

FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DICTIONARY USERS AND THEIR USE OF DICTIONARIES

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a study on dictionary use by students of English who are to become professional dictionary users. The first part of the article gives information on test subjects, their knowledge of English and their dictionary habits. The second part discusses the results of individual tasks with an emphasis on dictionary use and the relationship between the correctness of the students' answers and their dictionary consultation. In the last part of the article information is presented concerning the types of dictionaries students own; additionally, there is a discussion of the reasons why students do not consult their dictionaries as often as they should.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the first dictionaries were compiled, great changes have been made in content and design. In the 1970s and 1980s language teachers and lexicographers became aware of the fact that dictionaries, learners' dictionaries in particular, had to be tailored to suit dictionary users. Dictionary making has undergone revolutionary changes due to the development of research on dictionary use, dictionary users and dictionaries themselves (Tomaszczyk 1979, Béjoint 1981, Hartmann 1989, Hartmann 1995, Bogaards 1996, Wiegand 1998, Tono 1998, Tono 2001, Atkins 1998, Dolezal and McCreary 1999, MacFarquhar and Richards 1983, McArthur 1989).

The oldest among the learners' dictionaries, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (OALD)*, has seen seven editions since 1948. It was followed by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)* in 1978, which has been revised three times so far. In 1987, the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary (COBUILD)* was first published introducing many changes to the microstructure. In 1995, the above-mentioned leading monolingual learners' dictionaries were all revised and another learners' dictionary, the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English (CIDE)*, was first published; in 2003 it appeared in a revised edition. The *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (MED)*, another monolingual dictionary for foreign learners, was first published in 2002.

This article presents the findings of research on a specific group of dictionary users, namely, the students of English who are future English teachers or translators and thus

cannot be regarded as general dictionary users. In the course of their studies, students are constantly reminded of the importance of using dictionaries and of the wealth of information included in them. This holds true especially for monolingual dictionaries, not only general but also specialized ones, because the existing English-Slovene and Slovene-English dictionaries are not reliable sources of information. It has to be pointed out that the most comprehensive English-Slovene dictionary was published in 1978 and has not yet been revised, whereas the most comprehensive Slovene-English dictionary underwent a partial revision in 1990. This revision brought no changes to the macrostructure and in the microstructure only some of the most glaring mistakes were corrected.

The research we conducted is the first of its kind in Slovenia; we therefore decided to carry out a study on the general use of dictionaries rather than investigate a certain aspect of dictionary use or concentrate on a special part of a dictionary entry. We based our questionnaire partly on the questionnaire used in the EURALEX/AILA project (Atkins and Varantola 1998). We adopted the design of the questionnaire used in this project, but made several modifications to meet our needs. The sample sentences for different tasks were changed, and sentences that are contrastively different in English and Slovene, thus posing problems to Slovene learners of English, were included. 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 newly included (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-year students of the Faculty of Arts, Department of English, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in March and April 2003. The researchers distributed 60 questionnaires. Fifty-seven respondents (i.e. 95 %) speak Slovene as their mother tongue and three (i.e. 5 %) speak Croatian.

The test subjects were asked to give details about the number of years they had been studying English. They have all been studying English for between eight and sixteen years: the highest percentage of respondents have been studying it for ten years (35 %) (see Table 1). All of them have studied English in primary school, grammar school and at the university; three of them stated that they had additionally attended courses in Slovenia and abroad, and one of them mentioned watching TV as a means of learning English.

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

Length of English studies	Number of respondents in %
8 years	5 %
9 years	20 %
10 years	35 %
11 years	20 %
12 years	10 %
16 years	10 %
Total	100 %

For the purposes 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 did not undergo a placement test, because all students had to meet the matriculation requirements to have become students of English; this means that their grades in English in grammar school as well as in the final examinations at the end of grammar school should have been A or B. Thirteen students (i.e. 65 %) that took part in our research obtained a grade of A, whereas seven of them (i.e. 35 %) obtained a grade of B.

Test Design. The questionnaire consisted of two parts (cf. Atkins and Varantola 1998: 21–81): a Dictionary user profile form and a Dictionary research test. The first part was aimed at obtaining information about dictionary users, i.e. their mother tongue, how long they have been studying English, 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, checking spelling), and on their preferred dictionary/dictionaries.

The 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 their dictionaries. 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.

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 questionnaire 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 a word in italics. The majority of the existing monolingual and all 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 students did not have problems identifying *just* as an adverb and an adjective (in both cases 95 % gave the correct answer). *After* was more problematic when

used as a conjunction (45 % gave the correct answer) than when used as a preposition (65 % answered correctly). Amazingly, the respondents found it easy to identify *present* as an adjective (85 %) but only 55 % could identify it as a noun in the sentence “At *present* the outlook appears bleak” (for details see Table 2).

Table 2: Identification of part of speech.

Question	Parts of Speech				
1/1	adverb 25 %	adjective 0 %	conjunction 5 %	preposition (*) 65 %	don't know 5 %
1/2	adverb 35 %	adjective 0 %	conjunction (*) 45 %	preposition 15 %	don't know 5 %
1/3	noun 0 %	adjective (*) 85 %	adverb 10 %	preposition 0 %	don't know 5 %
1/4	noun (*) 55 %	adjective 5 %	adverb 30 %	preposition 0 %	don't know 10 %
1/5	noun 0 %	adjective 0 %	adverb (*) 95 %	preposition 0 %	don't know 5 %
1/6	noun 0 %	adjective (*) 95 %	adverb 0 %	preposition 0 %	don't know 5 %

(*) The correct answer.

If we consider the results of this task, we can see that the percentage of correct answers ranges from 45 % to 95 %. It must be stressed that the respondents were second-year students of English who had all passed two grammar examinations in the first year, a fact which explains the high percentage of correct answers for questions 1/3, 1/5 and 1/6. In the rest of the questions the percentage of those who answered correctly is lower (between 45 % and 65 %).

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 3), correct student answers range from 55 % to 100 %, but it seems that their choice of answers depended mostly on previous knowledge rather than on dictionary consultation, since only very few respondents actually consulted their dictionaries (0 % to 20 %). Interestingly, very few students, if any, used their dictionaries in questions that were answered correctly by all or almost all respondents, but the percentage of those who consulted their dictionaries increases in questions that were answered correctly by fewer respondents (e.g. 20 % of the respondents consulted their dictionaries in the example that was answered correctly by 55 % of the students). The question arises of why the number of look-ups was not greater in examples where students did not know

the answer. One would have expected that students of English would have made greater efforts to find the correct answer.

Table 3: Answers to questions concerning grammatical properties of words and dictionary use.

Question	Answers			
2/7	a. 0 %	b. 95 % (*)	c. 0 %	d. 5 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 100 %			
2/8	a. 0 %	b. 0 %	c. 0 %	d. 100 % (*)
	+ dict. 5 % - dict. 95 %			
2/9	a. 0 %	b. 100 % (*)	c. 0 %	d. 0 %
	+ dict. 0 % - dict. 100 %			
2/10	a. 75 % (*)	b. 15 %	c. 0 %	d. 10 %
	+ dict. 10 % - dict. 80 % (+)			
2/11	a. 45 %	b. 55 % (*)	c. 0 %	d. 0 %
	+ dict. 20 % - dict. 80 %			

(*) Correct answer.

(+) Two students (10 %) did not provide an answer.

Table 4 shows that the students who did consult their dictionaries chose one of the monolingual learners' dictionaries and that their look-ups were mostly successful, a finding which means that the consultation of dictionaries obviously contributes to a better result.

Table 4: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
2/7	0	0	0	/
2/8	3	3	0	COBUILD, OALD
2/9	0	0	0	/
2/10	6	3	3	LDOCE, OALD
2/11	12	9	3	COBUILD, OALD

3.3 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, as 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 5 % to 10 % 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 10 %, 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 5).

Table 5: Expectations of students of the location of (multi-word) lexical items.

Question	In the entry for ...			
	hard	nut	hard nut	don't know
3/12	25 %	70 %	5 %	0 %
3/13	pay	dividend	pay dividends	don't know
	20 %	80 %	0 %	0 %
3/14	come	through	come through	don't know
	80 %	10 %	10 %	0 %
3/15	colour	colours	/	don't know
	60 %	35 %		5 %

Interestingly, there is a gap in students' expectations about where to find the noun *colours*. The majority of students (60 %) would look up the noun *colours* under *colour*, while 35 % would expect to find *colours* as a separate entry.

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. Generally speaking, the results are far from discouraging, since the question that was answered incorrectly by the greatest number of students was still answered correctly by as many as 70 % of the respondents, which is a high percentage. We can see that even in the question which was answered correctly by all the students, 20 % of the respondents consulted the diction-

ary, which helped them find the correct answer (see also Table 7). The results of this question are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Selection of the appropriate prepositional complement.

Question	Answers			
4/16	with 0 %	by 30 %	for 0 %	at (*) 70 %
	+ dict. 30 % - dict. 70 %			
4/17	at (*) 80 %	of 0 %	in 20 %	with 0 %
	+ dict. 30 % - dict. 70 %			
4/18	at 5 %	over (*) 70 % (*)	on 0 %	in 25 %
	+ dict. 5 % - dict. 95 %			
4/19	for 25 % (*)	at 0 %	on 0 %	by (*) 75 %
	+ dict. 20 % - dict. 80 %			
4/20	for 0 %	in (*) 100 %	to 0 %	by 0 %
	+ dict. 20 % - dict. 80 %			

(*) Correct answer.

Table 7 shows the number of look-ups by individual questions. It is evident from the figures that not many students consulted their dictionaries (from 5 % to 30 %), but that those who did found the appropriate information in the dictionary. Only one student failed to find the correct preposition used with the adjective *surprised*, even though he/she stated that he/she had used the OALD where the correct preposition is included. The student who gave an incorrect answer to question 4/19 (the preposition *by* should be inserted in the sentence "Profits declined ____ 6 % this year") consulted the COBUILD. It is true that this dictionary neither includes a sample sentence with this preposition nor provides one anywhere else in the entry for *decline*.

Table 7: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
4/16	18	15	3	OALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, ESD
4/17	18	18	0	COBUILD, OALD, ESD
4/18	3	3	0	OALD
4/19	12	9	3	COBUILD, OALD, ESD
4/20	12	12	0	COBUILD, OALD

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. The correct students' answers range from 70 % to as much as 100 % and here, the average percentage of students who used the dictionary is higher than in the previous tasks (as high as 55 %).

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 were supposed to choose the correct answer from several possibilities, Task 5 required that the students themselves provided an answer. It is understandable that, if they did not understand the meaning of the word in question, they would consult their dictionaries. This pattern of behaviour complies with our expectation that the dictionary is used quite frequently while reading an English text and encountering unknown words.

Table 8 proves that dictionary consultation helped the students choose the correct answer. Only in question 5/26 (students were supposed to decode the meaning of the verb *ring* in the sentence "Ringed by soldiers for protection, he tried to address the crowd") did three students who consulted the ESD fail to provide the correct answer, even though this meaning is included in this dictionary. The ESD has two separate entries for the verb *ring*, one treating different senses of the regular and the other one of the irregular verb. The students looked up the entry for the irregular instead of the regular verb. The look-up operations of all the other students were successful.

Table 8: *Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.*

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
5/21	12	12	0	OALD, COBUILD, ESD
5/22	15	15	0	COBUILD, OALD, ESD
5/23	33	33	0	COBUILD, LDOCE, OALD, ESD
5/24	6	6	0	LDOCE, ESD
5/25	0	0	0	/
5/26	12	9	3	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 non-professional dic-

tionary users in Slovenia cannot read the given pronunciation. This part of the research was not carried out only on the sample of students of English but also on more general users. The questionnaire used in the research was the same for both groups. The test subjects whose results are discussed in this article are students of English who regularly come across dictionaries in the course of their study and are constantly reminded by their teachers that dictionaries are a primary source of information for those who teach English, translate or are otherwise professionally involved with English. Here, too, we should mention that the second-year students have already passed the examination in English phonetics, which means that they have systematically been taught to read and write the IPA. To test the ability of respondents to read the IPA, we included six well-known words (i.e. *unimaginative*, *birthplace*, *northern*, *approach*, *breathing*, *showgirl*). Dictionaries were not allowed. The majority of the students were able to decipher the words (from as many as 95 % to 80 %), but there were still 10 % to 20 % of the students who did not make any attempt at trying to decipher the words given (see Table 9).

Table 9: Students' ability to read the IPA.

Question	Answers		
	correct	incorrect	no answer
6/27	95 %	0 %	5 %
6/28	80 %	0 %	20 %
6/29	80 %	10 %	10 %
6/30	80 %	0 %	10 %
6/31	80 %	10 %	10 %
6/32	80 %	0 %	10 %

3.7 Filling the slot in context

Task 7 tested students' ability to find a suitable word to fit the context. 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. The percentage of students who gave the correct answer ranges from 15 % to 100 %. Six out of 14 slots were filled with the correct word by all the respondents, whereas two slots were filled with the correct word by only 15 % of the students (one slot had to be filled with either the verb *fill* or the verb *make up* to form the collocation with the noun *prescription*, and the other one had to be filled with the preposition *against*, which collocates with the adjective *effective* in the sentence "The medication is reported to be very effective

_____ the common cold"). Interestingly, only 10 % and 20 % of the students, respectively, consulted the dictionary in these two cases. There are two possible explanations for not using the dictionary: one is that the students simply did not know what to look up and the other is that they thought they knew the correct answer (especially in the case of the preposition). Also worth mentioning is the case (question 7/35) where 55 % of the respondents inserted the correct word, but as many as 45 % consulted the dictionary.

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). Since a possible reason for not (sufficiently) consulting their dictionaries includes the fact 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.

Again, it can be established that the majority of the students who consulted their dictionaries provided the correct answer. If we have a look at the dictionaries the students used to get the correct answer, we can see that they comprise seven different dictionaries (COBUILD, LDOCE, OALD, LTPDSC, OCD, BBI, and ESD), three of these being monolingual learners' dictionaries, three being specialized dictionaries of collocations and one being a bilingual dictionary (see Table 10).

Table 10: 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	0	0	0	/
7/35	27	21	6	COBUILD, LDOCE, OALD, OCD, LTPDSC, BBI, ESD
7/36	9	9	0	OALD, BBI
7/37	6	6	0	COBUILD, OALD
7/38	21	21	0	COBUILD, OALD
7/39	6	6	0	COBUILD, OALD
7/40	0	0	0	/
7/41	12	9	3	OALD, COBUILD, BBI
7/42	0	0	0	/
7/43	6	6	0	COBUILD, OCD
7/44	0	0	0	/
7/45	36	27	9	OALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, 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. The results of this task show that the percentage of students with the correct answers ranges from 70 % to 95 %. Interestingly, in as many as four questions (i.e. 8/48, 8/49, 8/51 and 8/52), the students eliminated two out of four given answers and chose one of the remaining two. One might assume that all the students considered the eliminated answers wrong and that, in all likelihood, those who consulted their dictionary looked up only the remaining two answers.

As far as dictionary use is concerned, the percentage of those who used the dictionary varies from 0 % to 65 %. This broad range is presumably due to the fact that the students were not familiar with any of the words listed. In 8/51, the verbs *rummage*, *ravage*, *forage* and *salvage* were given to complete the sentence "_____ through the attic and see if you can find anything for the jumble sale". They looked up all the words and narrowed their selection down to two items with a similar semantic meaning – in the above-mentioned case to the verbs *rummage* (90 %) and *forage* (10 %). The other example that is worth mentioning is 8/52 where the adjectives given are familiar words (*wide*, *straight*, *deep*, *long*), but the students were in two minds about which of these could be used to fill the slot in the sentence "It is often difficult for ex-convicts to keep to the _____ and narrow".

As has already been mentioned, the students who consulted their dictionary gave the correct answer in the majority of cases. Most of the students used monolingual learners' dictionaries, which is the right choice in case of doubt concerning idiomatic expressions and unfamiliar semantically similar lexical items (see Table 11).

Table 11: Successful and unsuccessful look-ups.

Question	Number of respondents who used a dictionary	Correct + dict.	Incorrect + dict.	Dictionaries consulted
8/47	21	15	6	COBUILD, OALD, LDOCE, OCD
8/48	0	0	0	/
8/49	3	3	0	OALD
8/50	24	21	3	OALD, LDOCE
8/51	39	36	3	OALD, LDOCE, ESD
8/52	15	15	0	OALD, LDOCE

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the use of dictionaries by students of English whose mother tongue is Slovene. We wanted to get information on which dictionaries they consult, what types of information they expect to find in a particular

dictionary and when they consult a dictionary. The dictionaries the respondents listed range from bilingual to monolingual learners' dictionaries as well as monolingual dictionaries intended for native speakers. Among general monolingual dictionaries, they most frequently possess the learners' dictionaries, such as OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD, MED and CIDE, whereas among dictionaries for native speakers, they enumerated *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus* and *Oxford English Dictionary*. Not only did the students mention general dictionaries but they also named a wide range of specialized dictionaries, from dictionaries of idioms, collocations or phrasal verbs, to dictionaries of pronunciation. Understandably, they all possess bilingual English-Slovene and Slovene-English dictionaries.

The Dictionary user profile form included a question that referred to the frequency of use of bilingual dictionaries. Forty-five percent of the respondents claim to use a bilingual dictionary often (i.e. every week), 40 % say that they use one rarely, 10 % use one regularly (i.e. almost every day) and 5 % never use one. When the students were asked how often they used a monolingual dictionary, the following results were obtained: 70 % use one regularly and 30 % often use one. This part of the Dictionary user profile form enquired about the students' habitual use of dictionaries, whereas in the questionnaire they were asked in each individual task to indicate whether they consulted a dictionary or not.

The students who participated in this research project were well aware of its aims and they were encouraged to use their dictionaries as much as possible when completing the questionnaire. The high percentage of students who did not use their dictionaries can be explained by the fact that many questions were simply too easy for them; consequently, they did not need to consult their dictionaries. The same questionnaire was also filled in by a group of test subjects who are not in training as professional users and are therefore considered more general dictionary users. In order to assure comparability of results, the same test was used with both groups of dictionary users. We dare to speculate that we would have obtained different (perhaps even more relevant) results concerning dictionary use in this group of test subjects if different, more difficult questions had been used for this special group of dictionary users, because they would have been forced to perform more look-ups.

Sixty percent claim that they were taught at school how to use their dictionaries in comparison to only 40 % 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, and attention should be paid not only to bilingual but also (or even more intensively) to monolingual dictionaries, especially to those intended for foreign users.

5. CONCLUSION

Dictionary use has not yet been the subject of research in Slovenia, but the first study conducted on general aspects of dictionary use has proved to be well accepted by

the respondents. While completing the questionnaire, they had to think about what to look up and how to find the word they were looking for. At the end of the questionnaire, the students were asked to give their opinions about the dictionaries they had used. Their comments as regards the disadvantages of the dictionaries they consulted can be briefly summarized as follows:

- lack of examples of use,
- absence of the preposition used with a particular word,
- absence of the appropriate definition (in reference to monolingual dictionaries) or translational equivalent (in reference to bilingual dictionaries),
- absence of the word they were looking for,
- the dictionary does not provide information about the frequency of entries,
- new words or slang words are not included,
- lack of illustrations,
- lack of appendices of any kind,
- difficulty in finding idiomatic expressions in the idiom section; the student proposed the inclusion of each idiomatic expression in a new line,
- difficulty in finding idiomatic expressions if they are not treated within the idiom section,
- lack of grammatical information,
- lack of definitions and/or examples of use in run-on entries,
- too few collocations,
- lack of technical words and expressions.

Among the advantages of the dictionaries used the respondents listed the following:

- a good layout of the dictionary,
- easy-to-understand definitions,
- cross references among idiomatic expressions (the user is guided to the right place in the dictionary where the idiomatic expression he/she is looking for is treated),
- information on synonymous expressions.

The students who participated in this research by completing the questionnaire expressed satisfaction because they were given a chance to air their opinions about the dictionaries they use, their advantages and disadvantages and about the problems they have when consulting them. As future professionals, they would find it useful to receive more information about different types of dictionaries and about what different dictionaries include. This seems reasonable because in future they will have to use dictionaries as an invaluable reference tool for solving the linguistic problems that will arise in their professional careers. Apart from that, they lack sufficient training in dictionary use because many of them will work as teachers of English at different levels and will have to teach their students how to use dictionaries effectively.

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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>
MED	<i>Macmillan English Dictionary</i>
CIDE	<i>Cambridge International Dictionary of English</i>
ESD	<i>English-Slovene Dictionary</i>
BBJ	<i>The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations</i>
OCD	<i>Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English</i>
LTPDSC	<i>LTP Dictionary of Selected Collocations</i>

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