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Topic: Dictionaries

Subject: Re: Dictionaries

Posted by: Tim Luo

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Repost of a message I posted on July 25, 2002 in the newsgroup of tw.bbs.lang.chinese. Somebody posted a message talking about dictionaries and something he got on 60 Minutes (or 60 Minutes II).

The following was my reply to him. (Typo corrected.)

Don't know when it was aired and what it was about. But I think there could be some misunderstandings involved. The Oxford English Dictionary is based on historical principles, and this implies it tries to list all the words traceable since a given time. OED I includes all words since 1150 AD they could find and some earlier words still in currency. OED II includes all the words in OED I plus many new words.

Please go to <http://www.oed.com/public/guide/editions.html> for details.

So if you have a chance to see either OED I or OED II yourself, you should know it even says something about when a sense of a word fell into disuse.

So what 60 Minutes said on the removal of obsolete (or less-used?) words could be just about Oxford English dictionaries. Please note the use of lowercase d and the plural form. It's a common practice for most dictionaries to take away less-used words in a new edition. This is because they have to keep their dictionaries within a certain scope.

Tim

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Eenie, meenie, miny, mo.
Presto chango!

Tim is on the run.