distinguish lexical items that share formal features. However, contextual similarity alone does not establish that two terms are synonymous or interchangeable.

The relevance of this problem extends to professional education, economic publishing, document review, and language technologies. A systematic account of paronymic confusion can support the development of more reliable terminology instruction and context-sensitive editorial procedures.

1.3. Research objectives and scope

The principal objective is to develop a theoretical framework for analyzing paronymy as a potential source of communicative difficulty in Ukrainian economic discourse.

The study addresses four objectives: to establish a conceptual relationship between paronymy and lexical ambiguity; to synthesize the supplied literature on semantics, word formation, terminology, and professional communication; to classify potential paronymic risks in economic texts; and to propose a framework for identifying and resolving such risks.

The article focuses on Ukrainian economic terminology as a field of professional language use. It does not claim to measure the actual frequency of paronymic errors in Ukrainian economic documents. Instead, it develops an analytical model that can inform subsequent empirical investigation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Paronymy and lexical-semantic differentiation

The study of paronymy requires a distinction between formal resemblance and semantic equivalence. Two words may share phonological or morphological characteristics while performing different semantic functions. Hrynchyshyn and Serbenska (1986) provide a Ukrainian-language lexicographic foundation specifically concerned with paronyms, while Lyshychenko (2009) situates lexical meaning within the broader semantic structure of the Ukrainian language.

These perspectives are complementary. A dictionary-based approach identifies established lexical distinctions, whereas a broader semantic approach examines how meanings relate to one another within the language system. For economic communication, both are necessary: identifying a potentially confusing pair is only the first step; determining which form fits a particular professional context requires further analysis.

A limitation of purely lexicographic treatment is that individual definitions may not fully explain the behavior of a term across different genres. A word used in a textbook may appear in a different syntactic or pragmatic environment in a contract or financial report. Accordingly, paronym differentiation should consider both conventional meaning and contextual suitability.

2.2. Terminology formation and economic discourse

Dyakov et al. (2000) examine terminology formation from semantic and sociolinguistic perspectives. This orientation is relevant because professional terms acquire their status not merely through their structure but also through patterns of disciplinary use and social convention. Honcharov and Kushnir (2009) and Dvorak (2018) provide economic lexicographic resources that can support the identification and interpretation of specialized vocabulary.

The Economic Dictionary Online and Liga Zakon offer additional reference points for investigating economic language and legal-economic usage. Nevertheless, dictionary inclusion should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that a term is appropriate in every professional context. Lexicographic resources may differ in scope, intended audience, and treatment of emerging terminology.

Koval and Hladka (2012) connect professional preparation with a conceptual model for training specialists in economic cybernetics. Their subject matter underscores the relevance of systematic conceptual understanding in economic education. Kharchenko (2020), focusing on the development of professional communication culture among future economists, provides a pedagogical perspective that complements terminology research.

Together, these works suggest that terminological precision should be treated as both a linguistic competence and a professional skill. However, the supplied literature does not establish the prevalence of specific paronymic errors in contemporary Ukrainian economic practice.

2.3. Distributional semantics and contextual interpretation

Boleda (2020) provides a theoretical overview of distributional semantics and its relationship to linguistic theory. Distributional approaches examine how linguistic expressions behave in context, often representing lexical items through patterns of co-occurrence or contextual similarity. Such methods are potentially useful for distinguishing closely related words whose meanings overlap without being identical.

The relevance of this approach lies in its ability to move analysis beyond isolated definitions. If two candidate terms tend to occur with different verbs, nouns, modifiers, or discourse functions, those distributional differences may help identify their preferred semantic environments.

Research on semantic differences between Indonesian prefixes using a vector-space model illustrates how distributional techniques can be applied to word-formation questions (Denistia et al., 2022). Guzmán Naranjo and Bonami (2023) examine rivalry in word formation from a distributional perspective, while Cartier and Huyghe (2021) investigate affix competition diachronically in French. Huyghe and Varvara (2023) further address theoretical and methodological challenges associated with affix rivalry.

These studies concern related linguistic problems rather than directly demonstrating paronymic confusion in Ukrainian economics. Their value is methodological: they indicate that similarities among lexical forms can coexist with systematic differences in usage, and that those differences may be investigated through contextual evidence.

2.4. Research gap and theoretical positioning

Isaeva (2019) considers metaphor in terminology in relation to efficient professional communication, highlighting the importance of interpreting specialized expressions in context. Andreou and Lieber (2020), through their analysis of deverbal conversion and -ing nominalizations, demonstrate the relevance of contextual conditions to the interpretation of related linguistic constructions. Mykhailenko-Zoto (2019) addresses the differentiation of paronyms across texts of different styles, directly supporting the importance of genre-sensitive analysis.

Despite these complementary perspectives, the supplied references do not provide an integrated, empirically validated framework specifically for identifying and resolving paronymic risks in Ukrainian economic communication. The present study addresses this conceptual gap by combining lexical-semantic differentiation, terminological conventions, contextual analysis, and professional communication requirements.

Its theoretical position is that paronymic risk arises not from formal similarity alone, but from an interaction among lexical resemblance, incomplete semantic differentiation, contextual expectations, and the demands of a particular communicative task.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The study adopts a qualitative, conceptual research design based on descriptive analysis and critical synthesis of the 17 references supplied. It does not employ original survey data, interviews, experiments, or a newly compiled linguistic corpus. Consequently, the findings are presented as theoretically derived analytical propositions rather than measured outcomes.

The methodology combines four complementary procedures: conceptual clarification of paronymy and lexical ambiguity; comparative examination of the supplied literature; functional classification of potential communication risks; and construction of a context-sensitive framework for terminology verification.

This design is appropriate for establishing a preliminary analytical model, although empirical research would be required to establish its predictive accuracy and practical effectiveness.

3.2. Analytical framework

The proposed framework treats potentially confusing lexical choices as the result of an interaction among four dimensions.

Formal similarity concerns the extent to which two lexical items resemble one another in spelling, pronunciation, or morphological structure. Similarity can attract attention to a possible paronymic relationship, but it cannot independently establish that confusion exists.

Semantic differentiation concerns the conceptual distinction between the candidate terms. The analysis examines whether the words express different economic processes, properties, participants, or relationships. Ukrainian lexicographic research provides the conceptual basis for this stage (Hrynchyshyn & Serbenska, 1986; Lyshychenko, 2009).

Contextual compatibility concerns whether a lexical item fits the surrounding sentence, its grammatical structure, and its intended meaning. Distributional semantics supports investigating how contextual patterns contribute to lexical interpretation (Boleda, 2020). In practical analysis, this dimension includes the nouns, verbs, modifiers, and other expressions with which a candidate term regularly occurs.

Professional adequacy concerns whether the selected expression corresponds to established economic usage and communicates the intended concept to its audience. This dimension draws on the terminology and professional education perspectives represented by Dyakov et al. (2000), Koval and Hladka (2012), and Kharchenko (2020).

These dimensions are interdependent. A word may be formally plausible but semantically inappropriate, or semantically understandable but inconsistent with accepted professional terminology. The framework therefore avoids treating any single diagnostic feature as decisive.

3.3. Classification of communication risks

For analytical purposes, potential paronymic risks are divided into three functional categories.

The first is conceptual substitution, in which a writer selects a similar-looking word that represents a different concept. In a hypothetical economic report, a term intended to describe an institution's financial condition might be replaced with a term referring to its financial activity. The resulting sentence could remain grammatically correct while changing the analytical claim.

The second is collocational incompatibility, in which a candidate word does not fit the established lexical environment of the intended concept. For example, a writer might use an expression that is linguistically possible but conventionally inappropriate for describing the assessment of an investment, the calculation of expenditure, or the evaluation of institutional performance.

The third is genre-sensitive misinterpretation, in which a lexical choice is acceptable in a general explanation but unsuitable for a legal-economic document or technical report. This category reflects the importance of stylistic differentiation and professional context, consistent with the research direction of Mykhailenko-Zoto (2019).

These categories are analytical tools developed for this study, not an empirically established taxonomy of all Ukrainian economic paronyms.

3.4. Procedure for analyzing potentially confusing terms

The proposed analytical procedure contains five stages.

First, identify two or more lexical forms whose similarity could lead to substitution. Second, compare their dictionary meanings and grammatical properties. Third, examine the sentence-level context to determine which semantic interpretation is intended. Fourth, verify the selected term against relevant economic terminology resources, including the supplied dictionaries and legal-information resource. Fifth, assess whether the final expression preserves the intended professional meaning.

Consider a hypothetical sentence: “The report evaluates the institution's economic condition and its operational performance.” If a writer uses a similar-looking term for condition where performance is intended, the reviewer should not rely on spelling alone. The distinction must be evaluated through the report's analytical purpose, the relevant definitions, and the relationship between the term and the evidence being discussed.

A terminology reference can help establish conventional meanings, but it cannot always resolve context-dependent interpretation. Where a dictionary entry is incomplete or multiple usages are plausible, consultation of domain-specific documents and qualified editorial review may be necessary.

3.5. Methodological limitations

The study is limited by its reliance on the supplied references and hypothetical examples. It does not establish the frequency of particular paronymic substitutions, compare professional groups, or measure the consequences of lexical errors in actual economic documents. Moreover, the references address different linguistic phenomena and languages; their methodological implications cannot automatically be generalized to Ukrainian economic terminology.

The proposed framework should therefore be understood as a basis for empirical testing. A future corpus study could compare economic textbooks, institutional reports, financial documents, and educational materials to determine which lexical distinctions produce recurring difficulties and whether contextual analysis improves their identification.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Paronymy as a multidimensional communication risk

The conceptual analysis indicates that paronymic risk cannot be reduced to visual or phonological resemblance. Formal similarity may initiate confusion, but actual interpretive difficulty depends on the relationship between lexical meaning, grammatical environment, and professional context. This interpretation is consistent with the broader view that lexical meaning must be analyzed in relation to linguistic usage rather than through form alone (Boleda, 2020).

The distinction is important because a sentence containing a questionable term may appear grammatically well formed. Conventional grammar and surface fluency do not guarantee conceptual precision. In economic writing, an expression can be structurally acceptable while misrepresenting the relationship between an activity, an outcome, a financial condition, or an institutional process.

4.2. Three principal patterns of potential confusion

The framework identifies three analytically distinct patterns: conceptual substitution, collocational incompatibility, and genre-sensitive misinterpretation.

Conceptual substitution presents the most direct risk because the selected word changes the proposition being communicated. Collocational incompatibility arises when a term conflicts with the normal linguistic environment of the intended concept. Genre-sensitive misinterpretation occurs when an expression does not meet the conventions or precision requirements of its professional setting.

These categories may overlap. A term that is conceptually incorrect may also occur in an unusual collocation and violate the conventions of a financial document. Consequently, effective terminology review should evaluate several dimensions simultaneously rather than classify errors through a single criterion.

4.3. The complementary functions of dictionaries and contextual analysis

The supplied lexicographic works provide resources for establishing conventional meanings, while studies of distributional semantics and word-formation rivalry offer methods for examining contextual differences. These approaches serve different functions: dictionary consultation supports normative and definitional

verification, whereas contextual analysis helps determine whether a particular meaning is appropriate in a specific sentence.

Distributional evidence is potentially useful because words that occur in different linguistic environments may perform different semantic functions, even when their forms are similar (Boleda, 2020). However, frequent co-occurrence does not by itself prove semantic equivalence or establish a mandatory usage rule.

The resulting finding is methodological: a reliable review process should combine lexicographic evidence, contextual interpretation, and domain-specific judgment.

4.4. Implications for professional education and editorial practice

The proposed framework suggests that terminology instruction should move beyond memorizing isolated definitions. Learners should practice distinguishing similar forms in complete economic statements, interpreting terms through their collocations, and verifying the conceptual relationships expressed in professional documents.

For editors, the framework offers a structured review procedure that prioritizes potentially consequential lexical choices. For language-technology developers, it provides candidate features for a future paronym-detection system, including formal similarity, contextual compatibility, and terminology-resource matching.

These applications remain proposed rather than experimentally demonstrated. Their effectiveness would depend on the quality of reference dictionaries, the representativeness of the training data, and the ability to distinguish genuine errors from legitimate variation in economic language.

4.5. Overall finding

The central outcome is a conceptual model in which paronymic risk emerges from the interaction of lexical form, semantic distinction, contextual distribution, and professional convention. This model provides a structured basis for analyzing Ukrainian economic communication while avoiding the unsupported assumption that every similar-looking lexical pair creates a practical problem.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Theoretical interpretation

The findings support an integrated understanding of paronymy as a context-dependent linguistic risk rather than a purely formal relationship between words. The distinction matters because professional communication requires lexical choices to preserve conceptual relationships, not merely to satisfy grammatical conventions. A term may resemble the intended expression and remain understandable to a general reader while introducing a distinction that matters within economic analysis.

This interpretation connects Ukrainian lexicographic approaches with distributional accounts of meaning. Hrynchyshyn and Serbenska (1986) provide a foundation for identifying paronymic relationships, while Lyshychenko (2009) supports a broader consideration of lexical-semantic structure. Distributional semantics complements these perspectives by examining patterns of use and contextual association (Boleda, 2020). The resulting theoretical position does not replace dictionary definitions with statistical evidence; rather, it treats definitions and usage patterns as complementary sources of information.

A key qualification is that distributional similarity should not be equated with semantic identity. Two terms may appear in similar contexts because they belong to the same professional domain, yet express different concepts. Conversely, a term may occur infrequently in a small corpus without being incorrect. Contextual evidence must therefore be interpreted in relation to linguistic theory, disciplinary knowledge, and the communicative purpose of the text.

5.2. Implications for economic communication

The practical importance of paronymy depends partly on the function of the document in which a lexical choice appears. In a general educational explanation, an imprecise expression may cause temporary confusion. In a contract, financial assessment, or policy document, the same type of imprecision could obscure the distinction between an obligation, a result, a condition, or a process.

These are plausible consequences rather than documented outcomes of the present study. Their significance lies in illustrating why terminology review should be proportional to communicative risk. Editors and authors should give

particular attention to lexical choices that determine the interpretation of financial relationships, analytical categories, institutional responsibilities, and regulatory provisions.

The implications also extend to professional education. Kharchenko (2020) examines the formation of professional communication culture among future economists, while Koval and Hladka (2012) address professional training in economic cybernetics. Read alongside the terminology-focused literature, these works support treating lexical accuracy as part of professional competence rather than as a narrow language-correction exercise.

Instruction can therefore incorporate contrastive tasks in which students explain why a particular term fits one sentence but not another. Such activities can develop semantic judgment, encourage the consultation of authoritative resources, and make the relationship between language and economic reasoning more explicit.

5.3. The role of terminology resources and language technology

Dictionaries and legal-information resources can provide an initial verification layer, but their usefulness depends on whether they document the relevant distinction and reflect current professional practice. The supplied economic dictionaries, Ukrainian terminology scholarship, and Liga Zakon resource represent different kinds of reference material. They should not be treated as interchangeable authorities: each must be evaluated according to its scope, terminology coverage, and intended purpose.

A digital support system could operationalize the proposed framework through a sequence of checks. It might detect formally similar candidates, compare their surrounding linguistic contexts, consult a terminology database, and flag expressions whose usage appears inconsistent with the intended meaning. A reviewer would then assess whether the flagged expression is genuinely inappropriate.

Such a system should provide explanations rather than automatically replacing terms. Automated substitution can introduce new errors when context is insufficient or when a term has a legitimate specialized meaning. Distributional models may also reproduce biases present in their source texts, particularly if the available corpus overrepresents one genre, period, or institutional writing style. These limitations reinforce the need for human review.

5.4. Trade-offs and limitations

The framework presents several trade-offs. Strict standardization can improve consistency but may overlook legitimate variation across economic subfields. Flexible contextual interpretation accommodates changing usage but may weaken terminological uniformity if decisions are made without reference to established conventions. A balanced approach requires both contextual sensitivity and explicit verification criteria.

Another limitation concerns the scope of the literature. Several supplied studies address word formation, morphology, or languages other than Ukrainian. They offer methodological insights into lexical competition and semantic differentiation, but they do not directly establish how Ukrainian economists interpret specific paronyms. Their relevance is consequently theoretical and comparative rather than direct empirical evidence.

Furthermore, the study does not provide a frequency-ranked list of problematic lexical pairs, an error rate, or a measured improvement in communication. It cannot determine which types of paronymy are most common or whether the proposed procedure reduces misunderstanding. Those questions require a corpus of authentic documents, a clearly defined annotation scheme, and independent assessment of candidate errors.

5.5. Directions for future research

Future work should begin by compiling a balanced corpus of Ukrainian economic texts drawn from educational, administrative, financial, and legal-economic genres. Researchers could identify candidate paronymic pairs, annotate the relevant contexts, and ask qualified linguists and economists to assess whether each occurrence is appropriate.

A second stage could compare manual dictionary-based verification with contextual or distributional methods. Evaluation should distinguish correct detections, missed cases, and false alarms, while accounting for genre and disciplinary differences. Such a design would establish whether computational assistance offers practical benefits beyond conventional editorial review.

A third direction concerns professional education. Controlled teaching activities could investigate whether contrastive terminology exercises improve students' ability

to select appropriate lexical forms and explain their decisions. Until such studies are conducted, the present framework should be treated as a testable proposal rather than a validated intervention.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has examined lexical ambiguity in Ukrainian economic communication through the specific problem of paronymy. The analysis establishes that formally similar words may present a communication risk when their semantic distinctions, contextual behavior, or professional conventions are insufficiently understood. However, formal resemblance alone does not demonstrate that confusion has occurred.

The principal contribution is a context-sensitive framework that combines four dimensions: formal similarity, semantic differentiation, contextual compatibility, and professional adequacy. It also distinguishes conceptual substitution, collocational incompatibility, and genre-sensitive misinterpretation as three categories for organizing potential risks. These categories provide a practical foundation for terminology analysis, editorial review, and the design of language-support tools.

The synthesis of Ukrainian lexicographic research, terminology studies, professional communication scholarship, and distributional approaches suggests that no single resource can resolve every case. Dictionaries support the identification of conventional meanings, contextual analysis clarifies sentence-level interpretation, and disciplinary judgment helps establish whether the selected expression preserves the intended economic concept.

The study is limited by its conceptual design and does not report original corpus-based or experimental findings. Accordingly, the proposed framework requires validation through authentic Ukrainian economic texts and systematic evaluation by language and subject-matter specialists.

Future research should prioritize the compilation of representative corpora, the identification of recurring paronymic difficulties, and the testing of educational and computational interventions. Such work could clarify the actual scale of the problem and determine which verification procedures are most effective. Ultimately, improving lexical precision in Ukrainian economic discourse requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, professional terminology, contextual reasoning, and evidence-based editorial practice.

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