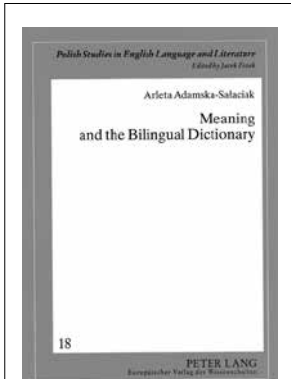


Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak. *Meaning and the Bilingual Dictionary: The Case of English and Polish*



Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak
Meaning and the Bilingual Dictionary: The Case of English and Polish
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Meaning and the Bilingual Dictionary is a detailed study of bilingual lexicography carried out by Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak, a lexicographer who has been involved in the creation of a number of Polish/English dictionaries. All the issues discussed in the book focus on the lexicographic treatment of meaning. Besides an introduction and a list of references, the reader will find four main chapters.

Chapter 1 deals with the nature of bilingual dictionaries, their relationship to foreign language learning, and their typology. Starting from Sčerba's typology focusing on the active-passive dichotomy, the author tries to see how the latter's theoretical proposals translate into current lexicographic practice. She discusses the four major functions generally assigned to bilingual dictionaries: reception in L2; reception in L2 + production in L1; production in L2; reception in L1 + production in L2.

Chapter 2 deals with the presentation of meaning in bilingual dictionaries. Starting from the late John Sinclair's 2004 motto that meaning is the only thing that is ultimately worth bothering about in language, the author shows how recent advances in corpus and cognitive linguistics have impacted bilingual lexicography. She deals with the crucial questions that any lexicographer needs to answer before starting a new project: should they favor lumping or splitting strategies? Should sense divisions be based upon the source or the target language? The various mechanisms traditionally used to account for sense discrimination are examined in minute details and abundantly illustrated with real examples derived from existing dictionaries. Collocates, labels, typical arguments, variants and synonyms are discussed at length, together with the metalanguage and sense ordering issues. Should etymology be the basic criterion for ordering senses, or should other criteria, such as frequency of use or even part of speech, be used to decide which senses to list first? To each of these questions, Adamska-Sałaciak provides very clear answers, based upon her experience with Polish/English dictionaries, but also drawing on other monolingual and bilingual dictionaries.

Chapter 3 focuses on the relation between source language and target language items. Levels and degrees of equivalence are discussed, as well as the status of glosses,

which are useful when a target language item is less well-known in the target-language culture than the corresponding source-language item in the source-language culture. The author convincingly demonstrates that automatically generating an L2-L1 dictionary on the basis of reversing an L1-L2 dictionary without any human editorial work will produce disastrous results. Lexicographers are usually well aware of this, but the demonstration is worth reading and is illustrated with real examples. The author's inevitable conclusion is that full symmetry of the two dictionary sides is neither possible nor desirable.

Chapter 4 deals with the question whether usage should be illustrated with an example or explained. If it is true that users rely on examples more than on stylistic labels, it may be preferable to resort to illustrative examples. The question then becomes: what is a good example and where does it come from? Should examples be coined by lexicographers or derived from a corpus and, if they are, to what extent can they be manipulated and edited for the benefit of the user? Invented examples are sometimes over-informative and may not illustrate typical usage. Unmodified authentic examples tend to be longer. The author's conclusion is that, whenever possible, corpora should be used in the preparation of dictionary examples, bearing in mind that an example created by a competent lexicographer who has access to corpus data may work just as well, and sometimes even better, than raw corpus-based examples. The chapter ends with an interesting discussion of potential "geopolitical" issues raised by the inclusion of material that is deemed to be offensive. Inappropriate and potentially objectionable material (derogatory references to race, religion, nationalities, sexual preferences, etc.) should be removed before a dictionary goes to print, since dictionaries are perceived as more socially responsible than was the case 30 years ago.

Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak has succeeded in creating a beautifully-written essay on bilingual dictionaries, clearly based upon her experience and full of common-sense recommendations and judicious analyses. I enjoyed reading that refreshing essay.

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