
Hornby Lecture

Why Dictionaries are no Better Than They are – and no Worse

Dice Dios: Toma lo que quieras – y págalo

Robert Ilson

University College London

Honorary Member

European Association for Lexicography

e-mail: roberti@dsl.pipex.com

1) Why Dictionaries are no better than they are :-

Lexicography is beset with problems at three levels :-

1.1) Metalexigraphy (ie lexicographic theory), which includes linguistic theory ;

1.2) Lexicography Proper (ie the confection of dictionaries) ;

1.3) Dictionnaire (ie the organisation of lexicographic projects and the selling of their products).

Or, in plainer words, problems about what to say, how to say it, and how to present it.

Many such problems stem from the failure to generalise best practice across genres and languages, and from the failure to exploit fully the Explanatory Technique of Exemplification.

2) Why Dictionaries are no worse than they are :-

2.1) Dictionary-users, as native speakers of at least one human language, already know a great deal about language in general and about the world, which enables them to supplement and interpret correctly the information offered by dictionaries ;

2.2) Many dictionary-users come from dictionnaire communities, in which dictionaries and their conventions are widespread and well known.

NB. I hope to begin with a tribute to A S Hornby ; and my subsequent discussion may include not just dictionaries but other LORWs (Lexically Oriented Reference Works, such as Usage Guides and Thesauruses).

1

In a previous incarnation I taught English as a Foreign Language in several of the intensive EFL programmes that American universities offered to – and often required of – overseas students hoping to study there. I shall never forget the day there arrived in the office of the English Language Institute of Queen's College of the City University of New York a parcel containing the latest edition of what was then called the Advanced Learner's Dictionary (ALD) and is now called the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), for ever associated with the name of A S Hornby. America could, so far as we knew then, offer nothing similar (though it can now). My colleagues and I prided ourselves on our elementary and intermediate EFL courses (such as those produced under the auspices of Charles Fries and Robert Lado at the University of Michigan). But when it came to Advanced EFL we had to yield the palm to our British confrères. In the event, we admired ALD but, not knowing what to do with it, filed it reverently away.

Decades thereafter, when I was working at Randolph Quirk's Survey of English Usage at University College London, I was invited to join Longman in producing -- a monolingual EFL dictionary, which ultimately became the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE). My first reaction was to say: But there already *is* a learners' dictionary – by which, of course, I

meant ALD. Eventually I was persuaded that, good though ALD was, it might now be possible to do something even better.

When LDOCE was nearing completion, I heard that A S Hornby was seriously, perhaps terminally, ill in hospital. I tried desperately to get through to him the message that, far from being a criticism of his work on ALD, LDOCE was in effect a tribute to it : not for the first time did I think, as Isaac Newton had said, that if we saw farther than our predecessors, it was because we stood on the shoulders of giants.

Giants like A S Hornby.

Such figures point backwards or sideways, as it were, to their own eminent precursors or colleagues, such as Harold Palmer, Michael West, and Basic English's C K Ogden and I A Richards.

Such figures also point forward to today's robust Monolingual Learners' Dictionaries (MLDs) of English (and perhaps to those of other languages as well, such as French, Dutch, and German). MLDs may also have influenced the Semi-Monolingual/Semi-Bilingual Learners' Dictionaries that combine Definition and Translation (eg Kernerman English English Arabic Dictionary -- K Dictionaries Ltd. 2009) and even the Bilingual Learners' Dictionaries (as for Japanese learners of English) that use some features of MLDs (such as Illustrations and Usage Discussions).

For me, the best way to pay tribute to Hornby now is to situate the Monolingual Learners' Dictionary within the wider field of Lexicography generally and its manifold products, including monolingual, bilingual, and semi-bilingual dictionaries for all sorts of audiences (native speakers, learners, adults, children) plus related works such as usage guides and thesauruses : what I call LORWs (*Lexically Oriented Reference Works*).

That is done best through a theory about Lexicography. (For my theory of Lexicography, see eg Ilson, 2010, pp. 338-346, "Lexicography", *The Routledge Linguistics Encyclopedia*, Routledge, London & New York.) Such a theory about Lexicography ought to comprise at least three principal components : Metalexigraphy (Lexicographic Theory), Lexicography Proper, and Dictionnaire. Metalexigraphy includes Linguistic Theory. Lexicography Proper is about the actual confection of LORWs. Dictionnaire is about the organisation of Lexicographic projects and (bluntly) the selling of the resulting Lexicographic products. To put all this as simply as possible, Metalexigraphy is about *what* LORWs should say ; Lexicography Proper is about *how* to say it ; Dictionnaire is about *how* to organise the process and promote its result (see Charles McGregor, 1985, pp. 123-133, "From First Idea to Finished Product", *Dictionaries, Lexicography and Language Learning*, Pergamon Press & British Council, Oxford).

Before getting my hands dirty I must acknowledge the presence of several elephants in my room, of which by far the biggest is Big Data in the era of Mega-Corpus. So I'm delighted that also speaking here will be Patrick Hanks, an authority on the use of such corpora (Hanks, Patrick (2013). *Lexical Analysis – Norms and Exploitations*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press). Dare I hope that our two contributions will be not just complementary but complimentary ?

That said, to see how these three components interact in practice, consider the proposition that dictionaries are no better than they are because they are not ECDs. The *Explanatory and Combinatorial Dictionary* is a type of dictionary developed by Igor Melchuk et al (eg Melchuk et al 1984) to make explicit the lexical competence of the native speaker : a tall order indeed ! Among its features is a set of Lexical Functions whose exponents are to be displayed for every entry to which they apply. There are about 60 Lexical Functions, of which many are Collocations : Number 30 is "Magn", a collocation that strengthens or intensifies, as in this example from OED2 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989) at the verb *mortgage* : <1875 M. E. Braddon *Strange World* I. iv. 64 The Bellingham estate was mortgaged up to the hilt when he inherited it.>. So an ECD entry for the verb *mortgage* should include the exponent *up to the hilt* of the Lexical Function Magn. Does any dictionary save OED – for learners or otherwise – do so now

? It is certainly not at *mortgage* in *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (2002). Here we have a bit of Metalexigraphy (in this case Linguistic Theory).

If we decide, at the level of Lexicography Proper, to incorporate Lexical Functions into a dictionary, we face several problems. First, are Lexical Functions appropriate to dictionaries of every kind? In principle, I'd say Yes – but not equally so. They seem more suited to dictionaries that emphasise encoding language (using it) than decoding language (understanding it). So Lexical Functions are more obviously candidates for OALD than for COD (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Twelfth Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011). Second, how does one identify Lexical Functions? In the age of Big Data, that should not be hard. But it is. Lexical Functions may be frequent or rare in any given corpus. What matters is not their frequency but their psycholinguistic salience (what the French call their *disponibilité*) in expressing a particular notion as applied to a particular word. Thus we lexicographers must trawl for them ultimately in our own minds, with whatever secondary support a corpus can provide. Third, having decided to show Lexical Functions, how best to display them? In a separate section with each on a separately labelled line? Very clear, but needing a lot of space. In examples (which of course can be combined and manipulated in various ways: see Ilson, “The Explanatory Technique of Exemplification”, 2008)? Imaginative and stimulating – but can the meaning of each Lexical Function be brought out clearly enough?

The final decision will be made at the level of Dictionnaire. Those responsible for the management of the dictionary project must assess whether the cost of Lexical Functions in time, energy, and money is worth it, bearing in mind that their inclusion is likely to increase the size of the dictionary and consequently its selling price, and that users of different types of dictionary may well have different feelings about the importance and usefulness of Lexical Functions.

Another important area of Metalexigraphy that has received in Lexicography Proper less attention than Lexical Functions is Lexical Metaphor (see Lakoff G., Johnson M., *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press, 1980). A particularly trenchant account of Metaphors about *Time* is to be found in the five essays that constitute Chapter 2 of Part 1 of *Россия : изменяющийся образ времени сквозь призму языка*, Vera Zobotkina, Editor, *Studia Philologica*, Moscow, 2012). But by a fortunate chance a remarkable set of Metaphors about *Pain* has been collected in a review of a recent book about pain :-

“Pain is thought to escape description and yet, at the same time, has inspired complex metaphor. To provide a small list of examples, pain has been described as a battle (p. 77), an electric shock (p. 79), an enemy (p. 75), something that ruptures, shatters, or rips apart the body (p. 62), a lightning bolt (p. 179) and a storm (p. 267).” -- Jennifer Crane, review of *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* by Joanna Bourke (OUP, 2014) [see IHR, Reviews in History, 11 October, 2015]. To the best of my knowledge, no dictionary attempts to provide – at *time* or *pain*, say – the metaphors associated with those words. To do so would pose the same problems and suggest much the same lexicographic solutions as the hypothetical treatment of Lexical Functions. In addition, especially in the case of Metaphor, one might consider adapting a device of Lexicography Proper associated above all with the French dictionaries of Le Robert : just as the ECD is *un Dictionnaire explicatif et combinatoire*, so the typical Robert dictionary is *un Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique*, where the “analogique” component means that, for a given word, space is allowed for other words and phrases to be shown that together with the original word constitute a lexical or semantic field. Needless to say, about the inclusion of Metaphors in a dictionary, as about the inclusion of Lexical Functions, the question cannot be dodged : Is It Worth It? Well, a suggestion that it might be is to be found in *London Review of Books* (Steven Shapin, 3 December 2015, p. 26) : “If metaphor is central to science, then the language in which science happens matters a lot.”

A fascinating problem for Lexicography Proper is how to deal with the Metalexigraphic phenomenon of the possessive/genitive after *-s*, typically represented as *-s'* (as in <the boys' books> <learners' dictionaries> <Keats' poetry> by contrast with <the boy's book><learner's dictionaries> <Keats's poetry>. The problem is that whereas *-s* is a real English morpheme, *-s'*

isn't : it's just an apostrophe added to a noun ending in *-s*. As ACGEL (R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, J.Svartvik. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London & New York, Longman, 1985) says (5.113, p. 319) : "In writing, the [genitive] inflection of regular nouns is realized in the singular by apostrophe + s (*boy's*), and in the regular plural by the apostrophe following the plural *-s* (*boys'*)." Which latter can be called, according to ACGEL, the "Zero Genitive". In OALD online, *-s'* is an entry ; in LDOCE online it is, too ; I can't find it in CIDE online but in my Urtext CIDE of 1995 it is in, too; In Macmillan online it isn't in, nor is it in my Urtext of 2002. But in Collins Cobuild online we find at *-s'* :-

1. *-s'* is added to nouns to form possessives. However, with plural nouns ending in *-s*, and sometimes with names ending in *-s*, you form the possessive by adding *'*. ■ EG: ⇒ ...the chairman's son. ■ EG: ⇒ ...women's rights. ■ EG: ⇒ ...a boys' boarding-school. ■ EG: ⇒ ...Sir Charles' car.

This Collins COBUILD treatment delights me. I might have wished, however, for an explicit contrast between <the boy's book> and <the boys' books> ; and there is a case for adding a dummy entry *-s'* with a x-reference to 1. *-s'* above. I suppose one could argue that whereas the other Learners' Dictionaries let the presentational needs of Lexicography Proper trump the reality of Metalexigraphy (in this instance Linguistic Theory), Collins COBUILD accords precedence to Metalexigraphy over Pure Lexicography Proper. Through my suggestions I've tried to effect a Middle Way wherein the demands of Theory and the needs of the User are held in equipoise.

Turning again to Why Dictionaries Are No Better Than They Are, I find that an important reason is lack of communication between Metalexigraphy and Lexicography Proper. That is a highfalutin' way of saying that lexicographers aren't always aware of developments in linguistic theory. A striking – and amusing – example concerns that venerable problem-word *ain't*. The great American linguist Geoffrey Nunberg runs (Is that the right collocating verb?) a blog. His Language Log 1 Nov 2008 includes a contribution by Tom Wasow about what he calls Evidential Ain't, which is perhaps best understood as reinforcement of a no-brainer. A wonderfully apposite citation comes from US President Barack Obama : <"Not only is it not right, it ain't right." – Obama>. One can make the construction even stronger by adding *just* <It just ain't right !> or by using marked word-order possibly with an expansion for contrast <She looks OK but Marilyn Monroe she ain't ! But then again, Marilyn Monroe looked OK but Marlene Dietrich she wasn't !>. It is easy to imagine other examples ; the construction is highly *disponible* : <Many people believe things that just ain't so !>. An important point to bear in mind about this Evidential Ain't is that its linguistic level is *Informal* rather than *Non-Standard*. If entered, it can be explained via Definition ('most definitely is/are not') or Discussion ('--used to strengthen denial').

So do dictionaries recognise Evidential Ain't? Monolingual learners' dictionaries are supposed to cater for linguistic niceties. How do they fare? Evidential Ain't ain't in OALD on line, nor in LDOCE on line, nor in COBUILD on line, nor in CIDE (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*) on line, nor in Macmillan Dictionary on line. Another LORW is the Usage Guide. Here I must single out *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (1989), which says about *ain't* virtually everything possible. True, WDEU does not mention Evidential Ain't explicitly. But it does say (p.63) that "Another of the most common public uses of *ain't* makes use of the word's ability to attract attention" ; I suppose that Attention-Grabbing Ain't is at least as good a name for what is on offer here as Evidential Ain't ! And among WDEU's innumerable citations we find <What is wrong with all this, of course, is that it just ain't so. – Archibald MacLeish...1968> : for the record, Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982) was an American "poet, playwright, lawyer, and statesman", who won no fewer than three Pulitzer Prizes. Note, however, that Charles McGregor suggests Attention-Grabbing Evidential Ain't may be more American than British.

Mention of *ain't* and Usage Guides leads inevitably to the question whether Learners' Dictionaries ought to deal with the sorts of problems discussed in such Guides ; for example,

hopefully as a sentence adverb meaning roughly ‘it is to be hoped (that)...’. In fact, Learners’ Dictionaries do – albeit in summary fashion. Thus OALD online offers as its first sense :-

1. used to express what you hope will happen ● *Hopefully, we'll arrive before dark.* Although this is the most common use of **hopefully**, it is a fairly new use and some people think it is not correct.

And LDOCE online offers :-

1 [sentence adverb] a way of saying what you hope will happen, which some people think is incorrect:

- ☞ *Hopefully, I'll be back home by ten o'clock.*
- ☞ *By then the problem will hopefully have been solved.*

Collins COBUILD online seems, confusingly, to have several on-line entries for *hopefully*, of which the following one is characteristic :-

You say **hopefully** when mentioning something that you hope will happen. Some careful speakers of English think that this use of **hopefully** is not correct, but it is very frequently used.

- EG: ⇒ *Hopefully, you won't have any problems after reading this.*

OALD, LDOCE, and COBUILD do at least alert learners to the reaction that they may provoke by using *hopefully* as a Sentence Adverb. But their Usage Notes are woefully inadequate. First, *hopefully* need not require a future-tense verb <Hopefully, they arrived before dark. Hopefully, you didn't have any problems.>. Second, no real explanation is given for the feeling against Sentence-Adverb *hopefully*, which turns out to be really anomalous (see Ilson, “Prolegomena...”, 2014). Put concisely though technically, Sentence-Adverb *hopefully* is a Non-Factive Evaluative Disjunct. The typical Evaluative Disjunct is Factive ; ie, it presupposes the truth of its associated proposition <Fortunately, they arrived before dark. Unfortunately, they arrived after dark.>. *Hopefully* does not <Hopefully, they arrived before dark – but perhaps they arrived after dark.> In English, there are very few Non-Factive Evaluative Disjuncts (*ideally* – for some speakers, including me – and perhaps *arguably*). Moreover, Sentence-Adverb *hopefully* may be confused with Manner-Adverb (Manner-Adjunct) *hopefully* <Hopefully/Very hopefully, they arrived before dark – only to have their hopes dashed.>. But there are other Evaluative Disjuncts susceptible of such confusion too : *happily* can be both Disjunct ‘fortunately’ and Adjunct ‘in a happy frame of mind’ <Happily/Very happily, they arrived before dark – but left unhappily.>. So at the very least Learners’ Dictionaries should like OALD, LDOCE, and Collins COBUILD alert their users that *hopefully* may raise eyebrows. Whether or not they should explain why is another matter altogether. That depends on whether Lexicography Proper can explain the anomaly clearly and whether Dictionnaire reconstitue the space used for the explanation is well employed. Usage Guides on the other hand – especially for native speakers – should not content themselves with ridiculing the objection to *hopefully* but should explain it even if the rank-and-file objectors themselves cannot.

Up to now all my examples have come from English. It goes without saying, however, that other languages can and should be analysed in much the same way ; for instance, by considering developments in Metalexigraphy. One such development is by no means new. In his book *Language* (New York, Henry Holt, 1933, p, 217), Leonard Bloomfield recommends that the base/canonical form of French adjectives should be the feminine rather than the masculine :-

- “...if we take the feminine form as our basis, we can describe [adjectives with two forms -- RI] by the simple statement that the masculine form is derived from the feminine by means of a minus-feature, namely, loss of the final consonant and of the cluster [-kt].”

Put otherwise, it's easier to derive *français* from *française* than *française* from *français*. Yet to the best of my knowledge no dictionary of French, monolingual or bilingual, has ever done that : all take the masculine as canonical. Why not the feminine ? My lexicographic colleagues reply that the World is not Ready for it. They might have added that it would put dictionaries at odds with how French grammar is presented in grammar-books at present (though this too could change) and that it might affect alphabetical order (but not greatly, I believe). The first argument is from Dictionnaire ; the second two, from Lexicography Proper. Moreover, some linguists have taken exception to Bloomfield's position. What strikes me as regrettable, however, is that Bloomfield's idea has not received the attention it deserves.

As regards German, there is an important question at the level of Dictionnaire, based on what may be a widespread practice in monolingual dictionaries *of* or bilingual dictionaries *with* German. In such dictionaries, *Dampfschiff* 'steamship' and *Rundfahrt* 'tour' must be entries – but *DampfschiffRundfahrt* 'steamship tour' need not be. In other words, compounds of two nouns are obligatory entries ; compounds of more than two nouns need not be. Fair enough about the long ones ! But might one not consider eliminating two-noun compounds whose translation is – dare I say it ? – obvious ? For example, *Fischmarkt* 'fish market', *Lederjacke* 'leather jacket' are in the German-English part of the Collins Dictionary of German and English (Collins, London & Glasgow, 1981) ; *fish market* 'Fischmarkt' is in the English-German part but *leather jacket* 'Lederjacke' is not ; contrariwise, *fish paste* 'Fischpaste' is in the English-German part but *Fischpaste* 'fish paste' is not in the German-English part ; which suggests that despite everything there may well be some vacillation in how dictionaries of German and English actually treat noun-noun compounds. So in principle *Fischmarkt*, *Lederjacke*, *fish market*, and *fish paste* could disappear safely from this bilingual dictionary. Surely the space thus saved could be put to good use – as by adding some Lexical Functions ? (Though, needless to say, what I can so easily dismiss from a dictionary of German and English might be of vital importance in a dictionary of German and another language less closely akin to German than English is.) This, which might seem a problem of Lexicography Proper, turned out upon investigation to be one of Dictionnaire. My Germanist colleagues liked the idea but said that to implement it would require too much extra thought. As a professional lexicographer I knew exactly what they meant : the budget for the dictionary did not include time for – still less payment for – such extra THINKING !

It is perhaps time now to re-emphasise that not all Metalexigraphy is Linguistic Theory ! One very important Metalexigraphic problem arises from Lexicography Proper : the problem of Reversion (or Reversibility) in bilingual dictionaries (see Ison, "Building Lexical Bridges", in Вестник Московского университета (Серия 19, Лингвистика и межкультурная коммуникация, 2/2011, pp. 126-130). This is essentially the relation of the two parts of a bilingual dictionary to each other. One aspect of the problem is whether every entry in **bold** on the left-hand side of the dictionary should automatically appear as a translation equivalent on its right-hand side (in roman, as it were). Not everyone thinks so. For example, Katzner's dictionary of English and Russian (John Wiley, 1994) offers:-

eucalyptus...звкалипт.

but not :-

звкалипт ... eucalyptus.

Since the eucalyptus tree is better known in Anglophonia (especially Australia) than in Russia, it can be argued that **eucalyptus** merits entry in the English-Russian part (chiefly so that Russophones can decode/understand it) but that **звкалипт** need not appear in the Russian-English part (because Russophones will rarely need to use/encode the word themselves). However, such cases are by no means as typical as (also from Katzner) :-

redwood ... секвойя. **секвойя** ... sequoia; redwood.

sequoia ... секвойя.

Here we have a straightforward case of Reversibility ; indeed, one might even call it Complete Reversibility. But the example of **eucalyptus** shows that Katzner's policy is more complex (or less

thought out). After all, the redwood and the sequoia are trees native to North America, not Russia, just as the eucalyptus tree is native to Australia, not Russia. An even more troubling case concerns the two principal Russian words for ‘truth’, **истина** and **правда** (about which pair of words much has of course already been written) :-

truth ... правда. **истина** ... truth.
verity ... истина. **правда** ... truth.

Since <**истина**... verity.> does not appear on the Russian-English side, the foregoing display may be said to instantiate Incomplete Reversability, though frankly there appears to be *un manque de cohérence dans le projet*, given that Kenneth Katzner calls his otherwise excellent dictionary “a single, consistent, and fully integrated volume, with each half a mirror of the other” (Preface, p. vi). Contrast his dictionary’s actual treatment of these items with their hypothetical Complete Reversability :-

truth ... правда; истина. **истина** ... truth; verity.
verity ... истина; правда. **правда** ... truth; verity.

Once again, it is up to Dictionnaire to decide whether the extra space required for Complete Reversability is justified ; or, if not, what a coherent policy on Reversability should be. Bear in mind also that such notions as Reversability, Complete Reversability, and Incomplete Reversability can be applied to a whole dictionary as well as to groups of items within a dictionary.

Bear in mind also that about Reversability I do *not* say : “*One aspect of the problem is whether everything on the right-hand side of the dictionary (in roman, as it were) should automatically appear as a **bold-face** entry on its left-hand side.” Admittedly, the back cover of Katzner seems to say just that : “any Russian word given as the [right-hand roman – RI] equivalent of an English word in the [English-Russian – RI] first half automatically appears as an entry [a left-hand **bold** entry --RI] in the [Russian-English -- RI] second half, and vice versa”. But in fact Katzner’s dictionary itself instantiates a more modest claim, or at least requires us to focus on the word “word” in its claim. After all, not everything on the right-hand side of the dictionary is a translation equivalent (such as a word) that could qualify as a dictionary entry. Thus Katzner’s own dictionary offers :-

сбегать *v. impfv.* ... **5**, ...*colloq.* to skip; fail to show up for. ...

Reversability might entitle us to expect <**skip**... сбегать> (though it’s not in Katzner !). But no dictionary is likely to offer <**fail to show up for**... сбегать> (though we might find something like that as an example at **fail**, say). In other words, the domain of Reversability is the relation between dictionary entries and translation equivalents. (See IJL “The Explanatory Technique of Translation”, IJL, 26/3, August 2013, pp.386-393.)

The typical problem so far has concerned the relation to one another of the three components or levels of Lexicography : Metalexicography, Lexicography Proper, Dictionnaire. But it is also possible for a problem to arise chiefly or entirely at one level. At the level of Lexicography Proper, for instance, the typical dictionary article is laid out as a sort of inverse paragraph :-

XXX.....
.....

Simply by indenting this lay-out like a proper paragraph a significant amount of space would be saved with no loss of legibility :-

XXX.....
.....

I find it hard to imagine a serious objection from Dictionnaire to this reform – which shows that everything in a dictionary may well be worth scrutiny and re-thinking.

On the other hand, the most intractable problems I have so far encountered arise at the level of Dictionnaire. Suppose we want to create a dictionary for the Australian market. How to make Australians notice it ? The standard answer from the Publicity Department, embodying Dictionnaire, is to equip the dictionary with Australianisms (like *arvo* ‘afternoon’, *crook* ‘bad,

inadequate'). Against this, Lexicography Proper – and perhaps also Metalexigraphy – may suggest that what Australians are surest to know are precisely Australianisms. What Australians are less likely to know are, say, South Africanisms (like *bioscope* 'a cinema', *robot* 'traffic lights'). Dictionnaire gives this objection short shrift because of the Buyer's/Reviewer's and User's Paradox. If you are an Australian wanting a dictionary, you look in the candidates for an item you already know (such as *arvo*) hoping you will *not* find it. A dictionary without *arvo* will be discarded. Ideally [used here as a Non-Factive Evaluative Disjunct, like *hopefully* – RI], only one candidate will have *arvo* : that's the one you'll buy (or praise as a reviewer). If several candidates boast *arvo*, you will try another test item. Eventually, you will settle on a dictionary and buy it. Once you get it home, however, your stance will change utterly. From being a dictionary *buyer* you will have become a dictionary *user*. Then you will look up an item you *don't* know but have heard or read (perhaps *bioscope* or *palimpsest*) hoping desperately that you *will* find it. If it isn't there you will get angry but it's too late : you've already bought the dictionary (or reviewed it favourably) ; its publisher will trouser his profit in the name of Dictionnaire. In all the years I have been confronting this Paradox, which privileges the Buyer/Reviewer over the User, I have found but one argument of any weight in appealing against Dictionnaire : the possibility that dictionaries are sold also by word-of-mouth recommendation from satisfied Users. But as Dictionnaire likes short-term solutions better than long-term ones, I have yet to win this argument.

Another such problem concerns the size of the dictionary, which of course involves both the size of its Macrostructure (number of entries and perhaps sub-entries) and the size of its Microstructure (amount of information about the Macrostructure). In one memorable project there was some doubt about how big it was going to be ; when I was finally given a rough estimate of its intended size I opted for submitting a text with a rich Microstructure (lots of details of meaning, use, phraseology) and a fair-sized Macrostructure. The published product used relatively little of my material (which fortunately I have saved). I was heart-broken. But I believe I understood why it had happened. The publisher had added lots of **bold-face** entries to augment its Macrostructure, and, as a result, had to cut lots from my Microstructure to make room. The reason, I suppose, was obvious at the level of Dictionnaire : the Macrostructure is more impressive to quantify (ie to count) than the Microstructure. So the publisher could boast of a dictionary with X thousand **bold-face** entries rather than having to speak of one with X thousand words of text. Charles McGregor has reminded me that this anecdote is also yet more evidence that dictionary publishers even of learners' dictionaries give precedence to decoding over encoding, which may well be in response to the preference of dictionary users.

To recapitulate : Dictionaries (and other LORWs) are no better than they are because they fail to incorporate advances in Metalexigraphy (eg Lexical Functions), because at the level of Lexicography Proper they fail to exploit to the full the techniques they already use (eg the Explanatory Technique of Exemplification) or to consider incorporating innovations made elsewhere (eg the Analogies of French Robert dictionaries), and because at the level of Dictionnaire they are constrained with respect *to* the time and money needed to innovate successfully (as in the treatment of French adjectives and German compound nouns) and the need to publicise the product effectively – and with respect *for* existing lexicographic traditions. Which should not make Dictionnaire the villain : the best dictionary never published (as because of bad management) is worse than the worst dictionary ever published ! As God implies in the Spanish apophthegm quoted earlier, you can do what you want – if you are willing to pay the price.

I don't want to end this part of my essay on too pessimistic a note. Dictionaries of all kinds are on the whole better than they used to be, and so, for that matter, are at least some other kinds of LORW : in respect of Usage Guides, for instance, WDEU has Raised The Bar significantly ! Moreover, a Good Idea *can* at times find its way into Really Existing LORWs with surprising ease and speed. A remarkable example is the work of James E Iannucci (eg Iannucci, James E. "Meaning Discrimination in Bilingual Dictionaries: A New Lexicographical Technique", *The*

Modern Language Journal 41 (1957): 272-81). He suggests that in bilingual dictionaries the proper language for sense-discriminators of polysemous items should be the left-hand source language rather than the right-hand target language. Though there had been much shilly-shallying on the subject thitherto, Iannucci's idea seems to have become typical standard practice rather fast (as in the Collins Robert French-English English-French Dictionary, London & Glasgow, Collins, 1981). Moreover, the idea seems to have been generalised to other kinds of orienting information :-

servile...adj...(*soumis*) *homme, flatterie, obéissance servile*, cringing; *traduction, imitation slavish*.

servile ... adj *person, behaviour servile, obséquieux, rampant; flattery etc servile*.

Even more remarkable, though, is how these principles have been modified (deliberately or not) in the light of the work of another towering figure in lexicography, the Soviet scholar Lev Shcherba (Shcherba, Lev 1940. "Opyt obshchei teorii leksikografii". *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie literatury i iazyka*. 3: 89-117 ; "L. V. Shcherba's 'Opyt': A Contribution to Theoretical Lexicography" & "Towards a General Theory of Lexicography" *Int J Lexicography* (1995) 8 (4): translated and presented by Donna M T Cr Farina: 304-351). Shcherba argues *inter alia* that lexicographers ought to take account not only of the structure of dictionaries but also of their function. Thus while the example of **servile** above is from a bilingual dictionary intended equally for Francophones and Anglophones, the following example is from Katzner's dictionary 1994, of which Katzner says (p. vi) "It was written primarily with the English speaker in mind, although Russian speakers should also find much in it that is useful" :-

do...n., music до.

до...n.neut., music do; C.

In Katzner's dictionary of English and Russian, unlike the Collins dictionary of French and English, the sense-discriminators and other orienting information are in English in both parts of the dictionary (eg *music* rather than *музыка* in the Russian-English part). Furthermore, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the promising development of an extra section of bilingual dictionaries that is devoted to what might be called a mini-phrasebook, that in the Collins Dictionary of Spanish and English (1988) and the Collins Robert French (and English) Dictionary (1998/1987) is called in English "Language in use : a grammar of communication in Spanish/French and English", and that in the Oxford Hachette French (and English) Dictionary (1994) offers, more modestly, French and English models of Correspondence (a bilingual *Briefsteller*, as it were) and Advertisements. Though we all know that Lexicography is a team game, I couldn't but be struck by the credit in all three dictionaries given to my revered colleague Beryl T. Atkins. Unsurprisingly but gratifyingly, something similar has found its way into the principal Monolingual Learners' Dictionaries of English (OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD, Cambridge, Macmillan) : this is a wonderful instance of how LORWs of one kind can influence beneficently those of another.

2

And yet, despite everything I've said, dictionaries have over the centuries done their job very effectively – to the point of becoming not only well thumbed but well loved. Given all their defects, what accounts for their success ?

In the first place, many speech communities (though unfortunately not all) are Dictionnaire communities ; that is, they share a tradition of dictionary-making and dictionary-using. Members of Dictionnaire communities have often grown up with dictionaries at home and know the sort of information they contain and how to find it ; they even know (whether or not they have been told) the essential dictionary Search Algorithm : if you don't find something in one place, look in another. When Dictionnaire communities began to spawn the great historical dictionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries, of English, French, German, and other languages, those historical dictionaries might well have been intended by their makers as repositories of information rather than as working tools : they have been called (as by Alain Rey) "the memory of a culture" and "the epics of the nineteenth century". Yet even such behemoths can be used and often *are* used by any

members of the relevant Dictionnaire community. How so ? Because those dictionaries had perforce to be cast in the mould of their predecessors : the workaday dictionaries intended to help people to solve specific problems of language. Indeed, it is hard to imagine even a great historical dictionary in a form grossly different from its smaller ancestors. So those who wish to change the format of dictionaries should consider carefully whether the advantages of such reforms outweigh the difficulty for users of accustoming themselves to new lexicographic conventions : the respect shown by Dictionnaire for lexicographic traditions may be slavish (or indeed servile !) but should not be dismissed out of hand.

In the second place, and still more important, dictionaries are written not for robots but for human beings. Humans know, consciously or unconsciously, not only how their own language works but how human language works in general. They may combine <This is by far the best.> with <This is far and away the best.> to produce the dubious blend <*This is by far and away the best.>. They may say <Whom did you see Mary with ?> but they will not say <*Whom did you see Mary and ?>. So while Dictionaries and Usage Guides may try to prevent their users from creating unacceptable Blends (however frequent), there is no need for them to prevent users from violating the rules of the Deep Structure of their language or indeed of human language itself. Moreover, my own experience as a language-teacher suggests strongly that not only native speakers but also foreign learners of a language develop the *Sprachgefühl* that enables them to sense and grade how likely and natural a specimen of language is.

By the same token, users of LORWs possess a great deal of Knowledge of the World. They know, for example, that though eggs are edible their shells are not ; that though bananas are edible their skins are not. So when OALD online says that an egg has a shell and can be specifically “a bird’s egg, especially one from a chicken, that is eaten as food” its definition of that sense (save for the redundancy of “eaten as food”) is good enough – though not so elegant as when Merriam-Webster’s C11 says, after its primary definition of *egg* as “hard-shelled”, “also : its contents used as food”.

And because LORWs are made for people rather than, say, dogs, OALD’s definition of *dog* begins : “an animal with four legs and a tail, often kept as a pet or trained for work”, whereas an English-language dictionary for dogs might at *dog* offer instead : “an emotionally intelligent being with four legs and a tail that often gets food and shelter from humans in exchange for providing them with companionship and protection”. I’d be happy to work on such a dictionary ; but I fear that at the level of Dictionnaire it would be considered unprofitable.

Anyway, lexicographers are aided immeasurably in their compilation of LORWs by the long-established conventions of earlier LORWs in Dictionnaire societies and by the explicit or implicit knowledge of Language and of the World that human beings possess.

By way of summary, let me proclaim that the relation of dictionaries and their users is perhaps the inverse of Shakespeare’s dictum about God and men : “**There’s a divinity that shapes our ends**, Rough-hew them how we will”. It’s dictionaries that rough-hew language for us users to filter and refine through our *Sprachgefühl*. The process may be analogous to what in the Jewish tradition is called *Tikkun Olam*, whereby God and Man work in partnership so that God’s rough-hewn creation is fine-tuned by Man. Can this process likewise be analogous to the Chomskyan notion of language acquisition, whereby we are offered an inadequate sample corpus of language by our environment/our dictionaries, from which our minds are nevertheless able to infer the syntactic and semantic rules and regularities we need in order to become native (or at least competent) speakers/users/understanders ?

There is undoubtedly more to be said, notably about how Metalexicography can be enriched by Lexicography Proper ; ie, what Linguistics can learn from Dictionaries. But time presses, and I fear that, to paraphrase Jane Austen, I have delighted you long enough.

So just as I began my essay with an encomium of A S Hornby, let me close it with an encomium of EURALEX, which was formed in 1983 in part through the realisation that Lexicography is an international discipline. I have already hinted at what that realisation entails :

just as MLDs seem to have been willing to adapt from bilingual dictionaries the mini-phrasebook idea, so lexicographers in one place (eg Anglophonia) ought to be willing to consider ideas and techniques developed elsewhere (eg the Analogies in French Robert dictionaries).

An example, as moving as it is memorable, of such international cooperation is the following. Several hundred years ago William Shakespeare wrote the play *Henry V* about an English military hero whose archers and foot-soldiers triumphed at Agincourt over the heavily armoured French knightly cavalry. In 1938 Sergei Eisenstein directed the film *Alexander Nevsky* about an even earlier Russian military hero whose foot-soldiers triumphed over the heavily armoured cavalry of the Teutonic Knights. In 1944 Laurence Olivier directed a film version of *Henry V* whose climactic battle in particular seems to have been influenced by if not copied from *Nevsky's* Battle on the Ice ; in both films the Hero defeats the enemy leader in single combat on horseback. Eisenstein worked closely in *Nevsky* with the great composer Sergei Prokofiev, who produced for it the greatest film score ever written ; Olivier got William Walton to write a memorable film score for his *Henry V* (though it incorporated something from Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne*). In other words, an English play inspired a Russian film that in turn inspired an English film of the English play.

May lexicographers of many lands and languages likewise strike sparks off one another to the advantage of our discipline and the users of its products !

References

NB. The principal British Monolingual Learners' Dictionaries (MLDs) of English referred to above are published by Oxford, Longman, Collins COBUILD, Cambridge, and Macmillan.

ACGEL : R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, J.Svartvik. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London & New York, Longman, 1985

ALD/OALD : *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* on line

Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, New York, Henry Holt, 1933, p, 217

C11 : *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*, Springfield, Mass., USA, Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003

CIDE/Cambridge : *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* on line

COBUILD : *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* online

COD : *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Twelfth Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011

Collins Dictionary of German and English, London & Glasgow, Collins, 1981

Collins Robert French-English English-French Dictionary, London & Glasgow, Collins, 1981

Collins Robert French-English English-French Dictionary, Second Edition, London & Glasgow, Collins, 1987

Collins Robert French-English English-French Dictionary, Fifth Edition, Glasgow, HarperCollins, 1998

Collins Spanish-English English-Spanish Dictionary, Second Edition, London & Glasgow, Collins, 1988

Jennifer Crane, review of *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* by Joanna Bourke (OUP, 2014) [see IHR, Reviews in History, 11 October, 2015]

James E Iannucci "Meaning Discrimination in Bilingual Dictionaries: A New Lexicographical Technique." *The Modern Language Journal* 41 (1957): 272-81

Patrick Hanks (2013). *Lexical Analysis – Norms and Exploitations*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013

Robert Ilson, "The Explanatory Technique of Exemplification", *Язык, Культура, Общение*, Moscow, Гнозис, 2008, pp. 40-44)

Robert Ilson, "Lexicography", *The Routledge Linguistics Encyclopedia*, Routledge, London & New York, 2010, pp. 338-346).

- Robert Ilson, “Building Lexical Bridges”, in Вестник Московского университета (Серия 19, Лингвистика и межкультурная коммуникация, 2/2011, pp. 126-130
- Robert Ilson, “The Explanatory Technique of Translation”, IJL, 26/3, August 2013, pp.386-393
- Robert Ilson, “Prolegomena to a Cross-Linguistic Comparison of Usage Problems”, English Usage (Guides) Symposium, Cambridge, 2014 : see also <http://bridgingtheunbridgeable.com>
- Kenneth Katzner, *English-Russian/Russian-English Dictionary*, New York etc., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994
- Kernerman English Arabic Dictionary* -- K Dictionaries Ltd. 2009
- George Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press, 1980
- LDOCE : *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* on line
- Charles McGregor, “From First Idea to Finished Product”, *Dictionaries, Lexicography and Language Learning*, Pergamon Press & British Council, Oxford, 1985, pp. 123-133
- Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* on line
- Igor Melchuk et al. (Rédaction André Clas), *Dictionnaire explicatif et combinatoire du français contemporain : recherches lexico-sémantiques I*, 1984, Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal
- OED2 : *Oxford English Dictionary* (Second Edition), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989
- Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*, OUP, 2002
- Oxford Hachette French (and English) Dictionary*, OUP, 1994
- Le Petit Robert 1 : Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*, Paris, Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1988
- Steven Shapin, *London Review of Books*, 3 December 2015, p. 26
- Lev Shcherba 1940. Opyt obshchei teorii leksikografii. *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie literatury i iazyka*. 3: 89-117 ; “L. V. Shcherba’s ‘Opyt’: A Contribution to Theoretical Lexicography” & “Towards a General Theory of Lexicography” *Int J Lexicography* (1995) 8 (4): translated and presented by Donna M T Cr Farina: 304-351)
- Tom Wasow in Geoffrey Nunberg’s *Language Log*, 1 Nov 2008, on line
- WDEU : *Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage*, Springfield, Mass., USA, Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1989
- Vera Zabolotkina, Editor, *Россия : изменяющийся образ времени сквозь призму языка, Studia Philologica, Moscow, 2012*