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ANALYSIS OF THEATER TERMS IN ELECTRONIC DICTIONARIES

Abstract

This study investigates how theater terminology is presented, defined, and categorized in modern electronic dictionaries. By examining a selection of authoritative digital lexicographic resources, the research evaluates the completeness, accuracy, contextual coverage, and user-friendliness of theater-related entries. The findings reveal that while electronic dictionaries provide broad access and convenient search functions, there exist inconsistencies in the depth of explanations, contextual examples, and semantic precision of theater terms. Recommendations for improved digital lexicography in the field of performing arts are offered.

Keywords: Theater terminology; electronic dictionaries; lexicography; definition accuracy; contextual usage; semantic clarity.

АНАЛИЗ ТЕАТРАЛЬНОЙ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИИ В ЭЛЕКТРОННЫХ СЛОВАРЯХ

Аннотация. В данном исследовании изучается, как театральная терминология представлена, определена и классифицирована в современных электронных словарях. На основе изучения ряда авторитетных цифровых лексикографических ресурсов оцениваются полнота, точность, контекстное покрытие и удобство использования театральных статей. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на широкий доступ и удобные функции поиска, электронные словари не всегда обеспечивают достаточную глубину объяснений, контекстные примеры и семантическую точность театральной

терминологии. Предлагаются рекомендации по совершенствованию цифровой лексикографии в области исполнительского искусства.

Ключевые слова: Театральная терминология; электронные словари; лексикография; точность определения; контекстное использование; семантическая ясность.

Introduction. Theater, as one of the oldest forms of art, has developed a rich and specialized vocabulary. With the advent of digital technology, electronic dictionaries have become widespread tools for accessing linguistic information, including specialized terminology. However, the question remains whether these resources effectively represent the nuanced meanings and contextual usage of theater terms.

Traditional printed dictionaries often struggled to keep up with the rapid evolution of artistic vocabulary due to space and publication limitations. In contrast, electronic dictionaries offer dynamic and adaptable platforms that can theoretically house vast amounts of specialized information. The aim of this research is to analyze how well electronic dictionaries address theater-related terminology and whether they meet the demands of students, researchers, translators, and theater enthusiasts.

Methodology. This study employs a comparative content analysis of theater terminology featured in five widely used electronic dictionaries: Merriam-Webster Online, Oxford Learner's Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary Online, Dictionary.com, Collins Dictionary

A corpus of 50 theater terms (e.g., “proscenium,” “cue,” “blocking,” “upstage,” “deus ex machina”) was selected. Each term was evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. **Definition accuracy** – precision and correctness of meaning
2. **Presence of contextual usage** – examples provided
3. **Etymological information** – origins and historical context
4. **Semantic clarity** – avoidance of ambiguity

5. **Cross-referencing** – links to related terms or concepts

Results and analysis. The analysis reveals notable variation among the dictionaries:

Definition Accuracy: Although the electronic dictionaries surveyed provide generally accurate definitions of foundational theater terms, there exists a noticeable discrepancy in the depth and comprehensiveness of explanations for specialized terminology. For instance, terms such as “*blocking*” and “*cyclorama*” are often defined in basic functional terms without elaborating on their broader artistic and technical implications within theater production. This lack of detailed semantic differentiation may limit users' understanding, especially in academically or professionally demanding contexts where precise terminology is essential.

Contextual usage: A critical component of effective lexicography, particularly for specialized vocabulary, is the inclusion of contextual usage examples. In this regard, the Oxford Learner's Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionary consistently provide exemplary sentences that illustrate the terms within authentic theatrical settings. Such examples are pedagogically valuable as they link linguistic meaning to practical application, aiding learners in internalizing terminology through real-world usage. Other dictionaries that neglect this feature risk presenting terms in isolation, which may hinder comprehension for non-expert users.

Etymology: Etymological information serves as a key linguistic and historical reference point, especially for terminology with classical or borrowed origins. Among the resources studied, Merriam-Webster stands out for regularly providing etymological notes that trace the origins and evolution of many theater terms. In contrast, platforms like Dictionary.com and Collins Dictionary either omit etymological details entirely or provide them inconsistently. For theater studies, where historical and cultural context is often deeply intertwined with language, such omissions limit the user's ability to fully grasp the layered meanings of certain terms.

Semantic clarity: The survey revealed several instances where semantic ambiguity is insufficiently addressed. Terms like “*cue*” and “*upstage*” exhibit polysemy, having different meanings within theatrical and broader social contexts [3,58]. However, not all dictionaries clearly distinguish these usages or provide sufficient markers to guide the reader toward the correct interpretative frame. This can lead to confusion, particularly for learners, translators, or non-native speakers who may struggle to discern context-specific meanings without clear lexicographic guidance.

Cross-referencing: Cross-referencing is an essential feature of digital lexicography that enhances user navigation and deepens understanding by linking related terms. Of the dictionaries examined, Collins Dictionary was the only one that consistently implemented this feature in relation to theater terminology. Relevant links (e.g., “*proscenium*” connected to “*stage*” and “*auditorium*”) were present, thereby enriching the semantic network available to users [1, 213]. The absence of such interconnectedness in other dictionaries limits comprehensive exploration and reduces the educational potential of the resource.

These findings indicate that while electronic dictionaries are evolving, there remains a need for more consistent inclusion of contextual and expert-informed content in special fields like theater.

Discussion. The digital transformation of lexicography promises accessibility and flexibility, yet the study's results suggest ongoing limitations in how theater terms are handled. A lack of comprehensive contextual explanations can hinder non-experts, particularly students or translators. Sources such as specialized theater glossaries and academic texts often provide more authoritative insight but are less accessible than online dictionaries.

Future lexicographic efforts should aim to integrate expert input, more dynamic multimedia features (such as audio pronunciation and visual examples), and user feedback mechanisms to improve the reliability and utility of theater-related entries.

Conclusion. Electronic dictionaries offer valuable and rapid access to theater terminology but vary in the depth and quality of their entries. Enhanced contextualization, cross-referencing, and semantic precision are necessary to meet the needs of users in the performing arts. Collaboration between lexicographers and theater practitioners could bridge these gaps, ensuring a more accurate representation of this culturally significant field.

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