

INTRODUCTION

Placed at the interface between linguistics and philology, the study of dictionaries opens up several rich avenues of investigation, not least among which the exploration of the way in which the prescriptive/descriptive dimensions emerge not only in the lexicographers' conception but also in the view of dictionary users. The current issue of *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* includes papers and topics discussed in a workshop on metalexigraphy held in November 2022 at the University of Bucharest ("Dictionaries and Prescriptions", a workshop which was part of The Annual Conference of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 25-26 November 2022). Focussing on the keyword "prescription", the workshop aimed to explore not only the complex role of dictionaries on the prescriptive-descriptive cline but also the particular way in which lexicographic texts choose to represent "prescriptions" on various levels, at various times. The papers included here certainly continue and expand the metalexigraphical exploration launched by the workshop. Adopting a variety of perspectives, the authors tackle topics such as the relation of dictionaries to prescriptivism and to standard language ideology (Milroy & Milroy 2012, Watts 2011), the role of usage labels in monolingual, bilingual or learner's dictionaries, and, last but not least, the way in which various dictionary types attempt to prescribe parameters of representation regarding certain information or certain areas of the lexis.

While the label "prescriptive" is the thread that unites the papers included here, it is essential to emphasize from the start that prescriptivism and descriptivism should be viewed as a continuum rather than as a clear-cut dichotomy (see for example Wilton 2014, Finegan 2020). This is what Marinela Burada and Raluca Sinu argue in the first paper of this issue. In order to show that descriptivism and prescriptivism emerge as inextricably linked in the history of lexicography, Burada and Sinu dwell upon the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* in its 1933/1961 editions (accompanied by later supplements), and on the *Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DTLR)*, compiled at various times, but published under this title in 2010), two authoritative lexicographic texts traditionally perceived as firmly entrenched in the descriptive tradition. The descriptive-prescriptive continuum in lexicography is also explored by Anca Focșeneanu, who examines Japanese loanwords in Romanian dictionaries of recent words and who provides a detailed investigation of the lexicographic selection and of the standard representation of such loanwords.

Dictionaries and other similar reference books have been perceived as the carriers of language ideology (see Schieffelin et al. 1998), and it is in its function as a host to Victorian language ideology that Rita Queiroz de Barros approaches *Hobson-Jobson*, a Victorian dictionary of Indian English. Drawing on semiotics and on the critical theory of the dictionary (Benson 2001), Queiroz de Barros's analysis shows that *Hobson-Jobson* encodes two significant tenets of Victorian language ideology: standard language ideology and the belief in the world status of English.

Dwelling on the lexicographic representation of "cultural" and "literary" information, both Ilinca-Simona Ionescu's and Anda Dimitriu's articles explore the

“encyclopaedic” dimension of dictionaries. Ionescu’s article, which focuses on the period comprised between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, consists of a historical sociolinguistic exploration of the lexicographic descriptions and prescriptions surrounding the term which denotes the Spanish household spirit. Dimitriu’s study, which investigates an English dictionary focused on the Gothic, is placed at the juncture point between metalexigraphy and genre theory. The author lays emphasis on the particular way in which a specialized, literary dictionary chooses the guidelines for its macrostructure and microstructure.

In the history of lexicography, dictionaries acquire not only descriptive and prescriptive dimensions but also proscriptive ones. The representation and potential proscription of derogatory lexis is a particularly challenging area of lexicography, and the last two papers in this issue centre on the way in which dictionaries attempt to label and mark such lexis. Placing her focus on usage labels, Andreea Moruzan looks at the best-known present-day learner’s dictionaries of English, in order to investigate the labelling practices chosen by these dictionaries in the representation of certain epithets for nationalities. Indeed, the representation of disparaging words in dictionaries has received increased attention from both linguists and the general public in recent years (see for example Curzan 2014, Pullum 2018). Starting from a recent Romanian text which was widely distributed in the media, the final paper in the current issue examines a significant and much-discussed present-day label, namely that of “hate speech”. In the paper, Ruxandra Vișan attempts to examine the challenges faced by current lexicographers in the recontextualization in dictionaries of what emerges as “hate speech” in specific contexts.

References

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