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Title of the book:

Principles and Practice of South African Lexicography

Authors:

R.H. Gouws
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1. A brief assessment of the book and its contribution as a research output.

This is to my knowledge the first major attempt to apply international and European lexicographic theory to the languages and the dictionary production situation of South Africa. In particular, I have not seen, before, any comprehensive and well structured summary description of lexicographic activities for the African languages, but only separate articles, dealing with individual aspects of the questions. It is a major achievement that there is now a thorough and detailed analysis of best practice for the lexicography of the South African languages. In addition, most of European and international lexicographic theorizing has been developed with European languages in mind, and transferring these techniques to the African languages is an achievement in itself. For example, the corpus studies of South African languages, the assessment of the needs of the South African national language units, aspects of user orientation, as well as work on the use of outer structures in dictionaries for African Languages are all highly original and have mostly not even been published previously.

The book is based on theoretical work in lexicography by Wiegand, Bergenholtz/Tarp, Atkins and several others, and the authors manage perfectly to strike a balance between theoretical discussion and practical application. The title of the book is adequate, as it rightly emphasizes both aspects and the South African dimension. However, the book is by no means only relevant for readers in South Africa, but it gives, with examples from South Africa's languages, a condensed and up-to-date overview of today's best practice in the field. This goes as far as integrating first results of ongoing research on lexical modelling, on corpus use and exploration and so on. Moreover, the book contains a significant number of very instructive examples, many of which are relevant and telling also for readers not dealing (exclusively) with the languages of South Africa.

The book could not have been written without a significant amount of previous research by both authors, and alone the list of dictionaries cited and analysed is impressive. Obviously, the research results are integrated into a concise presentation of international standard working procedures and principles in lexicography.

General comments: the book has a well-balanced structure, and we find it particularly useful to see that the authors managed to condense in to less than 200 pages a large number of theoretically and practically relevant discussion in lexicography. The fact that the individual chapters are mostly rather short is an advantage: on the one hand, this facilitates browsing and searching for specific topics, on the other it allows to cut up systematic work into sufficiently small pieces. We would like to suggest that the table of contents, which rightly only provides an inventory of numbered subsections, could also be extended to cover non-numbered subsections for reference and search purposes. Such a "long table of contents" at the end of the book, would assist the user alongside the index of terms. Finally, the pdf-print which the reviewer received contains a number of screen dumps, which are unfortunately hardly readable. Here, either another way of reproducing the screen dumps or some other improvements in the printed version is necessary.

Overall, this book is a beautiful condensed overview not only of international best practice in lexicography, but in particular of its application to the languages of South Africa, which has led to a whole series of new insights both theoretical and practical, and thus the book shows the substantial steps forwards which South African lexicography has brought to lexicography in general.

2. An indication that the book disseminates original research and new developments in lexicography and metalexicography around the world, with unique concentration of the languages of South Africa.

Original research and new developments: as mentioned above, the application of lexicographic principles from ongoing European theorizing in lexicography, to South African languages, is in itself an new development. Even more so, work on the lemmatization of the African languages, on article types for dictionaries, on corpus-based methods in determining the size of a macrostructure, to quote but a few examples, are all new and of international relevance. Some of the results of the author's research on these topics have indeed been presented at international conferences, and the others would definitely merit to be known to a large international public.

3. An indication that the target audience of the book is specialists / peers in the relevant field and that it is not merely a textbook or a popular book intended for the general public.

Target audience: this book, despite being very well written, didactically structured and full of useful examples, is clearly intended towards a high level specialist public. Already the use of Wiegand's terminology, which is introduced at a very early point in the book and used throughout, as well as the systematic use of internationally recognized specialized vocabulary of lexicography and corpus linguistics clearly show that the book is not intended towards the general public alone. Obviously, all terminology is defined and the alphabetical index at the end of the book allows everybody to cross-check relevant definitions. In this sense, interested non-specialists are by no means excluded as a public, but they are likely only a fraction of the regular users of the book.

The book goes far beyond a textbook, insofar as it addresses many more details than a typical university course could be covering. Moreover the strictly scientific nature of the book makes it an adequate reading not so much for the first year student, but rather for those who after a few years of exposure to courses in linguistics and lexicography have decided to concentrate on dictionaries. This public will also find numerous international references as well as national ones, allowing them to deepen their knowledge where necessary. The use of examples from different languages may make the book somewhat less attractive to the general public but clearly provides added value for the specialist, provided the user is interested in the broad range of phenomena covered.

I see this book in the hands of advanced students, researchers at university, collaborators of the national language units dealing with lexicography, as well as very usefully in the hands of all those interested academics who want to get an up-to-date picture of today's research and development in lexicography at large and in the lexicography of the South African languages in particular.