



President's Annual Report: 2010-2011
Presented at the AGM of AFRILEX 2011, 6 July 2011
Windhoek, Namibia

The year between the previous annual Afrilex conference, held at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, and the present conference, was a very busy one for the Afrilex Executive and Board, as well as the Afrilex members. In my report I will select a few highlights to illustrate this.

A personal note

Let me however start with a brief personal note. As you will recall, last year our Vice-President, Dr Maropeng V. Mojela, had to replace me during the conference, as my wife and I were expecting our first-born: Malaika-Louis if it had been a boy, Malaika-Louise if it had been a girl. Today I am happy to inform you that it is a Little Prince that we welcomed into this world. **Pr Malaika-Louis** is now fast approaching his first birthday, and while we got away with not bringing him this time, my wife, Minah Nabirye, and myself had to promise him that we would allow him to attend next year's conference. Last I heard he was already working on his abstract.

And while on the topic of last year's conference, I would like to use this opportunity to personally thank **Drs John Lubinda** and **Thapelo Otlogetswe**, both from the University of Botswana, as they made sure the Afrilex conference they hosted was yet another successful one. Both have remained very active, and we are glad to see that they are once again with us at this conference. To Drs Lubinda and Otlogetswe: Thank you!

Activities of the Executive and Board

The main task of the Executive and Board of Afrilex this past year was to prepare the present conference. Thanks to the wonderful organizing skills of this year's local conference organizers, **Dr Herman Beyer and his team**, this was an enjoyable experience – an experience that is carried through to this very moment, as I am sure all of those who attended the pre-conference workshops yesterday, the publishers' session, the cocktail party, as well as today's papers, can attest to. To Dr Beyer and his team: Thank you!

Afrilex is **going places** – an explicit goal of the current Executive and Board. Of the sixteen conferences to date, four, or thus one quarter, will have been hosted outside South Africa. While we are already reviewing applications from even further afield in Africa, I want to reassure our members that planning for next year's conference, for which we will return to the University of Pretoria, South Africa, is not just ongoing, but already in a very advanced stage. More on this later during this AGM.

While our annual conferences, together with their pre-conference workshops, remain the major event on the annual Afrilex calendar, the Executive and Board also actively embarked on the organization of interim workshops. Two were organised under the auspices of Afrilex.

In August 2010, a **workshop on dictionary use** was presented at the University of Pretoria's campus in **Mamelodi**, a township east of Pretoria. The workshop was attended by 140 learners (80 primary-school and 60 secondary-school learners) and 13 of their teachers. Our Vice-President, Dr Maropeng V. Mojela, as well as two Past-Presidents, Proff Rufus Gouws and Danie Prinsloo, introduced the learners – as well as their teachers! – to the use of a dictionary. Despite being included in the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools, few schools actually teach these skills, mostly because of a lack of dictionaries in classrooms. The junior learners were supplied with a take-home copy of MML's *Longman Foundation Phase Bilingual Sepedi/English Dictionary*. They also received exercises in dictionary use, designed by Prof Prinsloo and Ms Mariza Steyn of MML. Secondary school learners were supplied with a copy of the same dictionary as well as a copy of the *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: Northern Sotho and English*. The latter dictionary, edited by

myself, also comes with a workbook designed to teach users on how to use a dictionary. Feedback from both learners and teachers was so positive that a similar workshop is already planned for later this year.

Also in 2010, Dr Michele van der Merwe and Ms Mariza Steyn, in collaboration with Afrilex, conducted **dictionary workshops for foundation phase learners** in the **Western Cape**. The main aim of those workshops was to train teachers in the importance of dictionary skills education. Teachers received training on a general typology of dictionaries with reference to pedagogical dictionaries, on how to extract information from a dictionary, and on how to teach dictionary skills as part of their literacy program. The teachers also received a range of dictionary worksheets and activities covering the basic structure of *MML's Longman Foundation Phase Bilingual Afrikaans/English Dictionary*. As a result of the teacher training and subsequent regular consultation of the dictionary by the learners in the classroom, the reference skills and confidence of the learners improved drastically.

The Executive and Board would like to stress that the teaching of dictionary skills at especially primary and secondary school levels is of vital importance in order to establish a dictionary culture – in South Africa, as well as in the rest of Africa. Afrilex will therefore continue to organize and support such activities.

The Executive and Board also embarked on a revision of our Association's **Constitution**, in order to bring it in line with today's realities. The explicit mention of workshops is one of the suggested changes, as is an expanded section on honorary membership, the option to use postal ballots where applicable, as well as a reduction in the number of portfolios on the Board (with a smaller Executive as a result). These suggested changes will be tabled for your approval later during this AGM.

Lastly, the Executive and Board have also been overseeing the change of editorship at **Lexikos**. After many years of the highest possible dedication to the journal, Dr Johan du Plessis passed on the baton to a rotating trio of editors: Proff Elsabé Taljard, Danie Prinsloo, and Rufus Gouws. The journal will continue to be published by the Bureau of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*. Although Dr Du Plessis is not present today, I would like to request a big hand for him. He himself does not know it yet, but his continued efforts

to steer *Lexikos* in the right direction, as well as his unabated endeavour to solicit material from all over the world, has now been rewarded with an even higher ranking for the journal in the latest, 2010, *Journal Citation Reports*, published by Thomson Reuters, and released only last week. In the Linguistics Category, which currently brings together the world's top 141 linguistics journals, *Lexikos* now ranks 66th, meaning that it now moved from the third to the second quartile. A big round of applause for Dr Du Plessis is therefore in order.

Activities of Afrilex Members

There are three kinds of membership of Afrilex: personal, honorary, and corporate. We have two **Honorary Members**: Prof A.C. Nkabinde, since July 2002, and Prof Rufus Gouws, since July 2010. Both are in good health, and both are currently involved in a number of dictionary projects, on a practical as well as theoretical level.

Corporate Members are typically National Lexicography Units, as well as Publishers.

When I asked Dr Willem Botha, Executive Director at the Afrikaans NLU, for news from his Unit, this is what I received:

For the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* the year 2010 will be remembered as the year when the WAT became available on cellphone. This means that you can now hold the equivalent of almost 9 000 pages in the palm of your hand!

The WAT was also for the first time ever involved in the compilation of a translation dictionary. The *Vriende van Afrikaans* (Friends of Afrikaans) asked the WAT to compile an Afrikaans-English translation dictionary containing the 1 000 most-used Afrikaans words. The little dictionary was published early in 2011 by Pharos.

Steady progress is also being made on the compilation of the first of three volumes of the WAT containing the letter S. S is a very productive letter in all Germanic languages and comprehensive dictionaries in these languages always devote several volumes to it.

From Ms Jill Wolvaardt, Executive Director at the English NLU, I received the following:

The latest edition of the very successful South African Concise Oxford Dictionary was published by Oxford University Press Southern Africa in September 2010. Edited by the *Dictionary Unit for South*

African English at Rhodes University, the second edition (re-branded as the *Oxford South African Concise Dictionary* for marketing purposes) was launched in Grahamstown, home of the DSAE, and in Cape Town. Originally published in 2002, the first edition of this popular desktop dictionary sold more than 50,000 copies, and the new edition is flying off the shelves!

The new edition has nearly 300 new South African entries, as well as new contemporary English vocabulary. It also has a number of additional features to assist users make the most of the dictionary as a language tool: usage notes, a guide to good English, and tables with curriculum-related information, such as the list of elements, Prime Ministers and Presidents of South Africa, the UK and the US. All of these features have been prepared from a southern African perspective, which makes the dictionary unique on the market.

All other NLUs are also continuing with their various compilation efforts, and this despite dwindling government funds.

Given a dedicated Publishers' Session was organised yesterday, at which *Oxford University Press Southern Africa*, *Pearson Education South Africa*, *Pharos* and *Menha Publishers* could present their latest products, I will not re-review those here.

Rather, I will briefly mention two more endeavours by **Personal Members**. Firstly, at a book launch held on 8 October 2010 in Kampala, Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni officially launched Minah Nabirye's monolingual Lusoga dictionary, the *Eiwanika ly'Olusoga*. Learning, during the laudatio by the President, that Museveni is himself a lexicographer came as a great but welcome surprise to us. We are now waiting for his Runyankore dictionary to be released ...

At another book launch, at the EURALEX 2010 congress in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, Patrick Hanks was honoured with a Festschrift on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Several of his long-time colleagues, including John Sinclair, Sue Atkins, Michael Rundell, Adam Kilgarriff, Rosamund Moon, and many more, contributed chapters, with the book edited by myself.

We also received sad news from one of our members. Our colleague Dr P.B. (Bhuti) Skhosana passed away on 28 October 2010. Dr Skhosana will be remembered for his involvement in all matters lexicographic pertaining to isiNdebele. Bhuti, we will miss you!

By way of conclusion

I would like to remind the members about the existence of the electronic **Afrilex Mailing List**, through which messages are delivered directly into your e-mail box. All paid-up Afrilex members have automatically been made members of the Afrilex Mailing List. Over the past two years, however, traffic on that mailing list was rather low. I would like to urge members to make better use of this facility to exchange news, to discuss lexicography, or simply to make announcements relevant to Afrilex and its members.

I would also like to extend a special word of thanks to **Pharos** (NB Publishers) for their continued sponsoring of our association.

And now, **to sum up**, one can confidently state that over the past year the Executive and Board of Afrilex, as well as the Afrilex Members at large, have all contributed to the furthering of lexicography *in* Africa and *on* African languages. Moreover, the journal *Lexikos* has carried the flame further than ever. May we continue on this road, and may Afrilex continue to prosper.



Gilles-Maurice de Schryver
President: AFRILEX

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Windhoek, Namibia