Example Approach in Persian Dictionaries

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Abstract

From 1970s, lexicographers and linguistics found that explicitness of definitions and explanations is not so much needed. Only by referring to word without depending on other factors, the meaning of the word will be completely clarified. The result of this analysis indicated that the clarifying task is not any longer assigned to the definition, but the example following each definition helps develop exactitude of the meaning. Examples should justify and clarify words and they should offer reasons for words.

Key words: Persian, lexicography, examples, dictionaries.

Introduction

A French proverb says a dictionary without example is a lifeless body. Verbal examples are helpful means in identifying meanings, semantic separation understanding usage or implied meanings and providing useful information. Examples provide the lexicographer great facilities and help the reader to understand the concept of words (Hashemi Minabad, 2007).

Today examples in monolingual dictionaries are integral and essential. Users and learners need one or several sentences that show their usage in contexts in addition to the definitions that describes lexical units. These sentences reinforce the meanings of lexical units, and this matter takes place by showing the usage of the words in real contexts. Examples help users and learners to find a specific meaning among different meanings. Examples are useful in cases that meanings seem synonymous apparently but subtle differences are in the meanings. They are also constructive and clarifying in cases that ambiguity and doubt possibly can mislead users.

Monolingual dictionary should pattern language learners' lexical ability because many users of monolingual dictionaries are individuals that the language of the dictionary is not their native language. Therefore, in a comprehensive dictionary, definitions are written exactly. In such dictionary, examples are various and sometimes these examples are more effective than definitions themselves for users.

Lexicographer should be aware that not only users and learners' need for encoding is important, but also their need for decoding is more important because it give them confidence to produce new sentences and do that like natives. In the past, lexicographer's main aim was more concerned with encoding; dictionaries were merely tools for interpreting and translating languages. Not producing language creatively and naturally, but modern lexicography takes step in satisfying both needs, thus in this regard, examples are of great importance (Jafari, 2007).

The Background of Example

Using examples is a new tradition that was started in the western world by Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), while this tradition existed in Islamic lexicography for a long time. The earliest Iranian dictionaries were accompanied with poetic examples. However, the examples were chosen exclusively from poetry. Examples extracted from prose have been presented in the

recent time. Some old lexicographers composed poems containing the words, if they could not find that words in poems. Today visual examples are an innovation that is borrowed from western world lexicography (Hashemi Minabad, 2007). Self-made examples are not real reflections from natural language; it only shows the register and lexicographer's idiolect.

Researchers in their studies regarding users and learners' references and dictionaries and their efficiency concluded that even top students and language learners have problems in using language. One of the solutions to the problem is providing linguistic information directly and accessibly as examples in dictionaries. Drysdale (1978) in his research divided examples usage into two parts:

A) Receiving functions or decoding   B) productive functions or encoding.

Decoding Functions

1. Helping user in clarifying single meanings
2. Helping user in distinguishing among different meanings of a word.

Productive Functions or Encoding

1. Helping user in teaching correct and common grammatical patterns.
2. Showing them with outstanding and acceptable homophones and helping user in producing them when using language
3. Helping user in writing and speaking in that language in accordance with language users' stylistic normality (Jafari, 2007).

Example - **Various Types**

When we say *example*, it means that it should justify the usage of the word and be reasoning for the definition. In language, we use a formula rules that is the definition of the word to understand the meaning of the word. On the other hand, we use example which is the usage of the word. Therefore, lexicographer uses examples for compensating the default of the definition and what is a not expressible using formula rule.

Lexical unit in dictionaries may include lexicographer-written examples that it is so called editor-written that include narrative examples which are adopted from corpus that we call them examples. The most essential point is that example should show the word usage in its context. In lexicography, the task of editor-written example is only that show usage of the lexical unit. On the contrary, example sentences also have descriptive and clarifying roles (Jafari, 2007).

Lexicographers' viewpoints are different concerning editor-written examples. Some of them prefer free and independent editor-written sentences to convoluted example sentences, but they avoid imagining in making examples in order to show word usage because they fear that they may make mistakes in describing definitions, while example sentences are safe from these dangers and will not bring such uncertainty. Moreover, example sentences are related to real usage. Examples of the meanings are proved through their extracting contexts. That is, in fact they call text to witness (Martin, 1989).

Optimum Feature of Examples in Lexicography

Examples have some features that the most important ones are as follows:

1. Example should reflect natural language, and follow natural language discourses and in fact it should reflect linguistic capacity. According to Sinclair, naturalness means that sentences should not be used separately, but they should be with used other linguistic components.

2. Example should be valid and trustworthy in a way that user can use it as a following pattern for producing other sentences.

3. Example should show features of the entry. Simple and school sentences which are usually neutral are not worthy. For example, the sentence I love book does not contribute to the definition of the word.

4. Words used in example should be consistent stylistically, that is they should be coherent colloquially, informally, literally and formally.

5. Example should show correct grammatical identity of the word and indicate the most common syntactical structures.

6. Example use in some lexical units such as prepositions, conjunctions and affixes is an indispensible matter.

7. For some entries, words such as conjunctions or prepositions, providing long examples is unavoidable. In such cases, lexicographer writes one long but efficient example instead of some short and inefficient examples. In Cobuild dictionary, the following example is mentioned for "therefore":

- *I am not a member of England myself; therefore it would be rather impertinent of me to express an opinion. (p,1516)*

8. It is better that poetic examples should be avoided, because poems have their own discourse, and in most cases, do not follow natural language. Moreover, poetic example may trick lexicographer to record uncommon usage.

9. Example should be literally beautiful, interesting and fascinating as much as possible. (Jafari, 2007).

Approaches of Some Persian Dictionaries Towards Examples

1. Moein Dictionary

Mohammad Moein in the introduction of *Moein Dictionary* under the title of Shavahed va Amsaleh (evidences and examples) says about example that, in this dictionary, our attention and focus is on example instead of evidence. Evidences are mentioned only in necessary places. Mentioning evidence is for proving the correctness of word usage in its special meaning. This necessity is satisfied in referring to etymologies and derivations to some extent and make us somehow needless in bringing independent evidence, but it should be said about example that in necessary cases examples are mentioned and other examples are excluded in order to not make the dictionary lengthy (Moein, 1992).

Moein Dictionary, as the author has mentioned, is without example. He believes that the fault resulting from example is compensated by other parts that can convey meaning to the user. Moreover, the limitation of size and space made him to exclude examples for most entries. A short review of *Moein Dictionary* shows its example shortage, which has degraded its quality to a large extent. For example one of the meanings of *esteghna* (magnanimity) is mentioned *naz*

(coyness) and its definition is a single word, in fact it is referred to synonym that, of course it is completely unfamiliar for foreign users or even for native Persian speakers. Definition absolutely does not help its understanding; an example could contribute to its understanding.

Another point is that most of Moein examples are poetic examples. Understanding poem sometimes is more difficult than the word itself, while the main point is simplifying the meaning of the word (Jafri, 2007).

2. Dehkhoda Dictionary

Dehkhoda dictionary is filled with examples in verse and in prose. Sometimes different examples are mentioned for a word that occupies several pages. Dehkhoda did this work extremely, but these different examples do not help the user dramatically they are in poetic language and poetic language has a special discourse and does not follow natural language poems that are filled with stylistic, semantic, syntactical and grammatical abnormalities. For example, the word *pazhmorde shodan* (to wilt) is defined: *roy be khoshki avorde, chin va shkn be hm resande, be taravat*. These two couples are also mentioned as examples:

خواهی که چون چکوک بپری سوی هوا   ای غوک چنگلو ک چو پژ مرد ه برگ کوک
The crippled frog pale as a plant pale, if you wish to jump as a bird.
مرگ بفشارد همه در زیر غن   هر گلی پژ مرده گرددزو نه دیر
Every flower soon get withered, death will come to any and bury under loads of soil.

As it is shown, reading these poems is very difficult for most users instead of helping clarifying meaning. Most of these poems are filled with difficult and unfamiliar words that do not contribute to understanding meaning and even make meaning more difficult. In fact, these examples are a beautiful literary selection and do not conform to necessary standards for doing lexicographer's tasks and also they are inefficient (Jafari, 2007).

Dehkhoda, in his dictionary introduction, mentions that ,some people may criticize the abundance of examples, but if all examples were not collected, all the main and figurative meanings of words were impossible to obtain and because collecting these examples was necessary, we did that for showing the word usage, one or two examples should were written, but

abundance of examples was only for showing different usage of the word, thus, remaining all examples was necessary. On the other hand, it may be said that mentioning all the examples was not necessary, but it is not right, because being famous for a nation is infamous for the other nation and the famous one may be sometimes famous and sometimes infamous and even sometimes become rare and vanished and making sense of them will be impossible (Dehkhoda, 1958).

3. Emrooz Persian Pictionary

This dictionary is rather a contemporary Persian dictionary. Its authors claim that it is written based on new lexicography methods and styles. In the introduction of this dictionary, it is mentioned about examples that sometimes for explaining word usage, example or examples are mentioned. Examples are chosen randomly from books, magazines, newspapers or speakers and to be distinguished, they are in lranic and between < > signs (Sadri Afshar, 1998).

Some examples in this dictionary are mentioned below:
- *Daro peykar* (doors and walls): doors and a set of what surround and guard a building
- *Sooz* (fervency): what cause physical and psychological harm.
- *Sooze sarma, sooze gham* (coldness, fervency of sorrow)

In this dictionary, regarding figurative idioms and combinations, only definitions are mentioned and examples are excluded (Jafari, 2007).

- *zire bal gereftan* (taking care of): support In this case, example can be very clarifying.
- *Agar man pedar dashtam zire balamo migereft va man mitoonestam ezdevaj konam*. (If I had a father taking care of me, I could marry) (Sadri Afshar, 1998).

4. Great Sokhan Dictionary

This dictionary is the newest Persian dictionary. A look at its introduction and approaches clarifies that its authors were aware from the clarifying role of example in the dictionary and tried to close to the standards of examples in lexicography as much as possible. In this dictionary

there has been made differentiation between example evidence and the following definition is mentioned for them:

Example is a sentence or combination that is made on the authors and editors' linguistic instinct or is obtained from the listened or read ones. Evidence is a sentence, phrase or combination that is extracted from written resources and its source is mentioned.

Functions are also defined for examples or evidences that are mentioned in the dictionary. The objective of mentioning examples and evidences is helping its users to:

1. Understand the meaning of words and combinations.
2. Know grammatical position of words.
3. Be familiar with their usage in sentences or phrases   (Anvari, 2003).

Therefore, it is mentioned in the introduction that the principle in this dictionary is providing examples and evidences, but in some cases, for specialized words and terms of sciences and sports, evidences and examples are not provided.

Pay attention to some entries and their examples that are chosen randomly:

Pa (playmate) 1- company 2- rival 3- comrade 4- playmate
- *Paye bazi, paye ghomar paye sabte mehmanihay ma bod*. (The playmate of play and gamble was our parties' stable playmate.
- *Chera nemi ayi bazi ? paye bazi kam darim*. Why don't you come to play? We need one more playmate.

In this case, first example is mentioned and then evidence and of course, it is mentioned in the introduction of the dictionary that in some cases that both evidence and example are mentioned, first example is mentioned then evidence. In most entries, only examples are provided and no evidence is provided.

Az khod bi khod shodan (to become drunk)

1. Go unnatural and abnormal

   ▪ I felt like a drunken man.

   ▪ Hapli hapoo (careless and chaotic) 1- careless you were not so careless in the past.

2. Chaotic conditions were chaotic.

   The above-mentioned cases are all lexical units that are very common and it seems completely impossible that there is no provided evidence in the corpus and it is unclear that why examples are only provided and evidences are not provided. Moreover, provided examples are not optimum ones, and do not clarify a particular feature of lexical units, and in fact are neutral. Of course in this dictionary, in most of lexical units, no example and evidence are provided especially in cases that lexical unit is referred to another entry (Jafari, 2007).

   ▪ *Be paye kasi istadan* (waiting for someone): *be paye kasi neshastn*
   ▪ *Motadakhel* (Conjunct): *dakhl shode dar yedigar, dar ham rafte, amikhte*.

   In these units, providing evidences as proving their validity is necessary, because they are not used today or they have limited usage.

   Of course, as mentioned in the introduction of this dictionary, evidences and examples are not provided for scientific words and terms that is a common and wise method, but the same dictionary has provided evidences for many specialized lexical units. For example, Verk (plants): a shrub-like and ornamental plant from rose family.

که عطای کلیچه برورک است   بی عطای ورک نفرماید

Bread is the gift of burning woods.

کاندر این یک روز دو روز روزه شک است   پخته باید کلیچه پیش از عید

Bread needs to be baked before Eid, any of the last days be Eid.

Providing evidence as poetic difficult evidence from an old text is not suitable for a specialized term (Jafari,2007).

Suggestions

Monolingual dictionary should pattern language speakers' linguistic potential, because most of monolingual dictionaries' users are language learners or individuals that the language of the dictionary is not their native or mother tongue. Therefore, in the comprehensive dictionary, descriptions should be done exactly and precisely. In such dictionary, the variety of the examples should be rich, because the examples are more constructive for the user than the definition. It is better to not use poetic evidence as the example, because poetry has a particular discourse and in most cases does not follow natural language and its reading and understanding is out of the normal users' patience.

It is better that the selection of evidence or example would be according to the semantics and pragmatics principles.

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