

English-Portuguese and Portuguese-English Bilingual Dictionaries

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Potential users of bilingual English-Portuguese dictionaries will, from the outset, find a number of obstacles in their paths. These include basic issues of availability, selection of language pairings and the apparent demise of the printed form.

The question of availability, or lack of choice of publications, arises to a large extent from the current status of English as an international language. The seeming ubiquity of English has encouraged publishing houses, particularly those which are themselves English-speaking in origin, to take advantage of this market through the publication of a wide variety of 'learner' dictionaries which tend to be monolingual, graded and oriented towards correct linguistic usage rather than acting as simple reference texts. Major publishers, including the Cambridge University Press, the Oxford University Press, Pearson Longman, Macmillan and Collins have all produced significant ranges of learner monolingual dictionaries which tend to be updated, reedited and republished far more assiduously and frequently than their bilingual offerings, where these exist. A target market which does warrant bilingual publication is the travel or tourist market, but here the offer seems to be almost uniquely of the phrase book rather than dictionary type, even when labelled the latter.

The second difficulty, that of language pairings, is one that may not even become apparent to the user until after they have purchased and then started to use the dictionary. Unless specifically stated, which is rare, and particularly in the case of dictionaries produced by Portuguese language houses it is not immediately obvious which language pairing is being offered, or even if a true distinction between languages is being maintained by the publication. Thus, the English side of the dictionary may be, and is, North American, British or even South African in standard and the Portuguese side European or Brazilian Portuguese.

The third factor, that of online rather than hard copy dictionary publication, has essentially emerged as the result of the powerful language research possibilities offered by the internet which have been harnessed by a number of organisations. These include such powerful players as the European Union itself with its Interactive Terminology for Europe database (IATE) which is an open access working tool designed to promote homogenous communication across the community. Other offerings in the same vein are more commercial in nature; in some cases 'free' services are offered as an incentive to purchase dictionaries, as with Reverso, or even to sell non-dictionary related items, as is the case with dictionary.com. An interesting feature of many of these services is that the offering is multilingual rather than bilingual in nature, though there appears to be an underlying assumption that English is one half of any language pairing to be made.

The bilingual English/Portuguese dictionary offer is certainly somewhat skewed, in the sense that the publishing priorities of English and Portuguese publishing houses seem to be significantly different. British and American houses have focused on the learner / travel /

pocket market while Portuguese and Brazilian houses have produced far more comprehensive and traditional dictionaries which tend not to be quite so focused on specific market sectors

For the general user, perhaps the best place to start with bilingual dictionaries is Porto Editora. Their flagship offerings '*Dicionário de Inglês-Português*' and '*Dicionário Português-Inglês*', sold in two complementary volumes, have a number of distinguishing characteristics. First, the coverage of both languages, with approximately 2-300,000 translations in each volume makes it one of the most comprehensive dictionaries available on the market. Both dictionaries follow a similar format and offer some particularly useful features which include headword entries which, in addition to translating the headword itself, also offer translations of compound phrases, idiomatic phrases, proverbs, sayings and, interestingly, collocations. There is, perhaps, a slight over-emphasis on proverbs and sayings, given that these may be less frequently encountered by the user. There is also room for indicating which of these categories a given phrase is in, particularly in the case of collocations and more common idiomatic expressions, though, of course this may be obvious to the reader who is fluent in the target language. There is good indication and separation of separate meanings of a headword, including whether or not it is colloquially employed. Headwords are also assigned a register where appropriate, which will certainly help the user narrow down the choices for multi-meaning words, again this feature is clearly identified. A certain proportion of headwords are encased in illustrative phrases, presumably as a guide to meaning, which are then translated into the target language. There are perhaps not quite as many of these as there might be, given that this is a feature which would certainly help the non-native target language user who may be looking to understand/translate a phrase rather than an individual word. This technique of exemplification is used widely in learner monolingual dictionaries but seems to have been rather half-heartedly adopted here. There are a couple of somewhat perplexing organisational traits, such as individual entries, but not labelling, for phrasal verbs and an indicated inclusion of synonyms in the target language. The former helps identify the dictionary as a being, at least partially, aimed at the learner market rather than the professional user. The latter is rather confusing since a translation necessarily has the characteristics of a synonym and the synonymous meanings would be better served by mere identification of their register/context. For example, 'clima' is translated as climate and 'atmosphere' is given as a synonym when these two words both have equal value as a translation. The more orthographically similar, Latinate translation is not even necessarily the most useful or common. In terms of meaning translation, a final big plus for these dictionaries is their crystal clear identification of words from different language systems (GB, USA, Brazil), although the user obviously needs to be aware that everything else is European Portuguese in usage.

The lexicographical, grammatical and syntactical information offered by the dictionaries is comprehensive, accurate and tuned to an easily understandable key. For example, different grammatical categories are labelled with large circled letters rather than simply by the more conventional grammatical abbreviation, which is going to make for much faster look-up times. For the advanced user, the dictionaries contain extensive information on the new Portuguese orthographic code. The dictionaries are also available in a CD-ROM format, with the added bonus of verb conjugation tables for most verbs in both languages. On test-driving the dictionary, it never failed to find a 'common word', defined here as one that returns a full page of results from the taken from the Cobuild Concordance and Collocations Sampler and, in overall terms, is definitely the most accessible one-off dictionary, particularly in its multimedia format, for the advanced professional or translating user.

The same publisher also produces an 'academic' version of the same dictionary. The '*Dicionário Académico de Inglês-Português / Português-Inglês*' is aimed at the school market and essentially consists, to this user's eye, of a watered down version of its larger cousins. It is

much more list-like in format although it does contain all the pertinent grammatical information, and, more importantly, such lexical features as the sample sentences, registers/contexts and separate entries for homographs. The phonetics guide is clear, though the user would need to be highly familiar with the transcription used and it is not clear whether the pronunciation is, for example, British or American. It is also necessary for the user looking up a Portuguese word to backtrack to the English entries to find the pronunciation guide. There a number of features that could perhaps be borrowed from the larger dictionaries, such as the simple identification of a change in grammatical category. Other features, such as the sending of the user to related entries are excellently signposted and could also be expanded. The only downside of this dictionary is the actual wordlist itself, and this is a major objection. If the dictionary is aimed at the school or college user, then some more detailed grading of the items to be included, according to frequency, register or even age, would surely benefit the user. This is, of course, an editorial decision and reflects the editor's desire to be as inclusive as possible, but again it begs the question as to whether this is a reference dictionary for all users or whether it is a learning tool with which the school-user may interactively engage.

A better bet for the Portuguese language learner learning English would be the *'Dicionário Oxford Pocket para estudantes de Inglês (Português-Inglês / Inglês-Português)'*. This dictionary exists in two separate formats, one for European learners of English and the other for Brazilian learners. Although this dictionary is, in its makeup, as Anglo-centric as the abovementioned Academic dictionary is Luso-centric, it does have a number of useful, innovative characteristics that are designed to make the language learners task an easier one. It comes with a CD-ROM that not only contains the full contents of the dictionary but which also has extra illustrations and Oxford's proprietary Wordfinder dictionary which is designed to help learners build and extend their vocabulary. This additional monolingual dictionary is conceptually and thematically organised and guides the learner by concept to the right English words to use in a given context.

The content of the main dictionary has been carefully selected using Oxford's own 3,000 key word system as a basis (these words are indicated by a key symbol in the entries). Again this is designed to ensure that learners can more easily access useful frequent words and don't get bogged down in a forest of irrelevant entries or more complex definitions. The dictionary does not restrict itself to definitions but contains elements of what are recognisably grammar and vocabulary book formats. In this largely successful attempt to set itself up as a one-stop resource for the language learner, the dictionary offers insert sections on particularly difficult grammar points, such as modal verbs, and challenging areas of lexis, including false friends and phrasal verbs and a wealth of useful, annotated illustrations. There are even sections containing cultural information on a wide range of topics such as the British parliamentary system. All of the extra sections are written in Portuguese, as a further aid to the learner.

In purely dictionary terms, one of the most positive aspects of this publication is the layout and format. For example, colour has been used simply but effectively to highlight the headwords and a modern typeface engages the younger reader-browser. Special attention has been paid to the particular difficulties that the Portuguese speaker may have with English. This takes a number of interesting forms, one of which is the inclusion within entries of detailed explanations of cognates which do not map directly or simply between the two languages. A good example of this is 'esperar' which is not simply translated as wait, hope and expect but is explained in terms of the contexts within which each of these English verbs might be used. Another useful feature in this line is the inclusion of irregular verb forms as separate headwords, thus allowing the learner to search more directly for language items they don't know. The dictionary also addresses one of the perennial problems of language learning

dictionary writers which is that of how to write an entry in such a way that the explanation/definition is at a lower level of complexity than the headword itself. This dictionary smartly sidesteps this problem by guiding the Portuguese reader through complex entries in Portuguese. This textual mixing does not seem to complicate use of the dictionary. A further step in the direction of user-friendliness has been taken by including a pronunciation guide across the bottom of each page.

In general terms, then, this dictionary, which has grown out of Oxford's extensive experience in the area of ELT publishing and research, is a state-of-the-art product that has taken the learner dictionary to new levels of pragmatism and accessibility.

Oxford also publish a dictionary designed to work in the opposite direction, for English-speaking learners of Portuguese. The '*Oxford Colour Portuguese Dictionary*', with its approximately 40,000 entries, is designed for beginners. The 'colour' of the title is the main feature of this dictionary and is intended to aid the user's search for correct words. Although useful and usable, this dictionary, presumably in reflection of market forces, has obviously not been the target of the same research and investment as its sister publication going in the opposite direction.

The '*Collins Portuguese Dictionary in Colour*', shortly to be published in its fourth edition by Harper Collins, is an intermediate level dictionary also aimed at the learner of Portuguese, although in its pocket version it is probably just as useful for the Portuguese speaker engaged in learning English. It has a significant number of entries, at around 82,000 and has been fully updated to take into account the new orthographic code. The colour is employed here in exactly the same way as in the Oxford dictionary, for the clearer identification of headwords. There are also sections focusing on Portuguese culture and customs, as well as language points, such as false friends and Portuguese verbs that might cause difficulties to the language learner. A further, supplementary, section designed to boost the pragmatic force of the dictionary looks at such communicative acts as writing letters and emails and dealing with numbers, dates and time. The back of the dictionary contains a short, but useful, phrase-book for the traveller. In the current edition, Brazilian and European Portuguese are both covered, though there is some prevalence of the first, such as in the part where guidance on answering the phone is given, which may not, of course, suit all users.

A dictionary for early learners of Portuguese that has taken a more overtly research-based approach to helping with the organisation of learning is '*A Frequency Dictionary of Portuguese*' published by Routledge and available both as hard copy and as an eBook. This dictionary addresses the 5,000 most frequently used words in Portuguese and works from the premise that beginning language learners don't need most of what they can find in a dictionary since our real world experience of foreign language use is typically, and particularly at the early stages of learning, normally restricted to common and predictable contexts of exchange. The frequency organisation of the dictionary is, however, still subject to difficulty grading. The entries start with highly common, easy words such as 'o/a', 'de' and then progress through more intermediate and advanced levels. The traditional alphabetical organisation of a dictionary is maintained in the index from which the learner can then pass back to the entry itself. There is also a part of speech index, a number of thematically arranged lists and lists focusing on common grammatical problems at beginner level. The entries maintain most of the information the user would expect to find in a dictionary, plus a few extras: part of speech, a definition in English, sample sentences drawn from the 45 million word Corpus de Português with a corresponding translation into English and an indication of the type of discourse in which the word is likely to be found (spoken, general written, newspapers, etc.). One point to bear in mind with this dictionary is that, as a North American project, one might expect that there would be a slight favouring of Brazilian Portuguese and US English. However, the

lexicographers make it clear in their introduction that the corpus itself is broad-based and major differences between the languages, such as spelling, have been analytically accommodated. Words, for example, that systematically vary in their spelling have been included using the European Portuguese form of the spelling for the headword, but then in whichever form is appropriate for the sample sentences (depending on where in the corpus the sample has been drawn from). Words which differ significantly in their spelling have been given separate entries. Overall, this scientific approach to dictionary building, which has much in common with the Oxford dictionary discussed above, has resulted in a slim, practicable and efficient dictionary resource.

In collaboration with the German publisher, Duden, Oxford has also published the Oxford-Duden Pictorial Portuguese and English Dictionary a comprehensive bilingual technical dictionary. It is aimed at the technician, engineer, business person or translator and takes a simple but effective illustration-based approach to the translation of both technical and everyday objects, devices, machines, systems and situations. The dictionary, which has not apparently been reissued since 1993, covers terminology in all main fields of reference including science, technology, medicine, and business, the arts and entertainment, recreation and sport, flora and fauna, and even stretches to typical situations in domestic and everyday life. Despite its relative age, this dictionary still serves to fill what would otherwise be a hefty gap in the market as there is very little on offer for the technical specialist. All entries are indexed in both Portuguese and English so the user can operate in both language directions. One of the main advantages of this publication is that the thematic organisation of lexis allows the user to access the full range of vocabulary relevant to a given situation or context. The English and Portuguese used in the dictionary is European, though clear indications are given of both American and Brazilian variations.

The dictionary is organised into facing pages of illustrations and numbered bilingual labels. At the back of the book there is a comprehensive Portuguese and English index with clearly indicated page and label numbers. Homographs are distinguished through an indication of the register and context to which they apply. The dictionary does not restrict itself to merely physical single-word labelling of parts, as each illustration page is sub-divided into physical or thematic parts and the labelling is often at the phrase level. The illustrations take the form of line drawings, generic and stripped down in nature where applicable, which go some way to dealing with the problem of variety and variation when using other forms of illustration such as photographs.

As mentioned above, in terms of bilingual dictionaries, there is surprisingly little available to the specialist market and often what is on offer has not apparently been able to take advantage of the more recent lexicographical trends in terms of dictionary design user-friendliness and accessibility. Elsevier have published a number of multilingual dictionaries that feature the English-Portuguese pairing. Examples of these are *'Elsevier's Dictionary of Engineering: In English/American, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese/Brazilian'*, *'Elsevier's Dictionary of Industrial Technology: In English, German and Portuguese'*, *'Elsevier's Economics Dictionary: In English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and German'* and *'Elsevier's Dictionary of Drug Traffic Terms: In English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and German'* amongst others which address such fields as Nutrition and Food Technology, Climatology, Glass-making, Horticulture and Insurance. There is a much wider range of Elsevier dictionaries which don't include the English-Portuguese pairing. The dictionaries are highly priced and presumably aimed at academics, libraries, research institutions and industry. They all follow the same format in which the first part of the book is a full numbered listing of the entries in alphabetical order in English (called the Basic Table). Subordinate English synonyms are listed separately with a numbered reference to the main entry. Below each English word appear the

translations in whichever other languages the dictionary covers. The second part of the book contains alphabetical indexes for each of the non-English languages. The information contained in entries is fairly limited, though there are a number of useful features. Firstly, the term's sub-field within the overall field is identified, such as Hydraulics or Fluid Mechanics within Engineering, where appropriate. Secondly, the English term is often glossed or explained where there is potential ambiguity or the word has multiple meanings. The grammatical gender of the term is also identified where relevant, British and American English is labelled and where necessary the term is also glossed in Portuguese. There is no real need for any other type of information in the dictionary since it can be assumed that the user is an expert, or near-expert, in the area and in his or her native language.

There are a number of shifts taking place in bilingual dictionary publication and, as mentioned above, one of the main changes that currently seems to be in full swing is that dictionaries, like encyclopaedias before them, are moving away from expensive, short-lived hardcopy publications and into either multimedia or online versions. Presumably there are strong economic and market reasons for such trends, not least of which is the recent and rapid growth of free online dictionary and translation resources. However, the user needs to take a great deal of care with these since some of them are open-source and open-edited whilst others are limited in scope (Freedict) and can prove frustrating. Still others are offered by commercial organisations selling translation hardware, software and services (Babylon, Ectaco), hardcopy or paid online dictionaries (Reverso, Lookwayup, Porto Editora) or sites designed mostly to carry click-through advertising (Dictionarist). A common tactic is to offer limited online trial versions which either have restricted database access or short validity periods. With reduced editorial gateway functions, the user needs to be discerning in the choice of dictionaries, able to select certain dictionaries for certain tasks and be prepared to engage in considerably more cross-checking before accepting translations.

Curiously, there seems to be much greater niche feature specialisation amongst online dictionaries, possibly as a result of the general need for websites to make a special effort to stand out from the competition. Thus, Lookwayup has a drag and drop facility and a browser button add-on while Ectaco supplies extensive lists of words and phrases similar to a misspelled lookup word, a results page that contains other members of the word family and the code to embed their dictionary on your own website. Reverso offers not just the translated headword but also translations of compounds containing that headword as well as the possibility of suggest or asking for translations for their collaborative dictionary. Dictionarist provides multilingual translations of words, an audio sample of the pronunciation, synonyms of the search term and the conjugation of the headword should it be a verb. Porto Editora offers one of the more comprehensive online dictionaries, with almost all the information that it publishes in its hardcopy format plus links to other sites and its own encyclopaedias. Michaelis is particularly Brazilian in flavour and content and provides language guide notes to its entries.

Other sites have jumped the dictionary function altogether and gone straight for the translation of phrases, sentences or even whole texts. Amongst these are Google Translate Tool, SYSTRAN Translation Engine, Dictionary.com, Translated.Net Online Translation Engine and the WorldLingo Free Online Translator. For the casual user who needs the occasional translation, these resources are more than sufficient and may, in the long run, undermine the production of traditional hardcopy dictionaries.

This brief overview of bilingual English-Portuguese and Portuguese-English dictionaries is not designed to be comprehensive but merely illustrative. There are obviously, many other worthy dictionary products available, and the market in general is in a state of constant flux. Rather than take away the names or links of specific dictionaries, it is to be hoped that the

reader will have been able to tease out some of the progressive strands that are to be found in the dictionaries of today, These range from clearer, more accessible and faster presentation through more data-driven content to the allying of the dictionary to other language and linguistics services that may also prove to be of considerable value to the user.

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