Jonathan Crowther (Editor), Kathryn Kavanagh (Assistant Editor) and **Michael Ashby (Phonetics Editor).** *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English,* 5th edition (New International Students' Edition) 1995, x + 1428 pp. ISBN 0-19-431423-5. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price R54,95.

Learner's dictionaries of English are mushrooming nowadays. What does the New International Students' Edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (henceforth *OALD*) offer, apart from the very reasonable price, to make the potential buyer decide in favour of this specific dictionary? On the outer back page, five innovations are listed, of which two feature in the preface written by the editor. They are the use of the British National Corpus, "a massive and carefully balanced computer databank of modern written and spoken English" and the introduction of a 3 500 word vocabulary used for the writing of the definientia. "The words in the list (given in full as Appendix 10) were chosen principally according to their frequency in the language, as revealed by the corpus, ..." Apart from the British National Corpus, the Oxford American English Corpus was also used to update this dictionary. The fact that the macrostructure as well as the microstructure (a defining vocabulary of 3 500 words and over 90 000 examples) are corpus-based would be a major decisive influence in favour of this dictionary for this user.

If the user decides on a generating, and not merely a diagnostic aid, *OALD* would be your first choice, since the first promise listed on the outer back page, is that "this exciting new edition will help you: write and speak better English". These processes are assisted by a simplified defining vocabulary and "easy-to-understand definitions", coded clause patterns, idiomatic examples, a very explicit indication of labels, and an update of the pronunciation usage. Regarding the latter, one of the most outstanding features of the *OALD*, apart from the thorough update of the phonetics, is the indication of main and secondary stress in phrasal verbs and idioms, since this is always an extremely difficult area for learners.

For the writing of better English, two of the ten appendices should be singled out, namely the appendix on **Punctuation and writing**, where the use of punctuation in written English is shown, as well as the way in which a formal or informal letter is set out. The other appendix is **Notes on usage** where all the entries are listed at which notes can be found, e.g. on clarifying points of grammar, explaining differences between British and American usage, or showing variations between groups of words with similar meanings. The list not only gives the entry, but also the words or language points covered by each.

The diagnostic side however, is not neglected, since the second promise listed on the outer back page, is that *OALD* will help the user to "understand more easily and more quickly". Apart from the 65 000 definitions, which according to the editor are "both accurate and easy to understand", 1 700 words

are illustrated to complement their verbal definientia. Illustrations are effectively used mostly to discern between entries such as shade and shadow, spade and shovel, and frog and toad, or to disambiguate the definiens of entries such as siphon, spider, and pillory. The illustration is for instance only found at the entry of frog, but toad has a cross-reference to the illustration at frog.

The retrieving of information in *OALD* is explicated very thoroughly by means of different types of user information: on the front inner page the abbreviations, symbols, and labels, and on the back inner page, the phonetic symbols used in the dictionary are found. A very explicit key to dictionary entries, based upon real dictionary entries, is given on p. vii, where each part used within these articles is indicated. In addition to that, pp. ix and x consist of extra information on "using your dictionary".

Typologically *OALD* is extremely user-friendly in that a running bottom consisting of the new verb coding scheme is applied: the users do not need to remember or figure out the coding system themselves. The text-layout itself contributes to the easier retrieving of information from an article: the various polysemous values of a lemma are separated by bold numerals, idioms and phrasal verbs are marked clearly by bold blocks, and the idiom or phrasal verb itself is printed in bold. The one segment that should stand out the most in articles of learner's dictionaries, namely the special notes on usage, does so in *OALD*: it is placed right at the end of an article between two horizontal lines. The note is given only at one lemma, but cross-references to that lemma occur in the articles of other lemmas mentioned in the note.

Idioms are listed alphabetically, and not according to search words as most other dictionaries do. This is semantically a very sound microstructural treatment of idioms since one lexical item within the idiom is not selected as being semantically the most salient. Derivatives and compounds of a lemma are distinguished within the article by the use of bold symbols, and they form subarticles within the main article with their own linguistic information, polysemous distinctions, examples and idioms. The compounds of the adjective **dead** e.g each has its own article and each subarticle forms a new paragraph. The following sublemmas for **dead** are alphabetically listed as compounds: **dead-beat, dead beat, dead end, dead heat, dead letter, dead loss, dead weight, dead wood.**

Another macrostructural aspect that should be mentioned in helping the user to retrieve entries effortlessly, is that abbreviations are listed alphabetically, and not as in many dictionaries, as the first entries of a specific letter. If the abbreviation shows no resemblance to the full form, the abbreviation is repeated in the article of the full form, e.g. **lb** is listed between the lemmas **lazybones** and **lbw**, but it also occurs as part of the article of the lemma **pound**. The noncanonical forms of verbs e.g. are lemmatized alphabetically as well, although almost no information is found except for cross-references to the canonical form: "**gave** *pt* of GIVE[1]."

The entries in general reflect "an up-to-date picture of today's English" with lemmas such as **desktop publishing, Filofax, laptop** and **notebook computer, windsurf, mountain bike**, and even **rave** (a large party for young people, with dancing to fast electronic music, ...). The lexical items **roller blade** and **internet** are now more conspicuous by their absence.

Semantic information is one of the most important microstructural components of dictionaries. *OALD* gives a first-rate treatment of lemmas regarding the explanation of meaning, the indication of synonymy and opposition, and the homonymy and polysemy. What should however be emphasized here, is the way in which the polysemy of semantically empty verbs like **do, go** and **make** is handled. Because these verbs are so difficult to define, many lexicographers list the various contexts in which these verbs operate randomly as their different polysemous values. In *OALD* the various contexts of these verbs are grouped under a thematic heading. The user could immediately go to a specific heading under which specific contexts are listed, and concentrate only on its definientia and exemplary material. The themes for **go** e.g. comprise **movement, position, activity, state, sound, coming to an end, commands**, and **other meanings**. This type of organizational defining could also be used for the defining of prepositions or other functional items.

The only aspect of *OALD* that left a slightly negative impression, is the strong encyclopedic character with the inclusion of maps, cultural information, amongst which features information on the Commonwealth and the legal system in the United States, as well as illustrations of flowers common in Britain and the United States (p. 452) and breeds of dog (p. 343). These facts and illustrative material definitely belong in the encyclopedic and not in the linguistic version of *OALD*.

All in all, *OALD* is a more than worthy member of Oxford's series of dictionaries and of the range of other learner's dictionaries. It will positively enhance the encoding and decoding abilities of students of modern English.

Ilse Feinauer
Department of Afrikaans and Dutch
University of Stellenbosch
South Africa