

Dorothea Mantzel and Bernd Schulz. *Francolin Illustrated School Dictionary for Southern Africa*. Developed by The Dictionary Unit for South African English in consultation with The Molteno Project and READ Education Trust. 1997. xvi + 336 pp. ISBN 1-86859-015-1. Cape Town: Francolin Publishers.

It was a phone-in programme on a local radio station, dealing with the overcharging of tourists who use taxis. The deejay was completely upset, interrupting the CD she was playing. How could a trip which cost her R15 cost a tourist R300? Eventually a taxi operator called in to cut through all the nonsense. It was about misunderstanding the difference between a taxi and a minibus taxi. Using the former means that you pay per kilometre, irrespective of the number of people who get into the taxi, to a destination you decide. Using the latter implies that you pay a fixed cost per person and the drop-off points are predetermined for you along a specific route. And there is little difference in cost for the trip if the minibus taxi were carrying 20 people.

A learner conveys this discussion to me, demonstrating the power of radio stations in shaping and influencing the vocabulary of our youth, irrespective of whether they are first, second or third language users. I am writing this review, and wonder whether the **Francolin Illustrated School Dictionary for Southern Africa** makes this distinction. I wonder further whether it includes the abbreviations / words "CD" or "compact disc" and "DJ", "deejay," or "disc jockey", terms that fall within the experience of the target audience of this dictionary.

Target Audience

The dictionary, the editors claim, is aimed at senior primary school learners who do not speak English as their first language, but who have English as a subject or as the language of learning. In my opinion, they have succeeded in this objective, despite a few minor complaints about the dictionary.

They have tried to include vocabulary that the primary school learner is likely to encounter, such as

- common everyday English words,
- subject jargon from their school programme, and
- some common South African English (SAE) words.

The words used in definitions are all explained in the dictionary, with the exception of "Southern Africa" and "consultation" which appear on the front of the dictionary. "South Africa" is explained, but which areas are included in the term "Southern Africa?" The inquisitive and observant learner would have to go to some other reference book to clear that up.

The question raised in my introduction is partially answered. Words such as "minibus" and "taxi" and "combi" are listed, but while sharing similar mean-

ings in the South African context, are not cross-referenced. The distinction referred to in the opening paragraph is not made. Also, everyday words such as "CD" and "deejay" are not included.

The inclusion of the curriculum words add to the usefulness of this dictionary, making it a tool to be used not only in English but also in other subjects. Words such as "cotyledon" (p. 61), "rhombus" (p. 235) or "quotient" (p. 228) are examples of subject jargon explained in simple terms, although "rhombus" could have carried a label, indicating it is used in mathematics.

Organisation of the Dictionary

The dictionary has the following sections:

- an explanation of the entries,
- a note to the teacher,
- some examples of how to use the dictionary in the classroom, and
- the entries, with the occasional illustration.

The explanation of the entries is a valuable source of learning material and even teachers of grades 8-9 (the first two years of high school) should find the dictionary useful.

The note to the teacher is clear and easy to follow, covering matters such as the guide word, entry, headword, pronunciation, part of speech, definitions and so on.

The sample exercises on how to use the dictionary in the classroom are a good starting-point and provide the teacher with many opportunities for advancing the learners' vocabulary and understanding.

The illustrations used are generally apt. They provide opportunity for further vocabulary extension. However, there are times when the illustrations could have been less confusing, e.g. what is the link between the example sentences, the headword "aim" and the illustration on page 5? The sentences read "Luvuyo threw the ball and aimed it at the player on the other side of the field", and "The man aimed the gun at the buck and then he shot it." Then follows the illustration of someone shooting with a bow and arrow at a target.

When one turns to the headword "bow" (p. 31) there is neither an illustration nor a cross-reference to page 5, nor any illustration which has bearing on the word "bow".

On page 95, there is an example sentence dealing with the flags of Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique, but the South African rather than the Mozambican flag is included in the illustration. If this is to be a Southern African dictionary, then such symbols ought to be depicted consistently.

I have used this dictionary beyond its target group and have found that both my learners whose home language is not English and the learners who have English as medium of instruction have found its uncluttered look accessi-

ble. A short explanation on how to use the dictionary was all that was required before they used it independently. In language teaching the dictionary has offered opportunities for vocabulary extension for the "weaker" learner. The explanation of the rules of how the dictionary has been written has provided the older learner with some insight into lexicography and made the use of other dictionaries easier.

This dictionary deserves a place in the classroom.

Michael Benjamin
Teacher: English (First and Second Language)
Belhar High School
Bellville
Republic of South Africa
(*bhsm1@mweb.co.za*)