

The Comprehensive English-Georgian Online Dictionary: History, Methods, Principles

1. Background

The first bilingual dictionary of the Georgian language in respect to European languages was a Georgian-Italian dictionary, compiled by Stefano Paolini with the assistance of the Georgian diplomat Niceforo Irbachi, published in Rome in 1629, containing 3084 words. In the course of the 17th and 18th centuries more Italian-Georgian and Georgian-Italian dictionaries were compiled by an Italian missionary - Bernardo Maria da Napoli and an unknown author, the so-called "Anonym from Gori". A Dutch-Georgian dictionary (904 words) appeared in the second edition of Nicolaas Witsen's book *Noord en Oost Tartarye* ("North and East Tartary") in 1705, compiled by him and the Georgian nobleman Alexander Bagrationi. At the same period, more parallel word-lists were created in respect to other European languages.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Georgia was incorporated in the Russian Empire and as a result, the main emphasis of Georgian bilingual lexicography was laid on the Russian language. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Georgian lexicographers compiled and published many general and specialized Russian-Georgian and Georgian-Russian Dictionaries of various volumes.

The idea to create a comprehensive English-Georgian academic dictionary was conceived back in the 1960s at the newly-established Chair of English Philology of Tbilisi State University. The initiator of the project was a prominent Georgian scholar and translator, the first Head of the Chair, Prof. Givi Gachechiladze. The lack of an academic English-Georgian dictionary was acutely felt by translators, hence the creation of such a dictionary was primarily determined by the need to adequately translate English language literature into Georgian. There was no Research Institute of West-European languages in Georgia that would develop European-Georgian academic lexicography. These circumstances led to the decision of the Chair of English Philology of the University to shoulder this enormous undertaking and the compilation of the Comprehensive English-Georgian Dictionary (CEGD) started in the 1960s.

Since then, the work on the dictionary has gone through many difficult stages: incorrect sources chosen for the dictionary, lack of the experience of lexicographic work at an educational institution, no financing, etc. In the 1980s a small team of editors embarked on thorough revision of the dictionary material. In 1992, the Editorial Board decided to digitalise the edited entries of

the Dictionary and to start publishing the Dictionary in fascicles on a letter-by-letter basis. In 1995, the first fascicle of the Comprehensive English-Georgian Dictionary, the letter A, was published which was soon (1996) followed by two more fascicles, letters B and C. The Georgian scientific community, as well as foreign Kartvelologists, attached great importance to the beginning of the publication of the New English-Georgian Dictionary.

Currently, printed and published are 14 fascicles of the English-Georgian dictionary, which cover 2 380 pages of the dictionary proper. These fascicles have become the most reliable source of English words for Georgian readers (www.margaliti.ge).

In 2009 a decision was made to develop an Internet version of the Dictionary and “A Comprehensive English-Georgian Online Dictionary” was posted on the Internet in 2010.

The Online Dictionary is by no means a stereotyped version of the printed edition of the Comprehensive English Georgian Dictionary. First fascicles of the English Georgian Dictionary, which were prepared and published back in the 1980s and 1990s, have undergone a thorough revision. The online version has also comprised letters from Q to Z, not published yet as fascicles.

Currently, uploaded to the Internet are 14 fascicles of the Comprehensive English Georgian Dictionary (A to P) and letters Q to Z inclusive. Publication of the fascicles will be completed in 2015, whereupon the Editorial Board plans to publish the Comprehensive English Georgian Dictionary in two volumes. The development of iPhone and iPad applications of the Dictionary is underway.

The Comprehensive English Georgian Dictionary presently contains up to 110 000 entries. Taking into consideration the fact that dictionary entries fully represent the polysemy of English words, contain numerous collocations, phrasal verbs, phraseological units, ample amount of scientific and technical, economic and artistic terms, as well as terms from various other fields – the total material is as comprehensive as up to 800 000 units.

Working on a dictionary is a never-ending process. Language is changing constantly, reflecting the changes which affect the society using the language in question. Within the language there appear new words, or already existing words develop additional meanings; some words and meanings fall into disuse; the register of word usage is undergoing permanent changes: the words recorded as slang items only two decades ago, function as quite ordinary colloquial words today; on the contrary, words with rather neutral meanings may, in the course of time, acquire some rude /vulgar colouring; there appear numerous new realities of life, which must be adequately reflected by the language. All this is especially important for the English language, as far as the latter has displayed rather rapid rate of diachronic transformation at each stage of its development.

The Comprehensive English-Georgian Online Dictionary is a “living” dictionary, for its editorial team is constantly updating the Dictionary, adding new entries, improving and refining the definitions and this work is set to continue also in the future.

2. Sources

When the work on the CEGD had just started, the question of the sources for the dictionary was under consideration. In the 1960s and the 1970s, English-Russian dictionaries translated into Georgian were believed to be good enough to become such sources. Entries were translated into Georgian from V. Müllers’s *English-Russian Dictionary* in the 1960s and I. Galperin’s *New English-Russian Dictionary* in the 1970s. The existing semantic asymmetry between English and Georgian words was even more aggravated by the intermediary Russian language. This erroneous decision made all preliminary work and translated materials practically useless.

The possibility of drawing up a bilingual concordance based on English to Georgian translations was also considered. A small corpus of English-Georgian concordance was even created at the initial stage of the project but neither this way proved to be prospective, because of the quality of translations. Till the 1920s fifty per cent of all translations into Georgian were executed from the Russian language. Even European authors were rarely translated from the original, instead, Russian translations from English and other European languages were used as a source. At the same time, the majority of Georgian translators treated original texts rather freely. It was only from the 1980s that Georgian translators started realising that translatology was a linguistic discipline and a new trend, leading to thorough philological study of the source language text and its adequate rendering in Georgian, started to take shape. Undoubtedly, there were brilliant Georgian translators at each historical period, but such translations from English were not large enough to be used in dictionary-making.

In the 1980s, having considered and analysed all circumstances, the editors of the English-Georgian Dictionary arrived at the decision to regard comprehensive English monolingual dictionaries as major sources for the project. Definitions of comprehensive explanatory dictionaries constitute an extremely valuable source for the identification of the semantic structure of a word. Especially noteworthy in this regard are Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (OED) and Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, whose definitions have become the basic source for the semantic investigation of English words. The editorial team also relied on the New English-Russian Dictionary by Ilya Galperin, as well as on other lexicographic publications of the Oxford University Press, Cambridge, Longman,

COBUILD and other dictionaries. This stage of the work on the dictionary has lasted for 25 years.

3. Semantic asymmetry between English and Georgian words

One of the important issues faced by the editors of the CEGD has been ‘linguistic and cultural anisomorphism’ between the English and Georgian languages, resulting in semantic asymmetry of seemingly similar words of these languages. English-Georgian lexicography is not exceptional in this respect, as it is the central problem of bilingual lexicography at large. This problem is well-formulated in the definitions of ‘**equivalence**’ and ‘**equivalent**’ in the Dictionary of Lexicography by Hartmann and James. **‘Because of linguistic and cultural anisomorphism, translation equivalents are typically partial, approximative, non-literal and asymmetrical (rather than full, direct, word-for-word and bidirectional). Their specification in the bilingual dictionary is therefore fraught with difficulties, and recourse must be made to surrogate explanatory equivalents’** (1998 : 51).

This semantic asymmetry is even wider between genetically unrelated and structurally completely different languages as is the case with the Georgian and English languages.

The Board of Editors of CEGD developed different techniques for dealing with the problem of equivalence back in the 1980s.

The Comprehensive English-Georgian Dictionary distinguishes: **an equivalent of meaning** and **translational/contextual equivalents**. The goal of the editors of the Comprehensive English-Georgian Dictionary has always been to describe the equivalence between the English and Georgian languages on a **more general, systemic level** of the two languages, rather than give only Georgian equivalents of English words found in particular contexts. The editors of the CEGD have developed a technique of combining equivalents of meanings of lexical units with translational / contextual equivalents presented in different illustrative phrases and sentences selected for entries. These translational equivalents provide good, literary translations of English phrases and sentences into Georgian in particular contexts, thus providing different single contextual equivalents for an English headword.

4. Macrostructure

4.1. Word list

The selection of the word-list for the CEGD was determined by the target groups for which it was initially intended – namely translators of English belles-lettres and scientific literature into

Georgian, specialists working on specialized, branch-specific texts, learners of English, for whom English is their future speciality, also prospective psychologists, physicians, biologists, etc who study English and need to know foreign special terms and their Georgian equivalents, as well as learners of English in general.

The intended users of the dictionary determined the inclusion in it of modern vocabulary of the English language (keeping in mind the highest level of language proficiency) characterized by high frequency of occurrence, as well as the inclusion of less frequently used words, rare, obsolete, archaic, dialectal words or rare, obsolete, archaic and dialectal meanings of modern words. The dictionary has included terms from almost all fields of knowledge. Currently, as mentioned above, the CEGD comprises 110 000 entries, covering several hundred thousand English meanings, collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, terms from different fields.

4.2. Treatment of homonymy

Homonyms are usually presented as separate entries in the CEGD and are marked with small homonym numbers (see Figure 1).



Figure 1.

Some dictionaries place homonyms in a single entry and there are arguments behind such a decision. As is common practice, the main criterion for differentiating homonyms from

polysemantic meanings of words in the CEGD is their etymology. Words with different origins are treated as homonyms. For example, the English noun **pink**, has several homonyms. OED gives the following etymologies for different homonyms of **pink**:

- (1) **pink** (historical forms: **pinck**, **pyncke**, **pynke**) a sailing vessel; orig. one of small size used for coasting and fishing. This word is of a Dutch origin, *pincke*, *pinke* was a name of a small sea-going ship in Dutch.
- (2) **pink** (historical forms: **penk**, **penck**, **penke**) a young salmon before it becomes a smolt. It is assumed that the origin of the word is German (cf. dial. Ger. *pink*, with the following senses: a. minnow; b. small salmon; c. a kind of eel).
- (3) **pink** (historical forms: **pynke**, **pinck(e)**, **pinke**) the general name of various species of *Dianthus*, esp. *D. plumarius*, a garden plant. Although the origin is unknown, OED clearly states that this word has no connection with above discussed words.

All three nouns are presented in three different entries in CEGD marked with small homonym numbers. Our team strongly believes that this principle should be implemented also in smaller dictionaries, even for schoolchildren. If polysemy and homonymy get equal treatment in a dictionary entry, users and learners will lose the understanding of the most fascinating mechanisms of linguistic changes underlying polysemy. They will fail to perceive amazing similarities, seen by a language community in the diversity of the Universe, enabling a language to translate the infinite concreteness of the Universe into linguistic unity, represented by a polysemantic word. On the other hand, giving polysemy and homonymy equal treatment in a dictionary entry will overshadow the essence of homonymy as well, development of the same spelling, as a result of numerous phonetic changes, by words of totally different origin, meaning and spelling.

4.3. Converted forms

Many dictionaries place converted forms of English words within one entry. Proceeding from the assumption that conversion is a word-forming means in Modern English, the CEGD describes words, formed by means of conversion, in separate entries and distinguishes them by Roman numerals (see Figure 2).



Figure 2.

5. Treatment of polysemy and sense-numbering

There are few instances of parallel polysemy between Georgian and English words. If one compares European languages, from this point of view, more parallelism can be observed between polysemantic words, due to more convergences in related languages, mutual influence of these languages on one another, etc. For example:

French **retirer** and English **withdraw** have more parallel forms than English **withdraw** and its Georgian counterpart *gamoqvana*. For example:

- retirer** (*troupes*) – **withdraw** (*troops*);
- retirer** (*soutien*) – **withdraw** (*support*);
- retirer** (*projet, candidature*) – **withdraw** (*candidature*);
- retirer** (*argents*) – **withdraw** (*money*), etc.

Georgian translational equivalents for different senses of English **withdraw** will be *gamoqvana* (lit. ‘bringing / taking out’), *tsamoqvana* (lit. ‘bringing over’), *gamosvla* (lit. ‘coming out’), *ukanve tsagheba* (lit. ‘taking back’), *gamotana* (lit. ‘drawing from’), *amogheba* (lit. ‘taking out’), etc. This fact accounts for the decision of the editors to present polysemantic meanings of English words to the maximum extent possible with the whole panoply of their equivalents in Georgian.

In order to distinguish between polysemantic meanings of words, different modes of sense-numbering are applied in the CEGD. In the majority of cases entries contain a double numeration system for main meanings [1. 2. 3.] and sub-meanings [1) 2) 3)]. Sub-meanings are regarded by us as lexical-semantic variants, lexical units, created on the basis of the same association or

semantic component. We do not consider these meanings as subordinate meanings. We think that once a transfer of meaning occurs, there appears an individual meaning, as important, as any other meaning of a polysemantic word. For example: In an entry for **thick**, sub-meaning numbering mode [(1) 2) etc] will be applied to the following meanings of this adjective:

- (1) 'bushy, luxuriant' (thick hair...)
- (2) 'densely arranged or crowded' (thick throng, thick on the ground...)
- (3) 'dense, viscid' (thick soup...)
- (4) 'hindering vision' (thick mist...), as these meanings are created on the basis of one association, one semantic component – *consisting of closely occupied, filled or set individual components*.

Thus, the above given meanings of **thick**, are numbered in the following way:

1. 1)...2)...3)...4)...

Polysemantic meanings of phraseological units are marked out by letters of the Georgian alphabet.

Ordering of senses in entries is based on the frequency principle. The most frequently used meanings are given at the beginning of the entry, followed by dialectal, archaic, obsolete and technical meanings.

6. Phraseology

Phraseological units, idioms are amply presented in the dictionary entries. English idioms get different treatment in the CEGD.

(1) Where possible, English idioms are translated by an equivalent Georgian idiom with the same meaning and the same lexical composition. For example:

to treat smb. like / worse than / a dog *rogorc dzaghls ise ekceva* (lit: 'treats him as / like / a dog').

(2) English idioms are translated by an equivalent Georgian idiom with the same meaning and more or less the same lexical composition. For example:

dog doesn't eat dog *dzaghli dzaghls tqavs ar dakhevso* (lit: 'a dog will not tear another dog's skin').

The symbol of approximate equality is used to indicate that lexical composition of Georgian idiom does not coincide with that of English.

(3) English idioms are translated by an equivalent Georgian idiom with the same meaning and completely different lexical composition. For example:

dog eat dog *junglebis kanoni; brdzola arsebobisatvis* (lit: ‘jungle law; struggle for existence’).

(4) English idioms are translated by an equivalent Georgian idiom with the same meaning and completely different lexical composition. At the same time, English idioms are supplied with their literal translations into Georgian. For example:

every dog has his day *erti dro dzaghlsac akvso; ertic ikneba da mze pirs chvenskenac izamso* (lit: ‘there will be a day when the sun will turn its face towards us’).

(5) English idioms have no equivalents in Georgian and are supplied with translations into Georgian. For example:

dressed (up) like a dog's dinner *colloq. saguldagulod gamopranchuli* (‘thoroughly dressed up’).

the dogs of war *omis sashinelebani* (‘abominations of war’).

6. Grammatical and other labels

Headword is followed by a phonetic transcription and part of speech label. Entries contain irregular forms of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs. These irregular forms are also entered as headwords and cross-referenced to major forms. Entries also have other types of labels: temporal (*archaic, obsolete*), regional (*American English, Australian English, etc*). Dialectal words, as well as poetic and literary words are marked in the dictionary. Formal and informal, spoken words, sociolects and connoted vocabulary are also marked by respective labels (*formal, informal, colloquial, vulgar, slang, derogatory, contemptuous, pejorative, etc*). All foreign words have corresponding labels. Specialized terminology has subject-specific labels.

7. Specialist terminology in the CEGD

The English Georgian Dictionary includes an ample amount of scientific and technical, as well as economic and other terms from various fields.

Agriculture, anatomy, anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art, astronomy, banking, biology, biochemistry, botany, computing, geography, geology, economics, electrical engineering, folklore, heraldry, informatics, law, mathematics, medicine, metallurgy, mineralogy, music, painting, philosophy, psychology, radio, television, theatre, etc. This is an incomplete list of the subjects which are represented by respective terms in the CEGD. During the last 15 years our editors have faced the necessity of defining some terms, particularly newly emerged ones. This practice of combining principles of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries

seemed to us essential for proper understanding of a new term and its correct establishment in this or that field. Later, this approach has developed into a principle and is followed in specialized projects of the lexicographic centre.

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