The Dictionary Properties of Verbs in the Definition of National-Cultural Units

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Abstract. *This article investigates the optimal representation of verbs in bilingual dictionaries to accurately convey national-cultural realities. Verbs play a central role in expressing actions, rituals, and institutional behaviors, necessitating a lexicographical approach that includes valency, collocational patterns, and semantic prosody. Drawing on corpus-stylistic analysis and translation theory, the study proposes a structured microstructure for verb entries. Using the English-Karakalpak (ING-QQ) dictionary project as a case study, 15 culturally significant verbs are analyzed. The analysis culminates in seven methodological guidelines for verb entry compilation, emphasizing the importance of corpus data, register specification, and a balanced application of translation strategies like transposition, modulation, and equivalence to navigate domestication and foreignization.*

Key words: *bilingual dictionary, verb, valency, collocation, semantic prosody, translation strategy, corpus linguistics, national-cultural units.*

Introduction. Bilingual lexicography faces a significant challenge in accurately defining verbs that encode national-cultural units. These verbs—denoting specific actions, rituals, or institutional practices such as patronage, swearing oaths, or veneration—are not merely lexical items but carriers of cultural meaning. The conventional dictionary definition often falls short of capturing their full semantic and pragmatic scope. The core of the problem lies in the verb's relational nature; its meaning is largely determined by its valency (the grammatical structures it requires) and its collocations (the words it typically co-occurs with).

Existing dictionary models frequently overlook these aspects, leading to definitions that are grammatically correct but culturally and pragmatically inaccurate. As Munday (2016) and others note, translation strategies such as transposition (e.g., changing a verb to a noun phrase) and modulation (shifting the perspective) are essential for achieving natural equivalents, yet they are seldom systematically applied in dictionary microstructure. Furthermore, Venuti's critique of the "invisibility of translation" warns against excessive domestication, which can erase cultural specificity and create asymmetry.

This study posits that a verb's dictionary entry must extend beyond its core meaning to include its syntactic behavior, typical collocations, semantic prosody (the positive or negative "aura" of a word revealed through corpus analysis), and a deliberate translation strategy. The primary objective is to propose and illustrate a comprehensive framework for verb entries in a bilingual dictionary, using the English-Karakalpak (ING-QQ) project as an empirical basis.

Methods. This research employs a qualitative, theory-driven approach based on corpus-stylistic analysis and applied translation studies. The methodology consists of two main components:

Theoretical Framework: The study draws upon:

Valency Theory and Pattern Grammar: To account for the syntactic structures (e.g., V+NP, V+PP) that verbs require.

Corpus Stylistics: To identify semantic prosody and typical collocations that are not intuitively obvious but are evident in large text corpora (Stockwell & Whiteley, 2014).

Translation Theory: Vinay and Darbelnet's model of transposition and modulation, as well as Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization, provide the basis for deciding on translation strategies.

Analytical Procedure: A sample of 15 English verbs frequently associated with national-cultural realities was selected. For each verb, a detailed entry was constructed, analyzing the following components:

Core Definition: The primary meaning.

Valency/Connectors: The grammatical patterns the verb participates in.

Typical Collocations: 3-5 frequent word combinations.

Register/Etiquette: The discursive context (e.g., legal, religious, ethnographic, poetic, colloquial, pejorative).

Translation Strategy: The recommended approach for the Karakalpak equivalent (e.g., transposition, modulation, equivalence, calque).

Cultural Note: An explanatory note provided where necessary to clarify a foreign concept.

This structured analysis forms the basis for deriving broader methodological guidelines for lexicographical practice.

Results and discussion. The analysis of the 15 verbs within the ING-QQ project yielded a proposed microstructure for verb entries. The table below provides a condensed illustration for a selection of verbs:

Table 1: Sample Verb Entries in the ING-QQ Microstructure

Verb (ENG)	Core Meaning & Connectors	Typical Collocations	Register	QQ Equivalent & Strategy
to swear	To make a formal promise. V+NP (oath); V+PP (in)	swear allegiance; oath of office	Legal/Inst.	*ant ishiw* (Transposition: V → N+V)
to honour	To respect deeply. V+NP (guest/obligation)	do sb. the honour; honour debts	Poetic/Lov.	*qásterlew, izzet etiw* (Modulation)
to enshrine	To establish as sacred or in law. V+PP (in law)	rights enshrined; values enshrined	Law/Poet.	*bekkemlep qoyıw* (Calque + Modulation)
to venerate	To revere deeply. V+NP (ancestors/saints)	ancestral veneration; rites	Rel./Ethnogr.	*ulıǵlaw* (Equivalence + Cultural note)
to crown	To invest with a crown. V+NP (king/queen)	royal coronation; crown prince	Historical/Inst.	*taj kiydiriw* (Foreignization + Definition)

Based on this analysis, we formulate seven methodological guidelines for compiling verb entries in bilingual dictionaries:

Specify Valency and Connectors. Each entry must include at least one grammatical pattern (e.g., V+NP, V+to-inf) and 3-5 high-frequency collocations. This guides the user on how to use the verb syntactically and idiomatically.

Define Semantic Prosody. Dictionary entries should indicate the evaluative nuance of a verb or phrase (e.g., *set in* often has a negative prosody, implying something unpleasant has begun). This information, derived from corpus analysis, is crucial for appropriate usage.

Handle Phrasal Verbs and Idioms Pragmatically. When no natural equivalent exists, the entry should provide a simple, clear meaning rather than a literal, non-idiomatic translation (e.g., *keep the company afloat – kompaniyanı bankrot bolmastan uslap turıw*).

Apply Transposition and Modulation Systematically. Lexicographers should consciously employ these strategies. Transposition is common between English and Karakalpak (e.g., *to swear an oath – ant ishiw*), while modulation ensures the result is idiomatic in the target language.

Balance Domestication and Foreignization. For verbs tied to specific cultural institutions (e.g., *to crown, to grant a royal charter*), it is often preferable to retain a degree of foreignness through a calque or a definition, rather than fully domesticating the concept, thus preserving cultural authenticity.

Indicate Register and Text-Normative Equivalence. The register (legal, religious, colloquial, etc.) must be explicitly stated to ensure the user selects a contextually appropriate equivalent.

Base Entries on Corpus Evidence. Collocations and examples should be derived from corpus data rather than intuition. Presenting frequent collocations is more effective for language acquisition and use than invented example sentences.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that the accurate representation of verbs denoting national-cultural units requires a sophisticated lexicographical model that integrates syntactic, collocational, and pragmatic information. The proposed microstructure, developed through the analysis of 15 verbs for the ING-QQ dictionary, moves beyond simple one-to-one equivalence. By systematically incorporating valency, collocations, semantic prosody, register, and a theoretically-grounded translation strategy, bilingual dictionaries can become more reliable tools for language learners, translators, and cultural mediators.

The seven methodological guidelines provide a practical framework for lexicographers, emphasizing the need for corpus-based data and a nuanced approach to translation that balances clarity with cultural fidelity. Future research could expand this model to a larger set of verbs and apply it to other language pairs to further validate its effectiveness.

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