

# CONTENTS, CONTEXTS, COMMENTS ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

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The CONTENTS, CONTEXTS, COMMENTS section, which falls into two segments—the round table proper and TRANSLATORS' CORNER—comprises contributions that differ in some respects from what typically appears in scholarly journals. We opted for a round table discussion format in order to relieve our contributors of all kinds of restrictions and formal requirements, and encourage thereby a free flowing expression. This format makes it easier to identify common ground between the creators and users of dictionaries, specifically of idiom dictionaries. Our participants include linguists, lexicographers, instructors of various languages, and translators, all of whom were presented with the following issues for discussion:

- semantic explanations and entry structure in idiom dictionaries
- ways and means of indicating style in phraseology
- sources and presentation of illustrative examples, and the role of corpora
- the challenge of treating collocations
- the notion of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural equivalence in the field of phraseology, and
- presentation of target-language equivalents in bilingual dictionaries.

Six separate subsections are devoted to each of these issues. We later added one more important subsection, devoted to nontraditional presentation of entries, and grouped the contributions into the seven subsections under the rubrics specified above. The translators' essays are clustered together under their own rubric, TRANSLATORS' CORNER. No constraints were imposed with respect to the contributors' preferences for issues, approaches, or styles of presentation.

Some of the topics initially suggested, such as entry structure and the use of definitions and comments in bilingual idiom dictionaries—which the editors consider lexicographically significant—did not attract any of the round table participants. It is unclear whether these topics were viewed as too challenging or, perhaps, of lesser importance. While a detailed discussion of these topics is conspicuous by its absence in the round table proper, we find it telling that they are raised in a number of the translators' essays. Not only is this a real

testimony to the relevance of these issues for users, it also suggests a gap to be bridged between users and dictionary makers.

TRANSLATORS' CORNER, a special segment within the round table, comprises a homogeneous group of contributors, if not contributions. It is limited to two languages, Russian and English, and contains essays written exclusively by American translators from Russian into English. The essays, while different in content and style, specify the translators' expectations of idiom dictionaries, with an emphasis on those features of bilingual phraseography viewed as most significant for their work. The essays incorporate the translators' personal experience with dictionaries, notably with idiom dictionaries, offer analysis of selected examples, whether idioms or phrasemes of other types, and analyze representative dictionary entries. The editors' decision to solicit contributions from translators was motivated by a desire to better understand their priorities and preferences. While it is obvious that their expectations differ from those of linguists or language learners, we wanted to provide an avenue for them to express these expectations in their own voices. The contributors were invited to share their thoughts about the role of idiom dictionaries in their work. We encouraged them to draw on their own experience and spell out which dictionary features are indispensable and which they either completely ignore or give only cursory attention. Again, they were not in any way restricted with respect to the direction or style of their essays, or the selection of illustrations for analysis. We are extremely pleased that they have tackled diverse issues and examples.

Unlike TRANSLATORS' CORNER, which is inhabited solely by English speakers with an American accent, our round table participants hail from various countries and are speakers of languages other than English. For the readers' convenience, we have provided specific information about our contributors at the end of this section. Some of them sought assistance from native speakers of English. We are indebted to all those who generously gave of their time to make our authors' contributions more felicitous. While we do not have all their names, there is one that must be mentioned: we are indeed grateful to Professor Martin Durrell, who graciously helped to elevate the style of a nonnative contribution to near-native level.

Lastly, but not unimportantly, we want to state that as dictionary makers, we, the editors, hold strong views on various aspects of lexicography in general, and bilingual phraseography in particular. These views are embodied in our own dictionaries. As editors, however, we attempt to be tolerant and objective observers of varied and occasionally contradictory points of view. We aim to present a variety of views and approaches to our readers, and we are confident that they will easily sort out the material offered in this section from their specific perspectives. This is not to say that we agree with all our contributors and their approaches—we don't. But just as we do not believe in prescriptive dictionaries, we do not believe in prescriptive editorial comments. Our guiding principle is: may the reader be the judge.

# SEMANTIC EXPLANATIONS AND ENTRY STRUCTURE IN IDIOM DICTIONARIES

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## I. General comments

Contrary to current practice, the meanings of idioms given in dictionaries should provide much more detailed information than that of the dictionary entries for single words, and that should be even more the case in specialized dictionaries of idioms. This has been attempted recently in the large four volume *Slovník české frazeologie a idiomatiky* (SČFI, Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics), 2009, by F. Čermák, who is a (co)author and the editor of all the volumes which is based on an entirely new approach that aims to cover much more than traditional dictionaries. The SČFI thus treats meaning in two separate sections, i.e. context and meaning proper, accompanied by a coverage of pragmatics and function together with a specific guide on how to use each entry. As an additional benefit to the user each entry also lists synonyms, antonyms and other related expressions. Further information is given in *Slovník etc*, 2009, and in reviews by Klégr 2010 and Ďurčo 2010. The dictionary, which is probably the largest of all modern dictionaries of its kind, is intended to give an exhaustive account of the contemporary Czech language in this respect, with over 35,000 entries and in most cases links Czech idioms with their equivalents in English, German, French, and Russian. Two editions of the first three volumes have appeared, with a fourth volume now containing improved data obtained from the Czech National Corpus. This last volume is innovative in recording intonation and extended semantic metalanguage. Each of the four volumes has an alphabetical onomasiological index registering all entries.

It must be stressed that all parts of an entry are connected in a number of ways, although semantics and usage remain central. This naturally necessitates further brief comments on the meaning and all closely related aspects of idioms. Since this can only be fully appreciated in the light of whole contexts, these are provided in the account given below, which also includes several illustrations of full Czech entries with commentaries. At the same time we shall demonstrate that the method we employ is more generally applicable for the description of any language by including at the end of our survey an English entry compiled along the same lines.

We take the view that the description of meaning (A) must be separated from the description of the contexts (B) in which the idiom is used and from pragmatics (C), viewed functionally. The use of a particular idiom is also closely linked with its textual function (D). All these aspects are discussed and illustrated in section (3) below in respect of three Czech entries.

## 2. Aspects and comments on context and meaning

Standardized metalanguage avoiding metaphors and idioms is used for the description of the *Context section* (B) (in brackets, starting with a capital letter, ending with a colon:) and of the *Meaning proper section* (A), where notes on *Pragmatics* are added (C). This is the core of the semantic section, which is usually exemplified by selected typical examples (D), often set in the context of a dialogue. Using the first Czech entry (of the three given here) as an example for the procedures of our analysis, the entries in the dictionary will read as follows:

**(B) Context:** *the arguments and circumstances* are given in brackets as a necessary introduction to the speech situation that will follow. These typically include descriptive information about the *actors* involved (*man, adult, child etc.*) characterized if need be (*usually older, gullible, etc.*), the *relationship* between them (*familiar* if not friends, **body shape**, etc.), the *setting* (*promise, behaviour, quarrel, etc.*), where and when the idiom may be used, *causality* (why it is used, e.g. as a reaction to something), etc.

We may draw the reader's attention to the fact that further possibilities exist which are not mentioned in the definition (signalled by *etc.* or *especially*), since the meaning of an idiom may in principle be rather vague, without precise boundaries. This is one of the ways in which how the vagueness of a typical idiom may be captured.

**(A) Meaning:** Primarily records the permanent core features of meaning, i.e. those that are specific for the particular idiom, while appropriate factors of the context that have been given or enumerated previously (*deceive, excite, etc.*) are noted.

**(C) Type of Pragmatic function** (most prominent with sentence-like idioms where speech acts such as promise, advice, threat etc. may apply); this is often related to a particular register. However, pragmatics is best handled outside the description of the meaning, if possible. The pragmatic function often takes the form of *evaluation*, as frequently with many idioms (see example 3 and the use of evaluative adjectives there).

**(D) A note on Textual function** (introduced by a zero sign 0): This is specific and individual in each case, and requires inclusion since it gives information about the use of the idiom. The approach adopted here, however, is based on negative characterization, since all idioms are anomalous in their behaviour in that they characteristically lack some of the morphosyntactic categories which

are relevant for the regular words of which the idiom is composed. The description is thus based on a specification of the categories which are NOT relevant in the case of the particular idiom and take the form of an annotation made up of abbreviations of these “negative” categories, e.g.:

**0** ot (=otázka, i.e. question), neg, imp, imp neg, kond, fut, 1.sg a pl

This states that the verb of the particular idiom is prototypically not used in questions (*otázka*), with a negation (*negace*), as an affirmative *imperative* or a *negative imperative*, in the conditional mood (*kondicionál*), the future tense (*futurum*), or in the first (1.) person singular or plural. The description thus provides both a guidance to what should be avoided and to appropriate usage, in that it may be inferred that the idiom can be used in conjunction with all the morphosyntactic categories which are not listed.

### 3. Czech Examples

#### *Idiom No 1*

We give first a summary account of the first full dictionary entry of Czech (including further sections which are not explained in detail above, see *Slovník*):

#### **být<sup>o</sup> (hubený) jako l u n t**

(kol; nepřízn, posm) **0** ot, neg, imp, imp neg, kond, fut, 1.sg a pl

**Nom** někdo j. l., hubený j. l.

(*Dospělý i odrostlejší dítě postavou:*) *být velmi hubený, vychrtlý, popř. podvyživený.* ♦ *Lunt* (doutnák) býval dlouhý konopný provázek.

■ **S** hubený, být (hubený) j. koza/špejle, být j. za groš kudla, mohl by se svlékat za bičem **A** tlustý, být j. kulička, být širší než delší, mít cejchu, hřeje ho sádlo **Cf** hubený, slabý, být j. sušinka/pápěrka, z kalhot by ho vyklepal, když se syleče j. když odejde, žebra by mu mohl počítat, být kost a kůže

≥ **A** be as thin as a rake/lath **N** dürr w. ein Stecken sein **F** être maigre c. un clou **R** худой как щепка

*Parts of the entry:*

- Morphologically modified component of the lemma: **být<sup>o</sup>** (it relates to the part of the lemma bearing the sign <sup>o</sup>)
- Syntagmatic variant of the lemma: **(hubený)**
- Word indicating place in the alphabet: **l u n t**
- Stylistic information: (kol; nepřízn, posm)
- Grammatical information: **0** ot, neg, imp, imp neg, kond, fut, 1. sg a pl
- Transformations: **Nom** někdo j. l., hubený j. l.

- Context, valency and function: (*Dospělý i odrostlejší dítě postavou:*)  
 -Meaning: *být velmi hubený, vychrtlý, popř. Podvyživený*  
 -Exemplification: (no example is given here)  
 -Additional notes: ♦ *Lunt* (doutnák) býval dlouhý konopný provázek  
 -Reference to onomasiological: hubený  
 -Synonyms: ■ **S** být (hubený) j. koza/špejle, být j. za groš kudla, mohl by se svlékat za bičem  
 -Antonyms: **A** být jako kulička, být širší než delší, mít cejchu, hřeje ho sádlo  
 -Related expressions: **Cf** být j. sušinka/pápěrka, z kalhot by ho vyklepal, když se svleče j. když odejde, žebra by mu mohl počítat, být kost a kůže  
 -English equivalent: **E** be as thin as a rake/lath  
 -German equivalent: **N** dürr wie ein Stecken sein  
 -French equivalent: **F** être maigre comme un clou  
 -Russian equivalent: **R** худой как щепка

*Note.* Since a translation of every part of the Czech lemma may not be appropriate for our purposes, only general notes are given together with an annotated account of its use, while the meaning of the idiom is provided by the equivalents in four other languages.

#### Idiom No 2

#### ležet<sup>o</sup> l a d e m

(neutr – kol; nepřízň) **0** ot, pas, imp, imp neg, 1. a 2. sg a pl

**Verb** nechat něco (ležet) l. **Adj** ležící l.

**1.** (*Pole, louka, země, zahrádka ap.:*) *být (dočasně) neobděláný a nevyužitý.* **2.** (*Talent, schopnosti, možnosti, popř. oblast n. sféra činnosti, v níž jsou, též cenný nástroj, přístroj ap.:*) *nebýt využitý, využívaný (a čekat na to); zahálet a nepřinášet užitek, prospěch.* ♦ *Lado* = pův. pustá, neobdělaná půda.

**A** nést plody / ovoce **Cf1** být neobdilaný, ležet úhorem **Cf2** nebýt —využítý, (být) zakopaná hřivna, přicházet nazmar

**A** lie fallow **N** brach liegen **F** être en friche **R** земля под паром; лежать под спудом; (пропадать даром)

*Notes.* This is an illustration of a verbal idiom with a Non-human subject (such as field), although this is only the case in the first of the two meanings recorded. The entry shows two stable transformations: *ležící ladem* which is functionally different, being used only as an attributive adjective (hence **Adj**) and *nechat něco (ležet) ladem* which is also a verbal idiom, but not a variant (hence **Verb**).

#### Idiom No 3

#### Kdo chce p s a bít, hůl si najde.

(kol) **0** neměnné ~ 6 stoup.-kles. (od 5. slova)

(Čl. vůči druhému, zvl. ve vysvětlení perzekučního, nenávislného chování nadřazeného třetího k druhému ap.:) pokud člověk chce (právem či neprávem) potrestat, poškodit jiného, vždy si najde záminku n. prostředek, jak to udělat (protože každý dělá chyby ap.); kdo si zasedl na druhého, snadno najde záminku k jeho pronásledování.

A: A proč mě šéf tak trestá za takovou pitomost? – B: Nediv se, kdo ch. p. bít, hůl si n., nikdy tě nesnášel.

S čl. potrestá druhého pod záminkou snadno; dostat se někomu na kobytku.

◆ Příšloví (Čelakovský), srov. lat. Qui iugulare canem vult, invenit cito causam, kdo chce psa škrtnout, rychle si najde důvod (Walther 24 157).

A It's easy to find a stick to beat a dog. N Ein billiger Vorwand findet sich immer. F Qui veut noyer son chien, l'accuse de la rage. R Была бы собака, а палка будет.

Notes. As this is a sentence type idiom (known as a propositional idiom), it is typically invariable (*neměnné* in **0**). Its definition, like the lemma, also has the form of a sentence. Due to its complex nature, more attention has to be paid to its meaning. The context section gives three actors here, i.e. speaker, listener and a third who is characterized pragmatically, so that a motivation for the use of the idiom is evident. A novelty is the introduction of the final cadence of the idiom, as the Czech annotation ~ 6 *stoup.-kles.* (*od 5. slova*) signals the intonation type (~ 6) out of a list of up to 20 types described in an appendix which states that this intonation is used starting with the fifth word.

Some attention is paid also to the etymology which is Latin by origin and, most of all, to the design of the onomasiological entry, i.e. a thesaurus type entry for the whole dictionary. In contrast to the usual practice in a thesaurus (such as that of Roget), this also has to be given as a formalized sentence, e.g.:

čl. *potrestá druhého pod záminkou snadno* (man punishes the second easily under a pretext) which introduces the idiom that fits here (*dostat se někomu na kobytku*). We hope that this onomasiological dictionary will be published separately for all the volumes together.

#### 4. An English Example

Finally, an English example compiled along the same lines is given to demonstrate the way in which the Czech approach and techniques can be applied more generally.

##### *pull someone's leg*

**0** question form?, negative form, passive voice?, conditional, imperative, negative imperative, future, 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and plural (= **D**)

(Human, usually a man, towards a gullible second person by his tempting promise, sensational story, behaviour, usually teasingly and good-naturedly, etc.: = **B**, i.e. the context preceding the meaning annotation) *bluff, deceive someone or excite them unduly* (= **A**, i.e. the meaning annotation)

*Note: for 0 (i.e. categories NOT used, see more in the last two paragraphs) Notes.*

**Context: arguments and circumstances** (in brackets as an introduction to the speech situation that will follow), i.e. **actors** (*man, person etc.*) involved, characterized if need be (*usually older, gullible*), their **relationship to each other** (familiar if not friends, not mentioned here), **setting** (*promise, story, behaviour*) where and when, **causality** (*why*), a reaction to what, etc.

**Meaning:** in the first instance the permanent core features, which are specific to the idiom and must fit the previously enumerated factors of the context (*bluff, deceive, excite*); note that teasing is listed under A, although it could be equally well regarded as a pragmatic function.

Type of **pragmatic** function (most prominent with sentence-like idioms where speech acts such as promise, advice, threat etc. are relevant); often related to a particular register (the prototypical use of the idiom), such as *you are pulling my leg!*, the listener suspecting, sensing cheating and/or good-natured teasing. Pragmatics is best handled outside the description of the meaning.

Thus, while the idiom is NOT used in negative, conditional, negative imperative, future tense and 1st person forms, it may possibly be used in questions and a kind of passive construction such as *She had her leg pulled* (in contrast to *her leg was pulled*, which is possible only non-idiomatically). Hence, a question mark has been added (e.g. passive form?) to indicate that other, if rather non-prototypical, uses might be encountered. It is also potentially helpful to mention the use of the idiom in questions in progressive tenses, as this is not infrequent.

A note on **textual function (D)**, introduced by a zero sign **0**: labels indicating question, mood, negation, passive, conditional, imperative, past, present and future tenses, singular and plural, 1.-3. person give those categories in which the idiom does not prototypically occur.

The undesirable shortness of information in dictionaries which is lacking in many of the features outlined above, could obviously be further improved along these or similar lines. Compare, for example, a description of the same idiom which is too brief in available reference works:

NODE *deceive someone playfully; tease someone*

while Cobuild stresses only teasing, cf. *If you pull someone's leg, you tease them about something, for example by telling them something which is not true.*

In the light of the Czech examples given, these definitions leave much to be desired.

## References

### A. Dictionaries

**Cobuild** – *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms*. 1977/1995. Sinclair, J. et al. (eds). London: HarperCollins.



**NODE** – *New Oxford Dictionary of English*. 2001. Perasall, J. and P. Hanks (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**SČFI** – *Slovník české frazeologie a idiomatiky*. 2009. (Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics). F. Čermák (author and editor of all volumes), 1 *Přirovnání* (Similes, with J. Hronek and J. Machač et al., 2. revised edition); 2 *Výrazy neslovesné* (Non-Verb Expressions, with J. Hronek and J. Machač, 2. revised edition); 3 *Výrazy slovesné* (Verb Expressions, with J. Hronek and J. Machač, 2. revised edition); 4 *Výrazy větné* (Sentence Expressions, 1. ed., with J. Holub, R. Blatná and M. Kopřivová). Praha: Leda.

## B. Other literature

**Čermák, F. 2001.** ‘Substance of Idioms: Perennial Problems, Lack of Data or Theory?’. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 14: 1–20.

**Ďurčo, P. 2012.** ‘František Čermák (ed.). *Slovník české frazeologie a idiomatiky I-IV*. [Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics I-IV]’ (review). *Yearbook of Phraseology*, 3: 169–171.

**Klégr, A. 2010.** ‘František Čermák (Ed. in Chief) et al. *Slovník české frazeologie a idiomatiky I-IV* [Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics]’ (review). *International Journal of Lexicography*, 23.4: 477–486.

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In languages with a long lexicographic tradition, available dictionaries already cover many aspects (monolingual, bilingual, etymological, phraseological, onomasiological, etc.). However, all those dictionaries share an atomistic view, which does not give an account of the relations between the thousands of meanings they deal with. Even the different meanings of a given entry are treated as if they were independent from one another. In the most recent Spanish Academy Dictionary (*DRAE*), the definition of *perro* ‘dog’ shows a list of five meanings, where nothing connects the first one (‘domestic animal...’) with the second subentry (‘derogatory name for the believers of other religions...’) or with the third (‘despicable person...’). The order of meanings is also arbitrary. Since the average number of figurative meanings is five times higher than of the literal ones, even more if we include idioms, there should be some kind of systemic order, connecting them to each other within the mental lexicon, and modern lexicography should face this challenge.

For example, the Spanish idiom *ciudadano de a pie* (lit. ‘foot citizen’), i.e. ‘commoner’ is connected to the HORSE zoomorphic symbol. Synchronically, native speakers can infer these meanings from an underlying cultureme (HORSES ARE FOR THE ÉLITE, FEET ARE FOR THE RABBLE), which motivates other lexical meanings like Spanish *pedestre*, lit. ‘pedestrian’, i.e. ‘unrefined’, *caballero*, lit. ‘horseman’, i.e. gentleman, *caballeroso*, lit. ‘horsemanlike’, i.e. chivalrous, respectful, polite. Another idiom, apparently distant, can be related to

this series: *de poca monta*, lit. ‘of little riding’, i.e. third-rated, of little standing, mediocre. Diachronically, this symbol comes from the early times of the Roman Republic, when the cavalry was composed only of patricians, called *equites* (sing. *eques*, from *equus* ‘horse’). A synchronic link connects these images with an ideological stereotype that can be labeled ARISTOCRACY IS GOOD, PLEBEIANS ARE BAD, which motivates other figurative meanings such as Spanish *noble* ‘generous’, *cortés*, ‘from the King’s Court’, i.e. polite, *villano*, lit. ‘from the town’, i.e. boorish, *rústico*, lit. ‘rural’, i.e. rough, ignorant, *ordinario*, lit. ‘ordinary’, i.e. vulgar. These two semiotic nodes may form a bigger network with other models, such as the somatic archi-metaphor HEAD COMMANDS, FEET OBEY, motivating meanings like Spanish *pensar con los pies*, lit. ‘to think with one’s feet’, i.e. to be incapable of logical thinking, and the opposition between *peon*, lit. ‘footer’, i.e. infantry soldier, pawn, landless rural worker, person with little authority, and *caudillo*, lit. ‘little-head’, i.e. war lord, *cabecilla*, lit. ‘little-head’, i.e. leader, and *encabezar*, lit. ‘to head’, i.e. to lead. These ideological preconceptions are in their turn connected to the orientational macro-metaphor UP IS GOOD, DOWN IS BAD, where the *espíritu elevado*, lit. ‘elevated spirit’ of the *high-minded* gentlemen opposes the *bajeza moral*, lit. ‘moral lowness’ of the *low-minded* rabble, motivating also the social connotations of the verb *rebajarse*, lit. ‘to lower oneself’ or the idiom *caer tan bajo*, lit. ‘to fall so low’ when they refer to practising certain despised professions.

Figurative meanings follow recurrent models which are also interconnected through the items they motivate, be they single words, compounds, idioms, or proverbs. If we assume that the underlying cultural background of metaphors constitutes a part of native speakers’ competence, a *linguo-cultural dictionary* should not approach figurative meanings as isolated unpredictable facts, but as a motivated network of cross-conceptual links (Luque Durán 2009). The question is, of course: how to present this information in dictionaries? Since this task does not seem compatible with alphabetically ordered lexicography, it should be carried out by an onomasiological inventory of productive conceptual models, be they experiential *archi-metaphors* or *culturemes*, ordered according to their source domain, like in a thesaurus, but following *naive* folk classifications rather than objective scientific criteria. For example dolphins and whales would be included in FISHES, not in MAMMALS, etc., since languages reflect ancient conventional folk views. If one model corresponds to several target domains, the macrostructure becomes semasiological from this point, and each target domain may correspond to several lexical entries, which must be described either from a monolingual point of view or applying contrastive approach.

For example, the Spanish symbol *lechuza* ‘owl’ would be included onomasiologically into the section NOCTURN < BIRDS OF PREY < BIRDS of the chapter ZOOMORPHIC MODELS in the macrostructure, but its corresponding microstructure would be organized semasiologically (Pamies 2007) (cf. figure 1).

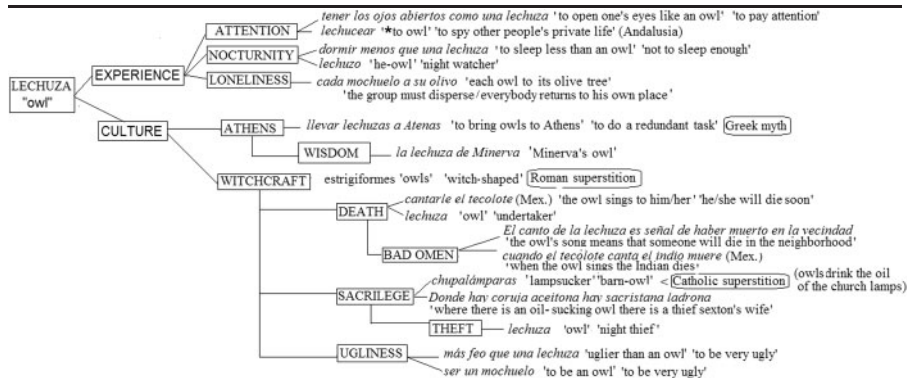


Figure 1:

We can observe that the word *lechuza* does not appear in many examples in this table. There are also dialectal variants from Mexican Spanish like *tecolote*, *tunkuluchú*, or from North-Western Spanish like *coruja*, *chupalámparas*, or cohyponyms like *mochuelo* (Athene Noctua). This explains why the macrostructure must be onomasiological. For example, the HORSE entry would include figurative units with the component *caballo* ('horse'), but also expressions with *yegua* ('mare'), *pollino* ('poney'), *silla* ('saddle'), *estribos* ('stirrups'), *riendas* ('reins'), *espuelas* ('spurs'), *montar* ('to ride'), *jinete* ('rider'), etc., as well as the abovementioned *caballero* and *ciudadano de a pie*.

References

**Luque Durán, J. D. 2009.** 'El diccionario intercultural e interlingüístico y su aplicación a la traducción de culturemas'. In Ortega, E. and M. J. Marçalo (eds), *Lingüística e Tradução na Sociedade do Conhecimento*. Évora: Universidade, 177–188.

**Pamies, A. 2007.** 'El lenguaje de la lechuza: apuntes para un diccionario intercultural'. In Luque, J.d.D and A. Pamies (eds), *Interculturalidad y lenguaje: El significado como corolario cultural*. Granada: Granada Lingvistica/Método, 375–404.

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The definition of phraseological units in dictionaries constitutes a challenge for lexicographers, given the strongly pragmatic component of some units in terms of the situation and register of use, the speaker's attitude, illocutionary potential, and lexical combinability. The (non-referential) semantic-pragmatic component is especially relevant in idioms which have become 'conversational routines' adopting a certain morphosyntactic structure.

Idiomatic dictionaries should take into account the interrelation between syntactic form and meaning (see Hanks 2004) through the multiple

lemmatization of phraseological sequences. Such a practice, however, is not very common in German and Spanish phraseography<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the German idiom *jmdn. unter die Erde bringen* (lit. ‘to drive someone under the ground’, i.e. to cause sb.’s premature death) is defined in DU 11 as ‘(verhüllend) jmds. vorzeitigen Tod verschulden’, (i.e. (euphemistic) to cause sb.’s premature death) along with the example: *Der ständige Ärger mit seiner Frau hatte ihn unter die Erde gebracht.* (The constant annoyance with his wife caused his premature death). On consulting German corpora (see ReDeKo), we see that the meaning given in DU 11 is clearly the one in use when the idiom is used in the past tense, but in the present tense, with the adverb *noch* (yet) and the adjunct (*mit etw.*) (with sth.), the meaning is different, losing referentiality and gaining pragmatic force (for the lexicographic definition of pragmatic meaning of idioms, see Kühn 1985): the speaker expresses (1) complaint with respect to the action of the agent of the utterance, (2) concern for the physical and mental state of the patient, derived from that action of the agent. This use as a conversational routine, not registered in DU 11, does indeed appear as an independent entry in our dictionary *Idiomatik Deutsch-Spanisch* (IDS 2013): *j. wird jn. noch unter die Erde bringen (mit etw.)* (sb. will be the death of sb. (with sth.)). Hence, the most useful way of dealing with this case is to create two entries:

- (1) *jmdn. unter die Erde bringen*: [1] ‘jmdn. beerdigen’ (to bury sb.); [2] (verhüllend) ‘jmds. vorzeitigen Tod verschulden’ ((euphemistic) ‘to cause sb.’s premature death);
- (2) *jmd. wird jmdn. noch unter die Erde bringen (mit etw.)* (s.o. will be the death of s.o. (with sth.)): mit dieser Routineformel bringt der Sprecher seine Beschwerde um die Handlung des Agens inbezug auf das Patiens und gleichzeitig seine tiefe Sorge um den psychischen und physischen Zustand des Patiens zum Ausdruck (with this conversational routine, the speaker expresses complaint with respect to the action of the agent in relation with the patient, and *simultaneously, the speaker expresses concern for the physical and mental state of the patient*).

As we can see, the degree of pragmatization and bleaching of the referential meaning is in relation to the degree of morphosyntactic fixedness (see Mellado Blanco 2013). On many occasions, the agent-subject of formulas is fixed or semi-fixed in the second person, as in: *Du wirst mich noch unter die Erde bringen!* (You’ll drive me into the ground!). In other cases, the realization of the external actants in first, second or third person can be associated with different illocutionary force, as in: *der Teufel soll jmdn./etw. holen!* (damn you; to hell with you; the devil take you) (Verwünschung (curse), according to DU 11), in contrast to *Teufel soll mich holen, wenn....* (I’ll be damned if...) (Bekräftigung (confirmation), according to DU 11).

In our dictionary IDS there are numerous examples of multiple lemmatization with independent lexical meanings and their respective equivalents in Spanish:

- *j. meint/...*, *er könnte Bäume ausreißen* (lit. ‘s.o. thinks/..., he/she could pull out trees’) *colloquial* ‘sentirse con fuerzas de comerse el mundo’ (to be/feel up to anything; to be full of beans)
- (*in/bei/...*) (*auch*) *keine Bäume ausreißen können* (lit. ‘not to be able to pull out any trees (in/at/...)’) *colloquial* ‘(en/...) no poder/ir a arreglar el mundo’ (of course he/you/... cant’s set the world on fire in/at/...)
- *noch keine Bäume ausreißen können* (lit. ‘not to be able to pull out any trees yet’) *colloquial* ‘no poder todavía hacer esfuerzos; no estar todavía para subir montañas’ (not to be in top for jet, not to be overflowing with energy yet).

## Notes

1 This study emerged as part of the research project FFI2013-45769-P *Combinaciones fraseológicas del alemán de estructura [Prep. + Sust.]: patrones sintagmáticos, descripción lexicográfica y correspondencias en español*, partially funded by FEDER grants and directed by me at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

2 DU 11 does sometimes present multiple lemmatizations of an idiom, as in: **jmdm./jmdn. den Kopf kosten** (geh.) (lit. ‘to cost s.o. his life/his head’): ‘jmds. Verderben sein, jmdn. ruinieren’ (to be the ruin of s.o.) as referential meaning, and the conversational routine of the modalizing epistemic meaning: **etw. wird nicht [gleich] den Kopf kosten** (lit. ‘sth. will not cost s.o. his head’): ‘(als Beschwichtigung) etw. wird schon nicht so gefährlich sein’. ((as appeasement) sth. will surely not be so dangerous).

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## WAYS AND MEANS OF INDICATING STYLE IN PHRASEOGRAPHY

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The question of stylistic labels may seem minor compared to semantic description and examples. Learners pay most attention to the meaning as they consider the stylistic labels to be of secondary importance. However, the fact that learners understand an idiom does not always mean that they can use it freely. If native speakers of a language know intuitively what contexts allow a given idiom, learners of a foreign language have to rely on dictionaries to discover these contexts.

Stylistic labels can easily confuse learners. Only a few dictionaries do not fail to provide explanations of the labels used. Let us look at this issue from the learners' point of view. To understand how an idiom is used, learners must know when the given idiom is/was used, where it is used, how it is used, and who uses it.

Dictionaries use temporal labels to indicate the historical period during which the idiom is or was used in a language. For example, the French idiom *acheter chat en poche* 'to buy a cat in a bag' 'to buy or accept something without inspecting or thinking about it carefully first; with the result that one gets something that one does not want; to make an uninformed decision' (Pirainen 2012) is obsolete. Its Russian equivalent with the same inner form *купить коша в мешке* 'to buy a cat in a bag' is, on the contrary, commonly used.

Territorial labels indicate the geographical area in which a given idiom is used. For instance, in France, someone who 'has enough of something or is tired of something or someone' may be described with the idiom *en avoir marre de quelque chose, de quelqu'un* 'to be fed up with something or someone'. In French-speaking Quebec the same meaning is rendered with the idiom *être tanné* 'to be tanned'.

Traditionally, most dictionaries place literary, vulgar, substandard, and high labels in the same category. However, Baranov and Dobrovolskij use a different approach in their *Slovar'-tezaurus sovremennoj russkoj idiomatiki – Thesaurus of Contemporary Russian Idioms* (2007), in which they distinguish stylistic labels from discursive labels. This seems reasonable since discursive labels point to the particular socio-professional group which uses the idiom.

This framework deals with Russian idioms; however, it seems to fit the French idioms as well. Let us have a look at the stylistic labels which are relevant for French. The following labels cover the style register scale:

- ‘high or elevated’ – indicates idioms used in formal language as a rhetorical device.

Examples:

- *terre promise* ‘promised land’, i.e. a place of expected happiness or fulfilment
- *jusqu’à la fin des temps* ‘till the end of time’, i.e. always
- *entre chien et loup* ‘between dog and wolf’, i.e. the period of time after the sun sets when human vision becomes unclear

- ‘neutral’ – indicates neutral idioms characterized by a faded inner form.

Examples:

- *premier choix* ‘first choice’, i.e. best choice
- *sain et sauf* ‘safe and sound’, i.e. out of danger
- *pas à pas* ‘step by step’, i.e. gradually
- *lune de miel* ‘honeymoon’, i.e. holiday taken by a couple after their marriage
- *en plein air* ‘in the open air’, i.e. outdoors
- *de loin* ‘from afar’, i.e. by far
- *non seulement ... mais aussi ...* ‘not only ... but also ...’
- *au moins* ‘at least’

- $\emptyset$  sign (*the label is intentionally omitted*) – indicates the basic or zero stylistic level. Traditionally such standard idioms are called *colloquial* or *informal* and, since most of them are colloquial, the label is omitted.

Examples:

- *un bouc émissaire* ‘a scapegoat’, i.e. an innocent person who is punished for the mistakes of others
- *froid de canard* ‘duck’s cold’, i.e. extreme cold
- *cheval de bataille* ‘battle horse’, i.e. favourite topic
- *copains comme cochons* ‘friends like pigs’, i.e. close friends
- *avoir un chat dans la gorge* ‘to have a cat in one’s throat’, i.e. to have an obstruction that irritates one’s throat
- *vache à lait* ‘milk cow’, i.e. an exploited person
- *c’est du gâteau* ‘it is a piece of cake’, i.e. something that is very easy to do

- ‘low colloquial’ – indicates idioms perceived as clearly subnormal but they are not rude, vulgar, or obscene.

Examples:

- *nous n’avons pas gardé les cochons ensemble* ‘we have not kept pigs together’, i.e. you cannot take such liberties with me

- *roule ma poule* ‘roll, my chicken’, i.e. everything is all right; go ahead, sweetly
- *peau de vache* ‘cow’s skin’, i.e. a nasty person
- *tête de cochon* ‘pig’s head’, i.e. a stubborn person
- *tirer les vers du nez* ‘to pull snot out of one’s nose’, i.e. to pry information from someone
- ‘rude’ – indicates idioms including offensively impolite words (e.g. *ferme ta gueule/ton clapet* ‘shut your maw/valve’, i.e. keep your mouth shut).
- ‘vulgar’ – indicates idioms containing words that are considered indecent. Examples:
  - *avoir le cul bordé de nouilles* ‘to have the ass surrounded with noodles’, i.e. to be extremely fortunate
  - *se geler les couilles* ‘to freeze one’s balls’, i.e. to feel extremely cold
  - *un sac à merde* ‘a crap bag’, i.e. a person who is good for nothing
  - *se chier dessus* ‘to defecate on oneself’, i.e. to mess something up
- ‘taboo’ – indicates idioms containing obscene, sexually connoted and offensive words that are not socially acceptable.

To describe idioms that social norms make socially unacceptable, Baranov and Dobrovols’kij introduce a new category of labels which they call register operators – ‘euphemisms’ and ‘dysphemisms’.

Euphemisms are divided into two sub-classes: ‘obscene’ and ‘taboo’. Obscene euphemisms are anaphors in the sense that they refer to the obscene idiom without using obscene words.

Examples:

- *purée* ‘mashed potato’ instead of *putain* ‘fuck’ (used to denote discontent or as an intensifier)
- *en avoir ras la casquette* ‘to be fed up to the top of one’s cap’ instead of *en avoir ras le cul* ‘to be fed up to the top of one’s ass’, i.e. to not be able to take it anymore

Taboo euphemisms are often used to speak about death or sex, the two topics the direct discussion of which is socially forbidden in the European culture.

Examples:

- *un âge canonique* ‘a canonical age’, i.e. venerable, very old age
- *une longue maladie* ‘a long-lasting illness’, i.e. cancer
- *finir ses jours* ‘to finish one’s days’, i.e. to die
- *passer l’arme à gauche* ‘to switch the weapon to the left side’, i.e. to die

Dysphemisms, on the contrary, are used to impress the listener by using vulgar and obscene words instead of neutral ones.



Example:

- *on entendrait une mouche pêter* ‘we could hear a fly fart’ instead of *on entendrait une mouche voler* ‘we could hear a fly fly’, i.e. there is absolutely no noise.

The fourth point of importance to learners is to know in what particular type of discourse a given idiom is used. Being corpus-oriented, Baranov and Dobrovol’skij’s theory relies on the information about idiom frequency in different discourse types. For instance, idioms labelled ‘journalistic’ have higher frequency in journalistic corpora than in the literary ones. Stylistic and discursive categories are closely linked but are not interchangeable. Whereas in the stylistic category the choice of an idiom is free and depends on the speakers’ choice, discursive features are governed by the type of discourse. Thus, the discursive scale includes six types of labels summarized below as follows:

- ‘literary’ – traditionally used for idioms that can be found in written discourse, such as ‘novels, poetry, short stories, and detective stories (as a special narrative genre)’ or official discourse (Baranov et al., in print).

Examples:

- *le rivage des morts, du Styx* ‘the shore of death, the river Styx’, i.e. the hell’
- *en tout état de cause* ‘whatever the case may be’, i.e. in any case
- ‘journalistic’ – used by print and broadcast journalists. Journalistic idioms are not found in informal speech.

Examples:

- *le pays du soleil levant* ‘the land of the rising sun’, i.e. Japan
- *la plus belle avenue du monde* ‘the most beautiful avenue of the world’, i.e. Champs Elysées
- *scénario catastrophe* ‘worst-case scenario’, i.e. the worst expected result of something
- *la tension est palpable* ‘the tension is palpable’, i.e. the tension is felt in the air
- *le nerf de la guerre* ‘the nerve of war’, i.e. something vitally needed (said mostly about money) to win a fight
- ‘jargon’ – assigned to idioms used by members of a particular profession or a certain social group.

Examples:

- *cocktail Molotov* ‘Molotov cocktail’, i.e. a homemade weapon produced with a glass bottle and flammable liquid

- *T'as craqué ton string?* 'Have you broken your G-string?', i.e. Have you gone mad?
- *avoir le seum* 'to have the seum', i.e. to be pissed
- *à Pétaouchnok* 'in Petaoushnock', i.e. very far away, in the middle of nowhere
- 'low-lettered' – such idioms contain words deviating from the norm and frowned upon by intellectuals and educated people.  
Examples:
  - *aller \*au coiffeur* 'to go \*at the hair salon', i.e. to get one's hair cut or styled
  - *Comment que c'est?* 'How is this?', i.e. How are you?
- 'folkloric' – used by rural dwellers. Folkloric idioms contain words designating culturally meaningful realia, and do not contain words deviating from the norm.

The model proposed by Baranov and Dobrovol'skij is useful to learners, especially inasmuch as it lets them understand the differences between idioms having sharp boundaries, such as rude and vulgar, or substandard and folkloric.

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# SOURCES AND PRESENTATION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES, AND THE ROLE OF CORPORA

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In the first place we might ask what use examples in idiomatic dictionaries serve. One possible reply is: the examples serve to illustrate the types of contexts in which a specific phraseological unit is prototypically used. However, given the semantic complexity of some types of phraseological units (e.g. idioms or conversational routines), examples should also have a defining and explaining function<sup>1</sup> that can compensate for any deficiencies of the definition in the lexicographic entry.

The practice of resorting to a corpus to extract examples of use is, in principle, positive because in this way ‘real’ samples of speech are given, these having already been produced and located in a text. Corpus examples are thus considered ‘authentic’, unlike those invented *ad hoc* by the lexicographer based on his or her own introspection, which because of this can occasionally be forced or artificial in nature. However, in the case of corpus examples all that glitters is not gold, and neither is all this material from corpora ‘real’ and/or ‘natural’. This is the case for the following reasons:

1. Corpora of German and Spanish are compiled mainly from newspapers and literary texts (the latter mainly for Spanish corpora), that is, existing corpora are quite limited in terms of their representation of discursive reality. In addition, taking into account that many idioms are used above all in oral language and dialogues, written corpora reproduce only a part of their real use. Although in the case of certain literary works, especially drama and the novel, dialogues emulating oral speech may occur, these are cases of conceptual oral speech, not produced authentically by a speaker, but by the creator of the literary work. The oral character of interviews published in the press is more authentic, therefore material drawn from the genre of journalism is more representative of the real use of spoken idioms. Chat sites and internet forums also provide fairly faithful examples of conceptual oral speech.

The lexicographer who creates examples is often accused of being ‘subjective’ in that he or she is the sole direct architect of examples, but let us not forget that the very task of the linguist in selecting examples from a corpus is also subjective. Intervention and the ‘hand’ of the lexicographer are not only present in the selection but also in the presentation of examples, if we consider that many authentic examples from corpora are too long and need to be

shortened before inclusion in a dictionary. Other corpus examples contain grammatical or spelling errors that should also be reviewed. Aside from these involuntarily misleading uses, an additional problem is that in the journalistic genre (sports, advertising) there is an abundance of playful modifications and simplifications of phraseological units for use as slogans. These modifications and simplifications, introduced deliberately by the author of the discourse, are not conforming to the desirable dictionary standard.

2. On occasions, the phraseological units of the corpora are used in an incorrect sense, or with a peripheral or non-prototypical meaning. Here the lexicographer faces the task of establishing that the examples chosen are not the result of ‘deviant’ or occasional uses<sup>2</sup>.

For these reasons, then, the extraction of corpus examples is associated with many complications which must be borne in mind when writing a dictionary. In our dictionary *Idiomatik Deutsch-Spanisch* (IDS 2013), examples have been created *ad hoc* by H. Schemann, as indeed is the case for the whole series of Schemann’s monolingual and bilingual idiomatic dictionaries. Despite not being drawn from corpora, the examples in these works seem to have a defining and explaining function, and are not limited to illustrating or documenting the use of a phraseological unit, as sometimes happens with the examples given in other dictionaries<sup>3</sup>. In addition, they also have a pragmatic function since they represent prototypical situations of use, mostly in dialogue form. Also, with a view to possible use by non-native users of German, the vocabulary and size of the examples are suitable, they do not contain errors, and do not contain any creative modifications.

For all these reasons, the advantages of invented examples, when created by lexicographers with a deep knowledge and competence of their mother tongue (see Schemann 2009: 105-109; Mellado Blanco 2009a: 10), seem clear.

We provide in this context an example in which the defining function is clearly seen. It is the idiom *seine Augen überall haben* (*to be on top of things*): *Der neue Vorarbeiter ist ein sehr tüchtiger und gewissenhafter Mann. Er übersieht nichts: er hat seine Augen überall* (The new leader is a very efficient and conscientious man: nothing escapes him; he is right on top of things).

The example given for the idiom *seine Auge überall haben* has a defining function, in that it satisfies the following criteria:

- (1) In the example, the meaning of the idiom is reinforced through synonymous clarifying expressions: a person who *is on top of things* is efficient and conscientious, and nothing that happens around him escapes his attention.
- (2) The example illustrates the prototypical use of the idiom in a speech situation. Speakers tends to use this idiom to talk about a third person or to refer to a positive quality of the interlocutor (implicature PRAISE), but normally never to describe themselves.

On the contrary, finding original examples of idioms from the oral language which are free from errors, syntactic mistakes and plays on words, and which also have prototypical meaning, could become a very complex process for the lexicographer.

Also, it should be borne in mind that the decision to include corpus examples or invented examples depends on the type of dictionary and user it is aimed at. In dictionaries which are aimed at non-native users and which have a didactic purpose (learner's dictionaries), what prevails are the criteria of the defining function of examples and of the clarity and simplicity of expression, and we are thus inclined towards the inclusion of examples created *ad hoc* by lexicographers with a deep knowledge and competence of their mother tongue. If real examples are used here, they must be subjected to a careful process of selection, adaptation, and/or simplification by the lexicographer.

In the case of monolingual dictionaries for native users, examples generally have a more documentary value than a defining function. They need not be especially simple, and hence can be taken directly from the corpus. However, in these cases of real examples the 'hand' of the lexicographer is also necessary in order to ensure a good selection, and in many cases also for the correction and adaptation of examples.

In summary, I believe that a mixed approach should be adopted in modern phraseography, one which embraces examples from corpora, plus the intervention and introspection of the lexicographer. For colloquial idioms of a predominantly oral nature, use ought to be made of forums, chat rooms, and other forms of interactive communication which come close to oral speech. Such material should be chosen with rigor, corrected and simplified where required, without the fear of being overly interventionist, since the quality of the dictionary and the attention to the needs of the user must be the main objectives of any lexicographer.

## Notes

1 According to Olímpio de O. Silva (2006: 263), examples with a 'función definitoria' (explaining function) 'son capaces de transmitir una situación de uso representativa, natural, frecuente, etc.' ('are capable of transmitting a situation of use which is representative, natural, frequent, etc.'). In addition to presenting a prototypical situation of use, it is useful for the example to provide keys to understand the meaning of the idiom, normally by means of reinforcing expressions which are to a greater or lesser extent synonymous (see Olza and Losada 2011).

2 However, the selection and analysis of real examples that contain creative modifications can be useful when dictionaries are aimed at linguists who want specific information on the textual behavior of idioms (see Dobrovolskij, 2009: 161-162).

3 Thus, in DU 11, 'the documenting function' appears in the phrase *den Löffel abgeben/hinlegen/fallen lassen/wegschmeißen* (to kick the bucket): ...ich hätte nie im Leben freiwillig den Löffel abgegeben (Plenzdorf, Leiden 147) ('...I never in life

would have voluntarily kicked the bucket'). This means that the example here only has the function of establishing that the idiom appears in a specific literary work, but provides nothing as to its meaning, that is, it does not have an explaining function as any good example should have (see Mellado Blanco, 2013).

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Text corpora may be very helpful for analysis of syntactic structures and lexical co-occurrences. Some large text corpora such as the German corpus DeReKo (Deutsches Referenzkorpus) are primarily based on texts of the press. For analysis of figurative meanings of idioms, these corpora should be supplemented by corpora of literary texts, otherwise there is the danger that the frequency and usage of certain idioms might be misrepresented. An example is the German idiom *eine weiße Weste haben*, lit. 'to have a white vest'. Its lexicalized figurative core meaning, 'not to have done anything dishonorable', is indicated by the concept WHITE symbolizing 'honorable, morally pure'. The technical language of sport (football and related sports) has derived a secondary figurative meaning, namely 'not to allow an opponent to score goals (points), to fend off all shots', and this meaning is the one that

dominates in the press-oriented texts of the DeReKo. However, when various respondents were asked to describe a prototypical situation in which this idiom appears, all contexts created by respondents were grouped around the meaning ‘honorable behavior, morally good acts’, but not ‘fending off shots’.

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Large corpora are important sources of authentic examples in modern lexicography. Such authentic examples have twofold functions in lexicography. They are the starting point for the lexicographer’s extraction of meanings of phrasemes and therefore provide the basis for semantic explanations. Polysemous phrasemes require an example for every meaning (cf. Ettinger 2009). Besides, they illustrate usage patterns in dictionaries. As for the user, the appropriateness of corpora as sources of illustrative examples can be questioned. Media texts in large corpora represent a broad variation of phrasemes in everyday language, but authentic examples often contain words and phrases that are too complicated or irrelevant for L2-learners.

In the Danish-English dictionary on the commercial dictionary portal *Ordbogen.com*<sup>1</sup>, authentic monolingual examples from corpora are included in addition to semantic explanations:

- The 23-year-old was attending a **wake** for Ucal Chin, who lived on the street in Chorlton-on-Medlock and who was killed in a drive-by shooting near his home in June.
- Commentators said the laws were even more important in **wake** of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data showing how the UK’s population is ageing.
- Tyrone Gilbert, a father-of-three from Longsight, was killed in a drive-by shooting while at a **wake** in Chorlton-on-Medlock on Friday.
- But in the **wake** of Sunday’s tsunami, Mr Gupta and his fellow bloggers switched gears.

In the selection shown here, some limitations of non-edited (authentic) examples can be detected:

- (1) Frequent use of proper names irrelevant to a language learner;
- (2) Complicated sentences;
- (3) No sorting of different aspects of meaning, i.e. the learner has to sort different meanings, a difficult task that can probably only be solved by an advanced learner;
- (4) Bias towards an association of ‘wake’ and ‘being killed’ instead of ‘already dead and having a funeral’ in the content of the examples.

Therefore, in most cases corpus examples will need editing before they can be used in a learner dictionary. Appropriate examples should use basic vocabulary according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (cf. Council of Europe 2011, Heine 2009, Jesenšek 2009), for example as has been specified for German by the Goethe Institut (cf. Glaboniat et al. 2012, Perlmann-Balme and Kiefer 2011).

Examples (1) and (2) show a possible simplification of syntactic structures, removal of names and less relevant vocabulary in authentic examples from Icelandic and Danish corpora (with a literal translation into English<sup>2</sup>):

- (1) *Authentic*: Eignarhaldsfélagið Mundur gerði í maí s.l yfirtökutilboð í Högum og í **kjölfarið** var félagið afskráð. [The holding Mundur made in May a take-over bid for Hagar and in the wake of this the company was deregistered]

*Edited*: Þeir gerðu yfirtökutilboð og í **kjölfarið** var félagið afskráð. [They made a take-over bid and in the wake the company was unregistered]

- (2) *Authentic*: Desuden vil softwareudvikleren SuccessFactors uden tvivl stige i **kølvandet** af et købstilbud fra tyske SAP. [Furthermore is the software developer SuccessFactors without doubt going to rise in the wake of a buying offer from German SAP]

*Edited*: Prisen steg i **kølvandet** af et købstilbud fra et stort tysk firma. [The price rose in the wake of a buying offer from a large German company]

Depending on the media of the dictionary, sources other than written text (i.e. corpus examples) can be used to illustrate the meaning of a phraseme. Visualizations with photos and illustrations can be very effective in a learner dictionary and a powerful tool in the didactic implementation of phraseology (e.g. Hallsteinsdóttir 2011, Konecny and Autelli 2013). Furthermore, audio or video examples can easily be implemented in an electronic dictionary (e.g. the introduction to Ephras<sup>4</sup>), whereby the border between a dictionary, a database and learning materials are becoming more and more fluid.

## Notes

1 [www.ordbogen.com](http://www.ordbogen.com). Accessed on 7 April 2015.

2 Examples from the Danish, Icelandic and German corpus of the Leipzig Corpora Collection: [http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/ws\\_spezial/?dict=dan\\_mixed\\_2012](http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/ws_spezial/?dict=dan_mixed_2012), [http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/ws\\_isl/](http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/ws_isl/) and <http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/abfrage/>. Accessed on 7 April 2015.

3 <http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>. Accessed on 7 April 2015.

4 <http://www.ephras.org/03-2-1-Intro.php> Accessed on 2 May 2015.



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# THE CHALLENGE OF TREATING COLLOCATIONS

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One of the difficult issues in handling phraseology when compiling monolingual or bilingual dictionaries is proper representation of collocations that are not exactly idiomatic but at the same time not entirely compositional. In many such cases, subtle semantic distinctions have to be accounted for, which may require considerable research.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, available resources like parallel corpora or previously published dictionaries provide more or less sufficient data, but, generally speaking, the lexicographer needs to put much effort, including a great deal of introspection, in analyzing hard or controversial examples, to ensure that such collocations receive adequate semantic interpretation and/or translation equivalents. The approaches proposed by Jurij Apresjan and his colleagues in the *Aktivnyj slovar' russkogo jazyka – Active Dictionary of Russian* (Apresjan 2014) could be very helpful here. Of particular importance is the idea that the dictionary, bilingual or monolingual, must be oriented towards active acquisition and mastery of the native or foreign language, rather than just passive understanding of texts.

To illustrate some of the subtleties that need to be reflected in the dictionary, we will discuss two series of examples. Both of them are concerned with collocations representing weak valencies of nouns (non-core frame elements, to use FrameNet terms) in a (hypothetical) active Russian-English/English-Russian bilingual dictionary. At the same time, much of the material to be discussed is also valid for monolingual active dictionaries, as detailed explanations and/or analytical definitions of such collocations, especially in cases of ambiguity, are necessary if we wish to meet the needs of an active user.<sup>2</sup>

To begin with, let us look at the Russian verb *закрывать* 'close' in the sense 'close for operation', as in *Магазин закрывают в 8 часов вечера* 'The shop is closed at 8 p.m.'. In this sense, the verb has a weak valency of purpose, expressible by the prepositional group *на* + acc, as in *закрывать на ремонт* 'close for repairs'. To simplify the discussion, we will focus on expressions formed with the passive participle in the perfect tense: *закрyто на ремонт, на профилактику, на карантин* 'closed for repairs, maintenance, quarantine', etc. Such expressions seem to be so simple and straightforward that one should hardly expect any difficulties presenting them in the bilingual dictionary. Yet these difficulties do arise, for two main

reasons: 1) the meanings of such expressions may not be entirely compositional; 2) the most natural translation equivalents of some of these expressions into the counterpart language turn to be rather different from one another.

Indeed, let us take a closer look at one such expression:

(1a) *закрyто на обед*  $\approx$  (1b) ‘closed for lunch’,

which is commonly used to inform the public, often in the form of a written announcement or sign, that a business or a public service is closed to customers so that their own staff could have their lunch unhampered. (Note that the expression can only refer to a facility that normally receives customers or visitors in need of a service: a house, a sitting room, or a mathematical faculty cannot be ‘closed for lunch’ or even ‘closed for repairs’.) This implies that the expression (1) contains at least two important semantic items that are not explicitly communicated: a) the concrete class of participants of the situation affected by the act of closure of a service facility (regular customers) and b) the concrete class of participants unaffected by this situation (the facility’s staff). Interestingly, a facility closed in accordance with such a formula may in fact work very actively at the time of closure: e.g., if a restaurant is *закрyт на спецобслуживание* (lit. ‘closed for a special event’, which was a common situation in pre-perestroika Soviet Union), the implication is that it is providing premium service to a particular group of people while refusing access to its regular customers.

On the other hand, the English equivalent of such an expression, *closed for lunch*, is, surprisingly, substantially different from the source Russian phrase. In contrast to the Russian counterpart, this expression is ambiguous. One of the readings of (1b) is the same as that of the Russian (1a), conveying the idea that the facility is closed to customers<sup>3</sup> to allow the staff to have their lunch, as in the following example:

(2) *The Health and Wellness Center is closed for lunch every day between noon and 1:00 p.m.*

The other reading of (1b), however, is fully compositional and refers to a situation when the amenity is not serving lunch, so that *for lunch* is not an adverbial of purpose but, rather, a temporal adverbial where *for* has a meaning of time and perhaps aspect, as in

(3a) *The dining hall will be closed for lunch today*  $\approx$  ‘closed in lunch time and so unavailable for lunch’.

Incidentally, such a sentence is difficult to translate into Russian; an awkward, though sense-preserving version would be something like

(3b) *Столовая сегодня во время обеда работать не будет.*

The existence of a compositional interpretation of (1b) explains why *lunch* in this English phrase, in contradistinction to (1a), can be replaced by its cohyponyms like *breakfast*, *dinner*, *supper*, as in

(4) *The restaurant is closed for breakfast at weekends*

Or

(5) *NOCA closed for dinner due to renovations*

Naturally, in this case the closed business can only be an eatery.

In Russian, a replacement of *обед* in phrases like (1a) can only be made jokingly, as in

(6) ...повесил на дверь деканата табличку “ЗАКРЫТО НА ПОЛДНИК”, потом вошёл внутрь и заперся изнутри на ключ ‘he hung a sign on the door of the dean’s office saying ‘CLOSED FOR AFTERNOON SNACK’, then he went inside and locked the door with a key’ (from a short story posted on the Web).

The fact that Russian phrases like (1a) mostly focus on *обед* is probably corroborated by the existence of a separate meaning of this noun: ‘lunch break’. A sign bearing a solitary word *обед* is a typical artefact in Russia which communicates to potential customers that a business they are interested in is temporarily closed. Paradoxically, it may well be an eatery. One can hardly expect that a similar sign in English bearing a single word ‘lunch’ will convey the same meaning; rather, it would say that lunch is served here and now.

The second series of examples involves Russian phrases in which nouns denoting human roles are used with their weak valency of aspect instantiated with the prepositional phrase *по + acc*, as in

(7) *сосед по дому* ≈ ‘neighbour living in the same house, housemate’.

Such phrases are quite numerous and diverse, ranging from non-idiomatic expressions like (7) via metaphorical ones like *товарищ по несчастью* ‘companion in misfortune’ to fully idiomatic *собрат по перу* ‘brother of the quill, fellow writer or poet’. In what follows, I will focus on the subclass of these phrases that contain the noun *сосед* ‘neighbour’<sup>4</sup>. As we will see, this subclass shows interesting sense variation which must be reflected in the active dictionary.

Most of these phrases display the same semantic pattern: if analytical lexicographic definitions are to be used, we may say that

(8) *Y – сосед X-а по Z-у*

means that (humans) Y and X live (or, somewhat broader, are located) in the same Z.

This definition ((NB! There was an error here: definition)) is valid for phrases like *сосед по дому*, *сосед по квартире* ‘flatmate, apartment-mate’<sup>5</sup>, *сосед по комнате* ‘roommate’, *сосед по палате* ‘hospital roommate’, *сосед по тюремной камере* ‘prison cellmate, fellow inmate’, *сосед по купе* ‘fellow traveller sharing a compartment with X’, as well as somewhat less obvious like *сосед по столу* <столику> ‘someone sharing with X his table (at a restaurant etc), tablemate’, or *сосед по парте* ‘someone sharing with X his desk at school (actually sitting beside X during lessons), school deskmate’). The list may be supplemented by metaphorical uses like *сосед по фотографии* ‘someone who is photographed together with X’ or *сосед по номинации* ‘someone who is nominated for a prize or post together with X’; as in

- (9) *Диссернет – однако, круто. Соседи по номинации (всемирной) там вообще потрясающие* ‘Dissernet<sup>6</sup> is cool, really. Neighbours in worldwide nomination are just stunning there’ (Mikhail Gelfand, a Russian biologist and mathematician, on Facebook)

Even though such expressions are semantically transparent, bilingual dictionary resources do not always supply translation equivalents for them, which results in difficulties for translators (including machine translation systems, as can be seen from Fig. 4, which presents screenshots from Google Translate: the system gives an absurd English translation for the Russian *сосед по парте* ‘neighbour’s party’ and no Russian translation for *deskmate*).

In the meantime, because many of such expressions occur very often and represent sensitive language-specific cultural concepts, they must be reflected in good dictionaries. *Сосед по парте* is one of these concepts: the expression is used more broadly than is presumed by its literal sense to denote long-standing school ties; as, for instance in the Russian title of a recent Japanese anime film ‘Сосед по парте Сэки-кун’ where the Japanese source title, *Tonari no Seki-kun*, has no reference to *парта* ‘desk’ at all.

An additional problem of adequate rendering of this class of expressions in the dictionary is the fact that some of them have meanings somewhat different from prototypical expressions. To give an example, a slightly metaphorical expression like *соседи по планете* does not just mean ‘people living on the same planet’ but, rather, people (or animals!) living on the same planet close to each other. The same goes for expressions mentioning words like *город* ‘city’, *деревня* ‘village’, or concrete localities, as in *мой сосед по Петербургу* ‘my neighbour in St. Petersburg’, *наши соседи по СНГ* ‘our CIS neighbours’ (this latter expression refers to countries and not to individuals).

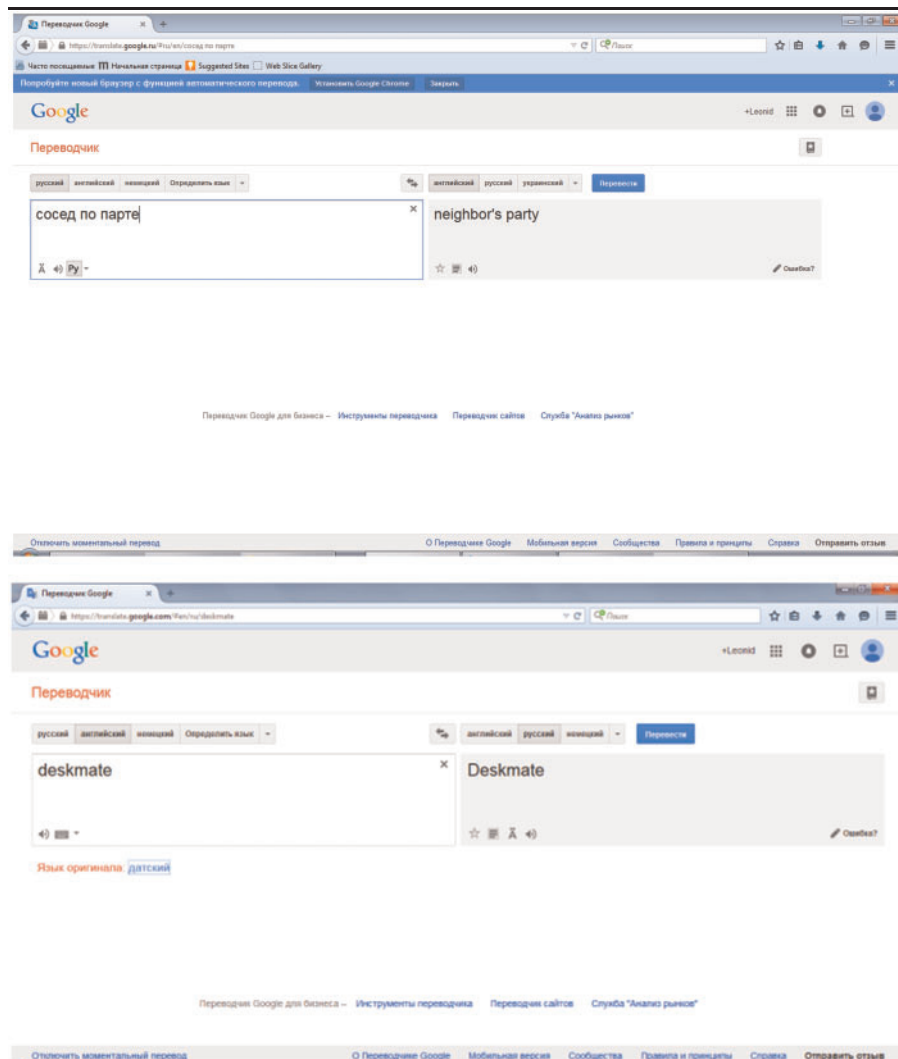


Figure 2: Google Translate screenshots for *сосед по парте* and *deskmate*

Another subclass of expressions containing *сосед по* has, surprisingly, a meaning essentially different from the prototypical one. We have seen that expressions like *сосед по квартире, комнате* etc. denote a person sharing the same room with X. However, the expression *сосед по даче* 'country house neighbour' may refer to a person living in a neighbouring, and not the same, *дача*. One more expression of this type is *сосед по койке* 'bunkmate, bedmate', which normally refers to a person sleeping in a neighboring bed, even though the regular reading is also possible. Note that the latter expression is slightly idiomatic because it refers not to any bed (bunk) but a bed located in a hospital, third-rate hotel, or military barrack. Unexpectedly enough, the word *койка* is

singular, even though it clearly refers to two beds. This rule is sometimes violated, as in Pushkin's *Belkin Tales*, where *сосед по поместьям* lit. 'neighbour in estates' is mentioned: this refers to a person living on a neighbouring estate. In modern Russian, the plural after *сосед по* hardly occurs (except for *pluralia tantum* like *сосед по наркам* 'fellow inmate using the next – or even the same – prison bunk, which may be big enough to accommodate several cellmates).

How should such expressions involving weak valencies be represented in good dictionaries? As mentioned earlier, they require special attention because of their intermediary position between free collocations and phraseology. This naturally implies a good deal of introspection and research on the part of lexicographers: hopefully, this requirement has been illustrated with my deliberations and examples above.

On the other hand, one must bear in mind that the existing monolingual and parallel annotated corpora, even those of a limited size, provide much valuable material for dictionary compilers, supplying them with good translation equivalents. Let me finish by briefly discussing a few examples from the parallel corpus constituting part of the *Nacional'nyj korpus russkogo jazyka* (*Russian National Corpus*) at ruscorpora.ru. I will be concerned with the Russian word *сосед* accompanied by the PP *по* + dat, which is present either in the source or the target part of the parallel Russian-English and Russian-German corpora.

- (10) You should've seen the way he did with my **roommate's** parents. [J. D. Salinger. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)] ⇒ Вы бы посмотрели, как он, например, здоровался с родителями моего **соседа по комнате**. [Дж. Д. Сэлинджер. Над пропастью во ржи, перевод Р. Райт-Ковалёвой, 1965]: English source, Russian target, translation equivalent *roommate* – *сосед по комнате*;
- (11) Even so, her wearing even such simple jewellery would have brought comments from her ever curious **housemates** [Miranda Lee. *Fugitive Bride* (1998)] ⇒ Но даже эти простые украшения наверняка вызвали бы любопытство ее **соседок по дому** [Миранда Ли. В любви все средства хороши, перевод М. Авдокушиной, 2000]: English source, Russian target, translation equivalent *housemate* – *сосед(ка) по дому*;
- (12) It was Mrs Parsons, the wife of a **neighbour on the same floor**. [George Orwell. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)] ⇒ Это была миссис Парсонс, жена **соседа по этажу**. [Джордж Оруэлл. 1984, перевод В. Гольшева, 1989]: English source, Russian target, translation equivalent *neighbour on the same floor* – *сосед по этажу*. Note that the English source contains a free collocation that leads us to a Russian set expression;
- (13) So the banquet proceeded and the **man who sat next to me** had been the former manager of Rafael el Gallo and he was telling me a story. [Ernest Hemingway. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)] ⇒ Все шло хорошо, пока мой **сосед по столу**, бывший импресарио Рафаэля эль Гальо, не

вздумал рассказать мне историю. [Эрнест Хемингуэй. По ком звонит колокол, перевод Н. Волжиной, Е. Калашниковой, 1968]: English source, Russian target, translation equivalent *man who sat next to me – сосед по столу*. Note that the English source and the Russian target contain differently formed set expressions;

- (14) Все ему противно было, и ненавидел он всех: и дьячка, и смотрителя за то, что не топил, и вахтера, и **соседа по койке** с раздутой красной губой. [Л. Н. Толстой. Фальшивый купон (1889-1904)] ⇒ He was disgusted with his surroundings, and hated every one – the deacon, the superintendent who would not light the fires, the guard, and the man who was lying in **the bed next to his**, and who had a swollen red lip. [Leo Tolstoy. *The Forged Coupon*, translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude, 1911]: Russian source, English target, translation equivalent *сосед по койке – the bed next to his*. The example illustrates that *сосед по койке* refers to a person using a neighbouring bed;
- (15) Поэтому надежды на выигрыш **соседа по редакции** неотвратимо толкали держателей облигаций в лоно нового клуба. [И. А. Ильф, Е. П. Петров. Двенадцать стульев (1927)] ⇒ Hence the hope of a win on the part of an **office colleague** drew the bond-holders into the new club. [Ilya Ilf, Evgeny Petrov. *The Twelve Chairs*, translated by John Richardson, 1961]: Russian source, English target, translation equivalent *сосед по редакции – office colleague*. Neither expression is a set phrase but the material could be used to illustrate the construction with weak valencies. Another recent translation of this sentence (not present in the parallel corpus) gives a closer English equivalent: Therefore, the bond-holders' faith in their **editorial neighbors**' winning inevitably pushed them into the lap of the new club [translated by Anne O. Fisher, 2011];
- (16) Увидав это, женщины – не **соседки по парам** – отошли к своим местам. [Л. Н. Толстой. Воскресение (1899)] ⇒ Seeing which, those women who were not her **immediate neighbors** went to their places. [Leo Tolstoy. *The Awakening* (William E. Smith, 1900)]: Russian source, English target, translation equivalent *сосед(ка) по парам – immediate neighbour*. A good example of a creative translation equivalent – no exact counterpart of *пары* exists in English; see above for an approximate description;
- (17) Wir hatten einmal einen Mitschüler, der schrieb regelmäßig von seinem **Nachbarn** ab. [Erich Kästner. Pünktchen und Anton (1931)] ⇒ У нас в классе был один мальчик, он регулярно списывал у своего **соседа по парте**. [Эрих Кестнер. Кнопка и Антон, перевод Е. Вильмонта, 2001]: German source, Russian target, translation equivalent *Nachbar – сосед по парте*. Note that the word *парта* appears again without a hint from the source language, referring to a common cliché;
- (18) Nun, wie gefallen dir denn die Leute hier? Ich meine **die an unserem Tisch?** [Thomas Mann. Der Zauberberg (1924)] ⇒ Как тебе понравилась здешняя



- публика? Я имею в виду наших **соседей по столу**. [Томас Манн. Волшебная гора, перевод В. Станевич, 1959]: German source, Russian target, translation equivalent *die an unserem Tisch – соседи по столу*. Note that the German source contains a free collocation that leads us to a Russian set expression, in a way similar to example (12) above;
- (19) Man kann sich die **Tischnachbarn** nicht aussuchen,—wohin sollte denn das auch führen. [Thomas Mann. Der Zauberberg (1924)] ⇒ Ведь нам не дано выбирать **соседей по столу**, да и к чему бы это привело? [Томас Манн. Волшебная гора, перевод В. Станевич, 1959]: German source, Russian target, translation equivalent *Tischnachbar – сосед по столу*, ready for the dictionary;
- (20) Dann wieder, in Momenten der Hoffnungslosigkeit, wenn einer nach dem andern meiner **Zellengenossen** zum Verhör geführt wurde, – nur ich nicht, – drosselte mich eine dumpfe Furcht, sie sei vielleicht schon lange tot. [Gustav Meyrink. Der Golem (1914)] ⇒ А потом снова, в минуты отчаяния, когда, кроме меня одного, всех моих **соседей по камере**, одного за другим, вызывали на допрос, меня охватывал тупой ужас: может быть, она давно уже умерла. [Густав Майринк. Голем, перевод Д. Выгодского, 1922]: German source, Russian target, translation equivalent *Zellengenosse – сосед по камере*, ready for the dictionary.
- (21) Ростовы в Петербурге жили так же гостеприимно, как и в Москве, и на их ужинах сходились самые разнообразные лица: **соседи по Отрадному**, старые небогатые помещики с дочерьми и фрейлина Перонская, Пьер Безухов и сын уездного почтмейстера, служивший в Петербурге. [Л. Н. Толстой. Война и мир, том 2 (1865-1869)] ⇒ Die Rostows führten in Petersburg ein ebenso offenes Haus wie in Moskau, und zu ihren Abendgesellschaften kamen die verschiedenartigsten Leute zusammen: *Nachbarn aus Otradnoje*, alte, wenig bemittelte Gutsbesitzer mit ihren Töchtern, eine Hofdame, Fräulein Peronskaja, Pierre Besuchow und der Sohn eines Postmeisters vom Land, der in Petersburg diente. [Leo Tolstoj. Krieg und Frieden, 2. Band (Hermann Röhl, 1922): Russian source, German target, translation equivalent *сосед по Отрадному – Nachbar aus Otradnoje*. The example is interesting as it introduces a free instantiation of the weak valency of *сосед*.

It is of course easy to understand that ‘standard average lexicographers’ compiling monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual dictionaries can hardly afford to spend so much time and effort in order to create an adequate description of a few minor cases, or provide optimal translation equivalents for them: otherwise, they will never be able to finish the dictionary. Yet it is worth knowing what tools, resources and methods are useful, and resort to them at least in really hard cases – such as those handled above. After all, creation of good dictionaries has never been a fast or easy job.

## Notes

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2 It goes without saying that an active bilingual dictionary may have specific features different from those of an active monolingual dictionary, in particular with regard to the category of users it is intended for (native/non-native speakers of the source/target language). In this short paper, however, these differences cannot be discussed in detail.

3 Note that *closed to customers* is another example of non-obvious instantiation of a different weak valency of *closed*. The idiomatic Russian equivalent of this would be *закрyто для клиентов* – literally, ‘closed for clients’.

4 All observations concerning *сосед* are also valid, *mutatis mutandis*, for two derivative words: *соседка* ‘female neighbour’ and *соседство* ‘fact of neighbourhood’, in expressions like *соседка по дому* and *соседство по дому*.

5 It is seen that many of such expressions are best translated into English with compound words containing the element *mate* or composite constructions containing the word *fellow*. In many cases, such words and phrases are occasionalisms coined by translators when necessary, and often missing from dictionaries, which further complicates finding appropriate equivalents.

6 A popular Russian Internet project aimed at fighting plagiarism.

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# THE NOTION OF CROSS-LINGUISTIC AND CROSS-CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE IN THE FIELD OF PHRASEOLOGY

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The notion of ‘cross-linguistic equivalence’ is linked to the systemic level of the language and is of an incremental magnitude embracing three broad parameters of comparison: the semantic parameter (phraseological meaning, image, lexical components); the morphosyntactic parameter (syntactic valence, syntactic function, possibilities for transformations); and the pragmatic parameter (cultural components, diasystematic restrictions, frequency, preferences of the textual genre, modifications, speaker implicatures).

The complexity of these factors that constitute the tertium comparationis between two languages means that absolute equivalence is rarely achieved, as Roos (1981: 231) noted more than three decades ago: ‘there are few idioms that correspond in form and meaning totally to idioms in another language’.

The notion of cross-linguistic equivalence has a particular relevance for studies of Contrastive Linguistics but less so for lexicography, and even less for translation studies. At the textual level, certainly, translating word by word becomes of secondary importance, and of more interest is the meaning of the text of the L1 as a whole. For this reason, it is not relevant whether a phraseological unit is translated by another one, by a single lexeme, by a periphrasis, or simply because of contextual needs does not translate.

The ‘cross-linguistic equivalence’, which arises essentially from the introspection of the linguist, is linked to the traditional classification of ‘total’, ‘partial’ or ‘null’ equivalence, depending respectively on whether the concordance between the form and meaning of the supposedly equivalent idioms in both languages is complete, occurs only in part, or if there is no equivalent idiom in the L2. The case of *false friends* is also the object of analysis in ‘cross-linguistic equivalence’. This classification of the idioms of the L1 and L2 according to their degree of equivalence is interesting from a contrastive and descriptive point of view, in that it helps to know languages better, both internally and in contrast with others. In dictionaries, equivalences must be formulated from the **prototypical** contextualised use of the idioms. In many cases, these equivalences do not coincide with the equivalences of Contrastive Linguistics because these have not been contextually verified. Nevertheless, cross-linguistic

equivalence can be useful in lexicography in certain cases, for example when the meaning of the idiom of the L2 is broader than that of the idiom of the L1, or when it is polysemous. In these cases, it is necessary to specify that certain sememes of the idiom of the L2 are not included in the meaning of the idiom of the L1. This is relevant above all in the case of dictionaries aimed at productive-encoding-use.

1. When the idiom of the L1 has a *false friend* in the L2, which should be presented as such in the dictionary entry to avoid incorrect use by the user. Sometimes, *false friends* may exist partially with respect to only one of the meanings of the idiom of the L1 or L2 (see case 1 below).

2. When the possibilities for syntactic transformations of the idiom of the L1 and L2 are not parallel, for example (a) the idiom of the L1 allows for passive transformation and the L2 does not, (b) when the use of negation is frequent in one of the idioms but not in the other, (c) when a verbal idiom can be used as a nominal through a process of deverbal derivation, for example: Sp. *meter la pata*, (lit. ‘to put the leg in it’, i.e. to put one’s foot in one’s mouth) > *la metedura de pata* (lit. ‘the putting-in of the leg’, i.e. the blunder). All these aspects are relevant especially in cases of dictionaries aimed at productive-encoding-use.

The notion of cross-cultural equivalence is linked to that of functional equivalence (see Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2009: 158-161; Dobrovolskij 2014: 207-209), in which of primary concern is the conservation of the communicative and pragmatic value of the L1 in the L2. This type of equivalence is especially important at the lexicographic and translation levels. The image of the idiom in its role here is different from that in cross-linguistic equivalence, where it is but one of many parameters of comparison.

In cross-cultural equivalence, the image of the idioms has a special role when at the lexical level there are constituents that denote objects or traditions unique to a culture. In these cases, the lexemes contain ‘untranslatable’ semantic features which survive in the phraseological meaning. This has a direct impact on lexical equivalence. It can also create difficulties in translation, through the cultural load that they transmit, or through not having a denotative correlate in the L2.

In the search for equivalences in Spanish for our dictionary *Idiomatik Deutsch-Spanisch* (IDS 2013), problems arose, among others, related to cross-cultural equivalence, in the following cases:

- (1) The idiom of the L1 contains an element of cultural reference that doesn’t exist in the L2: *einen blauen Brief bekommen* (lit. ‘receive a blue letter’, i.e. receive a warning letter from school); *seinen Friedrich-Wilhelm unter etw. setzen* (lit. ‘put his name ‘Friedrich-Wilhelm’ under something’, i.e. to sign); *seine Groschen zusammenhalten* (lit. ‘to maintain his “Groschen-coins” intact’, i.e. not to spend savings). In these instances, bilingual

dictionaries should present as interlingual equivalence a meaning paraphrase, as happens with:

- Germ. *einen blauen Brief bekommen*: ‘recibir una carta de aviso del colegio (sobre un alumno)’ Ø (lit. ‘receive a warning letter from school (about a schoolchild)’) (IDS 2013)
  - Germ. *einen blauen Brief bekommen*: ‘to receive a letter of warning (telling parents that a child may have to repeat a year)’ (IDE 2011).
- (2) The idiom of the L1 is an idiom with ‘onymic reference’. This idiom denotes objects from reality which do not exist in the L2, frequently foods, drinks, clothing etc.: *kalte Ente* (lit. ‘cold duck’, i.e. a drink based on wine, cava and lemon); Germ. *ein halber Hahn* (lit. ‘half a chicken’, i.e. sandwich of salmon and egg or simply salmon). In these instances, bilingual dictionaries should present as interlingual equivalence a description of the onymic reference, as happens with:
- Germ. *kalte Ente*: ‘bebida a base de vino, cava y limón’ Ø (lit. ‘a drink based on wine, cava and lemon’) (IDS 2013)
  - Germ. *kalte Ente*: ‘white wine cup, cava and lemon’ (IDE 2011).
- (3) The idiom denotes actions or states which in the L2 are not lexicalised phraseologically. This is a matter of phraseological gaps, in our dictionary marked with the symbol Ø (as in the cases of 1, 2, 4, 6 and sometimes of 5), as in Germ. *die lachenden Erben* (lit. ‘the joyful heirs’, i.e. the laughing heirs; in our dictionary IDS with the paraphrase ‘los herederos todos contentos/felices de la vida’ Ø, lit. ‘the competly happy heirs’), with no correspondence in Spanish, or Germ. *besser erstunken als erfroren*, (lit. ‘better suffocated than frozen’, in our dictionary with the paraphrase ‘preferible que apeste a que haga frío’ Ø, lit. ‘better suffocated than frozen’), a comment made when someone prefers to be cold outside than to tolerate the bad smell of an enclosed place; Germ. *eine Grundlage legen* (lit. ‘establish a base’, i.e. eat something substantial prior to drinking alcohol; in our dictionary IDS with the paraphrase ‘comer algo de sustancia antes de ingerir alcohol’ Ø, lit. ‘eat something substantial prior to drinking alcohol’).
- (4) The idiom denotes an action that does not form part of the culture of Spanish: Germ. *jmdm. die Hand zum Kuß reichen* (lit. ‘to extend one’s hand (to sb.) for a kiss’, i.e. to present one’s hand to be kissed; in our dictionary IDS with the paraphrase ‘ofrecerle la mano a alg. (para que se la bese)’ Ø, lit. ‘to present one’s hand to sb. (to be kissed)’).
- (5) The idiom of the L1 is a ‘bibleism’ which does not exist in the L2: Germ. *vom Saulus zum Paulus werden* (lit. ‘to change from Saul to Paul’): ‘pasar de un extremo al otro; dar un giro de 180 grados’) (to make a change of front).
- (6) The idioms are based on phonic word games or rhymes, cases in which Jakobson’s poetic function is especially relevant. For this reason it is

practically impossible to find cross-cultural equivalence of these idioms of a strongly iconic value and of indexal motivation (see Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2009: 36-38). Examples from our dictionary IDS and from IDE:

- Germ. *etw. zu hinterlistigen Zwecken/für hinterlistige Zwecke brauchen* (based on the word play *hinterlistig* 'deceitful' and *Hintern* 'butt'): 'utilizar algo para limpiarse el trasero' Ø (use sth. to clean one's bottom) (IDS 2013)

Germ. *etw. zu hinterlistigen Zwecken/für hinterlistige Zwecke brauchen*: 'to use sth. as toilet paper' (IDE 2011)

- Germ. *frisch, fromm, froh und frei*<sup>1</sup> (lit. 'fresh, god-fearing, happy and free'): 1. 'fantástico y distendido' Ø; 2. 'tan feliz', 'tan tranquilo', 'tan pancho' Ø (1. cheerful; 2. breezily)

- Germ. *frisch, fromm, froh und frei*: 1. cheerful, merry; 2. breezily, cheerfully, gaily (IDE 2011).

In our work on the dictionary we observe equally that the role of the image of idioms is not always fundamental for functional equivalence. Indeed, cross cultural equivalence and the image can shift to a secondary level of importance when the objects of the external reality are lexicalised in the L1 and in the L2, that is, no phraseological gap exists. Here, the image on which the lexical unit relies is often of little importance, above all when its degree of opacity is high and thus it is not present as such in the mind of the speaker. Also, in transparent idioms there may be a clear functional equivalence with different images and even with one-word lexemes in one of the languages (see Mellado Blanco 2008), as in Germ. *sich die Lungen aus dem Hals schreien* (lit. 'to scream one's lungs through the throat off', i.e. to scream very loudly till one get powerless), Sp. *desgañitarse* (lit. 'to get gulletless', i.e. to scream very loudly till one get powerless').

In this way, an object, action or property of external reality can be lexicalised in the L1 and L2 by means of images which are wholly or partially distinct, as long as this does not have any effect on the functional equivalence or the cross-cultural equivalence. Thus in: Germ. *den Hauch vor dem Mund sehen können* (lit. 'to be able to see the breath as mist in front of one's mouth', i.e. to be very cold) – Sp. *salirle a alg. vaho de la boca* (lit. 'for breath as mist to come from someone's mouth', i.e. to be very cold), Sp. *cantarle a alg. las cuarenta* (lit. 'to sing sb the 40') – Germ. *jmdm. die Leviten lesen* (lit. 'to read sb the leviten'), both with the meaning 'to read sb the riot act'. Interlingual pragmatic differences that might exist in cases of the divergence of images are not necessarily a matter of the inner form of the idioms, but rather of other factors, such as verbal aktionsart, register, and frequency of use.

In general, it is not necessary that the images coincide for functional equivalence between the two lexical units to occur (see Farø 2006: 65; Mellado Blanco 2015). Of greater importance is that beneath the image of the idiom of each

language lies a similar conceptual metaphor, as happens with Sp. *buscar algo con lupa* (lit. ‘to look for something through a magnifying glass’, i.e. to be scarce) and Germ. *etw. mit der Laterne suchen* (lit. ‘to look for something through a lantern’, i.e. to be scarce), which corresponds to the conceptual metaphor SCARCE IS VERY SMALL. Another examples: Sp. *un hueso duro de roer* (lit. ‘a hard bone to gnaw’) and Germ. *eine harte Nuss zu knacken* (lit. ‘a hard nut to crack’, i.e. a major problem to be solved), with the conceptual metaphor: A TROUBLE IS A HARD FOOD; Sp. *hacer una montaña de un grano de arena* (lit. ‘to make a mountain from a grain of sand’, i.e. to make a big deal out of little things) and Germ. *aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen* (lit. ‘to make a mosquito from an elephant’, i.e. to make a big deal out of little things), with the conceptual metaphor: TO EXAGGERATE IS TO MAKE SOMETHING VERY LARGE FROM SOMETHING VERY SMALL.

## Notes

1 Slogan of the gymnastic club founded by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) in Germany. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “pictures of Jahn decorated German pubs, taverns, community centres and gyms. On either side of his picture were symbols: on one, his gymnastic cross formed by the first letters of the slogan ‘*Frisch, fromm, froh und frei*’: god-fearing, happy and free; and the other the greeting ‘*Gut heil*’, hail well.” (Bose 2012: 25). The idiom *frisch, fromm, froh und frei* carries nowadays a jocular pragmatic meaning (DU 11 2002: 243).

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### B. Other literature

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A central motivation for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural work in the field of phraseology is the notion of equivalence. Phraseological equivalence relates to the degree of similarity in form, meaning(s) and function of a hypothetically equivalent pair of phrasemes (cf. Farø 2006) in two or more languages. Traditionally, cross-linguistic analyses have focused on equivalence within the phraseological system, disregarding non-phraseological equivalents such as simple words, word formations and paraphrases or describing those as a zero-equivalence or substitute equivalence (cf. overview in Farø 2006, Hallsteinsdóttir 2009, Korhonen and Wotjak 2001: 227). Sometimes even the literal translation of a phraseme is considered more appropriate than a non-phraseological translation:

An important dilemma of bilingual lexicographers as well as translators is whether to give a verbatim translation of a source language phraseological



unit or always aim at a target language phraseological unit of the same kind as the source language item. (Szczepaniak and Urban 2011: 261)

Focusing solely on the phraseological system may cast light on aspects of the linguistic system, but in applied disciplines (foreign language acquisition, translation, lexicography) a holistic approach is more fruitful (cf. Hallsteinsdóttir 2006, Hessky 1997: 258). The following examples support the necessity of including both words and phrasemes in the selection of hypothetically equivalent pairs in the lexicographic work (cf. Hallsteinsdóttir 2014):

**Table 1:** Greetings for the different time of day in German, Danish and Icelandic.

German	Danish	Icelandic
<i>Guten Morgen [Good morning]</i>	<i>Godmorgen   God morgen (Go' morgen)</i>	<i>Góðan dag</i>
<i>Guten Tag [Good day/ Good afternoon]</i>	<i>Goddag   God dag (Go' dag)</i>	
<i>Guten Abend [Good evening]</i>	<i>Godaften   God aften (Go' aften)</i>	<i>Gott kvöld</i>
<i>Gute Nacht [Good night]</i>	<i>Godnat   God nat (Go' nat)</i>	<i>Góða nótt</i>

The greetings show that focusing solely on the category phraseme in the cross-linguistic comparison would exclude those of the equivalent Danish lexical items that are word formations (e.g. words and not phrasemes). A corpus analysis in the Danish National Corpus<sup>1</sup> shows that those items except for *Godaften* are more frequent than the phrasemes:

- *Godmorgen* 134 examples, *God morgen* 46 examples and *Go' morgen* 34 examples.
- *Goddag* 442 examples, *God dag* 259 examples and *Go' dag* 5 examples.
- *Godaften* 46 examples, *God aften* 80 examples and *Go' aften* 7 examples.
- *Godnat* 324 examples, *God nat* 62 examples and *Go' nat* 5 examples.

Thus, the cross-linguistic lexicographic work should include not only phrasemes, but regard all lexical items as possible equivalencies.

An explanation for the different frequency of *Godaften* – *God aften* could be its occurrence in the frequent description of a 'nice' or 'successful' evening and generally in the modification by using adjectives (*Rigtig god aften!* – lit. 'Very nice evening!').

Furthermore, a comparison of the meaning and function of the lexical items shows an asymmetric function of the same form. The most striking difference is the lexical gap for a salutation in the morning in Icelandic. Functionally,

there is no gap, the Icelandic people also greet each other in the morning. Here, *Góðan dag!* ('Good day!') is used, whereby its meaning and function is broader than the formal Danish and German equivalents *Goddag!* and *Guten Tag!*

These examples show that the notion of a L1 and L2 equivalent phrasemes within one linguistic category can be problematic when other non-phraseological equivalences exist. Those do not occur in a dictionary if it focusses only on phraseological equivalences. Generally, a non-phraseological equivalence strategy would be appropriate for most phrasemes in learner dictionaries since L1 and L2 phrasemes are seldom completely equivalent. Such a strategy implies using meaning paraphrases as the key to the semantic structure, combined with examples to illustrate the most salient meaning(s) and the usage of a phraseme. Beyond that, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural phraseological equivalence can be included as translation possibilities within the lexical system if the dictionary also aims at supporting active language use.

If a dictionary solely uses phraseological equivalence, then there is a risk that varieties of non-phraseological equivalences are excluded. Furthermore, a native speaker will not know every phraseme in his/her language (cf. Hallsteinsdóttir et al. 2006, also Dobrovolskij 1997 on the role of speakers' knowledge of idioms). Therefore, illustrating the meaning by using an equivalent phraseme can cause problems when phrasemes have different frequencies (and level of familiarity) and usage patterns (cf. Hallsteinsdóttir 2005). An analysis of the frequency of the phraseme 'in the wake of' in German, Danish and Icelandic in the corpora of the Leipzig Corpora Collection<sup>2</sup> reveals that the phraseme has a much lower frequency in German than in Danish and Icelandic. Those corpora have the same format and are compiled by using comparable sources and thereby allow a reliable cross-linguistic comparison of frequency and usage of phrasemes in the written language. In a learner dictionary, such frequency differences should be stated in a note and a different translation should be offered, as proposed in example (1):

(1) **kølvand**

(2) meaning(s):

- Die Spur, die sich als weiße Streifen hinter einem Boot oder Schiff auf dem Wasser bildet (The mark that occurs as white stripes on the surface of the water behind a boat or a ship).

(1) translation(s):

– **Kielwasser**

– (*følge*) i kølvandet på:

– **im Kielwasser etwas** (+ genitiv) (**folgen**):

▶ *Das zweite Boot folgte im Kielwasser des ersten (den anden båd fulgte i kølvandet på den første)*

▶ [*figurative*] *Im Kielwasser des Gewinns an der Wall Street stiegen die Preise (i kølvandet på gevinsten i Wall Street steg priserne)*

- NB! the Danish phraseme (*følge*) *i kølvandet på* is much more frequent than the German phraseme **im Kielwasser etwas** (+ genitiv) **folgen** and therefore in German other translations should be considered, e.g.
- ▶ **auf Schritt und Tritt folgen**: *Sie folgte ihr auf Schritt und Tritt.* (*Hun fulgte i kølvandet på hende.* [She shadowed her/followed her closely.])
  - ▶ **(auf) etwas folgen**: *Das Feuer erntete große Aufmerksamkeit, da es auf die zwei ähnlichen Feuer in Kopenhagen folgte.* (*Branden fik stor opmærksomhed, fordi den kom i kølvandet på de to lignende brande i København.* [The fire got huge attention, because it came in the wake of the two similar fires in Copenhagen.])
  - ▶ **das Resultat von etwas sein**: *Unsere größten Fehler sind häufig das Resultat von Ungeduld – denken Sie daher langfristig.* (*Vore største fejltagelser kommer ofte i kølvandet på utålmodighed – tænk derfor langsigtet.* [Our largest mistakes come often in the wake of impatience – think therefore long-term.])

## Notes

- 1 <http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>. Accessed on 7 April 2015.
- 2 <http://corpora2.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/>. Accessed on 7 April 2015.

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# PRESENTATION OF TARGET-LANGUAGE EQUIVALENTS IN BILINGUAL DICTIONARIES

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Although it has been pointed out that bilingual dictionaries are frequently used for information of a phraseological nature (Blasco Ferrer 1999: 229), they often fall short in this regard, since most lexicographers and publishers still consider phraseology a ‘decorative’ part of the lexicographical entry rather than a crucial one. Generally, compilers of bilingual dictionaries do not devote enough time and space to this aspect, even though they draw heavily on the wealth of studies on phraseology and phraseography. As a consequence, looking for a suitable equivalent in bilingual dictionaries often proves frustrating, if not useless, since they mostly flatten out the rich and often asymmetric range of semantic nuances and/or contextual usages of an idiom in an oversimplified A = B equivalence. The German idiom *etw. im Auge haben* (lit. ‘to have something in the eye’, meaning ‘to have something in mind’) may help us to illustrate our claim. In a recently published dictionary (DIT – Dizionario Tedesco-Italiano 2008), *etw. im Auge haben* is translated as ‘avere qualcosa in testa’, which is insufficient to translate properly into Italian a sentence like *Herr Müller hat nur seinen eigenen Vorteil im Auge* (lit. ‘Il signor Müller ha solo il suo interesse nell’occhio’, i.e. Mr Müller only has his own interest in his eye). The translation of this sentence should be *Il signor Müller guarda solo il suo interesse* ‘Mr Müller only looks after his own interest’ and not *Il signor Müller ha solo il suo interesse in testa* ‘Mr Müller only has his interest in his head’, an expression that any native speaker of Italian would deem as unnatural and even cryptic in meaning. It is therefore essential for a dictionary user to know that *etw. im Auge haben* can be translated into Italian through a range of different expressions, depending on the context, such as:

- (1) *avere qc in testa* ‘to have something in (or on one’s) mind’; [generically]
- (2) *pensare a qc di preciso* ‘to be thinking about something in particular’; [EIN BESTIMMTES MODELL VON BMW/SCHULE/...] ‘A SPECIFIC MODEL OF BMW/SCHOOL/...’]
- (3) *guardare solo a qc* ‘to be only considering something’; [SEINEN EIGENEN VORTEIL/...] ‘HIS OWN INTEREST/...’]

It would therefore be a valuable practice for lexicographers to list not only the generic equivalent but also a number of equivalents, which would enable users

to choose the most appropriate one for use in a concrete text. In other words, while the generic equivalent may be suitable in most cases, we suggest that a second level of equivalents suitable for use in specific contexts be added to the generic one. Instead of sticking to the old-fashioned norm of providing first an equivalent and then examples of its use, it would be more beneficial to introduce the more functional practice of showing alternative equivalents to be used when the general one does not fit the context.

One further issue is represented by false friends such as Ger. *auf eigene Faust* (lit. 'on his own fist, i.e. off his own bat, on one's own (initiative)) and It. *di proprio pugno* ('on his own fist', i.e. in his own hand). Although they convey similar images and comparable lexical structures, their lexicalized meanings differ to some extent (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2009: 147). The bilingual dictionaries on the market supply equivalents only. None of them specifies that the word-by-word translation of *di proprio pugno* 'auf eigene Faust' is also an idiom. Moreover it is a false friend because it has a different meaning and must be used with verbs of a different semantic class. This information could be very useful for the dictionary user. In this case a second level of lexicographic description – currently not present in bilingual dictionaries – also should be provided, for example, in an Infobox like the following one:

*di proprio pugno* means 'in one's own hand' and is used with verbs like *firmare* 'to sign' or *scrivere* 'to write'. The German word-for-word translation of *di proprio pugno* 'auf eigene Faust' not only has a different meaning, 'on one's own (initiative)', but also co-occurs with verbs of a different semantic class (*fahren* 'travel', *handeln* 'deal', *machen* 'do', etc.)

With a view to further explaining our claim, consider the use of *jmdm. zeigen, wo der Hammer hängt* (lit. 'to show someone where the hammer hangs'; i.e. demonstrate to someone his intellectual and physical superiority/his power/his force, criticize openly somebody's opinion/behaviour/etc.) in the examples below:

(1) «Wir wollten *den Bayern zeigen, wo der Hammer hängt*», sagte Reus frech. (<http://www.merkur-online.de/sport/fc-bayern/hammer-haengt-1572081.html>)

'«We wanted to show Bavarian people our power (lit. 'where the hammer hangs'», Reus said insolently.'

(2) Brink will Bohlen damit endlich mal *zeigen, „wo der Hammer hängt“*. Das Hörbuch sei eine Reaktion auf die Bohlen-Biografie „Nichts als die Wahrheit“. „Es hat mich geärgert, wie Bohlen ständig Leute denunziert, bekrittelt und niedermacht“, sagte Brink. „Dagegen hat so richtig keiner aufgemuckt... *Ich zeige ihm, wo der Hammer hängt*“ (<http://www.rp-online.de/kultur/musik/bernhard-brink-zeigt-bohlen-wo-der-hammer-haengt-aid-1.2068810>)

'Brink wants to criticize Bohlen openly (lit. 'to show Bohlen "where the hammer hangs"'). The audiobook is a reaction to Bohlen's biography *Nothing but the truth*. "It made me cross to see how Bohlen always accuses,

criticizes and massacres people”, Brink says. “Nobody reacted to this. . . . I (lit. ‘show him where the hammer hangs’) openly criticize his behaviour.”

The two examples lend themselves to a discussion of an interesting case of polysemy. The meanings of *jmdm. zeigen, wo der Hammer hängt* can be paraphrased in examples (1) and (2) respectively as (a) and (b):

- (a) ‘to prove one’s intellectual and physical superiority, power or force to somebody’
- (b) ‘criticize openly somebody’s opinion/behaviour etc.’

Although these two meanings share some features, an interlinguistic comparison neatly highlights a case of semantic dichotomy. The idiom *jmdm. zeigen, wo der Hammer hängt* corresponds, in both contexts, to two different Italian idiomatic expressions: In example (1), the appropriate phrase to be used in Italian is *mostrare i muscoli a qu* (lit. ‘to show your muscles to somebody’, i.e. to prove one’s intellectual and physical superiority, power, or force to somebody). In example (2), on the other hand, the suitable Italian expression is *dirne quattro a qu* (lit. ‘to say four to somebody about something’, i.e. to tell someone what you think about them, to openly criticize somebody’s opinion/behaviour etc.).

It goes without saying that a suitable description of idiom usage must include not only information about the semantic, syntactic, pragmatic connotations, etc., but also about the context and the register (Dobrovolskij 2009). For instance, the German expression *jmdm. zeigen, wo der Hammer hängt* is more colloquial than the Italian equivalent *mostrare i muscoli a qu* and, as has been explained above, only the context can help the user choose the best of the many equivalents of *etw. im Auge haben*. This type of information is essential in order to enable the Italian learner of German to master the correct use of the idiom; consequently it should be included in bilingual dictionaries.

The user can generally find precise information about the context and the register only in phraseological dictionaries, which generally offer authentic or semi-authentic examples. However, dictionaries of this type are seldom, if ever, consulted by the common user.

To sum up, bilingual dictionaries should include a second descriptive level consisting of equivalents (with a special focus on context, register, and polysemy) and information on false friends, which often cause translation errors.

It will be the task of electronic (bilingual) lexicography to seek an effective way to integrate the great wealth of research accumulated in the compilation of phraseological dictionaries and, at the same time, to exploit corpora (to identify a larger number of contexts or polysemous words). This would allow users to open up fields with a simple click in order to receive more information on an idiom, for example, a greater number of equivalents or near-equivalents, authentic or *ad hoc* constructed examples, and therefore to access the most complete description available.

## References

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## B. Other literature

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**Dobrovol'skij, D. and E. Piirainen.** 2009. *Zur Theorie der Phraseologie. Kognitive und kulturelle Aspekte*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

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One of the objects of phraseography is to describe subtle semantic differences between idioms in two languages. Let us compare the following pair of idioms: Russian *чёрным по белому* and German *schwarz auf weiß*. They differ with respect to their syntactic structures. The most frequent verbs that combine with the German idiom are *haben* 'to have' and *besitzen* 'to possess': *etwas schwarz auf weiß haben/besitzen* 'to have/possess something black on white'. This is motivated by the lexicalized meaning 'written, printed, and therefore official'. The Russian idiom, however, is used in constructions such as *там же чёрным по белому написано* 'there it stands written in black on white'. Here, the 'official character' is an additional, non-obligatory component of the meaning. Instead, the core meaning of the Russian idiom involves the semantic components 'clearness, clarity' (cf. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2009: 148).

However, there are cases in which similar idioms of two languages are really full equivalents. An example is German *im siebten Himmel sein* 'to be in the seventh heaven' vs. Finnish *olla (kuin) seitsemännessä taivaassa* 'to be (as) in seventh heaven'. The analysis of 100 contexts confirmed this point. This finding is especially important for language teaching. While the syntactic structures of the idioms must be practiced, the figurative meaning does not need to be explained or practiced. In such cases, space can be saved in paper dictionaries. Comments on semantics are unnecessary.

Such parallels can also be found in 60 or 70 other European languages. Idioms of this type can be described as 'widespread idioms' (WIs for short, cf. Piirainen 2012). An indication of the WI status of a given idiom in the dictionary would be particularly useful for cross-linguistic (bilingual) idiom research.

A full semantic equivalence of such idioms in two or more languages is not due to their 'etymology' as is often claimed. This could be illustrated by an in-depth cross-linguistic examination of the cultural history of the idiom 'to be in seventh heaven'. The idiom does not originate from the (canonical) chapters of the Bible



or from classical antiquity. Rather, the uniformity of the figurative lexicon of European languages has emerged in the course of the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century. There is no monocausality for the wide spread of this idiom but various factors are involved. However, this aspect is irrelevant for language teaching.

## References

- Dobrovol'skij, D. and E. Piirainen. 2009.** *Zur Theorie der Phraseologie: Kognitive und kulturelle Aspekte*. Tübingen: Stauffenberg.
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## I. Introduction

Nearly thirty years ago I examined the treatment of English idiomatic and metaphorical expressions in learners' dictionaries (Nuccorini 1988a) and their Italian translational equivalents in bilingual dictionaries (Nuccorini 1988b).<sup>1</sup> To the exclusion of metaphorical expressions, I am now going to analyse some of those idiomatic expressions in the latest online edition of only one of the bilingual dictionaries I originally used<sup>2</sup>, namely *Il Ragazzini 2015*, actually published in 2014 (R 2014), in order to compare their treatment with that in the then called *Il Nuovo Ragazzini* (NR 1984). The comparison also aims to trace both lexicological and lexicographical differences concerning the definition, exemplification and translation of English idioms into Italian. In particular, my contribution focuses on the presentation of the Italian equivalents of selected English idiomatic expressions in the two editions: however, special reference is made to the 2014 online edition, since its characteristics allow to easily retrieve cross-linguistic key information. The textual role of the idioms in the articles from *The Economist* in which they were originally used, and cross-cultural, English-Italian differences will not be taken into consideration.

In section 2, I will briefly comment on the major general differences between the *Ragazzini* 1984 second edition (NR 1984) and its 2014 fourth one (R 2014); on the idiomaticity of the expressions analysed; and on their specific treatment in the two *Ragazzini* editions. Translational equivalents will be compared in Section 3, followed by some concluding remarks.

## 2. Idioms in *Il Ragazzini* (1984-2014)

### 2.1 *Main features of the two editions*

The 1984 edition features most of the characteristics of monodirectional bilingual dictionaries. The front matter clearly states that the dictionary is

addressed to Italians, especially to students; all its different parts are in Italian and not in English; both English and Italian irregular verbs are listed in two Appendixes, but irregular forms and pronunciation are given for English headwords only, though voiced vs. voiceless *s* and *z* and open vs. closed *o* and the accent of Italian headwords are also shown. The metalanguage is in Italian in both parts.

This edition is analysed in depth by Marengo (1989), who summarizes the main features of its microstructure in a specific profile, according to which the part she broadly refers to as *fraseologia* ('phraseology') is very rich: it includes 'special phrases, idiomatic expressions, technical uses and proverbs' (NR 1984: 7, my translation), arranged alphabetically in a run-on section preceded by a black bullet point. Compounds are also included in this section in the English-Italian part. Proverbs are usually labeled as such, whereas idioms, given at the entry for their first constituent, are not labeled, but they are reported in a subsection preceded by a special symbol (□). Examples are not systematically reported.

According to the Foreword to the 2014 edition 'the updates of the English headwords and idioms have become one of the strong points of the *Ragazzini* for Italian readers' (R 2014: 5). The figures given in the two editions are not comparable: on the one hand, the inclusion of 'new idiomatic phrases' (NR 1984: 5, my translation) in the 1984 edition is not any better quantified; on the other hand, the previous quotation from the 2014 edition seems to refer to Italian idioms, since it is followed by 'the *Ragazzini* dictionary is supplied with new Italian terms and phrases every year' on the basis of data from '*lo Zingarelli*, Zanichelli's flagship dictionary of the Italian language' (R 2014: 5), which is brought out in a new edition every year (the edition of the Zingarelli dictionary referred to is not mentioned: presumably it is its latest one, published in 2014). However, the R 2014 boasts the overall inclusion of 'over 50,000 compounds and idioms' which 'provide authoritative answers to even the most demanding translation queries' (Foreword, R 2014: 5). In this edition idioms are still included in a run-on section preceded by the same round bullet point, which is now light-blue, together with technical meanings, compound nouns and proverbs, still labeled *prov*. Differently from the 1984 edition, idioms are included in the entries for all constituents.

Though the front matter of the 2014 edition is written both in Italian and in English, and the information about the pronunciation of Italian headwords is more detailed, the special attention paid to Italian and the didactic role the dictionary boasts of performing for Italian students with explicit reference to the European Council Framework levels, seem to confirm its monodirectionality. The usage notes about translational problems from English into Italian also reinforce this point, and the metalanguage is in Italian in both parts.

Neither edition reports a lexicological definition of idiom. The use of the abbreviation *idiom* seems to refer to the idiomatic use of single words: for

example, it is used in the 2014 edition at the entry for the article *a* to refer to its use in expressions such as *a few tools* or *a good many presents* as opposed to *many a man*, labeled *lit*.

At the time I first analysed the selected expressions in the NR 1984, I checked their idiomatic status against the complex lexicological categorization explained and exemplified in the lxiii-page front matter of the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* (ODCIE 1983). That categorization still holds true for the present analysis of the selected expressions in the R 2014. In addition, I will also use the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED online) to clarify moot points.

## 2.2 Idiom categorization

The selected expressions to be analysed are, in alphabetical order, *a blind alley*, *do time*, *fill/fit the bill*, *jump the gun*, *make do* (with sth), and *a wet blanket*. They represent different semantic and syntactic typologies of idiomatic expressions. Very succinctly, according to the ODCIE categorization and inclusion policy, expressions are divided into pure idioms, figurative idioms and semi-idioms; syntactically they are grouped into clause or phrase patterns. Pure idioms are non-compositional, fixed and ‘petrified’ (ODCIE 1983: xii), exemplified by *blow the gaff*; figurative idioms are expressions whose overall meaning is figurative, but they also ‘keep a current literal interpretation’ (ODCIE 1983: xii), exemplified by *catch fire*; semi-idioms or restricted collocations can also be used in their literal sense, but whenever ‘one word has a figurative sense not found outside that limited context’ and the other element ‘appears in a familiar, literal sense’ (ODCIE 1983: xiii), their use becomes idiomatic, as exemplified by the restricted, figurative use of *jog* and the literal use of *memory* in *jog one’s, sb’s memory*. Expressions belonging to phrase patterns will be dealt with before those belonging to clause patterns. The ODCIE definitions and, occasionally, the OED ones are reported because they help clarify the concept of idiomaticity, but also because they are relevant in explaining the translational paraphrases analysed in Section 3.

In the ODCIE *a blind alley* is a phrase semi-idiom, also used to exemplify this category in the front matter (ODCIE 1983: xiii). Its literal and figurative uses are separately and differently defined in its entry: ‘a street closed at one end’ and the rather syntactically and semantically complex ‘sth which one embarks on that may look promising but which (eventually) has no satisfactory result or outcome’ which is followed by the much simpler but equally figurative ‘a dead end’. This expression is not recorded in the ODCIE, but it is reported in the *Ragazzini*. In the OED *blind alley* is a headword: the figurative use is recorded after the literal one and its definition, ‘applied to something that “leads nowhere”’ supports the ODCIE treatment.

*A wet blanket* also belongs to phrase patterns, but unlike *a blind alley* it is treated as an informal pure idiom: no literal use is recorded. It is indeed defined as ‘sb/sth that discourages, reduces pleasure or enthusiasm’. Both the adjective and the noun are used figuratively. However, the issue of non-compositionality is partially questioned here, vis-à-vis the existence of a literal interpretation, according to which *a wet blanket* could be interpreted as a figurative idiom (see *jump the gun* below). The OED treatment of *a wet blanket* pleads the cause of the pure idiom interpretation: it is a headword and its two separate figurative uses are defined as ‘something that acts as a damper to activity, enthusiasm, or cheerfulness’ as opposed to ‘a person who has a depressing or dispiriting effect on those around him’. The latter highlights the shift from the inanimateness of its use when referred to a thing, which still carries some type of contiguity with the literal meaning, to the animateness of the exclusively idiomatic use which refers to a person. In the OED the expression is also listed among phrases at BLANKET.

All the other expressions belong to clause patterns, but they differ in their degree of idiomaticity. In the ODCIE *do time* is a pure idiom and so is *make do*. The former is defined as ‘serve a prison sentence’; the latter as ‘manage with sth, accept sth, although it is not adequate or satisfactory or desirable’.

*Fill/fit the bill* is also a pure idiom. It is defined in a way that almost looks the opposite of *make do*: ‘be satisfactory, or adequate, for a defined or understood purposes; satisfy all the requirements of a function or role’. With reference to the last part of this definition the ODCIE adds that ‘bill here refers to a theatre or advertising poster’, thus including an element concerning the literal sense of one constituent. The OED records the expression at FILL and at BILL: it is labeled as *slang* and originally American. The OED definitions, ‘to fulfil the necessary requirements; to come up to the requisite standard’ at BILL, and ‘to do all that is desired, expected, or required; to suit the requirements of the case’ at FILL, clearly highlight the idiomaticity of the expression.

*Jump the gun* is considered a figurative idiom: it keeps a current literal interpretation and both constituents are used figuratively. As the ODCIE highlights, expressions in this category are idiomatic ‘in the sense that variation is seldom found’ (1983: xiii). In the OED it is given among phrases (where idioms are recorded) at GUN. The ODCIE reports both the definition of its literal sense and that of its figurative use, ‘do sth too soon, before the usual or proper time’.

### 2.3 Selected idioms in the *Ragazzini 2014*

Broadly speaking, the 2014 online edition, as opposed to the 1984 printed edition, marks considerable differences especially as regards information access. Remarkably, the search for an idiomatic expression returns the list of the English headwords where the expression is recorded or referred to, usually in examples. In addition, the list also includes the Italian headwords where the

same English idiom can be retrieved, usually as a translational equivalent. Idioms, as previously noted, are included in the entries for all constituents, unlike the 1984 edition in which they are given at the entry for their first constituent only, though with some exceptions, as in the case of *a wet blanket* which is given at both entries. For example, in the 2014 edition the prototypical idiom *to kick the bucket* is given at KICK and at BUCKET, and it is translated with an equivalent idiomatic expression, *tirare le cuoia*. The English idiom is also given as a translational equivalent at TIRARE ('throw'), at CUOIO (the singular of the irregular plural *cuoia*, which is used in this form only in its figurative sense), and, somewhat surprisingly<sup>3</sup> at CALZINO, ('sock'). The Italian idiomatic expression *tirare il calzino* is rendered into English 'kick the bucket', which explains the cross-reference to CALZINO in the Italian-English part, but it is reported as a translational equivalent neither at KICK nor at BUCKET. The same treatment, in terms of retrieval, concerns the other expressions to be analysed in the following paragraphs.

The treatment of *a blind alley* in the 1984 edition is consistent with its own lexicographical policy and with the ODCIE lexicological categorization; though no definition of idiom is reported in the dictionary, the idiom sections seem to include only the expressions which are considered to be pure idioms in the ODCIE. Unlike idioms, *a blind alley* is given both at BLIND and at ALLEY (see below also the case of *jump the gun*): both its literal use and its explicitly labeled figurative use are recorded among examples. Significantly, it is not recorded among idioms at BLIND (there is no idiom section at ALLEY). Its treatment in the 2014 edition is similar. It is given at both headwords, as idioms are, but it is not included in their idiom sections: in addition, it is referenced to the Italian headwords USCITA and VICOLO. The reasons why these two Italian headwords are reported will be analysed in section 3.

*A wet blanket*, labeled *fig.*, is recorded in the idiom section at both constituents in the 1984 edition. It is analogously recorded at WET in the 2014 edition, and, interestingly, it is cross-referenced to not only the Italian headword GUASTAFESTE, used as a translational equivalent in both editions, but also to the English headword PEG, where an example, *she pegged him as a wet blanket*, includes the idiom (though strangely there is no cross-reference to BLANKET).

In the 1984 edition *do time* is not included in the idiom section at DO, while it is at TIME. Interestingly, in the 2014 edition, though the expression is given at both constituents, as idioms are, it is reported as an example following definition 6 at DO, while it is included in the idiom section at TIME, thus somehow partly confirming its 1984 treatment as regards the presence of the expression among the idioms at TIME. No explicit lexicographical reason seems to explain the absence of the expression at DO in the 1984 edition, where plenty of other idioms, including *make do*, are recorded, nor its 2014 asymmetrical treatment. From the lexicological perspective the semantic and idiomatic role of *time*, as opposed to that of *do*, might well explain the treatment of the expression in

both editions. No reference to any Italian headword is reported, since the Italian translational equivalents in the English-Italian part are not (more or less) idiomatic expressions, but paraphrases, as such not present in the Italian-English part.

*Fill/fit the bill* is recorded separately in the idiom sections of the two verb entries in the 1984 edition. At *FILL* the expression is included in the example *if Mary sings, that fills the bill*, while at *FIT* it is recorded in its citation form. In the 2014 edition the treatment of *fill/fit the bill* is the same in the idiom sections of the two verb entries, with the only addition that the former is used in American English, as also shown in the ODCIE. Different Italian paraphrases are also reported at *BILL*. There is no reference to Italian headwords in this case either.

*Jump the gun* is included in the idiom section at *JUMP* in the 1984 edition, but strangely the Italian rendering concerns its literal meaning only (see below). The expression is unusually recorded also in the idiom section at *GUN*, where a distinction is made between its literal sense, labeled *sport*, and its figurative sense, for which different translational equivalents are given, as will be seen in Section 3. In the 2014 edition the literal and figurative senses of the expression are recorded among idioms at both entries, with a minor difference concerning the label *sport* used to refer to the literal sense as recorded at *JUMP*, whereas the more restricted label *atletica* ('athletics') is given at *GUN*. It is cross-referenced to many Italian verb, noun, and adverb headwords (*ANZITEMPO*, *CORRERE*, *PARTENZA*, *PREMATURAMENTE*, *SCATTARE*) for reasons that will be analysed in the next Section.

*Make do* is recorded in the idiom sections of both verb entries in the 1984 edition in the form 'make sth do': at *DO* an example is offered, and at *MAKE* the alternative form 'make do with sth' is also recorded. In the 2014 edition 'to make sth do (or to make do with sth)' is recorded in the idiom section at *MAKE* and it is cross-referenced to a high number of Italian, especially verb headwords (*ACCOMODARE*, *ACCONTENTARE*, *AGGIUSTARE*, *ARRANGIARE*, *IMPROVVISATO*, *MEGLIO*, *RIMEDIATO*, *RIPIEGARE*, and *TANTO*). This means, as previously noted, that the English idiom is also included in the entries for these words in the Italian-English part. It also testifies to the high number of non-idiomatic possible Italian equivalents.

### 3. Italian equivalents

The Italian equivalents of the English expressions reported above are analysed just to see whether they are equally or partially as idiomatic in Italian as they are in English, or whether they are paraphrases, without considering their functional equivalence.

The equivalent given in both editions for *a blind alley* is *un vicolo cieco*, an expression which perfectly matches the English one both figuratively and

literally. The Italian headword USCITA ('way out') is cross-referenced to because the both literal and figurative expression *strada senza uscita* ('a street without way out') is given at its entry, though not in the idiom section, and back-translated into a *blind alley*.

*A wet blanket* is translated as *un guastafeste* (literally 'somebody who ruins parties') in both editions; in the 2014 edition another equivalent is added: *un impiastro*. The meaning and the level of formality of *impiastro* are slightly different since in its figurative use it refers to a boring and annoying person. *Guastafeste* is cross-referenced to and one of its translations into English is consequently *a wet blanket*, which is labeled *familiar*. *Guastafeste* is a fused compound which is used figuratively in connection with all sorts of especially unexpected and undesired situations.

*Do time* represents a rather different case from the translational perspective, since no equivalent idiomatic expression exists in Italian. In both editions, it is translated as 'scontare una pena (detentiva)' and 'essere in galera'. The first expression is not an idiom in Italian, but a collocation<sup>4</sup> which refers to the counting down of the years, months, days one has been sentenced to pass in prison. The Italian collocation has no slang or informal connotation, unlike the English idiom. The second option, 'essere in galera' (literally 'to be in prison or jail'), is not a collocation, but it partially keeps the connotation of the English expression, in as far as the word *galera* is a more informal synonym of *prigione* ('prison').

Also in the case of *fill/fit the bill* no matching Italian idiomatic equivalent exists, though some of the translations given in the two editions are figurative. The example reported in the 1984 edition, *if Mary sings, that fills the bill*, is translated into *se Maria canta, siamo a posto*, which might be contextually appropriate, but which cannot be generalized. However, the figurative sense of *essere a posto* (literally 'to be in the appropriate place') refers to the solution of a problem. Two of the expressions at both *FILL* and *FIT* in the 2014 edition, namely *essere quello che ci vuole* and *fare al caso di qn*, keep the sense and the informality of the English idiom (though they cannot be labeled *slang* as the English expression is according to the OED), but they need contextualization. The third expression, *andare bene*, is a literal, general expression of agreement or consensus. The translations reported at *BILL*, namely *essere l'ideale*, *essere perfetto* ('to be the ideal person or thing'; 'to be perfect'), though literal and not informal, nonetheless capture the essential meaning of *fit/fill the bill*.

In the 1984 edition, *jump the gun*, which is included in the idiom section at *JUMP*, is strangely translated only into the literal paraphrase *scattare prima del segnale di partenza*. It is also given at *GUN* where it is translated with a collocation, *fare una falsa partenza* ('to make a false start'), which in Italian can be used both literally and figuratively. In the 2014 edition at both entries the same literal 1984 translation is given together with the figurative (labeled as such) *essere troppo precipitoso*, a paraphrase of the original sense, 'do sth too soon'.

At the Italian headwords to which it is cross-referenced, the English expression is usually given in its literal use; only at CORRERE ('to run'), is it given as the figurative translation of the equally figurative use of Italian *correre troppo* (literally and figuratively, 'run too soon').

In the 1984 edition *make do* is translated *far bastare qc, arrangiarsi con qc* at MAKE. The following example, *I'll make these colours do*, is rendered into *farò bastare questi colori*, which is literal: *bastare* is 'to be enough, to suffice'. At DO the equivalents are *far bastare qc; farcela con qc*, and the following example, *can you make ten dollars do?*, is rendered into *riuscirai a farcela con 10 dollari?*. The Italian translations are not idiomatic, but the figurative sense of *farcela* ('to achieve a goal') and that of *arrangiarsi* ('to cope with a difficult situation')<sup>5</sup> are very close to that of the English expression, though the former is more akin to English *make it*. The same translations are reported in the 2014 edition. Quite interestingly, most of the Italian headwords at which *make do* is given as an English equivalent are reflexive (pronominal) verbs (as shown by the presence of *si* in the infinitive form): others are also present in examples at the adverb headwords MEGLIO and TANTO (*sapersi accontentare, adattarsi, aggiustarsi, arrangiarsi, farsi bastare*). The reflexive use implies some personal commitment, often present in English whenever *make do* is preceded by 'have to'; this consideration is also reinforced by the explicit use of 'dovere' in an example, rendered into English *you'll have to make do with it*. In the other Italian entries *make-do* is hyphenated and used as a nominal or adjectival derivative. The remaining verb, *ripiegare* (literally 'to fold'), is used figuratively with the obligatory preposition *su* (and back-translated 'to make do'), but the resulting expressions are not idiomatic.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The analysis of the expressions reported above showcases some of the difficulties in identifying clear-cut lexicological boundaries, let alone consistent implementations in English-Italian bilingual lexicography, as far as idioms are concerned. Generally speaking the treatment of idioms in the *Ragazzini* editions is somehow affected by the lack of a lexicological definition underlying an explicit and consistent lexicographical approach; in principle, both should be clearly stated in the front matter and followed through in the A-to-Z body of the dictionary. It is however difficult to identify idiomatic expressions precisely, as the ODCIE clearly states: 'idioms in the strict sense [such as kick the bucket] comprise only one, and certainly not the largest, of a spectrum of related categories' (1983: xii), which often shade off into each other at the boundary ends of their position along a continuum going from ascertained idiomatic to ascertained non-idiomatic expressions. This has often been highlighted in many theoretical approaches and in their fine-grained distinctions (among others,



Fernando 1996; Moon 1998; Cowie 1998; Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005); Burger et al. 2007; Granger and Meunier 2008). Lexicographical distinctions are even harder to identify and consistently apply, bearing in mind that users' needs are as relevant as (or more relevant than) theoretical approaches. In this respect, both editions especially address learners, whose language awareness is not always and not necessarily lexicology-informed: the precise status of the idiomatic expressions they want to translate into Italian (or vice-versa) is unlikely to be known in advance and it would not affect their look-up processes and their overall reference skills. Thus, in a bilingual dictionary such as the *Ragazzini*, lack of precise information about what idioms are and about their lexicographical treatment is not to be considered a drawback, provided translational equivalents are clearly reported and, hopefully, exemplified. It is to be noted that the technological facilities of the *Ragazzini* online edition solve most theoretical and practical problematic issues, which were all but impossible to deal with adequately thirty years ago. In particular its cross-references and the presentation mode of Italian equivalents of English idiomatic expressions result in a systematic network which works in the English-to-Italian direction as examined in the previous Section, and which presumably works in the opposite direction as well.

In general, the typologies of translational equivalents given for English idioms range from idiomatic expressions to paraphrases. They also include figurative expressions and collocations. In particular, the expressions analysed and their translations are often as figurative in the two languages, but not equally idiomatic in the ODCIE sense, that is to say in the way *kick the bucket* and *tirare le cuoia* are. As already noted, according to the ODCIE not only is the category of clearly identified pure idioms quantitatively restricted, but also, as Piirainen (2012: 62) says, "truly full equivalents in different languages are very rare".<sup>6</sup> Conversely, a common figurative core meaning can often be present in different languages. Cross-linguistic equivalence is highly problematic, starting from its own definition and meaning, at all levels, both in decontextualised, theoretical perspectives, and in semantic, pragmatic, communicative approaches and translation theories (Adamska-Salaciak 2010). It is, however, what the essentials of bilingual dictionaries amount to. Lexicographical translational equivalents often need further contextualization, especially because of language-specific pragmatic, stylistic and communicative restrictions and their textual role. Idioms, as fixed, institutionalized expressions do not quickly change in time, but their use, especially in manipulated forms, often does, in different ways in different languages. Translators are well aware of these (and other) pitfalls; they can rely on their own experience and they are able to use other sources, such as corpora, to turn lexicographical equivalents into functional equivalents. Learners, especially at the intermediate level, have to *make do* with their more limited experience, reference skills and knowledge

of English to avoid the inherent dangers in *a blind alley*. Bearing all that in mind, and considering the different status of the English expressions and their Italian translations in the examples analysed above, it can be safely concluded that the *Ragazzini* dictionary fits the (lexicographical) bill.

## Notes

1 Unfortunately in this 1988 article there are many errors and typos for which I apologise, though I was not responsible for them.

2 They were: Skey, 1977; Collins-Giunti, 1985; Sansoni, 1988. According to Marengo (1989), Skey's dictionary was monodirectional, while the Collins-Giunti and the Sansoni dictionaries were bidirectional.

3 *Tirare il calzino* which is recorded in Italian monolingual dictionaries, was unknown to me until I read it in the *Ragazzini*.

4 *Scontare una pena* is included in Italian Dictionaries of Collocations, such as Urzi's *Dizionario delle Combinazioni Lessicali* (1999).

5 There are differences in the use of *farcela* and *arrangiarsi*: apart from grammatical constraints, the former cannot be used in the imperative (though it can be preceded by *dovere* ('have to', 'must') in that mood), while the latter typically is, in the sense 'this is your problem, your responsibility, find a solution'.

6 It is interesting to note that none of the expressions analysed here is included in Piirainen's impressive, extremely rich and detailed study.

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## I. Introduction

When translating into another language, the use of bilingual dictionaries raises two types of general questions: Firstly, one must ascertain which kinds of equivalents are being sought in the target language, i.e., whether an equivalent term or a paraphrase is required. Secondly, one needs to know which kind of stylistic label to attribute to these terms. Furthermore, if we consider idioms with an image component, the issue of the nature and function of the image is of paramount importance. A dictionary user's expectations are then focused around image transposition – knowing which pitfalls to avoid on the level of semantics and stylistics. Finally, it will be necessary to know how one should encode a bilingual dictionary entry so that it takes these parameters into account.

This short contribution aims at outlining a few difficulties that a user might be faced with. We used the following lexicographic tools, either because they are easily accessible or because of their specialization:

- The online bilingual French-German / German-French *Pons Dictionary*. It is by far the best and most comprehensive bilingual dictionary, on a par with its print counterpart;
- The Rey and Chantreau dictionary (1979) for French, *Dictionnaire des expressions et des locutions*;
- The *Duden Redewendungen* (DU 11 2013) for German.

The last two are specialised dictionaries, which users can refer to in the hopes of getting more detailed definitions.

## 2. Different images, one meaning

### 2.1 Analysis of two French idioms for 'to pour' and their degree of equivalence

The weather provides speakers with many images that illustrate the intensity of a phenomenon: *un vent à décorner les bœufs* (literally 'a wind that will blow the horns off oxen'), *une purée de pois* ('a pea-souper') for fog (mixed with coal smoke), and so on. Let us focus on two French idioms that are similar in regard to their actual meanings (they both refer to a 'pouring rain') but that differ in regard to their images.

- (1) *pleuvoir/tomber des cordes*, literally 'to rain/drop ropes';
- (2) *pleuvoir comme vache qui pisse*, literally 'to rain like a pissing cow'.

The Rey and Chantreau dictionary does not have a specific entry for *tomber des cordes* — it refers the user to the idiom *pleuvoir à seaux* ('to pour buckets'), an entry which is merely paraphrased by 'très fort' ('very hard'). As for *pleuvoir comme vache qui pisse*, it does have its own entry, with far more detailed explanations; cf. extract 1.

extract 1

**pleuvoir comme vache qui pisse** "à verse" (milieu XIXe s.). L'expression paraît s'expliquer à partir de pleurer comme une vache, le passage de la première loc. à la seconde est motivé à la fois par le contenu (rapports métaphoriques entre pleurer et pleuvoir) et par la forme phonique (allitération des syllabes initiales). Comme (une) vache est senti comme un intensif renforcé par une image caractérisant un trait physiologique aisément observable (vache qui pisse). (1979: 898)<sup>1</sup>

This dictionary provides no mention of register, however decisive a dimension it is in choosing one or the other idiom. It is indeed obvious (for a native speaker!) that idiom (2) is much more informal than idiom (1).

The online Pons dictionary provides register information, but the two expressions are treated as belonging to the same 'informal' register and no information is given about the underlying images and the contexts of use. Let us now characterize the stylistic labels on the basis of the image components.

The image of 'ropes' in idiom (1) is a visual simile that belongs to the common human experience when we look at raindrops. The register is 'informal', since the underlying (implicit) comparison is a common visual image based on the outward appearance of raindrops and used in informal communication / friendly conversation in everyday life.

The image provided by idiom (2) is based on an explicit comparison with a 'pissing cow'; the source domain is ANIMAL SPONTANEOUS URINATION and belongs to the informal-rude register. Other idioms with the verb 'piss' are used to refer to a deviant and negative action, for example *pisser dans un violon* (literally 'to piss in

a violin') for a completely useless action (the concrete image denotes a disgraceful and outrageous action). Rain is not an activity and does not presuppose an intention, but the comparison with a pissing cow maps the quantity and the ugly impression onto the target domain RAIN; we consider therefore the register of idiom (2) as 'vulgar' and we would add the emotive-expressive label 'rude'. This idiom is used in informal communication, in one's family or with friends; it conveys relatively intense negative emotion and contributes to more expressivity.

## 2.2 What are German equivalents for these idioms?

A query for idiom (1) on the online Pons dictionary yields the following results:

- (3) **es regnet Bindfäden**, literally 'it's raining strings', informal
- (4) **es regnet wie aus [oder mit] Kübeln**, literally 'it's raining buckets', informal.

For idiom (2), here are the proposed equivalents:

- (5) **es regnet sehr stark**, literally 'it's raining very hard',
- (6) **es schüttet**, literally 'it's pouring',
- (7) **es gießt wie aus Eimern**, literally 'it's pouring buckets', informal,
- (8) **es gießt in Strömen**, literally 'it's raining in streams'.

The stylistic label '*fam.*' (*familier*, 'informal') for (4) *regnet wie mit [oder aus] Kübeln* (*fam.*) and (7) *gießt wie aus Eimern* (*fam.*) places them at the same level as idioms (1) and (2), without further details or differentiation. Idioms (4) and (7) are indeed very close with regard to their lexical and syntactic structures, but the lexical components ('regnet' vs. 'gießt' and 'Eimer' vs. 'Kübel') are different when it comes to their expressivity.

Investigating further, here are the entries that come up with the specialised *Duden Redewendungen* dictionary:

- **Bindfaden: es regnet Bindfäden** (ugs.): *es regnet sehr stark*: Wir können noch nicht gehen, es regnet Bindfäden. ☞ Doch keine 12 Stunden später regnete es Bindfäden. Das erwartete Hoch hatte sich statt auf- abgebaut (Hörzu 41, 1972, 80). (DU 11 2013: 117)
- **gießen: es gießt wie aus Kübeln/Kannen/Eimern** (ugs.): *es regnet sehr stark*: Es goss wie aus Eimern und stürmte wie verrückt (www.rheinkultur.org). Ich stieg aus und war in Sekunden klitschnass, es goss wie aus Kübeln (jordibelp ch). ↴ Binde (DU 11 2013: 277)

*Duden* thus provides a stylistic label: both idioms belong to the informal register (ugs.: *umgangssprachlich*). But this label is insufficient as the second idiom contains a non-meteorological verb with a more expressive component ('gießen' vs. 'regnen') and an explicit comparison ('wie'). Because of the expressive label, these idioms should not be regarded as totally equivalent.

### 2.3 A few observations

At this stage of our investigations into lexicographic tools, a few observations should be made:

- In the French specialized dictionary Rey and Chantreau (1979), indications on what style or register pertains to an idiom are sorely lacking. The authors of the dictionary chose to offer etymological explanations and an illustration — but neither the former nor the latter enable the reader to make an appropriate choice, as he or she has no access to stylistic information.
- In the generic bilingual dictionary (Pons), a user will have access to a few short and partly erroneous stylistic labels. Editorial and lexicographic choices were made to favor speed of use and adapt it to the concrete needs of foreign language learners. Stylistic labels are partly inadequate, as some idioms are introduced as being equivalent in terms of register even though there are actual, blatant differences on the expressive level between them.
- The specialised German dictionary DU 11 (2013) offers what is probably the most comprehensive and practical entry: an illustration through two examples, taken from a diverse range of corpora (Internet websites, TV program magazines), is undeniably helpful. In addition, stylistic labels are present, but there is a lack of information about expressivity.

### 3. Same image, different meanings

Let us now focus on the opposite case: similarity of images and non-parallel features of actual meaning of L1- and L2-idioms.

In order to do so, we looked up the German idiom **blöde Kuh** (literally ‘bloody cow’, *idiot*) in the Pons Dictionary. The results are shown here:

French-German part

couillon(ne)	Blödmann m / blöde Kuh <i>fam</i>
pétasse f <i>fam</i>	blöde Kuh (f)
ahuri(e)	blöder Kerl / blöde Kuh <i>fam</i>
pauvre con(ne)	Blödmann <i>fam</i> / blöde Kuh
espèce d’imbécile ! <i>fam</i>	[du/Sie/so ein] Blödmann! / [du/Sie/so eine] blöde Kuh!

German-French part

eine blöde (oder dumme) Kuh    une peau de vache *pop*

It is specifically the last suggestion in the German-French part that caught our attention, even though the first five equivalents are not faultless either. What is astonishing is the equivalence suggested between the two idioms: *blöde Kuh* and *peau de vache* (literally ‘cowskin’, *mean person*).

These idioms have in common the ‘cow’ image. The German idiom does not appear anywhere in the Duden dictionary. On the other hand, the specialised French dictionary has an entry for its French counterpart that is comprehensive enough for a speaker to get a clear grasp of its meaning; cf. extract 2.

Extract 2

**Peau de vache** “personne méchante, dure, qui ne passe rien à autrui”. Se dit indifféremment d’un homme ou d’une femme. Croisement entre les valeurs péjoratives de *peau* et celle de *vache* (qui connote la méchanceté, après avoir au XIXe s., impliqué la mollesse, la veulerie). (Rey et Chantreau 1979: 898)<sup>2</sup>

One cannot but note that German *blöde Kuh* and French *peau de vache* are clearly non-equivalent: calling a teacher a *blöde Kuh* means that one finds her stupid, while calling her *une peau de vache* means that she awarded extremely low grades on an exam. The Pons dictionary can in this case undeniably mislead a user. Unlike the German idiom which contains only one idiomatic unit (*Kuh*), the French idiom is made up of two idiomatic parts, as the Rey and Chantreau dictionary points out: *skin* and *cow*: both point to nastiness rather than stupidity. Thus, even though the image of the cow is, all in all, commonplace and frequent in the imagery of languages, it is a vector for different representations and meanings across languages. In French, except in the exclamatory idiom *La vache!* to express surprise (sometimes combined with admiration), *vache* foregrounds nastiness. In German, *Kuh* foregrounds crassness and stupidity.

#### 4. Conclusion

Above we have discussed some specific aspects which have to be taken into account when comparing idioms with an image component and their equivalents in bilingual dictionaries. We can now suggest what we consider to be an ‘ideal’ entry pattern for a bilingual dictionary of idioms, phrases, and sayings. Undoubtedly, etymological considerations belong in a dictionary, but to a lesser extent than what one finds in the Rey and Chantreau dictionary, which is geared towards native speakers. The presence of corpus-based examples, drawn from as diverse a range of corpora as possible, seems essential and it is the choice made by the *Duden Redewendungen*. Beside the semantic and syntactic parameters, we add a pragmatic level (‘context of use’) that informs the user about text type and/or the speaker’s emotions or frame of mind. Cf. Table 1.

**Table 1:** Annotated dictionary entry

Pattern and recommendations	Example for the French entry	Example for the German entry
Entry – the entry will include all usual variants	<b>tomber/pleuvoir des cordes</b>	<b>Bindfäden regnen</b>
Actual meaning	pleuvoir très fort, en grande quantité et intensité [to rain very hard, both in quantity and intensity]	stark regnen [Quantität und/oder Intensität]
Simple construction	<i>Il tombe/il pleut des cordes.</i>	<i>Es regnet Bindfäden.</i>
Stylistic labels	registre standard à familier [standard to informal]	umgangssprachlich [colloquial]
Context of use	description, narration dans une conversation privée ou un compte-rendu se voulant expressif, voire humoristique. Évaluation dans laquelle la pluie est présentée sous un aspect négatif, notamment comme un obstacle à une activité prévue (voir exemples ci-dessous) ou comme un événement inattendu et désagréable.	Beschreibung, Erzählung im Rahmen eines privaten Gesprächs oder eines Berichts, in dem ein expressiver, ja sogar humoristischer Ton angeschlagen wird. Bewertung des Regens unter einem negativen Aspekt, besonders als Phänomen, das einer geplanten Aktivität im Weg steht oder als unerwartetes und unangenehmes Ereignis.
	[description, narration in a private conversation or a report that aims at being expressive, or even humorous. Evaluation in which rain is presented negatively, especially as an obstacle to something that was expected to happen or an unexpected or unpleasant event.]	
Motivation	L'image des <i>cordes</i> est motivée par la forme longue et rectiligne (bien que souple) de la corde, semblable à la forme que les gouttes de pluie peuvent revêtir lorsqu'elle tombe drue.	Das Bild der <i>Bindfäden</i> entspricht der Form der Wassertropfen, wenn es sehr stark regnet und sie lang und geradlinig vorkommen.
	[The <i>rope</i> image is motivated by the long, rectilinear (though supple) shape of the rope, similar to the shape of raindrops when it is raining hard.]	
Examples	Pas de chance pour nous, le jour où nous y sommes allés, il faisait un temps de chien <i>il tombait des cordes et il faisait froid</i> [www.zlm-concept.org/voyages/equateur/coto-paxi.html]	<i>Es regnete Bindfäden</i> , es blitzte und donnerte. Doch kaum 30 Minuten später war der Spuk vorbei, und Punkt 20.15 Uhr erklang der erste Ton. [www.tonight.de, 21.8.2014]
Other idioms/sayings with close meaning + stylistic value	<i>pleuvoir à verse</i> (standard), <i>pleuvoir à seaux</i> (standard)	⇒ <i>wie aus Eimern/Kübeln/Kannen gießen</i> (umgangssprachlich)
	<i>pleuvoir/tomber des hallebardes</i> (formal)	⇒ ∅ [keine stilistische Entsprechung [no stylistic equivalence]
	<i>pleuvoir comme vache qui pisse</i> (informal, vulgar)	⇒ ∅ [keine stilistische Entsprechung [no stylistic equivalence]



## Notes

1 Translation of extract 1: (mid 19th c.). The idiom seems to stem from *pleurer comme une vache* ('to cry like a cow'); the transition from the first expression to the second is motivated both by its content (metaphorical links between crying and raining) and phonic form (alliteration of initial syllables). *Comme (une) vache* is felt to be an intensifier reinforced by an image that characterizes an easily observable physiological trait ('pissing cow').

2 Translation of extract 2: Nasty, mean person who will not let someone else get away with anything. Used for both men and women. A mix between the pejorative values of *peau* and *vache* (which connote nastiness, whereas they used to imply languidness and spinelessness in the 19th c.).

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# NONTRADITIONAL PRESENTATION OF ENTRIES

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If defined as the production of traditional dictionaries, lexicography is a dying profession. Dictionaries are losing out to other tools because:

- They insist on creating detailed and precise classifications of material that, by its very nature, defies such classification.
- They seem unable to shake off organizational structures that are rooted in the economies of printing.

The lexicographer as word sleuth, surgeon, and alphabetizer is being replaced by machines. My students use Google before they resort to a dictionary. And they are right to do so.

Our physical selves are examined by cardiologists, dermatologists, and neurologists, our social selves by sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. I would rather be examined once a year by a single humanologist who studies all those areas together. I don't see how the functioning of my liver can be separated from the flukes of the culture I live in.

So, too, our verbal lives are not distinct series of events in syntax, morphology, semantics, and phraseology. That would be most unnatural. How can the versions of the phrases I use be separated from the rest of my behavior, or from the behavior of their component words and morphemes, or their components' components? Or, come to think of it, from the functioning of my liver?

The top-notch *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* by Sophia Lubensky (2013) – the first of its kind – will probably also be the last to appear in print. I keep it on my desk and advise my students to use it for reference. But I don't tell them to use it to learn Russian. For that, I tell them, go swimming with a search engine. And I teach them how to stay afloat. And if my wish comes true (below), they will occasionally land on Lubensky shores.

As a lexicographer dissects his native tongue in order to fit pieces of it into a particular kind of dictionary entry, he resorts to all kinds of surgery. The author of a phraseological dictionary is spared much of the gore, but still must decide where a phrase begins and ends, and whether it belongs in the dictionary or not. These are artificial decisions that distort the life of the phrase. A phraseological dictionary is better than other dictionaries because it usually includes at least a sentence, and sometimes even two. But that is still a biopsy. The patient doesn't live in that sentence, it lives in the paragraph, in the chapter, and possibly in the entire book. And the book lives in a culture.

The sentence *Партия не дремлет* (lit. ‘The Party never sleeps’) reads differently depending on its geopolitical situation. Is it ‘the Party’ or ‘a party’? Does *never sleeps* mean ‘is awake’ or ‘is vigilant’? Is *не дремлет* an idiom? Can a different subject be substituted? Is its meaning reversed if you remove the negative particle? Can it be used in a different tense or aspect? Can you turn it into a participle? We use various litmus tests to decide whether a phrase belongs in a phraseological dictionary, but the only reason we have to consider the question is our strange desire to compile (and use) dictionaries – dictionaries whose every bit of information has been honed to perfection and placed, most unnaturally, in its precise spot.

I use dictionaries all the time. And every time, I am depressed by their artificial representation of the language. Paper dictionaries are the worst, but most electronic dictionaries go the same route. A dictionary of idioms is better than most and is almost acceptable, but I prefer a collocational dictionary.<sup>1</sup> And my favorite dictionary is not a dictionary at all, it is *Nacional’nyj korpus russkogo jazyka* (Russian National Corpus – RNC). That’s where I tell my students to hang out. It is free of the descriptive and prescriptive pretensions of lexicography, and it is open-ended.<sup>2</sup> Another great hangout for context lovers is the bilingual Linguee at <http://www.linguee.ru>.

It doesn’t matter where *не дремлет* belongs. Let all dictionaries be phraseological dictionaries, a collection of small portions of the RNC. Let all Russian sentences in Lubensky’s *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* be included in it, along with all the other sentences in the RNC. And let my phrase be presented to the learner as it is used in *Партия не дремлет. | А партия не дремлет! | Однако партия не дремлет!* or even better, *Однако партия не дремлет: она всё видит, замечает и наносит ответный удар* (‘The Party never sleeps’ or ‘But the Party never sleeps!’ or ‘However, the Party never sleeps!’ or, better yet, ‘However, the Party never sleeps: it sees everything, pays attention to everything, and strikes back’). If you need to bring the sea to the learner in a drinking glass, give her as much context as you can.

In my dictionary for English-speaking learners of Russian, *The Russian Dictionary Tree*<sup>3</sup>, entries are offered as follows (somewhat modified for this publication<sup>4</sup>):

## Брать

- *as in* я брал деньги у родителей I used to get money from my parents [details➔]
- *as in* Он брал карандаш и задумчиво смотрел на лист бумаги. He would pick up his pencil and gaze thoughtfully at the sheet of paper. [details➔]
- *as in* брать портфель на работу to bring a briefcase to the office, брать с собой детей to bring the children along [details➔]

- *as in* армия брала один город за другим the army took one town after another [details➔]
- *as in* вы слишком много берёте за свои помидоры you charge too much for your tomatoes [details➔]
- *as in* брать билеты в театр *Colloquial* to buy theater tickets, брать молоко в гастрономе *Colloquial* to get milk at the grocery store [details➔]
- *as in* брать садовника на лето *Informal* to hire/take on a gardener for the summer [details➔]
- *as in* брать номер в гостинице *Colloquial* to take a room in a hotel [details➔]
- *as in* брать тему для статьи to choose a theme for an essay [details➔]
- *as in* брать хитростью to succeed through cunning, брать терпением to succeed through patience [details➔]
- *as in* меня брала тоска I used to become depressed, меня брал страх I used to be overcome by fear [details➔]
- *as in* эти ножницы картон не берут these scissors don't work on (don't grip) cardboard [details➔]
- *as in* брать (курс) на юг *Informal when курс is omitted* to turn south брать (курс) на деревню to head for the village [details➔]
- *used as a semi-auxiliary verb in the general meaning of* to gain possession of something, permanently or temporarily, *as in* брать напрокат to rent, to borrow, брать в аренду to lease, to rent [details➔]
- *as in* их всегда брали ночью *Colloquial* they were always arrested at night, жандармы брали всех заговорщиков вместе *Colloquial* the police arrested all conspirators together [details➔]
- *as in* брать под стражу *Old-fashioned* to place someone under guard, брать под арест *Formal* to arrest someone, to take someone into custody
- *as in* брать магазин под охрану *Formal* to place the store under guard, to install security guards at the store [details➔]
- *as in* она брала пример с сестры she followed her sister's example (*always with the word* пример) [details➔]
- *as in* не много ли вы на себя берёте? aren't you taking on more than you can handle? [details➔]

The reader uses this list to select the item that interests her. Once she clicks 'details➔' she can read the entire entry, including a more traditional definition and glosses, e.g. 'to overstep one's authority, to take on more than one can deal with, to assume more power than one is entitled to' for the last item, above.

This list for *брать* is not complete. Dozens more entries should be added, especially of the kind that involve severe combinatorial restrictions like those towards the end of the list (Lubensky includes more than eighty). Some instantiations of *брать* are idiomatic, some are borderline idiomatic,

and in some phrases, it serves as a semi-auxiliary verb.<sup>5</sup> Some could probably be collapsed: *брать* as in *полиция брала всех подряд* can be seen as a special case of *брать под арест*. The boundaries between most of the items in this list are fuzzy: such is the nature of language.

I often find myself explaining to my students that the dissection of a word into numbered meanings or usage cases is largely the lexicographer's invention. I encourage them to see words as chameleonic beings that can only be learned in their polymorphous polysemanticity. Words change their message depending on the environment, yet mostly stay true to their core nature. By offering these carefully constructed bits of context, *The Russian Dictionary Tree* (RDT) invites a holistic approach to the study of the word. For many students, *The Russian Dictionary Tree* (RDT) is easier to use than RNC, but its purpose is still to prepare the language learner to swim in a sea of words that is swarming with life.

Another aspect of the presentation in the RDT is its reliance on the English speaker's instant comprehension of the translations. A more traditional dictionary might offer the following glosses for the top two items in my listing: *брать* 1) to take, to get, to take possession of; 2) to pick up, to take, to get, to grasp. It takes most readers longer than a New York minute to figure out what the glosses in 1) and 2) have in common and how they are different. I want the reader to rely on her native speaker's intuition (in English) rather than analysis. Printed dictionaries conserve space by combining two very different functions of an entry: a) to help the reader choose the right meaning/usage and b) to offer glosses for use in translation. This is a bad practice that, surprisingly, is being transferred to electronic dictionaries, where space is much cheaper. The RDT separates these two functions: glosses and explanations are presented after the reader clicks for the details, i.e. after she has chosen her hero.

A similar presentation for an English speaker who is searching for an appropriate Russian word would look like this:

#### View

- *as in* the view from my window вид из моего окна [details➔]
  - *as in* she shared her views with the audience: она поделилась своими взглядами с аудиторией [details➔]
  - *as in* let me offer my view of this issue позвольте мне предложить свое мнение по этому вопросу [details➔]
- etc.

Such display is more effective than a list of glosses in helping the learner choose a good Russian equivalent of the English word.

Clicking the ‘details➔’ link for one of the *брать* items allows the user to drill down to a display like this:

**брать.**

to succeed by virtue of something, *as in* to succeed through cunning

*Morphology*

ЕМ берут; intransitive; Impf. (Pf. взять)

Non-past Sg.	non-past Pl.	Imper.	Past	Pres.deverb.	Past deverb.
беру	берём	бери	брал	беря	
берёшь	берёте	берите	брала	берущий	бравший
берёт	берут		брали/о	—	—

*Examples and Notes on Usage and Style.*

брать хитростью (Inst.) to succeed through cunning

In many entries the detail display includes notes on pronunciation, synonyms, antonyms, style, an occasional cultural comment, and other useful items. For example, a usage comment may explain the difference between *брать напрокат* ‘to rent, to lease’ and *брать в аренду* ‘to rent, to lease’, where the English glosses are not helpful. The structure of the entries makes them easy to expand. This dictionary is called *The Tree* because it keeps growing. Some day I may start adding Melchukian [Mel’čukian] lexical functions, in one format or another.

Because each ‘details’ link takes the reader to a display that is specific to the item she has selected, the information she sees there is tailored to her interest: no irrelevant inflected forms, aspect partners, or comments clutter the screen. Compared to the more traditional grouping of meanings or usages, this allows me to write cleaner entries.

Consider, for example, the top two items in the list for *брать*. Most Russian-English dictionaries would group them together because both can be glossed as ‘get; take’, and indeed the two usage cases are close. However, their government patterns are different (*взять X в руки* vs. *взять X у мамы* ‘take X in your hand’ vs. ‘take X from Mom’) and that difference cannot be cleanly presented in the combined entry. Their combinatorial properties and lexical functions are also different: you might hear someone say *беспардонно брать деньги у мамы* ‘shamelessly take money from Mom’ but I doubt you will hear people say *беспардонно брать в руку карандаш* ‘shamelessly pick up a pencil’. Okay, perhaps one can shamelessly

pick up a pencil and use it to draw something outrageous. If so, here is perhaps a more convincing example: *the opposite* of taking money from Mom is giving her money (thus the verbs *давать* ‘to give’ and *возвращать* ‘to return’ should be listed in the entry), but the opposite of picking up a pencil is *класть* ‘to put, to place’. Therefore, two entries are better than one. In some cases, the set of usable inflected forms can be different, as well. In other words, my guiding principle in defining an entry is that any difference should lead to separation.

Accordingly, in the RDT, if one instantiation of a word differs from another in some detail, such as a different value of a lexical function, government pattern, set of synonyms, etc., those two cases are presented separately. This sets the RDT apart from the excellent project called *Викисловарь* (Wiktionary).<sup>6</sup> Wiktionaries take full advantage of unlimited electronic storage and display space, and include all kinds of information, potentially combining morphological, phraseological, semantic, cultural, and other types of dictionaries in one portal. I like this approach for its philosophical and practical advantages: it paints an exhaustive portrait of a word, which I find very appealing; and it spares the learner a search for a specialized dictionary for her every need (a search that most learners simply won’t undertake). However, the clarity of the presentation is greatly hampered by grouping all incarnations of a word together. When investigating a particular usage of the word, the reader has to sift through many bits of irrelevant information and is expected to be able to cope with that. In the RDT, if a certain inflected form, government pattern, or synonym is not relevant for the selected usage, it is not shown.

The long list of items shown above for the verb *брать* is complemented by an entirely separate list for *взять*, its perfective counterpart. The two lists are not quite parallel because some usages are unique to one aspect or the other. For example, this context for *взять* rarely appears for *брать*:

## Взять

- ....
- *as in* дети уже ждали наследства, а он взял да и женился *Informal* his children were expecting an inheritance any day now, but he up/went and got married (*when followed by и/да + perfective verb*) [details➔]

The detail display for the above entry states that this use of the imperfective partner is rare, but not impossible, e.g. *Ужасный был хулиган. Как увидит знак «Не курить», так нарочно берёт и закуривает.* ‘He was an inveterate contrarian. He would deliberately light up whenever he saw a no-smoking sign’.

By isolating each aspect partner into its own entry, the RDT resolves some of the difficulties of the more traditional combined presentation of perfective verbs and their imperfective partners:

- English equivalents are much easier to present when they do not have to fit both aspects.
- Sentential examples (for government patterns and other illustration) can be compiled to fit the relevant aspect. This often requires entirely different sentences and is especially important for presenting idiomatic/phrasological usage.
- The display of inflected forms is greatly streamlined.
- A list of the verb's aspect partners can be offered without complicating the display, e.g. for the imperfective verb *играть* as in *играть гаммы на рояле* 'to play scales on a piano', the aspect notation is Pf-begin<sup>7</sup>: *заиграть*, Pf-awhile: *поиграть*, Pf: *сыграть* and *проиграть*. This information would be less readable if both aspectual variants were presented in one entry.

I teach Russian language and produce documentaries that I use in my courses. That's where words really live an exciting life, complete with intonations, facial expressions, and gestures. Not all language is speech, yet speech is where it all begins. Cognition by analysis has its place in language learning, but more and more frequently I see my colleagues turn away from rules and dictionary entries. And I see students achieving greater success with search engines than with specialized dictionaries. Given what I said at the beginning, should I continue cultivating my *Tree*?

A dictionary serves three functions:

- for a learner, an array of entry points into the language
- for a proficient speaker, a reference tool
- for the lexicographer, an object of love and attention.

I think the first two functions could be better served by advanced searching and presentation technologies. The third one cannot be replicated by any other means, so I guess I'll stick around – hoping to nudge lexicographers gently away from producing traditional dictionaries.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A few examples of collocational dictionaries are: (Iordanskaja and Paperno 1996), (Mel'čuk et al. 1984-1999), (Mel'čuk and Polguère 2007), and the father of them all (Mel'čuk and Žolkovskij 1984). I also must mention my long-time favorite (Denisov and Morkovkin 1978). That edition is a monolingual resource.



2 The main part of the RNC (*Russian National Corpus – Nacional'nyj korpus russkogo jazyka*) is a monolingual resource; the RNC also includes several parallel corpora, a valuable bilingual tool. The titles of the dictionaries I cite indicate whether they are mono- or bilingual.

3 *The Russian Dictionary Tree* (RDT) by Slava Paperno and Richard L. Leed can be used at <http://russian.cornell.edu/rdt/> and, with a slightly more sophisticated interface, <http://lexiconbridge.com/cloud/>.

4 One of the modifications that were necessary because of the technology of this publication is the removal of accent marks. In the RDT, word stress (principal and secondary) is marked for all words that bear it, including the stressed monosyllabic words like *но* (secondary stress) and *он* (primary) because, of course, the vowel in these two words does not sound the same (nor is it the same as the vowel in the unstressed *о*), which is useful information for the learner.

5 A 'semi-auxiliary' verb may not be a widely accepted label or category, but I find it very useful in teaching. The concept contributes to the learner's understanding that all incarnations of a word are mutually related.

6 In many ways similar to Wikipedia, Wiktionaries exist for several languages. The Russian-language Wiktionary can be used at <https://ru.wiktionary.org/>. Like *The Russian Dictionary Tree*, it will probably always be a work in progress. I would like to see articles on individual culturally significant words/concepts included in Wiktionary, e.g. the wonderful collection published in (Zaliznjak et al. 2005).

7 As far as I know, the practice of labeling *aktionsart* as Pf-begin, Pf-awhile, and Pf-once was first introduced in (Leed and Paperno 1987).

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**RDT** – *The Russian Dictionary Tree*. Paperno, S. and R.L. Leed. <http://russian.cornell.edu/rdt/>, or <http://lexiconbridge.com/cloud/>

**RNC** – Russian National Corpus (NKRJa – *Nacional'nyj korpus russkogo jazyka*): <http://ruscorpora.ru/>.

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## TRANSLATORS' CORNER

### A TRANSLATOR'S-EYE VIEW OF IDIOM DICTIONARIES

Lydia Razran Stone

I am a Russian to English translator, currently retired from earning a living but still translating, with a focus on rhymed metrically faithful translations of poetry. I cannot imagine that I could have found any profession or professional activity that would be more interesting and satisfying for me than being a translator. I was enthralled by words and dictionaries far before I ever felt a real need to choose a profession. When it comes to dictionaries I favor those of idiomatic expressions for, it seems, the same reason I favor poetry: both are at the pinnacle of linguistic creativity and both represent the greatest challenges for translation.

My actual translation experience, working only from Russian into English and mostly in technical subjects and poetry, has not required very substantial use of the idiomatic dictionary collection I have amassed. However, I have used these volumes extensively for other translation-related quasi-recreational projects I have undertaken. I myself have compiled a number of glossaries of specific subtypes of English idiomatic expressions and have worked with a partner on an English-Russian dictionary of idiomatic expressions taken from sports. With him, I have published a number of columns under the general heading 'Idiom Savants' meant mainly to entertain. I also write a quarterly humor column, 'SlavFile Lite: Not by Word Count Alone', in which I frequently discuss idiom mistranslations found in the media and published works.

Sophia Lubensky's *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (2013) has been on my desk as a reference since the first edition came out. For me it represents the gold standard for bilingual idiom dictionaries, not merely because of the completeness of its coverage and accuracy, but also because the information included in each entry is based on the compiler's conscious and insightful decision as to what information would be the most useful for her target audience (Russian→English translators). In terms of my own preferences, the features I appreciate most in bilingual dictionaries of idiomatic expressions, aside from freedom from inaccuracies (including typos) and inclusion of as many appropriate entries as possible, are: 1) A complete explanation of the meaning of the idiom including the situational and conversational context in which it would be used and relevant emotions, attitudes, and/or intentions of the speaker it conveys. If what the phrase conveys is somewhat different in different contexts this

should be stipulated. Register or registers should be noted. 2) Another extremely important thing would be a range of equivalents in the target language – not necessarily idioms, if good correspondence cannot be achieved. (In many less satisfactory dictionaries of idiomatic expressions I have observed that the drive to cite an analogous idiom, proverb, etc., can produce very approximate and at times misleading equivalents.) The more equivalents the entry provides in the target language, the more likely the reader will get a true idea of the meaning and find the appropriate one for his or her text, even if the dictionary does not list it *per se*. Specific examples of usage are very helpful, but, depending on their source, may not correspond to the level of discourse a translator requires. For example, a translation from 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature might not be appropriate for someone needing to translate the idiom used in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century mass-market film. Since I am not confident in my own active Russian, the only Russian idioms I would use are those that I have heard numerous times in conversation and am sure of. Thus, I myself am less interested in material about grammatical usage constraints in the source language, though I understand its value to others.

Aside from the above, the feature of bilingual dictionaries of idiomatic expressions that I most value is an index, which in my experience is provided only in the minority of cases. Inclusion of an index of all key words that cites whole idioms and links to page or entry numbers enormously enhances the ease and sometimes even possibility of finding an idiom. Dictionaries in which entries are organized by topic, of course absolutely require an index if they are to be used for any purpose other than browsing.

Yet another feature I would appreciate, although do not require, is a literal translation of the source language idiom. Even though the translation of any unknown words can be found in an ordinary dictionary, sometimes it is the syntax that baffles and one is too short of time to look up words after learning how to render the conveyed sense of the idiom. Knowing the literal meaning of an idiom greatly helps to anchor the conveyed meaning in my mind, and this might well be the case of other users.

I have always known that compiling a dictionary of any kind requires an enormous amount of work, research, and erudition; what I have come to realize while attempting to write this contribution is how many trade-off decisions must be made and how greatly many of these decisions depend on the intended primary user of the dictionary. At the very least, assuming some rough limitations on the size of the dictionary and the resources of those working on it, the number of entries and the length of individual entries would certainly have to be inversely related. A language learner might appreciate a great deal of supporting information in each entry at the expense of inclusion of obscure or little used idioms. An experienced literary translator might find shorter entries with less explanation and examples sufficient, especially for commonly used idioms, and prefer that available space be used to increase the number of less used expressions defined.

A compiler must not only consider what idioms to include but also whether to include commonly used idiomatic expressions that belong to some other category – proverbs, for example, or full or truncated quotations from literature or other media, interjections, or slang that has become part of the standard language. After all, a reader who needs to look up the meaning of a phrase encountered in reading or conversation is quite likely not to know what category the phrase belongs to. Indeed the dimensions that define an idiomatic expression are not always independent and many terms could reasonably be classified as belonging to more than one category. Furthermore, the set of idiomatic terms in common use is constantly changing, especially rapidly in this age of internet memes. It seems likely that there will never be an idiom dictionary (monolingual or bilingual) that contains all the terms a non-native speaker might with some justification try to look up in an idiom dictionary.

Another part of the entry that involves a difficult decision on the part of the compiler is whether to include examples of use of idioms in naturally occurring context and where to find suitable examples. Lubensky, for example, uses a truly impressive list of Russian original literary sources (literature and memoirs) for the Russian examples coupled with one or more published translations by well-respected translators. Note that quotations have to be found that fit within a very limited space but provide enough situational, conversational, and emotional context to give a good idea of how the idiom is used. Aside from the huge amount of work finding such examples and checking translations entails, use of quotations from literature may or may not be the most appropriate guide for uses in other contexts (journalism for example, or actual colloquial speech). If classics are used there is the additional problem of the time that has elapsed between their writing and the publication date of the dictionary and time of use. The most current new idioms at the time the dictionary is being compiled will likely be underrepresented.

A second option is for the compiler to create examples with context to accord with the other material in the entry. It seems to me fairly likely that virtually every compiler of idiomatic dictionaries has resorted to this method at times, and certainly it is preferable to leaving out an idiom or not giving a usage example because a suitable published example of its use could not be found.

A potential way to find non-literary naturally occurring examples of idioms is to turn to the Internet. But use of the Internet as a general source is fraught with dangers. Not everything on the Internet is written by someone with a good command of the language or of the standard meaning of a particular idiom he or she uses. Some idiom sites consist of or include contributions solicited from the public and, evidently, not edited. These may offer the most outrageous supposed definitions and examples, which at best are used by a small subgroup and, at worst, are some contributor's idea of a joke. Furthermore, searches for idioms in context on the Internet, even from reputable publications, are apt to turn up very large numbers of the products of advertisement, headline, and

script and song writers' searches for punning references to attention-getting well-known phrases. These, in my experience, come up in searches *en masse* before an actual use of an idiom in appropriate communicative context is found. Lastly, it is not clear that the version of English (or any other language) written directly for communicating on the Internet is standard English and thus appropriate for dictionaries claiming to reference usage in that language.

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# PIES IN THE SKY VERSUS BIRDS IN THE HAND: REAL LIFE IDIOM DICTIONARIES

Nora Seligman Favorov

I am not a lexicographer; I am a translator, a greedy consumer of lexicographic resources. What do I want out of these resources? My desires are, no doubt, unreasonable, since so few resources come close to meeting them. In the case of idioms, I look to lexicographers to search the seemingly infinite universe of usage and identify the most eloquent and accurate matches between idioms in my source language, Russian, and my target language, English. Not only do I want Russian idioms to be explained (literal and figurative meaning, context, register, mood, temporal and geographic diffusion, alternative word orders, grammatical information, as well as associations with classes of people, events, or situations), I want examples – from literary works and news reports, blogs and advertisements, pop culture and scholarly articles – that have been translated by only the most insightful and knowledgeable translators.

For now, these demands are pie in the sky. Just finding the examples I so greedily seek would take an army of Russian-English lexicographers (and the funding sources to support their efforts). Then, in the print arena, there is the issue of space and the limitations imposed by the overall economic equation.

My unreasonable, pie-in-the-sky demands notwithstanding, I am generally pleased with the Russian-English idioms resources at my disposal, which range from the precise, detailed, and scholarly to the sprawling and unreliable. Writing this essay is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the resources I use and how I use them.

## Нечего греха таить (Why Deny It?)

There's no use denying it: sometimes convenience takes precedence over quality in my decision to choose one resource over another. *Время – деньги!*, i.e. Time is money! There are deadlines and limited hours in the day. This is why the first resource I turn to in most cases when I encounter an unfamiliar Russian idiom is ABBYY Lingvo x5 (2011) – not because it is the best but because it is the fastest and easiest to access. Instead of breaking my bond with the keyboard and interrupting the flow of words onto my monitor, Lingvo allows me to highlight a phrase (assuming I'm translating a digitized text and not squinting at a piece of paper) and tap out a quick Ctrl+C+C. *Словно по щучьему веленью* (as if by magic) I am offered, for example, two suggested translations

of *нечего греха таить*, i.e. let's face it; to be honest from ABBYY Lingvo's own *Russian-English Dictionary: The American Variant* and two Russian equivalents (*незачем скрывать; нужно признаться*) from S.A. Kuznecov's *Comprehensive Russian Explanatory Dictionary*. These are just two of the 220 dictionaries that ABBYY has brought together in the Lingvo x5 package. Two others of potential value in deciphering Russian idioms are D.I. Kveselevič's (2001) *Modern Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms*, which offers examples from literature, and Lingvo-Pro, which features translations contributed by users of the ABBYY Lingvo.Pro website. According to Lingvo's 'About Dictionary' pop-up, 'On the ABBYY Lingvo.Pro website, you will also find the full versions of the ABBYY Lingvo x5 dictionaries and usage examples from bilingual text corpora'.

The infrastructure ABBYY has provided with its Lingvo products and website holds tremendous promise and can already be extremely useful, but there are serious problems. First, the infrastructure itself frequently fails. For example, after some time-consuming investigation, I did discover a lengthy entry for *чего греха таить* from (Kveselevič 2001) that was not offered in response to my initial Ctrl+C+C (presumably because his entry only covered this precise wording, and not the synonymous *нечего* variant). Second, although I have not made a thorough study of any of the components of Lingvo's overall idiom package, the quality and number of English equivalents offered is often wanting and, on occasion, laughable. It is hard to have confidence in a resource that offers, for *растряссти жир*, for example, one literal equivalent 'shake off one's fat' and one that is simply wrong ('slenderize') and tops it off with the following example: *Орудуйте поэнергичнее... Полезно, очень полезно **растряссти жирок***, translated as: 'Put a jerk in it!.. Shake off your fat, it's very good for your health'. (A better translation – with thanks to Sophia Lubensky's dictionary discussed below – might be: *Use some elbow grease! It'd do you good to shed some of that blubber.*) That particular entry is taken from what Lingvo identifies on screen as 'Idioms (Ru-En)', in other words Kveselevič (2001), who has drawn his example from a Russian novel that has sunk so deeply into oblivion (Fedor Gladkov's socialist realist *Energy*) that the only hits we get when we plug the Russian example into any of the top Russian search engines come from Kveselevič, not Gladkov. In general, Kveselevič's examples seem to be taken from Soviet-era translations produced by native Russian speakers who, one suspects, never set foot in an English-speaking country (it is telling that none of the translators are credited). To the contemporary American ear, such renderings as *jiggery-pokery* for *но щучьему веленью* are odd and, in some cases, utterly unfamiliar. Furthermore, all of Lingvo's idiom resources suffer from a dearth of usage notes, collocations, contextual restrictions, etc. And when it comes to the sort of 'crowdsourcing' offered by Lingvo-Pro and its (perhaps dominant) competitor Multitran.ru, the wealth of possible solutions offered can be both



a blessing and a curse. High quality translations are often lost in a sea of infelicities, usually contributed by non-native speakers of the target language. This is why I often do go to the trouble of breaking my bond with the keyboard and turning to my favorite paper resource for Russian idioms.

### Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда (No Pain, No Gain)

As the Russian saying goes, without effort, you won't even get a little fish out of a pond. This idiom applies both to the decades of labor that no doubt went into producing Sophia Lubensky's *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* and the translator's effort involved in using a paper resource – trivial by comparison, but a factor in the day-to-day translation process. No doubt plenty of hard work went into putting together sprawling resources such as Lingvo x5 and Multitran, but it was not the sort of disciplined, scholarly, and painstaking labor (along with help and cooperation of some top Russian-into-English translators, credited in the acknowledgements) that produced the resource I turn to most often when the idiomatic challenge warrants removing my hands from the keyboard and bending down to pick up a heavy tome (usually sitting on the floor right by my chair). With my 'Lubensky', I know that every entry has been expertly vetted, most offer gems of examples from literary translations, and furthermore that the work is targeted at the contemporary American audience. (In contrast with Kveselevič 2001, the translations are all attributed, and the list of literary sources runs fourteen pages.)

Again, being in a hurry, my eyes usually rush straight to the bold print offering English equivalents (the decision to put these equivalents in bold type has saved me what will eventually add up to significant time). Next (unless I am rushed and have already seen the solution to my translation problem), I read the examples taken from literature or, in some cases, invented. If the context in which the idiom is being used in my source text does not make the choice of equivalent immediately clear, I next read the explanatory information preceding the equivalents. Finally, only if I find an idiom to be so appealing that I think (a) I might want to work it into my active Russian and (b) I will actually remember it do I read the grammatical information, word-order restrictions, etc., at the beginning of the entry.

When precision is essential, such as when I was translating a series of documents featuring words spoken or written by Joseph Stalin (an imaginative user and abuser of Russian idioms!), I use this resource exclusively. To offer just one example, when Comrade Stalin voiced the charitable (if, as subsequent events proved, insincere) opinion that the peasantry should not be seen as a colony from which industry could *драть десять шкур*, lit. 'to strip off ten hides', I greatly appreciated the wealth of information offered by Lubensky's dictionary as compared with Lingvo. First, Lubensky provided separate sub-entries for two variations on this idiom – a shorter version that does not specify a

particular number of hides (generally used to convey a threat) and a longer version that usually refers to seven (and sometimes two or three) hides (I suppose Stalin's ten hides were for emphasis) – and provided different explanations and English equivalents for the short and long versions. While Lingvo (*The American Variant*, in this case, although the bulk of Lingvo's entries for this idiom came from Kveselevič 2001) did offer one equivalent not included by Lubensky that I considered using (*fleece smb.*), the latter's explanation ('*highly coll* being in a position of power, to exploit s.o. pitilessly by making him pay large taxes, very high interest, exorbitant prices, etc.')

helped me choose what I thought was the best English idiom for the context: *to squeeze dry*. In short, I consider the Lubensky idiom dictionary made almost *как по заказу*, i.e. made 'to order'. Since limitations of time, space, and the print medium prevented the inclusion of literal translations and more examples, I would call it *му синица в руках*, i.e. proverbial bird in the hand, if not *предел мечтаний*, i.e. dream come true.

#### На закуску (To Top Things Off)

In closing, I would like to mention one other resource I have benefitted from in deciphering Russian idioms, although it is not exclusively devoted to that particular form of speech. In my ideal world, where everything I ever wanted to know about a phrase I've encountered in Russian is assembled in one searchable space, I would like to have Pavel Palazhchenko's *My Unsystematic Dictionary* (2003-2009) included. Palazhchenko, a highly regarded translator and interpreter who is best known for interpreting for Mikhail Gorbachev, is not a lexicographer. He puts Russian and English usages he finds interesting under a microscope and shares his thoughts about their possible equivalence.

Take, for example, his discussion of the English phrase *the bottom line*. Palazhchenko devotes almost two pages to examining how well one meaning of this phrase coincides with the Russian phrase *сухой остаток* (a term used in chemistry to signify the dry residue that is left over after evaporation). Drawing on excerpts that fall within a relatively short timeframe and come from the close-knit world to which *New York Times* opinion writers belong, he still manages to find examples that make the exact usage algorithm for *the bottom line* rather hard to pin down.

His first example comes from a November 2002 *New York Times* opinion piece by Thomas Friedman: *Bottom line: Many Europeans today fear, or detest, America more than they fear Saddam*. Palazhchenko comments on the 'new tendency' to omit an article in certain breezy styles of writing and suggests that this usage is roughly equivalent to 'in summary'.

Another example he offers from the *New York Times* that uses this phrase is a February 2003 editorial that asks how the United States can 'get France and

its supporters to define their own bottom line rather than simply criticizing Washington's'. Here, Palazhchenko offers the Russian equivalents of *fundamental position* or *last straw* as useful phrases in translating *bottom line*, although it strikes me that *define their own bottom line* might have just as easily been expressed as 'state what is most important to them'. But what I like about the loose ('unsystematic' – the disclaimer is right in the book's title) format of Palazhchenko's work is that it enables him to share his thought process. Following the logic of the *Times*' editorial board, he notices that France's *bottom line* is contrasted with the *overriding concern* of the United States. He concludes that *bottom line* and *overriding concern* are being used synonymously.

Of course, Palazhchenko's two-volume dictionary is indeed unsystematic. (Only at the conclusion of the entry does he mention, almost as an afterthought, the common use of *bottom line* to refer to the final line of a financial report.) But unsystematic resources produced by translators and interpreters, such as Palazhchenko (whose website features interesting discussions of terminology, including idioms and set phrases) and Michele Berdy, who regularly demystifies Russian idioms for readers of *The Moscow Times* and *Russian Life* magazine and has published a book on the subject, *The Russian Word's Worth*, are valuable supplements to the more disciplined works of the professional lexicographer.

If greedy translators like me ruled the world, there would be armies of trained lexicographers monitoring usage across all languages in order to *отделить зёрна от плевел*, i.e. to separate the wheat from the chaff – outlying usages from standard usages and mistranslations from accurate translations, and catalogue their findings in a searchable database. Alas, we do not rule the world, so for now part of our job is to assemble a range of systematic and unsystematic resources and apply our own common sense and judgment in selecting equivalents.

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# THOUGHTS ON DICTIONARIES

Diana Burgin

‘The problem of learning Ancient Greek’, Professor Setchkarev of Harvard University once said to me, ‘is that you can look up every word of a sentence in a really good dictionary, understand what all the words mean, and still not really understand what the Greek text is all about’. His remark sums up for me the value and shortcomings of dictionaries.

## I. My life with dictionaries

My first contact with dictionaries (in my native language, English) dates back about 60 years to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, in the Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, Massachusetts, when we began to read ‘serious’ literature. As part of studying certain books (I remember in particular ‘The Gold Bug’, by Poe, who has an extraordinary vocabulary) we were asked to make lists of words in the text we didn’t know, look them up in a ‘good’ (i.e. not pocket) dictionary, and write down as many ‘meanings’ (often synonyms) as were listed. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades we had weekly vocabulary quizzes on the new words we learned. I remember this because these practices seem to have defined my attitudes to and use of dictionaries for the rest of my life, up to the present. My grade-school experience with dictionaries also developed in me a fascination with words, their meanings, derivations and ultimately, their unique aspects both within a language and by comparison with other languages.

‘Other languages’ consciously became part of my life when I entered high school and began to study them. Foreign languages entranced me, probably because my father, whom I adored, knew several and spoke English with an accent (a fact I wasn’t really aware of until I listened to a recording of his voice speaking English several months after his death!).<sup>1</sup> The first language I studied was German, then French, both in high school. Naturally, I made use of dictionaries, to look up and learn (or try to) words I didn’t know. I also enjoyed writing stories, first in German, then, translating the German into French. One story was called, ‘Willi and the Wiener Schnitzel’, another, a play written first in French, was called ‘The Letter’. I did this writing and translating on my own, for fun, and not for a school assignment. I’m sure I used dictionaries to help me write those stories, probably the glossaries in my German and French textbooks.

In college, I finally began my study of Russian (my father’s native language which he did not speak, ALAS! at home). Russian was hard, but endlessly challenging, and Russian literature was the best (I had begun reading it in

translation from age 11). I chose a Russian major, went on to graduate school in Slavic, and became a professor of Russian, then a translator from Russian to English. In college, my Russian professor was Russian, loved literature, and had us read Gogol's 'Overcoat' after just 2 years of Russian. I vividly recall that I had to look up almost every word on the first page of the story and write in the meanings in between the lines, but I still understood very little. (It was forbidden to use English translations). This Russian teacher also told us NOT to use English-Russian dictionaries for our compositions on literary topics because we should try to use only words and expressions (in speaking and writing) that we already 'knew'. She warned us if we looked up an English word or phrase in order to find a Russian equivalent, we would most likely choose the wrong one if several were given. As it turned out, in the Russian we 'knew' at that stage we also came up with completely 'un-Russian' phrases, especially in our literary essays (which had to be written in Russian from scratch). As a result, the professor would rewrite virtually each student's whole essay. Needless to say, that was not a teaching technique I emulated when I taught Russian!

Nevertheless, I took my professor's advice to heart despite the frustration it caused (never being able to say anything I really wanted to say!) and I eschewed E-R dictionaries entirely, other than glossaries provided for specific texts. (They were, and still are, a godsend! What I wouldn't give for a fully glossed text of *The Master and Margarita*! Anyone interested?). The only dictionary I bought at the beginning of my career in Russian was the Oxford Russian-English Dictionary (ORED 1972), in the early 1970s, and I have used it ever since as my main dictionary. (It is tattered, duct-taped, even missing a few pages, including the title page, but it is my friend). Although it is now not up-to-date, and although I have other more specialized dictionaries in my library, the Oxford R-E dictionary has consistently been the most useful to me and still is.

Of course, the Oxford is not an idiomatic dictionary and its presentation of idioms is inconsistent. For example, it has a proverb which is not commonly used, *ешь пирог с грибами, держи язык за зубами* (lit. 'eat your mushroom pie, hold your tongue behind your teeth'), but does not have the more common, *вот какие пироги* (lit. 'so that's the pies we have', equivalents *so that's how it is, that's the way the cookie crumbles*), which the two idiomatic dictionaries I own do have. Nevertheless, the Oxford occasionally does have some words and related semi-idiomatic phrases that my other idiomatic dictionaries do not, for example, *петрушка* (in both, totally unrelated meanings of the word, 1) 'parsley' and 2) 'Punch', as well as the latter's figurative, colloquial meaning, 'foolishness, absurdity, nonsense, grotesquerie, wild scene, travesty', etc. *ad quasi-infinitum*). I've heard Russians use phrases with *петрушка* in its second, figurative meaning and recently, when rereading *Master i Margarita*, re-encountered it twice in what I consider idiomatic

phrases: 1) *Что означает вся эта петрушка с Ялтой?* (chapter 14); and 2) *К чему вся нелепая погоня за ним в подштанниках и со свечкой в руках, а затем и дикая петрушка в ресторане?* (chapter 11). I suddenly recalled my first encounter with these phrases in Bulgakov's novel, a quarter century ago when they really made no sense to me even though I knew *петрушка* meant 'parsley' and that *Петрушка* was the 'Punch' hero in Stravinsky's ballet. What I didn't know then was that *Petrushka* can be used with a small p in the figurative sense of 'nonsense, absurdity' etc. I found this information, incomplete as it may be, only in the Oxford dictionary. It was enough to allow me to understand the phrase and to start mulling over possible English translations.

There is one quibble I have with standard and specialized Russian-English or Russian-Russian dictionaries in general. They do not uniformly (and at best, only in some cases) provide information about the etymology, derivation or brief history of the words/phrases they present, the way 'good', one-volume English dictionaries routinely do. I consider this an insufficiency for two reasons. Knowing the etymology/brief history of a word or idiom can not only give one a whole new take on the nuances of a commonly used word or phrase, it can often cement the 'meaning' of a new word or phrase in your mind, help you remember it (so you don't have to look it up again) and make it part of your active usage (to my mind, the ultimate test of understanding). My experience with the phrase, *с гулькин нос* (lit. 'the size of a dove's nose') illustrates this. I first encountered this expression in the speech and correspondence of a Russian colleague many years ago. From the way my colleague used the phrase, I understood its function as an adverbial quantifier, I recognized it as an idiom (or 'fixed expression', as we were taught), and I vaguely got its meaning from the context. Just to make sure of what it meant, I looked it up in a dictionary I had to hand. Happily, I found it, and learned I had been 'right' about the general meaning and function. However, I remained quizzical as to how it came to have that meaning. I surmised it came from some *Гулька* (I knew about possessive adjectives from first names ending in *-а*), but who was s/he and what did her/his nose have to do with it? In a word, I knew what the idiom 'meant' but for want of its etymology, it lacked 'real' meaning for me. I could understand it, translate it, but I wouldn't risk using it. When I finally learned that *гулька* is used by dove-keepers to call pigeons, that information made the idiom my own, part of my active vocabulary. Why? Because the metaphor etymologically embedded in the idiom allows me to visualize a pigeon's nose.

In a broader sense, it's important for a serious reader, not to mention a translator, to know the histories of words and their etymologies. Russian modernist poets, for example, often play on etymologies and the derivational associations of words, which in turn constitute the whole 'meaning' of some of their most difficult (some would say, meaningless) verse. Tsvetaeva is a prime example. Of

course, there are Russian etymological dictionaries, but they aren't (or haven't been) the easiest things to acquire and consult on the spur of the moment. Online dictionaries may remedy the accessibility issue. This morning I googled *с гулькин нос* on google.ru and, with lightning speed, found a presentation of the idiom in (FSRJа 1968) on dic.academic.ru that concluded, to my delight, with the derivation of *гулькин*: 'Буквально: с нос голубя. Гулькин – прилагательное от существительного *гулька*. Гуля, гулька – ласковые звукоподражательные названия голубя. Предлог *с* употребляется в значении сравнения: как гулькин нос, т. е. размером с нос голубя.' [Literally: the size of a dove's nose'. *Dove's* is an adjective from the onomatopoeic pet name, *gul'ka* ('lovey-dovey') used by dove-keepers to call doves. The preposition *с* + the acc. ('the size of') conveys the sense of comparison: like a dove's nose, i.e. the size of a dove's nose.]

### Why dictionaries are important and what they lack

As a reader and translator of Russian, R-E dictionaries are first of all important for telling me the meaning of words or short phrases that I simply do not know, or have only a vague idea about. Thus, they play a crucial role in the first stage of translating a Russian work into English, the stage when I prepare a literal (totally un-artistic and sometimes unreadable) 'equivalency' translation. I always hope to find in a dictionary I consult, several possible English words that could render the Russian word, depending on the context of the specific passage in the work I am translating.

In finding appropriate English renderings of Russian words/idiomatic usages, the most challenging are phrases involving interjections, various parts of speech that are used as interjections, and so-called particles, like *ну, же, -то, как, -де, что, кто-кто*, etc. These can drive you mad, and sometimes you just have to forget about them. Dictionaries do provide very interesting, even exhaustive, but frustratingly, not too useful explanations of how some particles and interjections are employed; for example, you're told, (and this is not a quotation from any particular dictionary) – '*Ну* is an interjection that can express surprise, excitement, annoyance, bewilderment, consternation, etc. and so forth, depending on the context.' The problem is, it's not always clear exactly which emotion (or maybe more than one) is being expressed in the *specific* passage in the text you are reading or translating, not to mention the Russian *realia* of time and place that surround it. In such cases, and until someone does a glossed and annotated edition of the Russian text you're working with, only a qualified native speaker of Russian who really understands all the ins and outs of the idiomatic phrase you're dealing with can help. One caveat, however: native speakers are most helpful when they are willing to talk with you about the problematic word or phrase *in Russian* and not offer

you, a native speaker of English, what s/he thinks is the ‘best’ or ‘right’ English translation.

Ironically, dictionaries can sometimes be far more interesting than useful not only to translators seeking to understand all the nuances of a phrase but simply to educated readers trying to grasp its use in one specific context. In order to find the best dictionary to consult, the reader/translator has to know what sort of phrase he is dealing with: A winged word? Idiom? Slang? Original coinage? Etc. Such classifications surely are very important for how and when to use the phrase in question, but if one comes across a particular expression in a text for the first time, one often simply doesn’t know its taxonomy and therefore, which dictionary to turn to. My attempts to fully understand a phrase in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*, *Свету ли провалиться, или мне чаю не пить?* ‘Is the world to go under, or am I not to have my tea?’ illustrate this quite common quandary.

To begin with, I must note that anyone who can read Dostoevsky in the original, let alone translate him, probably knows the infinitive + dative construction used here as well as expressions with the verb *провалиться* ‘go under’ + dative, and can also probably guess at the general ‘meaning’ of what the Underground Man is mouthing off about in his inimitable, sardonic way. But, in order truly to understand the phrase in context, one has to look it up. The question is, where? I looked for it in Professor Lubensky’s excellent phraseological dictionary (revised edition) in the Index, under the verb, *провалиться*, and after reading the entry, I learned a lot of reliable, interesting, and generally useful information about, and idiomatic expressions used with this verb. But, the specific phrase I was curious about, was not there, and with good reason. I learned later (from Professor Lubensky herself) that Dostoevsky’s phrase is not so much an idiom as a, rather uncommon, winged word that is not fully idiomatic.<sup>2</sup> It wasn’t her dictionary’s oversight not to have it, I understood that, but still, I was left frustrated. As a last resort, I went online, and I did find Dostoevsky’s winged word in toto, simply by googling it as written on google.ru. Up popped:

*Энциклопедический словарь крылатых слов и выражений*

*Свету ли провалиться, или мне чаю не пить?*

‘Is the world to go under, or am I not to have my tea?’

Слова главного героя повести «Записки из подполья» (1864) Ф. М. Достоевского (1821 — 1881): «Свету ли провалиться, или вот мне чаю не пить? Я скажу, что свету провалиться, а чтоб мне чай всегда пить». Ироническая фраза-символ крайнего индивидуализма, эгоизма.

[Words spoken by the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground* (1864) by F.M. Dostoevsky (1821-1881): ‘Is the world to go under, or am I not to have



my tea? (If that's the choice) I'd say that the world can go under, but I'd always have my tea.' An ironic coinage symbolizing extreme individualism, egoism.]

I have to say, however, that the only advantage offered by the internet 'dictionary' in this case was convenience and accessibility. The content of what I accessed was mind-blowingly sparse and next-to-useless. In the end, conversations with two native speakers of Russian helped me most though the translation I offer here – 'Is the world to go under, or am I not to have my tea?' – still does not completely satisfy me, artistically, and should be taken as a translation-in-progress.

Qualified native speakers offer translators a certain kind of help that dictionaries really can't simply because people (unlike immutable, inflexible print) can focus on the specific context at hand, and they can change their minds while explaining, i.e. be with you *in the process*. They can have a free-flowing conversation with you in Russian about how they understand the word or expression you're asking about and can, if patient, listen to your responses till you both agree you've 'understood'. Then, you try, on your own, to find a way of conveying your understanding in English. Ideally, you should have such conversations with two or three native speakers to see if you can't reach a consensus of informed opinion in your own mind.

### Quixotic aspects

Ultimately, in my experience, the hardest part of doing a translation is to find the best way of saying something in your native language that is still reasonably faithful to the language of the original, which, say what you will, comes out of a linguistic culture, as unique unto itself as your language is unto itself. Translating is the most quixotic of endeavors (except, perhaps, for compiling the 'perfect' dictionary); it's an endless joust with a fantasy opponent who, to mix metaphors, really comes 'from another opera'. How can you transpose Mozart's 'Don Giovanni' into Gounod's 'Faust' while remaining true to the former? I don't know. But one tries and clearly, people do succeed and we should all be grateful for good translations and good dictionaries.

Dictionaries play an important role in the process of translating, and some are more useful than others, but when it comes to the 'art' (or higher 'remeslo') of translation, i.e. the final stages of catching the intonations, nuances and Russian *realia* of the original in the target language, then one has to rely most on one's own ear, the ears of those who really know the nuances of Russian on one hand and English, on the other, and sometimes, just good luck.

### Notes

1 Richard Burgin (1892-1981), noted Russian-American violinist, former Concertmaster and Associate Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. – *Editors*.

2 An expression like this is an author-specific phraseme, a type of phrase which has aroused increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Author-specific phrasemes border the fields of linguistics and literary studies. – *Editors*.

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## СХЛОПОТАТЬ В БУБЕН, OR 'REARRANGE YOUR FACE'

Marian Schwartz

In translating contemporary Russian literature, as I often do these days, my single biggest lexical issue is the pace at which the Russian language is changing – too fast for traditional dictionaries to keep up and maybe too fast for authoritative online sources as well. For contemporary texts, once I've exhausted the available print and online resources, I usually ask a native speaker for help (I trade queries with a fine English-Russian translator), but inevitably I end up going to the author. In the case of Andrei Gelasimov, four of whose novels I've translated, I'm in luck. To my good fortune, Gelasimov wrote his dissertation on Oscar Wilde, so his responses tend to be especially helpful.

In his novel *The Lying Year* (*Год обмана*), which is set in the post-Soviet, pre-Putin years, Gelasimov uses the expression, *схлопотать в бубен*, lit. 'to get into the tambourine', in the following sentence:

При этом обзывали друг друга такими словами, за которые среди нормальных людей легко можно было *схлопотать в бубен*.

In his response to my query about the phrase, Gelasimov described it as slang, meaning 'быть избитым по лицу'. Cf. '*Схлопотать* значит "получить". *В бубен* – "в лицо".'

I translated the expression as 'rearrange your face,' which works well with the conversational tone of the narration at this point. For the full sentence, I have: 'They would call each other names that normal people might easily rearrange your face over'.

All in all, I sent Gelasimov forty queries for this novel. Of these, quite a few turned out to be crude expressions [грубые выражения] or euphemisms of crude expressions, many were slang, and one was a cultural reference – *Дед Пухто*, lit. 'Granddad Pikhto' – which turned out to be a crude response to the question *Ты кто?* (Who are you?) (another response being *конь в пальто*, lit. 'a horse in a coat'). Gelasimov made two points: that both answers rhymed with the question, and that *Пухто* occurred only with *Дед*. I never did come up with a similar rhyme and went instead for an answer to *Who are you?* that supplied the required sarcasm: *Brad Pitt*.

Part of me wishes I had some system for collecting the solutions to all my queries. Another (lazier? more pragmatic?) part of me has serious doubts that I will ever encounter another text with the two words *Дед Пухто*.

# HIDDEN TRAPS

Steven Shabad

One of the things that I love about translating is that no matter how much you ‘master’ your craft, I am still learning, still facing constant challenges in my work. Despite having been a Russian-English translator all my adult life (which is more years than I am willing to admit), I am still making discoveries. It took me years to seriously deal with the imperative of getting away from an overly literal translation of the Russian source. It is, in a sense, like escaping the gravitational pull of the original in order to enter the gravitational field of an idiomatic English translation.

An obvious example of this problem is false cognates – which are false not only because of different meanings in the two languages but also because of different usages even when the meanings are virtually identical. But false cognates, I finally came to realize, were merely a subset of a larger category that I would call ‘Hidden Traps’. These are Russian phrases and idioms that appear to be straightforward and to call for a direct translation, but in fact are semantically different. The context is always key, for it usually provides the necessary clue for the translator. A few examples:

- (1) *В принципе*. While the Russian phrase is semantically close to the English *in principle*, the more frequent and varied use in Russian puts it in the category of a false cognate. Examples:
  - (a) *Они прекрасно понимали, что регистрация электромагнитного импульса в принципе даёт возможность почти мгновенно получить информацию о ядерном взрыве* (They knew perfectly well that the recording of an electromagnetic pulse, *in general*, would make it possible almost instantly to obtain information on the nuclear explosion).
  - (b) *Не может существовать юридических обязательств, которые в принципе не предполагается исполнять* (There can be no legal obligations that *in principle* are not expected to be performed).
  - (c) *В принципе, следует согласиться с этой аргументацией* (*Basically*, we agree with this line of argument).
  - (d) *Тот факт, что внешне это может проявляться в разное время и в разных местах, ничего не меняет в принципе* (The fact that externally this can be manifested at various times and in various places does not change anything *in theory*).

- (e) **В принципе**, возможны несколько подходов в разрешении этого затруднения (*Basically*, several approaches are possible in dealing with these difficulties).
- (f) **Прежде всего, не надо планировать то, что в принципе недостижимо, необходимо обеспечить полное соответствие планируемых потребностей с имеющимися финансовыми возможностями** (Above all, one should not plan what *in theory* is unattainable; planned requirements must fully conform with available financial capabilities).

In principle (pun intended), it would not be technically wrong to translate в принципе in all of these examples as *in principle*. But the fact that the phrase is used much more often in Russian – it took little effort for me to collect these examples – than in English suggests that in many, if not most, cases it is not idiomatic in English. Words and phrases such as *basically*, *in general*, or *in theory*, convey the same meaning in a more suitable way.

- (2) *В связи с (чем-либо)*. This is no longer in the realm of cognates, but simply a hidden trap that tries to ‘trick’ the translator into staying within the gravitational pull of the Russian source. Consider:
- (a) **Освобождение от наказания в связи с состоянием здоровья осуждённого** (An exemption from punishment *due to* the health of the convicted person).
- (b) **Страхование по безработице покрывает риск, возникающий в связи с потерей работы или невозможностью трудоустроиться** (Unemployment insurance covers the risk *that results from* the loss of work or an inability to get a job).
- (c) **Зачастую косвенные (социальные) эффекты данных программ, выраженные в росте успеваемости, улучшении физического состояния детей или улучшении питания, трудно оценить. В связи с этим в данном разделе будут представлены основные расходы государства на поддержание программ социальной защиты и некоторые количественные показатели выгод от вложенных средств** (It is often difficult to evaluate the indirect (social) effects of these programs in terms of enhanced academic performance, an improvement in children’s physical condition or an improvement in diet. *As a result*, this section will present the government’s main expenditures on supporting social-protection programs and some quantitative indicators of the benefits from the investments).

Again, the fact that this phrase is constantly used in Russian – far more often than the English phrase *in connection with* – is a tip-off. But more to the point is the semantic distinction. More often than not, as in the above examples, *в связи с* denotes a cause-and-effect relationship between the two parts of the sentence. So the more idiomatic rendering is an English phrase such as *as a result of, because of, due to*. And a corollary of that point is that the phrase *в связи с чем*, when referring to the phrase that precedes it, should be translated as *therefore, as a result, accordingly* or the like.

All of this is not to negate the fact that sometimes, when no causal relationship is evident, *in connection with* or *in regard to* is not only perfectly acceptable, but the proper equivalent. For instance:

**В связи с вышеупомянутым проектом, хотелось бы обратить Ваше внимание на...** (*In connection with the aforementioned project, I would like to call your attention to...*)

Here the phrase comes from a letter on the subject of a certain project, and the English phrase *in connection with, in regard to* or the like is clearly the correct choice.

3) A final example of a trap: *Как сообщает..., как считает*, etc. The word *как* here would seem to call for *as*, but the word *as* suggests that what it modifies is an example of what precedes or follows it. In Russian, however, *как* usually carries no such meaning.

**Как сообщает ИТАР-ТАСС, норовирусом заразились свыше 120 пассажиров и членов экипажа** (*According to ITAR-Tass, more than 120 passengers and crew members contracted the norovirus*).

**Судебная система работает избирательно и люди не равны перед законом. Такое положение дел убивает в людях базовое чувство справедливости, и именно за восстановлением справедливости, как считают эксперты, российские граждане обращаются в Европейский суд** (*The judicial system works selectively and people are not equal before the law. This state of affairs kills the basic sense of justice in people, and it is precisely to restore justice, the experts believe, that Russian citizens apply to the European Court.*)

**Европарламент сегодня рассмотрит и, как ожидается, примет резолюцию по правам человека в России** (*The European Parliament today will consider, and is expected to adopt, a resolution on human rights in Russia*).

These challenges constantly test the translator's resourcefulness: digest the meaning of the source, remain as faithful as possible to it, but not slavishly so, and produce an equivalent that is idiomatic in the target language.

The Russian-English translator can find excellent solutions for the first two cases – which are idioms – in Sophia Lubensky's own *Russian-English*

*Dictionary of Idioms* (2013), which is easily the best volume of its kind available, with a quite comprehensive and on-the-mark selection of English equivalents.

Another useful source is the famous online dictionary [www.multitran.ru](http://www.multitran.ru), but it takes a scattershot approach to translation. That is, it is indiscriminately accepts contributions from anyone who registers with it – and while some are quite good, others do not fit or occasionally are downright wrong. It is best used by translators who have a good sense of the meaning they are looking for.

Sometimes, however, the hidden trap is not an idiom, as in the third case, involving the word combinations *как сообщает*, *как сказал*, *как считаем*, etc. And since there is no specific phrase or clear-cut definition of *как* to look up in a monolingual or bilingual dictionary, the translator must rely on context (see the examples above) to reveal the true meaning. Ideally, such phrases, which are not idioms but still pose traps, would be incorporated into future dictionaries, both regular and specialized ones.

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# TO DEFINE OR NOT TO DEFINE: REFLECTIONS OF A USER-CUM- EDITOR

Judith Hehir

As a professional translator and editor, I make ample use of dictionaries. Much of my current work is academic or technical in nature, which makes things rather cut and dried. Sometimes, however, I enjoy the challenge of a project requiring greater subtlety, i.e., a more subtle knowledge of and approach to the language(s) involved. In such instances, dictionaries play a far more vital role.

In the case of translation, it is specifically those times when subtlety is needed that I am inclined to avoid using a bilingual dictionary. I have always been somewhat averse to simply accepting an equivalent provided by a bilingual dictionary without the benefit of a definition. Instead, I aim to “feel” a word or phrase – to arrive at its meaning on my own, if possible – and pull up an equivalent from my own lexicon. This approach, however, often quickly exposes my limitations so that I ultimately find myself reaching for a dictionary of one kind or another. My first inclination is nearly always to consult a monolingual dictionary. Ideally, this results in a clear sense of the meaning of the word or phrase in question, while leaving room for me to come up with an English equivalent of my own.

Not so, however, with idioms. When I run across an unfamiliar idiom, I readily set aside my preference for monolingual dictionaries and happily avail myself of a bilingual dictionary for several good reasons. For starters, idioms, by their nature, largely defy linguistic intuition. A dictionary is a must. But the drawbacks of monolingual dictionaries for this purpose are undeniable. First, idioms are given sparing treatment – definitions are typically severely truncated and limited to one sense only. And suggested equivalents, of course, are not to be had. With bona fide definitions and a selection of equivalents to choose from, bilingual dictionaries are the only viable option where idioms are concerned.

My awareness of the advantages of bilingual dictionaries over monolingual dictionaries – particularly in the case of idioms – began in the early and mid-eighties, while working with Sophia Lubensky on the original edition of her *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (1995). At that point, I had little translation experience under my belt and even less with lexicography. My role with respect to the latter was essentially to evaluate idioms for semantic faithfulness, stylistic adequacy and overall quality. Without my realizing it, this was my initial introduction to the concept of lexical functions. From my perspective,



I was filling shoe boxes, one index card at a time, as I analyzed idiom after idiom – in seemingly endless succession. I got an inkling of what was going on behind the scenes, i.e., in the mind of the lexicographer, only when asked to translate Lidija Iordanskaja’s “Russian expressions denoting physical symptoms of emotions: An example of two-argument lexical functions”. To ease my task, Lubensky gave a rudimentary explanation of lexical functions as indispensable tools to describe and systematize semantic relationships between lexical units. Much of it went over my head.

Fast-forward two plus decades, and the revised edition of the “Lubensky” (2013) is underway. By this time, I have acquired experience in both translation and editing, and dictionaries and I have become fast friends. My idea of what a good dictionary should offer has crystallized somewhat and I am far more aware of the frustrations experienced by other translators in this regard. Assuming the role of English text editor for the revised dictionary, I now have opportunity to revisit lexical functions and discover, with deepened understanding, their relevance to the presentation of idioms. But this is only the beginning. I now have an insider’s view of phraseological lexicography and an opportunity for input I missed out on the first time around. No longer strictly a translator/user, my approach to dictionary entries is that of an editor.

Needless to say, this “other side of the desk” perspective sharpened my thinking on the features necessary to effectively present idioms in phraseological dictionaries. While I long viewed definitions as an essential feature – hence my decades-long preference for monolingual dictionaries – I gained a vast appreciation for their place in bilingual dictionaries, not to mention a far better understanding of what they must include to ensure clarity and quality, and, in some cases, to compensate for less than perfect equivalents. Some idioms, by virtue of their protean or chameleonic nature, present a particular challenge. We discovered this to be the case, for example, when working on the definition for *белый и пушистый*, the meaning of which is somewhat difficult to pin down. Our initial approach was a bit too narrow, as reflected in early definitions we rejected as potentially misleading or confusing for the user. After several go-rounds and much needed input from native speakers, we arrived at a definition that accommodates the idiom’s variable meaning depending on context: ‘(of a person or group possessing some attractive, alluring quality which, while unspecified, may be more clearly understood from the context) good, virtuous, righteous; or kind, accommodating; or non-threatening, law abiding etc (typically used sarcastically or mockingly, to make clear that the quality in question, positive image etc is lacking)’.

Definitions must be detailed but precise, and capable, where necessary, of setting one idiom apart from another. Consider the addition of *хозяин-барин* to the revised version of Lubensky’s *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (2013). Although close in meaning to *хозяин* <*хозяйка*> *положения*, the new idiom is quite different syntactically and stylistically.

A usage label can be affixed to indicate the stylistic contrast, and a grammatical description to specify the structural characteristic of the idiom. In this particular instance, the difference in structure is first clarified in brackets as follows: *хозяин-барин* is presented as [indep. sent] and *хозяин <хозяйка> положения* as [NP]. But the definitions themselves must also reflect this syntactic difference. Instead of ‘the person who is in control of the situation in question, in a position to direct the development of events’, we thus arrive at ‘the person who is in control of a given situation is in a position to make decisions and direct others accordingly’.

Another example can be found in *прижимать/прижать хвост* and *прищемлять/прищемить хвост*. Unlike the pair described above, these idioms share the same structure. While both are verb phrases (shown as VP), there is nevertheless a slight difference of meaning between the two. Approaching these two metaphors ‘literally’, the difference is a matter of the whole tail versus the tip of the tail and the implications thereof. In direct usage, *прижать* results in a release initiated only by the agent (person or instrument), whereas the ‘victim’ of *прищемить* is capable of escaping independently – with or without his tail intact. In this respect, *прижать* implies more serious and lasting consequences than *прищемить*, a subtle semantic difference which must be conveyed in the definitions. The definition for the latter (involving only the tip of the tail) is thus taken a step further so that ‘to humble s.o. by putting him in a difficult or awkward position’ becomes ‘to humble s.o. by restricting his freedom to act as he pleases, forcing him to act in accordance with one’s wishes’ in order to accommodate the meaning of the former (where the whole of the tail is involved).

The role of definitions is likewise important in the case of polysemous idioms, where the meaning of two or more senses must be clearly distinguished. A good phraseological dictionary will provide distinct definitions for idioms having multiple meanings. Consider, for example, *(толстокожий) как бегемот <слон, носорог>* and the need to point out its use in reference to 1) an individual who is unable to recognize subtlety of any kind versus 2) a person who is not easily offended.

Finally, definitions must be presented in such a way as to clearly differentiate homographic idioms, i.e., in separate entries with a distinct definition providing an explanation of each together with its collocates. The user will then have no cause to confuse, for instance, *до точки (дойти, довести)* with *до точки (знать, изучить, объяснить)*. It will be abundantly clear that the first idiom speaks of reaching or driving someone to ‘a hopeless, desperate state, the limits of one’s (or his) emotional endurance’ while its homograph refers to knowing, learning, or explaining something ‘fully, completely’.

My editorial and translation experience with Lubensky’s *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (2013) further served to cement my conviction that a

bilingual dictionary without definitions is to be set aside. Definitions are not optional, and here's why. While your average lexicographer is unlikely to deny his or her limitations, lexicographers by and large possess a wealth of knowledge and experience. The best among them, however, recognize that all their best efforts to offer equivalents that would cover every imaginable context fall woefully short – for a host of reasons. There is no better way to create a natural habitat for an idiom than to provide a definition that addresses its every important semantic element.

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# ON DICTIONARIES OF IDIOMS IN THE PRACTICE OF RUSSIAN-ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Timothy D. Sergay

One of the pleasures of literary translation is the gratification of the translator's strictly *philological curiosity* about the source language, especially its stock of common idioms. An idiom, after all, as the term is frequently defined, contains a kind of riddle: its semantic effect is not strictly predictable from the denotative sense of its constituent words. Its enduring charm may well depend on puns or other paronomasia. The pleasure of discovering the semantic or sociolinguistic intrigue of each idiom can be so great that translators of the 'foreignizing' school are unwilling to keep that pleasure to themselves and hasten to share it at all costs with readers of their translations. They do so by reproducing each lexeme of the idiom with the most literal equivalent in the target language that they can devise. An example from the practice of Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky is their rendering of *пошла писать губерния* as 'there the province goes, *scrawling*' in their translations of Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Anton Chekhov's 'A Boring Story'. Many critics and readers have applauded this method and believe that when a translation has instead 'solved' an idiom by representing it with an equivalent target-language idiom or other 'domesticating' strategy that the true nature of the source text has been misleadingly, gratuitously, and presumptuously withheld from them. Such critics and readers wish to share in the translator's gratified philological (or perhaps *interlinguistic*) curiosity regarding particular idioms without having to learn the source language as a whole.

Personally, I reject the idea that a literary translator is obliged to double as a strictly linguistic tour guide: if you will kindly turn to the left, dear readers, you will see that we are now passing *a genuine idiom* in the original language, which I have rendered for you with the closest available English lexical equivalents. Isn't *that* something? Yes, a '*scrawling* province'! No, not *sprawling* – *scrawling*! You don't read *that* every day, do you? It's something one says in *Russian*! And now if you will kindly look directly forward once again, we may return to our exposition... A good many translators still share this disinclination to calque idioms quizzically and clumsily into the target text. Reasons for this preference have been rehearsed by various scholars and critics of translation elsewhere. My point here is that the most concentrated, comprehensive, and reliable

sources for the sheer intellectual pleasure of exploring idiomaticity are not literary translations at all, but rather the bilingual explanatory dictionaries of common idioms that translators employ in producing them. In the Russian–English field, of course, the leading title in this category is Sophia Lubensky’s *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms*, revised edition (2013). And so one of the most striking benefits of such lexicographical works is that *they exist* and can be recommended to critics and readers who resent the ‘domestication’ of idioms in literary translations. Monolingual dictionaries of idioms such as (Birix et al. 2005) are likewise ‘browsable’ and afford a great deal of pleasure, but by definition they remain closed to nonreaders of the source language.

Bilingual dictionaries of idioms are indispensable for both translation and language teaching, but not equally, of course. Idioms is an advanced topic in language teaching: years of elementary grammatical and lexical work go by before beginning students of Russian, for example, are ready to benefit from such dictionaries, chiefly in reading exercises. But requirements for the structure of dictionary entries, in my view, are similar for both areas, translation and teaching, because the translator *is* a learner, typically, of the source language, and vice versa: the language learner is ‘translating’ even if the ultimate objective is (as it should be) to liberate learners from invariably mediating Russian through their prior knowledge of English. In both areas, the more complete and systematic the semantic explanations of the idiom, including stylistic markers and usage advice, the more comprehensive the selection of authentic examples with one or more sample translations, the better. The organizational standard for such dictionary entries has been set very high indeed by Lubensky. Lubensky’s typographical conventions insure that no user in a hurry to arrive at solutions is ever ‘bogged down’ in lengthy entries. The head-term idiom is in bold face, and sample English translation solutions, *wherever they may appear in the entry itself*, are likewise set in bold. The eye finds this bold material immediately. Users can easily skip all other material (linguistic, etymological, stylistic) set in normal type and begin weighing sample solutions. The literary examples are even set a point or two smaller than the rest of the entry, and are segregated at the end, saving space and further emphasizing the preceding bold material. The presentation of the dictionary entry is thus calibrated to two different sorts of use (and user) at once: both utilitarian, high-speed ransacking for answers, and linguistic, scholarly perusal of admirably complete and richly illustrated entries. Likewise, Lubensky’s index of *all* key words occurring in all idioms solves the critical problem of choosing a single lexeme from a given idiom to serve as the head term. One finds the location of Lubensky’s entry for *пошла писать губерния* in that index very quickly whether one searches for

*пошла, писать, or губерния*. There is no need to take an initial guess and riffle through the body itself of the dictionary. By contrast, a reader looking for *пошла писать губерния* in (Tixonov et al. 2004) must search both volumes and will eventually discover an annoying editorial lapse: under *губерния*, there is only a cross reference, ‘see *пойти*’; under *пойти*, another cross reference advises ‘see *губерния*’; and finally, under *писать*, a third cross reference likewise advises ‘see *губерния*’. There is no entry at all for *пошла писать губерния*. The related idiom *и пошло писать* does appear under *писать*, and it is treated adequately, but it is not grouped semantically with *пошла писать губерния*, as it should be, and as it is in Lubensky. It would be difficult to improve on Lubensky’s formatting scheme, which is one of the key achievements of the dictionary as a whole. One hopes to see its ideas adapted for future bilingual lexicography not only of idioms, but of slang and jargon as well.

The most critical avenue for future improvement of dictionaries of idioms, apart from the continuing efforts to expand and update the corpus and further enrich menus of target-language solutions, is to digitize them one way or another. No search method based on print technology is as fast as an electronic look-up. Thanks to ABBYY Lingvo (and before it, MultiLex), a translator can work for days on end without ever touching a printed dictionary. The corpora of whole shelves full of dictionaries are available and *simultaneously searchable* on ABBYY Lingvo (2011). The best way for recent achievements in Russian lexicography of idioms, such as the outstanding titles I have mentioned here, to remain relevant to the community of translators and language educators is to find their way either onto the hard drives of users, or into the Cloud where they can be searched by secure licensing. Computer memory has become very cheap, and so has space on computer monitors (translators and scholars should use very large or dual monitors). Dictionaries that remain available only in paper will be left behind, no matter how brilliant they are.

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## Notes

1 Readers may be struck by the fact that there is one dictionary that comes up in almost every essay included in the Translators' Corner: Sophia Lubensky's *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms*. There is nothing surprising about this. To start, the authors of these essays all translate from Russian into English and are therefore regular users of Russian-English dictionaries. Second (and most important), the Lubensky dictionary is unique among bilingual idiom dictionaries. Not only does it provide a wealth of factual information, covering a broader range of phrases and in more depth than any of its predecessors, but it adheres to the highest linguistic standards. The essays do an excellent job of pointing out its merits, so there is no need to do so here.

Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij

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