

Modern English Dictionaries. A Foreign User's View

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Summary. The article is devoted to the description of new trends in theory and dictionary making process of modern English lexicography. At the same time the paper also covers the main historic steps of formation and development of national English lexicography with special reference to the most reliable English dictionaries for general purposes (early glossaries and concordances, Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary, etc.) and special purposes (English writers' glossaries, concordances, lexicons to the complete and separate works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and other famous English men of letters). The main accent is made on the digital époque of English national lexicography, describing innovative features of both printed and Internet dictionaries of various types and formats from the point of view of a user studying English as a foreign language. The paper touches upon new branches of English lexicography (collaborative, volunteer) with users' needs and demands at the centre of dictionary making process.

Keywords: English lexicography; Oxford English Dictionary; printed and on-line dictionaries; user's profile; users' needs and demands; digital; collaborative and volunteer lexicography.

Introduction

English national lexicography has the richest repertoire of dictionaries in the world and dates back to the 15th c. when first glossaries and concordances to the English translation to the Bible appeared (*The Oxford History of English Lexicography* 2008: 11–12). These reference books were mainly bilingual (Latin–English) and dealt with description of *difficult*, *obscure* and *remarkable* words from the Holy Scriptures. Their volume and content had a strong subjective character which depended first and foremost on the compiler's taste and prescribed the English user their own attitude to the language where influence of Latin at that time has still been very strong. Glossaries architecture was rather simple, and the majority of entry lines included elementary information, such as grammar markers (Béjoint 2010).

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But with intensive development of the English language in the 17th and 18th cc., lexicographers turned to dictionary making practice based on description of native words, thus offering English educated audience *registrative* lexicons which contained more than 9,000 entries with grammar, chronological and etymological labels.

This period of time in the history of English lexicography is characterized by noticeable development of specialized dictionaries (synonymic, dialectal, learners', terminological, slang, idiom, etc.) where English writers' reference books played an important role. English author dictionaries appeared in 1598 with publication of Chaucer's glossary which laid the basis for further compilation of Chaucer and Shakespeare lexicography with various types of linguistic and encyclopaedic dictionaries (Karpova 2011: 11). Among them: indices (frequency dictionaries), concordances, glossaries, onomasticons (dictionaries of characters and place names), lexicons (*tolkovije slovari*), terminological and pronunciation dictionaries to the complete and single works of English writers. It should be noted, that modern English author lexicography unites today more than three hundred (!) author reference books to eighty English writers and poets: Th. Malory, Th. Wyatt, Th. Kyd, Chr. Marlowe, J. Donne, J. Milton, J. Dryden, A. Pope, Th. Gray, W. Blake and many other famous men of letters.

The role of author dictionaries in the formation of national English lexicography is very high, because Shakespeare, Chaucer, Marlowe concordances produced a valuable source of quotations (or illustrative examples) which lexicographers of other English lexicons became to involve into the dictionary microstructure. Illustrative examples contributed to better understanding of the meaning of key-words and successful communication of the contemporaries. The compilers of English dictionaries for general purposes borrowed quotations from reliable Shakespeare and other famous concordances to their reference works and continued this practice up to now. Such technique contributed to productive formation of national English lexicography which up to the 19th – beginning of the 20th cc. had at its disposal hundreds of glossaries and lexicons of the English language (Karpova 2011: 32–35).

1. Milestones of English national lexicography

1.1 Samuel Johnson's Dictionary

The year of 1755 is known as an important landmark in English national lexicography when Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* was published in London. At that time Great Britain had no Academy as in other European countries (for example, France, Russia, Germany, Italy), which defined the norm of the usage in the national language. Thus S. Johnson's Dictionary fulfilled this social function in British society for a long time till the *Oxford English Dictionary* had been launched (Murray 2004: 25).

S. Johnson managed to use rich historical experience of English dictionary making in his great lexicographic enterprise and was the first to incorporate a large variety of labels and illustrative examples into the entries of his reference book. Thus, he made his

Dictionary *prescriptive*, i.e. offering native speakers the model of famous writers' usage, taken from the so-called "theory of literary authority" (Karpova 2011: 21). Although S. Johnson included into dictionary microstructure a lot of quotations from the literary works of famous English writers (mainly, Chaucer and Shakespeare), his purpose was to teach his contemporaries standard British English. So, he declared his dictionary to be the first national lexicon of the English literary language (Karpova 2010: 42).

1.2 Oxford English Dictionary

After S. Johnson's dictionary there appeared a lot of other reference works (glossaries and lexicons), but their compilers did not manage to reflect the modern state of the English national language lexicographically. Only at the end of the 19th c. after the establishment of English Philological Society lexicographers in Great Britain turned to the idea of creating a new lexicographical enterprise based on historical principals but reflecting national language in its current state. Ch. Murray was in charge of the dictionary project and the first volume of *Oxford English Dictionary* was published in 1888 followed by other volumes, the last one having appeared in 1928 (Murray 2004: 14).

Later on, different teams of outstanding English lexicographers have been working on the new dictionary project under the auspices of Oxford University and Oxford Publishing house taking into consideration new research projects and linguistic discoveries of rapidly developing British society and language. Thus, *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) in 12 volumes (Jackson 2002: 51) appeared with new mega-, macro- and microstructure which contained a lot of new words, phraseological units, collocations, terms, and other new entry units which had a large variety of labels: etymological, regional, chronological, pragmatic, etc. (Svensén 2009: 65–67). This edition of OED was constantly revised and enlarged in the 20th c. with intensive development of British society and appearance of new words due to scientific and political changes.

But the role of OED in Great Britain became especially significant at the end of the 20th c. when electronic British National Corpus was created and became the basis of the new OED. British National Corpus contained more than 500 million words at that time and had several sub-corpora: scientific, mass media, literary texts, spoken corpus and other subcorpora which made OED edition up to date. Nowadays OED is put on-line and is considered to be the most reliable reference resource of the English language based on a new comprehensive two-billion-words corpus which is regularly enlarged with new language data.

2. English dictionaries in the Digital era

2.1 Users' needs and demands

It goes without saying that English language is the main language of international communication in modern world where dictionaries play a very important role. Foreign

users are seeking for dictionaries according to their preferences, needs and demands. This new trend in modern English lexicography (as in other national lexicographies today: in Germany, Russia, Spain, etc.) became a serious branch of research called *users' perspective* (Atkins, Rundell 2008: 56). It is based both on sociology of a dictionary user – studying users' needs through questionnaires in different countries of the world and *eye tacking*, i.e. following users' look ups in the Internet reference resources (Lew 2015: 232–253).

However, perspective research by the modern user contributes to studying not only foreign or native speakers' preferences in choosing a dictionary (Meyer, Abel 2017: 735–753). It helps to find a certain printed or online dictionary mostly suitable for concrete research or practical purposes (reading, translation, writing, etc.). It should be noted that users' needs differ among various user groups (students, teachers, translators, professionals) of different nations, age, education, sex and level of English language competency (Nesi 2016: 579–589).

These tastes differ inside each user group from country to country. Thus, for example, Russian users prefer to see grammar label and pronunciation in the microstructure of English dictionaries, while Chinese users search for meaning and quotation in the entry lines in modern English dictionaries (Karpova 2018: 629–630).

Moreover, intensive immigration to UK and other developed countries changed the *native user's profile*, when new members of, for example, British society do not possess the proper knowledge of the English language and culture. Such situation made modern English lexicographers create new types of special learners' dictionaries for immigrants: schoolchildren, students and other groups of people mastering English on different levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced).

2.2 Printed dictionaries

The new millennium offered new challenges to lexicographers in different countries, which they discuss in numerous books on practical and theoretical lexicography (Fontenelle 2008; *A Cultural Journey through the English Lexicon* 2012). Today we witness high interest to dictionaries themselves, their architecture, design, format, number of information categories and dictionary use in the modern world. This trend stimulated famous scholars to create two significant volumes on theoretical and applied lexicography. These two handbooks were recently published in Oxford: *The Oxford Handbook of Lexicography* (2016), London and New York: *The Routledge Handbook of Lexicography* (2018) and include a detailed description of modern scene in printed and electronic lexicography in the world.

Characterizing English lexicography today, one must say, that printed dictionaries of the English language still exist, continue to be published and have a strong learning and cultural orientation. English famous and reliable brands, such as scholarly dictionaries of Oxford, Cambridge, Cassel, Chambers, Collins (*Collins English Dictionary*) and other well-known trademarks of reference books (based on multi-billion electronic corpora) offer foreign and native users new genres of lexicons and thesauri.

Among them one can mention various types of English learners' dictionaries: advanced learners', school and students' reference books of the English language for general purposes. At the same time, special group of English learners' dictionaries has at its disposal a large variety of reference books, for example: English learners' dictionaries of idioms, pronunciation, phrasal verbs; quotations (film, sport, writer's, humorous, political quotations), proverbs (introduced by famous men of letters like Shakespeare, Dickens' and famous British politicians); writers' and slang dictionaries, dictionaries of neologisms, onomasticons, and so on.

English reference works of new generation offer their foreign and native users new elements of dictionary megastructure, mainly – Appendices with different rich linguistic and extra linguistic data: thematic collections of graphic illustrations (*photos, pictures, diagrams, tables*, etc.); cultural and grammar boxes; samples of oral and written communication (*different kinds of business letters, faxes, messages, telephone communication*), etc.

A new wave of different types of terminological (or LSP) dictionaries for translators, specialists in different fields of knowledge, students (studying different terms in technical institutions) appeared in the 21st c. These reference books describe terms of both new subject fields, (such as: *new information technologies, public relations, logistics, digital economics, computer design, fashion*) and fundamental branches of industry (*ship building, automobiles, electronics, electrical engineering* and so on), which enlarged their vocabulary with introduction of new concepts and words. Many compilers of new English LSP reference books introduced combined arrangement of the entries in their macrostructure (i.e. alphabetic and thematic order) for the sake of better and efficient information search.

In the era of rapidly growing information the majority of English LSP reference works are compiled by users themselves, due to the intensive development of society and techniques which vocabularies are growing fast and must be quickly explained professionally and correctly.

Probably in future LSP dictionaries will be created not only in collaboration with professional lexicographers, but mainly by specialists in definite subject areas. Moreover, new branches of English lexicography – *partner's (collaborative)* and *volunteer's* (appeared in the 21st c.) rapidly develop, their products are interfacing with other kinds of reference sources (producing hybridized lexicographic forms) in printed, electronic and Internet formats (Karpova 2018: 630).

2.3 Internet dictionaries

With ongoing lexicographical development, the majority of English dictionaries moved to the Internet (Nielsen, Tarp 2009). If at the end of the 20th c. only ninety English dictionaries of all types and sizes were put online (Jackson 2018: 540), in 2012 there were more than 1,500 reference books on the Web with dynamic data display, audio, video, drawings and photos, colours and spacing.

Such situation was an effective response to the users' needs, who were seeking for specific pieces of information and wanted lexical data to be presented in online reference books in a more user-friendly way than in printed dictionaries. Internet dictionaries had no limitation of space, provided objective evidence for word usage, collocations (which were hard to find in printed volumes), phrasal verbs, slang and idioms, thus answering any users' look up query (Granger, Paquot 2012).

In the 21st c. all famous printed English dictionaries (OED, Cambridge, Longman, Collins English dictionaries, etc.) had their online versions. Oxford dictionaries publishers created an outstanding 2-billion-word Oxford English Corpus which became the basis of all Oxford reference books of new generation. If the second edition of OED (published in 1989 in twenty volumes) both had printed and online format, its third edition is going to be only in the online format (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

MacMillan dictionary cancelled publishing it in printed volume and offers its users only online version (*Macmillan English Dictionary*). Longman publishers also digitized their famous and reliable English dictionary, offering its users innovative online search techniques and thus trying to draw public's attention to certain information categories which may be found only in Longman reference books. Cambridge dictionaries are presented in one portal enabling users to get required information from all types of Cambridge dictionaries online (*Cambridge Dictionaries Online*).

Nowadays the majority of English dictionaries of older periods also have been digitized. These online old vocabularies, glossaries and concordances to the Bible, Beowulf, Old and Middle English texts, Chaucer, Shakespeare and the like allow the interested user to have free access to rare reference books for the sake of research and other special purposes.

Internet opened a new trend in *collaborative lexicography* which united professional lexicographers and volunteer users in such projects as the crowd-sourced *Urban Dictionary* when the readers themselves add new words into the dictionary corpus (Nielsen, Tarp 2009). But when applying to the dictionary one should take into consideration the fact that such volunteer projects usually have no editorial control and thus may contain mistakes.

Conclusions

Looking into the future of English lexicography, it is necessary to note, that its rich historic traditions will definitely contribute to effective development of new approaches to the printed and online dictionary making process. Those people, who predict only electronic future to English lexicography, unfortunately neglect its long and effective historic experience in creation of numerous glossaries, concordances, thesauri, lexicons and other types of dictionaries which laid the solid basis to modern British lexicography.

To my mind, printed and on-line English dictionaries for general and special purposes will co-exist in the 20st c. and further, while people keep reading printed books and cherish the historic achievements in theory and practice of English dictionary making. At the same time with growing success in new information technologies and cyber

lexicography discoveries, there appeared new technical lexicographical devices (such as *apps-dictionaries* for mobile telephones) which occupy the leading place in modern users' reference activities.

With growing role of English as a language of international communication, learners' dictionaries will be the most popular and demanded types of reference resources among foreign users in the world. It goes without saying, that native and foreign users' needs and demands will be in the centre of lexicographers' attention, and new English dictionary projects will attract readers to the dictionary making process for the sake of effective information search.

In future the frames of traditional English printed and Internet lexicography will be widened to *reference science*, where along with traditional dictionaries different new types of reference works will appear.

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