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Book Review

G. Stein: *Better Words: Evaluating EFL Dictionaries*
(University of Exeter Press, 2002)

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Professor Stein is one of the most energetic and active scholars in the field of lexicography. The book that includes her articles and papers for the last twenty years or so is regrettably "the last volume in the Exeter Language and Lexicography series" (Foreword, vii), following McArthur's *Living Words* (1998) and Osselton's *Chosen Words* (1995). It is recommended for those students who are fascinated in EFL dictionaries during the latter half of the twentieth century. The genre of EFL dictionaries is one of the most rapidly growing and changing fields in lexicography.

The book consists of some articles originally printed in a journal of lexicography, such as *Dictionaries: Journal of The Dictionary Society of North America* or *International Journal of Lexicography*. It also includes the lecture originally given on the occasion of the inauguration of the Dictionary Research Centre at Exeter. There are also included some slightly revised versions of the original articles in journals or international conferences. They are not necessarily given in chronological order, but shown from the general to more specific ones. Most of the papers give footnotes at the end so that readers are referred to other new books or recent articles on the subjects for later development in the last quarter twentieth century.

The book would be recommended for lexicography class students but require them to catch up with the later development, without which they could not grasp the progressive development of EFL dictionaries in the latter half of the century, especially since the 1970s to the present day. Not

only careful reading of the articles but also examination or follow-up study of the later transition would enable them to be fully aware that dictionaries may have solved some problems or endeavored to deal with needs of foreign learners, but that there still remains much to be improved or discussed for dictionary users to be familiar with them.

For example, Professor Stein discusses the topic of coded grammatical information in the first edition of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978), which in its revised editions has undergone radical or gradual changes of presentation. This change is largely due to dictionary criticism or heated discussion and careful examination of users' reference skills and needs. Most of the EFL dictionaries, consequently, have come to be more conscious of, and cope with, user-friendliness. Another aspect she discusses is word formation and their treatment in some dictionaries. How EFL dictionaries tackle the problem has been discussed in journals, articles or conferences, but it is still doubtful whether the topic has been seriously taken into account or the discussions have attracted much attention from lexicographers or publishers. Readers or students interested in dictionaries, especially the remarkable genre of EFL dictionaries, are reminded that they carefully read Professor Stein's articles and examine critically how the problems discussed are later to be dealt with, or remain unchanged.

A number of lexicographical studies in the last twenty years or so have made a great contribution to lexicography in theory and practice. But it does not mean that all the problems in lexicography or dictionary making are resolved and there is nothing to be desired. Rather, it seems that we still have a long way to go. The twenty-first century may see more change in dictionary format and dictionary content itself. All readers of the book are encouraged to focus on and tackle the lexicographical problems in theory and practice.

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