BILINGUAL DICTIONARIES

(The Preparation of Bilingual Dictionaries Intended Primarily for the Use of Indigenous Peoples)

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1. Introduction

The aim of a bilingual dictionary is very much tied up with its potential users. No dictionary can be 'all things to all men', it cannot be equally oriented to linguists, to native speakers of the language, to people seeking anthropological information, and to the European officials of the administration.

According to Samuel Martin (1)

You set out with the cheerful view that you can produce a work that will be all things to all men ... and perhaps to all machines; you end up with a feeling that you are failing one and all.

Maybe it is too much to expect that our dictionaries will be linguistically adequate for both languages. As Martin goes on to say, we soon become frustrated and realise the need for compromise.

Sooner or later you have to concentrate on certain goals and forget others. Each dictionary requires some unique compromise; useful – we hope – for some purposes and frustrating for others.

Obviously we must narrow the scope of our dictionary. The type of bilingual dictionary I want to talk about is intended primarily for the use of native speakers from indigenous cultures, geared primarily to their needs. But, as a secondary aim, we want the dictionary to be useful also to Mission or Administration staff. (2)

We hope that at the same time the dictionary may be of interest to comparative linguists, to anthropologists, and possibly to Education Department personnel as well. Finally, the field worker, too, should find such a dictionary useful for his own purposes: for further linguistic analysis, for the preparation of literacy materials, or for translation work.

Narrowing our scope will affect the format of our dictionary, the nature of its definitions, the number of its entry words, etc. Some general aims remain, however, which apply

to any dictionary. It is highly important to be accurate, and clear, as well as comprehensive. As far as possible we need to have not only clear definitions, but a clear format so that users can find what they are looking for quickly. But does the aim of comprehensiveness mean we should be eager to heap up word upon word? This seems a case where quality comes before mere quantity. Wealth of meaning seems more important than many words sketchily defined.

Another thing that needs to be considered is the tone of the dictionary. Should we be objective? Or didactic? It is fascinating to read some of the critical articles on Webster's new dictionary on this point. Wars have been waged on whether it is right or wrong to include such words as 'ain't.' We, however, as non-native speakers, are in no position to be didactic. It is not for us to say which is the best usage when there are several possibilities. We must describe what is actual usage as we find it.

1.1 Specific Aims

What should be our aims concerning native speakers? Comprehension? If so, of English, of the Aberiginal language, or both? Expression? Reading and writing? Should it be a defining dictionary or a translating dictionary? (3)

I believe that our aims in regard to the native speaker should be fourfold:

- (a) to help them in the reading, writing and spelling of their own language;
- (b) to provide a defining dictionary of their own language which they can find useful;
- (c) to assist them in comprehending the national language, English, and
- (d) to help foster pride in their own language and culture.

Point (b) above seems the most controversial: Just how can a foreigner, even though he may have been learning the language for several years, provide a defining dictionary for native speakers, especially if the definitions are in English? (It would, however, be expected that linguist and informants would work close together). It is obvious that a bilingual dictionary can never fulfil this aim adequately. Obviously, the best defining dictionary for native speakers is a monolingual dictionary written by native speakers for other native speakers, such as R. Hsu envisages. The role of the linguist in this case would be mainly training and checking. It is true, as Hsu says, that "the explanations of words in the vernacular can be (if well made) much more relevant and accurate than definitions in a foreign language ever can." (4) He also goes on to say that "it is reasonable to think that a bilingual dictionary can be more accurately made by first making a unilingual one." (5)

It would be interesting to see this latter point tested out. Actually, the linguist who elicits meanings and grammatical information monolingually only is already in part doing this, i.e. he works out his English gloss from the explanations and examples given by native speakers in the language as well as from text material and conversation heard or participated in.

However, while recognizing the superiority of a monolingual dictionary to fulfil the aim of providing a defining dictionary for native speakers, it should be said that a bilingual dictionary can partly meet this aim, especially if numerous sentence examples in the vernacular are included.

It is interesting to see the range of vocabulary knowledge in Aboriginal communities. Some individuals use and understand a much greater number of words than others, just as in our society. In some Aboriginal tribes, however, the teenagers who have been away to school or lived in a dormitory system where they have mixed mainly just with each other have a very narrow range of vocabulary. There is justification for a good defining dictionary to be prepared to increase the vocabulary of such groups. The pressure on Aborigines to learn English, and the desire of many to do so, points to how important such bilingual dictionaries are for Aboriginal communities.

The aims for the Administration or Mission staff are:

- (a) extension of vocabulary,
- (b) guide to pronunciation, and
- (c) presentation of words in context (through provision of grammatical and collocational information and sentence examples).

2. Nature of Content

2.1 Introduction and Technical Description

Preceding the body of the dictionary, it is usual to find the following:

- (a) table of contents,
- (b) acknowledgments,
- (c) description of the dictionary's purpose,
- (d) geographical information on where the native language is spoken, data of native speakers,
- (e) a statement of the alphabet used and a guide to the pronunciation of each letter,
- (f) an explanation of the symbolization of tone and/or stress if necessary,
- (g) explanation of format,

- (h) parts-of-speech labelling,
- (i) list of abbreviations,
- (j) acknowledgement of the services of the principal informants.

Following (or preceding) the body of the dictionary, some further technical description of the Aboriginal language should be provided. It is highly important to include some grammatical information, such as:

- (a) a description of the major and minor word classes,
- (b) the system of inflectional morphemes with notes on noun and verb structure (and on other word classes if helpful). A verbal paradigm is often useful.
- (c) examples of the uses of affixes along with a definition of their meaning,
- (d) types of word formation (derivational affixes, compounding)
- (e) the uses of reduplication,
- (f) rules for determining allomorphs, and
- (g) how noun or verb classes are determined.

Such information is especially important for those wanting to learn the language. Charts of closed classes such as pronominals are useful too. If all forms are presented in a chart, it provides a clearer picture of their use, and this can relieve the amount of information needed in the main body of the dictionary.

A description of the main types of borrowing words, along with samples of loan words should also be of interest.

Affixes should be described either in the grammatical section above, or in a separate alphabetical section. Either seems preferable to entering affixes in the main body of the dictionary.

Finally, a linguistic map for the area marking dialect boundaries is a most useful addition.

2.2 Body of the Dictionary

The body of a bilingual dictionary is normally divided into two sections: Native Language-National Language, and National Language-Native Language.

Since we are not aiming at making the dictionary linguistically adequate for both languages, our English entries in the National Language-Native Language part will be restricted. There is no need to enter every English synonym corresponding to one word of the native language. As Harrell (6) says, there is no need to enter both sail around and circumnavigate; the English user should have enough sophistication to know where to look.

Should, however, each English synonym be provided in the English-Native Language section for the benefit of the indigenous user? If more than one English word is needed to describe the range of meaning of the word from the native language, yes. But, whenever the English synonyms correspond equally well to the native word, one synonym only – the one most frequently used – should be entered.

The dictionary should help the native learner of English. However, there is a point where other books must take over. Preferably not works such as the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, where we find definitions such as:

Egg - Spheroidal body produced by female of birds etc. esp. of domestic fowl, containing the germ of a new individual

Rather, specialised dictionaries such as those by Hornby and Parnwell, meant for the learner of English as a second language. These, supplemented by English courses provide adequate help for someone keen to learn English. (Libraries, especially those that have a good number of books written in controlled English, or specially designed for those learning English as a second language, can also be of real help, and provide enjoyment). There is no need for us to attempt to duplicate the work of these specialised dictionaries and courses in our dictionary.

Should we use dictionaries such as Hornby's and Parnwell's to guide us in selecting entries for the English-Native Language volume? Although their entries are selected on the basis of frequency counts, we cannot include every English word – there will be words for which there are no cultural equivalents in the native language. The sources of our English entries are the words in the native language. We cannot give the whole range of the English lexicon. Where there are three or four English words that could equally well serve as entries on the English-Native Language side, the frequency count can help us in our selection (8). If there is room in the Native Language-English section, more than one English word can be given.

3. Arrangement of Entries

An alphabetical order seems the most logical, and the easiest for the indigenous person to use. This means, of course, that we treat our digraphs and trigraphs as one letter. For example, if <u>aa</u> represents one phoneme, as it does in Wik-Munkan, and if <u>a</u> was the first letter of the alphabet and <u>aa</u> the second, then all and <u>ap</u> etc. would come before aa.

Or, if in the orthography, n, ng, nh and ny each represented one phoneme, then the words nily and nunang would come before the words ngal and nhok in an alphabetical listing. We may have to decide, too, where additional symbols, such as that for the glottal stop should be placed in alphabetical sequence. An alphabetic sorter and print—out machine can save weeks of time, particularly if the same cards can be used to alphabetize both sections.

Under the main entries there will be sub-entries. Candidates for sub-entries include derived forms, compounds, idioms and special phrases. Sub-entries can be arranged alphabetically. However, a grammatical arrangement may be better e.g., derived forms first, then compounds, then idioms.

Some linguists maintain that the alphabetical arrangement is arbitrary, and that a domain arrangement such as Voegelin's "Hopi Domains" is preferable. It is, however, hard to find unambiguous criteria for the user as the domains cannot be neatly delineated.

On the other hand, semantic categories can be of great use to us in selecting useful entries and in eliciting new materials. The index and contents of Voegelin's "Hopi Domains" should be consulted for this purpose.

Topical appendices can be of great interest to the native speaker, especially if the topics chosen are the foci of their culture. According to Nida (9) many dictionaries prepared by outsiders to a culture tend to omit a high percentage of the foci vocabulary because "such words are difficult to elicit, as well as extremely hard to describe, due to lack of corresponding words and traits in the compiler's language and culture." But the inclusion of these foci words is important. The Eskimos have some dozen words for different states of snow, the Trobriand islanders have over one hundred terms for different types of yams, the Arabs have 6,000 terms to describe camels, parts of a camel and camel equipment. It would be virtually impossible to find English equivalents to enter in the English-Native Language section. It would perhaps be best to enter these foci words in the Native Language—English section, and also in a topical appendix. In the English—Native language section, reference could be made to the Appendix under camel, snow and yam.

The topical appendix can also serve to indicate relationships within a certain topic. For example, the Wik-Munkan topical appendices include birds and animals, tree types, fish types, kinship terms (including paired kinship terminology), cooking terms, dillybag types, spear types, and place and family names.

An illustrated section on sign language, and a section on onomatopoeic words are also useful additions. If possible, a number of illustrations should be included in the

appendices.

4. Sources of Entries

If a culture is literate, we can use novels, newspapers, and so on. With an Aboriginal culture, however, our main sources are texts, eliciting and conversation. Texts by themselves are insufficient. Samarin (10) says that

the collection of a mountain of texts is insufficient for a dictionary project for it has been adequately demonstrated that long texts do not necessarily show up new words. For dictionary projects one needs a fairly good prior acquaintance with the culture so as to elicit vocabulary which reflects it.

John Beekman provides a good description on how to discover new words in his "Eliciting Vocabulary, Meaning and Collocations." Beekman describes a well tested questioning technique to discover the names of objects, events, abstracts and relationals.

Carroll has published an interesting article in Oceanic Linguistics entitled "Generative Elicitation Techniques in Polynesian Lexicography." Carroll programmed the computer to print out strings of letters which were theoretically possible words in Nukuoro, the language under study. The print—out was then divided amongst a group of informants who picked out the strings actually occurring in the Nukuoro lexicon. The core lexicon was then elaborated by the systematic listing of forms derivative from the stems. Carroll states, however, that this technique is not suitable for languages with long roots, a high number of phonemes, or a wide variety of syllable shapes. He limited the programme of the computer to print out strings up to a maximum of six only, to exclude sharply diminishing returns.

Carroli describes other elicitation techniques e.g. competitions for school children (with prizes). Children (and adults) were asked to write down as many words as possible belonging to sets such as plants, birds, insects, parts of the outrigger canoe, kinship terms. Collections of insects, etc. were forwarded to taxonomists to supply the technical and English vernacular names. As Carroll says, such items only rarely turn up in lists of roots as they are frequently long compounds or descriptive phrases. We have tried similar competitions amongst Aboriginal school children at Aurukun with success.

5. Factors Affecting Number of Entries

It has already been said that a sheer heaping up of entries is not really our aim. It is better to have fewer entries with good definitions and copious examples.

Another factor affecting the number of entries is whether to include in our entries all derivations. If they are irregularly applied and restricted, the answer is 'yes', particularly if a prefix is involved. If the forms are regularly derived and extensive, the answer is 'no'. But even if they are regular, their inclusion could be of great help to a European learning the language, particularly if the meaning is not easy to work out. Sometimes two roots are synonyms, but the meaning of their derived forms have no relation; or two derived words may have synonymous meanings while their roots have no relation in meaning.

Irregular forms with replacive morphemes (e.g. geese) and suppletive forms (e.g.went) need to be included with cross-referencing. If however, "geese" and "goose" are part of a regular system, we shouldn't list each form as a separate entry but explain the system in the grammatical notes.

Another problem is that of bound stems, especially if there are substantial morphophonemic changes at the boundary of affix and stem. If the dictionary is meant primarily for the native speaker, we cannot enter the stem only because he will not recognise it as a word without affixation. This requires considerably more grammatical sophistication than we can expect. I would recommend that a consistent form of stem plus affix(es) be entered. This should be the least complicated form possible, with the least number of changes morphophonemically. For example, if the words are possessed nouns, consistently enter stem plus one possessive affix, such as 3rd person singular (enter other affixation only if obligatory). The English definitions should correspond, e.g. "his leg", "his arm", "his uncle". Similarly, for verbs that have bound stems, choose a consistent form, e.g. 3rd singular or imperative. Once again, the English definition should correspond.

Werner (11) talks of using a mixed strategy of partial alphabetization and 'regular' alphabetization, as the Navaho verbs are very complex, involving up to fourteen prefixes.

And what about such things as onomatopoeia, greetings, exclamations, interjections, and non-fluencies, such as wh...? Or, the method of calling a dog? As an integral part of the language, these things should be entered, although there may be exceptions where the expressions are very difficult to symbolize in the alphabet adopted.

6. Definition and Exemplification of Entries

If a dictionary is intended primarily for native speakers, the English definitions for native words need to be both clear and practical. Avoid, for instance, the English infinitive forms to do!, to run! etc. for definitions. The definitions of bound verb stems have

already been discussed. It is desirable to have similarly clear definitions for stems which can occur alone. Thus, for example, if 3rd singular past, or imperative, or some other form, has a zero marker, then the stem could be given with the meaning 'he ran', 'he cut', or 'run.'', 'cut.''

If one word from the native language corresponds to an English word plus particle or preposition, then once again the English definition needs to correspond, e.g. 'look up' 'weep for (him)'.

If the native language has two verbs, transitive and intransitive, that correspond to a single English form, one way of showing the difference in the definitions could be 'he opens it', and 'it opens'.

Lexical number is another point where clarity of definition is important. For example, in English, <u>furniture</u> is a mass noun, while in Spanish <u>meuble</u> is a count noun. So we would need to define <u>meuble</u> as 'a piece of furniture' and <u>meubles</u>, the plural form, as 'furniture'.

On the subjects of defining the area(s) of meaning of words, of being aware of the connotations a word might carry, of finding out figurative meanings, the articles by Ballard, Beekman and Lauriault are very useful and practical. In order to see clearly how a word works, its collocational restrictions and possibilities frequently need to be stated. We may need to state the specific objects or subjects or kinds of objects or subjects that a verb can take. We may need to indicate the specific words or kinds of words that an adjective, adverb or intensifier can modify. Collocational restrictions may be the key we need also when several words from the native language can be used to translate one English word. In these instances, careful directions need to be given for choosing between synonyms, and sentence examples should be provided.

Where one word has several sub-meanings, we need to be consistent in the order in which we give the definitions. A suggested order of meanings is central, figurative or transferred, specialized, obsolete, rare. Frequency of use would be an important factor in determining order.

We may sometimes come up against the problem of whether a word has several submeanings, or whether we have homophonous forms. If the words have any element of meaning in common whatsoever, then we have one word with submeanings. One of our difficulties can be that we do not always recognize a common element of meaning, because of our different background.

If words are clearly homonyms, they are best entered in a chosen grammatical order

which is kept consistent throughout the dictionary. Where there are homonyms of the same word class, frequency of occurrence may determine order.

including illustrative sentences along with definitions is especially useful in the following cases:-

- (a) where a word from the native language has two or more submeanings,
- (b) where several synonyms (with slightly different areas of meaning) from the native language can be used to translate one English entry,
- (c) where the native language specializes and the English language does not, e.g. cooking terms. (For nouns, it may be sufficient to provide special contexts.)
- (d) where several English synonyms (with slightly different areas of meaning) can be used to translate one entry from the native language. Here the English translations of the sentences from the native language would be the crucial part of the examples.
- (e) where the use of a word syntactically or in other ways is markedly different from English.

Illustrative sentences should provide information that is not easily deducible from the definitions themselves. They can be used, for instance, to provide grammatical information.

Drawings or photos can substantially help the comprehension of the native speaker, and can also be used to Illustrate unfamiliar Items for the 'European' user of the dictionary.

6.1 Special Features

Along with the definition and possible illustrative sentence(s) that go with each entry, several other features should be included.

- (a) Grammatical class for each entry. In the Mazatec tribe in Mexico, abbreviations of 'noun', 'pronoun', 'adjective', or 'transitive verb' etc. beside each entry helped the Mazatecs to feel proud of their language, and to feel that it had prestige like Spanish.
- (b) Pertinent grammatical information such as stating the class of verbs or nouns when morphemically defined; or pertinent grammatical restrictions such as obligatory occurrence with a postposition.
- (c) Cultural notes may be necessary for some words. For example, Swanson (12), says, "King will translate ancient Greek Basileus only if accompanied by a cultural note explaining the difference in connotation."
- (d) The semantic category; e.g. "musical", "used when fishing."
- (e) The social register; e.g. "for honorific language", or "men's or children's language."

- (f) Restricted vocabulary; e.g. one that can only be used between certain relatives.
- (g) The connotation or emotional slant of the word. A warning may be in order if, for example, a restricted word becomes a swear word when not used between the proper relatives.
- (h) If there are territorial limitations, and alternate forms for different dialects, the words need to be entered with dialect name, and preferably cross-referenced to alternate forms.

6.2 Special Entries

The term "special entries" here used of idioms, compounds and co-ordinates of fixed order, similes, close-knit phrases, etc. is actually a misnomer, as they may fill over half the dictionary.

Alan Healey (13) has given a helpful analysis of the problems facing the lexicographer as he tries to work out how to incorporate idioms into a dictionary.

- (a) There is a need to indicate clearly how much actually belongs to the idiom and how much is context.
- (b) It is important to indicate any open tagmemes which belong to the idiom. It is usual to use one or one's to indicate a tagmeme that is filled by a pronoun which agrees with the subject, and to use somebody, someone, somebody's, something and somewhere or abbreviations thereof to indicate other tagmemes.
- (c) Just as with single words, it is necessary to indicate the kind of words with which an idiom typically collocates.
- (d) It is important to indicate systematically the syntactic class of all idioms.
- (e) Some indication of meaning should be given for all idioms ... the tendency to rationalize away the meaning of the homophonous non-idiom is dangerous.
- (f) In bilingual dictionaries there is a tendency to always give an idiom as a gloss for an idiom for the sake of a rather illusory style equivalence ... The gloss which gives the most accurate denotation and connotation is to be preferred, whether it is a single word synonym, a multi-word idiom as synonym, or a lengthy explanation.
- (g) Idioms may be alphabetized under their first word or their first word which belongs to a major word class. In a bilingual dictionary there is some advantage to the user if each idiom is alphabetized under each major word-class word which it contains. However, this enlarges the dictionary very considerably.

While it may be impratical to cross-reference each major word class word for all idioms and compounds and other "special entries" for publication, it can be very helpful to the linguist in his own dictionary file. New insights are seen in the meanings of words as their further collocations are seen.

Co-ordinates of fixed order are important to include, e.g. "body and soul". They may be the opposite in the other language, if they occur in fixed order at all.

Close-knit phrases may be another important type of special entry e.g. the Wik-Munkan Generic-Specific phrase, e.g. thum kurk (fire dust) 'ashes', and thuuk manch (snake death adder). For the specific meaning to be given (versus just 'fire' or 'snake') both words almost invariably occur together.

These "special entries" are in nearly every case entered as sub-entries under a main entry. A possible type of exception is when the first word of an idiom or close-knit phrase does not seem to collocate with any other words.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to quote O'Grady (14):

It was pointed out earlier ... that in the strict sense of the term, no dictionary of an Australian language has yet been published. This state of affairs is at once a tragic commentary on past opportunities lost, as well as a pointer to future opportunities ...

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) Householder and Saporta p. 153.
- (2) The emphasis is placed on the preparation of dictionaries for the use of Australian Aboriginal tribes and for those who work with them.
- (3) In his article on "Problems of Navaho Lexicography", pp. 144-7, Werner distinguishes between defining dictionaries and translating dictionaries. Translating dictionaries he divides further into (a) those intended for Navaho speaking users, and (b) those intended for English speaking users.
 - In (a), the weight of grammatical information would be on the English side, and only a minimum on the Navaho side. In (b), however, the weight of grammatical information would be on the Navaho side, and therefore geared towards the beginner in Navaho.

It will be seen from the discussion, however, that the type of dictionary I have in mind fits none of these watertight categories. Ideally, in one volume, it should serve as:-

 a defining dictionary for indigenous users, even though the definitions be in English,

- a translating dictionary for Europeans who would need grammatical and other technical information on the native language,
- and secondarily only, a translating dictionary for indigenous people.
- (4) R. Hsu "The Case for Vernacular Dictionaries", p.3.
- (5) Ibid. p.4.
- (6) Householder and Saporta pp. 51-2.
- (7) Such a library is in operation at Aurukun Mission, North Queensland. The interest of a fair nucleus of Aurukun Aborigines is keen.
- (8) One such frequency count of American English is that by Thorndike and Lorge, N.Y. 1944, but I am sure others, more recent and oriented towards Australian English, must be available.
- (9) Nida, p. 283.
- (10) Samarin, p. 46.
- (11) Werner, p. 152.
- (12) Householder and Saporta p. 70.
- (13) Healey pp. 95 7.
- (14) O'Grady (p. 36 of manuscript).

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