

G.W.R. Tobias and B.H.C. Turvey. *English-Kwanyama Dictionary*, 9th reprint 1991, viii + 199 pp. ISBN 0 85494 382 X. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press. Price R27,00.

This dictionary was first published in 1954.

A note on Oshikwanyama: The prefix *oshi-* has been affixed to the stem Kwanyama so as to make it meaningful. If used without a prefix it renders no meaning to the native speakers.

Oshikwanyama is one of the Oshiwambo dialects used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1-3 and taught as a subject from Grade 4-12, and also at the teacher training-colleges.

Due to the extensive use of this language, there is a dire need for reference materials. However, the lexicographic work done so far with regard to Oshikwanyama is in the embryonic stage. This book only caters for learners of Oshikwanyama as English is used as the source language. The compilers have explained the abbreviations used in the dictionary but the explanations are not translated into Oshikwanyama. Besides, the abbreviations used would only be understood by people with the necessary linguistic background. In my opinion, a dictionary does not have to be overloaded with linguistic information and, should this occur, it should be made as simple as possible so as to ease the understanding of the target users.

In their introduction to this dictionary, the compilers have provided information on how to use the dictionary. The information provided includes the pronunciation of sounds in Oshikwanyama and their English equivalents, e.g. *tj* pronounced as *ch* in church, and how entries are entered, e.g. parts of speech such as nouns, verbs and adjectives. For the verbs information has been provided on how they operate in moods such as indicative, infinitive and imperative. Besides this, the question of verbal extension, which occurs quite extensively in Oshikwanyama, has also been treated with insufficient care because only causative has been referred to in the introduction.

With regard to adjectives, the compilers have given the stem preceded by the corresponding subject concord.

The concord given is unnecessary, e.g. p. 2 *acute* = *sa hongua* (read: *sha hongu*). *Sha* as a subject concord applies only to one noun class, namely class 7.

To avoid this difficult situation and indeed a more confusing one if not clearly defined, the compilers should have given the table of noun classes in the introductory remarks and should have illustrated the omission of a subject concord by means of a tilde.

The dictionary also lacks contextualisation. This means most of the lexical items have not been used in sentences to illustrate their meaning. It is a well-known fact that many words are not self-explanatory, and a mere translation of a word in a target language might tempt the users to misuse such words.

In the final analysis, the orthography of Oshikwanyama leaves much to be

desired. It is based on the old way of writing. Hence, most of the sounds used, do not appear in the existing Oshikwanyama texts, e.g. *s* in *okuhasiva* (not to know): the *s*-sound has become *sh*. In the same manner the *n* in *omunú* p. 112 should become *nh*, without a diacritic. On the basis of the above discussion, the dictionary needs to be updated if it is to serve its purpose.

While much still has to be done to update the lexicographic work under review, it should be noted that this is a great pioneering contribution to Oshiwambo in general and Oshikwanyama in particular. The commendable efforts by Tobias and Turvey should therefore be complemented by innovative work by prospective lexicographers.

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