A new dictionary with a different viewpoint

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Six advanced learners' English dictionaries (ALEDs) should certainly be enough, one would think. Six ALEDs – all excellent dictionaries, all clearly written by some of the world's top lexicographers, all published by the most reputable publishers, all corpus based, all comprehensive in scope, all well designed and attractively formatted, and all – but one new one – tried and tested, their value proven.
So why should there be a seventh?
A good question, and very much begging an answer.
Upon close inspection all of the ALEDs demonstrate shortcomings. I discussed some of these last year, both at the DSNA Meeting and in these pages, and will discuss them further this year at the EURALEX Congress. My purpose here is not to criticize these "Big Six", but to explain some of the ways in which the seventh differs from its predecessors.

A global dictionary
The seventh dictionary referred to above is *Kernerman Advanced English Dictionary* (KAED). It was begun in 1996 and is scheduled to be published next year. It was written by lexicographers who are all experienced teachers of EFL, and the Editor-in-Chief is Raphael Gefen, former Chief Inspector for English in the Israel Ministry of Education, and lecturer in applied linguistics, EFL methodology and contrastive analysis.
KAED was written from a different viewpoint, and with different intentions than the Big Six. It was not written for those who are learning English in an English-speaking environment, or who plan to live in or visit an English-speaking environment, or who have a preferential interest in the culture of native English-speakers. This dictionary was written with English-as-the-global-lingua-franca learners or users in mind, who aspire either to communicate with other English-as-the-global-lingua-franca learners or users, or to use English mainly for vocational purposes, that is, for instrumental and not culturally-integrative purposes.
With this as its objective, and as far as content is concerned, KAED aims to be a neutral dictionary. It is neither British- nor American-oriented, but is culturally, politically, religiously and socio-economically neutral.
Were KAED to adhere strictly to one of the existing English-language word corpora, all of its examples would be derived from everyday life in the English-speaking countries. It would abound in the names of British and American statesmen and other personalities, in the geographical names of those countries, in their local institutions and laws, and, in general, it would reflect a modern, middle-class, Christian way of life, as is the case with all of the Big Six.
But those individuals who require an ALED may not find this description appropriate for their needs. Their customs are neither American nor British, and their everyday life may be far removed from that inherent in the corpora-derived situations of these countries. Therefore, the KAED team was keen to create an atmosphere that is not suggestive of any particular world outlook, and that can serve as a basis for adaptation to any country or culture in the world.

So what is different about KAED is the fact that, in addition to being compatible with an accurate lexicographical description of both the American and British varieties of the English language, together with the necessary cultural references, it is meant to cater also to billions of others – Europeans, Latin Americans, Asians and Africans, all of whom are its potential users, and who require English in order to communicate with others in the non-English-speaking world.
The viewpoint, then, of KAED is distinctly different from the American and/or British ambience of the ALEDs produced by publishers in the West.

Raw material for semi-bilingualization
Another way in which KAED is different is the fact that it is written to be semi-bilingualizable. In addition to being a monolingual English learners' dictionary, KAED will serve as a database for publishers in other countries for conversion into a local semi-bilingual dictionary, by simply adding a brief translation into the mother tongue of each sense of the headword. This translation is what will make KAED primarily a local dictionary. And if everything else remains untranslated, then the user or learner should have no difficulty in thinking in the target language, while the presence of this brief translation is enough to create certainty regarding the correct comprehension of the meanings and to prevent misunderstanding. On the other hand, if the entire entry were translated, it would encourage thinking in the mother tongue, without there being sufficient inducement for the user to read the English text.
So the translations of the headword have both psychological and didactic importance. The translation creates in the user confidence and a "comfortable feeling" that the meaning is correctly understood. And it provides the most accurate equivalent that is possible to attain: the mother-tongue equivalent, which is more precise than any English definition could ever be. This is part of the beauty of the semi-bilingual dictionary. It's like having your cake and eating it, too.
Further localization will be achieved by giving the local editors a free hand in adding, changing or deleting entries or sentences to enhance the domestic content.

Anticipating mother-tongue interference
The focus on the learner, which is so characteristic of KAED, is also exemplified by a large number of notes that point to potential mother-tongue interference. Local editors will be able to adopt, adapt and add to the text, since they are the most knowledgeable persons for contending with problems in English-language learning that are encountered by speakers of their own language. This problem has been strongly anticipated and accommodated for by our lexicographers in compiling the text, being themselves all former teachers of English-as-a-foreign-language.
These, then, are some of the main features that may make KAED the "lucky seventh", viz., cultural neutrality, discretion in the application of corpora, semi-bilingual compatibility, and accounting for possible mother-tongue interference.