

HOW DO SLOVENE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH USE THEIR DICTIONARIES?

1. Introduction

The conference *Dictionaries and their Users*, which was organized by Reinhard Hartmann in the late 1970s, initiated a period of more intensive dictionary testing. Jerzy Tomaszczyk (1979) was the first to study the foreign users of dictionaries more thoroughly and was soon followed by Béjoint (1981), who based his investigation partly on Tomaszczyk's (Cowie 1999: 175–98). Later in the 1980s and 1990s, various researchers carried out studies concerning different aspects of dictionary needs, skills and use. The focus was on many areas of interest, such as definitions, illustrative examples, labels, grammatical information, inclusion of phraseological units, and the trend still continues (Atkins 1998, Dolezal and McCreary 1999, Tono 2001, Bogaards and van der Kloot 2001, Al-Ajmi 2002, Campoy Cubillo 2002, Nesi and Hail 2002, Wingate 2002). Consequently, learners' dictionaries have been improved a great deal on the basis of the findings of these studies, which have contributed to a better understanding of average dictionary users, their expectations and the problems they encounter when consulting their dictionaries.

In Slovenia, no such study has ever been conducted, so it is impossible to say whether the dictionary skills of Slovene learners of English differ from those of other learners and whether they are capable of making full use of existing monolingual English dictionaries. Therefore, many questions such as the following need to be answered:

- Which dictionaries do language learners in Slovenia possess and use when learning a foreign language (in particular English, which is the first foreign language taught in Slovene schools at all levels)?
- How often do they use their dictionaries?
- When do they consult a bilingual or a monolingual dictionary?
- What kind of information do they want to find?
- Do they find what they are looking for?
- Are they taught at school how to use their dictionaries?

To gain insight into the real situation, the skills of Slovene dictionary users have to be investigated by means of a relevant survey. It seemed inappropriate to start our investigation by testing just one particular aspect of dictionary use; we decided, therefore, to undertake general research into the dictionary skills of language learn-

ers in Slovenia. Our study is at least partly based on the EURALEX- and AILA-sponsored research described by Atkins and Varantola (1998: 21–81). This project studied many aspects of dictionary use by many different types of learners of English as a foreign language who were native speakers of French, German, Italian and Spanish but not of any Slavonic languages. We adopted the design of the questionnaire used in this project, but made several modifications to meet our needs. The sample sentences in different tasks were changed to include sentences that are contrastively different in English and Slovene, thus posing problems to Slovene learners of English. Some tasks were excluded (e.g. a passage for translation from one's mother tongue into English, since the correction of translations involves subjective decisions on the part of the person doing the correcting), and some were reintroduced (e.g. testing the ability of dictionary users to read the IPA, testing the ability to recognize grammatical properties of words, testing the ability to choose the appropriate meaning of a polysemous word).

2. Description of the study

Test Subjects and Their Level of Knowledge: Research was carried out among second- and third-year students of the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in March and April 2003. The researchers distributed 50 questionnaires. Forty-seven respondents (i.e. 94 %) speak Slovene as their mother tongue and 3 (i.e. 6 %) speak Serbo-Croatian. Those whose mother tongue is Serbo-Croatian are bilingual because they have lived in Slovenia since they were born and have obtained all their schooling in Slovenia.

The test subjects were asked to give details about the number of years they had been studying English. The majority of them have been studying English for nine years (40 %), two students (4 %) have been studying it for seven years, while all the others have been studying it for between eight and twelve years (see Table 1). All of them have learnt English in primary school, in grammar school and at the university, two of them stated that they had additionally attended courses in Slovenia and abroad.

Table 1: Distribution of years of English study among respondents.

Length of English studies	Number of respondents in %
7 years	4 %
8 years	8 %
9 years	40 %
10 years	32 %
11 years	10 %
12 years	6 %
Total	100 %

For the purpose of the EURALEX/AILA project, respondents had to undergo a placement test, which is understandable, since the research was carried out in different countries and in different educational systems. Our test subjects were considered as belonging to a more homogenous group: most of them attended schools in Slovenia, they had the same number of English lessons per year and covered the same syllabus. These are the reasons why we considered it unnecessary for them to undergo a placement test. However, we did enquire about the students' average grades in English in grammar school. Only 4 % of the students that took part in our research obtained a grade of A, whereas the majority (i.e. 54 %) obtained a grade of C (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of grades in grammar school.

Grades	Number of respondents in %
Grade A	4 %
Grade B	34 %
Grade C	54 %
Grade D	8 %
Total	100 %

Test Design: The questionnaire consists of two parts (cf. Atkins and Varantola 1998): a Dictionary user profile form and a Dictionary research test. The Dictionary user profile form was aimed at obtaining information about the dictionary users, i.e. their mother tongue, how long they have been studying English, and their grades in grammar school. The next few questions concentrated on the dictionaries they own and their reasons for purchasing these, on the frequency of use of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, the dictionaries they use for particular tasks (e.g. while reading a text in English, while translating or checking the spelling), and on their preferred dictionary/dictionaries.

Test subjects were asked to list a dictionary or dictionaries they were going to use throughout the test. In some tasks students were encouraged to use dictionaries, whereas in others they were asked not to use them. The aims of individual tasks were as follows: testing the students' ability to recognize the correct part of speech, to recognize grammatical properties of words, to locate multi-word lexical items, to select the appropriate prepositional complement, to understand polysemous words in context, to read the IPA, to fill the slot in context and to select the appropriate word to fill the slot in difficult contexts.

Information Prior to the Test: The students were acquainted with the aim of the test. We asked them not to use their dictionaries in certain tasks and explained why. They were also asked to give details about the dictionary they were going to use in a particular task. When dictionaries were allowed, the students were asked to indicate whether or not the dictionary had been consulted in that particular instance. The questionnaires were completed at home with no time limitation.

3. Results

The Dictionary research test consisted of eight tasks, each comprising several questions. Each task was aimed at testing a specific skill, ability or expectation of a dictionary user. The results obtained from the questionnaires are presented below.

3.1 Identification of part of speech

Task 1 consisted of six sentences in which students had to identify the part of speech of the word in *italics*. The majority of the existing monolingual and all of the English-Slovene dictionaries include different parts of speech as separate entries. It is, therefore, necessary for dictionary users to be able to determine the part of speech before looking up a word in a dictionary. In this task, dictionaries were not allowed.

The correct answer was indicated by only 20 % of the participants in question 1/2 (*after* used as a conjunction in the sentence '*After* you'd left, I got a phone call from John'), but by 74 % in question 1/5 (*just* used as an adverb in the sentence 'He has *just* arrived'). For a more detailed treatment see Table 3.

Table 3: Identification of part of speech.

Question	Parts of speech				
1/1	adverb 40 %	adjective 2 %	conjunction 6 %	preposition (*) 52 %	don't know 0 %
1/2	adverb 54 %	adjective 6 %	conjunction 20 %	preposition (*) 12 %	don't know 8 %
1/3	noun 18 %	adjective (*) 32 %	adverb 20 %	preposition 2 %	don't know 26 % (+)
1/4	noun (*) 38 %	adjective 8 %	adverb 42 %	preposition 4 %	don't know 8 %
1/5	noun 8 %	adjective 0 %	adverb (*) 74 %	preposition 10 %	don't know 8 %
1/6	noun 6 %	adjective (*) 62 %	adverb 8 %	preposition 16 %	don't know 8 %

(*) The correct answer.

(+) One student (2 %) claimed that the item tested was a verb.

Although this was a rather uncomplicated task, the results are not as good as expected. We can justifiably assume that these respondents have difficulty in finding the right part of speech when consulting their dictionary. The students had fewer problems when *after* was used as a preposition (52 % gave the correct answer) than when it was a conjunction (20 % gave the correct answer). A smaller gap was observed

in the identification of *present* used as an adjective (32 %) and as a noun (38 %), and of *just* used as an adverb (74 %) and as an adjective (62 %).

Our initial assumption was that students would have problems with *after* used as a preposition and as a conjunction, and with *just* used as an adverb and as an adjective, since students often have difficulty distinguishing between prepositions and conjunctions and between adjectives and adverbs, even in Slovene. Normally, they have fewer problems if they are asked to identify a noun or a verb. The above results, however, do not prove this hypothesis. The highest percentage of the respondents considered *present* in the sentence 'At *present* the outlook appears bleak' as an adverb, a result which is most certainly due to the fact that the phrase *at present* is translated into Slovene as an adverb. All the other words in question should not have posed problems, since they are translated with the same part of speech into Slovene.

3.2 Recognition of grammatical properties of words

Task 2 tested whether students are aware of certain grammatical restrictions and properties of English words (e.g. transitivity/intransitivity, verb complementation, countability/uncountability, predicative/attributive use). The students were encouraged to use their dictionaries. As we can see from the results (see Table 4), correct student answers range from 10 % to 72 %.

Table 4: Answers to questions concerning grammatical properties of words and dictionary use.

Question	Answers			
2/7	a. 42 %	b. 48 % (*)	c. 6 %	d. 4 %
	+ dict. 8 % - dict. 92 %			
2/8	a. 2 %	b. 52 %	c. 0 %	d. 46 % (*)
	+ dict. 4 % - dict. 96 %			
2/9	a. 4 %	b. 72 % (*)	c. 16 %	d. 8 %
	+ dict. 2 % - dict. 98 %			
2/10	a. 40 % (*)	b. 46 %	c. 4 %	d. 6 % (+)
	+ dict. 2 % - dict. 94 % (+)			
2/11	a. 72 %	b. 10 % (*)	c. 12 %	d. 4 % (++)
	+ dict. 6 % - dict. 92 % (++)			

(*) Correct answer.

(+) Two students (4 %) did not provide an answer.

(++) One student (2 %) did not provide an answer.

If we consider the example where students were supposed to insert the adjective *lone* used attributively in ‘_____ women drivers are advised not to pick up hitch hikers’, we can see that the majority of respondents did not choose the correct answer. Only 10 % of the respondents answered this question correctly, but strikingly as many as 94 % did not consult their dictionaries.

It is interesting to note the example testing the transitivity of the verb *discuss*. In Slovene the verb is followed by the preposition *about*, and as many as 42 % of the students were misled by their mother tongue, while 48 % chose the correct answer. However, it should be emphasized that 92 % did not consult their dictionaries. The same holds true of the verb *enter*, which is intransitive in Slovene but transitive in English. Only 46 % of the respondents provided the right answer, but 52 % were again too much under the influence of Slovene. They seem to have been sure about the correctness of their answer, because 96 % did not use their dictionaries. Similar problems can also be observed when testing the countability of nouns. The use of the uncountable noun *pleasure* was tested, and 40 % chose the answer without the indefinite article, whereas 46 % chose the answer with the definite article. Here, the students’ mother tongue Slovene did not cause interference, because articles are not used in Slovene. Generally speaking, students find it difficult to use the articles in English correctly even if the use of articles depends on the grammatical category of countability.

It seems that their choice of answers depended either on their previous knowledge or on their choosing the correct answer by chance rather than on their consulting the dictionary. The results concerning the use of dictionaries are rather worrying, since only a very few respondents actually consulted their dictionaries (2 %, i.e. one respondent, to 8 %, i.e. four respondents), although they were not necessarily acquainted with the grammatical properties of all the words in question (see Table 5).

Table 5: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
2/7	4	4	0	LDOCE, OALD
2/8	2	1	1	OALD, COBUILD
2/9	1	1	0	ESD
2/10	1	1	0	ESD
2/11	3	1	2	COBUILD, LDOCE, OWD

Although the number of students who used their dictionaries to help them solve their linguistic dilemma was small, we can see that those who did consult their dic-

tionaries generally found the correct answer (see Table 5). The example with the attributive use of the adjective *lone* again proved to be the most problematic one, since two out of three students who consulted their dictionaries provided the incorrect answer.

1.4 *Lexical items and their expected place in a dictionary*

Task 3 tested students' expectation of where in the dictionary they can find different (multi-word) lexical items (e.g. idioms, phrasal verbs, compounds). The use of dictionaries was not allowed, since students might have believed that the correct answer could be found in their dictionaries. This is, of course, not true, since the inclusion of multi-word lexical items and special meanings of, say, plural nouns differs from dictionary to dictionary. Our initial hypothesis was that students would not consider a multi-word lexical item as a separate entry word. The results of the survey confirm this hypothesis, since only 2 % to 6 % of the respondents regarded a multi-word lexical item as a separate entry word. The phrasal verb *come through* was regarded as a separate entry by 22 %, but even here it can be assumed that some students believe that phrasal verbs are independent entries in monolingual learners' dictionaries, although they are included as run-ons. The rest of the answers comply with our expectations, i.e. dictionary users try to find a multi-word lexical item under the noun if it contains one (see Table 6).

Table 6: Expectations of students of the location of (multi-word) lexical items.

Question	In the entry for ...			
3/12 16 %	hard 80 %	nut 2 %	hard nut 2 %	don't know
3/13 6 %	pay 88 %	dividend 6 %	pay dividends 0 %	don't know
3/14 62 %	come 14 %	through 22 %	come through 2 %	don't know
3/15 48 %	colour 42 %	colours	/	don't know 10 %

3.4 *Selection of the appropriate prepositional complement*

Task 4 tested students' ability to find the correct prepositional complement of various English words. We selected grammatical collocations that present problems for native speakers of Slovene (i.e. grammatical collocations that are different in English and Slovene). If students were not acquainted with the correct preposition, they were supposed to check it in a dictionary. Here, too, the percentage of correct answers could have been higher if the students had used their dictionaries more frequently. They seem to have relied too much on their knowing the correct preposi-

tions and did not use their dictionaries as much as they should. The greatest number of mistakes can be observed in the example where students had to find the prepositional complement of the adjective *surprised*. The correct preposition (i.e. *at*) was selected by 28 % of the students only, but only 20 % consulted their dictionaries. The results of this task are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Selection of the appropriate prepositional complement.

Question	Answers			
4/16	with 40 %	by 30 %	for 2 %	at (*) 28 %
	+ dict. 20 % - dict. 80 % no answer 0 %			
4/17	at (*) 38 %	of 2 %	in 56 %	with 4 %
	+ dict. 16 % - dict. 80 % no answer 4 %			
4/18	at 6 %	over (*) 44 %	on 4 %	in 44 %
	+ dict. 6 % - dict. 88 % no answer 6 %			
4/19	for 44 %	at 2 %	on 4 %	by (*) 50 %
	+ dict. 10 % - dict. 86 % no answer 4 %			
4/20	for 8 %	in (*) 84 %	to 2 %	by 6 %
	+ dict. 4 % - dict. 94 % no answer 2 %			

(*) Correct answer.

(+) One student (2 %) provided no answer.

The only example where native speakers of Slovene could have been misled by their mother tongue was sentence 4/19, 'Profits declined _____ 6 % this year'. The preposition *by* (chosen by 50 % of the respondents) is often mistakenly replaced by the preposition *for* (chosen by 44 %), which is used in Slovene. The use of the correct

preposition in the rest of the examples is unpredictable for native speakers of Slovene; it is, therefore, a must to consult a dictionary in case of doubt. According to the results obtained, only between 4 % and 20 % of the respondents actually used their dictionaries.

Table 8 represents the number of students who consulted their dictionaries in relation to the correctness of their answers. The students mostly consulted monolingual learners' dictionaries. Only in 4/19 does the number of unsuccessful look-ups surpass the number of successful look-ups. It is often impossible to tell exactly what edition of a given dictionary was used, but LDOCE3 and COBUILD3 do not include information on the correct preposition, whereas OALD6 does. It can be assumed that students did not find the answer to their question in the dictionary they consulted; therefore they chose the wrong answer.

Table 8: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
4/16	10	6	4	OALD, LDOCE, OWD, ESD
4/17	8	8	0	LDOCE, OWD, ESD
4/18	3	2	1	COBUILD, OALD
4/19	5	2	3	LDOCE, OALD, COBUILD
4/20	2	1	1	COBUILD, OWD

3.5 *Understanding polysemous words in context*

Task 5 tested how well students understand polysemous words in context. The students were asked either to provide the Slovene translational equivalent of the underlined word or to paraphrase it in English. They were allowed to use their dictionaries and here the average percentage of students who used the dictionary is slightly higher than in the previous tasks (as high as 56 %). The results of this task are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Understanding polysemous words in context.

Question	Answers		
5/21	correct 56 %	incorrect 38 %	no answer 6 %
	+ dict. 28 % - dict. 66 % no answer 6 %		
5/22	correct 56 %	incorrect 40 %	no answer 4 %
	+ dict. 18 % - dict. 76 % no answer 6 %		
5/23	correct 40 %	incorrect 38 %	no answer 22 %
	+ dict. 56 % - dict. 24 % no answer 20 %		
5/24	correct 40 %	incorrect 48 %	no answer 12 %
	+ dict. 20 % - dict. 78 % no answer 2 %		
5/25	correct 96 %	incorrect 4 %	no answer 0 %
	+ dict. 6 % - dict. 90 % no answer 4 %		
5/26	correct 56 %	incorrect 34 %	no answer 10 %
	+ dict. 24 % - dict. 72 % no answer 4 %		

The question can be asked why students used their dictionaries more often in this particular task than in the previous ones. The answer may be sought in the demands placed upon the students in Task 5. In comparison to the previous tasks where students had to choose the correct answer from several possibilities, Task 5 required that the students themselves provide an answer. It is understandable that, if they did not understand the meaning of the word in question, they would consult their dictionaries, a pattern of behaviour which complies with our expectation that the dictionary is most frequently used while reading an English text and encountering unknown words.

Table 10 summarizes how (un)successful respondents were while using their dictionaries. It should be noted that the students made use of monolingual dictionaries, but they also consulted a bilingual English-Slovene dictionary, when looking for a translational equivalent in Slovene.

Table 10: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
5/21	14	5	9	OWD, OALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, ESD
5/22	9	6	3	LDOCE, OWD, OALD, ESD
5/23	28	18	10	OWD, COBUILD, LDOCE, OALD, ESD
5/24	10	5	5	COBUILD, OALD, ESD
5/25	3	2	1	OALD, ESD
5/26	12	6	6	OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD, ESD

3.6 Reading the international phonetic alphabet

Task 6 dealt with the IPA, which is used in British monolingual (learners') dictionaries to indicate pronunciation of entry words. This task was added to the questionnaire because we hypothesized that a great number of dictionary users in Slovenia cannot read the given pronunciation. To test this assumption, we included six well-known words (i.e. *unimaginative*, *birthplace*, *northern*, *approach*, *breathing*, *showgirl*) written in the IPA to see whether the test subjects are able to read the phonetic symbols. Dictionaries were not allowed. Our initial assumption proved correct, since the majority of students did not make any attempt to decipher the words, or perhaps tried to decipher the words but were unable to do so. The percentage of students who gave no answer ranges from 62 % (in *unimaginative*) to as much as 90 % (in *northern* and *showgirl*). The results are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Students' ability to read the IPA.

Question	Answers		
6/27	correct 34 %	incorrect 4 %	no answer 62 %
6/28	correct 10 %	incorrect 12 %	no answer 78 %
6/29	correct 2 %	incorrect 8 %	no answer 90 %
6/30	correct 14 %	incorrect 4 %	no answer 82 %
6/31	correct 12 %	incorrect 10 %	no answer 78 %
6/32	correct 2 %	incorrect 8 %	no answer 90 %

Instruction about the IPA is on the English syllabus in grammar schools in Slovenia. Students should, therefore, be acquainted with the symbols, but the results show a completely different picture. It is beyond the scope of this research to find the reasons why students are unable to read pronunciation. Is it simply because they have forgotten it, because of lack of practice? Or could it be because they did not deal with it in grammar school? These questions remain unanswered.

3.7 Filling the slot in context

Task 7 tested students' ability to find a suitable word to fit the context. The test subjects were allowed to use the dictionary. The text contained 14 slots that had to be filled with parts of lexical and grammatical collocations. It is obvious from the results that the students were reluctant to consult their dictionaries (only up to 16 %), even if they were unsure of which word to use. There are as many as five cases where not a single respondent consulted the dictionary. The percentage of students who gave a correct answer ranges from 0 % to 96 %, depending on their previous knowledge rather than on dictionary use. Obviously, they were acquainted with the grammatical collocation *explain to*, since 96 % of the respondents inserted the correct preposition. The lexical collocation *fill or make up the prescription* was the most problematic example, because no one was able to fill the slot with the correct verb (for details see Table 12).

Table 12: Filling the slot in context.

Question	Answers		
7/33	correct 96 %	incorrect 2 %	no answer 2 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 94 % no answer 6 %		
7/34	correct 90 %	incorrect 8 %	no answer 2 %
	+ dict. 2 % - dict. 92 % no answer 6 %		
7/35	correct 44 %	incorrect 44 %	no answer 12 %
	+ dict. 14 % - dict. 76 % no answer 10 %		
7/36	correct 60 %	incorrect 32 %	no answer 8 %
	+ dict. 10 % - dict. 82 % no answer 2 %		
7/37	correct 0 %	incorrect 90 %	no answer 10 %
	+ dict. 2 % - dict. 88 % no answer 10 %		
7/38	correct 66 %	incorrect 28 %	no answer 6 %
	+ dict. 6 % - dict. 78 % no answer 16 %		
7/39	correct 78 %	incorrect 12 %	no answer 10 %
	+ dict. 4 % - dict. 78 % no answer 18 %		
7/40	correct 92 %	incorrect 6 %	no answer 2 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 94 % no answer 6 %		

7/41	correct 6 %	incorrect 90 %	no answer 4 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 92 % no answer 8 %		
7/42	correct 92 %	incorrect 4 %	no answer 4 %
	+ dict. 2 % - dict. 92 % no answer 6 %		
7/43	correct 62 %	incorrect 32 %	no answer 6 %
	+ dict. 4 % - dict. 88 % no answer 8 %		
7/44	correct 80 %	incorrect 14 %	no answer 6 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 92 % no answer 8 %		
7/45	correct 48 %	incorrect 36 %	no answer 16 %
	+ dict. 16 % - dict. 68 % no answer 16 %		
7/46	correct 68 %	incorrect 24 %	no answer 8 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 92 % no answer 8 %		

Their performance on the whole task would probably have been much better if they had used their dictionaries more often. It has to be stressed that the use of dictionaries was much more demanding in this task than in previous ones. Here, the students should actually have looked up the bases of the collocations, i.e. the words that were given in the text, in order to get the collocators, i.e. the words they were looking for (e.g. they should have looked up the noun *prescription* to find the verbs *fill* or *make up*, which collocate with this noun). One possible reason for not (sufficiently) consulting their dictionaries may also be that they simply did not know what to look up. We strongly believe that students should be systematically taught which words in word combinations they should look up if they want to become efficient dictionary users. A specialized dictionary of collocations would be of great help in

this task, but interestingly, not a single respondent mentioned that he/she possessed a dictionary of this type. This can lead us to the conclusion that students are unaware of the existence of specialized dictionaries, let alone of how to use them.

Table 13 summarizes the number of look-ups performed by respondents while completing this task. We can see that when students consulted their dictionaries their look-up operations were mostly successful. Most frequently they made use of monolingual learners' dictionaries, and in four questions they also consulted the ESD.

Table 13: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
7/33	0	0	0	/
7/34	1	1	0	OALD
7/35	7	5	2	COBUILD, LDOCE, OALD, ESD
7/36	5	4	1	OALD, ESD
7/37	1	0	1	ESD
7/38	3	3	0	OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD
7/39	2	2	0	COBUILD, LDOCE
7/40	0	0	0	/
7/41	0	0	0	/
7/42	1	1	0	OALD
7/43	2	2	0	OALD
7/44	0	0	0	/
7/45	8	8	0	OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD, ESD
7/46	0	0	0	/

3.8 Selection of the appropriate word

Task 8 tested students' ability to choose the appropriate word from a list of four items to fill the slot in relatively difficult contexts. They were allowed to use their dictionaries.

If compared with the previous task there were more look-ups (as many as 46 % in 8/51). On the other hand, performance on some examples was rather poor (e.g. the students were in two minds about deciding between the verbs *overcome* and *surpass* in combination with the noun *expectations*; they were unsure whether to use *worth*

or *worthy* in ‘_____ of our serious consideration’; 8/47 and 8/49 respectively). For details see Table 14.

Table 14: Selection of the appropriate word.

Question	Answers				
8/47	a. 54 %	b. 24 % (*)	c. 6 %	d. 6 %	no answer 10 %
	+ dict. 10 % - dict. 78 % no answer 12 %				
8/48	a. 0 %	b. 18 %	c. 64 % (*)	d. 14 %	no answer 4 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 96 % no answer 4 %				
8/49	a. 8 %	b. 8 %	c. 48 %	d. 30 % (*)	no answer 6 %
	+ dict. 6 % - dict. 84 % no answer 10 %				
8/50	a. 10 %	b. 20 %	c. 46 % (*)	d. 14 %	no answer 10 %
	+ dict. 36 % - dict. 50 % no answer 14 %				
8/51	a. 64 %	b. 2 % (*)	c. 10 %	d. 10 %	no answer 14 %
	+ dict. 38 % - dict. 60 % no answer 2 %				
8/52	a. 8 %	b. 78 % (*)	c. 2 %	d. 4 %	no answer 8 %
	+ dict. 12 % - dict. 80 % no answer 8 %				

(*) correct answer

Although students did have problems choosing the right word, they still did not consult their dictionaries often enough. The majority of those who used their dictionaries managed to find the correct answer to their question (see Table 15).

Table 15: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
8/47	5	3	2	COBUILD, ESD
8/48	0	0	0	/
8/49	3	2	1	OWD, ESD
8/50	18	12	6	OALD, LDOCE OWD, COBUILD, ESD
8/51	1	0	1	ESD
8/52	6	6	0	OALD, LDOCE, ESD

4. Discussion

The aim of this empirical study was to test dictionary use and the ability to retrieve information from the dictionaries consulted. The students were asked to enumerate all the dictionaries they own and use in production and reception. They all claim that they have bilingual as well as monolingual dictionaries, printed and/or electronic versions. Among bilingual dictionaries, they listed various English-Slovene and Slovene-English dictionaries, whereas, as far as monolingual dictionaries are concerned, they mostly possess learners' dictionaries, such as different editions of OALD, COBUILD and LDOCE. Occasionally, they own a monolingual dictionary for native speakers, such as *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* or the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

One question referred to the frequency of use of bilingual dictionaries. Fifty-two percent of the respondents claim to use a bilingual dictionary rarely, 46 % say that they often use one (i.e. every week), and only 2 % use it regularly (i.e. almost every day). When the students were asked how often they used a monolingual dictionary, the following results were obtained: 58 % rarely use one, 30 % often use one, 10 % never use one and 2 % use one regularly.

The above figures show that students are quite well equipped with general dictionaries. Consequently, one may assume that they are familiar with the types of information they could find either in a bilingual or in a monolingual dictionary. The results of the survey, however, show that they consult dictionaries far too rarely and that if they do, their performance generally improves.

The students who participated in this research were well aware of its aims, and they were encouraged to use their dictionaries as much as possible when completing the questionnaire. Despite this, the results concerning dictionary consultation are

striking. In some tasks as many as 90 % or more students did not use their dictionaries. There are several possible explanations as to why the students failed to consult their dictionaries in so many cases. The students may have believed that they knew the correct answer; therefore, they did not consider it necessary to use the dictionary at all. The second, more likely, interpretation is that they are not accustomed to solving their linguistic problems and dilemmas by using a dictionary. Very often students simply give an answer, and their teachers then tell them whether they have answered correctly or incorrectly, and if their answer is incorrect, their teacher tells them the correct answer rather than encouraging them to try to find it themselves, possibly in dictionaries or other reference books. Another possible reason may be that they simply feel that consulting a dictionary is a time-consuming job, because they may not immediately find the answer to their question.

The results of this study clearly show that students do not consider dictionaries to be the most important aid in learning a foreign language. Sixty percent claim that they have been taught at school how to use their dictionaries in comparison to only 33 % who say that they were not given any systematic lessons or precise instructions on how to do this. Obviously, in primary and secondary schools in Slovenia not enough time (if any at all) is devoted to promoting students' awareness of the wealth of information that can be found in dictionaries, let alone to the development of dictionary skills. We strongly believe that dictionary use should be systematically taught throughout the educational process. Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries at school as well as at home. Attention should be paid not only to bilingual but also (or even more intensively) to monolingual dictionaries, especially to those intended for foreign users. Teaching dictionary use should be initiated at a very early stage of learning a foreign language but should be adapted to the age and level of knowledge of learners.

5. Conclusion

The first research project ever carried out into dictionary use among Slovene learners of English has yielded some interesting findings and may be regarded as a good starting point for further investigation into more specific areas, such as the analysis of the micro- and macrostructure of English-Slovene and Slovene-English dictionaries, the ability of users to make good use of various types of information found in bilingual as well as monolingual (learners') dictionaries ranging from grammatical information to the inclusion of phraseological units, the role of definitions and example sentences within dictionary entries. Since this is a new area of research in Slovenia, there is much to be done to catch up with the level of research attained in other European countries with a longer tradition of studying dictionaries from users' point of view and improving them on the basis of the results gained in such studies. It should be emphasized that the most comprehensive English-Slovene dic-

tionary was compiled in 1978 and has not yet been revised. In contrast, the most comprehensive Slovene-English dictionary was at least partly revised in 1990, but as far as the macrostructure is concerned, no new entries were included and microstructurally only the most glaring mistakes from the previous edition were corrected. It is hoped that, when we get results from several surveys testing different aspects of users' reference skills, their needs and dictionary use and including a greater number of dictionary users, bilingual dictionaries (English-Slovene and Slovene-English ones) can also be improved a great deal.

The study was well accepted by the students who completed the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire they were asked to add comments about their degree of satisfaction with the dictionaries they used. Overall, they were less satisfied with their bilingual than with their monolingual dictionaries, a result which is understandable, taking into account the quality of the existing bilingual as opposed to monolingual dictionaries. They also made critical comments, such as the following:

- the dictionaries are not precise and comprehensive enough (referring to the students' bilingual dictionaries);
- an English-Slovene dictionary can be used only to find translational equivalents of completely unknown words; otherwise, it is not particularly useful;
- one student complained that he/she did not use his/her OALD a lot because he/she does not really know how to use it;
- one student complained that he/she did not find all the words in one dictionary but had to consult several dictionaries;
- it is a time-consuming job when you want to find the appropriate preposition;
- one student claimed not to have been completely satisfied with the LDOCE because he/she did not find the answers to all his/her questions in it;
- one student found the OWD not comprehensive enough, because of lack of explanations of a great number of words and example sentences illustrating the use of the word or phrase in context.

We believe it was useful for students to complete such a questionnaire, because some of them did consult their dictionaries and expressed their opinions about them. It is still a matter for concern that they are still not willing to use their dictionaries more often – it is only in this way that they become familiar with them – their layout and the variety of information they contain – and finally become more efficient dictionary users. More effort should be devoted to the development of dictionary skills and more time should be spent on teaching dictionary use in grammar schools, but teachers of English should first be trained in how to do it and convinced of the necessity of teaching dictionary skills.

Dictionaries cited:

LDOCE	<i>Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English</i>
OALD	<i>Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary</i>
COBUILD	<i>Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary</i>
OWD	<i>Oxford Wordpower Dictionary</i>
ESD	<i>English-Slovene Dictionary</i>

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Povzetek

KAKO ROJENI GOVORCI SLOVENŠČINE, KI SE UČIJO ANGLEŠČINO, UPORABLJAJO SLOVARJE?

V študiji o rabi slovarjev je sodelovalo petdeset študentov drugega in tretjega letnika Ekonomske fakultete. Zanimalo nas je, kako dolgo se že učijo angleščino, kakšne ocene so imeli v gimnaziji, katere slovarje imajo in kdaj ter kako pogosto jih uporabljajo. V drugem delu študije smo se osredotočili na testiranje različnih vidikov, kot so sposobnost študentov, da prepoznajo pravilno besedno vrsto in slovnične lastnosti besed, da znajo najti večbesedno leksikalno enoto, da izberejo ustrezen predlog, da razumejo večpomenske besede v sobesedilu, da znajo prebrati besedo, zapisano v mednarodni fonetični transkripciji, da znajo poiskati ustrezno besedo v besedilu z izbrisi in da izberejo ustrezno besedo v vprašanih izbirnega tipa. Preučevali smo tudi, kako pogosto študenti uporabljajo slovar in kako so uspešni pri določeni nalogi, če uporabijo slovar, kar smo ocenili na osnovi pravilnosti odgovorov, ki so jih navedli.

Appendix 1

The Dictionary User Profile Form was produced in Slovene, so that respondents could complete the form in their native language. The questionnaire here is a translation of the original form.

DICTIONARY USER PROFILE FORM

The aim of this questionnaire is to discover how dictionaries can be improved. You can help us by filling in this questionnaire. The questions are about both monolingual (i.e. English-English) dictionaries and bilingual (i.e. English-Slovene) dictionaries

1. What is your native language? _____
2. How many years have you been learning English for and where? _____
3. What was your average grade in English in grammar school? _____
4. a. Have you learnt at school how to use a dictionary? Yes No
b. If you answered yes, please answer the following question: Have you been systematically taught how to use a dictionary and have you received precise instructions about it? Yes No
5. If you personally own a dictionary or dictionaries that you use when studying or reading texts in English, say which ones (title, editor, published by, date of publication – not a reprint!).
A
B
C
D
6. How long have you owned the dictionary or dictionaries that you listed above?
Dictionary A _____ years Dictionary C _____ years
Dictionary B _____ years Dictionary D _____ years
7. What were your reasons for choosing the dictionary or dictionaries?
8. a. Recommended by the teacher f. It looked easy to use
b. Recommended by the bookshop g. It had good illustrations
c. Recommended by the parents h. It was a gift
d. Recommended by a friend i. Other (please specify)
e. It didn't cost much
9. Do you ever use a monolingual English dictionary?
a. Never b. Seldom c. Often (every week) d. Constantly (nearly every day)

10. Do you ever use a bilingual dictionary?

- a. Never b. Seldom c. Often (every week) d. Constantly (nearly every day)

11. Do you ever use a dictionary that you don't own yourself?

	Never	Seldom	Often	Constantly
a. In the school library				
b. In class (provided by the school library)				
c. At home				

12. If you use other dictionaries, please give full details (title, editor, published by, date of publication – not a reprint!):

13. What kind of dictionary would you normally use for each of the following purposes?

	English monolingual	Bilingual
a. To understand an English word, e.g. during reading		
b. To find the English translation of a word in Slovene		
c. To check on how to use an English word that you already know, for instance, when you are writing an essay or a letter		
d. Other (please specify)		

14. Which of all the dictionaries you use seems the most useful?

- a. Monolingual dictionary (specify which one/ones)
b. Bilingual dictionary

Appendix 2

The Dictionary Research Test was produced in Slovene to ensure that participants in the project would read the questions in their own language. The questionnaire here is a translation of the Slovene original.

DICTIONARY RESEARCH TEST

Thank you for helping us by doing these tests. The point is not to test you personally, but rather to assess the usefulness of the dictionary that you are using. (However, we will sometimes ask you not to use your dictionary for a particular question.) We are using the same tests for all students, whatever their level of English, and so you should not worry if you can't answer all the questions. Please use the dictionary that you normally use, whether it is a monolingual English dictionary, or a bilingual one (in English and your own language). It is important that you should not change dictionaries in the course of doing the test.

Please give details of the dictionary you are going to use for the tests (title, editor, published by, date of publication – not a reprint!):

1. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.

Do you know what part of speech the word is that you are looking up? For instance:

in: "I'm going to address the letters." the word address is a "verb"

in: "What's her address?" the word address is a "noun"

So the correct answer to the question "What part of speech is address?" is marked like this:

	noun	adj.	verb	prep.	I don't know
I'm going to <i>address</i> the letters.			X		
What's her <i>address</i> ?	X				

Now answer the following questions by putting a cross in the appropriate box.

In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *after*?

	adv.	adj.	conj.	prep.	I don't know
1/1 I went for a swim <i>after</i> breakfast.					
1/2 <i>After</i> you'd left, I got a phone call from John.					

In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *present*?

	noun	adj.	adv.	prep.	I don't know
1/3 Both kinds of nucleic acid are <i>present</i> in all cells					
1/4 At <i>present</i> the outlook appears bleak.					

In the next two sentences, what part of speech is the word *just*?

		noun	adj.	adv.	prep.	I don't know
1/5	He has <i>just</i> arrived.					
1/6	Many Americans viewed it as a <i>just</i> war.					

2. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Circle the correct answer.

2/7 You should discuss _____ with your doctor.

- a. about this problem c. on this problem
- b. this problem d. over this problem

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

2/8 Soldiers entered _____, apparently searching for weapons.

- a. in the houses c. to the houses
- b. into the houses d. the houses

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

2/9 He still denies _____ his wife.

- a. murder c. to murder
- b. murdering d. of murdering

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

2/10 His books have given _____ to many people.

- a. enormous pleasure c. the enormous pleasure
- b. an enormous pleasure d. enormous pleasures

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

2/11 _____ women drivers are advised not to pick up hitch hikers.

- a. Alone c. An alone
- b. Lone d. A lone

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

3. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.

Put a cross against the word that you would look up first if you wanted to find the following items. For instance, *hot cross bun*: if you think you would find *hot cross bun* under the word *hot*, mark the box as follows:

at HOT
at CROSS
at BUN
at HOT CROSS BUN, as if it were a "word" in its own right
I don't know

x

Now answer the following questions in the same way: say where you would really look for the expression – there is no "correct" answer to these.

3/12 *hard nut*

at HARD
at NUT
at HARD NUT, as if it were a "word" in its own right
I don't know

3/13 *pay dividends*

at PAY
at DIVIDEND
at PAY DIVIDENDS, as if it were a "word" in its own right
I don't know

3/14 *come through*

at COME
at THROUGH
at COME THROUGH, as if it were a "word" in its own right
I don't know

3/15 The word *colour* is a colour, but *colours* is a plural noun with a special meaning: where would you look it up?

at COLOUR
at COLOURS, as if it were a "word" in its own right
I don't know

4. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Complete the sentences below by putting a cross against the preposition which you think is the correct one to fill the slot. For instance, if you think that "It's cruel to pick an animal up *by* its tail" is correct, mark it like this:

It's cruel to pick an animal up _____ its tail.

with	
by	
on	x
at	

Now answer the following questions by putting a cross in the appropriate box.

4/16 I'm surprised _____ you.

with	
by	
for	
at	

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

4/17 Students who do not have a computer are _____ a disadvantage.

at	
of	
in	
with	

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

4/18 I couldn't hear what she was saying _____ the noise of the crowd.

at	
over	
on	
in	

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

4/19 Profits declined _____ 6 % this year.

for	
at	
on	
by	

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

4/20 We achieved a small increase _____ profits of \$ 3257.

for	
in	
to	
by	

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

5. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Read the following sentences carefully. Focus on the meaning of the underlined word. What does this word mean (you can translate it into Slovene or copy a suitable definition from a monolingual dictionary)?

5/21 The arms will need shortening.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

5/22 The main course was a bit heavy on the garlic.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

5/23 He has never courted popularity.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

5/24 She held fast to the railings and refused to move.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

5/25 I told her to leave, for I was very tired.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

5/26 Ringed by soldiers for protection, he tried to address the crowd.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes – which:

6. ANSWER THIS QUESTION WITHOUT USING YOUR DICTIONARY.

The words underneath are written in the way they are pronounced. This is how pronunciation is written in monolingual dictionaries. Which words are these?

(Pronunciation was given in the IPA.)

6/27 unimaginative

6/28 birthplace

6/29 northern

6/30 approach

6/31 breathing

6/32 showgirl

7. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Read the following short English passage, and give one single word which will fill each of the numbered slots. In some cases, there are several correct alternatives.

A Visit to the Doctor

I did not feel well and went to see the doctor. She asked me what was wrong. I explained (1) _____ her that I (2) _____ a cold. The doctor did a physical examination, (3) _____ a diagnosis, and (4) _____ (a) medication. A pharmacist had to (5) _____ the prescription. This medication is sold (6) _____ prescription (7) _____. She told me to (8) _____ the medication twice a day. The medication is reported to be very effective (9) _____ the common cold. The doctor also (10) _____ me some advice. She said that I was allergic (11) _____ certain types of meat and should not eat them. She suggested that I (12) _____ a warm bath once a day in order to relax. She also urged me to (13) _____ calisthenics every morning and (14) _____ a long walk every afternoon.

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer individual questions? Circle Yes or No for each word separately:

7/33	(1)	No	Yes - which:
7/34	(2)	No	Yes - which:
7/35	(3)	No	Yes - which:
7/36	(4)	No	Yes - which:
7/37	(5)	No	Yes - which:
7/38	(6)	No	Yes - which:
7/39	(7)	No	Yes - which:
7/40	(8)	No	Yes - which:
7/41	(9)	No	Yes - which:
7/42	(10)	No	Yes - which:
7/43	(11)	No	Yes - which:
7/44	(12)	No	Yes - which:
7/45	(13)	No	Yes - which:
7/46	(14)	No	Yes - which:

8. IF YOU WANT TO, USE YOUR DICTIONARY TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE NEXT SET OF QUESTIONS.

Circle the correct answer.

8/47 We believe that the cumulative effects of renewed prosperity will _____ expectations.
a. overcome b. surpass c. undermine d. succeed

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

8/48 He will _____ leaving the door open - it drives me mad!
a. hold on b. go on c. keep on d. carry on

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

8/49 I do not believe that this preposterous scheme is _____ of our serious consideration.

- a. worthless b. worthwhile c. worth d. worthy

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

8/50 There was a _____ of brakes as the car took the corner too quickly.

- a. squawk b. squelch c. screech d. scream

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

8/51 _____ through the attic and see if you can find anything for the jumble sale.

- a. Rummage b. Ravage c. Forage d. Salvage

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

8/52 It is often difficult for ex-convicts to keep to the _____ and narrow.

- a. wide b. straight c. deep d. long

Did you use your dictionary to help you answer the question? No Yes - which:

9. YOUR OPINION ABOUT THE DICTIONARIES YOU USED:

- a. Were you satisfied with the dictionary/dictionaries you used or not (write down the title of the dictionary you are referring to)?

- b. What did you not find in the dictionary/dictionaries (write down the title of the dictionary you are referring to)?

- c. What did you like in the dictionary/dictionaries (write down the title of the dictionary you are referring to)?

- d. What problems did you have when using the dictionary/dictionaries?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!