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A Review of the Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary by Steven Paas

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary compiled by Steven Paas, published in 2016 by Oxford University Press in Cape Town. Upon a review of the dictionary, a number of issues arise. The dictionary's significance rests in its use as reference material for language learners, its semantic precision and the relevance with which translation and other disciplines treat it. Regardless of its wide coverage of the Chichewa and English lexicons, the dictionary has a number of flaws which are misleading and confusing for the dictionary's users. Such errors include ambiguity over dictionary type, inclusion of proper nouns as lexical entries, lack of detailed grammatical information and silence on morphological typology among others. This paper, therefore, concludes that the dictionary leaves a lot to be desired and recommends that the next edition of the dictionary take into account the highlighted issues.

KEYWORDS

Bilingual Dictionary, Entries, Grammatical Information, Lexicon, Malawi, Noun Class, Phonetic Transcription, Translation

INTRODUCTION

Chichewa is a Bantu language widely spoken in Malawi, Zambia and parts of Mozambique. In Malawi, it is the national language. In Zambia, its rendition is Chinyanja, a term that was the initial rendition of the Chichewa in Malawi in colonial times and the early years of independence.

English on the other hand, though native to an insignificant minority of descendants of colonial administrators and other British, Australian and American immigrants, is extremely important because of its status as an official language. It is the language of education, administration and communication. Knowledge of the two languages is therefore very significant for daily communication as well as effective execution of professional duties in various disciplines.

Such importance has led to attempts at Chichewa/English bilingual dictionaries by various interested stakeholders. The most notable of these attempts has been the creation of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary*. According to Paas (2016), the words and explanations in the dictionary were compiled in 1997. The dictionary contains about 45 000 entries.

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It is bilingual, with a dissection into two parts. A part of it is the translation from Chichewa to English while the other is the translation from English to Chichewa (Paas, 2016). This paper aims at reviewing the dictionary in detail, with insights into both its strengths and weaknesses.

BACKGROUND

A bilingual dictionary is a dictionary whose entries are in one language and their definitions are in another. It is a very important tool for both speakers and learners of a foreign language (Asma, 2010). There is a lot of scholarly work worldwide examining the strengths and challenges of bilingual dictionaries. Most of the researches have involved a close scrutiny of widely studied international languages whose data is readily available. Numerous studies have also focused on various dictionaries that involve an international language and a corresponding local one in a particular locality. Research shows an unending debate on the significance (or lack of) of a bilingual dictionary to language learners.

Asma (2010) observes that bilingual dictionaries are a preference for most beginners in language learning because of their lack of vocabulary in the target language. The study by Asma (2010) on the use of bilingual dictionaries also ascertains that these types of dictionaries are mostly developed for translators although they are equally used by several other stakeholders such as students. This is largely due to the dictionaries' ability to help them find immediate suitable equivalents (Asma, 2010). In agreement with these findings, Roohani and Khosravi (2011) found that frequency of a bilingual dictionary use has a significant positive relationship with writing in a second language. The sample of their study included university students who used the English-Persian/Persian-English dictionary in a test. The study recommends the use of bilingual dictionaries for learners of a second language who are not at an advanced level. Similarly, Kung (2015) seconds Chang (2004) who argues that the consultation of bilingual dictionaries can potentially provide learners with the benefits that both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries possess, such as the juxtaposition of both target language definitions and mother tongue equivalents. In a study on dictionary use for foreign language students in Turkey, Tulgar (2017) notes that integration of bilingual dictionaries in language learning is a preferred regular practice amongst university students. In the study, students forming the population sample shared the perspective that bilingual dictionaries are not only designed to provide word-to-word translations to convey meaning between languages. They consider dictionaries as language learning materials in which learners can find additional information about other components and aspects in the target language (Tulgar, 2017).

However, the bilingual dictionaries, much as they are useful, also have their own weaknesses. Laufer (2011) argues that it might be unclear if second language learners truly benefit more from a bilingual dictionary because it is difficult to gauge whether they read both the first language (L1) and second language (L2) entries, as per the intention of the lexicographers, or if they use just either of the two. Laufer (2011) claims that if the dictionary users merely use either their L1 or L2, 'the consultation of bilingual dictionaries could be unnecessary since it would be identical to the use of monolingual dictionaries'. Kung (2015) agrees with this assertion by citing the argument by Fan (2000) and Thumb (2004) that many L2 learners still rely on their L1 for translations when consulting a bilingual dictionary.

With reference to Zulu (South Africa) bilingual dictionaries, Gauton (2008) notes that the main challenge for lexicographers in the compilation of a bilingual dictionary is the basic non-equivalence between languages. This in turn tends to cause difficulties which the translator or any other user of the bilingual dictionary has to contend with (Gauton, 2008). Ahangari & Dogolsara (2015) agree by ascertaining that bilingual dictionaries demand word-for-word translation and equivalents that may not be as appropriate equivalents in some situations and might cause confusion and ambiguity. Another key aspect under equivalence in lexicography is equivalence discrimination. In a study on meaning discrimination in bilingual Venda (South Africa) dictionaries, Mafela (2005) notes that dictionary users find it difficult to use the bilingual Venda dictionaries because they are confronted

with equivalents which they cannot distinguish. 'In most cases, the equivalents of the entry-words are provided without giving meaning discrimination' (Mafela, 2005).

Despite the availability of numerous studies on bilingual dictionaries worldwide, there has not been sufficient scholarly treatment of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary*, if there is any. This is despite the importance of the dictionary as one of the only few updated and reliable Chichewa/English bilingual dictionaries in Malawi, with a few others registering their presence in online forms most recently. However, as it can be noted from the related literature, a review of the dictionary is of paramount importance because it leads to a discovery of more phenomena surrounding the dictionary. Such a discovery in turn leads to major improvements in related future lexicographic works – which in the context of the current review would result into improved editions of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary*.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study limited to analysis of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary*. In order to understand the complexities of a bilingual dictionary in general before the actual review of the target dictionary, a review of related literature was conducted. This involved an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the bilingual dictionary from multiple perspectives across the world. The study engaged journal articles, theses, books and authorial knowledge gained in various circumstances such as lexicography lectures and conversations they have previously participated in. An analysis of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* followed the understanding generated from the review of the literature, leading to a sampling of relevant pages with examples substantiating key points noted by the study pertaining to the dictionary's strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS OF THE DICTIONARY

For the use of bilingual dictionaries, scholarly opinion has always been divided on the extent to which they are useful to language learners. There is similar observation in the examination of literature on bilingual dictionaries globally. Similarly, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* has strengths that render the dictionary relevant to various stakeholders in the Malawi setting. These centre on the dictionary's relevance to L2 learners of both Chichewa and English, its closeness to the actual meanings in translation and its relevance to other important disciplines such as translation and education.

Reference Material for L2 Learners

To begin with, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* by Paas (2016) is useful for learners of both Chichewa and English as a second language as well as other users. The dictionary gives a good account of Chichewa and English words which are used in the users' daily communication. For someone who would want to learn how to speak Chichewa and English, this dictionary can be a good guide and reference material. It is easier to use, and a good option for language learners of both English and Chichewa for survival in the two languages' linguistic environments. The bilingual dictionary is especially helpful in the acquisition of more Chichewa and English vocabulary to the user, relevant to one's social, academic and professional endeavors in the Malawian linguistic context.

Semantic Precision

The other significant strength of the dictionary is that for the majority of its entries, it gives the closest meanings of a word as they are used by the speakers of the two languages in question for a significant number of entries. The compiler always provides the nearest meaning of the Chichewa

entries in English and vice versa where possible. For example, under the 'Chi-' list of entries in the Chichewa-English section, the dictionary provides several alternative meanings for *Chinyengo*. In English, it translates into multiple synonyms and forms that are listed for the user of the dictionary. These include 'deception/deceit/corruption/cheating' etcetera. Where necessary, the dictionary also provides short example sentences contextualizing the words' usage. For example, the translation equivalent for 'grievance' is *dandaulo* as per the entries under 'Gr' in the English-Chichewa section of the dictionary. To contextualize it, the dictionary provides a short sentence in which the word 'grievance' has been used in English: 'My grievances were genuine'. It then provides its translation in Chichewa as *Madandaulo anga anali omveka*, with the prefix 'ma-' serving as the equivalent of the suffix '-s' in English for a plural marker. The precision in translation is very critical to both local and foreign beneficiaries of the dictionary in the sense that it captures the context behind a word's meaning. This is helpful when considering the richness of the two languages in the dictionary, and the fact that the translations remain as close as possible to the original meanings in the different contexts demonstrates the dictionary's high regard for meaning.

Relevance to Translation and Education

The dictionary is also very significant to the field of translation and other related fields such as education. Its existence offers critical insights to scholars and researchers on the challenges in lexicography and bilingualism in Malawi. This sets professionals, scholars and researchers in the relevant fields in motion to consider measures of improving lexicography and other related fields within the discipline of Translation. It also creates an opportunity for the creation of better and improved lexicographical works involving the two languages for the benefit of the ordinary population, the academia and language policy makers.

With regards to translation, benefits of the dictionary are obvious. In many circumstances, translators from English to Chichewa and vice versa rely on the dictionary to find equivalents of terms they have never encountered before in both languages. The dictionary provides such terms, and continues to provide various forms of the entries from which translators are able to construct meaning in various contexts.

It must also be noted that language policy in Malawi has remained skewed towards the use of English as an official language with Chichewa as the national language. As such, in the learning of English for Malawian natives, the role of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* cannot be overemphasized. Language policy informs several relevant fields including education because it is through the language policy that a medium of instruction in schools is determined. This is where the dictionary becomes even more critical because much as English is taught from the first class in primary school in Malawi, it remains a mere subject until standard 5 in which it becomes the language of instruction. As such, an improved edition of the dictionary would serve both teachers and students in Malawian schools well.

Pertaining to the academia, research for contribution of knowledge to various disciplines is always at its core. Language experts find an opportunity in the existence of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* to create linguistic and lexicographical projects with the dictionary as their departure point. The knowledge gained in turn feeds into the cycle of education and language policy – which in the long run contributes to betterment of learning through improved instruction and understanding of the instructional media with the aid of the bilingual dictionary. An improved edition resulting from scholarly recommendations would also greatly enhance the work of translators who rely on the dictionary.

WEAKNESSES OF THE DICTIONARY

Despite the dictionary's current relevance, it also contains areas that require urgent improvement. Its weaknesses resemble to an extent the general weaknesses in other studies as observed in the review

of literature related to this specific study. They range from the compiler's lack of clarity on the dictionary's type, among several other shortfalls, to the inclusion of irrelevant and erroneous entries.

Ambiguity Over Dictionary Type

One of the shortfalls of the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* relates to its compilation. Paas (2016) does not state explicitly or with an implicit reference to the type of dictionary under which this compilation can be categorized. An ordinary user of a dictionary is often oblivious to the effect each type of dictionary has on how it can be used. However, a linguist is aware of the time such processes consume when a dictionary user cannot seem to find the right dictionary for reference to a particular work. This is because every type of dictionary carries varying kinds of information with different principles which allow users to predict content of the given dictionary. For example, while a dictionary on historical principles would place emphasis on etymology at the start of each entry and then follow a particular word's semantic development through arrangement of the senses in their historical order, a dictionary for language teaching would maintain an emphasis on idiomatic expressions and syntax with limited vocabulary targeting the quickest and best acquisition possible by learners (Kishindo, 2017). The lack of knowledge over the dictionary's type is a setback to the user in many ways. A user searching for etymology of Chichewa or English words has his/her work rendered futile but only after a rigorous search through the dictionary, which would be avoided if the dictionary's type was made explicit at the beginning. It is also a futile endeavor if a user of the dictionary refers to it in the search of idiomatic expressions in both English and Chichewa because, although it is not stated again, the dictionary is also not a thesaurus. This leads to ambiguity over the type under which the *Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* falls. And, this ambiguity is time consuming, which is detrimental to human translation – an endeavor that is itself characterized by time consumption.

Proper Nouns as Lexical Entries

The second main weakness of the *Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* is the inclusion of names of people as lexical entries. For example, the dictionary includes the name *Isake* in its Chichewa-English section translated as "Isaac", with a biblical explanation of its genealogy. It also includes the name *Davide* 'David', with the same biblical reference point. In the English-Chichewa section, it has similar translation patterns in Jonah '*Yona*' and Joshua '*Yoswa*'. Although a closer examination of the pattern of proper nouns included in the dictionary points to religiosity, the compiler does not state any motive and criteria of inclusion of any of the names in the dictionary – which would have been resolved if there was a statement on the type of dictionary under which the work falls. Again, although it is not stated whether the dictionary is abridged or unabridged, the inclusion of names creates the impression that it falls under the latter. However, this would be subject to debate as well because the names that have been included are not sufficient enough for an unabridged dictionary – which in the case of names as linguistic entities that occur idiosyncratically in the lexicon has to explore as many useful and well-known proper nouns as possible.

Lack of Detailed Grammatical Information

Another problem with the *Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* is that it lacks detailed grammatical information about the languages in question: Chichewa and English. The dictionary is devoid of sections that provide grammatical information such as word derivation in both languages and the differences existing between them. In addition, a significant number of entries lack any additional information apart from the translations provided. There are no synonyms, antonyms and pronunciation exercises accompanying the entries, among others. For example, in the English-Chichewa section of the dictionary, the entries 'sub-','sub-conscious' and 'subjugation' among several others are simply translated into their Chichewa equivalents (*pansi pa*; *-sadziwa maganizo*; and *chigonjetso*) without examples of how they would fit in a phrase or sentence, in their contextual use. However, it

is these very aspects that assist dictionary users comprehend the use and contexts of various entries in the dictionary. This is a problem that characterizes most entries in the dictionary. Words cannot be learned and understood in their idiosyncratic existences, they must be accompanied by contexts. This is why a good dictionary carries additional information about grammar and usage, synonyms and derivations, as well as distinctions between spoken and written forms of the language in question (Dakun, 2001). Among other things, the compiler should have explained how grammatical elements such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are derived in the languages in question and the affixes involved in word formation processes.

Silence on Morphological Typology

Further, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* fails to provide an explanation on the morphological differences between the two languages. For example, Chichewa is an agglutinating language while English is an isolating language. The compiler does not pay attention to features peculiar to each of the two languages such as the noun class system in Chichewa either. This has serious implications on learners' understanding of the structures of the language because a single word in Chichewa can be translated into a completely different syntactical structure with several parts in English. The reason behind is this is that morphemes that denote various grammar aspects in Chichewa can be glued together to a particular lexical item. For example, the verb *patsa* 'to give' can have several morphemes attached to it, but it will still remain in a single word form. Consider the following: *Ndinamupatsa* 'I gave him/her'. The word has the following morphemes attached to the root – *patsa*: ndi-, -na-, -mu-, where *ndi-* is the subject marker 'I', *-na-* is a tense marker denoting the past, and *mu-* is an object marker. Knowledge of this agglutinating feature of Chichewa provides the right framework from which to construct correct sentences and phrases from the words learned in the dictionary. In addition to that, understanding the noun class system is very crucial for Chichewa learners because it determines other key phonological processes such as vowel harmony and assimilation. Further, despite its agglutinative nature, the compiler should have described Chichewa as a language with a generally very low morpheme-per-word ratio in comparison with English which has derivational morphology in which complex words are formed by stringing together morphemes without changing them in spelling or phonetics (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011).

Minimal and Misleading Exemplification

Though relevant to second language learners, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* is also difficult for use due to the fact that most of its entries lack accompanying examples. When using a dictionary, example sentences are a very significant feature as they provide context through which the word is used. Looking at example sentences is the fastest way to figure out the answers to three critical questions about what a word means, situations in which native speakers use the word and the words and grammatical patterns that typically appear with the word (Kishindo, 2017). The dictionary is lacking in this aspect as some words that require illustration do not have examples of how they are used in various contexts. For example, the entries *gong'oli*, *gong'ontha*, *gong'osha*, *gong'u*, *gonga*, *gongoma*, *gongama* and *gongola* are just listed with their respective English translations without any examples of how they are actually used by native speakers in a variety of contexts. A non-native user of the dictionary would easily misapply the words to contexts that are not suitable.

In relation to lack of illustration, the dictionary also deploys misleading examples for some of the entries that have examples. Some of the examples do not actually reflect the words' contextual usage. These consequently express distorted meanings of the words' actual sense, and at times reproduce strange translations of the original text in the target language. For instance, the entry *nyika* translated as "dip" in English in the Chichewa-English section of the dictionary has the following as an example; *zovala zinali kunyikidwa mmadzi*. This sentence is translated as "clothes were dipped in water", giving a different sense altogether. A correct English translation of the Chichewa sentence would be "clothes were being dipped in water" hence the example sentence is misleading. In addition,

the example given does not actually reflect the way it is used by Chichewa language users. That is, Chichewa speakers do not say *zovala zinali kunyikidwa mmadzi* to mean "clothes were dipped in water" but rather *zovala zinanyikidwa mmadzi*. This is a mistake that needs to be avoided in any work related to language as it adversely affects the communication ability of learners of a new language.

Inappropriate Translation of Words

Another noticeable shortfall in this dictionary is the inappropriate translation of words that have been included in a number of instances. For example, the dictionary translates the entry "incubator" as *chipangizo chothandiza kutenthesa mazira kuti aikire anapiye* ("a tool that helps eggs lay chicks"). A more correct translation of the word should have been *chipangizo chothandiza kutenthesa mazira kuti aswe anapiye* ("a tool that helps eggs hatch chicks"). The compiler's definition of an incubator has the implication of eggs laying chicks when actually eggs hatch into chicks. In the example, the word *kuswa* (to hatch) was supposed to be used instead of the word *kuikira* (to lay) since chicks are hatched not laid. As such, a learner of Chichewa as L2 gets a relatively inappropriate explanation of an incubator in the target language of translation. As is the case with misleading examples, inappropriateness in translation leads to strange translations with meanings that are hard to decipher. More danger lies in the confusion it causes amongst learners of either of the two languages and the resulting consequences of wrong application of words in contextual use.

Lack of Phonetic Transcriptions

Further, the dictionary also contains another lexicographical error: the lack of phonetic transcriptions for its entries. Being a bilingual dictionary, phonetic transcriptions of both English and Chichewa are inevitable as they are vital in the final production of a given word. The dictionary is devoid of phonetic transcription of the entries and therefore the dictionary users, especially learners of English or Chichewa as a second/foreign language, are most likely to encounter problems in their utterances. The dictionary user might capture the semantic sense of the word but fail to pronounce it, which would result in wrong and strange pronunciations as well as incomprehensible utterances. At times, the mispronunciation might distort meaning in instances where tone distinguishes lexical or grammatical meaning of an item. For example, although Chichewa is not a tonal language, there are some very special lexical items in which tone affects meaning. The word *khala* means 'charcoal' when stress falls on the first syllable *kha-* while when there is no stress on both of the syllables /*khala*/ (that is, the tone on both /*kha*/ and /*la*/ is low) the word means 'sit'. In addition to that, the syllable structures of the two languages, English and Chichewa, are different. Chichewa generally adheres to a CV syllable pattern with minor alterations but its words do not end in a consonant and in its alphabet the letter 'x' does not exist. In addition to that, the sound /r/ does not exist in its spoken form though it manifests in the written form. As such, pronunciation of words in a language with different features such as English is problematic. For example, it is very common for a Malawian to pronounce the /r/ sound as /l/ in words such 'read', 'rule', 'red' etcetera. English speakers (and speakers of other languages rather than Chichewa and its related Bantu languages) will usually encounter the same challenges in pronunciation of Chichewa words due to the property differences of the two languages. For example, the lack of a 'bw-' in a *syllable initial* position of an English word renders it difficult for native English speakers to pronounce words such as *bwera* 'come' and *bwino* 'good'. Users of the two languages would be served well by the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* if it included phonetic transcription to aid in utterances of these relatively strange syllable patterns.

Typological Errors

Another problem with the dictionary is the presence of typological errors. In an important linguistic exercise as this, this has the potential to ruin accuracy and worthiness. For instance, the example given under the entry *nyengeza* (which means "lie" or "tell lies"), *ndinamunyengeza ndicholinga chakuti andilole* is translated into English as "I told **in** lies **order** to win her love". This sentence is

ungrammatical and it was supposed to read "I told lies **in order** to win her love". The preposition "in" is misplaced in the sentence as in the intended grammatically correct structure it is supposed to precede 'order', adversely impacting the grammaticality of, and semantic deductions from the sentence. Such errors ought to be avoided as much as possible as the dictionary is a useful tool to language learners, and any error might lead them into acquiring incorrect forms and structures.

Inclusion of Irrelevant and Inappropriate Entries

Lastly, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* contains irrelevant and erroneous entries. First, the dictionary includes words from languages other than Chichewa in the Chichewa-English section. These entries are neither English words, regardless of the fact that the dictionary is bilingual with a scope limited to Chichewa and English. This may mislead users of the dictionary who are not familiar with Chichewa. For example, the word *nyifwa* 'funeral' which is a Chitumbuka word has been included in this dictionary. A user would think that this is a Chichewa word and use it among Chichewa speakers who would not understand; as such it may lead to confusion both to the speaker and the listeners. In Chichewa, the translation for *nyifwa* is *maliro*. Other examples of words from other languages used in the dictionary – which do not appear in Chichewa usage – include entries such as *uchizeleza* 'foolishness' (Chitumbuka), *Ugali* '*nsima*', (Chiyao/Kiswahili), *uchafu* 'impurity' (Kiswahili) *uchawi* 'sorcery' (Kiswahili), *tumphi* 'a type of fish' (Chitonga), *dyzeko* 'things' (Chilomwe) and *dzyemchichi* 'many' (Chilomwe). Another case of words from other languages are the entries for "I" where there is a list of Chingoni words appearing in the dictionary. Legitimately, these words from other languages should not have been included in this dictionary which is supposed to have Chichewa and English entries only because they do not exist in the lexicon of a native Chichewa speaker. They are not even loan words in the Chichewa language to warrant their inclusion in the dictionary.

Second, the dictionary also includes predictable terms as separate entries. Derivations are included as separate entries in the dictionary, a phenomenon that challenges the norms of lexicography and interrupts the procedural learning of the two languages. For instance, some Chichewa entries under "mwa-" are predictable words. If anything, the compiler was supposed to explain in the preface how derivations are arrived at in the two languages in question. For example, the entries *mwabata* 'peacefully', *mwabodza* 'deceitfully' and *mwabule* 'without payment' were not supposed to appear as separate entries since the roots in all the three words already appear as nouns in the dictionary before the prefixes transform them into adverbs. However, it must be noted that if derivation brings in a different meaning, it has to be included in the dictionary as a separate entry since it is an item with an idiosyncratic sense independent of the root. For example, for the Chichewa word *yenda* (walk), the applicative form *yendera* (visit) can be included. Further, the dictionary also includes abstract nouns derived from concrete nouns as separate entries. For example, some entries under "u-" such as *uchitsiru* 'foolishness' are Chichewa abstract nouns coming from concrete forms which are already entered in the dictionary. There is also inclusion of plural forms entered as separate entries. For example, some of the Chichewa entries under "a-" are plural forms derived from nouns which are already entered in the dictionary, and therefore unnecessarily redundant as well.

The last problem on inclusion is the integration of obscure abbreviations. The *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* leaves out popular abbreviations and yet includes obscure ones such as MEET (Malawi Environmental Endowment Trust), MEF (Malawi Equestrian Federation), MEON (Malawi Environmental Observatory Network), MHEN (Malawi Health Equity Network) and MHPF (Malawi Homeless People's Federation). These abbreviations are not so popular in daily usage of both English and Chichewa in Malawian life considering the bilingual context of the dictionary which renders it relevant to bilingual speakers of Chichewa and English, among others. Besides, the compiler does not explain the criteria that he uses to enter the abbreviations in the dictionary. An explanation would have been a better way of dealing away with concerns over the obscurity of the abbreviations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the *Oxford Chichewa-English/English-Chichewa Dictionary* provides a good account of Chichewa and English words and it tries to provide the closest meaning of the entries in English and vice versa. However, as observed, it also contains several factors which leave a lot to be desired. These include the lack of examples and explanations for the majority of the entries, misleading examples, inappropriate translations, and inclusion of irrelevant entries among others. The paper recommends that the next edition of the dictionary take into account these short falls in order to refine the dictionary for the maximum benefit of its users.

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APPENDIX: REVISION NOTES

In this updated manuscript, we have made the following changes as per recommendations of the reviewer:

1. We have formatted the paper into a full paper structure with an abstract (that appears separately in the manuscript submission slot as per requirement), the Introduction, Background and Methodology as three separate sections;
2. After the first three sections, we have classified the main arguments of the paper into two: strengths and weaknesses. Under 'Strengths of the dictionary', we have three main points that have been indicated as sections – not as one long chunk divided into paragraphs as was before. Under this, we have put it in the following manner: 'Reference material for L2 learners', 'Semantic precision' and 'Relevance to translation and education';
3. After the strengths, we have included the 'Weaknesses of the dictionary' section;
4. The final part of the structure is Conclusions;
5. With the introduction of the Background, we have updated the reference list with more relevant materials for the paper, with articles that mostly tackle various aspects of bilingual dictionaries;
6. In the introduction, we have changed the in-text citation format for Steven Paas (2016) in what is now the third paragraph (initially it was just one paragraph for the introductory part of the paper). Now, it has been re-written following the actual APA style in line with the rest of the paper, unlike previously where it appeared like no style was followed at all;
7. In what was initially the fourth paragraph explaining the benefits of the dictionary to various disciplines, it was observed that we just stated the benefits in general without explanations as to how it is exactly beneficial. In this updated manuscript, we have offered explanations under 'Relevance to translation and education' where the dictionary's importance has been linked to the various disciplines such as translation, education (and language policy) as well as the academia;
8. Under Silence on morphological typology, we have given an example to illustrate that a single Chichewa word sometimes produces a complete sentence with different syntactical elements in English. This was recommended in the initial manuscript by the reviewer so as to make the point clearer (in comment R7);
9. Under Lack of phonetic transcriptions, we have expounded our explanation on stress on the Chichewa word *khala* with variations in tone producing different meanings. In the initial manuscript, this was noted as not being explanatory enough in comment R8;
10. We have also worked on some constructions that the reviewer noted needed some attention especially with regards to grammar in the reviewer's comments R5 and R6. We have altered the structures to eliminate the ambiguity in their grammaticality.

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