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Sexy Dictionary

Ilan J. Kernerman

Dictionaries and sex are worlds apart, but the world is changing and words change. As it becomes more outspoken, sex and its words are increasingly attributed to denote anything but sex, and *sexy* now means *interesting, exciting, fashionable* (cf. LDOCE3, MEDAL, OALD6, and appendix).

Sex is physical and natural, sensual and essential; it embodies attraction, temptation, passion, satisfaction; it is instinctive, almost irresistible, and grabs instant attention. Now wonder, then, that in these times of consumerism, it is (as has maybe always been) the great teaser in marketing, promotion and advertising, applied for the sale of *sexy* products, ideas, etc.

Dictionaries stand in stark contrast; fruits of the mind, of studious thought and scientific labor, rationalizations, verbalizations, lists and order all put in frames and formations. Often this makes

them staid and estranged, cumbersome and complex, desireless and repelling – lacking some basic intuition that seems inherent in normal lively communication. What waste of wonderful human knowledge!

Does it have to be so? Why do many fear dictionaries, use them only if they must or not at all? Can't a dictionary be handy and friendly? Tell us about what lexicography and poetry share in common, relate dictionaries to reality and dream; give just the right information simply, clearly, fully; not patronize as a sacred know-it-all scripture, but literally speak the language of the user and be sensitive to the media that is used.

Let it appeal, seduce, be pleasant to use and easy to understand, stimulate and gratify, help to wisen us up, to broaden horizons and lead on to new ground – be a *sexy dictionary*, not just a provocative title.



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Thanks to Ramesh Krishnamurthy for researching *sexy* in the Bank of English. An appendix containing his findings and analysis is online: <http://kdictionaries.com/newsletter/kdn10-sexy.html>

This contribution is a revised extract of an article in *Studs*, 2, 2001. Lund: Studentlitteratur.