

# AFRILEX

## Newsletter 1 – August 1996

Compiler: M. Alberts

### FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The first international conference was held on 1 and 2 July 1996 at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in Johannesburg. The conference had a good attendance and we were fortunate to have several members from South Africa and Africa present. Among the visitors from abroad were Prof. HE Wiegand (University of Heidelberg, Germany), Dr. Edmund Weiner (Oxford University Press, UK) and Prof. Jan Kabuta (University of Gent, Belgium). Dr. Albina Chuwa (Kiswahili Dictionary Project, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) and Mr. N Mberi and the project team of the Alex Dictionary Project (Zimbabwe) were delegates from Africa. The conference was an ideal situation for the promotion of Afrilex with ample time for communication among participants.

Prof. Danie Prinsloo had the last word at the conference and since it was a speech coming from his heart (and representing the feelings of most of the rest of us), I feel all members should take note of it:

*I would like to thank our chairman for entrusting me with the final word at this conference.*

*In four minutes the First International Conference of Afrilex will belong to the past. At this conference we had many discussions of theoretical as well as practical aspects of lexicography, which are in the end all aimed towards making better dictionaries for the eleven official languages of our new country. We have also realised that the availability and standard of dictionaries for these languages vary from languages for which dictionaries of a high standard are readily available, to languages which even lack a single worthwhile dictionary.*

*There is work to be done; we have the manpower, the resources, lexicographical skills and the will to satisfy the dictionary needs of our people; and, yes, Professor Louwrens, we are going to build that railway line you referred to. We are not going to wait until a new town is built at the other end; in fact, we are going to start building the town at the same time. Afrilex is totally committed to the upliftment of dictionaries for the African languages but at the same time not holding back one inch on the work that still has to be done for English and Afrikaans. Research on theoretical principles of lexicography remains a priority and must be maintained so that SA lexicographers can take their rightful place among the best lexicographers and lexicologists in the world.*

*From surveys done in the past it is very clear that lexicographers are born free and wish to stay free. The aim of Afrilex is to bring these lexicographers, as well as everybody else who has an interest in dictionaries, including the dictionary user, together. Our aim is to be a home for anyone wishing to further his or her own interests in lexicography, be it theoretical, practical or simply to gain financially. The enthusiasm that we encounter in the everyday-running of this association is amazing and inspiring. I have sometimes wondered whether it is because Afrilex is a new broom, or whether we are supercharging the members to a state of hysterical participation. The real reason, I believe, is that the establishment of an association for lexicography had been long overdue in this country. Almost all the responses to the initial questionnaire testing the viability of a possible association for lexicography echoed this need. One respondent even said, and I shall never forget this: "I have been **praying** for the establishment of such an organisation."*

*Afrilex is a threat to no-one, Afrilex is not in competition with dictionary units, publishers or the government. Afrilex unites all these forces. Present here today, are representatives of all the dictionary units and projects in South Africa, publishers, experts in lexicography, representatives from government, dictionary users and teachers. As Paul McCartney said: "We all stand together".*

*Afrilex is definitely not your average organisation; Afrilex is like the ad of a very famous car: "obviously in a different class".*

*Afrilex has work to do – we do not live from conference to conference, we live from day to day. Afrilex is not just an association that you belong to; you must say to yourself: "I AM AFRILEX". And remember to celebrate **Afrilex's first birthday on 14 July 1996**. Perhaps we should ask the government to declare 14 July National Lexicography Day.*

*Those of you who have not yet joined Afrilex – surely you cannot spend the rest of your life wondering what it feels like being a member of Afrilex. So join now!*

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the African Association for Lexicography will be held during the week 11-18 July 1997 at the University of Natal in Durban and is scheduled to coincide with ALASA's biennial conference and the annual conference of the LSSA. So consider this a first call for papers for the next international Afrilex Conference.*

*Finally I would like to once again thank Mr. Bekeweni for the generous sponsorship from **ESKOM**; as well as Dr. Mariëtte Alberts for handcrafting this beautiful shield. ♡ Whenever you see this shield, Afrilex will be in session.*

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The first Annual General Meeting of the African Association for Lexicography took place on 1 July 1996 at RAU. The meeting was attended by several members. The chairperson, Prof. Rufus Gouws, chaired discussions on various business matters – the most important / interesting / noteworthy to be mentioned in this circular were aspects relating to Afrilex activities such as regional seminars, membership, publications.

#### Seminar

Since the establishment of Afrilex on 14 July 1995, members were treated to a variety of seminars / workshops where lectures were given by renowned lexicographers from abroad, i.e. Drs. RRK Hartmann and Gregory James, and Profs. W Martin and HE Wiegand.

The Chairperson as well as the Organiser, Prof. Danie Prinsloo, requested members to initiate seminars on a regional basis. The Organiser will assist anyone who wants to organise a seminar / workshop in his/her region but we need enthusiastic members prepared to suggest relevant topics for discussion and who will be willing to do the organisation in co-operation with the Organiser.

Anyone interested in organising such a seminar / workshop anywhere in South Africa or Africa must please contact Prof. Prinsloo at (012) 420 2320 (Tel.) or (012) 420 3163 (Fax) or e-mail: [prinsloo@libarts.up.ac.za](mailto:prinsloo@libarts.up.ac.za) – he will assist you in every possible way.

A seminar / workshop is an important activity since it creates opportunities for discussion and training. By having frequent seminars / workshops the members will participate the whole year round and not only during the annual conference.

#### Membership

At the moment Afrilex membership totals 110 paid-up members. We have several other names of interested people in the database. These people, although they are NOT members, receive all the circulars ... Maybe they should also pay their membership fees???

#### Lexikos

**Paid-up members** will receive the *Lexikos* publication this year free of charge although it costs R 85 per copy – not bad for a membership fee of only R 50!!! The publication will this time be under the auspices of the Bureau of the Woordboek van die Afrikaanse Taal (WAT) as well as Afrilex.

### Editor: Newsletter

It was decided at the AGM that the members would like to receive a proper newsletter. But now we need an editor for such a newsletter. Please contact any Executive member if you are prepared to assist.

## NATIONAL LEXICOGRAPHY UNITS BILL

### Background

The National Lexicography Units Bill provides for the establishment and management of National Lexicography Units to make equitable provision for national general monolingual dictionaries for all official languages in South Africa and for matters incidental thereto.

At present the State finances only two national dictionary units, one for **Afrikaans** (*Bureau of the "Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal" (WAT)*) and one for **English** (*Dictionary Unit for South African English (DSAE)*). With this Bill, provision is made for dictionary units for all the official languages. The linguistic heritage of the country can be preserved with these units since general lexicography describes the vocabulary of a given language by documenting it. The Act will bring about change and transformation since it makes provision for the documentation and development of all the languages.

The support for monolingual dictionary projects underpins the policy of multilingualism, since it will contribute to the documentation of all indigenous official languages and their dialects. By planning, managing and financing national dictionary projects the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) will co-ordinate lexicographic activities in South Africa. Thus possible duplication of work is eliminated.

DACST aims to finance the units. The National Lexicography Units will receive recurrent financing from the State.

### Progress

☉ The Bill served before the Cabinet's Committee on Social and Administrative Affairs on 12 June 1996. This Committee approved the Bill. The Bill was ratified on 19 June 1996.

☉ The Bill must also serve before several other language and communication subcommittees such as the Portfolio Committee and the Select Committee. If these committees approve and ratify the Bill, it will serve before Parliament.

☉ The Bill still has quite a long way to go and if any committee along the line decides that they need more input or information the whole process can be delayed. It is even possible that a committee may decide to arrange public hearings. Since this Bill actually facilitates new possibilities for language development it may be seen as a benefit to the country as a whole and may therefore not be regarded as a burden that needs further investigation.

### LIAISON

Since the **Afrilex** Conference coincided with the congresses of the *South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT)*, the *Linguistic Society of Southern Africa (LSSA)* and the *African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)* there was a fruitful interchange of knowledge and information. Members of these associations were allowed to attend any session of the different associations.

The following paragraph taken from the *Australex* Newsletter 14 of April 1996 is an indication of the warmth and friendship with which Afrilex is regarded abroad:

[cf. <http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/alex/14.html>]

*Our international connections in South Africa have been strengthened by two new members. We welcome the National Terminology Services of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. Our contact there is Dr Marietta Alberts, the head of Systems Development and Research. And Professor D J Prinsloo of the Department of African Languages, University of Pretoria, has written to us. He is a member of EURALEX, DSNA and Afrilex (our newly established sister association in Africa).*



A Dictionary is the only place where **success** should come before **work** ...



### INTRODUCTION, BODY AND CONCLUSION

I told them what I was going to tell them

Then I told them

After that I told them what I had been telling them



### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### Seminar Series 1996, Department of Linguistics, University of the Witwatersrand

You are cordially invited to attend seminars in this year's Linguistics Department Seminar Series. Refreshments will be served following the presentation.

Venue: Wits University, Social Science Building, Room 004B (Basement), Wednesdays at 15:00

Enquiries: 011 716 2346

Date	Speaker	Topic
14 Aug.	Tony Traill	Sound change in Khoisan languages: New data on click loss and click replacement
28 Aug.	Ruth Morgan	Identity construction by disabled students: A discourse analysis approach
11 Sept.	Lynne Murphy	Acquisition of antonyms: Consequences for theories of semantic representation
2 Oct.	Tony Traill	Lexical avoidance in !Xoo
23 Oct.	Bill Reynolds	Can low tone spread? Evidence from Zulu



### QUESTIONS YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER ASKED

(Taken from the *Australex* Newsletter 14 of April 1996: 3)

[cf. <http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/alex/14.html>]

Here are some of the bigger questions of our times - see how many of them are lexically based:

- *Why isn't phonetic spelled the way it sounds?*
- *Why are there locks on the doors of supermarkets that are open 24 hours per day and 365 days per year?*
- *How do they make teflon stick to the pan?*
- *Why is it that when you transport something by car it's a shipment, but when you transport something by ship it's a cargo?*
- *Why are they called apartments when they are stuck together?*
- *What do freedom fighters fight if crime fighters fight crime and fire fighters fight fire?*
- *Why are there flotation devices under plane seats instead of parachutes?*
- *Why can't they make the whole plane out of the same substance as that indestructible black box?*

☺ ☹ ☹

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▼ A pottery shield mounted on a wooden stand.