

A STUDY OF TWO THEORIES OF LEXICOGRAPHY: THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO LEXICAL MEANING

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Abstract :

The present study has been undertaken to discuss two opposite theories of lexicographic approach. One of them is the old general theory developed by H. E. Wiegand and the other is the modern lexicographic theory which covers all the theoretical and practical outputs to establish dictionaries as utility products. This theory was developed by researchers of the centre for Lexicography at the Aarhus school of business in the early years of 1990. The components and structures and the utilities of both the theories will be discussed in the present studies.

KEY -WORDS: LEXICOGRAPHY, UTILITY PRODUCT, LEXICOGRAPHIC FUNCTION, GENUINE PURPOSE

1.Introduction:

Dictionary making is an old practice seen in almost all the civilizations throughout the ages. The dictionary is the significant source of language exploration inasmuch as it provides the meanings of the words, spellings, correct pronunciation along with many other necessities. It is one of the most powerful tools providing the readers the best and most comprehensive information about words.

The branch of dictionary making is termed as 'Lexicography.' Lexicography is the art and science of making dictionaries. The term 'dictionary' was first coined in Medieval Latin during 13th century. It is derived from the Latin adjective 'dictionaries' meaning 'of words', a derivative of Latin 'dictio' meaning 'saying.' Again, the word 'Lexicography' is derived from the Greek word 'Lexicographos' from 'Lexicon'. Lexicon is defined as:

"Dictionary especially of an ancient language."¹

In Indian terminology, there is no definite term that means 'Lexicography.' In this regard Madhukar M. Patkar observes:

"There seems no technical term for Lexicography ...the expression like '*abhidhanasastra*' which has been employed in this sense by some modern writers is a neologism."²

Again, Anundoram Boroah, the great Indologist uses the term '*kosaracana*' for lexicography.³

A dictionary deals with the individual words of a language so as to set forth their orthography, pronunciation, derivation, history etc. Information is often given with apt quotations. Different types of linguistic information are treated in a dictionary. The lexical stock of a particular language comprises the sum total of all the words available in the language. But each word has its own entity. It becomes related to other lexical items. All these things are to be scientifically treated in lexicography. Lexicography is consulted as a

guidebook for distinguishing good uses of words from bad uses. From this perspective, ‘a dictionary performs the function of ‘court-house’(legislative)for a language or variety.’⁴

2.Need of lexicographic theory:

The need of lexicographic theory lies in the fact that it provides tools for better understanding of the concept and production of lexicographical works. Scholars like Yukio Tono, Russian lexicographical tradition, German tradition, Danish lexicographers, Various South African lexicographers, Czech American Lexicographers support the need of a lexicographic theory. At the same time, some scholars do not support this view. Henri Bějoint writes in his book:

“I simply do not believe that there exists theory of lexicography. And I very much doubt that there can be one. Those who have proposed a general theory have not been found convincing by the community, and for good reasons. A theory is a system of ideas put forward to explain phenomena that are not otherwise explainable. A science has a theory, a craft does not. All natural phenomena need a theory, but how can there be theory of the production of arte-facts. There are theories of language, there may be theories on lexicography, but there is no theory of lexicography. Lexicography is about all a craft, the craft is preparing dictionaries.”⁵

But this view is strongly opposed by other lexicographers. Tarp defines a lexicographical theory as a systematically organized set of elements about dictionaries and other lexicographical works and their relationship with specific types of social need and at the same stresses that it is necessary to distinguish between different types of theory, general and specific theory, integrated and non-integrated theories (i.e. specific theories integrated or not in a general theory of lexicography) and contemplative and transformative theories.⁶

3.General theory of lexicography :

The general theory of lexicography advocates that lexicography can never be considered as a science. It is neither a branch of applied linguistics. Rather, it encompasses more than the application of linguistic theories or findings. According to this theory, lexicography is not a branch of lexicology. Lexicology alone cannot interpret Lexicography. The general theory of lexicography comprises the following components.-

3.1. The lexicographical activities which can be classified into three fields –

- a. The first field includes all the activities leading to the drawing up of a dictionary plan.
- b. The second field includes all the activities involved in established a dictionary base and in processing this base on a lexicographical file.
- c. The third field of activity includes all the activities concerned directly with the writing of dictionary texts and thus with the writing of the dictionary.

3.2.The result of the lexicographical activities in the three fields, namely, the dictionary plan, the lexicographical file and the dictionary.

The general theory is the result of four constituent theories as pointed out below –

Meta Lexicography

- A. History of lexicography
- B. General theory of lexicography

- General section
 - i. 1st component – purpose of dictionaries
 - ii. 2nd component – relationship to other theories
 - iii. 3rd component-principles from the history of lexicography.
 - Theory of organization –Organization of labour in the three fields of activities.
 - Theory of lexicographical research on language
 - i.1st component-data collection.
 - ii.2nd component-data processing.
 - iii.3rd component – computer assistant.
 - Theory of the lexicographical description of language
 - i.1st component-dictionary typology
 - ii.2nd component –textual theory for lexicographical texts.
- C. Research on Dictionary use
D. Criticism of Dictionaries.

The general theory of lexicography must systematically process and explain the reasons for the knowledge required to enable lexicographers to carry out their work appropriately and possibly. Wiegand considers lexicography as a linguistic reconstruction of information.

4.The modern lexicographic theory

The modern lexicographic theory has been developed by researchers from the centre for Lexicography at the Aarhus school of business since the early 1990.(Bergenholtz 1996,1998,Tarp1992,1994,1995,1998,2000,2001,2002,Bergenholtz/karfmann1997, Bergenholtz/Nulsen 2002,Bergenholtz /Tarp 2002.This theory, like the general theory considers lexicography, as an independent scientific discipline. It is now no more considered as a branch or sub discipline of Linguistics though it has much inter-relation with Linguistics. According to Zgusta ,lexicographer should be with linguistics in much broader sense. The theory of lexicography is connected with all the disciplines which study the lexical system, semantics, lexicology, grammar, stylistics, Zgusta says.⁷The subject field of Linguistics is language whereas the subject field of Lexicography is dictionaries. It is a product of human beings. Further, dictionaries are meant to fulfill certain needs of human beings. Therefore, all the considerations related to lexicography, theoretical or practical alike, must be based upon these needs. It should aim at specific problems for specific target users with specific characteristics in specific user situations. The basic area of a lexicographer's study is human activities. It finds out the needs that can be satisfied by the dictionary. But it would be wrong to think that human needs are abstract, they do not have any specific image. Needs are associated with a particular group of people and specific situation. Therefore, a lexicographer must take into account some important characteristic features to make a profile of specific user group. Some of them as pointed out by Henning Bergenholtz & Tarp are: ⁸

1. Which language is their mother tongue?
2. At what level do they master their mother language?
3. At what level they master a foreign language?
4. How are their experiences in translating between the languages in question?

5. What is the level of their general, cultural and encyclopedic knowledge?
6. At what level do they master the special subject field in question?
7. At what level do they master in corresponding their mother tongue?
8. At what level do they master the corresponding the foreign language?

Thus, a lexicographer is to determine the specific needs of the users. The users' needs are related to specific situations. The functional theory of lexicography traces out two distinct groups of users' situations. These groups are: Knowledge oriented group and communication oriented group.

4.1. Knowledge- oriented group

In this group the users want to obtain additional information e.g. general, cultural and encyclopedic, specialized information regarding a scientific discipline or information about a specific language related to the language learning process. One of the examples of language learning process is the learning of foreign language. The types of function of the knowledge oriented group are:

1. To provide general cultural and encyclopedic information to the users.
2. To provide information about the subject field to the users.
3. To provide information about the language to the users.

4.2. Communication- oriented group

In a communication oriented group communication takes place in a planned way. The communication occurs between two or more persons. Here, the lexicographer intervenes indirectly. Communication here is the production and reception of texts. It is also known as encoding and decoding of texts. Translation of existing texts is also taken into account. Through the variation of the language of the produced texts and the mother tongue (or the first language) of the text receiver and the translator five different forms of communication take place:

L1 user ->text production->L1 text->text reception->L1 user

L1 user->text production->L1 text->text reception->L2 user

L1 user->text production->L2 text->text reception->L2 user

L1 user->text production->L2 text->translation (L1 translator)->L2 text->text reception->L2 user

L1 user->L1 text->translation (by L2 translator)->L2 text->text reception->L2 user

Figure: communication model

In case of a foreign language translation can be both from and to mother tongue. Translation of text between two foreign languages, revisions of texts are also some other types.

After detecting the characteristics of the user group the lexicographer then should proceed to a characterization of the users' needs. The needs as suggested by Bergenholtz and Tarp are:⁹

1. Information about the native language.
2. Information about a foreign language.

3. Comparison between the native and the foreign language.
4. Information about culture and the world in general.
5. Information about the special subject field.
6. Comparison between the subject field in the native and foreign culture.

These are some of the basic needs of the users .After determining these the lexicographer is to proceed to the kind of data to be provided in the dictionary. These steps make the lexicographer ready to approach to **lexicographic function**. A lexicographic function is defined as a function of a given dictionary is to provide assistance to a specific user group with specific characteristics in order to cover the complex of needs that arise in a specific type of user situation.¹⁰The functions of the dictionary determine the basic principles of the dictionary. Each and every element of a dictionary is largely influenced by its respective functions. The content or the form can never be conceived without considering the functions. The other part that should be given due consideration is the genuine purpose of the dictionary. According to the present theory, as it is mentioned above, the dictionary is like any other utility product. Therefore, every dictionary has a genuine purpose. The **genuine purpose of** a dictionary is made up by the totality of function of a given dictionary and the subject fields that it covers.

After the determination of the lexicographic function and the genuine purpose the lexicographer would now proceed to the next step i.e.to decide which data must be prepared and included in the dictionary in order to give adequate treatment to its various purpose or in case of reviewing, to analyze whether the data incorporated in the dictionary actually make it live up its functions. As the theory goes, there should be no such data that cannot be argued on the basis of its respective functions.

These are the main components of the modern lexicographic theory. This theory has contributed a lot in the field of modern lexicography. The good part of the theory is that it has given utmost importance to the users and their needs. During the years , the theory has earned much popularity though some lexicographers like Wiegand points out some shortage of the theory and gives opposite postulates .

5.Contribution of the two theories to lexical meaning :

We have discussed above the very structure of the two theories of lexicography in brief. Both the theories have contribution to the expression of lexical meaning. Wiegand's general theory helps to provide the knowledge of how to compile a dictionary base. The collection, composition, representitivity, function and typology of lexical corpora have got due consideration in this theory. According to this theory, a dictionary is text of linguistic instruction. Through the dictionary the lexicographer shows us how to use the lemma sign. It ascertains that one should provide as many quotations as possible. But the user should select only those that support his own argument. One of the remarkable contributions of Wiegand is towards theoretical lexicography. He criticized lexicographical tradition. It was Wiegand to define dictionary as utility product for the first time. The theoretical determination of the concept of dictionary function is the most important part of Wiegand's theory. The general purpose of a dictionary is that it is used to retrieve information from the lexicographic data contained in the text parts with outer access outer structure.(especially in the word list or the word lists)about those properties reflected in the linguistic expressions which belong to the subject matter of the dictionary. Due to his immense contributions Wiegand is widely accepted as the most important lexicographical theorists in Germany. And in regards to the modern lexicographic theory it has much been stated earlier that it as a user -friendly theory. Whereas

Wiegand's theory can be regarded to be more theoretical, the modern theories are considered to be more practical.

Conclusion:

Both the theories have their contributions towards the approach of lexicography. These theories are rooted on two main suggestions – 1. Lexicography is an independent study and 2. Dictionary is the utility of products. He interprets lexicography phenomenologically. Wiegand's theory is a linguistic theory. It interprets lexicography from Linguistic point of view Users and their needs have not got due attention in his theory. Likewise, concept of lexicographic functions seems to be neglected in his theory. On the other, the modern lexicographic theory is a user- friendly theory. Lexicographic function has been given apt consideration in this modern theory. But we must admit that though these two theories differ from each other both the theories contribute to the development of lexicographic approach. They together stimulate lexicographical discourse.

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