



PRESS RELEASE

Oxford University Press SA launches the first bilingual isiXhosa dictionary in almost 30 years

In a small town just outside East London in the Eastern Cape – the home of the isiXhosa language – leading educational publisher Oxford University Press Southern Africa (OUPSA) continued to boost African languages by launching the *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English*, the first substantial isiXhosa–English bilingual dictionary to be published since 1985.

The launch event, which took place at Prana Lodge in Chintsa East, was attended by a host of prominent academics, education specialists and media. Eastern Cape Education MEC, Mr Mandla Makupula, and Member of Parliament Mr Bantu Holomisa also attended as guest speakers. Chintsa East is about 40 kilometres away from what is now known as Intlambo kaNongqawuse, an area that saw the near ruin of the isiXhosa nation during the cattle killings of 1856–57. It was fitting, therefore, that the launch celebrated the isiXhosa language here, in the heart of Heritage month.

“Oxford has been making up-to-date bilingual dictionaries for South African languages since 2004. Each bilingual dictionary we produce takes at least three years, an extensive team of language and dictionary-making experts and state-of-the-art technological support. The *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* had a team of more than 35 experts working on it,” says Steve Cilliers, OUPSA Managing Director.

The investment culminated in a ground-breaking dictionary that boasts a host of features unseen in others before it. The *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* is the first of its kind to have been made with a corpus. This means that words were selected based on their frequency in texts such as novels, textbooks, official documents and even transcripts, ensuring that the dictionary reflects the language as it is really spoken today. It is also the first to include words from across the South African curriculum, such as *life cycle*, *photosynthesis* and *vertex*. The result is a modern, up-to-date dictionary that supports learning and teaching in subjects like Natural Sciences and Maths, as well as in the two languages.

“Our ultimate goal is to support education and enable all South African children to fulfil their potential. This may seem like a big task for a dictionary to achieve, but our research indicates that widespread use of bilingual dictionaries really could help children acquire the languages they need to learn, and to succeed, whatever their mother tongue may be. Having real dictionaries in class can help teachers stop being ‘walking dictionaries’ and enable them to spend more time on the subject they’re teaching. We feel confident that they can make a real difference,” continued Cilliers.

Guest speaker at the launch event and Member of Parliament Mr Bantu Holomisa added, “This dictionary will go a long way to promote indigenous languages.”

At the launch, 600 copies of the *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* were donated to the Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development (NMI), an Eastern Cape-based NGO working with rural communities to create text-rich classrooms that promote reading, writing, expression and critical thinking. Ms Xolisa Guzula, Senior Language and Literacy Specialist at NMI, was on hand to accept the donation and commented that it would go a long way in supporting learners and teachers: “Dictionaries are a scarce resource in our schools. The *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* will help teachers to standardise meanings as they teach vocabulary, and learners as they engage with difficult texts. They’ll be invaluable in making texts even more accessible in both languages.”

The new *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* is available at leading book retailers at a recommended selling price of R129.95.

For more information, go to: www.oxford.co.za

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Notes to the editor:

Brand new, easy to use and based on the most up-to-date research, the *Oxford Bilingual School Dictionary: isiXhosa and English* supports learners in speaking, reading and writing in an additional language. It will be a valuable addition to Oxford University Press Southern Africa's offering to support learners and teachers ahead of the implementation of the Incremental Introduction of African Languages Policy, which will see a third African language being taught in all South African schools from 2015.

- Includes useful words from across the curriculum (from Maths, Social Sciences and other subjects) to give vital support to learners using English to study other subjects
- Example sentences show how words are really used, helping learners to find and use the right translation, which is something that many learners struggle with.
- More than 150 illustrations boost learners' understanding instantly.
- Authentic phrases help learners to sound natural and feel confident in their additional language.