On some problems of the bilingual learner's dictionary

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A dictionary-maker is nothing more than a qualified dictionary-user. I am going to speak about selected problems of dictionary-making. Trying to approach different dictionaries, mostly monolingual ones, as *sources* for bilingual lexicographers, I shall highlight cases or topics the EFL lexicographer encounters when using another dictionary as a source. I do not want to value one dictionary more highly than the other, still less do I want to criticise any of them, I only hope to place some common problems in a new light. Thus, my modest critical remarks or suggestions will be uttered by a dictionary-maker as a dictionary-user. And if some of these remarks will strike home then my paper will not be in vain.

The problems treated here concentrate on *grammar, usage* and *meaning*, and some of them, like all questions of lexicography, are often interrelated.

The four topics I want to touch on fall under four headings, viz. adjectival collocations, phrasal verbs, synonyms, and labelling.

Adjectival collocations

The approach to the problem discussed here is not that of lexicology (viz. theory — practice — theory) but that of lexicography (practice — theory — practice). Making a virtue of necessity, I have collected problems as they cropped up while I was working on the new edition of the CONCISE HUNGARIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY. First of all I want to deal with adjectival entries which perhaps presented the greatest difficulty, second only to the menace of prepositions, a non-category in Hungarian.

Whenever I was faced with sets of synonyms such as *big/large/great, legal/lawful/legitimate, beautiful/attractive/lovely/nice, honest/trustworthy/upright/straight, wide/broad, incorrect/indecent/improper,* I began to feel helpless. Since no data bank for English words is available in Hungary as yet, I have had to draw heavily on English monolingual dictionaries. I have found, however, that the most undertreated word class, even in the learner's dictionaries, is the adjective.

When I wanted to find equivalents for — say — the Hungarian adjective *jogos* meaning 'rightful', 'lawful' or 'legal' in relation to 'claim', what I expected was to find nouns collocating with the particular adjectives to help me find the adequate or most frequently used adjective describing 'claim', 'demand', 'worry' and the like. What I did find was a set of synonyms, quite often ending up in circularity.

In trying to match the Hungarian word *hitvány* meaning 'of poor quality' with *shoddy* to see if they are equivalent, no collocation was given in any of the dictionaries consulted (LONGMAN ACTIVE STUDY DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH, LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH, COLLINS DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH) except in OXFORD ADVANCED DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH: ~ *cloth* and *a* ~ *piece of work*. Looking for equivalents for the Hungarian word *tág* meaning 'wide' or 'broad", only COD gives a set of collocates, but only for *wide* and very few for *broad*. Again, the concepts 'beautiful', 'attractive' or 'lovely' etc. can be expressed by one of a set of Hungarian synonyms *szép* collocating with 'girl', 'couple', 'woman', 'apple', 'apricot', 'eyes', 'figure of a woman', 'concert', 'picture' etc. Since there is not such an all-round word for this concept in English as there is in Hungarian, I looked up all possible synonyms, adjectives as well as nouns, but the dictionaries were silent. Should anyone argue that the more usual way of recording adjectival collocations is under the noun, I must answer that I have consulted the possible noun entries as well, with very little result.

I certainly agree with Quirk et al. (1972) that such items are of wide range and indefinite complexity, and with Strang that there is a considerable overlap in contextual and collocational meaning: i.e. *strong* is a member of a set of items which can be juxtaposed with *argument*, so is *powerful*. And, while *a strong car and *powerful tea are unacceptable, *a powerful car* and *strong tea* are correct (1968: 221). According to Bolinger the only explanation that can be given to the sad fact that the range and variety of such collocations is enormous, is this: "No reason, as far as dictionary definitions of words are concerned. We don't say it because we don't say it." (1975: 102) But we have to contradict that. Adjectives can and should be analyzed objectively.

Phrasal verbs

Much has been said about the phrasal verb by well-known authors such as Bruce Fraser (1965), D. Spasov (1966), L.A. Hill (1968), D. Bolinger (1971), L. Lipka (1972), R. Quirk et al. (1985) and others. And much has been done about them, too. Take the OXFORD DICTIONARY OF CURRENT IDIOMATIC ENGLISH with a 70-page Introduction or LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF PHRASAL VERBS and a smaller but very useful compilation COLLINS DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS AND THEIR IDIOMS, not to mention a wide range of monolingual dictionaries, especially the learner's type, and bilingual dictionaries such as HARRAP's or COLLINS GERMAN or COLLINS-ROBERT, and even Országh's dictionaries, all treating phrasal verbs, as they deserve it, in detail.

I would not however be as critical of dictionaries as is Bolinger (1971: XIII) for not treating phrasal verbs as individual verbs. Some do to the annoyance of

the more conservative users − like myself. CED is not a learner's dictionary, so the native user is probably not surprised to find the verb *make up* under the noun *make-up*, but the EFL users of LDOCE may feel some inconvenience to find 9 pages of headwords from *dock* to *dower* through *domineer* and *door* wedged between *do* and *do without.*

As long as phrasal verbs are written in two they should − in my opinion − be entered under the main verb or immediately after it.

First, I want to look at the problem peculiar to Hungarian as one of the agglutinating languages.

A great number of Hungarian verbs are prefixed verbs. These verbal prefixes are quite similar in function to the verbal prefixes in German and Russian. They have locative function, e.g. *bemegy* 'in-go', *eintreten* in German, *go in* or *enter*, and perfectivizing function, e.g. *elutazik* 'away-travel', *abfahren, to leave* or *depart.* Under specifiable syntactic conditions they may be separated from the verb stem by intervening morphemes, and they may also be moved to a post-verbal position. Julia Horvath (1978) argues that verbal prefixes in Hungarian belong to the category of postpositions. Further contrastive study will bear out the supposition that there is an interference between Hungarian postpositions and preverbal prefixes when moved to a postverbal position, and this may account for the difficulty of Hungarians in recognizing whether an English multi-word verb (Quirk's term) is a phrasal verb or a prepositional verb. A further difficulty − one, I think, for all EFL learners and not only for Hungarians − is to know whether a transitive phrasal verb is separable or inseparable. In other words the dictionary has to indicate the correct position of the object when using a phrasal verb. It is an immense help to the EFL user − and some of the best modern monolingual and bilingual dictionaries do this − to indicate when a phrasal verb is separable or inseparable (or "fused" in Collins usage).

While revising the CHED, I found grave errors in treating the English phrasal verbs. The editor was apparently not always aware of the obligatory nature of the preposition or adverbial particle following a verb. This uncertainty was revealed by putting these prepositions etc. in parentheses as if they were optional, e.g. refer (to), hint (at), belong (to), interfere (with), meddle (in) etc. This error was never committed in WILDHAGEN (1953), edited about the same time. Thus, for example, *hinweisen:* jdm ∼ auf: to refer a p. to, call (*od.* draw) a p's attention to a th.

If it is true that the majority of transitive phrasal verbs are separable (cf. CDEPV), then only the inseparable verbs, the minority, are to be marked as such.

To give just a few examples: under the Hungarian headwords *nyal* (= lick) or *hízeleg* (= flatter) the English equivalents 'make up to sb' or *inf* 'suck up to sb' is to be marked *insep* or *fus,* similarly under *vigyáz* (= take care of) 'look after sb or sth' is to be marked similarly. And I might consider marking all the intransitive verbs as, for example, *keep on, make for, hold back* etc. Most of the bilin-

gual dictionaries consulted (CAMBRIDGE ITALIAN DICTIONARY, LANGEN-
SCHEIDTS ENZYKLOPÄDISCHES WÖRTERBUCH DER ENGLISCHEN UND
DEUTSCHEN SPRACHE, COLLINS GERMAN-ENGLISH ENGLISH-GERMAN
DICTIONARY, COLLINS/ROBERT FRENCH-ENGLISH ENGLISH-FRENCH
DICTIONARY, HARRAP'S CONCISE GERMAN AND ENGLISH DICTION-
ARY) give the necessary information about English phrasal verbs and their tar-
get-language equivalents (including separability) where English is the source
language, but none of them give any information on English phrasal verbs in the
part where English is the target-language, which suggests that all these diction-
aries are intended primarily for speakers of English.

Synonyms

Zgusta (1971: 329 ff.) has described once and for all the meaning and function
of 'glosses' and 'labels' in bilingual dictionaries. Glosses do "not attempt more
than to indicate as succinctly as possible the relevant differences, the critical
features, the sphere of application. . . They specify to which part of the entry-
word's multiple meaning the respective partial equivalent belongs, and thereby
also disambiguate its own multiple meaning" (p. 329). The gloss may often be a
disambiguating synonym.

Very often, however, the equivalents, which are essentially synonyms in the
target language within one meaning or sense, need to be glossed or labelled.
These glosses and/or labels do not primarily refer to the meaning of the given
word or phrase but to usage. Usage labels in bilingual dictionaries often corre-
spond to 'usage notes' in monolingual (learners's) dictionaries. It is this sphere
that I am often dissatisfied with in both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries.

Just a few examples. In the big HUNGARIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY
under the headword *fordít* 'translate' one finds: *translate, render, do, put, turn*
(all: into). With such a set of synonyms the user is at a loss without any distin-
guishing marker. Another example: the headword *tesz* 'to do or perform' is
followed by a string of synonyms: *do, perform, make, achieve, accomplish,
bring about, effect, carry out.* Without glosses, however, this set of words is of
no use for the user and it can even be harmful. HCGED sets a good example
under *tun* by giving context words for each synonym: *to do* (*sth, a job, favour
one's duty* etc.); *to make* (*a vow, remark* etc.). Most monolingual dictionaries,
however, even the so-called learner's type, tend to overgeneralize the question by
giving vague definitions of each member of the set, and giving only very few con-
text words for the synonyms listed. The practice of LONGMAN WEBSTER
ENGLISH COLLEGE DICTIONARY (and probably of other dictionaries too)
of giving synonyms as run-on entries seems to be very helpful (cf. *fast, perform*
etc.).

Labelling

Another source of uncertainty for the bilingual lexicographer is labelling (a) national variants and (b) style variants.

I could refer to scores of examples where the EFL user and lexicographer can find disagreement between (monolingual) dictionaries, and is, once again, at a loss.

Zgusta (1971) emphasizes the correct selection of labels and their proper use, which is one of the most important tasks of the lexicographer. Labelling for Allen Walker Read is a "touchy matter" (1962: 221). In the English language the primary split is between British and American English. For Read — and, indeed, for the bilingual lexicographer — the decision of origin is not as important as the degree of currency. Reinhard Hartmann (1981: 269) admits that "very little systematic work has been done" about the inconsistencies in marking styles, especially in bilingual lexicography.

I do not want to repeat or even to summarize what — little — has been said before on style variation and marking (cf. Kipfer 1984). What I would expect from the monolingual standard dictionaries is a more uniform and consistent labelling system and practice.

With the arrival of the computer a regular updating service between publishers throughout Britain and the USA might help bring about more uniformity in marking style or regional variants.

There is no time and space here to give detailed examples on the point I want to make. Let me just refer to a few lexical items where I have found wide differences between source-dictionaries: *belt out, wire* (in the sense of telegram), *commons* (in the sense of college meal), *return ticket* or *round-trip ticket, bellboy/bellhop, Indian corn/maize,* a *dead* or *flat battery* or a *battery run down, phonograph/gramophone/record player, aisle/gangway, reckon* (in the sense 'to suppose' or 'assume'), *transport/transportation, rector* (as the head of a school), *call sb up* (= telephone sb), *spool* or *reel, to beat the band* etc.

The ideal dictionary for an EFL student is one which tells him or her in no uncertain terms what the British or American usage is, what is chiefly or solely British or American, giving at the same time the British and/or American synonyms, as is often done in CED or LASDE and in others as well.

In my paper I have tried to deal with problems cropping up while compiling or revising a bilingual L1-L2 dictionary. I approached these problems and some of the deficiencies of L2 dictionaries as a user of source-dictionaries. Four topics have been touched on. Adjective entries seem to be somewhat undertreated in English dictionaries. Many more *adjectival collocations* are needed for the EFL lexicographer especially in the learner's dictionary. *Phrasal verbs* are excellently treated in both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Marking of their separa-

bility, however, might be more emphatic, esp. in L1-L2 dictionaries. Equivalents (in a bilingual dictionary) are essentially *synonyms* in the target language. These synonym-equivalents need to be disambiguated more carefully than is normally done in L1-L2 dictionaries, by means of glosses, context words, and – of course – illustrative sentences. Finally, *labelling* of national variants ought to be more uniform in English (monolingual) dictionaries, potential sources for non-native bilingual lexicographers.

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