Summing Up Two Decades of Pedagogic Lexicography

Ari Kernerman
Kernerman Publishing
46 Hagolan Street, Tel Aviv 69718, Israel
kernrman@zahav.net.il

Abstract
Since the introduction of monolingual learners' dictionaries, about six decades ago, 1986-2006 was the period in the history of lexicography that saw the greatest number of new developments in this field. Some of the areas in which changes took place are the semi-bilingualization of learners' dictionaries, the incorporation of user-friendly features in learners' dictionaries, the creation of word corpora on which learners' dictionaries can be based, the development of software programs for dictionary writing and manipulation, the invention of electronic applications of lexicography data bases, the emergence of a highly competitive market for publishers of learners' dictionaries, the flowering of academic lexicography, such as university departments and courses, research in, and writing about the theory and practice of pedagogic lexicography, and last but not least, the multiplicity of neologisms. Is it conceivable that new developments will continue to evolve at such a breathtaking speed? What will dictionaries be like ten more Euralex conferences from now, in 2026?

1 Introduction

A period of twenty years is a very short time in the history of lexicography. Indeed, it is only a fraction of a lexicographer's lifetime. Yet, the metamorphosis of dictionary design, production and use in this past score of years is unparalleled in all dictionary history. I discuss eight areas in which profound changes have taken place. The selection is purely subjective, and additional areas may be suggested by participants in the discussion period.

2 The semi-bilingualization of learners' dictionaries

The semi-bilingualization of learners' dictionaries – which is providing a separate mother-tongue translation of the headword, for each meaning of every entry and sub-entry – could never have come about if the monolingual learner's dictionary had not first been invented. During the preceding four decades the groundwork had already been laid in developing monolingual learners' dictionaries, with their easy-to-understand defining vocabularies, examples of typical use, and learning notes, by pioneers such as A.S. Hornby and publishers such as Longman and Oxford. [See OALD1 and LDOCE1.] These dictionaries, of course, were monolingual, and so relied on the users' ability to understand everything they read, even though they were foreign language dictionaries.

From there, it was a short jump to satisfy language learners' psychological and practical needs for a translation into the language they are actually thinking in, while learning a new language and using a dictionary. Previously, Panmun Book Company, Ltd. of Korea had tried translating almost the entire text of Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English into Korean [See OALD English-Korean edition]. But 'over-translating' turned out to be self-defeating, because then users tend to read only the translation, without reading the text in the target language, and so, they do not think in the target language. Nevertheless, it was a step away from the Direct Method in foreign language teaching (total immersion in the target language) and a return to the recognition of the importance of the use of the mother-tongue.

Semi-bilingualization, the first serious attempt of which appeared in 1986, heralded a new phase in the concept of language-learning dictionaries [See OSDHS1, 1986].

3 The incorporation of user-friendly features in learners' dictionaries

An integral aspect of semi-bilingual dictionaries for language learners is their learner-friendly features, which make dictionaries easier to use. Look at this page from AOLD3, whose contents are no more user-friendly than its appearance. Notice how crowded it is – how jam-packed with abbreviations, signs and symbols. This dictionary uses over 75 abbreviations, signs and symbols, and has 40 pages explaining how to use it, including 10 pages of tables of verb patterns. Such a volume must have turned off most users. Moreover, since each dictionary had its own system (as is still the case), even if you managed to learn the system of one dictionary, you would still not be able to use another.

Compare this page with any modern dictionary. [See OALD7, and MED.] Modern-day dictionaries are designed to have text that is less crowded and more legible. Selected items are highlighted by color, font or positioning. The text is not over-crowded, making it easier to find the desired entries and the appropriate meanings. The pages are attractively planned and are visually appealing. The contents are clear, comprehensible, and considerate of the language level of the user. Some of these contemporary dictionaries not only provide information, but explain it in such a way that they may be considered language teaching tools.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to out-do one another, there is a tendency in some of the present editions to provide an over-abundance of information about usage – more than is necessary for learning purposes.

4 The creation of word corpora on which learners' dictionaries can be based

The development of computers and computer programs made it possible for steps to be taken in many languages to create data bases in which the uses in that particular language of words, phrases and expressions are analyzed and categorized for frequency, meaning, collocation, etc. Some of these were developed by publishers for their own particular needs, sometimes in conjunction with a university, such as Oxford Corpus Collection, and Longman Corpus Network, and some are available publicly, such as Bank of English, and British National Corpus. New dictionaries have been written which, instead of being based solely on human experience, derive confirmation from computer-ordered frequency lists and actual citations from current texts.

But, as often occurs when embracing new ideas too enthusiastically, the pendulum made a complete sweep, partly disregarding human experience and knowledge, as well as pedagogic considerations. Now the pendulum is slowly creeping back towards the middle, more ready to accept active human intervention in the use of corpora. At the same time, attempts are being made to compile learners' corpora, which, hopefully, will be better suited for use in compiling learners' dictionaries, as they will emphasize more the particular language that the learner encounters and requires.

5 The development of software programs for dictionary writing and manipulation

Dictionaries are no longer written on slips of paper, but right onto computers, and directly into software programs designed to accept, store and process the information so that it can subsequently be used in a multiplicity of ways. We can discuss this point further in the discussion period.

6 The invention of electronic applications of lexicography data bases

Paper dictionaries are being challenged by electronic dictionaries in half a dozen electronic forms: hand-held battery-operated devices, computer software containing dictionary data bases, Internet-based (on-line) dictionaries, dictionaries on CD ROMs, and soon in cell phones. The competition from electronic sources is so intense that some printed dictionaries can also be found in one or more electronic forms, such as a CD ROM, neatly tucked away in the inside pocket of the back cover, (as with OALD7, for example), or providing on-line access to the printed material.

7 The emergence of a highly competitive market for publishers of learners' dictionaries

Whereas two decades ago there was only a small number of serious publishers who enjoyed the monolingual learners' dictionary market, competitors have appeared – serious contenders – creating a highly competitive market, and bringing with them all the advantages and disadvantages of competition. Today there are five major large-size learners' dictionaries. They are commonly referred to as "the big five": Oxford, Longman, Macmillan, Cambridge and Cobuild). My company is now working on a sixth. In addition, there is a large number of medium-size and smaller dictionaries, many of which are derived from "the big five".

8 The flowering of university departments and courses, research and writing about the theory and practice of pedagogic lexicography

The past two decades have seen many universities setting up departments, courses, seminars or workshops for lexicography in general and pedagogic lexicography in particular. A large number of doctoral theses have been written on lexicography and related topics. And an unprecedented number of research projects have been undertaken. National and international conferences have taken place, books, conference proceedings and articles have been published, and dictionary societies, associations and other groups have come into existence. These developments have contributed substantially to the expansion of lexicography as a profession.

In addition to national and local organizations for lexicographers and their fellow travelers, there are dictionary societies that encompass whole continents: Euralex, Asialex, Afrilex, Australex, and DSNA. We are only waiting now for Globalex – the global dictionary organization that will encompass all dictionary organizations.

Special mention should be made of the great giants of lexicography, who have spanned this period. I refrain from mentioning names, as most are still alive, and many are still active. But without their contributions lexicography would not be where it is today.

9 The multiplicity of neologisms

By neologisms I mean not only new words, but new meanings acquired by already existing words. The past two decades have seen the adoption of more neologisms than any other period.

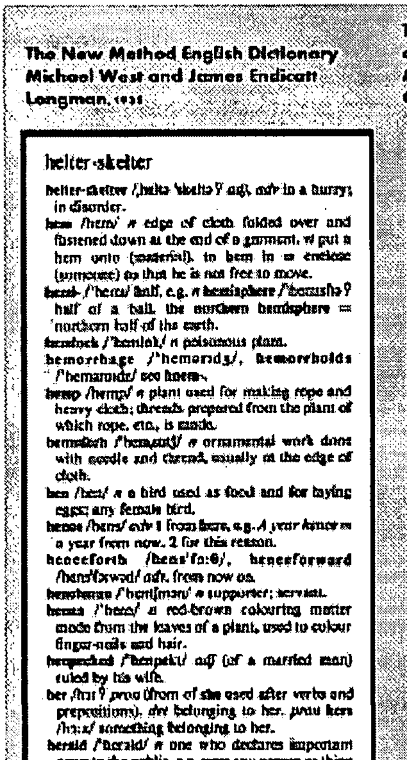
Each new edition of every dictionary is a replica-in-language-form of the society whose language it documents. Actually, the documentation of words and their uses is the most accurate reflection of a society that it is possible to attain. No other form of writing can achieve such a close-to-perfect image of any sector of a society (no less society in its totality) than a dictionary can – neither fiction, history books nor even encyclopedias. No other form of human creativity – whether poetry, music, art, photography, theater or dance – no activity, whether mechanical, technological or electronic – can delve into every nook and cranny of humankind, as does a dictionary's representation of a language's words and their uses. People do not think of dictionaries as history books, but that is exactly what they are. Each new word or meaning describes a change in society. Likewise, each word or meaning that drops out of use, reflects its own particular societal change.

Dictionaries are mankind's most effective means of recording social change. By entering into the minutest variance of the subtleties of individual words, phrases, collocations, fluctuations in grammatical use and syntax, dictionaries record society at the time they are last edited. And the differences between two editions of any given dictionary record the changes in society in the period between the two editions. Words come into the dictionary, and their meanings are changed; other words drop out.

This transformation has taken place in these past two decades more than at any other equivalent period of time in the entire history of dictionaries.

10 What does the future have in store?

Competition will bring forth new ideas (assuming there are ideas that have not yet been thought of and tried out). And the market will re-shape itself in order to accommodate other dictionaries. Regarding the 'threat' of electronics to paper dictionaries, it seems that paper dictionaries will continue to hold out for a long time to come.



The New Method English Dictionary
Michael West and James Endicott
Longman, 1935

helter-skelter

helter-skelter /ˌheltəˈskeltə/ *adj, adv* in a hurry; in disorder.

hem /hem/ *n* edge of cloth folded over and fastened down at the end of a garment. *vt* put a hem onto (material). to hem in = enclose (someone) so that he is not free to move.

hemi- /ˈhemi/ half, e.g. *n* **hemisphere** /ˈhemisfɪə/ half of a ball. the northern hemisphere = northern half of the earth.

hemlock /ˈhemlɒk/ *n* poisonous plant.

hemorrhage /ˈhemərɪdʒ/, **hemorrhoids** /ˈhemərɔɪdz/ see haem-.

hemp /hemp/ *n* plant used for making rope and heavy cloth; threads prepared from the plant of which rope, etc., is made.

hemstitch /ˈhemstɪtʃ/ *n* ornamental work done with needle and thread, usually at the edge of cloth.

hen /hen/ *n* a bird used as food and for laying eggs; any female bird.

hence /hens/ *adv* 1 from here, e.g. *A year hence* = a year from now. 2 for this reason.

henceforth /hensˈfɔːθ/, **henceforward** /hensˈfɔːwəd/ *adv*. from now on.

henchman /ˈhentʃmən/ *n* supporter; servant.

henna /ˈhenə/ *n* red-brown colouring matter made from the leaves of a plant, used to colour finger-nails and hair.

henpecked /ˈhenpekt/ *adj* (of a married man) ruled by his wife.

her /hɜː/ *pron* (from of she used after verbs and prepositions). *det* belonging to her. *pron* **hers** /hɜːz/ something belonging to her.

herald /ˈherəld/ *n* one who declares important news to the public, e.g. war; any person or thing which acts as a sign of some future event, e.g. *Birds are heralds of spring*. *vt* be a sign of (some future event).

heraldry /ˈherəldri/ *n* study of the special signs painted on shields, etc., as the family sign of noble persons. *adj* **heraldic** /heˈrældɪk/.

herb /hɜːb/ *n* 1 any plant which dies down to the roots in winter. 2 plant used for medicine or for giving a special taste. *adj* **herbaceous** /hɜːˈbeɪʃəs/ (of a plant) dying down to the roots in winter. *n* **herbage** /ˈhɜːbɪdʒ/ grass and other field plants. *n* **herbalist** /ˈhɜːbəlɪst/ one who studies plants and uses them as medicines. *adj* **herbal**.

herculean /ˌhɜːkjʊˈliːən/ *adj* (of a piece of work) that needs more than human strength.

herd /hɜːd/ *n* number of beasts together; all the cattle of one kind on a farm. *vt* collect together; be in charge of (a herd). *n* **herdsman** /ˈhɜːdzmən/ man who takes care of, is in charge of, cattle.

here /hɪə/ *adv* to or in this place.

hereabouts /ˈhɪərəbaʊts/ *adv* near here.

hereafter /hɪərˈɑːftə/ *adv* after now; from now on.

hereditary /hɪˈredɪtəri/ *adj* that is passed down from parents to children. *n* **heredity** /həˈredɪti/

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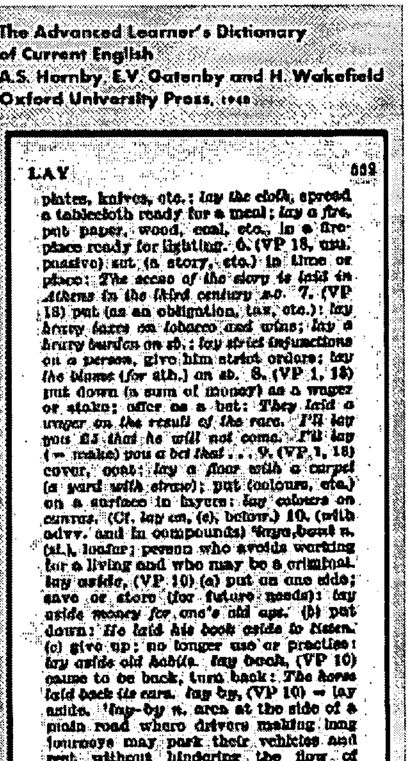


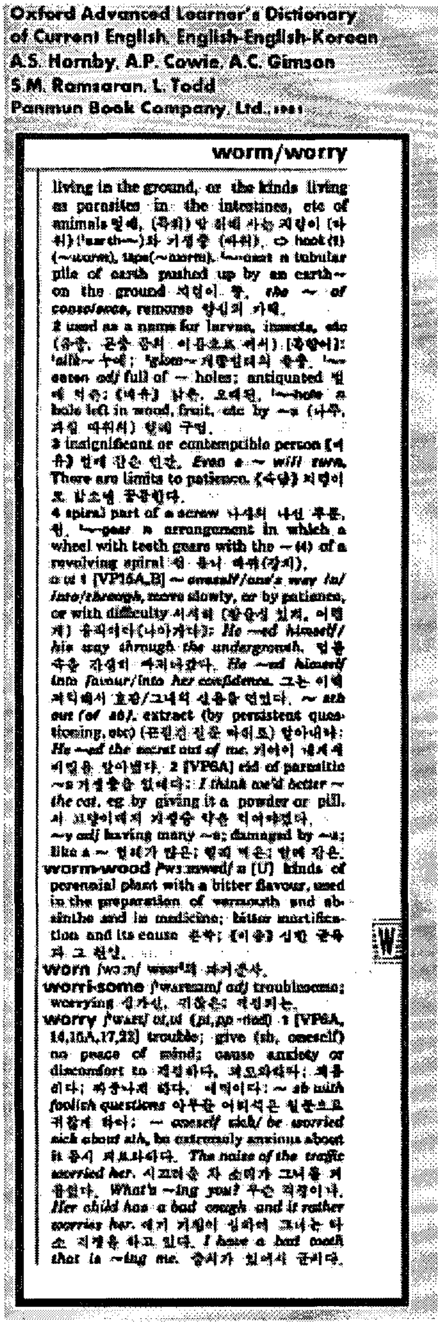
The Advanced Learner's Dictionary
of Current English
A.S. Hornby, E.V. Gatenby and H. Wakefield
Oxford University Press, 1948

LAY 609

plates, knives, etc.: *lay the cloth*, spread a tablecloth ready for a meal; *lay a fire*, put paper, wood, coal, etc., in a fireplace ready for lighting. 6. (VP 18, usu. passive) set (a story, etc.) in time or place: *The scene of the story is laid in Athens in the third century B.C.* 7. (VP 18) put (as an obligation, tax, etc.): *lay heavy taxes on tobacco and wine; lay a heavy burden on sb.; lay strict injunctions on a person*, give him strict orders; *lay the blame (for sth.) on sb.* 8. (VP 1, 18) put down (a sum of money) as a wager or stake; offer as a bet: *They laid a wager on the result of the race. I'll lay you £5 that he will not come. I'll lay* (= make) *you a bet that . . .* 9. (VP 1, 18) cover, coat; *lay a floor with a carpet (a yard with straw)*; put (colours, etc.) on a surface in layers: *lay colours on canvas*. (Cf. lay on, (c), below.) 10. (with advv. and in compounds) **'layabout** *n.* (sl.), loafer; person who avoids working for a living and who may be a criminal. **lay aside**, (VP 10) (a) put on one side; save or store (for future needs): *lay aside money for one's old age.* (b) put down: *He laid his book aside to listen.* (c) give up; no longer use or practise: *lay aside old habits.* **lay back**, (VP 10) cause to be back, turn back: *The horse laid back its ears.* **lay by**, (VP 10) = lay aside. **'lay-by** *n.* area at the side of a main road where drivers making long journeys may park their vehicles and rest without hindering the flow of traffic; (older use) railway siding. **lay down**, (VP 10) (a) place in a lying position, on the ground, etc.: *Lay the baby down gently. She laid herself down.* (b) surrender: *lay down one's arms* (i.e. weapons); *lay down office.* (c) sacrifice: *lay down one's life.* (d) pay a wager (money). (e) (begin to) build; make plans for: *lay down a new ship (a railway).* (f) establish; formulate (a rule, course, principle): *lay it down that*, assert that; *lay sth. down as a maxim; prices laid down by the manufacturers.* (g) convert (land) into pasture: *lay down 10 acres in (to, with, under) grass.* (h) store (wine) in a cellar: *lay down claret and port.* **lay in**, (VP 10) provide oneself with a stock of: *lay in stores for the winter; lay in provisions.* **lay off**, (a) (VP 10) (U.S.A.) discharge; dismiss temporarily: *lay off workmen during a business depression.* (b) (VP 21) (U.S.A.) discontinue work or activity: *The doctor told me to lay off for a week.* **'lay-off** *n.* period during which a workman is temporarily dismissed. **lay on**, (VP 10) (a) supply (gas, water) through pipes into a building: *We can't occupy the new house until gas and water are laid on.* (b) (colloq.) organize; arrange for (entertainment, etc.): *Theatres and concerts*

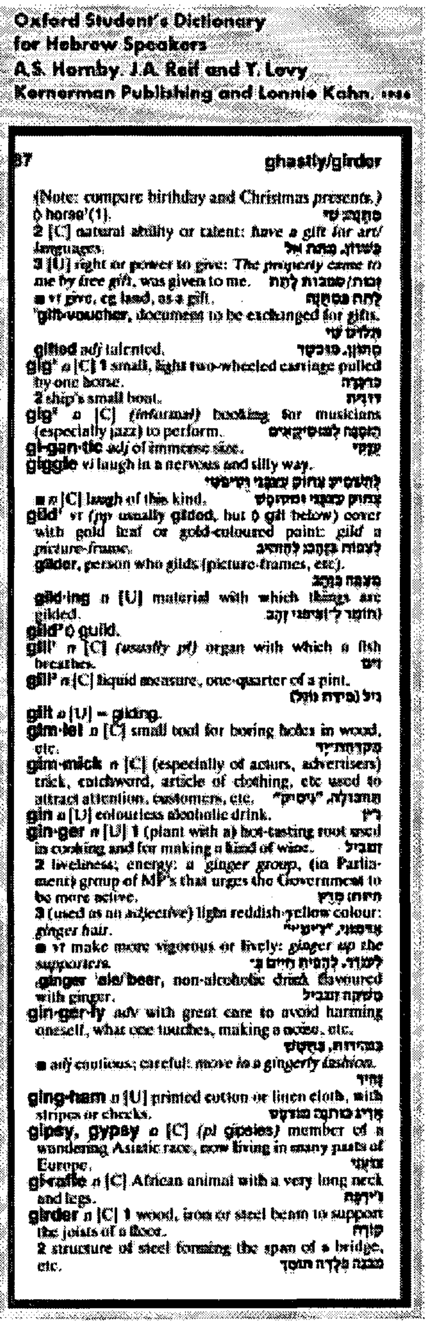
Figure 1. The New Method English Dictionary, Michael West and James Endicott, Longman, 1935.

Figure 2. The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English,
A.S. Hornby, E.V. Gatenby, and H. Wakefield, Oxford University Press, 1948.



Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary
of Current English. English-English-Korean
A.S. Hornby, A.P. Cowie, A.C. Gimson
S.M. Ramsaran, L. Todd
Panmun Book Company, Ltd., 1981

worm/worry



Oxford Student's Dictionary
for Hebrew Speakers
A.S. Hornby, J.A. Reif and Y. Levy
Kernerman Publishing and Lonnie Kahn, 1986

87 **ghastly/girder**

(Note: compare birthday and Christmas presents.)
◊ **horse'**(1).
2 [C] natural ability or talent: *have a gift for art/languages.*
3 [U] right or power to give: *The property came to me by free gift*, was given to me.
■ *vt* give, eg land, as a gift.
ˈ**gift-voucher**, document to be exchanged for gifts.
gifted *adj* talented.
gig¹ *n* [C] 1 small, light two-wheeled carriage pulled by one horse.
2 ship's small boat.
gig² *n* [C] (*informal*) booking for musicians (especially jazz) to perform.
gi·gan·tic *adj* of immense size.
giggle *vi* laugh in a nervous and silly way.
■ *n* [C] laugh of this kind.
gild¹ *vt* (*pp* usually **gilded**, but ◊ **gilt** below) cover with gold leaf or gold-coloured paint: *gild a picture-frame.*
gilder, person who gilds (picture-frames, etc).
gild·ing *n* [U] material with which things are gilded.
gild² ◊ **guild.**
gill¹ *n* [C] (*usually pl*) organ with which a fish breathes.
gill² *n* [C] liquid measure, one-quarter of a pint.
gilt *n* [U] = **gilding.**
gim·let *n* [C] small tool for boring holes in wood, etc.
gim·mick *n* [C] (especially of actors, advertisers) trick, catchword, article of clothing, etc used to attract attention, customers, etc.
gin *n* [U] colourless alcoholic drink.
gin·ger *n* [U] 1 (plant with a) hot-tasting root used in cooking and for making a kind of wine.
2 liveliness; energy: *a* ˈ*ginger group*, (in Parliament) group of MP's that urges the Government to be more active.
3 (used as an adjective) light reddish-yellow colour: *ginger hair.*
■ *vt* make more vigorous or lively: *ginger up the supporters.*
ˌ**ginger** ˈ**ale/beer**, non-alcoholic drink flavoured with ginger.
gin·ger·ly *adv* with great care to avoid harming oneself, what one touches, making a noise, etc.
■ *adj* cautious; careful: *move in a gingerly fashion.*
ging·ham *n* [U] printed cotton or linen cloth, with stripes or checks.
gipsy, gypsy *n* [C] (*pl* **gipsies**) member of a wandering Asiatic race, now living in many parts of Europe.
giraffe *n* [C] African animal with a very long neck and legs.
girder *n* [C] 1 wood, iron or steel beam to support the joists of a floor.
2 structure of steel forming the span of a bridge, etc.

Figure 3. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, English-Korean, A.S. Hornby, A.P. Cowie, and A.C. Grimson, Panum Book Company, Ltd., 1981.

Figure 4. Oxford Student's Dictionary for Hebrew Speakers, A.S. Hornby and J.A. Reif, Kernerman Publishing and Lonnie Kahn, 1986.

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