

# PASSWORD News

A forum for discussion about the semi-bilingual English dictionary. Your comments are welcome.

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## *The Advent of the Semi-Bilingual Dictionary* by Lionel Kernerman

Historically, the monolingual learner's dictionary was the outcome of the Direct Method in foreign language teaching. This meant total immersion in the target language without the use of the mother tongue, i.e. without any translation.

Given the fact that learners do not have an extensive vocabulary in the target language, learner's dictionaries employ a limited, basic vocabulary (usually 2,000-3,000 words) in order to explain meanings and to give example sentences or phrases showing how the word is normally used. Some learner's dictionaries also point out particular problems pertaining to the grammatical use of a word, its spelling, or its pronunciation.

While many professionals recognize the superiority of the Direct Method over the Indirect or Translation Method, they have also observed that monolingual dictionaries are not frequently used by learners.

Apparently bilingual dictionaries remain the choice of most learners (if given a choice) despite their drawbacks, such as misleading lexical translations.

It is now acknowledged that the vital element in the acquisition of a new language is associated with one's native tongue. Thus, the semi-bilingual dictionary was a natural progression in dictionary development. It contains the advantages of the monolingual learner's dictionary, combined with the native tongue translation found in the bilingual dictionary. The ambiguity of the bilingual dictionary is thus automatically eliminated. Learners are encouraged to read the definitions and examples of usage in English, since only the headwords are translated.

Eight years after its first appearance, it is clear that the semi-bilingual dictionary was indeed a step in the right direction.

### **Bi-directional adaptations**

Semi-bilingual dictionaries can be made bi-directional by having the computer retrieve all the translations, arrange them alphabetically and provide their English equivalents. The list must then be edited to exclude those translations which are not suitable as dictionary entries.

The remaining list does not contain all the headwords one would normally find in a dictionary, since the translators do not necessarily make use of all the words in their translations. Therefore, some headwords must be added. Otherwise, the resulting list would be merely an index of the translated words, which could have important words missing.

Such indexes, however, have been included by publishers of the

Bulgarian, Finnish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Slovenian editions, with several more currently in preparation. It should be taken into account that the addition of an index increases the size of the dictionary by about one sixth.

### **British vs. local settings**

The English-English core of *Password* dictionaries is British oriented. But it is possible to make changes in the basic dictionary text, in order to make it suited to other geographical or cultural areas.

Publishers may delete certain words, expressions, definitions or examples which they find are unnecessary for users in their countries, or which are culturally unsuitable for their target populations. On the other hand, it is

also possible to add material to suit local requirements, as was done in the case of the Finnish, French and Hebrew editions.

### **Workbooks**

An important feature of the semi-bilingual dictionary is its simplicity of design and format which eliminates the need to explain how to use it. Nevertheless, some publishers have prepared additional material for teachers and/or pupils, which provides extra classroom or home practice in dictionary skills.

Workbooks or worksheets were produced for the French, Hebrew and Spanish editions, and are provided free of charge. From the publisher's viewpoint, this is a good way to promote sales in schools.

# English Learner's Dictionaries in the Israel School System

by Raphael Gefen

The Israel Ministry of Education and Culture has had a good deal of experience in the use of dictionaries in English matriculation exams.

Following a general decision to allow the use of auxiliary material during examinations in all subjects, students in English were allowed, beginning in the mid-1970s, to use a monolingual English learner's dictionary, such as Oxford Student's Dictionary or Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. This was both at the "Ordinary Level" (the so-called 4 Points examination) and at the higher "Advanced Level" (5 Points).

The students gained a greater feeling of security by being allowed to use a dictionary in the examination, and thus the compilers of the test passages and questions were able to select more difficult and authentic material for the exams. In addition, there were extensive repercussions in the classroom. A top-to-bottom reform such as this introduced from "above" brought about extensive changes in the curriculum and in classroom techniques, and led to exercises and instructions in textbooks on the use of dictionaries. It also resulted in teachers educating pupils in dictionary-using techniques, and pupils using a dictionary in class and for homework.

Nevertheless, the English-English learner's dictionary, although written in simplified language, did not prove to be up to expectation in use and led to student dissatisfaction. Since it imposes a rigid ban on translation, students would get a *general* idea of the meaning only - the "fluency" or "pragmatic competence", as posited by current theories of communicative

competence. Yet what they wanted to know was the exact meaning of the headword.

At the same time, feedback from research in reading comprehension at Haifa and Tel Aviv Universities - and from classroom experience in schools - became available. This showed conclusively that the most effective way of determining whether a text has been correctly comprehended is to elicit responses in the mother tongue rather than in the foreign language (English in this case). These researches confirmed current psycholinguistic theory, which views the mother tongue as a positive element in foreign language learning and which calls upon teachers to drop their educational pretence that the learner has no mother tongue.

All changes in education proceed slowly and by a process of persuasion. Even the "top-to-bottom" reform of allowing dictionaries in the examination room took two or three years of work to prepare teachers for the change. The Ministry was persuaded by the results of these researches and feedback to allow the English-English-Hebrew and English-English-Arabic dictionaries (published by Kernerman Publishing) for use in the "Ordinary Level" English exam. The monolingual dictionary was, however, still specified for the "Advanced Level" test.

This change was introduced in 1988 and proved very successful. It clearly responded to student needs, both in class and in the examination room. The only difficulty was for the new immigrant pupils, of whom there are a large number in the Israeli

educational system, whose mother tongue is neither Hebrew or Arabic. For them, English is the third language, not the second. They are allowed to use an ordinary English-Russian or English-Amharic dictionary. However, where they *do* use the semi-bilingual dictionary, their Hebrew improves due to the definitions and the example sentences in English, whereas using the bilingual dictionary often results in uncertainties.

The same arguments and researches that led to the introduction of the semi-bilingual dictionary at the "Ordinary Level", together with the ongoing classroom experience of teachers and pupils, have recently led the English Committee of the Ministry of Education to decide to replace monolingual with semi-bilingual dictionaries also at the "Advanced Level" starting in 1996. This committee was chaired by Professor Bernard Spolsky, the internationally known applied linguist, and consisted of teachers, teacher-trainers, university lecturers and Ministry inspectors. The decision has been welcomed enthusiastically by both the teaching profession and the students.

I believe that this Israeli experience will prove of interest to educators in other countries as well.

*Raphael Gefen was formerly Chief Inspector for English at the Israel Ministry of Education and Culture, and currently lectures at the School of Education of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.*

## Semi-Trilingualism

Although English has become the *de facto* international language taught at most schools, many countries have their own second or minority language. In Israel, for example, Russian is used by recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and thus last year Kernerman Publishing issued a Russian version of its semi-bilingual Hebrew elementary edition: *Oxford Elementary Dictionary, English-English-Hebrew-Russian* (see extract).

Tri-lingualism is an important issue in former Soviet republics, whose inhabitants are at times more fluent in Russian than in their national languages. The issue is also of major concern in Francophone Africa, where a native tongue is spoken at home, French (the official language) at school or work, and English is used as a means of communication with the world at large. Situations of this sort exist in many countries with multilingual societies.

**positive** *adj.* sure; certain: Are you positive that you put the key in your pocket?

**уверенный** בטוח; חיוני

**positively** *adv.* definitely; certainly.

**уверенно** בהחלט

**possess** *v.* have or own something: He lost all that he possessed when his house burned down.

**владеть** להיות לו; להיות בעל

**possession** *n.* 1 (no pl.) having or owning something.

**собственность; имущество** בעלות

**for possession of**, to get or take something: The players fought for possession of the ball.

**за обладание** כדי לתפוס/לקחת את

# Marketing **PASSWORD** in Brazil

by Waldir Martins Fontes

*Password English Dictionary for Speakers of Portuguese*, published in Brazil by Martins Fontes Editora in 1991 and now in its third edition, has already achieved impressive sales results. This is a consequence of a marketing campaign, whose goal was to familiarize English language learners in Brazil with the concept of semi-bilingual dictionaries.

This marketing campaign included an aggressive promotional strategy, made necessary by the immense difficulties in the local publishing industry. Brazil suffers from economic recession and monetary inflation, with the resultant decrease in consumer purchasing power. There is also the problem in setting up an efficient company structure to cover over 8.5 million square kilometers, encompassing regions with enormous social and economic disparities.

Nevertheless, Martins Fontes understood that *Password* had to its advantage a potentially rich market. The use of English in Brazil, both at work and socially, is becoming more and more important and necessary.

Specific programs to publicize *Password* were developed with many of the English courses set up in the country and with schools which teach English as part of their curriculum. Among these activities, the following may be noted:

- A direct mail campaign to all English language teachers in the country.
- Sending a copy of the dictionary to

the director of each course.

- Visits by sales representatives for demonstrating the dictionary to directors and English teachers.
- Participation at the most important professional conventions for English teachers, such as LAURELS (Latin American Union of Registered English Language Schools) and BRAZ-TESOL.

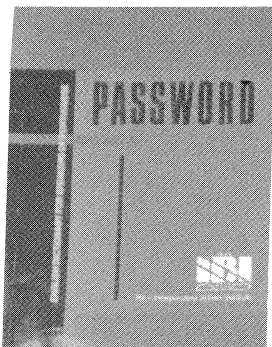
This campaign produced an impressive response. As a result, English teachers have begun to recommend the dictionary to their students.

Another important marketing coup was the agreement made with LAURELS, one of the most prestigious chains of English language schools in Brazil. As a result of this agreement, Martins Fontes produced an edition with special covers for six schools of the group.

The contact with LAURELS has had a very strong marketing impact on the image of *Password* in Brazil, taking into account the effect of a partnership between a publishing house with a well established tradition and a group of private schools of high reputation.

The association with Kernerman Publishing has provided an innovative opening for Martins Fontes, as it has become recognized as an ELT publisher in its own right for the first time.

*Waldir Martins Fontes is director of Livraria Martins Fontes Editora Ltda, in São Paulo.*



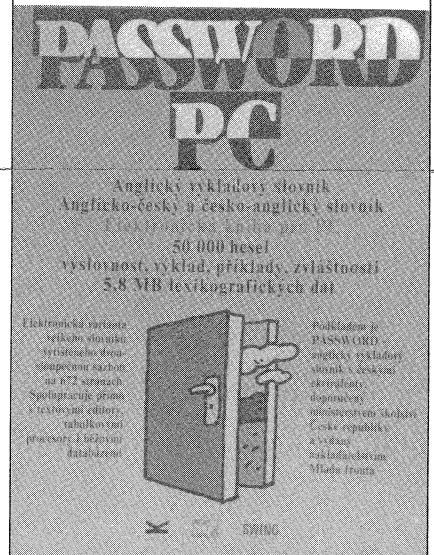
## NEWS BRIEFS

*Dar es Salaam University Press* is in the final stages of producing a **Swahili** edition of *Password*. It is the first semi-bilingual version to appear in an African language, and will be distributed in East Africa.

*Witwatersrand University Press* in Johannesburg will publish a series of semi-bilingual versions for the languages of South Africa, starting with **Zulu** and **Xhosa**.

Further to its distribution by *Belin* in France, *Modulo Editeur* made special printings of the **French** edition for Cameroon and the Ivory Coast. The dictionary is approved by the ministries of education in these countries, as well as in the Canadian Province of Québec.

Following the success of its **Czech** edition, *Mladá Fronta* in Prague associated last year with local software company *Swing* to publish **PASSWORD PC**.



It is sold as package containing two floppy diskettes, which include the English-English-Czech dictionary and a Czech-English index.

*Aina Litera* in Vilnius have just published the **Lithuanian** edition. It is the first semi-bilingual dictionary to appear in the former USSR.

*Okno Publishing House* in Kharkov will publish in 1995 a semi-trilingual edition: **English-English-Ukrainian-Russian**.

*Bookman Books* in Taipei will publish an edition in **traditional Chinese** next year, for distribution in Taiwan and Hong Kong. **Simplified Chinese** versions were already published in China by *Science Press*.

# From Kernerman to Password

by Ilan Kernerman

Kernerman Publishing published its first semi-bilingual dictionary in Israel in 1986. The fact that it was a Hebrew version of Oxford Student's Dictionary, and was approved by the education authorities, contributed to its success. Yet the most essential factor in making it enormously popular was the user-friendly nature of its lexicographic approach. It fast became a national bestseller.

It was followed by an Arabic version for Israel, with subsequent editions for the Middle East and worldwide. This was the first in the *Kernerman Semi-Bilingual Dictionaries* series, whose English core is based on Harrap or Chambers learner's dictionaries. Italian, Greek and French editions appeared under licence by other publishers beginning in 1989.

The term *semi-bilingual* was coined by Lionel Kernerman to describe the new lexicographic concept, for want of a better name for this hybrid dictionary. Zanichelli Editore termed their Italian version *mono-bilingual*. Dr Reinhard Hartmann, head of the Dictionary Research Centre at the University of Exeter, refers to it simply as *a bilingualized dictionary*.

The significance of this terminology is of little concern to the general public, for whom the semi-bilingual dictionary is first and foremost an easy-to-use English dictionary with translations in the mother tongue. Thus, the dictionary made its reputation on the basis of its features, rather than its name.

Among the first to realize the innovativeness of this "learning tool" outside of Israel was Roger Turcotte, director of Modulo Éditeur in Montréal. Modulo launched a successful marketing campaign, which made their semi-bilingual edition the best-selling English dictionary in French-speaking Canada. They called it *PASSWORD*.

"Password" means a "secret word or phrase used by somebody to indicate to somebody else...that he is a friend rather than an enemy" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4/e, OUP 1989). As it contains the word "friend", this definition is appropriate here for underlying the user-friendliness of *Password* dictionaries.

When the Spanish, Portuguese and Czech editions appeared in 1991, their publishers decided to use *Password* in the titles. Other publishers later adopted this title as they already had textbooks with a similar name, while some preferred a title in their own language.

To date there are semi-bilingual versions in nineteen languages, and a dozen more in preparation. While the basic concept remains the same everywhere, the publisher in each country decides upon the most suitable dictionary design and format for the local market, as well as the promotion strategy for that country.

Following its appearance in southern Europe, the semi-bilingual dictionary was well received in most eastern European countries. Its reputation is

spreading out to northern Europe as well, as indicated first by the Finnish edition published last year by WSOY, and then by a Swedish edition due to be published at the end of this year by Studentlitteratur.

This trend is growing, while new attitudes are taking shape. The relatively high ELT standard in western countries led to assume that their existing methods were satisfactory, but the new ideas about language-learning are causing a reassessment of the role of the semi-bilingual dictionary.

Whereas this increasing recognition is salutary, seeking new ways to improve the semi-bilingual dictionary goes on constantly. While we esteem it as the best type of dictionary presently available for learners of English, *Password* may not necessarily be the last word.

Twenty-five years ago Kernerman Publishing began publishing English language textbooks, and soon became one of Israel's leading ELT publishers. During the past decade it has branched out into the field of learner's dictionaries and extensive collaborations with publishers throughout the world.

The growth of this global aspect of our publishing activities led to setting up a new company, whose role is the coordination of international contacts. The recently-established Password Publishers is committed to pursuing the tradition begun by Kernerman Publishing.

