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Utilizing English Lexicographic Models in the Compilation of Arabic Dictionaries

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا

إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

صَادَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمَ

الآية [٣٢] سورة البقرة

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Lexicography is the theory and practice of making dictionaries (Crystal, 1988: 108). Early dictionaries were prepared before knowledge about language had become systematized. Early lexicographers were considered mere practitioners of an art rather than scientists, as they depended on guesswork and intuition in forming definitions. Their attitude was one of legislation because any language usage must be judged either as correct or incorrect (Halsey, 1987: 533). However, through the years, lexicography has become a well-established discipline which has its own practices and rules. In fact, the main aim of lexicography is the compilation and production of dictionaries that aim at defining words as well as giving different kinds of linguistic information.

1- Rationale for the Research

It is well-known that classical Arabic is very rich in its vocabulary and meanings and many ancient Arabs took pride in this fact. Thus, many linguists collected the vocabulary of the Arabic language and began the process of compiling dictionaries. They began with concise subject dictionaries about particular topics such as "trees" and "horses" and then moved on to general ones. Thus, Arabs were among other pioneers in this field such as Sumerians, Babylonians, ancient Chinese, and ancient Indians. Then, the Western world began to follow in their footsteps. But, in spite of this, this science lagged behind in the Arab world while it continued to progress in the west.

Arabic dictionaries, whether old or new, have many disadvantages such as obscurity and circularity. Also the information found in them usually complement each other. Moreover, incomplete information in a given dictionary can be found. In fact, no serious attempts were made to

improve them or to compile modern Arabic dictionaries based on proper modern linguistic and lexicographic bases and to present full information about words and their meanings. Therefore, there is a need for updated monolingual Arabic dictionaries are needed as Arabs are in desperate need of this kind of information about their language.

2- Limitations of the Research

In this research the "Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary" (henceforth OALD) and the "Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English" (henceforth LDOCE) are taken as models of good monolingual English dictionaries and the various kinds of linguistic information and the method of presenting them, using proper lexicographic principles, are analyzed. Then, "Moheet Al-Moheet", "Al-Waseet" and "Idah Mokhtar Al-Sihah" are taken as examples of Arabic Dictionaries, and again the linguistic information found in them and the methods in which they are presented are analyzed, but this time with the aim of indicating the inconsistency and the deficiencies found in the three dictionaries. So that, these weak points can be remedied using the principles of English lexicography. Then, in the end, an Arabic entry is rewritten by the researcher as a model for other lexicographers. In this model, the principles of English lexicography are applied.

3- Plan of the Research

The first chapter of the research deals with some of the theoretical aspects of lexicography such as its definition, types of dictionaries, and some techniques incorporated in lexicography. Finally, the history of English and Arabic lexicography is briefly presented.

In the second chapter, two English monolingual dictionaries; the "Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary" (OALD) and the "Longman

Dictionary of Contemporary English" (LDOCE) will be analyzed in terms of all kinds of linguistic information such as definitions, pronunciation, grammar, collocations, idioms, example sentences, illustrations, and information of usage to show that the two dictionaries are consistent and present detailed information that is based on modern language corpora, and the proper principles of lexicography are applied.

In the third chapter, three monolingual Arabic dictionaries will be compared which are "Mohcet Al-Moheet", "Al-Waseet", and "Idah Mokhtar Al-Sihah". This will be done by analyzing all kinds of linguistic information such as definitions, pronunciation, grammar, collocations, idioms, example sentences, illustrations, and information of usage, to provide a descriptive account of them, so the differences among them and their weak points would become clear. As a result, the analyzed models of English dictionaries are utilized so modern Arabic ones can be compiled based on the lexicographic principles found in the former. Then, in a supplement to the dissertation, the whole section of the letter /š/ is rewritten using the principles of English lexicography.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- 1- Introduction
- 2- Lexicography and lexicology
- 3- Types of dictionaries
- 4- Techniques of lexicography
- 5- A Brief history of English lexicography
- 6- A Brief history of Arabic lexicography

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretical framework of lexicography. It aims at making the readers understand the meaning of the two terms "lexicography" and "lexicology", types of dictionaries, the basic linguistic principles involved in compiling dictionaries, and finally, the history of English and Arabic lexicography.

2. Lexicography and lexicology

When lexicographers deal with words and their arrangement in dictionaries, they actually deal with the two terms "lexicography" and "lexicology". Therefore, the meaning of these two terms must be clarified.

Sherman (1973: 39) defines "lexicography" by stating that it includes both a theoretical aspect which is a group of theoretical fundamentals that control lexicographic work, as well as a practical aspect which is the actual process of compiling dictionaries. However, "lexicology" is defined as a branch of linguistics which deals with words with regards to their form, meaning, and lexical relations to other words. Therefore, "lexicology" can be divided into "morphology" which studies the form of words, and "semantics" that deals with their meanings and lexical relations.

Moreover, "lexicography" is considered by Asher (1994 : 36) to be a practical art and not a science, while "lexicology" is considered a branch of linguistics which studies words with respect to form, meaning, and lexical relations.

Finally, Platt (1996 : 214) defines "lexicography" as the process of compiling dictionaries, while "lexicology" is the study of vocabulary items