

## Using a dictionary

### 1.0 What kind of dictionaries will you need?

There are a number of different types of dictionary but the two you will probably use most while studying English are:

- a good English-English dictionary and
- a good bilingual dictionary, i.e. a dictionary that uses your own language and English.

Before we look at how you can make the best use of your monolingual dictionary, let's think about which dictionary might be more useful to you in different situations.

### 2.0 Monolingual? Bilingual? Both? Neither?

Look at the situations below and decide for each one whether you would use a dictionary or not, and if you would use a dictionary, which one would you use? You may decide that doing something else other than using a dictionary is your best option.

You can do this individually or with other students and then report back to the whole class.

Write

- A. a monolingual dictionary**
- B. a bilingual dictionary**
- C. both dictionaries**
- D. no dictionaries**

#### Situations

1. The teacher has asked you to read an article. You do not understand one of the words in the title
2. You are reading a book and you understand the main idea but one word appears that you are not sure about
3. You are struggling to understand a sentence from an article you are reading in preparation for a writing assignment and you think the problem is that there are some words you do not understand
4. You are discussing a subject with your tutor and you cannot think of an English word for what you want to say. You can think of a good word in your own language
5. You are writing an assignment and you want to use the English word *factor*. You would like to find an appropriate adjective to use with it
6. You are writing an assignment and want to use the word *comparison*. You are not sure how to use it

7. You have used the word *role* in a previous written assignment but your teacher said you used it incorrectly last time
8. You have just listened to a lecture where the lecturer used one word a number of times. You understood the lecture but you had never heard this word before and you would like to find out more about it. You know the first few letters of the word and you understand the context in which it was used
9. You are writing an assignment and there is a word in your own language that you do not know in English. You want to use this word and you would like to use it correctly
10. You are in a group discussion and there is a word in your own language you want to use. The group consists of students from different countries, including your own

### 3.0 One danger of the bilingual dictionary

#### Dictionary note

*Some words you look up in bilingual dictionary will give you a number of possible meanings which leaves with you the problem of knowing which one to choose. For example, there is a Polish word, ognisko for which the bilingual dictionary offers these possible translations: camp fire, hearth, stove, focal point, focus group. To decide which one to use you would probably have to check these words in a monolingual dictionary*

#### 3.1 Which meaning of *ognisko* would fit in this sentence?

- *Returning to the warmth of the kitchen \_\_\_\_\_, he stripped and pulled on the clothes he'd worn on the motor cycle.*

#### 3.2 Work with other students who speak your language.

1. Can you think of other words from your language which have multiple meanings?
2. Can you think of any times you have made a mistake by using a bilingual dictionary incorrectly?

## 4.0 Using Monolingual dictionaries

Here are some monolingual dictionaries that we would recommend and which you will be using in class

1. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE)
2. Cambridge International Dictionary of English (CIDE)
3. Collins COBUILD English Dictionary (CCED)
4. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)

The Cambridge Dictionary can be viewed on the Internet, at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

### 4.1 What information does a monolingual dictionary provide?

We all know that dictionaries help with the meanings of words but what other information do they provide?

With a group of other students discuss what types of information you can get from a monolingual dictionary and then compare your ideas with the **Checklist** at the end of this Unit.

### 4.2 Practise using your monolingual dictionary

#### Task 1: Pronunciation

##### Dictionary note

*Dictionaries will give you help with pronunciation by providing pronunciation (phonetic) information and by marking the word stress in words. This will be especially helpful for you when you encounter new words outside class and need to know how to pronounce them*

Check the words below in your dictionary and mark the word stress in each. In some cases the position of the stress will depend on whether you are using the word as a noun or as a verb. In this case you should make a note of both

import	conduct	export	increase
survey	trigger	inflation	factor

Compare your answers with students who have used different dictionaries. How was the stress marked in the different dictionaries?

How were verbs and nouns marked in the different dictionaries? What abbreviations were used?

## Task 2: Pronunciation

The words in the box below may be new to you. Using the dictionary and the pronunciation symbols given (as well as the word stress markings), can you work out how the words are pronounced?

unique      version      practitioner      rigid      strategy

Compare your pronunciation with other students

## Task 3: Collocations

### Dictionary note

*Words do not live appear in isolation, they are used with other words. In many cases the same words are used together **frequently**, for example, fee and pay. In some cases the same words are **almost always** used together, for example, conclusion and come to or reach and conclusion.*

*Dictionaries can help with these collocations especially if we pay attention to the example sentences provided.*

*Example: if you check the word empirical in the OALD, you will find that is it is used with these words: empirical evidence/knowledge/research and a further example phrase is given: an empirical study.*

### What words are commonly used with the following words?

1. **role:** what adjectives and verbs commonly come before this noun?
2. **rate:** what nouns are often used immediately before this word to create a noun +noun phrase?
3. **problem:** what adjectives are commonly used before this noun?
4. **impact:** what verbs and adjectives are commonly used before this word?
5. **contribution:** what verbs and adjectives are commonly used before this word?
6. **extent:** what adjectives are commonly used before this noun?
7. **data:** what verbs are commonly used *before* and *after* this noun?
8. **decline:** what adjectives are used before this noun?

Compare your answers with students who have used different dictionaries

**Task 4: Prepositions**

**Dictionary note**

*Students often have problems knowing or remembering which preposition to use with which noun, verb or adjective. The monolingual dictionary can help, especially if we pay attention to the example sentences given. For example, if you are not sure how to use the word proportion in a sentence, these examples from the LDCE and the OALD will help:*

- her feet are small in proportion to her height
- the proportion of men to women in the college has changed dramatically over the years
- they earn sentences out of all proportion to their ability

**What prepositions are used before and/or after these words to make commonly used phrases?**

*Notes*

- ..... contrast .....
- ..... connection .....
- ..... proportion .....
- ..... comparison .....
- ..... compared .....
- ..... result .....
- ..... extent .....
- ..... similar .....
- ..... specific .....
- ..... excess .....

## Task 5: Sentence patterns

### Dictionary note

Information about how to construct sentences correctly can also be found in monolingual dictionaries. Sometimes this information is given explicitly, sometimes it is revealed in the example sentences. For example, in the OALD here is some information about how to use the word **require**:

#### **require [VN]**

**These pets require a lot of care and attention.** The [VN] here tells you that the verb[V] can be followed by a noun or noun phrase [N], in this case, **a lot of care and attention.**

#### **require [V that]**

**the situation required that he should be present.** The 'that' in this case tells you that the verb is followed by 'that' + a sentence

#### **require [V-ing]**

**lentils do not require soaking before cooking.** The '-ing' here tells you that the verb is followed by a gerund

In other dictionaries you have to work out the pattern from the examples provided.

Here, for example, are two example sentences from the entry for **require** taken from the online Wordnet Vocabulary Helper:

- **success usually requires hard work**
- **We require our secretary to be on time**

In this case you have to look closely at the examples to see that the sentence pattern for the first is verb + noun, i.e. require + hard word and the pattern for the second is verb + noun + to + infinitive, i.e. require + our secretary + to + be

Look at the sentence below.

- *the \_\_\_\_\_ that heredity affects behaviour is no longer revolutionary*

The sentence pattern here is:

**noun + that + clause + verb**, i.e. the \_\_\_\_\_ (N) + that + heredity affects behaviour (clause) + is (V)

Which of these nouns could be fitted into this sentence pattern?

*concept*

*idea*

*thesis*

*belief*

**Task 6: Sentence patterns**

**Match the verbs below with the sentence patterns that follow**

- a) *perceive*                      b) *expose*                      c) *undertake*  
 d) *differentiate*                  e) *retain*                      f) *contradict*

- 1      verb + noun + to + noun                      (V+N+to+N)  
 2      verb + noun + as + noun or adjective      (V+N+as+n/adj)  
 3      verb +between + noun + and + noun      (V+between+N+and+N)  
 4      verb + to + infinitive + noun                  (V+to+inf+N)  
 5      verb + noun    (V+N)

Now check what the sentence patterns are for these words

Word	Sentence pattern(s)
assume	
benefit	
consist	
derive	
function	
identify	
indicate	
involve	
respond	
vary	

## Review tasks

**1.0** Here is an example of a dictionary entry, taken from the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary. Label the parts of the entry (the first one has been done for you as an example):

### 2.0 Quick review

Use a learner's dictionary to find the answers to the following:

1 How are these words pronounced?

neurology

diversity

conduct

2 How many meanings do these words have, and what are the meanings?

observe

bill

3 Which prepositions are used with these words?

context

peculiar

4 What verbs are used in the examples with these nouns?

evidence

analysis

5 What nouns are used in the examples with these adjectives?

plausible

devastating

6 What are the grammatical features of these words?

persuade

research (noun)

## Checklist: What information does a monolingual dictionary provide? (Task 4.1)

In a learner's dictionary, you can find the following information about a word:

a) <u>Spelling</u>	A dictionary will show you if more than one spelling is acceptable. For example, ' <b>realise</b> ' or ' <b>realize</b> '
b) <u>Meaning</u>	For example, <b>definition</b> = a statement that explains the meaning of a word or phrase.
c) <u>Pronunciation</u>	For example, where to put the stress in a word or how to pronounce a word you have never seen before, such as <b>thesis</b> /'θi:si:s/, or <b>hypothesis</b> /hɑ'pɒθəsi:s/
d) <u>Part of speech</u>	Is it a verb, a noun, an adjective, an adverb, a pronoun, a preposition or an article?
e) <u>Inflected forms</u>	For example, <b>take, takes, taking, took, taken.</b>
f) <u>Grammatical features</u>	For example, is the noun uncountable, or is the verb transitive?
g) <u>Collocations</u>	What other words often appear with the word you are looking up? The adjectives <b>crucial, contributing</b> and <b>major</b> are collocates of <b>factor</b> . In some learner's dictionaries, collocates are shown in bold type.
h) <u>Example phrases or sentences</u>	For example, 'Heavy snow was a contributing factor in the accident'
i) <u>Similar or opposite words</u>	<b>neutral:impartial</b> or <b>neutral</b> ⇔ <b>biased</b>
j) <u>Style</u>	Is the word formal or informal? Journalistic? Technical?
k) <u>Sentence patterns</u>	Sentence patterns after or around the word in question: for example, how to continue a sentence like this: <b>the author suggests ...</b>
l) <u>Frequency</u>	Some dictionaries show how frequently a particular word is used. This can help you to decide whether it is useful to learn the word.

## Keys

### Quick review

- 1     neurology            /nju:'rɒlədʒi/ or /nʊ'rɑ:lədʒi/  
      diversity            /dɑɪ'vɜ:sɪti/  
      conduct             /kən'dʌkt/ (*verb*);  
                              /'kɒndʌkt/ or /'kɑ:ndʌkt/ (*noun*)

- 2     observe  
      i.        see and notice  
      ii.       say what you noticed  
      iii.       watch sth carefully  
      iv.       obey

### bill

- i.        written list for payment  
      ii.       piece of paper money (US)  
      iii.       written proposal for new law  
      iv.       bird's beak  
      v.        programme of entertainment  
      vi.        police (*informal, spoken*)
- 3     in/out of context  
      peculiar to
- 4     find/give evidence or evidence suggests/points to/shows  
      accept/do an analysis or analysis revealed/
- 5     plausible explanation/answer/excuse  
      devastating effect/consequences/news/argument/blow/beauty
- 6     persuade sb to do sth  
      persuade sb of sth  
      persuade sb into doing sth  
      persuade sb that ...  
      persuade sb  
      research (U) + into/on