On the Development of a Bilingual Electronic Dictionary of Eponyms

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ABSTRACT

The number of words based on proper nouns in fields such as economy, science, technology, history, culture, sport and many others is very large, as discoveries and inventions are often named after their authors and prominent researchers. However, the functional classification of eponyms and their lexicographic representation has not received sufficient attention in Russian and foreign linguistics. The paper gives an account of how a cross-cultural dictionary project of designing an English-Russian dictionary of eponyms is currently being undertaken at the Faculty of Linguistics of Bauman Moscow State Technical University. Several categories of eponymous units based on anthroponyms, toponyms, mythenonyms, and brand names were used as semantic domains in a lexicographic software application. The article deals with the theoretical and practical approaches to introducing eponyms in a bilingual dictionary intended for students of language and linguistics, which can be used in lexicology to study the ways of word formation and vocabulary description methods.

Keywords: eponyms, eponymy, cross-cultural Dictionary, electronic Dictionary.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of eponymy is of undoubted interest from the point of view of various fields of knowledge. Eponyms are one of the most common ways to expand the vocabulary of any language. In linguistics, despite numerous studies devoted to the status and functioning of eponyms within a particular subject area, a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, as well as a comprehensive lexicographic description of eponymous units, is still relevant.

The term 'eponym' (epi- 'upon', onym 'name') has been used in different senses: (1) the name of a person after whom something is named; (2) a lexeme derived from a personal name; (3) any proper noun that has become a common noun (McArthur, 1992; Crystal, 2000).

Originally, it referred to the names of gods, heroes or real people for whom something is or is believed to be named; for example, Joseph Banks was surely the eponym of eponyms. From Alaska to Indonesia, from Tierra del Fuego to Tasmania, there are capes, islands, straits, mountains, bays, points, channels, peninsulas, counties and towns named after him (Rogers, 1988). Since the second half of the 20th century, 'eponym' has been used in various languages for specific purposes as a linguistic term. It often refers to the name derived from the name of a real person or mythical creature, for example, boycott from Captain Charles C. Boycott or satirical from satyr. Lejchik notes that the word ‘eponym’ is now included as a linguistic term in the series: ‘antonym’, ‘synonym’, ‘homonym’, ‘paronym’ and ‘toponym’ (Lejchik, 2011).
Crystal points out the ambiguity in the use of the term: "So, the name of the French acrobat Jules Leotard (1842-70), as well as the close-fitting one-piece costume which he introduced in his circus act, could both be referred to as 'eponyms'. Similarly, lexemes which are derived from place-names, as well as the place-names themselves, are often known as 'toponyms'" (Crystal, 2000, p. 155). In this paper, the term 'eponym' is used to refer to all new words and expressions derived from proper names, including personal, geographic, and brand names.

Eponyms can be a real challenge for foreign language learners and translators. Although analysis of the linguistic material has shown that most common eponyms are based on the same proper nouns and belong to common cultural heritage, in many cases the corresponding equivalent in the target language is a non-eponymous common noun whose meaning is rather generic or an eponym that goes back to a different source. The latter happens if the names of the same concept are based on different anthroponyms in Russian and English. For example, the term 'kurchatovi' was used to denote the same chemical element of the periodic table in the USSR as 'rutherfordium' in the United States.

Bilingual dictionaries and corpora are known to be widely used by learners of foreign languages (Troufanova et al., 2018). However, in case of eponyms, they might seem inferior to monolingual dictionaries, as they also suggest a simplistic one-to-one relationship between words in the source and target languages. The current dictionary project is an attempt to design a bilingual electronic dictionary of lexemes derived from proper names based on their lexical and semantic analysis. It is aimed at students of language and linguistics who need to understand references to proper names, see more deeply into the culture of native speakers of English by giving not only brief definitions of words based on names but also highlighting connotations and translation equivalents of the eponym. Following research objectives should facilitate the achievement of this aim:

1) the selection of eponymous units in both languages;
2) the specification of cross-referential semantic relationships among them;
3) the preparation of a lexicographic database of eponymous units;
4) the development of the macrostructure and microstructure of the electronic Dictionary.

2. Literature Review

Most eponyms are terms, so many dissertations, books, research papers, and dictionaries of specialized vocabulary deal with eponymous terms. Researchers who study eponymous terms focus on morphological patterns of eponymous lexemes and their semantic relationships with base words (Lotte, 1961; Beaver, 1976; Mishkevich, 1988; Kackzanova, 2011, 2013; Majkova, 2017; Konkova, 2018).

In a number of studies, it is noted that eponyms are used to refer to a wide variety of concepts and are characterized by significant heterogeneity in terms of their main components. For example, in the field of sociology, according to Majkova, they are motivated through the combination of "encyclopedic knowledge of the phenomenon represented by the 'onim' and the semantics of derivational morphemes or appellative components". These eponymous terms include lexical items derived from the names of scientists who made a scientific discovery, created a scientific theory, described a particular phenomenon, or developed a new methodology or experiment: Guttmann scale, Halevy Thesis, Gini coefficient, social Keynesianism, Fordism, social Darwinism. Besides, they include terms based on geographical names (Hawthorne Effect, Abilene paradox) and myonyms or culture-specific concepts (Mathew Effect, John Henry Effect) (Majkova, 2017).

In the field of medicine, eponyms are widely used to name diseases, medical signs, surgical procedures, tests, human anatomical parts, medical devices and treatments: Hodgkin's sarcoma, Basedow's disease, Horner's muscle, Kupffer's cell, Bailey's method, Le Fort amputation, etc. In the context of lexicography, eponyms of medicine and anatomy are the most studied subcategory of eponyms (McKusick, 1998; Jana et al., 2009; Macaskill and Anderson, 2013). While some researchers call on editors of medical journals and textbooks to abandon the use of eponyms because they "lack accuracy, lead to confusion, and hamper scientific discussion in a globalized world" (Woywodt and Matteson, 2007), others advocate their preservation because they are "often practical", "bring colour to medicine and embed medical traditions and culture in our history" (Whitworth, 2007).

Until a few decades ago, research was mainly conducted in the formal sense, but with the development of cognitive linguistics, the object of study has become not only the structural specificity of the term, which to some extent determines its meaning, but also the influence of the onomastic component on the meaning of terminological units. Novinskaya notes that the specificity of eponymous terms is determined primarily by the fact that they are based on very different proper names: the names of our contemporaries and the names of scientists. These political and public figures lived in the past. Consequently, eponymous units become "monuments" of their time, and this is their great value. In philosophy, for example, the terms Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, Kantianism, Marxism, and many others reflect the history and change of scientific schools (Novinskaya, 2013).

Koshlakov et al. state that eponyms realize two functions in the language of Science – cognitive and communicative. They claim that to some extent eponyms connect two worlds - the world of ideas and the world of
people, or, more precisely, the world of abstract concepts and the world of scientists who study these abstract concepts (Koshlakov et al., 2019).

Until recently, there has been almost no systematic way to discover the distributions of eponyms in scientific domains and investigate their structural patterns in scientific and technical discourse. Cabanac and Guillaume introduced a “semi-automatic text mining approach to extracting eponyms and quantifying their use in such datasets” (Cabanac and Guillaume, 2014). Kon’kova analyzed the frequency of occurrence of eponymous constructions and pointed out that all eponyms of scientific and technical discourse could be classified into seven groups based on their structure: Anthr.+N, Anthr.suf=N, Anthr.+Anthr.+N, Anthr.’ s+N, abbreviations, N-units of measurement. The author states that eponymous units help compress information, thus avoiding lengthy descriptive definitions (Kon’kova, 2018).

The current trend in onomastic research is related to the study of different types of proper names and their role in various spheres of socio-economic development of society. For example, Minkova and Stockwell draw attention to the trend of using trademarks as common names (Minkova and Stockwell, 2009). Generic use of a trademark poses a risk to the effective protection of trademark rights by its owners. However, this can be somewhat beneficial for companies, as they promote the identification of the brand name in the consumer’s mind with the category as a whole.

With all the researchers’ interest, there is a limited number of dictionaries containing only this type of vocabulary, not to mention bilingual dictionaries. Most existing dictionaries of eponyms are monolingual and include names of real, fictional, and mythical people used in the formation of new lexemes (Freeman, 1997; Blau, 2010). Thus, a comprehensive lexicographic description of eponyms should explore their origins derived from the personal, geographic names or trademarks and include their definitions and linguistic information about their current usage.

3. Methods and Procedure

The compilation of a dictionary includes several procedures to build and maintain an operable lexicographical database, i.e. collecting the lexical items, documenting them, classifying, editing, presenting, storing vocabulary, and updating the database. Our corpus data came from four main sources:

1) List of eponyms based on personal names (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_eponyms);
2) List of words derived from toponyms (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_words Derived from toponyms);

Currently, the dictionary project contains 87 entries. Overall, the collection of eponymous words and expressions available for computational and lexicographic analysis amounts to over two thousand.

This section reviews the procedure for designing the dictionary structure, particularly focusing on the lexicographic software application with which the project is currently being undertaken. Two further issues discussed are efficient entry navigation and search for translation equivalents.

The concept of the bilingual Dictionary of eponyms presupposes the converse relationship between the proper nouns and the new words based on names. Therefore, it is organized by semantic criteria and leads the user from the entries where lexical items that include a proper name in English, along with the influence of these names in the coinage of new words and expressions, to the entries with their Russian equivalents. Currently, the work on the Russian part of the Dictionary is at the initial stage.

The macrostructure of the Dictionary determines the volume and purpose of the Dictionary, the choice of lexical items (list of entries), and the principle of their order. The macrostructure of an electronic dictionary in a linear sequence largely replicates the macrostructure of a traditional dictionary. Still, due to the hypertext structure, each of the elements can be activated in any sequence at the user’s request (Chepick, 2006).

This cross-cultural dictionary project is at the crossroads of two fundamental fields: linguistics and cultural studies, exploring how features of human languages are entrenched in culture-specific concepts. Therefore, it is compiled on the basis of two main principles: (1) the cultural specificity of the lexical item as such, or any of its components; (2) general knowledge of lexical information for most members of a particular language society (Chernobrov, 2014).

As for the microstructure of an electronic dictionary (the internal structure of its entries), the design is based on hypertext, so the relationship between the parts of the entry is not linear. A dictionary entry of an electronic dictionary is a structural unit of a dictionary or encyclopedia, which includes the lemma (word combination, expression, concept, term) and its explanation (definition, interpretation, equivalents in other languages, etc.) The basic elements of the microstructure comprise the lemma in standard orthographic representation, phonological representation, meaning definitions and/or translation equivalents, morphological and semantic data, encyclopedic and etymological information, illustrations (pictures, examples) (Coward and Grimes, 2000; Sorina, 2011).
An important characteristic of an electronic dictionary, in addition to the many-fold increase in search speed and the ability to store large amounts of information, is the use of multimedia to semanticize vocabulary. To ensure that the material of the Dictionary is accessible and easy to share with others, a Lexique Pro application was used (http://www.lexiquepro.com/about.htm). This lexicographic software application is an interactive lexicon viewer and editor with hyperlinks between entries, category views, glossary reversal, search, and export tools.

Lexique Pro reads data from the Shoebox or Toolbox database and formats it in an interactive viewer to make the electronic Dictionary as clear and user-friendly as possible. Lexicographic labels are displayed in a sorted list on the left side of the screen. On the home page, word lists can be selected by clicking on the corresponding letters of the alphabet. The user can navigate through the Dictionary by clicking on the hyperlinks. Lexique Pro creates hyperlinks to related records, such as synonyms, morphemes, master records, cross-references and subsections. The 'Category' tab is built from the semantic domain information in a database to view entries by category. For example, one can click on the category that some eponymous unit belongs to and see a list of eponyms belonging to the same category.

The dictionary software allows to include one or more images for each entry to semanticize (illustrate) eponyms (supported image formats are jpg, png, gif and BMP). Although most of the words and expressions in the Dictionary come from the same common source, their pronunciation in English and Russian differs significantly. Therefore, the authors can add an audio file with the pronunciation of the headword, heard by clicking on the 'Pronounce' button on the toolbar, and users will be able to listen to files for corresponding examples, paradigms and lexical functions.

The electronic Dictionary of eponyms consists of several vocabulary zones: definitions, interpretations, examples of use, the zone of illustrations, the equivalent of translation, etc. They can refer to different levels of information in the Dictionary, i.e. to some specific eponyms or a category as such.

4. Results and Discussion

Semantic Classification

The importance of semantic classification for ideographic Dictionary can hardly be overestimated. Through the classification scheme, the logical and conceptual structure of any subject area in all the variety of its relations is revealed. The analysis of the linguistic material allowed us to distinguish the following main categories of eponyms: (1) words and expressions based on personal names (anthroponyms); words and expressions based on geographical names (toponyms); words and expressions based on names from mythology and literature (mythonyms), and words based on brand names (proprietary eponyms). Within each category, the most typical thematic groups were identified: medical terms, instruments, types of food, types of fabrics and textiles, clothing, plants and animals, weapons, names of people by type of activity, personal qualities, etc. The variety of structural types of eponyms included in these groups (simple eponyms, compound and attributive, suffix-based, possessives, blends and clipping) illustrates derivational word-formation processes. The number of main types of English eponyms that can be used as dictionary entries is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>category</th>
<th>based on anthroponyms</th>
<th>based on toponyms</th>
<th>based on mythonyms</th>
<th>based on brand names</th>
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</thead>
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<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>medical terms</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>food and drinks</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>weapons</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>total</td>
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<td>311</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.1. Lexical items based on anthroponyms

Personal names are the most common source of lexemes. Therefore, most dictionaries of eponyms are based on human beings’ proper names or anthroponyms (personal names, surnames, nicknames, pseudonyms). Anthroponyms or their derivatives have distinct cultural associations and have become an integral part of scientific and cultural discourse. Eponymous units based on anthroponyms represent the largest group. They also have the greatest derivational potential and include semantic derivatives resulted in subject-object metonymy (watt, boycott, derrick, lynch), attributive constructions (Apogar score, Geiger counter, O. Henry ending), possessive constructions (Newton’s laws, Archimedes’ principle), suffix-based derivatives (narcissism, quixotic, machiavellian), blends (trumponomics).

Derivation based on anthroponyms is also characteristic of eponyms in the Russian language. It is especially productive in forming nouns denoting schools or systems (‘Darwinism, ‘frejdzim,’ Leninism, ‘konfucianstvo’) and scientific terms, for example, in geology (‘eremeevit,’ ‘korzhinskit,’ ‘rentgenin’), and chemistry (‘kyurii,’ ‘fermil,’ ‘einshteinii’).

The dictionary entries of this category include medical terms (Asperger syndrome, Down syndrome, Fallopian tubes), names for food (Caesar salad, graham cracker, sandwich), breeds of animals and types of plants (guppy, dahlia, begonia), inventions (braille, diesel, hoover, Jacuzzi, nicotine, derrick), names of people by personal qualities (casanova, chauvinist, dunce, einstein, maverick), types of clothing (cardigan, leotard, knickers), units of measurement (Celsius, Fahrenheit, ohm), sports terms (derby, lutz, axe), etc.

4.1.2 Lexical items based on toponyms

Toponymy is one of the most established domains of onomastics that focuses on the study of the functioning of geographical names, their meaning and origin, structure, areal distribution, development and change over time. Toponymy is an important source for research in the field of language history and is linked to historical lexicology, dialectology, etymology, and linguistic geography. The names that are used in the formation of new lexemes mostly include names of countries, districts, areas, and settlements.

Structurally, the lexical items based on toponyms in English are mainly represented by three types: simple nominative units, which is a result of spatial metonymy (china, cheddar, bikini, balaclava, bourbon), suffix-based derivatives (laconic, sardonic, Alsatian, pheasant) or two-component structures (Siamese twins, Brussels sprouts, Venetian blind).

The dictionary entries of this category are also quite diverse and include names of animals (chihuahua, turkey); sports (rugby, football, badminton); types of clothing (jeans, bikini); food and drinks (hamburger, sherry, champagne), abstract concepts (rubicon, bedlam), etc.

4.1.3 Lexical items based on mythonyms

This Dictionary category includes words and expressions based on names from mythology, folklore, and literature. A significant part of onomastic research is devoted to the study of some linguistic aspects of the names of personified images of ancient Greek and Roman mythology - gods, demigods, characters of historical legends, etc., which became common names and served as a means of enriching the vocabulary of modern European languages. Although this category is smaller, its usage is widespread and sometimes surpasses the usage of lexical items based on geographical names.

A small group of expressions are medical and psychological terms: Achilles tendon, hygiene, venerology, Oedipus complex, narcissism, nymphomania. However, the majority of the lexical items based on mythonyms are common names that refer to multicultural concepts sharing the same relevant defining properties in both languages: flora, fauna, iris, chimera, panic, atlas, morphine, judas. As for character names borrowed from English literature, it is widely known that the names of many characters from the works of W. Shakespeare served as a source for creating the names of people endowed with the qualities of these characters in some European languages, including Russian. For example: ‘Othello’ (a jealous man); ‘King Lear’ (an elderly man deceived by his children); ‘the Capulets and the Montagues’ (groups of people who are in conflict with each other), ‘Romeo’ (an attractive, passionate male seducer or lover).

4.1.4. Lexical items based on brand names

Quite often, a brand name, due to its popularity or significance, becomes a ‘proprietary eponym’ (generic trademark) and refers to the whole class of goods, quite often, contrary to the trademark owner’s intentions. The main reason why brand names come into generic use is that there was no such product on the market before the product’s brand name was launched, and therefore there was no word to denote the product. The products with which the trademark is associated acquire a significantly dominant position in the market. The main meaning of the generic trademark becomes the product itself and not an indication of the source of its origin.
Some common proprietary eponyms are cross-cultural, as they have English and Russian equivalents derived from the same trademarks, for example, diaper, xerox, Jacuzzi, jeep, lycre. Others are less known to native Russian speakers, as the corresponding trademarks are not popular and, therefore, are very rarely used to denote the corresponding class of goods in Russian. Examples of such multicultural eponyms include comet (bathroom cleaner spray), kleenex (soft facial tissue), sharpie (permanent fine-tip marker), Tupperware (plastic food containers). Some verbs coined from brand names by conversion deserve special attention since they were not only borrowed by the Russian language but also adapted to its grammatical forms: to google – ‘googlit’ (‘use the Google search engine to obtain information on the Internet’), to xerox – ‘kserit’ (‘to copy (a document) by the Xerox process’).

4.2 Dictionary structure and types of lexicographic information

The Dictionary combines an alphabetical order (English-Russian, Russian-English) and thesaurus-hierarchical order of the entries, with semantic domains used as categories. For example, the entry for ‘toponyms’ gives a list of words based on geographical names – bikini, cheddar, china, denim, etc. There is a thorough index at the start of each alphabetical section and semantic domain. Lexicographic software tools provide users with a choice in any sequence.

As already mentioned, they can do searches using the ‘Search’ tab to find the words in all definitions and examples.

Each entry includes a referential correlation of every eponymous unit with the corresponding proper name, for example, biographical information or information related to the relevant myth or story. The same zone in the corresponding Russian language entry should describe the cultural connotations formed in Russian and might contain information about the types of discourse in which it might be used (scientific or political discourse, advertising, etc.).

Although most of the eponyms are multicultural and belong to a common cultural heritage, the important feature of the Dictionary is the inclusion of multicultural eponymous equivalents to denote the same concept in English and Russian. For example, dahlia – which is believed to have received the name in honour of Anders Dahl, a Swedish botanist, author of Observationes Botanicae, and ‘georgina’ – in honour of Johann Georgi, the Russian botanist, geographer and ethnographer, refer to the same brightly coloured garden flower with long, thin petals in a shape like a ball. Another group of multicultural eponyms in English do not have eponymous equivalents in Russian: candy – ‘konfeta’; booze – ‘vypivka’, ‘teddy’ – ‘medvezhonok’, ‘pylyshevyj medvezhonok’, ‘taser’ – ‘elektroshoker’.

The next stage of the project is to explore the similarities and differences between the multicultural eponyms of the Russian and English languages and the types of information necessary for their lexicographic representation.

One specific feature of the Dictionary which provides a valuable learning tool is the use of phonemic transcription, as many words and expressions that are multicultural concepts differ significantly in spelling and pronunciation: hyacinth (’haɪəsɪnθ) – ‘jacin’’, cyrillic (’sɜːrɪlɪk) – ‘kīril’’, ‘kīrillesikf’, euphuism (’juːˈfuːzəm) – ‘evfüizm’, cynic (’sɪnik) – ‘cinik’, ‘cinichnyj’, herculean (’hɝkjuːliən) – ‘gɵrcukelo’, ‘gɵrkuləvskij’. This dictionary zone could be supplemented by an audio file with the pronunciation of the headword.

This lexicographic project is currently under development and includes the following entry components: (1) lemma; (2) transcription; (3) definition; (4) translation equivalents; (5) category (based on anthroponyms, toponyms, mythonyms, or brand names); (6) thematic group; (7) background information on the cultural-specific origin of concepts; (8) two illustrative image files; (9) an example of the use of an eponym in a sentence from English dictionaries and corpora. A sample dictionary entry is shown in Figure 1. The structure of the dictionary entry for eponyms of the Russian language should be identical.

Figure 1. Dictionary entry
Conclusions

The eponyms of modern English and Russian languages carry both linguistic and cultural information reflecting their role in Science and culture, which affects the choice of comparative analysis methods of such units. The conducted research allowed us to identify the most common thematic groups of the eponymous units based on anthroponyms, toponyms, mythonyms and brand names. The main methods of word formation were also analyzed, among which the most common is semantic derivation (most frequently, subject-object metonymy).

The Dictionary is being compiled using a lexicographic software application in order to create a convenient work of reference that will be most useful to the students of language and linguistics for many different purposes. It will provide them with references to people, mythical creatures, places, and brand names that they could meet when they read scientific articles, novels, or hear spoken language, for example, TV series. It is based on constantly updated lexicographic database. Each entry includes the eponym, extralinguistic information on the proper name from which it was derived or an account of its origin, as well as the definition and the example of current usage.

An important feature of the Dictionary is the inclusion of information on the monocular eponyms and their cross-cultural reference. The 'Category' tab is based on the semantic domain information in the database and allows users to view records by cluster. The user can select the functional parameters of the Dictionary, for example, which languages are used for glosses and definitions.

The dictionary project allows students of languages and linguistics to sort and analyze hundreds of eponymous units in terms of their structure, compare and contrast their origins in both languages. More detailed phonological, grammatical, and conceptual information for each eponymous expression might be introduced in the future. A deeper comparative study of eponyms will allow us to establish similarities and differences in the semantic structure of eponyms, especially connotations, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the two peoples' mentality.

As a component of the lexicology and lexicography course, dictionary training should be an integral part of the syllabus, and this dictionary project might be a useful aid. Further studies may also focus on discussing which eponymous units may be worth learning for receptive purposes and which may be worthy of more serious attention since they are frequently used and denote culturally significant concepts.

References


