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THE INFLUENCE OF THE CORPUS ON THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE DICTIONARY. A CASE STUDY OF CORPUS-BASED DICTIONARIES OF GERMAN

Abstract   Dictionaries are often a reflection of their time; their respective (socio-)historical context influences how the meaning of certain lexical units is described. This also applies to descriptions of personal terms such as *man* or *woman*. Lexicographers have a special responsibility to comprehensively investigate current language use before describing it in the dictionary. Accordingly, contemporary academic dictionaries are usually corpus-based. However, it is important to acknowledge that language is always embedded in cultural contexts. Our case study investigates differences in the linguistic contexts of the use of man and woman, drawing from a range of language collections (in our case fiction books, popular magazines and newspapers). We explain how potential differences in corpus construction would therefore influence the "reality"[1] depicted in the dictionary. In doing so, we address the far-reaching consequences that the choice of corpus-linguistic basis for an empirical dictionary has on semantic descriptions in dictionary entries. Furthermore, we situate the case study within the context of gender-linguistic issues and discuss how lexicographic teams can engage with how dictionaries might perpetuate traditional role concepts when describing language use.

Keywords   Gender linguistics; corpus-based lexicography; collocations; lexicography equality; gender equality

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[1]   What can be seen as "linguistic reality" is a very complex matter that goes beyond the scope of this paper. When we use in the following the term "linguistic reality", we are aware that texts or corpora are not a "description" or "representation" of this assumed reality, but serve to construct and interpret one possible part of this reality from language use (e. g. simply in reading or in specific work such as lexicography).