

# Lexicography at the Poznań School of English

Robert Lew



Robert Lew was born in Szczecin in 1966, and is employed at the Department of Lexicology and Lexicography of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, where he is now director of the School of English PhD Programme. His current interests focus on dictionary use, and he has recently published a book comparing the effectiveness of monolingual, bilingual and bilingualized dictionaries. He has also worked as a practical lexicographer on a number of dictionary projects for various publishers including Harper-Collins, Longman, and Cambridge University Press. Dr Lew is Reviews Editor for *International Journal of Lexicography*.  
rlew@amu.edu.pl

The English Department of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, now officially known as the School of English or by its Polish acronym IFA, was founded in 1921 by W.A. Massey, who headed the institution for three decades. The second long-term (1965-2005) head of IFA was Jacek Fisiak, and it was he who, in the late 1980's, saw clearly the pressing need for modern English-Polish and Polish-English bilingual dictionaries to replace the antiquated existing ones, most of which described the two languages as written around the mid-20th century, and reflected the lexicographic know-how several decades out of date. To coordinate the work on new dictionaries, a dedicated Lexicographic Centre was created at IFA, which in 1996 grew into the Department of Lexicology and Lexicography, now headed by Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak. Today, the School of English itself, with close to 200 staff and 1000 students, including 80 PhD students, is headed by Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk.

With the Poznań School of English being a major centre of English studies in Poland, it is only natural that its lexicographic activity should focus on bilingual lexicography. This includes semi-bilingual dictionaries, as among the first major lexicographic projects at IFA was a bilingualized dictionary produced in cooperation with Kernerman Publishing (1990), with two updated and expanded editions at six-year intervals (1996, 2002). Another semi-bilingual dictionary was produced more recently as the Polish adaptation of the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary* (2003).

The first one in a series of newly compiled bilingual (as opposed to bilingualized) dictionaries was the *Collins English-Polish and Polish-English* dictionary (1996, 1997, 2000). This two-volume work has received much praise for its coverage of contemporary colloquial English and Polish, and the lexicographic treatment which, while focusing on the Polish user, did not neglect the encoding needs of the native speaker of English. At about the same time Collins published another smaller bilingual dictionary in the *Gem* series (1996, with later editions in 1997, 1999).

The pocket-sized *Longman Podręczny Słownik Angielsko-Polski, Polsko-Angielski* appeared in 1999, a compact yet utterly modern dictionary in its compilation, content, and presentation. Its instant success

inspired the larger and highly innovative *Longman Słownik Współczesny* (2004). This was the first dictionary for Polish learners of English designed specifically for target language production, largely freeing the Polish user engaged in English text production from the need to consult a monolingual dictionary or flip between the two volumes of a traditional bilingual dictionary (see Adamska-Sałaciak 2005, *Kernerman Dictionary News* 13: 23-26).

In terms of volume, the single largest lexicographic project at IFA so far has been the compilation of the most comprehensive bilingual Polish-English and English-Polish dictionary to date, *Nowy słownik Fundacji Kościuszkowskiej angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski. The new English-Polish and Polish-English Kosciuszko Foundation dictionary* (2003). The two thick volumes of this sizeable dictionary include over 130,000 headwords and around 400,000 translations.

IFA lexicographers have also contributed to specialized bilingual lexicography, and here I should mention dictionaries of information technology (*Słownik informatyczny angielsko-polski*, 1990) and of television advertising (*Angielsko-polski słownik reklamy telewizyjnej*, 2003). A pictorial English dictionary for children was published in 1990 (*Słownik obrazkowy języka angielskiego*). Specialized dictionaries of multi-word units have also been developed in Poznań: a dictionary of English idioms (1993) was followed by a comparative dictionary of Polish-English idioms, with five editions to date (1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005).

One may wonder why so many significant lexicographic works should have been produced at a single academic institution. I believe this is through a lucky combination of several factors. Firstly, the personal qualities of the long-time head, Professor Jacek Fisiak: his enthusiasm, foresight and organizational skills; then, the effort and skills of the linguists at IFA; finally, the sheer size of the institution itself, its research potential and emphasis on modern technology were able to ensure the completion of major lexicographic projects on time or with only relatively small delays. The expert IT support provided by Michał Jankowski and Mariusz Idzikowski made it possible to develop in-house dictionary writing tools, and even build a dedicated corpus of Polish to assist in some of the projects. No wonder that such

a combination has made IFA a desirable partner for a number of major players in English lexicography worldwide.

At IFA, the practical lexicographic work of designing and compiling dictionaries goes hand in hand with theoretical lexicographic reflection and empirical work on dictionary use, as reflected in numerous publications, including a number of books and dissertations. Let us have a brief look at a representative selection.

The one work most closely related to practical lexicographic projects is Adamska-Sałaciak's recent book (2006), offering a fresh and original analysis of some of the central theoretical and practical issues in bilingual lexicography (see the review). Also inspired by practical lexicographic work, Lew (2004) reports on a large-scale experimental study of the effectiveness of monolingual, bilingual and semi-bilingual dictionary types for Polish learners of various proficiency levels involved in receptive tasks. Dziemianko (2006) studies the user-friendliness of the various ways of conveying verb syntax information in dictionary entries (see the review). Szczepaniak (2006) examines the extent to which monolingual learners' dictionaries can assist Polish learners in interpreting creatively modified idioms.

The lexicographic research at IFA is not restricted to Polish and English

lexicography, as demonstrated by the recent PhD dissertation by Ptaszyński (2006), who looks diachronically at the usage information in bilingual English/Danish dictionaries.

The study of the phonetic aspect of dictionaries, including electronic ones, is another important area of lexicographic research at IFA. Włodzimierz Sobkowiak has published a study on how pronunciation is treated in electronic dictionaries (1999), and another recent one on the phonetics of dictionary definitions (2006). While arguing for proper attention to be given to pronunciation, on a par with other linguistic dimensions of lexicographic description, Sobkowiak actually demonstrates the ways in which this imbalance might be rectified (see the review). The same author has also created several versions of an electronic Phonetic Access Dictionary (non-commercial).

The example of the Poznań School of English shows that an alternative model of practical lexicography, one where dictionary-writing is not a full-time job but rather a sideline of university-employed linguists, is actually a viable one, and need not compromise dictionary quality, completion deadlines, or research. Actually, for that to be possible, there is yet one more key quality that's very characteristic of IFA: workaholicism.

### Selected monographs on lexicography

- Adamska-Sałaciak, A. 2006. *Meaning and the Bilingual Dictionary: The Case of English and Polish*. (Polish Studies in English Language and Literature 18). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Dziemianko, A. 2006. *User-friendliness of verb syntax in pedagogical dictionaries of English*. (Lexicographica Series Maior 130.). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Lew, R. 2004. *Which dictionary for whom? Receptive use of bilingual, monolingual and semi-bilingual dictionaries by Polish learners of English*. Poznań: Motivex.
- Ptaszyński, M. 2006. A diachronic study of usage information in dictionaries between English and Danish. Ph.D. dissertation.
- Sobkowiak, W. 1999. *Pronunciation in EFL machine-readable dictionaries*. Poznań: Motivex.
- Sobkowiak, W. 2006. *Phonetics of EFL Dictionary Definitions*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.
- Szczepaniak, R. 2006. *The role of dictionary use in the comprehension of idiom variants*. (Lexicographica Series Maior 131). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

### Selected dictionaries developed by lexicographers at the Poznań School of English

- Fisiak, J. 1993. *Słownik idiomów angielskich*. Warszawa: BGW.
- Fisiak, J. (ed.) 1996. *Collins Polish-English, English-Polish Dictionary*. Warszawa: HarperCollins - BGW.
- Fisiak, J., Jankowski, M., Adamska-Sałaciak, A., Idzikowski, M. (eds.) 1996(1997, 1999) *Praktyczny słownik angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski. Collins Gem English-Polish, Polish-English dictionary*. Warszawa: BGW.
- Fisiak, J., Adamska-Sałaciak, A., Idzikowski, M., Jankowski, M. 1999. *Longman podręczny słownik angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski*. Harlow: Longman.
- Fisiak, J. (ed.) 2003. *Nowy słownik Fundacji Kościuszkowskiej angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski. The new English-Polish and Polish-English Kosciuszko Foundation dictionary*. 2 vols. (volume editors: A. Adamska-Sałaciak and P. Gąsiorowski). Kraków: Universitas.
- Fisiak, J., Adamska-Sałaciak, A., Idzikowski, M., Jagła, E., Jankowski, M., Lew, R. 2004. *Longman słownik współczesny angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski*. Harlow: Longman.
- Jankowski, M., Lange, T.W., Skommer, G. 1999. *Słownik uniwersalny polsko-angielski, angielsko-polski*. Berlin - Munich: Langenscheidt.
- Jankowski, M., Marciniak, A. 1990. *Słownik informatyczny angielsko-polski*. Poznań: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Jankowski, M., Nadstoga, Z., Sawala, K. 1990. *Słownik obrazkowy języka angielskiego*. Poznań: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atena.
- Lew, R. (ed.) 2003. *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary. Słownik angielsko-polski z indeksem polsko-angielskim*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwarz, C. M., Seaton, M. A. and Fisiak, J. (eds.) 1990. *English Dictionary for Speakers of Polish*. Toronto - Poznań: Kernerman - SAWW.
- Schwarz, C. M., Seaton, M. A. and Fisiak, J. (eds.) 1996. *English-Polish Learner's Dictionary*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Schwarz, C. M., Seaton, M. A. and Fisiak, J. (eds.) 2002. *Praktyczny słownik angielsko-polski, polsko-angielski*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Wolfram-Romanowska, D., Kaszubski, P. 2003. *Angielsko-polski słownik reklamy telewizyjnej*. Warszawa: TVP S.A.
- Wolfram-Romanowska, D., Kaszubski, P., Parker, M. 1999. (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005) *Idiomy polsko-angielskie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.