

*Marta DICK-BURSZTYN*

**TALKING DICTIONARIES: AN INTRODUCTORY-LEVEL  
COURSE IN LEXICOGRAPHY  
FOR ENGLISH-BOUND STUDENTS**

**DOROTA OSUCHOWSKA**

**WYDAWNICTWO UNIwersYTETU RZESZOWSKIEGO,  
RZESZÓW 2011**

**ISBN 978-83-7338-622-8**

Dictionaries (in particular learner-oriented ones) seem to belong to the group of publications that is most widely available to its potential customers, who, in turn, are very enthusiastic to use them and for whom they are frequently the cheapest learning aids assisting them in mastering and understanding the intricate properties of a foreign language. Nevertheless, the eagerness to have and use a dictionary hardly ever goes hand in hand with the so-called dictionary skills of its user. Sadly, it is common that profound ignorance about the dictionary structure, contents, information retrieval strategies, etc., leads to misinterpretation of lexicographic data, the inability to trace the desired information or, when finally found, incorrect application of this information in whatever task it may be.

It seems reasonable to assume that philology students use various types of monolingual, bilingual, general or specialized dictionaries more extensively than any other group of dictionary users among students. Their studies are primarily aimed at preparing them for their future professions – that is – those of teachers and/or translators. It is, therefore, crucial that they become professional and proficient dictionary users, not only because of the fact that they themselves will be inseparably bound with these powerful tools in their jobs, but many of them should also feel as if sent on a mission to educate younger generations of learners on how to make the best use of a dictionary.

Thus, English philology students at numerous, though not all, universities are routinely offered courses on lexicography and grammaticography, including lectures as well as seminars and tutorials. The author of *Talking Dictionaries:*

*An Introductory-Level Course in Lexicography for English-Bound Students* (2011) has been lecturing the type of classes in question for many years now and the work I have the pleasure to review appears to be the impressive result of in-depth observations gained in the course of teaching, combined with her considerable expertise in the lexicographic field. In that case, let us briefly introduce Dr Dorota Osuchowska's most prominent scholarly achievements and interests, which will then be followed by the discussion of the contents of the textbook under consideration.

The author's research interests include lexicography (teaching dictionary use), the methodology of *ELT*, and, quite recently, diachronic semantics. In some of her recent publications Dr Dorota Osuchowska has focused, among other things, on the use of dictionaries in tertiary education, the treatment of collocations in pedagogical lexicographic works of reference (Osuchowska 2007), as well as the issues of etymologising in British dictionaries for young learners. Moreover, she has successfully contributed to the practical branch of lexicography as the author of *English at Work: An English-Polish Dictionary of Selected Collocations* (2001).

The body of the academic textbook being reviewed here has been divided into 15 main chapters, which constitute lectures intended for use by university students of an introductory level course in lexicography.

The opening *Aims of the Course* chapter serves to inform the prospective textbook users of its value to them, given the fact that some or many may soon wish to satisfy their lexicographic curiosity by attending BA or MA seminars in this particular branch of linguistics. Additionally, the section summarises the most prominent contents of the subsequent parts of the book, cleverly and, it is safe to assume, successfully arousing interest in the subject-matter among students or its other readers.

The subsequent chapters systematically and, following a top-down approach (from general and global to more detailed contents), reveal and elaborate on the most elementary but, at the same time, crucial mono- and bilingual lexicographic issues, to name but a few: dictionary classification, dictionary structure, the usefulness of user's guides, macro- and microstructural properties of dictionaries, productive vs. receptive dictionary use, etc. The author presents all the contents in an extremely accessible and concise manner, using language that is more colloquial, yet well-suited to the subject-matter, rather than heavy jargon. These attributes make the publication a reader-friendly one. Additionally, all the lectures are supplied with the author's exercises (some to be set for homework and some for in-class activities), which, in most cases, are thought-provoking and will certainly trigger a good deal of inspiring debates between students and lecturers. What is more, the sufficient bibliography and detailed index add to the usefulness of this small volume.

It is worthy of note that, among others, the book addresses the most typical problems learners and dictionary users encounter when using dictionaries, such as information findability, its accurate comprehension and its application to the lexical context that prompted the dictionary look-up process. It will, therefore, not only aid students to follow the course with more ease and, I assume, greater interest, but as a result of successful comprehension of the theoretical, lexicographic topics presented here, combined with numerous practical tasks and discussions, they will certainly become more fluent dictionary users, who will find it less challenging to deal with even the most elusive and troublesome areas of lexical and lexicographic issues.

I highly recommend *Talking Dictionaries: An Introductory-Level Course in Lexicography for English-Bound Students* (2011). It will be a useful resource and teaching tool in colleges and universities for years to come.

### References:

- Osuchowska, D.** 2001. *English At Work. An English-Polish Dictionary of Selected Collocations*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Osuchowska, D.** 2007. *In Search of the Collocation Value of EFL Dictionaries*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.
- Osuchowska, D.** 2011. *Talking Dictionaries: An Introductory-Level Course in Lexicography for English-Bound Students*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.

