

## SOME THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES TO DESIGNING A BILINGUAL (ROMANIAN-ENGLISH) DICTIONARY OF RELIGIOUS TERMS

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### *Abstract*

*The aim of this article is to present and discuss some preliminary theoretical aspects related to designing and compiling a bilingual ESP dictionary, more specifically a Romanian-English dictionary of religious terms that will cover religious vocabulary associated with Catholic, Orthodox and Reformed Christianity. The main prospective beneficiaries of this work will be students attending Faculties of Theology, although I hope the dictionary may also benefit scholars with a background in theology, translators of religious texts from Romanian into English and other interested parties. The wordbook I envisage will be a work of specialized lexicography with an underlying pedagogical focus. The main aspects I intend to discuss in this article are: (1) identification of ESP students' lexicographically significant needs and skills; (2) organization of each dictionary entry so that the users' needs are successfully met; (3) discussion of some specific difficulties associated with the project of compiling such a dictionary.*

**Keywords:** ESP; bilingual dictionary; specialized lexicography; religious terms; corpus.

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### *1. Introduction*

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Having surveyed European specialized lexicography in recent decades, S. Tarp has concluded that, unlike LGP dictionaries, which are often excellent, in the field of LSP lexicography “there is still a considerable number of bilingual – or plurilingual – dictionaries being printed that are virtually word lists with equivalents and almost nothing else, that is without definitions and the grammatical – especially syntactic – data needed to provide qualified assistance to translation as well as foreign-language text production and reception which are the most relevant functions in relation to bilingual dictionaries” (Tarp, 2012: 119). While I believe progress is being made in the area of specialized lexicography as well, especially in terms of better established theoretical foundations (as proposed by Tarp himself and his colleagues at Aarhus University – but also, for instance, by the other contributors in Fuertes-Olivera 2010), Tarp's assessment appropriately points to concerns that every lexicographer should bear in mind when embarking on the project of

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designing an LSP dictionary. And so does his claim that “all theoretical and practical lexicographic work should be based on the dictionary functions which represent the assistance provided by a dictionary – by means of its lexicographic data – to a specific type of user in solving the specific type of problems related to a specific type of user situation” (Tarp, 2005: 9). Along these theoretical lines, in the present article I would like to present and discuss some preliminary aspects related to designing and compiling a bilingual ESP dictionary, more specifically a Romanian-English dictionary of religious terms that will cover religious vocabulary associated with Catholic, Orthodox and Reformed Christianity.

One important focus of the dictionary will be on specific pragmatic considerations in terms of both prospective users and their likely needs. Thus, the expected user of the wordbook is a native speaker of Romanian who needs specialized religious terminology in English for either academic/scholarly or other professional purposes. The user groups I expect to be most likely to benefit from such a lexicographic work are: (1) Theology students whose knowledge of the subject matter as well as linguistic competence probably still needs improving, (2) experts in the field of theology who may need some assistance with language issues, (3) translators/interpreters who have the necessary language proficiency but may lack sufficient knowledge of the field of theology, (4) specialists in related fields (philosophy, history, art history, etc.) who may require clarification of some conceptual and/or linguistic aspects. Each of these prospective users will probably find him/herself in a number of situations which will necessitate consultation of a specialized dictionary of religious terms. Drawing on Tarp’s classification of such situations as communication-related or knowledge-related (Tarp, 2005), I expect that all user groups mentioned above will require, to varying degrees, skills falling under the former category (production of oral/written religious texts in English, reception of oral/written religious texts in English, translation of religious texts from Romanian into English) as well as under the latter (enhancement of their awareness of the meanings and particular contexts of use of some religious vocabulary).

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## ***2. Some preliminaries to designing an ESP dictionary of religious terms***

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A question that probably needs to be addressed at this point is whether religious vocabulary should be regarded as specialized terminology at all. Research on terminology, as contrasted to lexicology, has often indicated that the former differs from the latter in a number of significant ways:

*lexicology is based on words and does not conceive of meaning unless it is related to the word; terminology, in contrast, considers that the concept, which is its main focus, is prior to the name and can be conceived of independently from the name or term that represents it. In addition, lexicology is always linked to grammar. Words*

*in dictionaries are described with respect to their use in context; they are considered as elements of discourse. For terminology, on the other hand, terms are of interest on their own account, and neither inflection (provided by the morphological form appropriate for its use in context) nor syntax (which inserts them in the proper grammatical context) are of consequence. Finally, whereas linguistics distinguishes between and includes both synchronic and diachronic features of words, terminology is only concerned with synchronic aspects* (Cabré, 1992/ 1999: 33).

Moreover, according to Cabré, terminological inventories tend to consist of monosemantic terms (“the polysemy of the common lexicon is treated as homonymy in terminology” (Cabré, 1992/ 1999: 40)), whose definitions are generally of a broad encyclopaedic nature (Cabré (1992/ 1999: 34), citing Wüster); specialized terms are often regarded as trans-cultural and are fairly standardized (Cabré, 1992/ 1999: 48).

Clearly, religious vocabulary does not meet all these criteria: for defining religious terms context of use is sometimes important and so is, at least occasionally, awareness of the diachronic/etymological features of words. Besides, lemmas describing religious concepts and practices are often deeply rooted in a specific culture, bearing indelibly the mark of that respective culture. However, rather than concluding that religious vocabulary is not to be regarded as specialized terminology, I would like to advance the tentative suggestion (at this early point in my research on the theoretical and practical aspects involved in designing the dictionary that makes the subject of this article) that it should be treated as such, but further – and more accurately – described as specialized terminology of the kind one is likely to encounter, and use, in the field of the humanities<sup>2</sup>. While the criteria listed above may well hold true for the ‘hard’ sciences and technical disciplines, they are less likely to be met by the specific lexicon of any humanistic subject. However, the latter too have their own specialized vocabulary and, while it is true that this vocabulary usually finds its place (at least) in all major monolingual historical dictionaries of general language, pragmatic considerations will, I believe, prompt the conclusion that bilingual specialized dictionaries are needed and useful in the field of the humanities as well (for each intended user mentioned above, mere awareness of the fact that the English equivalent (which they ignore, and search for) of a religious term in Romanian is to be found, for instance, in the OED will be of no help at all).

In its completed form, the component elements of the wordbook envisaged here will be as follows: (a) prefatory matter (in Romanian, describing dictionary content, purpose, limitations, the rationale behind various lexicographic decisions),

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<sup>2</sup> For a similar argument in favour of regarding Eastern Orthodox religious terminology in the French language as specialized vocabulary, see F. Dumas (2012: 6-7).

which is also to include a guide to users; (b) list of abbreviations; (c) Romanian-English word list from A to Z; (d) Romanian and English language corpus; (e) several appendices. The vocabulary I aim to cover is to be related to the various branches of theology, but also to religious practice (services and prayers) and the associated objects (sacred vessels and vestments), religious administration (hierarchy and monastic structures) and religious architecture, each of these terminological fields as specific to the Eastern Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic and Reformed Churches. Therefore, the corpus used to compile the list of entries and to select the most relevant illustrative citations will consist of written academic and/or ecclesiastical sources: primarily encyclopaedias of Christian denominations and dictionaries of religious terms, but also additional bibliographical resources from which religious terms and examples related more narrowly to specific lexical sub-fields can be excerpted. Several appendices, which are thought to be extra tools of, hopefully, some help to prospective users, are to be included in the concluding section of the dictionary: a few lists of religion-related proper names in Romanian and their equivalents in English, as well as an A-Z inventory of all the English main lemmas given in the dictionary, with cross references to the corresponding Romanian headwords. While it is perhaps less usual that proper names should be included in an LSP dictionary, I have decided to add a number of names of saints and religious holidays for pragmatic and pedagogical reasons, namely because the Romanian and English equivalents of such proper names are sometimes so far apart as to be nearly impossible to guess or reconstruct based on component words.

Bearing in mind the likely user profiles described above and the corresponding most probable user situations in which the need to consult a bilingual Romanian-English dictionary of religious terms may occur, I propose the following structure for each dictionary entry:

- headword in Romanian (= L1 lemma)
- grammatical category of L1 lemma
- English equivalent of Romanian word (= L2 lemma)
- grammatical category of L2 lemma (when necessary, irregularly inflected forms will be given as well)
- example sentences to illustrate the meaning, likely collocations and grammatical structures of L2 lemma
- (when applicable) synonyms of L2 lemma (with specification, again when applicable, of denominational restrictions of use)
- (when applicable) set phrases in which L1 lemma occurs
- English equivalent of these phrases (= L2 set phrases)
- example sentences for L2 set phrases
- cross references.

As I assume those users of the dictionary who will attempt to take advantage of entry content for encoding purposes (production of text in English) will already

have an intermediate level of English, additional grammatical information is only given for more advanced language aspects (such as the plural forms of Latin or Greek borrowings; e.g. *ciborium* – *ciboria*, *antidoron* – *antidora*); a verb like *partake* (in the phrase *partake of the (Holy) Communion*) is not to be signalled as irregular, the users being supposed to already have the information. Not all derivatives of nouns/verbs will be listed, on the assumption that the user will be able to transfer the information he/she has received about the headword to its derivatives (the downside of this choice is that the users will not be provided with example sentences for all derivatives, but doing otherwise would increase the size of the dictionary beyond manageable proportions). A more difficult decision is required by the treatment of religious terms which are synonyms in Romanian. The usual lexicographic practice in such cases is to choose the most important (i.e. best known, most frequently used) synonym and consider it the headword, with the other synonyms being cross-referred to the main lemma. However, given the peculiar situation of religious terminology in the Romanian language – with three of the main churches represented in Romania, the Orthodox Church, the Greek-Catholic Church and the Roman-Catholic Church developing, to varying degrees (due to historical circumstances and their different religious and cultural allegiances), a specific religious vocabulary (for example, *vecernie* (Orthodox Church) – *înselat* (Greek-Catholic Church) – *vespere* (Roman-Catholic Church), all describing the evening prayers) – no one synonym can, on cultural, historical or denomination-internal grounds, be regarded as more important than the others. In such cases I have usually opted for the pragmatic decision of treating as the ‘main’ synonym the one used by the church with a majority of Romanian worshippers (i.e. the Orthodox Church), while the other synonyms are cross-referred to it.

No English definition will be provided in the dictionary for the Romanian words to be explained. However, as often as possible, the first illustrative citation for each (sense of a) Romanian word will be given in the form of an encyclopaedic definition in English, usually taken from a monolingual encyclopaedia/dictionary of religious terms. The rationale behind this decision is twofold: on the one hand, I believe the prospective users of the dictionary will benefit from being exposed to yet another sample of authentic language context that incorporates the word they search for. On the other hand, and more importantly, by so choosing I have attempted to manage those situations in which one and the same word has different meanings – and subsequent definitions – depending on which religious denomination defines it (for example, the word *Eucharist* and its synonyms would need extended and complex encyclopaedic explanations if one is to do justice to the specific meanings ascribed to it by the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Reformed Churches). I intend to provide, instead, a variety of illustrative citations, as well as cross references to related concepts, in an attempt to signal the fact that the term *Eucharist* is given different acceptations by members of different Christian denominations.

It may be objected that it is perhaps not typical of bilingual dictionaries to provide example sentences. In recent years, however, theoretical proposals as well as practical illustrations have emerged (see, for example, some contributions in Fuertes-Olivera, 2010), pointing to the benefits which dictionary users may derive from being exposed to a variety of relevant citations. While remaining probably true that “the words of the mother tongue are the most efficient index to meaning” (Lew and Adamska-Sałaciak, 2015: 51), thereby bilingual dictionaries still proving clearly helpful, it is equally true that, if users wish to speak “a foreign language appropriately and idiomatically, they might require more sophisticated linguistic information, and not just word for word translations” (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2011: 99). Indeed, it has even been claimed that “the data contained in the [bilingual specialized] dictionaries (e.g. in example sentences) should enable practitioners, researchers and translators to write grammatically and idiomatically correct utterances without compromising their factual contents” (Nielsen, 2014: 201-202). I tend to believe this may be too great an ambition on the part of lexicographers: no dictionary, however accomplished, is likely to achieve so much, or else everyone could write grammatically and idiomatically correct sentences in a foreign language simply by availing themselves of the right wordbook.

Nevertheless, I find example sentences very useful and I intend to introduce them in the bilingual specialized dictionary I have envisaged for the following purposes: (1) to exemplify most likely collocations (for example, for the English noun *justification*, example sentences will give *justification by faith*, but also *justification through faith alone*), (2) to illustrate likely grammatical structures (e.g., active but also, often, passive constructions for the religious sense of the verb *justify*), (3) indirectly to provide a brief encyclopaedic definition whenever feasible, (4) to draw attention to specific denominational contexts of use, when such is the case (e.g. the tradition of distributing *antidoron* as being specific to the Eastern Orthodox Church and some Greek-Catholic Churches; the object *ciborium* (sense “vessel”) as only encountered in the Roman-Catholic and some Reformed Churches). I am, indeed, aware that “the danger of including too much data in example sentences is that users may overlook or misinterpret the data because they do not know what to look for” (Nielsen, 2014: 205), but I believe this is a risk one cannot but take. I hope it can be minimized, however, if sufficient explanations are given in the front matter of the dictionary about the variety and usefulness of the information potential users can find when browsing through the example sentences made available to them.

For the dictionary I have envisaged, I have also thought appropriate to increase the range of cross-referencing beyond what is typical of bilingual wordbooks. Of course, as it is the usual lexicographic practice, synonyms are to be cross-referred to what is regarded as the main lemma. Words belonging to the same lexical family are also to be cross-referred (e.g. verb *justifica* (*justify*) to noun *justificare* (*justification*) and vice versa) with a view to helping prospective users better to

understand the meanings of the respective notions as well as enabling them to explore as many illustrative citations as possible. Less typically, I also intend to cross-refer (using the indication “compare”) words which in different Christian denominations describe vestments/objects with corresponding or associated functions (e.g., *pluvial* (*cope*) and *mantie* (*mantle/mandyas*) will be cross-referred to each other and so will be *manipul* (*maniple*) and *mănecuță* (*epimanikion/cuff*), *omofor* (*omophorion*) and *paliu* (*pallium*)). Similarly, by means of the indication “see also”, related concepts are to be cross-referred, especially those whose complexity of meaning cannot be captured by any conveniently brief definition (e.g., *Împărtășanie* (*Communion/Eucharist*) will be cross-referred to *transsubstanțiere* (*transubstantiation*) and *consubstanțiere* (*consubstantiation*), and possibly to its superordinate category *sacrament* (*sacrament*)).

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### 3. “Frame-setting” and religious terms

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I have taken the decision to increase cross-referencing based on arguments advanced by Charles Fillmore, who has aptly pointed out that “the vocabulary of religious terminology offers a number of special problems. Because of the nature of religious belief, people who operate within a given religious system are not likely to think of the frame-setting part as something that needs to – or ought to – receive explicit recognition” (Fillmore, 2003: 275). However, when one attempts to design and compile a dictionary of religious terms that is, so to speak, ‘pluri-confessional’, including vocabulary (and, implicitly, conceptualization of religious belief) that is specific to a certain denomination but not used by the others, one senses the advisability, but also the difficulty, of conveying to dictionary users not only what the English equivalent of a Romanian word is, but also what Fillmore calls the “frame-setting part”, i.e. “what frames or conceptual backgrounds underlie its reason for existing” (Fillmore, 2003: 268). To take Fillmore’s own example, if a word like *sin* (and the underlying concept) is to be truly understood in the context of Roman Catholic eschatology, one would also have to know, and understand, related concepts such as *grace*, *heaven*, *hell*, *purgatory*, *limbo*, *God*, *devil*. The specifically Catholic notion of *purgatory* can only be grasped against this larger conceptual background or, as Fillmore puts it, “you more or less have to understand the whole plan in order to understand any one part of it” (Fillmore, 2003: 283). But, of course, the “plan” is somewhat different in Eastern Orthodox, and different still in Reformed, eschatology and soteriology (and not only in these branches of theology), with distinct emphases and sometimes divergent points of doctrine. With the consequence that – to return to my example – a term like *Euharistie*, translated as *Eucharist*, actually means different things to different people, and in this sense a word for word translation, which *is* accurate as far as it goes, strikes me as insufficient. In view of this difficulty, I have attempted not only to choose example sentences that could point to the various conceptual frames within which the word is to be understood, but also to cross-refer it to key related

concepts (e.g. *transubstantiation*, *consubstantiation*) in connection to which it does clarify and particularize its meaning. Of course I am aware that not every intended dictionary user will need all this information every time he/she looks up a word; some may already have it, some may not desire it. However, cross-references are unobtrusive enough: while they draw attention to the fact that more can be gained from seeing related terms, users remain free to decide whether or not they actually wish to “see also” or “compare”.

On the other hand, and despite a lexicographer’s best efforts, I believe appropriate signalling of specific religious/cultural content can only be done to a certain degree, a degree which in some cases probably remains insufficient. For a specialized Romanian-English dictionary of religious terminology the greatest difficulty that arises is not, as it might be expected, the lack of equivalence between terms of the source and the target language. Occasionally this may indeed be the case (for instance, to the best of my knowledge there is no Romanian word to designate a *chimere*, the piece of garment worn by Anglican bishops for some religious ceremonies). However, more often than not, words which in the religious vocabulary of the Romanian Orthodox Church (to take the example which, culturally speaking, is the remotest from English-speaking countries) are borrowings from Greek or Old Church Slavonic are also borrowings from Greek in English (e.g. *tropar* – *troparion*, *condac* – *kontakion*, *ceaslov* – *horologion*, *patrafir/epitrahil* – *epitrachelion*, *stihar* – *sticharion*). Therefore, it is usually not lexical equivalence at this level that is problematic. Difficulties – sometimes insurmountable – arise when a lexicographer attempts to convey the specific connotations which a religious term has developed in its own religious/cultural environment, but he/she only has available target language ‘equivalents’ which have formed different religious/cultural associations (or none at all), thereby triggering in the target language audience a response which is unavoidably at variance with that evoked within the word’s host tradition. In her article, *Dictionaries and Ideologies. Three Examples from Eastern Europe* (1995), Anna Wierzbicka provides one such illustration. As she argues, the Russian noun *smirenie* and the corresponding verb *smirit’sja* – usually translated in English as *humbleness*, *humility*, *meakness* and, respectively, *submit* or *resign (oneself)* – have “no exact equivalent in English” (Wierzbicka, 1995: 187). They identify an attitude to life that is specific to “the traditional (Orthodox) Russian outlook” (Wierzbicka, 1995: 187), namely

*a religious attitude of serene acceptance of one’s fate, achieved through moral effort, through suffering, and through realisation of one’s total dependence on God, an acceptance resulting not only in an attitude of non-resistance to evil but also in profound peace and a loving attitude toward one’s fellow human beings.* (Wierzbicka, 1995: 188)

As, however, “a dictionary cannot [...] have the resources of an encyclopedia [...] showing the cultural life of a linguistic group” (Steiner, 1995: 280), such rich connotations are, often and quite unavoidably, lost in translation.

Unsurprisingly, one also encounters similar difficulties when attempting to render the connotations of Romanian religious terms into English, and vice versa. To take only one example for each case, the series which earlier in this article was described as synonymic – *vecernie* (Orthodox Church), *înserat* (Greek-Catholic Church), *vespere* (Roman-Catholic Church) – is indeed so in terms of the three words describing the same religious practice, the evening prayers offered in church. However, to native speakers of Romanian they evoke different religious-cultural realities (the evening services being similar in the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Churches, but different in the Roman Catholic Church and in the local Reformed Churches, which offer this form of the divine office). At the same time, they are associated with distinctive semantic realities, the word *vecernie* bearing older and richer cultural and literary connotations, *vespere* being felt as neologistic, and *înserat* possibly recalling the efforts made by the Greek-Catholic Church to infuse Romanian ecclesiastical language with words that could be traced (even indirectly) back to Latin (in the historical context of the then pressing needs for national emancipation in Transylvania). The English ‘equivalents’ of these words are either *vepers* (in the Roman-Catholic Church and some Reformed Churches) or, in the Anglican tradition, *evensong* or *evening prayer*. However, the only true lexical and religious-cultural equivalence here is between *vespere* and *vepers*, as offered in the Roman-Catholic Church. To translate *vecernie* and *înserat* by *vepers* – as one actually has to, for lack of a better alternative – is, from a religious and cultural point of view, a mere approximation (and so it is to equate *evensong* with either *vecernie* or *înserat*).

In a likewise fashion, but illustrating the problematic transfer of some religious terms from English into Romanian, the word *justification*, which in English is rooted in King James’ Bible and bears the full religious and cultural weight of Reformation arguments and controversies, is in Romanian (*justificare* in its religious sense, as used in some recent theological works) a technical neologism, rather little known and devoid of connotations (to the best of my knowledge, no major Romanian translation of the Bible even uses the term, the preferred words being instead *dreptate* (e.g. the 1688 and 1795 translations, and the 1914 translation endorsed by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church), *neprihănire* (neo-Protestant translations) or *îndreptăţire* (some Roman-Catholic translations). Therefore, the translation of *justification* by *justificare*, while accurate as such, remains unable to convey the religious-cultural load of the English word, and the restricted number of example sentences that a bilingual dictionary can provide will most likely not be able to compensate for this deficiency.

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**4. Conclusions**

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Such (and other) limitations notwithstanding, I believe that a Romanian-English dictionary of religious terms is still able to fulfil its purpose of assisting intended users, be they Theology students, translators or other interested parties, in their efforts to decode and/or produce specialized oral/written discourse in English. All the more so if these users are given due warning about what the dictionary aims, and cannot aim, to achieve, as well as – and very importantly – appropriate training in dictionary reference skills. With respect to this last aspect, which is likely be of particular relevance to less experienced dictionary users, research has indicated that second language teaching has often given insufficient attention to integrating dictionary use in language training (for a brief overview of such findings, see Frankenberg-Garcia, 2011: 121). However, studies are also available that provide a comprehensive list of dictionary reference skills to be taught in higher education, starting from selection of the appropriate wordbook to correct interpretation of entry information and, as an advanced skill, dictionary criticism and evaluation (Nesi, 1999). It is therefore to be expected, and hoped, that in the profitable meeting of a well-designed specialized dictionary and a well-trained dictionary user lies the key to lexicographic success and enhanced foreign language production/reception capability of all prospective users.

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