

HISTORICAL DICTIONARIES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A MEANS FOR STUDYING LANGUAGE HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Linguists have always been fascinated by language origins and evolution. Lexicographers must find the word's fundamental source and trace its history and articulation possibilities. Etymology, a subfield of linguistics, studies lexical unit structure and meaning. Language history materials abound. Dictionaries are the outcome of scientific effort that used technology to chronicle the lexical composition of a language at a specific time in its history. This article presents a selection of literary sources, dictionaries, glossaries, and word lists that provide the most complete description of the English language's evolution since the early middle ages.

Keywords: lexical composition, vocabulary, glossary, monolingual, professional dialect, jargon lexicography, etymology.

Introduction

Some of the earliest original materials on the development of the English language may be found in one of the 143 glossaries that were used in Anglo-Saxon England. The so-called "Cleopatra's Glossary" (henceforth Glossaries), which is comprised of three Old English glossaries written in Latin, is one of the biggest glossaries in existence. It is impossible to comprehend the development of Old English language or early mediaeval England in general without the use of dictionaries and glossaries.

Literary analysis and methodology

The first of three Glossaries of Cleopatra was organised alphabetically and contained approximately 5,000 Latin-Old English words. The compendium was continually revised, the compilation was unfinished, and the word list only extends to the letter P [3], [4]. Cleopatra's Second Glossary is a concise, topic-organized glossary. The third glossary



of Cleopatra includes explanations for "Prose of the Virgin" and "Carmen de virginitat" by Aldhelm, with the lemmas arranged in the same order as they occur in the text. Research indicates that at least some of the terms in Cleopatra's Third Glossary are written in Old English with West Saxon and Kentish overlays [5]. According to Franzen, the study of Old English lexicography presents a unique challenge: while glossaries make up less than one percent of the surviving corpus of Old English, twenty-four percent of the corpora are in subscripts to Latin texts. Thus, in a Latin prose manuscript, Aldhelm's Prose of the Virgin contains approximately 5,500 Old English words. These glosses, which provide equivalents for every term in a Latin text, bear a striking resemblance to the glossaries they can serve as a source for [6].

The Middle English tradition of compiling word lists and dictionaries is both bilingual and multilingual, as well as quite complicated. The lexicographers of Anglo-Saxon England only dealt with Latin and Old English, but their successors worked in a trilingual society, and their word lists and annotations demonstrate the interaction of Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, significant lexicographical material appeared in school textbooks, and in the fifteenth century, basic alphabetical Latin-English and English-Latin dictionaries, which attested to the language's development from the Norman Conquest to the end of the fifteenth century [6].

The golden age of English lexicography occurred between the 16th and 18th centuries. Increasing levels of literacy increased demand for dictionaries, and the invention of printing made it simpler to meet this demand. Although inventories of words in manuscripts were compiled throughout the period, the most significant achievements were devised and implemented through the use of printing [7]. The dictionaries of the sixteenth century were bilingual or specialised; consequently, glossaries have been published as a part of larger works, with the exception of a few grammar guides. In the eighteenth century, monolingual dictionaries recorded up to 65,000 words [8]. In the seventeenth century, the number of words in non-specialized dictionaries grew from 2498 words in Cowdrey's 1604 table to 25698 words in Coles' 1676 dictionary. The most studied is the Dictionary of the English Language or, as it is also known, the Dictionary Johnson, which is the richest in content and one of the most frequently cited not only in the history of the English language, but also in the history of English literature [9]. During this time period, bilingual dictionaries provided a wider spectrum of historical evidence than their single-language counterparts. Not only did they record



vocabulary not found in monolingual dictionaries, but they also emphasised phraseology and expressions. Particularly relevant were phraseological works that helped students translate idiomatic English into idiomatic Latin and vice versa [10]. The Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language [15], despite being primarily a historical dictionary, was Jameson's primary source for vocabulary. Even less-than-professional dialect glossaries frequently reflect extensive and direct interaction with regional vocabulary. Coleman's exploration of jargon lexicography, which dates back to sixteenth-century word lists of criminals' jargon and has spread since the end of the seventeenth century, is also the primary source of the words it registers [16].

Discussion and results

As primary sources, dictionaries, word lists, and glossaries may contain the first or only record of uncommon, informal, or regional lexical terms. This applies to both English and other languages; for instance, the Lexicon of Hesychius of Alexandria is the only source for a large number of uncommon ancient Greek words (notably dialectal forms) [19]. The need to create bilingual dictionaries has compelled lexicographers to examine and consider language resources. One of the reasons why the Dictionary of the French and French-English Tongues (1611) is the earliest authoritative dictionary [20] is because of this. Lexicographers involved in the creation of this dictionary not only searched for uncommon words, but also attempted to explain them when the context made it difficult to determine their meaning. Clearly, a problem existed: lexicographers explained the meanings of the terms, but their explanations could be incorrect or inaccurate. Early lexicographers attempted to explain all Latin and English compound words, but it cannot be ruled out that their own vocabulary was limited. There was a possibility that a word or phrase in the dictionary was created by the lexicographer for whatever purpose. Thus, dictionaries should never be relied upon as evidence of the value or meaning of a lexical item, but it should not be denied that they document a large number of terms.

This fact creates new opportunities for research involving accessible publications that can serve as primary sources. Historical dictionaries and word inventories were compiled in the course of researching the history of the language. Old English and Middle English word inventories appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century and were supplemented by etymological dictionaries of the seventeenth century. These early works are currently only of interest as primary sources: for example, 173 vocabulary items in the first list of Old English words, "Vocabularium saxonicum," compiled by Lawrence Nowell before 1567, cite forms from the Lancashire



dialect (Lancashire refers to the Northern English dialect of the English county of Lancashire). Dictionary Jameson (1808) (the first etymological dictionary of Scots in two volumes) is significantly more complicated than its predecessors; the terms are illustrated with chronologically ordered citations beginning with the earliest that Jameson could locate. However, the vocabulary was limited and the narrative was portrayed as a tale within a story.

When discussing the etymology of words, the Oxford English Dictionary has always been comprehensive, and the information contained in the revised sections of the dictionary is crucial for linguists researching the history of the English language. Numerous etymological dictionaries supplement the Oxford Dictionary with unpublished terms. A renowned linguist and etymologist, Anatoly Semyonovich Lieberman, made a substantial contribution to the etymological lexicography of the English language. The 20th-century publication Analytical Dictionary of English Etymology presents a comprehensive dictionary and bibliography of the etymology of English words. The Analytical Dictionary of English Etymology, on the other hand, discusses all existing derivatives of English words and provides the best of them. In the first volume, Lieberman examines fifty-five words whose etymology has traditionally been considered unknown.

Conclusion

The entries "man", "boy", "girl", "bird", "brain", "understand", "key", and "ever" are among the most frequently used in the English language. Others - slang: "to fool around," "to push," and "to stare." Some of them appeared more recently, while others have existed for centuries. All of them share an obscure etymological origin. Lieberman's Analytical Dictionary discusses the fundamentals of etymological research methodology. Each entry is a comprehensive article, casting light for the first time on the origins of some of the most frequently contested words in the English language [25]. Job Anatoly Lieberman is "analytical" because in her articles, as well as in the etymological dictionaries of a number of languages other than English, most or all previous scholarly etymological treatments of the word in question are discussed with references to methodology not found in the Oxford Dictionary or any other English-language etymological dictionary. Therefore, it is evident that the scientist's contribution to the study of the history of the language is invaluable.

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