KD’s BLDS: a brief introduction

In 2005 K Dictionaries (KD) entered a project of developing dictionaries for learners of different languages. KD had already created several non-English titles a few years earlier, but those were basic word-to-word dictionaries. The current task marked a major policy shift for our company since for the first time we were becoming heavily involved in learner dictionaries with target languages other than English. That was the beginning of our Bilingual Learners Dictionaries Series (BLDS), which so far covers 20 different language cores and keeps growing.

The BLDS was launched with a program for eight French bilingual dictionaries together with Assimil, a leading publisher for foreign language learning in France which made a strategic decision to expand to dictionaries in cooperation with KD. The main target users were identified as speakers of French learning a foreign language at an intermediate level. To serve both production and reception purposes, it was decided that the dictionaries would be fully bilingual and bi-directional. The core for each language consisted of about 12,000 main headwords, with the total number of words and expressions running up to a maximum of 20,000. The entries typically consisted of the headword, pronunciation, part of speech, irregular forms, brief definitions, example of usage for each sense of polysemous entries, all types of compositional phrases, run-ons, usage and register labels, etc.

We started by establishing an extensive infrastructure both contentwise and technologically. The lexicographic compilation was divided into 25 projects: 1 for the French core, 8 for the dictionary cores of the eight languages, another 8 for the translation from French to eight languages, and 8 more for the translation of each language to French.

An editorial team was set up for developing each of the nine (French + 8) dictionary cores. The lexicographers worked from a distance, usually at home, all over the world. The chief editor for each language was responsible for preparing the editorial styleguide and the list of headwords. Since no corpora were publicly available for any of these languages, each editor used different means to retrieve information in order to compile the headword list. Much of the language resources for compiling the entries were found on the Internet.

The technical foundations had to be robust and elaborate enough to accommodate complex lexicographical data in any language, fitting into a single overall framework that allowed for regular exchanges with dozens of editors and translators. We configured an XML Editor for the lexicographic input and had to maintain a sub-project of having the software installed by each lexicographer, preparing proper documentation on its functioning, and providing technical support.

In its larger sense, the BLDS concerns constructing a
The BLDS cores currently include these languages:
- Arabic
- Chinese (Simplified)
- Traditional - Czech - Dutch
- English - French - German
- Greek - Italian - Japanese
- Korean - Latin - Norwegian
- Polish - Portuguese (Brazil)
- Portuguese - Russian
- Spanish - Turkish

database-network that can serve as a base for compiling different dictionaries. It contains more data than is needed for a single dictionary, and enables the extraction of precise components to suit individual user profiles. For example, the titles for speakers of French use sense indicators for disambiguating meanings instead of carrying the definitions, and exclude the phonetic pronunciation of the French headwords but present phonetics of the L2 headwords and translations. The appropriate balance naturally has to be fine-tuned for each particular language pair.

Meanwhile, KD began to compile dictionary cores for more languages, and the first BLDS title was actually published already last year by Vega Forlag in Norway (Spanish/Norwegian). The eight French bilinguals are published by Assimil in France this year. Each dictionary is accompanied by an electronic application that is downloaded and activated by a personal key. This issue of KDN presents a few BLDS samples, more extensive information will be provided in the next issue.