ABSTRACT

Lexicography has always been in the focus of linguists, translators, teachers and other language specialists. Lexicography is the activity or occupation of compiling dictionaries. The status of lexicography among other branches of linguistics has not yet been precisely determined. Some say it is just the practice of compiling dictionaries, others argue that it is «the gentle art of lexicography»; still others state it is a separate science. But it is really hard to overestimate the role of lexicography in today’s society.

There are many different types of dictionaries.

It is now widely accepted that lexicography is a scholarly discipline in its own right and not a sub-branch of applied linguistics, as the chief object of study in lexicography is the dictionary.

Despite all the apparent achievements of lexicography both in this country and abroad, there are still lexicographic problems which need to be tackled. The great European historical dictionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries (OED, etc.) applied comparative and historical linguistic methods to the elucidation of the history of the forms and meanings of each word in a national language. As a matter of policy, personal names and place-names were not included. This omission was justified on the grounds that names are different from words: names are devices for referring to individuals in context, rather than classes of entities or events.

In the 20th century, this state of affairs is changing. Very large electronic databases of names records are becoming available, statistical methods of analysis are being applied, and scholars are beginning to explain systematically the origins and history of surnames as well as first names and place-names.

The given study presents an insight into the existing problems of modern lexicography with special attention to onomastic dictionaries in the English-speaking world. It focuses on the design, compilation, use and evaluation of several English and Russian dictionaries. The paper analyzes the ways and methods of presentation and treatment of different types of names in the dictionaries.

As far as names dictionaries are concerned, a small number of scholarly accounts of place-names have been compiled – although there are still many serious gaps; for example, there is still no satisfactory dictionary of Scottish place-names.