

Dictionary reflects change

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CHANGES in the Zulu language and the way it is spoken have prompted Oxford University Press to publish the first Zulu-English Dictionary in 40 years.

"We live in a new age and with that comes a change in a language," chief compiler Nomusa Sibiyi said.

"IsiZulu today is very different from what it was 40 years ago and this is why we saw fit to have a new bilingual dictionary that would address the change."

Sibiyi said the dictionary was necessary because second-language speakers needed to learn how to use words correctly in a sentence.

"We all know that second-language speakers have a problem with using words correctly and in the right context," she said.

"IsiZulu is difficult to learn for second-language speakers and so is English, so this is a way to bridge that problem. It will also make it easier and encourage them to learn another language, using more words, the way to use them in a sentence and with the correct grammar. I wish it had been there when I was at school."

The dictionary, launched on



Nomusa Sibiyi, who is the chief compiler of the new dictionary. The launch was held at Zimbabwe Lodge where IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi spoke about the importance of language.

Picture: SANDILE NDLOVU

Friday at Zimbabwe Lodge, took two and a half years to complete. Contributors included Sibiyi, African language lexicographer Professor Gilles Maurice de Schryver, and Zulu linguist Professor Arnett Wilkes.

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said the dictionary was an important first step in acquiring an additional

Touted as the most accurate and up-to-date English-Zulu dictionary, it contains about 10 000 entries.

Words such as human rights, cellphone, antiretrovirals and reality TV are now included in the dictionary.

"Every single entry has been crafted from scratch, as this is the first substantial bilingual dictionary for isiZulu that Oxford has published. It therefore includes many new words, but most important, it focuses on the core vocabulary of both languages," said Megan Hall, Oxford English/Zulu dictionary publishing manager.

"Users of the dictionary can therefore feel confident that they have a very good chance of finding the word they want."

Hall said they had decided to compile the dictionary as it was important to give people a modern dictionary that would support learners.

"The world around us changes all the time and its language that we use to communicate about the world, so language changes all the time, too.

"When people ask me what has changed for Zulu in the past 40 years, it's not hard to answer, even if I don't speak the language."