

### **European words of emotion: *structure, culture, and translation***

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## **European words of emotion: *structure, culture, and translation***

### **1 Report on the work of working group 4**

This paper is the written version of a short talk I held in Herstmonceux on 14 August, 2015 at the working group 4 meeting of the European Network of e-Lexicography (ENeL). It presents a rough overview over aspects that – in my opinion – are worth considering in a dictionary on a pan-European level (the latter being the objective of working group 4). More than anything, this overview is meant to take some prominent ideas and concepts into the work of ENeL, while a very detailed look into every one of them has to be postponed to a later stage.

At first, I will point out what working group 4, respectively the task group on emotion words<sup>1</sup>, has worked out so far (which I shortly reported about in Herstmonceux as our group leader Alina Villalva could not be present).

### **The dictionary of European roots**

The main task of working group 4 is to establish a prototype for a pan-European dictionary (or, according to the working title, a European roots dictionary), as can be read about at <https://sites.google.com/a/campus.ul.pt/european-roots/home>. So far, working group 4 has established several task groups concerning the European lexicon, with one of them working on words of emotion and colours (which are both “common naming issues”, see website).

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1 This task group was established during the Bolzano meeting in July, 2014, with Prof. Alina Villalva (Lisbon) being determined as group leader.

## **Words of emotion**

Alina Villalva and Joao Silvestre founded the task group “words of emotion” at the ENeL meeting in Bolzano in July 2014. As a first step, the task group agreed on setting up word lists for as many European languages as possible including simplex words of emotions of every language involved. So far, monolingual data has been collected for French, Romanian, Portuguese, Dutch, German, and Polish, i. e. word lists for the languages involved containing each 20 nouns, adjectives, and verbs. All words will be discussed and analyzed from an etymological and historical point of view (with the latter including analysis of contemporary usage) to explore connections and similarities on both an etymological and a semantic level.<sup>2</sup> In the long run, it will thus be possible to bring about a contrastive analysis in terms of etymological and semantic relationships within the European lexicon for this limited set of words.

## **Colour conference, Lisbon 2015**

At its most recent meeting during the conference on colour naming in Lisbon (July, 2015), the task group agreed on specifying research on emotion words by exploring connected information on emotion words and colour words within the respective languages (e. g. associations between emotions and colours and vice versa). To this end, the task group leaders will set up a prototype<sup>3</sup> for a pan-European dictionary by September and display it on the web page so that all members can insert their findings into that pattern. As a starting point, basic colours and basic emotions were chosen, with “basic” meaning ‘most common’. Thus, red, blue, green, and yellow count as basic colours<sup>4</sup> (with red being the starting point), whereas fear, anger, disgust, happiness, joy, sadness, and surprise were considered basic emotions according to Ekman (1992). The connection between “red” and “anger” was mentioned and/or explored in several presentations at the conference (e. g. by Roxana Ciolaneanu, PhD) and chosen as the most prominent example to start with. In terms of German, one phrase that will be discussed in this context is *rot vor Wut* (= very angry).

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<sup>2</sup> The group members who set up the lists shall carry out this work; some work has already been done, and the overall objective is to have the analyses finished by the end of 2015.

<sup>3</sup> As has been done recently: <https://sites.google.com/a/campus.ul.pt/european-roots/root-dictionary-prototype>.

<sup>4</sup> For the concept of basic colours see Wanzek (2003: 2f.).

## Introduction

The topics to be explored in this talk will be *structure*, *culture*, and *translation*. Being issues from very different fields, one may reasonably ask: why combine them? Do they have anything in common? As the overall objective of working group 4 is to present possible prototypes for a pan-European dictionary, one of the most prominent questions that come to mind is:

- (1) How can a dictionary include all European languages and still be understandable for any reader?

I subsumed aspects related to this question under the term *structure*. Secondly, when thinking about Europe as a common (linguistic) area, the aspect of *culture* is very obvious in that the lexical inventories of the European languages have influenced each other and have thus been shaped by, and reflect, different kinds of cultural traditions and ideas, be they common in the respective (geographical and/or national) areas or established by interactions beyond any borders.<sup>5</sup> With that come similarities and differences that might affect the way we understand words, phrases etc. (Wierzbicka 1992: 7f.). As a consequence, the fundamental question related to *culture* arising within a lexicographical project like this is:

- (2) How can information be displayed in a way that any speaker from any cultural background will be able to understand?

This question especially refers to parts of dictionary entries containing phrases or idioms. Needless to say, every language has its own set of figures of speech that can only be understood in the specific cultural context of the respective language and thus need to be explained to speakers of other languages (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1992, pp. 373ff.). Additionally, one might even ask whether cultural similarities and/or differences should be commented on at all – and: what can be defined as culture after all (see 3). From a linguistic point of view (and with the objective of a pan-European dictionary in mind), it

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<sup>5</sup> Santoyo comments on cultural implications that become obvious in translating (Santoyo in Munoz-Calvo/Buesa Gómez 2010: 15).

might be helpful to show inter-European connections in order to take a step beyond the mere overview function of such a dictionary. One striking feature of a pan-European dictionary could be presenting of connections of all kinds (e.g. Latin origin), that is transforming observations into conclusions.

Having said a few things now about the role of understanding within a pan-European dictionary, *translation* is an important aspect as well in a multi-lingual dictionary enterprise. As English has become the *lingua franca* on many European levels (e. g. European Union's politics and economy), one might argue that it should be taken as the common language in a pan-European dictionary as well. If English was agreed upon as the *lingua franca* for such a dictionary, every article would either have to be written in English from the beginning or at least hold an English alternative for non-native speakers of the respective language(s). This poses the following questions:

(3) How can words / lexemes / entries be properly translated?

Or even:

(4) Is there an alternative to translating, i. e. to using English as a *lingua franca*?

## **2 Structure**

The concept of a pan-European dictionary depicts a huge project that touches upon several lexicological topics. Some theoretical thoughts, e. g. about structure, should be given to that in order to achieve a unity in display in the long run, thus making all information easily accessible to users of all kind.

So, how can the article structure reflect the whole set of information that words of emotions (and their connection to colours) hold? Generally speaking, dictionaries contain levels of macro structures and microstructures, both of them assigning certain places to all information the dictionary holds. The order of words, for example, is located on the macro-structural level. However, any questions referring to the concept and content of articles are situated on the so-called micro-structural level.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example *Handbooks of linguistics and communication science* (1989).

A detailed microstructure is being worked on within ENeL as well; speaking of phrases and idioms of colour words and emotion words, they could be given an own place in every entry as well (as an own category or at the end of every entry as is done in the Deutsches Wörterbuch). Bearing European connections in mind, references or links to similar phrases in other languages could then be indicated by links to the respective entries. As the colour red, for example, is associated with kings and the church, love and revolution in many languages, such links could easily be set.

### **3 Culture**

As mentioned before, culture is a determining aspect in the history of languages. Languages can reflect cultural habits of everyday life or traditions, also in cross-linguistic contexts: “[...] justified criticism [towards national characteristics] does not mean that we can altogether reject the concept of culture as a basic orientation. [...] we still tend to refer to cultures as unified entities in practice.” (Assmann 2012: 13) Cultural implications could also be described in a pan-European dictionary, but clear categories would be needed to define what culture is and how it can be depicted linguistically. This is an aspect that needs further investigation.

### **4 Translation**

When setting up the word lists, we agreed on giving English translations for every word so that speakers of other European languages could understand. As English has become a *lingua franca* in many areas, this seemed to be a reasonable way of sharing information in across languages. One should, however, bear in mind that translations might not always be sufficient as they can only transfer the range of meanings to a certain extent. Therefore, the strategy of using English as a *lingua franca* should be questioned critically. There are, however, alternatives to translating: all languages could be displayed side by side, giving the task of understanding them to the users. Or, translations could be given in a discreet way, e.g. adding an English glossary that can be displayed when needed. The online dictionary portal Linguee could serve as a model here as they have included these “translations-on-demand” in their system: When looking up a word, the user is provided with the translation of their keyword as well as text sources showing different contexts and uses of the respective word. The translation function then allows picking any word

from these texts by a touch of the cursor and obtain a translation for them as well (which is presented in the same way as the original keyword). A modified version could be used in a pan-European dictionary, e.g. showing the translation of the word in a small box right next to the cursor (instead of opening another window).

Nevertheless, if English translations should be agreed on, a translation for the entries could be activated when needed (see above). In a printed version, the dictionary could finish with them or have them as a second volume.

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