
Examples and Collocations in the French 'Dictionnaire de langue'

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1. Introduction

It is still unusual in Britain to find a working lexicographer with the time and inclination to keep an ear tuned to current developments in linguistics. When the dictionary-maker can move with assurance and distinction between the two worlds, as Sue Atkins does, we have a rarity to be cherished. In the course of a career that has given us two major bilingual dictionaries and a succession of incisive, illuminating papers, Sue has combined an insider's critical view of existing dictionaries – especially monolingual and bilingual learners' dictionaries – with an active engagement with syntax and lexical semantics (Atkins and Levin 1995, Atkins, Levin and Song 1996), including, notably, a collaboration with Charles Fillmore in the field of frame semantics (Atkins 1994, Fillmore and Atkins 1992). And not content with extending the reach of relevant theory and description into dictionary-making, Sue has led the movement in promoting empirical research into dictionary uses and users, both as a way of improving the products themselves and as the best means of enhancing their effective use (Atkins 1998).

In this chapter, and as a tribute to Sue Atkins, I propose to tackle an aspect of dictionary structure – examples – in the treatment of which linguistic expertise and concern for didactic effectiveness are both essential elements. And to provide a critical perspective on English lexicography from another dictionary culture, I shall focus on the French monolingual 'dictionnaire de langue'.¹ There is a direct connection between the excellence of the works I shall discuss and the enviable degree of linguistic expertise displayed by their editors. On the whole, they order this matter better in France.

Many of the issues I shall touch on, linguistic and presentational, have exercised French lexicographers since the 1960s, and there is a measure of agreement on the types of examples that are appropriate for larger and smaller dictionaries. This is partly, as Quemada has shown, the result of strong and persistent influences from the past. As regards examples, the prestige of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, first published in 1694, ensured that later French dictionaries would lay stress, in an unbroken tradition, on illustrative examples,

and especially ‘minimal syntagmatic units’, or collocations (Quemada 1968: 507). Another long-standing subject of interest, as Hausmann has shown, is the *source* of examples: are they ‘les *exemples* rédigés par les lexicographes’ or ‘les *citations* empruntées aux auteurs’ (Hausmann 1987: 107); and what kinds of supporting context do they provide?

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the forms that examples take and the illustrative functions that they serve. We begin (in Section 2) by setting up a framework of example types. Here we examine and attempt to refine the notions of *made-up examples* (cf. Hausmann’s ‘*exemples rédigés*’) and *textual quotations* (‘*citations empruntées*’), pointing out that the difference between the two types need not be clear-cut, since quotations are often, and to varying degrees, adapted. Again, we focus on and define Quemada’s ‘minimal syntagmatic units’, also to be referred to as ‘skeleton examples’ (cf. Palmer 1936), which carry much of the burden of illustration in monolingual dictionaries of various types and sizes.

Examples in this part of the discussion will be drawn from two widely praised and highly influential one-volume dictionaries, the *Dictionnaire du français contemporain* (DFC) (first edition, 1966) and *Le Petit Robert* (PR) (second edition, 1993). Our framework of example types will reflect the forms they take in those dictionaries – though some later modification will be needed when we turn to consider major, multi-volume works. The functions of the various example types in DFC and PR will also be examined.

In Sections 4 and 5, I shall be concerned with the forms taken by examples, and their didactic and cultural functions, in two multi-volume monolingual French dictionaries of the present day, namely *Le Grand Robert* (second edition, 1985), and *Le Trésor de la langue française* (1971-94). The analysis of examples and their uses in dictionaries such as these needs to be set in a historical context, and though a detailed account will not be attempted, I shall refer (in Section 3) to the circumstances which led to the inclusion of invented and simplified examples in the French Academy’s dictionary of 1694, and the exclusion of literary citations. We shall find, incidentally, that there is often a close connection between the selection of extracts from literary texts and the desire to provide examples that have *resonance* in the reader’s mind. As Jean and Claude Dubois have remarked (1971: 92), ‘les exemples littéraires font partie de la tradition esthétique et morale’. Conversely, as we shall see, there is often a close link between the simplification of examples, made-up or borrowed, and a *pedagogically* inspired wish to provide minimal contexts for sense recognition and sentence building.

2. Citations, examples and collocations

As I have already suggested, a number of French lexicographers have, over the past thirty or more years, and with some measure of agreement, succeeded in identifying the types of examples thought to be of most value in the 'lexical' dictionary (Quemada 1968, Rey-Debove 1968, Dubois and Dubois 1971, Imbs 1979, Rey 1985). Interestingly – though these scholars will, understandably, have had no knowledge of what had been written on the subject, in Japan, over thirty years previously – the expatriate teacher and linguist Harold Palmer, then director of the Tokyo Institute for Research in English Teaching, developed a scheme of dictionary examples intended to meet the needs of foreign learners of English (Palmer 1936; cf. Cowie 1999a).² Though Palmer's framework was comparatively simple, interesting parallels can be drawn between his categorization and the later French schemes, and I shall refer to these in what follows.

Quotations, whether from a literary or non-literary source, or from speech or writing, played no part in the early EFL dictionaries, and in fact did not make their appearance until the corpus-based dictionaries of the late 1980s. The dictionary in our set which comes closest to an English learner's dictionary – DFC – contains no quotations either. On the surface, PR is quite different, each page containing from 10 to 50 citations in brackets followed by the name of an author or periodical (Rey 1992: xv). But these are not the 'minimally adapted' quotations, typically complete sentences, referred to at A in Fig. 1 (below), that are regularly found in the larger dictionaries. Though a number of examples in PR are complete sentences, many are noun phrases or subordinate clauses, clearly adapted from some larger independent unit. Consider, for example:

- (1) << *Les sphères célestes de la philosophie* >> (FRANCE)
 << *Quand viennent les chaleurs de l'été* >> (DAUD.³)

Note, too, that any stylistic interest such examples may bring is subsidiary to the chief editor's main purpose: they are chosen to illustrate normal usage: 'c'est pourquoi des phrases volontairement banales, très courtes, ont souvent été retenues' (Rey 1992: xv). We shall return to such 'syntagmes minimaux' below.

If we now return to quoted sentences, and take account of the possible removal, during compilation, of anaphoric pronouns such as *ceci*, *cela*, and time and place adverbials like *alors*, *là* – thus making the examples intelligible independently of context – we are in fact edging towards the second type of example – the decontextualized sentence example, one whose components, apart from the definiendum, are already familiar to the intended user. (See Type B, Fig. 1.)

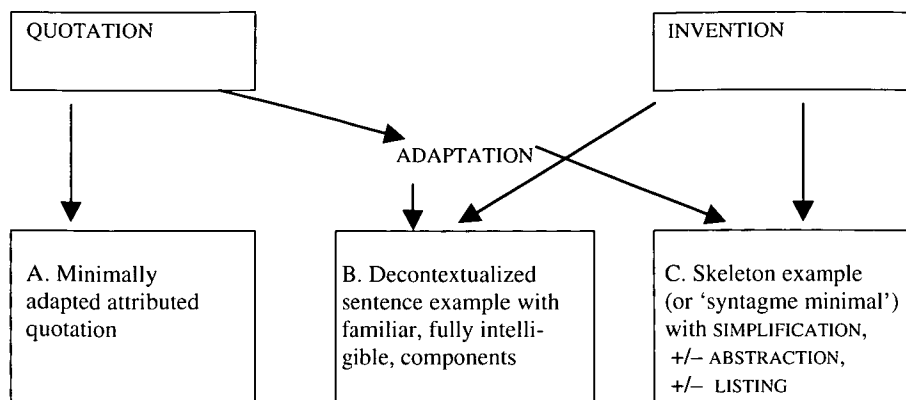


Fig. 1. Types of illustrative example

Several considerations – especially in one-volume monolingual dictionaries – argue in favour of such examples, whether these are the products of ADAPTATION or INVENTION. The first is economy. To ensure that a dictionary is of manageable size, examples will for the most part not be allowed to exceed the limits of a sentence, or perhaps a phrase, and therefore not be dependent on a wider context for complete elucidation (Dubois and Dubois 1971). Typical examples at this level, that is to say, are *isolated sentences, not dependent for full understanding on an explanatory context* (Cowie 1989: 59). When this condition is not met in a quotation, the structure and/or vocabulary of the excerpt may, as we have shown, be adapted. And made-up examples, while contriving to be natural, must satisfy the same conditions.

Granted that understanding of the extract and of its included headword is not dependent on context, it is also essential that the words and (where present) the idioms making up the sentence should not be less familiar and understandable than the definiendum. To be a satisfactory example, in other words, the quoted extract or ‘exemple forgé’ must be *fully intelligible* (Cowie 1999a: 135). In the following quotation from Maupassant appearing in the *Petit Robert* entry for *embarcation*, we find several words – all co-hyponyms of the headword – that are likely to be less well known than the headword itself. The result is that *yole*, *skif*, and so on, whose purpose is to throw light on *embarcation*, are themselves partly explained by it.

- (2) << *Des flottes de yoles, de skifs (sic), de périssaires, de podoscaphes, de gigs, d'embarcations de toute forme et de toute nature.* >> (MAUPASS.)

Quoted material, then, even when adapted, as no doubt in that case, may be somewhat opaque – even to native speakers. However, compilers who make up

their own examples may fall into the opposite trap of sacrificing linguistic naturalness to explanatory fullness (Cowie 1989: 59). The perfect balance is struck when the editor devises a sentence that illuminates the meaning of the headword, does so without reference to a context, and is at the same time convincingly natural. The following examples from the entry for *patte* in DFC, while recalling to English readers that *patte* collocates with *homard* and *poule* (where of course it translates *claw*) as well as with *chien* and *chat*, provide a defining collocational range (or collocability) for the entry word.

- (3) *Le chien tend la patte pour avoir un sucre. Les pattes d'un homard. La poule fouillait la terre de sa patte. Le chat mit sa patte sur la soucoupe.*

Some examples in this dictionary and others, incidentally, are a reminder that the typical environment in which words are placed can become what Clarence Barnhart (quoted by Drysdale 1987: 216) has called a 'forcing illustration', that is, one that can only be read with the correct interpretation of the headword. In the following entry for *bouton* (the source is again the DFC), the examples convey the meaning of the word by describing the uses of the object, but naturalness is not strained (cf. Rey-Debove 1971).

- (4) *Des boutons de nacre ferment le chemisier. Les boutons de manchettes rapprochent les deux bords des poignets de chemise.*

The two sets of examples just considered have been complete, self-explanatory *sentences*. They have also approximated to natural utterances, even where a possible quotation has had to be edited to make it easier to understand when removed from its context. Such examples, called 'sentence-sample' examples by Palmer (1936), fulfil an important function in many dictionaries, including learners' dictionaries of English as well as French. While they have a part to play in indicating the syntactic and lexical environments of the headword, another key function, especially when they are literary quotations, is to refer the reader to a cultural context, as in the case of *le chat ronronne de plaisir quand on le caresse* (DFC), an example which evokes an event familiar within a French domestic context (Dubois and Dubois 1971: 89).

Alongside 'sentence-sample' examples, several French 'dictionnaires de langue', including DFC and PR, contain examples that could not occur in natural speech or writing since they are the product of various types and degrees of *reduction*. These are commonly referred to by French scholars as 'syntagmes', with a further division into 'syntagmes nominaux' and 'syntagmes verbaux', and by Harold Palmer (1936) as 'skeleton-type' examples. (Type C.)

If we examine a number of syntagmas, it quickly becomes apparent that many are not examples at all, if by examples we mean instances of *performance*,

actual or invented (Cowie 1999b).⁴ They are the result, specifically, of SIMPLIFICATION and ABSTRACTION – what I have elsewhere called ‘minimal lexicalized patterns’ (Cowie 1995, 1996) – and their value has long been recognized in French and Italian lexical dictionaries, and in English learners’ dictionaries.

Simplification can be seen in the following examples from *Le Petit Robert*. As the joint chief editor, Alain Rey, says – recognizing the nominal and verbal types – ‘ces exemples sont le plus souvent brefs, parfois simplifiés: groupes adjectif-substantif sans articles, exemples verbaux à l’infinitif (le soin de les conjuguer étant laissé au lecteur)’ (Rey 1993: xv).

- (5) *Graver une inscription, des caractères.*
Graver un nom sur un arbre.
Graver un disque.

As for abstraction, one can see that, in the following examples from the DFC, category labels such as ‘quelqu’un’, ‘quelque chose’ are used to represent *classes* of substitutable items at one or more points.

- (6) *Embarquer quelqu’un, quelque chose*
Embarquer quelqu’un dans une affaire

A further characteristic of the skeleton example, often found in English learners’ dictionaries, and in French lexical dictionaries large and small, is the LISTING of items known to be substitutable at various points in the example (Cowie 1999a). Note the alternative verbs and object nouns in the following extract from the DFC:

- (7) *Mettre, verser du baume sur une plaie, une blessure,*
dans le coeur de quelqu’un

Finally, it is clear that these various procedures can be combined when devising particular examples. Thus, example (6) shows a listing of abstract categories, while (7) illustrates abstraction and simplification – note the absence of any modifying adjectives – as well, of course, as listing.

In discussing the *simplified* syntagma, especially, we need to ask whether *collocation* – a term more familiar to British than to French lexicographers – can be used in the same sense. We can put to one side the so-called *grammatical* collocations, that is, combinations of two words one of which is an open-class word, such as a verb or adjective, and the other a closed-class word, such as a preposition – as witness, *disagree with* and *happy about* (Benson 1985, Cowie 1999a) – and instead focus on *lexical* collocations. Lexical collocations consist of two (or more) open-class words in a specific syntactic pattern – for instance,

verb + object noun (*tondre la pelouse*), noun + modifying adjective (*célibataire endurci*), modifying adverb + adjective (*grièvement blessé*).⁵ At this point it will be clear that the simplified examples at (5) (e.g. *Graver un disque*) are also lexical collocations – while any listing, such as *Graver une inscription, des caractères* represents the collapsing of two or more individual collocations of the same grammatical type. Of course, as well as reflecting these possibilities of combination, the collocations provided in both dictionaries represent a *variety* of structural types. In the following entry for the noun *grève* (“strike”) in PR, for instance, we find examples realizing the structures verb + noun, noun + adjective and noun + preposition + noun:

(8) *Faire grève, se mettre en grève. ... Grève générale.*

Grève perlée. Grève tournante, ... Grève du gaz, des transports.

3. Collocations as dictionary examples: the historical context

The tradition of compiling monolingual dictionaries in which skeleton examples, or lexical collocations, play a leading exemplifying role is for the most part located in continental Europe, specifically in France, Germany and Italy, and is particularly evident today in the French ‘dictionnaires de langue’ and the Italian ‘dizionari scolastici’ (Cowie 1996). The United States and Britain, it should be noted, are given a low rating by Hausmann (1987) in his survey of the relative prominence given to this feature in various national traditions – though in the case of Britain, he makes an honourable exception of the English learners’ dictionary, and an exception should be made, too, of the innovative *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998). Both of the French dictionaries we have been examining are ‘pedagogical’ dictionaries, the DFC being addressed ‘aux élèves de l’enseignement secondaire et aux étudiants étrangers’ (Dubois et al. 1966: v) and the PR being intended for students, professional users and ‘le grand public francophone’ (Rey 1992: ix), and the EFL dictionaries share with them the characteristic that their shorter examples – the collocations – are designed to show the chief combinatorial possibilities of words in their various senses.⁶

A significant historical forerunner so far as the choice of examples is concerned was the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie*, first published in Paris in 1694. It was certainly not the case that, at its inception, the use of literary citations received no support. Indeed, Chapelain’s plan of 1636 had envisaged systematic recourse to great authors of the past, on the model of the Italian *Vocabolario dell’Accademia della Crusca* (Quemada 1972). But this purist and literary

orientation was rejected by important elements at Court and in the cultivated classes, and the Academy abandoned the notion of including citations from literary texts – the opposite course, it will be noted, to that taken later by Samuel Johnson. The compilers in fact drew on their own intuition for suitable examples: ‘étant Académiciens, [ils] considéraient qu’ils détenaient le beau parler’ (Rey 1985: xviii). But as we saw earlier, invented examples can vary quite considerably. They may be full sentences, and somehow convince the reader that they could occur naturally in discourse. On the other hand, the examples could come closer, through abstraction and simplification, to ‘skeleton’ examples, and many of the examples devised by the compilers were to be of this type. We can see in the following article for *encourager* how the balance is struck in practice.

- (9) ENCOURAGER. v. a. Donner courage, exciter, inciter. *encourager à bien faire. il m’encouragea à cela. ce bon succès l’a fort encouragé. quand il eut encouragé ses soldats. ils s’encourageoient l’un l’autre.*

This entry contains made-up sentence and clause examples, of which *quand il eut encouragé ses soldats* is an instance, but it also has *encourager à bien faire*, which is stripped down to a skeleton example. We shall find, too, examples involving both simplification and listing. In the next entry, listed object nouns are provided for both the meanings given. These are verb + noun collocations which the user can flesh out and expand according to need.

- (10) ENTAMER v. a. Faire une petite ouverture, une petite incision.
Entamer la peau, entamer la chair ... Oster une petite partie d’une chose entière. Entamer du pain, un melon, un pasté. entamer une pièce de drap. ...

The resemblance between this entry and those in later learners’ dictionaries – English as well as French – is striking. Yet the didactic emphasis of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* should not surprise us. According to its Preface, the dictionary was intended to serve as a model for cultivated native speakers and as a learning tool for foreigners wishing to acquire the French language (Cowie 1998). As a result, there are very many noun and verb ‘syntagmes’ designed to meet those needs. As Hausmann has noted, a rhetorical tradition led the French Academicians to ‘bourrer de collocations leur premier dictionnaire de 1694’ (Hausmann 1987: 111).

4. Examples in Le Grand Robert

The second edition of the *Grand Robert de la langue française. Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique ...*, in nine volumes, 'entièrement revue et enrichie par Alain Rey', was published in 1985 – with 'une édition augmentée' following in 2001. For its rich syntagmatic treatment of entries, which follows a consistent, systematic pattern, this remarkable work has no parallel among English-language dictionaries of the same or similar size published in the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed for a treatment of comparable richness one has to turn to *Le Trésor de la langue française*.

In introducing the kinds of examples to be used in the dictionary, Rey makes a major distinction which will be reflected recurrently in the structure of entries. Examples are broken down into (a) 'exemples intégrés au texte', that is, examples which, while italicized, form part of the same 'defining block' as the definition proper, and (b) 'citations référencées', or more or less unaltered attributed quotations. Consider the arrangement at **1.** in the entry for the verb ARBORER, where the citation from Étienne Pasquier comes last in a smaller type-size:

- (11) ARBORER ... ♦ **1.** Planter, dresser, élever (qqch.) de manière à exposer comme un emblème. *Arborer les bannières, des enseignes, des drapeaux. Arborer les trois couleurs ...* Je n'avais jamais lu *Arborer une enseigne pour la planter*, sinon aux (*dans les*) ordonnances que fit l'Amiral de Chastillon ...

Étienne Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*

Within this structure, the 'integrated' examples (*Arborer les bannières*, etc., in the above entry) are further divided into 'énoncés observables' (i.e. observable utterances) and 'énoncés traités et simplifiés' (i.e. adapted and simplified utterances), with the recognition by Rey that many of the latter come from the former. This division somewhat cuts across the distinctions drawn earlier in Fig. 1. The 'citations référencées' are clearly type A in that framework, while 'traités' relates to both B and C and 'simplifiés' to C. All the examples 'intégrés au texte', note, are 'chargés de montrer au lecteur les principales possibilités combinatoires de chaque mot' (Rey 1985: xxxvi), or, more precisely, of each word in its various senses.

Indeed, in long, complex entries such as ARME, the dictionary provides a great number of examples, fulfilling different illustrative functions. A major function, which is often served by simplified examples, and quite complex listings, is indeed to demonstrate collocability but also to clarify meaning. The skeleton

examples shown at (11), above, perform these functions, as do the following two lists of verb-noun collocations supporting one of the senses of plural ARMES:

- (12) *Abandonner, déposer, poser, rendre les armes. Mettre, jeter bas les armes.*

However, the employment of examples for these purposes is by no means confined to this dictionary, as we have seen, and shall see again. The true originality of *Le Grand Robert*, as far as the use of examples is concerned, lies in the support they give to the ‘analogical’ structure of the dictionary.

Inspired in part by the *Thesaurus* of Peter Mark Roget (1852) and the *Dictionnaire analogique de la langue française* of P. Boissière (1862), Paul Robert had, in his first edition of 1958-64, sought to achieve a marriage between an alphabetical treatment supported by quotations – owing something to Émile Littré – and an *analogical* dictionary which would bring together groupings of different words expressing the same notion (Rey 1985: xvii). In fact, his dictionary would feature a cross-reference system designed to reflect a *variety* of semantic relations, including antonymy, part-whole relations and cause-effect relations. There would, too, be ‘mots-centres, autour desquels s’organise tout un vocabulaire’ (Rey 1985: xxxix). Such an ambitious scheme would have important consequences for the roles that examples were called on to play in the dictionary.

As an example of a word-centre, consider ARBRE in *Le Grand Robert*, and the dense, multi-layered structure that is built up in that entry (see Fig. 2).

Note first the development of the definition with its emphasis on the chief components of the tree and its extension above the ground. There then follow a number of noun-phrase examples of the form ‘*le / la NOUN de l’arbre*’, in which the slot is filled by a noun denoting a component part (say *tige*). As the following selection shows, their ordering takes the reader from the bottom to the top of the tree:

- (13) *Les racines, la tige ..., les branches d’un arbre. Noeud vital de l’arbre. ... Le feuillage de l’arbre. ... Le haut, le sommet, la tête d’un arbre.*

Later on, we are invited to consider the annual cycle of the tree. Set out in chronological order we find verbal skeleton examples (‘syntagmes verbaux’) denoting stages in that progression: *L’arbre prend bien, prend racine, ... croît, se développe, pousse, végète* – and so on. This is simply to consider the syntagmatic aspect of the description. There is also a rich paradigmatic treatment, since at various points in the section dealing with the structure of the tree (see again Fig. 2), the names of components are followed by their synonyms

in bold print, thus: *la tête d'un arbre*. ⇒ **Apex, cime, faîte, houppier, sommet**. Such an arrangement, which clearly derives from the Saussurean structuralist tradition, as well as Roget, would provide a superb basis for vocabulary development in a native or foreign-language context.

ARBRE [arbr] n. m. — 1080; lat. *arbor, arboris*.

★ I. Grand végétal ligneux dont la tige, qui s'élève à plus de 6 mètres quand la plante est adulte (au-dessous, on parle d'*arbrisseau*), ne porte de branches qu'à partir d'une certaine hauteur au-dessus du sol (Voir les mots en *arbor-* et en *dendro-*). *Les racines, la tige* (⇒ **Tronc; bille, grume**), *les branches d'un arbre*. *Nœud vital de l'arbre*. ⇒ **Collet, pied**. *Coupée transversalement, la tige d'un arbre présente trois parties: le canal médullaire* (⇒ **Moelle**), *le bois* (⇒ **Bois, cambium, cerne, cœur, duramen, nœud, xylème**) et *l'écorce* (⇒ **Aubier, écorce, liber**). *La sève* circule entre les racines et les feuilles de l'arbre*. *Le creux d'un arbre*. *La charpente de l'arbre*. ⇒ **Branchage, branche, brindille, dard, embranchement, fourche, fourchet, gourmand, lambourde, rame, rameau, ramée, ramure**. *Le feuillage d'un arbre*. ⇒ **Feuille; aiguille, épine; (poét.) chevelure, couronne, couvert, frondaison**. *Le haut, le sommet, la tête d'un arbre*. ⇒ **Apex, cime, faîte, houppier, sommet**.

Ensemble d'arbres. ⇒ **Bois, forêt; bosquet** (→ ci-dessous, après la liste des noms d'arbres).

La vie d'un arbre. *L'arbre prend bien, prend racine* (⇒ **Enraciner**), *croît, se développe, pousse, végète; bourgeonne* (⇒ **Bourgeon, œil**), *s'épanouit* (⇒ **Débourrement**), *fleurit* (⇒ **Bouton, fleur**), *s'affruite, se met à fruit, produit, porte des fruits* (⇒ **Fruit**); *se défeuille, s'effeuille, verdit, verdoie, reverdit*.

Aspects, caractères, nature des arbres (⇒ **Espèce, essence**). — *Arbre agreste, franc (franc de pied), sauvage* (⇒ **Sauvageon**); *cultivé* (⇒ **Élève**), *de semis, greffé, en caisse, en pleine terre, en plein vent*. — *Arbre indigène ou exotique* (dans un lieu donné). *Acclimater* un arbre*. — *Arbre géant ou nain*. — *Arbre d'un seul brin, d'une seule venue; élané, vigoureux, en pleine sève*. — *Arbre chevelu, feuillu, frondescent, frondifère, touffu*. — *Arbre à feuilles persistantes* (⇒ **Vert**) ou *caduques* (⇒ **Feuillu**). — *Arbre épineux*. — *Arbre fleuri; chargé, couvert de fleurs; fertile ou stérile*. — *Arbre branchu, fourchu, moussu* (⇒ **Mousse; bryon**), *nouveaux, rameux*. — *Arbre caverneux, creux*. — *Arbre antique, chenu, rabougri*. —

Fig. 2. Part entry for ARBRE (*Le Grand Robert*)

5. Examples in *Le Trésor de la langue française*

Despite the marked differences of size between *Le Grand Robert* – six volumes in its first edition, published from 1958 to 1964, nine in its second, of 1985, six again in its new elaboration – and *Le Trésor de la langue française* – of which the sixteenth and final volume appeared in 1994 – and the greater dependence of *Le Trésor* on literary sources – though representing a narrower time-span (1789–1960) – there are certain similarities between the approaches taken to exemplification.⁷ As the highly original entry for ARBRE has demonstrated,

examples in *Le Grand Robert* often take a didactic shape, admirably suited to vocabulary development. While one cannot ascribe such specifically pedagogical aims to the editors of *Le Trésor*, it is nonetheless true that a didactically motivated desire for clarity lies behind the choice and arrangement of examples. In the words of the dictionary's first chief editor, Paul Imbs: 'leur différenciation, quant à leur structure ou à leur étendue, poursuivait un but surtout didactique, allant du plus simple au plus complexe' (1979: ix). And the practical outcome of aiming at such a progression is that, leaving aside the sometimes elaborate analogical element in *Le Grand Robert*, there are certain similarities between those parts of the microstructures of the two works which deal with definition and exemplification. If we consider sub-entry A. 1. A t ÉLÉGANT, ANTE, adj. in *Le Trésor* (Fig. 3, below), and compare it with the *Grand Robert* entry for ARBORER, v. tr. (11 above), we find in both the same broad divisions, namely: definition; 'exemples intégrés'; and attributed literary example(s), minimally abridged, and printed in a smaller type size.

ÉLÉGANT, ANTE, adj.

A. — [Domaine de l'esthétique en tant que science du beau dans la nature et dans l'art]

1. Qui se caractérise par une grâce faite d'harmonie, de légèreté et d'aisance dans la forme et les lignes, dans la disposition et les proportions des parties, dans le mouvement. *Un gilet de toile, dont la coupe élégante rachète la vulgarité de l'étoffe* (FLAUBERT, *Champs et grèves*, 1848, p. 163). *L'écriture de Vidame était d'ailleurs lisible, d'un dessin élégant et cursif qui rappelait assez bien les écritures du XVIII^e siècle* (DUHAMEL, *Suzanne*, 1941, p. 79) :

1. Le cou, plus étiré maintenant, a effacé les bourrelets graisseux qu'il esquissait sur la nuque, et celle-ci, fine, tendue, jaillit d'un trait élégant en une courbe parfaite.

HUYGHE, *Dialogue avec le visible*, 1955, p. 80.

SYNT. *Corps élégant et flexible; jambe au galbe élégant; geste rapide et élégant; s'asseoir d'un mouvement souple et élégant; simplicité élégante de la forme; ligne nerveuse et très élégante; décoration élégante et sobre; voiture élégante; élégant déshabillé, costume; élégante symétrie, beauté, architecture, colonne, sculpture; élégante silhouette, coiffure; élégante calligraphie; contours élégants; chevaux élégants; têtes élégantes et fines; chaussures élégantes; élégantes arabesques; élégantes fleurs; élégantes balustrades, ferrures.*

Fig. 3. Part entry for ÉLÉGANT (*Trésor de la langue française*)

And much the same justification is provided in *Le Trésor* as in *Le Grand Robert* for the inclusion, as a regular feature, of the nominal and verbal collocations. Here too they are intended to display the combinatorial possibilities of entries in their various senses, or 'de montrer de quelles associations minimales usuelles, ... était capable tel mot pris dans telle acception' (Imbs 1979: ix).

But there are at the same time, between the dictionaries, fine and broad differences of arrangement, of sources, and of descriptive intention. Whereas, in *Le Grand Robert*, most of the shorter examples are indeed 'minimal', and betray few of the peculiarities of actual utterance, in *Le Trésor* we sometimes find, immediately after the definition, an edited excerpt 'dépassant le simple syntagme binaire, et de ce fait exactement référencé' (Imbs 1979: ix). In the *élégant* entry, this type is represented by the examples from Flaubert and Duhamel, the first a complex noun phrase, the second a complex sentence.

Then again, in entries for the commoner words, and 'en cas de surabondance d'usances typées' (Imbs 1979: ix), the treatment of phraseology is rounded off by placing a broad range of short examples, usually verbal and/or nominal, and often with listing, in a block headed by the abbreviation SYNT. (i.e. 'syntagmes'). It can be seen from Fig. 3 that the examples are ordered according to complexity: patterns in which *élégant* is coordinated with another adjective come first; then follow adjective + noun and noun + adjective collocations.

What can be made of this extraordinary richness of exemplification? We need first to bear in mind that wherever they appear, and however they are adapted, examples in *Le Trésor* are drawn overwhelmingly from a corpus – are 'réellement et fréquemment attestés dans notre documentation' – and one in which literary material dominates. One has only to look at *jambe au galbe élégant* and *ligne nerveuse et très élégante* to be made aware that these phrases are not contrived, but come from specific, probably written, sources. And such choices, of course, point to broader preferences and judgements on the part of the editor, as when Imbs contrasts citations in the full sense – 'phrases riches en informations de type culturel concret' – with the shorter, commonplace examples – 'énoncés de la langue banale qui les précédaient immédiatement' (1979: x). Rey too laid stress on the value of the 'fragment de texte véhiculant une beauté stylistique' (1985: xxxvii), and did not shy away from the notion of the dictionary as, in part, a literary anthology. But a literary flavour pervades the structure of entries in *Le Trésor* whereas in *Le Grand Robert* it is only part of a more diverse whole.

One could argue that when examples are juxtaposed to the definition, as they are in the *élégant* entry, they contribute to the explanation and thus to the decoding role of the dictionary. But what of their appearance independently, at SYNT., in the same entry? Here, there is arguably a conscious purpose and an unconscious though, potentially, highly beneficial one. The conscious aim arises from a determination to make the dictionary record truly complete: it must provide a full account, not only of the word's meaning, but also of its typical lexical and grammatical environments. These must be supplied, even if, as one suspects, they are seldom referred to by native speakers. But for the non-native student or teacher they are an additional boon, providing as they do a record of collocability that is seldom matched by specialist dictionaries of collocations.

6. Conclusion

In her paper 'Theoretical lexicography and its relation to dictionary-making', Sue Atkins insists that theorists and practitioners must work together if dictionaries are to be improved, and 'electronic dictionaries are to rise to the challenge of the new medium' (1992-93: 30). She also identifies those linguists and those theoretical developments that appear to have special relevance to practical lexicography. She is right to identify the British and American scholars – Cruse and Fillmore among them – that she does. But as she surely also recognizes, lexicographers have a particular need, from time to time, to step outside their own languages and national traditions. Like the Russians, whose contribution since the walls began to crumble is immense, the French have much to teach us. First, they are less nervous about rubbing shoulders with linguists. French dictionary-makers find it less difficult than we do to accept the intimate – indeed necessary – association between lexicography and lexicology. (It is no accident that the leading French journal devoted to lexicography is entitled *Cahiers de lexicologie*). Second, the French recognize that all dictionaries are fundamentally didactic instruments, and that dictionaries fashioned for didactic ends may be works of high scholarship. Third, and this is the central theme of my chapter, examples – in the broadest sense – are regarded as an indispensable feature of French 'dictionnaires de langue', large and small. The use of specially devised examples, including collocations, has, in the course of centuries, become common practice, while the pedagogical value of such examples is well understood. And let us not overlook the quality of the work. The richness, diversity and fitness for purpose of examples in *Le Grand Robert* and *Le Trésor*, especially, are among the finest achievements of modern lexicography.

Notes

- ¹ The term 'dictionnaire de langue', for which there is no exact English equivalent, but for which the translation 'lexical dictionary' has been suggested (Cowie 1981), is a work which focuses on the grammatical forms and functions of words, their pronunciation and spellings, and their meanings and typical contexts – by contrast with the 'dictionnaire encyclopédique', or 'dictionnaire de choses et de notions' (Quemada 1968: 77; cf. Rey 1987, Pruvost 2002).
- ² Palmer's example types feature in his *Grammar of English Words* (1938) and, with modifications, in A. S. Hornby's *Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary* (1942).
- ³ i.e. Alphonse Daudet.
- ⁴ Though here, too, there is a continuum, as shall find when examining examples in *Le Trésor*, between those which, though simplified, bear all the marks of a literary origin, and those that are entirely invented.
- ⁵ I have not drawn the further distinction between 'free' and 'restricted' collocations, since this is one which few French lexicographers consider in discussions of exemplification. Moreover, as far as I can judge, none of the dictionaries examined here give special and regular prominence to the restricted type. Not all commentators, it should be noted, use the term 'collocation' in the same way: Hausmann (1985, 1989) uses collocation (*tout court*) to refer to what I call a restricted collocation. However, our definitions of the phenomenon are similar. In the case of *célibataire endurci*, the noun (or 'base') is used in its familiar, literal sense, while the adjective (the 'collocate') has a figurative sense found only in combination with the noun, or with very few similar nouns (*pêcheur*, *?rond-de-cuir endurci*). Note the stress laid here on the figurative sense of the collocate and a limited, arbitrary choice of possible bases (hence the 'restricted' of 'restricted collocation') (Cowie 1999a).
- ⁶ As Lamy has noted with regard to dictionaries such as DFC, 'their titles bear no trace of their vocations as dictionaries for foreign learners and they make only passing reference to foreign learners in their prefaces' (Lamy 1985: 25). However, and as she goes on to say, 'it would be foolish to suppose that foreign learners' interests cannot be met by presentations designed for natives' (*idem.*)
- ⁷ *Le Trésor de la langue française* draws on a variety of resources, including general and technical dictionaries and computerized and non-computerized archives. Initially manual, but later computerized, was *L'Inventaire Général de la Langue Française* (IGLF), assembled between 1936 and 1968 and consisting of about six million slips illustrating French words used in literary and technical contexts. The archive covers a period extending from the Middle Ages to the present day (Fléchon 1998). In 1960, IGLF was integrated into the computerized archive set up for *Le Trésor* (Pruvost 2000).

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