Capturing invisible culture in lexicography

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AUSTRALEX, 3-4 September 2019, ANU, Canberra
Outline

- Invisible culture
  - In words
  - In values
- A defining vocabulary for culture
- Thematic structures
- Targeting language learners
How can the underlying attitudes of a language be represented in a dictionary-like manner?

What would that look like?

How would that be organised?
Background

- NSM Semantics (Wierzbicka, 2014)/Cultural scripts (Goddard, 2014)
- Cognitive lexicography (Ostermann, 2015)
- Function lexicography (Tarp, 2008)
Culture in dictionaries

- Culture = people, places, traditions, ceremonies, and events (see *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, 2002)

- Culture = practices (see *The Dictionary of Hong Kong English*, 2011)

- Culture = culturally-specific semantics (see *The Australian Cultural Dictionary*, n.d.)
Entry for lai see in the DHKE (2011, Loc. 2511)

/laɪ si:/ n.

Source language: Cantonese (利是).

Definition: 1 money given as a gift in a red envelope; 2 a gift of money intended as a bribe.

Text example:

1 “Children and young adults will find more money in their lai see packets this Lunar New Year, according to a survey.”

2 “Staff must not solicit ‘Lai See’ from any external business associates in any circumstances.”

Underlying conceptualization: A BRIBE IS A GIFT [TARGET DOMAIN Δ CORRUPTION] [SOURCE DOMAIN Δ GIFT].

laisee (drawing by Adrian Cennydd Petyt)
## Invisible culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invisible Culture “Bottom of the iceberg”</th>
<th>Big ‘C’ Culture Classic or grand themes</th>
<th>Little ‘c’ culture Minor or common themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples: Core values, attitudes or beliefs, society’s norms, legal foundations, history, cognitive processes</td>
<td>Examples: Popular issues, opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, certain knowledge (trivia or facts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Visible Culture “Tip of the iceberg” | Examples: Architecture, geography, classic literature, presidents or political figures, classical music | Examples: Gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing style, food, hobbies, music, artwork |
Invisible culture

Culture is, in some sense, encyclopedic knowledge unevenly distributed over socio-historically specific groups of people who actualise their groupness through interaction, principally discursive interaction. (Silverstein, 2006, p. 482)

As a consequence of understanding the richer, multiple, and interacting partial systematicities involved in how it is that words and expressions occur in discourse—in particular texts in their sociocultural contexts of use—lexicography as such becomes, in part, an ethnographic undertaking. (Silverstein, 2006, p. 493)
Invisible culture in words
(and phrases)

- Longer entries to include such information
- A note about entry length: e-lexicography
- e.g. “SOOK” “SHE’LL BE RIGHT”

**sook** /sook/ n. [From Scots sough ‘suck’, used literally in compounds such as sookin baith ‘a child at the breast, a sucking’, and applied figuratively to persons ‘feeble in body or mind, silly, foolish’ (SND). Perhaps a back-formation from the sooky form.]

1. A cowardly; a ‘sissy’, a crybaby. [Also NZ: DNZE 1933.]

1925 *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 17 Nov. 6/1 At last he was grudgingly told he could accompany her, but must not hold her hand or go as far as the gate, because, as the mite explained seriously, ‘you see, the other girls reckon you are a sook when your father brings you’. 1931 Northern Miner (Charters Towers) 30 Oct. 2/1 You was always a sook from the first hour I clapped eyes on yer. 1937 *Central Qld. Herald* (Rockhampton) 22 Apr. 7/2 The parents who lurk at our child to call one of them a sook must be in the habit of using that word, or they’d surely have said something. Our babies learn to speak our language and imitate our actions. 1941 S.J. Baker *Pop. Dict. Austral.* Slang 69: sook, a cowardly, a timid person. 1950 B. James *Advancement Spencer Button* 9 If he nervously declares he can’t fight, and shows that he doesn’t want to fight, then he is a sook or a ‘sissy’. 1956 K. Tiernant *Honey Flow* 214 She doesn’t want a man, she wants a little boy—somebody like Joe who needs mothering. That Joe—he’s a big sook—always be the baby of the family. 1962 *Austral. Women’s Weekly* (Sydney) 13 June (Suppl.) B/2 In nearly every film (even on TV) that I see I start crying... I find it dreadfully embarrassing, and though I believe Mum when she says it’s better to have a soft heart than a hard one, the fact still remains that people laugh at me and think me childish or a sook. 1975 R. Merritt *Cake Man* (1978) 36 (He goes to her and holds her gently... She sobbed a little, but then forces a laugh and leaves him.) Ruby: Well! You’ll think I’m a sook. 1977 R. McKinnon *Crashing 131* He put the ring back on Emily’s finger. ‘I love good stones, I did a course in them once... in Canada.’ Terry threw sand at him. ‘You’re a sook... Except on a motor bike’. 1983 *Bulletin* (Sydney) 5 July B/6 The girl applied a hefty hip... and flattened him. Sprawled on the bitumen, he began to howl. ‘Bloody sooky’ said the girl, disgustedly. 1992 *Traders* Aug. 12/7 My mate and I were having a bit of fun with this young dude we know and we were pretending to chuck him off this footbridge into a creek. We didn’t even lift him over the railing. We stopped, put him down and then the little sook ran home to his mummy whimpering that we had beaten the shit out of him and hung him over the bridge by his ankles! 2002 P. Cleary *Just Another Little Murder* 226 For a sook who cried when he told us how much he loved Vicki, he had a strange way of showing it. 2013 S. Thomas *Bomz* 110 A few poor buggers had mothers who forced them to wear shoes and they suffered merciless drubbing for being such sooks.

2. A timid (race)horse. 1935 *Argus* (Melbourne) 6 May 10/2 Owner K. Bullock said Promis D’Or is known as a ‘sook’ in the stable. He has to be treated like a baby. 1980 *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 Aug. ‘5977 White, answering charges that Panamint is unsound, described the horse as a “big sook”... Invariably when he is taken in and out of the box he is timid. 1983 *West Austral.* (Perth) 17 Dec. 184/2 He is a real sook unless there is another horse with him... If there is not another horse alongside him, he starts to weave and get a bit uptight. 1986 *Age* (Melbourne) 3 July 803 The three-year-old is a ‘big sook’. ‘If anything went wrong in a race, he just used to turn it up.’ 1998 M. Keenan *Horses too are Gene 48* The next on to the track was Malaneen—an eight-year-old retired racehorse. He was seventeen hands and a big sook. 2007 *Age* (Melbourne) 17 Jan. (Sport Suppl.) 11/2 ‘You need a horse with the right temperament,’ he said. ‘You don’t need to take a sook there.’

**sook** /sook/ v. intr. [From *sook* n.] To be cowardly; to be a crybaby. Often as vb. n.

1986 *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 Aug. (Good Weekend Suppl.) 35/2, I miss him when he’s away, but it’s no use sooking, ranting and raving. 1993 *M.B. Read How to shoot Friends & influence People* 76 Instead of ranting and raving, rolling about and sooking at the injustice of it all, I simply look at it this way: it is never checkmate until I’m dead. 1994 M.B. Read *For Term of His Unnatural Life 37*, ‘I like being 12th man. I don’t know why some of the Test players sook when they got up in that position. 2005 West Austral.* (Perth) 22 June 11/3 Matthew Scarlett was soundly beaten in the preliminary final, sooked all summer and took ages to get over it. 2013 *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane) 21 July 91/5 NSW always twist things around, they look at the wrong reasons, they bring up any excuse in defeat. Ever since the inception of Origin, they have sooked.

“sook” in the Macquarie Concise Dictionary (Butler (Ed.), 2009a, p. 1198)

Invisible culture in attitudes

- “SHE’LL BE RIGHT”
- “SOFTENING DISAGREEMENT WITH PARTIAL AGREEMENT”
  - What do you call that attitude? Not defining the phrase...
- Cultural scripts (e.g. Goddard, 2004)

Softening disagreement with partial agreement
[in Australia, many people think like this:]
when I want to say to another person about something:
  “I know what you think about it,
I don’t think the same”
it is good to say something like this at the same time:
  “I know what you think about it,
I think the same about some of these things
I don’t think the same about all these things”
(Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 94)
A defining vocabulary for culture

- Minimal English (Goddard, 2018)
- 65 semantic primes + semantic molecules
  - (primes common across all languages)
  - 100 ish molecules
- Return to Function Lexicography → Why are we defining these terms?
Determining “headwords”

- Words + attitudes
- Titles of scripts? Related words?
- “Equality” vs “Thinking about other people in the same way”
- How do users find entries?
Thematic structure

- Multiple ways of accessing entries
  - Modules
  - Contents
  - Indexes
  - Search
  - Cross-referencing
Short Contents
Section Contents
Full Entry List
Introduction
Quick Reference Guide
How to use this Dictionary
Key values and attitudes
Cultural keywords
Conversational Rules
Expressing opinions
Requests and Directives
Work
Education
Personal relations
Humour
Emotions
Insults
Swearing
Alphabetical Index
Index by Part of Speech
Sources for the examples
Users: Language Learners

- Lots of access points for different levels of knowledge
- Can be related to classroom learning, but also real life
- Explicit content, not just implicit
sook "someone is a sook"

noun: a person of one kind

A kind of person (e.g. Brooke).
Brooke thinks something like this “I feel something bad. I don’t want to do anything because of this. I want someone else to do something good for me.”
Because of this, Brooke does many things like a child can do when a child thinks like this.
People think: It is not good to be like this.

"When I’m sick, I turn into a real sook and just want to curl up in bed with some tea."

"Shannon is such a sook, every time he doesn't get what he wants he leaves work early."

- showing negative emotions
- expression of negative feelings
- tough attitude
- doing something when something bad happens
- anti-whingeing
- whinge
- whinger
"she'll be right"
phrases someone says these words

I say "Nothing bad can happen now."
I say this because a short time ago it was like this:
Something happened. Other people can think like this:
Something bad can happen now.
I don’t think like this.
I want other people to know nothing bad will happen now.
Because of this, I say these words.

While ‘she’ll be right’ can seem like a cliche to some, it is still in frequent use by many, and also in the media. It is a phrase which is generally reflective of the related values, such as ‘tough attitude’.

"Do you think it will rain this weekend? I think we will have to cancel our walk. She’ll be right. We will just go for coffee instead if it does."

"Do you need a hand? She’ll be right. Just got to get to the next bus stop. Thanks though."

"Now, I admit that I’ve been guilty of the ‘she’ll be right’ attitude, too. I recently had some chest pain and acted like it was no big deal." (Feren, 2016)

"Galaxy poll finds Australians have a ‘she’ll be right’ attitude to life. Easy-going Aussies value time over money - and most see their future as bright, a Galaxy poll for News Limited reveals." (Bris, 2013)
**doing something when something bad happens**

*attitude: some people can think like this about something*

When a person feels something bad, it is good if this person thinks: I want to do something because of this.

When someone thinks like this, it is good if they do something because of this.

"Sasha’s car has broken down. Sasha feels bad because of this. Sasha thinks ‘I can do something now. I can fix some things. If I can’t fix it, I can call someone for help.’ Because of this, Sasha looks at the problem, and then phones for some help."

"Alright then. They don’t have any small boxes in stock in any of their stores, and I need it tomorrow. I will get the things to make them instead. It’s more work, but I will have them like I need."

*she’ll be right*   *tough attitude*   *anti-whingeing*   *battler*   *digger*   *whinge*
How can the underlying attitudes of a language be represented in a dictionary-like manner?

What would that look like?
How would that be organised?
Conclusion

- Invisible culture can be captured, but it looks a bit different to a traditional definition
- Minimal English can help - provide framework
- Structure can’t be alphabetical - how do you find what you want?
- For language learners, simple language, explicit content
Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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Select References


