

President's Annual Report: 2009-2010
Presented at the AGM of AFRILEX 2010, 20 July 2010
Gaborone, Botswana

The year between the previous annual Afrilex conference, held at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and the present conference, was a very busy one for the Afrilex Executive and Board, the Afrilex members, as well as the Friends of Afrilex. In my report I will select a few highlights only for each of these categories.

First an apology

But first an apology, as I have had to ask our Vice-President, Dr. Maropeng V. Mojela, to replace me during the present conference. As you will recall, Prof. Rufus Gouws informed last year's AGM that two Afrilex members were about to get married: myself and Ms Minah Nabirye, from Uganda. Now, about a year later, I am happy to inform you that Minah and I are not only happily married, but also expecting our first-born any day now. This explains, I hope, why I could not be present during this conference. While this is unfortunate, the good news is that we'll soon be able to announce a new Afrilex member: Malaika-Louis if it is a boy, Malaika-Louise if it is a girl. The announcement may even come during this conference! Watch the notice boards ...

In the mean time, many thanks to Dr. Mojela and his team for overseeing the smooth running of this conference.

Activities of the Executive and Board

Afrilex 2010 is already the 15th Annual International Conference of the *African Association for Lexicography*, but it is only the third one organised outside South Africa. In 2003 we went to Windhoek, Namibia, and in 2004 we went to Libreville, Gabon. All twelve other Afrilex conferences were organised in South Africa. The new Afrilex Board decided in its first meeting to make Afrilex more African than ever, so we are particularly happy that we ventured outside South Africa for the 2010 edition. Leaving 'familiar' South Africa necessarily means navigating the unknown. The Executive and Board of Afrilex was indeed confronted with all sorts of challenges, but the mere fact that you are all gathered in Gaborone, Botswana, participating in a successful conference, and attracting new lexicographers and new dictionary projects, is proof that we did the right thing.

Yes, the present conference is smaller than some of the previous editions, but the quality of the presentations remains high. The Board is now set to continue on this track, with the 2011 edition to take place in Windhoek, Namibia. Although we have also received offers from Kinshasa and Kampala already, capitals of the DRC and Uganda respectively, we will of course return to South Africa first, in 2012. The Executive and Board of Afrilex take their task seriously, and potential keynote speakers as well as pre-conference workshop topics for these forthcoming editions are already being decided on.

Another project that has the full support of the Board and which is now actively being planned is a series of workshops on dictionary use. This project is led by Prof Danie Prinsloo, and will be a joint venture between the Department of African Languages at the University of Pretoria, and Afrilex. The main aim will be to teach primary and secondary school learners, as well as their teachers, how to use dictionaries.

Two Board members deserve a special mention here: Dr Mojela and Prof Prinsloo, who fitted in an extra meeting into their busy schedule, to meet up with the local conference organizers of Afrilex 2010, Drs Lubinda and Otlogetswe. The four of them made sure that all conference aspects were meticulously prepared.

Activities of Afrilex Members

Several Afrilex members have also been very active, with long-awaited products now 'on' or 'ready for' the shelves. Let me start with an example from myself. My bilingual Zulu-English school-dictionary project was brought to completion earlier this year, and became available this July. This was a very large and long-term project, in which several Afrilex members have been involved, in co-operation with TshwaneDJe HLT and Oxford University Press Southern Africa. The Project Manager at OUP was Fred Pheiffer, and if you have not already met with and talked to him at this conference, please do so. Even though I am not with you at this conference, I invite you to take a critical look at the revolutionary lemmatisation approach my team of dictionary compilers and I came up with. As was the case for my previous African-language school dictionaries, also this dictionary is corpus-driven.

Another dictionary team, under the directorship of Jill Wolvaardt in Grahamstown, has also been frantically busy finalizing their dictionary. The second edition of the *Oxford South African Concise Dictionary*, edited by the *Dictionary Unit for South African English*, will be published in August this year. The first edition of this popular desktop dictionary sold more than 50,000 copies. 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 have been prepared from a southern African perspective, which makes the dictionary unique on the market.

From Jana Luther, now with Pearson Education South Africa, came the *HAT Afrikaanse Skoolwoordeboek* as well as the *HAT Afrikaanse Sakwoordeboek* last October – both derivatives of the acclaimed *Kernwoordeboek*. Jana was assisted by a team including Liezl Potgieter, Herman Beyer, Frikkie Lombard, Michele van der Merwe, and others – as you can see: all valued members of Afrilex!

I can of course not list all projects by Afrilex members, but allow me one more. At last year's Afrilex conference Minah Nabirye presented her monolingual Lusoga dictionary, a dictionary

compiled *by* a mother-tongue speaker, *for* mother-tongue speakers. Although Lusoga is spoken by over two million Basoga, none of the traditional publishers was willing to invest in the publication of her dictionary. Minah resorted to starting up her own publishing company, Menha Publishers, and printed and distributed her own work. Current sales in Kampala and throughout the world have not only proven the so-called 'established dictionary publishers' wrong, but opened up a new channel for all of us in a similar situation, that is: those of us in the possession of dictionary manuscripts which are the result of years of in-depth and original research, but without anyone interested in taking the risk to publish those results. Remember that Menha Publishers may be interested ...

Activities by Friends of Afrilex

I do realize I have been treading on slippery ground, with my previous example, which brought in commercial partners. The 'trade' tends to be a 'dirty word' at academic conferences, and one could argue that it should not feature in the report on the activities of an association. It is true that not all Afrilex members compile dictionaries, but those who do can hardly do without a publisher. I myself have accepted this long ago, and as a matter of fact, I have always easily crossed over from academia to business and back. As such, my own involvement in the activities of the software company TshwaneDJe HLT – makers of TshwaneLex, and also sponsors and maintainers of the Afrilex website – are well known. A software company, just as a publishing house, is of course another indispensable partner of today's practicing lexicographers who wish to successfully produce reference works.

Two examples from the past year will suffice to illustrate this invaluable interaction. TshwaneDJe HLT recently completed a major project in which it (re)placed the huge 13-volume *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* online. The *Bureau van die WAT* is a corporate member of Afrilex, as well as the publisher and sponsor of the journal *Lexikos*. In another project, TshwaneDJe HLT converted 20 dictionaries for Pharos, a division of NB Publishers, and (re)placed them online. The result consists of over 580,000 entries. Pharos is also a corporate member of Afrilex, as well as a valued sponsor of our annual Afrilex conferences.

Areas in which we were less successful

There have, unfortunately, also been areas in which we have not been very successful over the past year. One of those includes the attraction of enough material to produce an Afrilex Newsletter. The feasibility to compile a newsletter depends on the number of contributions received, and those simply numbered too few. I would like to use this opportunity to ask members to please send their news to our Treasurer, Mr J. Motsamai Motsapi.

In the absence of a regular Afrilex Newsletter, I would also like to remind the members that we now have the electronic Afrilex Mailing List, through which messages are delivered directly into your e-mail box. All current Afrilex members have automatically been made members of the Afrilex Mailing List. Over the past year, however, traffic on that mailing list was rather low. Here

too, 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.

A few words about *Lexikos*

Lexikos is not the journal of Afrilex — as it attracts contributions from all over the world, with the best only being published following, for each, a rigorous double-blind adjudication process by at least two referees — but it is the favoured outlet and as such the mouthpiece of the members of Afrilex. *Lexikos* would not be *Lexikos* without the devotion by its editor, Dr Johan du Plessis, and his right hand, Ms Riette Ruthven. The Afrilex Board would hereby like to thank them wholeheartedly. Changes to the way *Lexikos* is produced and edited are forthcoming, but those will only be announced officially and in full in the next issue of the journal.

Over the years, Dr Johan du Plessis and Ms Riette Ruthven managed to turn quality manuscripts into articles that are often close to perfection. Such aspects did not go unnoticed, and it is no doubt thanks to the high-quality submissions, combined to a timely editorial process, that *Lexikos* was selected, as of Volume 15 (2005), for inclusion in the Thomson Reuters Web of Science Citation Index. Beginning with Volume 18 (2008), Thomson Reuters further started to calculate the Impact Factor of *Lexikos*. I am happy to report that the 2009 Impact Factor of *Lexikos*, the most recent one available, has risen from 0.300 in 2008, to 0.667 in 2009. In simple terms this means that the ‘impact’ of *Lexikos* has more than doubled!

Summarizing

Summarizing, one can therefore state that in the past year the Executive and Board of Afrilex, the Afrilex members, and what I called the Friends of Afrilex – meaning the ‘trade’ (i.e. both traditional and online publishers/developers) – have all contributed to the furthering of lexicography in Africa.

Secondly, while the potential of the Afrilex Newsletter and the Afrilex Mailing List have unfortunately not been tapped, 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

18 July 2010
Ghent, Belgium