

Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera and Ascensión Arribas-Baño 2008: *Pedagogical Specialised Lexicography*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. ix + 165 pp. ISBN: 978 90 272 2335 7

Aquilino Sánchez
University of Murcia
asanchez@um.es

A new publication in the field of lexicography should be welcome. Lexicography after all has not been until rather recently a popular discipline in *academia*. This is more the case if (i) the topic is *specialised* lexicography, and (ii) the book has been compiled by Spanish scholars. If lexicographical studies in Spain have been a rarity, studies in specialised lexicography are to be certainly more than welcome.

In many aspects, specialised language lexicography deals with the same issues and shares the same problems as general lexicography: the planning of a dictionary, decisions on the entries to be selected, access to the sources underlying and supporting definitions, the structure of entries and, above all, the nature and concept of the definition itself. As specified in the title, the book is centred on 'pedagogical specialised' lexicography. Moreover, the 'specialised lexicography' analysed throughout the book is of a bilingual character: Spanish-English and English-Spanish. In addition to that, the authors include the *pedagogical* dimension, which in fact may affect any dictionary as well.

The book opens with an introductory chapter. The connection of this study to *Language for Specific Purposes* (LSP) is firmly established in the first pages. The rationale behind LSP cannot be separated from the emphasis on the specificity of the lexicon which characterizes the use of language in different disciplines and this is no doubt one of the most solid links between specialised lexicography (monolingual or bilingual) and the use of language by ever growing groups of speakers that need to gain an adequate understanding of the intricacies of linguistic usage in restricted communicative fields. Globalization increases a similar need among speakers of different languages willing to communicate with one another.

Chapter 2 discusses the 'Macrostructure, Mediostructure and Access Structure of Business Dictionaries'. The authors analyse how a sample of business dictionaries deal with meaning in relation to what they consider 'basic lexicographical issues': homonymy, polysemy and the form of the lexicographical article. Their conclusions on the 'state of specialised dictionaries' in this respect are not too encouraging.

Chapter 3 approaches the nature of definition with more detail. They refer to three kinds of definitions: terminological, encyclopaedic and semantic, as found – they specify – in monolingual dictionaries. No significant differences are found in the first two types. Regarding the semantic definition, the authors detect the widespread use of what they call 'traditional definitional styles'. This is what makes definitions more complex to students and hence less accessible. The business dictionaries analysed abound in conceptual information, which deviates from users' needs in encoding and decoding meaning.

Chapter 4 studies equivalences in business dictionaries. This is no doubt a key issue in bilingual lexicography. Culture and tradition play a significant role in the analysis of

equivalences. Equivalence among languages has much to do with the conceptualization of the outside world and we know that cultural values are the catalysts of concepts first and, in a second stage, the linguistic forms that act as vehicles of transmission to others. Context and situation are therefore two necessary ingredients in lexicography, and particularly in pedagogical dictionaries. The findings reveal important divergences in the samples analysed and the authors point out some positive actions to be taken, particularly in meaning discrimination.

Chapter 5 deals with the issue of 'Examples in Business Dictionaries'. This is again a key ingredient in lexicography. Examples of usage in fact are the primary source of meaning and their presence in dictionaries should grant them the reliability they need as faithful witnesses of linguistic use. The authors conclude once more that LSP lexicography still needs significantly more example-based definitions. Moreover, they point out that many examples are artificial, *ad hoc* examples. Such a practice does not help in the right direction, that is, the use of examples to illustrate real 'live meaning' or equivalences.

Chapter 6 offers the results and conclusions of the study. The following points stand out: (i) The prevalence of nominal style, as a proof of the 'relevance of the noun term' in the specialised use of language. It can be added that this finding matches the distribution of the parts of speech in general language. The following data, based on Spanish, illustrate this fact: nouns take 25% of the words in discourse, verbs 15% and adjectives 6.9%. (ii) Homonymy, polysemy and the lexicographical article are not given the prominence they should have in LSP meta-lexicography. As a result, theory and practice may be said to be divorced and this affects the right conceptualization of the business domain. (iii) Changes in improving definitions or definitional styles have not been adequately digested and incorporated by LSP. (iv) Equivalences in bilingual specialised lexicography are often used indiscriminately, following different criteria and far from adjusting to the eight "categories of elements which can contribute to meaning discrimination of the lemma or its equivalent" (137). (v) Examples, as the real source of the meanings found in dictionaries, do not fulfil the function they should be assigned, either because they are often 'invented examples', or because they are absent.

The book is clearly and 'efficiently' written: it includes what the authors aim to include and they transmit the message they want to transmit, with precision, accuracy and in plain words. The academic nature of the topic is embodied within a clear style, despite the intricate concepts which are often the subject of debate. Its pedagogical character goes hand in hand with the title of the work, focusing on '*pedagogical specialised lexicography*' as the leitmotiv for analysis. From that point of view, the book meets the goals the authors' claim in the introduction and deserves reading.

This study approaches LSP from a lexicographic perspective. Time was ripe for such a decision. LSP studies have largely taken care of language teaching and neglected the field of lexicography, which is at the very centre of language in specialized domains. LSP dictionaries had developed, rather, as a 'practical and minor appendix' of general monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. This monograph is concerned with LSP dictionaries as autonomous works, fully integrated in the lexicographic discipline and pointing to users with specific needs and problems when looking for meaning in specialized linguistic areas. When referring to macrostructures (chapter 2), the book advocates their analytical character because that is what users (LSP students and

translators) really need. For a similar reason the authors are not in favour of the familiar distinction between lexicography and terminology and therefore propose abandoning the traditional method of onomasiological work in favour of a semasiological approach, which has a long tradition in learner's dictionaries.

Polysemy and homonymy, sense differentiation and sense ordering, the treatment of definitions, examples and equivalents are all at the core of the lexicographic work. The authors face those issues and offer their own perspective in order to solve the problems discussed. Some would require a more thorough analysis. Sense differentiation is one of them.

The problem of word senses are the senses themselves: "There is no decisive way to identifying where one sense of a word ends and the next begins" (Kilgarriff 2006: 43). Still, we are gaining a better understanding of lexicographical work, among other reasons because we have more adequate tools for handling lexical information and data and because we may take valuable insights from other disciplines, such as general linguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic variation, lexicology, corpus and computational linguistics and language teaching/learning. All those disciplines add new elements useful for a better description of meaning. The more we know about words and meanings and the way they relate to each other the more we are brought to the conclusion that meaning is not easily isolated into words or senses as traditionally considered. Meaning and meanings are a complex web of semantic relationships, organized as an intricate network, with multiple connections in a tridimensional space. The structure of the neural network itself is probably the best model to look at when looking for structural similarities. Cantos and Sanchez (2002) suggest a constellation-like organization when explaining lexical dependency and attraction. The constellational model allows for web-like semantic constructs around lexical units (be they words or phrases) and aids the understanding of semantic interconnections among words. Polysemy, synonymy, antonymy and homonymy, for example, find a better comprehension in this model, particularly regarding sense differentiation and the multiple crossings of shared features among words, even if apparently they are not so closely related. LSP lexicography will also benefit from this approach in the 'visualization' of meaning and senses. If we analyse the semantic components of two lexical items, *lumber* and *log*, and relate them to *wood*, we obtain a constellation-like semantic construct, as shown in figure 1.

It can be appreciated here that *lumber* and *log* are connected through one of their semantic features ('wood as a hard fibrous substance'), while at the same time, the term *wood* shares directly with both this same feature. Other semantic features of *wood*, (an 'area with trees' for example) are only indirectly related to *lumber* and *log*. Semantic and partial interconnections among lexical items, the hierarchy governing those interconnections and the non-linear character of such interconnectivity often make sense differentiation quite difficult. The constellational model offers a useful help to capture meaning relationships and place them in the right hierarchical level.

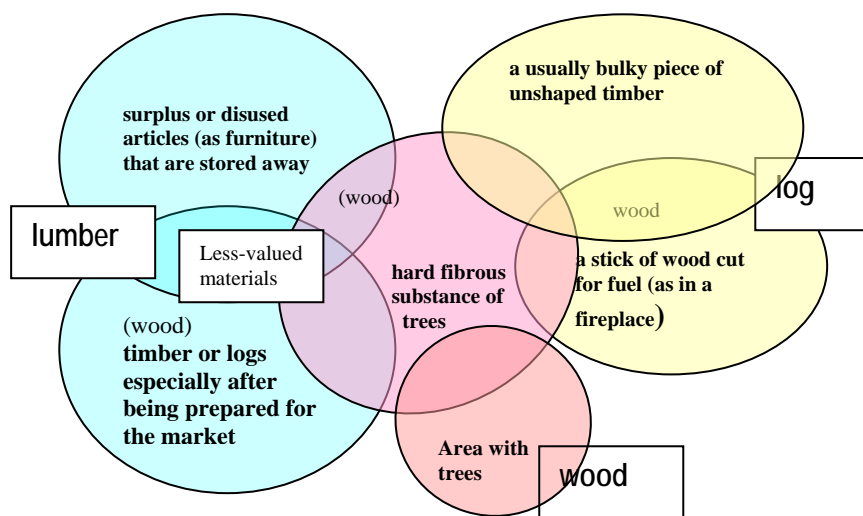


Figure 1: Example of a constellational model of meaning relationships

The authors advocate for the inclusion of definitions together with translation equivalents in bilingual dictionaries. This is no doubt an excellent initiative from a pedagogical point of view. Some practical and positive consequences may also be added to that. However, the complexity of such an initiative is high and publishers may find it too expensive to implement. Definitions of that kind would require in fact merging two dictionaries into one: the monolingual dictionary and the bilingual. Moreover, since the conceptualization of the world through language is not the same in different languages, the monolingual dictionary of the source language should be significantly enriched with many elements from the target language in order to adequately match the conceptualization of both communicative systems. The work involved in such a task is not to be underestimated.

The analysis by the authors of 8 business dictionaries gives ground to conclusions regarding a model which may better serve the needs of LSP users. The model entry they propose takes into account the passive and active sides of a business dictionary. Current practice of learners' dictionaries is also taken into consideration in this proposal. In this respect, they also claim that the specialised dictionary of the future should include a kind of conceptual introduction to the subject matter they deal with (Bergenholtz and Nielsen 2006; Fuertes-Olivera forthcoming). The usefulness of this suggestion is an open question, since access to the Internet may solve this problem with no extra investment by authors and publishers.

A book on lexicography, be it specialised or not, must necessarily come across some fundamentals of semantics, lexicology and the conceptualization of the world through language. Moreover, dictionaries are large and extensive works, with thousand of entries which must keep a homogeneous structure in order to facilitate the search and to easily capture the meaning of the definition and/or the explanation of this meaning. Both aspects require that any study on dAs is often remarked. The elaboration of

dictionaries requires practical skills, but at the same time must take a stand (consciously or not) on important theoretical issues. Among them, we may mention the nature of the word as a potential 'container' of meaning, the nature of meaning itself, the organization of meaning in our mind, the cognitive and referential aspect of meaning, the nature of definition and the types of definition. And dictionaries must also cope with one of the most serious problems in defining: the limitations derived from defining words with other words. Not all of those issues are commented on or analysed in this book. But some of them are, to the extent you can expect in a work of 165 pages, that is, in some cases only incidentally or partially. Two of them are particularly relevant here: the concept of definition, at the core of any dictionary, and the issue of equivalents, at the core of any bilingual dictionary.

Defining implies, among others, two basic issues: (i) a correct understanding of what is meaning and its organization, and (ii) the identification of the semantic features that constitute lexical items. Contrary to what one could expect, the types of definition are secondary to that. In fact, you can only proceed to the classification of definitions once you 'have them there'. It is well known that meaning is not to be equated to the real thing we can touch or sense; it is a reference to reality, a mental construct we build on the basis of the abstraction taken from the real world. Second, such a mental semantic construct would not be possible without an adequate organization among the many elements which integrate the construct. Organization guarantees comprehension, and implies locating everything in the right place regarding other elements in the construct. Such organization works as a basis for establishing relationships of various kinds among the elements affected. Chaos is thus avoided.

Capturing the semantic mental organization is also the key for a correct understanding of the relationships among meanings. And perhaps the clearest conclusion regarding these relationships is their hierarchical character. Organization into hierarchies is an efficient way of conceptualizing and understanding the world. As far as we know, the world itself is hierarchically structured and this is exactly the model we follow for organizing the references to the world inside our brain. The assumption of this hierarchical organization is the key to understand the nature of the definition itself and the types of definition in use. It is almost a commonplace to claim that there are better ways of defining, and hence ask for new improvements in definition. The claim is sound *per se*, but the question is how the improvement should be implemented. The *genus et differentiae* type of definition (usually referred to as the *classical* type of definition) is widely used by most dictionaries. This type of definition departs from a classification of the *definiendum* into a *genus* first, and then proceeds with the identification of the features that count for the differences among the elements of the same *genus*. This definition is not arbitrary: it responds and adjusts to the hierarchical organization of the meanings stored in our minds. And we must affirm that this is a most efficient way in order to identify the elements within a construct, since it facilitates rapid access to the place every meaning or sense keeps within a whole and the kind of relationships they keep with the rest of known elements within the same construct. The quality of a definition depends directly on the success or failure in the identification of the *genus* the *definiendum* belongs to (i.e. the place of the *definiendum* in the hierarchy) and the detection of its *differentiae* regarding other elements within the same hierarchy.

The authors of this book refer to this kind of definition as a 'semantic definition' and they are right. Suggesting changes in the kind and nature of the definitions would require however a more detailed analysis, which is beyond the scope of the present study.

The *genus et differentiae* type of definition is not only the 'classical definition'; it is probably the definition that best adjusts to the semantic mental construct we build in our minds. Other definitions may complement this one, but hardly substitute it. Encyclopaedic (and often functional) definitions, for example, are usually considered 'descriptive definitions', but in fact they function as a part or an appendix of the classical definition in so far as they basically describe the *differentiae*, that is, the features that are specific of the *definiendum*, which constitute a larger account of their differences regarding other elements, within the same category or outside it. They do not usually inform on the place the *definiendum* keeps in the lexical hierarchy (because the *genus* is not habitually specified). Other types of definitions include options with the 'equivalents' of the *definiendum* (as in bilingual dictionaries). When words are defined by means of synonyms or phrases we are offering equivalents close in meaning to the word defined. We are directly assuming that the equivalent belongs to the *genus* of the *definiendum* and that the *differentiae* are common to both (even if that is rarely the case). The main weakness of this kind of definition is that the reader must previously know both the *genus* and the *differentiae* of the equivalent in order to grasp the meaning of the item being defined. So how is all this related to the book under review? Are you pointing out weaknesses or just demonstrating superior knowledge?

Dictionaries, as repositories of language, should include as much information as possible in order to gain an adequate understanding of the language or languages they deal with. But limitations cannot be left aside. It may be that novelties in modern lexicography could be related in a great extent to decisive changes in the amount of information we can now include in lexicographical works, particularly in electronic dictionaries, which are no doubt substituting paper dictionaries in real usage. Users in fact do not open a book to look up the meaning of a word when they are working with a computer; they rather prefer to look for that information in the Internet, or directly in an electronic dictionary. If we focus on the electronic dictionaries of the future, size limitations will be almost irrelevant compared to paper dictionaries. Also irrelevant is the access to sources for defining (corpora and the web as a corpus), since these tools are now easily available to lexicographers. From that perspective, many of the ideas advanced by the authors of this book will easily find their way into the electronic dictionaries of the future. It must be kept in mind that electronic dictionaries at the moment are just paper dictionaries in an electronic format; the electronic dictionaries of the future have not yet been published.

Many other points could be highlighted and commented, all of them relevant in lexicography. Let me stress as a final remark the relevant work of the authors in publishing this book on specialised lexicography and strongly recommend its reading to scholars and students interested in LSP. They may find in this book a coherent and sound guide to correctly focus on the main problems and issues in the field. Still, further reading would be needed for a deeper understanding of some issues proper to general lexicography.

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Aquilino Sánchez (PhD Barcelona, MS U of Georgetown, Washington DC) is Full Professor at the University of Murcia, Spain, where he teaches Lexicography and Applied Linguistics. His research centres likewise in these fields. He has been editor and/or author of monolingual (Spanish) and bilingual (Spanish/English) dictionaries. A recent publication is: Sánchez, A. & M. Almela. Eds. 2009. *A Mosaic of Corpus Linguistics. Selected Approaches*. Berlin/Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa Facultad de Letras - Universidad de Murcia - Campus de la Merced. 30071 MURCIA. SPAIN.