

# **A Comparison of Three Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries**

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## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to examine similarities and differences among three monolingual learner's dictionaries (MLDs). The selected MLDs, resulting from a survey of 200 first-year KMUTT students' use of MLDs, were Oxford Student's Dictionary of English (2001), Longman Active Study Dictionary (2004) and Macmillan Essential Dictionary (2003). To analyze for both macrostructure and microstructure, this study used Hartmann's (2001) and Jackson's (2002) criteria. For macrostructure, all three MLDs included basic essential components that good dictionaries should contain: use of defining vocabulary, language contents (collocation, grammar of words) and illustrations and a guide to the dictionary; however, only three minor items differed among the three dictionaries, viz. the introduction, the total number of entries and the content of reference sections. For microstructure, there were six elements which resemble each other: headwords, homonym numbers, illustrative sentences, word classes, pronunciations and miscellanea; however, there were two elements which differ from each other: how to organize frequently-used and polysemous words.

## **Introduction**

Dictionaries have played a crucial role in foreign and second language teaching and learning. They are regarded as "the repository of final linguistic authority, a bank account of words and meanings to be drawn upon in moments of need" (Wright, 1998: 3). Dictionaries used in ELT will be mostly either monolingual or bilingual. According to Chanawangsa (1996), monolingual ones can be classified into two types: one for native speakers and the other for learners of English. Moreover, monolingual learner's dictionaries (MLDs) available on the market can be subdivided into three main levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced.

For this study, the researchers are interested in MLDs as teachers in Thailand nowadays try to encourage students to make use of this type of dictionary in place of bilingual ones. This is because MLDs provide meanings in English and the language explained is easy to understand compared to those designed for native speakers. In addition, there are grammatical information and authentic samples of the language, which indicate how words are actually used rather than how convention may deem that they should be used. Thus, it could be said that MLDs are used as one tool to assist students' self-learning, which is very important in independent learning and indispensable for every learner of English.

## **Purpose of study**

This study aims to answer the research question: how do three monolingual learner's dictionaries compare?

### **Monolingual learner's dictionaries (MLDs)**

MLDs, whether in book form, on CD or available on the Internet, are those written in only one language (in this case, English). Even though most dictionaries are monolingual in this sense, the abbreviation MLD is used to describe dictionaries written specifically for language learners of English, not native speakers. Moreover, in the literature on lexicography, they are interchangeably referred to as ELT or EFL dictionaries.

There are lots of aspects of MLDs to be investigated but our focus here is general characteristics that MLDs should possess. According to Bejoint (2000), Hartmann (2003), Ilson (1985) and Tickoo (1989), there are altogether ten such characteristics:

*1. Word lists* These are selected according to the criteria of frequency and usefulness; that is, the word list recorded in an EFL dictionary puts emphasis on the words learners should know and has well-balanced inclusion of several kinds of words such as archaic words, dialects and technical jargon. Moreover, the coverage of entries is usually around 50,000 items for the intermediate level.

*2. Definitions* These are confined to the more limited vocabulary of foreign learners; that is, since foreign users are still learners, the language used in the definitions of words is kept relatively simple and more controlled compared to that written for native speakers.

*3. Polysemous words* The different senses of headwords are distinguished by means of running numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.); and, in cases of detailed meaning, letters are used after the numbers (1a, 1b, 1c, etc.). Nowadays, signposts tend to be used in front of the polysemy in order to aid rapid searches for desired meanings.

*4. Collocational information* Collocational details are usually provided in boldface in example sentences or separate usage boxes.

*5. Grammatical information* According to Jackson (1985), there are four kinds of grammatical information we might expect to find in dictionary entries (i.e. inflections, word class labels, syntactic information and example sentences).

*6. Pronunciation* Phonetic transcription is international; that is, word pronunciation is mostly indicated in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) system. The purpose served by pronunciation is to advise users who are unsure of the spoken form of a word by recommending a suitable pronunciation for it. Besides, both American and British English pronunciation and stress are often provided.

*7. Stylistic information* This is typically provided by usage labels. Knowing stylistic information is particularly useful for students to use a dictionary as an encoding tool when they write an essay or article.

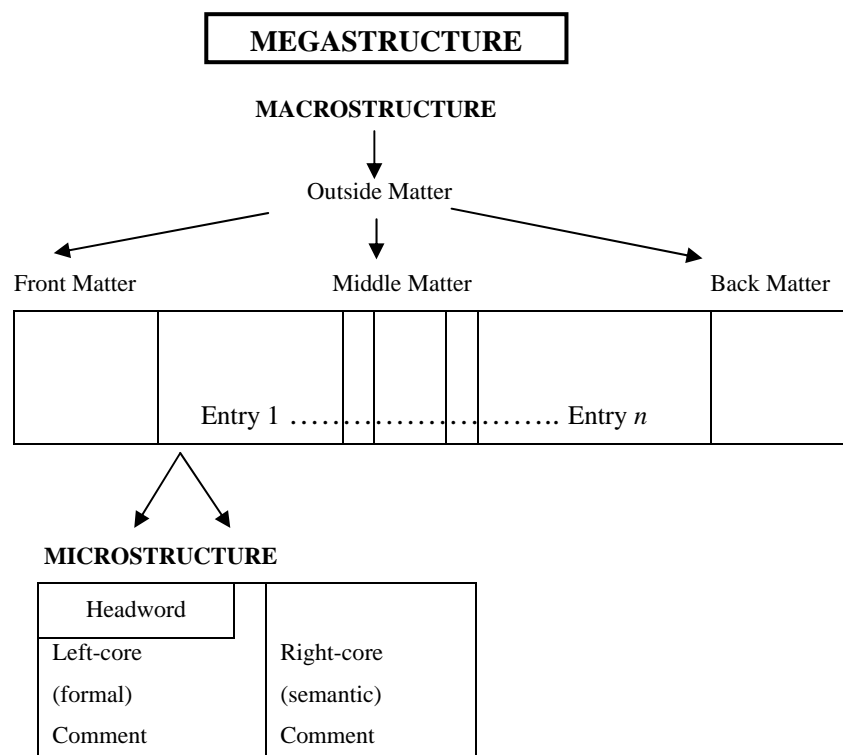
*8. Example sentences* According to Cowie (1978: 129), they have three functions: to “indicate the syntactic distribution of words in their various senses”, “throw light on the meanings of the words” and “encourage the learner to compose sentences which are lexically and syntactically new”.

9. *Etymological information* This is rarely provided, that is, information about word history is usually avoided in MLDs. Chanawangsa (1996) observed that, although this kind of information is not necessary for learners, it is useful when having to guess the meanings of the words.

10. *Textual transparency* Clarity of printed characters as well as page layout and layout of entries are believed to enhance accessibility of information for users.

### Dictionary structure

Hartmann (2001: 59) gives the explanation of dictionary structure in a diagrammatic form as follows:



**Figure 1: Dictionary structure (Hartmann, 2001)**

In Figure 1, the macrostructure and outside matter constitute what Hartmann called megastructure, which is the overall design of a dictionary. The macrostructure is shown as a sequence of entries (from 1 to n), preceded, interrupted and followed by outside matter in the form of front matter (such as a preface, table of contents and acknowledgements), middle matter (such as illustrations and language notes) and back matter (such as reference section, contents and appendices).

Hartmann's microstructure, adapted from Wiegand (1991), is shown as consisting of headword and subdivided into the left-core formal comment and the right-core semantic comment. In brief, both formal and semantic comments constitute microstructure or the way of showing how various information categories are arranged within entries.

### Criticizing dictionaries

In order to criticize a dictionary, it is certainly desirable to have a sound methodology or some guidelines for measuring its quality and suitability. A few guidelines or criteria are available in the literature. Based on Jackson (2002), criteria for evaluating a

dictionary can be derived from two possible sources: internal criteria and external criteria. The first one derives from what a dictionary says about itself, or what the editors claim for it; this kind of information can be found in its preface and often makes claims about features that distinguish it from other dictionaries or demonstrate its superiority over its rivals. The other derives from the metalexicography, taking into account the linguistic requirements for a lexical description and considerations of dictionary design and production. Moreover, Rundell (1998) reinforced Jackson's external criteria by proposing two more sets of criteria for the evaluation of dictionaries: one set related to presentation and accessibility; the other related to content.

## **Methodology**

### ***Selected dictionaries***

This survey was conducted to find out how 200 first-year KMUTT students use dictionaries, as it was hoped that the findings would point to recommendations on what features learners should look for in choosing a dictionary. In the survey questionnaire used in this study, there were five dictionaries, all of which are at intermediate level: Oxford Student's Dictionary of English (2001), Longman Active Study Dictionary (2004), Collins Cobuild Learner's Dictionary (2003), Cambridge Learner's Dictionary (2001) and Macmillan Essential Dictionary (2003). The results revealed the students' preferences in purchasing and using these dictionaries, as follows: Oxford Student's Dictionary of English (38%), Longman Active Study Dictionary (26%) and Macmillan Essential Dictionary (18%). Since these three dictionaries were chosen by a total of 82% of the students surveyed, they were chosen for this study.

### ***Dictionary comparison***

In order to compare these three MLDs, criteria were set based on Hartmann's (2001) and Jackson's (2002) ideas about the general characteristics of MLDs. In other words, the checklist in macrostructure comparison arose from a combination of Jackson's and Hartmann's ideas; specifically, Jackson's internal criteria and Hartmann's outside matter were incorporated into the checklist. Moreover, microstructure comparison came from the application of MLDs' general attributes; that is, a certain number of headwords and their details from the three MLDs were randomly chosen for comparison.

## **Findings**

### ***Macrostructure of three MLDs***

The table below shows the comparative analysis of ten items of outside matter in three MLDs: Oxford Student's Dictionary of English (OSDE), Longman Active Study Dictionary (LASD) and Macmillan Essential Dictionary (MED). We can see from the table that all three dictionaries contain items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 whereas the rest (items 1, 2 and 10) occur in either two or only one of the dictionaries.

Only MED contains an introduction (item 1); it summarizes what the dictionary is about and gives users important pieces of information. In its one-page introduction, the editor-in-chief claims that MED focuses on both word meanings and the most basic and important features of the English language that intermediate learners of English should know. He continues by highlighting two major resources: a large bank of data (220 million words of written and spoken texts) and expertise in being able to select what is

most important for learners. Moreover, he claims to include more entries than any other intermediate learner's dictionary.

**Table: Comparison of macrostructure of three MLDs**

Items	Dictionaries		
	OSDE	LASD	MED
1. Introduction	×	×	✓
2. Total vocabulary entries	47,000	45,000	×
3. Abbreviations & labels	✓	✓	✓
4. Edition (year of publication)	1 <sup>st</sup> (2001)	4 <sup>th</sup> (2004)	1 <sup>st</sup> (2003)
5. Guide to dictionary	✓	✓	✓
6. Frequently-used words	~ 3,325	3,000	3,500
7. Illustration pages (picture dictionary)	✓	✓	✓
8. Study pages & exercises with keys	✓	✓	✓
9. Defining vocabulary	2,500	2,000	2,300
10. Reference sections:			
10.1 Phonemic spelling	✓	✓	✓
10.2 Irregular verbs	✓	✓	✓
10.3 Geographical names	✓	×	✓
10.4 Periodic tables of elements	✓	×	×
10.5 Expressions using numbers	✓	×	×

This claim interests the researchers in making a comparison on the total number of entries of the three MLDs (item 2). A vocabulary entry here means the information of the whole set of a headword. OSDE's and LASD's back covers inform us that the total numbers of entries are 47,000 and 45,000 words, respectively, whereas MED gives no information on the total number of entries despite claiming in its introduction to have more entries than any other intermediate learner's dictionary. It may be said that these figures correspond to the word lists recorded in EFL dictionaries for intermediate learners, typically around 50,000 items (see the literature review above on MLDs). To the researchers, the total number of entries might be a factor that users consider when deciding which dictionaries to buy.

For item 3 (abbreviations and labels), all three dictionaries use abbreviations and labels that hardly differ, for example, the abbreviations [I], [T], [phr v] and [BrE] for, respectively, intransitive, transitive and phrasal verbs, and British English. Moreover, the list of this information is provided in the front matter of all three MLDs. To the researchers, abbreviations and labels are like signs to users to pay special attention to how words are used. Experienced users who are familiar with them may think they are not necessary but those who are novices may consider these as a matter of necessity. This could help students when they have to write their essays in English and edit their assignments by themselves.

For item 4 (year of publication), the first edition of OSDE was published in 2001 and that of MED in 2003 whereas the fourth edition of LASD was published in 2004. If a criterion for comparing and contrasting the quality of a dictionary is its frequency of publication and revision, then LASD, in its fourth edition, would be the best of all. This is because regular revision and publication is an indication of a dictionary's popularity amongst users, and there may be a tendency to take account of contemporary words and meanings according to the nature of the language, which is always changing.

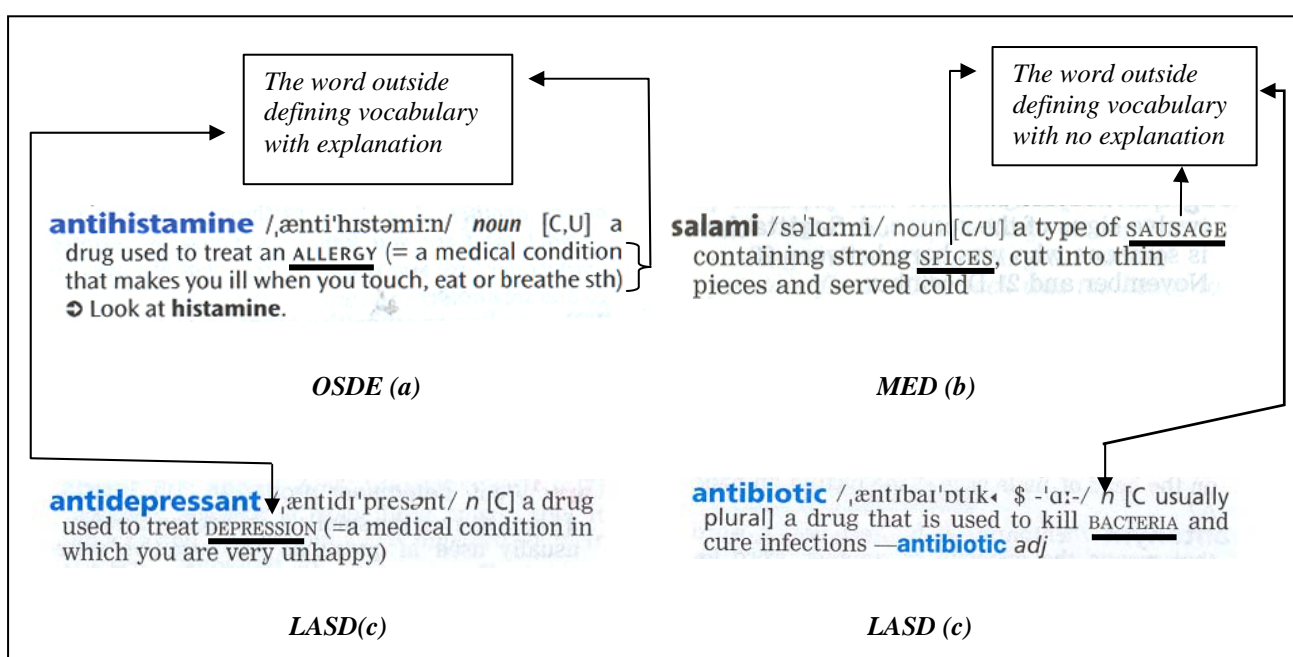
For item 5 (guide to dictionaries), all three MLDs provide similar information on how to use dictionaries, which can be categorized into seven groups. The first one is how to look up headwords such as homonymy, polysemy and compounds. The second is the explanation of how to search for words and phrases relating to the headwords (e.g. idioms, phrasal verbs and derivatives). The third is the matter of meanings: how to organize polysemous words, information on the number of defining vocabulary, the way meanings of each word are listed in order of frequency or history of meanings, etc. The fourth relates to grammar: explanation of word classes, codes, inflected forms, etc. Fifth, the way words are used is explained through patterns (e.g. *prevent sb from doing sth*, *protect sb from sth*), labels (e.g. *not before a noun*, *spoken*, *informal*). The sixth is about how to choose the right words and a section on vocabulary building, which are given by usage notes. The last is the explanation of pronunciation, for which all three use the IPA system. Moreover, among these three MLDs, only OSDE provides exercises with keys to familiarize users with the components and terms used in the dictionary.

For item 6 (frequently-used words), all three MLDs focus on frequently-used entries but differ in the number employed. LASD's guide to the dictionary informs us that there are 3,000 words; MED clearly specifies 3,500 words for intermediate learners to learn; however, OSDE says nothing about the number of frequently-used words. The researchers counted 3,325 words approximately (i.e. between 3,000 and 3,500). To the researchers, some important words in one dictionary might not be important in the others; for example, the words 'flexible' and 'campaign' (labeled as a noun) are given a one-star rating in MED but are ordinary headwords in the other two. The reason, according to Scholfield (2006) and Summers (2006), may be because each publisher employs different language corpora, which causes these apparent differences in word frequency.

For item 7 (illustration pages and picture dictionary), all three MLDs provide illustrations and picture dictionaries for users but the way they are organized varies. Illustrations in OSDE are spread throughout the book under a particular headword from an entry  $a_1$  to an entry  $z_n$ ; for example, pictures will appear over or under words or phrases like 'arachnid', 'bar code', 'car', 'diffuse' and 'energy'. For LASD, illustrations are in the middle matter and they comprise a picture dictionary section. Apart from the picture dictionary in the middle matter, illustrations in LASD are also distributed throughout the book, as in OSDE. For MED, as in LASD, illustrations are in the middle matter, and they are also categorized according to topics such as houses and animals. Moreover, illustrations in MED are dispersed throughout the book under or over a particular headword, as in OSDE and LASD. Among the three MLDs, illustrations in LASD are the most colorful whereas the others still use black and white.

For item 8 (additional study pages), all three MLDs provide plenty of topics to study. OSDE contains 38 pages of 16 topics such as prefixes and suffixes, punctuation and taking notes; LASD has 24 pages of 12 topics, for example, intensifying adjectives and adverbs, modal verbs and writing essays; and MED has 23 pages of 14 topics, for instance, new technology, metaphors and text types. Among various topics on the study pages, there are two topics which all three MLDs have in common: collocations and phrasal verbs. This implies that all three dictionaries emphasize the importance of collocations and phrasal verbs.

For item 9 (defining vocabulary), although all three MLDs employ controlled defining vocabulary, they differ in the number of words used. OSDE's dust jacket tells us that 2,500 words are used as defining vocabulary; MED claims to utilize 2,300 words and LASD uses only 2,000 words. Neither MED nor LASD provide a list of defining vocabulary in the back matter whereas OSDE does. Moreover, OSDE informs us that any words that are not in the dictionary's 2,500 word-defining vocabulary are shown in capital letters and are usually explained in round brackets (e.g. the word ALLERGY, shown in Figure 2: OSDE (a) below). For MED, if a word used in a definition is outside the defining vocabulary, it is shown in capital letters but with no explanation, so users need to look up that word separately (see Figure 2, MED (b)). As for LASD, if a word used in the definition is beyond the restricted defining vocabulary, it will be shown in upper case either with or without explanation (see Figure 2, LASD (c)).



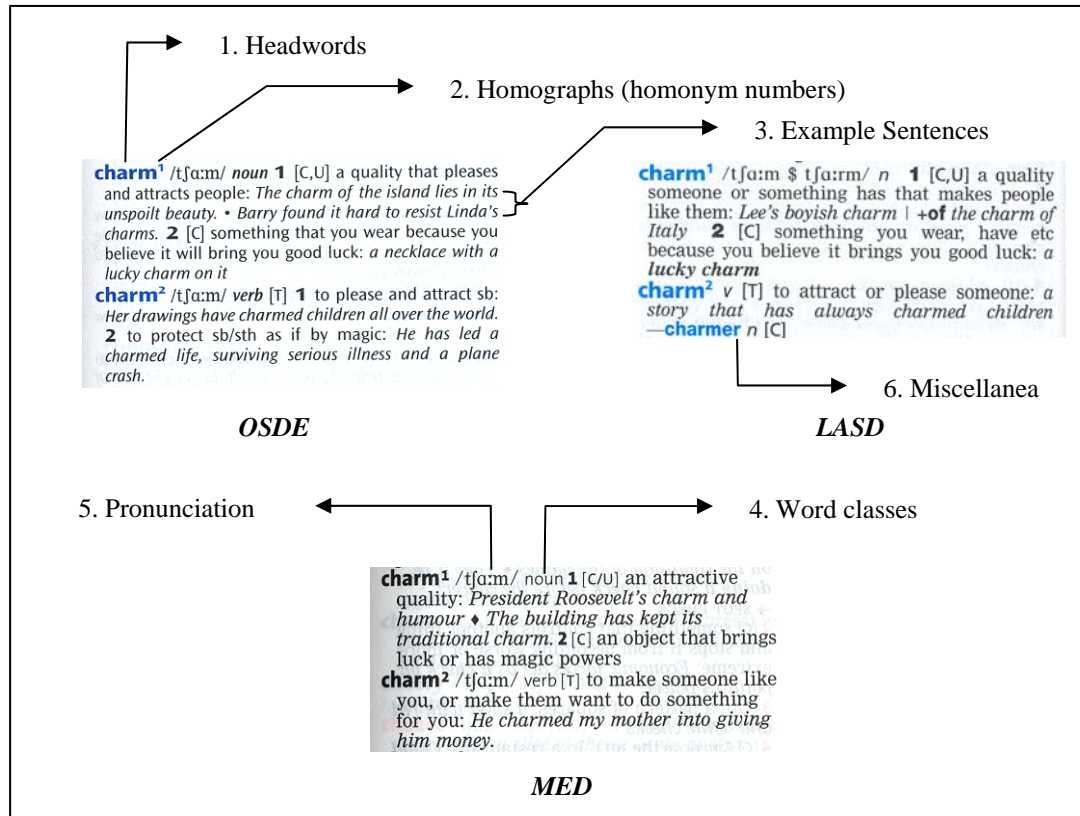
**Figure 2: How MLDs deal with words beyond controlled defining vocabulary**

For item 10 (reference section), it can be seen that OSDE provides a more comprehensive range of items in its reference section than the others. These are: 1) phonemic spellings, 2) irregular verbs, 3) geographical names, 4) periodic tables of elements, and 5) expressions using numbers. MED gives three out of five items which are the first three items above. LASD gives only the information on phonemic spellings and irregular verbs, and the researchers think that the reason why it excludes the last three items is that, compared to the first two, they are not directly involved in language learning.

## Microstructure of three MLDs

### Similarities of components within an entry

The following are the elements which are the same within entries: 1) headwords, 2) homographs, 3) illustrative sentences, 4) word classes, 5) pronunciation, and 6) miscellanea.



**Figure 3: Illustration of similarities of components in an entry**

**1. Headwords** These are words placed at the beginning of the entry (e.g. the word 'charm' in Figure 3); they are listed in alphabetical order whether they are written as one word (e.g. iceberg) or two (e.g. ice cap) or with a hyphen (e.g. ice-skate). OSDE gives headwords in general (not only frequently-used words) in blue (color is not shown in the figure), LASD in light blue and MED in black.

**2. Homographs** These have different running homonym numbers; in other words, the same word sometimes belongs to more than one word class, in which case, it is shown as a separate entry with a small number in superscript at the end of the headword. As can be seen from Figure 3, the headwords with superscript 1 are nouns and with superscript 2 are verbs.

**3. Illustrative sentences** These are given in italics, whether in the form of phrases or sentences, after the definition of each headword (see Figure 3). Examples are very important as they help users understand the headword and show how it is used in context. It can be noted from Figure 3 that OSDE and MED provide examples in both sentences and phrases whereas, in LASD, only phrases are provided.



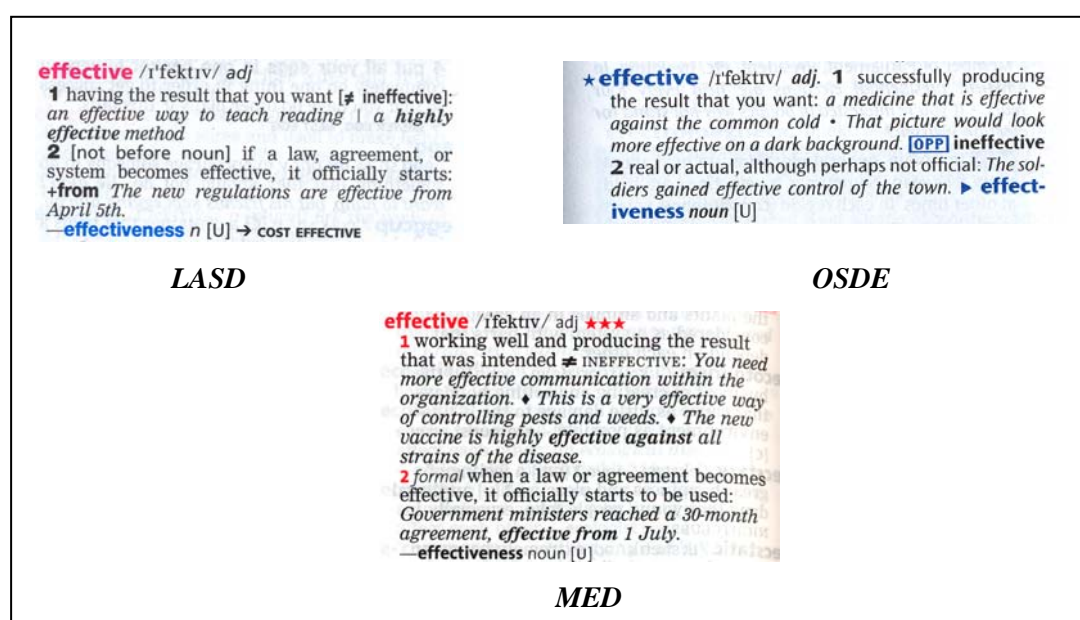
4. *Word classes* These are shown after the pronunciation, followed, depending on part of speech, by information on whether a word is countable, uncountable, transitive, intransitive, etc. It can be noted from Figure 3 that the word ‘charm’ can be both a noun and a verb; as a noun, it is labeled [C/U] and, as a verb, it is labeled [T].

5. *Pronunciation* This is shown by using IPA. A list of phonemic symbols is given on the back covers of OSDE and MED and on the inside front cover of LASD. It can be noted from Figure 3 that LASD provides American pronunciation of the word, indicated by the insertion of a dollar sign (\$) such as /tʃɑ:m \$ tʃɑ:rm/ in front of it whereas OSDE and MED do not.

6. *Miscellanea* Synonyms, antonyms, derived words, related words and cross references are either shown after the definition of the headwords or at the end of the entry; in Figure 3, the word ‘charmer’ is a derived word located at the end of the entry. Moreover, in order to serve users’ needs, there is full coverage of both American and British English (both orthographical and phonological) even though all three publishers are based in Britain.

#### *Dissimilarities of components within an entry*

1. *Organization of frequently used words* The symbols MLDs use to show frequently-used words vary (see Figure 4). OSDE uses one blue star, which is in front of the blue headwords (color is not shown in the figure), indicating frequently used words. In contrast, in LASD, they are printed in red, contrasting with headwords in general, which are printed in light blue. In MED, they are highlighted in red with a star rating ranging from one to three, depending on their importance and frequency, whereas general headwords are printed in black (cf. Figure 3).



**Figure 4: Organization of frequently-used words**

It can be noted that, by using one to three stars, MED provides more detail on degree of word frequency than the other two. Words with one star mean fairly common words such as ‘campaign’, ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘import’; two stars denote very common words such as ‘behave’, ‘friendly’ and ‘intelligence’; and three stars indicate the most

common and basic words such as 'easy', 'go' and 'have'. However, after the researchers checked these frequently-used words denoted by one to three stars in MED against the other dictionaries, it appears that all of these nine words except for 'campaign' are also marked as frequently-used words in OSDE and LASD. In other words, frequently-used words in one dictionary may not appear as frequently used in others. To the researchers, this is a natural phenomenon when talking about word frequency since publishers choose a variety of corpora as bases for compiling their dictionaries.

## 2. Organization of polysemous words

**★bill<sup>1</sup>** /bɪl/ noun [C] **1** a piece of paper that shows how much money you owe sb for goods or services: *the electricity/gas/telephone bill* • *to pay a bill* **2** (AmE **check**) a piece of paper that shows how much you have to pay for the food and drinks that you have had in a restaurant: *Can I have the bill, please?* **3** (AmE) = NOTE<sup>1</sup> (4): *a ten-dollar bill* **4** a plan for a possible new law: *The bill was passed/defeated.* **5** a programme of entertainment offered in a show, concert, etc.: *Topping the bill* (= the most important performer) is *Robbie Williams*. **6** a bird's beak  
**IDM** *foot the bill* → FOOT<sup>2</sup>

**OSDE**

**bill<sup>1</sup>** /bɪl/ noun [C] ★★★

1 amount that you owe	4 paper money
2 in a restaurant	5 bird's beak
3 proposal for law	

**1** a written statement that shows how much money you owe for goods or services that you have received: *a telephone bill* • *I always pay my bills on time.* • *I wonder what the bill for the repairs will be?*  
**2** a piece of paper that shows how much money you owe after you have eaten in a restaurant: *Could we have the bill, please?*  
**3** a written document that contains a proposal for a new law  
**4** American a BANKNOTE: *a \$100 bill*  
**5** a bird's beak  
→ FOOT<sup>1</sup>

**MED**

**bill<sup>1</sup>** /bɪl/ n [C]

**1** a list of things that you have bought or that someone has done for you, showing how much you have to pay for them: **+for** *The bill for the repairs came to \$650.* | **phone/electricity/gas/water etc bill** *Have you paid the gas bill?*  
**2** a list showing how much you have to pay for the things you have eaten in a restaurant [= **check** AmE]: *Can we have the bill, please?* → see box at **RESTAURANT**

**COLLOCATIONS**

If you have eaten in a restaurant and are ready to pay, you **ask for the bill**.  
If someone who eats with other people pays for the entire meal, they **pick up the bill**.  
If people share the cost of the meal between them, they **split the bill**.

**3** AmE a piece of paper money [= **note** BrE]: *a ten-dollar bill* → see box at **MONEY**  
**4** a plan for a new law: *The new education bill was passed* (=became law) *last week.*  
**5** **fit/fill the bill** to be exactly what you need: *This car fits the bill perfectly.*  
**6** a programme of entertainment at a theatre, concert etc  
**7** a bird's beak  
→ **foot the bill** at **FOOT<sup>2</sup>**

**LASD**

**Figure 5: Organization of polysemous words**

The way polysemous words are organized varies (see Figure 5). When meanings are very different, they are shown as separate senses with numbers. For MED, entries with five or more meanings will have a meaning menu, which is in red (color is not shown in the figure), at the top of the entry to make it easier for users to find the specific meaning they are looking for. For LASD, there are two ways in which the presentation of meanings is organized. First, if the entries have a few meanings, the presentation of meaning is in nesting form, which is all of the meanings or information is written within a single paragraph without using a new line to begin a new sentence. Second, entries with five or more meanings will use a new line to begin a new sentence in place of nesting. As for OSDE, the arrangement of meanings is done by means of nesting.

From Figure 5, it can be seen that there are some differences in the ways definitions are arranged. The first two are quite alike. However, for LASD, there is a collocation box

after the second definition when using the word 'bill' in this sense. This is a very useful and practical way to teach and learn vocabulary items. Also for the same meaning of 'bill', both OSDE and LASD provide the word 'check', which is the American English equivalent of 'bill' in British English, but MED does not.

Moreover, from the third definition onwards, it can be seen that the meanings given differ; for example, the third definition in OSDE and LASD is "a piece of paper money or note" whereas in MED it is "a written document that contains a proposal for a new law", which is the fourth meaning in OSDE and LASD. These might be explained from the information in LASD's guide to the dictionary, which says that the meanings of each word are listed in order of frequency (i.e. the most common meaning is shown first). In addition, as already mentioned, the three dictionaries were compiled from different corpora, which may provide different ranks of word frequency.

### **Conclusion**

Having presented the findings of macrostructure and microstructure of three MLDs, there follows a summary of the arguments for and against each dictionary.

For OSDE, there are four main disadvantages. They are its lack of an introduction, the matter of page and entry layout, the guide to the dictionary and illustrations. First, the researchers believe that it could be useful to consider the inclusion of an introduction in the front matter of the dictionary. This is because the introduction normally sets the scene for users and gives reasons why the dictionary should appeal to potential users, why users should possess it and, sometimes, its superiority over its competitors. Second, the researchers think that dictionary compilers should consider the possibility of innovating the presentation of page and entry layout in order to increase students' extrinsic motivation. This is because the target groups or customers are learners who are still at secondary level or at tertiary level as first- or second-year students aged around 15-18 years. Learners studying at these levels need a highly motivating dictionary at the outset. When they use a dictionary because they are interested in it or realize its value, whatever it looks like, they would not have much trouble using it. The third point is the guide to the dictionary, which may be too detailed for some learners compared to those of LASD and MED. Also, there should be some tips on using the dictionary so that it is more user-friendly and easier to access. Last, illustrations spread throughout the dictionary are still in black and white; using colorful illustrations may have a great effect on users' extrinsic motivation.

For OSDE's advantages, there are four. The first one is that it includes the total number of entries (47,000), more than LASD and MED. This implies that OSDE can best serve the needs of intermediate learners in terms of the total number of headwords. Second, compared to the other two dictionaries, OSDE contains more information on language (collocations, verb patterns, affixes, etc.), study skills (taking notes, essay writing, etc.) as well as encyclopedic information. This implies that, aside from vocabulary, there are chances for learners to acquire or pick up additional aspects of language, such as geographical names and periodic tables of elements. Third, OSDE uses more defining vocabulary (2,500 words) compared to MED and LASD (2,300 and 2,000 words, respectively); this would probably help to clarify word meanings. Last, the way OSDE handles the words beyond restricted defining vocabulary is the most user-friendly since the explanation of the words is presented in parentheses immediately after them; this could save users' time to search for these words again in the dictionary.

As for LASD, the drawbacks are its lack of an introduction, the least information about language contents and reference sections and inconsistency in organizing the words beyond restricted defining vocabulary. In terms of inconsistency of the words outside defining vocabulary, there are two ways in which the explanation is presented: the explanation is provided in brackets immediately after the definitions or there is no explanation in brackets after the words beyond the defining vocabulary.

The advantages of LASD are its modernity, its guide to the dictionary and illustrations. In terms of modernity, to date, LASD has been published four times compared to OSDE and MED, both of which have been published only once. This may reflect the popularity of LASD among its users; and, having been published frequently, it is likely that neologisms tend to be stored according to the nature of the English language, which is always changing. In terms of its guide to the dictionary, LASD's organization is more compact and descriptive than OSDE's and MED's. This could be more user-friendly to our young learners. The last point is LASD is more colorful than the other two; also, apart from color illustrations distributed throughout, there is a separate picture dictionary section in the middle.

For MED, there are three main pitfalls. The first one is its illustrations, which are still in black and white, although a few of them use red in the pictures. The second is its claim in its introduction to include more entries than any other intermediate learner's dictionary. In spite of this claim, MED gives no information about the total number of entries, which is another important factor involving users' consideration for buying a dictionary. The third one is its arrangement of the words outside defining vocabulary; that is, the explanation of the words is not provided. This is not user-friendly enough because, if learners do not know the meanings of the words outside defining vocabulary, they have to look them up again apart from their headwords. For its superior points, MED contains an introduction and makes use of a meaning menu for the polysemous words with five or more meanings. This is very user-friendly as it could help users look up the meanings more easily and quickly.

### **Pedagogical implications**

In this section, the salient points arising from the findings of the macrostructure and microstructure of each of the three MLDs are discussed; also, possible solutions to the problems arising and recommendations from this study are proposed. These points are considered from three viewpoints: those of learners of English, teachers of English and publishers.

To the researchers, there are at least two major issues regarding Thai learners of English in using MLDs. The first one is that they do not normally like to use MLDs. This may be because, in their opinion, MLDs are difficult to use and they often think they do not have enough vocabulary to understand the meanings given in English. Moreover, according to Scholfield (1982), the greatest difficulty for learners when they use monolingual entries is to find the right place in the headword list. This may be because MLDs provide word definitions in English; as mentioned above, students often claim the language in the definitions is way above their heads. Based on the findings of the study, this problem may be solved by making the explanations of the meanings easier to understand than the words being defined by using basic vocabulary that the learner is likely to know already as all three MLDs did by using controlled defining

vocabulary. The second issue is that Thai learners may not be aware of how MLDs can be best utilized; in other words, not many learners really know how to use them to assist their learning. This problem could be considered in two ways: they do not know what kinds of information are available in MLDs; and the manner in which dictionaries present their information often impedes access. Thus, training to use MLDs is essential.

For teachers of English, there are at least three major issues the researchers would like to note. First, they should act as good models of dictionary users to their students. Without this requirement, how can they train students to use MLDs? Second, they should encourage students to realize the importance of using MLDs in English language learning, and one way to do so is to give them recommendations for selecting a good dictionary. Based on this study, there are several criteria to be used as the starting point for consideration, for example:

- Are the contents of dictionaries modern?
- Are the explanations of use clear and simple? Do they have sufficient coverage?
- How many headwords are there in the dictionaries?
- Do they reinforce frequently-used words?
- How can students look for information on homonymous and polysemous words?
- How much defining vocabulary should be selected?
- Is any encyclopedic and cultural information provided?

For publishers, they might find the findings of this study useful especially some drawbacks to each MLD already mentioned in the conclusion; for example, the matter of introductions, illustrations, page and entry layout, the inclusion of explanations of words beyond controlled defining vocabulary and consistency in organizing words outside controlled defining vocabulary. The researchers believe that, if publishers can truly improve some of these problems, including innovating and modernizing their products, Thai students may gradually turn to and enjoy using MLDs compared to bilingual ones. However, it would be an accepted fact that, as expressed by Kirkpatrick (1985: 7), “it is impossible for any one dictionary to satisfy the needs of everyone, wide-ranging and diverse as these needs are”. This point corresponds to Atkins’ (1985: 17) idea that “the flavor of a dictionary is not the same, thus the value of a dictionary work must be estimated by its use”.

To conclude, the researchers would like to use Johnson’s (1755) saying, given in his dictionary, that “a dictionary is like a watch, even the worst one is better than none, but even the best, we cannot expect absolute precision”. This statement clearly gives a very clear idea that, although dictionaries are reliable sources of information for teachers and learners of English, yet they are not the final answer to English language teaching and learning; instead, they are like essential tools language learners should use with great care.

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