

What to Say about *mañana*, *totems* and *dragons* in a Bilingual Dictionary? The Case of Surrogate Equivalence

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There are frequent instances in any given language pair where a suitable translation equivalent is not available to be treated as source and target language in a bilingual dictionary. This is known as zero equivalence and can be regarded as the most complex type of equivalence to be dealt with in a bilingual dictionary. This paper will focus on the various ways in which lexicographers of different dictionaries deal with the lack of equivalence and the subsequent use of surrogate equivalents. There are a number of strategies that the lexicographer can use when dealing with instances of zero equivalence, e.g. the use of glosses, paraphrases, illustrations and even text boxes with lexicographic comments. This paper suggests different types of surrogate equivalents based on user needs, and it will be done in accordance with the relevant dictionary functions, i.e. the cognitive function and the communicative functions of text reception, text production and translation. A linguistic gap can be identified when the speakers of both languages are familiar with a certain concept but when one language does not have a word to refer to it, whereas the other language does have such a word. A referential gap can be postulated when a lexical item from language A has no translation equivalent in language B. This would be because the speakers of language B do not know the referent of the lexical item from language A. Acknowledging different degrees of complexity in the relation of surrogate equivalence leads to a tiered view of the concept. The first level in the hierarchy provides for linguistic gaps where a mere gloss or brief paraphrase of meaning will suffice. More complicated are the gaps where the surrogate equivalent also has to provide grammatical guidance. The top tier in the hierarchy provides for referential gaps where taboo, culture-specific or sensitive values have to be expressed.

1. Introduction

In the theoretical discussion of bilingual lexicography the notion of equivalence takes a central position. According to Kromann et al. (1991: 2717) “Equivalence is the axis about which the activity of translation turns.” Consequently the focus in a general bilingual dictionary is on the item presenting translation equivalents for the words represented by the lemma signs. Lexicographers have an obligation towards their specific users to ensure a presentation and treatment of translation equivalents that will enable an unambiguous retrieval of information from the data on offer in the comment on semantics of a bilingual dictionary. The nature and extent of this treatment should be determined by the needs and reference skills of the intended target user group, the user situation and the lexicographic functions of the specific dictionary. In modern-day lexicography it is important to realize that the one-size-fits-all approach no longer prevails.

Three major types of equivalent relations prevail, i.e. full equivalence, partial equivalence and zero equivalence. These different relations of equivalence confront lexicographers with different challenges to ensure that the users will be able to achieve an optimal retrieval of information from a given dictionary article. Ideally, suitable translation equivalents in the target language would be available for each source language item. Instances where a suitable translation equivalent is not available occur in any given language pair to be treated as source and target

language in a bilingual dictionary. This is referred to as zero equivalence and can be regarded as the most complex type of equivalence to be dealt with in a bilingual dictionary.

This paper will focus on various ways in which lexicographers of different dictionaries need to deal with the lack of equivalence and the subsequent use of surrogate equivalents. A number of strategies are available to the lexicographer when treating instances of zero equivalence, e.g. the use of glosses, paraphrases of meaning, pictorial illustrations and even text boxes with lexicographic comments. Depending on the nature, importance to the target user and the complexity of such instances, various cross-referencing options should also be utilized to refer the user to dictionary internal reference addresses, e.g. other articles and/or the back matter, and/or dictionary external reference addresses where (s)he could find more information. This paper will suggest different types of surrogate equivalents, based on user needs, and it will be done in accordance with the relevant dictionary functions, i.e. the cognitive function and the communicative functions of text reception, text production and translation.

2. Different approaches to surrogate equivalence and different lexical gaps

In theoretical lexicography the attention given to the notion of surrogate equivalence has primarily been limited to a description of equivalence relations and to different types of surrogate equivalents. When planning a bilingual dictionary it is important that lexicographers should take cognisance of the way in which this phenomenon has been treated in existing dictionaries. However, innovative lexicography demands that the lexicographer should go beyond the mere contemplative approach, cf. Tarp (2000), and employ a transformative approach which makes provision for a new and improved way of dealing with surrogate equivalence.

Modern-day theoretical lexicography accepts the importance of identifying the genuine purpose and the lexicographic functions as one of the early, pre-compilation phases of any dictionary. Deciding on the lexicographic functions presupposes a clear and unambiguous identification of the target user, the user situation and the usage situation of the intended dictionary. The selection of lexical items for inclusion as lemmata in a dictionary as well as every aspect of their treatment, including the presentation of surrogate equivalents, should be done in accordance with the identified lexicographic functions.

When comparing any two languages one soon becomes aware of the absence of certain words in a given language, the phenomenon known as lexical gaps. Lexical gaps are language specific. Dagut (1981) identifies two different types of semantic gaps in the transfer of a text from one language to another, i.e. gaps due to linguistic and gaps due to extra-linguistic factors. These two categories are called linguistic and referential gaps respectively. A linguistic gap is identified where the speakers of both languages are familiar with a certain concept but where the one language does not have a word to refer to it, whereas the other language does have such a word. A referential gap can be postulated where a lexical item from language A has no translation equivalent in language B because the speakers of language B do not know the referent of the lexical item from language A. Referential gaps typically occur when a source language form is a culturally bound lexical item and the speakers of the target language do not share in that culture. The occurrence of both linguistic and referential gaps demands the introduction of surrogate equivalents. In the case of a linguistic gap the lexicographer knows that the speakers of the target language are familiar with the specific concept. Consequently a brief explanation of meaning will suffice. Where the lexicographer is dealing with a referential gap a more comprehensive treatment is needed because the speakers of the target language are not familiar with the concept represented by the source language lemma.

Decisions regarding the nature and extent of the presentation of surrogate equivalents need to be taken on a dictionary-specific basis. Different users will need different types of surrogate equivalents to ensure their optimal retrieval of information from a given dictionary. In an Afrikaans-English bilingual dictionary, compiled for use in South Africa, the word *padkos* should be entered as an Afrikaans lemma. No exact translation equivalent exists and the lexicographer will have to use a surrogate. For the average member of the Afrikaans and

English speech communities in South Africa a brief description like “food for the road” will suffice. In a dictionary directed at primary school learners a slightly more comprehensive explanation might be needed. In the choice of surrogate equivalents cognizance should also be taken of the cultural differences prevailing between the members of the speech communities of the language pair presented in the dictionary. A failure to do that often results in surrogate equivalents that do not achieve either semantic or communicative equivalence between source and target language. In a dictionary with English and one of the Nguni languages as treated language pair, the Nguni word *lobola* will have to be included as a lemma. English has a lexical gap in this regard and the lexicographer will have to use a surrogate equivalent in the treatment of the lemma *lobola*. English does have a partial equivalent that can be offered in the treatment of this lemma, i.e. the equivalent *bride’s price*. However, this English equivalent does not convey the cultural value of the word *lobola* and the lexicographer should preferably give some additional entries, representing a more comprehensive treatment, as surrogate equivalent to complement the partial equivalent and to ensure a proper understanding of the meaning of the word *lobola*. If this dictionary has been compiled for use in South Africa, where the English speaking user of a dictionary may have some exposure to the concept of *lobola*, the surrogate equivalent may be less comprehensive than in a dictionary compiled for use in, say, Great Britain, where the typical user will not have been exposed to the concept of *lobola*. Yet again it is important to note that a generic approach to the treatment of zero equivalence needs to be supported by dictionary-specific approaches, where the user needs of the specific dictionary determine the nature and extent of the surrogate equivalents.

The treatment of surrogate equivalence demands a sensitive approach by the lexicographer in order not to offend the speakers of the source language. Spanish-English dictionaries often treat the Spanish lemma *mañana* by merely giving the English equivalent *tomorrow*. By doing so they eschew the deeply rooted habit of procrastination, a life-style of “I’ll do things later”, indicated by the habit of *mañana*. For the non-Spanish speaker, whether consulting a bilingual dictionary or a compact tourist dictionary, the treatment of *mañana* has to go beyond the literal translation equivalent. A surrogate is needed to explain the habit but also to make users aware of the sensitive nature of this concept, e.g. that in some Latin American countries legislation has been introduced to replace the habit of *mañana* with a lifestyle of strict punctuality. The surrogate equivalent presented in the treatment of *mañana* needs to be much more than a brief paraphrase of meaning. For *totem*, *dragon* and similar lemmata of special cultural significance and complexity, even more elaborate treatment is required to present the user with a full scope of information, as will be illustrated in the paper. The same goes for lemmata representing words with taboo or register restrictions. The surrogate equivalents need to display a much stronger adherence to the cognitive function of the dictionary.

3. Surrogate equivalents displaying a cognitive function

The treatment of e.g. culture-bound lexical items confronts lexicographers with unique challenges to achieve communicative equivalence, cf. example 1 from *The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* with English and isiXhosa as treated language pair with regard to some aspects of the use of surrogate equivalents.

(1) The Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa

indyifolo bead ornament worn by men round the neck; it is broad and flat with a number of pendant strings which are crossed and thrown back over the shoulders where they are again crossed.

undyilo a leather thong on which small rings made from brass wire are strung; it is attached by one end to the tip of a penis-sheath and it may be long enough to reach the ground.

lit: show off with a penis-sheath string.

show of with something insignificant

The comprehensive target language entry is primarily due to the culturally bound nature of the isiXhosa lexical items. Both linguistic and encyclopaedic data are needed in this surrogate equivalent. The inclusion of encyclopaedic data is in accordance with the approach that the

distinction between linguistic and encyclopaedic data may be of interest to the linguist but it is irrelevant for the lexicographer. The lexicographer is only interested in conveying enough data to ensure an unambiguous retrieval of the information needed by the intended target user. Consider the treatment of the lemma *brothel* in the *Northern Sotho Terminology and Orthography* in example (2).

(2) Northern Sotho Terminology and Orthography

brothel bogwebakathobalano/ngwako wa kgwebo ka thobalano, brothele

The first surrogate equivalent *bogwebakathobalano* is a composition of *gweba* “to do business” plus *ka* “with” plus *thobalano* “sleeping with each other”. The second equivalent *ngwako wa kgwebo ka thobalano* can be translated as “house of business with sleeping with each other”. Thirdly a Sothoised direct loan word *brothele* is given. Lexicographers need to decide which form would assist their users the best. Although the functions of bilingual dictionaries are too seldom explicitly stated in the front matter texts, the most typical function seems to be the communicative function. In this regard some dictionaries focus exclusively on text reception as communicative function whilst other dictionaries also have a text production function. Cultural differences between source and target language and the occurrence of referential gaps should compel the lexicographer to pay more attention to a cognitive function in the presentation of surrogate equivalents. Adhering to a cognitive function in stead of a communication function will compel lexicographers to present a much more comprehensive treatment of surrogate equivalence.

4. Zero equivalence and grammatical divergence

Though lexical gaps often occur in instances of cultural differences or in relation to the range of application, even highly used common words in a language could lack suitable translation equivalents in the target language. Treating the lemma *every* in an English/Sepedi bilingual dictionary is problematic because no single equivalent exists in Sepedi. This is an instance where a frequently used word in English can only be satisfactorily translated in Sepedi with a rare duplication/combination strategy of the concepts *a certain one* plus *another one*, thus rendering *every one*, e.g. *a certain man* and *another one* = *every man*; *a certain cow* and *another one* = *every cow*, etc. Here the nature of the target language determines the type of surrogate equivalent to be given. What is needed as surrogate equivalent is not a typical explanation of meaning but rather the selection of a combination of noun phrases to constitute the relevant meaning. To make things even more complicated and challenging to the lexicographer, grammatical divergence (cf. Prinsloo and Gouws *forthcoming*) prevails since *monna* ‘man’, and *kgomo* ‘cow’ belong to different noun classes each with their own set of grammatical markers which will determine the nature and extent of the surrogate equivalent, given in italics in example (3).

(3) *monna yo mongwe* le *yo mongwe*
 (a certain man and another one)
kgomo ye mngwe le *ye mngwe*
 (a certain cow and another one)

Compilers of Sepedi dictionaries often merely stack a number of examples as the treatment of *every*, e.g. in the *New English–Northern Sotho Dictionary* “*every*, adj., *mong le mong, nngwe le nngwe, ...*” In a dictionary with text reception as function and with knowledgeable users such a listing may satisfy some of the users. However, as a linguistic instrument the dictionary fails to give a proper target language form for the relevant source language item. In the treatment of a word like *every* the lexicographer needs to be aware of the type of zero equivalence and needs to give surrogate equivalents that go beyond the semantic level by also providing the grammatical context needed by the user to understand the source language item in an unambiguous way. The nature of these surrogate equivalents is also determined by grammatical aspects. Due to grammatical divergence the lexicographer cannot merely give *a certain ... and another* as surrogate equivalent. It has to be complemented by a specific noun so that the

grammatical markers of the relevant noun class can be indicated. Here the lexicographer deviates from the brief paraphrase of meaning, typically used where linguistic gaps prevail, and employs the grammatical system of the target language to ensure the best possible comprehension of the source language item but also to achieve a proper text production function. A mere contemplative approach to surrogate equivalence will not suffice. The lexicographer needs to apply a transformative approach with innovative target language entries to ensure the proper information transfer. Consider example (4) from *Travlang*, an English–Afrikaans dictionary where semantic information could be appropriately limited to three translation equivalents in contrast to example (5) for Sepedi where the lexicographer has to deal with zero equivalence and grammatical divergence simultaneously.

(4) Travlang

every ... almal, elke, elkeen

<http://dictionaries.travlang.com/EnglishAfrikaans/dict.cgi?query=every&max=50>

(5) Sepedi

every Expressed by a duplication of ‘certain/another’ and the morphology is determined by the class to which the noun that is referred to, belongs: (cl.1): (monna) *yo mongwe le yo mongwe every man*; (cl.3): (monwana) *wo mongwe le wo mongwe every finger*; (cl.5): (lesogana) *le lengwe le le lengwe every young man*; (cl.7): (selepe) *se sengwe le se sengwe every axe*; (cl.9): (kgomo) *ye nngwe le ye nngwe every cow*

5. A hierarchy of surrogate equivalents

Acknowledging different degrees of complexity in the relation of surrogate equivalence leads to a tiered view of surrogate equivalents. The first level in the hierarchy provides for linguistic gaps where a mere gloss or brief paraphrase of meaning will suffice, e.g. *padkos* “food for the road”.

More complicated are gaps where the surrogate equivalent also has to provide grammatical guidance, e.g. *monna yo mongwe le yo mongwe* “a certain man and another one” as in examples (3) and (5).

Referential gaps demand a more comprehensive description characterised by encyclopaedic entries, e.g. in the case of *indyifolo* and *undyilo* in example (1).

The *top tier* in the hierarchy provides for referential gaps where taboo, culture-specific or sensitive values have to be expressed. Here the lexicographer has to employ a treatment that can even go beyond the extent of definitions presented in monolingual dictionaries, e.g. for the treatment of *mañana*, *totem* and *dragon*. (S)he should not hesitate to use all available lexicographic devices for the treatment of zero equivalence and to maximally utilize cross-references. This reflects an urge towards completeness in the treatment although limited by space restrictions in the paper dictionaries but with more flexibility in electronic dictionaries. The lexicographer should also decide how detailed or exhaustive the treatment of lemmas such as *mañana*, *totem* and *dragon* in relation to their scope, complexity, sensitivity and relevancy to the target user should be. In the case of *mañana* (s)he could for example decide to limit the extent of the treatment to a single dictionary article in the central list but to go beyond giving only the single translation equivalent “tomorrow” as in example (6):

(6) **mañana** ... tomorrow, morning, some indefinite time in the future. Also a habit of procrastination: a life-style of “I’ll do things later”, indicated by the habit of *mañana*, cf. **African Time**.

For *totem* and *dragon* the lexicographer could in addition to treatment in the central text as in examples (7a) and (8a) of the *Macmillan English Dictionary* cross-refer the user to the back matter of the dictionary, and even to dictionary external sources where more, usually encyclopaedic, information could be found, cf. examples (7b) and (8b.)

(7) a. totem

totem ^{ˈtəʊtəm} ^{ˈtəʊtəm} noun [countable]

1 an animal, plant, or object that has religious or spiritual importance for a particular group of people, especially Native American people

1a an object or symbol used for representing one of these animals, plants, or objects

2 something that is treated with a lot of respect or fear

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b. totem

In kinship and descent, if the apical ancestor of a clan is nonhuman, it is called a totem. Normally this belief is accompanied by a totemic myth. Although the term is of Ojibwa origin, totemistic beliefs are not limited to Native American Indians. Similar totemism-like beliefs have been historically found throughout much of the world, including Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, Australia and the Arctic polar region. In modern times, some single individuals, not otherwise involved in the practice of a tribal religion, have chosen to adopt a personal spirit animal helper, which has special meaning to them, and refer to this as a totem. This non-traditional usage of the term is prevalent in, but not limited to, the New Age movement, and the Mythopoetic men's movement. *Totemism* (derived from the root *-oode-* in the Ojibwe language, which referred to something kinship-related, c.f. *odoodem*, "his totem") is a religious belief that is frequently associated with shamanistic religions. The totem is usually an animal or other naturalistic figure that spiritually represents a group of related people such as a clan.

Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totem>

(8)

a. dragon

dragon ^{ˈdræɡən} noun [countable]

1 a large imaginary creature in old stories that has wings and a long pointed tail and breathes out fire

2 **BRITISH INFORMAL** an insulting word for an unfriendly frightening woman

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b. dragon

Like most mythological creatures, dragons are perceived in different ways by different cultures. Dragons are sometimes said to breathe and spit fire, poison, even acid or ice (depending on the type). They are commonly portrayed as serpentine or reptilian, hatching from eggs and possessing typically feathered or scaly bodies. They are sometimes portrayed as having large yellow or red eyes, a feature that is the origin for the word for dragon in many cultures. They are sometimes portrayed with a row of dorsal spines, keeled scales, or leathery bat-like wings. Winged dragons are usually portrayed only in European dragons while Asian versions of the dragon, sometimes called the Long (Chinese pinyin) resemble large snakes. Dragons can have a variable number of legs: none, two, four, or more when it comes to early European literature. Modern depictions of dragons tend to be larger than their original representations, which were often smaller than humans. ... They are commonly said to possess some form of magic or other supernatural power, and are often associated with wells, rain, and rivers. In some cultures, they are also said to be capable of human speech.

Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon>

Finally, consider the *Greater Dictionary of Xhosa*'s handling of *uthikoloshe*, where in addition to the treatment given in the alphabetical section in (9a), a detailed gloss is given in the back matter, (9b).

(9) *Greater Dictionary of Xhosa*

a. uthikoloshe

ú·**thikólòshè** b/n 1a/2a: indoda emfutshane ebumnturha ethanda ukudlala nabantwana, kanti kwanabafazi ayibathiyanga; kgl Add 22:

uya kuva into embi eyaviwa nguthikoloshe: uya kuthi shu, ukuva into embi; kaloku uthikoloshe isiko lakhe lelokuba angayityi ityuwa; umntu onaye wasoloko eyilumkela ityuwa ekutyeni kwakhe, kuba utya naye; kuthiwa umntu wakhe waxabana naye waza wabona ukuba makamohlwaye ngokugalela kakhulu ityuwa apha ekutyeni, waphaka watya umfazi waza nothikoloshe watya; kulapho ke wavakala ekhala esithi “undenzakalisile!”; ngoku ke xa kuboniswa umntu into ebuhlungu aza kungena phakathi kwayo kuthiwa uya kuva into ebuhlungu eyakha yaviwa nguthikoloshe; eli bali libaliswa ngeendlela ngeendlela kwindawo ngeendawo; elinye lithi uthikoloshe wabelikiswa isonka esishushu:

tikolosh, a dwarf-like river-sprite, a playmate of children and a familiar and witchcraft agent of women; see Add 22;

lit: *you will feel the bad thing that the river-sprite felt (experience the same woeful lot as befell the river-sprite)*: you will get into hot water; the tikolosh is believed to be unable to tolerate salt and for that reason any woman who owns one never puts salt in her food, as she shares this food with her tikolosh; one story about a recalcitrant river-sprite relates how his mistress put an excessive quantity of salt in the food to punish him; on eating it he called out in distress saying that she had injured him seriously; the above expression is therefore used to warn a person who is heading for trouble; in another version of the story tikolosh is made to carry a loaf of hot bread on his back.

b. Tikoloshe (Back Matter)

Tikoloshe, also known as tokolosh in English, is a dwarf-like water-sprite. Its height is about half that of a human being and it has well-developed thigh and arm muscles. One side of its body is covered with hair like that of an animal, while the other side is hairless like that of a human being. It has a long beard that extends down to its waist. Its eyes open vertically. Salt is poisonous to it. Some Xhosas believe that females also exist and that the breed multiplies. Its normal abode is among the reeds on river banks, but it readily associates with humans, with some categories of whom it maintains certain relations. Firstly it befriends little boys, especially those who herd stock in rural areas. It plays with them during the day and is fond of playing tricks on them. Nevertheless, it provides a very convenient scapegoat when they have to account for their neglect, e.g. if the stock has strayed into the fields, or for other offences, e.g. if clothes have been torn in petty squabbles etc. Secondly the sprite associates secretly with a woman who is malevolently disposed. He is reputed to have sexual relations with her, while she in turn uses him as an agent of witchcraft. In this respect the occurrence of the sprite is not limited to rural areas, with their rivers and reeds, as it accompanies its mistress to urban areas where it is said, among other things, to strangle people in their sleep.

6. Ostensive addressing

Pictorial illustrations as a lexicographic device are invaluable in the treatment of referential gaps—“a picture is worth a thousand words”. Schematic illustrations of e.g. *totems* and *dragons* undoubtedly constitute an indispensable supplement to the target user’s understanding of these concepts.



A totem pole in Totem Park, Victoria, BC
Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totem>



Chinese dragon, color engraving on wood,
Chinese school, nineteenth century

Wikipedia:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon>

Figure 1: Pictorial illustrations of *totem pole* and *Chinese dragon*

7. In conclusion

Lexical and referential gaps, surrogate and zero equivalence relations pose great challenges to the innovative skills and dedication of lexicographers. Applying lexicographic theory to the practice and acknowledging the user-perspective this paper attempted to assist lexicographers to help their dictionary users in a better way.

The obligation towards the users and the adherence to the spectrum of lexicographic functions of the specific dictionary prohibits the lexicographer to fall into the habit of *mañana* when dealing with surrogate equivalence—because then the lexicographic tomorrow of a fulfillment of semantic and communicative equivalence may never come.

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