Management ergolect[1] as a separate language variety

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Management is one of those social groups which are in a position to create and maintain their social image through verbal means. Verbal communication in management is to a great extent employed to attain this goal and the function of management ergolect (ME) is expected to be predominantly social.

Research, based on a computational text analysis of two text corpora totaling 150,000 running words, has shown that ME possesses a recognizable identity of its own with two prominent tendencies, both of which confirm the thesis of the prevailingly social function of ME: on the lexical level this is manifested through the choice and use of key words and concepts and on the stylistic level in the metaphor generating network of ME.

By building its own semiotic system and using it to communicate the principles of the social group and its culturological and civilisational values, ME goes beyond the limits of a business transaction and exists as a separate linguistic, rhetorical and social entity.

Introduction

All human contact includes language and speech: through language people exchange information, manipulate others and are manipulated. The relation between communication and management is very specific: communication is the medium of management, its *spiritus movens*.

[1] I decided to use the term ergolect (by Pickett first applied to Business English /1989:5/) as a more adequate label for a professional language. The term technical language is for our purpose imprecise since language of management invariably coexists with at least one technical language and the term register is generally overused. As for jargon, there is a strong tendency in linguistic literature to assign to jargons many features typical for argots (Quirk 1968, Leech 1981, Chaika 1989).

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Management, as a social process, exists only through communication. Any interruption of communication endangers managerial efficiency.

The choice of communicational strategies and verbal formulae is stipulated by the nature of the managerial profession, the status of the manager as an individual and as a member of a defined social group.

This paper introduces and defines some of the features of the language of management whose main purpose is self identification (creating and maintaining the social image) of the speaker. The description of management ergolect as a separate language variety is proposed.

1.0 Review of relevant literature

Most EFL/ESL textbooks and literature on international business, management and marketing refer to the language of management as Business English. While it is not our wish to deny the fact that there is a significant overlap between Business and Management English, particularly prominent in the lexical layer of business transaction (Fox 1994a), there is an aspect of ME use which has been overlooked in the description of Business English: its social function, or to be more precise, the use of ME as an act of self identification.

/1/ *Global managers are made, not born. This is not a natural process. We are herd animals. We like people who are like us... Naturally, as a CEO, I set the tone for the company's management style. With my Anglo-Saxon education and Swedish upbringing, I have a certain way of doing things.*

A truly impressive number of volumes have been written on the topic of management. For the purposes of this research (depending on the nature and intensity of their relation to the communication and language issues) they are categorized into three groups:

1.1 Literature on international business, management and marketing (Peters and Waterman 1982, Drucker 1980, DeBono 1985, Peters and Austin 1986, to name but a few). The key word here is *communication* (also: *intercultural communication*), language is mentioned rarely and incidentally, and linguistic literature is hardly ever used as a source of reference (Holden 1987).

1.2 EFL/ESL textbooks which deal with those aspects of language related to typically managerial situations, but often under the title of Business English (Grosse & Grosse 1988, Ramsey 1990, Jones and Alexander 1991, Comfort, Revell and Stott 1991). Some of the titles (Sawyer-Laucanno 1987, Ardo 1991) show awareness of

specific features of language in management and of specific educational aspects of such language courses.

1.3 Linguistic literature so far uses the term Business English (Firth 1990, Kachru 1988, 1990), which also covers various aspects of language use in management.

2.0 The social status of the manager

Awareness of the social status of the manager in a postindustrial society is essential for understanding the communicational diversity of ME. The social status can be defined through 3 categories: culture, social class and social group(s) within that social class.

Culture is generally considered to be a »set of socially acquired behavior patterns« symbolically transmitted through language ... to the members of a particular society. The ethnography of communication, as a part of anthropology, extends understanding of cultural systems to language, relating language to social organizations, role-relationships, values and beliefs and other shared patterns of knowledge and behavior which are transmitted from generation to generation in the process of socialization/enculturation (Saville-Troike 1990:8). This implies that defining the culturological boundaries of management as a group and manager as an individual is important in more than one sense, since a definite correlation between culture and ME is expected.

Society can be viewed as a hierarchical structure stratified into classes distinguished through three main points: economic status (in common parlance, wealth), educational credentials (profession) and behavioral standards (lifestyle). So, the basic question of any social research is, as Lenski (1966) so aptly put it, *Who gets what and why?*

The third element of this pattern represent the *social groups* where the individuals communicate for a certain period of time sharing needs, interest and objectives. Numerous investigations, mainly in the USA (Williams 1982, Coleman 1983, Engel et al 1985), have shown that in a postindustrial society the manager is a member of the upper-middle (occasionally lower-upper) class, professionally qualified, concentrated on the career. His social status is based on his profession and income. The manager is described as self-confident, willing to take risks and believing to be in control of his life (Mowen 1987). The results of European research correspond with American: the Danish sociologist Hojrup (1983) describes upper middle class as social group with great vertical mobility and need for power:

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its members desire to exert control rather than being controlled, they are professionally dedicated and extremely competitive, their leisure time is fully devoted to their career with support of their families.

3.0 Communication in management as an act of self identification

Efficient communication is vital for the control of organization. It is closely connected to motivation, another key factor of successful management (Smith and Vigor 1991:78:80). Success of management does not depend on the manager only: it is affected by the nature of the message and by the readiness of other participants in the process to communicate: the greater the difference in social status the smaller the choice of communication channels (Likert 1961:97–118).

So called »excellent« companies are intensely aware of the impact of specific communicational strategies on management: in Walt Disney Production, this is, for example, addressing by personal names, in IBM »the open door policy« (Peters & Waterman 1984:122). The greatest advantage of such communication seems to be in its frequency and intensity: a great number of people in communication, often without previous notice.

It is precisely the social position that enables the group and the individual in management (2.0) to use the entire process of communication (of which language is only one element) not only to exchange knowledge and ideas, to persuade and command, but also to establish and maintain their social identity. It is social power that makes it possible for management to create and maintain their social image through verbal means. Accordingly, it is justified to assume that the language in/of management will be multidimensional and its social function dominant:

/2/ *I proposed a partnership. If we invested in a factory together, he would know we couldn't arbitrarily close it if our business took a nosedive because we would also have something to lose. We shook hands and were in business – much to the chagrin of Stride Rite's lawyers.*

Both the »surface« and the »deep« conceptual levels of this and the previous text example communicate one and the same: look at me: I am good, I am great, I am reliable, I am successful. This need for positive self identification, as our analysis will show, happens to be the key factor of the conceptual structure of ME (8.0; 9.0) and a fundamental principle of the metaphor generating network (10.0). In fact, there seems to be no clear-cut boundary between informative and social function of management ergolect: each utterance is an act of social self identification of the speaker.

Whereas the general significance of communication is in the literature on management and international business widely acknowledged (1.1), the specific nature of the relation between the speaker and the message, similar to communicational processes in political speech (Fox 1994b), has been explicitly mentioned by just a few, often only sporadically (DeBono 1985, for example). A description of ME should therefore start with its »emancipation« from the complex of Business English. The very obvious communicational feature of ME, its aspiration for positive self identification of the speaker, we decided to highlight through the selection and use of key concepts and its metaphor generating network.

4.0 Compilation of the text corpora

This research is based on two representative[2] text corpora of written English: *Management Ergolect Corpus* (MC) – 78,875 running words, taken from newer publications in the field of international management – and *Business English Corpus* (BC) – 72,313 running words, taken from newer publications in the field of international business.

MC is built up of three subcorpora. The subcorpus MSC1 (21,667 words) was taken by random sampling from the book *People in Organizations* (Smith and Vigor 1991), MSC2 (23,624 words) from the British magazine *International Management* (random samples taken from each edition June 1991 to March 1992) and MSC3 (33,584) compiled by stratified sampling from *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), *Personnel, Management International Review* (MIR) and others. Text genres covered by MC are interview, scientific and professional paper, report and case study.

BC, which in this research has a function of control corpus, includes a whole document: the complete book *The Shipbroker's Manual, Vol. 1,* (The Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, 1983, London). The advantage of a whole document corpus, it is well known, lies in its openness to a wider range of linguistic studies. Such a corpus secures sufficient evidence for statistical treatment (Sinclair 1991:19). In our research BC proved a very reliable control corpus, backing up any line of research in the main corpus.

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[2] Corpus representativeness is a basis of the whole process of corpus design and compilation. The simplest case is, as Renouf suggests, »where the whole is known and finite as with Shakespeare's works or the bible« (1988:2). Leech proposes that statistical or other models should be employed to make a text corpus really representative (p. 1991:27).

5.0 Corpus Analysis

The quantitative analysis of the two text corpora MC (with separate analysis of three subcorpora MSC1, MSC2 and MSC3) and BC was done in the program TEXTPACK PC, Version V., Release 4.0[3]. As a result, frequency lists FLM and FLM1, FLM2, FLM3, alphabetical lists ABM and ABM1, ABM2 and ABM3 as well as text concordance (KWIC) were obtained. Both frequency and alphabetical lists were, due to the information they contain on rank and frequencies for each lexical item, used as guidance in selection of the items of analysis. The concordances proved very useful, both on the quantitative and qualitative stages of analysis, especially in case of lexical items of lower frequencies (e.g. professionalisms and slang).

6.0 Results of the computational analysis of the text corpora MC and B

The computational analysis of text corpora MC (with subcorpora MSC1, MSC2, MSC3) and BC displayed the basic quantitative relations within each corpus and the essential quantitative difference between the two text corpora.

	MC				BC
		MSC1	MSC2	MSC3	
Tokens	78875	21667	23624	33584	72313
Types	9238	3187	4995	5479	5046
TTR*	0.117	0.147	0.211	0.163	0.070
HR**	49.73%	50.16%	45.89%	52.98%	39.85%

* type-token ratio
** hapax ratio (hapax-type ratio)

Table 1 BASIC QUANTITATIVE RELATIONS WITHIN THE TEXT CORPORA MC
(WITH SUBCORPORA MSC1, MSC2, MSC3) AND BC

[3] P. Mohler and C. Zuell (May 1990) TEXTPACK PC, Release 4.0, ZUMA, Mannheim, Federal Republik of Germany, a program designed for both professional and casual users of computational text analysis, comprising features like FREQ, XREF, WORDCOMP, SUBSEL, KWIC and many others.

The quantitative distinction between the text corpora MC and BC is manifested in two aspects: noticeably higher TTR and HR in the text corpus MC.

Higher TTR in the corpus MC suggests extensive use of words with specific meanings and higher density of information (Biber 1991:104–105). Higher HR indicates the rhythm by which the vocabulary is augmented (Muller 1969), as the relatively greater number of types used in a text affects the number of low frequency items and, of course, hapax as the group of frequency 1.

These two facts are in mutual correlation and in accordance with communicative purpose of ME: a very exact lexical choice and highly concentrated information leading to a carefully worded message.

7.0 The ME lexical structure

Computational text analysis has shown that the lexical structure of ME is rather complex, consisting of two blocks: grammatical words and lexical words. The lexical block is multilayered: thematic (contextual) words, key words, words of business transaction, words of subprofessions, professionalisms and slang (Fox 1994a). Such multilayered structure in itself suggests that any analysis of ME will have to go far beyond the scope of collections of business terms and jargon items, far beyond the frame of any individual technical language. The management ergolect, as we see it, cuts across such divisions (management itself being the common denominator). Our interest was therefore addressed to the potential of the entire vocabulary, its both realized and latent possibilities.

7.1 Grammatical words

It is a well known fact that approximately ten most frequent (without exception grammatical) words cover approximately a quarter of a text. Our analysis showed a visible difference in coverage by ten most frequent words between MC and BC. The cumulative relative frequency in MC amounts to 21.87%, which is considerably less than 27.33% in BC. This tendency of MC towards the lesser use of low info content words is consistent with the higher TTR and HR. In short, the text corpus MC possesses the statistical parameters of so called abbreviated grammar, the tendency typical for journalese and the language of commercial advertising, the varieties which (similarly to ME) have a strong persuasive tendency and insist on precisely focused information.

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7.2 Lexical words

Additional distinction between the two text corpora is in the choice of highly frequent lexical words. The top of MC frequency list was, apart from grammatical words, occupied by two groups of lexical items:

Thematic (contextual) words, related to management as profession, activity: *company, management, manager, business* and **key words,** related to ideals of management as a social group: *work, people, group, competitive*[4].

The top of the BC frequency list was, however, occupied exclusively by thematic words, which also explains their higher relative frequencies. Stating that BC contains no key words would of course, be incorrect: it is just that the key words in the BC have much lower frequencies and ranks, which points towards lesser significance of the social aspect of that language variety.

The usefulness of key words for this analysis was primarily manifested in the fact that they suggest the dominant conceptual areas and categories: the value of work, significance of the individual and the group, the competitive environment of management, thus indicating the importance of the social dimension of ME.

8.0 Concepts relying on high frequency key words

Key words	Frel
work	0.432
organization	0.323
market	0.298
people	0.293
group	0.251
European	0.250
Japanese	0.183
new	0.180
American	0.128
competitive	0.122

Table 2 RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF THE MOST FREQUENT KEY WORDS IN THE TEXT CORPUS MC

[4] This particular selection of top key words on the MC frequency list is not at all surprising. It is dictated by the basic principles of management as profession: authority, responsibility, discipline and order (Fayol 1979, Peters and Waterman 1982, Smith and Vigor 1991) and the ideals of management as a social group: individualism, success, efficiency, competitiveness and need for social power (Mowen 1987:517–521).

As key words are of (generally) high frequency and related to the ideals and principles of management it is reasonable to expect that they will act as verbal signals for the, invariably familiar and conventional, key concepts. Now, concepts in our understanding are not words. Even if the connection between words and concepts is conventional, the existence of concepts is not and all languages contain words to mark concepts and conceptual categories formed by direct observation (Lyons 1978:110). Consequently, the isolation of ME from Business English should be done through the isolation of key words and concepts and via their communicational and social evaluation.

The key words of the text corpus MC (Table 2) point towards dominant conceptual areas:

- group
- individual
- work
- competition
- positive orientation
- time (as the most frequent individual concept in ME)[5].

All stated conceptual areas can be related to the outward influence on ME: they originate in the basic principles of management as profession (Fayol 1987), the cultural network and values of society and social group (D'Andrade 1984, Chikudate 1991).

8.1 The dominance of positive concepts

MC	Frel	MSC1	Frel	MSC2	Frel	MSC3	Frel
new	0.180	individual	0.194	new	0.223	new	0.258
good	0.171	good	0.180	competitive	0.191	good	0.144
competitive	0.134	different	0.162	good	0.182	high	0.135
different	0.133	informal	0.126	different	0.159	international	0.127
high	0.096	senior	0.113	large	0.134	national	0.127

[5] The network of conceptual categories is inevitably based on shared experience. The concept of time is a typically culturologically conditioned concept. Western postindustrial societies are turned towards future, and traditional societies towards past: the former view time linearly and the latter cyclically (McClelland 1961, Terpstra 1978).

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large	0.096	new	0.095	high	0.104	financial	0.123
individual	0.077	human	0.081	corporate	0.095	competitive	0.110
international	0.076	responsible	0.072	international	0.092	foreign	0.093
big	0.057	industrial	0.068	foreign	0.077	large	0.093
corporate	0.057	social	0.063	important	0.077	big	0.889
financial	0.057	general	0.063	individual	0.030	public	0.076

Table 3 RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF POSITIVE CONCEPTS IN THE CORPUS MC AND SUBCORPORA MSC1, MSC2 AND MSC3

As shown in the table 3, ME has an explicit and definite preference for positive concepts:

– distinctly positive and positively connotated concepts have highest frequency (new, good, responsible, individual)

– mean frequencies are occupied by positive-to-neutral concepts (neutral concepts with positive connotation: free, large, international)

– unmistakably negative concepts are concentrated in the hapax (dictatorial, dirty, cynical, unconvincing, unpopular).

9.0 Concepts relying on low frequency key words

The most key concepts rely on high frequency key words. There is, however, a certain number of key words   related to the principles considered indisputably essential, but in the text corpus MC of distinctly low frequency (Table 4).

concept	MC	MSC1	MSC2	MSC3
money	0.029	0.032	0.018	0.042
profit	0.023	0.005	0.027	0.034
productivity	0.019	0.018	0.027	0.008

Table 4 RELATIVE FREQUENCIES OF KEY CONCEPTS BASED ON LOW FREQUENCY KEY WORDS IN MC (WITH SUBCORPORA MSC1, MSC2 AND MSC3.

With this in mind we once more have to refer to the nature of relation between the text corpus and key concepts. The selection and use of key words and key concepts are influenced by situational context in the sense that any key concept can be taken for granted and the need for explicit mention would thus be reduced or even eliminated (Ure 1971: 443–452). As this criterion can apply to all key concepts equally, the situational context factor still does not explain the extreme differences in ranks and frequencies.

This analysis points towards the social nature of key concepts as the ultimate cause: all key concepts in the text corpus MC that are in any way controversial had noticeably lower frequencies than the indisputable ones. The concepts like *work, people, change, group* are usefully applicable to any communicative situation and their pragmatic and social value is, therefore, universal. On the other hand, the key concepts like money, profit, productivity which represent the indicators of managerial success (Smith and Vigor 1991) can be controversial and their use potentially hazardous. To overcome the possible difficulty, ME activates one of two communicational strategies: the strategy of omission (as concepts of such importance can be implicitly understood) or the strategy of replacement (substituting the critical term by a weaker word or phrase → euphemism) (Fox 1995). The concentration of professionalisms around certain concepts (notably *money*) is nothing but a manifestation of the replacement strategy. Both strategies, as can be seen, ultimately result in the decrease of frequency.

10.0 Metaphor generating network

In any public speech[6] socially powerful individuals and groups create conceptual networks which generate individual metaphors. As a result, those who dictate the use of metaphors can affect our view and our understanding of reality.

/3/ *Thurman wasn't a veteran of marketing. He hadn't risen through finance. He wasn't a hired gun.*

/4/ *He got on the fast-track line and stayed there.*

/5/ *But if the CEO doesn't know what the front line looks like, how can he set the right policies, call up the right artillery or time the next advance?*

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[6] The most typical example of public speaking is, of course, political speech (for a detailed analysis see Wilson 1990). ME is also to a great extent designed for public use (Pickett 1989, Fox 1994).

These few examples show that ME relies on the awareness built into the process of metaphor interpretation, the awareness about the extra contents of the metaphor, outside its surface linguistic realization.

In creating and maintaining his own and perhaps destroying his opponent's image the speaker of ME counts on this interpretation strategy and adapts his message suitably:

/6/*After the debt-swamped 1980s, financial doctors who know how to stanch the hemorrhaging of cash are hot.*

/7/*There were cynics who tried to exploit the program by packaging their pet projects as QP initiatives, and I had political opponents in a few departments who tried periodically to entice some reporter into probing the »QP boondoggle«.*

/8/ *Ever since... Davis has been on the prowl.*

On the semantic level the fundamental idea of ME, the manager is a champion (Fox 1994a, 1995), is highlighted through the selection of contents like war, combat, sports and games, and very specific animal imagery (lions, tigers, wolves). On the conceptual level it is manifested through following fundamental concepts:

work is power
power is war
war is good.

The metaphors found in the text corpus MC[7] are a result of what we decided to name a *metaphor generating network*: the input (language) passing through filter (fundamental principle → manager is a champion); on semantic level it finds its realization in the basic metaphorical contents (combat, sport, animal imagery) and on the conceptual level in the dominant concepts (work is power, power is war, war is good). The output (individual metaphors) represents the result of this process on linguistic level.

Similarly to the choice of key concepts (8.0), the selection and use of metaphor in ME shows a decided preference for the conventional. Any metaphor, but especially the conventional one, represents a handy formula to ease understanding. In ME this strategy finds its realization on two levels

– in each single discourse
/9/ *They need someone who can walk on water.*

– and as means of general identification of the speaker's ideological position
/10/ *Management assumes that if the right carrots are held, managers and employees will run like rabbits.*

[7] The subcorpus MSC3 (30 text samples) was found to contain a total of 655 metaphors (an average of 21 metaphors per text sample of approx. 1,000 words). The standard deviation of s = 6.89 indicates a very stable distribution of metaphor in the analyzed subcorpus, a strong indication of high metaphoricity of ME.

11.0 ME as means of positive self identification

The ME Model of positive self identification (developed in Fox 1995) is based on three elements:

1. Process of encoding (phrasing the communicational intention):

– the utterance relies on strategically selected key concepts: *work, group, individual* etc., which implicitly (being culturologically perceived as positive) contribute to the positive self identification of the speaker.

– the explicit positive self identification is at this stage realised through concepts like *good, new, different, large, international* (new order, new world, new approach, new production), whereas the negative identification (usually that of the speaker's opponent) is achieved through clearly negative labels: *bad, dirty, dictatorial (8.0, 9.0)*.

– the selection and use of metaphor similarly relies on the expected process of interpretation in simple bipolar terms of positive and negative (10.0).

2. Process of decoding (interpretation of communicational intention): the recipient associates the meaning of the utterance with familiar (as a rule, more general) concepts. The communicational intention is usually interpreted in very general terms of bipolar perception (good – no good).

3. The social knowledge (Halliday 1978) of the speaker and the recipient provides the key to the code and enables adequate encoding and decoding of the message both on conceptual and metaphorical level.

SPEAKER process of encoding	*You have to be on the front lines with your troops, in constant contact with your customer.*
social and cultural knowledge	American, Anglo-Saxon and European cultures value competitiveness, courage and readiness to risk
RECIPIENT process of decoding	positive evaluation

Table 5: THE PROCESS OF POSITIVE SELF IDENTIFICATION

Further examples:

/11/ *The CEO learned this vital information in the trenches.*

trenches = courage, fighting spirit → **positive** evaluation

/12/ *But if the CEO doesn't know what the front line looks like, how can he set the right policies, call up the right artillery or time the next advance?*

front line = experience in the crisis; *artillery* = strategy → **positive** evaluation

/13/ *In tackling the personal problems, he began by shedding fat at the top.*

shedding fat at the top = fairness, social justice → *positive* evaluation

Both table 5 and examples /11, 12, 13/ clearly illustrate striving for improvement of speaker's social status as ultimate communicational objective of ME, which once more underlines the social function of ME as the dominant one.

Discussion

The social function of ME is present in two aspects: the choice and use of key concepts and metaphor. The entire metaphorical imagery of ME represents an interaction between social reality, cultural and civilisational values and the interests of a social group.

This research has established a correlation between social and cultural patterns and ME: there is a visible interaction between basic cultural values, communicative forms, views held about language and its use. Understanding and appreciation of ME can only be based on the understanding of culture and society. Its communicational implications can be fully appreciated in all their complexity only through cognizance of its cultural environment: through awareness of the true importance of social success, financial security, efficiency and freedom in a particular society.

ME appears to function as a symbolic system within culture, and its use is proof of cultural and social competence of its speaker. Through a specific choice and distribution of easily recognizable and conventional key words, fundamental concepts and metaphors, ME creates its own communication symbols and develops its own system of semiotics.

Results qualify investigating ME as an independent language variety, employing computational text analysis of a combined (spoken and written) text corpus of a monitor type, ideal for a dynamic and fast changing language variety like ME. Such an investigation should ultimately lead to establishing a sociological model of ME.

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ERGOLEKT MENADŽEMENTA KAO ZASEBNI JEZIČNI VARIJETET

Menadžment je jedna od onih društvenih grupa koje stvaraju i održavaju svoj društveni image uz pomoć verbalnih sredstava. Logično je očekivati da će velik dio komunikacije u menadžmentu služiti upravo ovoj svrsi i da će funkcija ergolekta menadžmenta (EM) biti pretežno društvena.

Ovo istraživanje koje počiva na računalnoj analizi dva tekstualna korpusa od ukupno 150.000 riječi pokazalo je da EM posjeduje prepoznatljiv identitet s dvije očite tendencije koje potvrđuju tezu o njegovoj pretežno društvenoj funkciji: na leksičkoj razini to se manifestira kroz izbor i uporabu ključnih riječi i pojmova, a na stilskoj razini u sustavu generiranja metafore.

Stvarajući svoj vlastiti semiotički sistem i koristeći ga za komuniciranje principa društvene grupe i njezinih kulturoloških i civilizacijskih vrijednosti, EM nadilazi granice poslovne transakcije i egzistira kao zasebni lingvistički, retorički i društveni entitet.