

An Informal Report on the New Hungarian-French Dictionary In Progress at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle

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Article abstract

This paper presents a new Hungarian-French bilingual dictionary project. It provides the theoretical framework of the dictionary and discusses some aspects of the microstructure.

AN INFORMAL REPORT ON THE NEW HUNGARIAN-FRENCH DICTIONARY In Progress at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle

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Résumé

On présente le projet d'un nouveau dictionnaire hongrois-français en cours de réalisation. On étudie ses bases théoriques et on développe plus particulièrement la question du contenu de certaines rubriques des articles.

Abstract

This paper presents a new Hungarian-French bilingual dictionary project. It provides the theoretical framework of the dictionary and discusses some aspects of the microstructure.

"The relations between words... are a fact, the equations are a fiction" (Neubert, A., "Fact and Fiction of the Bilingual Dictionary", *Euralex'90*, Barcelona, Bibliograf, 1992, p. 29.

1. Within the framework of a bilateral project and under the auspices of the *Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Hongroises (Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3)* I am currently supervising a team of lexicographers who are responsible for compiling a new Hungarian-French dictionary, which, by informal agreement, is to be co-edited by *Éditions Le Robert* (Paris) and *Akadémiai Kiadó* (Budapest).¹

Our objective is to make this reference work, which provides valuable information about the two languages, easily accessible to all students, teachers and translators working with Hungarian and French, and generally speaking, to make such information available to all those involved in the French-speaking and Hungarian-speaking worlds.

The only bilingual dictionary currently in use (Eckhardt 1958 and 1960) has been updated several times simply by the addition of supplements and since is outmoded in its design and faulty on many counts. It includes neither contemporary expressions nor new usages and does not indicate new meanings associated with existing terms. This is indeed a serious obstacle to the development of exchanges that have become increasingly important today. It also limits both the development of French language instruction in Hungary and in the regions of the Carpathian Basin where Hungarian is spoken and that of Hungarian language instruction in France and in French-speaking countries.

However, such criticism of a bilingual dictionary does not reflect all aspects of the problem. Indeed, despite its flaws, this dictionary has its merits in that it has help lay the groundwork for subsequent translations from and into the two languages, and as such is an invaluable source of information.

Compiling a bilingual dictionary entails choosing a set of methodological options and linguistic and cultural values. It necessarily implies addressing numerous problems related to defining of content and the intended public, as well as selecting relevant information and the manner in which this information will be organized.

Actual compilation began in the fall of 1993, following the establishment of an *Editing Protocol* which I had drafted in 1991-1993 with Miklós Pálffy (Attila József University, Szeged, Hungary), director of the French-Hungarian section of the dictionary, and Vilmos Bárdosi (Loránd Eötvös University, Budapest) and Jean Perrot (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris) who initiated the endeavor. Needless to say, a lexicography team cannot maintain a consistent style or obtain valid results unless its members share the same points of view and can agree on theoretical guidelines and working methods from the very start. Our method, described in detail in the *Editing Protocol*, was designed to be rigorous yet flexible, so that it might be applied to as many different cases as possible.

Carrying out such a project would not be possible today without recourse to computer technology. Under the supervision of Júlia Pajzs, a researcher at the Linguistics Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a network of programs has been designed in order to accommodate the particular needs of a bilingual dictionary, and ensure the coherence and uniformity of the word list, anticipate and coordinate every aspect of the lexicographer's task and automate to the greatest extent possible all the processes involved. It was therefore essential to define the dictionary's format, that is, to standardize writing norms as well as the structure of the lexicographical content. The software programs *Writer Station* and *Pat* enable us to record the dictionary's entries as they are completed and to store them in a data base. Since the different elements of each type of entry have been identified and standardized, it is possible to use search and query functions in the data base.

Naturally, this programming is in a constant state of flux. Clearly, the computer, with its speed, precision and convenience, has revolutionized the way in which we structure our dictionaries. But — let there be no mistake — in general, the particular type of translation that bilingual lexicography requires has not yet been relegated to even highly sophisticated computers. One of the main lessons the lexicographer learns from his daily work is that the natural texture of language predictably defies even the most ingenious formalizations and systematizations.

Here is a description of our method.

In *step one*, the native Hungarian speakers on our team prepare the word list which includes:

- lexical units chosen to appear as entry words;
- examples illustrating their usage and contexts in speech;
- frequently used idiomatic expressions in which the entry word is found;
- semantic labels in Hungarian to orient the user;
- usage labels, indicating field, register and other pertinent information.

In *step two*, the native French-speaking team members perform the following tasks:

- select the most pertinent equivalents;
- suggest translations of the illustrative examples and idiomatic expressions;
- propose changes in the structure of certain entries, taking into consideration the semantic criteria of the French language.

In *step three*, during meetings called "rereading" sessions, which are always held in the presence of two native French speakers and two native Hungarian speakers, we re-examine each proposed entry and determine its final version. At this time, we verify once again slight variations in meaning, situational appropriateness, grammatical context, register and the different constraints in the two languages. This kind of work is particularly delicate: when deciding whether or not a certain word or a certain translation "works," we can no longer separate theory from practical application, but must strive to synchronize the two, while also considering both the French and the Hungarian points of view.

My experience as a French professor (in the Hungarian university system) and as a Hungarian professor (in the French university system) has enabled me to observe the extent to which speakers from both linguistic backgrounds become confused when they must choose among insufficiently defined equivalents provided by the one bilingual dictionary available today. It is therefore fundamental that a bilingual dictionary address both linguistic groups (in this case, Hungarian speakers and French speakers) and that it accommodate their respective needs.² If the aim is to pay equal attention to the two languages, the dictionary must be developed with the perspective of reciprocal bilingualism.

As perfect symmetry between the two languages in any given dictionary entry is rare, so is it rare to find dictionary users who operate identically. Some resort to the dictionary for help in understanding a language they know but a little, while others hope to express themselves, with the help of a dictionary, in a language they have not entirely mastered. Consequently, different users may have different expectations of bilingual dictionaries.

Intended for use by both the Hungarian and the French linguistic communities, the dictionary will serve two principle purposes:

- for Hungarians, it will be used primarily for translation into French;
- for French speakers, it will be used primarily to understand Hungarian.

Redundance is therefore inevitable. If one claims to meet the principal needs of the two groups of users, one must accept that the information provided may be insufficient for the first group but superfluous for the second, or vice versa.

In most cases, bilingual dictionary editors claim to present languages as they are used in social exchanges. In fact, the truth is that language is manipulated by mediators who adjust it to fit the dimensions of a dictionary. Even if the dictionary's structure is defined and organized by lexicographers, it is more a pedagogical model than a purely linguistic description of language.

Two linguistic systems "collide" in all bilingual dictionaries. Nevertheless, a bilingual dictionary is neither an exhaustive lexical description of two languages nor the faithful reproduction of the innumerable concrete realizations of speech in L1 and L2.

The objective of any venture into bilingual is to facilitate an understanding of the particularities as well as the common characteristics of the two languages involved. Editing a dictionary inevitably generates greater awareness of differences and a certain awe at the number of similarities between the two languages. By presenting these very cases of difference and similarity, a bilingual dictionary and indeed, each dictionary entry, provides the user, through a limited number of lexical units and pertinent examples, with a means of producing natural utterances and avoiding many errors of interpretation.

To this end, the new dictionary will include a word list of approximately 50,000 words. Among these, are the expected core of everyday words, as well as numerous terms illustrating the diversity of a living language that is constantly altered and enriched by the evolution of cultural norms.

In both languages considered here, there are lexis inventories in the form of unilingual dictionaries, which are never entirely adapted to the needs of bilingual dictionary users. While the French word stock is documented by a vast array of unilingual dictionaries that are edited and re-edited by such prestigious publishers as Le Robert and Larousse and that have provided a ready starting point for the French-Hungarian section of the dictionary, the insufficiency of the sole Hungarian lexicographical reference book available today, *Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár* (1972) has required us to develop a computerized data base of elements drawn from various genres of contemporary Hungarian expression.

Contemporary Hungarian is represented in our corpus by excerpts from two primary sources:

- a) Hungarian literary works in prose published since 1960;
- b) the Hungarian press (including the popular press and economic, technical and cultural journals and magazines) since 1990, that is, since the end of the Communist regime.

These sources are representative of Hungarian usage and contain a large number of everyday terms and expressions especially those used in spoken Hungarian.

Use of this ever-growing data base ensures a balanced description of different fields and also supplies us with information on the creation and disappearance of words (even if our purpose is neither to adopt every modern-day linguistic innovation nor to compile a catalogue of trendy expressions). With the help of our computerized records, we are able to identify a considerable number of semantic and syntactical contexts which allow for a more faithful description of the usage of each entry word.

As the Editing Protocol specifies, "Priority must be given to contemporary language, to expressions heard frequently in daily life. Etymological observations need not be included; rare, archaic and dialectal words and excessively specialized meanings should be eliminated. On the other hand, unconventional words (slang, swearing) should be included. As for scientific and technical vocabulary, only the most commonly used terms will appear, at the advice of specialists in those fields."

If we consider the Eckhardt dictionary to be comprehensive — since its aim is to provide a inventory of all the words in the Hungarian language — the dictionary in progress can be considered selective. Efforts will be made, nevertheless, to record both the ordinary words found in contemporary language (especially the words and meanings that have appeared only recently) and the elements of classical Hungarian that are still considered essential.

2. There are rather few cases of true equivalents existing between languages, even between two genetically "related" languages such as French and English. Aside from a few technical or scientific terms, whose use is strictly limited to a specific domain, the great majority of the signs in two languages are not equivalent. On the contrary, they often designate multiple and diverse realities.³ Here are two examples in which the formal analogy between a Hungarian term of French origin and a French term is not accompanied by semantic similarity, and a third example, in which the semantic similarity is incomplete:

- *neszesszer* => *vanity case* (Anglo-American borrowing in French);
- *ridikül* does not mean *ridicule* ("ridiculous") as one might expect, but rather => *sac à main* ("handbag");
- *etalon* does share one meaning ("a standard of measurement") with the French *étalon*, but is never a reference to a stallion (as in French).

From one language to another, the designation of the same reality is generally obtained through different channels. Speaking about a person who was born to good fortune, a Hungarian says *burokban született* (literally, "he was born covered"); a French speaker says *il est né coiffé* ("he was born with his hair done"); the English speaker: *he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth*. How can these expressions be considered equivalent? We must place ourselves in the context: in such circumstances, what would be the verbal reaction of a Hungarian speaker, of a French speaker, of an English speaker?

The examples shown below demonstrate that L1 and L2 resort naturally to two analyses and to two completely different lexical solutions:

- a French speaker dons a *manteau de demi-saison* ("between-season coat") while a Hungarian speaker prefers to wear an *átmeneti kabát* ("transition coat");
- the disease the Hungarians call "English trouble" (*angolkór*) corresponds to *rachitisme* ("rickets") in French;
- an "asphalt bandit" (*aszfaltbetyár*) is nothing more than a man who accosts women on the street.

Often, one language uses a single word to express an idea that the other language expresses in several words, and vice versa. Thus, we find subtleties in Hungarian that French can only express by circumlocution:

- *borosta* => *barbe de trois jours* ("three-day beard");
- *botrányhős* => *personne qui défraie la chronique scandaleuse* ("someone who enjoys causing a scandal");
- *egybesült* => *rôti d'une seule pièce* ("roasted whole").

Unlike Hungarian, French makes no difference between raising prices (*áremelés*) and rising prices (*áremelkedés*). Similarly, Hungarian distinguishes, unlike French, between *zuhany* ("shower") and *zuhanyozás* ("showering").

All languages contain inconsistencies, redundancies and gaps. But however incomplete and asymmetrical, the lexical system of a language tends to coincide with the principal needs of the speakers of that language.

The fact that a given concept has an official name proves that it has a significance for the members of a linguistic community, while other concepts can only be expressed analytically and indirectly. If we compare the lexis of a language to a net, we can imagine that the "mesh" is finer in certain semantic fields than in others where it is indeed quite wide.

The "holes" in a language can be explained by the fact that some cultural particularities are recognized by the language, others not at all. Encounters with this idea of "insufficiency" are part of the daily work of the bilingual lexicographer.

The ability of a linguistic community to distinguish certain concepts from others can be a source of great confusion for the foreigner. For example, the Hungarian word *ablak* is not always translated by the French word *fenêtre* ("window"):

- => *vitre* (in a car),
- => *guichet* (in an office),
- => *hublot* (on a boat),
- => *lucarne* (in an attic),
- => *soupirail* (in a cellar), etc.

The Hungarian *aroma* is sometimes the counterpart of the French *arôme*, but a French speaker uses *bouquet* instead when talking about wine, and *fumet* to describe the smell of meat cooking.

As for semantic nonparallelism, one often discovers, when searching for French equivalents of Hungarian words, that the French words can be extended further than the Hungarian ones. The whims of semantic areas are not cause for alarm, for unpredictability is the rule rather than the exception even when it comes to concrete terms. In figurative language, discrepancies become even more flagrant.

One expects satisfactory equivalents for concrete nouns to be abundant: the Hungarian *macska* corresponds to the French *chat* ("cat"), just as *kés* ("knife" in Hungarian) corresponds to the French *couteau*. However, the French term *étudiant en médecine* ("medical student") can be translated by either *orvostanhallgató* or *medikus*, and likewise, the French *restaurant* can be expressed by either of two virtually synonymous Hungarian

words, *étterem* and *vendéglő*. Such words and formulas with nearly parallel meanings enrich language, placing a range of stylistic nuances at our disposal.

The Hungarian language, with its many highly transparent structures, seems closer to the world it describes than does the French language, whose words are seldom visibly linked — naturally or logically — with the “thing” or concept designated; French words are often coined from Greek and Latin roots: *szemorvos* (“eye doctor”) and *szívbetegség* (“heart” + “sickness”) become *ophthalmologiste* and *cardiopathie* in French. Compared to the Hungarian terms listed here, the French equivalents may seem arbitrary:

<i>bosszúvágó</i> (“vengeance” + “desiring”)	= >	<i>vindicatif</i> (“vindictive”)
<i>bőbeszédű</i> (“abundant” + “speaking”)	= >	<i>loquace</i> (“loquacious”)
<i>bőráru</i> (“leather” + “merchandise”)	= >	<i>maroquinerie</i> (“leather goods”)

Hungarian morphology groups ideas together whenever possible, whereas French tends to isolate them. Hungarian compound words designate permanent links established between two objects or notions; the same links are often best expressed in French by two separate elements joined by a copula:

<i>alaphér</i>	= >	<i>salaire de base</i> (“starting salary”)
<i>álarcosbál</i>	= >	<i>bal masqué</i> (“masked ball”)
<i>állólámpa</i>	= >	<i>lampe sur pied</i> (“standing lamp”)

Many Hungarian verbs that conjure up a precise image or that specify the nature of the action performed have their French counterparts in paler “sign” verbs which only vaguely evoke the original image.

It is in fact tempting to set up lists of Hungarian verbs opposite French verbs which can be assigned an equally specific meaning only by the context in which they appear. To translate the French verb *sortir* (“to go out”) into Hungarian, for example, we need to know who is going out, why and how. In short, we need to know the nature of the action performed.

3. A bilingual dictionary must render:

- the meaning and usage of words in L1;
- the possible L2 translations of each meaning and usage.

There are no ready-made or consistently valid equivalents for lexical units. Nonetheless, each entry must point the user toward the exact translation required by the context. Herein lies the importance of grammatical, semantic and stylistic labels which allow the user to choose the closest equivalent.

Were words not labeled and categorized, the dictionary would become an immense clutter, allowing no distinction between neutral and stylistically elevated usage, current and archaic usage, etc. A bilingual dictionary should answer not only the question, “Am I using this word in the right situation?,” but also, “Can I use this word without creating a negative impression?”

A bilingual dictionary should offer a choice of terms that reflect both standard grammar and authentic constructions, without neglecting to indicate degrees of equivalence in order to minimize the risk of excessive generalization on the user’s part.

Well-organized entries provide lexical equivalents, demonstrate major variations in construction and highlight structural similarities as well as differences.

Through the hierarchization of the information provided and branching subdivisions made clearly visible with the help of typographical aids, the dictionary must enable the user to correctly and efficiently find the answers he seeks.

The general structure of our entries is as follows:

ENTRY	=	ENTRY HEAD + MAIN TEXT
ENTRY HEAD	=	ENTRY WORD + PART OF SPEECH PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION USAGE LABELS SPECIFIC GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS
MAIN TEXT	=	SEMANTIC BLOCKS SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
SEMANTIC BLOCK	=	EQUIVALENTS SEMANTIC LABELS EXAMPLES WITH TRANSLATIONS IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS WITH TRANSLATIONS

The entries have been written in a special code, an artificial metalanguage consisting not only of vocabulary but also abbreviations and various typographical aids. The coherent and systematic application of this metalanguage is essential to compiling a good bilingual dictionary.

As Hungarian⁴ is a Uralian language (of the Finno-Ugric sub-branch), numerous characteristics distinguish its morphology from that of French. We will mention three here:

- juxtaposition of flexional and derivational suffixes;
- position of specific term (before general term);
- predominance of verbs with verbal prefixes.

The new Hungarian-French dictionary will offer ample illustration of the morphological idiosyncrasies of Hungarian words, providing the following type of information according to the particular ambiguities or irregularities encountered:

- for verbs: *alszik* ("sleep"):
 - subjective conjugation / 3rd person singular (*aludt*)
 - imperative / 3rd person singular (*aludjon*)
 - conditional present / 3rd person singular (*aludna*)
- for nouns: *ló* ("horse"):
 - accusative / singular (*lovat*)
 - possessive / 3rd person singular (*lova*)
 - nominative / plural (*lovak*)
- for adjectives: *jó* ("good"):
 - comparative (*jobb*)
 - adverb (*jól*)

Certain elements of Hungarian syntax require attention as well:

- the notion of the nominal predicate;
- the demonstrative antecedant before dependent clauses;
- the special organization of the message within an utterance.

Current lexicographical standards require us to provide as much information as possible about the words selected and also about the function of those words. Providing semantic information is the central and most important role of the dictionary. However,

the analysis of the semantic content is quite often related to the study of the word within a sentence. A word's meaning is defined by all of its different usages, by its relation to other words and by resulting relationships. One of our primary aims is to select information which will enable the user to understand not only what a word means but also how and in what circumstances it should be used.

The new dictionary provides meaningful examples in which the entry word appears in context and is accompanied by other words frequently associated with it. In this way, emphasis is placed on the possibility of combining words in order to produce set expressions that would be familiar to a native speaker. This will help not only translators but also any user striving to acquire and develop good linguistic reflexes.

The size of the word list or the number of words recorded is not one of the criteria used to determine the value of a bilingual dictionary. In any assessment of a bilingual dictionary, more importance is accorded to accuracy and precision than to the length of the word list.

4. Simple "word for word" translations are rare; it is the nature of words to extend beyond the the "spaces" defining them. Nevertheless, there are some words and expressions that a bilingual lexicographer can render more or less successfully without referring to a context. Among the words in this category are proper nouns and most scientific terms.

<i>tizenöt</i>	= >	<i>quinze</i> ("fifteen")
<i>osztalék</i>	= >	<i>dividende</i> ("dividend")
<i>balti államok</i>	= >	<i>pays baltes</i> ("Baltic States")

In such cases, there is perfect agreement, or semantic isomorphism, between the two terms. In other cases, however, a meaning can resist formulation in L2, thereby partially justifying the claim that a word or expression "cannot be translated." In reality, what is true of isolated words is no longer so when these words are used in a context:

<i>anyaszült</i>	=	-O-
"brought into the world by his mother"		
<i>anyaszült meztelenül</i>	=	<i>nu comme un vers</i>
"naked like the day he was brought into the world by his mother"		("naked as a worm")
		(<i>stark naked</i>)
<i>álmatlan</i>	=	-O-
"without sleep"		
<i>álmatlan éjszaka</i>	=	<i>nuit blanche</i>
"sleepless night"		(<i>sleepless night</i>)

The context used should provide an accurate illustration of the lexical unity in question by emphasizing its most pertinent semantic traits. We shall choose contexts in which the word to be illustrated is surrounded by other words which regularly appear in its linguistic environment and which function normally according to grammatical rules, as well as contexts that refer to the native speaker's cultural experience. The examples demonstrate the most frequent syntactical constructions, the most ordinary situations and the most common associations:

<i>szeptember</i>	= >	<i>septembre</i> "September"
~ <i>elején / közepén / végén</i>	= >	<i>début / mi / fin septembre</i> "early / mid / late September"
~ <i>folyamán</i>	= >	<i>courant septembre</i> "during September"
~ <i>elseje / elsején</i>	= >	<i>le premier septembre</i> "the first of September"
<i>érdeklődés</i>	= >	<i>intérêt</i> "interest"

<i>fokozott ~</i>	=>	<i>intérêt soutenu</i> “great interest “
<i>érdeklődéssel hallgat</i>	=>	<i>écouter avec intérêt</i> “to listen with interest”
<i>érdeklődést tanúsít vki / vmi iránt</i>	=>	<i>porter de l'intérêt à qn / qc</i> “take an interest in sb / sth”

In a vein similar to Igor Mel'čuk's, we have identified a series of characteristics shared by unsatisfactory and inadequate traditional dictionaries, dictionaries which aim, paradoxically, at gathering together equivalents — translating words by other words without necessarily specifying the limitations of such equivalents. Without attempting to duplicate the entirety of Mel'čuk's work, some of our methodology echoes his *Meaning-Text Linguistic Theory* and *Explanatory Combinational Dictionary*, which introduce procedures to overcome these deficiencies.⁵

Applying the ECD standards to our bilingual corpus permits us to be extremely efficient in the description of the combinative lexis and to specify — not sporadically, but systematically — the lexical combinations that can be expected at a given time to express a given idea. Resorting methodically to the “lexical functions” allows us to underline the most frequently used expressions associated with a word. Through use of Mel'čuk's “Magn” function, we then find the intensifying adjective *ádáz* (“ferocious”) next to the noun *ellenség* (“enemy”); next to the noun *siker* (“success”) we find the adjective *bődületes* (“roaring”). Similarly, the verb *megráz* (“shake”) is listed with a reference to the adverb *mélyen* (“profoundly”) and the verb *függ* (“depend”) with *nagymértékben* (“largely”).

Indeed, words are attracted to one another like magnets, and are generally surrounded by other words. Considered separately, they have only virtual meanings. Without a context, it is usually difficult or even impossible to identify these meanings or to interpret them with certainty.

One grammatical phenomenon that illustrates that the meaning of words is generated by their contextual interdependence is the paucity of the Hungarian temporal system. Compared to French with its ten tenses in the indicative mood, Hungarian has but two tenses, one for the present and one for the past. Certain temporal relations, which are fundamental in French (such as the durative/non-durative contrast, and anteriority, for example) are therefore expressed in Hungarian by lexical elements — verbal prefixes and adverbs.

Users of any dictionary have a dual task before them: their first choice is on the paradigmatic axis, the second on the syntagmatic axis. It is all the more important to point these out in an endeavor such as ours which compares two languages so genetically and typologically remote.

Those who study or teach Hungarian will agree that the biggest obstacle is not paradigmatic. What poses a particular problem is learning to produce and reproduce authentic syntactical structures that can convey messages while complying with norms. Our dictionary attempts therefore to faithfully reflect a syntactical system that is highly sensitive to displacement and in which accenting a word or even a morpheme can lead to considerable changes in meaning.

Foreign-language-student errors are not related to vocabulary alone, but can be explained as well by the syntactical structure of the native language, which is often projected onto the target language. Therefore, the more a bilingual dictionary tends to include common phrases, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, in order to illustrate correct use of entry words, the more the dictionary can be of use.

5. The lexicographer's role is then to identify those elements that need only to be transferred from one lexis to the other, and those that must be “recreated” according to context.

Bilingual dictionaries often translate not words or sentences, but *sufficient context*, that is, a fragment of variable length that conveys the information necessary to locate an equivalent summarizing all of the virtual meanings of a word.

The user must be warned of the potential sources of confusion which can impede interlingual communication. Meaning is embedded in context, but also in the experience of native speakers. Lexicographers face a real dilemma when they must designate in L2 a concept that is found in the culture and vocabulary of L1 speakers but that has no place in the culture and vocabulary of L2 speakers. They can choose between an approximate translation or a definition, neither of which is truly satisfactory.⁶ In the user's mind, translation is always possible and an equivalent can always be found. In fact, equivalence problems can arise on two different levels — the conceptual level and the lexical level. Does a given concept exist in the L2 speaker's culture? And if so, can it be expressed by an existing word in L2?

Moreover, a word does not necessarily conjure call up the same reality in one language that it does in another. If lexical units in the source language and the target language referred systematically to the same cultural reality, bilingual dictionaries would be infinitely less complex. The slightest omission or oversight of paralinguistic factors so necessary in compiling a bilingual dictionary can only increase the user's chances of producing a faulty translation.

The two columns of a bilingual dictionary (in this case, Hungarian and French) describe authentic languages that actually serve as means of communication. In fact, these languages also contain expressions that, for want of satisfactory translations, must be delineated by practical parameters (relationship of superiority or inferiority between speakers; sex, age or socio-professional status of the speakers; their level of intimacy). The utterances triggered in analogous situations cannot always be directly transposed (translated) from one language to another.

These utterances are defined by usage and therefore unpredictable for the foreign student whose understanding of a language is based on linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge. Learning a language requires more than mastering rules and individual words. There are also all of the "pre-coded" elements of speech: idioms, set phrases that can often be complex, elements that a native speaker masters spontaneously but that others must learn much as they learned words of that language.

Passing from one language to another, the translator-lexicographer also passes from one culture to another, from one socio-cultural atmosphere to another, from one world to another. Translating means conveying the L1 culture in terms of the L2 culture and therefore adhering to a new and complex system of values and shared cultural traits. History or simply the conditions of daily usage can attribute connotations to certain terms, and these connotations must not go unnoticed by the lexicographer. Truly, words in themselves are portable ethnographical records! We must detail implicit meanings; the intentions and associations connected to words are rarely sufficiently indicated since the native speaker's immediate understanding of such meanings precludes explanation.

In the end, the lexicographer faces almost ethical choices: he or she must transcribe a term in its specificity according to the role of that term within its own culture.

As a general rule, translation requires the comprehension of successive utterances in a text. When searching for an equivalent, the translator analyzes language, proceeding from an examination of written usages to a level that goes beyond that of the isolated utterance, unlike the lexicographer who analyzes a contextualized word "in and of itself." The literary translator can sometimes justify even radical reorganization of a passage as he considers the whole of the discourse included in one or several paragraphs, or perhaps in an entire work. The lexicographer's aim is rather to examine words, or words placed in

a context. Lack of coherence, considered troublesome in translation, is therefore natural in a group of equivalents given by a bilingual dictionary. If in a dictionary we find ideas logically linked, this is due to structural coherence within the entry itself.

By definition, the language of a dictionary entry is voiceless, the lexicographer remaining at all times "invisible." An entry should never be characterized by a particular "style." Certainly, the preference shown for one equivalent over another can reveal personal choice. Nevertheless, a dictionary, which takes shape very gradually, is the result of the reflection and input of an entire team and not of an individual translator. The translator-lexicographer must have perfect mastery of his native language, in addition to thorough an encyclopedic knowledge that corresponds to his familiarity with the outside world.⁷ This combination is necessary for the understanding and reformulation of a lexicographical message.

Let us keep in mind, as we conclude, that the dictionary in progress is not the work of a publishing company but of a team of lexicographers in a university setting. While this is the source of several logistical and administrative difficulties, the scientific advantages are obvious. Moreover, this project, though far from completion, has already infused new energy into Hungarian language instruction programs in France and renewed research initiatives in the field of contrastive studies of Hungarian and French.

Notes

1. I gratefully acknowledge *Jean Perrot*, Director of the *Centre Universitaire d'Études Hongroises*, who launched this project in 1991. It was he as well who appointed me to head the CIEH lexicographical team. I would also like to thank the members of this team for their efficient and dedicated collaboration: *Joëlle Dufeuilly, Viktória Erőss, Károly Ginter, Emilie Molnos, Jean-Léon Muller, Chantal Philippe, Dominique Radanyi, Péter Zimonyi*. Linguists or translators, they were selected according to three criteria: first, knowledge of French and Hungarian languages and literature; second, experience in language instruction; finally, a willingness to explore and apply new computer technology.
2. "The first question I ask myself about any new bilingual dictionary is whether it specifies its user group... The second question I ask is whether the orientation of the dictionary's information does actually conform to the user specification." Sharpe (1993).
3. "The most frequent misuse of bilingual dictionaries arises from the mistaken belief that for any word in one language there exists an equivalent in another." *The Megiddo Modern English-Hebrew Dictionary* (1968).
4. The number of Hungarian speakers in the world is estimated to be 15 million. This includes members of the significant Hungarian minorities in the countries surrounding Hungary (Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Austria) as well as Hungarians settled in the United States, Canada, Australia, etc.
5. For details, see Mel'čuk, I., Clas, A., Polguère, A. (1995).
6. "The bilingual lexicographer is constantly torn between the Scylla of a cumbersome explanatory definition and the Charybdis of a too free translation.", Neubert, A. (1992: 32).
7. I have wondered if lexicographers themselves do not have expectations of the bilingual dictionary user. We expect perhaps not absolute trust, but at least a certain maturity on the user's part. We hope he will try to understand the mechanisms of the dictionary, thereby gaining an understanding of its limits as well. Translators have some very high expectations of lexicographers. Yet both the "ideal dictionary" and the "ideal translation" are utopian.

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