
Resensie / Review

R.R.K. Hartmann (Ed.). *Lexicography in Africa*. Exeter Linguistic Studies, Vol. 15. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990, 102 pp. ISBN 085989 3456.

Lexicography in Africa is a new book in the invaluable series *Exeter Linguistic Studies* and one of three volumes dedicated to lexicography to mark the fifth anniversary of the Dictionary Research Centre in the University of Exeter. It is the first attempt to fill a niche in our knowledge of lexicography on this continent. It does not pretend to be a complete survey of lexicography in Africa but a tentative one which conveys the most important trends in the field and a wealth of exemplary material. It investigates the lexicographic situation in different parts of Africa (Central Africa paper 3; Northern Africa paper 4 and Southern Africa paper 6) and the linguistic and historical background (paper 1 and 2). It also concerns itself with the user of the dictionary and his needs, types of dictionaries available and the hopes pinned on computer technology.

The book is well-organized and this is what makes it easy reading for dictionary compilers, linguists and language teachers. The first paper by M. Mann is a brief and sensible introduction that sets the tone for what follows. The complexity of the linguistic mosaic has its implications for lexicography.

The major languages discussed do not often represent "one 'lect' but a chain of inter-intelligible lects" and many African languages grow and change rapidly. It all adds up to the enormous task facing the lexicographer.

The second paper by M.K. Awak is an attempt at examining the scope of lexicography in Africa in relation to past and present experience and the limitations imposed on dictionary making in West Africa. The history of lexicography up to the late 19th century has been closely related to European activities, exploration, evangelization and colonization. In recent times, the Africans themselves have been making efforts to create the needed vocabulary in science and technology and compile monolingual dictionaries.

M. Busane in paper 3 focuses on the user perspective in lexicography in Central Africa with special reference to Zaire. He attempts to identify the aims of dictionaries by considering the socio-cultural contexts in which they were used. The user perspective in dictionary production, it is true, cannot be enhanced without consideration of the sociolinguistic situation. Busane clearly illustrates this with the concept of 'bride-price'.

N. El-Badry's paper is concerned with Arabic lexicography in Northern Africa with special reference to Egypt. Though it is concise, well-written, and the greatest Arabic dictionaries like *Taj al-'Arus* and modern ones like *Al-Wasit* are cited, it has to be noted that little is said about the lexicographic principles

adopted in these dictionaries or about the activities of the Arabic Language Academy. It would be more advisable if a whole book or workshop be devoted to Arabic lexicography which is still a missing chapter in references on lexicography.

M. Mann in his paper on the impact of computer technology, presents interesting practical experience in the field. The illustrative examples make the paper highly readable. One of the advantages he cites is using the computer in making systematic changes in spelling, using lower case letters for low-toned vowels and upper case letters for high-toned ones and then converting them into a diacritic or an analogue representation.

Paper 6 by R. Gouws focuses on aspects concerned with the linguistic character of dictionaries. South Africa's multilingual situation demands pedagogic dictionaries that could be used as efficient linguistic instruments. In this respect Gouws treats three linguistic categories: semantic, normative and lexicographical information. In Afrikaans dictionaries some 'semantic relations' such as 'opposition' and 'semantic linking' are neglected. Translation equivalents are misleading since they list homonymous words as polysemous entries. Too often, words are listed as synonymous instead of translation equivalents of different polysemous senses of the lemma. They suffer from word bias, and multilexical lemmas are neglected. Gouws here treats important content features that are typical of Arabic dictionaries too.

R. Hartmann rounds up the whole survey in the last paper. He draws on material from:

- (a) Structural data on individual African countries.
- (b) State-of-the-art reports submitted to the Exeter Workshop.
- (c) Bibliographic publications and reference books.

Hartmann briefly and clearly presents the cultural-linguistic and political-economic background and its impact on the numbers and kinds of dictionaries produced. Then he gives a tentative, but useful, outline of dictionary typology, lexicographers, institutions, publishers, professional societies, training courses, etc.

The book is enriched by two appendices and a bibliography which includes two important new references, a manual of terminography and a book on lexicography and translation, both published in South Africa.

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