

Economic Vocabulary: “The Economy”

“It's hard to find jobs around here,” my mother said when I was visiting at home. “It's hard to find a used car. Because nobody is buying new cars.” That's what a friend of mine told me during the same trip. And they both gave the same reason: “Because of the economy.”

“The economy” is a popular topic in general, and right now especially. The general consensus is that “the economy is bad” or “we're in a recession.” What does that mean, though? Can you even give a decent description of the word 'economy'? The reason it's so hard to describe is that 'economy' is a word that now means almost anything you want it to mean.

Hard to find a job? It's the economy.

Is gas for your car expensive? It's the economy.

Why don't students like to learn grammar? It's the economy.

What did Bill Clinton say to get elected as President? “It's the economy, stupid.”

That's really what Bill Clinton's slogan was when he ran for President. And he became President. That's how important the economy is to Americans. It's important to everyone. But what *is* it, anyway? Here's how [Wikipedia defines the economy](#):

An economy (or "the economy") is the realized economic system of a country or other area. It includes the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of goods and services of that area. The study of different types and examples of economies is the subject of economic systems.

If it's still not clear, here's how [dictionary.com makes the definition](#):

The management of the resources of a community, country, etc., esp. with a view to its productivity.

Don't worry if it's still not clear. We'll spend the whole week talking about the economy. . . including some better words you can use when you might be tempted to say 'economy.' Before the week can start, though, let's get a description of the economy that we all can agree on.

When I talk about the economy, I'm talking about “the entire business-government mix.” It's that simple, everything from business profits and problems to government policies define “the economy.” It's a huge term. Everything President Obama does. . . is part of the way I understand the economy. Everything Microsoft or Siemens does. . . is part of the same economy.

When you think about it, it's a really huge term. Like “the space-time continuum,” it describes everything. . . and so, in the end, it doesn't *really* describe anything. So, tomorrow, we're going to learn some vocabulary that we can use to describe different parts of the economy. On Wednesday, we're going to revisit the grammar we talked about last week: the modal verbs. But this time, we're going to use them to discuss the future. . . Thursday we'll talk about vocabulary again, but this time we'll talk about the vocabulary you might hear when you listen to economic news. And Friday, you'll get my five-minute (or so) description of the current 'economic crisis.'

I hope it's an interesting week for you. It will be an interesting week for me. After all, if we can say one thing about the entire business-government mix—the economy—it's that it affects us all.