Dictionary structures and dictionary using skills

Dr Mariëtta Alberts
PanSALB
Afrilex, June 2007
Introduction

• The value of dictionaries lies in their contribution towards eliminating obstacles in communication – general and specific.
• The average dictionary user regards a dictionary as the most comprehensive authority on linguistic information.
• The value attached to dictionaries requires the lexicographer to comply to dictionary needs.
• “The lexicographer is in the impossible position of a man who undertakes to answer questions, but since he does not know at the time of compilation what questions exactly his public will ask, he has to word his entries so as to answer all possible questions about them” (Hanks 1979)

• “No dictionary of a living tongue can ever be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding and some falling away” (Samuel Johnson 1755)
• Although no dictionary would encompass all the information a dictionary user would need or like to have, the lexicographer should try to satisfy the average dictionary user (Zgusta 1984).

• The dictionary should therefore contain enough (structural) information to allow the dictionary user to successfully discover the relevant information.
• A lexicographer should not only accumulate and document linguistic facts, but also comments on these facts in such a way that the dictionary user could retrieve information for decoding and encoding purposes.

• When evaluating a dictionary and its usefulness to target users, it is necessary to determine whether the dictionary complies with all the parameters set by the dictionary structure.
Outline of talk

- Dictionary structures:
  - Macrostructure
  - Microstructure
  - Mediostructure

- Dictionary-using skills

- Conclusion

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007
Dictionary structures

• Different kinds of lexicographical activities lead to different types of dictionaries.

• All dictionaries should, however, comply with basic structural characteristics such as a macrostructure, a microstructure and a mediostructure.

• Every type of dictionary will have an influence on the structures of the specific dictionary.
Macrostructure

• The macrostructure of a dictionary is the external appearance, which is the form and size of the dictionary.

• The macrostructure refers to
  – the type of dictionary, and
  – the number of lexical entries in the dictionary.

• This corresponds with the collection of items being treated (Geeraerts 1984).
Macrostructure (cont.)

- According to Brustkern & Hess (1982) the macrostructure can be illustrated as:

\[ W = \text{LE}^1, \text{LE}^2, \text{LE}^3 \ldots \text{LE}^n \]

\[ W = \text{Wörterbuch/Woordeboek/Dictionary} \]

\[ \text{LE} = \text{lexical entry} \]
Macrostructure (cont.)

Source

Candidate headword

Store source

OUT

How presented?

IN

Own place entry

Homograph number

Order of Variants (form or spelling)

Derivatives, Compounds, Phrasal verbs...

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007
Dictionary structure

= Macrostructure

= Dictionary article

= Microstructure
Microstructure (cont.)

- According to Brustkern & Hess (1982) the microstructure of a dictionary can be illustrated as:

\[ \text{LE}^1 = (1^{i,1}, 1^{i,2}, 1^{1,3}, \ldots, 1^{1,n}); 1^{1,n} \cdot \text{EK}^n \]

\( i \) = information unit

\( \text{EK} \) = information classes (e.g. lemma, spelling, phonology, word class, flexion morphemes, derivatives, syntax, semantics, …)

- Every entry on its own consists of \( n \) number of information units.
Microstructure (cont.)

What data?

On sound
- Varieties?
- Transcript System?
- Dialects?
- Variants?
- Syllable Division?

On Grammar
- Form Class?
- Sub-Class?
- Inflexions?

On meaning
- Examples?
- Invented/Attributed?

On history
- Definition/Translation?
- Polysemes?
- Restricted Labels category?
- Etymology?
- Relations?
Information categories

Left core structure

Comment on Form

Spelling Pronunciation Grammar

Right core structure

Comment on structure

Meaning Usage Etymology

Hausmann & Wiegand 1989
Information on grammar:

• Explicit information:
  – Part of speech
  – Plural form of word/term
  – Diminutive form
  – Past tense
  – Degrees of comparison
  – Inflected forms

• Implicit information:
  – Selected contextual examples
  – Collocations

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007 (Gouws 1986)
Information classes (ICs)

- IC1  Spelling (word graphemes)
- IC2  Phonology (syllabification & accent)
- IC3  Lemma (uninflected form)
- IC4  Word class (parts of speech)
- IC5  Flexion morphemes
- IC6  Derivational morphemes
- IC7  Syntactic environment (surface structure)
- IC8  Deep case (deep structure)
- IC9  Semantic information (definition, context, examples of usage, relations, primitives, specialized field)

Brustkern & Hess (1982)
Mediostructure: Cross-referencing

- A lexicographic device that can be used to establish relations among different components of a dictionary
- The system of cross-referencing can create textual cohesion
- Various structural components can interact by the use of a system of cross-referencing

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007
Cross-referencing is a system assisting both lexicographer and user

• The scientific practice of the principles of lexicography leads to the production of dictionaries
• The end-result of the lexicographical process is a dictionary product
• Dictionaries should be used by end-users - not by the compilers of the dictionaries

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007
• Modern-day metalexicography stresses the user-perspective
• Lexicographers need to compile dictionaries according to target user needs
• The better dictionaries can be used, the better dictionaries they are (Gouws & Prinsloo 1998)
The mediostructure (cross-referencing system) interconnects the knowledge elements represented in different sectors of the dictionary on several levels of lexicographic description to form a network (Wiegand 1996:11)
• A dictionary is a **carrier of text** and the mediostructural entries can guide the user between different texts, e.g. between the **central text**, **text in front** or **back matter** or between various **articles** functioning as **subtexts** in the **central wordlist**
• The lexicographer refers the dictionary user from
  – a reference position or reference entry to
  – a reference address
• A reference address gives access to additional relevant lexicographical data
• A reference relation is established between the reference entry and the reference address
- frog (n): any of various smooth-skinned web-footed largely aquatic tailless agile leaping amphibians… - compare TOAD

- frog is the reference position or reference entry

- TOAD (the separate macrostructural entry to which the user is referred) is the reference address

- Reference relation (reference marker): compare
A variety of reference markers is used in different dictionaries to indicate reference relation, e.g.

- see/SEE, compare
- ☑, ☑, ⇒, ↓
- “ ☑ tracking”
- vid.
Function of cross-referencing

- Indicate variant spelling

Aging var. of AGEING

- headword where definition appears
• Indication that further information is to be found at headword named:

**decanal adj** 1 of a dean or deanery 2 of the south side of a choir, the side on which the dean sits. [based on Late Latin decanus (see DEAN)]
• Antonym given for consultation

**statics** n. *pl (usu. Treated as sing.) 1 the science of bodies at rest or of forces in equilibrium (opp. DYNAMICS 1a). 2 = STATIC n.*

• cross-reference to the noun sense of the headword **static**

• small capitals used to indicate headword entry appearing elsewhere
• Irregular forms appear as cross-referenced bold headwords, when they are three or more entries away from main headword.

**calves** *pl.* of **CALF**\(^1\), **CALF**\(^2\)

**trodden** *past part* of **TREAD**
Words in action:

• **leen v. borrow** (iets vir tydelike gebruik kry (van iemand anders); **lend** (iets vir tydelike gebruik afstaan (aan iemand anders))

Afrikaans has only one word for “to borrow” and for “to lend”: **leen**. The difference is expressed by using either **by** or **van** for ‘to borrow from’, or **aan** or **vir** for ‘to lend to’.

For example: *Ek het geld by/van my ma geleen* (I borrowed some money from my mother); *Ek het geld aan/vir my ma geleen* (I lent my mother some money)...

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007
Dictionary Use: reference profiles

Information categories
- Specialized context
  - Spelling
  - Meaning
- Variegated settings
  - Student
  - Teacher

Reference skills
- Diversified access
  - Complex tasks
- Thematic
  - Writing
  - Translating

Activity contexts
- Social roles
  - Student
  - Teacher
- Complex tasks
  - Writing
  - Translating
Dictionary usage: Reference skills

1. Select appropriate reference work
2. Determine problem word/term
3. Determine canonical form
4. Search for appropriate headword
5. Determine appropriate sub-entry
6. Extract relevant information
7. Relate to original context

Macrostructure

Microstructure

IN →

Success? → OUT

SUCCESS?
Conclusion

• The lexicographer should use the mediostructure system to assist him/her in supplying relevant information in different ways in the end-product.

• The mediostructural system (cross-referencing) should be used as a tool to assist the dictionary user to access information.
• Care should be taken when supplying the “extra” information via a cross-referencing system - there should be a uniform approach (e.g. usage of reference markers)

• The lexicographer should take care when “promising” extra information that serves to assist the dictionary user in better understanding of the word by means of a cross-referencing system
• The dictionary user should be able to find the “promised” information at the given reference address.

• Do not send the user on a wild-goose chase - it is an unforgivable lexicographical sin to omit such promised information.
The good news:

- With modern lexicographic software facilities such as MultiTerm, TshwaneLex, TshwaneTerm and other purpose-made dictionary compilation software, the computer is able to assist the lexicographer in dealing with macrostructure, microstructure and mediostructural features.
Thank you!

Dr Mariëtta Alberts
PanSALB
Private Bag X08
ARCADIA 0007

marietta@pansalb.org.za
Tel:   012 341 9638
Fax:   012 341 5938

Afrilex, TUT, Soshanguve, June 2007