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SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)

International Scientific Journal Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2020 Issue: 07 Volume: 87

Published: 30.07.2020 <http://T-Science.org>

QR – Issue



QR – Article



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THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE REGIONAL DICTIONARIES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Abstract: Essential part of English lexicography is to make comparison between regional dialects of the language and to identify similarities and differences between them. In this article we'll try to analyze this issue and to find out why it is so important. For writing this article, the authors based on the investigations of foreign scientists on this issue.

Key words: lexicography, glosses, dictionary, national, regional, historical dimension, compilers, compiling.

Language: English

Citation: Hasanova, S. Z., & Nizamiddinova, N. N. (2020). The importance of studying the regional dictionaries of English language. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 07 (87), 324-326.

Soi: <http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-07-87-63> **Doi:**  <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2020.07.87.63>

Scopus ASCC: 1203.

Introduction

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'. It is a matter of convention that the early collections are called glossaries and the later ones dictionaries. Moreover, terminology in the Middle

Ages was unstable. One picturesque name or another could be used in any given case.

Two centuries would pass before a variety within English would begin to assert its independence. That revolution began in Scotland with John Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language.

The study of English lexicography has a national and regional as well as a historical dimension: it encompasses the distinctive words and meanings used in the United States and in the independent countries of the Commonwealth, and the dictionaries in which they are recorded. By the 1850s in America, lexicography had moved away from its earlier concern with lexical origins. **The Dictionary of American English (DAE)** was the first of these to be produced.

Dictionaries of national usages have appeared in several other countries, including India. But they are most comprehensive and scholarly in countries where there are long-established native-English-speaking populations, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. In all those territories, with minor differences, a particular pattern of dictionary

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development has come about. First, typically, a single scholar or individual enthusiast will appear and start noting down the vocabulary peculiar to the territory—often complaining as a result that the OED is deficient in covering those usages. A small scholarly dictionary might be the next step, as in South Africa at Rhodes University, where a modest ‘dictionary unit’ was established, resulting in the production of a **Dictionary of South African English (1978)**.

Scottish National Dictionary (SND) is considered as the second major work to be produced by Scottish lexicographers. Much of the collecting and preliminary editing was carried out by volunteers. To gather spoken evidence, the country was divided into dialect areas according to pronunciation. Written quotations, also excerpted by volunteers, came from a considerable number and variety of works.

Regional dictionaries and glossaries were valuable, but many of these source books were descriptions of local dialects. The first serious undertaking, as Jeannette Allsopp explains, was **A Dictionary of Jamaican English on historical principles (1967)**, by Frederic Cassidy and Robert Le Page. This was designed to be a complete inventory of Jamaican Creole as well as a record of more educated Jamaican speech. The bulk of its data was made up of recorded responses to a questionnaire, devised by Cassidy, which focused on the working lives of farmers, Wshermen, and so on.

The next major title was **The Dictionary of Bahamian English** by J. Holm and A. W. Shilling (1982). It was intended to form ‘a link between the Caribbean Creoles such as Jamaican English and the English spoken today by many black people in the United States’. Analysis was restricted to the language of the most accessible islands of the chain. Richard Allsopp, eventually to assume the chief editorship of **the Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage (1996)**, became aware while a student in Europe of differences between his own usage and British Standard English. Then, running in parallel with the expansion of text corpora, and of exceptional importance for the further development of the OED, have been the changes made possible by online editing and publication. One significant aspect has been the editorial revision of the dictionary, now on going, which has resulted in the online publication of large amounts of new and revised dictionaries.

In the heyday of the British Empire, conditions were far from auspicious for the development of an autonomous variety of English in India. Macaulay’s policy paper in 1835 had raised English above the classical languages of the region—Sanskrit and Persian—and set as a goal the creation of a new class. In the course of the nineteenth century, this policy was largely successful among Indian elites, and not until the twentieth did Gandhi (among others) point to English used by Indians as a sign of cultural subordination. The first dictionary of Anglo-Indian

appeared in 1885 as the result of a decade of work by an official in India, George Clifford Whitworth. He saw it as a “Supplement to the English dictionary”: “An Anglo-Indian Dictionary” should contain all those words which English people in their relations with India have found it necessary or convenient to add to their own vernacular, and should give also any special significations which pure English words have acquired in India”

Though not a citation dictionary, it is an excellent work mostly devoted to loan-words from Indian languages like sari or stupa. Distinctive English usages are also treated (e.g. serpent race, settlement, state railway).

Into this cultural mix came a remarkable volume celebrating Indian English: **A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases (1886)** by Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell. Here was a work of profound scholarship with precisely identified quotations from a copious bibliography showing the evolution of expressions in the subcontinent. James Murray was an enthusiast of the work and cites it nearly five hundred times in the OED—for instance in the etymology of so English a word as elephant. The compilers were broadly interested in words that had entered English from the region and more particularly concerned with ‘the common Anglo-Indian stock’ in commercial and administrative use. Many of these were well established in British English: curry, toddy, veranda, cheroot. Others were more specialized and had retained connotations of their origin: pukka, mahout, nautch. The compilers were further interested in new senses of English words acquired in the region: bearer, cot, belly-band, college pheasant, chopper, summer-hand, eagle wood, jackass-copal, bobbery.

Ambivalence about the role of English after independence did not lead to consequential lexicography of distinctive uses of English in the region. Collectors national and regional dictionaries of English still publish lists of borrowings (like loofa for the product of the vegetable sponge vine) and innovative senses (like denting for smoothing of dents in automobile bodies). (For an example of a dictionary of this type, see Hankin 2003.) As the example of Pickering reveals in the American context, recognition of distinctive English may begin with a treatment of differences between the superordinate and the subordinate variety. A rich example of this practice in India was provided in the usage dictionary by Nihalani and his collaborators. Most entries are designed to alert users to differences (for instance, jotter ‘ball-point pen’).

Beyond south Asia: Malaysia has adopted Bahasa Malayu as the ‘national language’ and marginalized the use of English for some purposes, so conditions for such work are hardly any better there.

In Singapore, government action has discouraged the recognition of a distinctive Singaporean English. Nonetheless, an edition of the

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Chambers Dictionary designed for Malaysia and Singapore contains an appendix of borrowed words in common use (for instance, ang moh, Mat Salleh, orang putih, all three expressions used to designate a Caucasian person). Within the main alphabet there is a category for Singapore-Malaysian English 'informal English', as shown in this entry: (2) lamp post 2. (SME informal) You might be called a lamp post if you are in the company of two people who would rather be alone together. Wei Ming, I don't want a

lamp post around when Mei Ling comes afterwards, all right (Seaton 2002, s.v. lamp post). These varieties—known as Manglish and Singlish—are as revealing of their history as any of the other national kinds of English. Thus *gostan* 'move backwards, go slow' is derived from *go astern* and *zap* 'to photocopy' from international English. Only very recently has the power of the Internet allowed word enthusiasts, despite official indifference, to create ambitious citation dictionaries designed on historical principles.

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