

USER'S GUIDES IN GENERAL ENGLISH-LATVIAN DICTIONARIES

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Abstract. The purpose of the user's guide is to introduce the user to the dictionary layout and provide information on its use. Its location can vary from dictionary to dictionary, but in most cases it is placed in the front matter. Since the user's guide can be viewed as an umbrella term for a cluster of several metafunctional outside matter components (e.g. the list of abbreviations, pronunciation key, etc.), special attention is paid to the overall contents of these components rather than to their titles which might not be sufficiently revealing. The study focuses on the analysis of the user's guides in the general English-Latvian dictionaries (ELDs) compiled from 1924 to 2007, forming the English-Latvian lexicographic tradition. The aim of the study is to describe the typical contents and elements of the user's guides in ELDs, as well as to trace the development of this metafunctional outside matter component throughout the lexicographic tradition. The analysis revealed that at the beginning of the tradition there was no clear distinction between the preface and the user's guide, the latter as a distinct outside matter component was established and developed in the Soviet period, but the dictionaries published by 'Avots' reveal a tendency towards unification of the user's guides both structure and content-wise.

Key words: user's guide, metafunctional outside matter component, macro- and microstructure of dictionary, English-Latvian dictionaries

INTRODUCTION

Dictionaries have a complex multi-layered structure and contain various information types with different contents and functions. The purpose of the user's guide is to introduce the user to the contents and layout of the dictionary thus providing essential information on its use. Due to its relevant informative functions, the user's guide is regarded as an essential component of the outside matter of dictionaries (e.g. Hausmann and Wiegand, [1989] 2003: 213; Landau, 2001: 148; Svensén, 2009: 381).

The user's guide is a relevant source of information for efficient use of the dictionary; however, it is an open secret that people are often reluctant to read the information provided in the front matter of the dictionary. Kirkpatrick (1989: 754), for instance, has observed that in Britain '[i]t is widely believed that one dictionary is much like another' and it is most unlikely that dictionaries could 'differ from one another so radically as to require explanatory introductory material' (ibid.). The scholar also notes that the reluctance to consult the user's guide can lead to a situation when users 'remain in ignorance about the variety

of ways in which dictionaries present their information' (*ibid.*). Since this paper is targeted at the investigation of the structure and contents of this dictionary component in the English-Latvian dictionaries (ELDs), the aspect of its use will not be further investigated here.

The paper focuses on the analysis of the user's guides in printed general ELDs compiled from 1924 to 2007, forming the English-Latvian lexicographic tradition. The aim of the study is twofold: (1) to describe the typical contents, elements and mode of presentation of the user's guides encountered in the ELDs; (2) to trace their development throughout the English-Latvian lexicographic tradition.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to the threefold division of dictionary structure the user's guide belongs to the megastructural level of dictionary which covers the whole dictionary and 'in addition to the central macrostructure also includes front matter, middle matter and back matter' (Hartmann, 2001: 61). The component parts of the dictionary found outside the central headword list and situated before it (the front matter), in the middle of it (the middle matter) and at the end of the dictionary (the back matter) are referred to as the outside matter of the dictionary (e.g. Cop, 1989; Hartmann and James, 2001). The user's guide is normally situated in the front matter of the dictionary alongside with some other components with a metafunction (Svensén, 2009: 380), for instance, the preface or the introduction.

Several scholars have investigated the issue of the information types that should appear in the user's guide and its purpose. Landau (2001: 149), for instance, holds that the purpose of the user's guide is to provide answers to such questions as 'what's in it?', 'what does it mean?' and 'how do I find it?'. Landau also observes that the user's guides normally try to describe various elements of the entry and provides the following list: 'entry word, syllabication (if given), pronunciation, inflected forms, various kinds of labels, cross references, variants, etymologies, synonyms, and usage notes' (*ibid.*).

Bergenholtz and Tarp (1995: 170) suggest that the information provided in the user's guide should be divided in three main categories, namely: (1) the types of information that can be found in various dictionary components; (2) the macro- and microstructural peculiarities of the dictionary (e.g. the principle of alphabetisation, the ordering of equivalents and collocations inside the entry); (3) information on the interrelation of dictionary components (most typically it implies the system of cross-referencing).

Svensén (2009: 381) puts more emphasis on the contents as well as the component parts that a detailed descriptive user's guide should contain. Namely, there should be information on the macrostructure and microstructure of the dictionary, how different information types are presented in the dictionary, the

cross-reference system applied, the structure indicators used (typographical and non-typographical), the outside matter components functionally related to the headword list, the list of abbreviations (labels) used in the dictionary, the pronunciation key (if the dictionary provides pronunciation) and the syntactic codes (if used in the dictionary).

These lists reveal that the user's guide can be viewed as a cluster of several metafunctional outside matter components, namely, the component named 'the user's guide' (or 'how to use the dictionary', 'guide to the dictionary', etc.), the list of abbreviations (labels), the pronunciation key and, perhaps, some more informative components. Therefore in the analysis attention will be paid to the contents of the separate components of the user's guides rather than to their titles.

Several scholars have studied the language used and the role of examples in the user's guides. Svensén (2009: 382-383), for instance, holds that in order to facilitate dictionary use, the user's guide should be presented in understandable language (avoiding technical jargon) since most dictionary users are not lexicographers. Bergenholtz and Tarp note that the explanatory text should always be combined with examples since apart from saving space, 'examples are often much more instructive than are abstract verbal illustrations' (1995: 171).

Noteworthy is also the visual presentation of the user's guide. The examination of the user's guides in various kinds of contemporary dictionaries reveals that the information can be presented either in plain text or in a visually more attractive way, namely, in colourful explanatory charts containing dictionary entries or their parts with explanatory notes. Landau (2001: 149) describes the latter approach as 'an excellent use of graphics to provide the reader with a simple and clear index to the guide'. The user's guides in several recent editions of English monolingual learners' dictionaries (e.g. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*) are good examples of this approach. Bergenholtz and Tarp (1995: 172) support the application of entry samples in the user's guide stressing that the presentation of information in the user's guide 'should correspond to the mode of presentation used in the dictionary proper'. Kirkpatrick (1989: 756) remarks that even though the visually more attractive presentation of information in the user's guides can appear to be 'less satisfying linguistically and philosophically', it is much more user-friendly since it is easier to perceive the information.

It is relevant to note that dictionaries do not always contain a clearly distinguished preface and user's guide. Sometimes, according to Bergenholtz and Tarp (1995: 169), the information on the use of the dictionary is 'hidden away in the preface'. In order to make the distinction between the purpose and the contents of the two front matter elements, a short description of the preface should be added to this review. It is commonly held that the task of the preface is to inform the user about the key features of the dictionary: its purpose, the intended user group, its overall organization, scope and application of the dictionary (e.g. Svensén, 2009: 380; Bergenholtz and Tarp, 1995: 168). It is

pointed out by Bergenholtz and Tarp (*ibid.*) that the preface should inform the user of any limitations (e.g. the level of language proficiency) which might affect the use of this dictionary. Svensén (2009: 380-381) holds that the front matter of a dictionary should also contain a separate ‘description of goods’ providing more technical information on its design, theoretical basis (e.g. a list of metalexigraphic literature), dictionaries and corpora applied while compiling a dictionary that would help the user or teacher to find the most appropriate dictionary for the concrete reference needs.

METHOD

The lexicographic material selected for this study contains all the printed general English-Latvian dictionaries published since the beginning of the lexicographic tradition in 1924 till 2007 when the latest major general ELD was published. These are nearly 30 dictionaries (the number is not precise because occasionally it is difficult to detect whether a dictionary is a new publication or a repeated edition of a previously compiled dictionary) of various sizes and complexity. The historical events and changes in the political system in Latvia have affected the development of the lexicographic tradition and therefore it might be divided in several historically determined periods. Namely, seven ELDs were published till WWII; six very small dictionaries were published from 1945 till 1947 in the refugee camps in Germany; six dictionaries were compiled in Latvia during the Soviet period and approximately fifteen dictionaries (some of the dictionaries published by ‘Avots’ could be revised editions of the previously published dictionaries, but it is not clearly stated by the publisher) have been published since regaining of independence in 1991 (for a similar division of the lexicographic tradition see also Karpinska, 2013b). Some editions of the ELDs have been published abroad (especially during the Soviet period and also after 1991), but all of them are reprints of dictionaries originally compiled in Latvia, accordingly, they will not be considered in this study.

The dictionaries will be grouped according to the period of publication. Samples will be provided only from some ELDs representing each period in order to reveal either some typical tendencies or innovative solutions in the structure and contents of the user’s guides. Only these dictionaries will be included in the list of references.

The aim of the descriptive analysis is to reveal the typical contents, elements and mode of presentation of the user’s guides in the ELDs. The list of criteria selected for this analysis was based on literature review, but it was occasionally supplied by elements encountered in the user’s guides of ELDs. Thus, the user’s guides may contain information on:

- the macrostructure of the dictionary;
- the microstructure of the dictionary;

- the structure indicators used: (1) typographical (e.g. different typefaces, type sizes, font variants (italics, bold type, capitals), etc.), (2) non-typographical (numerals, letters, brackets, punctuation marks, symbols, etc.);
- the means of textual condensation (e.g. repetition symbols like swung dash, the first letter of the headword, etc.) used in order to avoid repetition of the headword;
- the pronunciation symbols;
- the list of abbreviations and labels.

This analysis enables to investigate the actual contents of the user's guides rather than merely the titles of its components which, especially in the earlier dictionaries, might not be sufficiently revealing; the development of the user's guides will be traced throughout the whole lexicographic tradition, and the typical mode of presentation of the user's guides encountered in the ELDs will also be determined. Translations of examples (in square brackets) are done by the author of this study. All the peculiarities of the Latvian text encountered in the user's guides of the early ELDs are retained in the quotes, but no attempt has been made to reflect them in the translations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the lexicographic tradition (from 1924 till 1940) not all the dictionaries contain such metafunctional outside matter components as the preface and the user's guide. Only four out of seven dictionaries contain a preface and four contain a user's guide (often without any distinct title), while only one dictionary in this period (Pelcis, 1940) contains both. Thus, the dictionaries normally contain either the preface or the user's guide, moreover, their contents and functions can be similar. It suggests that the distinction between the preface and the user's guide as two distinct metafunctional components of the dictionary is not yet firmly established. Information on the macro- and microstructural peculiarities of the dictionary, the structure indicators and the means of textual condensation is provided only occasionally and fragmentarily. The user's guide of the ELD compiled by Turkina (1937) contains the most detailed information on the macro- and microstructure of the dictionary. The following extracts illustrate the contents and the manner of presentation of information in this user's guide:

Īpašvārdi atrodami alfabēta kārtībā pārējo vārdu starpā. [Proper names can be found among other headwords arranged in alphabetical order.]
 Saīsinājumi un šifra vārdi atrodas īpašā nodaļā vārdnīcas beigās. [Abbreviations are provided in a special section in the back matter of the dictionary.]

Lietu vārdu daudzskaitlis dots tikai tad, ja tas irregulārs (sk. gramatiku). [The plural of nouns is provided only if it is irregular (see the grammar section).]

Saliktiem darbības vārdiem locījumu formas jāskatās pie galvenā vārda, piem. [The inflected forms of compound verbs should be searched for in the entry of the main verb, e.g.] *overbear* (*bear, bore, born*).

The means of textual condensation and typographical structure indicators are most explicitly described in the dictionary compiled by Dravnieks (1924):

Atkārtojamā zīme jeb tilde (~) atvieto, lai aiztaupītu telpas [The repetition symbol or swung dash (~) is used in order to save space and substitute the following]:

- a) gabaliņa sākumā stāvošu trekni iespiesto vārdu, t.s. tituļa galvu [the word given in bold typeface at the beginning of the entry (the headword)];
- b) visu no tituļa galvas, kas iespiests taisniem (ne kursīviem) burtiem, piem. [the part of the headword that is given in normal typeface, not in italics, e.g.] **ability**, *pl.* ~ies = abilities; **administer**, ~ration=administration; **stage-box**, ~-manager=stage-manager;
- c) atkārtojumus izrunas apzīmējumos, piem. [repeated parts of the headword in phonetic transcription, e.g.] **abate** (a**b**e'i't), ~ment, (~ment =a**b**e'i'tment).

The ELD compiled by Pelcis (1940) gives the most detailed account of the non-typographical structure indicators, for instance:

, komats lietots atšķirot līdzīgus un radniecīgus jēdzienus ... [a comma is used to separate similar or related concepts]
 ; zemikolons lietots (kā parasts vārdnīcās) punkta vietā, jo punktu nevar likt visur vārdnīcā, pēc kura jāsāk ar lielo burtu ... [a semicolon is used (as it is usually done in dictionaries) instead of the full stop, since the full stop cannot be applied everywhere in the dictionary because it should be followed by a capital letter]
 () iekavās ieliktie vārdi ir netieši paskaidrojumi ... [the words provided in brackets serve as indirect explanations]

The samples quoted above also reveal the compilers' attitude towards exemplification: the information in the user's guide is usually supplied with one or several illustrative examples, but it should be noted that this approach is applied only in the largest dictionaries of this period.

Such typical component parts of the user's guide as the pronunciation key and the list of labels are provided very often: the former in all seven dictionaries, the latter in five. In the first two dictionaries of the tradition (Dravnieks, 1924 and Godiņš, 1929) the pronunciation key presents two different types of respelling systems and, accordingly, two sets of elaborately described pronunciation symbols. Dravnieks even chooses to apply Gothic letters in order to ensure, as he puts it, a clear distinction from the rest of the text in the microstructure of the dictionary (Dravnieks, 1924: 3). The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are applied in the other five dictionaries. The dictionary compiled by

Curiks and Bangerska (1937) introduces this system to the English-Latvian lexicographic tradition where it has been applied ever since. The compilers of these dictionaries indicate in the preface that the phonetic transcription (IPA) has been proposed by Jones, but *An English Pronouncing Dictionary* as its immediate source is normally not mentioned. It is also claimed that IPA has become the most widespread means of phonetic transcription in Europe (Curiks and Bangerska, 1937: 5). It should be noted that the pronunciation key is the only component of the user's guide found in all the ELDs published before WWII, underlining that the indication of English pronunciation was viewed as very important from the very beginning of the tradition.

Five dictionaries provide a list of labels, but a closer scrutiny of these lists reveals that while grammar labels (e.g. *aux.* (auxiliary), *gr(am)*. (grammar), *indic.* (indicative), *m.* (masculine), *pl.* (plural)) and metalinguistic abbreviations (e.g. *sk.*, *u.c.*, etc.) are provided in most lists, domain, regional, register and temporal labels (e.g. *elect.* (electricity), *Engl.* (England), *bibl.* (biblical), *sl.* (slang), †(obsolete word)) are encountered only in the three largest dictionaries of this period, namely, in Dravnieks (1924), Turkina (1937) and Pelcis (1940). Incidentally, Dravnieks' dictionary (1924) is the only dictionary in the whole tradition where some domain and temporal labels are presented by symbols rather than described verbally (a more detailed description of the lists of labels in the first ELDs can be found in Karpinska, 2013a).

Six small ELDs (all of them containing less than 10 000 headwords) were published in the refugee camps in Germany from 1945 to 1947. All of them have very limited front matter: only four of the dictionaries contain a clearly distinguished preface and three – a user's guide, but only one (Kalnbērzs, 1945) both of them. The lack of clear distinction between the preface and the user's guide, as well as the overlapping of their contents and functions (characteristic of the dictionaries published before WWII), can also be observed in these dictionaries. Special emphasis is often put on the difficult conditions in which the dictionary was produced rather than on some relevant information facilitating efficient use of the dictionary.

The information in the user's guide in most dictionaries is reduced to the pronunciation key and the list of labels (usually including only field and grammar labels, while metalinguistic abbreviations and regional labels are provided only in two dictionaries). Systematic inclusion of the pronunciation key obviously continues the tradition established in the pre-war ELDs, though in the dictionaries published in the refugee camps the IPA is often slightly modified due to limited access to specialized phonetic symbols.

Only two dictionaries (Kalnbērzs, 1945 and Kundziņš, 1946) provide information on the macro- and microstructure and non-typographical structure indicators, for example,

Verbu particīpu formas un verbu substantīvējumi ar galotnēm **-ing**,
-er, **-or**, kas pa laikam atbilst latviskām galotnēm **-šana**, **-ājs**, **-ējs**,

izņemot atsevišķus gadījumus, nav vārdnīcā uzņemti. [The participle forms of verbs and substantivized words with the inflections -ing, -er, -or, which occasionally correspond to the inflections -šana, -ājs, -ējs in Latvian, apart from a few exceptions, are not included in the dictionary.] (Kundziņš, 1946)

Vārda vairakas nozīmes principā uzrādītas viņu lietošanas biežības kārtībā un atdalītas viena no otras ar semikolonu. [The various senses of the word are arranged, as much as possible, in the order of frequency of usage and separated with a semicolon.] (Kalnbērzs, 1945)

The user's guides of the dictionaries published in the refugee camps are limited in volume and contain quite few illustrative examples. It can be explained by the difficult conditions in which these dictionaries were compiled (limited financing, shortage of paper, etc.) and, accordingly, the compilers' wish to save space by all possible means.

Six general ELDs were published in Latvia during the Soviet period (or more precisely from 1948 till 1990) and most of them had several editions. In contrast to the dictionaries compiled in the previous periods, almost all of them contain a preface and a user's guide. Only a very small dictionary by Juhņeviča and Klētniece (1964) contains a combination of the preface and the user's guide. In all the other cases the distinction between these metafunctional components is clearly marked, they have also been given clearly distinguishable titles, for instance, 'No redakcijas' [From the editors], 'Redakcijas priekšvārds' [Editors' preface] or 'Priekšvārds' [Preface] for the prefaces and 'Par vārdnīcas uzbūvi' [About the structure of the dictionary], 'Vārdnīcas uzbūve' [The structure of the dictionary] or 'Vārdnīcas lietotājiem' [For the users of the dictionary] for the user's guides. What concerns the contents of the user's guides, some distinct tendencies can be observed. The user's guides, with a few exceptions, provide information on the macro- and microstructure of the dictionary, the typographical and non-typographical structure indicators employed and the means of textual condensation. The two editions of the largest dictionary of the period (Belzēja et al., 1957 and 1966) reveal an obvious expansion of information provided in the user's guides, as well as an increase in the number of illustrative examples, for instance:

Homonīmi apzīmēti ar mazajiem latīņu burtiem ^{a, b, c} utt., piem. [Homonyms are marked by the lower case Latin alphabet letters ^{a, b, c}, etc., e.g.]:

top^a [tɔp] *n* vilciņš (*rotaļlieta*);

top^b [tɔp] *n* galotne.

Ar pustrekniem romiešu cipariem parādītas dažādas vārdu šķiras, piem. [Various parts of speech are indicated using semi-bold Roman numbers, e.g.]:

talk [tɔ:k] **I** *n* 1. saruna ...; **II** *v* runāt ...

Ar pustrekliem arābu cipariem parādītas vārda atsevišķas nozīmes, piem. [The senses of polysemous headwords are indicated using semi-bold Arabic numbers, e.g.]:

wall [wɔ:l] *n* **1.** siena; **2.** mūris. (Belzēja et al., 1966)

The pronunciation key and the list of labels are clearly indicated as separate elements of the user's guide. In contrast to the ELDs published before WWII and in the refugee camps, where the pronunciation key was treated as an essential part of the user's guide, now it is missing in three small ELDs (Juhņeviča and Klētņiece, 1964; Birzvalka, 1981; Birzvalka and Sosāre, 1989). This might be explained partly by the small size of the dictionaries, but also, possibly, by the fact that the potential users' knowledge of the IPA might have already been taken for granted. The scope of the types of labels presented in the user's guide has definitely expanded and normally includes the field, regional, register, semantic (or meaning type), grammar labels and metalinguistic abbreviations. Style, temporal and attitude labels (e.g. *poēt.* (poetical), *sl* (slang), *novēc.* (old-fashioned), *iron.* (ironical), *niev.* (derogatory)) appear only in the largest dictionaries by Belzēja et al. (1957 and 1966) and Raškevičs et al. (1962, 1964, 1976, 1985).

Even though only six general ELDs were published in Latvia from 1948 till 1990, during this period the user's guides of the ELDs were considerably developed, became much more informative, as well as more uniform both in structure and contents.

Approximately fifteen general ELDs have been published in Latvia since 1991, some of them have had several editions. Two dictionaries (by Raškevičs et al. and by Birzvalka and Sosāre) are reprints of the dictionaries of the previous period. Several dictionaries published by 'Avots' are structurally very similar, but, if no clear link has been established among these dictionaries by the publisher, in this study they are treated as separate dictionaries.

All the ELDs contain the user's guide and most of them the preface. Surprisingly, some of the largest ELDs published by 'Avots' either do not contain any preface at all (Kalniņa, 2003), or else it is very small (only six lines) and superficial (Kalniņa et al., 2007). During this period the reprints of the ELD compiled by Raškevičs et al. (1993 and 1997) and the ELD published by 'Jāņa sēta' (compiled by Belzēja et al. and first published in 1995), especially its fourth edition (updated and edited by Baldunčiks in 2004), and Kalniņa et al. (2007) contain the most developed user's guides. Thus, the user's guides usually contain information on the macro- and microstructure, the typological and non-typological structure indicators, the means of textual condensation, the pronunciation key and a list of labels which in most cases includes a wide scope of various labels (field, regional, register, semantic, grammar) and metalinguistic abbreviations, but style, temporal and attitude labels can normally be found only in the dictionaries containing more than 10 000 headwords. Kalniņa et al. (2007), being the largest ELD by the number of headwords (it claims to contain around 85 000 entries), provides the longest list of labels enriched mostly by various field

labels, for instance, *apdrošin.* (insurance), *aut.* (automobile building), *biotehn.* (biotechnology), *helmint.* (helminthology), *siltumtehn.* (heat engineering), etc. Since some of them present very specific fields (e.g. helminthology), their inclusion in the list of labels of a general purpose dictionary could be questioned.

The 2004 edition of the ELD compiled by Belzēja et al. and updated by Baldunčiks, presents two notable innovations in the list of labels. Firstly, the list of labels is divided into the ones provided in English (all the grammar-related labels, e.g. *attr.*, *aux. v.*, *inf.*, *num.*, etc.) and in Latvian (the rest of the labels, e.g. field, regional, register, temporal, etc.). Secondly, the full version of abbreviations or their short explanation is provided in Latvian and English (e.g. *ek.* ekonomika – economics, *jaunzēl.* jaunzēlandisms – chiefly in New Zealand). The first of these innovative features is merely a logical grouping of labels according to the language used. The second, however, deserves more attention since before this dictionary the full versions or explanations of the abbreviated labels in the ELDs were presented only in Latvian. It should be added that the preface in this dictionary is also bilingual. The fact that the preface and the explanations of the abbreviated labels are provided in two languages might be viewed as an indication to the bidirectionality of the dictionary (Marello, 2003: 336), however, a closer analysis of the microstructure of this dictionary reveals it as a passive dictionary compiled to meet the needs of the Latvian speech community.

Several smaller dictionaries published by 'Avots' (e.g. Kalniņa, 2001) do not contain the pronunciation key, or in an English-Latvian (E-L), Latvian-English (L-E) dictionary (e.g. Kalniņa, 2002) it is provided only in the front matter of the L-E part of the dictionary where an inexperienced user might not look for it if only the E-L part of the dictionary is being consulted. This tendency was already observed during the previous period.

Similarly to the dictionaries published in the Soviet period, in most of the cases the user's guides are informative with an obviously unified structure, but often also very similar, for instance, in several ELDs published by 'Avots' after the year 2000 (e.g. Grabe et al., 2002; Kalniņa, 2004) the user's guides are almost identical. Some parts of the user's guide are even repeated word for word in many ELDs for several decades. For instance, the following sentence repeats in various ELDs since 1962:

Fonētiskā transkripcija parādīta visiem pamatvārdiem, kā arī lietvārdu daudzskaitļa nekārtnajām formām, nekārtno darbības vārdu *Past Indefinite* un *Past Participle* formām, īpašības un apstākļa vārdu nekārtnajām komparatīva un superlatīva formām un vietniekvārdu *this* un *that* daudzskaitļa formām. [Phonetic transcription is provided for all the headwords, as well as irregular plural forms of nouns, the *Past Indefinite* and *Past Participle* forms of verbs, comparative and superlative degrees of nouns, and the plural forms of pronouns *this* and *that*.] (e.g. Raškevičs et al. 1962, 1964, 1976, 1985; Kalniņa, 1999; Kalniņa, 2001; Grabe et al. 2002; Kalniņa et al., 2007, etc.)

The analysis of the visual presentation of the user's guides in ELDs reveals that throughout the lexicographic tradition the information provided in the user's guides has been presented only in plain text. Already from the very beginning of the tradition the explanatory text has been supplied with some illustrative material (some elements of the microstructure or entry extracts of various length), however, so far no attempt has been made to apply a more visually attractive way of presentation, for instance, colourful charts containing whole entries or longer entry extracts supported by explanatory text. This method of presentation could make the user's guides of the ELDs more eye-catching and attractive and, perhaps, also more frequently consulted by the users.

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of the English-Latvian lexicographic tradition, namely, in the dictionaries compiled before WWII and shortly after the war in the refugee camps in Germany, not all the dictionaries contained the two major metafunctional components – the preface and the user's guide. A clear distinction between them was not yet established, their contents and functions were often similar. This distinction was established only during the Soviet period and since then a clearly marked preface and user's guide are found in nearly all the ELDs.

The pronunciation key and the list of labels have been typical components of the user's guides since the beginning of the tradition, but since the Soviet period the pronunciation key can be absent in some smaller dictionaries. It could be explained by the small size of these dictionaries, but, perhaps, also the presumed familiarity of the users with the IPA symbols. During the Soviet period the contents of the user's guides were systematically enriched with the information on the macro- and microstructure of the dictionary, the typographical and non-typographical structure indicators and the means of textual condensation, thus making the user's guides more informative. The number of examples illustrating the information provided in the user's guides was also considerably increased. The list of labels has been gradually extended throughout the tradition. The unification of the contents and structure of the user's guides, which started during the Soviet period, has become even more distinct in the latter decades, especially in the dictionaries published by 'Avots', where the user's guides are often very similar, to the point of being occasionally almost identical.

Since the beginning of the tradition the user's guides of the ELDs have been considerably developed content-wise, but there has been very little change in their visual presentation – the information is still presented only in plain text. So far no attempts have been made to apply any visually more attractive methods of presentation.

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