

Research on dictionary use and the development of user-adapted views

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Abstract. The development of user-adapted views of lexicographic data is frequently in demand by dictionary research on electronic reference works and hypertext information systems. In the printed dictionary it has been indispensable to develop a complete dictionary relative to a user group and using situations. In contrast, for any electronic presentation of lexicographic data there are possibilities to define user-specific views of an initially user-unspecific resource. However, research on the use of dictionaries in general, still has to answer several open questions as far as this subject is concerned. This paper will firstly provide an overview of the present state of research on dictionary use with respect to electronic lexicography. Subsequently, explanations of further prerequisites for a possible user-adapted access to data are followed, as exemplified by OWID, the Online Vocabulary Information System of the Institut für Deutsche Sprache. Finally, it will be outlined what results on the subject have been accomplished so far. Also the prospects of potential user-adapted presentations of lexicographic data will be highlighted.

1 The subject matter of this paper

Dictionaries are basic commodities or more precisely: “Der genuine Zweck eines Wörterbuchs besteht darin, daß es benutzt wird, um anhand lexikographischer Daten in den Teiltextrn mit äußerer Zugriffsstruktur [...] Informationen zu denjenigen Eigenschaftsausprägungen bei sprachlichen Ausdrücken zu erschließen, die zum jeweiligen Wörterbuchgegenstandsbereich gehören.”¹ (Wiegand 1998: 299) Therefore, it seems to be appropriate to compile dictionaries for specific user groups and particular using situations. This applies at least to printed dictionaries. In the field of electronic lexicography, the question of how to integrate a potential user conceptually must be addressed in a completely different way. Instead of adapting the lexicographic description to particular users and functions, one has to think about how far the user can define her/himself by a specific look-up situation as it occurs in a user-unspecific resource. It is possible in the digital dictionary to obtain information from the same data pool and to incorporate it in a suitable way typically relevant to a typical usage

1. In English: The genuine purpose of a dictionary is to be used in order to obtain information on those properties of linguistic expressions which belong to the domain of the dictionary; this information can be accessed via lexicographic data in partial texts with an outer access structure.