

Editing a bilingual dictionary entry within the framework of a bidirectional dictionary

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In our paper, we intend to show how the practising lexicographer might edit a bilingual English → French entry within the framework of a bidirectional dictionary with the help of the concepts of encoding and decoding.

In our schema, adapted from a model by Kromann *et al.* (1984:208) for the language pair English → French, we see the basis for the ideal dictionary or indeed series of dictionaries.

DECODING (PASSIVE) DICTIONARY: L2 → L1

French → English: for **English** speakers

English → French: for **French** speakers

ENCODING (ACTIVE) DICTIONARY: L1 → L2

English → French: for **English** speakers

French → English: for **French** speakers

The model caters for four specific types of user, each user type with differing productive and receptive needs as well as varying levels of competence in either language. The model obviously draws quite considerably on the Ščerba ideal of the unidirectional dictionary, "tailormade" for very precise user needs. Ščerba maintained that translational equivalents alone were not satisfactory solutions to user needs particularly in the area of L2 acquisition, notably because of the inherent semantic and morphological mismatches between languages, however closely related they might be. Because of this "anisomorphism of languages" referred to by Zgusta (Kromann, 1984: 207), Ščerba argued instead for monolingual L1 definitions of L2 language items, thereby presenting their full semantic range so that: «nicht nur eine falsche Wort-für-Wort-Setzung ausgeschlossen, sondern auch eine verfälschende Modifizierung durch die Muttersprachliche Brille des Benutzers verhindert wird» (Duda *et al.* 1986: 19). While Kromann *et al* support Ščerba's basic thesis concerning the desirability of the unidirectional dictionary, they also acknowledge the definite advantages of a dictionary which gives translational equivalents. We would also subscribe to the view that, for practical purposes, the translational equivalent (with the minimum of warts, of course) is the most economical, immediately accessible solution to a given user need.

Our dictionary is bidirectional. By "bidirectional" we mean a dictionary which aims to cater for the needs of both the encoding and the decoding user. In Fig. 2, the four distinct unidirectional dictionaries are condensed in the two sides of a bidirectional bilingual dictionary, thus emphasizing the dual function of each side:

FRENCH → ENGLISH SIDE OF DICTIONARY

for DECODING English user (passive/receptive)

for ENCODING French user (active/productive)

ENGLISH → FRENCH SIDE OF DICTIONARY

for DECODING French user (passive/receptive)

for ENCODING English user (active/productive)

The lexicographers must take into consideration the differing competences of the users. On the English → French side, for example, the French speaker's total, native competence and the English speaker's varying but essentially non-native competence will influence the construction of bidirectional dictionary entries.

The distinction between the two sides of the dictionary is by no means watertight. Users will often "wander" back and forth, and experienced users will systematically crosscheck translational equivalents, thereby gaining a certain «monolingual» insight into the semantic range covered by a particular L2 language item, along the lines advocated by Šćerba. Nevertheless, the logic and design of a bidirectional bilingual dictionary maintains the basic division.

We ought at this stage to define the particular user group for whom our dictionary is designed. It consists primarily of second-level foreign language learners with a basic L2 competence. Although we do not exclude the more proficient L2 users such as teachers and translators, we assume these to be operating with monolingual or specialist dictionaries. Our dictionary is bidirectional for the following reasons:

a) given the nature of our typical user, we are aiming for a working tool of more modest dimensions than the 4-volume unidirectional series but one which is larger and more reliable than a mini-dictionary;

b) we are dealing in this instance with two world languages and we estimate that the encoding and decoding needs of both language groups will be broadly similar;

c) we have a particular brief from the publisher which is to a large extent determined by commercial constraints such as competition, marketability, etc.

Such basic constraints of size and costs mean that we operate within the confines of a single-volume collegiate size dictionary.

Let us look more closely at encoding and decoding. A decoding user will be translating from a foreign language into his native language, therefore from what is unknown to what is known. He will be moving from form (and context) to meaning (AI, 1983: 205). The encoder, on the other hand, will be translating into the foreign language which is unknown, and therefore moving from meaning to form. It follows that the user who will need the most help is the encoding user.

The lexicographer aims to cater for the needs of both the encoding and decoding user. As regards technical terms, both users will require an exact translational equivalent. In the case of concrete objects and basic everyday words, decoders will need an exact or at least a precise L2 equivalent; for the encoder, the translation also needs to be "safe" (i.e. applicable to the majority of potential contexts) and it should be easy to use. Translations of non-basic words —words with a register label, some words describing feelings and perceptions, or certain idioms and proverbs— will also have to fulfill the above criteria if encoding needs are to be met. For the decoder, on the other hand, we will consider that the translation given is above all a starting point. We will rely on the user's L1 competence and expect him to select the translation best suited to the context once the dictionary has served its purpose and he has grasped the meaning of the word. This degree of compromise from the decoder's point of view is necessary if the encoder's needs are to be given priority. Culture-bound terms will be given a cultural equivalent and/or a gloss which could, if necessary, function as an

approximative translation for the encoder. We can safely say, though, that the culture-bound term is more likely to be of use to the decoding user. Any information which helps the user choose the translation best suited to the context —indicators, collocates, examples of typical usage and structures— are there mainly for the encoding user. (For linguistic categorization, see Snell-Hornby, 1987: 165.)

We turn now to the practical application of these concepts to a typical English → French bidirectional entry. Together with a French-speaking counterpart, an English language editor would draw up the entry, bearing in mind the encoding needs of the English-speaking users, while the French language editor would protect the interests of the decoding French user.

We have chosen the noun THRILL for four reasons:

- a) it is a descriptive word —within a range of words which are notoriously difficult to translate accurately in many language pairs and which are often considered to be unsatisfactorily treated in general bilingual dictionaries (Snell-Hornby, 1984: 275);
- b) it is connotationally rich;
- c) it is productive of a number of structural and collocational patterns of interest to users;
- d) for the lexicographer, it presents problems of selection and ordering of material when analysed from encoding and decoding perspectives.

Our procedure for writing an entry for THRILL, noun, takes the following form:

1. SL analysis
(from corpus evidence, monolinguals, L1 competence);
2. General translational equivalents for SL framework;
3. SL → TL transfer;
4. Synthesis and finalized entry.

The first stage of compilation may be summarised thus:

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS: THRILL

- a) is a physical or emotional sensation, a reaction to the stimulus of an experience or an event;
- b) is brief, a passing sensation;
- c) is pleasurable except when otherwise specified
(a thrill of joy/horror/anticipation/fear);
- d) may be pleasurable with an additional danger/risk element
(the thrill of stock-car racing, thrills and spills);
- e) has sexual connotations
(a strange thrill as his hand touched mine);
- f) has potential for pejorative connotation
(cheap thrills, that's how he gets his thrills).

Having gleaned these facts from our SL research on THRILL, we also find it helpful to compare the word with a possible synonym, EXCITEMENT.

THRILL focusses on the moment, the sensation. It is short and staccato like its colloquial equivalents BUZZ and KICK. In usages and idiomatic phrases, however, there is a distinct shift from the instantaneous reflex to the more diluted notion of enjoyment so that 'to get a thrill out of something' = to enjoy something very much. The element of exaggeration gives the word used in this sense a slight colloquial tinge.

Thus there are differences of register and context of use between THRILL and EXCITEMENT, where the former is more colloquial in some instances and more typical of narrative (a thrill of joy/horror) in others. On occasions, the two words are more or less interchangeable (the thrill of meeting someone famous).

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS: THRILL

- a) is countable in all senses, although usually in the singular with determiners a/the;
- b) carries the idea of risk when pluralized and also the potential for pejorative connotation;
- c) is often modified by intensifiers 'real', 'big', etc.

BASIC STRUCTURAL INFORMATION (to feature in the entry)

a thrill of sth*
 the thrills of sth/ of doing sth
 to get a thrill out of sth/doing sth
 sth gives sb* a thrill
 it is/was a real thrill to do sth

*sth, *sb = something, somebody

After compilation, the monolingual information contained in the SL framework generates a broad range of translational equivalents—in the case of THRILL, 18 different translations. Much as we would like to include the entire compilation and resulting translations, we have to consider the entry within the framework of the dictionary as a whole. Thus, we consider THRILL to be a non-basic word and, correspondingly, one to which we can devote a relatively small amount of space. We will be interested in maintaining a balance between the economy and the user-friendliness of our presentation. The process of transfer from the SL to the TL is essentially one of selection and conflation. The English language editor will make a preliminary draft of the entry, establishing clearly differentiated semantic categories and choosing from a wealth of SL material those elements which are crucial for an encoding user, notably information on grammar and usage in the form of structures and examples. The French language editor will also be making a selection from the different translation possibilities, giving priority to those elements which are most reliable ("safe") and most generative. To illustrate this selection process, we have marked the different aspects of the preliminary entry according to their importance for the encoding user—we distinguish between what is crucial (***) and what is illustrative or additional information (*) for the encoder. The following is an annotated version of the transfer stage:

STAGE II TRANSFER L1 → L2 Draft entry for THRILL noun

- *** 1 a) **specific sensation - physical** frisson *m*: (1.1)
 *** **__ of sth** frisson de qch, frémissement *m* de qch; (1.1a)
 * **to feel a __ of sth** (1.2)
 ** **it sent a __ of sth through me** cela me fit frissonner de qch; (1.3)
 *** b) **can be sexual** frisson *m*; (1.4)
 ** **he gets a cheap __ out of...** [porn film(+N), humiliating people(+VB)]
 ça l'excite de... (+VB only); (1.5)
 * **(I felt) a strange __ (as he touched my hand)** un trouble étrange et
 délicieux; (1.6)
 * **go on, give us a _!** [teasing tone] vas-y, donne-nous des frissons! (1.7)
- 2 **generalized feeling of excitement —always positive— not necessarily physical**
- *** plaisir *m* ??? (2.1)
 *** **playing at Wimbledon gave him a __** il trouvait cela excitant *ou* palpitant
 de jouer à Wimbledon; (2.2)
 *** **the __ of doing sth** le plaisir de faire qch; (2.3)
 * **the __ of meeting (the Olympic athletes)** le plaisir de rencontrer...;
 * **(to do sth) just for the __ of it** juste pour le plaisir;
 *** **he gets a __ out of doing sth** [acting, sailing, (ironic) housework]
 il trouve cela excitant *ou* palpitant de faire...; (2.4)
 *** **it was such a __ to see Madonna** c'était vraiment excitant de voir
 Madonna; (2.5)
 *** **it was a real __ for them to...** [travel abroad, see the baby] ils étaient
 vraiment ravis de...; (2.6)
 * **for the __ of a lifetime, come to Disneyland** si vous voulez avoir le
 frisson de votre vie...; (2.7)
- *** 3 npl **_s 1 general feeling of excitement and risk element** sensations
fpl fortes; (3.1)
 * **_s and spills** [of adventure sports] sensations *fpl* fortes...; (3.2)
 *** **2 pejorative cheap _s** [sleazy] sensations *fpl* de bas étage;
 ** **that's how he gets his _s!** *fam péj* [voyeurism, (ironic) housework]
 c'est comme ça qu'il prend son pied! *coll* (3.3)

(1.1), (1.4) and (3.1) are head translations which must be generative and guaranteed to work in the relevant contexts. (2.1) does not fulfill these criteria and therefore no head translation will be given at this sense.

(1.1a), (2.3), (2.4), (2.5) and (2.6) are of structural importance to the encoder. The structures are presented both explicitly and in the form of examples. In the case of (2.3), the structure functions as a safe, albeit flat and semantically weaker equivalent of the English concept in the absence of a reliable head translation. (2.5) and (2.6) are valuable in that they demonstrate the frequency of intensifier use but a choice will have to be made between them and as (2.6) carries an extra structural element, it is the most likely candidate for inclusion.

(1.3), (1.5) and (3.3) are all of interest to encoders for their translation equivalents but we would rate them as being slightly less important for the encoding user be-

cause the nuances which they cover have already featured elsewhere in the article albeit in a less elaborate form.

(1.2), (1.6), (1.7), (2.7) and (3.2), among others, are lowest in the scale of encoding value, either because they are too context-bound or because they make interesting but purely illustrative points about the headword. The English speaker is less likely to need to encode these notions although they do inform users, both French and English, about the wealth of connotation associated with the headword.

If we were writing an entry purely for the decoding user, it would look like this:

Thrill *n* frisson, *vif plaisir*, excitation, sensation: *_s* sensations fortes.

The entry informs the user that THRILL is a sensation, pleasurable or otherwise and that, moving away from the purely physical, it can describe a pleasurable experience. It also indicates that, in the plural, THRILL can conjure up an idea of risk. The decoder does not need indicators, being able to select the translation best suited to his context. He does not need structural information or examples of typical usage, relying instead on his own native speaker competence to generate translations. Nor does he need to be told that 'plaisir' is masculine, 'sensation' feminine, etc.

STAGE III SYNTHESIS AND FINAL ENTRY FOR THRILL *noun*

1. **(physical, including sexual)** frisson *m* (of de);
2. **(psychological)**
the __ of doing sth le plaisir de faire qch;
acting gives her a __, she gets a __ out of acting elle trouve cela palpitant de faire du théâtre;
it was a real __ for them to go to Paris
 ils étaient vraiment ravis d'aller à Paris;
3. *npl* *_s* a) **(with risk element)** sensations *fpl* fortes;
 b) **(pejorative) cheap _s** sensations *fpl* de bas étage;
that's how he gets his _s! *fam* c'est comme ça qu'il prend son pied! *coll.*

Our final entry is very much shaped by the need to provide essential encoding information in as user-friendly a manner as possible, while guaranteeing decoding users a reliable starting point covering the principal semantic divisions of the word. The L1 encoder will find metalanguage in his native language, as well as gender, register and style markers. The L2 information is presented in the form of clearly "anchored" head translations, where these are possible, and structures which are accurate, generative (re-usable) and easily manipulated. The treatment of the idiomatic usages (in 2 and 3) is rather more detailed because the degree of one-to-one equivalence between the two languages is limited. It might well be argued that '*plaisir*' does not correspond to 'thrill' in terms of its semantic force but it is the product of a framework with a wide variety of context and is therefore likely to meet the needs of the majority of encoders, whereas '*frisson*' (in the psychological sense) is not. We have made a deliberate decision to reduce the treatment of the first category to the

minimum –the structure is included as confirmation of French syntax– but we choose to give it the primary position in the entry being as it is the closest L2 equivalent to the headword and also the one a user (either encoding or decoding) is likely to encounter first.

We have tried to show that a bidirectional dictionary aims to cater both for the encoding and decoding user and that the notions of encoding and decoding help the lexicographer to structure an entry, select information, decide on which translation to give and decide how much space to devote to an entry. Any space we might have saved in conflating the elements in THRILL is space saved for items of core vocabulary where the lexicographer will need to be as explicit as possible in his presentation.

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