# Teachers and dictionaries in Australia: Is there a need to train the trainers?

*It has long been the desire of dictionary makers that students should not only use dictionaries more, but receive training in their use. Teachers are the obvious providers of such training, but are they in a position to provide it? The following survey of teachers of English to non-native speakers in Australian language schools and universities aimed to discover teachers’ attitudes to and use of dictionaries in their English classes, particularly in relation to learners’ dictionaries in the teaching of grammar, collocations and idioms. Although the majority of the teachers who responded to the survey used dictionaries themselves when preparing teaching material, only a few said that they provided dictionary training in class, and very few commented on specific uses that could be made of dictionaries. The findings reveal that of those teachers who were interested enough in dictionaries to return the questionnaire, several had good dictionary skills themselves, and some had ideas for dictionary improvement. Most were sympathetic to dictionary use, but few had received training themselves in this area. Many seemed still to be unaware of the potential advantages of an English learners’ dictionary in the language classroom. The majority of teachers in this survey were thus not adequately equipped to provide comprehensive training in dictionary skills for their students.*

**Introduction**

Monolingual English learners' dictionaries (LDs) present a key resource for language learning, and students are in theory encouraged to use such dictionaries. There are five dictionaries for advanced learners of English produced in the UK: *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary* (2nd edition, 2005); *Collins* *Cobuild* *advanced learner's English dictionary* (5th edition, 2006); *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (4th edition, 2005); *Macmillan English dictionary for advanced learners* (2nd edition, 2007); and the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (7th edition, 2005). There are also two Australian learners' dictionaries: the *Macquarie learners dictionary* (1999, but now out of print) and the *Australian learners dictionary* (1997, for intermediate learners). Since such a range of LDs is available, the question arises as to whether teachers actually use these resources and promote their use to students. Although investigation has been done in regard to users’ needs and attitudes, with several studies written in the 1980s, little research has been conducted to determine whether teachers themselves are aware of the value of LDs (Chi, 2003). Indeed, in the West, there appears to have been no such survey in regard to EAL teachers.[[1]](#footnote-1) There is also the question of whether teachers are in favour of bilingual dictionaries (BLDs) for language learners, since the communicative approach to language teaching has replaced the former grammar/translation method in which dictionaries obviously featured highly. The following study aimed to discover how much English language teachers in Australia knew about LDs, and how much they thought their students used and should use both LDs and BLDs. The study also addressed the suitability of the current LDs for use in an Australian context.

**Background**

Dictionary makers have been encouraging teachers for several decades to teach dictionary skills in class, but there has been little recent study of this area. In addition, more research has been conducted on users' needs than on teachers' attitudes. In 1973, Marckwardt wrote that many teachers failed to exploit this valuable resource for their English language students. Underhill (1985, p. 106) described how teachers were generally unaware of the pedagogical uses of monolingual English learners’ dictionaries. Hartmann (1987) admitted that little empirical research had been done in this area, but speculated that users were not receiving the instruction necessary to make full use of their dictionaries. Despite the continuing exhortations of lexicographers to use these resources, the situation had still not changed in 1998, when Wright called the idea of dictionary training “relatively new” (1998, p. 5) and Atkins confirmed that dictionary skills were not usually taught in schools and colleges (1998, p. 1).

Only a few researchers have questioned the role of the dictionary for language learners. Although Tomaszyk wrote in 1979 that learners need more instruction in dictionary use, he observed in 1987 that “dictionaries are not nearly as important to the average learner as some lexicographers and most teachers consider them to be” (p.145). This does not mean that dictionaries are not important in themselves, but rather that learners need to be shown their importance. Atkins and Varantola (1998), however, showed that training in dictionary use did not make students use dictionaries more. Lan's study of 801 Chinese university students showed that although they owned an average of four dictionaries each, the English learners' dictionary itself presented many problems for Chinese learners of English, especially in terms of dictionary styles and language pairs (Lan, 1997, p. 62). Extrapolations may be made from this study to other speakers of languages with a non-Roman style alphabetising system, in that simply finding an alphabetical entry quickly can prove a challenge. Also discouraging are studies by Miller (2005) and Nesi and Meara (1994), in which there was no improvement in the grammaticality of students' writing produced with the aid of a dictionary. These findings do not, however, detract from the dictionary's other roles in decoding and encoding, and in Miller’s study the lack of improvement may have been due to the short-term nature of the project.

The general consensus among researchers, however, is that dictionaries are useful for language learners and that dictionary skills need to be taught (Hartmann, 2003). If students do not use dictionaries effectively in their academic writing, this may be because they are uncertain about parts of speech, or have not yet learned the value of the dictionary. It may well be their own language knowledge and proficiency which are lacking (Hulstijn & Atkins, 1998), and which the teacher can help to address. Grammatical information provided by dictionaries has been highlighted by Bensoussan, Sim and Weiss (1984) and Lemmens and Wekker (1986), who specify that grammatical instruction would benefit students in using their dictionaries more effectively. Dictionaries can thus highlight gaps in grammatical knowledge and provide at least part of the remedy for those gaps, and teachers have a large role to play here. As Hartmann says, “…how to bring about effective user instruction and increase general dictionary awareness remains a universal desideratum” (2003, p. 44).

**Western teachers’ attitudes to dictionaries**

Opinions on the use of dictionaries in the language classroom range from the extreme (“Burn all bilingual dictionaries!”) to the non-committal (“So what is a learner's dictionary?”), indicating varying degrees of informedness. The communicative approach to language teaching, which some dictionary makers claim values context and communicative competence over linguistic accuracy (Herbst & Stein, 1987), may be one reason for such ambivalence. Wright (1998) also indicates that lack of lexicographical enthusiasm may be due to teachers being “vague about the role and status of the dictionary in the communicative classroom” (p. 10). Dictionaries can nevertheless be used for many communicative purposes, for example in the teaching of collocational patterns and idiomatic expressions which allow students to communicate more freely in the target language with their peers.

When language teaching is conducted through the grammar/translation method, which involves learning lists of vocabulary and grammatical structures, the bilingual dictionary is an essential tool in language production, providing equivalent expressions and lexemes in the target language. Although Western language teachers have largely moved away from this style of teaching, it is still favoured in many countries, such as China, where immersion in the English language is not possible and native speaker teachers are often not available. Modern technology has meant that BLDs are now available in electronic format, and many students own pocket electronic dictionaries which incorporate spoken pronunciation and can contain multiple versions of both BLDs and LDs. The fact that some of these gadgets are little more than ‘translators’, used by students to find a quick (and often inaccurate) equivalent of an L1 term in the target language, has given electronic dictionaries a bad name, and both teachers and students may be unaware of the presence of LDs in many electronic dictionaries (Miller, 2005). As yet, little empirical research has been done on the usefulness of electronic dictionaries in terms of language learning (Nesi, 1999), but students' enthusiasm for them is often not matched by that of their teachers.

One of the reasons that BLDs are seen as preferable by students is that the electronic versions are readily portable and contain a quick and easy (though not always accurate) translation (Miller, 2005). Many students use BLDs for decoding, but their use in encoding is more problematic. However, students often fail to use an LD efficiently because their knowledge of English grammar is weak (Nesi & Haill, 2002). Marello suggests that there should be “a staged learning progression from the fully bilingual dictionary to the MLD [monolingual dictionary]” (1998, p. 310). However, in order to achieve this teachers would need to have a greater understanding of the role and function of each type of dictionary.

Could the reluctance to use dictionaries in language instruction be due to the lack of confidence and knowledge which teachers in the Western world often display towards lexicography? While Chinese students and teachers, for example, have advanced dictionary skills, with all primary school students receiving instruction in dictionary use (Lan, 1997, p. 67), the situation in the West is very different. Indeed, it would be fair to say that few studies have examined Western teachers' attitudes to dictionary skills and their place in the EAL classroom, nor their own expertise in dictionary use (Chi, 2003, p. 2). Hartmann (2003, referring to Hartmann, 1999) maintains that there are “relatively low levels of dictionary awareness among university staff and students” (p. 43).

The lack of dictionary promotion by teachers has been partially blamed on trends in language teaching (Herbst & Stein, 1987). Herbst and Stein (1987) suggest overemphasis on communication to the detriment of grammatical accuracy and correct spelling as being partially responsible for the demise of the dictionary in the language classroom. This is unfortunate, since it is with good reason that the dictionary has been termed a “silent language teacher” (Stein, 1984, p. 126). Wright points out that while students are using dictionaries they are working independently, appealing to the teacher only as a facilitator, and the dictionaries themselves provide an additional and motivational resource (1998, p. 7). When students eventually leave the classroom environment, those who have been accustomed to using dictionaries will be equipped with new skills as autonomous learners (Cubillo, 2001, p. 166).

The study reported here aimed to discover teachers' attitudes to dictionary use by their students, and the amount of training teachers themselves had received, as well as their awareness of the LD as an English teaching and learning resource, particularly in relation to grammar, collocation and idiomatic expressions.

**Participants**

Fifty-five teachers of EAL in Australia took part in this study. Of these, 45 spoke English as a first language, three spoke a first language other than English and seven were bilingual. One had been teaching EAL for less than a year, and nine for between one and three years. Seventeen had been teaching EAL for between four and ten years, and 28 for more than ten years. Thirty-four taught English for academic purposes, 10 for business purposes, 11 for leisure and 34 for survival. (Since many teachers had students learning English for more than one reason, these numbers do not equal the number of teachers in the survey.) Students' current level of English was assessed as University level (6), University preparation (14), elementary (24), intermediate (27) and advanced (16). Again, there was some overlap in categories, so that students might be both University level and advanced. Thus the participants and their teaching contexts represent a fairly broad range of teacher and learner characteristics, giving an across-the-board ‘snapshot’ of teachers’ views. However, the numbers of respondents in individual categories were insufficient to allow any correlations to be drawn.

**Method**

An invitation to participate was initially made in 2004 via the Unilearn Listserv for academic skills advisors in universities throughout Australia. Thirteen people responded to this invitation by completing an attached questionnaire. After this disappointing response, invitations were sent electronically to directors of studies of language schools in Adelaide in 2005, with the request that the invitation be disseminated to their staff. This produced the more encouraging result of 38 responses. The questionnaire was then refined and sent to universities and language schools throughout Australia, eliciting a total of 55 responses. All responses were anonymous, and anonymity was preserved by the returning of questionnaires to a third party, who then removed the addresses and forwarded the attachments to the researcher. The survey aimed to discover teachers' awareness of LDs and training in their use; their attitudes to LDs as a teaching tool, with a focus on grammar and idioms; and their views on LDs, particularly for use in Australia. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.)

**Findings**

* **Teacher awareness and teacher training**

In general, attitudes to dictionary use were positive. In terms of awareness, a wide variety of dictionaries was referred to, some more generally, by publisher, others specifically by name. There were few surprises among those most commonly mentioned (see Table 1).

Table 1: Teacher awareness of dictionaries, as named (n=55)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Oxford (with 13 naming *OALD* specifically) | 34 |
| Collins (with 17 naming *COBUILD* specifically) | 18 |
| Cambridge | 11 |
| Longman | 11 |
| *Oxford picture dictionary* | 9 |
| Macquarie  | 6 |
| MacMillan | 5 |
| *Australian learners dictionary*  | 3 |
| *Macquarie learners dictionary* | 2 |
| *Wordwise* | 2 |
| *First picture dictionary*  | 2 |
| *Collins concise dictionary* | 1 |
| *Collins* *junior illustrated dictionary* | 1 |
| *First 100 words* | 1 |
| *First 1000 Words*  | 1 |
| *Macquarie school dictionary* | 1 |
| *Oxford* *Australian school dictionary* | 1 |
| *Oxford photo dictionary* | 1 |
| *The new Oxford picture dictionary* | 1 |
| *Webster's* | 1 |

Editions and complete names were usually not specified. Since 24 teachers had elementary level students, picture dictionaries featured highly in the list. Oxford, as the oldest LD, retained its place as the most well known. *COBUILD* came second, possibly because the name is distinctive and easy to remember. The *MEDAL* is hard to obtain in Australia. From an Australian perspective, it is disappointing that the Australian LDs were little known and little used. Dictionary awareness may also be largely reflective of the success of promotion by different publishing houses, and of the length of time for which the dictionary has been on the market.

Table 2 summarises the uses that the teachers made of learners’ dictionaries outside the classroom. Most respondents (51) claimed that they used dictionaries themselves when preparing lesson materials, either to check meanings or, more frequently, to prepare lessons based on dictionary information.

Table 2: The most common uses teachers made of learners’ dictionaries outside the classroom (n=55)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To prepare lesson materials | 51 |
| To prepare dictionary use exercises | 30 |
| To prepare vocabulary exercises | 8 |

These findings support Maley's claim (in Wright, 1998) that dictionaries are consulted most for their definitions. While native speakers often use dictionaries to check spellings (Kipfer, 1987), only one teacher in this survey suggested LDs to their students for this purpose. Harvey and Yuill (1997), however, claim that students need dictionaries primarily for spelling and meanings.

Twelve teachers had received training in dictionary use during their teacher training courses, but the longest time spent on this was two hours. Twenty-seven who had not received training thought this would have been a useful skill. One added:

 *I'm a teacher trainer and I use it when training CELTA and CERT IV TESOL candidates.*

Only five thought training was unnecessary. These responses indicate the realisation that dictionaries are a useful teaching aid which requires more consideration.

* **Attitude to LDs as a teaching tool**

Fifty teachers said that their students used LDs in class, 42 that they used electronic BLDs and 20 that they used paper BLDs. The attitude to LDs was more positive than towards BLDs (see Table 3). It is interesting to note that no teacher in this survey felt that dictionaries should never be used. It is also of interest that 50 teachers said that their students were using LDs, since many classrooms are not equipped with them, and students often do not own their own copies and, if they are part of an electronic dictionary, often do not refer to them (Miller, 2005). Of BLDs, one teacher commented:

 *sometimes a bilingual dictionary can save a lot of time and effort, so can be useful.*

Table 3: Teachers’ attitudes to student use of dictionaries in the classroom (n=55)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Teachers who perceived use of this dictionary in class by students | Teachers who thought this dictionary should **always** be used in class | Teachers who thought this dictionary should be used in class **for specific purposes** | Teachers who thought this dictionary should **never** be used in class |
| LD | 50 | 17 | 38 | 0 |
| Electronic BLDs | 42 | 1 | 47 | 7 |
| Paper BLDs | 20 |

Forty-four teachers felt that users' level of English affected their dictionary use, while only six felt that it made no difference. The general feeling is summed up by these responses:

 *It hinges on learner independence. Many use dictionaries as a crutch.*

 *At more advanced levels, students should be using clues from texts instead of relying too much on dictionary use. This will include guessing the meanings of words from the context, using clues from the word form itself to guess meaning. Lower level students will need to refer to their L1 dictionaries more as they have less language to draw on.*

The reference to L1 dictionaries suggests that the word “dictionary” seems to conjure up a BLD for most teachers (despite the information in Table 3 that 50 teachers had students who used LDs in class), and the suggestion that dictionaries are used as a “crutch” indicates a general lack of familiarity with LDs and their uses.

A large number of teachers (38) taught their students how to use a dictionary, with the most common use being to check word meanings (33) (see Table 4). The next most common uses were in the areas of alphabetical order, collocation and grammar, though teachers also used the dictionary to remind students of pronunciation, parts of speech and phrasal verbs (see Table 4). Thirteen teachers did not teach dictionary skills, generally because they believed that students already possessed these skills. This suggests that these teachers themselves are probably unaware of the range of uses of an LD. One teacher made the pragmatic comment:

*Too heavy to carry class sets into the classroom - as I tend to teach lower levels and it is good to have the same version across the class when doing such an exercise. Also, there are not that many exercises around for dictionary work and there just isn't the time any more now that we have become slaves to our owner's dollar.*

This highlights one of the problems of dictionary use and research – the expense and weight of paper LDs can make it physically hard for teachers to use these items on a regular basis. A CD Rom or online version would obviously solve many of these problems, if enough computers were available in a classroom. Another solution is to make more use of the LDs which are now increasingly available on electronic dictionaries.

Table 4: Use of LDs by teachers in class (n=55)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To check word meanings (both teachers and students) | 33 |
| To familiarise students with the English alphabet | 18 |
| To indicate collocation patterns | 18 |
| To reinforce grammar points | 17 |
| To teach pronunciation | 8 |
| To refer to phrasal verbs | 3 |
| To familiarise students with the contents of an LD  | 3 |
| To explore polysemy with students | 3 |
| To develop speaking skills | 2 |
| To explain parts of speech | 1 |
| To teach prepositions | 1 |
| To provide example sentences | 1 |
| To check spellings | 1 |

Over half the respondents (33) did not use LDs to reinforce their grammar teaching. Generally, they did not see how LDs could help in this area, although one expressed a readiness to learn:

 *Sts are expected to follow the lesson, and they can check these things later. If there is any problem with grammar, it's worked out without a dictionary. I can't see how a dictionary can help with these issues, but I'm willing to be shown.*

The remaining 22 teachers, however, gave more positive responses, exemplified by the following:

 *Yes. I use dictionaries to reinforce parts of speech, plurality and tense. At higher levels to show aspects of language such as countability and non-countability and transitive and intransitive verbs.*

 *Yes. Sample phrases and sentences given in a LD are one of the most important benefits.*

 *Yes. We use the dictionaries to discover the grammar points of words and phrasal verbs especially.*

In the more specific area of collocation, 34 teachers did not use LDs in their teaching, although three teachers admitted that they had not thought a dictionary could be used in this context but would be willing to try it in future. One made the disparaging remark

 *No. I use a real dictionary.*

perhaps unconsciously summarising the thoughts of many teachers towards LDs. A further 18 teachers did use LDs to teach collocations, finding the examples useful (see Table 4). One teacher stressed the need for students to own and be familiar with their own dictionary:

*Yes. I think this is where it is important for students to own a dictionary with which they can become very familiar. Prepositions and collocations are not - often - 'logical' - they must be known and should be checked.*

Another question aimed to discover whether teachers felt that the idioms in the dictionaries which they used were adequate for teaching purposes in Australia. Seventeen used dictionaries in their teaching of idioms, but three commented:

 *This is where we need good Australian learners dictionaries.*

 *We need an Australian Oxford English Dictionary.*

 *Yes. I have a basic one in class but don't know of any comprehensive ones for Australian idioms.*

Thirty-six teachers did not use dictionaries in this way.

* **Teachers' views on LDs**

In response to question 18, “Are you happy with the content of the English learners' dictionary/ies you currently use? Please comment”, 26 teachers replied that they were happy, ten were mostly happy and four were unhappy. Three said they would like more Australian content. Question 20, “Would more pictorial information help your students? Please comment”, evoked a majority response of 37 teachers who wanted more pictures in their dictionaries. One teacher said:

 *Yes. Students have fed back that they like pictorial sections and refer to them often.*

Another indicated that students may be visual learners and respond well to pictorial examples. A third mentioned the usefulness of illustrations for learning lexical sets:

 *Yes. I find a lot of students like to refer to a pictorial dictionary, and it has a couple of advantages: they can see items with the English words and no extraneous information to comprehend, and they can learn a lexical set of words such as transport words together.*

One teacher indicated the usefulness of pictures for demonstrating the different words used in different countries:

 *Yes. In some cases and using Australian spelling and names in use (eg cantiloupe* [sic]*/melon)*.

This would certainly be an excellent way of introducing comparisons between varieties of English.

One person added the cautionary note:

 *Yes, but I can see the dictionary would become much bigger . . . And harder to carry to and from the classroom!*

The majority of teachers (39) thought that the LDs they used were appropriate for students studying in Australia, although eight had reservations:

 *Yes - though a few obvious additions with idioms would help.*

 *It's OK but we miss out on some typically Australian language.*

 *Mostly yes but some things are very British English based*

 *Yes. Sometimes - language is place-specific so of course an English dictionary may now be a bit outdated in Australia.*

*Yes/No. There seems to be little Australian content in the Collins Cobuild dictionary. An Australian based dictionary is needed.*

 *Yes/No. Not always appropriate, especially re pronunciation.*

 *No. It is too Britishcentric - our school doesn't have any Australian-based ones. Are there any?*

 *No. Not enough Australian colloquialisms.*

One teacher, however, felt that Australian content was unnecessary:

 *Yes. I don't use Australian dictionaries as I find that students do not need pure Australian English or Australian colloquialisms.*

These findings indicate that while the overall content of the dictionaries was adequate, a more Australian flavour would have been welcomed by many teachers.

The “further comments” section elicited the following remarks:

 *Only that an up-to-date version of the Oxford "Use Your Dictionary" workbook would be very valuable as a resource to go with any Australian LD, but I don't know if such a resource is available.*

 *I think more teachers need training on how to effectively use dictionaries in the classroom. Many teachers think they should be banned but they can be a very effective tool.*

*Student resistance to using monolingual dictionaries is an issue. Teachers need professional development in how to teach their students how to get the most out of a monolingual dictionary.* *EAP students should also learn to use a thesaurus in concert with a dictionary - but that is another area of research!*

There were few complaints about dictionaries in general, which may reflect the fact that those who responded to the invitation were already kindly predisposed towards them. One teacher, however, complained:

*I think Learners' dictionaries are too basic, lacking the vocab secondary and tertiary students need and sometimes dodgy in their definitions.*

Another felt that dictionaries had no place initially in the language learning process:

*I personally do not advocate the use of dictionaries to learn a language. I see them as a backup to be used after trying other ways to discover what it is you need to learn about a language.*

One teacher gave the response:

 *generally speaking I discourage continued reference to dictionaries - I encourage guessing word meaning from context. If the students need to check meaning, it is quicker to use an electronic dictionary.*

This response is surprising in its honest reference to the possible use of electronic dictionaries, which most teachers in this survey disliked.

**Limitations**

Although this study was based on an earlier pilot survey, with the questions refined and the range of the potential respondents extended, only 55 teachers responded. Since the questionnaire was sent to all schools and universities in Australia, it may be assumed that teachers were too busy, were suffering from questionnaire fatigue, or were not interested in dictionaries. This last possibility may, of itself, indicate the necessity for greater teacher education in this area.

**Recommendations**

It seems that teacher training in the potential uses of an LD is largely lacking, but that the majority of teachers in this survey felt they would have benefited from such instruction. While most teachers used LDs, many felt their knowledge of them as a teaching tool could be increased. Many teachers also wanted more specifically Australian content.

**Conclusion**

The main findings of this study are that although the teachers felt that students should use LDs often, and used dictionaries themselves when preparing lesson material, few expounded directly on the uses that could be made of dictionaries in classroom work or the contribution that dictionaries might make to independent learning skills. Over half the teachers did not use dictionaries to help with grammar and two thirds did not refer their students to dictionaries for collocations or idioms. The majority of teachers were reluctant to endorse the use of BLDs in class. Publishers of the *OALD* may be gratified to see their dictionary mentioned by 84% of respondents, but the relatively lower figures for the other dictionaries are not encouraging. Since the study was conducted in Australia, it might have been expected that more than three teachers would have been aware of the *Australian learners dictionary*. However, this may say more about marketing strategies and educational budgets than about teachers' general attentiveness to emerging resources. Although most teachers were happy with the LDs they used, there were several calls for more Australian content. It seems that much more investigation needs to be done to determine just how teachers might be encouraged to use LDs effectively in their classrooms. As Chi (2003, p. 5) claims, “I believe research into the teaching of dictionary use has not yet begun”. There is further scope for study in this area, particularly within an Australian context.

**References**

Atkins, B. T. S. (1998). Introduction. In B. T. S. Atkins (Ed.), *Using dictionaries: Studies of dictionary use by language learners and translators* (pp. 1-5). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Atkins, B. T. S., & Varantola, K. (1998). Monitoring dictionary use. In B. T. S. Atkins (Ed.), *Using dictionaries: Studies of dictionary use by language learners and translators* (pp. 84-122). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

*Australian learners dictionary* (1997). Sydney: NCELTR Publications.

Bensoussan, M., Sim, D., & Weiss, R. (1984). The effect of dictionary usage on EFL test performance compared with student and teacher attitudes and expectations. *Reading in a foreign language 2*(2), 262-276.

*Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary* (2nd ed.) (2005). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Chi, A. (2003). *An empirical study of the efficacy of integrating the teaching of dictionary use into a tertiary English curriculum in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Language Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

*Collins COBUILD advanced learner's English dictionary* (5th ed.) (2006). London: HarperCollins.

Cubillo, M. C. C. (2001). Dictionary use and dictionary needs of ESP students: an experimental approach. *International Journal of Lexicography 15*(3), 206-228.

Hartmann, R. R. K. (1987). Four perspectives on dictionary use: a critical review of research methods. In A. P. Cowie (Ed.), *The dictionary and the language learner: Papers from the EURALEX seminar at the University of Leeds, 1 - 3 April 1985* (pp. 11-28). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Hartmann, R. R. K. (2003). Why lexicography needs a strong academic foundation. In M. Murata, S. Yamada & Y. Tono (Eds.), *Dictionaries and language learning: How can dictionaries help human and machine learning? Papers submitted to the Third ASIALEX Biennial International Conference* (pp. 42-48). Tokyo: Asian Association of Lexicography.

Harvey, K., & Yuill, D. (1997). A study of the use of a monolingual pedagogical dictionary by learners of English engaged in writing. *Applied Linguistics 18*(3), 253-278.

Herbst, T., & Stein, G. (1987). Dictionary-using skills: A plea for a new orientation in language teaching. In A. P. Cowie (Ed.), *The dictionary and the language learner: Papers from the EURALEX seminar at the University of Leeds, 1 - 3 April 1985* (pp. 115-127). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Hulstijn, J. H., & Atkins, B. T. S. (1998). Empirical research on dictionary use in foreign-language learning: survey and discussion. In B. T. S. Atkins (Ed.), *Using dictionaries: Studies of dictionary use by language learners and translators* (pp. 7-19). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Kipfer, B. A. (1987). Dictionaries and the intermediate student: Communicative needs and the development of user reference skills. In A. P. Cowie (Ed.), *The dictionary and the language learner: Papers from the EURALEX seminar at the University of Leeds, 1 - 3 April 1985* (pp. 44-54). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Lan, L. (1997). Dictionaries and their users at Chinese universities: with special reference to ESP learners. In T. McArthur and I. Kernerman (Eds.), *Lexicography in Asia* (pp. 61-80). Jerusalem: Password Publishers Ltd.

Lemmens, M., & Wekker, H. (1986). *Grammar in English learners' dictionaries*. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (4th ed.) (2005). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

*Macmillan English dictionary for advanced learners* (2nd ed.) (2007). Oxford: Macmillan Education.

*Macquarie learners dictionary* (1999). Sydney: Macquarie University.

Marckwardt, A. H. (1973). The dictionary as an English teaching resource. *TESOL Quarterly 7*(4), 369-379.

Marello, C. (1998). Hornby's bilingualized dictionaries*. International Journal of Lexicography 11*(4), 292-314.

Miller, J. L. (2005). English learners’ dictionaries: An undervalued resource. *TESOL in Context 15*(2), 30-37.

Nesi, H. (1999). A user's guide to electronic dictionaries for language learners. *International Journal of Lexicography 12*(1), 55-66.

Nesi, H., & Meara, P. (1994). Patterns of misinterpretation in the productive use of EFL dictionary definitions. *System 22*(1), 1-15.

Nesi, H., & Haill, R. (2002). A study of dictionary use by international students at a British university. *International Journal of Lexicography 15*(4), 277-305.

*Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (7th ed.) (2005). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stein, G. (1984). Towards a theory of lexicography: principles and/vs. practice in modern English dictionaries. In R. R. K. Hartmann (Ed.), *LEXeter ’83 proceedings.* Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Tomasczyk, J. (1979). Dictionaries: users and uses. *Glottodidactica 12*, 103-119.

Tomasczyk, J. (1987). FL learners’ communicative failure: implications for pedagogical lexicography. In A. P. Cowie (Ed.), *The dictionary and the language learner: Papers from the EURALEX seminar at the University of Leeds, 1 - 3 April 1985* (pp. 136-145). Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Underhill, A. (1985). Working with the monolingual learners' dictionary. In R. Ilson (Ed.), *Dictionaries, lexicography and language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Wright, J. (1998). *Dictionaries, lexicography and language learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Appendix 1**

**Information about you**

1. Is English your first language?

2. How long have you been teaching English?

3. Do you know the names of any English learners' dictionaries?

4. Have you ever used an English learners' dictionary when preparing English teaching materials? If yes, how did you use the dictionary? (For example, did you use it to check the meanings of words yourself; to prepare a dictionary exercise; to familiarise students with the English alphabet; or to help students focus on grammatical items?)

5. Was information about English learners' dictionaries included in your teacher training course? If yes, how much time was devoted to this instruction, and what were you taught?

**Information about your students**

6. Are your students learning English for Academic purposes/Business/Leisure/Survival in another country?

7. What is the level of your students' current English study?

 University/University preparation/Other: Elementary/Intermediate/Advanced

8. Do your students ever use English learners' dictionaries in class?

9. Do your students ever use bilingual dictionaries in class?

10. Do you ever recommend a certain dictionary to students? If yes, which dictionary/ies do you recommend, and why?

**Information about dictionaries as a teaching tool**

11. How often do you think students of English should use English learners' dictionaries in class? Always/For specific purposes/Never

12. How often do you think students of English should use bilingual dictionaries (including electronic dictionaries) in class? Always/For specific purposes/Never

13. Do you think students' levels of English affect their dictionary use?

14. Do you teach your students how to use a dictionary? If yes, please give details. What do you teach and how long do you spend on teaching dictionary skills? If no, please comment.

15. Do you ever use an English learners' dictionary in class to reinforce grammar points (e.g. countability, transitive/intransitive verbs)? Please comment.

16. Do you ever use an English learners' dictionary to help students learn prepositions and/or other collocations? Please comment.

17. Do you ever suggest your students should use an English learners' dictionary to help them learn idiomatic expressions? Please comment.

**Your views on English learners' dictionaries**

18. Are you happy with the content of the English learners' dictionary/ies you currently use?

 Please comment.

19. What information would you like to see in an English learners' dictionary for your classroom?

20. Would more pictorial information help your students? Please comment.

21. Is your learners' dictionary appropriate for students learning English in Australia? Please comment.

22. Are there any further comments you would like to make?

1. Throughout this paper, the acronym EAL is used to refer to English as a second, foreign or additional language. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)