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Guidelines For Compiling A Monolingual Dictionary

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the linguistic foundations of lexicography as a field of study, focusing on the principles of dictionary compilation. The practice of dictionary-making is a tradition that has developed in parallel with human civilization, language formation, and the emergence of writing. A dictionary not only reflects the daily life of a people but also preserves linguistic traces of civilizations, events, and milestones in human history. Explanatory dictionaries constitute a fundamental type of lexicographic work: they are compiled in a single language and contain the vocabulary, phraseology, and meanings of words of a national language. This article traces the development of explanatory dictionaries from the earliest lexicographic monuments, such as the Chinese Erya, to modern explanatory dictionaries of the Kazakh language, including the 15-volume Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language edited by I. Kenesbaev and A. Iskakov. The article also highlights key considerations in compiling a monolingual explanatory dictionary, such as preparatory stages, guiding principles, and essential parameters. In addition, the paper outlines basic rules that assist in dictionary compilation—defining entries, abbreviations, arrangement of material, illustrative examples, and markers of stylistic features—emphasizing their importance in lexicographic practice. Through the Explanatory Dictionary, it is possible to present the national language to the world, Master global trends, and use global opportunities. Because the Explanatory Dictionary fully covers the national language. The only solution is to digitize the national language through an electronic Explanatory Dictionary.

Keywords: Dictionary; Explanatory Dictionary; Lexicography; Lemma; Meaning; Terminology

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1. Introduction

A dictionary is a linguistic tool that systematizes the lexical wealth of a given language accumulated over centuries. Since language evolves within society, its vocabulary is continually enriched and renewed in response to changing needs. Dictionary compilation is therefore a complex linguistic process that has developed in parallel with the establishment of written culture. This work falls within the scope of lexicography, which has become a fundamental branch of linguistics.

Modern lexicography integrates methodological foundations, theoretical frameworks, and practical approaches into a unified scientific system. Dictionaries are classified into various types depending on their internal structure and content, with explanatory dictionaries occupying a central place as the foundation of lexicography. A study of their history demonstrates that at each stage of human civilization, explanatory dictionaries were produced using specific methods and structures adapted to their purposes.

Nations with long-standing traditions of literacy regard lexicography as a repository of invaluable intellectual heritage, accumulated across millennia. The methodology of explanatory dictionary-making continues to evolve in line with technological progress, incorporating innovative approaches to meet the diverse needs of language users. In this respect, a dictionary is not only a scientific resource but also a practical tool for preserving and transmitting the lexical wealth of a national language to future generations.

Explanatory dictionaries serve as normative instruments of language: they regulate orthographic, orthoepic, and grammatical standards, ensuring the consistent and correct use of language. Their normative role contributes to the stability of language development and its proper functioning in society and culture. As Malbakov observes, “The explanatory dictionary is the most essential tool for language learning”^[1]. This underscores the enduring significance of such dictionaries for both the language itself and the community of its speakers.

Thus, an explanatory dictionary is a reference work that provides definitions of words in the same language. Accordingly, the explanatory dictionary of the Kazakh language is a lexical and reference tool that clarifies the

meanings of words in Kazakh. It presents the lexical-grammatical, semantic, and stylistic features of the Kazakh language.

Dictionary-making is not a purely technical activity; it is a demanding intellectual process involving deep scientific analysis and systematic organization of linguistic material. Modern lexicography increasingly employs corpus linguistics and computational methods, reflecting the field’s integration of new technologies to advance both theory and practice.

2. Methodology

The present study employs a descriptive and comparative methodological framework to analyze the principles of compiling explanatory dictionaries in Kazakh linguistics within the broader context of world lexicography. The research is grounded in a systematic examination of both primary and secondary sources, including major explanatory dictionaries and theoretical works in the field of lexicography.

2.1. Research Design

The study is primarily qualitative in nature, focusing on textual and comparative analysis. The methodological design integrates historical-comparative, structural, and semantic approaches to trace the development of explanatory dictionaries as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

2.2. Materials

The main materials for the research consist of:

1. The Kazakh Explanatory Dictionary (Қазақ тілінің түсіндірме сөздігі) in its ten-volume edition (1974–1986) and later single-volume adaptations^[2].
2. Foundational works on Kazakh lexicography, such as those by Malbakhov (2002)^[1], Kaliuly (2015)^[3], and Kaliyev (2014)^[4].
3. Classical and modern lexicographic sources, including Mahmud al-Kashgari’s *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (11th c.)^[5], Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi’s *Kitab al-‘Ayn* (8th c.)^[6], Yāska’s *Nirukta* (6th–5th c. BCE)^[7], the Persian *Farhangs* (9th–17th c.)^[8], Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabeticall* (1604)^[9], and Vladimir

Dahl's Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language (19th c.)^[10].

4. Scholarly literature on the methodology and practice of lexicography in both Kazakh and comparative contexts.

2.3. Procedures

The research procedure involved several key stages:

- Historical analysis: tracing the evolution of explanatory dictionaries from early lexicographic traditions (Chinese, Indian, Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Slavic, and European) to modern Kazakh lexicography.
- Structural analysis: examining the organizational principles of explanatory dictionaries, such as alphabetical arrangement, thematic grouping, semantic structuring, and inclusion of cultural-historical terminology.
- Comparative analysis: comparing the Kazakh explanatory dictionary tradition with major world lexicographic works to highlight both universal and unique features.
- Semantic analysis: analyzing dictionary entries, including neologisms, archaisms, ethnonyms, abbreviations, functional words (particles, conjunctions), and idiomatic expressions, to determine their lexicographic treatment.

2.4. Analytical Approach

The study applies hermeneutic and philological methods to interpret lexicographic data. Special attention is given to the cultural and historical dimensions of explanatory dictionaries as both linguistic tools and repositories of national identity. By combining synchronic and diachronic perspectives, the research highlights how dictionaries reflect the dynamic development of language and thought.

3. Results

The development of an explanatory dictionary entails specific requirements. In order to construct the theory of dictionary-making, it is first necessary to conduct a scientific analysis of previously compiled dictionaries, examining all included words and expressions from lexi-

cal-semantic and stylistic perspectives. Furthermore, the representation of these lexical units in the dictionary must be evaluated in accordance with the norms of the literary language^[11]. Based on the analysis of both international best practices and domestic dictionaries, the following requirements for compiling an explanatory dictionary were identified:

1. All headwords must be presented in strict alphabetical order.

Alphabetical arrangement of entries is one of the key methods of lexicographic work. Such structuring simplifies the dictionary's organization and facilitates rapid information retrieval. Beyond accelerating the search process, alphabetical order ensures the consistency and internal logic of dictionary entries. This is particularly important in comprehensive dictionaries containing thousands of words and meanings. Without alphabetization, users would be forced to examine each entry individually, significantly complicating the search process. Alphabetical structuring also accommodates both root words and their derivatives. Root words are often given as independent entries, with derivative forms grouped under them. For instance, the entry for *jaz* ("to write") may include derivatives such as *jazushy* ("writer") and *jazylym* ("writing"), thereby enhancing user comprehension. Polysemous words are numbered, with definitions provided for each distinct sense across different contexts. This system makes it possible to capture multiple dimensions of meaning within a single lemma. For example, the Kazakh word *bas* may be defined separately as "head (body part)" and as "leader."

2. The dictionary must comprehensively include all words with clear lexical meaning that are widely used in everyday life and hold general communicative significance.

Explanatory dictionaries primarily incorporate words of clear lexical meaning that are commonly used in daily life and have broad public significance. Such words constitute the core lexical stock of the language and enjoy wide applicability. In addition, explanatory dictionaries also document words encountered in literature and journalism, including archaisms, obsolete terms, religious vocabulary, and specialized or rarely used items. This inclusive approach allows for the study of all layers of the lexicon, en-

abling a deeper understanding of their usage domains and historical development.

3. Words must be presented in their root or derived base forms, with grammatical markers assigned according to parts of speech.

For example:

- ata-ana (noun) “parent”
- qyzyl (adjective) “red”
- eki (numeral) “two”
- osı (pronoun) “this”
- uıyqta (verb) “to sleep”
- ärqasha (adverb) “always”
- bylq (interjection)
- arqyly (postposition) “through”
- täit (particle)
- mümkin (modal word) “possible”

This systematization clarifies both the lexical and grammatical properties of words, ensuring that users can access not only definitions but also the morphological and syntactic roles of lexical items within the language.

4. In explanatory dictionaries, homonymous and homoformal words—that is, words identical in form but different in meaning—must be fully represented.

To ensure that readers clearly understand the semantic distinctions, each homonym is marked with an Arabic numeral and presented as a separate dictionary entry. This method highlights the various meanings of homonyms and demonstrates their precise usage domains.

Examples:

- et¹. Noun. A body part of humans and animals composed of muscle tissue. Example: “He bought meat from the bazaar.”
- et². Verb. To do something, to perform an action. Example: “From today on, do more work.”

This approach reveals the semantic nuances of homonyms and homoformal words, thereby making the dictionary systematic and user-friendly. Each homonymous unit is accompanied by a clear definition and usage examples, enabling readers to distinguish their functional differences.

5. In explanatory dictionaries of the Kazakh language, words borrowed from other languages and assimilat-

ed into Kazakh are marked with etymological labels.

These labels indicate the source language of the borrowing, thus helping readers to understand its origin. Etymological labels are typically placed before grammatical markers, emphasizing the importance of recording the linguistic history of the word.

The system of etymological labels includes:

- ar.—borrowed from Arabic;
- pars.—borrowed from Persian;
- or.— borrowed from Russian;
- lat.—borrowed from Latin;
- fr.— borrowed from French;
- qyt.—borrowed from Chinese.

Examples:

1. Mūğalim—ar. noun (from Arabic, meaning “teacher”).
2. Dana—pars. noun (from Persian, meaning “wise, visionary”).
6. Dictionaries should also include certain words, idioms, and idiomatic expressions that deviate from the standard literary norm of the period.

In such cases, after the grammatical label, a stylistic marker is added to indicate its register or contextual use.

Example:

- Bäleqor
Definition: A person who slanders or falsely accuses others.
Grammatical label: noun
Stylistic label: [colloq.]—characteristic of spoken language.
Example: “He kept away from the slanderous (bäleqor) people in the village.”

This example demonstrates that the word belongs to colloquial usage. Through the stylistic marker, readers understand that the word is not appropriate for formal contexts, but is used primarily in everyday speech.

7. In explanatory dictionaries of the Kazakh language, stylistic descriptions and the semantic definitions of entry words are provided in a specific order.

If a word is polysemous, each meaning is systemat-

ically numbered and explained in sequence. This method ensures the consistent presentation of all semantic layers of the word. Below is an illustrative entry for the word “Köz” (eye). As in most dictionaries, after each definition an example or quotation is provided to clarify the meaning.

Example:

Köz—noun.

- The visual organ of humans and animals. Example: “The human eye can see objects at a distance.” Idiomatic expression: “Közdiñ qaraşığında saqtaw”—to treasure or to protect with great care.
 - A spring or natural water source. Example: “The spring source is flowing near the village.” Idiomatic expression: “Sudıñ közin ashı”—to improve or open a water source.
 - A small hole or fastening point in objects. Example: “The button came off from the eye of the garment.” Idiomatic expression: “İne közinen ötkendey”—to describe something very precise or exact.
 - A military observation or aiming point. Example: “The soldier identified the aiming point and fired at the target.”
 - Visual capacity, perception, or awareness. Example: “This child is very observant, with open eyes.” Idiomatic expression: “Közi aşılw”—the expansion of awareness or understanding.
8. To convey the nuances of meanings and shades more precisely, explanatory dictionaries also provide phrasal expressions and idioms related to the word after the definitions and quotations.

The primary aim of this method is to demonstrate the extended usage of the word and to reveal the richness of the language. Phrasal expressions and idioms are listed in alphabetical order, each beginning on a new line and marked with a diamond symbol (◆), enabling readers to locate them quickly.

Example:

Köz—1) visual organ; 2) figuratively: attention, focus.

Examples and quotations:

- “The eye is the mirror of the soul.”
- “He saw everything with his own eyes.”

Phrasal expressions and idioms:

- ◆ Közdi aşyp-jumğanşa — very quickly, in a short time.
- ◆ Közi aşıq — an educated, literate person.
- ◆ Közine tüsuw — to attract someone’s attention.
- ◆ Köz qırımen qaraw — to glance at someone, to observe discreetly.

Here, the idiomatic expressions are marked with a diamond (◆) and arranged alphabetically for easy reference.

9. Explanatory dictionaries also include words adapted into the national language that relate to various scientific and social domains (new terms, neologisms, or fixed expressions).

Example:

Kerewet (from Russian *krovat*)

Definition: A piece of furniture used for sleeping.

Example: “Two beds were placed in the corners of the room.”

Such words occur frequently in the Kazakh language and are systematically incorporated into dictionaries.

10. The language contains numerous sets of words that are used in parallel in terms of form and meaning.

These include phonetic variants, words formed with derivational affixes, as well as morphological, syntactic, stylistic, orthographic, and orthoepic variants. All such variants are recorded in the dictionary, though the definition is given only for the standard literary form, with cross-references to the variants.

Example: *aıǵai–aıqai* [scream], *ǵalım–ālim* [scientist].

11. Explanatory dictionaries also incorporate dialectal words.

Dialectal words reflect the regional and local features of a language. They are characteristic of specific geographic areas, social groups, or historical periods. These words and expressions deviate from the general literary norm and form part of a particular dialect or local speech culture. Their inclusion allows for a deeper understanding of the language’s diversity and demonstrates its regional richness.

Example:

Jeti nan—in certain regions, this dialectal expression refers to “ritual or traditional bread.” In literary Kazakh, however, jeti nan is more often associated with religious or cultural contexts.

12. Explanatory dictionaries also include artificial words found in the works of poets and writers, as well as colloquial words that have spread into general usage.

Such words are often the result of linguistic experiments by authors or of forms that have become established in spoken language. They may not conform to the standard norms of literary language, yet they are employed to achieve specific artistic or rhetorical purposes. Their inclusion in dictionaries highlights their role in language development and helps to trace contemporary linguistic trends.

Example: *Jasampazdyq*—an artificial word frequently used in fiction and journalism. It conveys the meanings of “creativity” or “innovativeness” and is often employed to describe positive social change.

13. Explanatory dictionaries comprehensively cover ethnonyms, national and tribal names, as well as historically and culturally significant social unions.

These lexical units reflect the ethnic, cultural, and social realities of a people. They illustrate the identity of specific ethnic groups, clans, and cultural alliances, and preserve the historical and social significance embedded in language.

Example: Kazakh tribal names such as *Arğyn*, *Qypsaq*, and *Naïman* represent the ethnic composition and historical development of the Kazakh people. Similarly, national names like *Qazaq*, *Qyrğyz*, and *Özbek* capture broader ethnolinguistic identities. Historical and cultural unions such as *Altyn Orda* (Golden Horde) and *Jeti Jargı* (Seven Charters) function as linguistic markers of particular stages of socio-cultural development. Their inclusion in dictionaries helps preserve the rich cultural heritage of the language for future generations.

14. Both archaic and current names of months, years, and days are included in explanatory dictionaries.

This approach preserves historical and cultural specificities while demonstrating the evolutionary development of lexical items.

Examples:

- Săwir – the second month of spring. Archaic form: *Kökek*.
- Traditional Kazakh calendar year names (based on the twelve-animal cycle):
 1. *Tyşqan jılı*—the Year of the Mouse (first in the 12-year cycle).
 2. *Siýr jılı*—the Year of the Ox (second year).
 3. *Barıs jılı*—the Year of the Tiger (third year).
 4. *Qojań jılı*—the Year of the Rabbit (fourth year).
 5. *Ūlw jılı*—the Year of the Dragon (fifth year).
- 15. Abbreviated words formed from a syllable or a complete word are also included in explanatory dictionaries, while abbreviations formed solely from capital letters are not.

Such shortened forms retain their meanings and are widely used in everyday communication, particularly in informal or semi-official contexts.

Examples: *awatkom* (district executive committee), *raïkom* (district party committee), *Qazaqparat* (Kazakh news agency).

16. Explanatory dictionaries comprehensively include compound words.

Compound words are new lexical units formed by combining two or more roots. They are entered into the dictionary as independent, semantically integral items.

Examples: *baqqūmar* (“baq” + “qūmar”) [Gardening], *kökjiek* (“kök” + “jiek”) [horizon], *Aqtöbe* (“aq” + “töbe”) [Aktobe-city], *törtbüryş* (“tört” + “büryş”) [square], *temirjol* (“temir” + “jol”) [railway], *qoltańba* (“qol” + “tańba”) [signature], *balmūzdaq* (“bal” + “mūzdaq”) [ice cream], *bıyl* (“bül jyl”) [this year], *bilezik* (“bilek” + “jüzik”) [bracelet], *äkel* (“alyp kel”) [bring].

17. Reduplicated words in their various forms are fully represented in the dictionary.

This includes paired forms, reduplicated forms, and imitative reduplications.

Examples of paired compounds: *üi-jai* (house-dwelling), *ata-ana* (parents), *qyz-kelinşek* (young women), *el-jurt* (people, community), *jer-su* (land and water), *oi-pikir*

(thought-opinion).

Examples of reduplicated compounds with affixes: *özinen-özi* (by itself), *bir-birlep* (one by one), *betpe-bet* (face to face).

Examples of imitative reduplications with sound alternation: *taqyr-tuqyr*, *tars-türs*, *satyr-sutyr*.

Other forms include stable pairs such as *ata-baba* (ancestors), *er-toqym* (saddle), *däri-därmek* (medicine).

18. Only proper names that have acquired a generalized meaning or that carry special historical and cultural significance are included.

Such names play an important role in national history, literature, and culture, and have come to symbolize broader concepts or archetypes beyond their literal referents.

Examples:

- *Qojanasyr*—a symbol of a witty, humorous, and resourceful person.
- *Myrqymbaı*—a symbol of the common man, modest and hardworking.

These figures, frequently encountered in oral literature, proverbs, and cultural works, embody collective cultural memory and worldview.

19. All basic roots and derived forms across parts of speech are represented in the dictionary.

This applies to nouns, adjectives, numerals (cardinal, collective, quantitative), pronouns, and verbs. Verbs are listed in the second person singular imperative form. In addition, deverbal and deadjectival forms derived with participial suffixes (*-ğan/-gen*, *-qan/-ken*, *-qyn/-kin*, *-ğyn/-gin*) are included as independent entries.

Examples: *qaşqyn* (fugitive), *köşkin* (migrant), *jatağan* (low, sprawling), *beregen* (generous), *alağan* (grabby), *tebegen* (kicker).

20. Adverbs and ideophones are fully included, both in their basic and derived forms.

Adverbs indicate the manner, time, place, or frequency of an action, while ideophones describe sounds or movements.

Examples:

- Basic adverbs: *keşe* (yesterday), *bügin* (today), *erteñ*

(tomorrow), *qazır* (now), *joğarı* (up), *tömen* (down).

- Derived adverbs: *birden* (at once), *jaqynda* (recently), *balasha* (childishly).

- Basic ideophones: *sart*, *dürs*, *tars*, *jalt*, *qylt*.

- Derived ideophones: *satyr-sutyr*, *bylq-bylq*, *ars-ars*, *zyń-zyń*.

These words enrich the expressive resources of the language and enhance the vividness of texts.

21. Functional words such as postpositions, particles, conjunctions, and interjections are fully represented.

They perform structural and expressive functions in discourse: connecting words, adding nuances, or conveying emotions.

Examples:

- Postpositions: *üşin* (for), *deiin* (until), *soń* (after), *arqyly* (through), *turaly* (about).
- Particles: *ğana* (only), *da/de* (also), *ğoi* (emphatic), *ma/me* (interrogative).
- Conjunctions: *jäne* (and), *biraq* (but), *nemese* (or), *öitkeni* (because), *alaıda* (however).
- Primary interjections: *äi*, *bäse*, *äw*, *üh*, *paı-paı*.
- Derived interjections: *ühilep* (sighing), *aınalaıyn* (endearment), *şirkin-aı* (alas).

These elements, depending on their meaning, structure, and function, fulfill diverse syntactic roles in the sentence and convey different shades of emotion and logical relations.

22. Words used exclusively in fixed expressions

The explanatory dictionary also includes words that do not function independently in the language but appear only within certain idiomatic or set expressions. Such words do not carry full meaning when used in isolation; however, in combination with other words they form stable expressions with semantic value. In the dictionary, these items are given together with the expressions in which they occur, usually introduced by a colon following the entry.

Examples:

- *Žek* (*žek köru* – “to dislike, to hate”): “Ol özine qastyq qylğan adamdy žek kördi” [He hated the man who had harmed him].
- *Qapy* (*qapy qalu* – “to miss the right moment, to fail

to manage something”): “Bir sätke oylanıp qalıp, isti ayaqtauda qapy qaldy” [He hesitated for a moment and missed the chance to complete the work].

- Kōn (kōn etu – “to persuade, to make someone comply”): “Köp söz aityp, kōn etti” [After much talking, he persuaded him].

Such words are meaningful only within the fixed collocations in which they occur; therefore, explanatory dictionaries record them in conjunction with their corresponding expressions.

4. Discussion

Explanatory dictionaries play a pivotal role in documenting and systematizing the core lexical fund of a language, while simultaneously serving as a normative instrument that defines its grammatical, semantic, and stylistic rules. Such works are not limited to providing meanings of words: they also outline the particularities of their usage, fix orthographic and orthoepic standards, and reflect the broader historical trajectory of language development. In this respect, explanatory dictionaries function as a mirror of linguistic culture, revealing the richness of the national lexicon and ensuring its preservation for future generations. By uniting linguistic codification with cultural memory, they highlight the inseparable link between language, history, and identity.

The historical depth of explanatory lexicography is evident in the earliest world traditions. The ancient Chinese Ėryă (爾雅), compiled between the 2nd and 3rd centuries BCE, stands as the first systematic attempt to regulate and explain the lexicon of Chinese civilization^[12]. Structured thematically across nineteen sections, this dictionary applied synonymic explanation techniques to clarify archaic or obscure words, thus becoming both a linguistic and cultural canon incorporated into the Confucian textual corpus. Similarly, in India, Yāska’s Nirukta (6th–5th centuries BCE) laid the foundation of Sanskrit lexicography by explaining Vedic terms in semantic and etymological dimensions^[7]. As one of the earliest proto-linguistic treatises, it combined hermeneutics, philology, and semantics, offering an invaluable resource for interpreting sacred texts and influencing the trajectory of Indo-European linguistic thought.

In the Persian world, medieval Farhangs (from the Persian word “dictionary”) became indispensable for literary and scholarly culture. Beginning with Asadi Tusi’s Lughat-i Furs in the 11th century^[13], Persian lexicography evolved through classical milestones such as Farhang-i Jahangiri^[14] and Burhan-i Qati^[15], which not only recorded the Persian lexicon but also reflected contact with Arabic, Turkic, and Indian traditions. These works illustrate how explanatory dictionaries served as mediators of cultural exchange while at the same time codifying national literatures. In parallel, Arabic lexicography developed with Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi’s Kitāb al-‘Ayn (8th c.), the first comprehensive Arabic dictionary, which organized words according to phonetic articulation points^[6]. This innovative system anchored Arabic philology and exemplified the scientific spirit of early Islamic scholarship.

The European tradition followed its own trajectory, with Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabeticall* (1604) representing the first monolingual English dictionary^[9]. Although limited in scope, it marked a crucial step toward the standardization of English and contributed to literacy and educational reform. In the Slavic context, Lavrentii Zizaniy’s *Lexis* (1596)^[16] and later Fedor Polikarpov’s trilingual *Lexicon* (1704)^[17] reflect the integration of religious, cultural, and linguistic processes in Eastern Europe, bridging local and European scholarly traditions.

Turkic lexicography achieved its apex with Mahmud al-Kashgari’s *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (1072–74), which combined encyclopedic lexicon with ethnographic, folkloric, and cultural documentation^[5]. In later centuries, bilingual Arabic–Turkic dictionaries such as Abu Hayyan al-Gharnati’s *Kitāb al-Idrak li-Lisan al-Atrak*^[18] and Jamal al-Din al-Turki’s *Bulghat al-Mushtaq*^[19] recorded the dynamic interactions between Turkic-speaking Mamluks and the Arabic-speaking scholarly world. These works not only systematized vocabulary but also documented grammar, phonology, and cultural contact^[20].

The Kazakh lexicographic tradition emerged in dialogue with these global developments. Beginning with I. Kenesbayev’s two-volume *Explanatory Dictionary of the Kazakh Language* (1959–61)^[21], which contained 18,235 words and 3,371 idioms, Kazakh lexicography advanced to the monumental ten-volume dictionary (1974–86) under the editorship of A. Ysraqov, encompassing over 100,000

entries. The culmination of this tradition was the fifteen-volume Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language (2006), with over 150,000 lexical items, including not only common and literary words but also terms from science, law, and economics ^[22]. Further enrichment came from B. Qaliev's 2014 dictionary, which incorporated over 12,000 new lexical units absent from the earlier multi-volume set, particularly contemporary borrowings, neologisms, and phraseological expressions ^[4]. His subsequent monograph *Theory and Practice of Explanatory Dictionary Compilation* (2015) laid the theoretical foundations of Kazakh lexicography by addressing issues of selection, macrostructure, and microstructure of entries ^[3].

When examined comparatively, these traditions reveal that despite cultural and temporal differences, the central mission of explanatory dictionaries remains constant: to preserve, interpret, and systematize the living language as a reflection of collective cultural identity. They are more than linguistic tools; they are cultural monuments that codify a nation's worldview, facilitate communication across generations, and ensure the transmission of intellectual heritage. By tracing their historical development from Ėryä and Nirukta to Mahmud al-Kashgari and contemporary Kazakh dictionaries, it becomes evident that lexicography is a universal scholarly endeavor, deeply intertwined with the cultural and epistemological evolution of humanity.

V.I. Dal's Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language is one of the outstanding works of nineteenth-century Russian lexicography ^[10]. The first edition was published between 1863 and 1866 as a four-volume set, containing more than 200,000 words. The second edition (1880–1882) was released under the author's own revision, and later editions edited by I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay (1903–1909, 1912–1914) were also published. The dictionary had a significant influence on the development of both Soviet and modern Russian lexicography. This monumental work is regarded as part of the “golden treasury” of the Russian language and still serves today as a valuable source for linguists, historians, ethnographers, and writers.

D.N. Ushakov (1873–1942) compiled the Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language (*Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo yazyka*), one of the most important achievements of twentieth-century lexicographic science ^[23]. This

four-volume work, comprising approximately 85,000 words, was published between 1935 and 1940. It represented the first comprehensive academic attempt to capture the lexical stock of the Russian language during the Soviet period. The dictionary includes lexical units from the active corpus of the Russian literary language, as well as specialized terminology, dialect words, jargon, and historical vocabulary.

The first explanatory dictionary of the Kazakh language was compiled under the general editorship of I. Kenesbayev and published in 1959–1961 under the title *Explanatory Dictionary of the Kazakh Language* in two volumes ^[21]. The first volume contained 8,697 words, while the second included 10,890 words; in total, the dictionary featured 18,235 words and 3,371 phraseological units. Although relatively modest in scope, its publication marked an important milestone in the cultural development of the Kazakh people. The dictionary primarily included root words, selected on the basis of documentary evidence, with a focus on their fundamental meanings. Its goal was to codify the norms of the modern Kazakh literary language. In the preface, I. Kenesbayev emphasized: “The main purpose of the dictionary was to indicate the lexical and semantic norms of words that are frequently encountered in our contemporary literary language”. Explanatory dictionaries, therefore, not only establish lexical and semantic norms but also indicate orthographic and orthoepic standards. They help to distinguish between spoken and written varieties of the language and define the criteria for linguistic standardization. Kenesbayev argued that a dictionary reflects not only the norms of the language but also the culture and history of its people: “Through the language, which has lived alongside the rich history of the people, one can see their customs, economy, relations with other peoples, and level of culture”.

The idea of creating a ten-volume explanatory dictionary was raised six years after the publication of the two-volume work. In 1967, lexicographers of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan began compiling the ten-volume dictionary, which was fully published between 1974 and 1986. Edited by Professor A. Ysraqov, the work contained more than 100,000 words and word combinations, making it one of the first comprehensive dictionaries of its kind among Turkic-speaking nations. In his introduction, A.

Ysraqov noted: “As the explanatory dictionary was conceived to function both as a complete dictionary and as an explanatory one, it was naturally intended, first, to include all the words of our language; second, to fully reveal and accurately explain their meanings; and third, to provide appropriate and convincing examples from literary works”^[2].

For the first time in Kazakh history, the fifteen-volume Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language was published in 2006. This dictionary contained 150,156 lexical items, and over 166,000 meanings were explicated during the lexicographic process. It included words denoting objects, phenomena, events, and human emotions, as well as evaluative and expressive vocabulary within the literary standard. Specialized terminology, professional jargon, and dialectal words were carefully selected and incorporated. In addition, terms from fields such as medicine, finance, market economy, and law were included. Entries were arranged alphabetically, with concise definitions, grammatical and stylistic labels, notes on usage and etymology.

In the 15-volume Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language, it can be said that the units of the Kazakh language’s lexical stock are covered in full. Along with native words, it also includes borrowed terms from other languages and indicates their origins. In other words, this dictionary encompasses every word spoken by the Kazakh people. This feature distinguishes it from other dictionaries.

In 2014, scholar B. Qaliyev published a new Explanatory Dictionary of the Kazakh Language, which incorporated 10,290 newly attested words and 2,195 idiomatic expressions—a total of 12,485 lexical items absent from earlier dictionaries. In an interview, B. Qaliyev explained that foreign words enter the modern Kazakh language in three main ways: (1) by direct borrowing in their Russian forms, e.g., *aiti* (IT), *banner*, *blogger*, *volonter* (volunteer), *smartfon*, *sait* (site), *chat*, *Facebook*, *driver*, *YouTube*; (2) as hybrid forms, where the stem remains foreign but the affixes are Kazakh; and (3) adapted through the rules of Kazakh colloquial speech. Qaliyev considered it important to include all three types of borrowings, in order to raise the question: “Which of them preserve the foundation and nature of the Kazakh language, and which will eventually erode it?”^[5]. His dictionary sought to add to the lexical treasury those words and fixed expressions absent from

the fifteen-volume dictionary but attested in contemporary usage and literature^[4]. This feature distinguishes Qaliyev’s work from its predecessors.

In 2015, Professor B. Qaliuly published the monograph *The Theory and Practice of Compiling Explanatory Dictionaries*^[3]. This work comprehensively examined theoretical issues in Kazakh lexicography, analyzing the principles of selecting and describing lexical units, the structure of dictionary entries, and the macro- and micro-organization of dictionaries as a unified system. The monograph represents one of the first major attempts to establish the theoretical foundations of Kazakh explanatory lexicography.

A review of both global and domestic traditions of explanatory lexicography reveals a shared aim: to collect, systematize, and present the richness of the national language’s vocabulary in a meaningful and structured way for the broader community^[24].

By studying global practices of explanatory dictionaries, we realize the necessity of creating a comprehensive, digitized electronic explanatory dictionary that compiles the full lexical wealth of the Kazakh language. Turning Kazakh into a language of technology will help integrate it more freely into the process of globalization. Today, websites such as <https://sozdikqor.kz/>, <https://termincom.kz/>, and <https://emle.kz/> represent the first steps toward a full-fledged explanatory dictionary of the Kazakh language^[25].

5. Conclusion

The dictionary plays a crucial role in systematizing the lexical resources of a language, codifying the norms of the literary standard, and developing methods of semantic analysis. Beyond its purely linguistic value, a dictionary also serves as a historical and cultural document of its time, functioning as an encyclopedic source that reflects the linguistic state of a given historical period. Among them, explanatory dictionaries are especially important in preserving and fostering the lexical richness of the language, its semantic potential, and stylistic nuances.

The unique value of explanatory dictionaries lies in their universality and accessibility. They are designed not only for linguists and specialists but also for the general

public. Therefore, the metalanguage of explanatory dictionaries must remain as clear and simple as possible, while the structure of dictionary entries should be logical, consistent, and systematic.

Since a metalanguage is a language used to describe the units, structures, and rules of the language under study, the language of an explanatory dictionary must be readily understandable to the general public.

In conclusion, a comprehensive explanatory dictionary is a monumental work that reflects the richness and full range of any language. In particular, a digitized version of such a dictionary is especially important today. By adapting the language of technology into Kazakh, the future and prospects of the Kazakh language become clearly visible.

Author Contributions

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy restrictions

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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