A language on the back foot. The Afrikaans lexicographer's dilemma

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'... one cannot understand the development of a language change apart from the social life of the community in which it occurs. Or to put it in another way, social pressures are continually operating upon language, not from some remote point in the past, but as an imminent social force acting in the living present' (Labov 1972:3)

Afrikaans originated in the variants of Dutch that developed at the southern tip of Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century, when English began to overtake Dutch as the high-function language in the Cape, proponents of Dutch and Afrikaans put up a resistance, and during the 20th century the functions of Afrikaans expanded until it could take its place alongside Dutch and later stand with equal status next to English. As an official language Afrikaans reached back to Dutch a second time to develop into a full-fledged language. But its heyday could not last indefinitely. In recent decades the milieu of Afrikaans speakers has changed radically. Political upheaval, technological advances, new areas of specialisation, the lightning pace of new developments have thrust Afrikaansers into the thick of the world-wide explosion of knowledge which demands efficient communication. A third reversion to Dutch is out of the question. The path between Afrikaans and Dutch has become overgrown; few present-day users of Afrikaans still walk along it. Likewise, to the average Dutch man and woman, Afrikaans today is a distant language. In the multilingual South Africa, where English dominates, the effect of the contact with English on Afrikaans is undeniable. A serious threat to Afrikaans is its loss of status in the judiciary, the administration, education and as a scientific language. Against this backdrop the Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal (HAT) – a household name among Afrikaans speakers, comparable to the Dutch "Dikke van Dale" – is subjected to scrutiny: After its "golden age", how well has the HAT kept pace with Standard Afrikaans in transition? Can it keep in step with the unstoppable, irreversible changes of the time and in the language today? Or will Afrikaans's flagship dictionary, in a decade or so, lose its relevance for the Afrikaans user?

1. The language

Afrikaans originated in the variants of Dutch that developed at the southern tip of Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – a substandard form of Dutch influenced by the language of various nationalities: people sent to the Cape from 1652 onwards (in the service of the Dutch East India Company – *Verenigde Oos-Indiese Kompanjie* or *VOC*), people who came to the Cape of their own accord (refugees and immigrants), people brought to the Cape (slaves) and people who touched in at the Cape (seafarers), not to mention the indigenous population of South Africa.

Initially Afrikaans was spoken mainly by slaves from Africa and Asia and the local Khoikhoin, who had to learn Dutch in order to communicate with their masters and with one another (cf. Groenewald in Giliomee 2003:4). Such a conflict situation effects change as a matter of course. Where different languages come into contact with one another, a mutual exchange of words inevitably takes place.

Speakers of Standard Dutch did not favour the substandard form of Dutch that had developed in the Cape and the English who occupied the Cape in the early nineteenth century thought even less of the substandard Dutch spoken by the locals. Only after 1826 did written pieces of

Afrikaans appear in newspapers. At first these were included for entertainment value, but in due course a change of status is detected in these pieces.

When English began to overtake Dutch as the high-function language in the Cape, Dutch and its poor relation, Afrikaans, had to fight to defend their lowly position. In 1909 proponents of Dutch and Afrikaans united in the establishment of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (South African Academy for Science and Arts) and in an awakening of Afrikaner nationalism put up a resistance to the influence of English and Anglicisation.

During the twentieth century the functions of Afrikaans expanded until the language could take its place alongside Dutch as a high-function language and later it could stand with equal status next to the other official language, English. The linguist Fritz Ponelis (1994:106) referred to this period as the 'golden age of Standard Afrikaans'.

Factors that contributed to the standardisation of Afrikaans included the acquisition of political power by (white) Afrikaans speakers, the spelling, word choice and syntax of the first Afrikaans translation of the Bible (1933) and the Psalm and Hymn Book (1943), the influence of prescribed works such as the *Afrikaanse woordelys en spelreëls* (a list of words and spelling rules) and school textbooks and in cases where, after official recognition in 1925, Afrikaans could not stand alone, a back-formation to Dutch.

In order to meet the requirements of an official language alongside English, language planning was essential: a generally polished standard, a system of spelling and a vocabulary that could hold its own in all spheres of society including scientific language. For practical reasons it should not deviate too far from the Dutch.

Preference was given to the unique Afrikaans word or expression, but where Afrikaans offered nothing suitable and terminologists, translators and lexicographers were not able to come up with other options, extensive use was made of borrowing from Dutch (cf. Uys 1983:167).

A process of Dutchification of Afrikaans was thus outlined: as an official language Afrikaans had to reach back to Dutch a second time to be able to develop into a full-fledged, high-function language.

During this period Afrikaans was in its heyday, but it could not last indefinitely. In the 1980s the Netherlands broke the cultural agreement that had been in place between South Africa and the Netherlands since 1950: they were opposed to the apartheid system in South Africa. Contact between South Africa and the Netherlands was broken on all levels. After apartheid was abolished in the 1990s, Dutch interest in the Afrikaans culture increased, but the path between Afrikaans and Dutch has become overgrown and very few present-day users of Afrikaans still walk along it.

Likewise, to the average Dutch man and woman in the street, Afrikaans today is a distant language (cf. Leopold Scholtz, *Die Burger*, 22 May 2009). At a conference on Afrikaans in Leiden in 1992 Fritz Ponelis in his opening address 'Standard Afrikaans in transition', cast the spotlight on the influence of the revolution in South African society after apartheid on the Afrikaans language community and Afrikaans as a cultural and colloquial language. He

concluded that in future Afrikaans would become increasingly intertwined with the English culture: 'The enormous impact of English on Afrikaans has had an overwhelming influence on the independence of Afrikaans and raises the question of how long it will still make sense to retain a strongly English-tainted Afrikaans alongside English' (Ponelis 1994:127).

It is inevitable: no language can stand apart from the social life of the community that uses the language. And in recent decades the milieu of Afrikaansers (the term given to speakers of Afrikaans irrespective of ethnic origin) has changed radically. There has been political upheaval, both locally and abroad. Technological advances, new areas of specialisation and the lightning pace of new developments have thrust Afrikaansers into the thick of the world-wide explosion of knowledge which demands efficient communication.

A third reversion to the Dutch is out of the question. New serviceable words for strange new concepts are taken from English on many levels – this is much easier and quicker than making a case for a new Afrikaans word to suit the purpose. This is a normal phenomenon and many such words are useful additions to the lexicon of the receiver language, but the pace of change and degree of integration has concerned sensitive language users as borrowed words increasingly threaten existing serviceable words in the original lexicon and the contact situation results in language disruption.

In the multilingual South Africa where English is dominant the effect of the contact with English on Afrikaans is undeniable. Since the 1990s a serious threat to Afrikaans as a cultural language is its loss of status in the public domain: in the judiciary, the administration, education and as a scientific language. In an academic environment Afrikaans academics in the humanities and especially the natural sciences are beginning to take the line of least resistance and writing articles and research papers only in English (cf. van der Elst 2009).

Over the last two decades the number of specialised subject dictionaries involving Afrikaans as one of the languages dwindled from more than 150 available titles in 1990 (many of them already out of print but still obtainable) to fewer than 20 titles in 2005. Contemporary sources that are available – lists of terms, subject dictionaries and databases – are scattered throughout the country: among different departments, universities, various companies and even private individuals . . . Potential users are often unaware that the sources they need exist (cf. Alberts 2003).

At grassroots level, where informal spoken language proceeds unhindered, especially in the cities, a high degree of language disruption occurs. The language becomes unstable. Speakers change their language as circumstances demand – to make themselves understandable, for the sake of being civil when talking to strangers or simply because talking in such a way has become second nature.

Ferguson and de Bose (1977:118) point out that if two languages are distributed in a symmetrical ratio among various mother tongue communities, the product of the contact is bilingualism, but if there is asymmetrical distribution of a dominant language (English) to a subordinate language (Afrikaans), without a subsequent reciprocal process, pidginisation can occur, with the possibility of the pidginised language developing into a full-fledged Creole language.

The distribution of English and its impact on the status of indigenous languages is a source of concern to many communities and experts worldwide. In South Africa the apartheid history has accelerated this. In a paper delivered at the Roots Conference, 'A South African–Dutch dialogue on the dynamics of language, culture and heritage', held at the University of the Western Cape in September 2009, Munadia Karaan of the Voice of the Cape community radio station spoke about the establishment of this broadcaster fifteen years before. The dilemma was which language should be used on the station to best serve their listeners, primarily the Muslim community. Although Afrikaans is spoken daily in the Muslim community, politically aware Muslims had moved away from Afrikaans because of its role in the apartheid system, especially as a language of instruction in schools. The generation that had been active in the student unrest of 1976 and 1980 felt strongly about this and they were unaware of the role their forebears might have had in the formation of the language.

There are signs that this state of affairs is changing. Whereas in 1995 the Voice of the Cape broadcast half of the time in English and half in Afrikaans, by 2008 the mix was sixty percent English, thirty percent Afrikaans and ten percent other languages such as Xhosa and Urdu. The results of a survey into the listeners' language preferences in February 2008 were surprising. Callers acknowledged that over the previous fifteen years that they had inadvertently begun to speak more English. Yet almost eighty percent of these callers indicated that they would like to hear twenty percent more Afrikaans on the air. Online listeners, in general more professional people, were less supportive, but 36,8 percent still wanted the Afrikaans broadcasting component increased.

Karaan ascribes this new sense of being comfortable with Afrikaans to the fact that fifteen years ago Muslim speakers of Afrikaans were uncertain as to the implications of democracy for their culture and faith. Today they realise how much they benefit from the acceptance of diversity in the country. Where other Muslim minorities, especially in Europe and America, are oppressed by the worst form of Islamophobia, not only are South African Muslims respected for their uniqueness but their contributions are recognised at the highest level. This allows people to relax, and has played a great part in bringing about a new appreciation for Afrikaans. It is now easier for them to accept that Afrikaans originated with their forebears.

Karaan says we should not forget that the first manuscript printed in Afrikaans was a Qur'an – the holy book of the Muslims. 'We should never feel ashamed of our own unique form of Afrikaans; it is who we are and we are proud of it' (Karaan 2009). At the same conference Prof. Neville Alexander stated: 'To equate some of the attitudes of some of the mother-tongue speakers of a language with the language itself is to make a rudimentary but potentially dangerous category mistake. If this mode of operation were to be generalised, very few languages would fare worse than the English language, given some of the atrocities and horrendous acts of despoliation associated with the establishment of the British and US empires.'

But this does not change the message that he directs to the Afrikaans lexicographer: 'Of course, the most daring and imaginative literary artists have not waited for the lexicographers to catch up with them. However, it is the latter who 'set the standard' and they have to be convinced that a word like *trammakassie* should appear in the *HAT* with the explanation 'sinoniem van *dankie* (synonym of *thank you*)', and vice versa. Until this happens, all reference to the other varieties of Afrikaans will inevitably remain in the realm of folklore or exoticisms, i.e. be no more than a

polite, paternalistic and politically correct genuflection in front of the unavoidable. More generally and relevantly, this undertaking would place Afrikaans linguists at the cutting edge of the standardisation debate, where the tendency is to increase the comprehensiveness of the acceptable forms and the vocabulary of the relevant language. We would no longer construct such an impenetrable and alienating wall between street and standard as we do at present.

> '[. . .] In spite of all attempts to make out of it a 'white man's language' [Afrikaans] belongs to all who speak [it], especially to its mother-tongue speakers. Instead of the stigma of 'the language of the oppressor', the speakers of Afrikaans, like those of every other South African language, can aspire to and attain for their mother tongue the halo of a language of liberation and of unification.'
> Only when this happens, says Alexander, 'will the speakers of Afrikaans no longer have to brace themselves on the back foot' (2009).

2. The dictionary

A year after the official recognition of Afrikaans in 1925 work began on a unilingual descriptive dictionary; the aim was to publish within three years a dictionary equivalent in extent to the erstwhile Dutch *Van Dale* (a single volume work). After about twenty years, in 1951, Volume 1 (A–C) of the planned dictionary appeared. Volume 13 (R) of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (referred to as the *WAT*) appeared in 2009, and a team of six lexicographers at the Afrikaans Dictionary Unit in Stellenbosch are currently working on the letter S.

To complete such an extensive work within a few years was clearly an impossible task (as things go with dictionaries of this nature). In the 1950s a decision was reached to tackle an Afrikaans desk (or 'hand') dictionary to run concurrently with the *WAT*. The editor-in-chief of the *WAT* at that time, P.C. Schoonees, was also the first editor-in-chief of the *Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (known as the *HAT*). The first edition appeared in 1965 published by Voortrekkerpers, which amalgamated with Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel a few years later to form Perskor.

At the request of Perskor, in 1972 Francois F. Odendal, professor of Afrikaans and Dutch at the then Rand Afrikaans University and chairman of the language commission of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (the South African Academy for Science and Arts) accepted the job of producing the second edition of the *HAT*. For almost twenty five years – even after the publication of the third edition in 1993 – Odendal soldiered on at this task, the sole editor of the dictionary, revising the work by hand and sending copy to the publishers to be typed, proofread and printed. (Cf. Odendal 2006:280-289.)

During the 1990s Odendal requested the publishers to appoint a second, younger editor, Rufus H. Gouws, professor of Afrikaans language at the University of Stellenbosch, to help with the work. A comprehensive revision of the 1993 edition was out of the question in the time available. The two editors of *HAT*[4] decided to divide up the alphabet, one of them taking specific responsibility for aspects such as the refining of usage labels in the dictionary and the addition of computer terms and citations from A to Z. An attempt was made to delete archaic words and many new words were added, including a number of English words, which drew a considerable amount of criticism from users.

Pearson Education South Africa published *HAT*[4] in 2000. The previous publishers, Perskor, had been incorporated into Pearson in the late 1990s. In 2003 Pearson asked the compilers to produce a fifth edition in 2004. However, the authors suggested that 2005 would be a more realistic target and would also allow the publication of *HAT*[5] to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the first edition of the dictionary in 1965. Once more the editors took on half of the work each: Gouws did the first half in Microsoft Word while Odendal tackled the second half, still by hand on enlarged photocopies. At the launch of *HAT*[5], in September 2005, Odendal was recognised for his contribution and he retired after more than 30 years' work on the dictionary. (Cf. Odendal 2006:280-289.)

Since it was first published in 1965, the *HAT* has become a household name among Afrikaans speakers. It was soon clear that that dictionary had earned its niche in the market and that the Afrikaans public accepted its standpoint. By the end of the 'golden age of Standard Afrikaans' the *HAT* had taken its place in most Afrikaans homes, schools and universities, as well as in government offices and the business world. In the judiciary, when the meaning of a word is in dispute, it is the *HAT* that is accepted as the authoritative reference in all courts of the land.

After the 'golden age of Standard Afrikaans' how well has the *HAT* kept pace with 'Standard Afrikaans in transition'? What could two external editors with other obligations achieve in the little time that was granted to them by a new, mainly English, publishing house, with no dictionary division or specific lexicographical expertise to support them, at a time of such a worldwide explosion of knowledge?

The first priority in the revision of any descriptive dictionary is the omission of obsolete words and expressions. Then there is the tracking down and recording of new words and expressions to reflect the vocabulary of the particular period. A third aspect is semantic analysis: a reexamination and thorough definition of meanings. Finally, the content should be adapted to comply with the most recent spelling and writing rules of the language.

2.1. Obsolete words and expressions

In an authoritative dictionary like the *HAT* the user would expect that words and expressions that belong to an earlier era and are no longer in use would be omitted in the latest edition to make space for contemporary words and expressions. Or, if space is not a problem, such as in an electronic version, the user would expect to find such words tagged as obsolete or historic. An analysis of *HAT*[5] indicates that, despite attempts in this regard, apart from removing offensive words and words associated with the apartheid regime, the dead wood has not been completely excised.

Afrikaans lexicography originated from the translation of Dutch dictionaries and the *HAT* is no exception. Through back-formation to Dutch, Afrikaans was able to develop fully as a cultural language and the numerous borrowings for utilitarian purposes enriched Afrikaans considerably. These words gained acceptance in fields such as music, and the natural and physical sciences. Ponelis (1994:111) gives a long list of examples.

But the hyper-correct reaction against English among Afrikaans speakers of the past, the fear of 'threat' associated with English and the intolerance of anything that looked English also had less desirable consequences: often the Dutch 'patron' was dragged in where there was little or nothing

more to be gained. The 'fear' of Anglicisms, which had to be kept out of the language at all costs, often led to artificial replacements with strange Dutch forms that were never a true version of Afrikaans. Ponelis (1994:119) pointed out examples of the countless Dutchisms in the 1984 edition of the *Tweetalige Woordeboek/Bilingual Dictionary* (Bosman, van der Merwe, Hiemstra). Some of these examples are still found in the 2005 edition of the *HAT*.

Dutch word	Label	Frequency in archive of Afrikaans daily *Die Burger* (http://152.111.1.87/cgi-bin/dieburger.cgi)	Afrikaans equivalent	Frequency *Die Burger*
afdruip (afgedruip)	–	1	*afdrup (afgedrup)*	77
afpel (afgepel)	–	0	*afdop (afgedop)*	224
afwasbak (~ke)	–	1	*wasbak (~ke)*	1 984
begane grond	(seldom used)	0	*grondvlak*	3 194
benieu	(genteel)	0	*benoud maak*	61
benieud	(genteel)	12	*nuuskierig*	1 553
bloesem (~s)	(genteel)	1	*bloeisel (~s)*	506
duikel (ge~)	–	0	*tuimel (ge~)*	3 012

Table 1. Examples of Dutch headwords in *HAT*[5]

These last traces of the Dutchification of Afrikaans, as well as other words and expressions of transitory nature still need to be removed from the *HAT*.

Uys (1983:90) refers to language as a system of habits that are passed from the speakers of one generation to the next. 'Man is a conservative being. He does not easily change the things he is accustomed to. For example, a person will leave the things that have become part of his daily life alone' – a characteristic that is revealed in an individual's writing habits (Uys 1983:219).

Therefore it is hardly surprising that the *HAT,* which in the main was written for a quarter of a century by a single editor, by hand, without any access to an electronic corpus, reflects the language use, habits and 'respectability' of the individual in question as a representative of an older generation – in many places interwoven and embedded in definitions and examples of usage.

Some examples of this are the preference for forms such as *belewe, drywe, skawe, skrywe* (instead of *beleef, dryf, skaaf, skryf*) which today might be regarded as old-fashioned or over-refined. Other cases are *besig* (instead of *gebruik, sê* = use, say), *huid* (instead of *vel* = skin), *kneedbaar* (for *kniebaar* = kneadable), *spu(ug)* (for *spoeg* = spit), *toonladder* (for *toonleer* = tone scale), etc. There is almost continuous use in definitions of the honorific *dame* (lady) (instead of the neutral *vrou* = woman) and on the other hand the usage examples (which mainly feature men) include the form *vroumens* today often considered derogatory); the use of *manspersoon* instead of *man; vader* and *moeder* (instead of *ma* and *pa*). Also under fire are *vitamine* and *proteïne* instead of *vitamien* en *proteïen*, the indication of pronunciations – such as 'gha-r<u>aa</u>-zje' for *garage,* which is almost never heard like this – and words no longer heard such as *kloset* (closet), *spoelkloset, gemakhuisie* (convenience) and *privaat* (privy) instead of the everyday *toilet*. In *HAT*[5] the article for toilet appears like this:

toi·l<u>e</u>t☐s.nw. *(< F.)*
1 <mark>Gemakhuisie</mark> (met wasplek): *Na die toilet gaan.*
2 Handeling van aan te trek, <mark>hare op te maak,</mark> ens.; handeling van jouself mooi en <mark>presentabel te maak</mark> –
meestal van <mark>vrouens</mark> gesê: *Sy is besig om haar toilet te maak.*
3 (~te) Kleredrag met versiersels: *Sy bestee baie geld aan haar toilet.*
4 *(w.g.)* Kleding, veral <mark>damesjapon.</mark>
toilet: ~artikel, <mark>~doos,</mark> ~sak.

Of the four definitions offered only number 4 is labelled *w.g.* (*weinig gebruiklik* = seldom used), while in contemporary Afrikaans 2, 3 and 4 are old-fashioned and rarely used. The frequency of *gemakhuisie* in die internet archive of Cape Town's daily Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, is 17 (mostly used jokingly) as opposed to 8 930 for *toilet*. The plural form in 3 would be expected to be seen in 1. 'Gemakhuisie', 'hare op te maak', 'presentabel te maak', 'vrouens', 'haar toilet te maak', 'damesjapon', 'toiletdoos' are all examples of words and expressions that are obsolete and seldom used. In revising a dictionary of contemporary Afrikaans the article for *toilet* might appear as follows:

toi·l<u>e</u>t☐s.nw. (~te)
1 groot bak van porselein/plastiek waarin 'n mens urineer ens.: *toilet toe gaan.* ○ *Mag ek asseblief die toilet gebruik?* ○ *'n spoeltoilet.*
2 vertrek met 'n toilet, wasbak (en soms ook 'n bad en/of stort); badkamer.
3 [geen mv.] *(verouderd)* handeling van jou te was, jou hare te kam, aan te trek, ens.
toilet: ~artikel, ~papier, ~sakkie. ~seep

2.2. New words and expressions

Many users might not find the above at all remarkable, because the average person is more interested in vocabulary, the collection of headwords in a dictionary. A new revised edition of a dictionary is judged primarily on the basis of how well the dictionary reflects new developments on the social and political front in the fields of science, technology, medicine, etc.

In *HAT*[5] there are many new Afrikaans words, but there are also very many general Afrikaans words that comply with the requirements of Allan Metcalf's FUDGE-test (Frequency of use, Unobtrusiveness, Diversity of users and situations, Generation of other forms and meanings, Endurance of the concept) (Metcalf 2004:152) and with the requirements of autonomy, stability and standardisation (Ferguson and de Bose 1977:111) that the user will not find in the *HAT*. To name a few examples: *aandagafleibaarheidsindroom* (attention-deficit disorder), *aardverwarming* (global warming), *afstandbeheer(der)* (remote [control]), *antioksidant* (antioxidant), *antiretroviraal* (antiretroviral), *blog* (blog), *debietkaart* (debit card), *multimedia* (multimedia) …

There is little evidence of attempts towards 'bridging the anachronistic abyss that divides most white from most black Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers of the language' (Alexander 2009). The effect of the other nine official languages of South Africa is also negligible. The 'racialised standard of the Afrikaans language' that Alexander refers to is thus maintained, with Afrikaans words such as *trammakassie* (thank you) and *kanalla* (please) widely used in some communities still glaring in their absence. Over the years their place has been given to various English words: not only borrowings such as *cottage, deodorant, essay, establishment, franchise, fudge, gay, gentleman, gospel* . . . but in the last two editions questionable examples of code-switching. Users have criticised the inclusion of some English words in the latest edition of the *HAT* because in

most cases there are one or more contemporary Afrikaans equivalents in general use: *brag* (spog), *casual* (informeel, ongeërg), *cheeky* (astrant), *clue* (benul, idee)*, cute* (oulik), *fine* (goed), *gut feeling* (kropgevoel), *happening* (gebeurtenis, okkasie), *moan* (kla), *queue* (ry, tou), *panic, stunning, song, weird* . . . In the past, fear of Anglicisms often led to the baby being thrown out with the bathwater; now it can be claimed that corrective action in this respect has gone too far in the opposite direction in *HAT*[5], creating the impression that the lexicographer was not able to distinguish between the bathwater and the baby or that a sense of resignation has crept in: 'what's the use of kicking against the pricks?'

2.3. Semantic analysis
Fairly recent news is that 'a £34 million project to update the definitions of English words is being sped up because of the rate at which the language is changing. A 60-strong team working on the first revision of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) has spent the past decade covering just four-and-a-half letters – from M to the middle of words beginning with Q. But staff has now broken from their painstaking methods to concentrate on words whose meanings are changing the fastest' (David Thomas, www.telegraph.co.uk, 25 March 2008).

Without even one full-time, overarching editor and published by a publishing house that dealt with a dictionary manuscript in the same way as an ordinary textbook for school or university, the analysis of meaning – the key task of descriptive lexicography and the most difficult and most time-consuming – probably received the least attention in *HAT*[4] and *HAT*[5]. This is evident in the article *toilet* already discussed. A further example is the only definition of *konsultant* (consultant) as 'persoon wat raad vra' (someone who asks advice), while in contemporary Afrikaans a *konsultant* is widely and almost exclusively used with the meaning of 'persoon wat raad gee' (someone who gives advice).

2.4. Spelling and writing rules
Every reference work contains a few typos, a handful of oversights. A work of such extent and complexity as a standard dictionary cannot be expected to be free of errors. In *Trouw* of 30 March 2006 Ton den Boon admitted that even the *Dikke Van Dale* – just like *Duden* and *Robert* and *Oxford* – 'sometimes drops a stitch'.

Careful analysis of articles in *HAT*[5] exposes errors in setting and spelling – *afvoeter* (for *affoeter*), *asperine* (for *aspirine/aspirien*), cappucino (for *cappuccino*), *dubelganger* (for *dubbelganger*), *embarasseer* (for *embarrasseer*), *refleksiologie* (for *refleksologie*) – some of which can probably be attributed to the English publishers' choice of proofreaders for the dictionary. (How else to explain the interesting 'word' *malechite* instead of *moeilikheid* [trouble] on p. 905 of the first impression?)

The spelling and style of writing in *HAT*[5] do not always agree with the prescribed forms set out in the *Afrikaanse woordelys en spelreëls,* the list published periodically by the language commission of the Suid-Afrikaaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (the South African Academy for Science and Arts).

When lexicographers and publishers are confronted with errors such as these, they are distressed, but also pleased, because the problems can be corrected in the next edition – as long as the next edition is produced with the required diligence.

3. The future

What is a home without a *HAT*? This was the slogan used to introduce the fifth edition of the *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* to the public in 2005. In the *Kernerman Newsletter* of June in the same year Adam Kilgarriff, writing in a retrospective on the twentieth century about the 'fertile coastal strip of 'a dictionary in every household' ' in America and Britain said: 'Dependable as the cycle of one generation growing up and handing over to the next, it was a large and enviable market, in harmony with the grand and noble agenda of universal education. To be sure, the coastal strip was sometimes crowded with competitors, but the soil was good: there were always more households to buy dictionaries. They don't need to buy them any more.' The monolingual, emblematic 'dictionary-at-home' market 'may disappear with varying speed [. . .] but disappear it will.'

In September 2009 the closure of Chambers Harrap in Edinburgh was announced. In its declaration the mother company, Hachette UK, ascribed the move to the sharp decline in the sales of English dictionaries and reference books. This was the result (as Kilgarriff predicted) of the 'digital revolution [. . .] changing the way readers consume news and search for information. People are moving away from printed reference books and going online where, generally, they expect to get their information for free'.

The same eventual fate can be predicted for the 'dictionary-at-home' market in South Africa. But in the case of Afrikaans, the electronic supply of quality information and lexicography is not nearly as rich. Afrikaansers who do not wish to be informed in English still have a need for authoritative, reliable Afrikaans sources of reference; although the demand for Afrikaans–English dictionaries is greater, it is encouraging that the modest sales of the *HAT* have remained more or less constant over the past decade (in comparison with those of its English and even Dutch counterparts almost negligibly slight).

In the light of all the above-mentioned factors, and others, it should by now be clear that a radical revision of the flagship dictionary of Afrikaans can no longer be put off. The makers of a standard dictionary like the *HAT* need not explain or justify the complex nature of language changes. They do need to decide on what to omit from the dictionary, what to rearrange and rewrite, what to add to the dictionary and what to ignore (provisionally, for the edition currently in production). In a dynamic language that is constantly changing, what is standard and what is substandard? The lexicographer has to make decisions from one case to the next and be able to support the choices made.

There is no desire that the *HAT* should 're-standardise' Afrikaans, but it should continue to set the norm of the standard language and reflect the 'standard form' of the language in use. Not so much, as in the past, the language linked to institutionalised establishments such as church and school, the language heard on the stage and in cultural bodies and in government offices. Not a lofty, correct, form of language as it should be written and spoken. Not a form of language that is 'better' or of a higher class than other forms of the language. But the representative form of Afrikaans as it is generally written and spoken today, as determined with the aid of word lists and frequency tallies and concordances from electronic corpuses of contemporary language usage. In this way, if words such as *trammakassie* (along with *dankie*) and *kanalla* (along with *asseblief*) meet the requirements of the FUDGE-test, they can claim their rightful place in the dictionary.

The yardstick and sources for the reflection of contemporary Afrikaans in the *HAT* are the written forms of the language as found in the print media (Afrikaans newspapers, magazines and books). Attention is also given to the spoken form of Afrikaans as it is used on radio and television.

An important source is the archives of the major Afrikaans newspapers (including *Die Burger, Beeld, Volksblad* and *Rappor*t) which can only be consulted as full-text databases on the internet (not as part of a corpus) because all four belong to Media24, which includes among its companies NB Publishers, owner of the *HAT's* only competitor, the *Pharos Verklarende Afrikaanse Woordeboek* (the *VAW*). (The eighth edition of the *VAW* appeared in 1993. Thereafter work on the dictionary came to a halt for more than a decade. Towards the end of 2007 a swift revision was set in motion and a ninth edition of the *VAW* is scheduled to appear at the beginning of 2010 with a thousand new entries and a new list of abbreviations.)

Apart from access to the Media24 archives and other internet sources, the *HAT* has its own burgeoning Afrikaans corpus of manuscripts that have been published over the past five years by two book publishers, a magazine corpus and a corpus of all the Afrikaans school books of South Africa's largest two educational publishers.

But take note. Michael Rundell (2008:229) stresses: '[t]hough it's undoubtedly true that the advent of large corpora has brought fundamental and irreversible changes to the process of dictionary making, [. . .] good corpus data is merely a prerequisite for better dictionaries: it does not in itself guarantee that good dictionaries will actually be produced.'

In publishing the *HAT*, the publishers' point of departure, as with any other book, is commercial success: Who is the target user? What are their expectations? Is there a market for the dictionary? How big is the market? What should the extent of the dictionary be? How much will it cost to produce the book? What format? How many entries? What turnover – and profit – will it bring? (Cf. Landau 2001:343-401.)

And once all these questions on size of market, expected turnover and profit are answered, in the first place it is obvious that the 60 lexicographers of an *OED* and the 26 of a *Chambers* are not standing in line to serve the *HAT* – nor are the 6 of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (the *WAT*), or 4 or even only 3. What is clear is that, if it is to meet the expectations of its target users, an important dictionary like the *HAT* should not be the sole responsibility of a single competent external editor but one who has an overloaded programme and whose only time to attend to the revision is as an important hobby to do in the evenings.

Good authoritative dictionaries need compilers who have the required knowledge and skills to make dictionaries according to the lexicographical principles of the time and who have the necessary time to do the job. Dictionary work is time-consuming and therefore expensive. Towards the end of 2007 Pearson Education for the first time appointed an Afrikaans lexicographer-publisher to work full-time on the *HAT* and to take responsibility for their new Afrikaans dictionary products.

During 2008 and 2009 the text of the fifth edition of the *HAT* was converted from XyVision into XML, made available on CD-ROM and uploaded into the dictionary workbench TshwaneLex in

order to start the work on the new sixth edition. Work on building a corpus has been set in motion.

In 2009 *My eerste HAT,* an Afrikaans version of Van Dale's *Mijn eerste Van Dale,* appeared, as did the *HAT Afrikaanse Skoolwoordeboek* (a school dictionary published concurrently along with the pocket-format *HAT Afrikaanse Sakwoordeboek*).

Towards the end of 2010 a new bilingual Afrikaans–English school dictionary is due to appear. From all of this it should be clear that there is an urgent need for additional staff. Factors such as restructuring, the silo effect and the delay in an actual decision on a full-fledged dictionary division, make the appointment of a second full-time experienced specialist dictionary editor/lexicographer for the moment unlikely – such a person could immediately deliver work of high standard and visibly increase the pace of the work. The apparently 'cheaper' option – but in the long run more costly – is that the sole, full-time lexicographer-publisher, already under pressure to meet deadlines and over and above other urgent specific specialist tasks, has to find suitable freelance co-workers and train them as speedily as possible. This is not a minor issue. Because of the very few job opportunities for Afrikaans lexicographers, Afrikaans lexicographers and editors with dictionary-making experience aren't easy to find.

Although a good theoretical basis is useful, a good theoretical grasp of linguistic theory and metalexicography do not necessarily ensure a competent dictionary maker. 'Such people are about as rare as good poets,' said Landau (2001:235). A good lexicographer should have a fine feeling for the language (usually the mother tongue) in which they are working – an intuitive sense of nuance, style and idiom that is often innate and not something that one can learn.

Michael Rundell (2001) emphasises the importance of the distinction between teaching people *about* lexicography, and training people *to be* lexicographers. '[T]he only real way to learn how to write dictionaries is to write dictionaries. Most good dictionary publishers, whether operating in the commercial or academic sphere, provide on-the-job training for their staff – typically some combination of initial 'basic training' in the practical skills of lexicography followed by ongoing feedback and mentoring over a long period.'

It is unrealistic to expect one full-time lexicographer-publisher to deliver to mostly inexperienced freelancers the full range of training needs required. Without a proper dictionary division the *HAT* does not have the capacity to nurture new dictionary editors, and working with freelancers with no dictionary-making experience can result in many errors. In cases where a crash course does not deliver the desired results, where a freelance editor does not have the necessary skills and even after a long trial period fails to pass muster, instead of lightening the workload, it doubles the load and considerably delays projects in process instead of speeding them up. Perseverance is essential. If, for one or more of the reasons listed here, the publishers fail to allow the *HAT* to keep pace with the unstoppable, irreversible changes of the time and in the language, the chances are good that in a decade or so the flagship Afrikaans dictionary will lose its relevance for the Afrikaans user.

'Sooner or later,' warns Manning (1991:30), 'every business becomes obsolete. Products that sold like hotcakes stop selling. Systems that worked like a precision watch suddenly slow down and jam up. Ideas stop flowing. The adrenalin stops pumping.' 'A good dictionary is much more

than a tool to check spelling – it is a snapshot of a lively, changing language and culture' (*The American Heritage College Dictionary,* 4th edition). When effective communication becomes impossible, because language users no longer have the words and terms they need in their mother tongue and are no longer able to find the necessary words and terms in their dictionaries, in South Africa they will have no choice other than switch to English and turn to support materials in this world language.

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