

A review of the First International Symposium on Lexicography and L2 Teaching and Learning

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The First International Symposium on Lexicography and L2 Teaching and Learning was held from 26 to 28 November 2008 at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS). Sponsored by the Chinalex Bilingual Committee, the event was co-hosted by the Center for Lexicographic Studies and the National Key Research Center for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics of GDUFS with support from the Commercial Press, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Casio (Shanghai) Trade Co. Ltd and Beijing University Press.

1. Purpose

The zeal for learning second languages (L2, esp. ESL) has grown in recent decades all over the world, and the number of L2 learners in China continues to increase. With the trade openness and economic growth in China, more and more people around the world are interested in China and start to learn Chinese. The global economic integration and the needs for international exchanges stimulate people to acquire a second language in a short time. One of the results is that the research of learner's dictionaries is drawing growing attention from lexicographers, linguists and language educators. However, due to the feeble exchange between Chinese and international scholars in lexicography and L2 teaching and learning, few learner's dictionaries outside China target specifically Chinese L2 learners, and many L2 dictionaries published in China still cling to traditional approaches to lexical definition and show no consideration for the learner's real needs for L2 acquisition.

Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese and international scholars to form a platform for information exchange. The purpose of the symposium was to bring together scholars of lexicography, second language acquisition, linguistics and dictionary publishing from around the world in an interdisciplinary forum, so that Chinese scholars may be acquainted with new theories and practices of lexicography integrated in learner's dictionary-making abroad, and international scholars and publishers may investigate Chinese users' needs for L2 learner's dictionaries. As stated at the opening ceremony by the organizer, Zhang Yihua, the symposium has great realistic significance for promoting international

exchanges among lexicographers, dictionary publishers and second language teachers from home and abroad, and improving the quality of learner's dictionaries in the coming future.

2. Topics

The main topics of the symposium were as follows:

- Learner's dictionary research, compilation and publishing.
- Learner's dictionary and L2 (esp. ESL and C[hinese]SL) teaching and learning.
- Learner's needs analysis and dictionary making.
- Learner corpus and dictionary making.
- Computer-aided dictionary making and dictionary data access.

The conference included an exhibition of dictionaries and lexicographic works that was held alongside the symposium, including Beijing University Press, the Commercial Press, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Casio, K Dictionaries, Pearson Education (Beijing), and Oxford University Press, and a workshop on electronic dictionaries and L2 teaching in the classroom.

3. Participants

The conference was well attended with 136 participants from universities, publishing houses and research institutes in China, the UK, Denmark, Japan, Spain, Poland, Israel, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Zhang Yihua and addressed by Professor Sui Guangjun, president of GUDFS, Professor Li Yuming, vice-chairman of the China State Language Committee and Director of the Administration Department of Chinese Language and Information of the Ministry of Education, Professor Wang Tiekun, vice-director of Administration Department of Chinese Language and Information of the Ministry, and Yoshida Shusaku from Casio (Shanghai) Co.

The invited speakers included Li Yuming, Wang Tiekun, Zhang Yihua, Dr. Zheng Ding'ou from the City University of Hongkong, Professor Chen Guohua from Beijing Foreign Studies University, Michael Rundell from Macmillan dictionaries (UK), Dr. Yukio Tono from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Japan), Dr. Vincent



Zhang Yihua has a PhD in linguistics and applied linguistics. He is the director of the Center for Lexicographical Studies at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, and is concurrently the vice-president of the China Lexicography Association, chairman of Chinalex Bilingual Committee, vice-chairman of China National Standardization Committee for Lexicographical Terminology, and executive director of the State Committee of Modern Technology for Lexicography. His main research interests include lexicography, semantics and translation, and he has authored numerous publications in lexicography, including more than 70 academic papers, 6 monographs, 2 translation works, and 7 dictionaries. In recent years his research has focused on theoretical issues at the leading edge in lexicography, involving the integration of cognitive linguistics and cyber-linguistics theories, computational lexicography, and the multilingual dictionary generation system. Professor Zhang was the organizer of the First International Symposium on Lexicography and L2 Learning and Teaching. bilex@mail.gdufs.edu.cn



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B.Y. Ooi from the National University of Singapore, Dr. Robert Lew of Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland), Dr. Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera from Valladolid University (Spain), and Dr. Sandro Nielsen of Aarhus University (Denmark).

4. Overview

Over the three conference days, participants shared their experience in dictionary making and language teaching in a variety of forms, on the basis of their research work and vision for the development of lexicography and L2 acquisition. The symposium helped to promote international exchanges among lexicographers from different countries and dictionary publishers and L2 teachers, and it enabled Chinese lexicographers and teachers to learn about the new theories and methods in overseas learner dictionary research and compilation. Likewise, foreign lexicographers and publishers could enrich their knowledge of Chinese learners' needs for L2 dictionaries and of publications of the Chinese language and Chinese dictionaries for foreign learners.

5. Speeches

On each day of the conference, two hours were scheduled for plenary and hot-topic sessions, including eleven invited speakers.

Li Yuming made a keynote speech entitled *The great influence of informatization on Chinese lexicography*. He pointed out that one of the major purposes of this symposium was to call on experts and scholars to abide by the State language norms and standards in the process of dictionary compilation, and emphasized that because dictionaries constitute an important part in language standardization, lexicography plays a key role in the system. In order to create a harmonious language life, we should adhere to the philosophy of "regarding language as a resource", and attach importance also to resolving "the current language conflicts" and realizing language standardization and informatization. Professor Li described the relationship between language standardization and lexicography from five aspects: modernization of dictionary making; multimedia functions of dictionaries; the subtle changes of the relationship among lexicographers, users and publishers; the retrieval capacity; and the function of dictionaries. He stated that knowledge acquisition and creation might become the new dictionary functions, which would be of great significance to future dictionary making.

Wang Tiekun pointed out in his speech, entitled *Investigation on actual language use and some reflections about it*, that it

is the first time for China to hold such a conference, so the Ministry of Education has valued it highly and gave it its full support. He argued that lexicographers engaged in Chinese language dictionaries had little contact with international lexicographical circles and knew little about what foreign dictionary compilers and publishers had done, especially concerning learner's dictionaries. As a result, the making of Chinese dictionaries continued in a conventional way and failed to meet current users' needs. He offered to help Chinese and foreign experts and scholars with the Ministry's language resources, and presented and analyzed important data from *The Annual Report on the Language Situation in China* issued by the State Language Commission with regard to Chinese characters, words, catch phrases and the neologisms of the year.

Zhang Yihua made a speech entitled *A theoretical proposal for meaning driven multi-dimensional definition for a new generation learner's dictionary*. Based on cognitive semantics and L2 acquisition, he set out the interaction between L2 acquisition and learner's dictionaries, and put forward his proposal in a bid to settle the problems in conventional learner's dictionaries and meet the needs of users from a specific language community. He noted that L2 acquisition follows a developmental sequence from *formula* through *low-scope* pattern to *construction*, but existing learner's dictionaries attach importance only to the first two developmental phrases and pay little attention to the third phase of construction. The new generation learner's dictionary should make up for this deficiency by highlighting the description of construction, so its focus should shift from "basic material" to "prefabricated modular", from isolated items to frame-based information, from individual relevance to network relevance. This gives expression to the latest research achievements of cognitive and functional linguistics, i.e. the Cognitive Economy and Idiom Principle, and conforms to the laws of language cognition and learning of human beings.

After a detailed analysis, Zhang advocated that new generation learner's dictionaries should take the meaning-driven communicative pattern as the basis of semantic representation, so the lexicographical definition should be meaning-driven instead of grammar-driven, the description of lexical units should be focused on lexical sequence or chunks instead of on single words, and the lexical meanings should be represented through a semantic and lexical network instead of

by isolated definitions and annotations. Thus the phonology, morphology, syntax and concept are all representational forms of lexical meaning under semantic and pragmatic cognitive constraints, integrated to represent lexical meaning in a multi-dimensional way. Due to the anisomorphism between different cultures and languages, learners from different language communities have different cognitive patterns in L2 acquisition, and a single learner's dictionary cannot satisfy all learners from different communities, so it is essential to compile different dictionaries targeted at different learners.

Michael Rundell began his speech by reviewing the current state-of-the-art in the use of corpora (including learner corpora) in the production of learner's dictionaries, with particular reference to examples of usage, collocations, and the role of metaphor. Then he argued that the use of corpus data in dictionaries is implicit rather than explicit: what users see in their dictionaries is not the primary language data that lexicographers work with, but generalizations from this data made by the editors. Finally he explored some of the possibilities of giving dictionary users more direct access to corpora with the help of emerging technologies.

Yukio Tono argued that information from learner corpora has been used for learner's dictionaries for more than a decade, but it seemed that the analysis was rather limited in scope and the information provided was fragmental in nature, showing only individual lexico-grammatical usage problems of learners. Therefore, a more systematic approach should be adopted in the analysis of learner corpora in order to obtain information that is useful for improving the content of language teaching materials, including dictionaries. He also discussed the potential benefits of such information for pedagogical lexicography.

Zheng Ding'ou discussed the problems concerning the translation of polysemous verbs in a bilingual learner's dictionary (Chinese-English) under compilation, centering on valency items in the light of the French lexicon-grammar. Vincent Ooi introduced the tenets of the 5-circle lexicographic model originally used to relate Singaporean-Malaysian English to British and American English, and argued that such a model served not only to 'harmonize' the notion of international intelligibility but also to 'balance' Asian and Western realities in the dictionary. Chen Guohua held that one of the most important factors that hinder the development of collocation studies is the lack of a proper definition of collocation. He defined a construction as two words that

combine to form a unit, and a collocation in one language in terms of a corresponding construction in another language. Robert Lew discussed new ways of indicating meaning in electronic dictionaries, such as pictorial illustrations, animation and videos, and examined whether the dictionary users always appreciate and benefit from them. Pedro Fuertes-Olivera discussed some basic and general requirements that specialized monolingual dictionaries must have when aiming to solve the needs of learners enrolled in ESP courses. He argued that specialized dictionaries for ESP students must be all-inclusive, i.e. adding encyclopaedic/conceptual information to the linguistic information normally given. Sandro Nielsen defined pedagogical lexicography by the objective to develop principles and guidelines that help practitioners to produce lexicographical tools that fulfil the needs of specific types of users in specific types of situations in the real world, and argued that the dictionary should be analysed in terms of three significant features, namely lexicographic functions, lexicographic data and lexicographic structures. Finally, he believed that the modern theory of dictionary functions opens up exciting new possibilities for theoretical and practical lexicography and encourages lexicographers to adopt a new way of thinking when planning and compiling dictionaries.

The closing ceremony was devoted to these three questions: What should the next-generation learner's dictionaries be like? What could a corpus further offer for dictionary making? and, What is the relationship between printed and electronic dictionaries?

The Second International Symposium on Lexicography and L2 Teaching and Learning will be held at Sichuan International Studies University in 2010.

ASIALEX 2009: The Sixth ASIALEX Conference

ASIALEX 2009 is the 6th biennial conference of the Asian Association for Lexicography. The conference is hosted by King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 22 August 2009. Its purpose is to promote activities in various areas of lexicography by offering a forum for the exchange of ideas, the presentation of research achievements, and the discussion of future directions. With the theme 'Dictionaries in Education', the main aims of this three-day conference are to examine research into dictionary use and users in Asia, training in dictionary use and dictionary skills in education.

We are delighted to have five distinguished keynote speakers: Michael Hoey (University of Liverpool), Pam Peters (Macquarie University), Gregory James (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Theraphan Luangthongkum (Chulalongkorn University) and Suwilai Premrirat (Mahidol University). Speakers include Heming Yong (China), Shigeru Yamada (Japan), Z. Iqbal (Pakistan), G-M. de Schryver (Belgium/South Africa), Amy Chi and Lan Li (Hong Kong). The highlights of the social program include the conference reception and the Bangkok temple and city tour.

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President of ASIALEX (2008-2009)

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