

Bending the rules in minority language bilingual lexicography

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0. Introduction

Difficulties with applying accepted practice in lexicography

Need to “bend” some of the principles or rules; “bend” = adapt, modify, adjust, alter
“to bend”

I. Some prominent groupings in lexicography

Group 1: major languages or sublanguages

Atkins & Rundell (2008), Landau (2001), Mugglestone (2011), Svendsen (2009), etc.

Group 3: small, endangered languages

Brenzinger(2007), Frawley et al. (2002), Himmelmann (2006, 2012), Krauss (2007), Mosel (2006, 2011, 2012),
and many others

Group 2: minority languages, little-researched and not (yet) endangered

II. Iu-Mienh and the *Iu-Mienh - English Dictionary with Cultural Notes* (Purnell 2012)

III. Bending Rules

A. As generally accepted

1. Focus the dictionary on one target group

2. Use care in the arrangement of material: space is limited and costly so conserve it

3. Content should be semantic; little, if any, encyclopedic information should be included

B. As bent in the Iu-Mienh dictionary (with examples)

1. The focus is on the needs of two different groups; within the Iu-Mienh group, there is significant diversity in
needs and goals

Question: Can the needs of the different groups be adequately met?

2. The arrangement of lexical and semantic information favors inclusion and repetition; space is not a major issue.

3. A wide range of cultural and encyclopedic information is drawn from many cultural domains as found in
typical traditional village life.

C. Bending has been done many times before in various languages: e.g., Thai, Chinese, Sedang

IV. Other issues

A. What about cost? The use of so much duplication (as in a reverse dictionary) increases the number of pages
considerably. And the size of the volume increases the cost? How is cost managed?

B. What obligation, if any, does the lexicographer have in working with a minority language that may be stressed
but not yet endangered?

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Group 1

- Dictionaries of major languages
 - Chinese, English, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, Italian, Hindi, Danish, etc.
- Or major sub-languages
 - Cantonese, Canadian English, Tunisian/Moroccan/Egyptian Arabic
- With classic general “how-to” and descriptive literature
 - Atkins & Rundell (2008), Bejoint (2000), Landau (2001), Svensen (2009)

Group 3

- Dictionaries of small and endangered languages, e.g.,
 - within Native American languages and Australian Aboriginal languages,
 - within Oceania and insular Southeast Asia (many languages in Papua New Guinea), and
 - within mainland Southeast Asia (e.g., Mpi, Bisu)
- With literature focused on language documentation
 - Brenzinger(2007), Frawley et al. (2002), Himmelmann (2006, 2012), Krauss (2007), Mosel (2006, 2011, 2012), and many others

Regrouping for Lexicography

Group 1 large or major languages	Group 3 small, endangered languages
Group 2 minority languages little researched not yet seriously endangered	

What is a little-researched language?

- One which has received some, but not much, attention by researchers:
 - Linguists (word lists, historical/theoretical data)
 - Anthropologists (kinship, religion, society)
 - Others: public health, education, etc.
- One that is a minority language
- Usually under some stress
- Not (yet) endangered but possibly in the future

1. Users/Goals of the Iu-Mienh Dictionary

- Limited to North America by script or L2
- Primary: I-M community in North America
 - Age 40+
 - 35 and below never lived in an I-M village
 - Heritage learners
 - Community status, promote lang. maintenance
- Secondary: Non-Iu-Mienh
 - Academic community, researchers, libraries
 - Language learners

2. Use and Arrangement of Material

- Word groupings gather and repeat subentries
- Many subentries are deliberately repeated
- Generous inclusion of semantic material
 - For documentation and preservation
 - For usefulness to learners who are often unable to predict unstated forms or collocations
 - There may not be another dictionary of this scope so put in as much as is feasible

Repetition of Subentries

- About 30% of the subentries are duplicates! Why?
 - Some words only occur as the second member of a compound
 - Listing compounds under both words can help users by bringing together members of a new group
 - Duplicating includes the type of information one would get in a separate reverse dictionary, e.g.,
 - Chinese: fu4 mu3 "parents" would be under fu4 in a regular dictionary but under mu3 "mother" in a reverse dictionary
 - English: "brush fire" would be under both parts:
 - fire: bonfire, brush fire, fire ant, fireman, set a fire ...
 - brush: brush fire, brush knife, burn brush, cut brush ...

3. Encyclopedic Information in Cultural Notes

- Encyclopedic information
 - Typical village life, some of it a previous generation (1960s)
 - Covers a wide range of cultural domains
- Why include encyclopedic information?
 - I-M culture is changing rapidly in the U.S. and Thailand
 - Much of the information is not available elsewhere
 - I-M youths in the U.S. have little idea how their parents and grandparents lived back in Asia and need to be prepared to visit relatives in Thailand and Laos
 - It will be helpful to academics and language learners

lu-Mienh entries with culture notes

- **damx** *n.* a trap for birds or small animals having an object which falls on them when sprung. *Cf:* norm., *Cul:* The trap is made with a heavy piece of wood about 18 inches across and two and a half feet long which is raised up to at least a 45-degree angle and supported by one or more notched rods or sticks. Bait, such as corn, is placed in such a way that when the bird or animal takes it, the support collapses and the wood snaps down on the creature killing it. In stories, witches can set traps that are large enough to catch people.
- **mba'ngakv** *n.* a marker, sign, or symbol for indicating direction or identifying in some way. *Cf:* norm., *Cul:* Markers can be made in different ways. For example, a stick which has been split at the top is stuck into the ground and another piece of wood is inserted in the split to point to the direction that people coming later should follow or to indicate some other relevant information. Or if a large tree is available, a downward cut is made in the bark or the wood, and another piece of bark or a stick is stuck in the cut as a pointer or identifying marker. *See:* Jangx-hoc. ◀ *Mbiuv ndau oix zuqc zaux norm mba'ngakv.* In order to mark a piece of land one needs to use an identifying sign.

buoqv *ncl.* classifier for entire areas, sections, sides, zones, or group of items. *See:* **deix**, **guan.** ⇔ **Nc buoqv gemh.** That whole area is forested.

kamx-buoqv the shored up section of ground at the lower side of a house site. *Cul:* Traditionally, lu Mien houses were built on mountain slopes where the ground was uneven. To make a level dirt floor, the sloping part of the site was blocked off by boards and filled in with dirt.

waac *n.* a word, language, variety of a language, language repertoire, speech. *Cf:* **joux.**

....

waac-ormv a riddle, idiom, concealed speech.

Examples of riddles:

Buo muoz-sieqv juangc diuh m'nqornv-beu beu.

Three sisters share a single turban to wrap around.

Answer: **Caeng-jaax.** A trivet (a metal ring with three feet and used in a fireplace).

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