

4.4 Theory and practice

Reflections on lexicographic theory found in the current literature have commonalities with the views of our distinguished interviewees. Anita Srebnik, an independent bilingual lexicographer, believes that current practices are ahead of theory; this is similar to Piotrowski (2013), who is skeptical of the validity of past theoretical models for our time, when rapid changes are taking place in both cultural and technological environments. Dr. Srebnik mentioned that new tools require the articulation of new theory as to how to use them; this recalls Gouws' (2018) exploration of guidelines for the adaptation of "different types of data distribution structures in online dictionaries" (178) as part of the transition from print to online. In line with Wiegand's famous 1984 pronouncement that lexicography is not a science and will not become one,⁴ Srebnik considers theory and practice as two completely separate endeavors.

Apolonija Gantar, researcher at the University of Ljubljana, did not mention directly theory versus practice, but her remarks seem to speak to the separate "theoretical" statements that are imbued in each dictionary implicitly. Dr. Gantar believes that having more than one general monolingual dictionary of standard Slovenian would be good for Slovenia, because that would help people arrive at their own opinions about language; such multiple dictionaries as cultural artifacts would reflect a range of different user needs. This echoes Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp (2014), who note that dictionaries have covered "a wide range of different needs detected in society and ... almost all spheres of human activity and knowledge" (39). Dr. Gantar maintained that dictionaries, as reference works intended for general users (who want to solve different linguistic problems) rather than for linguists, should allow room for users to doubt the very information they provide. Dictionary users should be able to rely on themselves and their own judgements. Users, in Dr. Gantar's opinion, should be more self-confident in their own linguistic knowledge. Another of our interviewees agreed with Dr. Gantar's desire for more than one general Slovenian dictionary, and emphasized that clashes in theory, rather than just competition for project money, drive the current Slovenian paradigm of a single large monolingual dictionary. This remark fits with the notion that a dictionary is itself a kind of theory; it possibly fits as well with Piotrowski's (2013) idea that there are multiple lexicographic theories.

Iztok Kosem, a researcher at several institutions including the University of Ljubljana, mentioned the necessity of engaging in multiple dictionary projects simultaneously, since a single project will only provide partial employment financially. Dr. Kosem noted that when a researcher writes a grant proposal, s/he must wait for the results of funding; some worthy projects are not funded at all (e.g., the comparative European project on dictionary use). It is not possible to focus, Dr. Kosem said, on a single project over a sequence of months or years, and when a researcher has too many projects it is difficult to master any one. Dr. Kosem would like to have not too many but more than a

single lexicographic project active at once. Luckily, he was able to connect work on a Slovenian–Hungarian dictionary and on a collocations dictionary in terms of reusing some skills and methods. While Dr. Kosem's remarks were intended to address the financial realities as well as the uncertainties of lexicographic work in the real world, they also have theoretical implications. A project that begins through a well-articulated grant proposal risks losing its theoretical focus as work is dragged out due to the vagaries of funding; moreover, very good projects that would advance lexicographic theory risk not coming to fruition.

Anita Srebnik, the only independent lexicographer in our group, to some extent echoed the concerns of Dr. Kosem, but with a different emphasis. In her case, she has non-lexicographic full-time employment (as an instructor of Dutch at the University of Ljubljana) that prevents her from being fully dedicated to lexicographic work. For this reason, it took her seven years to compile her bilingual Dutch–Slovenian dictionary. She found the organization of dictionary work to be very time-consuming and would have appreciated being part of a team that could have provided more support for her efforts. She came into lexicography without prior formal training and this also presented a challenge; for Gouws (2012), she would be considered in category (1), a practitioner who lacked theoretical experience. While such practitioners can succeed in creating outstanding products, Dr. Srebnik underlined that such conditions of lexicographic practice are far from ideal for lexicographic theory.

Nina Ledinek of the Fran Ramovš Institute enumerated several problems connected with everyday lexicographic work. Among other things, she considered that more material relevant to lexicography is needed on the standard language and language stratification. Lexicographers need to determine what is the standard language, what is dialectal, colloquial, etc. for dictionary work. While theory was not mentioned directly by this participant, it is clear that an important, if not *the* most important, element of lexicographic theory is the point of view of the lexicographer on the standard language (cf. Farina 2020).

Another problem Dr. Ledinek raised is that *Slovenian Orthography* [*Slovenski pravopis*], an important reference tool for the country,⁵ is out of date since it was published in 2001 and users' habits have changed since then. This brings to mind Dr. Jakop's comment (above) about the desirability of completing dictionaries in five to ten years. When longer periods of time pass, a research tool may no longer be as effective: Either a work's underlying theory may cease to be suitable to modern reality or the theory underlying the work may lose focus due to the passage of time.

While some of the remarks above appear to indicate a recognition that there is no one lexicographic theory, nevertheless some interviewees do perceive that there is a prevailing general theory that guides their work. Mojca Žagar Karer of the Ramovš Institute maintains that there is no need to change lexicographic theory, but she would like to have more time to reflect on the theory and philosophy of her field, terminography. Dr. Gantar agrees with Dr. Žagar

Karer that the current state of lexicographic theory is acceptable, but adds that she is free to develop theory or change it if she wishes, through the publication of articles and the presentation of papers at conferences.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This second and final report on an interview study of seven prominent Slovenian lexicographers brings home the potential of the interview process to contribute to our understanding of modern lexicography. It would be impossible for our field to advance without the theoretical and practical contributions of the leading academic journals. In addition to these, the perspectives of the leading, working lexicographers "on the ground" provide an entirely different and valuable knowledge source. Just as dictionaries are cultural artifacts, embedded in the time and place of their creation, so lexicographers are cultural emissaries who both represent the users of the language and — as some study participants point out — collaborate or engage with users in the creation of or understanding of dictionary information. While these emissaries may be seen as "invisible" or "harmless" (see Vrbinc, Farina and Vrbinc 2018a) and may heretofore have been mostly ignored as subjects for scientific study, this is an oversight when much may be gained from listening to them. It is hoped that similar interviews will be conducted in other countries, to build a deeper comparative understanding of lexicographic ideas and work practices. It is worth considering whether the lexicographic product of a single nation can be evaluated fully without this type of grounded perspective from real lexicographers.

As a country, Slovenia is blessed with a powerful cadre of lexicographic experts, due in no small part to its successful programs for training future specialists (see Vrbinc, Farina and Vrbinc 2018a). For this reason (as one study participant points out), Slovenian lexicography has attracted international attention and has benefitted from international collaborations. This is a significant asset that could position Slovenia as a world leader in all things lexicographic. It is no small achievement for a country of only about two million people.

The Slovenian lexicographers interviewed expressed satisfaction with their work as well as with most aspects of their work situations. The study authors are left nevertheless with the impression of a lexicographic infrastructure that is inequitable. The interviews brought out that some Slovenian lexicographic work is independent and entirely uncompensated; some work is dependent on soft monies (i.e. grants) that might not be renewed, thus rendering some projects precarious; finally, some work is stable and supported institutionally on a permanent, ongoing basis. It is obvious that this situation may adversely affect the finances of the lexicographers themselves. Without the interviews, it would not be as clear how this state of affairs impacts the quality or the quantity of dictionary products, or how it affects theoretical innovation and long-term lexicographic development. Our participants are aware of the impact — though they are too busy being lexicographers to dwell on it. They

are aware of missed opportunities for dictionaries based on alternate theoretical premises, something that could potentially provide users with more choices and provide lexicography with more possibilities to develop as a discipline. Participants mentioned the need for fewer disagreements as well as less forced competition among specialists, the need to allow similar projects with different theoretical goals to coexist, and the need for better use of existing resources. Most likely, similar situations prevail in other countries. This is all the more reason to have interviews with specialists elsewhere, to provide us with that comparative picture.

Acknowledgements

This study could not have taken place without the cooperation, patience, and candor of our seven Slovenian lexicographer–interviewees. Many thanks to: Apolonija Gantar, Nataša Jakop, Iztok Kosem, Nina Ledinek, Jerica Snoj, Anita Srebnik, and Mojca Žagar Karer. As this second report on our interview study indicates, these high-level specialists allowed us to meet them where they live professionally, to bring a new and unique insight to lexicographers everywhere. Additionally, we thank Marko Snoj, the director of the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences, for welcoming us there.

The authors acknowledge the project, Lexicographic exchange as a way of building bridges between Slovenian and American lexicographic philosophy, governing principles, goals, and work tools, No. BI-US/16-17-053, which was financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency. They also acknowledge the approval (20 February 2017) of the New Jersey City University (NJCU) Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants in Research. Donna Farina thanks NJCU for travel support to Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as released time support from its Separately Budgeted Research program. The authors thank NJCU, in particular Tamara Cunningham, Assistant Vice President for Global Initiatives, for providing housing and hospitality to Alenka Vrbinc and Marjeta Vrbinc during their research visit to the United States.

Endnotes

1. Fran Ramovš (1890–1952) was a Slovenian linguist and a co-founder and member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He chaired the Academy from 1950 to 1952. He published the *Historical Grammar of Slovenian* (Volume 2: Consonantism, 1924; Volume 7: Dialects, 1935), *Dialect Map of Slovenian* (1931), *A Short History of Slovenian* (1936), and *Slovenian Morphology* (1952).
2. The online portal FRAN is named after Fran Ramovš.
3. For more information on the setting of Slovenian lexicography and on the development and influences of Slovenian lexicographic theory, see Vrbinc, Farina and Vrbinc (2018a).

4. "Lexicography was never a science, it is not a science, and it will probably not become a science. Scientific activities as a whole are aimed at producing theories, and precisely this is not true of lexicographical activities. We must bear in mind that writing on lexicography is part of meta-lexicography and that the theory of lexicography is not part of lexicography" (Wiegand 1984, 13).
5. This two-part reference work consists of a section on the rules of Slovenian orthography and a dictionary section; it might more accurately be called a manual of Slovenian orthography.

References

Dictionaries

- Bajec, Anton et al.** 1970–1991. *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Cigale, Matej.** 1860. *Deutsch–slovenisches Wörterbuch*. 2 vols. Laibach: Herausgegeben auf Kosten des Hochwürdigten Herrn Fürstbischofs von Laibach, Anton Alois Wolf.
- Debenjak, Doris, Božidar Debenjak and Primož Debenjak.** 1992. *Veliki nemško–slovenski slovar*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Debenjak, Doris, Božidar Debenjak and Primož Debenjak.** 1995. *Veliki slovensko–nemški slovar*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Grad, Anton, Ružena Škerlj and Nada Vitorovič.** 1973. *Angleško–slovenski slovar*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Grad, Anton, Ružena Škerlj and Nada Vitorovič.** 1978. *Veliki angleško–slovenski slovar*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.
- Gutsmann, Ožbalt.** 1789. *Deutsch–windisches Wörterbuch: mit einer Sammlung der verdeutschten windischen Stammwörter, und einiger vorzüglichern abstammenden Wörter*. Klagenfurt: gedruckt und im Verlage bey Ignaz Aloys edlen von Kleinmayer ...
- Košutnik, Silvester.** 1904. *Ročni slovensko–angleški in angleško–slovenski slovar: zlasti namenjen za izseljence v Ameriko*. Ljubljana: A. Turk.
- Kotnik, Janko.** 1945. *Slovensko–angleški slovar*. Ljubljana: Grad.
- Krek, Simon et al.** 2005–2006. *Veliki angleško–slovenski slovar Oxford*. Ljubljana: DZS.
- Kubelka, Viktor J.** 1904. *Slovensko–angleški žepni rečnik*. New York.
- Megiser, Hieronymus.** 1592. *Dictionarium quatuor linguarum*. A lohanne Fabro.
- Megiser, Hieronymus.** 1603. *Thesaurus polyglottus*. Frankfurt.
- Pleteršnik, Maks.** 1894–1895. *Slovensko–nemški slovar*. Ljubljana: Katoliška tiskarna.
- Škerlj, Ružena.** 1944. *Angleško–slovenski slovar*. Ljubljana: Grad.
- Snoj, Jerica, Martin Ahlin, Branka Lazar and Zvonka Praznik.** 2016. *Sinonimni slovar slovenskega jezika*. First edition. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC.
- Srebnik, Anita.** 2006. *Slovensko–nizozemski evropski slovar*. (Zbirka Evropski slovarji). Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba.
- Srebnik, Anita.** 2007. *Nizozemsko slovenski slovar = Nederlands Sloveens woordenboek*. (Slovarji DZS). First edition. Ljubljana: DZS.
- Toporišič, Jože, Franc Jakopin, Janko Moder, Janez Dular, Stane Suhadolnik, Janez Menart, Breda Pogorelec, Kajetan Gantar, Martin Ahlin and Milena Hajnšek-Holz (Eds.).** 2001. *Slovenski pravopis*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC.
- Vrbinc, Alenka and Marjeta Vrbinc.** 2009. *Angleško–slovenski slovar*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba.

Other references

- Čibej, Jaka, Vojko Gorjanc, Iztok Kosem and Simon Krek (Eds.). 2018. *Proceedings of the XVIII Euralex International Congress: Lexicography in Global Contexts, 17–21 July 2018, Ljubljana*. Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts.
- Farina, Donna M.T.Cr. 2020. 20th-century Soviet–Russian Dictionary Front Matter: Focus on the Linguistic Norm. *Lexicography* 7(1–2): 115–122.
Available: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40607-020-00064-z>
- Fuertes-Olivera, Pedro A. and Sven Tarp. 2014. *Theory and Practice of Specialised Online Dictionaries: Lexicography versus Terminography*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Gouws, Rufus H. 2012. Who can Really be Called a Lexicographer? *Lexikos* 22: 217–225.
Available: <http://lexikos.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/1004> and <https://doi.org/10.5788/22-1-1004>
- Gouws, Rufus H. 2018. 'n Leksikografiese datatrekkingstruktuur vir aanlyn woordeboeke [A Lexicographic Data Pulling Structure for Online Dictionaries]. *Lexikos* 28: 177–195.
Available: <https://doi.org/10.5788/28-1-1461>
- Hartmann, Reinhard Rudolf Karl (Ed.). 1984. *LEXeter' 83 Proceedings. Papers from the International Conference on Lexicography at Exeter, 9–12 September 1983*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Jackson, Howard (Ed.). 2013. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Lexicography*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Merše, Majda. 2009. Slovensko zgodovinsko slovaropisje s konceptualno-razvojnega vidika. Stabej, Marko (Ed). 2009: 251–255.
Available: <https://centerslo.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/28-Merse.pdf>
- Piotrowski, Tadeusz. 2013. A Theory of Lexicography: Is There One? Jackson, Howard (Ed.). 2013: 303–320.
- Ramovš, Fran. 1924. *Historična gramatika slovenskega jezika: Konzonantizem II*. Ljubljana: Učiteljska tiskarna.
- Ramovš, Fran. 1931. *Dialektološka karta slovenskega jezika*. Založila rektorat univerze kralja Aleksandra I. in J. Blasnika nasl., univerzitetna tiskarna v Ljubljani.
- Ramovš, Fran. 1935. *Historična gramatika slovenskega jezika: Dialekti VII*. Ljubljana: Učiteljska tiskarna.
- Ramovš, Fran. 1936. *Kratka zgodovina slovenskega jezika*. Ljubljana: Akademska založba.
- Ramovš, Fran. 1952. *Morfologija slovenskega jezika*. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije za Univerzitetno študijsko komisijo.
- Reiner, Tanja. 2007. Ružena Škerlj (1904–1992): svetovljanka, razumnica, (so)avtorica številnih izdaj angleško–slovenskega slovarja ter slovensko–češkega in češko–slovenskega slovarja. Šelih, Alenka et al. (Eds.). 2007: 404–406.
- Sajous, Franck, Amélie Josselin-Leroy and Nabil Hathout. 2018. Lexical and Semantic Neology in English: The Complementarity of Crowdsourced Dictionaries and Professional Dictionaries Viewed through the Filter of Neology. *Lexis. Journal in English Lexicology* 12: 1–34.
- Šelih, Alenka, Milica Antić Gaber, Alenka Puhar, Tanja Reiner, Rapa Šuklje and Marta Verginella (Eds.). 2007. *Pozabljena polovica: Portreti žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem*. Ljubljana: Založba Tuma and SAZU.
- Stabej, Marko (Ed). 2009. *Infrastruktura slovenščine in slovenistike*. Obdobja, Symposium 28. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.

Tarp, Sven. 2012. Do We Need a (New) Theory of Lexicography? *Lexikos* 22: 321-332.

Available: <https://doi.org/10.5788/22-1-1010>

Vrbinc, Alenka, Donna M.T.Cr. Farina and Marjeta Vrbinc. 2018a. Objectivity, Prescription, Harmlessness, and Drudgery: Reflections of Lexicographers in Slovenia. *Lexikos* 28: 361-383.

Available: <https://doi.org/10.5788/28-1-1469>

Vrbinc, Alenka, Donna M.T.Cr. Farina and Marjeta Vrbinc. 2018b. Slovenian Lexicographers at Work. Čibej, Jaka, Vojko Gorjanc, Iztok Kosem and Simon Krek (Eds.). 2018: 199-208.

Wiegand, Herbert Ernst. 1984. On the Structure and Contents of a General Theory of Lexicography. Hartmann, Reinhard Rudolf Karl (Ed.). 1984: 13-30.

Wolfer, Sascha and Carolin Müller-Spitzer. 2016. How Many People Constitute a Crowd and What Do They Do? Quantitative Analyses of Revisions in the English and German Wiktionary Editions. *Lexikos* 26: 347-371.

Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5788/26-1-1346>