Buletinul Ştiinţific al Universităţii Politehnica Timişoara
Seria Limbi moderne

Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timişoara
Transactions on Modern Languages

Vol. 24, Issue 1 / 2025

Bridging the Language Gap in Psychology: Challenges in Developing an English-Romanian Dictionary

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Abstract: The following paper would like to discuss the challenges of compiling an English-Romanian dictionary of psychology terms, from Creative Commons sources with the participation of first and second year Psychology students from West University of Timisoara (WUT). The students selected approximately 1200 concepts in English which they had encountered most often in specialized literature and then proceeded to translate them into Romanian, alongside their definitions. All the terms and translations were proofread by the authors of this paper and verified with the help of clinical psychologists and experts in Open Educational Resources (OER). The result is a specialist bilingual dictionary that can be used by anyone with an interest in psychological jargon.

Keywords: bilingual dictionary, Creative Commons, Open Educational Resources, psychology, crowdsourcing

1. Introduction

The paper intends to analyze the process of creating an English-Romanian dictionary of psychology terms in collaboration from Creative Commons sources.

The first element that sets this dictionary apart is that it was co-created with first and second year Psychology students from the West University of Timisoara as a result of a homework assignment. The students selected approximately 1200 terms from the specialized literature in English and used a collaborative online platform (Google Sheets) to create bilingual alphabetical lists of the terms, their definitions, as well as their translations in Romanian.

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This assignment was more than a mere translation exercise. It aimed to bridge the English-Romanian language gap in the field of psychology, but it also challenged the students to work in collaboration, use their imagination, actively search for terms, sources, and pictures, practice correct citation, and reflect, not only on the meaning of the term, but also on its etymology, related words, phrases, concepts, and uses in various contexts in both languages.

The final iteration of the dictionary, *Mic dicționar englez-român de termeni din psihologie* (2025), was proofread, adapted, and formatted by both authors of this paper who reviewed all the entries and translations. It was further edited by Iuliana Costea, Lecturer in Psychology, who checked all the terms and definitions for accuracy, while Associate Professor Gabriela Grosseck, who is an expert in OER, reviewed the CC licenses and the citations. *Mic dicționar* stands out as a valuable OER since it brings together concepts and terms from different areas of the broad and dynamic field of psychology - not just clinical, organizational, educational, but also sports psychology or psychoanalysis. The authors believe it can be used by those studying psychology and any Romanian speaker with an interest in the psychological jargon alike.

2. Theoretical aspects

2.1. Creative Commons (CC) licenses

One of the pivotal elements of this dictionary is represented by its reliance on Creative Commons (CC) licenses. They provide a framework that allows copyright holders to retain ownership of their creative works while granting the public permission to use, share, and build upon those works under specific conditions (Copyright Information, 2021).

Simply put, CC licenses offer a standardized method for managing copyright in a way that encourages broader access and reuse of creative materials facilitating open access to a wide array of resources across various domains. For instance, CC0 dedicates works to the public domain, thus strongly promoting open knowledge and collaboration. Other Creative Commons Licenses range from CC BY - which is the most open, allowing users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, even for commercial purposes, as long as attribution (BY) is given to the creator, to CC BY-NC-ND. The latter is the most restrictive of the six main CC licenses, allowing others to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format but with no modifications, for noncommercial purposes only, and as long as attribution is given to the creator.

Within this landscape, Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained significant momentum. OER are defined as teaching, learning, and research materials, in any medium, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license, permitting no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution with few or no

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restrictions (Rhodes, 2019). Thus, they go hand in hand with CC licenses in the attempt to democratize access to knowledge and educational materials.

Therefore, building a bilingual psychology dictionary by using openly licensed materials presents some major advantages. For instance, it can be freely accessible to students, educators, researchers, and the general public, removing financial barriers to essential knowledge in the field.

At the same time, compiling a dictionary that incorporates and modifies existing definitions of psychological terms (if only by making them shorter, for example) means creating derivative work. Hence, it is crucial to select and use only content under licenses that explicitly permit the creation of such works (e.g. CC BY, CC BY-SA, CC BY-NC, and CC BY-NC-SA all allow for remixing and adaptation of the original content). Proper attribution should include the title of the work (if provided), the author or creator, the source of the material (URL or hyperlink), and the specific license under which the work is available (Research Guides: Creative Commons Licenses: Attributing CC-Licensed Works, n.d.). We created a comprehensive acknowledgements section at the end of the dictionary, listing all the CC licensed sources used, and we included a link to the original source in each entry for clarity and enhanced user experience.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that we considered several examples which demonstrate the good use of CC licensed resources in other lexicographical projects. A search for OER in psychology reveals textbooks and learning materials (mainly on platforms like Pressbooks) that include glossaries of psychological terms. These open glossaries provided us with CC licensed definitions that could be adapted, translated, and incorporated into a comprehensive English-Romanian psychology dictionary. At the end, we chose a CC license (CC BY-SA 4.0) that aligns with the licenses of the source materials and the project's overarching goals.

2.2. Linguistic considerations

According to Kory Stamper, a dictionary is a record of the language in actual use. Its role is not only to list words that are "correct" or "worthwhile" (Stamper in Ogilvie 2020, 7), but to preserve the wealth of a language through time for future generations. What is more, the same author observes that bilingual dictionaries most likely came before monolingual dictionaries, their incipient forms being those of medieval Latin-English and English-Latin glossaries (Stamper in Ogilvie 2020, 2).

The *Oxford Handbook of Lexicography* delineates the main aim of a bilingual dictionary: "to give equivalents, words, or expressions corresponding semantically to a word or expression in another language" (Durkin 2016, 403). However, "equivalence can only rarely be said to be full, but in connection with scientific or technical terminology there is a higher possibility" (ibidem). Bo Svensen (1993, 140) agrees that complete equivalence existing between words and expressions from two separate languages is rare as concept systems evolve differently in different languages

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influenced by history, geography, society, culture, and economic differences in those countries where the languages are used.

According to other theoreticians "the ideal dictionary should be tailored, or at least tailorable, to one particular type of user" since "bilingual dictionaries are produced with the needs of specific users in mind." (Durkin 2016, 404) Our challenge was, thus, to guide our students into crowdsourcing a bilingual dictionary that meets their needs and the needs of Romanian psychology students who study English for special purposes at faculty.

Finally, the propagation of the Internet into every aspect of our lives, education, and science has made things both easier and harder for dictionary-making. Easier when it comes to the data-collection tools, harder when it comes to the reliability of sources and the large amounts of data (and slop) that are produced and disseminated on the Internet. To quote Stamper again: "Just as most people now get their news online, so, too, does the dictionary" (2020, 12).

3. Challenges in compiling a specialist bilingual dictionary

Building a bilingual single-field dictionary, which includes definitions taken exclusively from CC license sources, entails several difficulties that will be outlined and discussed in what follows. We will review the issues encountered and the solutions we resorted to.

3.1. Constructing the corpus

After clarifying the scope of the dictionary, namely to collect terms covering different areas of the field of psychology, and our target audience, predominantly psychology students or researchers, we advised our students on how to choose the headwords. A first list of concepts (V1) was presented to them, which incorporated frequently used terms like "anxiety" or "depression." Alongside these concepts, they also received a list of CC license glossaries/dictionaries and other open sources where definitions could be found, as well as a model entry. The semestrial assignment directed the students to start from this material and look for other specialized terms which appeared frequently in the literature (journal articles, books, websites), extract and add them to the corpus (V2), as well as select a short English definition and translate it into Romanian.

The main difficulties encountered at this stage when reviewing V2 consisted in identifying terms and definitions that featured twice or even three times but also identifying irrelevant terms, or general English words.

3.2. Dealing with copyright issues

Once the headwords and definitions were in place, we proceeded to check the sources of the definitions. Some were not on the list of CC license resources we had provided

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beforehand, but could still be included because the licenses were compatible. Others, however, had been taken from copyrighted materials, in which case we had to browse glossaries and other specialized OERs, such as journal articles, to replace them with CC licensed content. We also had to deal with several entries where the terms lacked sources altogether or the links were broken.

As explained above, not all CC licenses are compatible with each other, so when creating a derivative work cautious management of source licenses was fundamental in order to ensure legal compliance and to avoid inadvertently creating a license conflict.

3.3. Incomplete tasks or definitions

Inconsistencies or varying quality of definitions from different CC licensed sources was another problem we faced. Careful editorial oversight was needed to review and adapt definitions from multiple sources, especially since the sources may themselves have been user-generated. This entailed comparing and verifying definitions, adapting them for clarity and style, and ensuring they met established lexicographical standards for psychology.

3.3. Translations from English to Romanian.

There are some notable aspects worth mentioning and analyzing when it comes to the actual translation work. Firstly, it was important to check the accuracy of the term and definition – as landmark, we used VandenBos (2020) and Șchiopu (1997) to check terminology connected to clinical psychology, since the definitions and equivalences we incorporated came from open resources. The *VandenBos APA Dictionary of Clinical Psychology* has been translated into Romanian as *Dicționar de Psihologie Clinică* (2020) providing us with a first standard of accuracy in the branch of clinical psychology. Terms from other areas of psychology were checked in *Dicționar de Psihologie* (Șchiopu, 1997).

In field of psychology, rooted in Western cultures, many terms do not have a one-to-one correspondence in Romanian. If we analyze the term “bullying” none of the Romanian versions – “hărțuire, teroare” – fully cover the meaning and usage of the English term and concept. They are examples of partial equivalence (Liu 2018). Therefore, in the case of other such concepts, our choice for the Romanian translation represents the translingual borrowing of the English term, since it is already widespread and used as such by Romanian specialists.

Another challenge that we came across was that terms and phrases were already being used in real-life professional contexts with several variants. A notable example here is for instance “bias,” a term which is sometimes used in Romanian as a translingual borrowing “bias” (e.g., “confirmation bias” translated as “bias de confirmare”), sometimes translated as “eroare” (e.g., in statistics), and in other contexts it can be translated as “prejudecată,” “stereotip.” Owing to that, with the

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specialist's input, we opted for the translation "prejudecată sistemică" as a more general compound Romanian equivalent, therefore a descriptive variant of the term.

Then there are those concepts that have no correspondent in Romanian, not even a partial equivalent, which presents its own set of translation difficulties. One such concept is "gaslighting," a very narrow concept referring to a *specific* type of psychological manipulation. The English term derives from the name of a psychological thriller called *Gaslight* (1944). However, the Romanian translation of the film title, *Lumina de gaz*, obviously does not carry the same psychological concept. This is why, on advice from our specialist, we opted to use English neologism in Romanian ("gaslighting"), with the addition of a more general, umbrella term ("manipulare psihologică") even though, and especially because, the latter does not cover the specifics pertaining to the term in English.

There were also instances where we found that, rather than start with the English definition, students had translated a definition from Romanian to English, and their source had been various copyrighted Romanian sources.

Last but not least, another challenge that we faced when reviewing the students' work was that sometimes the students digressed from their main task, that of translating a chosen definition from English to Romanian, and instead provided a wholly different version of the definition in Romanian.

3.4. Writing in collaboration

Crowdsourcing has long been a tool for dictionary-building accompanying the industrialization of society. The arrival and proliferation of the Internet enabled collaborative work on an unprecedented scale.

Mic dicționar englez-român de termeni din psihologie (2025) took shape with the help of Google Sheets, with each letter having its own separate Sheet. This meant hundreds of college students were editing the same document, sometimes at the same time. The main issue here was maintaining a consistent style and tone across all entries. As already mentioned above, there were some situations where the same term appeared more than once (as the headwords were not arranged alphabetically when added). Moreover, some entries were deleted by mistake, words were included in the wrong Sheet (letter).

3.5. Online CC license resources.

Last but not least, online sources are ephemeral, and they can be taken down at any time very often without warning or reason. This signals a certain unreliability and unpredictability, and it means sources must be checked periodically and replaced with active ones when possible. However, that obviously adds to the workload and it represents a problematic aspect if the dictionary is already printed/published online.

Another major limitation when working with CC resources is that important concepts are not covered, or their definitions are incomplete or even inaccurate.

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While it is possible to solve some of these problems when building a dictionary (for example, sourcing accurate and comprehensive explanations from CC licensed content), others remain a clear risk (such as content being modified by users, and so on).

4. Conclusions

Compiling this bilingual dictionary was a long and tedious process of co-creation, requiring a deep understanding of lexicographical principles, linguistic nuances in both English and Romanian, and subject-specific terminology. The collaborative work of the students and the authors has resulted in an accessible corpus of psychological terms that enriches the open knowledge ecosystem, particularly for Romanian users.

In the future, we would like to ensure the longevity of this dictionary and expand it by adding more terms which are relevant for psychological theory and practice. Besides the actual definitions, we are also considering including more illustrative examples of how these terms are used in context. A second edition would, then, paint a more complete picture of the complex and dynamic domain of psychology and keep Romanian users up to date with its evolution.

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