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Delexical Structures Contrastively:
A Common Trap for Non-Native Speakers

Summary

This article deals with delexical structures and in particular with the problems non-native speakers are faced with when encoding. First, it gives reasons why it is necessary to study the structures and then it discusses the delexical structures in English (monolingual context). The second part of the article focuses on the bilingual aspect, i.e. the translation of English delexical structures into Slovene. Some problems concerning the bilingual context are presented, especially as regards aspect and the difference between the translation of English delexical structures in isolation (e.g. in a dictionary) and within the context. The last part of the article concentrates on the dictionary treatment of delexical structures and provides some examples taken from the latest editions of the leading EFL monolingual dictionaries.

Protistavna obravnava razpomenjenih struktur:
pogoste pasti za nematerne govorce

Povzetek

V članku se ukvarjam z deleksikalnimi strukturami, pri čemer je poudarek na težavah, s katerimi se soočajo nematerni govorci pri enkodiranju. Najprej navajam razloge, zakaj je potrebno preučevati deleksikalne strukture, nato pa se osredotočam na zgradbo deleksikalnih struktur v angleščini (enojezični kontekst). V drugem delu članka obravnavam dvojezični kontekst, zlasti prevajanje angleških deleksikalnih struktur v slovenščino. Predstavljeni so problemi, povezani z dvojezičnim kontekstom, predvsem glagolski vid in razlika med prevodom deleksikalnih struktur v izolaciji (npr. v slovarju) in v sobesedilu. V zadnjem delu članka obravnavam vključevanje deleksikalnih struktur v slovar in navajam primere iz zadnjih izdaj vodilnih enojezičnih slovarjev za tujce.

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1. Introduction

Collocations, be they lexical[1] or grammatical[2], are a common trap not only for learners of English or any other foreign language but also for translators and other professional users of foreign languages. According to their structure, collocations fall into several groups, but in this article I would like to focus on a subgroup of lexical collocations consisting of verb + noun, where the verb is one of the so-called delexical verbs. Delexical verbs (cf. Sinclair 1990, 147) are very common verbs which are used with nouns as their objects to indicate simply that someone performs an action, not that someone affects or creates something. These verbs have very little meaning when they are used in this way. According to the data obtained from the corpus The Bank of English the following verbs are used as delexical verbs (listed in order of the frequency of occurrence): give, have, make, take, do, hold, keep, and set. The reason why collocations of this type deserve special attention is that non-native speakers of English (specifically native speakers of Slovene) make many mistakes in this respect when they create a text in English.

In a monolingual context, delexical verbs are problematic as well since they are difficult to treat (e.g. in dictionaries) (cf. Sinclair 1991, 112–3). There is a broad general tendency for frequent words (which delexical verbs certainly are), or frequent senses of words, to have less of a clear and independent meaning than less frequent words or senses. These meanings of frequent words are difficult to identify and explain, and, with the very frequent words, we are reduced to talking about uses rather than meanings. The tendency can be seen as a progressive delexicalization, or reduction of the distinctive contribution made by that word to the meaning.

2. The Importance of Studying Delexical Structures

Why is it necessary to pay special attention to delexical structures? The great majority of deviant combinations can be understood in terms of the semantic specialization of the verb and the restrictions on the potential for the verb in that sense to combine with a range of nouns. One of the most common categories of specialization is delexical senses of verbs, though they are found much less frequently in the non-native speaker data than in the native speaker data – according to Howarth (1998, 181) 13 per cent against 21 per cent of all

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[1] Lexical collocations are combinations of two equal open-class words. Typically, they consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (e.g. *exert influence, a debatable question, argue heatedly*).

[2] Grammatical collocations consist of a dominant word (usually a noun, a verb, an adjective) and a dependent closed-class word (often a preposition) or a grammatical structure, such as infinitive, gerund, that-clause, wh-clause. Examples include *a rise in, agree on, good at, suggest that/gerund*.

collocations of the patterns studied. This may be the result of the avoidance by some learners of such combinations due to uncertainty over appropriate collocability. This is not surprising given that even native speakers are capable of confusing delexical verbs (e.g. *make an assurance* for *give an assurance*). Although there is occasional doubt over the 'correct' form (views might differ on the acceptability of *do a study*, for example), there are some clear cases of direct confusion between two delexical verbs:

*do attempts (make)[3]
*do a measurement (make)
*get contact with (either *make* contact with or *get* in contact with)
*make a reaction (give)

The idiomaticity of language has at least one consequence for word meaning: many word meanings are difficult to pinpoint outside of the contexts in which they normally occur. Many words do not even have meaning at all in some contexts. For example, *take* in *take a look at this* is only a 'copula' verb which supports the word *look*, putting it, so to speak, in the limelight (cf. Wierzbicka 1982; Stein 1991; Stein and Quirk 1991). The structure *take a look at this*, as opposed to *look at this*, puts special emphasis on the noun, gives it special prominence by allowing it to assume its substance as a noun. The word *take* in *take a look* cannot be defined in a dictionary out of the context *take a look* and according to corpus findings the commonest use of *take* in English is delexical (Hanks 1990, 35). This points to the following conclusions: the most frequent words, and the most frequent uses of polysemous words, whatever their frequency, seem to tend to have meanings that are less clear, less independent than rarer words, or rarer uses of the same words: meanings tend to lose their autonomy over time and as frequency increases (Cowie 1988, 135). The highly frequent words (Moon 1988; Cowie 1988, 130) are often difficult, or impossible, to define out of the typical contexts in which they occur idiomatically. But when the language users think of a word out of context, it cannot be the delexicalized meaning that comes to their minds first, so that the 'foremost' meaning cannot be the most frequent. Sinclair (1991, 113) hypothesizes that it could be 'the most frequent independent sense'.

The English language has many turns of expression which we can only learn if we are brought into direct contact with them. We may often know a large number of verbs, nouns and adjectives, but we may not know exactly in L1 → L2[4] translation how they should be put together to form a typical English collocation. Certain verbs are followed automatically by certain nouns that are the grammatical objects of the verbs. The verb may have different senses in different collocations. In many cases we know exactly what a certain English structure means and we therefore tend to translate it word for word, although there is a single equivalent verb for it in Slovene. It is, in fact, very difficult to notice this at the beginning. This leads to another important point, namely the role of context. If, for instance, we come upon a delexical structure in isolation, we are more likely to translate it literally, whereas we usually find a more idiomatic way of expressing it if it is

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[3] An asterisk (*) indicates unacceptable use.
[4] L1 stands for one's mother tongue and L2 for one's foreign language.

used in context. Several well-known linguists believe that context is of the utmost importance. J. R. Firth points out in his famous *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951* that the complete meaning of a word is always contextual, and that no study of meaning ignoring a complete context can be taken seriously. The problem of meaning is usually handled by splitting it up into components which can then be categorized and classified, and brought into relation with one another. As we will see later on in this article, context also plays an important role in delexical structures.

The importance of studying these structures lies in:

■ the fact that we should be very careful when translating them from English into Slovene: often we must not translate literally. The result of such a translation would be a clumsy, unnatural Slovene structure, e.g.:

   A: I'd like to know how to do this.
   B: Why don't you *have a try*?
   A: Rad bi vedel, kako se to naredi.
   B: Zakaj pa kar ne *poskusiš*? (*Zakaj pa ne bi imel poskusa?)

In English: *have a try*, in Slovene: *poskusiti* (a single verb) and not a direct translation *imeti* (verb) *poskus* (noun).

He made a suggestion that we should visit him.

Predlagal je, naj ga obiščemo.

?Dal je predlog, da naj ga obiščemo.[5]

In English: *make a suggestion*, in Slovene: *predlagati* (a single verb), a word for word translation is not acceptable at all (*narediti predlog*), and the translation *dati predlog* (the verb belongs to delexical verbs but the semantic meaning differs from the verb *make* in English – *dati* in Slovene means *give* in English) is hardly acceptable in this particular context, but perfectly acceptable as a dictionary equivalent and in several other contexts, such as *dati predlog za glasovanje*.

It is, however, even more important to bear these structures in mind when we translate from Slovene into English. These structures are idiomatic and are widely used in English but are much more limited in Slovene, which results in the fact that the translated English texts would sound more authentic if more of such structures were made use of.

■ the fact that the delexical structures should be incorporated into Slovene–English dictionaries in large numbers to enable translators and other users of English to become aware of them and to make them a part of their active vocabulary. The most comprehensive Slovene–English dictionary (Grad and Leeming 1992) includes only a very limited number of delexical structures, the result being that we tend not to use these very frequent English structures. If we relied too much on this dictionary, our translations would sound too formal, too stilted and sometimes even old-fashioned. It would most certainly not reflect the present-day use of the English language. The above-mentioned dictionary almost invariably tries to give rather formal one-word translational equivalents

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[5] A question mark (?) indicates that native speakers are unsure about the acceptability of the structure/word.

instead of providing also more modern, idiomatic equivalents including the delexical structures.

Earlier studies have claimed that formulaic language is dominant in conversation.

The most recent research based on extensive corpora of texts has proved that idiomatic phrases with the verbs *have, make,* and *take* are by far more common in the written registers (Biber et al. 1999, 1028–9). In fact, several of these phrases are notably common only in written exposition, some can be found in fiction only, and common phrases formed with *have*, for example, tend to be more colloquial. But the phrase *have time* (often in a negative context), for example, is found in different registers, although it is less common in news and academic prose.

3. Delexical Structures in English: A Monolingual Aspect

If we first have a look at some renowned grammar books of the English language, we can see that they all treat delexical structures in one way or another. Starting with the well-known *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik, we can notice that delexical structures are treated under the title 'Eventive object' (1985, 750–2). The authors observe that a frequent type of object generally takes the form of a deverbal noun preceded by a common verb of general meaning, such as *do, give, have, make, take*. This eventive object is semantically an extension of the verb and bears the major part of the meaning. Compare:

They *are arguing.* [verb only]
They *are having an argument.* [verb + eventive object]

The construction with the eventive object provides greater weight than the corresponding subject + verb type, especially if there are no optional adverbials, and is often preferred to the subject + verb construction in informal English.

Some noun heads in eventive objects are not derived from verbs. For example, there is no verb *effort*, although *an effort* is eventive in *I'm making an effort*; other examples: *have a game, have a haircut, make fun (of), make peace (with), make war (on).* In some instances, the verb is not normally used intransitively: I *made a mistake/an attempt/a correction.* In other instances, the combination clearly does not have the same meaning as the verb alone, e.g.: *make love (to), take trouble (over), make a difference.* In a few instances, the combination has (or may have) a passive meaning, particularly with *have*:

I *had a fright.* ['I was frightened.']
The baby's *having a bath.* ['The baby is being bathed.']
I'll *have a shampoo*, if I may. ['I want my hair to be shampooed.']
He *took offence* at my remarks. ['He was offended by my remarks.']

Most of the subjects in clauses with an eventive object are agentive. But some are recipient (or

experiencer):

> Bill *got a view* of the candidate.
> I *had a* wonderful *dream.*
> Sally *took an* instant *dislike* to the new tenant.

Others are affected (i.e. with intransitive verbs, the subject frequently has the affected role typical of the direct object).

> Saul *took a fall.*
> The team *has taken a beating.*
> At that sudden noise Bob *gave a jump.*

The verbs *do, make, offer, pay* and *put* always take agentive subject.

It should be noted that *have* can more easily take an affected subject than *take*:

> The baby'*s having a bath.* (also in AmE), generally not
> ?*The baby'*s taking a bath.*[6]

Do and *make* overlap in the eventive objects they can take, but only *do* takes -ing verbal nouns.

Contrast:

> She *gave a shriek.* [an involuntary shriek] – Zakričala je.
> She *had a good shriek.* [voluntary and for own enjoyment] – Vzkliknila je.
> She *did a (good) shriek.* [voluntary and for own enjoyment] – (Pošteno) je zakričala.

Such a fine semantic distinction cannot easily be expressed in Slovene. The only possibility would be to add some context or to explain – perhaps typically using adverbs – how she actually carried out this particular action.

Many nouns can be used with the verbs *have* and *take*, the former being more typical of British English and the latter more common in American English. Sinclair (1990, 151) distinguishes two groups of nouns which follow these two verbs:

(1) nouns referring to physical activities:
> I'd rather *have a swim.* – Rajše bi zaplavala.
> *Have a drink.* – Popij kaj!
> She decided to *take a stroll* along the beach. – Odločila se je, da bo šla na sprehod ob obali.
> I *took a bath*, my second that day. – Skopala sem se, že drugič ta dan.
> Apart from *take a stroll* (where *take* is usually rendered by using the more specific verb *iti*) no verb + noun combination is possible in Slovene.

(2) nouns referring to actions which involve using our senses:

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[6] ?* indicates that the expression tends to unacceptability, but is not fully unacceptable.

She should let a doctor *have a look* at you.
Even Lally *had a* little *sip* of wine.
A Harvard scientist was once allowed in to *have a peep*.
Meadows *took a bite* of meat.

Quirk et al. (1985, 753) also deal with the so-called affected indirect object and say that the indirect object normally takes the role of recipient. It occasionally takes an affected role with a few of the verbs that combine with an eventive object. The most common verb in the latter construction is *give*.

She *gave me a push*. ['She pushed me.'] – Porinila me je.
I *gave Helen a nudge*. ['I nudged Helen.] – Pomignil sem Helen.
We *gave the baby a bath*. ['We bathed the baby.'] – Skopali smo otroka.
I should *give the car a wash*. ['I should wash the car.'] – Oprati bi moral avto.
Give the car a push. ['Push the car.'] – Porini avto!

No verb + noun combination is possible in Slovene. In all the above cases, the English delexical structure is translated with a single verb in Slovene, the verb being semantically connected with the noun used in the English delexical structure.

The indirect object has the same role as the affected direct object in the paraphrase. Unlike the recipient indirect object, the affected indirect object is not normally paraphrasable by a prepositional phrase:

I *gave Helen a nudge*.   ∅ ?I gave a nudge *to Helen*.[7]

The reason is that this type of construction is intended to focus on the nominal equivalent of the verb (*nudge* in this example) and therefore the direct object should receive end-focus.

In this use, *give* may be compared with *get, have,* and *receive* in a parallel passive sense:

I *got a surprise*.   The car *has had a polish*.   I *received a shock*.

There is also an interesting equivalence of
They *gave* (or *shot*) *each other glances*.   and
They *exchanged glances*. ['They glanced at each other.']

This topic, however, is not covered in depth in various grammar books except for one aspect of it, namely the passive voice. Thus Palmer (1988, 236–7) points out that there is a whole group of the sequence of verbs, object noun phrases and prepositions that are collocationally closely linked, e.g. *make a mess of, set fire to, give way to*; most of these are semantically fairly transparent:

He *made a mess of* his speech.
You should *give way to* oncoming traffic.
There are various possibilities of passivization:

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[7] The sign Ø means that there is no systematic correspondence between structures.

a. A mess was made of his speech. → His speech *was made a mess of.*
b. Care should be taken of the matter. → The matter *should be taken care of.*
c. Advantage should be taken of his offer. → His offer *should be taken advantage of.*

It may be added though that *take care of* is used in both a fairly transparent sense and the less transparent sense of 'deal formally with'. In this second sense the whole combination is treated as a unit for passivization giving the second example above (which is most likely to be interpreted as 'This matter must be dealt with'). Others have no passives at all (or very rarely), e.g. *give way to*:

?Oncoming traffic *should be given way to.*
*Way should be given to oncoming traffic.

Quirk et al. (1985, 1158–9) give similar examples:
Type a: They *have made a (terrible) mess of* the house.
          Did you make (any) allowance for inflation?
          Mary *took (good) care of* the children.
Type b: *Give way to* traffic on the major road.

With Type a, there are two possible passives: the regular passive in which the direct object becomes subject (labelled (1) below), and a less acceptable passive construction in which the prepositional object becomes subject (labelled (2) below):

(1)   *A terrible mess has been made of* the house.
(2)   ?The house *has been made a (terrible) mess of.*
(1)   *Was (any) allowance made for* inflation?
(2)   *?Was* inflation *made allowance for*?
(1)   (Good) *care was taken of* the children.
(2)   ?The children *were taken (good) care of.*

In Type b, on the other hand, the only acceptable passive is the irregular passive in which the prepositional object becomes the subject.
          ?Traffic on the major road *should be given way to.*

Passivization, however, is not of great importance when translating an English text into Slovene.

The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999)*,* an innovation in the field of grammar books, not least by way of frequency data, includes an interesting chapter dealing with delexical verbs, or, more precisely it concentrates on the three most frequent delexical verbs, namely *have, make,* and *take* (Biber et al. 1999, 1026–9). All the information in this grammar book is based on the British National Corpus, which shows that these three verbs

are especially productive in combining with a following noun phrase to form relatively idiomatic expressions. The resultant expressions form a cline of idiomaticity (cf. Howarth 1998; Moon 1988; Cowie 1988; Hanks 1990). At one extreme there are clearly idiomatic expressions, such as *have a look, make a killing,* and *take time*:

> Michael can I *have a look* please?
> When we go public, you'll *make a killing*.
> Do you think you can *take time out* to have a cup of tea?

At the other extreme, there are expressions that retain the core meaning of these verbs:

> Well, we *have* an extra one.
> He *made* a sandwich.
> You can *take* a snack in your pocket.

In between are a number of relatively idiomatic expressions, such as *have a chance, have a bath, make a deal, make a statement, take a walk*. In these expressions, the meanings of individual words are retained to some extent, but the entire expression also takes on a more idiomatic meaning. Further, many of these expressions could be replaced by a single verb:

have dinner	→	*dine*
make provision (for)	→	*provide (for)*
take part	→	*participate*

3.1 Component Elements of Delexical Structures

According to their structure in English the delexical structures can be divided into the following groups (cf. Sinclair 1990, 148–9):

1) the delexical verb is followed by:

a) a noun in the singular: The noun which is the object of the delexical verb is often in the singular and is usually preceded by the indefinite article.
She *made a remark* about the weather.
She *gave a cry* when I came in.
All these nouns are commonly used also as verbs in English.

The singular countable nouns indicate a brief event. One difference in meaning between a delexical structure and a verb with a similar meaning is that the delexical structure can give the impression that the event you are describing is brief. For example, *She gave a scream* suggests that there was only one quick scream, whereas *She screamed* does not suggest that the event was brief.
Mr. Sutton *gave a shout* of triumph.
She *gave a sigh* of relief.

b) a noun in the plural:

She *took little ladylike sips* of the cold drink.
He *took photographs* of Vita in her summer house.
c) an uncountable noun:
We *have made progress* in both science and art.
Cal *took charge* of this side of their education.

2) the delexical verb is followed by an adjective before the noun. We can add further details about the event by using adjectives in front of the noun, rather than by using adverbs. It is more common, for example, to say 'He *gave* a quick furtive *glance* round the room' than to say 'He *glanced* quickly and furtively round the room', which is felt to be rather clumsy and unnatural. These examples are of great contrastive importance for Slovene speakers of English (cf. also Chapter 4).

3) the delexical verb is followed by nouns that are not used as verbs. Sometimes, however, there is such a verb but the form is slightly different.
   Work experience allows students to *make more effective career decisions.*
   The Prime Minister *decided* she had heard enough.
   He *made the shortest speech* I've ever heard.
   Iain *spoke* candidly about the crash.
   In other cases, there is no corresponding verb with a similar meaning at all and so there is no other structure that can be used.
   He had been out all day *taking pictures* of the fighting.
   That is *a very foolish attitude to take.*
   She *made a number of relevant points.*
   Try not *to make so much noise.*

4) one and the same noun can be preceded by more than one delexical verb, often with little difference in meaning:
5) some delexical structures are invariable (*make use of; give way; take part /in sth/*) whereas

give a call make a call	give a chance take a chance	give trouble make trouble take the trouble
have an advantage of take advantage of	have a rest take a rest	have room make room (for sth)
have a seat take a seat	make a meal take a meal	make a note take notes
make time take time	have a bath take a bath (*take* often favoured in AmE)	

others are grammatically variable (*make a statement/make several statements; give an example/ give a few examples; have a drink/have a few drinks*).

4. Delexical Structures in English and Their Translation into Slovene: A Bilingual Aspect

According to their Slovene translations the delexical structures fall into the following groups:

1. the English delexical structure is translated by a specific Slovene verb which is derived from the noun:

to have lunch   *kositi*
to give a lecture (on)   *predavati (o)*
to make an arrest   *aretirati*
to take a look   *pogledati*

2. the English delexical structure is translated into Slovene by the combination verb (which does not correspond semantically to the English delexical verb) + noun or adjective:

to take the temperature   *izmeriti temperaturo*   (verb + noun)
to take notice (of sth)   *biti pozoren (na kaj)*   (verb + adjective)
to make a speech   *imeti govor*   (verb + noun)
to have coffee   *piti kavo*   (verb + noun)
to give trouble   *povzročati težave*   (verb + noun)
to give way (to)   *biti nadomeščen (z)*   (verb + adjective)

3. with idioms the English structure and the Slovene translation are usually completely different:

to give sb a rough ride   *mučiti koga*
to make light of   *podcenjevati, dajati v nič*
You have the advantage of me.   *Veste nekaj, česar jaz ne vem.*

Note that the delexical structure is often used in English to denote the non-progressive (also called terminative or perfective) aspect whereas the single verb can indicate either the progressive or the non-progressive aspect (depending on the context).

to look   *(po)gledati*
to have/take a look   *pogledati*
to sigh   *(za)vzdihniti, vzdihovati*
to give a sigh   *(za)vzdihniti*
to rest   *počivati, odpočiti si*
to take a rest   *odpočiti si*
to guess   *uganiti, uganjevati*
to make a guess *uganiti*

As far as aspect in English is concerned it is the delexical verb *take* that presents special difficulties in translating from English into Slovene, especially if very little context is provided.

In other words, we are often completely lost without a context, but even with more context we are often of two minds about how to translate a particular delexical structure. If we take only a few examples we can clearly see that even with more context we do not know whether to translate the sentences by means of the progressive or non-progressive aspect, because we actually do not know whether something is still going on at the moment of speaking or whether it is a momentary action that has already been completed.

He recently took a vacation in Italy.   *Nedavno je bil na počitnicah v Italiji.*
                                            Nedavno je šel na počitnice v Italijo.
She took a train to see the countryside.   *Odpeljala se je z vlakom, da bi videla podeželje.*
                                            Peljala se je z vlakom, da bi videla podeželje.

The verb *to look*, for example means almost the same as *have a look*. When the word is a verb, as in *I looked round the room,* you are focusing on the action of looking. When you use the word as a noun in a delexical structure, you are naming an event, something which is complete. This structure often seems to be preferred to a structure in which the verb has greater prominence. The verb which corresponds to the delexical structure is often intransitive.

> She **made a signal**. vs She **signalled** for a taxi.
> He **gave a** vague **reply**. vs They **replied** to his letter.
> There are also some verbs which are transitive.
> He **gave a** little **sniff**. vs I **sniffed** the room.
> Comis **took a photograph** of her. vs They **photographed** the pigeons in Trafalgar Square.

4. in many cases there is a difference between the mechanical ("neutral", dictionary-like) translational equivalence and the translation of a sentence in context, which points to the importance of context.

to have joy	<u>veseliti se</u> (verb)*: Life really must have joy.*
	V življenju res mora <u>biti veselje.</u> (verb + noun)
to have a point	<u>biti vredno premisleka</u> (verb + adjective + noun)*:*
	Cynics call it "Mercedes democracy". They have a point.
	Ciniki temu pravijo "Mercedesova demokracija".
	Nekaj <u>je na tem.</u> (set expression consisting of
	a verb + prepositional phrase)
to make a contribution	<u>prispevati</u> (verb)*: He has made an important contribution to the*
	company's success. Njegov <u>prispevek</u> k uspehu družbe <u>je bil velik</u>.
	(noun + verb + adjective)
to make history	<u>priti v zgodovino</u> (verb + prepositional phrase)*: This*
	discovery made medical history. To odkritje <u>je bilo</u> za medicino
	<u>zgodovinskega pomena</u>. (verb + adjective + noun)

to take measures	*ukreniti, ukrepati* (verbs)*: The Conservative government has taken measures limiting freedom of the press. Konservativna vlada je z ukrepi omejila svobodo tiska.* (prepositional phrase + verb)
to take a precaution	*podvzeti varnostni ukrep* (verb + adjective + noun)*: I took the precaution of locking everything in the safe. Iz previdnosti sem vse zaklenil(a) v trezor.* (prepositional phrase)

It is also very interesting to note that an English delexical structure can often be translated into Slovene by a verbal phrase (specific verb) when there is no adjective between the delexical verb and the noun. As soon as an adjective appears, it is no longer possible to translate the sequence by a Slovene verbal phrase with a verb of specific meaning (postmodification, however, may change this, thus showing the importance of verb valency). A close observation of the three examples below shows how the adjective which appears in English delexical structures changes the translation into Slovene. There are at least two possible translations into Slovene, one being the nominal phrase plus the verb (example 1) and the second one just the nominal phrase (examples 2 and 3). The explanation for this may be that an adjective in its typical premodifying position before a headword calls for a structurally (example 1) or semantically (examples 2 and 3) similar translation. An adverb, on the other hand, can appear in a verbal phrase as well. That means that adjectives and adverbs restrict the range of meanings. This can best be illustrated by the following examples:

to have an impact	*vplivati: Economic sanctions are likely to have a decisive impact. Ekonomske sankcije bodo imele odločilen vpliv.*
to make a contribution	*prispevati: He has made an important contribution to the company's success. Njegov prispevek k uspehu družbe je bil velik.*
to make an offer	*ponuditi: He made a generous offer for the house. Njegova ponudba za hišo je bila velikodušna.*

5. Dictionary Treatment of Delexical Structures

In this section I would like to concentrate on monolingual learners' dictionaries for several reasons:

- The existing bilingual dictionaries of English and Slovene do not pay special attention to delexical structures, though one should not categorically say that they are not included at all. Unfortunately, however, they are not given as suitable, if not preferred, translational equivalents of a single verb in Slovene. Nor are they included in the dictionary for decoding, although, as has been pointed out previously, native speakers of Slovene may have problems finding a suitable equivalent for an English delexical structure.

- Monolingual dictionaries for native speakers include some delexical structures under the entry for a verb, but they are scattered throughout the entry and included under special senses of the verb.

Monolingual learners' dictionaries include a large number of delexical structures and it is interesting to see how this type of collocations is integrated within the dictionary entry. It should be noted that the leading monolingual learner's dictionaries, that is OALD[8], LDOCE[9], COB[10], include delexical structures in several places.

If we start with the latest edition of OALD, which was published in 2000, we can see that delexical structures are not ignored at all. On the contrary, a great number of them are included in the form of examples of use under different senses of a particular verb. For example:

> **take** (...)[11]
> **14** [VN] to photograph sb/sth: *to take a photograph / picture / snapshot of sb/sth* • *to have your picture / photo taken measurement* **15** [VN] to test or measure sth: *to take sb's pulse / temperature* • *I need to have my blood pressure taken.*
> **seat**
> **16** [VN] to sit down in or use a chair, etc: *Are these seats taken?* • *Come in; take a seat.*
> (...)
> **25** [VN] (not usually used in the progressive tenses) to have a particular feeling, opinion or attitude: *My parents always took an interest in my hobbies.* • *Don't take offence* (= be offended) *at what I said.* • *I took an instant dislike to him.* • *He takes the view that children are responsible for their own actions.*
> **action**
> **26** [VN] to use a particular course of action in order to deal with or achieve sth: *The government is taking action to combat drug abuse.* • *We need to take a different approach to the problem.*
> **27** [VN] used with nouns to say that sb is doing sth, performing an action, etc: *to take a step / walk / stroll* • *to take a bath / shower / wash* • *to take a look / glance* • *to take a bite / drink / sip* • *to take a deep breath* • *to take a break / rest* • *No decision will be taken on the matter until next week.*
> **form / position**
> **28** [VN] to have a particular form, position or state: *Our next class will take the form of a debate.* • *The new President takes office in January.*
> (...)
> **36** [VN] to do an exam or a test: *When did you take your driving test?*
> **transport / road**
> **37** [VN] to use a form of transport, a road, a path, etc. to go to a place: *to take the bus / plane / train* • *to take a cab* • *Take the second road on the right.* • *It's more interesting to take the coast road.*
> (...)
> **40** [VN] to use a particular method to find out people's opinions: *to take a vote / poll / survey*
> (OALD 2000, 1324–5)

On the basis of this example we can see that the lexicographers tried to arrange different delexical structures under special senses of the entry word. It could also be claimed that the

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most evident inclusion of delexical structures is sense 27 (used with nouns to say that sb is doing sth, performing an action, etc) where the definition itself suggests that the verb *take* is often used in combination with nouns.

A similar strategy is adopted by LDOCE, i.e. the inclusion of delexical structures as examples of use under different senses of the entry word. Interestingly, this dictionary uses special typography to highlight some (but not all) delexical structures, suggesting that these combinations belong to idiomatic language – the same typography is used for idioms, proverbs and other set expressions. In this dictionary, sense 2 (a word meaning to do something, used with many different nouns to form a phrase that means 'do the actions connected with the nouns') is comparable to sense 27 in OALD. For example:

> **take** (...)
> **2 DO SOMETHING**
> **2** [transitive] a word meaning to do something, used with many different nouns to form a phrase that means `do the actions connected with the nouns': *take a walk | take a bath | take a breath | take a vacation*
> (...)
> **9 take an exam/test** to do an examination or test: *I had to take my driving test three times before I passed.*
> (...)
> **38 FEELINGS** [transitive] to have or experience a particular feeling, used in some phrases: *Lin takes no interest in her work.* | **take pity on** (= help someone that you feel pity for*): that nice young man who took pity on me and helped me with my bags* | **take offence** (= feel offended by something): *Don't take offence. Roger says things like that to everybody.*
> (...)
> **39 take a picture/photograph** to photograph someone or something [+ of]: *I took several pictures of the cottage we stayed in.*
> **40 WRITE** [transitive] to write down information that you have just been given: *Don't let me forget to take your address before you leave.* | *It might be a good idea to take notes during the lecture.*
> **43 TEST/MEASURE STH** [transitive] to test or measure something: *He took my temperature and blood pressure.*
> (...)
> **45 take a bend/fence/corner etc** [transitive] to try to get over or around something in a particular way: *We took the bend at over 60 and lost control.*
> (LDOCE 1995, 1468–70)

A very interesting approach to dealing with delexical structures is that of COB where a special entry of the delexical verb *take* is devoted to its delexicalized senses. Consequently, the verb *take* has two entry words: one of them deals with the verb *take* in combination with nouns and the other one deals with other senses of the verb. For example:

take (...)

> **Take** is used in combination with a wide range of nouns, where the meaning of the combination is mostly given by the noun. Many of these combinations are common idiomatic expressions whose meaning can be found at the appropriate nouns. For example, the expression **take care** is explained at **care**.
>
> **1** You can use **take** followed by a noun to talk about an action or event, when it would also be possible to use the verb that is related to that noun. For example, you can say '**she took a shower**' instead of 'she showered'. *She was too tired to take a shower ... Betty took a photograph of us ... I've never taken a holiday since starting this job ... There's not enough people willing to take the risk ... Walk around the property and take a good look at it form the outside ... We took a long walk through the pines.*
>
> **2** In ordinary spoken or written English, people use **take** with a range of nouns instead of using a more specific verb. For example people often say '**he took control**' or '**she took a positive attitude**' instead of 'he assumed control' or 'she adopted a positive attitude'. *The Patriotic Front took power after a three-month civil war ... I felt it was important for women to join and take a leading role ... The constitution requires members of parliament to take an oath of allegiance ... In Asia the crisis took a different form.*
> (COB 2001, 1588)

It should, of course, be noted that delexical structures are widely included as examples of use under the entries for nouns in all the above-mentioned dictionaries. The same criterion, i.e. the inclusion of delexical structures under nouns, is also observed in specialized dictionaries of collocations (cf. *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations, LTP Dictionary of Selected Collocations, Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*).

What about bilingual dictionaries? Bilingual dictionaries for decoding should include delexical structures under the entry for a noun, because a non-native speaker is more likely to be acquainted with the meaning of the verb (they belong to the most frequently used words in English) than with the meaning of the noun. Another reason is that the translational equivalents of delexical structures differ from the translational equivalents of the verb, which is why it would be impossible to treat them all under the entry for a verb. It is much more sensible to treat them under the noun, because in the majority of cases the translational equivalents are semantically connected with the noun that forms the delexical structure. However, it should be stressed that when decoding, delexical structures do not pose many problems, since they are easy to understand. They may be more problematic when decoding activities involve translating a text from L2 into L1, especially when the structure in Slovene differs a great deal from that in English.

In a bilingual dictionary for encoding purposes, delexical structures are of great importance and should be provided as translational equivalents or as examples of use. Delexical structures are very common in English and very often they sound much more natural and much less formal than one-word equivalents that tend to be given as translational equivalents of a

one-word entry. Apart from that, they are very often confused by non-native speakers of English and the problem is that many learners are not even aware of them, since they are not sufficiently warned that it is not at all the same whether they use, for example, the verb *do* or *make* in combination with the noun *mistake*. Another reason may be that at first sight delexical structures are not difficult, but they are a rich source of mistakes made by non-native speakers especially when encoding.

6. Conclusion

Delexical structures as all other phraseological units form an important part of the vocabulary of any language. They should, therefore, be studied and apart from including them in monolingual as well as bilingual dictionaries, they should also be dealt with in course books, since learners should be aware of the trap that lures them at every step of the way of acquiring and using a foreign language.

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