The "Online Bibliography of Electronic Lexicography" (OBELEX)

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Abstract

Digital or electronic lexicography has gained in importance in the last few years. This can be seen in the increasing number of online dictionaries and publications focusing on this field. OBELEX (http://www.owid.de) – one of the bibliographic projects of the Institute for German Language in Mannheim – takes this development into account and makes both online dictionaries and research contributions available in a bibliographical database searchable by different criteria. The idea for OBELEX originated in the context of the dictionary portal OWID, which incorporates several dictionaries from the Institute for German Language (http://www.owid.de). OBELEX has been available online free of charge since December 2008. As of 2011, OBELEX includes two search options: a search for research literature and (as a completely new feature) a search for online dictionaries, a service which is unique in the world.

Keywords: bibliography; database; online dictionaries

1. Introduction

Digital or electronic lexicography has gained in importance in the last few years. This can be seen in the increasing number of online dictionaries and publications focusing on this field. OBELEX (http://www.owid.de) – one of the bibliographic projects of the Institute for German Language in Mannheim – takes this development into account and makes both online dictionaries and research contributions available in a bibliographical database searchable by different criteria. The idea for OBELEX originated in the context of the dictionary portal OWID, which incorporates several dictionaries from the Institute for German Language (http://www.owid.de). OBELEX has been available online free of charge since December 2008. As of 2011, OBELEX includes two search options: a search for research literature and (as a completely new feature) a search for online dictionaries, a service which is unique in the world.

2. Database on research literature

The database on research literature contains articles, monographs, anthologies and reviews published since 2000 with respect to electronic lexicography, as well as some older relevant works (current size: approx. 1000 entries). Each bibliographic entry gives information on title, year, person, periodical, analysed languages or keyword(s). Since all publications are associated with our keyword list, a thematic search is possible.

In addition to the systematically evaluated sources (see below), other relevant research literature is included in OBELEX, such as monographs from the field of electronic lexicography and articles from journals that are not systematically evaluated. Reviews are also included because they often present interesting metalexicographic aspects concerning the critical evaluation of electronic dictionaries and are quite often not easily accessible. As far as possible, abstracts are given, especially for articles from conference proceedings. In the future, OBELEX will be extended systematically.

Figure 1: Search form for research literature

2.1 Evaluated Sources

The systematically evaluated literature (with a focus on electronic lexicography) in OBELEX includes the following sources:

- Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America (DSNA).
- Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft (HSK): Hausmann, Franz Josef / Reichmann, Oskar / Wiegand, Herbert Ernst / Zgusta, Ladislav (ed.) (1989-1991): Wörterbücher. Dictionaries. Dictionnaires: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Lexikographie. An International Encyclopedia of Lexicography. Encyclopédie international de lexicographie (HSK 5.1). Berlin / New York: de Gruyter (= Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft. Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science. Manuels de linguistique et des sciences de communication 5.1-5.3).
- Hermes: Journal of language and communication studies. Institution: Aarhus School of Business.
- International Journal of Lexicography (Oxford Journals).
- Lexicographica. Internationales Jahrbuch für Lexikographie. International annual for lexicography. Revue internationale de lexicographie. Institutions: Dictionary Society of North America (DSNA) and the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX).
- Lexicographica: series maior. Institutions: Dictionary Society of North America (DSNA) and the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX).
- Lexikos: Annual Journal of the African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX).
- Conference Proceedings of European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX); 2000 (Stuttgart), 2002 (Copenhagen), 2004 (Lorient), 2006 (Turin), 2008 (Barcelona) and 2010 (Leeuwarden).
- Conference Proceedings of the 9th-12th "International Symposium on Lexicography" at the University of Copenhagen.

2.2 Other bibliographic projects

OBELEX supplements other bibliographic projects in a useful way: firstly, the printed "Internationale Bibliographie zur germanistischen Lexikographie und Wörterbuchforschung" by Herbert Ernst Wiegand (Wiegand, 2006/2007), and secondly the "Bibliography of Lexicography" by R.R.K. Hartmann (Hartmann, 2007), and lastly the "International Bibliography of Lexicography" of Euralex (cf. also DeCesaris/Bernal, 2006). OBELEX differs from all these bibliographic projects:

- The bibliography by Wiegand certainly has the broadest approach, but it does not focus on electronic lexicography. Furthermore, searching for a specific publication in this bibliography is not easy, since the forthcoming register volume has not yet

been published (cf. Dziemianko, 2008). Besides this, the main focus is on dictionary research within the field of German Studies. OBELEX, however, has no such restriction.

- The Euralex bibliography will include all publications from Euralex conference proceedings. However, other periodicals or journals will not be included systematically. Thus, if one does not want to restrict a bibliographical search to publications in the Euralex proceedings, the use of OBELEX is advisable.
- The Hartmann bibliography is comprehensive and international. However, for anthologies, only the title of the book as a whole is listed, not the individual articles. Thus, searching for specific articles or reviews is not possible in this bibliography, while OBELEX lists each article separately.

2.3 Search options

As mentioned above, there are different search options in OBELEX, which are explained below.

Search by title: The title search is a real full-text search, so results are obtained by inserting a search string in the title box.

Search by publication year: The search for publications in OBELEX can also be delimited by publication year. For instance, it is possible to search for all titles on the subject of electronic lexicography published from 2005 to 2010. For this particular search, "2005" should be entered in the "from"-field and "2010" in the "to"-field.

Search by person or periodicals: This incremental search option offers the possibility of typing in the first letters of an author's name (such as "be") or of a periodical's name (such as "int"). Then all appropriate people (e.g. "Bernal, Elisenda") or periodicals (e.g. "International Journal of Lexicography") included in OBELEX appear and can be selected from a list.

Search by keywords or analysed language: Two of the most important functions of OBELEX are the options to search by keyword and by analysed language. These fields allow a thematic search. For example, in combination with the chosen language it is possible to search for all bibliographic entries from the field of "online lexicography" that deal with online dictionaries in "Slovenian".

3. Database on online dictionaries

As an entirely new feature, OBELEX offers a search for online dictionaries. Firstly, this service will help orientate users in the growing market of Internet dictionaries, helping them to find a dictionary for certain languages or with special characteristics. Secondly, lexicographers and metalexicographers can search for all online dictionaries with a specified set of features. To date (July 2011), about 19,000 dictionaries are listed in the database of online dictionaries. This huge number results mainly from itemizing all language pairs in dictionary portals, such as Dicts.info or Sanakirja.org.

The database contains different kinds of information on each dictionary, for example name, language and search options offered to the user, as well as more specific information. The result pages present direct hyperlinks to the dictionaries covered (cf. also section 3.2).

In future, in addition to routine maintenance, further extension of the underlying database and new search options (e.g. for language families or groups) are planned.

3.1 Evaluated Sources

The database of online dictionaries has been compiled by sifting through link lists (such as Linguist List or LinseLinks), bibliographies and metalexicographic literature on online dictionaries. Of particular interest

have been the proceedings of relevant conferences on lexicography, such as the EURALEX-conference, and metalexicographic journals with special sections on the presentation of existing or new online dictionaries (cf. also section 2.1 for a list of corresponding conferences and journals).

Many of these online dictionaries and most of the metalexicographic literature also mention other online dictionaries, for instance in the form of link lists. Including these dictionaries in the database produces a snowball effect, resulting in a growing number of listed dictionaries.

Figure 2: Search form for online dictionaries

3.2 Search options

As can be seen in Figure 2 above, the database on online dictionaries is searchable for various kinds of information by means of a very detailed search form that is explained in this section. Similar criteria are grouped together under corresponding headlines.

General information (*Allgemeine Informationen*): In the top section of the search form, the user can specify general information on the dictionaries. These are probably the most important and most widely used search criteria. The search by type of dictionary (*Wörterbuchtyp*) consists of choosing a dictionary type (e.g. learner's dictionary or dictionary of synonyms) from the drop-down list. Perhaps the most central criterion of a dictionary is its object language(s) (*Sprache*). These can be typed into an autocompleting text box (incremental search). The third and last option under this headline is the search by name of dictionary (*Name des Wörterbuchs (Teil davon)*), a full-text search for the complete dictionary name or just a part of it.

Linguistic aspects (*Sprachliche Aspekte*): The second section of the search form covers linguistic aspects of the online dictionaries. This includes number of languages (*Anzahl der Sprachen*) (monolingual, multilingual) as well as language direction (*Sprachrichtungswechsel*), both realised via drop-down lists. There is also a search by different types of headwords (*Art der Lemmata*) (affixes, single-word entries, multiword items), which can be selected by corresponding check boxes.

Media and interactivity (*Medien und Interaktion*): In this section of the search form, the focus is on how the dictionary makes use of multimedia and interactivity. 'Use of multimedia elements' (*mediale Angaben*) refers to audio files, illustrations, graphics and videos. 'Interaction with the user' (*Interaktion mit dem Benutzer*) relates to the existence of contact forms, vocabulary trainers, help texts and tutorials, but also to the option of choosing a user interface language or of having user-adaptive views. All items in these groups can be selected by check boxes.

Search and access (*Such- und Zugriffsmöglichkeiten*): The last part of the search form deals with search options (*Suchmöglichkeiten*) and the access structure (*Zugriffsmöglichkeiten*) of the online dictionaries. There are three check boxes for various types of search (incremental, fault-tolerant, Boolean operators) and for ways of accessing the dictionary (via lemma list, phonological access, onomasiological access).

The user may select any possible combination of the search criteria outlined above. However, the user interface automatically rules out logically impossible requests. For instance, if the user has already selected two languages, the option 'monolingual dictionary' is grayed out.

Having started a search, a second page presents a shortlist of all hits with hyperlinks to the online dictionaries, their name and their language(s). The next page displays the full title containing all the information on a particular online dictionary.

For instance, if you are looking for a Slovenian-German online dictionary with audio files or for a French learner's dictionary, you can now easily find them by using the OBELEX search form on online dictionaries.

4. Conclusion

The two systematic applications of OBELEX (research literature and online dictionaries) take the growing importance of digital or electronic lexicography into account. With OBELEX, we hope to provide an extensive service for researchers, lecturers and students who specialise in digital lexicography and research on online dictionaries.

The participants of the eLex2011 conference are therefore the users we have in mind while compiling OBELEX.

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