Guides to tomorrow's English

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A review of the kinds of dictionaries now being created to cope with English as a universal language

An elaborated update of a paper given to the Dictionary Research Group of the Japanese Association of College Teachers of English (JACET), at Waseda University, Tokyo, August 1997.

IN ORDER to talk about tomorrow's English, and works of reference that could serve it, I would like first of all to say something about yesterday's English and today's English, and the works of reference associated with *them*. Having done that, I will try to project some lines forward into the early twenty-first century, despite the awful risks of futurology. Some things can, I believe, be usefully said towards the end of the 1990s.

Yesterday's English

My first point is that 'yesterday's English' is not really so long ago. Conventionally, the beginnings of the English language are dated from the arrival of the Angles and Saxons in the island of Britain 1,500 years ago. However, the dialect complex at that time (much later referred to as 'Old English' and 'Anglo-Saxon') was utterly remote from today's usage, and its life cycle ended in the twelfth century. It was in fact a predecessor language, as distinct from English as we now know it as Latin is from French.

The dialect complex that followed Anglo-Saxon – and continued till around 1500 – was later called Middle English, and was hardly the same language as what preceded it or what followed. It also had its own detectable life cycle, and is most notably the outcome of hybridization between an indigenized French and a Scandinavianized Anglo-Saxon. The dividing line between *that* deeply diverse complex and the English I wish to discuss here was a cluster of developments that included the Great Vowel Shift, the development of a print culture, the stabilization of orthography under the influence of that culture, and the emergence in the sixteenth century of a high cultural variety based on the dialect(s) of London and influenced by the written usage of the Chancery (the Lord Chancellor's court). The term 'Standard English'

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is often used by present-day scholars to label the high London English which emerged at that time, but this term did not in fact come into use until the later eighteenth century, when it was applied to the 'good' or 'proper' usage of the educated and socially dominant people of that time. This is a variety that we still comfortably understand today, as for example when we read the unadapted novels of Jane Austen.

So, for my purposes here, 'yesterday's English' ran from Elizabethan to earlier Georgian times, and 'today's English' has been running from the early nineteenth century onward: varieties that philologists call 'Early Modern' and 'Modern' English. The lexicography of Early Modern differs from later dictionary-making in being primarily geared to other languages. Thus, in the late sixteenth century there were unidirectional bilingual dictionaries such as William Salesbury's Welsh-to-English compilation of 1547 and John Florio's Italian-to-English compilation of 1599, and in the earlier seventeenth century there were a number of so-called *hard-word dictionaries*, which I would like to call 'crypto-bilingual', because they served to explain the foreignisms that were pouring into English at the time – mainly from Latin – to people who did not want to fall behind the latest linguistic fashion. Such works included the first ever 'proper' English dictionary, Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* (1604), John Bullokar's *The English Expositour* in 1623, and Edward Phillips's *The New World of English Words* in 1658. The broad procedure with such books was to take an Anglicized foreignism – usually polysyllabic and from Latin – and gloss it in the everyday language (as for example where *acquisition* is defined by Cawdrey as 'getting, purchasing').

One can make a useful comparison between these Early Modern works and genres in Japanese lexicography today: with on the one hand the mainstream unidirectional bilingual English-into-Japanese dictionaries for students and on the other those works that list and define *gairaigo* terms (foreignisms) in Japanese. Such terms are nowadays overwhelmingly drawn from English, as with the abbreviations *sekuhara* (from 'sexual harassment') and *wapuro* (from 'word processor'). The inflow of Latin into English in Renaissance times can also be compared to the inflow, centuries ago, of Chinese words into Japanese. It would appear therefore that the same kind of lexicographical needs can arise on islands off the shores of continents on opposite sides of the world, but at very different times and with very different realizations.

Today's English

Today's English came into being around 1800, when the stream of standardizing English had already divided between the United Kingdom on the one side and the United States on the other, the latter's usage being consolidated in relative isolation by c.1900. By the end of the nineteenth century, the English language complex had become extremely widespread and influential, the outcome of such forces as seaborne mercantilism, the Industrial Revolution, the British Empire, and the enlargement of the US, which was in linguistic (and other) terms an extramural extension of that Empire. At about the same time Japan was opening its doors to the world, as a result of which it has from the start been conscious of two national approaches to Standard English and its dictionaries, whereas for example mainland Europe and Africa were in the main conscious of only one, the dominant British variety.

The lexicography of today's English arose equally in both of the Atlantic traditions, the beginnings of each being identified with a single mythologized man: Samuel Johnson in the UK and Noah Webster in the US. But where the Americans have kept the Webster name vigorously and competitively alive, the British have fossilized and virtually forgotten Johnson, except as a wordy and rather pompous eccentric. Most general dictionaries in the nineteenth century, following in the Johnsonian and Websterian traditions, were self-help books more than school books, but a tradition of dictionaries for schools as well as homes established itself at an early stage in the US. There was also a good deal of reprinting and cross-fertilization between the UK and US, but even so rather different kinds of dictionary had emerged by the end of the century in three distinct locations: in England (with the primary focus as time passed on Oxford); in Scotland (characterized in particular by Chambers in Edinburgh as 'publishers for the people'); and in the United States (with its centre of gravity in Springfield, Mass., the home of the G. & C. Merriam company, which promoted books in the main Webster tradition).

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Tomorrow's English

Paradoxically, *tomorrow's* English and its dictionaries do not quite belong to the future: rather, they had their beginnings around the Second World War, when some observers were already making statements about English not simply as the language of an ageing worldwide empire and of a vast republic in its prime, but as a language that girdled the world. At least one such commentator, the best-selling educational writer Lancelot Hogben, referred to this linguistic juggernaut not as 'English' at all but as 'Anglo-American', acknowledging in this way a core duality within the international complex (in *The Mother Tongue*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1964, p. 17). Although we talk freely in the 1990s about going 'global', the globalization of English in general and Standard English in particular began decades ago, passing almost unnoticed by lexicographers whose attention was focused on the doings of the UK or the US. And this supranational state of affairs will soon be altogether clear when the world's linguistic demography shows that more non-natives than natives use English with educated success.

Such things were not so easy to see between 1940 and 1970. In that period, the British and the Americans were first of all waging a hot war against a German-speaking European empire then for decades afterwards a cold war against a Russian-speaking Communist empire with a huge Chinese-speaking partner. The first competitor is long gone, the strength of the second is now dissipated, and the global impact of the third as a force in its own right is as yet uncertain. Many international bodies, however, currently use English as a key language (the UN, the EU) or as *the* key language (NATO, the Commonwealth, CARICOM, ASEAN) in running their affairs. Even speakers of such other world languages as Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi-Urdu, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili use English extensively, and as a result the rapid growth of a stratum of linguistic universalization is clearer now than ever before – and is proceeding apace. [For details and comment, see David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge 1997), David Graddol's *The Future of English?* (The British Council, 1997), and my own *The English Languages* (Cambridge, 1998).]

A cardinal development for English lexicography at large was the emergence in the 1930s of dictionaries entirely in English for foreign learners of the standard language. The pioneers who compiled these books were British: pre-eminently Michael West (who did his seminal work in Bengal, in India), A.S. Hornby and his colleagues E. V. Gatenby and H. Wakefield (whose key work was done in Japan), and – importantly but often forgotten – C. K. Ogden (the creator of Basic English, in Cambridge in England).

Hornby was influenced by the lexicological work of Harold E. Palmer at IRET (the Institute for Research in English Teaching) in Tokyo. The dictionary that Hornby and his colleagues produced was published (after they left Japan) by Kaitakusha in 1942, as the *Idiomatic and Syntactic Dictionary of English*. After the war, it travelled to England, where it was re-published by Oxford University Press as *A Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (*LDCE*, 1948), then in a revised edition as the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (*ALDCE*, 1963), and in a further revision and development as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (*OALDCE*, 1974), since when there has been a fourth edition in 1989 and a fifth in 1995. Here we see the institutionalization – indeed the Oxfordization – of a book that initially had no link whatever with OUP, which has not by and large perpetuated the memory of the Japanese connection. In its several incarnations, this work has sold over 20 million copies (a figure far beyond any of its rivals) and has had a vast impact not only on learners' dictionaries at large but also on perceptions of English as an international language. It is the Bible of the genre and the pre-eminent exemplar of the view that one should seek explanations for the words of a target foreign language in that language itself. This view derives from the language-teaching reforms in Europe in the 1880s, and is one that I have never been entirely comfortable with.

I just used the phrase 'English as an international language' (EIL), which is not the same as 'English as a foreign language' (EFL) or 'English as a second language' (ESL). It is wider in its scope than both and fits in with a development which has recently become widely recognized and is now probably irreversible: that everyone who uses English (native or foreign) has to negotiate its standard forms at an international level. Mikie Kiyoi, a Japanese working for an international organization in Paris, writing in the *International Herald Tribune* ('Dear English Speakers: Please Drop the Dialects': 3

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November 1995) spoke up for the non-Anglophone world as follows, when she invited native speakers to leave their dialects behind when attending international gatherings:

> I have to live with this unfortunate fate: My native tongue is remote from European languages. Yet I believe I have the right to request that my Anglo-American friends who are involved in international activities not abuse their privilege, even though they do not do so intentionally. First of all I would like them to know that the English they speak at home is not always an internationally acceptable English. Nowadays, nonnatives learn English through worldwide media such as CNN or BBC World Service. Whether CNN's English is a good model is arguable. My point is that most nonnatives do not learn dialects such as Scottish or Australian ... I sincerely believe there exists a cosmopolitan English – a lingua franca, written or spoken – that is clearly different from what native English speakers use unconsciously in their daily life. There are also good manners that go along with a cosmopolitan English: not monopolizing the floor, giving equal opportunity to usually silent nonnatives and refraining from interrupting nonnatives when they do speak. We nonnatives are desperately trying to learn English; each word pronounced by us represents our blood, sweat and tears. Our English proficiency is tangible evidence of our achievement of will, not an accident of birth. Dear Anglo-Americans, please show us you are also taking pains to make yourselves understood in an international setting. [Paragraphs conflated.]

Here, native speakers are seen as needing to adjust linguistically, socially, and culturally in international situations just as much as anyone else: speaking with care, avoiding unnecessary idioms and slang, and toning down their regionalisms: that is, using – or aiming at – an International Standard English (ISE) rather than at any of their own particular 'Englishes'. To a significant degree no one has ISE as a mother tongue. Indeed, it cannot be anyone's mother tongue – it is too artificial and artful for that, and (as yet) it is far from rigorously standardized. What it does have, however, is enormous and increasing prestige. Two markers of this in Japan are, firstly, its presence on signs, packets, and a host of other things and, secondly, its Japanization as *wasei eigo* ('Made-in-Japan English').

Tomorrow's dictionaries

An unusual but trend-setting development in British lexicography emerged in the 1990s out of a short-lived alliance in the later 1980s between the Scottish publisher W. & R. Chambers and the English publisher Cambridge University Press. At that time, Chambers wanted better worldwide distribution of its products and Cambridge wanted a dictionary list to compete with Oxford, Longman, and Collins, as a consequence of which a joint imprint, Chambers Cambridge, was created in 1986. As part of this shared endeavour, a fully international advanced learner's dictionary was to be compiled by Chambers, with the title *The Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (*CIDE*), and I was engaged as its editor-in-chief.

A great deal of work was done on the project despite difficulties in operating the joint imprint. The partnership failed in 1990 for reasons unconnected with *CIDE* itself, and as part of the settlement each company inherited the project's policy-and-planning documents and embryo database, to be used if each so chose as the foundation for dictionaries to be developed separately. For reasons that included difficulties relating to the collapse of the joint imprint, illness in my family, and my editorship of *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, I did no further work with either company on the project. Paul Procter became editor-in-chief of a *CIDE* that was re-worked and completed in Cambridge and published in 1995. In the meantime, Chambers was taken over by the French company Larousse, which had earlier taken over the London reference publisher Harrap. A re-worked Chambers-Harrap version of the joint-imprint proto-dictionary came out not as a Chambers title, however, but as *Harrap's Essential English Dictionary* (also 1995), with Anne Seaton (an editor on the original *CIDE* project) as Senior Editor. This book was presented not as an advanced but an intermediate dictionary. Both titles have, however, emphasized their internationalism, in the spirit of the original project.

International dictionaries may however be localized. In 1997, Federal Publications of Singapore brought out the *Times-Chambers Essential English Dictionary*, whose introductory remarks describe a three-way project among Chambers-Harrap, Federal, and the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. Chambers had co-operated on various titles with Federal long before becoming Chambers-Harrap, under the 'Times-Chambers' joint name. The

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introduction to the *TCEED* distinguishes between 'Core English' (Standard British and American), English words specific to Singapore and Malaysia (marked 'SME' in the text), and regional words adopted into SME (listed in an appendix). There is in addition a brief account of SME (including pronunciation and grammar) and a list of further reading. Such *localization* of a universal learner's dictionary has immense potential worldwide.

We see here two complementary processes at work: *globalization* (books for all people and places) and *localization* (the same books customized for one country or group of countries that have close linguistic associations). Linked to these is a third process, unidirectional *bilingualization* (now widespread and likely to increase), in which the entire explanatory content of a major work is translated, so that it is available to users in both English and their mother tongue: a process with which I do feel comfortable. This has been a marked success with Chinese learners, as in the cases of the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1976 onward) and the *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* (1981), and has also done well with various titles in Japanese, Arabic, and Spanish-language markets. The opportunities for profitable extensions here are considerable, alongside more traditionally bidirectional bilingual works of reference.

Related in turn to straightforward bilingualization is an as yet modest but noteworthy fourth process, *semibilingualization*, in which translation equivalents for dictionary headwords are dropped economically into white space already available on the pages or provided in slightly recast pages, offering the student quick fixes in terms of the key mother-tongue meanings of the English words. Pioneers in this field are Lionel Kernerman and his son Ilan in Israel, with the Kernerman Semi-Bilingual Dictionaries, which add other-language items to straightforward English-language dictionaries, as for example: (1) Ya'acov Levy and Raphael Gefen, editors, *Passport: English Hebrew Learner's Dictionary*, Kernerman & Kahn, Israel (1996), based on the *Passport English Learner's Dictionary*; (2) Catherine M. Schwarz, M. Anne Seaton, and Jadwiga Fisiak, editors, the *English Polish Learner's Dictionary*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw (1996), based on the *Chambers Concise Usage Dictionary* (1985), with a Polish-English Index and a Phonetic Index; and (3) the *Password English Dictionary for Speakers of French*, also based on the *Chambers Concise Usage Dictionary*, and with a team of French-language editors under Michèle Morin in Quebec (1989).

So, there we have four pragmatic developments associated with tomorrow's English: *globalization*, *localization*, *bilingualization*, and *semibilingualization*. And with their emergence we may have entered the twilight stage of the long-standing pedagogical view that Standard English is best learned through direct use (immersion), unmediated by the student's own language(s).

There is also no shortage of developments in native-speaker lexicography, developments so closely associated with the autonomy of nation-states that I will call the process that especially interests me here *nationalization*, and will take as prime examples works created in Australia and Canada, although New Zealand and South Africa also bear watching. Until recently, we have generally conceived of International English in terms of two main varieties and their standards: British in traditional and American in contemporary terms. Now, however, Australian has broken free, with norm-related institutions of its own, including the Macquarie dictionaries (based at Macquarie University in Sydney) and government and other style guides (centred on Canberra). These include the *Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* (1995), edited by Pam Peters at Macquarie – who has now been engaged by Cambridge University Press to produce a *world* style guide, based among other things on computer corpora and the Langscape Survey questionnaires which began appearing in *English Today* in January 1998.

Canada is currently in the process of breaking free. Its first 'national' dictionaries were Canadian editions of American dictionaries (comparable to Australian 'national' editions of British dictionaries). Now, however, there are indigenous Canadian dictionaries, and Oxford University Press Canada has recently brought out the *Guide to Canadian English Usage* (1997), edited by Margery Fee (a research colleague of Pam Peters and the Canadian editor-contributor for *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, 1992) and Janice McAlpine (of the School of English at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario). In addition, last month Oxford University Press Canada published the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (Managing Director Susan Froud) with the promotional banner

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'Defining Canadian English'. This work clearly sets out to do for Canada what the *Macquarie* has done for Australia. See also pp. 35–40. Once such nations establish their own dictionaries and style guides (whether the publsher is entirely indigenous or a transplant from the former 'mother country'), their English becomes endonormative and their standard home-based – or, to use a term popularized in Canada in the 1980s, when the constitution finally moved from London to Ottawa, they have 'patriated' their usage.

The next and last process I'd like to identify here can be called *regionalization*, where the region is much larger than a single state – and the only example I know for this development does not (yet) exist. However, the project in question is radical in various ways. First, it proposes to produce a native-speaker-style dictionary for a huge and varied area where there are few traditional native speakers: Asia or, more properly, South and East Asia, where there are few pan-regional lingua francas. Second, it too has been undertaken by Macquarie in Australia, perhaps as part of a policy of (as it were) Asianizing Australia and Australianizing Asia: fitting Australian English more firmly into the Asian context (and its markets). Certainly one sees here a process in which (massively, from India and Malaysia to Japan and Korea) the middle classes are welcoming English into work and home *as an Asian language*. The Macquarie approach to this novel situation has already led to related lexicographical conferences in Bangkok and Manila.

None of which exhausts the possibilities. Everything I have mentioned so far has been traditionally alphabetic. There is also, however, a surge in *thematization*: that is, of works with formats more or less like the traditional *Roget's Thesaurus* and my own *Longman Lexicon*. I am aware of at least six new works more or less in this area, published by three publishers: (1) Three bilingual works in the Cambridge *Wordroutes* series, general editor Michael McCarthy, chief editor Elizabeth Walter: the *Cambridge Anglais-Français Word Routes: Lexique thématique de l'anglais courant* (1994), the *Cambridge Inglés-Español Word Selector: Diccionario temático del inglés contemporaneo* (1995), and the *Cambridge Angliká-Elliniká Word Routes* (1996); (2) The two *Activator* volumes by Longman, director Della Summers, managing editor Michael Rundell, the *Longman Language Activator: The World's First Production Dictionary* (1993) and the *Longman Essential Activator: Put Your Ideas into Words* (1997); and (3) Hugh Trappes-Lomax's *Oxford Learner's Wordfinder Dictionary* (1997). These, it seems to me, are more than just straws in the wind.

The eight *-izations*

There is no shortage of *-izations*: *globalization*, *localization*, *bilingualization*, *semibilingualization*, *nationalization*, *regionalization*, and *thematization*. But the most awesome of them all has been under way for some time now everywhere, touching on all the others and on almost every aspect of our lives: *electronicization*. This has had at least three stages: (1) From the 1960s, with the use of computers to make dictionary-making less laborious and more consistent, primarily in keying in, storing, and printing; (2) From the 1980s, on the one hand, with the use of desktop computers by compilers and editors, and, on the other, with the development of corpus linguistics and concordancing, providing more extensive and reliable data on how words work, most particularly in print, than ever before; (3) Increasingly, with works of on-line reference without any equivalents on paper – some hundreds of them already set free in cyberspace and (especially in the case of non-copyright technical lists and definitions) capable of rapid and cheap improvement and updating by means of feedback from their own users. (See Li Lan, 'Cyberdictionaries', *ET*54, Apr 98.)

Because such electronic activities are still in their infancy, they often consist of standard A–Z lists that could just as easily have been made available on paper – and may indeed originally have been paper products whose virtue for Internet purposes is that they are safely out of copyright. But hypertextuality is increasingly available within and among such products, so that users can pass freely from one lexical region to the next, wherever they may be based, whether within a single work of e-reference or from one to another. This lusty cyberbaby will, I suspect, soon outgrow A–Z storage and retrieval, and we will see words defined in sets, in the company they naturally keep, and supported by a rich supply of citations drawn from concordanced corpora, every item reached by menu or by hotlink. Oh brave new world, that has such things in store for us. ET

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