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**Abstract:** *The question of whether we need a new theory of lexicography to guide the conception and development of lexicographical e-tools has been posed in the present shift from printed to electronic dictionaries. Alternatively, the theories produced during the printed works era may be applied. To address this, the paper first addresses the question of whether lexicographical theory is desirable, feasible, or even existent. It demonstrates that the fundamental reason for the different responses to this subject is the intense debate surrounding the definition of theory itself in lexicographical circles. In this regard, it briefly examines the Anglo-Saxon academic tradition, which holds that science is only concerned with natural phenomena and that all other phenomena fall under the purview of art and craft. It also demonstrates how strongly this tradition is opposed by traditions found throughout the world.*

*Based on this, the paper demonstrates that there are already a number of really helpful theories in addition to the possibility of a lexicographical theory. In conclusion, it argues that rather than being discounted, these theories—particularly those that go beyond the printed dictionary form—should be developed and refined in close collaboration with lexicography and other consultation disciplines that fall under the larger umbrella of information science.*

**Keywords:** *lexicography, lexicographical theory, concept of lexicographical theory, function theory, academic status of lexicography, interdisciplinary vocation of lexicography, dictionaries, consultation tools, information science*

The debate over whether lexicography qualifies as a science or not primarily centers on the definition of science that each individual academic applies. As previously noted, it is rejected by Béjoint (2011) and the Anglo-Saxon academic tradition. Based on a concept of science developed by Posner (1988), Wiegand (1998) views lexicography as a field of scientific study but not yet a science because it does not yet meet two of the fifteen requirements outlined in this concept. On the other hand, lexicography was described as "the science of the classification processes of word material and its presentation in dictionaries" by the Russian lexicographer V. Dorosevskij (Sorokoletov 1978: 79), who based his definition on a different understanding of science. A science is an ongoing body of knowledge that emerges from social practice and consists of the recognition of the most significant characteristics, causal relationships, and legal considerations of nature, society, and philosophy. It is based on concepts, categories, goals, laws, theories, and hypotheses and forms the framework for Man's increasing understanding of his natural and social surroundings.

A science's own history, pre-theoretical concepts, methodological advancements, guidelines for applied research, etc., are also included. Lexicographical theory and

practice meet all the requirements for any field of study or branch of human endeavor that aspires to be considered a distinct science (2008: 6):

Its focus is on dictionaries, or more specifically, the organization, creation, application, and relationship between lexicographical works and particular social needs; It is grounded in concepts, categories, theories, and hypotheses; It encompasses both the historical background of dictionaries and its own history, including pre-theoretical ideas;

It gives guidelines for taking action in the real world; it contains separate methodological contributions. One cannot read lexicography-related academic literature without encountering word theory. It serves as a reference for both specialized theories covering any topic within the vast field of lexicography and for broader theories covering the discipline as a whole.

A theory is a logical structure that reflects the facts that certain things have particular features or that specific relationships exist between these things. It is a methodically arranged collection of claims concerning a field of objective reality or awareness. A lexicographical theory, according to Tarp (2008: 9–11), is a methodically arranged collection of claims about dictionaries and other lexicographical works and how they relate to particular kinds of social needs. However, Tarp also emphasizes the need to distinguish between various types of theories, including general and specific theories, integrated and non-integrated theories (i.e., specific theories that are integrated or not in a general theory of lexicography), and contemplative and transformative theories.

Notably, one of the few lexicographers to write a detailed critique of the function theory is Bogaards (2010: 316), who argues that the theory "lacks any form of empirically verifiable or falsifiable hypotheses" and so does not believe that it is a theory at all.

According to Béjoint (2010: 381), lexicography is based on the ideas that "a science has a theory, a craft does not," "lexicography is about all a craft, the craft of preparing dictionaries, as well as an art," and "there is no theory of lexicography." He next inquires: "How can there be a theory of the production of artefacts?"

What are our thoughts to be about these claims? Firstly, it has to be acknowledged that the actual process of producing dictionaries is not a science nor a theory, but rather a millennium-old cultural custom that is best described as a craft that, like all crafts, evolved over time to meet specific societal demands. However, this does not negate the possibility of observation, empirical research, and theoretical generalizations being applied to this profession, its demands, its practical results (dictionaries and other lexicographical tools), and the applications made of them.

The following is entirely feasible if one starts with the definition of theory given above:

(1) to watch and examine this craft in all of its facets, (2) to identify pertinent phenomena with certain characteristics, and (3) to determine the relationships that exist between them,



(4) to formulate claims regarding these relationships and occurrences; and (5) to organize these claims.

If the fundamental idea of theory is the one covered above, then all that is necessary to create a cogent theory of lexicography is this. It's also important to note that, at least for the first four of the aforementioned steps, this is what is actually done in the majority of the academic literature on lexicography, as it is still comparatively uncommon to meet the necessary theoretical generalizations and systematize the statements made in the form of logical structures.

Thus, it follows that there can be a theory of lexicography and that there are a number of different, usually conflicting, general and particular theories of lexicography. Wiegand's "general theory of lexicography" and the "theory of lexicographical functions" both contribute to the development of the kind of theory that Scerba (1940) aimed to formulate in his groundbreaking contribution to lexicography: one that could explain, guide, and even revitalize the existing practice. These theories "have not been found convincing" by the Anglo-Saxon lexicographical community, but that does not mean that they do not exist, that they are not feasible, or that those who attempt to solve the intricate puzzles of modern lexicography do not highly value them.

A general theory of lexicography cannot be limited to a subset of dictionaries, such as dictionaries where special linguistic knowledge is required, but rather must address all aspects of lexicography (including all types of dictionaries and other lexicographical works). Specific theories can focus on any area or subarea of the discipline. Oxford University Press, for example, publishes a wide range of dictionaries for advanced learners, school, and concise English dictionaries that are both bilingual and monolingual. In addition, the publisher offers a comprehensive collection of dictionaries covering a variety of subjects, including archeology, classical civilization, military history, philosophy, law, economics, sociology, art, music, chemistry, biology, nursing, and more.

Numerous other publishers have created lexicographical volumes covering thousands of different subjects; however, creating these works needs extremely specialized understanding not only of these fields but also of linguistics as a distinct academic area.

A general theory of lexicography cannot ignore the fact that lexicographical works are multifaceted cultural artifacts and practical tools that have, over the centuries, addressed a wide range of societal needs and covered nearly every field of human endeavor and knowledge. Nor should it stray from the characteristics that distinguish each of these works—such as their unique content, structure, etc.—but rather from the features and elements that all of them share.

According to the function theory, these unifying features and components make up the basis of lexicography, which is the creation of easily accessible utility tools that can be accessed rapidly.

- in order to satisfy prompt information needs that arise for particular user types
- in particular extra-lexicographic scenarios.

The theory formulated in this way will be able to direct the design of not only a completely new generation of lexicographic works of the kind we already know, but also of consultation tools covering areas that have not yet been treated lexicographically, provided this core activity is studied and generalized in the form of a systematic set of statements.

A theory cannot be born with all the weapons of Athena on Zeus' forehead; all lexicographical theories, including the function theory, must undergo an ongoing process of validation and refinement due to their productive relationship with their alter ego, lexicographical practice, which is likewise undergoing constant advancement. Nielsen and Tarp (2009: ix) quote the Danish lexicographer Henning Bergenholtz as saying, "Nothing is more practical than a good theory," repeatedly. A sound theory of lexicography is not only essential to generate high-quality lexicographical tools throughout the difficult and ongoing shift from printed to electronic dictionaries, but it also exists today and should be continuously improved.

While it is clear that these tools were not created and produced in accordance with lexicographical principles, it is also clear that while coming from various traditions, they all share an essential characteristic with dictionaries and other lexicographical tools. It is actually possible to discuss the general features of a single, large discipline that encompasses all forms of consultation tools created to satisfy urgent information demands. This discipline, which is a subset of information science, must necessarily establish its own general theory. Lexicography has much to learn in the construction of such a theory, as well as much to offer other theories addressing timely consultation tools and information science in general. from these theories and this science. In this respect, it is worth quoting the visionary words by Gouws (2011: 29):

Looking back at the development of the theory and practice of lexicography it is clear that for too long the practice of printed dictionaries had to go without a sound theory, for too long lexicography did not establish itself as an independent discipline, for too long the pool of lexicographers had been restricted to experts from a single field, for too long innovation in the lexicographic practice was impeded by its theory being a follower and not a leader, for too long lexicographic theory was exclusively directed at being implemented in the production of dictionaries.

Looking at the future, the planning and compilation of electronic dictionaries and the further development of a coherent and medium-unspecific theory we need to unlearn a lot, we need to learn a lot so that we can be innovative and produce better reference tools, including even dictionaries.

The debate on the relationship between lexicography and linguistics, or more specifically, on the relevance or usefulness of theory-based linguistic descriptions to dictionary making, is not new. In fact, the debate could be as old as the establishment of



lexicography as a discipline. On the one hand, there is scholarship in favour of the separation of theoretical linguistics and lexicography. This scholarship does not recognise lexicography as a branch of linguistics. Because of this, the view is that there should be no link between theoretical linguistics and dictionary making.

The linguists in this category considered lexicographers as non-linguists. In linguistic circles, dictionaries were therefore regarded as lacking linguistic interest since they were said to be produced without the help of any linguistic theory. The dictionary was seen as too unscientific to be worthy of any serious academic interest.

Even if linguistic theory is important for compiling dictionaries, lexicographers are also scientists releasing their work for users, most of whom are not educated linguists or lexicographers and whose goals are always more pragmatic. Because of this, lexicographers working in practice need to balance the needs of dictionary users with linguistic information obtained from credible linguistic theories. We have come to the conclusion that, while linguistic theories can be helpful in practical lexicography by offering accurate and pertinent information on linguistic ideas, lexicographers shouldn't become fixated on them; linguists are better qualified for that kind of work.

Rather, these ideas should only be applied to support the work of actual lexicographers who are engaged in the activity of creating dictionaries, which has its own unique requirements and objectives. The demands of various linguistic theories should not influence lexicographers to the point where the discipline's guiding principles or objectives are jeopardized. For instance, they shouldn't fall short of lexicographic user-perspective standards like user-friendliness and consideration for the target audience's historical and cultural sensibilities.

While it is now common practice in contemporary lexicography to include details in dictionaries concerning the derivation, spelling, and pronunciation of words, Béjoint (2000: 6) points out that the primary purpose of dictionaries is to define words and phrases. Stated differently, word meaning—especially in monolingual dictionaries—is the most important factor. Landau (2001: 8–9) describes monolingual dictionaries as follows:

A monolingual dictionary [...] offers a variety of information regarding its entry terms, but definitions are the most crucial information [...]. A monolingual dictionary's main goal is to define other words in terms that people can understand.

The defining task needs to be approached with seriousness since monolingual dictionaries place a high value on word meaning. But as lexicographers have repeatedly pointed out in Zgusta (1971), Hartmann (1983), Good (1988), Jackson (1988), Svensén (1993), and Landau (2001), among others, one of the most challenging things for them to accomplish is describing word meaning.

Lexicographers typically have to make a lot of tough decisions when determining the connotative and designative meanings of words. They must, for instance, respond to the following fundamental inquiries, which ought to assist them in producing definitions

that are exact, thorough, extensive, and all-inclusive as well as provided in a linguistic and cultural context:

- (a) Should the senses of certain words be the main emphasis?
- (b) Which interpretations of a word are pertinent?
- (c) Which meaning type or types need to be defined?

Which linguistic perspective—if any—should be adopted? and

- (e) What defining format or formats ought to be applied?

Lexicographers have a lot of additional factors to take into account while responding to these queries. They must consider things like their target audience and the dictionary's objective. Lexicographers must use study findings from other disciplines in order to manage all of these; they are unable to rely exclusively on their intuition.

The ultimate conclusion is that lexicography will continue to exist as a distinct field with its own unique subject matter, theory, and practice, but it will also likely connect and engage with related fields within the larger field of information science.

Consequently, via this presumably positive interaction with sister fields, current theory should not be dismissed but rather should be continuously refined and improved. Lexicographical theory will be in a better position to support and direct the current shift from printed to electronic dictionaries in this way.

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