

Monolingual or Bilingual, that is *not* the Question: the 'Bilingualised' Dictionary

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Abstract

This paper considers a new type of learners' dictionary: the 'bilingualised' dictionary. It can be placed midway between monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. The unique feature of this genre can most clearly be seen in the manner of its semantic description. The 'bilingualised' dictionary retains semantic explanations of the original L2 text with translation equivalents. Thus it should satisfy both language teachers who insist that foreign learners should use dictionaries of the target language and learner-users who complain that such monolingual (learners') dictionaries are too difficult. The 'bilingualised' dictionary could "bridge" the gap between monolinguals and bilinguals. Though it may have great potential to become a useful educational tool, this type of dictionary has not yet been fully discussed. To stimulate discussion I shall conclude with ten open questions.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on the following assumptions with regard to learners' dictionaries:

- (1) Monolingual learners' dictionaries (like the now very popular EFL dictionaries) should be compiled from a different users' perspective from that of monolingual native-speaker dictionaries (cf. Rundell 1988).
- (2) Bilingual learners' dictionaries should be different from bilingual dictionaries for highly advanced users such as translators.

Our discussion will focus on learners' dictionaries, especially dictionaries for foreign learners of English (EFL dictionaries). The conclusions, however, may to some extent apply to dictionaries of other languages.

2. Monolingual or bilingual?

There has been a great deal of discussion as to which dictionary type is a better educational tool for foreign learners: monolingual or bilingual. Some prefer monolinguals, others support bilinguals. As Béjoint (1981) reports, checking meaning seems to be the most common motive for using a dictionary (see also Snell-Hornby 1987: 167). In other words, "Dictionaries, both monolingual and bilingual, are primarily instruments for dealing with meanings" (Iannucci 1976: 1). If this is true, the starting point of the ongoing debates between monolingualists and bilingualists should be centred on the crucial differences in meaning presentation found in the two types of dictionaries. Monolingual dictionaries

'define' lexical items of the target language most typically by way of paraphrase, whereas the primary function of the bilinguals is "to serve as an aid to the translation" (Kromann et al. 1991: 2725).

It is often said that while teachers usually recommend monolingual dictionaries, students tend to rely on bilingual ones. I like Atkins' analogy (1985: 22): "Monolinguals are good for you (like wholemeal bread and green vegetables); bilinguals (like alcohol, sugar and fatty foods) are not, though you may like them better." I suspect there are many teachers who prefer fatty foods to green vegetables.

Let us consider why most teachers do not recommend bilinguals, and why students do not want to use monolinguals.

- (1) Bilingual dictionaries are bad for learners because:
 - (a) It is not unusual to find no translation equivalent to a given L2 lexical item ('nil-equivalence') - such an absence of an equivalent is frequently connected with differences in culture and in the surrounding world (cf. Tomaszczyk 1983: 48; Zgusta 1984: 149; Snell-Hornby 1987: 165; Kromann et al. 1991: 2718).
 - (b) A translation equivalent does not necessarily cover the same semantic area as the L2 lexical item translated ('partial equivalence'; cf. Kromann et al. 1991: 2718).
 - (c) A translation should convey to its reader the same message with the same aesthetic and other values, not to mention the same denotative meaning, which are conveyed by the original text ('stylistic and/or connotational equivalence': Zgusta 1984: 151; see also Tomaszczyk 1983: 47; Reif 1987: 154). However, this is not necessarily the case.
 - (d) By giving simple translations bilingual dictionaries may reinforce the wrong idea that there is always a one-to-one correspondence between L1 and L2, and thus prevent the internalisation of L2 (cf. Atkins 1985: 19; Snell-Hornby 1987: 165; Stein 1990: 403-404).
- (2) The vast majority of foreign language learners tend to turn to the bilingual rather than to the monolingual dictionary (Zöfgen 1991: 2888; Hartmann 1993: 3) because:
 - (a) Looking something up in the monolingual dictionary may lead to a seemingly never-ending search for explanations of the words used in the definitions (Tomaszczyk 1983: 46; see also Stein 1990: 404).

- (b) Phrase/sentence structures of definitions in monolingual dictionaries are sometimes too complicated; the learner is implicitly required to understand such definition style.
- (c) The learner does not really 'know' a foreign lexical item until s/he can provide its L1 equivalent (Tomaszczyk 1983: 46; see also Snell-Hornby 1987: 159; Hartmann 1994).
- (d) Monolingual dictionaries supply no translation equivalent which can be inserted into the context immediately.

A dogmatic assumption seems to underlie debates of this kind, i.e. that the most natural progression is from the bilingual dictionary through the monolingual learners' dictionary to the monolingual native-speaker dictionary (cf. Stein 1990: 402; Zöfgen 1991: 2897). This assumption seems to be accepted uncritically not only by many teachers but also by many students. I wonder how many innocent pupils and students continue to use their bilingual dictionaries feeling as if they were 'eating junk food'. Presumably they believe that green vegetables are better. It would be wonderful if we could have a dictionary that was the equivalent of Popeye's spinach!

Thus, there appears to be a gap - a wider gap than is generally believed - in attitude between teachers and learners. Many learner-users, even if they use an 'English-English' dictionary, have to 'jump' from bilingual to monolingual, just as a young bird has to when it leaves its nest.

3. A new type of learners' dictionary

Against this background of mono- and bilingual learners' dictionaries and their contested merits and demerits, a new type of learners' dictionary has recently appeared. It is called 'bilingualised', 'semi-bilingual', 'glossed' or 'translated' (cf. Hartmann 1994 and forthcoming). It is usually partially (only occasionally thoroughly) translated from a monolingual learners' dictionary into the intended users' mother tongue. They are different from monolinguals because they supply translation equivalents and also from bilinguals because they provide semantic equivalents (definitions) of the original text.

The possibility of this type of dictionary was hinted at as early as the mid '70s. Iannucci (1976: 4) argues that the objectives of Hornby's *Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (hereafter ALD) are bilingual. Tomaszczyk (1983: 47), following Iannucci, reports on some projects of making "translated versions" of ALD and the *Longman Dictionary of Current English* (hereafter LDOCE) into Chinese, Japanese and Italian.

Atkins (1985: 22) has offered a very concrete view of the new 'hybrid dictionary'. Combining the best

features of the monolingual and the bilingual dictionaries, she suggests two types of dictionaries. The first type:

Starting from a monolingual, L1 equivalents could be inserted at the beginning of each semantic category (sense); the metalanguage or even the definition could be in L1; the fixed phrases could be not only explained and exemplified in L2, but also translated into L1 ... the list of possibilities is endless.

I shall call this first type a 'bilingualised' dictionary. They are 'bilingualised' from a monolingual (learners') dictionary. An example entry of a (fake) 'bilingualised' English-Japanese dictionary might be seen as follows:

dictionary ... a book explaining the words of a language arranged in alphabetical order (辞書):
This is an English-German dictionary.

Here we see a Japanese equivalent "辞書", which is enclosed in round brackets, and the original English definition "a book ... order" at the same time.

The second type:

Starting from the bilingual, a number of monolingual features could be introduced: one could, for example, *not* translate phrases exemplifying straightforward use of the headword; the headwords, or better still the semantic categories (senses) of the headword, could be classified from the point of view of frequency, and entries for the less frequent items could contain a higher proportion of monolingual material.

I shall call this second type a 'monolingualised' dictionary. They are 'monolingualised' from a monolingual (learners') dictionary. In this case a sample entry of a (fake) 'monolingualised' English-Japanese dictionary might become as follows:

dictionary ... 辞書, 辞典, 事典, 字引 (a book explaining the words of a language arranged in alphabetical order). *This is an English-German dictionary.* これは英独辞典です。

At present there are a variety of 'bilingualised' versions of English monolingual learners' dictionaries, which are both semasiological and onomasiological (cf. section 5). Reif (1987) explains in detail the project of the 'bilingualisation' of the *Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English* (hereafter OSDCE) for Hebrew Speakers. Hartmann (1994) lists ten 'bilingualised' learners' dictionaries. However, that list does not exhaust the works of this new genre.

As opposed to 'bilingualised' versions, the 'monolingualised' dictionary has not yet become common.

I do not know any such work. As a result, I shall hereafter consider only the 'bilingualised' dictionary.

4. The conceivable advantages of the 'bilingualised' dictionary

Reif (op. cit.) lists outstanding features of his *Oxford Student's Dictionary for Hebrew Speakers* (hereafter OSDHS):

- indenting each numbered definition;
- giving full verb forms of the past tense and past participle which require consonant-doubling (like **abettet** instead of **-tt-**);
- giving full comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs (like **happier/happiest**);
- giving full spelling for abbreviations (like *somebody/something* instead of *sb/st*);
- replacing tildes (~) with fully spelt headwords;
- supplying Hebrew glosses for the various senses of a word and its subentries.

However, only the last feature is worth being discussed here. The original text (namely OSDCE) could have indented each sub-sense and spelt out all past tense and past participle forms. What really differentiates OSDHS from OSDCE is its manner of presenting meaning. This alone differentiates OSDHS from normal bilingual dictionaries, too.

According to Reif (1987: 153-154), a single translation equivalent called a gloss is given to each headword or its sub-sense in OSDHS. Further translation possibilities are only given when they are necessary "to avoid inaccuracies or to capture the particular meaning of a word in the English examples provided." (Examples are not translated in OSDHS.) Such glosses are given in order "to whisper in the ear of the user." The compilers have tried to keep translations as simple as possible because they were "not intent on producing a bilingual dictionary which the student could use for translating English texts into Hebrew" but wanted "to preserve the dictionary primarily as a monolingual reference work."

It is important to note that translation equivalents given in a 'bilingualised' dictionary are intended to play a different role from those given in a bilingual dictionary. Basically they are "keys" for the L2 definitions in the former, while immediately insertable elements in the latter.

The main problems associated with translation equivalents have already been mentioned (see section 2). Let us consider the alternative argument, i.e. why a translation equivalent may be a "good" thing. Hartmann (1993: 4) reports four reasons advocated by Kernerman, the publisher of OSDHS:

- A translation equivalent can supplement the L2 definition when the user is not sure of its

meaning, even though s/he has read the L2 definition.

- It can correct a misconception in the event that the user has misunderstood the meaning.
- It will reinforce one's understanding of an L2 lexical item and provide assurance that the correct meaning has been grasped.
- It will dispell the frustration formed by a psychological need to know the translation in the mother tongue.

It should be noted that these reasons are all based on an assumption that the users read the L2 definitions.

In addition to these four reasons for the 'bilingualised' dictionary, we must not forget that it also shares some common advantages with the monolingual dictionary. What are the benefits of using a monolingual (learners') dictionary? There are the benefits of meaning presentation. Stein (1990: 403-404) argues that when the learner-user is looking for the appropriate sense for the context, s/he will also read the explanation of other senses (especially when the sense is not listed first), and that the user will be prevented from reinforcing the undifferentiated equation 'an L2 lexical item = an L1 counterpart.' It is argued that this would be the most important reason for using a monolingual (learners') dictionary. It should be noted, however, that her arguments are based on an implicit assumption that the user understands the semantic explanation written in L2.

This seems to be a suitable place to parenthetically mention a very interesting and useful method named "strategic use" of monolingual learners' dictionaries advocated by Iwasaki (1990). He argues that the user will learn acceptable collocations by carefully reading semantic explanations in L2. For example, s/he will learn five collocations from the semantic explanation (definition) given at *dentist* in ALD:

person whose work is filling, cleaning, taking out teeth and fitting artificial teeth

fill + teeth, clean + teeth, take out + teeth, fit + artificial teeth, artificial + teeth

Very few lexicographers may have noticed that their dictionaries could be used in this way. Monolingual and 'bilingualised' dictionaries may thus serve active production as well as passive reception.

As Atkins (1985: 22) imagined, "a hybrid dictionary could conceivably *bridge* the present gulf between the bilingual and the monolingual" (*italics mine*). By crossing the "bridge" of the 'bilingualised' dictionary, the learner would no longer have to 'jump' from the bilingual to the monolingual. The 'monolingualised' dictionary could also function in a similar fashion.

Another defect monolingual learners' dictionaries unavoidably suffer from is that they are usually targeted on anonymous users (cf. Tomaszczyk 1983: 43, 45). However, each learner group, Israeli as opposed to Japanese learners of English for instance, tends to have specific problems. If so, it would be too much to expect that a particular monolingual learners' dictionary would be uniformly useful everywhere (cf. Reif 1987: 146). The 'bilingualised' dictionary could overcome this problem.

We cannot but admit that the 'bilingualised' dictionary must be considered more seriously and must be allotted a suitable place in pedagogical lexicography because it takes the particular user group into consideration (cf. Hartmann 1994).

Nevertheless, The 'bilingualised' dictionary has attracted criticism. From the viewpoint of bilingual lexicography, Zöfgen (1991: 2889) makes a negative comment: "these so-called 'semi-bilingual' learner's dictionaries are insufficient with regard to the standards which ought to be set for a true bilingual learner's dictionary." However, if the 'bilingualised' dictionary is *not* a bilingual dictionary but basically a monolingual work (cf. Reif 1987: 153), the criticism by Zöfgen is rather off the point.

Personally, I agree with Battenburg (1991: 118) when he says: "The traditional distinction between bilingual and monolingual learners' dictionaries must be reexamined" (see also Hartmann 1992: 64). I hope that this paper will stimulate greater discussion on 'hybrid dictionaries'.

Before ending the present discussion, I shall leave ten open questions as a fillip to future discussion.

5. Open questions

Before the 'bilingualised' dictionary becomes more common, the following questions should be asked especially by compilers, translators, and publishers working on a 'bilingualisation' work.

Questions relating to translation equivalents are as follows:

- (1) When there is no equivalent at all to a given lexical item, how should it be treated?
- (2) When there is no full equivalent, how should the lexical item be treated?
- (3) When there is no stylistic and/or connotational equivalent, how should the lexical item be treated?

The 'bilingualised' dictionary usually gives not a set of synonymous translation equivalents but only a single equivalent (see section 4), although not all

'bilingualised' dictionaries follow this policy (for instance, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* (hereafter OALECD) looks more like a bilingual dictionary in this respect). This is partly because the compilers are not intent on "whispering in the ear of the user", and partly because space allotted to translations is usually severely restricted (cf. Battenburg 1991: 118).

Even if translation equivalents are not intended to be used as immediately insertable elements, they are there. As is often pointed out (see section 2), unsuccessful translation equivalents can do more harm than good. The compilers may say that even if translations failed to convey the exact meanings, the user may comprehend the right meanings by reading L2 definitions. I should like to ask: if the user understands the meanings only from L2 semantic explanations, why are such translation equivalents necessary? If they say that translations support L2 definitions (Kernerman's 'four reasons' in the preceding section), they must always be good equivalents. Otherwise they will confuse or 'deceive' the user.

As to (3), let us look at the following example. Compare the definitions given at *systematic* in LDOCE and OSDCE:

often apprec based on orderly methods and careful organization; thorough: ... (LDOCE)
based on, using, a system (2): ... (OSDCE)

(The bracketed (2) in OSDCE's definition of *systematic* refers to the second sense of *system* which reads "an organized set of ideas, theories, methods etc".)

If there exists no translation equivalent that has the same connotational value, as well as the same denotative meaning, as the English lexical item in the target language, how should it be treated? If the original text explains the connotation clearly, for example by a usage label (e.g. "*often appreciative*" in LDOCE), the risk that the user will fail to notice it will be relatively low. However, if the original text lacks relevant usage information as is the case with OSDCE, what will happen? (Please note that it is not my intention here to criticise Hornby's intermediate learners' dictionary.)

Questions (4) - (6) concern selection of the dictionary to be translated:

- (4) Which dictionary should be translated?

It is very important for the publisher, whether it is the publisher of the original text or of the new product, to carefully select the dictionary to be translated. For example, it would be meaningless to translate an older edition if the revised version is already available. Therefore, (4) will create a further

question: Is the dictionary well-updated so that the translators need not revise it before translating? And if the bilingualised dictionary is basically a monolingual dictionary, semantic explanations in L2 supplied by the dictionary selected should be clear and helpful to the user.

- (5) To what extent are the compilers/translators/publishers of the 'bilingualised' version allowed to change contents and/or structure of the original text?

This will also bring us subsequent questions such as: Can they correct misprints? Can they include something new (for example, omitted lexical items, new illustrations, or new appendices)? Can they change ordering of senses? Can they even rewrite semantic explanations in L2? Or are they *not* allowed to change any part of the original text? (As we have already seen in the preceding section, OSDHS has changed the structure of the original text (namely OSDCE) to some extent.)

- (6) To what extent is the original text to be translated?

As Hartmann (1993 and forthcoming) points out, there are some significant differences in the way 'bilingualisation' has been done. Some have translated only headwords and their sub-senses (like OSDHS), others have translated almost the whole text (like OALECD). There are many possibilities between these two extremes (see Atkins' remarks in section 3).

The choice of the dictionary translated and the extent of translation will, of course, be influenced by the time and budget allotted to the project. However, from the users' perspective, a question may arise:

- (7) How do we know the potential users' needs?

How much would they like the original text translated? Everything?

And I have an "innocent" question:

- (8) Do the users really read the L2 text?

The better the translation equivalents are, the greater my anxiety. If what the average user wants most is an immediately insertable translation equivalent (see section 2), do they bother to read L2 definitions? Here, too, "objective knowledge about dictionary users' needs is still rare" (Hartmann 1989: 104). Surveys must be carried out to see how 'bilingualised' dictionaries are actually used.

Research on the targeted market is also necessary. Thus, my next question is:

- (9) Will a 'bilingualised' dictionary find a particular niche in the dictionary market?

Imagine two extreme cases: one market lacks (especially L2-L1 type) bilingual and (L2) monolingual dictionaries, whereas the other is full of them. A 'bilingualised' dictionary would be more easily accepted by the former market than the latter. If the new 'bilingualised' product aims at a market of the latter type, it must attract potential customers' attention more powerfully. It should be understood as a new type of dictionary, i.e. it is neither a bilingual nor a monolingual dictionary. Do the shoppers recognize it as the publisher expects them to?

Finally, my last question:

- (10) Is 'bilingualisation' most applicable for general-purpose semasiological dictionaries?

This question has been partially answered by such works as *Oxford Duden Pictorial Japanese and English Dictionary* (1983), *The Kenkyusha-Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (Japanese version: 1989), *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* (English-Chinese edition: 1992), *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English: A Guide to Word Combinations* (Japanese version: 1993), to name a few from two Far Eastern markets (see also the list in Hartmann 1994).

Enormous room is still left for the new type of dictionary to fill. When we take into consideration an electronic format as well as a traditional paper-printed type, we cannot but wonder why we have to use separate dictionaries for comprehension, production, and translation. A simple operation could immediately turn an electronic dictionary into an L2-L1 bilingual dictionary or an L1-L2 bilingual or an L2 monolingual or an L2 (or L2-L1) pictorial dictionary, etc, etc. Insofar as this is true, technological advances would make existing and future 'bilingualised' dictionaries outdated.

But, at present, we see more and more 'bilingualised' dictionaries in high-street bookshops. No longer can we ignore them. What I should like to know is your own answers to my ten questions.

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