Answers to Open Questions

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At the end of his article **Monolingual or bilingual, that is *not* the question: the 'bilingualised' dictionary**, Kyohei Nakamoto leaves ten open questions "as a fillip to future discussion". I should like to contribute to this discussion with the following answers:

(1) When there is no equivalent at all to a given lexical item, how should it be treated?

As in a bilingual dictionary, a description or definition might be given but with an indication that this is not a translation equivalent. This can be made with the use of a different typeface or size, enclosure in parentheses, or some other easily understood indicator. In any case, since an L2 definition is right there, the problem is less serious in a bilingualised dictionary than in a bilingual one.

(2) When there is no full equivalent, how should the lexical item be treated?

More than one translation can be given to cover the full equivalence with a punctuation convention to indicate that these are not simply synonyms in L1 which by themselves are more-or-less full equivalents.

(3) When there is no stylistic and/or connotational equivalent, how should the lexical item be treated?

The lack of a connotational equivalent is probably true of most word-for-word translations. Even in monolingual dictionaries connotations are a problem, and except in larger dictionaries they are usually ignored, with the definitions referring only to denotations.

Stylistic non-equivalence can generally be ignored, also, especially if there is a stylistic marker in the L2 part, e.g., (*formal*), (*colloquial*), etc, which the user can refer to.

(4) Which dictionary should be translated?

The choice optimally should be a learner's dictionary, which solves most of the problems of clarity and helpfulness to the user, and of course, the publisher's latest version should be the one to be translated.

(5) To what extent are the compilers/translators/publishers of the 'bilingualised' version allowed to change the contents and/or structure of the original text?

I can answer this from personal experience as the editor of OSDHS, in which L1 was a language using a non-Latin alphabet. As noted in the article, the structure of the original text was changed, such as eliminating almost all abbreviations and rearranging the line placements. The phonetic transcription was totally removed except for stress marks in compounds.

Misprints should, of course, be corrected. However, it should be noted that the misprints we found in OSDCE were on the computer tape text supplied by the original publisher, and almost all of these were corrected manually in the monolingual published version.

Omitted lexical items should also be included if they will be frequently used by the L1 speakers for cultural or other reasons. Changes should also be made if the wording of the L2 will offend the L1 group using the dictionary. Entries should be deleted if the translation requires a taboo word in L1. Such freedom should be written into the contract between the publishers concerned.

In general, though, changes such as reordering of senses and rewriting semantic explanations should not be made because the original L2 text is usually the work of expert and respected lexicographers whose speciality is learner's dictionaries.

(6) To what extent is the original text to be translated?

Translating only headwords and their sub-senses, as we did in OSDHS, preserves most of the original theory behind learner's dictionaries (all of it, in fact, if the user could be trained to ignore the translations at certain stages). Any further translating pushes the user further from achieving independant competence in L2, although as a tool for translators, who can be assumed to be more fluent already, it can save a lot of time and be reassuring.

It is a truism that there is no single dictionary that will be optimal for all users. The same is true of monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised dictionaries. In the case of the last group the habits, cultural patterns of learning, tradition, and preferences of the particular user groups have to be taken into account, not to mention the economic factors.

(7) How do we know the potential users' needs?

Such 'needs' are often defined by teachers who are prejudiced by the educational theories they learned during their training. Experience may normally be the best teacher, but in this case what publisher is going to try versions with different amounts of translation in order to get the experience?

(8) Do the users really read the L2 text?

Some do, some don't.

If all that the user wants is an immediately insertable translation, then there are probably better tools on the market, such as the small electronic dictionaries. In many places these are the tools of choice for most translation needs. But if the aim is learning L2 and not just translating an L2 text, then having an L2 definition to read can be very useful.

(9) Will a 'bilingualised' dictionary find a particular niche in the dictionary market?

It already has in Israel. Intended as a school text, it became a bestseller, far beyond the original niche. Its main drawback for many users is that it is unidirectional, and what might satisfy many users would be at least to have a word-for-word listing in the L1-to-L2 direction but without definitions since the user would not need them so much.

(10) Is 'bilingualisation' most applicable for general-purpose semasiological dictionaries?

It is certainly applicable, but the *degree* of applicability will be known only after we have seen it tried with a number of different types of dictionaries.