

## Module II. Lecture 15

### Main types of English Dictionaries

#### Plan

1. Encyclopaedic dictionaries
2. Specialized dictionaries
3. Bilingual or translation dictionaries

#### **1. Encyclopaedic dictionaries**

An encyclopedic dictionary typically includes many short listings, arranged alphabetically, and discussing a wide range of topics. Encyclopedic dictionaries can be general, containing articles on topics in many different fields; or they can specialize in a particular field, such as art, biography, law, medicine, or philosophy. They may also be organized around a particular academic, cultural, ethnic, or national perspective.

Historically, the term has been used to refer to any encyclopedic reference book (that is, one comprehensive in scope), which was organized alphabetically, as with the familiar dictionary (the term *dictionary* preceded *encyclopedia* in common usage by about two centuries). To convey their alphabetic method of organization and to contrast that method with other systems for classifying knowledge, many early encyclopedias were titled or sub-titled "a dictionary of arts and sciences" or something similar. However, it later developed into a somewhat distinct class of reference books. While there are similarities to both dictionaries and encyclopedias, there are important distinctions as well:

A dictionary is primarily focused on words and their definitions, and typically provides limited information, analysis of different forms, and an etymology (in more complete dictionaries) for the word defined. Hence, while it may offer a definition, it may leave the reader still lacking in understanding the meaning or import of a term, and how the term relates to a broader field of knowledge.

An encyclopedia, on the other hand, seeks to discuss each subject in more depth and convey the accumulated knowledge on that subject. This characteristic is especially true of those encyclopedias with long monographs on particular subjects, such as the first ten editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. While often organized alphabetically, some encyclopedias were not. Usually, more of the discussion may be organized around a field (such as law) or a topic (such as the Scottish enlightenment), and less on the alphabetic terminology related to that discussion. An encyclopedia also often includes many maps and illustrations, as well as bibliography and statistics.

Compared to a dictionary, the encyclopedic dictionary offers a more complete description and a choice of entries selected to convey a range of knowledge. Compared to an encyclopedia, the encyclopedic dictionary offers ease of use, through summarized entries and in some cases more entries of separate terms; and often reduced size, and the reduced publishing and purchase cost that implies.

The question of how to structure the entries, and how much information to include, are among the core issues in organizing reference books. As different approaches are better suited to different uses or users, all three approaches have been in wide use since the end of the 18th century. The title of the volume may not be a good indication of which type of reference it is, as commercial concerns may have affected the publisher's selection of a title.

## **2. Specialized dictionaries**

According to the Manual of Specialized Lexicography a specialized dictionary, also referred to as a technical dictionary, is a dictionary that focuses upon a specific subject field, as opposed to a dictionary that comprehensively contains words from the lexicon of a specific language or languages. Following the description in The Bilingual LSP Dictionary, lexicographers categorize specialized dictionaries into three types: A multi-field dictionary broadly covers several subject fields (e.g. a business dictionary), a single-field dictionary narrowly covers one particular subject field (e.g. law), and a sub-field dictionary covers a more specialized field (e.g. constitutional law). For example, the 23-language Inter-Active Terminology for Europe is a multi-field dictionary, the American National Biography is a single-field, and the African American National Biography Project is a sub-field dictionary. In terms of the coverage distinction between "minimizing dictionaries" and "maximizing dictionaries", multi-field dictionaries tend to minimize coverage across subject fields (for instance, Oxford Dictionary of World Religions and Yadgar Dictionary of Computer and Internet Terms) whereas single-field and sub-field dictionaries tend to maximize coverage within a limited subject field (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology). Another variant is the glossary, an alphabetical list of defined terms in a specialized field, such as medicine (medical dictionary).

## **3. Bilingual or translation dictionaries**

A bilingual dictionary or translation dictionary is a specialized dictionary used to translate words or phrases from one language to another. Bilingual dictionaries can be unidirectional, meaning that they list the meanings of words of one language in another, or can be bidirectional, allowing translation to and from both languages. Bidirectional bilingual dictionaries usually consist of two sections, each listing words and phrases of one language alphabetically along with their translation. In addition to the translation, a bilingual dictionary usually indicates the part of speech, gender, verb type, declension model and other grammatical clues to help a non-native speaker use the word. Other features sometimes present in bilingual dictionaries are lists of phrases, usage and style guides, verb tables, maps and grammar references. In contrast to the bilingual dictionary, a monolingual dictionary defines words and phrases instead of translating them.

The most important challenge for practical and theoretical lexicographers is to define the functions of a bilingual dictionary. A bilingual dictionary works to help users translate texts from one language into another or to help users understand foreign-language texts. In such situations users will require the dictionary to

contain different types of data that have been specifically selected for the function in question. If the function is understanding foreign-language texts the dictionary will contain foreign-language entry words and native-language definitions, which have been written so that they can be understood by the intended user groups. If the dictionary is intended to help translate texts, it will need to include not only equivalents but also collocations and phrases translated into the relevant target language. It has also been shown that specialized translation dictionaries for learners should include data that help users translate difficult syntactical structures as well as language-specific genre conventions.

In standard lexicographic terminology, a bilingual dictionary definition provides a "translation equivalent" – "An expression from a language which has the same meaning as, or can be used in a similar context to, one from another language, and can therefore be used to translate it." The British lexicographer Robert Ilson gives example definitions from the *Collins-Robert French-English English-French Dictionary*. Since French *chien* = English *dog* and *dog* = *chien*, *chien* and *dog* are translation equivalents; but since *garde champêtre* = *rural policeman* and *rural policeman* is not included in the English-French dictionary, they are not culturally equivalent.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of creating a bilingual dictionary is the fact that lexemes or words cover more than one area of meaning, but these multiple meanings don't correspond to a single word in the target language. For example, in English, a ticket can provide entrance to a movie theater, authorize a bus or train ride, or can be given to you by a police officer for exceeding the posted speed limit. In Spanish these three meanings are not covered by one word as in English, but rather there are several options: boleto or entrada and infracción/multa, and in French with billet or ticket and procès-verbal, or in German by Eintrittskarte or Fahrkarte.

### ***Questions for discussion***

1. Characterize the main types of dictionaries
2. For what purposes are encyclopedic dictionaries widely used?
3. What are the functions of specialized dictionaries?
4. What are the bilingual or translation dictionaries used for?

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