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DISSEMINATING DICTIONARY SKILLS WITH E-LEX TOOLS

This paper reports on two intertwined activities carried out with Lexonomy, a web-based tool for publishing dictionaries originally developed by Michal Měchura (2017; Rambousek/Jakubíček/Kosem 2021) and then released as an open-source project. Despite the vast literature focused on the importance of teaching lexicographic skills (for a summary see for example Gavriilidou 2013), cursory attention has been paid to the activities and methods which can improve users' understanding of the dictionaries they use.

With this aim in mind, one hundred university students in Linguistic Mediation were guided through compiling a multilingual Covid-19 dictionary which, later on, was used in a lexicographic informational session during the European Researchers' Night events. These activities, held in virtual rooms of video conferencing web platforms during the pandemic lockdown, profited from online resources like Lexonomy, which ensure data crowdsourcing from authorised contributors. Besides, using Lexonomy students should easily understand the microstructural organisation of dictionary articles -from the type of linguistic items to be found in general language dictionaries to the way they are described or arranged in the entry- since the data is added through an XML visual editor, displaying the entry structure in the form of a clickable hierarchical tree with nested elements. The task of compiling entries should therefore be easy to learn and engaging to accomplish, therefore the activities of this experimental protocol were meant to ensure different learning goals: to practise metalinguistic and metalexicographical knowledge for enhancing linguistic and translation skills.

The first attempt to compile the *Dizionario Multilingue del Covid19 – Covid19 Multilingual Dictionary – Covid19 Mehrsprachiges Wörterbuch* was carried out during class hours of a course in Lexicology and Lexicography. Students collected articles from major newspapers for the languages involved in the project: Chinese, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian. Texts were shared in online folders and were used to build comparable corpora using the *Sketch Engine* tools.

Later on, students were given the article microstructure schema, defined by the teacher, for compiling the multilingual dictionary. The article is made up by a meaning explanation and one example of use of an Italian lemma, followed by its collocates and licensed prepositions. The corresponding lemmas in the other languages covered by the dictionary are given on the same page as separate entries, arranged in the same structural organization as their Italian counterpart. Direct access to foreign words is possible by performing free searches in the search box since the multilingual macrostructure is not reversible.

As regards dictionary data, translation equivalents were identified by comparing the single and multi-word terms extracted from the comparable corpora collected. Yet additional searches on Google news or in the *Sketch Engine* "Covid-19 Corpus" were necessary when the language data proved to be insufficient.

With the aim of evaluating students' performance, specific assessment parameters were used:

1) the accuracy in compiling the dictionary entries,

2) the metalinguistic and metalexicographical skills acquired,

3) the effectiveness of peer learning.

In two of the three parameters analysed, the students achieved good results, whereas metalinguistic and metatextual skills, assessed by means of an open-ended questionnaire, were poor. Only a fraction of the students (around 30%) were able to explain fully some key concepts for the task, such as what a dictionary entry, microstructure or collocation is.

The presentation will provide further details of the experimental compilation carried out by the students and the ninety-three people who participated in the European Researchers' Night demonstration. The audience at this event rated the session as very interesting (4,68 on a five-point Likert scale). They also declared that it helped them understand that research in the humanities is carried out with scientific methods and has an impact on citizens' daily lives.

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