A Reflection on the Definition of Lexical Entries in the
English-isiZulu dictionary for learners

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Abstract
The writing and publishing of children's or learners' dictionaries especially in one of the indigenous South African languages is a genre that has been neglected by the majority of lexicographers and publishers. Following the Pan South African Language Board's (PanSALB) vision of promoting multilingualism in South Africa by the development and equal use of all official languages, the authors of this article believed that the writing and publishing of young and novice learners' dictionaries in an indigenous African language would advance this goal. The need for a learners' dictionary was especially noticeable during the teaching of a Short Course in Basic Communication in isiZulu. Research conducted here revealed that the lexicographic user needs were not provided for as the dictionaries available to these learners were cumbersome and confusing. All learners of a first, second or third language should have access to an uncomplicated, user-friendly dictionary in order to master their acquisition of language. With this aim in mind, the authors compiled an English/isiZulu dictionary of about 3000 lexical items containing illustrative material, cultural explanations and pronunciation guidance. The meaning descriptions of the selected contemporary words are straightforward and comprehensible, and applied in plain sentences taken from everyday conversations which bestow upon the user the opportunity to gain a more practical vocabulary. The intended target users of the dictionary are children and second-language learners acquiring the isiZulu vocabulary as a communicative tool. This research intends to consider the collection of the corpora, and analyse the definition of entries so as to determine the efficacy and quality of the information contained in the dictionary. Finally, the article proposes that the compilation of specific language purpose dictionaries will not only contribute to the acquisition of language, but also the development of indigenous African languages in general.

Keywords: *acquisition of language, children's dictionaries, indigenous South African languages, isiZulu, lexical entries, multilingualism, second-language learners*

1.   Introduction

The writing and publishing of children's and second-language learners' dictionaries especially in one of the indigenous South African languages is a field that has for a long time been neglected by terminographers or specialized lexicographers. Following the Pan South African Language Board's (PanSALB) vision of promoting indigenous African languages and multilingualism in South Africa by the development and equal use of all eleven official South African languages, the authors of this article believed that the writing and publishing of children's and second-language learners' language dictionaries in an indigenous African language will advance this goal. Language rights are affirmed in

section 29(2) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996,* which provides that every learner has the right to receive a basic education in the language of his or her choice, where this is reasonably practicable. The current education policy as regards language usage in South African schools promotes the use of mother-tongue instruction in the first three years of primary school (that is, from Grade 1 to Grade 3). These first three years in the foundation phase should provide learners with an adequate level of language proficiency in the indigenous African language mother-tongue, as from Grade 4 these scholars are taught in either English or Afrikaans. It is suggested that a basic learners' dictionary for the foundation phase of elementary schooling will not only assist these beginner learners in developing and strengthening their mother-tongue as the language of learning and teaching, but will also strengthen their knowledge of elementary English in order to facilitate the transition to this language in Grade 4, as recommended by the current curriculum and assessment policy statements. Furthermore, the *Language-in-Education Policy* 1997 (adopted in accordance with the *National Education Policy Act* 27 of 1996) stipulates that all children should learn more than one language at school in order to promote multilingualism in the country. It has been suggested by the South African Government that learners in the lower grades, especially non-African learners, must be exposed to the indigenous African languages. In this regard, it is anticipated that the dictionary will also play a significant role in assisting these learners in their acquisition of isiZulu and English.

The principle proposed in this article is that ideally all learners should start using dictionaries written in the indigenous languages (whether a monolingual isiZulu dictionary or an English-isiZulu dictionary) at preschools, a practice which should continue both at lower and higher primary schools. It is submitted that English-isiZulu dictionaries for young learners can play a major role in the educational needs for children, second-language learners as well for anyone who would like to acquire a language other than their own language in a multicultural society such as South Africa. This objective is affirmed by Thorndike (1935, p. 1) who regards the main function of dictionaries as accomplishing a significant role in language acquisition and learning by children. However, such a dictionary performs a far more important function as well, according to Béjoint (2000, pp. 137-138) who states that:

> …dictionaries occupy a very special position in all the societies that produce them. They are not only tools for more effective linguistic communication, but also quasi-magical instruments for the improvement of the individual, means to gain access to the dominant culture […] The emblematic power of the … dictionary is so strong, so real in a way, that the dictionary is felt to be necessary to any nation that wants to be recognized as an independent entity.

This article provides background information to the compilation of the *English-isiZulu dictionary for learners* , focusing particularly on the lexical entries in the dictionary, that is, the paraphrasing of the meaning of these entries, their translation equivalents, examples of use and the translation of such examples. The reasons for the establishment of the dictionary will first be discussed, where after an examination of the dictionary itself will follow. In this discussion, the terminological process of corpora selection and description will be explained.

2.   Why compile a learners' dictionary in English and isiZulu?

For many years in the majority of South African black schools, children from different African indigenous

languages from lower to higher grades did not have the opportunity of enjoying the comfort of using a children's dictionary or even a young learners' bilingual dictionary in their own languages. One cannot remember ever seeing children using a picture dictionary, children's dictionary or learners' dictionaries written in isiZulu, or in any other South African indigenous African language. This was mainly due to limited resources and expertise as a result of historical policies. As in many other countries in Africa, South Africa primarily relied on and developed the former colonial minority languages to the detriment of the indigenous African languages (Chabata, 2013, p. 51). As such, the first reason for compiling a learners' dictionary in isiZulu is consequently to bridge the gap left by previous injustices. There is a dire need for such a dictionary in African languages.

Young learners in African schools did not previously have the pleasure of reading age-appropriate children's story books and a relevant children's dictionary that would assist them in learning vocabulary. There was consequently no culture of dictionary use established amongst African children. Over the years, dictionaries in isiZulu have been published, but all of these dictionaries have adult readers as their target audience. Two prominent dictionaries here are, for example, the *Zulu-English Dictionary* (1953) written by C.M. Doke and B.W. Vilakazi, and S. Nyembezi's *Isichazimazwi Sanamuhla Nangomuso* (*Dictionary for today and the future*) (1992). These dictionaries are for adult users, as the type or font size is small, the format is very dense, and the dictionaries difficult to consult or use, mainly because the lemmas in the dictionaries consist of only the stem of a word. As isiZulu is written in a conjunctive writing style where relatively short linguistic words are joined together to form long orthographic words with complex morphological structures, it is quite difficult for second language- and young learners to identify the stem of the word in a dictionary:

> Whereas dictionaries making use of a left-expanded lemmatization strategy undoubtedly make it easier for the user to ascertain what the full (orthographical) form is of, in particular, the noun, words still need to be found under their stems - a process which entails a high level of grammatical and morphological knowledge and skills on the part of the user. (Gouws et al., 2013, p. 921).

The recently published *Oxford school dictionary/Isichamazwi Sesikole; IsiZulu-IsiNgisi/English-Zulu* (2015) is an improvement on the older publications, as it is the only text which may be utilised for children. The authors of this isiZulu-English dictionary regard their product as a new resource for children who speak the nation's most common African language and most widely-spoken home language, that is, isiZulu. However, as the target users of this dictionary are learners in Grades 4-9, this dictionary is still not yet entirely accessible for younger children and new learners of the language. The dictionary compiled by the authors of this article will assist both young children and second-language learners in order to enable them to converse with one another, compare the vocabulary and meaning of words and translate from the one language into the other. This action will indeed reflect that bilingual dictionaries, be it an English-isiZulu dictionary or an isiZulu-English dictionary, can help break down language barriers and promote cross-cultural understanding in South Africa as Smith (2010, p. 1) notes:

> South Africa has 11 official languages and this diversity poses questions for education. Many children use Zulu at home, especially in rural arears, but are often taught in English at school, putting them at a potential disadvantage. Vukile McKenzie, a radio personality and founder of the Khanyisa Development Trust, which works to enhance

education in rural schools in Kwazulu-Natal, said: "The learner in South Africa not only faces challenges of learning to read, think and write, but quite possibly to communicate, understand and influence in a language other than the one his or her parents, or significant adults use. An educational tool such as this dictionary – and other bilingual or multilingual dictionaries for that matter – equips children learning both isiZulu and English to access one another in a meaningful way."

Except for young African children, an English-isiZulu dictionary is needed for new learners of a second- or third African language. These learners, whether children or adults, should have access to an easy-to-use dictionary in order to effectively master their acquisition of the new language.

3.   The *English-isiZulu dictionary for learners*

Working from the basis that "dictionaries should be designed with a special set of users in mind" (Householder & Saporta, 1962, p. 279), the *English-isiZulu dictionary for learners* was created especially for the lexicographic needs of prospective beginner learners of the isiZulu language. While a dictionary is regarded as a "repository of meanings of words" (Lew, 2010, p. 290), or a "book that contains a … list of words in alphabetical order with the meanings explained or written in another language, or a similar product for use on a computer" (McIntosh, 2013, p. 388), a children's dictionary is differentiated from a general dictionary as follows:

> A DICTIONARY aimed at children. While the transition between the dictionary for younger children and the SCHOOL DICTIONARY is fluid, the former is less bound by the conventions of the traditional, fully fledged GENERAL DICTIONARY than the latter. It is limited on a BASIC VOCABULARY and uses illustrations and 'stories' - often humorous - rather than formal definitions, to explain the meanings of the (predominantly concrete) words. (Hartman & James, 1998, p. 20)

With the above explanations and aims in mind, the *English-isiZulu dictionary for learners* was compiled aimed at the beginner learner of isiZulu; and also at the not-so-advanced learner or second-language learner who finds the larger dictionaries too complex and extensive for his or her specific requirements. The language of the dictionary is aimed at this level of expertise and focuses deliberately on vocabulary surrounding children and beginner learners on this specific level. As such, most of the words listed in the dictionary are regarded as those usually learned in the first years of language acquisition, and the lexical items are defined or described at the level of these target users.

Language is culture bound; therefore the dictionary necessarily also includes cultural explanations. Where possible, cultural explanations are accompanied with colourful illustrations to enhance the comprehensibility of the particular cultural term. The amount of encyclopaedic information in the dictionary was limited to 3000 lemmas in order not to encumber the young and novice learners who are the intended users of the bilingual terminological dictionary. As the most important objectives of the dictionary are to augment the acquisition of the mother-tongue in isiZulu children, and to enable basic communication amongst non-Zulu speaking beginner learners, standardised isiZulu is used as the prime language. Regional dialects, different variations or registers of the language are not provided. Similarly, the entries do not indicate parts of speech or give morphological information, except to

indicate the singular and plural form in nouns. The Introduction though contains a background synopsis on the syntax and morphology of the isiZulu language. The standardized language utilised in the dictionary includes both spoken as well as written forms, which could be applied in both formal and informal communicative situations. Archaic or obsolete lemmas were not included in the lemma list as these terms do not contribute to the acquisition or transmission of the language.

3.1   Creating the English-isiZulu word lists and illustrative sentences

The terminographical process in compiling the English-isiZulu dictionary consisted of first collecting a corpus of carefully-selected words used for language acquisition and basic communication in isiZulu. These basic terms were listed in English as the source language, and then translated into the target language of isiZulu for a mono-directional English-isiZulu dictionary. Every translated entry was thoroughly considered to ensure that the most appropriate lemma was selected to represent the English term, and vice versa. This was especially necessary for some isiZulu words have grown out of specific cultural contexts where the connotation of the terms needed to be understood. All the terms were provided with fairly simple illustrative or example sentences in both languages representative of how the words should or could be used in context in full sentences. The aim was to keep the article length of each illustrative sentence consistently similar and concise, but adequately informative. The sample sentence strives to make the meaning of the lemma clearer. These sentences show the learners in which way the words are really used, and also assist with translation from the one language to the other, as seen in the sample entries provided below:

alive	*-phila*	Usa**phila** ugogo wakho na?
		(Is your granny still alive?)
all	*-nke*	Bo**nke** abantwana bathanda ukudlala.
		(All children like to play.)
almost	*-cishe*	U**cishe** walunywa yizinja.
		(He was almost bitten by dogs.)
all right	*kulungile*	**Kulungile**, ungahamba manje.
		(It's all right, you can go now.)
alone	*-dwa*	Udlala ye**dwa** ngoba akanaye umngane.
		(She plays alone because she doesn't have a friend).
also	*futhi*	Unenja **futhi** unekati .
		(He has a dog, and he also has a cat.)
always	*njalo*	Ugogo ugqoka izibuko **njalo** nje.
		(Grandmother always wears spectacles.)

The dictionary is thus more than the ordinary word glossaries—as mentioned above, the contemporary words listed in the dictionary are applied in user-friendly sentences taken from everyday conversations which bestow upon the user the opportunity to gain a more practical vocabulary. This vocabulary also includes selected terminologies of specialised or technical subject fields such as computer and other technological jargon, literary and cultural terms, amongst others. These specialised language terms were selected as they already form part of the vocabularies of the target users of the dictionary, and are consequently necessary for communication. Additional information is also provided in the Appendix, for example, isiZulu abbreviations, days of the week and months in isiZulu, isiZulu numbers,

national holidays, name of provinces and of all various government departments are presented in the isiZulu language. As such, this dictionary is specifically compiled to fulfil the needs of any beginner or young learner of isiZulu, the needs of anyone who wishes to learn the language as well as of those isiZulu speakers who require a basic English vocabulary builder with isiZulu synonyms.

The dictionary further provides in the Introduction a user-guide to explain the lay-out of the dictionary as well as directions on the use of the dictionary. A brief background to isiZulu history and culture is also provided. Furthermore, a key to the pronunciation of the speech sounds of isiZulu are given. For example, in the isiZulu word -*cela* (ask), a click sound **c** appears. In order to pronounce the **c** click, users are instructed to put the tip of their tongues against their upper front teeth and gum. They are then told to suck the air into their mouths as they depress the centre of the tongue and release the tip of their tongues drawing it slightly back. In order to make this sound more recognisable, dictionary users are informed that this click almost sounds like the English tsk, tsk sound (a sound of sympathy or disapproval). Illustrations of the position of the mouth and tongue in the particular sound are also provided where possible.

3.2   Description of lexical entries in the *English-isiZulu dictionary*

The words in the dictionary are ordered alphabetically by a main entry with a double structure, which according to Van Sterkenburg (2003, p. 6) is the micro structure and the macro structure:

> The microstructure is the information given about each word in the macrostructure. That information is organised systematically into easily distinguishable smaller and larger sections per word.

Each translation equivalent is clearly and accurately indicated first in English and then in isiZulu, using a limited but understandable vocabulary. Almost all the words used in the illustrative sentences are also listed in the dictionary for easy cross-referencing. Illustrations are sometimes given to enhance the meaning of the word for better comprehension. For example, in the example listed below the English noun "baby" and its plural "babies" is followed by the isiZulu singular and plural for the word (indicated by the singular prefix *u-* and plural prefix *izin-* before the root or stem *-sana*). The isiZulu word is then used in a sentence followed by an English translation of the sentence. An illustration is given to assist in the memorising of the word by the learners.

baby/babies _usana/izinsana_   **Usana** luyadla. (The baby is eating.)

As seen from the example above, the isiZulu word lists are printed in italics for quick reference. In each illustrative sentence provided, the isiZulu word is printed in bold. This will enable the user to apprehend at a glance how and where the specific word is applied in the sentence. The remainder of the English and isiZulu words are all in the normal type of print. As this is a dictionary for young learners and second-language learners, there are no parts-of-speech labels for lemmas in the entries. More advanced learners may infer these categories from the contexts of the sample sentences provided.

The example provided above further demonstrates that compilers of traditional bilingual dictionaries in isiZulu may experience difficulties in ordering the lexical entries in this particular language as the roots of nouns and verb stems must occur with productive derivational prefixes. It is particularly these complications that the _English-isiZulu dictionary for learners_ has attempted to eliminate. As isiZulu is an agglutinating language, the morphological process entails the adding of different prefixes and suffixes to the root of a word which also results in the changing of the meaning of the specific word. African languages are furthermore based on a noun class system which relies on concordial agreement between the subject and the predicates (verbs). The noun class system in isiZulu consists of 15 classes where the even number represents the plural form of the uneven number. The only exceptions are classes 14 and 15 which do not have any plural form (see Table 1).

Table 1: The noun class system in isiZulu

NO.	CLASS PREFIX	EXAMPLE
1.	umu-	_umuntu_ (a person)
1a.	u-	_ugogo_ (grandmother)
2.	aba-	_abantu_ (people)
2a.	o-	_ogogo_ (grandmothers)
3.	umu-	_umuthi_ (tree)

NO.	CLASS PREFIX	EXAMPLE
4.	imi-	*imithi* (trees)
5.	ili-	*ilizwe* (country)
6.	ama-	*amazwe* (countries)
7.	isi-	*isihlalo* (chair)
8.	izi-	*izihlalo* (chairs)
9.	in-/im-	*inja* (dog)
10.	izin-/izim-	*izinja* (dogs)
11.	ulu-	*ufudu* (tortoise)
10.	izin-/izim-	*izimfudu* (tortoises)
14.	ubu-	*ubuso* (face)
15.	uku-	*ukudla* (food)
16.	pha-	*phandle* (outside)
17.	uku-	*ukunxele* (left hand)

It is evident that isiZulu nouns can be divided into groups or classes according to the prefixes they start with. Prefixes can further be divided into a pre-prefix and prefix, e.g. in the singular form *umuntu* (person), the pre-prefix is *u-* and the prefix *mu-,* and in its plural form *abantu* (people) is identified by the pre-prefix *a-* and prefix *ba-*. This is important as these prefixes are used in concordial agreement as object- and subject pronouns. These pronouns are furthermore not gender-specific, which makes it difficult for a learner of isiZulu who has to look at the context in which the word is used in order to deduce the gender of the subject class:

Ufundisa abafundi. (She/he is teaching the learners.)

This situation where a single word in a source language such as English may have more than one pronoun or concord as equivalent in the target language of isiZulu, is known as grammatical divergence (Prinsloo & Gouws, 2006, p. 186):

> The situation is brought about by the complicated noun class system, which is characteristic of the African languages. Nouns denoting the third person in African languages are subdivided into different noun classes and each noun class has its own set of concords and pronouns. This simply means that a single word in English such as 'he, she, it, they'[…] can easily have up to 15 different translation equivalents in an African language.

It is difficult to translate these terms as the equivalents "are neither target language synonyms that can substitute each other in a given context nor target language items representing different polysemous senses of the source language item" (Prinsloo & Gouws, 2006, p. 188). The only manner in which the beginner learner can differentiate between the various translation equivalents is if the word is used in a co-text entry which clearly illustrates the particular form of the concord or pronoun in the source- as well as the target language. In other words, an example sentence which presents the use of a given word should be compiled in such a way that the intended target reader thereof can clearly and

unambiguously identify the subject of the pronoun or concord. The compilers of this dictionary has attempted to accomplish this objective with each illustrative example containing a concord or pronoun by placing antecedents referring to the specific pronoun or concord in the sentence. It is hoped that each lemma and its translation equivalent together with the illustrative sentence will suffice both source and target language users.

As seen with the examples provided above, the singular as well as the plural form are supplied with each noun in the dictionary; e.g. _umuntu/abantu_. The singular and plural prefixes are underlined for instant recognition. When searching for an isiZulu word in older bilingual dictionaries, it is the stem (the part that is not underlined) where under one looks for the meaning of the word. The authors of this dictionary for young and new learners however decided that the entries in isiZulu will be best ordered by adding the prefixes in the case of common noun stems, and in the case of verbs, providing the verb stems only. Verb stems appear in natural language use as commands, which is a base verb in the present simple indicative frequently used as building blocks in language acquisition.

Verbs are very flexible in isiZulu as the meaning of the verbs may be changed through the use of affixes. This means that the word as it appears is incomplete (unless it is a command) and that a prefix or suffix is to be added as seen in some of the illustrative sentences. In the dictionary, verbs and descriptives are all written with a dash in front of the word (e.g. -_hamba_).   For example, the isiZulu word for "cook" is -_pheka_.

cook   -_pheka_   Udadewethu u**pheka** ukudla okumnandi.
                                        (My sister cooks delicious food.)

Tenses and the negative are two more aspects which can lead to a change of meaning in verbs. Most of the verbs in the dictionary appear in the present indicative tense; however for the sake of variety some other tense forms have also been inserted.

Other parts of speech such as adverbs are used as they appear. In certain cases, locative forms are also given in a sentence for demonstrative purposes. As seen in the above table, isiZulu nouns belonging to classes 16 and 17 are used as adverbs indicating location, and also occupy the position of adverbs in the sentence. Locative nouns are also utilised to indicate location in isiZulu. The process of constructing these locative nouns is explained in the Introduction so as to assist learners who wish to comprehend the morphological marking expressing location. Users are informed that the initial vowel of the noun is

replaced with a prefix *e-* or *o-* together with the suffix *-ini*. These affixes influence the vowels that follow or precede them in the following manner:

-a + -ini > -eni   *intaba* (mountain) > *entabeni* (on/at the mountain)

Bilabial consonants in the last syllable of nouns ending in *-u* or *-o* require specific changes because of the semivowel *-w-* that results when adding *-ini* to these nouns. The phonological rules of isiZulu do not allow for bilabials and the semivowel *-w-* to be next to each other. To avoid this, palatalisation takes place, resulting in the following:

-m- + -w- > -ny-   *umlomo* (mouth) + *-ini* > *emlo<u>mw</u>eni* > *emlonyeni* (in/on the mouth)

Some nouns only require the locative prefix *e-*. These nouns are the seasons, the four cardinal points, some place names, some loan words and a few general nouns, such as:

ikhaya (house) > *ekhaya* (in the house, at home)
imini (midday) > *emini* (at midday), etc.

The locative particle *ku-* is used with nouns from classes 1, 1a, 2, 2a and 6 (denoting people or groups), as well as all pronouns. The particle and the noun are written as one word and the initial vowel is dropped. In the case of class 2a the particle occurs as only k- (*ku- + ogogo* (granny and company) > *kogogo* (at granny and company). The locative particle *kwa-* consists of the locative particle *ku-*followed by the possessive morpheme a, which gives this particle a locative as well as a possessive semantic value. It can be translated as 'at the place of' as in *kwaZulu* (at the place of the Zulu).

Words which can be used synonymously are separated by a semi-colon in the dictionary; e.g.

Every day   *nsukuzonke; malangawonke*   **Nsukuzonke** sizwa izindaba ezimnandi nezimbi.
                                              (Every day we hear the good and the bad news.)

The language of isiZulu is extremely rich with proverbs and idioms. Many words are so descriptive that one word may qualify as a poem on its own! The authors have attempted to insert as many as possible of these words and phrases into the dictionary; with a short explanation of the literal as well as the figurative meaning thereof. For example,

hand   *i<u>s</u>andla/i<u>z</u>andla*   Ubhala nge**sandla** sokudla.
                                              (He uses the right hand to write.)
                                              Proverb: **Izandla** ziyagezana.
                                              (One hand washes the other; i.e. one good turn deserves another.)

Where English equivalents of isiZulu words were absent in these proverbs and idioms, short explanations and descriptions of cross-cultural issues are made in cultural notes. These additions are aimed at enhancing the cross-cultural competency of the users of the *English-isiZulu dictionary for learners*.

5.   Conclusion

Dictionaries provide the building blocks for discourse. Dictionaries are one of the most important texts that can be used for reference in schools, institutes of learning and also at home. The compilers of dictionaries should also, as far as possible, consider society and the specific users' needs. As there was need for a young learners' and second language learners' dictionary in English-isiZulu, the authors hope to fulfil this gap with this dictionary. However, this dictionary genre has unfortunately received very little attention from terminographers or specialized lexicographers. As elucidated in the article, the terminographical process of compiling the dictionary was aimed specifically at the needs of young and new learners of isiZulu. This was furthermore evident in the process of selecting and description of the lexical items for the dictionary; the manner in which the grammar system of especially isiZulu was presented, as well as the guide on the pronunciation of isiZulu words. Illustrative idioms or proverbs containing specific terms highlighted cross-cultural issues which were further explained in cultural notes, tables and pictures. Although the concluding aspiration is that the compilation of this dictionary will play a crucial role in the acquisition and dissemination of the isiZulu language amongst beginner learners and also contribute towards the empowerment of language communities in South Africa, further compilations of this kind is needed in order to promote multilingualism and cross-cultural communication in South Africa.

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