A FEW DIFFICULTIES WITH DICTIONARY ENTRIES' STRUCTURATION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I will discuss the importance of dictionaries for language learning. Since regional dictionaries are a source of confusion, it is evident how important it is to study them. Additionally, it is crucial to look into the semantic changes in the English language's meaning system in order to provide a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources.

Keywords: dictionary, invaluable, Websterian, Chambers, Scotland, Oxford, glossaries, alphabetical glossaries, reference unit, lemma, comment, sub-entries, subsenses, Entry-line, Entry-term, secondary entry.

We can't imagine studying any language in the world without such an important thing as a dictionary and it plays invaluable role in studying a language. The compiling of dictionaries has been a major scholarly occupation and a flourishing business enterprise for publishers in the last two centuries. As T. McArthur puts it, the lexicography of today's English arose equally in both of the Atlantic traditions, the beginnings of each being identified with a single man: Samuel Johnson in the UK and Noah Webster in the US. Most general dictionaries, following in the Johnsonian and Websterian traditions, were self help books more than school books, but a tradition of dictionaries for schools as well as homes established itself at an early stage in the US. There was also a good deal of reprinting and cross-fertilization between the UK and US, but even so rather different kinds of dictionary had emerged by the end of the century in three distinct locations: in England (with the primary focus as time passed on Oxford); in Scotland (characterized in particular by Chambers in Edinburgh); and in the United States (with its centre of gravity in Springfield, Mass., the home of the G. and C. Merriam company, which promoted books in the main Webster tradition).

The importance of studying the regional dictionaries is obvious because it is the object of confusion and in order to provide a quantitative and qualitative growth of the language's expressive resources it is extremely important to investigate the semantic changes in the system of meanings in the English language. To understand a text, learners need to know words and knowing a word involves knowing: its spoken and written contexts of use its patterns with words of related meaning.

If we speak about the dictionary as a linguistic term, it is a list of words with their definitions, a list of characters, or a list of words in other languages. Dictionaries are most commonly found in the form of a book. The optimal dictionary is one that contains information directly relevant for the needs of the users relating to one or more functions. It is important that the information is presented in a way that keeps the lexicographic information costs at a minimum.

Vocabulary study has a long history, going back in the Western world to Plato's Cratylus. The elaborate, large-scale dictionaries of today evolved by stages from simple beginnings. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the practice arose of inserting in Latin manuscripts explanations (or 'glosses') of difficult words, in Latin or in Old English (sometimes in both). Later, the glosses were gathered together into 'glossaries'. Three types of glossaries are usually recognized. If glosses in texts are later collected, but without orderly arrangement, they are 'glossae collectae'. If they are then arranged alphabetically, they become 'alphabetical glossaries'. If, however, the glosses are arranged according to semantic fields (e.g. parts of the body, farm tools), they are "class glossaries". Glosses and glossaries came to fullfil a vital function in teaching and the transmission of knowledge.

The A–Z entries. The core of the dictionary is of course the great body of entries holding details of the meaning, grammar, and usage conventions associated with each headword. Every dictionary is subtly different from every other in the principles applied during the headword selection, and in the design and content of the various types of entries used to present the information. As always, decisions on these matters are driven by the user profile, the target market of the dictionary, its competitors in that market, and consequently its costing and budget. The basic **reference unit** in a dictionary or other reference system such as a library catalogue. A wide range of formats (microstructure) is possible. In the dictionary, depending on its content and purpose, these component parts are common: the **lemma** (which allows the compiler to locate and the user to find the entry within the overall word-list); the formal **comment** on the 'topic' introduced by the lemma (spelling, pronunciation, grammar); and the semantic 'comment' (definition, usage, etymology). What follows the lemma is the main part of the entry its basic purpose is to indicate the meaning of the lexical unit in all its aspects.

In case of multiple meanings of the lemma, the entry is subdivided into (usually numbered or otherwise marked) sections called **"sub-entries"** or **"subsenses",** each of which provides the same basic information categories. **Entry-line** is the initial line of an entry in a dictionary or other reference work, highlighted by indentation or protrusion ("hanging indentation") and containing the headword (usually in bold) and sometimes information on pronunciation and grammar. **Entry-term** is the form of a

word or phrase which serves as the 'main entry', or headword, for a record in a terminological dictionary, in contrast to a **"secondary entry"** which lists alternative terms.

The meaning of the word may be also explained by examples, i.e. contextually. The term and its definition are here fused. For example, diagonal is explained by the following context where only this term can occur: A square has two diagonals, and each of them divides the square into two right-angled isosceles triangles. Very often this type can be changed into a standard form, i.e. A diagonal is one of the two lines ..., etc.

One more problem is the problem of whether all entries should be defined or whether it is possible to have the so-called "run-ons" for derivative words in which the root-form is readily recognised (such as absolutely or resolutely). In fact, whereas resolutely may be conveniently given as a -ly run-on after resolute, there is a meaning problem for absolutely. One must take into consideration that in colloquial speech absolutely means 'quite so', 'yes' which cannot be deduced from the meaning of the corresponding adjective.

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