

The user in focus - what does that really mean?

Carolin Müller-Spitzer

Universitetet i Mannheim, Tyskland

Dictionaries are tools, i.e. they are created to be used in certain situations by specific users. This has become common sense in lexicography. But what exactly does this mean for lexicographic practice? Do we always have to do user studies before compiling a dictionary? Or only for certain dictionaries? What about documentation-oriented dictionaries, where the preservation of the linguistic cultural heritage is the main concern? And if one wants to conduct user studies, which methods are suitable at which point in the lexicographic process? The keynote aims to discuss these issues, presenting the different methods of empirical dictionary usage research and explaining briefly the advantages and disadvantages. In doing so, I will draw on experiences we have made in various empirical user studies (presented in the volume "Using Online Dictionaries" and in further studies).