Mariusz Piotr Kamiński. *Defining with Simple Vocabulary in English Dictionaries.* 2021, xvi + 326 pages. ISBN 9789027208590 (Hardback), ISBN 9789027260000 (e-Book), ISSN 1388-8455. Terminology and Lexicography Research and Practice 22. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Price € 99.00 (Hardback and e-Book).

This book must be the most thorough and comprehensive up-to-date account of restricted vocabularies of the English language. In the Introduction, the author formulates six research questions, which partly aim at the design of different restricted vocabularies, and, partly focus on the effectiveness of definitions based on restricted vocabularies. Chapter 1 traces the development of restricted vocabularies back to the 17th century and outlines important stages such as Isaac Pitman's and Kaeding's shorthand systems. The author then makes a distinction between (a) the frequency-based objective approach taken by scholars such as Thorndike and Horn, (b) a more pedagogically oriented approach associated with Harold Palmer and Michael West, and (c) a logical approach attributed to Ogden and Richards, and discusses the pros and cons of each of them. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a very detailed outline and critical discussion of Michael West's famous and influential *General Service List.* He comes back to the GSL after outlining a number of word list projects that were designed for pedagogical purposes in Chapter 2, which also deals with human-computer communication projects and Wierzbicka's theory of a semantic metalanguage.

While the first two chapters deal with the design of restricted vocabularies from various perspectives, Chapter 3 directs the focus on the issue of lexicographical definition. The author provides a very knowledgeable survey of defining policies in English lexicography ranging from Dr Johnson to modern learners' dictionaries. Kamiński draws an interesting parallel between the rise of monolingual foreign language teaching and the need for simple definitions and discusses the controlled defining vocabulary approach taken, e.g. in the 1st edition of the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the research it instigated and the effects on other dictionaries. At the end of this chapter, the research questions already outlined in the introduction are taken up and formulated in more detail.

Chapters 1 to 3 provide the basis for the empirical analyses that are being described in the second part of the book. This involves a quantitative comparison of selected editions of learners' dictionaries between 1987 and 2015 (OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD, CALD, MEDAL and MWALED), finding, for example, that "the vast majority (87%) of the vocabulary items shared by the early lists has survived into the recent lists" (p. 169). In the framing of the book, the findings of the quantitative analysis are presented in a slightly complicated manner: "One of the aims of this chapter was to test the hypothesis that the RVLs of definitions in the latest editions of learners' dictionaries vary considerably (H1). This hypothesis cannot be substantiated by the findings of the analysis, as the

vocabulary loads are comparable (3,000–4,000 word families)" (p. 168) While in many experimental designs an approach in terms of postulating a hypothesis that will be falsified or verified certainly makes sense, here it has a slightly pseudo-scientific ring to it, especially if the hypothesis formulated seems rather counter-intuitive, as in this case.

This quantitative analysis is complemented by a qualitative one, which is based on 51 entries in various learners' dictionaries, where Kamiński comes to the interesting conclusion that there have been improvements in the restricting defining vocabularies and that these are most noticeable in the editions published around the turn of the century. He then goes on to show that at least in some native-speaker dictionaries, notably the COD, similar improvements towards greater comprehensibility can be observed.

Chapter 6 extends the scope of analysis to the user. In order to test the effect of the various defining policies, experiments were carried out with a substantial number (215) of university students of English, who were native speakers of Polish (and an additional 35 with neither English nor Polish as L1). The results show a clear advantage of definitions that are based on controlled defining vocabularies over those that are not (p. 254). The final conclusions chapter provides a summary of the preceding analyses in the form of a list of useful guidelines for the designing of defining vocabularies and the phrasing of definitions in monolingual dictionaries, which will certainly be of great value for future lexicographic projects (not only of English).

On the whole, this book is a very thorough and systematic analysis of the defining approaches of a large number of English dictionaries. Although the amount of statistical evidence is impressive, a few more examples of direct comparisons of actual dictionary entries might have supported the case even more strongly. In any case, this book is a valuable contribution to research on controlled vocabularies in lexicography providing a very useful account of previous research on the topic and adding relevant empirical data.

A final point of critique, however, concerns the title, because the present volume is not only relevant to lexicographers, but surely also of great interest to applied linguists and foreign language teachers.

Thomas Herbst
Department of English and American Studies
Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
Erlangen
Germany
(*thomas.herbst@fau.de*)