

E-LEXICOGRAPHY: FROM WORDS TO ACTION

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Introduction. What was your first English dictionary? Mine was of chocolate color that had the smell of the fresh printed ink. With the appearance of this small bilingual English-Russian, Russian-English

dictionary the chemistry has begun, this small book created a special connection between the English language and me. Then the Oxford Advanced Dictionary, Le Petit Larousse and The Oxford Thesaurus Dictionary became the members of my small student library. I vividly remember the spirit of the library community, holding printed sources, meeting new people, diving into lifetime friendship with people and books. I remember working with the mastodons that have united centuries of human social and scientific activities, the New Webster International Dictionary and The Encyclopædia Britannica that are the monuments to the English language.

Dictionary skills. The times have changed. We have changed. Electronic dictionaries have conquered our hearts. Robert Lew identifies two factors of a successful dictionary use. First of all Lew considers that dictionaries should be user-friendly, and second of all users should have good dictionary reference skills. The combination of these two factors brings success to electronic users (e-users) and paper-users (p-users). Robert Lew mentions that the use of dictionaries is a two-way game with two players; the result of the game depends on both parts. Dictionary skills are defined by Cowie (1983:136) as “the skills which the user is assumed to possess, or can be expected to acquire, in handling a dictionary and making effective use of the information it contains”[1]. Hartman and James (1998:117) take a different approach defining reference skills as “the abilities required on the part of the dictionary user to find the [info] being sought. Thus, they focus on the access to information while Cowie is concerned with how the information is exploited.

E-lexicography. Computational lexicology was coined to refer to the study of machine-readable dictionaries (MRDs) (Amsler, 1982) and emerged in the mid-1960s and received considerable attention until the early 1990s, thus there was made the first attempt to improve dictionaries made in the mid-1980s (Abate 1985; Crystal 1986), and although numerous researchers have reiterated this idea later (Hulstijn & Atkins 1998; Sobkowiak 1999; Docherty 2000; Harley 2000; Sato 2000) [2]. The first dictionary to move from the machine-readable dictionary to the lexical database, thereby greatly helping lexicographers design dictionary entries, was the *Longman Dictionary of*

Contemporary English (1978) [3]. Weschler (2000) observes that “electronic dictionaries are still fundamentally paper dictionaries on a microchip” [4], however Sylviane Granger identifies important innovation brought by the popularity of the electronic dictionaries as corpus integration; more and better data; efficiency of access; customisation; hybridisation; and user input.

The Big Five goes online. English is the foreign language of some 86% of Europe’s active internet users [5]. It has become today’s lingua franca thanks to the world wide net that uses English, the electronic lexicography being the part of, which is actively used by non-native speakers. According to Robert Lew, English learners’ dictionaries enjoy a long-standing tradition, which goes back to around the 1940’s or, as Cowie claims, the 1930’s, that have been reedited successfully and enjoyed their prestige, thus he identifies the major Learners’ dictionaries as the Big Five, that includes Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary [6], Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English [7], Cambridge Dictionaries Online [8], Macmillan English Dictionary [9], Collins COBUILD [10], well – respected print dictionaries that have launched online versions. The dictionary websites are far more than dictionaries. They include blogs on language grammar, words of the day/year, words in the news, videos, some additional resources like quizzes, games, puzzles, pragmatics, English humor, glossaries, spelling guides (Macmillan), subscriptions, different categories for young people, English learners (Oxford, Collins), explanatory, bilingual, British/American dictionaries, translation dictionaries (Cambridge), Scrabble (Collins), Time Traveler (Webster). Friedrich Nietzsche said, “The snake which cannot cast its skin has to die. As well the minds which are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be mind.” The Big Five has changed developing online versions.

The OALD. The Macrostructure of the printed OXFORD ADVANCED LEARNERS’ DICTIONARY has been continually changing and upgrading. The front matter, the body of the dictionary, and appendices constitute OALD’s **macrostructure**. The front matter includes preface/foreword, sections which are present in all the

editions, guide on using the dictionary, key to dictionary entries that instructs the learners about the microstructural information that can be searched for and read when consulting the dictionary, and abbreviations, symbols and labels presented in lists). The OALD's **microstructure** has been more or less fixed. It has included headwords and spelling, pronunciation (presented by the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), shown inside a pair of forward-slashes / /), part of speech and inflections, senses, definitions and examples, usage, some other microstructural elements like run-ons (presented in bold (italic) type after headword's definition(s) and example(s), synonyms and antonyms, etymology, "groups of meanings" marks for a quicker dictionary navigation).

The OALD **electronic form** includes the full A-Z content from the latest printed dictionary. The electronic form is very suitable for users as it is faster to find the necessary word by typing it, it is very suitable to listen to the correct pronunciation and repeat it as many times as necessary. "Besides that they can use Oxford iWriter and iSpeaker guides. The Oxford iWriter guides students through the stages of planning, writing and reviewing a range of different written tasks (essays, presentations, reports, letters, reviews, CVs, etc.)" [11] In 1992: The first CD-ROM version of the *OED* was published, that has been a great success. In the present, the *OED* is now being fully revised, with new material published in parts online [12]. The microstructure of the p-dictionary is totally preserved and improved by phonetic options, and navigation possibilities to switch to additional entries and even other dictionaries. It is evident that electronic version successfully complements the printed version, it can be easily updated and the infinite size has tangible advantage over the printed, as it is free, the speed of finding the necessary word is very high, the electronic source is multifunctional, it looks like a small e-library, or e-universe.

Conclusion. Lexicographic innovation is a necessary measure; otherwise, lexicography may die from "identity crisis" (Tarp 2015:16), however, I am definitely optimistic about e-lexicography. The popularity of online dictionaries has increased, because they are

free, quick, convenient, legible, multifunctional, and auto-updated. And what is your favorite dictionary?

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