

A conceptually organized bilingual dictionary as a foreign culture interpreter

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While performing its primary purpose of establishing lexical equivalence between the lexical units of two languages, the traditional bilingual dictionary often neglects culturally conditioned differences in the meanings of the supposed equivalents. Such differences, nevertheless, pose difficulties to foreign language learners and dictionary users. Furthermore, the partial equivalents that bilingual dictionaries offer in the lexical interpretation of such culture-specific terms may lead a dictionary user to falsely assume equivalence even when it does not exist in reality.

There are specialized dictionaries treating specific cultures (e.g. Great Britain, Japan, etc.) but they are usually monolingual and rather ethnographic in approach. This implies two important features of such dictionaries, firstly that they are not primarily concerned with the linguistic problems of lexical interpretation, and, secondly, that they do not involve a comparative (let alone contrastive) cultural view.

Problems concerning the incongruences between the culture-specific meanings of lexical items of different languages and the impossibility of establishing full or partial lexical equivalence between such culture-bound lexemes naturally crop up in the domain of bilingual lexicography.

In this paper I would like to present an outline of a type of dictionary (not known to me in either lexicographic theory or practice) which could be classified as a conceptually organized bilingual dictionary of a specific culture.

The purpose of such a dictionary is to systematically present and describe the realia of an entire culture, interpret their linguistic and extralinguistic meanings, and bring the selected concepts into correlation with the corresponding semantic and lexical categories of a target language.

Such a dictionary, on one hand, shares some characteristics of two types of dictionaries —conceptual dictionaries, and the so called «dictionaries of culture» (a form of ethnographic dictionary)— but, on the other hand, has bilingual structure. In other words, it combines certain properties of the above three dictionary types but also in many aspects differs considerably from all of them.

Let me first explain how such a dictionary compares to the existing dictionaries of particular cultures. Here I am not referring primarily to dictionaries like A. Room's **Dictionary of Britain** and its Russian version *Великобритания* — which falls into the category of dictionaries known in Soviet lexicography as «stranovedeskij slovar», that simply list unrelated individual lexemes/concepts in strictly alphabetical order, but rather to the type of ethnographically oriented dictionary like **A Cultural Dictionary of Japan**.¹

While these dictionaries present data on a specific society and its culture grouped into broader thematic units, the dictionary I have in mind introduces the lexical material following the principles of conceptual organization. More precisely, instead

1. The project of a related kind of dictionary has also been theoretically elaborated by the Yugoslav linguist and lexicographer Željko Bujas on the example of a Dictionary of American society and civilization.

of independent, often mutually unconnected or very loosely connected thematic units treated separately (art, food, clothing, architecture, history, law, etc.), the more elaborated conceptual structure I am advocating here arranges the lexical material according to notionally organized domains. (Within such domains the semantic-conceptual relations are further presented in the form of hierarchically structured entries, as will be shown later.)

It should be stated, however, that both approaches have certain advantages and limitations.

Since all conceptually organized systems of lexicographic presentation seek to be universal and as all-embracing as possible—and neither our world nor our languages are uniformly and unambiguously structured—all of these systems suffer from certain weaknesses and drawbacks. Roget's thesaurus principle is in many ways artificial and arbitrary and, for example, Hallig's and Wartburg's Begriffssystem also seems to be too general, so that it has often been criticized as a mechanism which rather lists than classifies linguistic units.

Every proposal for a conceptually conceived scheme for lexical structures seems to be doomed to a certain degree of incoherence, either because no given language has an ideally transparent organization of its lexical items or because the Weltanschauung of the proposer is necessarily personal, language and culture specific, and arbitrary in some respect. Differences in conceptual organization which manifest themselves in every language resist being reduced to a common dominator. For this reason, attempts to apply such conceptually organized lexical systems to other languages prove to be efficient in pinpointing such differences in conceptualization among different languages and are therefore particularly interesting in the context of culture-bound vocabulary.

Since I am mainly concerned here with a possible conceptual dictionary whose primary function is to reflect the relevant specific features of lexical structure of the vocabulary, while presenting the extralinguistic realia of a particular culture, one which does not start out from isolated language items but groups the lexemes according to their linguistic and extralinguistic meanings, it seemed justified to look for similar attempts at categorization that can be found in other disciplines related to linguistics.

A group of American anthropologists, for example, have developed a system for the description and categorization of different cultures called Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). HRAF is a very elaborate and meticulous instrument for the description of cultural categories which also allows the establishment of various sorts of cross references. However, this system is, not surprisingly, primarily oriented towards the material (nonlinguistic) aspect of culture and while being somewhat too technical on one hand, it does not provide for the inclusion of all categories relevant for a primarily linguistic dictionary of the sort I am interested in.

The most adequate system for the description of the culture-related aspects of lexical meaning which could be applied in lexicography would have to take into consideration the extralinguistic cultural categories and, at the same time, allow room for purely linguistic description of the items, without being either ethnocentric or too complex. It should also be conceived in such a way as to prevent unnecessary overlappings of categories or repetitions of information.

Of all such proposals known to me, closest to this «ideal» comes the outline of a system put forward by Mantaro J. Hashimoto for the description of the *Newari* lexi-

con (1977) and further elaborated by J. E. Grimes (1986), who considered it: «a culturally useful checklist which might be developed into a list that reflects different kinds of core meaning patterns within words». The primary function of this list is to serve for the structured collection of data on more or less unknown languages and cultures, but it could efficiently serve as a basis for a conceptually organized dictionary of any language.

The main advantage of conceptually organized dictionaries, in my opinion, is the fact that if they are well conceived they can, in the process of structuring lexical material and interpreting lexical meaning, point to numerous characteristics of the structure of the given culture's extralinguistic world. On the other hand, it hardly has to be mentioned that they are not, in principle, as adequate for the lexicographic description of the entire lexicon as the traditional, alphabetically arranged dictionaries. Another disadvantage, compared to both traditional (alphabetically organized) dictionaries and those organized according to broader thematic units, lies in the fact that the conceptually organized dictionaries are synchronic by their very structure and can therefore not so easily incorporate diachronic information or references of either linguistic or extralinguistic nature.

I have so far tried to offer arguments in favour of arranging such a dictionary, which is primarily intended to present and interpret specific features of a foreign culture reflected through the **culture-specific** vocabulary, in accordance with a certain conceptual system.

The type of dictionary I am outlining here differs, on the other hand, from standard conceptual dictionaries in that it has a **bilingual** dictionary structure. The reason for that seems to be obvious (although it is often neglected both in lexicographic theory and practice). Namely, the bilingual dictionary, much more explicitly than a monolingual one, brings to the surface the differences and lack of correspondence in lexical meanings conditioned by the differences in cultural contexts, which in turn imply differences in the corresponding referents or denotata.

Our dictionary is therefore conceived as a bilingual dictionary constructed of a number of macroentries corresponding to cultural concepts within a wider underlying conceptual system (e.g. Hashimoto and Grimes').

The principle of the choice of lexical data can be selective and concentrated on some contrastively specific culturally relevant concepts or, on the other hand, the selection of material can be exhaustive and encompass all domains presupposed by the general conceptual framework.

The notion of a suggested bilingual conceptual dictionary will be illustrated here on the example of an *American English - (Serbo) Croatian conceptual dictionary*, primarily oriented towards the native speakers of Serbo-Croatian (i.e. members of the Yugoslav —or more precisely Croatian— culture). Its intention is to explain the linguistic and extralinguistic contents of the included macro and microconcepts related to the American culture and society. The source language is American English and the target language, as well as the metalanguage, is Serbo-Croatian (Croatian variant). The dictionary, thus, combines the form of a conceptual dictionary with the standard and less standard procedures of bilingual dictionaries.

The proposed lexicographic method is illustrated here on several segments of the macroentry (concept) **UNIVERSITY** (see **Appendix 1**).

Appendix 2 brings the list of all lexical units included in the macroentry **UNIVERSITY**.

The procedure of linguistic description and cultural interpretation of meaning implies several innovative lexicographic procedures which enhance the efficiency of the dictionary. By these I mean a special marking system intended to rank degrees of lexical equivalence between the lexical items of a source language and the suggested equivalents in a target language, as well as a specific type of accompanying cultural commentary.

The basic marking system is as follows:

Ø denotes that in the Yugoslav university system such a concept i.e. a corresponding linguistic or extralinguistic equivalent does not exist. This label is not used if there exists a similar institution or function.

∞ denotes that the meaning of the concept implied by a suggested equivalent considerably differs from the meaning of the entry.

All entries thus marked (Ø or ∞) are followed by an (italicized) explanatory cultural commentary (e.g. entries *plan of study, interview, etc.*).

Semantic discrepancies of a lesser degree are not specially marked but are, when necessary, also explained by additional cultural commentary.

The numbers within the square brackets stand for larger thematic segments within macroentries, while numbers in parenthesis denote individual entries for the purpose of easier crossreferencing.

Information on phonological and morphological data are omitted in this sample since they are not of primary interest here. However, apart from the grammatical labels and pronunciation a dictionary of this kind should also include labels as to whether a certain entry appears within some other concept and where.

Only the standard vocabulary connected with the designated conceptual area is included, while stylistically marked lexemes are omitted except in a few cases when they are more frequent than the standard ones.

In the long run the choice of lexical entries in a conceptually organized dictionary of this kind is determined, as in any other dictionary, by its intended purpose, type of users and other lexicographic constraints which the dictionary maker has to keep in mind.

The principal criterion for inclusion of a certain entry was based on the very logic of the semantic/intraconceptual structure of a certain broad concept. In other words, only those lexical items were included that were not likely to appear (in the same meaning) within a conceptual structure of another macroentry. The microentries are not presented in alphabetical order (although this is another theoretical possibility) but according to the assumed interconceptual logical organization within the given notional segments of the macroentry. The advantage of this approach is, in my opinion, that such organization of the subentries enables the user to gain an insight into the structure and relations of the corresponding extralinguistic realia for which they stand.

So, for example, the structure of the segment entitled UNIVERSITY REGISTRATION indicates at the same time the organization of this aspect of American university life, the sequence of steps necessary for registration and, moreover, reflects a specific immanent socio-cultural world view.

I tried to achieve economy in choice and presentation by omitting those lexical items whose meanings can be derived from the semantic interpretation of existing entries. As already mentioned, the meanings of the polysemous lexemes not relevant for the given concept were also left out.

Some lexical units not entered in the category of primary subentries were listed and explained within the definitions or cultural commentaries of other units.

The segment of the lexicon thus presented and organized offers, in my opinion, a comprehensive and detailed insight into the selected domain of the American educational system and the underlying social philosophy, while at the same time it groups together a host of linguistic material organized according to rather transparent principles.

Bilingual dictionaries of different cultures conceived in this way could, to my mind, prove a powerful and effective tool in presenting features of specific foreign cultures to language learners.

A rough comparison with the existing English-Croatian dictionaries shows that about 5-10% of the entries presented here, or some of their meanings, cannot be found in them. In the majority of cases the existing entries in these dictionaries present far too general definitions which, due to their imprecision, imply nonexistent or only partial equivalence without further explication or indication of existing cultural differences.

This, of course, does not necessarily mean that these dictionaries are not satisfactory in their own right but rather confirms that even in comprehensive, traditionally organized bilingual dictionaries there is often no room for those meanings that refer to concrete segments of society. Because of these limitations it is apparent that they can hardly provide an adequate basis for comparative interpretation of not only interlinguistic but also intercultural meanings.

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APPENDIX 1

Sveučilište/University

[1] opće napomene (general information)

- (1) **university** // sveučilište, univerzitet *Američka su sveučilišta visokoškolske ustanove koje se obično sastoje od jednog ili više četvorogodišnjih dodiplomskih fakulteta (→ **undergraduate college** [2(4)]) na kojima se može steći diploma drugog stupnja (BA → [5(4, 5)]), postdiplomskih fakulteta odnosno visokoškolske ustanove za daljnje stupnjeve studija (magisterij i doktorat) u prirodnim i društvenim naukama (→ **graduate school** [2(15)]), a (iznimno) mogu uključivati i više škole (**junior college** → [2(2)]) na kojima se ne može steći diploma drugog stupnja. Visokoškolske ustanove mogu biti privatne (**private**, najčešće **denominational**) i javne (**public**), pri čemu javne mogu potpadati pod gradsku, državnu odnosno federalnu upravu. Većina visokoškolskih ustanova, osim npr. vojnih akademija (→ **service academies** [2(19)]), nisu pod izravnom kontrolom federalne vlade i podliježu zakonima pojedinih država.*
- (2) **institution of higher education** (ili rjeote)
- (3) **postsecondary educational institution** visokoškolska ustanova
- (4) **alma mater (Alma Mater)** 1. sveučilište, fakultet ili kakva druga visokoškolska ustanova (koju je netko pohađao) *Osoba koja je studirala na više fakulteta/sveučilišta obično za Alma Mater drži onu ustanovu na kojoj je stekla B.A. → [5(4)]* 2. himna sveučilišta (fakulteta)
- (5) **study**, često **studies (to study)** studij (studirati)
- (6) **student** student (u *AE student* se upotrebljava za polaznike svih obrazovnih...

[7] upis na sveučilište ili fakultet (university registration and course enrollment)

- (1) **college (university) catalog** popis (pregled) fakulteta i sveučilišta (*s opisom nastavnih programa i kolegija, uvjeta za upis, uvjeta studiranja itd.*)
- (2) **to apply for admission** prijaviti se za upis, podnijeti molbu za upis
- (3) **application** molba, prijava za upis (*šalju se izabranim visokoškolskim ustanovama već tokom završne godine srednje škole*)
- (4) **application form** obrazac za prijavu
- (5) **to file an application** podnijeti prijavu, molbu
- (6) **application fee** pristojba (taksa) za prijavu (*što traže neki fakulteti ili sveučilišta*)
- (7) **application deadline date** (krajnji) rok prijave za upis
- (8) **(letter of) recommendation** *takooter personal ~, personal endorsement, personal reference* preporuka
- (9) **plan of study** Ø, program studija *Uz prijavu za upis od kandidata se ponekad traži detaljni opis programa studija koji želi upisati. Za razliku od našeg, američki sistem studija omogućuje studentima veću fleksibilnost i širi izbor u profiliranju vlastita studija (na dodiplomskoj i postdiplomskoj razini) jer se uz obavezne (→ **required courses** (31)) upisuju izborni predmeti (**electives** (32))*
- (10) **statement of purpose** Ø, opis buduće karijere kojoj se kandidat za upis namjerava posvetiti nakon završena studija *Ponekad se traži uz prijavu za upis*
- (11) **appointment** Ø, dogovoreno vrijeme za razgovor srednjoškolca s predstavnikom fakulteta (sveučilišta) kojem je uputio molbu za upis (→ **interview** (12))

- (12) **interview** ∞ razgovor s kandidatom za upis (što ga prije upisa na uglednije fakultete ili sveučilišta vode predstavnici te visokoškolske ustanove)
- (13) **admission(s) requirement** uvjeti za upis (na fakultet/sveučilište)
- (14) **aptitude and achievement tests** ∞ testovi sposobnosti i znanja *Mnoge visokoškolske ustanove pri upisu studenata u obzir uzimaju rezultate postignute na ovakvim testovima koje studenti polažu prije upisa, obično još u toku posljednjeg razreda srednje škole. Najčešće se pri upisu na fakultet traži rezultat testa SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), odnosno testa GRE (Graduate Record Examination) pri upisu na postdiplomski studij. Takvo je testiranje vrlo uobičajeno u Americi i smatra se objektivnom metodom mjerenja znanja. Sastavlja ih College Entrance Examination Board (→ [10(2)]), sveamerička, meatusveučilišna ustanova sa sjedištem u Princetonu (New Jersey). Testovi su vrlo minuciozno graduirani, a rezultati koji se na njima postižu izraženi su numerički. Na testu GRE npr., raspon rezultata je od 200 do 800. Uglednija sveučilišta obično upisuju samo studente koji su prešli odreoteni prag.*
- (15) **to qualify for admission** zadovoljiti uvjete upisa
- (16) **offer of admission** odobrenje upisa, ponuda za upis
- (17) **open-door (admission(s) policy)** slobodna upisna politika...

APPENDIX 2

UNIVERSITY

[1] *opće napomene (general information)*

university

institution of higher education
 postsecondary educational institution
 alma mater (Alma Mater)
 study, studies (to study)
 student
 school (medical ~, law ~)
 accreditation
 accredited school (college)
 private (endowed) university (college)
 state university (college)
 state-supported university (college)
 coeducation
 coeducational college
 all-male/all-female college
 men's/women's college

[2] *tipovi visokoškol. institucija (types of institutions of higher education)*

college
 junior college (community ~)

undergraduate college
 undergraduate program(s)
 professional school (~ college)
 prelaw (study, program)
 premedical study(program), premed
 preprofessional courses
 medical school
 law school
 teachers college
 liberal arts
 liberal arts college
 college of arts and sciences
 college of letters and science
 graduate school
 graduate program
 graduate field
 institute of technology
 service academy (school)

[3] *uprava sveučilišta (university administration)*

board of trustees (~ of regents, ~ of directors)
 president
 chancellor
 vicechancellor, vicepresident
 provost
 academic vicepresident
 dean (college ~)
 associate dean (assistant dean)
 chair(man)/head (of department)
 chairperson

[4] *adm. službe i adm. osoblje (admin. offices and staff)*

administrative offices
 registrar
 bursar
 bursar's office
 proctor
 college admissions office
 office of admissions
 director of admissions
 student (personnel) services
 dean of students
 dean of students' office
 placement office (center)

career and placement office (~)
 housing office
 international student office
 department secretary
 administrative assistant

[5] *akademski stupnjevi (academic degrees)*

(academic) degree
 associate degree
 certificate
 associate in arts (A.A.)
 associate in science (A.Sc.)
 bachelor's degree
 bachelor of arts (B.A.)
 bachelor of science (B.Sc.)
 bachelor of education (B.Ed.)
 bachelor of philosophy (B. Phil.)
 bachelor of letters (B.Lit.)
 B.A. thesis (senior ~, graduation ~)
 master's degree
 Master of Arts (M.A.)
 Master of Science (M.Sc.)
 Master of Education (M.Ed.)
 Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)
 Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
 Master of Civil Engineering (M.C.E.)
 Master of Arts in Religion (M.A.R.)
 Master of Agriculture (M.Agr.)
 M.A. thesis
 doctor's degree, doctorate (Ph.D.)
 doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.)
 doctor of medicine (M.D.)
 (Ph.D., doctoral) thesis
 (~) dissertation
 professional degree

[6] *prostor i struktura sveučiliš. (physical layout of the univ.)*

campus
 collegetown
 college (school)
 (college) department
 chair
 hall
 classroom

auditorium
 office
 laboratory (lab) (language ~, science ~)
 study room
 browsing room
 reading room
 library (undergraduate ~, graduate ~, science ~)
 carrel
 bookstore
 housing
 on-campus housing
 off-campus housing
 dormitory (dorm)
 residence hall (hall of residence)
 dining hall (*also* cafeteria)
 field house
 gym (gymnasium)
 stadium
 health center
 child care center

[7] *upis na sveučilište ili fakultet (university registration and course enrollment)*

college (university) catalog
 to apply for admission
 application
 application form
 to file an application
 application fee
 application deadline (date)
 (letter of) recommendation
 (*also* personal recommendation,
 personal endorsement,
 personal reference)
 plan of study
 statement of purpose
 appointment
 interview
 admission(s) requirement
 aptitude and achievement tests
 to qualify for admission
 offer of admission
 open-door (admission(s) policy)
 minimally selective (~)
 selective (~)
 competitive (~)
 registration (to register)

preenrolment
 (student) identification card (ID card)
 enrollment (to enroll)
 matriculation
 course (of study)
 course list (catalog)
 course enrollment
 course enrollment form
 course schedule
 course and time roster
 course and room roster
 required course
 core course
 elective (course)
 honors (~ course)
 advanced placement
 advanced standing
 tuition
 fee

[8] *financijska pomoć studentima (financial aid to students)*

student loan
 work-study
 work-study program
 student job (on campus job)
 scholarship
 fellowship
 stipend
 tuition waiver
 grant
 assistantship

[9] *organizacija studija (organization of university studies)*

[9.1] *dodiplomski studij (undergraduate studies)*

undergraduate study (studies)
 subject
 field of study
 instruction
 course
 section
 lecture
 class
 seminar

colloquium
curriculum
syllabus
course assignment
academic year
term
semester (fall ~, spring ~)
quarter
vacation(s), vacation period
recess
session
credit
degree requirement
adviser/advisor (faculty ~)
academic adviser/advisor
major
minor
concentration
research projects
graduation (to graduate)
graduation (ceremony)
commencement (ceremony)
diploma
cap and gown

[9.2] *postdiplomski studij (graduate studies)*

graduate school
graduate study (studies)
graduate field
graduate department
teaching assistant (TA)
research assistant (RA)
graduate assistant (GA)
graduate research assistant (GRA)
M. A. thesis
Ph. D. thesis (dissertation)
approval of thesis (~)
(academic) adviser/advisor
chairman of the committee
special committee
postgraduate study
postdoctoral study (research, program), postdoc

[10] ispiti i ocjene (examinations and grading)

entrance exam
 College Entrance Examination Board
 preliminary exam (prelim)
 test
 score
 quiz
 midterm exam
 examination week
 final (exam)
 term paper
 in class exam
 take home exam
 oral exam
 written exam
 qualifying exam
 admission to Ph.D. Candidacy Examination
 A exam
 comprehensive exam,
 Final Examination for Ph.D. Candidates (B exam)
 dissertation defense
 to fail
 to flunk
 grades
 letter grades
 grade point value
 grade point index
 grade point average
 class rank
 incomplete (grade)
 report card (grade report, grade slip)
 term report
 honors
 to graduate with (high, highest) honors
 cum laude
 magna cum laude
 summa cum laude
 transcript (official ~)

[11] struktura nastavnog osoblja (classification of faculty)

faculty
 faculty member
 instructor
 assistant professor
 associate professor

professor (full ~)
 professor emeritus
 tenure (academic ~)
 to have tenure(d) status
 junior faculty
 senior faculty
 scholar
 visiting professor
 visiting scholar

[12] *struktura studenata (classification of students)*

undergraduate (student)
 freshman
 sophomore
 junior
 senior
 president of the class (class president)
 graduate (student)
 masters student, M.A. candidate
 doctoral student, Ph.D. candidate
 full-time student, student in residence
 part-time student, extramural student
 nonresidential student
 auditor (to audit)
 special student (*also* nonmatriculated student)
 transfer student
 teaching assistant (TA)
 teaching fellow
 research assistant (RA)
 graduate assistant (GA)
 graduate research assistant (GRA)
 scholar
 alumnus
 class of...
 roommate
 dormmate

[13] *studentske izvannastavne aktivnosti i udruženja (student life and activities)*

extracurricular activities
 clubs
 societies
 sports team
 university team
 varsity

intramural sports
intercollegiate sports
student union
fraternity
sorority
the Greeks
fraternity (sorority) house
greek row (fraternity row)
panhellenic
rush(ing)
haze
honor society
alumni organization
annual alumni reunion