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# Onomasiological dictionary in bilingual phraseology

**Abstract.** Onomasiological dictionaries are not very common in any language. In this dictionary, i.e. thesauri, lexemes are ordered by semantic criteria. There is very large need for well-organized onomasiological dictionaries in phraseology which can lead the user from meaning to expression. Though, the arrangement of multilingual units by significance is more complicated than monolingual ones and the author is faced with many challenges in this area. We discuss specifically devised a thesauri-like system of Czech onomasiological dictionary, its metalanguage and definitions. The idiom, having its standardised form, often includes variants and should be explained in such a dictionary by its functional equivalent. This equivalent could consist of all 10 word classes and range between a single word and whole sentence. We could say that the possibilities of bilingual phraseology between Czech and Serbian languages are mainly far from exhausted.

**Key words**: *onomasiology, phraseology, dictionaries, metalanguage, phrasemes*

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we aim to present some of the challenges the author is faced with if he or she wants to make an onomasiological dictionary for the Slavic bilingual phraseological dictionary. A dictionary like this may not necessarily be a separate publication, but often appears as an independent semantic lexicon added to the body of the main bilingual dictionary, so it can also be called "an onomasiological register" in the Czech and Serbian language. For the purpose of this paper, we will use the term *onomasiological dictionary* or *thesaurus* regardless of its type. We would like to give an answer to the question of why the onomasiological dictionary is important in phraseology and what we mean by it. As the basic unit of phraseology we use the terms *phraseme* and *idiom* synonymously.

Onomasiology is generally defined as a linguistic discipline examining the designation of fact by signs. It represents a contrast to the semasiological approach, typical in lexicography and characterized by the analysis from form to meaning. The basis in onomasiology is the meaning and the destination is an expression. Onomasiology could be defined both as a branch of linguistics and part of lexicology, responsible for an answer to the question: how do we express some meaning?

Onomasiology as a science approach was formed in the 19th century under the name *lexicologia comparativa* (Simeon 1969: 979) and has been present in the linguistics of Slavic languages for many years, ever since The Thesis of the Prague Linguistic Circle, whose representatives (primarily M. Dokulil, V. Mathesius) formulated the purpose and objectives of onomasiology, and determined the subject and object of this discipline (Кубрякова 1978: 5). There are two works in the Russian linguistics, among others in the 20th century, on the subject: *Части речи в ономасиологическом освещении* by Elene Samojlovna Kubrjakova from 1978 and *Очерки по ономасиологии* by Yevgenia Leonidovich Krivchenko from 1989.

As Kubrjakova states (1978: 5) "an onomasiological approach implies the study of nominating units as such", i.e. in the field of nomination itself. Then, in the 1970s, the importance of this approach was noted and recognized by many scientists, although the theoretical foundations had been set relatively shortly before that. In the Thesis of the Prague Linguistic Circle, the study of a nominative function through which "language breaks reality (real or abstract) into elements that can be defined linguistically" was emphasized.

In addition to the undoubted importance of the theory of nomination, the so-called "range" of language units and their combinability are also important. Therefore, Krivchenko noted that the consideration of the category of "part of speech" as an onomasiological category represents the development of onomasiology and its methods. The application of the basic principles of onomasiological analysis for determining the function of a grammatical class of words (nouns and verbs) reveals a wide range of applications of an onomasiological approach to the analysis of language phenomena[1].

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[1] Рассмотрение категории "часть речи", как категории ономасиологической, означает дальнейшее развитие основных положений ономасиологии, а также методов ономасиологического анализа, которые были разработаны для описания способов и средств наименования при помощи производных слов. Применение основных принципов ономасиологического анализа при определении функций грамматических классов слов (существительных и глаголов) и при описании языковой техники, используемой для вычленения из класса языковых знаков семиологического подкласса имен существительных и подкласса глаголов, раскрывает широкие возможности применения ономасиологического подхода к анализу рознородных языковых явлений. (Кривченко 1989: 3–4)

At the present time, Russian onomasiology and the theory of nominations, its mechanisms and types have been developed in the monograph *Русская ономасиология* by Elena A. Kosyh (2016).

Hence, it is not surprising that in modern language studies, the onomasiological approach is used in cognitive linguistics, where research on the nominative subsystem of language, nomination processes and their motivation is essential[2].

## 2. Onomasiology in phraseography

Thesauri exist in many languages, such as English, German etc., relatively numerous and focused on the systematization and classification of words in one language. In Serbian, according to our knowledge, only one dictionary appears in this area, it is *Систематски речник српскохрватскога језика* by Jovanović and Atanacković (Јовановић, Атанацковић 1980) which does not contain the term *onomasiological* or *thesaurus* in its title; however the author introduced it as a thesaurus in the preface[3]. Onomasiological classification can be applied to the entire system of one language and its phraseology and idiomatic, i.e. to the area of fixed "anomalous" combinations of all kinds and at all relevant levels (anomalous of syntagmatic and paradigmatic forms) as Čermák (2007: 76) describes the irregularity and non-model-based formedness of every phraseological unit.

In a phraseographical work, we have recognized the importance of the onomasiological dictionary within the phraseological one. As we have already noted, the semasiological approach, which goes from the term to find a definition, is commonly used in lexicography and phraseography. This generally used approach is also very important in dictionary-compiling, but there is a point based on an onomasiological approach and an ability to search phraseme or idiom from a concept. The presence of this approach in existing dictionaries is, unfortunately, reversely proportional to its significance.

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[2] Such as the monograph *Когнитивная ономасиология* by E. A. Selivanova (2000) in which the method of cognitive-onomasiological analysis of different nominative classes motivation was developed due to a new concept of motivation as a cross-cutting linguistic psychology operation of ethnic consciousness, resulting in the formation of onomasiological structures of language units.

[3] This dictionary was first published in 1938, and in the 1960s and 1970s it was updated by the publisher Atanacković who printed it in new edition in 1980.

Therefore, there are not many sources we can use if we want to create an onomasiological dictionary as part of bilingual one. As we have pointed above, such thesauri are usually not represented in phraseological dictionaries, even though they are absolutely necessary both in monolingual and bilingual phraseological dictionaries. In the first case, it is because the user may need to search for a phrase meaning in his mother tongue and in the second case – students and translators often need to get acquainted with the phraseology of a foreign language. So, every dictionary user would welcome such a search option in the printed edition of the dictionary, the possibilities of searching for expressions in electronic dictionaries are definitely wider.

A favourable circumstance in our case is the fact that we occupy with Czech-Serbian phraseology and we are able to refer to *Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics* (*Slovník české frazeologie a idiomatiky* SČFI), which upgraded the phraseological dictionaries not only in the Slavic world. The design of standard dictionary entry offers a rather rich microstructure and includes equivalents in four languages (German, English, French and Russian). *Dictionary of Czech phraseology and idiomatics* is a multivolume edition attended to serve as a mono- and multilingual dictionary; this project started some time ago, its first volume was published in 1983. The main authors: Čermák, Hronek and Macháč intended to make the dictionary as exhaustive and comprehensive as possible. So far, total of five volumes have been published. The first four volumes are devoted to the lexicographical description of comparisons, nonverbal phrasemes (nominal, adjectival, adverbial and grammatical idioms), verb-based phrasemes and propositional phrasemes or proverbs. It has a microstructure that includes: lemma, stylistic and grammatical information, transformations, context, valency and function, meaning, exemplification of usage, additional notes, synonyms, opposites and equivalents in four languages and there is a thesaurus added to the body of main dictionary. Besides, the fifth volume, published in 2016, is *Onomasiological dictionary* (SČFI V), which includes the previous four.

## 3. Onomasiological system and challenges

An onomasiological system in *Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics* could be a right model for compiling this type of dictionary in the Slavic languages. There is illustrated how such system looks and some of the problems, notably those of metalanguage, are discussed: (1) systematicity in theory, (2) exhaustive coverage of the whole material, and (3) findability i.e. prac-

tical usability enabling the user to find an expression. It is not a simple classification or indexing of material, but a basic and unambiguous description of its meaning and organization in an effective and formalized description (SČFI V: 7–11).

The challenges the author faces in work with a monolingual and especially a bilingual phraseological dictionary if he wishes to add a thesaurus are as follows:

- generalisation of metalanguage;
- the possibility of precision in case when there are more idioms under the entry and
- the problem of finding short definitions.

We will try to explain each of them on the example of the future Czech-Serbian phraseology dictionary. The majority of the possible problems is universal; the issues do not immediately concern the Slavic bilingual dictionary.

## 3.1. Metalanguage

The main question here is what metalanguage is like and whether there is only one metalanguage applied to all dictionaries. As Čermák noted (2007: 667) fairly recently, "no one had ever attempted to define the metalanguage problem used at least to describe classifiers, and it was terra incognita particularly in mapping of paroemia". The principle of creating onomasiological entry is to keep a common, non-metaphorical and relatively limited metalanguage. Onomasiological metalanguage, due to a functional nature of the Czech language, usually has the form of a verb sentence, a proposition, often with an explicit subject. To ensure the findability of the phrase or proverb (due to the alphabetical arrangement), this metalanguage has to be slightly formalized, mainly in the sense of breaking down the word-order variability (the offsetting of adjective attributes for its nouns, the relocation of enclitics and standard placement of adverbs to the end of the metalanguage phrase): Subj (-Atr)-V-ADV, or S-V-ADV. The definitions must also remain comprehensible to the laymen and close to the native language (SČFI V: 9).

In this dictionary, the 20 most common words of metalanguage are as follows: *to be, to have, to do, to give, to get, to stand, well, might, life, to go, to speak, good, to take, to leave, time, word, man, money, come, day* leaving out prepositions, conjunctions and other synsemantic words[4].

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[4] *Být, mít, u/dělat, dát, dostat, stát, dobře, moc, život, chodit, mluvit, dobrý, vzít, nechat, čas, slovo, člověk, peníze, přijít, den* (SČFI V: 9).

An entry in such a type of dictionary could be one word, a syntagma or a sentence. As far as the third kind is concerned, Čermák (2003: 49–50) states that there are three types of full sentence entry; in our case, we implemented two of them:

- indicative: Subj(-Atr)-V-(O)-ADV

  *jídlo dobré podporuje lásku* [*food good supports love*] **храна добра подржава љубав**.

  *Láska prochází žaludkem.* [*The (best) way to a men's heart is through his stomach.*] Љубав на уста улази. Пут до мушког срца иде преко стомака.

- exclamatory and/or imperative: V!

  *já potrestám ho* [*I will punish him*] **ја казнићу њега**

  *Já mu ukážu, zač je to loktem!* [*I'll give him what for!*] Вид(ј)еће он свога бога!

- interrogative: Pron-V?

  *kdo přichází?* [*who is coming?*] **ко долази?**

  *Koho to sem čerti nesou? Who the hell can it be?*[5]

A very important question can be posed: Should it incline to the Czech or Serbian idiom? In a dictionary, it is sufficient to include only one phrase as onomasiological entry, in relation to the user's language, thus, in our case it would be Serbian.

## 3.2. Definition and its precision

As far as the Czech-Serbian dictionary of somatic phrasemes or idioms is concerned, it is important to emphasise that there are idioms of a functionally different nature: comparisons and verb-based phrasemes, as well as nonverbal ones and sentence. The general verbal nature is a characteristic of the first two groups of phrasemes, while nonverbal, i.e. nominal, adjectival and adverbial phrasemes are functionally equivalent to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. The sentences are varied and the proverbs are included, which, of course, is reflected in the definition.

The entry in *Czech onomasiological dictionary* gives information on the form of the given phrase, i.e., it is a comparison, a verbal, a nonverbal idiom or sentential phrasemes, so there is an abbreviation before the phrase. Basing on this clue, the user has information on the different forms of idioms, i.e. their transformation. However, there are cases in the bilingual dictionaries where the entry provides information on the form of an idiom in one

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[5] The Czech-Serbian dictionary referred to in our paper is a dictionary of somatic phrasemes which is a part of a monograph *Česká a srbská frazeologie*. Although there is no example for this type of entry, we refer to it here illustratively.

language (as we have noted above, the first would be the Serbian language), but its equivalent in another language perhaps does not have the same form. So, the definition is either incomplete or there should be a symbol in front of a Czech idiom with the information concerning its form.

Thus, this is closely linked to the next issue: the possibility of precision in case when there are many idioms under the entry. The functional and nominative nature of the phrase or sentences provides the hierarchization.

The Czech-Serbian phraseological dictionary does not provide information on the general function of phrasemes, there are no abbreviations describing their form or type. However, the problem may occur in the future in the meaning of a sentence idiom and verbal one, because for the description of first one often uses *That is* (*To je*), while the same definition does not apply to the verbal idioms. So far, we have not encountered such problems with somatisms. If the phrasemes of different type are close and their meaning differs slightly, they are quoted twice. Perhaps it will be necessary to consider a link to a related idiom in the future, as exemplified below:

(1) ***не радити***, ***беспосличити*** *do nothing*
- *mít na bradě mozol*; *Dělá, až/že má* (*z toho*) *na bradě mozol.*
- *не претргнути се од посла, хватати зјале, красти богу дане, дангубити*; *Као* (*нешто*) *ради.*

### 3.3. Short definitions

The issues mentioned above correlate with proposing short definitions. A stratified hierarchy of Czech dictionaries, the principle of hyponymity, each term (word, phrase etc.) is classified according to a common meaning in a category (or multiple categories). This creates descriptive taxonomy, in which each term has its own place and according to the context can be easily found, based on similarity. The problem could consist in elaborating short definitions for each category and subcategory. The meaning of an idiom is often expressed by numerous words in a phraseological dictionary, but this way of defining is not applicable directly in a thesaurus, since the definition has to be reduced to just several words.

Such a reduced definition which represents an entry in thesaurus is called a "skeleton definition of meaning" in the *Onomasiological Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics*. There could be a number of similar and different semantic groups of phrasemes under one entry, given by the skeleton definition.

An example of one-word definition is given below:

(2) *insolence* **дрскост** • *drzé čelo*

(3) *together* **заједно** • *bok po boku* • раме уз раме

In sentential phrasemes or idioms, there may occur a problem concerning the form of generalizing the subject in the definition or speech:

(4) *ти нећеш тако постићи циљ / циљ се тако не постиже*
*you will not achieve the goal in that way / the goal cannot be achieved in that way*

- *Čelem zeď / zdi neprorazíš / nepovalíš.*
- *Не може се главом кроз(а) зид.*

The sentence with a second-person singular pronoun is more suitable for the Czech idiom, while a passive construction without a pronoun is more appropriate to the Serbian example. In *Onomasiological Dictionary of Czech Phraseology and Idiomatics*, there is the first definition, while in the Serbian version, the other would be preferred because of the decoding purpose of dictionary for a Serbian user.

## 4. Conclusions

The samples from the above-mentioned monolingual dictionaries show clearly that it is possible to systematically organize entries in the onomasiological dictionary and that good practice should be applied to the bilingual dictionary with a certain adaptation. Challenges concerning metalanguage and definitions lead to the conclusion that if there are no symbols that determine the type and there is no function-based division of idioms in onomasiological dictionary, it would be impossible to implement a methodical and precise entry description unless the idioms are functionally separated. Metalanguage should be common, relatively limited and formalized, so that it could indicate a type of phrasemes and idiom. To sum up, it could be said that because of complexity of the field, onomasiology in monolingual and bilingual phraseography requires more scholarly attention and deserves a systematic approach.

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# Dictionnaire onomasiologique en phraséologie bilingue

### Résumé

Les dictionnaires onomasiologiques ne sont pas très répandus dans aucune langue. Il existe un très grand besoin de dictionnaires onomasiologiques bien organisés en phraséologie. Nous discutons spécifiquement du système thésaurus du dictionnaire onomasiologique tchèque, possibilités et défis du dictionnaire de phraséologie bilingue entre les langues tchèque et serbe.