

The linguists' researches related to etymology and etymological dictionaries of English language

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Abstract: *In linguistics, the term etymon refers to a word or morpheme (e.g., stem or root) from which a later word derives. For example, the Latin word candidus, which means "white", is the etymon of English candid.*

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Introduction

Etymologists apply a number of methods to study the origins of words, some of which are:

- Philological research. Changes in the form and meaning of the word can be traced with the aid of older texts, if such are available.
- Making use of dialectological data. The form or meaning of the word might show variations between dialects, which may yield clues about its earlier history.
- The comparative method. By a systematic comparison of related languages, etymologists may often be able to detect which words derive from their common ancestor language and which were instead later borrowed from another language.
- The study of semantic change. Etymologists must often make hypotheses about changes in the meaning of particular words. Such hypotheses are tested against the general knowledge of semantic shifts. For example, the assumption of a particular change of meaning may be substantiated by showing that the same type of change has occurred in other languages as well.

An etymological dictionary discusses the etymology of the words listed. Often, large dictionaries, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Webster's*, will contain some etymological information, without aspiring to focus on etymology.

Main part

Etymological dictionaries are the product of research in historical linguistics. For a large number of words in any language, the etymology will be uncertain, disputed, or simply unknown. In such cases, depending on the space available, an etymological dictionary will present various suggestions and perhaps make a judgement on their likelihood, and provide references to a full discussion in specialist literature.

The tradition of compiling "derivations" of words is pre-modern, found for example in Indian (*nirukta*), Arabic (*al-iṣṭiqāq*) and also in Western tradition (in works such as the *Etymologicum Magnum*). Etymological dictionaries in the modern sense, however, appear only in the late 18th century (with 17th-century predecessors such as *Vossius'* 1662 *Etymologicum linguae Latinae* or *Stephen Skinner's* 1671 *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae*), with the understanding of sound laws and language change and their production was an important task of the "golden age of philology" in the 19th century.

"Etymology" is a slippery term . Its meaning shifts from century to century , falling somewhere between the classical , philosophical attempt to establish some innate (truth - giving)connection between the word and what the word stands for and the nineteenth - and twentieth – century lexicographical attempt to trace a word to its earliest form. The historical context Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission .

There are different linguists who have explored etymology and created etymological dictionaries. For example: Christopher Mark Simon in his dissertation explores the interplay between ancient etymological practices and the Roman historical tradition in stories of the early city. It aims to provide a better understanding of the intersection between language and history in Roman thinking about the past by examining the use of ancient etymology as a means to connect the origins of the Latin language with the origins of Rome and its culture. It assesses the influence exerted by ancient etymology not only from the perspective of etymologies as a category of historical evidence, but also from the perspective of etymological practices as an hermeneutic with the ability to (re)interpret and (re)construct the past.

"Etymology," Aarseff points out, is one of the trickiest words of all, both philosophically and philologically" In his earlier article on the background of the OED3 he stressed that the meaning now usually assigned to etymology, i . e . , its late nineteenth -century meaning of word provenance, " will not do at all before around 1820 at the earliest. " Etymology before 1820, as Bailey's *Universal Etymological Dictionary* (1721) makes clear, was a "Part of Grammar, shewing the Original of words, in order to distinguish their true Meaning and Signification ," and an " Etymologist" is "one skilled in searching out the true Interpretation of Words" not the form . Following Locke, Bailey explains in his introduction that since "Words are those Channels by which the Knowledge of Things is conveyed to our Understandings," an etymological lexicon must help us understand them in their "proper Meanings and . . . true Sense." The correctness of our thinking, Bailey asserts, depends on our exact understanding of the meanings of the words we use. Bailey's definition of etymology tends toward the Lockean notion of using words precisely to avoid imprecise thinking ; his declaring etymology a part of grammar, which is often overlooked by modern scholars, is pervasive before 1800.

To create an etymological dictionary of any language is one of the responsible tasks and everyone uses their own principles on making such dictionaries. It is important to point that there is a relation between the concepts that is being expressed by the word and the word itself. As R.M.W. Dixon states in the book *Word: A Cross – Linguistic Typology*, "the word is the smallest independent unit of language referring to a certain linguistic reality or to a relation of such realities and characterized by certain formal features (acoustic, morphemic) either actually (as an independent component of the context) or potentially (as a unit of the lexical plan)." (Pg: 5)

All the languages, which are existent nowadays, have their own etymological dictionaries. The approaches of creating such dictionaries are also different. For example, Eric Patridge states in his book *Origins*, "Exigencies of space"—not always a myth, nor always a mere excuse for laziness—preclude a large vocabulary. The number of entries in *Origins* is comparatively small, even for an etymological dictionary, but the system I have devised has enabled me, with the

aid of cross-references, not only to cover a very much wider field than might have seemed possible but also, and especially, to treat all important words much more comprehensively and thoroughly.” He has concentrated upon civilization rather than upon science and technology; dialect and can’t have been ignored; slang is represented only by a very few outstanding examples” (e.g., *phoney*). He made short etymological dictionary.

On the other hand, Eric Partridge has included a certain number of words not usually found in a small British etymological dictionary: words that, little known in Britain, form part of the common currency of Standard English as it is spoken and written in the United States of America, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India and Pakistan.

He has made the book as the following: One class of words has deliberately been treated very meagrely: such exotics as do not fall into the classification ‘Americanisms’—‘Australianisms’—etc. It does not much help the searcher to be told that *llama* has been adopted—that is, accepted unchanged—from Quechuan, or *okapi* from Bambulan (Mbuba); only a little more does it help him to learn that *cassowary* has been adapted from Malayan *kasuari*. For Amerindian, Australian aboriginal, Maori, Hindi and similar words, he has, wherever possible, avoided the baldness and inadequacy of such entries as ‘*kangaroo*’. Australian aboriginal word or ‘*pakeha*’. Maori for a white man.

M.M. Makovskiy used another approach on creating etymological dictionary. In his book *Historical etymological dictionary of modern English* he tried to concentrate on metaphor, the words are explained in a cultural way. The more attention paid to the customs and traditions of English people. It can also be helpful the author explains the worn in a cultural way, according to the traditions of the language owners. It is difficult to create native language’s etymological dictionary, to create foreign language’s etymological dictionary is much more difficult to do it, but the Russian author could manage to create it. His work is worth reading and it is very helpful.

In the book *Word and phrase origins* by Robert Hendrikson there were given U.S. dialects, technical words, slang words, sports words, echoic words, coined words, eponymous words, classical words, “war words,” and many other stimulating terms. No word or phrase has been eliminated because it might offend someone’s sensibilities he says.

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