

COMPLEX VERBS USED IN ECONOMIC CONTEXTS

Alexander HOLLINGER

Complex verbs in general English have been dealt with in special dictionaries such as *The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* [1]. In Romania mention should be made of Andreea Gheorghitioiu's *Dictionar englez-român de verbe cu particula adverbiala* [2]. Books of lexicology include this category in the wider category of compound verbs (cf. Leon Levitchi *Limba engleza contemporana. Lexicologie*) [3], as a variety of them, made up of a principal verb and an adverbial particle.

The study of complex verbs can be successfully performed in the business English class if you divide them into categories corresponding to different subjects and topics dealt with. In what follows we shall try to suggest such an approach, aiming to provide a summary of the most usual complex verbs that can be associated with various topics we deal with in our business English classes.

When dealing with **recruitment and employment** we shall teach such verbs as *take on* meaning "to hire", *pay off* and *to lay off* with the meaning of "to dismiss" or "make redundant". In a related context we can teach *to lock out* with the meaning of "to prevent workers from coming into the factory." Some amounts of an employee's salary may be *taken off* i.e. deducted for pension schemes, etc.

In classes on **telephoning** a lot of complex verbs are learned. Thus one speaks of *to put through*, *to get through*, meaning "to be connected with the called party", while on the contrary *to be cut off* means "to be disconnected while having a telephone conversation". The operator can tell you to *hold on*, meaning "to hold the line", or she may ask you to *hang up* and *call back* later. You are said to *pick up the receiver*.

In a class on **business trends in market economy** you can speak of prices *going up*, *shooting up* or, on the contrary, *going down*. With reference to an economy you say it *picks up*, or a business *looks up* meaning it improves. A company *breaks into* a market when in periods of boom it expands. But as in any economic cycle there comes a moment when sales stop *going up* or they even *level off* and then they *fall off* and *bottom out* and the company has to *pull out* of a market. When production expenses *go up*, they have to be *cut down* in order to ensure efficiency. Prices may have to be *put up*, or *marked up* in order to *make up for* increased

costs. Companies may have to *scale down* their productive activities.

In classes in **accounting** you say that fixed assets *wear out* and because of this an accountant has to *write off* their value taking into account their useful life period. Accounting principles in Britain and the USA require that financial statements should *give out* i.e. reveal all information to shareholders, whereas in German accounting some information is *held back* or *kept back* from external users such as shareholders.

A company that has been *set up* is expected to make profits that will be distributed to shareholders in the form of dividends, though some of the profits may be *ploughed back*, i.e. reinvested. Companies may be *taken over* by others following a takeover bid or may be *bought out*.

A company may *run up* a debt, i.e. incur it. When speaking of **bankruptcy**, companies that can be said to *go under* have to be *wound up*. A bad debt is finally *written off*, as there is no hope that the debtor will ever *pay off*. It may also be *wiped out*.

Valuable goods may be *laid out*, i.e. exhibited and *put up* to auction, then they will be *knocked down* to the highest bidder. If you *buy in* goods that were *put up* to auction it means you by them back.

Various complex verbs are used when dealing with **instruments and methods of payment**. A revocable letter of credit may be *called off*, i.e. revoked by the issuer, therefore it is advisable to provide for arrangements to have irrevocable letters of credit. You can also use to *make out* with reference to cheques.

In the field of **insurance**, a document such as an insurance policy is said to be *made out*, i.e. issued by the underwriter, whereas the party seeking cover from loss is said to *take out* insurance.

With reference to **business transactions**, we say that orders are *made out*, *written out*, then *carried out* or there are instances when they are *turned down*. The necessary documents are *worked out* or *drawn up*. Referring to contracts, you say that you *carry out* their stipulations; conversely, you may *back out* of a contract, i.e. you withdraw from it. You also use to *bow out* of a contract.

A lot of complex verbs are used in relation to **travelling**. When *setting out* on a business trip your friends may *see you off*. The plane is said to *take off*,

while the train *pulls out* of the station. A business partner may *pick you up* at the airport at destination, and you are going to *put up* at a hotel.

At the business meeting you may *set/put forth* some proposal.

Banking is another area where we find a number of complex verbs. Thus, when you refer to a bank account, you *put in*, i.e. deposit money and then you can *take out*, i.e. withdraw money. With reference to amounts of money you may say you *put aside*, *put away*, *put by*, i.e. save. Money may be said to be *laid out*, i.e. spent.

Here are a few more verbs from other areas:

Product promotion: *to build up* a new product, i.e. advertise it.

Shipping: A vessel may *lie off*, *lie to*, or *lie up*.

Use of natural resources: Depletable resources are said to *run out*.

The examples we have supplied belong to different chapters of economics and business and make it obvious that when teaching a certain theme or subject we should be aware and highlight for our students the specific complex verbs without which the understanding of an authentic text is much impaired.

REFERENCES

1. COWIE, A.P. and R. MACKIN, *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, Vol. I. *Verbs with Prepositions and Particles*, London, Oxford University Press, 1975
2. GHEORGHİȚOIU, A. *Dicționar englez-român de verbe cu particulă adverbială*, Bucharest, Teora, 1999
3. LEVIȚCHI, L. *Limba engleză contemporană. Lexicologie*, Bucharest, Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1970