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Collocations and General-purpose Dictionaries

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Abstract

In recent years lexicographers have been devoting increased attention to collocations.[1] Heretofore, discussions of collocations have been primarily concerned with the role that they might play in various types of learners' dictionaries. This paper deals with the potential role that collocations can

play in general-purpose (GP) dictionaries. It will be shown that while the best GP dictionaries contain many collocations, they all omit a large number.

The prospect of adding collocations to GP dictionaries compels us to reconsider the goals of monolingual dictionaries. Two new types of monolingual dictionaries will be proposed.

The role that collocations can play in bilingual dictionaries will be explored. It will be shown that the appropriate use of collocations in bilingual dictionaries can make them valuable tools for both encoding and decoding.

This paper will also describe the importance of providing illustrative phrases, including collocations, especially in definitions of polysemous items. It should be noted that when a collocation is given at the base (usually a noun), it is considered to be a collocation proper, i. e., a supplement to the definition. When it is given at the collocator (usually a verb or adjective), it is considered to be an integral part of the definition, i. e., an illustrative phrase. For this terminology see Benson 1989: 6. The rest of the terminology used in this paper is found in Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1986b), referred to here as the BBI.

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