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## **Pedagogical Practices of Lexicographers in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England.**

### **Abstract**

In compiling early dictionaries for the lower and middle classes, lexicographers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England adapted some of the pedagogical practices grammarians used in grammar books. Those practices included words illustrated with pictures, words used in sentences from literature and the Bible, and words explained with etymologies. Not all lexicographers used these pedagogical practices, but those who did were remarkably successful. Lexicographers changed the format of dictionaries and the way dictionaries were perceived by the users. I am going to examine pedagogical practices in dictionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from four perspectives: visual learning, linguistic information, encyclopedic format, and definitions of words.

**Keywords:** visible language, universal language, grammar, grammarians

### **1. Introduction**

In a previous paper I argued that during the seventeenth century in England, grammar books often included lexicons, and dictionaries hardly existed (Mitchell 1994). But by the eighteenth century, it was instead the dictionaries which included grammar, while grammar books had become much less important as linguistic authority. I also argued that in the context of early modern England the enterprises of grammarians and lexicographers were distinct, and that the developments in the relations of grammar and lexicography do not constitute a progression so much as they are an inversion: in the beginning, grammar embraced lexicography, and later, lexicography embraced grammar.

In this paper I want to continue this argument to illustrate further how lexicographers assumed authority in their pedagogical practices. In compiling early dictionaries for the lower and middle classes, lexicographers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England adapted some of the pedagogical practices grammarians used in grammar books. Those practices included words illustrated with pictures, words used in sentences from literature and the Bible, and words explained with etymologies. Not all lexicographers used these pedagogical principles, but those who did were remarkably successful. Thus, lexicographers changed the make up of dictionaries and the way dictionaries were perceived by the users. I am going to examine pedagogical practices in dictionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from four perspectives: visual learning, linguistic information, encyclopedic format, and definitions of words.

### **2. Visual learning of language**

Lexicographers adapted the pedagogical practice of the visual learning of language, that is, connecting a word with a picture, and thus to the real world. A practice that started out as an efficient method of teaching all subjects in the village schoolroom also became an effective

technique for teaching vocabulary and foreign languages and for illustrating more complex words in dictionaries.

Philosopher and educator Johann Amos Comenius developed a method of teaching language to lower and middle classes that helped shape how the seventeenth-century mind learned the lexicon. Comenius uses the pictorial method, sometimes referred to as a visible learning of language, to connect objects with the world. He claims that “words should not be learned apart from the objects to which they refer; since the objects do not exist separately and cannot be apprehended without words, but both exist and perform their functions together” (1642:204). Comenius believes that a child learns a new word most efficiently by seeing the word and the picture at the same time: “For by once looking upon an elephant, or at least, upon his picture, a man shall more easily, and firmly apprehend his forme, than if it had bene told him ten times over” (1642:14).

Comenius demonstrated his pictorial method by writing the popular *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1659), a book that went through many editions and translations. Although the value of Comenius's method was not to be fully recognized during his life, dictionaries and textbooks embraced the pedagogy of matching the picture with the word or concept, thus profoundly changing the teaching of language by giving the pictures abstract qualities. *Orbis* consists of a series of drawings in which each picture has numbers affixed to things Comenius wants to name. These numbers are keyed to corresponding vocabulary below the picture. He adds another cognitive level by incorporating emotions, feelings, and other abstract concepts. The picture becomes not only a vocabulary lesson, but a visible means of teaching all subjects: grammar, science, biology, mathematics, history, religion, philosophy, and literature. For example, lessons come from the pictures on such topics as air, village, fire, religion, games, and human anatomy. In the drawing *The Water* Comenius differentiates sources of water, such as fountain, brook, pond, and stream. He places each of the water sources in a sketch so that a child has a visual idea where to find them. A child learns grammar and vocabulary by what Comenius called “visible language.”

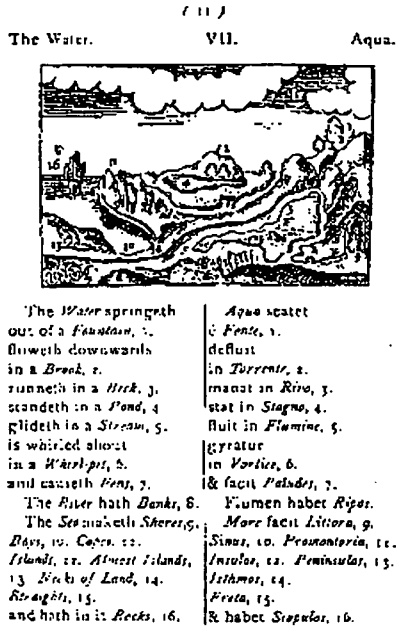


Figure 1. Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1659), Drawing and corresponding vocabulary words for water, Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

Such pictures offer a variety of vocabulary words that children would enjoy learning and using in sentences; of particular interest is the illustration for games. Overall, the lessons in *Orbis* reaffirm Comenius's commitment to teaching material relevant to a child's life. Comenius's new model of language instruction was also one of the first innovative dictionaries in that it taught words through pictures. The pedagogical practice of using visible language had its problems in the classroom. As a type of lexicographical reference, Comenius's *Orbis* was useful; as a subject text, it lacked unity. Students learned material in fragments and often were not able to integrate what they learned into a coherent whole. Pedagogues, however, still use the method today to teach children basic vocabulary in both their native languages and foreign languages. Parents and teachers may easily find visible learning books in local bookshops.

Lexicographer Nathan Bailey also uses drawings to illustrate words in *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730). On the title page he claims to include 500 drawings "for Giving a clearer Idea of those Figures, not so well apprehended by verbal Description". For example, he includes a drawing of a chevette, "an engine for raising guns or mortars into their carriages". The reader is able to understand the description with the aid of the drawing: "it is made of 2 pieces of wood about 4 foot long, standing upright upon a third which is square; they are about a foot asunder and parallel, being pierced with holes exactly opposite to one another,

with a bolt of iron". Lexicographers today still use drawings to define words in dictionaries. Some dictionaries like Webster's even include inserts of colorful pictures to illustrate a vocabulary entry.

### 3. Linguistic information

Until the seventeenth century, lexicographers approached linguistic information timidly. Grammar books were already defining parts of speech, specifying sounds and letters, and identifying etymologies, and listing both common and usual words in syllables. Grammarians attempted to standardize language and place usage tags on words. All these elements would eventually be found predominately in the dictionary.

Pedagogical practices of lexicographers were also influenced by the grammarians' invention of universal language schemes in the seventeenth century. Grammarians argued that language had to be free of ambiguities and that it had to be practical enough to learn. They also insisted that a language be harmonious and that it signify the thing each word represented in the natural world. Each word was to incorporate a complex and abstract meaning of ideas. Grammarians experimented with numbers, symbols, signs, music, and pictures, thus producing some unusual systems. What all these projects had in common was that grammars used the same principles, even though they built widely varying models of language. Most of these principles were eventually incorporated in dictionary entries.

Lexicographical practices developed from books such as *A Common Writing* (1647) where Francis Lodowyck created an artificial language made up of signs. He argues that his language scheme is an hieroglyphical representation of words that people can communicate with universally. He selects radical words which he divides into root-words. In a second group he divides the parts of speech (substantives, pronouns, adjectives, plus one of adverbs, prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions) into four categories. The radical words are made up of radical characters. Prefixes and suffixes of radical characters change the word to fit the sentence. For example, he makes the infinitive "to drink" with the root-sign of an upside "e." To change the word, he adds various curving marks to the upside part of the "e," thus getting drinker, drink, drinking, and drunkard.

- Ʒ = the drinker
- Ʒ = drink
- Ʒ = the drinking
- Ʒ = the drunkard

Lodowyck makes other parts of speech, such as adverbs, by inventing signs. According to Lodowyck, he devised an artificial language that was an "expression or outward presentation of the mind" (21). The value of his markings of words for parts of speech, pronunciation, and meaning carried some sound pedagogical practices for dictionary makers. They had a model for marking accents on words, standardizing spelling, and displaying prefixes and suffixes.

(21)  
The disjunctive sign is this stroke, (1) drawn through the nominal sign thus, (2) as following, (3) a small drinking bout.

The 9. Section.  
The figure of the three sort of nouns adjective, is this, (4) thus varied

7 na 7	applied thus,		the loving.
			the beloved.
			the lovely.

The substitutional figure for the declaration, this, (5) subscribed thus, K is declare any thing blam.

The 10. Section.

The comparative encreasing sign is this, (6) and for the superlative, the same doubled, thus, (7) The comparative decreasing figure is the former, turned thus, (8) and for the superlative, the same doubled thus, (9) applied as under,

13	lovelyes.	14	loveliest.
15	lovelyeth.	16	loveliesth.

17	greater drinker.	18	lesse drinker.
19	greatest drinker.	20	least drinker.

D 1 The

(22)  
The privative figure is this, (10) and applied thus, left lovely.

The 11. Section.

The adverbial figure is this, (11) applied thus, drinkingly.

Both Comparisons are hereto applied thus: drinkinglyer, lesse drinkingly, &c.

The privative thus: undrinkingly.

The Radical Adverbs Characterized, as followeth.

of a manner.	of place.	of the manner.
when a	where b	how c
then d	there e	thus f
now g	here h	of thing i
perfectly j	her k	whether l
or soon m	acore n	why o
early p	yeardet q	
late r		
affirming.	Denyng.	Denying.
yea (4)	no (12)	if (7)

The 12. Section.

The figure of the personal pronounes, is this (1) For

Figure 2: Francis Lodowycyk, *A Common Writing* (1647), Symbols for composing Lodowycyk's writing scheme, Reproduced by courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Lodowycyk's invented language scheme served as a model for lexicographers to build entries in dictionaries with some consistency and completeness. For instance, prefixes and suffixes are placed on words to make them a different form, such as in the entry of the word "drink". The problem, of course, arose with the irregular forms of English that grammarians thought they could translate into artificial languages, but ultimately realized they could not.

Other universal schemes were invented. Cave Beck devised a model based on numbers, claiming that it would be quicker to learn and use. In *The Universal Character* (1657) he states that he wants to avoid the obtuse, confusing symbols presented by symbolic writing and hieroglyphs. He claims in "To the Reader" to avoid "all Equivocal words, Anomalous variations and superfluous synonyms (with which all Languages are encumbered and rendered difficult to the learner)". His elementary scheme of arithmetical numbers was supposed to improve upon all defective spoken languages.

Beck sets up the parts of speech according to cases with numbers in the following example of a noun (1657:12).

Nominative	an abater	p3
Genitive	(of) an abater	pa3
Dative	(to) an abater	pe3
Accusative	(a or the) abater	pi3
Vocative	(o) abater	po3
Ablative	(from an) abater	pu3

Nominative	the abaters	p3s
Genitive	of the abaters	pa3s
Dative	to the abaters	pe3s
Accusative	the abaters	pi3s
Vocative	(o) abaters	po3s
Ablative	from the abaters	pu3s

He states that to make the feminine one should add /f/ to the vowels, as Nom. pf3, Gen. paf3, Dat. pef3. For verbs he shows the following example.

I abate	thou abatest	he abates, or abeth
ab 3	eb 3	ib 3
we abate	ye abate	they abate
ab 3 s	eb 3 s	ib 3 s

Beck also lists nouns that are capable of degree of comparisons (1657:13).

bold	q 317
bolder	qq 317
boldest	qqq 317

To the numbers he adds letters to show tense, case, gender, and number. He assigns nouns the letters p, q, r, or x before the arithmetical figures. Vowels are a, e, i, at the beginning of a syllable, followed by the consonants b, c, d, f, g, and l after them mean the three persons of the pronouns and the six tenses of the verbs. An example of "Honor thy Father and thy Mother" would look like this: "leb2314 p2477 and pf2477". Pronunciation would be "leb toreónfo, pee tofosénsen, and pif tofosénsen". His system is too complicated to be practical, although grammarians looked upon it with linguistic interest in the same way they did at Lodowyck's invented universal language.

Some of the pedagogical practices grammarians used to teach language as a universal language were also used by lexicographers. Grammarian and lexicographer Elisha Coles compiled *An English Dictionary* (1692) by assuming that words can be defined according to the principle that all language has common elements. For example, he explains difficult terms from divinity, husbandry, philosophy, law, and mathematics, and he records thousands of hard words excluded in other dictionaries. He defines words by looking at universal language in the following ways: etymological derivation, rules of grammar, and pronunciation. Coles had previously discussed these elements in his grammar books. The anonymous author of *A Vocabulary or Pocket Dictionary* (1765) also follows the pedagogical practices of evaluating words for their universal qualities. He discusses inflections (nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns) and the ones without inflections (adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, interjections). He, however, adds another level to teaching language: he considers custom and the best writers in determining preferred usage. This lexicographer adds even more to his linguistic teaching with a third pedagogical practice: he includes syntax in which he talks about the incorrect word order and the preferred word order and then supports his explanations with clear examples. Another lexicographer who adapts linguistic practices of grammarians is John Entick. In *The New Spelling Dictionary* (1765) he teaches a student "to write and pronounce the English tongue with ease and propriety". On the title page he intends that each word be "accented according to its just and natural pronunciation; the part of speech is properly

distinguished". For the convenience of the user the "pocket companion" has "prefixed, a grammatical introduction to the English tongue". Lexicographers take on more linguistic authority in the eighteenth century as they begin including information that was exclusively in the grammarian's territory in the previous century.

#### 4. Encyclopedic format

Lexicographers saw how successful grammar books were that included diverse information. The dictionary that had only hard words with a short definition had to compete on the market with grammar books that had encyclopedic information. Texts such as William Mather's *The Young Man's Companion* (1695) contained information about farming, grammar, arithmetic, shorthand, land measurement, physics, chyrurgery, law, marriage, children, illnesses, and wine making. The eighteenth century saw a continuing demand for the encyclopedic grammar texts. In *Every Young Man's Companion: Containing Directions for Spelling, Reading, and Writing English* (1765) William Gordon combines grammar and composition with gardening, farming, and measuring. The market sales were an indicator that people wanted to buy what would give them the most for their money. If a grammar text had other material, the purchaser was getting a bargain. Grammarians inadvertently challenged lexicographers: give the consumer more for his money.

Henry Cockeram's *The English Dictionarie: or, An Interpreter of hard English Words* (1632) competed strongly with encyclopedic grammars. Cockeram writes an all-purpose dictionary for clerks, merchants, scholars, women, and foreigners (A3). He claims that his dictionary serves as a "foundation of a building leveled and laid". He proudly offers extensive topics such as the following: "Treating of Gods and Goddesses, Men and Women, Boys and Maids, Giants and Devils, Birds and Beasts, Monsters and Serpents, Wels and Rivers, Herbs, Stones, Trees, Dogges, Fishes, and the like". Edward Phillips' *World of Words or English Dictionary* (1658, 1671, 1678, 1706, 1720) covers hard words that come from other languages, terms from the arts and sciences, significations of proper names, mythology, and poetical fictions, historical relations, geographical descriptions of most countries and cities of the world, and many other useful subjects.

A similar dictionary with a wide range of information is Benjamin Martin's *Lingua Britannica Reformata: Or, a New English Dictionary* (1749), Martin covers a wide range of linguistic material. He first discusses topics under the following headings: universal, etymological, orthographical, orthoepical, diacritical, philological, mathematical, and philosophical. He places at the beginning of the dictionary "An Introduction, Containing a Physico-Grammatical Essay on the Propriety and Rationale of the English Tongue, deduced from a General Idea of the Nature and Necessity of Speech for Human Society; a Particular View of the Genius and Usage of the Original Mother Tongues". His introduction includes a history of the English language.

#### 5. Definitions of words

The early English lexicographers compiled their dictionaries on lists of words they thought people did not know. Robert Cawdrey compiled *Table Alphabeticall* (1604) on hard usual words. John Bullokar's *English Expositor* (1616) and Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie*

(1650) followed the practice of listing obscure words. Often the lists of hard unusual words were so difficult that the reader had trouble deciphering them, thus defeating the purpose of having a dictionary. In contrast, grammar and spelling books had been carrying lists of ordinary words for most of the seventeenth century. These lists were meant as a learning device for vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, but they also served as a dictionary. Many grammar books did not define words on the list because the schoolmaster went over the words orally in class. Thus, the practice in spelling and grammar books was detrimental to lexicographical practices because of the missing information. Lexicographers would use this practice in their attempts to make dictionaries more useful.

A dictionary, though, was not a textbook and did not have the advantage of the schoolmaster teaching the material in the classroom. J. K.'s attempts to follow the pedagogical practice of grammar texts in his *New English Dictionary* (1702) and compile a work that in many ways imitated the spelling books of N. Strong's *England's Perfect School-Master* (1697), R. Brown's *English School Reform'd* (1700), and E. Young's *The Compleat English-Scholar* (1680). Unfortunately J. K. followed the format of spelling books too closely; he includes derivatives, related words, and common words without explanation (Starnes and Noyes 1991:72-73). J. K. also breaks with another practice of earlier dictionaries, grammar texts, and spelling books. In the preface he claims that he will not follow the practice of filling the pages with obscure words such as the ones Elisha Coles listed. Instead of "Dimidietas", a lexicographer should use "half." He complains that the "plain Country-man, in looking for a common English Word, amidst so vast a Wood of such as are above the reach of his Capacity, must needs lose the sight of it, and be extremely discouraged, if not forc'd to give over the search". J. K. argues for common words that Englishmen can understand when they look for the correct spelling and definition. Dictionaries should have, according to him, words that are "now commonly us'd either in Speech, or in the familiar way of Writing Letters, &c." but should avoid words that are "obsolete, barbarous, foreign or peculiar to the several Counties of England". In a forward move, lexicographers like J. K. are improving on the practice of grammarians. They are making dictionaries accessible and informative.

Another practice lexicographers adapted from grammarians was marking the accentuation of words. Before Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721), grammar texts and spelling books marked the accent, but previous dictionaries did not. Perhaps Bailey was influenced by Thomas Dyche's *A Guide to the English Tongue* (1709) and *A Dictionary* (1723) (Starnes and Noyes 1991:110). Dyche made several improvements in spelling and pronunciation guides. For example, he introduced his system of pronunciation in the *Guide to the English Tongue* grammar text. In it he grouped words according to syllables and stress, such as words with two syllables accented on the first syllable and words of two syllables with accents on the second syllable. He also invented the double accent ("") for words that had a pronounced double consonant (thus, mu" dle for mud" dle). Also, one must consider that as the vernacular developed in a society that was moving toward industrialization, vocabulary became more technical and complex. People also demanded a standardized pronunciation along with standardization of rules of grammar. Dyche is also credited with the innovation of opening his dictionary with a nine-page "A Compendious English Grammar" that explains parts of speech, declension, conjugation, and comparison. The compendium of grammar was spotty at most and wordy in places, but it did set a practice for other lexicographers to include a section on grammar in their dictionaries.



Lexicographers moved toward another practice of grammarians: defining words by way of illustration. An effective way of teaching vocabulary, spelling, or pronunciation was with examples from literature or the Bible. In *You Shall Make Latin . . . Together with the Youth's Visible Bible* (1675), grammarian Elisha Coles provides a series of drawings from the Bible demonstrating vocabulary words from Bible verses. On other pages he divides the page into three columns. Column one has the verse in English, the narrow second column names the Bible verse, and the third column states the verse in Latin. For example, there is a picture of a man vomiting (1675:130). The left column states the vernacular: "Vomit: The morsel which thou hast eaten, thou shalt vomit up, and lose thy sweet words". The center column names the verse: Prov. 23.8. The right column states the vernacular in Latin. The student reads each quotation and learns many skills at once: grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and reading. Also, Coles is able to teach Latin translation through the examples. This text was particularly successful with middle-class parents who wanted their children to learn both grammar and morals from the examples. Lexicographers, such as Bailey, followed this pedagogical practice of including a drawing of the word entry.

## 6. Conclusion

Lexicographers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England changed the format of dictionaries and the way users perceived the reference book. By adapting some of the pedagogical practices that grammarians used in grammar books, lexicographers were able to compile more accurate, comprehensive dictionaries. Grammarians provided models in their texts for teaching visible language, linguistic concepts, encyclopedic information, and definitions. Since students had to go to grammar texts to get most of this information, dictionaries were not a priority item in the marketplace. However, once lexicographers began incorporating the needed information in their dictionaries, their circulation rose. Dictionaries took the lead in standardizing spelling, grammar, and pronunciation, a feat that grammar texts never quite accomplished.

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