

The Specialised Lexicographical Approach: A Step further in Dictionary Making

Nuria Edo Marzá.

Bern: Peter Lang, 2009. 316 pages. ISBN 978-3-0343-0043-8.

In the blurb of *The Specialised Lexicographical Approach: A Step further in Dictionary-making* Nuria Edo Marzá describes herself as a researcher interested in specialised lexicography, terminology, and specialised languages, and presents the specialised lexicographical approach (SLA) as “the result of a natural evolution in the field of specialised dictionary-making that goes a step further the “mere” terminographical practice”; she also adds that the SLA will lead to the construction of “specialised, active, user-friendly, user-focused, corpus-based dictionaries deeply grounded on the belief that terminology has a practical, communicative dimension that terminographical works have not normally reflected”. The above reflection is in line with the wealth of metalexicography and dictionary-research carried out in the field of lexicography, especially by proponents of functional approaches to lexicography who have committed themselves to making specialised dictionaries aiming at satisfying the needs users have in communicative and cognitive use situations. Recent book-length publications by Fuertes-Olivera and Arribas-Baño (2008), Tarp (2008), Bergenholtz, Nielsen and Tarp (2009), Nielsen and Tarp (2009), and Fuertes-Olivera (2010) make also specific contributions regarding the true nature of lexicography.

The book is divided into 10 chapters, and a list of references. Chapters 1 to 6 are devoted to presenting the theoretical framework of the specialised lexicographical approach SLA, which involves “the study of terminology from a *continuum* view of language and an integrating perspective” (page 17) and rests on the idea that specialised language is a functional register that constitutes a subgroup within the general code of language being its terminology the “main articulator of specialised discourse” (page 48); this view obliges lexicographers to rest on a sound method of term selection. Edo follows traditional approaches in Spain (Cabré, 1999) and defends a corpus approach to term selection and description in Chapter 3, in line with current practices in general lexicography.

The communicative perspective adopted by the SLA is also present in

chapter 4, which describes the evolution of terminology from its inception in the 1930s – the so called General Theory of Terminology (GTT) – to the Communicative Theory of Terminology (CTT) proposed by Cabré and colleagues (Cabré, 1999). Following the main tenets of CTT, Edo maintains that there is no need to differentiate between words and terms by claiming that lexical units have the potential to be a term and a no term in context, which lays the foundation for proposing an analysis of terms from formal, semantic, and functional perspectives. In the same way as we can analyse the lexical units of general language (i.e., “words”), we can also study the lexical units of specialised discourse (i.e., “terms”). This reflection lays the foundation for stating a set of principles that form the grounding blocks of CTT (pages 116-122).

In chapters 5 and 6 (devoted to “specialised lexicography” and the socio-economic context of the research carried out), Edo Marzá introduces some practical aspects of terminological works. They rest on what I assume to be a wrong hypothesis, although very popular in Spanish terminological circles: the use of corpora for term selection. It is well-known that the use of corpora in the compilation of general reference works has led to better and more adequate reference works. I agree with the author that a corpus may be an adequate methodology for term description, but I disagree with her on the use of corpus for term selection considering that the characteristics of terms are very different from those of general words. The nature of specialised discourse, however, rests more on “relevance” than on “frequency”; this implies the necessity of selecting lemmata and lexicographical data by using deep knowledge, something that only true experts in the field can offer.

The second part of this book – chapters 7 to 9 – presents the method used in the development of a bilingual English-Spanish, Spanish-English dictionary of the ceramics industry. In Chapter 7, Edo Marzá describes her proposed dictionary as descriptive and active; this is:

each entry may include up to eight distinct items of technical, grammatical or pragmatic information, namely, part of speech (adj., adv., n., v., etc.), gender, (m/f), translation, semantic field, collocations/collocates, acronyms, examples, quotations and definitions/technical information. (page 198)

Chapter 8 enumerates some general-theoretical considerations and working stages in the compilation of the specialised bilingual dictionary of industrial

ceramics terminology. The first stage focuses on the definition of the work that comprises four main stages: deciding on the topic of the work, the potential users, the functions the work is aimed at, and the work dimensions. Another stage is concerned with several considerations for work preparation and corpus compilation. She mentions five main activities, one of which has proven to be elusive in most specialised dictionaries: the conceptual structuring of the field. She offers (pages 209-210) some tasks for accomplishing such endeavour. Without questioning the validity of the description my experience is that this task is time consuming and offers little reward. More interesting are the sections devoted to term extraction using WordSmith Tools (pages 233-254) and data processing.

Chapter 9 illustrates her results. In spite of the theoretical framework described in previous chapters the dictionary articles reported are very similar to the ones found in the dictionary projects sponsored by the late Enrique Alcaraz. For example, the entry for **abroad**:

Abroad *adv.* GRAL extranjero (en el); to go abroad: irse al extranjero ◊ *We specialize in manufacturing, processing and trading abroad ceramic tiles.*

I am not sure why this entry is in the dictionary. It is neither specialised nor specific to the field. Perhaps it is frequent in the corpus used for lemma selection, but it is not relevant and should not be included in the lemmata.

The book finishes by summarising the main topics discussed. In general I find the proposal identified as SLA far from lexicography and close to the works of those scholars who tend to equate lexicography and applied linguistics. My view is that such a proposal is misguided and contrary to the true nature of (specialised) lexicography (Bergenholtz & Nielsen, 2006; Tarp, 2008).

[Review received December 2009]

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