

A COURSE OF STUDY IN THE USE OF THE DICTIONARY

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"No reference book, perhaps no book of any kind except the Bible, is so widely used as the dictionary."¹ In English-speaking countries even homes that have few books or none at all besides "the Scriptures" have at least one copy of a dictionary. Business offices are likely to have dictionaries, and most stenographers have a copy on their desks. At one time or another in their schooling, boys and girls are required to obtain and use dictionaries. Dictionaries are in such widespread demand and use that they can be purchased almost anywhere--in drug stores, newsstands, super markets, as well as book stores.

Despite this common experience with dictionaries, the average person is likely to use it as a reference book merely to determine the correct spelling or the accepted pronunciation of words. Also, many people have erroneous ideas about the use of the dictionary and little understanding of how to interpret them properly, in fact, how to use them profitably. Thus, it is often thought that the mere presence of a word in a dictionary is evidence enough that it is in

¹James R. Hulbert, Dictionaries: British and American (New York, 1955), p. 9.

accepted use. Similarly the average layman invariably supposes that one dictionary is as good, as authoritative, as another and will often ascribe his book to Webster. Finally, there is the false notion that the dictionary is the absolute authority. Its statements are used frequently to clinch arguments.²

To use a dictionary effectively requires an understanding of what a dictionary is and what it is intended to do. Over the past three or four decades, the contributions made by linguistic science to lexicography have been enormous. Principles of dictionary-making once understood partially, if at all, are now universally accepted by those responsible for today's dictionaries. The broad general findings of the new science are

1. All languages are systems of human conventions, not systems of natural laws. The first--and essential--step in the study of any language is observing and setting down precisely what happens when native speakers speak it.

2. Each language is unique in its pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. It cannot be described in terms of logic or of some theoretical, ideal language, or in terms of its own past.

3. All languages are dynamic rather than static, and hence, a "rule" in any language can only be a statement of contemporary practice. Change is constant --and normal.

²Ibid., pp. 9-11.

4. "Correctness" can rest only upon usage, for the simple reason that there is nothing else for it to rest on. And all usage is relative.³

These understandings about language have certain important implications for the lexicographer and the user. A dictionary must be a description of current usage. Because the description has value to the extent that it is comprehensive and accurate, it must include information about regional and social associations of words. The lexicographer's most important single source for information about words is a file of quotations from contemporary speech and writing, each one illustrating the use of some word.

The debate that followed the publication of Webster's Third New International Dictionary in 1961 revealed the great gap in understanding between modern lexicographers and many of the people who use their products, even those whose profession is using the language, such as writers, editors, and teachers. Today that gap is far from closed. Yet, whatever one's opinion may be of Webster's Third, it and all other modern dictionaries are and will continue to be based on modern scientific principles about language.

A dictionary, then, is a description of the words of English and how they are used, not a prescription of how

³Hergen Evans, "But What's a Dictionary For?" Harbrace Guide to Dictionaries, edited by Kenneth Wilson, R. H. Hendrickson, and Peter Taylor (New York, 1963), p. 195.

they ought to be used, with the exception of such Latin and Greek terms used in medicine and other sciences. When a dictionary records the existence of a word, such as finalise, it is not telling the reader whether or not to like or use that word, only that it is used by speakers and writers of English. A modern dictionary will frequently record the fact that a certain word, such as irregardless, is "non-standard," or not conforming to the usage characteristic of educated native speakers of English. Even this label does not tell the reader whether or not to use the word, but simply records a fact about its use.

Because the dictionary is a record of how people use words and not a final authority, learning its effective use requires more than casual observation. The dictionary is frequently taken for granted. Students think they already know how to use it, although they may seldom or never turn to it unless a teacher requires them to. Teachers sometimes assume that their students are more skillful in the use of the dictionary than they actually are. Today's student needs thorough, formal training that is cumulative over his school years and that is based on the same linguistic principles that have raised the art of lexicography to its present high level. It is the purpose of this thesis to provide a plan for attaining these ends.

CHAPTER II

THE DICTIONARY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

The moment a child arrives in school, he begins formally the task of expanding his vocabulary, refining and amplifying his skills in listening and speaking, and acquiring the skills in reading and writing which make him literate. His resources for learning are his teacher, the world about him, and his books. In the course of his education, the student will be introduced to books of many kinds for many purposes, but the one which eventually will tell him the most about his language is the English dictionary. "It seems tragic that so many children leave school thinking of a dictionary as a dull book to be evaded if possible rather than a mine of riches available for the taking."¹

The teacher serves as the child's first dictionary, helping him with meanings, pronunciations, and spellings as the need arises. Gradually the student is introduced to the self-help possibilities of picture dictionaries, junior dictionaries, and finally to the unabridged dictionary. But all too often, at each level, the dictionary is used only

¹Ruth G. Strickland, "The Dictionary. . . by Way of Introduction," Elementary English, XLI (April, 1964), 325.

for meanings, pronunciations, and spellings. "The rest of its offering is overlooked so that the growing student never discovers its buried gold."²

Linguistic scholars are increasingly eager that all children learn as early as possible what a language is, why there are different languages in the world, and how a language changes and grows. They want children to think of language as arbitrary and patterned, but changing and expanding to meet human needs and express human concerns. However, most language textbooks do not undertake any kind of dictionary study until the third or fourth grade.

Although the flow chart for the sequential development of language arts skills listed in the Texas Education Agency Bulletin 617, Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 1-6, does not specifically mention dictionary usage until the third grade, there are competencies listed for dictionary use in grades one and two under Word Recognition, Vocabulary Development, and Study Skills. The first and second grade student should attain letter recognition and alphabetical sequences in order to develop locational skills with primary picture dictionaries.³

Ibid.

³Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 1-6 (Austin, 1963), p. 124.

The introduction of dictionary usage in the first grade usually does not occur until the second semester, or until the student has learned the concept of alphabetical order. If a copy of the alphabet is displayed somewhere in the room, it will be easy to convey the idea that letters occurring at the beginning, middle, or end of the alphabet will occur in a similar position in the dictionary.⁴

In the first grade, children are encouraged to use the picture dictionaries in their reading and writing activities. They are instructed that if in their reading they find a new word to look for the first letter of the word, then the second, in their dictionary, and when they come to the word, the picture will tell them what the word means. If students are writing a story and they need to know correct spelling, they are told to think of the sound of the first letter or letters. The students then look for the picture in their picture dictionary. They find the correct spelling opposite the picture.⁵

The major supplementary activity for using the dictionary in the first and second grades is to have the students make their own picture dictionary.⁶ Using a scrapbook or

⁴Margaret Hillert, "The Dictionary in the First Grade," Elementary English, XLI (April, 1964), 336.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Sally Mahoney, "Basic Study Skills and Tools," Elementary English, XLII (December, 1965), 906

notebook, the children are instructed to letter (more than one page to a letter, if desired) A, B, C, etc. On the page for A the students are told to paste pictures of things, the names of which begin with A--as apple. They do the same for the other letters, correctly spelling the word under each picture.

In the third grade the student uses the dictionary to select word meanings which fit the context.⁷ There is, however, too broad a gap between the skills developed in using a child's picture dictionary and the skills necessary to use adequately his first beginning dictionary. The following skills are necessary in locating words in a standard dictionary. To look up a word, the child must be able to:

1. recognize that a word is a unit of language.

Printed words are no problem. If a child is looking up a word he has heard but not seen, he may face a problem. The sounds "bafts" seem to be one word, but are really two. The child must have developed the skill to discriminate sounds.

2. recognize the beginning sound of a word and the sequence of sounds that follow the first. Many primary grade children have mistaken initial a in a word as the article a; they, therefore, attempt to look up pearance

⁷Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 1-6 (Austin, 1963), p. 117.

instead of appearance.

3. associate sounds and letters, so that he may select the most probable letter or variant letters under which to search for a word. It takes time to acquire the needed association that would enable a child to look under gn or kn for gnaw or knot.

4. recognize alphabetical sequence of letters both forward and backward. A child can find a word faster when he can open the dictionary near the front, middle, or back at approximately the spot where the letter can be found. Then he can quickly turn forward or backward to the letter he seeks. He also needs to recognize the alphabetical sequence of the second, third, or even the fourth letters in the word he is attempting to locate.

5. recognize the usage of the word he is seeking in the sentence he is reading or writing. Otherwise a child who wants to write eight might be satisfied with finding the spelling of ate. Realizing that he wants a word that tells how many, the child will search for another spelling as soon as he notes that the definition of ate is not a number.⁸

Since the first three of the above competencies relate directly to reading skills, there will be no discussion of

⁸ Marian Monroe, "The Use of Picture Dictionaries," Elementary English, XLI (April, 1964), 342.

exercises pertaining to them. The alphabet as well as simple alphabetizing has been introduced in grade one and reviewed in grade two. In order to accomplish the fourth competency, the recognition of alphabetical sequence both forward and backward, the teacher may demonstrate with the classroom set of dictionaries which letters are contained in the first third of the dictionary, the second third, and the final third. Then the teacher can ask her students to try opening the book to where they think the m's are, then the g's, and so on. Students will learn approximately where to open the book for the particular word they are seeking. An exercise of this type follows:

Dictionaries can be divided into three parts of the same size. Words beginning with the letters below would be found in the three parts.

<u>Front</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>End</u>
a b c d e	f g h i j k l	p q r s t u v
	m n o	w x y z

The teacher gives a list of words, and the children arrange them in three columns according to their location in the dictionary.⁹

To insure mastery of alphabetizing by second, third, or fourth letter the teacher can easily devise such exercises as follows: crayfish, crag, crane, craw, crab.

⁹Shirley C. Feldmann and Kathleen Merrill, Learning About Words (New York, 1965), p. 22.

In order to avoid having the students write out words endlessly in alphabetical order, a numbering exercise can be constructed:

On the blank line before these words, students will place a number showing where this word would come if the words were arranged alphabetically--a first, b next, etc. The word beginning with a will be number one. The word beginning with g will be number twenty-six.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. _____ birthday | 14. _____ visited |
| 2. _____ something | 15. _____ nothing |
| 3. _____ worked | 16. _____ I'll |
| 4. _____ grandpa | 17. _____ kite |
| 5. _____ lot | 18. _____ zero |
| 6. _____ room | 19. _____ merry |
| 7. _____ funny | 20. _____ quick |
| 8. _____ umbrella | 21. _____ Xerxes |
| 9. _____ joke | 22. _____ elf |
| 10. _____ and | 23. _____ old |
| 11. _____ handkerchief | 24. _____ down |
| 12. _____ your | 25. _____ paw |
| 13. _____ cane | 26. _____ tight |

It is not necessary for students to recite the alphabet backwards in order to gain mastery of the alphabetical arrangement of the dictionary. In oral work, the teacher may simply ask what letter precedes n, l, or r.

Reading instruction, in part, may help to develop competency five, the recognition of the usage of the word in the sentence, but dictionary-related exercises will help the student select the correct definition and spelling when he is working independently in the dictionary. Many students simply accept the first entry given. Some sample exercises of this type follow:

~~their~~--belonging to them
there--in that place

Put the book over _____.
 _____ book was lost.

track 1. metal rails for cars to run on.
 2. a footprint.

_____ The hunter followed the tracks to the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER III

THE DICTIONARY IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

It is generally accepted that formal, planned experiences designed to equip the child to use the dictionary with ease and satisfaction begin late in the third grade or in the fourth grade.¹

Gray writes that during the middle grades most children learn to use a dictionary. The skills that are essential to using a dictionary fall into three categories--those needed (1) to locate an entry word, (2) to choose the appropriate definition of an unfamiliar word and adapt that definition to its context, and (3) to translate pronunciation symbols into a spoken word. The skills and understandings in word analysis that most pupils acquire in the primary grades provide background and readiness for using a dictionary. Throughout the middle and upper grades, word analysis skills and dictionary skills supplement each other.²

¹Mildred Dawson and others, Guiding Language Learning (New York, 1963), p. 69.

²Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 345.

³Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus, 1961), p. 292.

⁴William S. Gray, On Their Own in Reading (Chicago, 1960), p. 63.

Dawson, Zollinger, Elwell, and Smith include the following outline for the phases of elementary dictionary training, which they state can be easily introduced to students in the fourth grade:

- I. Practise in alphabetizing lists of words
 - A. Listing of words, all of which begin with a different letter
 - B. Listing of words, several beginning with the same letter
- II. Location of specific parts of a dictionary; specific words
 - A. Opening the dictionary by estimate
 - B. Using the guide words at the head of each page
- III. Pronunciation of unfamiliar words
 - A. Making a systematic study of diacritical markings
 - B. Using a pronunciation key
 - C. Learning syllabication
 - D. Accenting syllables
- IV. Selection of a meaning to fit the context of the word in the sentence in which it is embedded
 - A. Listing various meanings for the same word; as fly, run
 - B. Making a list of sentences, each of which contains the same word but with a different meaning

- G. Finding unfamiliar words in context and trying to guess their meanings
- D. Selecting the dictionary meaning of an unknown word, found during reading in terms of the meaning suggested by context³

The dictionary competencies compiled by the Texas Education Agency generally follow Gray's plan for developing dictionary skills in the intermediate grades. Specifically, the Texas Education Agency lists the following competencies for the fourth grade:

1. The child begins to develop some understanding concerning accent.
2. He uses the accent mark in the dictionary.
3. He uses the dictionary to verify pronunciations and meanings of new words.
4. He begins to keep a list of words whose meanings he has had to look up in the dictionary (or marks words in a personally-owned dictionary).⁴

The competencies listed for the fifth grade are:

1. The child uses the dictionary's pronunciation guide, syllabication aids, and preferred pronunciation.

³Dawson and others, pp. 88-90.

⁴Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 1-6 (Austin, 1963), p. 147.

2. The child uses context and the dictionary to select precise meanings from multiple meanings.⁵

For the sixth grade the Texas Education Agency introduces only one new competency for the sequential development of dictionary skills; the student derives, with help, the appropriate meaning of a word and adapts it to context.⁶ Arrows on the flow chart indicate that the skills developed in grades four and five are to be reviewed and continued with increasing difficulty.

Since the Texas Education Agency's list of competencies for the development of dictionary skills is flexible, the following exercises will not be designated specifically for fourth, fifth, or sixth grade. They will simply be designated as for use in the intermediate grades. The following exercises develop the competencies prescribed by the Texas Education Agency.

Exercises for Developing the Concept of Accent

In introducing the concept of accent or stress, the teacher has the pupils practice on voice impulses in pronouncing two and three syllable words, allowing the pupil to hear for himself where the divisions within the words occur. The students are told that one part or syllable within a word is said with more force than the others.

⁵Ibid., p. 117.

⁶Ibid.

The teacher proceeds in the following inductive manner. The teacher has the student find fishhook in the dictionary. The teacher asks the students what appears immediately after the main entry. The symbols tell how to pronounce the word. Every dictionary has a list of symbols that are used to indicate pronunciation. The teacher asks what symbol in the dictionary shows which syllable to accent. A word with several syllables may also have a second, or secondary accent. The teacher has the students look up emancipate. She asks how can one tell the difference between the two accents. After the students have practiced looking up accent marks, the teacher then provides a list of words, telling the students to say the words and to place accent marks where they think they belong. Then the student checks his work by consulting the dictionary.⁷

In teaching accent marks, the teacher should point out that one word may have a variable accent, depending on context. The teacher should supply examples, as,

1. My teacher objects to talking during study periods.
2. There were several objects on the table.
3. The coach will present a trophy to Bob.
4. The boy opened his birthday present.⁸

⁷ David Conlin and others, Our Language Today, Grade Five (New York, 1967), pp. 217-218.

⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

Exercises Verifying Pronunciation

Dictionaries and language textbooks do not use a common set of pronunciation symbols. It is thus common for a child to be exposed to different pronunciation symbols through his reader, speller, language textbook, and his dictionary. It would be impractical for a teacher to attempt to teach the various symbols or codes that appear in textbooks and dictionaries as aids to pronunciation. But the teacher should attempt instructions in how to use the various pronunciation charts a child might encounter. Sample directions for an exercise developing dictionary skills using the pronunciation guide might read as follows:

Suppose one wants to find out how to pronounce the word feat. If one has never heard the word, one cannot tell whether it is pronounced with the vowel sound /e/ as in sweat or the vowel sound /ē/ as in heat. But one can find out by looking up the word in the dictionary. The part in parentheses just after the word itself is what tells the pronunciation. It is called the respelling. The student notices the spelling of the vowel in the parentheses. He notes the symbol used over the vowel. At the bottom of the dictionary page, in the pronunciation guide, he finds a word with the same symbol over the vowel in the word he looked up. The sound of the vowel in the easy word is the same as the sound in the new word. The word in the pronunciation guide

is an easy word which one already knows. The student now pronounces the two words.⁹

In order to show that pronunciation guides vary, the teacher might have the students take some simple vowel sounds such as /a/, /ā/, /e/, /ē/, and others, placing the pronunciations they find in columns according to the pronunciation guide in their speller, reader, language textbook, and dictionary.

The teacher might also wish to point out that there are variant pronunciations for many words. She might have the students look up the word fog in order to bring out this point. Two pronunciations will be given. When the dictionary gives two pronunciations, both pronunciations are correct.¹⁰

Exercises Developing Syllabication Concepts

The directions for a beginning exercise might read:

Words are made up of syllables. A syllable is a word or part of a word containing just one vowel sound. Words have as many syllables as they have vowel sounds. The following words have just one vowel sound, so they are one-syllable words. The students tell what the vowel sound is in each word.

fight /I/ feat /ē/ eye /I/ toy /oi/ pitch /i/

⁹Paul Roberts, The Roberts English Series, Grade Five (New York, 1966), p. 98.

¹⁰Conlin, p. 219.

The teacher gives other examples of one-syllable words with their respective vowel sounds.

Most words have more than one-syllable. For example, all verbs in the -ing form do, since the -ing part is a syllable and the verb has at least one syllable more. The students name the two vowel sounds in these two syllable words:

hoping, smiling, moving, loving, giving.

Following are some examples of other two-syllable words. The students name the vowel sounds in each.

stagecoach, playpen, mushroom, hotel, bookcase, friendly, matchstick, lookout

Students are asked how their dictionary shows the division between syllables.¹¹

In working with syllabication, students should be aware of the small letter combinations of prefixes and suffixes that are in the dictionary. Students are asked to look up the combination re- and -ful. Since these are not words in themselves, the teacher should lead the children in discovering the purpose of the hyphen. Also, the teacher should inform the students that many words containing commonly-used prefixes or suffixes will not have a separate entry in the dictionary. Since many prefixes and suffixes, such as re- and -ing are so productive, it is not necessary to make a separate entry for each one. But if the students still are

¹¹Roberts, p. 99.

not sure of a definition of a word which contains a prefix or suffix and it is not listed, they are instructed to look up the components of the word which are in the dictionary.

Selecting the Precise Definition to Fit the Context

Students should be instructed that definitions are listed according to their parts of speech and that the abbreviations n., v., adj., and adv. divide the definitions. The student in the intermediate grades is developing awareness of the parts of speech. In the following exercise, the student should determine the part of speech of the word, give the number of the definition that fits, and finally the definition.

1. Our troop will camp tonight.
2. The camp was in the middle of the forest.
3. Rabbits dart through bushes.
4. The dart hit the bull's-eye.
5. Bill wore a light blue shirt.
6. Turn on the light.
7. The pilot light would not light.

The following exercises develop dictionary competencies not mentioned by the Texas Education Agency. These competencies are mentioned by authors herein quoted and are found in elementary language books.

Use of Guide Words

At the top of a dictionary page, there are two words in heavy black type. The teacher demonstrates by holding up the dictionary and pointing out the words. The first word is usually the same as the first entry word on that page. The second word is usually the same as the last entry word on that page. How do the words at the top of the dictionary page help one? They "guide" one by showing whether the word one wants will be on that page. The entries are given in alphabetical order between the two guide words on each page. The teacher then may call out certain words for which the students are to write the guide words. Or, the teacher provides such an exercise as follows: The two guide words for a page in the dictionary are frost and fund. Beside each word, students indicate whether it would appear before, on, or after the page containing frost and fund as the guide words.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|----------|------------|---------------------------|
| 1. function | 2. fry | 3. funny | 4. fortune | 5. froth |
| 6. full | 7. front | 8. fuse | 9. fumble | 10. furious ¹² |

Etymology

Student spelling books often contain one unit on word borrowings. Along with the spelling exercises, there is reference made to etymologies in the spelling dictionary in

¹²Conlin, pp. 208-209.

the back of the speller, but little or no explanation is given as to how to find etymologies in a regular dictionary.

To introduce an etymology activity, the teacher tells the students that they are going to be detectives--word detectives. Their clues to determine the source of the word and its original meaning are found within the brackets which come between the respelling of the word and its first definition. The students are to find the language from which the word was "stolen" and what the word meant to the "owners."¹³ The teacher guides the students in their first "investigation." The students look in their dictionaries for the word pie. They find that the word came from magpie--a bird that fills its nest with all sorts of odds and ends. The first stew, made of meat and vegetables cooked in a crust, must have reminded someone of the magpie's nest. So the dish came to be called by the bird's name which at that time was pie.¹³ To show that words change in meaning over a period of time, the students can continue their "investigations" into the original meanings of nice, fond, and girl.

In order to show that the English language is a "melting-pot" of languages, the teacher can have the students look up the language which gave us such words as banana, grenade, pecan, cafe, corral, lasso, hamburgers, and solo.

¹³Freeman B. Anderson and others, New Directions in English Grade Five (New York, 1969), p. 146.

An interesting way to handle etymology exercises is to combine the dictionary study with world geography. Since world geography is usually taught in the upper intermediate grades, the following exercise would add variety. The teacher outlines a world map on a stencil. On the map, she places a number in the approximate location of the country in which the word originated. The students look up the words in the etymology section and match its etymology with the appropriate number on the map. Such words as emu, yen, mikado, pagoda, boomerang, au gratin, pizza, mandarin, guilotine, peso, potato, pajamas, kayak, alpenhorn, yak, guilder, gnu, ebow, sputnik, and vicuna might be used in the exercise.

CHAPTER IV

THE DICTIONARY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Although dictionary exercises are included in secondary school textbooks and are keyed in the teachers' manuals, the secondary teacher who wishes to develop dictionary-teaching units will find little supportive material in teachers' manuals, language arts methods textbooks, and educational journals. Most of the dictionary-related material is found under the title "Vocabulary Development."¹ The purpose of the exercises described in these articles is to develop word understanding through contextual methods. Children are urged to make intelligent guesses, and, in fact, to use the dictionary only as a last resort. Other articles urge consultation with the dictionary upon completion of the exercises involving the use of context clues. The secondary journals and methodology books consulted apparently agree with Gram, who says, "In junior high, there remain few new things to be learned about the use of the dictionary. Most of the work is a refinement of skills."¹

While it is true that a number of dictionary skills have been introduced in elementary school, secondary school students need review in order to insure mastery of dictionary

¹Fred D. Gram, Using Reference Books (Chicago, 1932), p. 38.

skills. Also, since the instruction of dictionary skills has been directed toward beginning dictionaries in elementary school, students need to practice and refine the skills they already possess with larger, more detailed dictionaries.

Writing in Elementary English, Olson has developed a sequence of developmental skills for grades one through twelve. For grade seven, she lists the following competencies:

1. Establishing the habit of referring to the dictionary when writing.
2. Refining the skill of using the dictionary for pronunciation, spelling, parts of speech, meanings, syllabication, derivation, and word origins.
3. Learning to use the total dictionary as a reference book, especially the biographical, geographical, and new words sections.
4. Establishing the habit of keeping a personal dictionary of troublesome words.²

For grade eight Olson lists:

1. Having regular dictionary lessons in the use of the following:
 - Dictionary key
 - Guide Words
 - Symbols

²Helen F. Olson, "The Dictionary as a Basic Text," Elementary English, XLI (April, 1964), 367.

Abbreviations

Supplementary materials

2. Stressing understanding and use of the following aspects of a dictionary entry:

Syllabication

Phonetic spelling

Accents

Roots

Prefixes

Synonyms

Antonyms

Homonyms³

The Texas Education Agency in Bulletin 615, Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Courses, Grades 7-12, makes no distinction between grades seven and eight as to the dictionary competencies to be developed. "Instruction includes use of advanced dictionaries and context clues for determining word meaning, and study of interesting word origins and histories."⁴

The following exercises develop the competencies established by the Texas Education Agency for grades seven and eight.

³Ibid.

⁴Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 7-12 (Austin, 1961), pp. 73, 75.

Using Advanced Dictionaries

Bulletin 615 does not define the term "advanced dictionaries." It is assumed that the term "advanced" includes dictionaries designed specifically for the junior high school level as well as the unabridged dictionary.

Regardless of what classroom set of dictionaries is being used, the teacher should preface any dictionary study by pointing out that not all dictionaries are organized in the same way. For example, in some dictionaries certain kinds of material, such as proper names and abbreviations, are listed in separate sections at the back. In other dictionaries, all entries are included in a single alphabetical list.

Dictionaries differ in the way they treat variant spellings of a single word. The explanatory notes at the front explain the system used in each particular dictionary. One dictionary, for example, specifies that the first spelling is preferred, while another states explicitly that the first is no more to be preferred than the second. It simply occurs less frequently.

Dictionaries also differ in the number and kinds of usage labels they use and the precise meanings they attach to them. One dictionary distinguishes between substandard and nonstandard, the former term applying to words less likely to be used by the "prestige" group. Another dictionary subdivides nonstandard into such categories as slang and

illiterate but does not use the label substandard. The student will use a dictionary more efficiently if he understands some of the differences among various dictionaries and if he discovers the value in the explanatory notes in any dictionary he uses.

To point out the differences in dictionaries, the students answer the following questions about their classroom dictionary. Then, for a homework assignment, they answer the same questions using the dictionary they have at home.

1. What is the copyright date? Why is this date significant in determining the usefulness of the dictionary?
2. What types of information are contained in the introduction?
3. What kinds of explanatory notes are given to help you understand the information included for each entry? Where are these explanations located?
4. Where is the key or guide to pronunciation? What other keys are given?
5. Where is the list of abbreviations that are used in this dictionary?
6. In what sequence is the information about each word given? How many distinct types of information are there?

7. Are the geographical and biographical terms in a separate section or are these words included in the main section?
8. Is there a special glossary of foreign words and phrases or are such terms included in the main section?
9. Are new words listed separately?
10. What types of information are given in the appendix?⁵

Getting Acquainted with the Unabridged Dictionary

Since it is not practical to use the unabridged dictionary in the classroom as a class activity, the teacher should discuss its contents with the class or allow a child to make a report to the class in which the following questions are answered:

1. How many entries are there?
2. What information not found in a smaller dictionary is given for each entry?
3. What sections did you find that you did not discover in your desk dictionary?
4. What is the purpose of the horizontal line across each page?
5. Where are the new words found?
6. What types of colored plates are included?

⁵Frieda Radke, Word Resources (New York, 1955), pp. 214-215.

7. What other kinds of illustrative material are used?
8. Where does one find the Pronouncing Gazetteer and the Biographical Dictionary?⁶

Study of Interesting Word Origins and Histories

In square brackets a dictionary gives a brief etymology, or history, of a word. This etymology may be placed before or after the definition, depending on the dictionary you are using. Naturally, a complete word history cannot be given in a few lines of a desk dictionary, but the direction of a word's development may be shown.

Some etymologies are simple and easy to follow. The teacher has the students find helicopter. Helicopter comes from the Greek combining form heliko-, meaning "spiral," and the Greek word pteron, meaning "wing." Its etymology in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary looks like this: [P hélicoptère, fr. Gk. heliko- + pteron wing--more at FEATHER] This is not a difficult etymology to interpret. It reveals that the English word helicopter came into English from French. Earlier the French word hélicoptère derived from the combined Greek forms heliko- and pteron. (Under another entry, feather, more etymological information about pteron can be found.) In short, the word helicopter ultimately derives from Greek.

⁶Ibid., p. 215.

Although it is not necessary to know such fine points of language history, the etymologies of some words will increase the understanding of their meanings in an immediately practical way. The word write is illustrative. It comes from Old English writan, meaning at one time "scratch" or "engrave." Something about the nature of early writing, when words were "scratched" on stone or wood with rock or knife is thus conveyed. Not all words develop so directly. But the current meanings of many words bear at least some resemblance to their original meanings.⁷

To show students that some words may be traced directly to a specific person, they may look up such words as braille, diesel, gobbledygook, boysenberry, guillotine, magnolia, maverick, and saxophone.

In working with the following etymological exercise, the students should not answer yes or no. A few key words from the brackets should be copied in order to support their answer. This exercise also forces students to use the material within the brackets in order to determine the original meaning of the word.

1. What should a butcher do with cattle?
2. Why can't a villain ever be found in the city?
3. How should an acrobat walk?
4. The name of what animal is preserved in arctic?

⁷Harold B. Allen and others, New Dimensions in English (Wichita, 1966), p. 270.

5. Should a diploma be rolled, flat, or folded once in the middle?
6. Should athletes be given prizes or ribbons?
7. Where would one expect a hippopotamus to live?
8. Why should a volume be round?
9. Why would it be impossible to collect a poll tax from the headless horseman?
10. Would a teacher be flattered if somebody called him a dunce?
11. Which of the following animals would one expect a polecats to like, duck, pig, chicken, turkey?
12. If a goat could act on the stage, would he be better in a tragedy or comedy?
13. In ancient times, where did people think the voice of a ventriloquist came from?
14. How should a candidate dress when out seeking votes?
15. In which school subject should a glamour girl do well?⁸

The following exercises develop selected competencies, not previously introduced, suggested by Olson,

Using the Dictionary for Correct Spelling

Teachers have frequently heard a student say, "How can I find the spelling of a word in a dictionary when I don't know the spelling?" One answer to that question is that a

⁸Coordination in the English Program (Austin, 1966), pp. 1-2.

person very rarely does not know the first two or three letters of a word. For example, ninety may cause one difficulty; one does not know whether it is ninty, ninity, or ninety. The word could be found easily by beginning with nin.

Trouble arises when students are uncertain of the first few letters. Students consider these words:

CORRECT	INCORRECT
despair	dispair
won't	wun't
women	wimen
divide	devide
definite	difinite

Does one have to look through all the di's to find despair? Not at all. After the first letter, there usually is a vowel. The word is spelled, therefore, either da, de, di, do, du, dy. Obviously, most of these combinations can be quickly eliminated. Only a minute is needed to find the correct spelling.

Suppose the first letter is in doubt, as in:

CORRECT	INCORRECT
whole	hole
write	rite
pneumonia	newmonia
Philippines	Filippines

psalm	salm
clock	klock
cinnamon	sinnamon

There are very few of these combinations. It is easy to learn that in many words the w is silent, as in wring, wrote, whoop, and who.

The ph combination, pronounced as an f, is fairly common and, once known, offers no difficulty, as in phantom, pheasant, pharmacy, photograph.

The pn combination, the p being silent, occurs in a very few words, as in pneumonia and pneumatic.

Other combinations with silent p are rare, as in psalm, pseudonym, pseudopod, psychology.

Sometimes c is pronounced k, as in clock; sometimes, it is pronounced s as in circus.

Actually, then, the difficulties of looking up the spelling of an unknown word are not very great if a person remembers these few oddities and uses his head.⁹

Syllabication

Errors are often made in dividing words at the ends of lines. The following rules are helpful:

1. Never divide words that are pronounced as one syllable: through, search, dropped, killed.

⁹Margaret M. Bryant and others, English at Work (Chicago, 1953), pp. 371-373.

2. Do not separate a syllable consisting of a single letter from the rest of the word. For example, it is not correct to write o-mission, a-chieve, or e-nough. Neither is it correct to write plan-o or preparator-y.
3. In words which contain a double consonant, the division usually falls between the two consonants: hid-den, wed-ding. However, words are not divided between double consonants if both consonants are needed to spell the root of the word: fill-ing, spell-er, tell-ing.

Applying the rules given above, the students divide the following words into syllables. They check with their dictionary to see how many they have divided correctly.

league	regulation	accepting
breathe	thorough	wealth
scrubbed	illustrate	omitted
vaccinate	humming	genuine
syllable	through	exaggerate ¹⁰

Roots, Prefixes and Suffixes

The following exercise dealing with affixes and roots illustrates the contextual development of word analysis exercises:

1. How does an amphitheater differ from a theater?
2. Why is a frog called an amphibian? The root of this word means to live.
3. What is an antisocial person like?

¹⁰Radke, p.221.

4. Why do we sometimes speak of an epidemic of small-pox? The root of this word means people.
5. Doctors say that each person has two layers of skin, the dermis and the epidermis. Which is the outer layer?
6. What is the difference between a hypercritical person and a critical person?
7. John went to his oculist, who told him that he had hypermetropia. What does this mean about his retina and the light rays striking it?
8. Why is a tramp humorously called a peripatetic?
9. Would a periscope on a submarine be a periscope if it could not be turned so that the operator could see in any direction?
10. If one is unlucky enough to swallow poison, why does one take an antidote? The root of this word means to give.¹¹

Instead of supplying endless lists of words to be analyzed according to roots and affixes, the teacher can vary the exercises in the following way. To the student the teacher directs:

1. Can you find in your dictionary a suffix which makes a word that refers to a man instead of to a woman? Look up aviator.

¹¹Margaret Bryant, p. 369.

2. Find a suffix which makes a word plural. Look up ox.

3. Find a suffix which forms a noun from a verb. Look up evaporate.¹²

Another way to vary the study of roots, prefixes, and suffixes is through a word-building game. The teacher supplies the roots, prefixes, and suffixes and the formulas for combining the word parts into meaningful units. The student uses his dictionary for the source of the word part plus its definition.¹³

Prefixes

1. a-, ab- (L. not; from)
2. bi- (L. two; twice)
3. ana- (Gr. on; up; backward)
4. de- (L. down; from)
5. eip- (Gr. upon; on)
6. eu- (Gr. well; good)
7. hypo- (Gr. under; beneath)
8. in- (L. not; into; in)
9. ob- (L. against)
10. peri- (Gr. around)
11. pro- (L. forth)
12. re- (L. back again)

¹²Ibid., p. 370.

¹³Coordination in the English Program (Austin, 1966), p. 17.

13. syn- (Gr. with; together)

14. tele- (Gr. far)

Roots

15. agogos (Gr. leading)

16. alere (L. nourish)

17. autos (Gr. self)

18. bios (Gr. life)

19. chronos (Gr. time)

20. cognoscere, cognitus (L. know; known)

21. demos (Gr. people)

22. dermos (Gr. skin)

23. fundere, fusus (L. melt together, pour)

24. genere, gigner (L. be born; beget)

25. gamma (Gr. letter; writing)

26. graphein (Gr. write)

27. hydor (Gr. water)

28. kardia (Gr. heart)

29. kratos (Gr. rule)

30. logos (Gr. word)

31. meter (Gr. measure)

32. pater (L. father)

33. phone (Gr. sound)

34. skopein (Gr. look at; see)

35. struere (L. pile up; build)

36. thesis (Gr. setting; placing)

37. tomos (Gr. cutting)

Suffixes

38. -ant (used to form adj.; a person who)
 39. -arch (ruler)
 40. -ary (pertaining to)
 41. -ate (to form adj., noun, verb; characterized by having)
 42. -ic (of the nature of)
 43. -ician (denoting a specialist)
 44. -ion (act; state of)
 45. -ism (doctrine of; characteristics of)
 46. -ium (scientific suffix)
 47. -ize (subject to; carry on)
 48. -ment (state; condition; quality)
 49. -mony (resulting thing; abstract condition)
 50. -or (state of quality of; one who)
 51. -y (used to form adj.; noun; full of; inclined to)

The following may be combined into words:

14 + 25	13 + 36	13 + 15
3 + 19 + 45	12 + 23	17 + 29 + 42
11 + 24 + 50	14 + 34	21 + 15
10 + 31	24 + 44	21 + 29 + 42
9 + 35	7 + 36	11 + 23
12 + 20 + 47	32 + 39	16 + 49
5 + 25	13 + 19	6 + 30 + 47
32 + 43	10 + 28 + 46	19 + 30 + 51
18 + 30 + 51	4 + 27 + 41	11 + 30
32 + 49	14 + 33	5 + 30

12 + 24 + 41	16 + 48 + 40	3 + 25
8 + 20	6 + 33 + 51	33 + 26
27 + 31	10 + 34	21 + 29 + 51
8 + 35 + 44	28 + 25	5 + 22
20 + 38	33 + 42	17 + 18 + 26 + 51
8 + 23	7 + 22 + 42	4 + 35 + 44
19 + 42		

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes students have difficulty in selecting the most appropriate word to fit a given context. The following exercise will help the student discover where to find the most precise word for his sentence. While this exercise is devoted exclusively to synonyms, a similar one would be adapted for antonyms. A sample exercise follows:

By using the dictionary, students, find a synonym that more exactly expresses the meaning intended:

1. Losing so many games is bound to dismay the team.
2. Did you discover that idea?
3. The men managed to elude from the prison.
4. Having just emptied the pail, I know it is vacant.
5. The main speaker at the annual feast was a former magician.
6. We have a small estate with a forest in the southwest corner.
7. Manifold people attended the races.

8. Their secret disagreement burst into candid antagonism.
9. The main property of his face was a large nose.
10. What an elegant piece of lace!¹⁴

Using the Dictionary as a Reference Book

The junior high school student should be informed of the encyclopedic information contained in dictionaries. Generally, the material of this nature is biographic or geographic in scope. If, while reading, a student comes across the name of an unfamiliar person or place and an encyclopedia is not handy, he should know that the dictionary can supply him with a concise statement regarding the person or place. Questions of this type are easily constructed.

1. When did Haile Selassie first become emperor of Ethiopia?
2. Where is the Red River of the North?
3. Who was vice-president under President Polk?
4. What is the area of the state of Mississippi?

Presenting the New Words Section

Many junior high school students assume that all words have always existed. To present the new words section, usually found at the beginning of a dictionary, complies with

¹⁴Bryant, p. 375.

the linguistic concept that language changes. Using freeway and astronaut as examples, the students can see from the definitions that these words are of recent origin.

The teacher suggests to students that they compile a list of words they think are new English words. They look for them in both the new words section and the regular section. Should a new word, such as hippie, not appear, the teacher will explain that a dictionary cannot be entirely up-to-date because words are being "coined" constantly. The teacher might also mention the time involved, as well as the cost, in producing a dictionary.

CHAPTER V

THE DICTIONARY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

By the time he enters high school, a student knows that a dictionary is essentially a practical tool. To find and correctly interpret dictionary information requires no little skill, and the student who can use a dictionary deftly as a tool is a tribute to the people who taught him how to do it. He must know a great deal: the order of twenty-six letters, processes of definition, dictionary shorthand such as diacritical marks and abbreviations, and much more.¹

However, high school teachers are often surprised to discover that many of their students do not know how to use a dictionary. This deficiency is not necessarily due to inadequate elementary school training, for students learn the rudiments of dictionary skills in the lower grades. It is more often the result of secondary teachers' failure to provide maintenance activities. Teachers must also realize that as students are called upon to read increasingly mature materials, they must learn more advanced dictionary techniques.²

Olson's list of dictionary competencies for grades nine through twelve reflect both maintenance activities and advanced

¹Charles Stones, "Dictionaries: A Second Introduction," Elementary English, XLI (April, 1964), 370.

²John S. Lewis and Jean C. Sisk, Teaching English 7-12, (New York, 1963), p. 159.

dictionary techniques. Specifically, the advanced dictionary techniques include understanding connotative and denotative words, levels of usage, and composition and origin of words.³

The Texas Education Agency in Bulletin 615, Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Courses, Grades 7-12, states that in the ninth grade dictionary instruction includes use of advanced dictionaries and context clues for determining word meaning. It also lists study of connotation and denotation, etymology, and roots and affixes of words found in context.⁴ For grades ten through twelve the statement regarding the use of the dictionary is the same. The student determines the meanings of frequently used abstract words through the author's context and to use dictionaries as descriptive rather than prescriptive references.⁵

In pursuing any dictionary study in high school regardless of the competency being developed or reviewed, students are reminded that dictionaries differ in their methods of handling entries and that lexicographers do not always agree on a given entry. Students are urged also to purchase their own dictionary, preferably a college edition which they can use later if they attend college.

³Olson, pp. 366-367.

⁴Principles and Standards for Accrediting Elementary and Secondary Schools and Description of Approved Program, Grades 7-12 (Austin, 1961), p. 77.

⁵Ibid., pp. 81, 81, 87

The following exercises develop the competencies established by the Texas Education Agency for grades nine through twelve.

Understanding Connotative and Denotative Words

The ability to differentiate between the denotations and connotations of words is basic to intelligent reading and is probably one of the most important abilities for the high school student to acquire. This skill often supplies the key to inferences, to a writer's point of view, to selection of meanings appropriate to certain contexts, and to accurate evaluation of informational reading materials.

The denotation of a word is its dictionary definition, which states the "thing" the word stands for or symbolizes. The connotation is the idea suggested by or associated with a word in addition to its explicit meaning. The difference between denotation and connotation can be taught by asking students to write their reaction to pairs of sentences containing dictionary synonyms with different connotations. The students then compare their answers with the dictionary.

1. A lean, angular man stood at the intersection.
2. A scrawny, sharp-featured man stood at the intersection.
2. Easily convinced by his arguments, she decided to compromise.
Gullible in the extreme, she decided to give in.

3. Russians are often unconventional.

Russians are screwballs.⁶

Synonyms may be used in denotative-connotative exercises. In the English language exact synonyms are rare, and it is not often possible to use two or more words interchangeably. For example, fluent, eloquent, and glib have a basic meaning of ease of use in language. However, when students are asked to consult the dictionary, they will discover a fine line of difference in the words. Other examples of this type are puzzled, perplexed, bewildered, and nonplussed.⁷

Or students may be asked to state the difference in connotation of paired synonyms, such as thrifty/stingy, disabled/crippled, idealist/visionary, investigate/snoop, and superior/snobbish.⁸

Using the Dictionary as a Descriptive Reference Book

In nearly all modern handbooks of composition, students are advised to confine their language choices in themes to uses which are appropriate to the writing of cultivated people.⁹ In order to achieve this end, students must be exposed to the status labels of words. However, there is some discrepancy in the terms by which various dictionaries label these levels, but the concept of levels of word usage

⁶Lewis and Sisk, pp. 157-158.

⁷Radke, p. 66.

⁸Lewis and Sisk, p. 158

⁹Austin C. Dobbins, "The Language of the Cultivated," Harbrace Guide to Dictionaries, edited by Kenneth Wilson, R. H. Hendrickson, and Peter Taylor (New York, 1963), p. 142.

is fairly generally accepted as having a pragmatic value, if not a linguistically accurate one. The linguist is, after all, a scholar interested purely in describing and cataloguing all uses of language. He is not a teacher interested primarily in improving the language habits of the young. The concept of levels is a convenient one to employ in the absence of traditional standards of absolute right or wrong. It bridges the gap between the autocratic attitude toward language and a completely nonprescriptive point of view.¹⁰

In developing exercises in which the students are to consult the dictionary for status labels of words, the teacher's goal should be that the students will be concerned with learning to use the levels appropriately. The students should learn to adapt their language to suit the occasion, the audience, and their purpose in speaking or writing. The concept of suitability rather than correctness is the important usage to impart to the students.¹¹

Students should review the discussion of status labels in their dictionaries before labeling the underscored words in the following exercise.

1. We will go irregardless of the weather.
2. Let's scrounge a ride.
3. Put on your glad rags.
4. On this job you can't goldbrick.

¹⁰Lewis and Sisk, p. 417. ¹¹Ibid., p. 418.

5. This really bugs me.
6. A vicious hurricane raged in the Keys.
7. I'm awful tired.
8. We must try to normalize the economy.
9. The actress was light-complexed.
10. Both men stumped the state in the primary.
11. The lecture was terrific.
12. I find his questions very aggravating.
13. The ball game was a sellout.
14. The meal was scrumptious.
15. Mary is mad about me.¹²

The following competencies and exercises represent more advanced dictionary techniques. Stones suggests working with meaning change, origin of words and word structure; Goldstein approaches advanced dictionary techniques through the study of lexicography; and Heiman employs dictionary study by having students compile a slang dictionary. Exercises using the dictionary as an aid to interpreting difficult passages of literature are also included in advanced techniques.

Semantic Shift

A living language is constantly changing, but a fascinating topic when one looks closely at specific examples

¹²Allen, p. 316.

of such change as revealed by etymologies. Few students will be disinterested when the teacher tells them that advertise once meant "warn," or that a muscle is literally a "little mouse." The teacher presents a short list of such oddities to her students. Then the students, leafing through dictionaries, look at etymologies of common words and list those words that have interesting former meanings.

A list follows:

Word	Former Meaning
cloud	Mass of rock
branch	paw, claw
worry	strangle, injure
quest	stranger, enemy
tragedy	goat song
slim	crafty, bad, crooked
school	leisure
nice	foolish, stupid
snout	drip fluid
puny	born later
glide	shine
bugle	young ox

The teacher may wish to have the students look more closely at the examples of semantic shift they have gathered to determine which of the changes fall into patterns. For example, some of the words have become generalized and others

specialized. Examples of generalized words are scene, holiday, affiliate, snag, and zone. Specialization can be illustrated by garage, malaria, pill, and starve.

Using the same lists, students can also detect historical changes of status in some of the words. Some have become degraded in meanings, others elevated. Again, a few examples will serve to help students get started. Examples of elevation are shrewd, shrines, velvet, and chiffon. Examples of degradation are mildew, sinister, crafty, and diaper.

The teacher may also want the students to investigate the role of euphemism as a factor in change in meaning. Euphemism is a special case because its use reveals human motives, thus demonstrating a recognizable cause of semantic shift. In man's attempt to make the unpleasant acceptable, one says that a loved one has "passed away" rather than admitting he has died. While some of the following may not be in the dictionary, the student will probably recognize the euphemisms and can supply the former terminology. A partial list of euphemisms includes the departed, slumber robe, interred, memorial park, rotisserie, bowling lanes, billiards, building superintendent, and sanitary engineer.¹³

Borrowings

Lexical analysis of a typical desk dictionary shows that fewer than fifteen percent of the entry words are native words,

¹³Stones, pp. 370-372.

i.e., derived from Anglo-Saxon. However, the proportion of native words in actual English prose is surprisingly high, often exceeding seventy-five percent. A workable assignment is to have students copy exactly one hundred words of nonfiction from a book or magazine article. They double-space their copy, check the etymology of each word, and write symbols over the words to show the origin of each. When they have completed their analyses, the students show a tally at the end of the exercise. Computing the results is easy because the number of words of each origin in the passage is also the percentage. The assignment is not formidable. Students will not actually look up one hundred words, since common structure words will occur several times.¹⁴

Alteration

Many changes in words occur as a result of some type of structural change, by removal or interchange of some elements or by splicing together words or parts of words. The names are more difficult than the processes they describe -- metathesis, hypaeresis, and apocope. Nevertheless, the procedures are interesting to many students, and with a little encouragement and a few examples to start them on a search, students will turn up long lists of additional examples.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 372.

Clipped words: math(ematics), gym(nasium), auto, phone, hi-fi, stereo.

Agglutinated words (combining two or more elements): flagpole, eyelash, windshield, sportsmanship, antidisestablishmentarianism.

Portmanteau words (clipped and agglutinated): motel (motor + hotel), smog (smoke + fog), Metrecal (metered + calories), telecast (television + broadcast).

Acronyms: RADAR, NATO, UNESCO, CARE.

Reduplication: murmur, humdrum, mama, tutti frutti, ping pong, alfalfa.

Metathesis: bird (AS. bridd), through (ME. thurgh), spurt (ME. sprutten).

Neologism and Coinage

Thousands of new words are added to the word stock of English each year. Some like transistor and astronaut are assimilated into the language without controversy. Others, like mooch and cllobber are not readily accepted by cultivated speakers. The general test seems to be our need for the new word. However, this is not always the case. Hair-do has worked its way into polite usage, but booze, dating from the fourteenth century, has not yet been accepted.

In addition to outright coinages, the language expands by means of new applications for existing words and combinations: featherbedding, piggybacking, re-entry, missile,

space station, network, cheesecake, beef up, and phase out. Students may consult the new words section of their dictionary and then write an addendum containing new words and new definitions for existing words.¹⁵

Lexicography

The publication of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, in addition to its stirring up a controversy between descriptivists and prescriptivists, revealed that many people did not understand the science of lexicography. Students can discover for themselves how modern dictionaries developed and how attitudes vary among lexicographers and users about what dictionaries are and what they should be. A good place to begin is to have students read appropriate selections from the front matter of a few dictionaries. In these introductory essays students can find brief discussions of the role of a dictionary, American and English dialects, a history of English dictionaries, and other relevant subjects. Students may also do further library research and develop reports on the lexicographers they find mentioned in the introductions.¹⁶

The Portland, Oregon, Public Schools has developed a skeletal outline for teaching lexicography in the tenth grade.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 373.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 374.

Using the introductory material found in several dictionaries and materials supplied by dictionary publishers, the teacher and students develop the outline.

Lexicography

I. INTRODUCTION: MEANING

- A. What is a word?
- B. Minimum lexical units
- C. Meaning of utterance: expression and content
- D. Meaning and context
- E. Kinds of meaning
- F. Core versus peripheral meaning
- G. Process of lexical definition

II. INSTRUCTIONAL TACTICS

- A. Dictionaries and etymology
 1. Semantic shift of common words
 2. Abbreviations and symbols of etymology
 3. Utility of etymology
- B. Variations among dictionaries
 1. Format
 2. Introductions and fine print
 3. Scope: single versus multiple-volume words
- C. Lexical processes
 1. Definition and denotation
 2. Citation
 3. Synonymy

- D. History of English language dictionaries
 - 1. Latin glosses
 - 2. Hard-word dictionaries
 - 3. Universal dictionaries
 - 4. Development of a plan
 - 5. Samuel Johnson
 - 6. Noah Webster and American dictionaries
 - 7. Oxford English Dictionary
- E. Dr. Johnson's "Preface to the English Dictionary"
 - 1. Johnson's intention
 - 2. Failure to purify and regulate English
 - 3. Problems of the lexicographer
- F. Shift of meaning
 - 1. Generalization and specialization
 - 2. ~~22~~Elevation and degradation
- G. Overtone and modification
 - 1. Connotation
 - 2. Euphemism
 - 3. Metaphor
- H. Dictionaries and usage
- I. Topics for writing and discussion; exercises¹⁷

¹⁷Miriam B. Goldstein, The Teaching of Language in Our Schools (New York, 1966), pp. 133-134.

Teaching Lexicography and Selected Linguistic Concepts

By Writing a Slang Dictionary

The advantages of using slang as a basis for language study are twofold: a high interest level on the part of the students and a presentation of a great variety of language principles which are applicable to standard English. A study of language which compares slang to standard English can relate to such linguistic areas as classification of various figures of speech, principles of language formation, principles of language change, and semantics.

In compiling their slang dictionaries students follow the same format as for regular dictionaries. They list their entries alphabetically, attempt an etymology, followed by the definition and a synonym or two.

Linguistic principles developed in this study which relate to figures of speech are

1. Metaphors--(a) analogies to the human body and its parts: half-pint, pig, gorilla, pony tail, and especially the human head: rocker, bean, nut; (b) comparisons to food: a prune, a greaser, a pickle, a honey; (c) references to the five senses: rough(situation), smooth, smells.

2. Metonymy--This figure of speech describes by substituting a term thought to be closely associated with an object for the object itself. Some examples found in slang are: a breadline, a company man, a brain, a long hair.

3. Synecdoche--A form of metaphor, this technique is used to describe by having a part signify the whole, sometimes confused with hyperbole. Slang examples are: wheels (for car), a skirt (for girl), a pad (for home).

Many forms of slang follow traditional principles of word origin: ~~as their pronunciation.~~

1. Onomatopoeia--This is the use of words in which their pronunciation suggests their meaning. In slang: whammo, yuk-yuk, slurp, a tick-tock (for watch). In standard: buzz, bang, whirr.

2. Reduplication--This principle uses the suggested repetition of sounds; as in slang: the beeby-jeebies, a boo-boo, a no-no. In standard: zig-zag, pitter-patter.

3. Compounding--This principle simply places two words in juxtaposition, at times combining them into one. In slang: plow jockey, egghead, hillbilly. In standard: blackberry, cupboard, stone wall.

4. Shortening--Though other methods exist, the most common form of shortening is simple abbreviation. In slang: teach (for teacher), hood, biochem. In standard: gym, taxi, math.

5. Conversion--This principle takes advantage of the lack of inflection in modern English to create new words by changing the function of form words or parts of speech. In slang: to stomach (from the noun form), to bug (from the noun form), a find (from the verb form), the ins and outs (from the adverb forms). In standard: to stone, to ink, to

6. Derivation--This very common principle of language growth forms new words through the affixing of prefixes and suffixes. The controversy still exists with finalize and normalize, but these may be considered slang by some. An interesting story surrounds the use of mini as a prefix. Mini comes from miniature and was not originally a prefix. We now find it as a prefix on mini-skirt. It has also been extended to mean anything which is small, such as mini-kid, mini-child, mini-dress, mini-bike. Micro, as a prefix, was the more logical choice for the fashion designers who gave us mini-skirt. There is some reference to a micro-skirt.

7. Acronyms--Acronyms are formed by using the initial letters of syllables of a phrase to form a new word. In slang: TV, SNAFU, OK.

Of the types of historical change in meaning which words undergo, only two principles are readily applicable to slang. Since linguistic change evolves so slowly, it generally takes too long to affect slang words with their ephemeral nature.

1. Hyperbole--Gross exaggerations occur in slang: jillion, super, the most. In standard: stupendous, unique, perfect.

2. Euphemism--Since the accepted use of slang is restricted, and the principle of euphemism involves the replacing of one term with a more acceptable one, slang does not

frequently qualify as a substitute term. In slang, one finds kicked the bucket for the accepted passed away, cracked for insane, and funny farm for mental institution.

Semantically, students can see the questionability of using slang when they try to define adjectives. Such ambiguous older adjectives as nice, swell, fair, neat, awful, keen, and sharp are being replaced by such newer terms as way-out, gone, kooky, square, cool, sick and groovy.¹⁸

Using the Dictionary as an Aid in Interpreting Literature

High school students are often confronted with difficult passages in literature anthologies. In some instances explanatory material or footnotes are included. If, however, no additional aids are provided by the textbook, the student can easily refer to his dictionary for the necessary interpretation.

The following exercise is developed from Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, written in Middle English.

With hym ther was his sone a yong Squier
 A lovyere and a lusty bachelor
 With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse
 Of twenty yeer of age he was I gesse
 Of his stature, he was of even lengthe
 And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe
 And he hadde been somtym in chyvachie
 In fflaundes, in artoys and pycardie
 And for hym weel, as of so little space
 In hope, to stonden in his lady grace
 Embrouded was he as it were a meede
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede

¹⁸Ernest Heiman, "The Use of Slang in Teaching Linguistics," English Journal, LVI (February, 1967), 249-252.

Syng ynge he was, or floytnge al the day
 He was as fresch, as is the monthe of may
 Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde
 Well koude he sitte on horse and faire ryde
 He koude songes make, and wel endite
 Juste and sek daunce, and weel purtreys and write.

The teacher can select random passages for interpretation. It is obvious that many spellings are quite similar to current spellings in Modern English. Students are asked to make an intelligent guess as to what they think the present spelling and meaning are. Students then use the dictionary etymology material to check their accuracy. They then paraphrase the statement.

1. With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in press
 (The young squire had such curly hair that it looked as if it had been laid in a press).
2. And wonderly delyvers
 (He spoke well; his words were well delivered).
3. Somtyme in chyvachie
 (He had spent some time in chivalry or he had spent some time as a cavalryman).
4. In hope, to stonden in his lady grace
 (He hoped to stand well in his lady's affection).
5. Embrouded was he as it were a meede
 (He was so embroidered as to look like a meadow).
6. Syngynge he was, or floytnge al the day
 (Singing or whistling all day).

7. And weel endite

(He could sing songs and recite poetry).

8. Juste and eeek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.

(He could joust and also dance and draw and write).

From An Essay on Man, Epistle 11 by Alexander Pope

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
 The proper study of mankind is man.
 Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great;
 With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
 With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
 In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
 Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
 Still by himself abused, or disabused;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;
 Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

1. The teacher instructs the students to write the above selection in prose, employing synonyms for the under-scored words. As the students re-write, they note any changes in meaning, in diction, in pronunciation between Pope's time and ours. They are urged to use the dictionary for each underscored word.

2. Each of the words below is from the same root as a word underlined in the above passage. The students write the root, its meaning, and the word from the passage.

	Root	Meaning	Word from Passage
errant	_____	_____	_____
doomsday	_____	_____	_____
hurry	_____	_____	_____
assumption	_____	_____	_____
apprehensive	_____	_____	_____
agile	_____	_____	_____
martyrdom	_____	_____	_____
instability	_____	_____	_____

3. The use of the word scan in the first line may seem odd to the student. Aside from the purpose of rhyme, students should account for Pope's using it.

Many words in earlier literature would be considered by modern poets too "poetic" to describe twentieth-century life. What word or words would a modern poet be more likely to use for each of the following words taken from William Wordsworth's poems, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," and "Ode on Intimations of Immortality?"

" . . . Tintern Abbey"	"Ode on Intimations . . ."
copse (line 24)	sallies (line 88)
corporeal (line 43)	primal (line 181)
sylvan (line 56)	relinquish (line 190)
interfuse (line 96) ¹⁹	fret (line 192) ¹⁹
exhortation (line 146)	
pastoral (line 158)	

¹⁹Robert C. Pooley and others, England in Literature, Teacher's Resource Book (Chicago, 1965), p. 122.

Dictionary and Literature Etymology

Characters and places named in literature often become in time a part of the general vocabulary and are used in a less specialized sense. For example, Milton, in Paradise Lost, described the capital of Hell and named it Pandemonium. Taken into the general vocabulary, pandemonium has come to mean a place of wild disorder, a wild uproar, or lawlessness. The following words have come from names and places in literature. Students examine the etymology of each word and its definition. They then can determine how the word attained its present meaning. Bowlerize, babbitry, nemesis, benedict, schlemiel, serendipity, chesterfield, and malapropism have origins in literature.²⁰

²⁰Ibid., p. 82.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The attention usually devoted to instruction in the use of dictionaries stresses spelling, meanings, and pronunciations. Surely these are conspicuous features of any dictionary, and it is desirable for students to be encouraged to turn to these works when they are confronted with a problem of this kind. But it has not been the sole purpose of the dictionary exercises presented in this course of study to treat the dictionary as a problem solver. The exercises have been compiled with the thought in mind that students learn that dictionaries are filled with interesting information from which one can derive much pleasure and instruction, even though the student may not be confronted with an urgent problem of any kind.

Dictionary competencies established by the Texas Education Agency have been employed as the basic competencies to be developed. In addition, Helen Olson's list of dictionary skills has supplemented the Texas Education Agency list.

The exercises to develop dictionary competencies outlined for the elementary grades generally reflect the traditional approach to dictionary study, while the exercises for the

secondary school are in keeping with the principles of linguistic science found in the introduction to this study.

The order of the presentation of the competencies and the accompanying exercise material for the elementary school should be followed precisely, with allowance for supplementation. Before introducing advanced dictionary techniques, the secondary teacher should appraise the dictionary competency level of the students. Allowance for review and maintenance activities for basic dictionary competencies is permitted in high school.

In summary, dictionaries are tools, and they are much more complicated and capable of many more uses than students suspect. Despite what is being done in dictionary study, however, the fact is easily observable that few students are able to use their dictionaries with efficiency. Certainly there must be few, very few, students who complete their schooling who are not familiar with the details of looking up words in dictionaries. Yet, it is one thing to find a word in a dictionary and quite another to understand fully the information given about it. Through the sequential spacing of dictionary skills mentioned in this study a student, upon completion of the work prescribed in this course of study, will be thoroughly familiar with the dictionary and its offerings.

In addition, and equally important, the student will know exactly what a dictionary is designed to do and what

it is not intended for. He will come to see it as a record of how words are actually used; this in turn will enable him to see the need for an updated dictionary and to realize that a dictionary "prescribes" only to the extent that its user wishes to conform to the constantly changing linguistic norms of his society.

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