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# Resensies / Reviews

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## Woordeboeke en Woordelyste / Dictionaries and Word-lists

**William Branford.** *The South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 2nd South African edition 1994, 2nd impression 1995, xxiii + 1138 pp. ISBN 0-19-570760-5. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Price R54,95.

Australian, New Zealand and South African pocket dictionaries of English are relatively recent additions to the burgeoning proliferation of Oxford dictionaries. This second edition of *The South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (SAPOD), which is based on the eighth edition of *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1992) edited by Della Thompson, has benefited greatly by the advances in modern technology by being able to draw on the latest updated computerized databases of the Oxford English dictionaries. This has enabled the compilers to include such topical entries as **ethnic cleansing, karaoke, pixel, toy boy and virtual reality.**

Comparing this 'pocket' dictionary with my old 1964 edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (which is about the same size), I was struck by how user-friendly this new version is. Some of the features making this dictionary more accessible to the user are set out below.

Headwords are set in bold type. A conscious policy of 'denesting' has been followed resulting in words being easier to find. For instance, compound words such as **French leave** are written as two words instead of being 'nested' at the end of entries. The various senses of a word are numbered instead of being separated by semicolons. Explanations of etymologies are set out in a more straightforward way than in many earlier dictionaries. Specific information about the forms of words has been given, such as difficult plural forms (e.g. **syllabuses / syllabi**). Pronunciation of words is given in a phonetic transcription (using IPA symbols).

The notes on usage are one of the most helpful features of this dictionary. These notes include guidance on aspects of traditional grammar such as noun phrases, transitive verbs, adverbs and the like, as well as old chestnuts such as the difference between *shall* and *will*, *due to* and *owing to*, *affect* and *effect* etc. There are also helpful comments on the use of noun class markers when referring to the names of Suntu languages or ethnic groups such as *amaXhosa*. Some of the most helpful notes are those on the South African usage of (often loaded) terms such as *baas*, *Bantu*, *boy*, *Bushman*, *comrade*, *girl*, *man*, *master* and *Springbok*. The note on *girl*, quoted below, gives a good idea of the nature of these notes:

Many S. Africans still say *girl*, *housegirl*, *washgirl* etc. of a Black woman servant without intending offence, but these terms are deeply resented by others.

The special distinguishing feature of *SAPOD* is, of course, its South African English (SAE) component which has drawn heavily on Jean and William Bransford's *A Dictionary of South African English*<sup>4</sup> (1991) (*DSAE*). Entries of SAE origin constitute about 2500 of the 65000 entries in *SAPOD*. About half of *DSAE*'s corpus plus a number of new words appear in *SAPOD*. Generally the words not included in *SAPOD* were marginal items in *DSAE*. A quick comparative test-drive through some of the entries under the letter B of the two dictionaries helps to illustrate this point:

The following words appear in both dictionaries: **-baai, baas, baasskap, baba, babalaas, backvelder, baie dankie, bakgat, balie, bandiet.**

The following words in *DSAE* have not been included in *SAPOD*: **babbie-shop, bafta, bakkis, bakoond, bakore, baliestoel, ballasmandjie.**

The selection of SAE words in *SAPOD* is fairly extensive, including not only common SAE words such as **fundi, indaba, laatlammetjie, lekker, lobola, lucky bean, pap, wors**, but also less commonly used words which are of special socio-political significance: **imbizo, inkululeko, ubuntu**, or socio-cultural terms: **imbongi, isanusi, liretlo, manyano**. There are also numerous entries of specialized vocabularies relating to various subcultures such as troepie-talk: **bokkie, bossies, leopard crawl, min dae**; prison slang: **fransman, impimpi, lightie**; shebeens: **gweva, mahewu, mailer, mbamba, shebeen queen, skokiaan**; township music: **malombo, mbaqanga**.

Many common South African expressions have also been included: **banana boy, moenie panic nie, monkeys' wedding, môre is nog 'n dag, Natal fever, skop, skiet en donder.**

Many current SAE abbreviations also appear in the dictionary: **ANCYL, ASB, AWB, CCB, CFE, ESKOM, MK, SACP.**

The main languages of origin of the SAE entries are Dutch/Afrikaans, English and Sintu. There is a significant drop in the Afrikaans entries from 52% (in the 1987 edition) to 40% (in this 1994 edition), indicating that many of the marginal Afrikaans items have been dropped, and a number of new items mainly of (South African) English origin have been included, making the composition of the entries more representative of current SAE.

Being a pocket dictionary, there are naturally certain limitations on its scope. Proper nouns (except those of local South African relevance) and 'foreign' words (e.g. *babouche*) are generally excluded. Definitions of words are concise, but sometimes lacking in important details, and examples of usage are limited. Nevertheless, on the whole, this dictionary covers a good range of current Standard English and SAE. Given its limitations as a pocket dictionary, it is of use to anyone who would like to have current general and South African usage of English at their fingertips.

L.A. Barnes  
 Department of Linguistics  
 University of South Africa  
 Pretoria  
 South Africa