

For users of English as a foreign language, native speakers can be the grindstones on which we sharpen our competence in English. But in situations where we need all our concentration to follow a line of thought, or understand a clever reasoning, the use of flowery language and infrequent idioms are obstructions on the road to understanding. For example, an elaboration on the subtle nuances in meaning and use of an English verb requires a far greater effort by a non-native than by a native speaker of English. We foreigners have to make a double effort: decode a text in a foreign language, and understand the complexities in a language that is not our own. And so I am faced with the following dilemma. May I discourage learned and lettered authors to write in the full wealth of their mother tongue? I definitely would not mind if they showed some awareness of the limitations in the competence of the English language of foreign lexicographers. If learner's dictionaries restrict their defining vocabulary for the benefit of non-native users, maybe authors who write for an international

audience could make a similar effort.

As an example of what I mean, I quote one sentence: "There is no dearth of interesting and perspicacious commentaries on this aspect of language." Maybe the author is just trying to encourage the use of dictionaries. If so, she succeeded. I decoded the text into "There are many interesting and clever commentaries on this aspect of language."

#### References

- Landau, Sidney I. 1984. *Dictionaries: the Art and Craft of Lexicography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Svensen, Bo. 1987, 2e 2004. *Handbok i lexikografi. Ordböcker och ordboksarbete i teori och praktik*. Stockholm: Norstedts Akademiska Förlag. (*Practical Lexicography: Principles and Methods of Dictionary Making*. Translated from Swedish by John Sykes and Kerstin Schofield. 1993. Oxford University Press, USA.)

**Rik Schutz**

rik.schutz@onderwoorden.nl

## Password – a productive dictionary family

Ruth Mägi



**Ruth Mägi** has been at the head of the dictionary department at TEA Publishers in Estonia since 1999. She graduated from Tartu University as a Finno-Ugrian philologist (majoring in Estonian philology) and continued her MA studies in linguistics (with special interest in dictionary use) at Tallinn University. She has tested Estonian school-childrens' dictionary awareness, comprehension and usage skills, and is currently preparing dictionary workbooks. ruth.magi@tea.ee

I first saw *Password* dictionary some years ago when I was a university student. It was my brother's book, which he received as a present. I remember that when I opened it I was quite confused by the structure. Who would put so much English language into an English-Estonian dictionary? I have to admit that I had absolutely no knowledge of any structural differences in dictionaries. At the time, I, like most dictionary users, never read or showed interest in the preface or instructions for use. Why bother?

Later on, while already working on dictionaries, I came to understand the *why* part – and it still fascinates me. Now I'm happy to know that I'm not the only *Password* fan!

There are many dictionaries on the publishers' and lexicographers' shelves, but very few of them can be considered as both *purpose-built* and *purpose-served*. I would, without doubt, consider *Password* and its family of products as just that.

The Estonian version of the semi-bilingual *Password* dictionary (*PASSWORD Inglise-eesti seletav sõnaraamat. English Dictionary for Speakers of Estonian*) was first published by TEA Publishers in 1995. It was a huge success among Estonians, which might somehow be taken as pure

luck. After Estonia regained independence at the beginning of the 1990s, there were other things to achieve than publishing dictionaries, and at some point there were only a few English-Estonian dictionaries available on the market. TEA published *Password* at the peak of the demand for proper and reliable dictionaries. There were several reprints after its first launch and in 2006 TEA published an updated version along with a CD-ROM.

However, there would not have been such success without good content. Estonians have always been "language-oriented" people. Even during the Soviet rule, schools taught English, German and French, and we have had notable language teachers. *Password's* idea of teaching the English language through English itself suited our public well, since almost everyone knew English to some extent. Estonian equivalents to English meanings simply supported learners' comprehension.

I personally like dictionaries that entice you to think a little, and when I understand what the dictionary is trying to convey then I like it even more. *Password* is a dictionary that does not have a simple structure; rather, it has the simplest structure needed in order to convey meaning in an economical way.

Everyone likes to be considered smart, and *Password* is for smart people.

*Password* has many advantages, and it is multipurpose by nature. When I ask people why they use dictionaries, they usually answer that they want to know the meaning of words. So, providing English definitions along with Estonian translations serves this purpose well. *Password* is also a perfect dictionary for giving the most important meaning of headwords, for which derivative forms and phrases are also presented. It also provides definitional language in easy-to-understand English using a limited range of vocabulary for explanations.

There are many English language teachers in our country who have said that *Password* is a very good dictionary for teaching school children *how* to use dictionaries in general. (They have added that any kind of semi-bilingual type of dictionary is appropriate for this.) English is the first foreign language taught at our schools, and will likely remain so in the near future. Thus, many users might need a monolingual English dictionary at some point in time. If translations are ignored, then *Password* can function as a monolingual dictionary. This makes it suitable for practicing monolingual dictionary use before moving on to true monolingual dictionaries where no translations are provided, since the basic structure of a monolingual dictionary has been retained in *Password* and is only 'interrupted' by translations. This kind of 'interruption' is not something users would mind; on the contrary, they subconsciously need the translations in order to be fully sure of the meaning. In addition, there are many structural entry elements that teachers can point out to students, such as where to find derivatives, phrases, examples, cross-references, etc. I'm sure this teaching function can be considered to be one of the best advantages *Password* has over other dictionaries.

Having had such good and long experience in publishing and marketing *Password*, we at TEA have come to the understanding that it would be a shame not to develop this line further and offer our public such a type of dictionary for different levels. Therefore, the whole semi-bilingual family has been extended, based on *Password* as the main product. This year we launched *Junior Password* (*Junior PASSWORD Inglise-eesti seletav sõnaraamat English-Estonian Semi-Bilingual Dictionary*) along with a CD-ROM version. Originating from *PASSPORT English Learner's Dictionary*, *Junior Password* is meant for users in elementary up to junior high school. It does not provide English definitions, but rather, presents example sentences and

phrases that illustrate the context of where and how the word can be used. In this way, learners can put English into action right away. The Estonian translations are based on these sample sentences, so editors had a specific context in mind when translating the headwords from English to Estonian. Several side-meanings that were beyond the level intended for these users were deleted. This is an ideal dictionary for forming the first idea of semantic connections and differences between words. It contains many usage notes that link words and terms to each other and point to synonyms and antonyms. *Junior Password* can be considered as a compact, simplified version of *Password*.

In *Junior Password* we decided to exclude the Estonian-English index, which is an integral part of the *Password* dictionary. (However, we did include it in the electronic version.) Our idea was that kids at this level of language awareness are not ready to understand that this is NOT an Estonian-English dictionary. Given the structural core of *Password*, where there are many derivatives under a single entry, the index is relevant for supporting the significance of the key entry. However, *Junior Password's* structure is very simple, and an index in this case would have made things more unclear to the user, since there is no sub-entry system. In developing the original *Password*, I rather develop an index specifically for an electronic version. There are, however, some disadvantages in presenting such an index, even for such a purpose. These include cases where the articles are split to component parts, or derivatives that become full entries. Thus, such an index may not be as functional as intended.

TEA's cooperation with K Dictionaries has proven to be both productive and profitable. Thus, we have agreed to develop two more titles within the *Password* line: *Advanced Password* for upper level learners, and *Picture Password* for younger ones. Both dictionaries have been introduced to our public as members in an upcoming family of products. This will prime our market for customer acceptance of new products and allow users to take full advantage of the multipurpose features provided in the current offerings.

Finally, I would like to suggest a possible idea for the future. Why not start a *Password* dictionary support centre? Among the many publishers who have localised the *Password* family of dictionaries around the world, it may be a good idea to consolidate our efforts and be able to convey to one another any good ideas for further improvements, as well as share issues and problems that may co-occur while working on the diverse languages that *Password* is offered in.



### PASSWORD

Inglise-eesti seletav sõnaraamt Eesti-inglise sõnastik-indeksiga + ePASSWORD CD-ROMil koos hääldusega  
English-Estonian Semi-Bilingual Dictionary  
TEA KIRJASTUS  
Tallinn, Estonia  
August 2006 (2nd edition)  
1008 pp, 250x173 mm  
Hardcover, incl CD-ROM  
ISBN 9985-71-518-7  
<http://kdictionaries.com/products/pw/pwet.html>



### Junior PASSWORD

Inglise-eesti seletav sõnaraamt Eesti-inglise sõnastik-indeksiga + eJUNIOR PASSWORD CD-ROMil koos hääldusega  
English-Estonian Semi-Bilingual Dictionary  
TEA KIRJASTUS  
Tallinn, Estonia  
February 2008  
584 pp, 204 x 140 mm  
Hardcover, incl CD-ROM  
ISBN 9985-71-519-2  
<http://www.tea.ee>  
<http://kdictionaries.com/products/pp/ppet.html>

From the series  
KERNERMAN SEMI-BILINGUAL  
DICTIONARIES