

Holding a post and filling the job: English collocations in English-Italian, Italian-English Dictionaries

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1. Collocation and collocations

The term 'collocation' has been used in different ways since it was defined by Firth as a «mode of meaning» (1957), and has been referred to various types of word combinations, showing and evidencing different levels of stability and fixedness, different degrees of semantic transparency, different discourse functions. The frequency of co-occurrence of the elements of a given expression, which determines its diachronic institutionalization, and their syntagmatic and paradigmatic restrictedness are the main criteria to establish how stable and how fixed an expression is; the retrievability of the literal meaning of an expression and of its parts from possible figurative and/or metaphorical uses, or, on the other hand, the lexicalization of the latter to the (partial) exclusion of the former, testify to its degree of transparency; the acknowledged labelling of a given expression as a lexical collocation, or a grammatical collocation, or a routine formula, etc., also points to the linguistic and pragmatic function it performs, from the designative one, in Zgusta's terms (1971), to the purely communicative one. A further subdivision of collocations into open and restricted ones is based, according to Aisens-tadt (1979, 1981), on the commutability of their constituents and according to Cowie *et al.* (1983), on the figurative use of one of their elements. Restricted collocations, though this expression is never used by Zgusta (1971), could be considered as hyponyms of the term 'multiword lexical units', as used by Zgusta (*ibid*), since they meet Zgusta's two most important criteria (with a partial flouting of the first one) to detect a multiword lexical unit, namely the first, i.e. impossibility of substitution of any of its constituent parts, and the ninth, i.e. its functioning, syntactically and onomasiologically, as if it were a more simple unit, which usually corresponds to a word. On the other hand, collocations and restricted collocations do not comply with the third criterion, i.e. the opaqueness of the expression as a whole as opposed to the sum of the meanings of its constituents, a criterion which qualifies idioms as multiword lexical units, but does not apply to transparent and semi-transparent fixed expressions, which constitute the great majority of collocations. According to Mitchell (1971) collocations are not idioms, but, like idioms, are 'composite elements'. Idioms and collocations have been analysed, from different standpoints and with different objectives, by many lexicologists and lexicographers (for instance Mitchell, 1971; Jones and Sinclair, 1973; Mackin, 1978; Aisens-tadt, 1979, 1981; Hausmann, 1979; Fernando and Flavell, 1981; Cowie, 1981; and forthcoming, Benson, Benson and Ilson, 1986; Sinclair, 1987; Benson, 1989) both in general, theoretical terms and in view of, or on the basis of, their lexicographic treatment. It has been suggested (cf. Fernando and Flavell, 1981; Nuccorini, 1988a and 1990, Cowie forthcoming) that they are related along a continuum going from free, completely transparent word combinations to fixed, completely opaque expressions, taking into consideration «different degrees of setness, different degrees of restrictions» (Zgusta, 1971: 154-155) alongside different degrees of opaqueness, figurativity and metaphorization.

Against this rather sketchy terminological and notional background, the term

'collocation' will be used in this paper in a rather broad sense, covering a number of more or less fixed, more or less opaque, more or less figurative and more or less designative expressions which would be located in the central sectors of the above-mentioned continuum, to the exclusion of idioms on the one hand and, on the other, of absolutely transparent expressions whose elements are commutable, in Aiscens-tadi's terms (1979), and freely recombinable. In particular the paper deals with lexical collocations in the sense used by Benson, Benson and Ilson, whose dictionary (**BB**I 1986) has been used throughout the present research to check the role and the status of the expressions analysed, since the focus of this study is not on collocation as a linguistic phenomenon, but on the lexicographic treatment of specific instances of a few English transparent and semi-transparent (in the sense of both partially figurative and partially opaque) expressions generally referred to as collocations. The examples analysed have been selected from three different sources, which represent uses and misuses of the language: examples from the first source are those usually discussed in the literature about lexicology, lexicography, semantics, etc., such as *a confirmed bachelor* and *to bite the dust*; those from the second source are expressions actually used in English newspaper articles among which (*to get/have*) *a foot in the door* (*The Guardian Weekly*, 10 April 1988) and *French window* (*The Independent*, 6 June 1990); those from the third source include two categories: 1) Italian students' both productive and receptive errors, e.g. **Good Easter!* and *Estremo Occidente* as a translation for *Far West* (not in the purely geographical sense); 2) Italian journalists' errors or misuses, such as **out of job* (*La Repubblica*, September 1989) and *dark lady* (*La Repubblica*, 21 April and 1 May 1990), which was wrongly referred to somebody who had nothing in common with the «Mistress» of the Sonnets. Another expression, *poll tax*, has been analysed separately because, although a peculiar student's error (it was wrongly interpreted, in the very first days of its almost daily use also in Italian newspapers, as a short form for 'tax on pollution'), its lexicographic interest lies in the gap between its recent widespread and highly connotated use and the way it is treated in dictionaries. Some of the expressions represent borderline cases of collocations either because of their linguistic nature (*to bite the dust* could well be defined as an idiom, *poll tax* is a compound), or because of their cultural and encyclopedic connotation and denotation (*dark lady* is a Shakespearian quotation), or because of their role (**Good Easter!*, has a formulaic value): all these elements affect the lexicographic treatment of the expressions which, however, as authentic instances of uses, errors and misuses constitute interesting examples for, rather than of, real dictionary use (or perhaps non-use). Though somehow far-fetched as collocations they are usually treated as such when they are recorded in the dictionaries consulted, whereas verb+noun expressions such as *to fly the tube* or *to dial a ticket* do not qualify for dictionary inclusion given their occasional and atypical use. All the expressions analysed are somehow indicative of the advantages or disadvantages, for the dictionary user, of different lexicographic treatments, for instance from the point of view of their onomasiological or semasiological presentation in different types of dictionaries (cf. Benson, 1990 and Cop, 1990): moreover they represent different cases not only for their collocational features but also for their cultural distance or overlapping with the Italian language, thus offering a good testing ground in order to assess the role bilingual dictionaries play, in both decoding and encoding activities, in the way they treat them in terms of location, information given or exemplified (on use, etc.), ease of access (cf. Gates, 1988) and, in particular, translation.

2. Collocations and dictionaries

The translation of collocations in bilingual dictionaries often raises many problems, in addition to those connected with the search for a translational equivalent (cf. Zgusta, 1984), which are analogous to those concerning the treatment of idioms (cf. Nuccorini, 1988b), but which involve a larger spectrum of difficulties due to the number and nature of the distinctive features of collocations mentioned above. For instance, there are cases, usually due to cultural overlapping, in which the Italian translation is itself a collocation, but sometimes more or less restricted than the English one, or with a slightly different use or meaning: there are other cases, usually due to cultural distance, in which the Italian equivalent is not a more or less fixed expression, but a totally free combination or a paraphrase. In the latter cases the paraphrases given cannot be tested by cross-checking them in the Italian-English part of the dictionary, where they are irretrievable: in the former cases, the English expression is usually recorded in the Italian-English part when there is complete equivalence or, at least, an equivalent degree of fixedness, but there is not always a straightforward way of finding the right English collocation. According to Ivir (1988: 49) bilingual dictionaries offer «those collocations which are differently semantically treated by the two languages under consideration». He adds that when the collocational patterns of the two languages agree bilingual dictionaries normally indicate differences in meaning through listing appropriate synonyms, and that the selection of collocation «will be different for each pair of languages and for each direction». The expressions chosen for the analysis illustrate these and other points, as exemplified in the following bilingual (English-Italian, Italian-English) dictionaries: **Skey** (1977), **Ragazzini** (1984), **Hazon** (1990) (all monodirectional); **Sansoni** (*editio minor* 1988), **Collins-Giunti** (1985) (both bidirectional); and **Paravia** (1989), which has a bidirectional structure in the use of the metalanguage (English in the English-Italian part, and Italian in the Italian-English part) and in the treatment of grammar, but which uses only Italian in the front-matter, except for a very small section on «orthophonic indications for Italian words» (p. 24). Though **Paravia** stresses its «duplice accesso» (double access), it is *de re* addressed to an Italian public.

These dictionaries, of different sizes, offer a good range of different lexicographic traditions, in their design, and of different typologies in their macro- and micro-structures.¹ **Skey** bases its English-Italian part, which is the «most important one» (p. VII), on the second edition of **OALD**. **Ragazzini** is a typical monodirectional dictionary, like **Skey**, but it is not based on any monolingual dictionary; somehow surprisingly, since it is specifically addressed to Italians, it signals, like **Paravia**, the voiced or unvoiced pronunciation of /s/ and the open or closed pronunciation of /e/ and /o/ in Italian words. **Hazon**, which differs from its first, 1961, edition in many other re-

1. According to Marello (1989) bilingual dictionaries follow a different microstructure model (or profile), A, B, C or D, based on the order of presentation of senses, collocations, etc., on the extension of 'phraseology', on the presence of examples, etc. **Skey** and **Collins-Giunti**, although addressed to different users, usually follow model B and sometimes, but in different cases, model A: **Ragazzini** and **Sansoni**, again different in their mono- and bidirectionality, both follow model C. **Paravia** and **Hazon**, which were published after the publication of Marello's book, seem to follow, respectively, model B and sometimes A, and, viceversa, model A and sometimes B (this analysis has been based on the entry for *conto*, used as a comparative example in Marello).

spects, has not changed its typical monodirectional nature and structure. **Collins-Giunti** is a typical small bidirectional dictionary in all its lexicographic, typographic and editorial characteristics. **Sansoni**, too, is typically and wholly bidirectional: though larger than **Collins-Giunti**, it is an *editio minor*. Finally **Paravia** is, as already seen, rather atypical.

Occasionally also the *Mono-bilingual Learner's Dictionary (MBLD)* (1989) (a dictionary which reports in the English-Italian section the definitions given in the *Harrap Learners' Dictionary* followed by an Italian equivalent, and which has a very small Italian-English part) has been consulted and so have, for purposes other than translation, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* (1989), the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)* (1987) and the *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (COBUILD)* (1987).

It is quite interesting to notice that the term 'collocation', in whatever sense and in whatever degree of inclusiveness or restrictedness, is never used in the front matters of any of the dictionaries mentioned above. Very often the terms 'phrases' and 'phraseology' (**Collins-Giunti**, **Sansoni**, **Paravia**, **Hazon**) refer to or anyhow comprehend the expressions here labelled as collocations. **Collins-Giunti** (xi) also uses the expression 'contextual indicators', saying that «these may be typical noun subjects of an intransitive verb, typical noun objects of a transitive verb, or typical noun complements of an adjective or another noun», an explanation which could well be a good definition of collocations (cf. the treatment of *a confirmed bachelor*). **Sansoni** (16) dedicates a paragraph to «alternative words in phrases», printed in round brackets, which are either words which may be omitted, or words which are substitutes for other words or groups of words, as in *to run for one's (dear) life, the eternal (or everlasting) life, to die with one's boots on (or in one's boots)*, again an exemplification of what happens in collocations. It is not by chance that these linguistic descriptions and exemplifications appear in two bidirectional dictionaries, which are presumably affected by the British tradition, which has long studied collocations, and in which *both* the English *and* the Italian users are expected to use the dictionary for *both* decoding *and* encoding activities. **Hazon** indicates in the sample pages which illustrate the dictionary layout and microstructure two sections under which collocations may be found: the phraseology section and the section, signalled by two oblique strokes, covering «usi particolari», i.e. particular uses (which are indeed typical rather than particular) of the headword, such as *to gasp for a drink* under *gasp*. Sometimes the two sections combine in the dictionary (cf. the phraseology section for *have*). **Paravia** does not have any other expression but for «fraseologia d'uso» (use (?) phraseology) and the very neutral and general «locuzioni» (phrases). «Locuzioni speciali» (special phrases) is a term also used by **Ragazzini** together with the more scientific but again rather general «lessie complesse» (complex, multi-word, lexemes as opposed to compound lexemes). **Skey** generically mentions «frasi fatte», i.e. ready-made expressions, a term which is not used in the second edition of **OALD**.

The location of collocations, however called or defined, and the criteria according to which they have been placed under a specific entry are not always explicitly and clearly stated in the front-matters (cf. Gates, 1988). In **Collins-Giunti** phrases and idioms, but for verbal phrases with «the ten or so basic verbs», are listed under «the first set key word», without specifying the order of presentation within the entry. **Sansoni** states that phrases, idiomatic expressions and proverbs «are listed under the entry of the most important word contained in the phrase», adding that within the entry «the in-

dividual phrases are arranged in alphabetical order on the basis of the most important word in the phrase» which, although not specified, is obviously other than the headword under which phrases are listed. **Ragazzini** seems to follow the general policy, explicitly stated in the front-matter, to record compound lexemes under the first element they are composed of, also in the case of complex lexemes (but cf. Cowie, forthcoming: *near/distant relation* recorded at *relation*), which are ordered alphabetically preceded by a dot in bold type. In **Skey** ready-made expressions and «several compound words» which cannot be placed under any of the senses of the headword because of their «idiomatic peculiarity» are grouped, in no specified order, at the end of the article preceded by a small squared box. Unfortunately the dictionary does not specify under what entry those expressions are to be found. Finally, **Paravia** does not say where phrases are located, and in what order they are listed, neither does **Hazon**, except for compounds, which, as clearly stated in the Introduction (viii), are all main entries.

None of the dictionaries seems concerned with the importance of the location of collocations with respect to the role, as collocators or as bases (cf. Hausmann, 1988; Cop, 1990), of their constituents, and in consideration of the type of addressee. In spite of this, there seems to be a certain amount of systematicity in the presentation of collocations, systematicity usually based on a general need for organization, both in the macro- and in the micro-structure, rather than on linguistic criteria which would deserve a higher consideration since location constitutes one of the key factors in the lexicographic treatment of collocations. Their translation, which is another key element, will be dealt with in the following paragraphs, each concerning one of the expressions to be analysed.

3. Analysis of the lexicographic treatment of a few collocations

A confirmed bachelor is recorded under *confirmed* in **Ragazzini** and is translated as *uno scapolo impenitente*, an expression which has exactly the same meaning and use as its English equivalent, but which is slightly less fixed than this, since it admits the lexical adjectival variant *incallito*. The expression is not entered in the Italian-English part under *impenitente*, but under *incallito* there is the example sentence *un fumatore incallito*, translated as *an inveterate smoker*, which would lead the unaware learner, or dictionary user in general, to produce deductively **an inveterate bachelor*.

In **Skey** the expression is treated in the same way and with the same example as **Ragazzini** in the Italian-English part, but is not recorded in the English-Italian part, as it was not in the second edition of **OALD**, whereas it is now recorded, in the 1989 edition, under the entry for *bachelor* (as it is in **BBI**), following the accepted principle according to which collocating verbs or adjectives, as this is the case, should be given in the entry for the noun.

Hazon enters the expression under *confirmed* and translates it as *scapolo impenitente*. In the Italian-English part the expression is recorded twice, under *scapolo* and under *scapolone*, a derivative, which is lemmatized.

Collins-Giunti gives the expression in the entry for *confirmed* with *bachelor* in parentheses as a «contextual indicator», showing, on the one hand, a restriction in the collocative use of the adjective, but failing to indicate, on the other, the compulsory reciprocity in the use of both the adjective and the noun. At the entry for *impenitente* the expression is recorded without the article *a*.

Sansoni records the expression neither under *bachelor* nor under *confirmed*: under sense 3 of the latter (*inveterate*) three equivalents are given: *inveterato*, *impenitente*, *incallito*. Under *scapolo* it gives the derivative *scapolone* and translates it, without the article *a*, as *confirmed* (o *old*) *bachelor*, warning that the Italian is «scherzoso» (jocular).

Paravia records the expression in the entry for *confirmed* and translates it as *uno scapolo impenitente* or *uno scapolone*, here labelled colloquial. It records it also in the Italian-English part under *scapolo*, whereas, for instance, it records the analogous expression *un peccatore incallito* (a *confirmed sinner*) under *incallito*, thus flouting both a purely organizational principle such as that of recording 'phrases' under the first element, and a linguistic principle, since both expressions should be given in the entry for the noun in the Italian-English part which is meant to be used more by Italians for encoding activities than by English people for decoding activities.

Finally the expression is recorded under *confirmed* in **MBLD** and it is translated as *scapolo impenitente*.

To bite the dust is not entered in **BBI** presumably because of its idiomatic nature. It is though an interesting case from the point of view of its translation and this is the main reason why it has been analysed. The expression has a word-for-word Italian translation, *mordere la polvere*, which has an equivalent meaning but a slightly different use. The Italian expression is almost exclusively used, nowadays, in its figurative meaning, i.e. to be humiliated (cf. the definition in **OALD** 1989, «be defeated or rejected»), though its literal meaning, «to fall down dead», «to lay down on the ground» (cf. «to be killed» in **LDOCE** 1987), is recorded in Italian monolingual dictionaries. It still keeps to the original, literal meaning when it is used with an animate subject vs. the possible use, in English, with an inanimate subject (cf. «another of my great ideas bites the dust», **OALD** 1989, and «the project bit the dust when the new management came in», **LDOCE** 1987). Thus, the translation given in **Collins-Giunti**, *lasciarci la pelle*, is ambiguous: it is an expression which needs an animate subject, though this is not stated, and therefore it respects this restriction in use, but it covers only the literal meaning *to die* (which is given in parentheses as a synonym), since it cannot be used, figuratively, in the sense of being humiliated. Consistently, though in *absentia*, *mordere la polvere* is not recorded in the Italian-English part, and significantly, *lasciarci la pelle* is translated, at the entry for *pelle*, as *to lose one's life*.

Sansoni enters the expression under *dust*: it gives the translation *mordere la polvere* and consistently records it under *polvere* in the Italian-English part. **Hazon**, too, records the expression considered as "un uso particolare", under *dust* but it lists it under *bite* as well. The translations given under *dust* are: *mordere la polvere*, *cadere ferito*, *morto*, *viuto*, whereas only the first one is given under *bite*.

Ragazzini too gives *modere la polvere* as a translation and records it both under *mordere* and under *polvere* in the Italian-English part, thus anticipating, like **Hazon** in the English-Italian part, the recommendation in Benson 1990, according to which collocations should be placed at the entry for both the collocater and the base. As in the other dictionaries no examples are given to signal the difference in use (animate vs. inanimate subject) of the two expressions.

Skey gives the label (*fig.*) followed by three equivalents, *mordere la polvere*, *cadere a terra*, *essere ucciso o umiliato*, which can all be used with animate subjects.

In the Italian-English part, which is specifically addressed to Italians for encoding activities, the expression is consistently recorded under the entry for *polvere*, where is also given the much more frequently used collocation *far mordere la polvere a qualcuno*², translated, rather neutrally, as *to humble somebody*.

Finally **Paravia** gives *mordere il terreno, la polvere* in the section for phraseology under *bite*. Under *polvere* it lists, in no apparent order, as figurative uses of sense 1, both *mordere la polvere* and *far mordere la polvere a qualcuno* translated as *make somebody kiss/lick the dust*. The expression is not recorded in **MBLD**.

To have/get a foot in the door is an expression which has no equivalent in Italian, probably because the stereotyped image from which it derives, that of the commercial traveller who physically 'puts his foot in the doorway of his customer's house' does not belong to the Italian 'culture'. The expression, which is recorded in **BBJ** under *foot*, is necessarily given paraphrastic translations in the dictionaries in which it is listed. **Collins-Giunti** records it under *foot* and translates it as *essere già a metà strada*, trying to preserve the link between the figurative and the literal meaning of the English expression. **Sansoni**, which records it under *door*, translates it as *riuscire a infiltrarsi*, an expression which must be followed by a complement, a restriction which is not signalled. Though this dictionary reports the existence of the variant *to have one foot in the door*, it does not indicate the equally correct *to have one's foot in the door*, which was, incidentally, the way the expression was used in the newspaper headline from which it has been taken («Mr Schultz's foot in the door»). **Ragazzini**, under *foot*, gives *farsi un'entrata*, which is rather awkward, since the most frequent expression is *avere un'entrata*. **Paravia**, under *door*, records the expression only in the form *to get one's foot in the door*, and translates it as *aprirsi la strada (verso qualcosa)*, which is very similar to the translation given in **Collins-Giunti**. No example is given in any of these dictionaries. Finally **Skey** does not record the expression, which was not entered in the second edition of **OALD**, but which is listed and exemplified in **OALD** (1989) under *foot*. The expression is not entered in **Hazon** and in **MBLD** either.

French window, entered in **BBJ** under *window*, does not raise any problems for its translation since it has a full equivalent in the Italian *portafinestra*, which is given in all the dictionaries. In spite of this full equivalence its use in the newspaper headline from which it has been taken —*French windows* (which, incidentally, is the form recorded as a main entry in **LDOCE**)— is a play on words actually untranslatable. The term *windows*, referred to a radio programme, was used in the sense of metaphorical openings on to literary criticism, and the term *French* happened to be the surname of the programme producer. However, the peculiar lexicographic treatment of this expression is most probably due to the lexicological anisomorphism of the two otherwise equivalent English and Italian expressions, respectively an adjective+noun compound, and a noun+noun compound. *French window* is recorded under *French* in **Collins-Giunti**, **Paravia**, and **MBLD**, and under *window* in **Ragazzini** and **Skey**, where it is printed with a small *f*: in **Hazon** the expression is lemmatized since it is a compound. In the Italian-English parts it is always a main entry except in **Skey**

2. **Sansoni** and **Hazon** record the expression *far mangiare la polvere a qualcuno*, which is synonymous with *far mordere la polvere a qualcuno*, and translate it respectively as *to make s.o. eat dust*, and *to make s.o. bite the dust*.

where it is a sub-entry of *porta*, i.e. *door*. This treatment is consistent with the semantic value of *portafinestra*, which is a type of *porta* (*door*), just as a *French window* is a type of *window* sometimes recorded under *window* (but defined as a *pair of doors* in **LDOCE**). The element *porta* which forms all the other Italian compounds listed alphabetically as main entries is the homograph verb *portare* meaning *to carry or to hold*, as in *portaerei* (aircraft-carrier, lit. which carries aircrafts), *portacenera*, *portachiavi*, *portalampada* (lamp holder, lit. which holds a lamp), *portariviste*, *portasisgarette*, *portavoce*, etc., etc. The policy to list compounds as main entries (as in some Italian monolingual dictionaries, such as **Garzanti** and **Devoto-Oli**, but not in **Zingarelli**, which has been mainly used by **Skey** for his Italian-English part) in this case clashes with the semantic aspect of word-formation. The location of *French window* in the English-Italian parts of the dictionaries here consulted follows the general organizational, rather than linguistic, principles already hinted at, but it is rather surprising that **Sansoni** considers *French* «more important» than *window* and records the expression in the entry beginning with *French polish* and ending with *French woman*, preceded and followed by two derivatives of *French*, namely *Frenchness* and *Frenchy*, so that it is very difficult to locate it.

Good Easter* is an error often made by Italian learners due to the interference of the adjective *buono*, used in Italian for greetings, wishes and the like, whose usual English equivalent is *good*. It falls into the category of lexical errors often exemplified by **hot regards*, etc.: although typical of beginners, who usually are not accustomed to using dictionaries, it is an error which the use of a dictionary would prevent. Though all the dictionaries translate *buono* as both *good* and *happy* in the variously defined semantic area of wishes, all (but **Hazon) exemplify at least *good morning* as opposed to *happy Christmas*, from which *happy Easter* would be easily deduced. **Paravia** records *happy Easter* under *buono*, **Sansoni** and **Hazon** under *Pasqua*, where **Ragazzini** and **Skey** give *to wish somebody a happy Easter*. The expression is not given in **Collins-Giunti**. Surprisingly *Easter* is not entered in **BBJ**, whereas *Christmas* is, but only *Merry*, and not *happy*, is recorded among its collocators.

Far West is an expression which is only superficially symmetrical to *Far East*. The latter has a full equivalent in Italian, *Estremo Oriente*, but the former is normally referred to, borrowing the English expression, as *il Far West*, with an Italianised pronunciation. *Estremo Occidente* is a perfectly acceptable expression in purely geographical terms, but it is not correct as a translation, given by a student, for *Far West* in a socio-political context and in a figurative sense, because it lacks the (usually negative) connotations inherent in *il Far West*.³ *Estremo Occidente* is the first equivalent given in **Skey**, at the entry for *far*: the second one is *il Far West*. **Hazon** records the expression as a «uso particolare» under *far*, juxtaposing it to *Far East*, and translating it as *il Far West*. **Ragazzini** records the expression under *west*, whereas *Far East* is re-

3. The term *Far West* is often used also with reference to the geographical area as in «una siccità perenne minaccia il Far West: a perennial drought threatens the Far West» (*La Repubblica*, 15 April 1990), or in «Il vero Far West sono la California, il Texas e il Colorado»: the true Far West is California, Texas, Colorado» (*Corriere della Sera*, 1 April 1990). It usually has negative connotations: it is significant that the Italian *Estremo Ovest* has been used, as opposed to *Far West*, to convey, explicitly, positive connotations (*Corriere della Sera*, 1 April, 1990).

corded under *far*, and gives the equivalent *il Far West*, followed by an explanation reading «the region west of the Rocky Mountains», from which the historical and connotative values conveyed by the expression may not necessarily be inferred. In **Collins-Giunti** and in **MBLD** the expression is not recorded and neither is it in **Sansoni** which gives *Far East* as a main entry. **Paravia** does not record the expression although it makes use of it in the entry for *western* (noun) where it gives the paraphrase *racconto ambientato nel Far West*. It records *Far East* under *far*. The expression is not recorded in **BBi** either, which gives, under *west*, *The Wild West*, and, under *east*, *The Far, Middle and Near East*, followed by an explanation. It seems that the lack of systematicity in the treatment of this expression derives from the lack of agreement on its status, although this, when the expression is recorded, does not affect its translation.

Out of job* was used in an Italian newspaper in a clause reading «those who are out of job». It might well have been a misprint, but it is anyhow interesting to analyse its lexicographic treatment. *To be out of a job* is recorded in all the dictionaries under *job* (though it is not entered in **BBi): in all the dictionaries it is translated as *essere disoccupato* (**Sansoni**, **Paravia** and **Collins-Giunti** also add *essere senza lavoro*, which is not fully synonymous with *essere disoccupato*) but it appears only in **Hazon** under *disoccupato*, where other equivalents are given (*workless*, *out of work*, *jobless*, *unemployed*). Under *lavoro* all the dictionaries, but for **Sansoni**, give *out of work*, and only **Paravia** adds, and juxtaposes to it, *out of a job* (**Hazon** gives *without a job*). It seems that the error originates in the countability of *job*, expressed by the article *a*, as opposed to the uncountability of *work*. It is anyway almost impossible to retrieve the right English collocation in the Italian-English parts of the dictionaries here consulted.

Dark Lady was used more than once, in a series of articles about a case of kidnapping, with reference to the wife of one of the kidnappers. In one of these articles the quotation was indeed used in a phrase reading «one of the two dark lady» (sic), with no plural marker in conformity with the Italian practice of not applying English morphology to borrowed expressions. Since there was nothing mysterious (or negative) about her identity or about her role in the case, the expression could not be used in its figurative sense, but its literal interpretation did not apply either, as she was, unmistakably, white. Given the cultural and encyclopedic, rather than linguistic, value of the expression, it is not surprising that no dictionary records it⁴, but for **Ragazzini** which, under *dark*, gives *the dark lady of the Sonnets* and translates it as *la dama bruna dei Sonetti*, adding, in parentheses (*di Shakespeare*). Although the term *bruna* in Italian is very often used in connection with the colour of the hair and of the skin, as is the English *dark*, the lady in question was not 'particularly' dark as the Lady of the Sonnets was. What the journalist most obviously did not know is exactly what the dictionary fails to say, i.e. that the *dark lady*, as clearly said by Shakespeare himself, was indeed a black woman.

4. It is, however, a little bit surprising that **Hazon** does not record the expression, since it claims that over two thousand citations from the «lingua antica e letteraria» (old and literary language) have been included in order to facilitate those who read or study the classics (cf. Introduction, viii).

Poll tax is entered in **BBI** under *tax* since it is a type of tax. In its current use it is normally referred to in Italian as *la poll tax* (again with an Italianised pronunciation), following a process of linguistic borrowing similar so that connected with *Far West*, although for different causes. The *Far West* does not belong to the Italian culture (or history in this case) and consequently the Italian language does not have an equivalent for it so that it has borrowed *il Far West* just as it has borrowed, to quote a well-known example, the term *drugstore*. The term *poll tax* does have two equivalents in Italian which go back to the medieval system, i.e. *capitazione* and *testatico*, but these terms, which are highly transparent via the Latin *caput* and the Italian *testa*, corresponding to the sense *head* of *poll*, are both obsolete: the English term is now preferred, and it is always used to denote only the English poll tax. *Poll tax* as a translational equivalent is not recorded in bilingual dictionaries, most probably for chronological reasons, but it will soon be if it becomes institutionalised, like *Far West*.

Poll tax is recorded in **Ragazzini** and in **Skey** under *poll* and translated respectively as *capitazione*, *testatico* and *tassa pro-capite*, which is an often used expression to denote a type of tax but not a specific tax like the poll tax. As usual in the case of compounds **Hazon** enters the expression as a main entry: surprisingly for a dictionary which has just been published it does not give *la poll tax* as a translational equivalent but only the already commented upon (*imposta di*) *capitazione*, *testatico*, and *tassa elettorale pro-capite* labelled *st.* (*storico* = historical). It gives as a synonym the expression *head money*, which is labelled in the **Collins English Dictionary** as «an archaic term for poll-tax». **Skey** lists the expression as a hyphenated compound⁵ of the sense *head* of *poll*, labelled *ant.* (*antico* = ancient). The other dictionaries do not enter the expression: **Paravia** and **Sansoni** record, with no examples, the sense *head* of *poll*, which **Sansoni** labels as *scherz., dial.* (*scherzoso, dialettale* = jocular, dialectal).

Poll tax is obviously not a neologism, but the poll tax is a new tax, and the term has become widely used, with its specific denotative (and connotative) power, only recently. It is significant, with respect to this observation, that the expression is not entered in **COBUILD**: most evidently it was not very frequent when this dictionary, which has selected its entries and subentries on the basis of their frequency of occurrence, was compiled. The expression does no longer denote a (possible) type of tax, but it refers to a real tax: lexicographically is a still a poll tax (cf. its definitions in **OALD**, under *poll*, and in **LDOCE**, a main entry), whereas 'culturally' it has now become *the* poll tax. It is this shift from extension to intension which has started the process of institutionalisation and of lexicalization of the expression.

Conclusions

The analysis of the lexicographic treatment of all these expressions shows that most errors (for instance **Good Easter!* or **out of job*) could often be avoided, if dictionaries were (properly) consulted. On the other hand, it shows that not all the lexico-

5. According to Delbrudge and Peters, the choice of how to write compounds is more than a matter of spelling-sound conventions. A term written as a unit «seems to connote a distinct species above and beyond what is expressed in its component parts» (1988:39). In this sense the passage from a spaced through a hyphenated to a solid form contributes to the process of lexicalization, but the hyphenated form *poll-tax* given in **Skey** cannot be interpreted in this sense since it was used *ante litteram*.

graphically-relevant aspects of collocations have been taken into consideration systematically. The location of collocations does not seem to follow any linguistic criteria connected with the role of the constituents as bases or as collocators or with the type of dictionary, as evidenced in the treatment of *a confirmed bachelor* or *French window*. The differences and pitfalls due to the anisomorphism of languages, which affects translation at various levels, from restrictions in use, as in *to bite the dust*, to culture specificity, as in *Far West* and in *a foot in the door*, are not indicated. The linguistic phenomenon exemplified by *poll tax* will find an adequate lexicographic treatment in due time, whereas encyclopedic information, as in *dark lady*, is and will be a justified absentee in general bilingual dictionaries. Example sentences, which are not given for the expressions analysed, should be added both to contextualise them and to highlight differences in use. On the whole it seems that collocations, which have been given great attention in theoretical studies, need greater attention in dictionaries. Going back to the title, it seems that, in a sense, the shortcomings of their present treatment (in the dictionaries consulted) make it similar to the behaviour of a person who has long held a post but has not filled his/her job.

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