

# A Dictionary of South African English

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# Preface

This is not a conventional dictionary. It deals with an unconventional part of the English vocabulary, namely that peculiar to or originating in South Africa, and it treats that part in a manner which is not strictly orthodox. It has been designed with that dual purpose which Horace ascribes to poets in his *Ars Poetica*:

*Aut prodesse . . . aut delectare*  
'Either to instruct or to delight.'

In this case it is my earnest hope that it will do both. Like all dictionaries, it is intended to be useful; but unlike many, it is intended also to give pleasure and amusement.

In preparing the dictionary I have had the good fortune to be treating some of the most expressive language possible, and have had access to what must surely be a uniquely varied body of source material. From this have been chosen for their utility, validity, or pure pleasure, the quotations which are the spirit of this text. They have been chosen with love, care, and also laughter; some of them with sorrow and dismay. On the body of the text too, love, care and effort have been expended over a number of years, but like any other work of man, it is far from perfect.

In this respect I feel I cannot do better than quote my remarkable predecessor, Charles Pettman, who wrote in his *Africanderisms* in 1913:

In all the author has aimed at accuracy; he would be foolish, however, to suppose that there are no mistakes, but trusts that they will not be so many as to detract from the usefulness of the book.

J.B.

# Acknowledgements

I wish first to express my thanks to the Dictionary Committee and the Board of the Institute for the Study of English in Africa of Rhodes University for making it possible for me to undertake this work. My gratitude is due also to the Human Sciences Research Council, without whose financial support for the Rhodes University research programme for a Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles from its inception in 1970 this present work could not have been contemplated; and also to the Department of National Education whose subvention of the Research Unit since 1975 has made its completion possible.

I am most deeply indebted to Professor Johan Smuts, my supervisor of studies, and to Professor André de Villiers, Director of the Institute, both of whom have given generously of their time and unstintingly of their specialized knowledge far beyond my deserts.

To my colleagues on the Dictionary staff, Margaret Britz, Assistant Research Officer, who prepared the appendix of first dates and whose endless patience and good humour have always supported me, and Dorothy Muggeridge, who has twice typed the entire manuscript, my love and thanks are due in no small measure.

My special thanks are due to Mr C. J. Skead for the many hours of guidance he has given me in the complexities of scientific names of birds and beasts; and to the instructors of my younger days, Professor W. S. Mackie and Professor Dorothy Cavers. I am indebted too, to my former colleagues Penelope M. Silva and the late J. D. Walker upon some of whose wide reading I have been fortunate enough to draw.

My debts to friends known and unknown are more numerous than I can well compute but I would like to record my gratitude to many colleagues at Rhodes University: Dr M. V. Aldridge, Mr Michael Berning, Professor R. Beuthin, Professor André P. Brink, Professor Guy Butler, Mr J. S. Claughton, Miss A. C. Dick, Dr D. S. Henderson, Dr A. P. Hendrikse, Mr Peter Jackson, Dr Amy Jacot-Guillarmod, Mrs Margaret Smith, Mr C. Z. Gebeda now of Fort Hare and to Professor L. W. Lanham of Witwatersrand University;

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From all these, and many more, material, help and kindness have come to me.

I should like too, to pay tribute to other and better workmen, my predecessors in this field; the great and original spirit of Charles Pettman, and to Dr C. P. Swart and Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys who continued the work which he began.

To my husband William Branford, for more than I can adequately express here, both in his personal capacity and as designer of the Rhodes Dictionary project.

Finally, for his many gifts and his example of meticulous scholarship, to my father, Alfred Gordon-Brown of Cape Town, to whom I dedicate this work.

JEAN BRANFORD

Grahamstown

## Note:

### 'South African English'

South African English – the English of South Africans of whatever race, colour or national group – is in every sense, culturally, lexically, grammatically and phonologically, a 'mixed bag'. It is not, as I see it, only that complex of forms spoken by what are sometimes called 'ESSAS' (English Speaking South Africans), White or Black, but a *lingua franca* among those to whom English is, and many to whom English is not, their mother tongue. It teems therefore with words, ideas, structures and concepts from many languages and many cultures, and if my sample collection of these serves to illustrate this fact, it will fulfil the function which I have envisaged for it.

# Introduction

'To every man the domain of "common words" widens out in the direction of his own reading, research, business, provincial or foreign residence, and contracts in the direction with which he has no practical connection: no man's English is *all* English' – Sir James Murray, *Introduction to A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (1888).

## 1. 'South Africanisms' in our English

Sir James Murray's statement, made many years ago, that 'no man's English is *all* English', is particularly true for South Africans. As members of a multilingual society, we freely borrow from the languages around us, from Afrikaans to Zulu. Some of these borrowings are ephemeral; others, like *sopie*, have obtained a permanent footing in South African English but are unlikely to pass beyond it. Still others, like *trek* and *apartheid*, have become part of 'world English' and are likely to remain so.

Early in this century, as Stuart Cloete pointed out in *Rags of Glory* (1963), the Anglo-Boer War 'brought the African veld into the parlours of Brixton and the pubs of Highgate' with words like *donga*, *dorp*, *drift* and *kop* in news reports and soldiers' letters home. More recently the vocabulary of a different and yet deeper conflict – *apartheid*, *verkramp*, *amandhla*, *hippo*, *troopie* and *terr* – has begun to figure increasingly in the international press.

The South African origins or provenance of words like these are probably consciously felt by most overseas readers. In other cases, a word may have lost, for the user elsewhere, its specifically South African flavour. The South African origin of *trek* must have long been forgotten by big city commuters, by those who re-enacted the westward *trek* of pioneer wagons in the bi-centennial year of the U.S.A., and by British holiday makers *pony-trekking* in the hill country or, more adventurously, *Mini-trekking* abroad. The executive who *commandeers* a company car – (or who even decides to *Stellenbosch* an unsatisfactory colleague) may well be unaware of the fact that he is using a word of South African origin; and many of the specialized *commando* shock troops of World War II may not have known, or wanted to know, that their name echoes back to that of the militia of the early Cape frontiersmen.

But while few would dispute that *trek*, *commando* and *apartheid* are now well established in world English, there are many South African purists who react with horror to the notion of designating as 'English' – or even as 'South African English' – some of our more casual and informal loan-words such as *lekker*, *bakkie* or *braai*, even though many of these are terms which South Africans of all ages find an integral and almost indispensable part of their everyday usage. One of several reasons for preferring the term *South Africanisms* is to smooth the hackles or allay the alarms of the purists.

A further reason is that many English words – for instance, *land*, *location* and *camp* – have meanings in South Africa which differ from their usual established significations in British English. South Africa is, of course, not unique in this. The phenomenon is even more frequent in the United States (consider *gas* meaning 'petrol' and *depot* meaning 'railway station'). Indeed, during World War II, an illustrated word list was compiled by *Life* magazine to explain to American G.I.s what *biscuit*, *cookie*, *vest*, *bum* and other such items meant in British English.

A further group – including the useful *dingus*, which is the property of much of the English-speaking world – consists of terms which we share with some English-speaking communities but not with all. We share, for instance, with Australia the ubiquitous fencing *dropper*, or the *fossicker* of the past. Some of these are marked in the text as

'non-SAE', though this is simply a marker of convenience. South Africanisms they are, but they are 'other English' though not perhaps 'world English' as well.

I have also included a few words which might well be regarded as not South African at all – notably *rust*, *rinderpest* and *'flu* – all of which have local significance as historical rather than as clinical manifestations in South Africa. *Redwater*, similarly, has, in South Africa, a rather wider than usual application. With these are *Almanac*, *the Company*, *Court Calendar*, *District*, *Division*, *party* and *settler*, all of which have special signification or overtones surviving from the earlier years of Colonial administration at the Cape.

Lastly, these South Africanisms include, as I interpret them, a number of English phrases or usages, whose frequency in the English of South Africans – as opposed to their actual existence in English itself – can be attributed in part to the influence of Afrikaans, or possibly sometimes to that of other languages of this country. Cases in point are: *in place of* for 'instead of'; *just now* for 'in a little while'; *come there* for 'arrive'; *wait on* for 'wait for'; *come right* for 'resolve itself'; *rather* for 'instead'; *doesn't want to* for 'won't'; *busy (with)* for 'engaged in', or 'in the process of'; *is it?* for 'really?'; and the prefix *there-* as a substitute for the pronoun 'it'.

## 2. The User

This text has been designed basically with three types of reader or user in mind. Firstly it has been written for South Africans of all racial groups, including the English speaker interested in the finer detail of the dialect with which he has grown up and the Afrikaans speaker with an interest in how much and in what way his language has permeated that of his English-speaking fellow-countryman. Secondly, it is for the 'stranger within our gates', tourist or immigrant, who may need a guide to the many unfamiliar terms which he will encounter in this country. These he will meet in shops, in the Press, in advertisements, in daily conversation, place names and even in menus, finding a new vocabulary spanning almost every aspect of experience. I hope that for him it will provide an interesting and helpful key to what has developed from the original polyglot 'Tavern of the Seas'. Thirdly, it has been planned as a handbook for the overseas student of South African literature, in the hope that in the copious illustrations from South African texts of all kinds, he will find background material to supplement those which he happens to be studying.

## 3. The Material

'It has been difficult sometimes to decide what to admit to the Glossary and what to exclude. A few words have been included that could not be termed "Africanderisms", but no word has been admitted that had not some special interest for South Africans.' Pettman, *Africanderisms* (1913)

Makers of dictionaries generally agree that their job is to provide an objective record of the actual practices of writers and speakers, rather than a reflection of personal prejudice or taste. But however objective the lexicographer may wish to be, the decision to include or exclude an item is finally his personal choice and responsibility. This is never easy. Even Dr Johnson in his *Plan of a Dictionary* (1747) remarked 'It was not easy to determine by what rule of distinction the words of this dictionary were to be chosen.' For the dialect lexicographer, who is in any case dealing with only a part of the English vocabulary, the choice is already, to a certain extent, made in that what he treats is that section of English in South Africa which might be called the *non-standard*. If it were standard there would be no need for such a text as this, as everything in it would appear in ordinary English dictionaries. Thus the standard vocabulary, unless it be adapted for some special purpose other than those it serves in



'world English', has no place here. Since lexicography is a continuing task, I shall at all times be grateful for material which might be included in any future revision of this text.

The items included were collected over a number of years and initially grouped into thirty-four categories chosen to cover the principal fields of South African English experience. These range from (1) *Address, modes of*, to (34) *Writing, Education and the Arts*. In between were such categories as *Dishes and Cookery*; *Church and State*; *Farming and Domestic Animals*; *Games, Dances and Diversions*; *Health, Moods, Medicine and Witchcraft*; *African World*; *Landscape and Places*; *Drinking and Smoking*, and so on. Under each of these headings items were assembled in a small notebook, and afterwards each on a card in one of thirty-four bundles. It was only when the original collection was more or less complete that the categories were broken up, and the whole alphabetized so that the drafting of entries could be done in order. Alphabetization was thus secondary to categorization in the design of the text as a whole.

The words that found their way into the categorized scheme came from many places and in many ways. There are two primary ways of observing dialect usage: firstly, listening to people speak, and secondly, reading. Very often usages first encountered in speech are reinforced by being afterwards found in print, in newspapers, books and magazines. While the second method is usually the more reliable, the first is very often more interesting. Items were noted down from the speech of people in many walks of life and over a wide range of situations, including shopping, farming, travelling and telephone calls. Material acquired from reading is of varying reliability as a reflex of the dialect of the country. This is because it ranges from instances of a highly conscious literary device adopted for imparting a specifically local atmosphere to that of the genuine bread-and-butter usage of newspaper reports and advertisements. It would, however, be unfair to call the literary use of loan words an artificial device. There are many instances where a loan word must be used, not for local colour or the creation of atmosphere, but for the simple reason that there is no English equivalent for it, or that the thing it designates does not exist elsewhere.

It is possible that a distinction should be drawn between literary and non-literary sources: between South African stories, plays, novels and poetry on the one hand, and more utilitarian newspapers, magazines, recipe books and histories on the other. This, however, would not accommodate two of the earliest and most valuable groups of source materials available to us. One of these is the array of narratives by early traveller-naturalists such as Burchell and (in translation) Thunberg, Kolb, Sparrman, Le Vaillant, Lichtenstein and Latrobe. The second consists of people with a somewhat longer commitment to South Africa, notably travellers such as Alexander and Thompson and the missionaries, settlers, administrators, military men and their wives. For all of these, the need to describe new experiences, new peoples, unfamiliar landscapes, food, flora and fauna forced them to use a new vocabulary, without which their accounts would not have been valid, nor probably as satisfying to the taste of nineteenth-century readers with an interest, half-fascinated, half-fearful, in Darkest Africa.

These early loan-words reflect, of course, an important general property of English, its assimilative capacity. This was demonstrated early in the general history of the language by extensive borrowings from Latin, French and later Greek, and by less extensive but still important assimilations of Scandinavian material. The English of South Africa has long been a receptacle for what is most vivid, viable and apposite from many tongues: notably of course from Dutch, its successor Afrikaans, and from the Bantu languages, but also from others ranging from the Far East to the heart of Europe. The etymologies, for which I must again stress my debt to Professor J. Smuts, reflect something of the 'banquet of languages', to borrow Otto Jespersen's phrase, from which South African English in its present manifestations has grown.

One special interest regularly shown by early writers was in the place names of South Africa, upon which they made frequent comment. Included in this text are a

number of 'place-name formatives', e.g. *-berg*, *-bosch*, *-kloof* and *-pan* which regularly appear in place names (*Stellenbosch*, *Du Toitspan*) as prefixes or suffixes, as well as in many cases as independent words. Among these are features of the landscape, names of birds, beasts and plants, adjectives, verbs, participles, and occasional abstract nouns. While particular place names like *Villiersdorp* have no place in a dictionary, this collection of place name 'pieces' or building bricks, has been designed for the visitor or stranger who is unfamiliar with what is commonplace to most South Africans, to enable him to construct the meanings of many of the place names encountered in his travels or reading. It is also interesting in its own right as a regular source of new and recent coinages such as *Verwoerdburg*.

A full list of the word sources quoted appears on page 300. This does not include dictionaries and other reference or linguistic texts consulted.

Four words of particular complexity – *boer*, *kaffir*, *kraal* and *veld* with their compounds – have been divided up under headings according to their separate and different meanings or uses in South Africa. A note explaining the presentation of each of these four items precedes it.

In attempting a reasonably broad coverage of 'South Africanisms' I have included some grammatical material to reflect, for instance, such well-established colloquial usages as 'Are you coming with?' The text, as a result, contains some unusual headings: some of these are only parts of words such as *-ed* or *-ie*, and others include *omissions*; *prepositions*, *adjective with infinitive*, *negative*, *uses of*, *third person form of address* and *redundancies*. These give clues to certain grammatical idiosyncracies in South African English usage, particularly the short cuts taken, found at *omissions*, the extraneous matter, listed as *redundancies*, and South African uses of prepositions. All prepositions discussed are given as head-words in the text, but under *prepositions* they are simply listed together. Many of the unfamiliar usages of dialect grammar are direct translations or transliterations, usually from Afrikaans.

It should be borne in mind that all of the three thousand-odd items included are not likely to occur in the dialect of any single South African. The vocabulary reflects the usage of persons in many differing walks of life, differing backgrounds and widely differing working or recreational milieux. Thus to the farmer with a whole semi-specialist terminology of his own, that of the miner may be almost, or totally, unknown. Someone whose contacts with Africans have been minimal, or who has never had the opportunity or inclination to read the black press, may well be sceptical of the African-language borrowings or otherwise Africanized English terms included here. Nevertheless it is, I hope, a representative collection of some of the forms, features, adaptations and loan words characteristic of English in South Africa.

#### 4. Quotations

The illustrative quotations, as indicated in the Preface, have been chosen with the two purposes of making the text both useful and readable. If a quotation appears over-long, this is frequently because it contains and illustrates items other than the one below which it appears.

In most quotations of recent date, the names of persons and institutions have been removed, particularly where their inclusion might harm or give offence, as in murder or other criminal cases. But names have in certain instances been retained where the identity of the speaker or person mentioned has been of importance to the sense, for example in the case of an item of specifically African English usage to show that the speaker quoted is indeed an African.

#### 5. Cross-references

The cross-references among definitions are basically of two kinds. The first directs the user to equivalent items, e.g. '*miltsiekte* see *gifsiekte*', '*nagmaalhuis* see *kerkhuis*'

(and vice versa) or to related items: 'rixdollar see *schelling, skilling, stuiver*'. This type of cross-reference is also made by the sign (q.v.), e.g. 'boeremusiek: rhythmic country-style dance music played by a *boereorkes* (q.v.)'.

The second kind refers the user to a quotation under another head-word in which the word may be seen in a different context, or even several, e.g. '*alles sal reg kom*: see also quot. at *toe maar* and *moenie worry nie, moenie panic nie*,'; or '*roman*: see also quot. at *allewêreld*' (where there is a description of a large varied haul of fish).

This method of cross-referencing ensures that attention is drawn to other and possibly useful material on the one hand, and on the other that the word in question can be seen in as many different illustrative quotations as the text can afford.

There is one further type of reference, not strictly a cross-reference, which will be found at certain entries. These references are to items or usages from other variants of English comparable in form or idea with the South African terms e.g. '*randlord* cf. Anglo-Indian *nabob*, Hong Kong *tai-pan*'. While this is not part of conventional lexicography, I think it is of great interest to match certain recurrent themes in English vocabularies across the world. Thus *brak* is paralleled by Anglo-Indian *pye-dog* and Australian *mong*; *sugar baron* by Canadian *sawdust nobility*, *lumber king* and British *merchant prince*; *verkrampste* by Australian *wowser*, Canadian *mossback*; *trek wagon* by United States *prairie schooner*; *Anglikaans* by Canadian *Franglish*, *Franglais*. While these cross-references are not as many as I could wish, they give a fair number of instances of striking parallels of experience for English speech communities far apart in space and time.

## 6. Limitations of Choice

There have been several fields in which the inclusion of items has been consciously restricted. Dialect dictionaries tend, I feel, to over-invest in three particular areas: flora, fauna and the more ephemeral colloquialisms. However, the categorization system has made it possible to control the proportion of items of different kinds to be included here.

It is not, I think, justifiable to attempt a detailed treatment of flora and fauna in a dictionary, since it is not designed as a biological glossary. Too many of these infrequently-used terms would result in an unwieldy volume, and one of dubious value, since standard textbooks deal with them with the competence and detail required. I have therefore attempted to include only those which are likely to be fairly often encountered. The longer *Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* will naturally include far more material of this sort. Similarly, the names of peoples and tribes, of which hundreds and perhaps thousands can be found in our source materials, have been kept relatively few.

Colloquialisms inevitably form a large and significant part of the usage of any dialect speech community, large or small. It has been difficult, in the case of some colourful but possibly ephemeral terms, to resolve to exclude them. Unlike Australia, South Africa has as yet no great exponent of the colloquial idiom like C. J. Dennis, whose work of 1914–18 in particular continues to delight Australians today, as recent new editions prove. Nor have we a modern text on South African English to match the range and scholarship of Sidney J. Baker's *The Australian Language*. At a more popular and anecdotal level, John O'Grady's *Aussie English* and *They're a Weird Mob* have run to nearly a million and a half copies. It is evident however from the success of Robin Malan's *Ah Big Yaws* (closely related to Afferbeck Lauder's *Let Stalk Strine*), and the following enjoyed by 'Blossom Broadbeam' (Jenny Hobbs) of *Darling*, that there is a widespread interest in colloquial South African English. It is from this latter witty satirist that many illustrative quotations for items common in speech, but seldom to be seen in print, have been taken. A few items of the highly sectional argot of motor cyclists have been illustrated from *Bike S.A.*

A further problem of inclusion is that of rare or obsolete items. Some terms here may be thought to be too esoteric for a general handbook of this sort; but it remains true that a dictionary is more liable to be consulted by a user wishing for information on the unusual word than on the everyday one. To the South African user in particular, it is not the items of everyday vocabulary that are likely to be of interest, but the rarer and unfamiliar ones. It is therefore without apology that some rare historical and legal terms are included, some African journalese, and odd usages heard among farmers. But rare birds, beasts and flowers, for reasons outlined earlier, have been generally excluded.

## 7. Status labels

Some guidance as to levels or fields of use is offered by means of status-labels.

As is suggested elsewhere, any usage peculiar to a dialect can be regarded as *non-standard* in relation to the internationally-recognized literary norm. For this reason the label *non-standard* is not used at all. The status label *substandard* does appear, but it is restricted to points of usage rather than of vocabulary. Thus it marks the use of *by* for *standard at* ('I was working by a chemist's down in Jeppe') and other structures translated, or transliterated, from Afrikaans, e.g. 'I'm busy having new sunglasses made'; or redundancies such as *little* in 'a small little tin' ('n klein blikkie). It is seldom used for lexical items, particularly nouns, as a criticism of their use or content, except where the term itself is a transliteration, e.g. *youth*, *the* (Afrikaans *die jeug*).

Much dialect usage is naturally informal; but for the lexicographer this poses a very real problem. Few would dare to attempt to lay down a hard and fast line through that hazy territory in which the colloquial shades off into slang. The words themselves, even, may be one or the other, depending on the nature of the context in which they are found. There has therefore been no attempt at a classification based on any rule of thumb. The label *colloq.* has been used on the whole for words or usages informal in varying degrees in speech or writing, and the label *slang* for terms so very informal that they are seldom found in print. No scheme could possibly hope to fit this shifting and unstable ground, and what is given here can only hope to be a guide. Where terms are genuinely obscene and objectionable this is stated in the definition itself. A label such as *taboo* 'not used', would be unrealistic for a term which *is*, and has therefore been avoided.

Furthermore, in a multiracial and multilingual country, there are many words which, while they are completely harmless in the view of a large number of people, will and do give hurt and offence to others. These include 'boy', 'girl', 'coon', 'coolie', 'hotnot', 'spider', 'rock' and many more. For these no suitable status label could be devised, so the definition usually includes the term 'offensive', or 'objectionable', as a description of how such words are regarded by many members of a mixed population. The inclusion of such items in this text is purely a record of their use and existence in the language, and should not be interpreted as a mark of approval or signal of their acceptability: nor should the presence of certain of the illustrative material be regarded as endorsement of the sentiments it contains.

The labels *rare* or *regional* are given on a basis of personal experience or opinion only. Certain terms such as *mali*, stated by Pettman to have been 'common among Colonists', are now possibly better known or more used among certain groups, possibly the older generation or people from the Eastern Cape. It is often observed that the usage of one age group is obscure to another and while it is obvious that the use of colloquial or other dialect terms must depend upon individual and the generation or area to which he belongs, this is not something which can be readily pinpointed or labelled by the lexicographer.

## 8. Spelling: Orthographic conventions

There are four aspects of spelling in this text which require brief comment.

Firstly, the set rules of the spelling of compound words in Afrikaans are frequently not followed when these compounds are used in English, so that usage as we have found it is often at variance with what the correct Afrikaans forms would be. Usage varies, though usually if one item is English and the other Afrikaans (as with *trek-ox* or *rooibos tea*) they are separated or hyphenated. Even this is not a reliable rule of thumb, however, as *Kaffirboom* shows; and the English tendency to maintain separation is not followed in *camelthorn* and *dryland*. These do of course appear as *camel('s) thorn* and *dry land* and the lack of consistency in our sources may well be reflected in the text in spite of conscious effort to maintain a uniform system.

Secondly, the spelling of African-language loan words is regularly found to differ from the correct forms of the 'new' orthographies. These reflect the aspirated consonants [k<sup>h</sup>] [t<sup>h</sup>] [p<sup>h</sup>] as *kh*, *th* and *ph* to indicate a contrast with the unaspirated forms [k] [t] [p]. A related contrast is indicated by the spellings *bh* and *b*. These contrasts are seldom reflected in our sources, though in the text, wherever possible, both forms are given, e.g. '*khehla* see *kehla*', '*thwasa* see *twasa*', '*bhuti* see *buti*', '*phuthu* see *putu*'.

In South African loan usages of African-language nouns the initial vowels of prefixes are frequently dropped or lost, so that *iNkosi* becomes *Nkosi*; *intombi*, *ntombi*; *imbongi*, *mbongi* (even *mbongo*) and *umnumzane*, *mnumzane*. As far as possible both forms are given in the text, usually with the prefixed vowels in parentheses. In plural nouns the prefixes are more frequently retained (as in *imishologu*, *izinyanya* or *izibongo*), possibly because of their relative rarity. In others, such as *abafazi* or *amadoda*, they are retained with or without the initial *a*, which does not prevent the relatively common addition of an anglicized *-s* plural, particularly for plural forms such as *Basotho*, *Bantu* or *Mashona*, which are not perceived as plurals by the majority of English speakers. The infinitive verb prefix *uku-* is used in the etymologies only, with the exception of *ukuthwasa*, which, as it is used by anthropologists as a noun, appears as a cross-reference item in the text.

A third area of orthographic difficulty is that of the scientific names of flora. Authorities differ in their treatment of such names as *Solanum burchellii* or *Gardenia thunbergii* which incorporate a personal name. Although modern botanists now largely use lower case letters in botanical names in preference to the more conservative capitals (thus matching the convention long established in the names of fauna), the early sources from which much of our material has been drawn do not. In the interests of standardization, however, the now prevailing lower-case convention has been followed in the text.

Lastly, the now obsolete Dutch spelling *sch-*, which in Afrikaans is usually *sk-*, appears in much of the earlier source material for this work, and has therefore been retained in such words as *schans* and *schepel*. When the commoner spelling appears from our data to be *sk-*, as in *skerm*, *skelm* and *skof(t)*, the *sch-* forms are given as cross-references only - '*schelm* see *skelm*' etc. - even where both spelling forms may be found in the illustrative material. The *-sch* spelling, now *-s* in Afrikaans as in *bos*, is retained usually only in such place names as *Stellenbosch* or *Rondebosch*, or in historical material, such as the quotation at *bosch*, or terms in which the pronunciation is now [ʃ] as in *schelling* or *schlenter*.

## 9. Pronunciation

The system of phonetic transcription has been evolved with some care in the effort to make it both simple and flexible enough to indicate a number of various sounds unfamiliar to the non-South African or non-speaker of Afrikaans. The key has been prepared to provide illustrations of the sounds of the non-English words heard in



South African English. For such a sound, an analogue is given from a European language (French, German or Italian) as a rough approximation. Thus the spelling *ui* is given as [œi] and described as being 'as in French coup d'*œil*' and its obverse *eu* as [œ] 'as in French *monsieur*'. In the case of some other non-English diphthongs the nearest English approximation is given, e.g. for *ee* (as in *heemraad*) [iə] 'as in *beer*' is suggested, and for *oo* (as in *boom*) [ʊə] 'as in *poor*'. These, it must be stressed, are given for simplicity and convenience since detailed articulatory descriptions would be of little interest to non-specialist readers.

The pronunciation of loan words is always an awkward issue. Too-perfect French pronunciation of names, places, dishes and people, or for that matter unrecognizably Spanish renderings of the same type, can only jangle the English speech chain; and the same is true of too-perfectly enunciated Afrikaans or African loan words in the speech of South Africans. This is therefore a problem for the lexicographer who wishes to give an idea of how words unknown to the non-South African should and do sound. It makes it necessary to attempt a mean between the wholly or partially anglicized rendering on the one hand, and the authentic pronunciation in the original language on the other.

One device adopted is the placing of *r*, sounded by some speakers and left silent by others, within small parentheses (*r*) to indicate its optional status. Another is the alternative endings shown in words with diminutive suffixes *-tjie* or *-djie*, which have a number of differing manifestations.

Not shown in most cases are those plurals which for most Afrikaans-influenced speakers are [s] and for English speakers are [z], though it has been possible in a plural noun such as *sousboontjies* to indicate the Afrikaans form.

Also not normally shown is a phonetic transcription for English words, as the reproduction of a South African accent in the pronunciation of English is hardly part of the lexicographer's brief. Only when the actual stress pattern deviates from the standard norm, as in such a word as *cooldrink*, is a transcription included.

The South African English speaker's rendering of the Afrikaans or African-language loan words in his own vocabulary must inevitably be directly related to the linguistic influences to which he is exposed. It is self-evident that the country-dweller in a largely Afrikaans community is more likely to roll *r*'s and produce vowels more closely related to those of the original Afrikaans pronunciation of the loan words he uses than is a city-dweller in a largely English-speaking environment. It is, however, interesting to note that some fluent speakers of African languages omit clicks in place names or loan words such as *mngqusho* or *Xhosa*, even though they can, and regularly do, produce them in speech. Variant pronunciations are given in some cases. They are, of course, too few, and can by no means hope to cover variations from speaker to speaker, or variations within the same speaker in different contexts or situations. *Quot homines tot sententiae* holds true of pronunciation also. Such variations are often of vowel length or quality. More significant variations occur in stress patterns, e.g. in the main stress in such words as *likkewaan*, *bobbejaan*, *Shangaan* and *kabeljou*.

Variation is especially difficult to reflect for non-English sounds (including at times the clicks) which may or may not be given their 'authentic' sound-values – for want of a better word. This is firstly and obviously according to the preference or habit of the speaker himself, and secondly and less obviously, the circumstances in which the speaker finds himself at the time, since he may or may not wish to accommodate his speech to that of his companions, which may differ significantly from his own.

Accommodation or non-accommodation can reflect either his wish to level out the differences, or maintain or exaggerate them; or simply a lack of articulatory adaptation. An employer of African staff, for example, may make, in their company, a conscious effort to Africanize his pronunciation of African loan words which he would not consider proper or desirable among White companions.

Among children, of course, speech adaptation and accommodation under social

and environmental pressure is only too well known, and regularly observable in any playground. The New York slum child from a poor but well-spoken home, when asked why he didn't speak to 'the kids he played with on the street' as he did to his parents, succinctly replied to the research worker: 'I couldn't live here if I did.'

It is impossible to attempt to lay down a hard and fast standard for the pronunciation of loan words, and what appears in this text can at best only hope to be a guide. The sound values suggested are usually approximations to a far greater variety of sounds than can be shown in a simple text.

## 10. Form of Entry

The normal form of entry is as follows:

**putu** ['putu] *n.*

Traditional African preparation of *mealie meal* (q.v.) cooked until it forms dry crumbs: equiv. of *krummelpap* (q.v.) eaten by Africans with meat and gravy etc. or with *calabash milk* (q.v.) or *maas* (q.v.). ¶ It is also a popular breakfast food among Whites, served instead of porridge; see second quot. [Ngu. *uphuthu* crumb porridge, anything crumbly, e.g. earth]

Soon one of Mazibe's wives . . . entered on her hands and knees. Permitted to kneel but not to stand, she adroitly balanced a baby strapped to her back in a cloth sling, while serving us roast chicken and uphuthu, a kind of hominy that has been a staple Zulu dish for centuries. *National Geographic Mag.* 6.12.71

. . . her first move is to the kitchen where Lukas her cook is preparing breakfast . . . Whatever else might be in the offing a large pot of putu – crumb mealie meal porridge – will be ready for eating. *Fair Lady* Jan. 1972

Each entry takes more or less the same form, namely:

1. The headword, *putu* in the above example, in bold type.
2. A *phonetic transcription*, usually only in the case of items of non-English origin, in square brackets.
3. The *grammatical designation*, *n.* for 'noun' in the case of *putu*, followed for 'countable' nouns, e.g. *voorkamer* or *land*, by the marker or markers of their plural forms. This is not given for *putu* which, like English *porridge*, normally acts as a 'noncount' noun: we seldom convert 'porridge' to a 'count' noun by pluralizing it as 'porridges'. In the case of names of game birds or animals, e.g. *eland*, which are regularly used, like *sheep*, with an unmarked plural, the sign Ø (zero) is used.
4. The *definition*, with cross-references if any, e.g. from *putu* to '*mealie meal* (q.v.)'. This sometimes includes an extra note marked ¶.
5. The *etymology*, again in square brackets: this for *putu* relates the word to the Nguni *uphuthu* from which it derives.
6. The *illustrative quotations*.

Forms which occur as prefixes or suffixes are preceded and/or followed by hyphens to indicate that these are not normally 'free' forms. They occur quite frequently among the place name formatives mentioned above, and also in the names of flora and fauna. Many forms such as *veld* and *berg* appear both free and in compounds.

Latin names of flora and fauna have been taken from the newest available checklists and texts. These are given either at the beginning or in the body of a definition. Cross-referenced equivalent terms are marked (q.v.) – 'which see' – and will be found as head words elsewhere in their alphabetical sequence. Other cross-references given are explained in Section 5.

In the case of alternative spellings which are frequent in African loan words, these also appear as head words in the alphabetical sequence: '*phuthu* see *putu*'.

# PRONUNCIATION KEY

## TABLE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS

Approximate sound values of symbols for South African English.

### CONSONANTS

[p, b, t, d, g, k, f, v, s, z, h, m, n, l]  
have their usual agreed English  
speech value.

Non-English sounds are marked\*.

- r** like normal English initial 'r' as in *rat*. This *r* in initial position is rolled as in Scottish English by some S.A.E. speakers.
- \*(r)** the parentheses indicate that some speakers omit this sound altogether. This (r) when sounded is rolled as in Scottish English or Afrikaans by some S.A.E. speakers e.g. *poort* [pʊə(r)t].
- ŋ** as in *ring*.
- dʒ** as in *judge*.
- tʃ** as in *church*. This is a frequent S.A.E. pronunciation of \*[c], the palatal plosive (see below).
- \*c** this sound is rare for S.A.E. speakers who usually pronounce it as [tʃ] (see above) or [k]. In Afrikaans it is spelt *tj* or *dj* and sounds like a [k] produced forward on the hard palate, e.g. *naartjie* [narci].
- θ** as in *thin*, *pith*.
- ð** as in *then*, *tithe*.
- ʃ** as in *shine*, *finish*.
- ʒ** as in *pleasure*.
- j** as in *yellow*. The Afrikaans spelling is *j* e.g. *ja*, *yes*.
- \*x** as in Scottish *loch*, German *ach*. The Afrikaans spelling is *g* or *gg* e.g. *gogga*, *insect*.

- \*ɬ** as in Welsh *Llandudno*: found in African language borrowings spelt *hl* e.g. *hlonipa* reverence, *kahle* well, also in all Zulu place names containing this combination e.g. *Hluhluwe*, *Mahlabatini*; often erroneously pronounced [ɬl] as in German *schloss* (see first quot. at *kehla*).

*Note:* In words borrowed from the African languages the *c*, *x* and *q* spellings represent clicks of three different basic types.

*c* represents the dental click formed behind the teeth on the teeth ridge, rather like the English 'dismay sound' variously spelt *tut-tut*, *tch*, *tch*, *tsk* *tsk*.

*x* or *xh* represents the lateral click, formed at the side of the mouth, and *q* the palatal click formed at the hard palate. Approximations are not available for these.

In the interests of simplicity, therefore, they are all transcribed as [k] sounds, a quite usual way of rendering them.

The presence of a click in a word is indicated by [+ ] following the transcription thus:

*Tixo* ['tɪkɔ +].

### VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

Vowels or diphthongs which have no English equivalent are marked \*. The example and/or description following each is the nearest approximation to the sound.

*Note:* 'high', 'low', 'front', 'back' and 'central' refer to the position of the tongue in the mouth.

### VOWELS

- \*y** as in French *rue*, German *über*. This is pronounced like the sound in



pea but with closely rounded lips. The Afrikaans spelling is *uu* e.g. *suurveld* sour grass veld, occ. *u* e.g. *suring* sorrel.

- i** as in *pea*.  
*Note:* A form of this sound, very short and slightly lower, is used by most S.A.E. speakers for the pronunciation of final *y* as in *city*, unlike the [ɪ] of British English in the same position. Where this occurs in the text the symbol [ɪ] is used.
- \*ɪ** short as in German *ich*, French *riz*. The Afrikaans spelling is usually *ie* as in *riem* thong, occ. *e* before *tj* e.g. *ribbetjie* rib chop.
- I** as in *pick*.  
*Note:* Unless it is initial or in combination with [g], [k] or [ŋ], preceded by [h] or followed by [ʃ], when the symbol [I] is used, this sound is pronounced in a lower form, further back, see [ɪ] below.
- \*ɪ** Similar to the sound in *because*, degree pronounced stressed. This is only an approximation: see note on [ɪ] above. The [ɪ] symbol is used for *i* spellings other than the combinations described there, and for the S.A.E. rendering of Afrikaans *i* spellings, rendered [ə] by Afrikaans speakers and some speakers of S.A.E.
- e** as in *pen*.
- e\*:** as in French *mère*, German *ähnlich*, the [e] sound pronounced long. The Afrikaans spelling is either *ê* as in *sê* say, or *kêrel* fellow, *e* before *r* as in *ver* far, occ. *è* as in *nè* not so? See also diphthong [eə].
- æ** as in *pæn*.
- \*a** short as in German *ach*, Italian *altro*, French *a la mode*. This sound occurs with many variations in both Afrikaans and the African languages which contribute to S.A.E., spelt *a*. This description is only an

approximation since the variants are between the extremes of the [ʌ] of *hut*, on the one hand and the [ɒ] of *hot* on the other.

- ɑ** as in *par*, *palm*, used in this text for most Afrikaans 'aa' spellings and for some *a* spellings.
- ɒ** as in *on*, *sock*.
- ɔ** as in *corn*, *call*. This symbol is also used to transcribe long 'o' sounds in words borrowed from African languages e.g. *lobola* bride price.
- \*ɔ̃** Similar to [ɔ] but short and pronounced stressed, something like the *o* in German *Gott*. The quality and duration of the sound are equivalent to that of the first syllable of *authority*, pronounced stressed. [This does not make it equivalent in quality or duration to the first syllable of *author*.] The Afrikaans spelling is *o* as in *koppie* hillock.
- ʊ** as in *book*, *pull*.
- u** as in *boot*, *rule*.
- \*ũ** as in German *Hund*. Similar to the sound in *boot*, but pronounced short. Spellings are *oe* as in Afrikaans *stoep* open verandah, and *u* as in *kudu* (Afrikaans *koedoe*) in both stressed and unstressed syllables.
- ə** as in *butter*, *about*. The unstressed central 'neutral' vowel.
- \*ə̃** the same vowel stressed, a sound said to be unique to S.A.E. It is standard in Afrikaans e.g. *sin* [sɛ̃n] sentence. Some S.A.E. speakers and most Afrikaans speakers use this sound for *i* spellings e.g. *pit* [pɛ̃t] Afrikaans 'stone', 'pip', for which the symbol [ɪ] is used in this text.
- \*æ̃** as in French *bœuf* (pronounced short). A short semi-low front vowel with slight lip rounding. The