

A new step forward for South African learners' lexicography: *The Oxford Afrikaans-Engels / English- Afrikaans Skoolwoordeboek / School Dictionary*

A B S T R A C T This paper focuses on various aspects of the recently published dictionary *Oxford Afrikaans-Engels / English-Afrikaans Skoolwoordeboek / School Dictionary*. From the perspective of the theory of lexicographic functions the dictionary is evaluated as an instrument in the hand of the intended target user. An identification of the relevant dictionary functions and the way in which they are achieved is followed by a discussion of the central word lists and the dictionary articles. This section offers a critical analysis of the micro-architecture of the articles and the article contents. Suggestions are made for an improved presentation and treatment. Innovative proposals regarding the macro- and microstructural presentation of homonyms and polysemes are made to enhance the user-friendliness of this dictionary. The value of the outer texts and the prevailing transtextual function is emphasised. It is shown how certain inconsistencies impede the optimal transfer of information.

Keywords: Central word lists, cognitive function, dictionary article, frame structure, homonyms, learner's dictionaries, lexicographic functions, outer texts, polysemes, school dictionaries, text production, text reception, translation equivalent.

1. Introduction

A new learners' dictionary has been published in South Africa, the *Oxford Afrikaans-Engels / English-Afrikaans Skoolwoordeboek / School Dictionary* (hereafter referred to as the

Oxford School Dictionary). The new dictionary is a bilingual, two-way (biscopal) dictionary designed for users who master one of the two involved languages (bidirectional), and as such it adds to the list of other bilingual, biscopal and bidirectional learners' dictionaries between Afrikaans and English such as Bosman's *Tweetalige Skoolwoordeboek*, Du Plessis's *Tweetalige Aanleerderswoordeboek / Bilingual Learner's Dictionary*, and Kromhout *et al.*'s *Skoolwoordeboek / School Dictionary*. However, in comparison with its predecessors, the new dictionary constitutes, in various aspects, an important step forward.

In South Africa, like in other countries, there seems to be a terminological confusion as far as the terms *school dictionary* ("skoolwoordeboek") and *learners' dictionary* ("aanleerderswoordeboek") are concerned. Although there are no generally accepted definitions of the two terms, the term *learners' dictionary* most frequently refers to a dictionary used to support the acquisition of a language that is not the anticipated users' first language (cf. Gouws 2001), whereas the term *school dictionary* – as the term itself indicates – refers to a dictionary used in the school, frequently in relation to the use and improvement of the schoolchildren's first language (or mother tongue). Consequently, in this sense and from a typological perspective school dictionaries should rather be monolingual dictionaries. As can be read on the front page, the *Oxford School Dictionary* is a dictionary designed to and approved for use in the South African schools and in this regard its title may be acceptable, but due to its bilingual (and biscopal) character – and as it can explicitly be seen in the blurb – it is also a learners' dictionary in the above-mentioned interpretation of this terminological category because it is conceived to support the acquisition of an additional language. In the list of dictionaries given above only Du Plessis's dictionary indicates in its title that it is a learner's dictionary. This dictionary aims to improve the language skills of users of either English or Afrikaans as a non-mother-tongue and therefore rightly qualifies as a learner's dictionary. The other dictionaries, presented by their titles as school dictionaries, also display a biscopal nature and are also aimed at assisting users in the improvement of a non-first language. As such they also qualify as learner's dictionaries, although indicated as school dictionaries.

Oxford University Press (South Africa) did not publish this dictionary in isolation but it is complemented by a bilingual workbook. This workbook will not be discussed in the present paper but its importance in helping to create a dictionary culture in South Africa should not be underestimated. The blurb on the back cover of this dictionary gives an explicit reference to the workbook, including its ISBN. However, it would have been even better if dictionary and workbook could have been sold as a single package so that all the users of this dictionary could have had immediate access to the workbook. Being sold as a separate book too often leads to a situation where very few users who are actually in need of the assistance offered by the workbook, get access to it.

2. Dictionary functions

A dictionary is – or should always be – designed with a specific function (or functions) in mind, i.e. to satisfy the specific type of lexicographically relevant needs that a specific type of user may have in a specific type of extra-lexicographic user situation, e.g. text reception or production. However, it is a frequent problem that dictionaries either do not indicate their anticipated functions or claim to be useful for all thinkable purposes in order to support sales – the

lexicographic once-size-fits-all approach. In this respect, the *Oxford School Dictionary* distinguishes itself in comparison with its South African predecessors in as much as it, at least partially, specifies its anticipated functions as can be seen in the following quotation from the blurb:

Designed to enable learners to write and speak effectively and competently in their additional language, this up-to-date dictionary focuses on overcoming learners’ most common difficulties.

Although dealing with Afrikaans and English as language pair no indication is given of a preferred user group and it can be accepted that the dictionary focuses on both Afrikaans and English-speaking learners in an equal way.

The concept “additional language”, as given in the text on the blurb, is a specific South African concept which refers to a non-first language. Within the South African context the term “additional language” is more often than not used to refer to a third or fourth language but it is also used, as in this dictionary, to indicate a second language. When working with a dictionary like this one, one should also be aware of the broader language and lexicographic situation in South Africa. Although there are eleven official languages which each has a national lexicography unit, responsible for the compilation of dictionaries for that language, all these languages do not yet have bilingual dictionaries in which the language is paired with Afrikaans or English. A bilingual dictionary with Afrikaans or English as language pair may consequently also be used by learners of either Afrikaans or English with that language as a third or fourth language, but utilising this dictionary due to a lack of dictionaries in their mother tongue to bridge the gap to the language (Afrikaans or English) they need to learn. In this sense the *Oxford School Dictionary* is a dictionary designed to provide assistance in order to solve problems related to written and oral text production in Afrikaans or English as additional language.

As to the anticipated user group, it is only defined indirectly and in a fairly broad manner. On the one hand, the editors inform that the dictionary is “relevant and useful for learners of English and for learners of Afrikaans” (*Introduction*, p. x). On the other hand, the *Introduction* also refers to the National Curriculum which establishes that dictionaries are relevant for the teaching of additional languages from Grade 8 through to Grade 12. In this indirect way, it can be deduced that the *Oxford School Dictionary* is designed to assist South African schoolchildren from Grade 8 to Grade 12, that is 13 to 14 and 17 to 18 year old schoolchildren – when they face text-production problems related to the learning of English or Afrikaans as a first or second additional language. However, although nothing is said about it, it may also be deduced from the two languages referred to in the dictionary’s title that the user group can be narrowed down to schoolchildren who have mastered either English or Afrikaans as their home language or as their first additional language (when learning a second additional language). It could be recommended that the editors in future editions furnish all this important information in a more explicit way, either on the front page or in the blurb.

3. The central word lists

The central word lists are the most important section of the dictionary but not the only texts conveying lexicographic data. Many dictionaries, also the *Oxford School Dictionary*, display a frame structure with front, middle and back matter texts complementing the central word lists. A later section of this paper briefly discusses some of these outer texts, but the main focus in

this paper is on the central word lists of this dictionary and the treatment presented in these word lists.

The *Oxford School Dictionary* consists of two central word lists, one Afrikaans-English and the other English-Afrikaans. This should not only be considered necessary in order to fulfil the dictionary's bidirectional purpose, but also to guarantee its usefulness as a text-production dictionary for the anticipated user group which – as it is presented in the *Introduction* – embraces the levels from the very beginners to the intermediate level. It has been theoretically argued that learners at the very beginner's level normally produce texts in the language to be learned through a mental first-language draft or outline which they then "translate" inside their brain before proceeding to the oral or written text production in the additional language. As the learners improve their proficiency level in the non-first language and little by little pass to the intermediate level, they will gradually start to express themselves directly in the additional language without an outline in their mother tongue, a process which in most cases culminates when they reach the very advanced learners' level. But for most learners at the intermediate level, text production may take place as a combination of production *through* their first language and production *directly in* the additional language (cf. Tarp 2008). It goes without saying that all this has big consequences for the learners' lexicographic needs and the corresponding lexicographic solutions which necessarily have to include both a bilingual word list from the users' first language to the additional language and a (monolingual or bilingual) word list which departs from the additional language. In this respect, the *Oxford School Dictionary* fully meets the requirements of a text-production dictionary designed for the anticipated user group.

4. Dictionary articles

As to the number of articles (lemmas) included in the two word lists, no explicit information is given anywhere in the dictionary, but a rough calculation suggests above 5 100 articles in each of them. This number seems fair enough taking into consideration the anticipated user group and user situation as well as the fact that it is conceived to be used in a controlled environment, i.e. the classroom (cf. Tarp 2004a). As can be seen below, each article contains the lemma, part of speech, inflection, equivalent, a text example in the source language and its translation into the target language. Apart from that, when a lemma has more than one sense, the article is subdivided into two or more parts:

fyn *byvoeglike naamwoord* (**fyn, fyner, die fynste**) **1** delicate. ♦ Die rok is van **fyn** kant gemaak. *The dress is made of delicate lace.* ♦ Brenda is 'n baie **fyn** meisie. *Brenda is a very delicate girl.* **2** mashed. ♦ Inge eet graag wors en **fyn** aartappels. *Inge likes to eat sausage and mashed potatoes.*

delicate *adjective* (**more delicate, the most delicate**) **1** fyn. ♦ The dress is made of **delicate** lace. *Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak.* **2** sag. ♦ I like **delicate** colours like light pink and cream. *Ek hou van sagte kleure soos ligte pienk en roomkleur.*

Example 1: Two dictionary articles from the *Oxford School Dictionary*

From a purely didactic point of view the information in the dictionary articles would have been more easily retrievable if a micro-architecture had been employed. This would have made a clear distinction on the typographical level between the different search areas in the dictionary article, e.g. by presenting each data type in a separate line. The use of a micro-architecture would have rendered the following presentation of the article of the lemma sign *fyn*:

fyn *byvoeglike naamwoord (fyn, fyner, die fynste)*
1 delicate
◆ Die rok is van **fyn** kant gemaak. *The dress is made of delicate lace.*
◆ Brenda is 'n baie **fyn** meisie. *Brenda is a very delicate girl.*
2 mashed
◆ Inge eet graag wors en **fyn** aartappels. *Inge likes to eat sausage and mashed potatoes.*

Example 2: Hypothetical dictionary article with micro-architecture based on the article in Oxford School Dictionary

A micro-architecture is more space-consuming but, especially in the case of lengthy articles, it enhances the user-friendliness of the dictionary.

If one looks at the articles in example 1 and at other articles, it is evident that the authors have not only selected the most frequent and relevant lemmas, but also the most frequent and relevant senses of the separate words. This is by all means acceptable taking into account the foreseen functions of the dictionary. But what kind of information – and corresponding lexicographic data – may users of the anticipated type need when producing a written or oral text in the additional language? Roughly speaking, they may need information on:

- target language
- translation equivalents
- spelling
- pronunciation
- part of speech
- meaning
- inflection
- syntactic properties

Apart from *pronunciation* – which is only needed in relation to oral texts – all these needs are met in one way or another. *Spelling* is inherent in the lemmas and their inflected forms. *Part of speech* is indicated in all articles although – as we shall see later on – sometimes in a rather complicated way. *Target language translation equivalents* are provided in all articles and, when there is more than one, the text examples can be used as possible meaning differentiators. As to *inflection*, the corresponding forms are always furnished in relation to the lemma and not in relation to the equivalents. This is normal practice in most bilingual dictionaries but it means that the learners who produce additional-language texts through their first language would have to look up twice in order to get the needed information. In this regard, the *Oxford School Dictionary* has given priority to the learners who mainly produce directly in the additional language and constitute a minority of the anticipated user group. Instead, the authors could

have chosen one of the two following solutions where the first give priority to the learners who mainly produce through the first language while the second provides assistance to users of both types:

delicate *adjective* 1 fyn (fyn, fyner, fynste).

◆ The dress is made of **delicate** lace. *Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak.* 2 sag (sagte, sagter, die sagste). ◆ I like **delicate** colours like light pink and cream. *Ek hou van sagte kleure soos ligte pienk en roomkleur.*

delicate *adjective* (more delicate, the most

delicate) 1 fyn (fyn, fyner, fynste). ◆ The dress is made of **delicate** lace. *Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak.* 2 sag (sagte, sagter, die sagste). ◆ I like **delicate** colours like light pink and cream. *Ek hou van sagte kleure soos ligte pienk en roomkleur.*

Example 3: Two hypothetical dictionary articles based on the Oxford School Dictionary

Such an approach would have been an innovative adaptation to the typical microstructure of learners' dictionaries. By means of a procedure of non-lemmatic addressing the translation equivalent is elevated to a treatment unit in its own right for which (at least) the relevant entries on inflection are provided. Employing a partial micro-architecture would have rendered the following article:

delicate *adjective* (more delicate, the most delicate)

1 fyn (fyn, fyner, fynste). ◆ The dress is made of **delicate** lace. *Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak.*

2 sag (sagte, sagter, die sagste). ◆ I like **delicate** colours like light pink and cream. *Ek hou van sagte kleure soos ligte pienk en roomkleur.*

Example 4: Hypothetical dictionary article based on the Oxford School Dictionary

As to *meaning*, this information – apart from the cases where there are various target language translation equivalents and where data on meaning differentiation should be provided – is mainly relevant when addressed at lemmas being the additional-language lemmas for a specific user. In these last cases, the corresponding lexicographic data consists of 1) their first-language translation equivalents which provide direct meaning translation and 2) the text examples which support the meaning provided by the equivalents. Of course, the dictionary could have chosen to incorporate explanations or definitions but this does not seem to be necessary since this dictionary is primarily designed as a tool to assist in text production.

Up till now, the *Oxford School Dictionary* has satisfactorily met the requirements of a text-production dictionary in terms of the lexicographic data included in the respective dictionary articles. However, it is still to be seen whether or not it satisfies the requirements in terms of data on syntactic properties. This question is a very complex one that has not found a proper solution in most learners' dictionaries. The concept of *syntactic properties* refers to data on general combinational properties, collocations, idioms and proverbs. These data types are

presented in diverse ways and quantities in many learners' dictionaries and it is not always clear whether they are given as part of a lexicographic tradition or in order to meet the real needs of the intended target users. As to the last three data types mentioned above, the *Oxford School Dictionary* does not contain any proverbs and very few idioms while it includes a number of collocations which – with very few exceptions, e.g. the English verb *look* – are furthermore presented in an indirect manner as part of the text examples. Considering the proficiency level of the anticipated user group, it is not only acceptable but also understandable and even praiseworthy that the dictionary contains no proverbs and very few idioms which are both linguistic phenomena that cannot be used without risk of appearing ridiculous until reaching a more advanced proficiency level (cf. Scerba, 1940). However, it goes without saying that the foreseen type of users need information on collocations in order to produce texts in a language that they are only beginning to learn (cf. Hausmann, 1984). It could therefore be recommended that a future edition of the dictionary should include at least a number of the most frequent and relevant collocations. As to information on the *general combinational properties*, there are traditionally three different ways of providing the corresponding lexicographic data:

1. explicitly, by means of grammatical codes or minirules
2. implicitly, as part of text examples
3. implicitly, as part of the explanations (definitions)

It is not necessary to follow an either ... or approach in this regard. The best learners' dictionaries use a combination of explicit and implicit methods, partially because one method supports the other(s) and partially because learners are different with some gaining more advantage from explicit data and others from implicit data. The articles in the *Oxford School Dictionary* do not contain either syntactic codes or explanations. Hence, the only data from which the users may retrieve information on combinational properties – which mainly, but not exclusively, is needed in relation to verbs – are the text examples. The following article shows how the combinational properties are indirectly contained in the text examples:

hoor *werkwoord (het gehoor)* hear. ◆ Jy sal moet harder praat, ek kan jou nie **hoor** nie. *You'll have to talk louder, I can't hear you.* ◆ Het jy daardie vreemde geluid **gehoor**? *Did you hear the strange sound?* ◆ Het jy **gehoor** wat gister gebeur het? *Did you hear what happened yesterday?* ◆ Ek **hoor** Elizabeth gaan volgende jaar in Johannesburg werk. *I hear Elizabeth is going to work in Johannesburg next year.*

Example 5: Dictionary article from the Oxford School Dictionary

In the above article, four possible syntactic combinations with *hoor* are provided:

1. **hoor iemand** (*hear somebody*): Jy sal moet harder praat, ek kan jou nie hoor nie.
2. **hoor iets** (*hear something*): Het jy daardie vreemde geluid gehoor?
3. **hoor wat + bysin** (*hear what + clause*): Het jy gehoor wat gister gebeur het?
4. **hoor + bysin** (*hear + clause*): Ek hoor Elizabeth gaan volgende jaar in Johannesburg werk.

The text example representing the fourth combination in the article of the lemma *hoor* could be problematic. In Afrikaans a subordinate clause is typically introduced by a conjunction. Where this is the case the word order of the subordinate clause differs from that of the main clause, e.g. main clause: *Hy sing 'n lied* (he sings a song) and subordinate clause: *Ek weet*

dat hy 'n lied sing (I know that he sings a song.) The conjunction *dat* may be omitted from subordinate clauses but then the subordinate clause takes the same word order as a main clause: *Ek weet hy sing 'n lied* (I know he sings a song.) The subordinate clause with *dat* has a higher frequency in Afrikaans and it would have been better to have used such a combination in the text example.

The text examples in the article of the lemma *hoor* illustrate some of the most frequent and basic combinational properties of this Afrikaans verb. The dictionary users have to retrieve the corresponding information from the text examples and then use it when producing new texts. However, the fact that the *Oxford School Dictionary* only indirectly provides data on combinational properties should not be considered an insurmountable obstacle taking into account that the foreseen users are still in an age characterised by linguistic creativity, which means that they will probably be able to extract the needed information from selected text examples. Nevertheless, it may be recommended that the authors consider the possibility of including well-formulated explicit syntactic minirules in a future edition, for instance in the following way, as suggested by Gouws and Tarp (2004: 291), where the minirules are supported by text examples which could also be translated in bilingual dictionaries:

hoor iets (*Ek hoor die donderweer*)

hoor iemand (*Sy hoor hom in die badkamer*)

hoor van iemand (*Hy hoor dikwels van sy seun*)

hoor (dat) + bysin (*Ons hoor dat hy in die badkamer sing/hy sing in die badkamer*)

hoor hoe + bysin (*Julle hoor hoe die wind vandag waai*)

To honour the truth, it must be admitted that the dictionary indeed contains a very few examples of this kind, for instance hear from somebody in the article hear:

hear *verb* (hearing, heard) hoor. ♦ I **heard** a noise in the garage. *Ek het 'n geluid in die garage gehoor.* ♦ I will **hear** you when you come in. *Ek sal jou hoor as jy inkom.* ♦ We **heard** that they were getting married in June. *Ons het gehoor dat hulle in Junie gaan trou.*
hear from somebody van iemand hoor. ♦ I haven't **heard** from her for ages. *Ek het lank nie van haar gehoor nie.*

Example 6: Dictionary article from the Oxford School Dictionary

This example shows that it is perfectly possible to include syntactic minirules as the ones proposed above. In fact, it is surprising that the dictionary has not generalised this practice which could surely improve its quality, although the absence of such minirules, as already stated, should not be considered an insurmountable obstacle for the anticipated user group.

To sum up, and taking into consideration its declared functions, the *Oxford School Dictionary* generally seems to contain the lexicographic data that may satisfy the beginner and intermediate learners' needs in terms of text production in their additional language, being it English or Afrikaans. However, more explicit syntactic guidance would have enhanced the retrieval of information.

5. Macro- and microstructure

In printed dictionaries, the macrostructure (structure of the word list) and the microstructure (structure of the article) are structures conceived to facilitate the users' easy and quick access to the relevant data from which they may retrieve the needed information. The macrostructure of the *Oxford School Dictionary* is traditionally alphabetic but it includes nevertheless some features which make the users' access to the needed data easier and more difficult, respectively.

On the positive side, we find the selection of a number of irregular inflected forms as lemmas heading cross-reference articles and guiding the user to the canonical form where the relevant data can be found. The selection of irregular forms as cross-reference lemmas is normally important in dictionaries designed to assist text reception where such forms appear in real texts and may create specific comprehension problems. However, the selection of these inflected forms may also be useful when the actual text-production phase is succeeded by a text-revision phase where the user may not remember the meaning of the words employed. In any case, the relatively few cross-reference lemmas of this type do not harm the user-friendliness of the dictionary.

On the negative side, we find the very complex principles used to select the various types of homonyms and polysemes as lemmas or sublemmas, respectively. In the short guide to the dictionary (called *Dictionary features*), the structural principles are explained in the following way:

- When a headword has more than one sense, each **sense** is clearly numbered.
- Headwords with the **same spelling** but with a different meaning or origin appear in separate entries. These entries are numbered as you can see in this example.

The articles provided in the *Oxford School Dictionary* to illustrate these principles are *bottom* and *die*, respectively:

bottom *noun, adjective*

- ▶ *noun (bottoms)* 1 onderkant. ♦ There are trees at the **bottom** of the garden. *Daar is bome aan die onderkant van my tuin.* 2 (*informal*) sitvlak. ♦ I sat on my **bottom**. *Ek het op my sitvlak gesit.* 3 bodem. ♦ If you don't stir your coffee, all sugar will stay at the **bottom**. *As jy nie jou koffie roer nie, gaan al die suiker op die bodem bly lê.*
- ▶ *adjective* onderste. ♦ You can put the book on the **bottom** shelf. *Jy kan die boek op die onderste rak sit.*

die¹ *verb (dying, died)* sterf, vrek. ♦ My aunt **died** of cancer. *My tannie het aan kanker gesterf.*
 ♦ The plants will **die** without water and sunlight. *Die plante sal sonder water en sonlig vrek.*
die-hard kanniedood. ♦ He is a real **die-hard**. *Hy's 'n regte kanniedood.*

die² *noun (dice)* dobbelsteen. ♦ You need two **dice** to play this game. *Jy het twee dobbelstene nodig om hierdie speletjie te speel.*
throw the dice gooi die dobbelstene. ♦ If it's your turn, you have to throw the **dice**. *As dit jou beurt is, moet jy die dobbelstene gooi.*

Example 7: Dictionary articles from the Oxford School Dictionary

The classification of words in homonyms and polysemes according to meaning and origin (etymology) is a linguistic speciality which gives rise to continuous disagreement between linguists, among other things because there are various criteria and a strong element of subtlety and subjectivity involved. It goes without saying that the distinction between homonyms and polysemes is important and highly relevant – for the retrieval of linguistic information. If it is the intention of the lexicographer to assist the dictionary user in retrieving this kind of linguistic information, then dictionaries, e.g. standard and comprehensive monolingual dictionaries, should have a clearly defined way of treating homonyms and polysemous lexical items. In such a dictionary the distinction between homonyms and polysemes is relevant because the user actually needs to retrieve linguistic information (performing a cognitive function). It is, however, not relevant in relation to, e.g., the text production and text reception functions.

However, the type of macro- and microstructural presentation traditionally employed in general dictionaries with a strong linguistic focus should not necessarily be adhered to in a learners' dictionary. Dictionary structures should be adapted to meet the needs of the users of the intended dictionary. In a learners' dictionary with text production as its major function (*"The dictionary has been designed to help you write and speak better."* – Dictionary features, p. vi) the identification of homonyms and polysemes is not an essential feature and the macro- and microstructural presentation of homonyms and polysemous senses may not be given to the detriment of easy access to a required word or sense. The linguistic distinction of homonyms and polysemes, as presented in many dictionaries, should not automatically be transferred to learners' dictionaries whose users do not need this information and are not expected to have the necessary knowledge that allows them to determine whether words are polysemous or homonymous in order to access the dictionary articles as quickly and easily as possible (cf. Tarp, 2001). Innovative planning of the macrostructure is needed and instead of the rather complex principles used to structure the word list, it may be recommended that a future edition of the *Oxford School Dictionary* consider a more user-friendly macrostructure based on transparent "surface" principles, deviating from a linguistic-based approach and favouring an easier access approach, such as:

- All words with different parts of speech and inflection are selected as independent lemmas in separate articles.
- All senses and meanings addressed to words with the same spelling, part of speech and inflection are numbered and placed in one and the same article headed by the same lemma.

It can rightly be argued that these principles may result in a more complex microstructure when several senses and meanings are addressed at the same lemma. However, this possible problem can easily be reduced by introducing a more user-friendly – but of course more space-consuming – micro-architecture and internal access structure in the articles as in the following example:

bottom *noun* (**bottoms**)

1 onderkant.

◆ There are trees at the **bottom** of the garden.

Daar is bome aan die onderkant van my tuin.

2 (*informal*) sitvlak.

◆ I sat on my **bottom**. *Ek het op my sitvlak gesit.*

3 bodem.

◆ If you don't stir your coffee, all sugar will stay

at the **bottom**. *As jy nie jou koffie roer nie, gaan al die suiker op die bodem bly lê.*

bottom *adjective* onderste.

◆ You can put the book on the **bottom** shelf. *Jy kan die boek op die onderste rak sit.*

Example 8: Two hypothetical dictionary articles based on the Oxford School Dictionary

If these structural principles were combined with a more harmonious layout they would surely improve the anticipated user group's changes to access the needed data as quickly and easily as possible.

Where homonyms belong to different parts of speech, as is the case with the lemmas *die* in example 7, or have different inflection paradigms they will still be presented in separate articles. Where they have the same part of speech and inflection only one article will be given. However, this system should be explained in the users' guidelines so that users familiar with the traditional way of treating homonyms and polysemes will not be confused. Such an approach will enhance the user-friendliness of the dictionary and will emphasise the fact that users' needs have a higher priority in a learners' dictionary than linguistic traditions.

6. Curiosities

Although consistency is important in a dictionary it is not necessary that a dictionary should be one hundred per cent consistent in every aspect. Variation may in some cases make the consultation and reading more interesting and less boring. This is especially the case with learners' dictionaries whose users may be expected to be less experienced and more impatient readers. But the inconsistencies should, nevertheless, be maintained within certain limits. In this regard some inconsistencies that can hardly be motivated have been found in the *Oxford School Dictionary*. In example 1, we saw that the text example used in the Afrikaans-English word list (*Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak. The dress is made of delicate lace*) is also used in the English-Afrikaans word list (*The dress is made of delicate lace. Die rok is van fyn kant gemaak*).

However, the second text example given in the Afrikaans-English word list for the same sense of the lemma *fyn* and its translation equivalent *delicate* (*Brenda is 'n baie fyn meisie. Brenda is a very delicate girl*) does not appear in the treatment of the lemma *delicate* in the English-Afrikaans word list. Furthermore, in examples 5 and 6, we saw that the text examples addressed at another pair of equivalents, i.e. *hoor* and *hear*, were completely different.

The same holds true for the following four articles where the principle of using the same examples in both word lists of the dictionary has been abandoned:

prince *noun* (**princes**) prins. ◆ The son of a king or a queen is called a **prince**. *Die seun van 'n koning of koningin word 'n prins genoem.*

princess *noun* (**princesses**) prinses. ◆ **Princess** Thandiwe is the daughter of the king. *Prinses Thandiwe is die dogter van die koning.*

prins *naamwoord* (**prinse, prinsie**) prince. ◆ Charles is die **prins** van Wallis. *Charles is the Prince of Wales.* ◆ Die klein **prinsie** is die troonopvolger. *The little prince is the heir to the throne.*

prinses *naamwoord (prinsesse, prinsessie)*

princess. ♦ Sy het soos 'n **prinses** by haar matriekafskeid gevoel. *She felt like a princess at her matric farewell.* ♦ **Prinses** Caroline van Monaco is 'n grasiëuse gasvrou. *Princess Caroline of Monaco is a gracious hostess.* ♦ Die klein **prinsessie** het alles wat 'n mens se hart kan begeer. *The little princess has everything one could wish for.*

Example 9: Dictionary articles from the Oxford School Dictionary

The text example in the first of these four articles illustrates yet another type of inconsistency. This is not a typical usage example but it rather recalls the so-called natural-language definition introduced by Collins Cobuild some years ago in order to enunciate meaning in a more user-friendly way. The use of such a “defining” type of text example deviates from the default example type in this dictionary. The last three articles in example 7 present another type of inconsistency. The second article uses a text example taken from Africa, while the two last articles – apart from neutral text examples – have borrowed their text examples from another continent, i.e. from the old-fashioned royal families of Old Europe. Given the target user of the *Oxford School Dictionary* it should perhaps be considered to bring such text examples closer to the African and the South African reality.

Further inconsistencies have been found in the selection of lemmas in the two word lists. Without engaging in the never-ending and rather fruitless discussion about the selection of one or another particular word, it is nevertheless relevant to call attention to some problems involving the very concept of the dictionary. Hence, in the English-Afrikaans word list the following article can be found:

tyrant *noun (tyrants)* tiran. ♦ The **tyrant** used force to rule the country. *Die tiran het mag gebruik om die land te regeer.* **tyranny** *noun* tirannie. ♦ The people rioted against the **tyranny** of his rule. *Die mense het teen die tirannie van sy bewind betoog.*

Example 10: Dictionary article from the Oxford School Dictionary

Apart from the inconvenience that the users have to access the article *tyrant* in order to find the translation of *tyranny*, they will never be able to get any help if they are not sure of the plural form of the Afrikaans equivalent in as much as *tiran* is not selected as a lemma in the Afrikaans-English word list. It would be exaggerated to claim that there should be a one hundred per cent correspondence between the equivalents in one word list and the lemmas in the other word list. In fact, such an application of the reversibility principle would be impossible because the various senses and meanings addressed at a lemma in one list would create still new candidates to be included in the other list, and vice versa. However, this is not the case with *tyrant* and *tiran* and it could be suggested to aim at a higher degree of consistency and correspondence in cases like this between the two word lists.

7. Outer texts

A frame structure offers lexicographers the opportunity to include data in the dictionary for which the articles in the central list do not typically make provision. Especially where a

transtextual functional approach is used, (cf. Gouws, 2004), these front and back matter texts can enhance the application of the lexicographic functions pursued by the specific dictionary. When it comes to the use of a frame structure the *Oxford School Dictionary* sets a fine example, with the central lists complemented by a number of front and back matter texts as well as texts presented as middle matter, i.e. between the two word lists without constituting a secondary outer frame structure by being either a back matter text of the first or a front matter text of the second word list. The blurb of this dictionary explicitly focuses the attention on the outer texts with the entry: “Plus: 46 pages of useful extras (activities with answers, model letters, illustrations, SMS language, and more”).

It is true that very useful extras of the above-mentioned types are incorporated in the dictionary. However, in order to reach 46 pages you have to include a title page (1 pg.), a colophon (1 pg.), three different lists of content (3 pg.), two user guides (4 pg.), and an *Introduction* in both languages (5 pg.), i.e. a total of 14 pages, which reduces the number of pages of useful extras of the mentioned type to 32 pages. This completely unnecessary exaggeration casts a gloom over the extras that in many ways are of great usefulness and relevance to the users in terms of text production in their additional language.

Dictionary users are not always familiar with the fact that a dictionary often offers more than the contents of the central word list(s). Where front, back and middle matter texts complement the central word list(s) it is important that users should be made aware of these texts. The table of contents of the *Oxford School Dictionary*, one of the front matter texts constituting the primary frame of this dictionary, gives adequate guidance in this regard by listing all the different outer texts of the dictionary. The front matter texts include an introduction and two graphic and very pedagogical user guides presented under the topic *Dictionary features*. This is of special importance – taking into account the age and supposed lexicographic experience of the anticipated users. The middle matter presents a “study section” with the focus on dictionary activities (with exercises that can be used in the classroom in order to become familiar with the use of the dictionary), a formal email, a formal letter, an informal (friendly) letter, electronic messages, irregular verb forms in English, punctuation and spelling and prefixes and suffixes. These texts support the general use as well as the text production function of this dictionary. As indicated earlier in this paper the topic of dictionary activities is also dealt with in a separate workbook. The texts in the back matter constitute a reference section, focusing on a variety of topics, with pictorial illustrations, like domestic animals, wild animals, small creatures and sea creatures, fruit and vegetables, the human body, sport, a map of South Africa, South African languages and phases of education, themes, numbers, weights and measurements and the answers to the dictionary activities of the middle matter. These texts introduce a knowledge-directed function and can be useful for the foreseen type of users, but it is also a fact that their usefulness is reduced and relative as they only cover a small part of the words that are included in the word list and could benefit from similar illustration. However, these illustrations may have another important function which is not mentioned in the dictionary. At the Twelfth AFRILEX International Conference, celebrated at the Tshwane University of Technology from 27 to 29 June 2007, the editor of the *Oxford School Dictionary*, dr Phillip Louw, informed his colleagues that the publishing house had received many letters from parents who praised the dictionary. Some of these letters referred to the illustrations which their children also

used to learn the animal names in their mother tongue. This use is not part of the declared genuine purpose of the dictionary, but it should not be despised for that reason because it furnishes the dictionary with another important function, namely to familiarise the children with dictionaries and convince them that they are not boring tools belonging exclusively to the world of their parents. The existence of this socialising or familiarising function should be an important experience for future generations of learners' dictionaries for schoolchildren.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, the *Oxford School Dictionary* is in various ways a pleasant acquaintance that has found acceptable solutions to most of the lexicographic needs which the intended user group of 13 to 18 year old South African schoolchildren learning English or Afrikaans as their first or second additional language may be expected to have when writing or speaking in these languages. It is completely understandable that the dictionary has been approved for use in the South African schools. However, this well-deserved praise does not imply that the dictionary has no weak points and cannot be improved in various aspects. Some of these improvements have already been suggested above, but two other improvements should be especially recommended.

The first has to do with the layout of the dictionary articles. In the present edition the layout is characterised by a fuzzy picture with the use of various fonts, sizes and typographies which serve to give prominence to one or another type of lexicographic data. This kind of layout may be useful in advertisements but the way it has been employed here, rather causes the real important data to be lost in the crowd. In this way, it also impedes the users' quick access to the relevant data and probably also the very process of retrieving information from the data taking into account the age of the anticipated users. It is therefore recommended that a future layout should be adapted to some of more user-friendly principles (cf. Almind, 2005; Almind/Bergenholtz, 2000), employing, as stated earlier, a well-devised micro-architecture.

The second improvement suggested here also aims at creating an even more user-friendly dictionary. It focuses on the very first moment when future users glance at it and have to decide whether or not it should be bought or taken down from the shelves. This specific improvement could be a short, precise and reliable informative label – for instance placed in the blurb – containing the most important information about the type of dictionary, the anticipated user group, the intended user situations, the number of lemmas in both word lists, the main types of lexicographic data in the articles, the most relevant outside and middle matter, etc. The dictionary needs a data exposure text presented on the cover. In the present edition the potential users have to piece this information together from various places in the dictionary and even count the number of lemmas themselves. An informative label of the proposed kind would not only be extremely useful for the intended users of this specific dictionary, but may also contribute to raise the general lexicographic culture of these and other dictionary users. If this happened, the *Oxford School Dictionary* would stand even stronger in the market in comparison with the other bilingual, biscopal and bidirectional English-Afrikaans learners' dictionaries, at least for its declared types of users and user situations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rufus H Gouws*

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch
University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602
Email: rhg@sun.ac.za

Sven Tarp

Centre for Lexicography
Aarhus School of Business
University of Aarhus
Fuglesangs Allé 4
DK-8210 Aarhus
Denmark
Email: st@asb.dk