The Dictionary Unit for South African English. *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary.* 2002, xx + 1368 pp. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Price: R275.00.

The *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary* (henceforth SACOD) is a South African version of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the first time that this particular hybrid has been prepared. It is testimony to the enduring success of the work of the Dictionary Unit for South African English at Rhodes University, headed by teams that included Jean and William Branford in the 1970s, Penny Silva in the 1990s and now, Kathryn Kavanagh. The lexicographical work from the unit saw the publication of four editions of the *Dictionary of Southern African English* (1978, 1980, 1987, 1991), a *South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (SAPOD) and the *Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (DOSAEHP) (1995). SACOD differs from the rest in several ways. It is larger in scope than SAPOD, smaller than DOSAEHP, and unlike DOSAE and DOSAEHP, does not deal with South African words alone. Based on the 10th edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* SACOD has excised some words from the parent, whilst adding many new words of general English as well as of South Africa.

In its layout and content SACOD resembles the Oxford Clarendon prototype. Using my copy of the 7th edition of the latter (1991) as a point of comparison, SACOD is thicker by 110 pages, and each page is longer and broader by a centimetre each way. It also shows some technical advances from the 1990s that are made possible mostly by the improved computer technology. SACOD uses the IPA system for the pronunciation of headwords, rather than the outdated (if less daunting to the novice) system of Roman orthography with modifications. There is even a table for the click sounds and their symbols. The computer age enables the use of a 'footer' containing the IPA symbols and their values on every page, with consonants on two facing pages alternating with vowels on the next two. SACOD also has little panels, covering points of usage (e.g. a box on *few* vs *less*) and word formation (e.g. a box on *ptero-*). These are quite useful and, I would argue, could have been used more frequently. The computer age makes its mark in another way; the way it dominates the new words recorded. As can be expected, words like *flame, spam, stiffy* (a South Africanism), *firewall, download, URL,* and *HTML* are very much part of the word-hoard recorded in SACOD. On a point of etymology, we learn from the entry on *spam* that it probably comes from a Monty Python sketch set in a café in which every item on the menu includes sp(iced h)am. It is also good to see topical words included like the use of *sledging* in cricket, acronyms like *FAQ* and informal truncations like *ex-con,* and even *ex-* as a noun meaning 'a former husband or wife'. I remember the effectivenesss of a recent women's magazine's headline debating the merits of 'Sex with your ex'.

It is quite clear then that SACOD has all the benefits one expects from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Are these matched by the South African interpolations, one might wish to ask? In reviews of previous publications from the Dic-

tionary Unit for South African English, I have suggested that among their few weaknesses were a disproportionate amount of vocabulary from Afrikaans, especially a failure to exclude code-switching from established borrowings, and a tendency to accept folk etymologies for items of slang and informal words, especially those drawing on languages other than Afrikaans. These remarks are not generally applicable to SACOD, which discusses the code-switching/borrowing dilemma early on in its preface, and which is not faced with a plethora of etymologies for obscure words, since its selection of South Africanisms is small in comparison to DOSAE and especially DOSAEHP.

South Africanisms have become accepted in international English from the days of exploration and colonisation — the *trek – veld – laager* semantic field is well known. Later it was the spectacular attempt at social engineering that brought lexicographical fame: *apartheid, dompas, exit permit*, etc. The post-apartheid era makes its impact in a smaller way in SACOD with terms like *imbizo, lekgotla* and *African Renaissance*. Every now and then our dictionaries still give occasion for surprise in announcing the South Africanness of terms like *slasto* (a brand name), *slave bell* and *dam*. The entry for *dam* works rather well for SACOD, since its main sense is 'downloaded' from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (the barrier constructed to hold back water), while a second sense (the body of water itself) is marked as 'South African'. A complex case is the lack of a label specifying the status of *stop street*, which is not generally familiar to overseas visitors I encounter. Moreover, it is not listed in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (7th edition), nor in the *Encarta World English Dictionary*. Kathryn Kavanagh (personal communication) informs me that the term is, however, attested in the U.S.A. and Canada, thanks to a Google search. The question remains whether such terms localised to South Africa and one other territory should somehow be flagged.

Inevitably with a work of this scope some problems arise. One that may not have been foreseen by the editors is a clash of semantics of the many words arising ultimately from the Indian subcontinent. Whose pronunciations and meanings should the dictionary record: that of the British in the days of Raj, those of Indian/Pakistani/Bangla Deshi/Sri Lankan immigrants to 20th century Britain, or (more crucially for SACOD) those of Indians in South Africa? The latter now mostly speak English as a mother tongue, but have retained a rich vocabulary from India forged from personal and group circumstances in South Africa. Thus *bhaji* is given in SACOD as an equivalent to *bhajia* glossed as 'a small flat cake or ball of vegetables, fried in batter'. If correct, this must be a Britishism, as in South Africa the two terms are distinct. That is, whilst *bhaji* is a term for 'leaves of plants, herbs, cresses' that are cooked, *bhajia* is the small flat cake referred to, also anglicised in South Africa as *chilli bite*. Similarly the meaning of *dosa* 'a pancake made from rice flour' is the usual one in India and Britain, where the unsweetened pancake is stuffed with a curried vegetable filling. In South Africa however, *dosa* (pronounced [dosɛ]) is usually a sweet pancake, with no filling. Finally, SACOD gives the Indian and British form *dhal* or

dal for 'split lentils, split pulses, a soup made from these'. In South Africa the usual spelling is *dol* (pronounced [dɔ:l]), possibly on account of the raising and rounding of the [a:] vowel by white South Africans. Perhaps the same tactic as for *dam* would have been appropriate here, with the more widely spread forms given first, and the different South African sense or pronunciation given second.

In respect of etymologies and meanings, SACOD is of the highest quality, though I have a few quibbles. Fanakalo was not developed on the mines, as the entry for this headword suggests. It existed in a clearcut form decades before the mines were founded in Natal and to a lesser extent, the eastern Cape (Mesthrie 1989). The etymology of *larney* is given as 'from Tsotsitaal *lani(e)* 'white man', perhaps related to Malay *rani* 'rich'. A more plausible etymology, as I argued in Mesthrie (1997), was that the Tsotsitaal form was ultimately based on Cape vernacular Afrikaans *oolana* 'Hollander', which spread up north in the era of the gold and diamond rush. The entry for *bhuti* ('brother') correctly identifies it as taken from Xhosa, but for reasons unknown the fact that the term is based on Afrikaans *boetie* (as mentioned in DOSAEHP) is not stated. *Peri-peri* is given as a variant spelling of *piripiri*, which is traced to the Ronga language of Mozambique. In the South African context, I think the usual form is *peri-peri* (the headword in DOSAEHP), and while the link with Mozambique is correct, it may be optimistic to tie it to a particular language of the area. Is it definitely Ronga, but not the closely related Tonga and Tsonga? (In South Africa the term occurs as *pelepele* 'pepper' in Zulu). The word must be linked to the spice trading along the East African coast (*piripiri* or *pilipili* in Swahili), and prior to that the Arabic word *phil-phil*, ultimately based on Sanskrit *pipar,* the word for 'pepper'. Mozambiquan Portuguese is the most likely link between all of these and the South African term.

To conclude: SACOD will prove a most valuable resource for students and the general public in South Africa. The editorial team in Grahamstown and the publishers in Cape Town are to be congratulated on another splendid piece of lexicography from their joint stable.

References

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