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THE REPRESENTATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC LEXICAL ITEMS IN MONOLINGUAL LEARNER'S LEXICOGRAPHY

The case of the electronic Phrase-Based Active Dictionaries

Abstract This paper focuses on the treatment of culture-bound lexical items in a novel type of online learner's dictionary model, the Phrase-Based Active Dictionary (PAD). A PAD has a strong phraseological orientation: each meaning of a word is exclusively defined in a typical phraseological context. After introducing the relevant theory of *realia* in translation studies, we develop a broader notion of culture-specific lexical items which is more apt to serve the purposes of learner's lexicography and thus to satisfy the needs of a larger and often undefined target group. We discuss the treatment of such words and expressions in common English learner's dictionaries and then present various excerpts from PAD entries in English, German, and Italian which display different strategies for coping with cultural contents in the lexicon. Our aim is to demonstrate that the phraseological approach at the core of the PAD model turns out to be extremely important to convey cultural knowledge in a suitable way for users to fully grasp cultural implications in language.

Keywords Learner's lexicography; phraseology; culture-specific items; *realia*; multimedia

1. Introduction

This contribution concentrates on the treatment of words and expressions indicating culture-specific items in the model for online Phrase-based Active Dictionaries (PADs), which is currently being implemented in the context of the PhraseBase project. PhraseBase is a new project in learner's lexicography carried out at the Universities of Hildesheim and Heidelberg. At the core of the project are a cognitive approach to the study of language, a strong phraseological orientation towards lexical analysis and representation, as well as a corpus-based method to data acquisition and preparation. The theoretical background and the lexicographic process have been described in DiMuccio-Failla/Giacomini (2017a, 2017b), Giacomini/DiMuccio-Failla (2019), Giacomini/DiMuccio-Failla/Lanzi (2020), as well as in forthcoming publications. The current state of the PADs is a set of distinct monolingual resources (English, Italian, German) in which several sample entries have been compiled, especially for verbs. Each PAD entry has a deep hierarchical structure in which collocations are systematically employed at each level as disambiguating elements and possibly as components of normal patterns of usage (Sinclair 2004; Hanks 2013).

The online PADs are mainly addressed at non-native speakers of a language and cover data suitable for the CEFR levels B1-C2 that can be selectively presented according to the profile of the individual user. The distinctive cognitive linguistic character of the project is reflected, among others, by the access structures and the microstructure of the dictionaries, including the applied sorting criteria, and the treatment of polysemy, with the identification of progressive extensions of core prototypical meanings. Alongside general linguistic-phra-

seological aspects, the cultural dimension is essential. It manifests itself in the lexicon in various ways, for example in the denotative or connotative meaning of words, in the use of familiar alternative terms, in the pragmatic nuances of language.

Words and expressions characterised by cultural specificity pose a challenge for non-native speakers, e.g. foreign language learners or translators, both during text reception and text production tasks. Their role in learner's lexicography has already been discussed in a number of publications concerned with different languages and different subtypes of dictionaries (cf., among others, Zhang/Mi 2020; Tomaszczyk 2017). In the context of translation studies, culture-bound words and expressions, often referred to as *realia*, have been extensively explored and are mostly analysed from the point of view of distinct language pairs (cf. House 2004; Markstein 1998; Schreiber 2007). We will draw on these studies but attempt to devise a description model that is suitable for monolingual learner's lexicography, in which a range of possible target languages and cultures needs to be taken into account. The goal of this contribution is to show how the analysis and presentation of words denoting culture-specific items can benefit from PhraseBase's focus on the phrasal nature of language in terms of information completeness and potential information delivery efficiency.

After discussing the way in which existing learner's dictionaries treat this kind of data and illustrating different types of cultural specificity in the general language lexicon, the following aspects will be considered in greater detail: principles for selecting culture-bound vocabulary, its integration in the PAD microstructure and the definition of adequate microstructural data types, including multimedia options. This will be illustrated by way of examples in Italian, German, and English. Our final goal is to demonstrate that the phraseological approach at the core of the PAD model is crucial to convey cultural knowledge in a suitable way for dictionary users to fully grasp cultural implications in language.

2. Theory on culture-specific lexical items: from translation studies to learner's lexicography

In this contribution, *culture-specific* is broadly intended as the property of lexical items related to non-universal concepts (and entities) and displaying peculiar socio-cultural, historical, geographical etc. meaning traits. In principle, any type of dictionary may contain words and expressions related to culture-specific entities. In a general monolingual dictionary aimed at native speakers, such words and expressions usually have the same status as any other element of the lexicon. An exception is when cultural specificity is linked, for example, to certain characteristics of a restricted geographical area of a country and to certain diatopic varieties of a language (e.g. *carsico* in Italian and *Apfelsine* in German). In that case, short encyclopaedic additions to definitions as well as pragmatic indications are useful to support text comprehension.

Cultural specificity can only be grasped when different cultural and linguistic realities are compared. This is even more apparent when dealing with bilingual dictionaries and learner's dictionaries. Here, words and expressions related to culture-specific entities should, at least in theory, be considered as a part of the lexicon that requires special lexicographic treatment, precisely because it is designed for a potential non-native user with a (partly) different cultural background.

It is not surprising that many reflections on the nature of such elements of the lexicon and the problems they pose for a non-native speaker have originated in the field of translation

studies. In this context, a common term used to indicate culture-specific lexical items is *realia*. This term was first used in this meaning by translation scholars from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 60s, such as Sobolev in 1952, and Vlachov/Florin in 1969 and then in 1980. According to Sobolev, *realia* are words and phrases specifically related to the everyday life of a nation, which do not have any equivalents in the everyday life – and therefore – in the languages of other countries (Sobolev 1952, p. 281). A decade later, the Bulgarian translation scholars Vlachov and Florin expanded Sobolev's theory in two monographs published, respectively, in 1969 and 1980, and defined *realia* as

[...] words (and phrases), denoting elements that are specific to the life (everyday life, culture, social and historical progress) of a people and foreign to other peoples; since they carry a national and / or historical connotation, they do not have, as a rule, precise correspondences (equivalents) in other languages, and therefore cannot be translated «following the common rules» of translation, but require a specific approach.¹ (Vlachov/Florin 1980, 47; translation by P.D.M.P.)

Their work *Neperevodimoe v perevode* (“The Untranslatable in Translation”) published in 1980 represents one of the few scientific works which have investigated the concept of *realia* in such an extensive way. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge Vlachov and Florin are the only authors who have attempted to propose a categorization of *realia* (cf. Section 3). Being aware of the impossibility of establishing well-defined borders between *realia* and other categories, such as proper nouns, terms, and appellatives, they also provided interesting differentiation criteria with several examples.

In the wake of Vlachov and Florin, scholars belonging to the Leipzig school of translation such as Otto Kade, Albert Neubert and Wladimir Kutz carried on the research about *realia* focusing on viable translation strategies, especially in the language pair Russian-German (cf. Kutz 1977). In the last decades of the 20th century, the interest in *realia* grew also in Western Europe and North America, as other researchers (cf. Newmark 1981; Williams 1990; Kujamäki 2004) began to focus their studies on how to deal with *realia* in the translation process within the scope of a specific language pair.

The definitions mentioned above, as well as those formulated by Bödeker/Freese (1987) and Koller (1979), allow for a very precise approach to the translation of *realia* but fail to provide objective criteria for their identification outside the translation process, i. e. without the comparison between a source language and a target language.

Markstein attempts to provide an objective interpretation of *realia* and defines them as elements of the everyday life, history, culture, politics, etc. of a given people, country, geographical place, which do not have any correspondences in other peoples, other countries, other geographical places (Markstein 1998, p. 288). She also applies a decisive criterion and states that *realia* are identity carriers of a national/ethnic entity, a national/ethnic culture and are associated to a country, a region, a continent (ibid). An important aspect of her definition is based on a specific distinction: *realia* are objects, phenomena, etc. which have no correspondence in other *cultures*, and not just in other *languages*.

¹ Original text (Russian): “[...] слова (и словосочетания), называющие объекты, характерные для жизни (быта, культуры, социального и исторического развития) одного народа и чуждые другому; будучи носителями национального и/или исторического колорита, они, как правило, не имеют точных соответствий (эквивалентов) в других языках, а, следовательно, не поддаются переводу «на общих основаниях», требуя особого подхода.”

The problem of lexical equivalence is, of course, crucial in the context of translation studies. The definition provided by Markstein, however, opens a broader perspective on the role of cultural differences which is more apt to serve the purposes of a learner's dictionary. This aspect will be discussed in the next section.

3. Types of culture-specific lexical items

The categorization of *realia* proposed by Vlachov/Florin (1980, pp. 47–79) stretches over multiple levels of categorization and implies that a *reale* can simultaneously belong to more than just one of them. The first level of categorization concerns the denotatum: the authors subdivide *realia* into geographical (e. g. pampas, fjord, yeti, sequoia, etc.), ethnographic (e. g. sauna, kimono, sombrero, balalaika, etc.), and socio-political *realia* (e. g. Tory, tsar, sheikh, pharaoh, etc.). The second level of categorization takes into account the language(s): *realia* can be analysed either as elements of a single language, and therefore, be subdivided in domestic and foreign *realia*, or as contrasting elements between two languages. In this case, *realia* can be internal or external to the translation language pair. Moreover, according to a third level of categorization, *realia* can be subdivided diachronically into historical and contemporary *realia*. A comparable categorization has been made by Newmark (1988, p. 95). Newmark identifies the following cultural categories: 1) ecology; 2) material culture; 3) social culture; 4) organization, customs, ideas; 5) gestures and habits. A last differentiation criterion pointed out by Vlachov and Florin and pertaining to the present study involves the lexicographic occurrence of a *reale*: lexicographers should always take into consideration the frequency of a foreign *reale*, whether it has enjoyed an ephemeral success in a given language or whether it still fulfils the criteria for being defined as such.

As already mentioned, we draw our inspiration from studies on cultural categories and *realia* in translation, however we do not specifically concentrate on words and expressions for which no target notion (i. e. a referent in a target culture) and no equivalents exists. In fact, the problem of equivalence itself will not be dealt with in this study. From the standpoint of learner's lexicography, we need to set up a more flexible approach to the definition of cultural items and their treatment in a dictionary for learners. We expand the translation-oriented perspective by taking into account, among others, the approach by Markstein (1998) and the concept of *cultureme* in Pamies (2017) to include more phenomena than mere lexical gaps and pay close attention to the linguistic and encyclopaedic needs of a much broader and partially undefined public. The broader picture is given by the interplay between concepts and their lexicalisations in different cultures, for which a range of cases can be identified (Table 1).

1. Referent is available in a certain target culture:	2. Lexicalisation of the related concept in the target language:	3. Difference between the word in the source and in the target language in terms of cultural content:
No	–	–
Yes	Not (yet) lexicalised	–
	Lexicalised – sometimes through a foreign word	– Culturally different – Culturally similar

Table 1: Concepts and their lexicalisations in different cultures

It should be the goal of a learner's dictionary that addresses users of many different languages and cultures to provide specific cultural information related to the lexicon, especially when it can be assumed that some lexicalised concepts may be experienced differently in different cultural environments. This is often the case of foreign words in a language: is a *pub* in Italy the same as a *pub* in the UK, or is the *Bolognese-Sauce* in Germany the same as the *ragù alla bolognese* in Italy? Of course, these borrowings need to be treated like neologisms which may slowly adapt their meaning to the cultural adaptations of the referent. This also should be reflected by an up-to-date lexicographic resource. Cultural differences, finally, can depend on encyclopaedic, i. e. non-linguistic, but also be paired to differences in connotative meaning (think, for example, of the connotation of words indicating the colour red in different languages).

4. The treatment of culture-specific lexical items in learner's dictionaries

As previously mentioned, the treatment of culture-specific words in lexicography is particularly important for a non-native speaker. In a bilingual dictionary, such treatment can effectively focus on the language pair in question, depending also on the directionality of the dictionary (cf. Svénson 2009). A monolingual learner's dictionary typically does not target a single group of native speakers. The presentation of culturally specific vocabulary elements should be therefore calibrated with a potential audience in mind, possibly including different language families. The number of lexical items of a language which can be seen as culture-specific is determined by the distance between the socio-cultural context of that language and that of other languages. This topic has been dealt with in studies on equivalence in translation (cf., among others, Koller 1979).

In this section we offer a brief overview of how four online monolingual English learner's dictionaries² treat lexical items which are probably unfamiliar to most of their dictionary users because of their cultural specificity. For each of the three languages, three common words and expressions have been selected and analysed from the perspective of their 'cultural', encyclopaedic coverage. The headwords are words indicating concrete or abstract concepts, including actions and events. In this test, we aimed at choosing words and expressions which are not being commonly used as foreign words in other languages (i. e. not such cases as *pub* or *paella* in Italian). *Fish and chips*, *peer*, *hustle and bustle*, and *to facepalm* have been selected to show different ways in which cultural aspects may be rooted in language. For analysing dictionary data, we applied the following criteria:

- adequacy of semantic information: do definitions provide all necessary information for the user to grasp the cultural implications behind the meaning(s) of the lexical item?
- adequacy of pragmatic information: do lexicographic items such as pragmatic labels and usage examples enable the user to fully understand the (cultural) context in which a lexical item is used?

We intentionally concentrate on the quality of data needed for text reception alone, since this is the most important step for the user to first deal with an unfamiliar part of the lexicon. Grammatical aspects are not taken into account, as they do not typically have a specific

² Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD), and Collins English Dictionary (COLLINS).

impact on the treatment of this kind of lexical units if compared with others. Table 2 lists the definitions provided in the selected dictionaries:


fish and chips:	<p>[LDOCE] – a meal consisting of fish covered with batter (=a mixture of flour and milk) and cooked in oil, served with long thin pieces of potato also cooked in oil</p> <p>[OALD] – a dish of fish that has been fried in batter served with chips, and usually bought in the place where it has been cooked and eaten at home, etc., especially in the UK</p> <p>[COLLINS] – Fish and chips are fish fillets coated with batter and deep-fried, eaten with French fries.</p> <p>[CALD] - fish covered with batter (= a mixture of flour, eggs, and milk) and then fried and served with pieces of fried potato</p> 
peer:	<p>[LDOCE] – a member of the British nobility → House of Lords, peerage</p> <p>[OALD] – (in the UK) a member of the nobility or the House of Lords</p> <p>[COLLINS] – In Britain, a peer is a member of the nobility who has or had the right to vote in the House of Lords</p> <p>[CALD] – in the UK, a person who has a title and a high social position</p>
hustle and bustle:	<p>[LDOCE] [OALD] [COLLINS] – (no entry, there are only examples)</p> <p>[CALD] – busy movement and noise, especially where there are a lot of people (separate treatment in the entry of hustle)</p>
to face-palm/ facepalm:	<p>[LDOCE] – (informal) to put the palm of your hand on your face, or put your face down on your hand, when you are embarrassed, disappointed, shocked at someone's stupidity etc</p> <p>[OALD] – (informal) the action of covering your face with your hand, usually because you are shocked, embarrassed, annoyed, etc.</p> <p>[COLLINS] – to bring the palm of one's hand to one's face as an expression of dismay</p> <p>[CALD] – (informal) to cover your face with your hand because you are embarrassed, annoyed, or disappointed about something</p>

Table 2: Definitions of culture-specific lexical items in four major learner's dictionaries of English

With the exception of some indications which we highlighted by using bold characters, definitions are neutral from the point of view of cultural specificity and the degree of possible semantic-encyclopaedic coverage varies from one dictionary to the other.

Fish and chips indicates a concrete entity, a dish or even a meal, which is generally described by external sources such as encyclopaedic and news sources as being typically British. Its typicality is also reflected by the fact it is a multiword expression. Although the meaning of the expression is transparent and fully compositional, and the definitions provided by the dictionaries are exhaustive from the perspective of the purely denotative meaning, subtle connotative information related to the context in which this kind of dish is sold and eaten is missing. The same observations apply to *peer*, a word which describes a specific role in British society and politics.

In general, no images are provided for the selected words, even though this would be a useful device for supporting text reception. The only exception is CALD's image for *fish and*

chips. CALD also mentions a large number of related words and phrases in a dictionary section called SMART vocabulary, in which further culture-specific lexical items indicating dishes are listed, for instance *baked beans*, *arancini*, *French toast*, *pad thai*, and *spaghetti bolognese*.

The specificity of the idiom *hustle and bustle* seems to have been fully underestimated and CALD is the only dictionary that provides a definition. The verb *to facepalm*, finally, indicates a gesture and, as such, can turn to be highly culture-specific depending on the recipient. At first sight, the definitions in the four dictionaries are similar, but the description of the action involved in facepalming oneself can be pretty different, ranging from generic “putting the palm of the hand on one’s face” to “covering one’s face with the hand”. In order to specify this kind of action, some images would have been useful. There are, in fact, different ways of performing this action: with one or two hands as well as putting your hands in different and yet typical positions on your face, often depending on the emotion you are experiencing (embarrassment or disappointment, for example). Whenever facial expressions or, in general, non-verbal communication are involved, the use of non-verbal descriptors such as images and videos should be considered as an essential complement to definitions.

Pragmatic information is primarily delivered by means of usage examples. The quantity of examples greatly varies from dictionary to dictionary. LDOCE offers the largest number of examples, which seems to be a most adequate solution for illustrating the use of the selected words and expressions in their typical contexts. Especially corpus examples, however, which are provided in addition to a couple of introductory examples, do not really help the dictionary user, since they are either too generic, or too specific, or their context is unclear. Pragmatic labels have not been used with the exception of the *informal* register label for the verb *to facepalm*. The entry for *peer* in LDOCE is related via a link to the topic ‘Government’. The webpage dedicated to this topic, however, mostly concentrates on the word *government* itself and makes no mention of the word *peer*.

A comparable treatment of culture-specific lexical items can be found in learner’s dictionaries of German (the words *Fachwerkhaus*, *Kabelsalat*, *Schadenfreude*, and *gemütlich* were searched for in Langenscheidt Deutsch als Fremdsprache and PONS Deutsch als Fremdsprache), French (the words *yaourt* and *flâneur* were searched for in the Dictionnaire Le Robert Micro and Le Robert & CLE International), and Spanish (the words *madrugada* and *sobremesa* were searched for in VOX Diccionario de español para extranjeros and ELE Diccionario de español para extranjeros).

Although no large representative study has been carried out in the four languages, these first results seem to confirm that no special focus is put on cultural aspects of the lexicon and their implications in lexicography, be it at the level of semantic or at the level of pragmatic description. Situational knowledge is also rarely conveyed, and non-verbal descriptors such as images are usually missing.

5. Culture-specific lexical item in a Phrase-Based Active Dictionary (PAD)

From the point of view of its lexicographic functions, a Phrase-Based Active Dictionary is primarily intended as a dictionary for text production. However, a prerequisite for enabling

the active usage of language is adequate text reception, which is particularly important whenever specific cultural aspects are mirrored in word meanings.

How do we intend to treat cultural specificity in our model for a PAD? The main microstructural feature of the dictionary model is that words are not described in isolation but within typical phraseological patterns, which are seen as the true lexical units of a language. Each phraseological pattern is a syntactic-semantic unit matching a specific word sense, mostly in a collocational way. For instance, we do not just define all possible senses of the verb *to agree*, but we define *to agree with a certain opinion* as the phraseological pattern which uniquely identifies the meaning “to think that a certain opinion is right”.

As pointed out in section 3, we widen the typical translation-oriented perspective on culture-bound elements of the lexicon and include a more comprehensive range of phenomena. However, our primary focus is on the base vocabulary of a language, which often has large cross-cultural, if not universal validity. The choice of entries which need to be treated as culture-specific is made by concentrating on lexical elements that on average may be perceived as ‘foreign’, e.g. their referent is missing or the related concept has not (yet) been lexicalised (cf. Table 1). This is a manual procedure aided by the consultation of existing general dictionaries and the analysis of frequency data in corpora³.

For some of the selected words and expression, encyclopaedic information is required to provide the dictionary user with an exhaustive cultural picture. Encyclopaedic information can be part of a definition, enclosed in collocations and usage examples, or presented in a dedicated microstructural section. Physical objects shall be complemented by one or more prototypical images. A few entry excerpts will now be presented and discussed from the perspective of their culture-related content:

1) *Fachwerkhaus* in the German PAD:

The excerpt from the entry for *Fachwerkhaus*⁴ displays several peculiar features. First of all, corpus-based analysis reveals that the word is mostly used in its plural form and in the context of the description of (usually the centre of) a settlement such as a village, a town, or possibly the old town district of a city. This is reflected by the formulation of the Lexical Unit (in German: Lexikalische Einheit, LE) (*normalerweise alte/historische Fachwerkhäuser (im Zentrum) einer bestimmten Siedlung* (“(usually old/historical) half-timbered houses (in the centre of) a certain settlement”), in which the semantic type *Siedlung* encompasses different possible types of settlements. The lexical unit functions as a phraseological pattern which is typical for the word *Fachwerkhaus*. It is followed by a definition, usage examples and collocations. A special microstructural section dedicated to culture-specific aspects is called Culture (in German: ‘Kultur) and contains encyclopaedic, i.a. historical, architectural and socio-cultural information related to the concept of *Fachwerkhaus*. Two images of pro-

³ In this study, the English Web 2020, German Web 2018, and Italian Web 2016 corpora have been analysed by using different Sketch Engine tools.

⁴ The German word *Fachwerkhaus*, usually translated in English as half-timbered house, indicates a house built by half-timbering. “Half-timber work was common in China and, in a refined form, in Japan and was used for domestic architecture throughout northern continental Europe, especially Germany and France, until the 17th century.” (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/half-timber-work>)

totypical half-timbered houses in the German-speaking area are also included. The Culture section and the images are intended to convey culture-specific information which cannot be given elsewhere. The former, in particular, can include both an entry-specific encyclopaedic description and links to external sources such as Wikipedia, BabelNet, and also popular scientific resources.

	<p>LE: (NORM. alte/ historische) Fachwerkhäuser (im Zentrum) einer best. Siedlung</p>
	<p>DEFINITION: (NORM. alte/ historische) Häuser mit Struktur aus Holzbalken (im Zentrum) einer best. Siedlung</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>BEISPIELE: 1. Mehr als 1300 Fachwerkhäuser bilden den historischen Kern der Stadt. 2. Bis 1937 war die Schule in einem 1850 erbauten Fachwerkhaus untergebracht.</p>
	<p>KOLLOKATIONEN: restaurierte/ denkmalgeschützte Fachwerkhäuser; Fachwerkhäuser in der Altstadt/ im Ortskern</p>
	<p>■ KULTUR: Ein Fachwerkhaus besteht aus einem Art Skelett aus verstreuten Holzbalken. Dieses Stützskelett trägt das gesamte Fachwerkhaus. Die jeweiligen Zwischenräume, auch Gefach genannt, sind mit einem lehmbeiworfenen Holzgeflecht ausgefüllt oder mit Back- oder Bruchsteinen ausgemauert. Sie können aber auch mit Lehmbausteinen verbaut oder verputzt sein. Verwendete Holzarten sind Eiche (am meisten eingesetzt) oder gelegentlich auch Tanne. (https://www.hausbau-portal.net)</p>

2) *aceto balsamico* in the Italian PAD:

It is important to note that encyclopaedic information can sometimes be paired with information on norms and standards regulating a given domain. This is, for instance, the case of specifications such as DOP, DOC, DOCG, and IGP⁶ for Italian food and drinks. In the entry for *aceto balsamico* we include the following data:

⁵ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fachwerkh%C3%A4user_%22Am_Johanniskloster%22-20151029-IMG_0516.jpg, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fachwerkh%C3%A4user_in_Wetter_\(Hessen\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fachwerkh%C3%A4user_in_Wetter_(Hessen).jpg).

⁶ DOP: Denominazione di Origine Protetta (Protected designation of origin), DOC: Denominazione di Origine Controllata (Controlled designation of origin), DOCG: Denominazione di origine controllata e garantita (Controlled and guaranteed designation of origin), IGP: Indicazione Geografica Protetta (Protected geographical indication).



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UL: **Aceto Balsamico (Tradizionale) (di Modena/ Reggio-Emilia)**

ESEMPI: 1. *L'aceto balsamico è un condimento molto popolare sulle tavole italiane.* 2. *L'antica acetiaia, fondata nel XVIII secolo, produce un pregiato Aceto Balsamico di Modena.*

COLLOCAZIONI: *Aceto Balsamico di Modena IGP, Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena DOP, Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Reggio-Emilia DOP; glassa di aceto balsamico*

■ **CULTURA:**

L'Aceto Balsamico di Modena IGP è il prodotto ottenuto dai mosti appartenenti a sette varietà di uva del territorio emiliano. A questi mosti, parzialmente fermentati, cotti o concentrati, è prevista l'aggiunta di aceto vecchio di almeno 10 anni e minimo del 10% di aceto di vino. La quantità di mosto d'uva utilizzata non deve essere inferiore al 20%. È consentita l'aggiunta di caramello, per la stabilizzazione del colore, fino ad un massimo del 2% del volume del prodotto finito, ma non è ammessa l'aggiunta di altre sostanze oltre quelle già menzionate. L'acetificazione e l'affinamento avvengono in recipienti di legno pregiato quali quercia, rovere, castagno, gelso e ginepro, nell'arco di un periodo minimo di 70 giorni. [...] (www.altroconsumo.it)

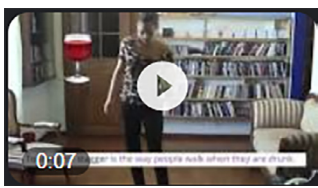
<https://acetiaiaestense.com/aceto-balsamico-di-modena>

The Lexical Unit (in Italian: Unità Lessicale, UL) is already provided by the name of the product carrying the specification label. Being a proper name, it does not require a definition. However, in the Culture section (in Italian: 'Cultura'), a brief encyclopaedic description of Aceto Balsamico di Modena, followed by cross-references to external texts dealing with its origin production, properties, and its IGP or DOP status are crucial. *Aceto Balsamico (Tradizionale) (di Modena/Reggio-Emilia)*, which is phraseological in nature, also builds complex recursive collocations (cf. Giacomini/DiMuccio-Failla/Lanzi 2020), some of which are further proper names. Images can also be useful to gain a first impression of the organoleptic characteristics of the product.

3) *to stagger* in the English PAD:

Motion verbs in English have several troponyms which correspond to very subtle meaning distinctions. This is not a culture-specific feature from a conceptual point of view. Rather, the cultural specificity concerns the extremely precise lexical differentiation, which may be missing in other languages. Among the troponyms of the verb *to walk*, WordNet lists, for example, *lollop*, *tap*, *stumble*, *sneek*, *swagger*, *scuffle*, *stagger* and many others. The motion verb *to stagger* can be presented as follows:

⁷ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4e/Balsamic_vinegar_%28drops%29.jpg/330px-Balsamic_vinegar_%28drops%29.jpg



0:07

LU: **sb. (ESP. a drunk) staggers around / in a ct. direction**


DEFINITION: sb. (ESP. a drunk) walks very unsteadily around/ in a ct. direction

EXAMPLES: 1. *The girl was walking unsteadily, too, stumbling and staggering from side to side.* 2. *He staggered a few feet then dropped to the ground.*

COLLOCATIONS: *to stagger back/ backwards/ away/ forward/ sideways/ about; to stagger drunkenly*

Actions like *staggering* are best illustrated by videos. In this case, however, no additional Culture section is required.

4) *peer* in the English PAD:



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LU: **a political party (ESP. Conservative/ Labour) peer in the House of Lords**

DEFINITION: a member of the House of Lords belonging to a political party (ESP. Conservative/ Labour)

EXAMPLES: 1. *The British government has continued the process of abolishing hereditary peers in the House of Lords.* 2. *A life peer cannot pass their title on to his or her children.*

COLLOCATIONS: *hereditary/ Tory/ representative peer*

■ **CULTURE:**

peer is a core element of the frame UK PARLIAMENT:

UK Parliament is made up of three central elements: the **Monarchy** and two **Chambers**, namely the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords / House of Peers**. **MPs** sit in the House of Commons. (**Members of the**) **Lords / peers** sit in the House of Lords. The main functions of the UK Parliament are **scrutinizing the work of the Government, legislation, debating, checking and approving Government spending**. [...]

Meanings and cultural implications of words indicating roles such as *professor*, *nurse*, *parent*, or *peer*, are best described in terms of a frame, which provides the user with situational knowledge (cf. Fillmore 2006). Within a frame, a word is embedded in a complex scenario made up of entities, events, states of affairs etc. A suitable frame for describing the role of a peer is the frame UK PARLIAMENT, in which core frame elements (bold characters) are presented together with their relations (underlined). The frame itself can be introduced by using a multimedia approach, e. g. by means of graphs, images and videos.

The above-mentioned examples show that different strategies should be taken into account for presenting culture-specific lexical items in a learner's dictionary. The PAD model provides, with its phraseological lexical units, first contextual syntactic-semantic information on a word and, at the same time, a key to first access cultural content: for instance, *sb. (ESP. a drunk) staggers around/in a certain direction* matches the content of the video in a more

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T09ufCyTtV0>

⁹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:House_of_Lords_2011.jpg

precise way than *to stagger* alone, while *political party* (ESP. *Conservative/Labour*) *peer in the House of Lords* anticipates the content of the frame description in a more explicit way than the noun *peer* alone.

A PAD aims to offer a holistic treatment of the lexicon starting from a phraseological view of language. The Culture section is a repository for cultural and/or situational knowledge required by a non-native user to fully understand a text while acquiring cultural competence (cf. Nied Curcio 2020). The same purpose is fulfilled by the media section of the micro-structure, in which images and videos can be found. A further method for increasing efficiency in the presentation of culture-bound phenomena in a learner's dictionary is the parallel treatment of similar words, which can be clustered in a homogeneous semantic field (e. g. motion verbs) or domain (e. g. design and architecture, food).

6. Conclusions

According to the broad notion of *cultural specificity* adopted in this paper, a large portion of the lexicon is affected by some kind of cultural influence. From a lexicographic point of view, culture-specific lexical items pose a considerable challenge to learner's dictionaries, which do not focus on a single target group but usually address speakers of many different languages.

To decide which entries need to be integrated with culture-related information is not an easy task for a lexicographer. Moreover, the amount and type of information required varies from word to word. As illustrated in the examples from the PADs, depending on the expected relation between concepts and lexicalisations in distinct cultures as well as on the type of entity (or: concept) we are dealing with, different strategies should be used to reach the same goal: to enable the user to fully understand the meaning and the cultural implications of a word or expression. A holistic, multimedia approach is desirable, because it offers multiple ways of communicating content:

- images (e. g. pictures and drawings) are particularly useful for illustrating concrete objects and states of affairs;
- videos are particularly useful for showing actions;

frames providing specific situational knowledge are particularly useful for describing events and roles.

There is no strict subdivision between these strategies, nor is their mutually exclusive application advisable. This has been shown in all examples of section 5. Besides prototypical images, videos and frames, further data can be added, also in the form of links to external sources.

The novelty of the PAD model lies in the fact that the first access to cultural content is granted by the phraseological structure of the Lexical Units, which provide the base syntactic-semantic context in which a word in a specific sense typically occurs. This phraseological pattern also determines the way in which culture-specific information is presented: in the same way that we do not define words in isolation but in their fundamental syntactic-semantic contexts, we do not present cultural information independently of the minimal context set by the Lexical Unit.

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