

# Oxford

## **Guide to the practical usage of English monolingual learners' dictionaries:**

Effective ways of teaching dictionary use in the English class

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## Introduction

Various types of dictionaries exist throughout the world. For non-native speakers learning the English language, English monolingual learners' dictionaries play an important role. The first full-fledged dictionary in this field was the *Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary* published by Kaitakusha Publishing in Japan in 1942 (edited by Hornby et al.), which later became the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)*. English monolingual learners' dictionaries have developed amidst fierce competition among publishers and in a context influenced by the growing importance of English as a global language, the development of linguistics and lexicography, and technological progress. It would be reasonable to say that English monolingual learners' dictionaries are the most advanced in all dictionary genres in terms of compilation methods, information quality, and presentation methods. These dictionaries are useful tools and resources for non-native speakers studying English. Today many English monolingual learners' dictionaries are available online at no charge. In addition, handheld electronic dictionaries for advanced learners contain multiple dictionaries, and learners may also use applications on their smartphones. As electronic dictionaries can be freely searched, having several paper dictionaries across a desk and constantly referring to them appears to be something of the remote past. Personal preferences exist with regard to dictionaries, but in my opinion, the usage of English monolingual learners' dictionaries is a reliable way to improve English-language abilities. Why not use them? It is a good idea for non-native speakers to have English monolingual learners' dictionaries as one option on the desk or at the fingertip. In this guide, I will discuss dictionaries that support learning activities of Japanese people in terms of the reception (reading and listening) and production (writing and speaking) of English with a special focus on receptive-type English monolingual learners' dictionaries. Examples of specific activities will also be introduced. I hope that this guide will prove useful for the better utilisation of dictionaries in classes and in individual study.

\* This is the English translation of the original version written in Japanese for the use by Japanese teachers of English. Although most parts are believed to be useful for international EFL readerships, it will be helpful for non-Japanese readers to replace "Japan" and the "Japanese language" with their country/region and native language, in order to make sense of the content (e.g., "English-Japanese dictionaries" correspond to "English-Spanish dictionaries" for Spanish speakers). However, there are inevitably several parts applicable only to Japanese and Japanese use. The below activities, for example, need to be tailored for the reader's linguistic situation:

Looking up English words related to Japan (p.11)

Looking up loan words from English (p.11)

Comparing English definitions with Japanese translational equivalents (p.11)

Translation of the entry of "obsession" (**Pair and group work**, p.15)

## 1. Purpose and significance of using dictionaries

Dictionaries are primarily tools for quick reference. However, when using a foreign-language dictionary, an element of learning is added to the goal of reference. It does not matter whether this is seen to be an added value, effect or end. English monolingual learners' dictionaries conscientiously teach the meaning of words, grammar, pronunciation and culture, and also present models for output. In this sense, these dictionaries are too good to be used only for reference. Nowadays, websites rapidly display the translations of words, and some may find the task of consulting a dictionary troublesome. However, dictionary consultation facilitates self-study. Using a dictionary presents a significant learning opportunity, as it increases knowledge, polishes one's sense of language and enhances the power of expression. It also presents an opportunity for unexpected discoveries. Moreover, the use of multiple dictionaries expands learners' perspective even more and further deepens their understanding. In order to fully enjoy the act of consulting a dictionary and maximise its benefits, it is necessary to learn about the different types of dictionaries and how to use them.

## 2. Dictionary usage and how to teach it

What does it mean to be able to use a dictionary? Although people often consult a dictionary in a casual manner, in reality this demands a complex and advanced intellectual process. Let us refer to Figure 1 and consider the two abilities needed to use a dictionary in relation to the teaching of those abilities. To use an English monolingual learner's dictionary, for example, a foreign student is required to have **general linguistic ability** (English) and **dictionary-specific ability**. The dictionary-specific ability can be divided into **static knowledge** (familiarity with kinds of dictionaries and their functions) and **dynamic knowledge** (use of practical dictionary consultation methods). These two types of knowledge apply before and after the dictionary is opened, respectively. The dynamic knowledge can be subdivided into "general" and "specific", depending upon the applicability to all (or most) dictionaries or only certain ones. The general linguistic ability should be developed in **general language lessons**, while the dictionary-specific ability through the **teaching of dictionary use**. The teaching component concerned with static knowledge is referred to as **guidance**; that with dynamic knowledge as **instruction** (Yamada 2001: 116-117).

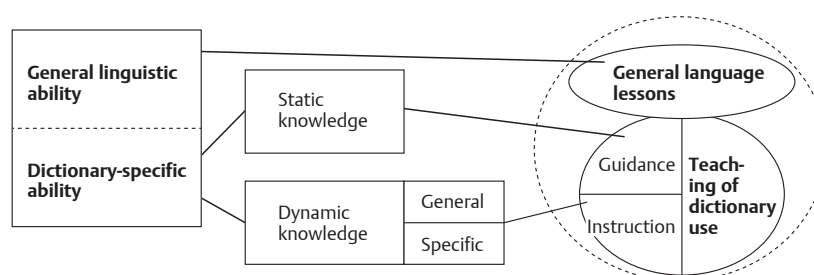


Figure 1. Two abilities entailed in dictionary use and teaching thereof (Yamada 2001: 125)

Let us now examine in greater detail static and dynamic knowledge in the context of dictionary use.

## 3. Dictionary types and characteristics

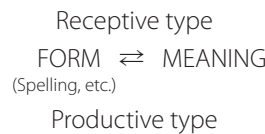
### 3.1 Dictionary typology

Today, a great variety of English dictionaries exist, but their classification is not straightforward. To select and use dictionaries appropriately, it is valuable to recognise the different types of dictionaries that exist and their classification. They may be classified according to the following categories (note that these classifications are not exhaustive and, in some cases, they represent trends as opposed to categories): scale and scope (general or specialised; linguistic or encyclopaedic; diachronic or synchronic); format (alphabetical or thematic); principle (historical, frequency); approach (descriptive or

prescriptive); information category; number of languages; medium (print or electronic); use (receptive or productive); target audience (native or non-native speakers); search method (alphabetical order, index); compilation method (corpus usage, translation); publication objective (academic, commercial) (Koike et al. 2003: 652).

### 3.2 Two directions for dictionary searches

Henceforth, I will present a general overview of useful English dictionaries for Japanese learners. These dictionaries can be divided into receptive and productive types. Let us consider the two goals of dictionary usage. First, for example, when people encounter an unknown word when reading an English-language newspaper, they refer to an English-Japanese dictionary. Second, if they do not know the proper English word to express a certain meaning when writing an e-mail in English, they refer to a Japanese-English dictionary. The figure below thus depicts the two directions of dictionary searches:



When encountering an unfamiliar word in an English-language newspaper, looking up the meaning of the word in an English-Japanese dictionary (FORM  $\rightarrow$  MEANING) involves a receptive search. In contrast, a productive search relates to the use of a Japanese-English dictionary to find out how to express a certain Japanese meaning in English (MEANING  $\rightarrow$  FORM) when writing an e-mail in English.

The following English dictionaries can be used by Japanese people for reception and production:

**Reception:** English-Japanese dictionaries and English-English dictionaries (for native and non-native speakers)

**Production:** Japanese-English dictionaries, thesauruses, synonym dictionaries and collocation dictionaries

The headwords in English-Japanese and English-English dictionaries are arranged in alphabetical order. They are primarily dictionaries used for receptive purposes, although this does not exclude their usage for production. A special knowledge about synonyms, for example, is required when using these dictionaries for productive purposes. English-Japanese and English monolingual learners' dictionaries also include information relevant for production such as grammar, collocation, synonyms, common errors and so forth.

### 3.3 English dictionaries for reception



This guide will now explore the characteristics of dictionaries that may be used by Japanese people for reception, by comparing English monolingual learners' dictionaries with dictionaries intended for native speakers and then English-Japanese dictionaries.

#### 3.3.1 English monolingual dictionaries for native and non-native speakers

There are two types of English-English dictionaries: for native and non-native speakers. The former type is the equivalent of Japanese-language dictionaries for Japanese speakers. On the other hand, English monolingual learners' dictionaries target non-native speakers learning English. Let us compare the definition of "dog" in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (for native speakers), and the *OALD*, (for non-native learners):

a domesticated carnivorous mammal that typically has a long snout, an acute sense of smell, non-retractile claws, and a barking, howling, or whining voice.

<*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3rd ed. 2010. Oxford University Press.>

 [C] an animal with four legs and a tail, often kept as a pet or trained for work, for example hunting or guarding buildings. There are many types of dog, some of which are wild. *I took the dog for a walk.* ◇ *I could hear a dog barking.* ◇ *dog food* ◇ *guard dogs* ◇ *a dog and her puppies*  
 see also GUIDE DOG, GUN DOG, HEARING DOG, LAPDOG, PRAIRIE DOG, SHEEPDOG, SNIFFER DOG, TRACKER DOG

< *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 8th ed. 2010. Oxford University Press.>

Compared with a dictionary for native speakers, the definition found in the dictionary for non-native learners does not contain difficult terms, and also provides examples. It is clear that a considerable difference exists between the two types of dictionaries in terms of their level of difficulty and approachability. Learners' dictionaries, including English monolingual learners' dictionaries, have the following characteristics (Koike et al. 2003: 665):

- Concentration on lexical information with selective entry words and senses
- Detailed descriptions for basic vocabulary items
- Pronunciation indicated in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
- Indication of the un/countability of nouns and sentence patterns
- Easy-to-understand definitions using defining vocabulary
- Wide range of examples and illustrations

One reason that English-English dictionaries may seem difficult or troublesome relates to the anxiety occurred when a learner consults a dictionary to look up the meaning of a word and the explanation contains expressions that are not understood; in turn, these expressions must also be looked up in the dictionary. However, the definitions in English monolingual learners' dictionaries are composed of 2,000 to 3,500 basic vocabulary items (defining vocabulary\*). If the usage of additional words is necessary, measures are taken to avoid leading the user astray in the manner as described above, such as by directly adding annotations in parentheses. When Japanese university students use English monolingual learners' dictionaries, it is often observed that they consult them with unexpected ease, even though they perhaps previously avoided them due to their perceived difficulty. In general, non-native speakers should start by first using English monolingual learners' dictionaries. Currently, various English-English dictionaries are available online at no charge, but guidance and consideration are required so that inexperienced learners do not feel overwhelmed or have adverse reactions when turning to English-English dictionaries for native speakers without knowing the mismatch of readership.

\* Some English monolingual learners' dictionaries of Oxford University Press base definitions on **The Oxford 3000™**. These basic words, which should initially be mastered by learners, are selected according to such standards as their frequent usage in a wide range of fields and a lack of alternate words expressing the same meaning. They are treated in depth in dictionaries, and a key mark is placed in front of the entry word.

### 3.3.2 English monolingual learners' dictionaries and English-Japanese dictionaries

A student incorrectly interpreted "moving up" as 'increasing' in the following sentence:

The issue of age in the workplace is rapidly moving up the political and business agenda.

<Nic Paton, "Age-old problem for baby-boomers", *The Guardian*, Saturday 6 July 2002; <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2002/jul/06/workandcareers.jobsandmoney>, Guardian News and Media Limited. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.>

What led to this misinterpretation? As the student took "agenda" (*gidai* in Japanese) to mean *mondai* ('problem'), he perhaps mistakenly translated the original phrasal verb "move up" as *zōdai sa-*

*seru* in Japanese, which means ‘increase.’ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online* defines “agenda” as follows:

a list of problems or subjects that a government, organization etc is planning to deal with  
<*LDOCE Online*; <http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/agenda>,  
Pearson Education Limited. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.>

An “agenda” is “a list of problems or subjects” (emphasis added). Given this definition, “move up” should be interpreted as ‘move to the top (of a list)’—in other words, ‘become a priority issue (that should be handled first)’. The aforementioned student did not grasp the true meaning of the English, so he made the mistake of trying to make it meaningful in Japanese.

The most significant difference between monolingual and bilingual dictionaries is that the former provides definitions of entry words, while the latter provides translational equivalents. When looking up “dog” in an English-Japanese dictionary, the Japanese word for “dog”, *inu*, appears. Certain people may likely consider this to be sufficient, and this actually presents no major problems when confirming the meaning of specific things such as flora and fauna. However, in most other cases, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between English and Japanese—which have an entirely different structure and organisation—so disparities exist in their meanings. As seen above, *gidai* is merely an approximation of one aspect of “agenda”. To resolve these gaps in meaning, English-Japanese dictionaries may attempt to project the scope of entry word meanings by providing multiple translational equivalents or qualify the meaning of translational equivalents with notes (Kojima 1984: 48-49). Benjamin Lee Whorf states, “We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language.” For learners with upper-intermediate proficiency or higher, it becomes important to apply the rule of English to individual contexts using English-English dictionary definitions and examples as clues, and then interpret the word according to the conventions of English. By reading English-language definitions, learners get greater exposure to English and learn the language within its own system. Nevertheless, Japanese still feel a sense of convenience and peace of mind when quickly confirming a meaning in their native language. Japanese equivalents can help understanding and retention of English words. English-Japanese dictionaries are considered top-ranking in the world among bilingual dictionaries for reception, and various measures and considerations have been taken to bridge the gap between the two languages. For specialised terms, English-English dictionaries do not provide an instinctual understanding, although they are suitable for preparing for classes conducted in English. In short, it is essential to use English-Japanese and English-English dictionaries for different purposes according to the user’s level, preferences, goals, and circumstances.

### 3.4 English dictionaries for production

Let us now turn to dictionaries that can be used by Japanese people for production: Japanese-English dictionaries, thesauruses, synonym dictionaries and collocation dictionaries.

#### 3.4.1 Japanese-English dictionaries

When Japanese people produce output in English, many think in Japanese. Japanese-English dictionaries pinpoint and teach English expressions that correspond to Japanese words and phrases. Japanese people certainly do not use Japanese uniformly and they have differing senses of language. Furthermore, they write or speak English in a wide variety of situations and contexts; it is thus a near impossible task to create a dictionary that caters for all of these activities satisfactorily. The compilation of Japanese-English dictionaries progressed rapidly during the mid-1980s, and practical dictionaries have been published since then.

In addition to the effective utilisation of Japanese-English dictionaries, learners should also make efforts to improve their output by using synonym and collocation dictionaries, which have different perspectives in complement to Japanese-English dictionaries.

### 3.4.2 Thesauruses and synonym dictionaries

Synonym dictionaries can be divided into two types: dictionaries that list synonyms and those that explain the differences in meaning between synonyms. Thesauruses make users aware of the existence of synonyms and are convenient for native speakers who already understand their meaning and usage. Generally, synonym dictionaries that include an explanation of meanings help non-native learners to produce texts and increase their vocabulary. However, technology has made thesauruses for native speakers considerably accessible to non-native learners. When a thesaurus is incorporated in a hand-held electronic dictionary, users can easily check the meaning of an unknown word in the thesaurus with the monolingual and bilingual English dictionaries bundled together through the “jump” function — just by highlighting the word, pressing the jump function key, and designating a dictionary to check the meaning in. Synonym dictionaries for native learners (children and students) also provide good reference and learning materials for non-native learners.

### 3.4.3 Collocation dictionaries

“Collocation” refers to the “affinity” between different words. Simple Japanese examples include *shōgi wo sasu* (‘play *shōgi*’) and *go wo utsu* (‘play *go*’), but conversely, *shōgi wo utsu* and *go wo sasu* are not acceptable. These expressions use two different verbs for ‘to play’. The verb *suru* (‘to do’) can signify ‘play’ in this case, but it sounds clumsy. For this reason, a close relationship is said to exist between the noun *shōgi* and verb *sasu*, and between the noun *go* and verb *utsu*. Information about these types of relationships known as “collocations” are provided in collocation dictionaries. “Coffee” is described as *koi* (‘thick’) or *usui* (‘thin’) in Japanese, but as “strong” or “weak” in English; hence, the collocates cannot be directly translated from Japanese. It can thus be said that one-to-one relationships rarely exist between Japanese and English at the level of collocation. Therefore, knowledge of collocation is essential for the output of correct, accurate and fluent English.

Collocations comprise a “base” and a “collocate”. For example, with the collocations listed below, the general rule when looking up collocations is to search for the base (in bold):

- Adjective + **noun**: strong **coffee**
- Verb + **noun**: consult a **dictionary**
- Preposition + **noun**: in a **handout**
- Verb** + adverb: **drink** heavily
- Adverb + **adjective**: deeply **grateful**

## 4. Important points when selecting English monolingual learners’ dictionaries

Various types of English monolingual learners’ dictionaries have been published by many publishers. Although this may be confusing, learners should choose a dictionary according to their goals, level and preferences. It is a sound idea to pick up a paper dictionary before choosing it and examine the entire dictionary, and the Japanese blurbs on the cover or case. It is not always true that learners’ dictionaries are better if they include a larger quantity of words. Budgets are applicable in the creation of dictionaries—which are commercial products—and this naturally determines the total number of pages. Increased vocabulary means reducing the amount of examples and usage notes as well as other useful information. In practice, it is useful to compare dictionaries by looking up several words as common yardsticks in multiple categories such as basic vocabulary (function and content words), specialised terms, neologisms and so forth. Learners should verify that they can understand the definitions and examples and easily find the desired information. They should look at the usage notes and appendices.

It is also useful to refer to the websites and catalogues of different publishers. In some cases, publishers provide lists of available dictionaries according to goal and level (standards like the TOEIC® and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]). It is important to note that in general small pocket learners’ dictionaries are aimed at advanced students.



Regarding online dictionaries, important points to verify are the inclusion of audio recordings of pronunciation, the availability of the function of double-clicking a word to check its meaning, search facilities for set phrases, wildcard search, search speed and whether the advertisements are intrusive. The following list provides online English monolingual learners' dictionaries (basically for advanced students) available at no cost, along with brief comments:

**Cambridge Dictionaries Online:** <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

- Features a unique structure in which word meanings are organized under guidewords (meaning subheads).
- Elementary, intermediate and advanced EFL dictionaries and bilingual ones are available.

**CollinsDictionary (COBUILD):** <http://collinsdictionary.com>

- Different parts of speech are included under the same head word.
- Senses are arranged in frequency order.
- Full-sentence definitions are universally used.

**Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online:** <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

- The frequency of use for entry words is indicated on a scale from one to three for written and spoken language.
- Signposts (meaning subheads) are used to aid searches for word meanings.

**Macmillan English Dictionary Online:**

[http://online.macmillandictionary.com/mc\\_au2/macmil.htm](http://online.macmillandictionary.com/mc_au2/macmil.htm)

- Menus are utilised to aid sense location.
- Features an easy-to-view, simple structure.

**Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary:** <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/>

- An American English monolingual dictionary for non-native learners.
- Contains a large amount of examples, including information about rewording.

**Oxford Learner's Dictionary Online:** <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

- Displays academic words that are frequently used in scholarly fields.
- Short cuts (meaning subheads) are utilised to aid searches for word meanings.

## 5. Important points regarding the usage of English monolingual learners' dictionaries

### 5.1 Seven-step dictionary look-up process

Let us now consider dictionary look-up mechanisms for reception and production. The act of consulting a dictionary is a complex, advanced intellectual activity as described above. Hartmann (2001: 89-92) divides this process into the following seven steps:

- 1) Activity problem
- 2) Determining problem word
- 3) Selecting dictionary
- 4) External search
- 5) Internal search
- 6) Extracting relevant data
- 7) Integrating information

When learners are able to use a dictionary appropriately, all of these steps are completed consciously or sub-consciously. This model is an abstraction of looking up a word in a paper dictionary and applies to searches in both directions (reception and production). Let us now use Hartmann's model to consider the usage of English monolingual learners' dictionaries for receptive purposes.

## 5.2 Dictionary look-up for reception

### 1) Activity problem

Users must first recognise the problem and then decide whether a word should be looked up and whether a dictionary should be used. If the correct decision is not made at this "entrance" point, users will not consult a dictionary and will thus continue reading with an incomplete or incorrect interpretation; hence this is an extremely important step. Whether or not a word should or even can be looked up depends greatly on users' English-language proficiency (vocabulary and reading comprehension) as well as their feel for dictionary use. To use a dictionary properly, it is important for users to try using a dictionary regularly in order to familiarize themselves with the process.

### 2) Determining problem word

Users then determine the problem word to be consulted. It is important at this stage to ascertain whether it is a compound noun, phrasal verb or idiom.

### 3) Selecting dictionary

To select a suitable dictionary, users must be aware of the different types of dictionaries that exist (and are available for use) as well as their characteristics. It is beneficial to use different dictionaries for different purposes and search targets; for example, large-scale English-Japanese dictionaries are suitable for specialised terms and English monolingual learners' dictionaries for looking up basic vocabulary items. Although it is fine to use only one's preferred dictionaries, today many dictionaries are available to use for free on the Internet and it is easy to access multiple dictionaries of a single genre. By using various kinds of dictionaries, users can respond to a wide range of situations. Therefore, it is necessary to understand dictionary types and characteristics, and use them for different circumstances.

### 4) External search

Users then determine the entry word under which the required information is located. In many cases, each part of speech of a word is dealt with in a separate entry in English monolingual learners' dictionaries, thus grammatical knowledge is essential. In general, nouns are to be consulted in singular form, and verbs and adjectives in base form. Although idioms are presented according to different principles, they are often included under the first key word of the idiom. In addition, users must be aware that each dictionary differs in terms of whether a certain word or compound word is given as a headword or as a sense.

### 5) Internal search

After finding the headword for a polysemous word, users must select one of the several meanings corresponding to the context of the reading. Each meaning is assigned a number. In English monolingual learners' dictionaries based on corpora, senses are usually arranged according to their frequency of occurrence (starting with high-frequency meanings). To select the appropriate meaning in English monolingual learners' dictionaries, users must read a large amount of English-language definitions and examples, which used to be very difficult. To reduce this, "shortcuts" are now added to meanings given for polysemic words. Shortcuts consist of synonyms, related words, selectional restriction, context, partial definitions and so forth. These concisely indicate what sub-entries signify, which helps users narrow down and identify the relevant meanings. In the *Macmillan English Dictionary (MED)*, "menus" (list of shortcuts) are included at the beginning of items with multiple meanings.

In dictionary consultation for receptive purposes, users search for the meaning (FORM → MEANING). Therefore, they should depend on "form" as a clue for their "semantic" search. To facilitate this search, English monolingual learners' dictionaries explicitly provide the following useful information: un/countability of nouns ([C] and [U]), attributive and predicative uses of adjectives, in/transitivity of verbs ([I] and [T]), selectional restriction and grammatical and lexical patterns. Users should make effective use of this information according to the situation.

## 6) *Extracting relevant data*

After locating a word meaning, users must choose the information from the definition and examples required to resolve the identified problem. Unlike English-Japanese dictionaries, consulting an English monolingual learners' dictionary involves an additional step of interpreting the information provided in English. It is true that consideration has been taken to make definitions accessible with defining vocabulary and full-sentence definitions. However, definitions are abstract, compared with examples, and may still involve special language and complicated structure in an effort to pack as much useful information as possible into a limited space. Let us now examine the fundamental points that are useful when interpreting definitions.

### Basic definitions

To interpret a definition correctly, users must understand the general rules. Nouns are mainly defined according to the pattern of "genus + distinguisher". In the *OALD Online*, "chair" is defined as follows:

A piece of furniture for one person to sit on, with a back, a seat and four legs

Genus	Distinguisher

*<Oxford Learner's Dictionary Online;*

[http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/chair\\_1](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/chair_1), Oxford University Press>

The genus is a more general, superordinate word for the word being defined. The distinguisher may be expressed using adjectives, participles and relative clauses. This fundamental definition pattern can also be widely applied for output, such as when explaining things Japanese in English.

In the past, for other parts of speech, it was likewise standard to give definitions using phrase forms (for example, defining adjectives with adjectival phrases) that could be used to replace the entry word. This principle helped to save space, but contributed to making definitions difficult to understand. Accordingly, full-sentence definitions were introduced, that is, definitions based on regular ways of writing that could be immediately understood upon reading. *COBUILD* defines the word "familiar" as follows:

If someone or something is **familiar** to you, you recognise them or know them well.

*<CollinsDictionary.com;*

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-cobuild-learners/familiar>,  
HarperCollins Publishers. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved>

*COBUILD* gives the definition as a complete sentence and uses a tone that resembles a teacher speaking to a student. The meaning is easy to understand after reading it once. However, caution is still required. Full-sentence definitions frequently begin with "if". The *if*-clause indicates the (principal) usage pattern(s) for that particular meaning of the headword, and the meaning is provided in the main clause. Nevertheless, if the defining sentence is simply translated into Japanese and interpreted without knowing this principle, learners will become confused by the semantic overlap between the *if*-clause and of the main clause and not understand the definition. In addition, full-sentence definitions were introduced for ease of understanding, but given their tendency to incorporate many components in pursuit of accuracy, such sentences may have complex structures containing relative clauses, participles, parenthetical expressions and so forth. Therefore, it is important to fully understand these characteristics.

### Words and phrases often used in definitions

As a matter of convenience, some phrases and syntax are frequently used in definitions. A familiarity with these is useful in order to understand the definitions accurately and promptly. Let us look at several representative examples:

### “Cause ... to do ...”

Verbs are usually defined in the infinitive form that begins with “to”. “Cause ... to do ...” is frequently used to define transitive verbs. Also, the causative verb “make” is sometimes used.

### “In a particular way”

*OALD Online* defines “count” as below. The variant part (“as income” in the example), as represented as **somebody/something**, is expressed as “in a particular way”. Learners must take care not to misinterpret this, such as “in a special way”, which is incorrect:

**count as somebody/something | count somebody/something (as) somebody/something**

to consider somebody/something in a particular way; to be considered in a particular way

◇ **count (somebody/something) as somebody/something**

*For tax purposes that money counts / is counted as income.*

<*Oxford Learner's Dictionary Online*;

[http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/count\\_1](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/count_1), Oxford University Press>

### “The case”

As described in p.8, the *if*-clause in a defining sentence indicates a pattern for using the entry word. The second defining sentence in *COBUILD* (shown below) indicates that “happen” can also be used in the pattern “It + happens + that-clause”. “Something is the case” means that ‘something is true’ and fills in the *that*-clause in the defining sentence, which cannot be left blank:

If you **happen** to do something, you do it by chance. If it **happens** that something is the case, it occurs by chance [emphasis added].

<*Collins Dictionary.com*;

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-cobuild-learners/happen>,

HarperCollins Publishers. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.>

### “Someone ... they”

In the past, the masculine singular form (“he”, “his”, “him”) was used to refer to “someone”, “everyone”, etc. However, in order to be politically correct, the unisex term “they” is now used. This practice was quickly introduced into the full-sentence definition in English monolingual learners’ dictionaries (refer to the definition for “familiar” [p.8]).

### “sb” and “sth”

“sb” and “sth” stand for “somebody” and “something”, respectively. They are also used to indicate grammatical patterns. While obvious to advanced learners, this trivial factor can hinder beginners. Therefore, suitable guidance at an early stage is required.

## Definition structure

Definitions include multiple components and may have a parallel or layered structure. To interpret a definition, users must correctly understand how the definition is structured, and then identify the information that is useful for their purpose. In doing so, one must also consider how portions of the definition correspond to the examples. (For more details about the interpretation of definitions and examples, refer to the Japanese translations of “obsession” in section 6.4 [p.15])

## 7) Integrating information

Looking a word up in a dictionary is certainly not a routinized, linear process. Being able to accomplish one’s goal effortlessly on the first attempt is of course a good thing, but learners will sometimes go back and forth, stop what they are doing and be forced to make adjustments in their approach. Built upon the results of the preceding steps, Step 7 thus constitutes an important component that brings the look-up process to completion: information obtained from a dictionary

is applied to solving the problem arising from the context at hand. I believe this step to be closely linked to the preceding step (6) Extracting relevant data). Users may have to go between these steps several times to finish off their dictionary consultation successfully.

### 5.3 Dictionary look-up for production

Let us move on to dictionary use for productive purposes. Dictionaries essentially only provide direct solutions to problems within or between sentences. Here, I will focus on collocation searches, which solve the former type of problem.

#### Two approaches for collocation searches

If you wish to say *Densha wa supiido wo mashita* ('The train sped up') in English but do not know the appropriate verb (blank space below), what should you look up in what dictionary?

The train (        ) speed.

There are two possible approaches for collocation searches, which depend on paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. The paradigmatic approach is a method to search among expressions that can be substituted, such as synonyms. For example, this type of method could involve consulting a Japanese-English dictionary to find the meaning of the verb *masu* and an English-English synonym dictionary to look up "increase", for example. In contrast, the syntagmatic approach is a method to search for words that are used together based on grammar and collocation. For example, by looking up the base "speed" in a collocation dictionary, verbs that occur with it can be searched. Also, examples can be searched under "speed" in English-Japanese and English monolingual learners' dictionaries to check which verbs are used with it. Through these approaches, users may discover word combinations such as "gain speed".

In addition, in hand-held electronic dictionaries, the keywords of "train" and "speed"—or the Japanese keywords *spiido* and *masu*—can be input to search for example sentences including these words.

Dictionary usage for production is complex and may require confirming grammar and usage in English-Japanese or English monolingual learners' dictionaries. Considering the wide range of objectives and circumstances for writing or speaking English, the amount of information in individual English dictionaries for production is not sufficient. To convey the intended meaning as close as possible, it is necessary to maximise dictionary use—to use different dictionaries appropriate to the different contexts and/or to use them in combination.

## 6. Activity ideas

Finally, to help Japanese people use English monolingual learners' dictionaries, I will introduce examples for specific classroom activities. I will discuss these according to four categories: introductory activities, activities for reception, activities for production and comprehensive activities.

### 6.1 Introductory activities

Dictionaries written entirely in English may initially seem difficult to students and somewhat threatening. In an effort to reduce their fears and to make them feel a sense of familiarity, it is a good idea for teachers to use a (print) dictionary first to make the students aware that the dictionary is not so intimidating as it looks but actually is usable with useful aspects from which they can benefit. One important factor is for learners to consult known words in the dictionaries.

#### Exploring illustrations

English monolingual learners' dictionaries include hundreds of illustrations and photographs, which enhance their explanatory effects. How does one say *ashi* ('tentacle') or *kyūban* ('sucker') of an

octopus in English? The illustration under “octopus” (in *OALD8*) informs that these words correspond to “tentacle” and “sucker”. Like this, some illustrations deal with parts in relation to the whole, and others draw together related items. In some cases, illustrations also help learners become aware of different cultures and stereotypes (for example, the illustration for “shutter” in *OALD8*).



octopus



shutter

### Looking up English words related to Japan

Using the Advanced Search function included in CD-ROMs that come attached to some English monolingual learners' dictionaries, a search for the keyword “Japan” or “Japanese” provides a list of headwords that derive from Japanese or are related to Japan (it is also a good idea to first ask students about Japanese words that have become part of English). By seeing how Japanese words are described in English definitions, learners become more familiar with English-language definitions. One idea is to give students quizzes in which a teacher reads out the English definitions and then the students try to guess the headword. (A similar type of activity can be devised for sayings from a cross linguistic perspective by searching a CD-ROM dictionary for the keyword “saying.”)

### Looking up loan words from English

There are often differences in meaning between foreign loan words (Japanese) and the original words (English). The semantic discrepancies are dealt with in Japanese-English dictionaries. However, confirming meaning disparities from English to Japanese provides an interesting activity when introducing English monolingual learners' dictionaries. In these dictionaries, senses are usually arranged in order of frequency — the first sense is the one used most frequently by native speakers. Differences can be highlighted by comparing the meanings of loan words with the first senses of their original English words. For example, try looking up the following words: *businesslike*, *businessman*, *challenge* (verb), *claim*, *mannerism*, *sense*, *smart*.

### Comparing English definitions with Japanese translational equivalents

As often pointed out, re-looking up known words in an English monolingual learners' dictionary is an effective way to confirm meanings and become familiar with the dictionary. When introducing it, in particular, it is ideal for students to have eye-opening experiences to make them aware of the differences between English meanings and Japanese equivalents; English monolingual learners' dictionaries are convenient tools for teaching these differences. I recommend that students should look up words such as the following, and pay attention to the differences in meaning compared with the corresponding Japanese-language translations:

- not bad: *warukunai* (the meaning is more positive in English than in Japanese)
- climb: *noboru* (the word in English also expresses downward and sideways movements)
- international: *kokusaiteki* (the application is wider in English, also meaning 'bilateral')
- willing: *yorokonde . . . suru* (the meaning is always very positive in Japanese)

### Reading usage notes

Some definitions are difficult to understand because they are succinctly written, involving special grammar and/or language. On the other hand, usage notes are relatively easy to read because they are written in regular English, though some may contain specialised terms. English monolingual learners' dictionaries contain hundreds of useful usage notes relating to synonyms, grammar, British and American differences, etc. In addition to referring to the usage notes in class, it is a good idea for students to

read some or all usage notes to become familiar with the dictionary and increase their knowledge.

## 6.2 Activities for reception

Despite the recommended usage of English monolingual learners' dictionaries, it is still difficult to give these dictionaries to learners and expect them to use them outright. It is in fact quite challenging for learners to clear all seven steps of Hartmann's consultation model by themselves. Therefore, I suggest teachers control the look-up process for practice. This means carefully planning dictionary look-up exercises to progress from easy to difficult and from simple to complex, and from exercises addressing each step individually to those handling a sequence of steps – without overloading students. I will now introduce examples of specific activities related to several steps in the Hartmann model.

### <To develop skills for Step 1) Activity problem>

[Activity] Underline the words in the following text that you want to look up in a dictionary.

But what if your dishwasher stops working? Or your computer crashes?

Should you pay someone to repair it, or should you buy a new one?

It's often hard to know what makes the most financial and environmental sense. Here are some rules of thumb to help you decide whether you should repair or replace a broken item.

<Hutchinson, Tom and Kristin Sherman. 2013. *Network: Student Book 4*. Oxford University Press. p.73.>

[Teaching notes] Problems may not necessarily arise from single lexical items. Senses of a basic word may go unnoticed without being checked in a dictionary. Related to Step 2 (determining problem word), it is advisable to keep alert to multi-word items (e.g., idioms "make sense" and "rule of thumb" above). If the combined meaning of individual words do not make sense, it is possible that set phrases are involved. It is important to be able to pick up and look up idioms in a dictionary.

### <To develop skills for Step 4) External search>

[Activity] What headword should you look up to research the meaning of the underlined portion?

1) A recent study by the Consumer Electronics Association reports another interesting development. It states that almost a third of the new and more innovative electronics are sold to women.

<Sarosy, Peg and Kathy Sherak. 2013. *Lecture Ready 2*. Oxford University Press. p.3.>

2) Either way, workers of all ages, but particularly those in their 30s and 40s, are suddenly waking up to the fact they may have to work well beyond the traditional 65 if they want a comfortable retirement.

<Paton, Nic, "Age-old problem for baby-boomers", *The Guardian*, Saturday 6 July 2002; <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2002/jul/06/workandcareers.jobsandmoney>, Guardian News and Media Limited. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.>

[Teaching notes] In English monolingual learners' dictionaries, if a single headword contains multiple parts of speech, it is typical to have separate headings for each part of speech. Therefore, when searching for a word with multiple parts of speech, learners should use their grammatical knowledge to identify the part of speech. "States" and "well" above relate to the verb ('say') and the adverb ('to a great degree'), respectively. In addition, special care must be taken in looking up compounds and derivatives because they are given as headwords, senses or run-ons, and the placement may vary between dictionaries.

<To develop skills for Step 5) *Internal search*>

[Activity] Which sense should you examine to research the meaning of the underlined portion?

1) Well, companies are obliged to provide a link for you to unsubscribe from mailing lists. But the huge numbers of unsolicited emails will carry on growing and might one day saturate the Internet completely.

<Chapman, Rebecca. 2007. *Express Series: English for Email*. Oxford University Press. p.60.>

2) I quite like when a presentation ends on a bit of a high note.

<Hughes, John & Andrew Mallet. 2012. *Successful Presentations*. Oxford University Press. Unit 6.>

[Teaching notes] When using a dictionary to look up a meaning, the general rule is to start by looking for form-based clues. For sentence 1), students should be aware that “carry on” is followed by a verb in *-ing*. On this ground, they can identify a sense using clues such as patterns displayed in bold and examples, and find the definition for “carry+on+v-ing”. For Sentence 2), students can take the same approach as 1) by looking for the pattern “on a ... note”.

When practicing the location of senses, exercises should progress from items with a few meanings to those with many meanings, and likewise from terms with easy-to-understand clues to those that are more difficult to understand.

<To develop skills for Step 7) *Integrating information*>

[Activity] Carefully study a definition and think of suitable Japanese translations for the headword portion of each example.

[Teaching notes] I previously mentioned that Steps 6 and 7 are a closely linked sequence in which the learner may go back and forth between the two steps (**7) *Integrating information***, p.10). This method is aimed at simply practising this sequence. Students should compare their individual Japanese translations of the headword portion of the examples in pairs or groups, and then discuss how these translations were created. They will observe the differences in the interpretations of the definition and their senses of the Japanese language, which will stimulate their thinking and enrich their understanding. Students should definitely be able to provide a basis for their translations from the dictionary.

After each individual step, students should practise the sequence in several steps. For example, the last activity can be extended to the sequence from Steps 5 to 7 by using additional examples from CD-ROM dictionaries (e.g., “EXAMPLE BANK” in *OALD8*). Students begin by thinking about which sense corresponds to the headword item of each additional example.

**6.3 Activities for production**

[Activity] Define familiar objects in English.

[Teaching notes] It is a good idea to ask students to define concrete nouns with distinctive features. Use the “genus + distinguisher” formula. If writing definitions is too difficult, it is acceptable for students to only suggest the genus, in the beginning. After writing individual definitions, students should consider these in pairs or groups to create better definitions. The results should be compared with definitions in the English monolingual (learners’) dictionaries. The students should refer to the definitions in multiple dictionaries, revise their definitions and then each group presents their results in class. Furthermore, ask students to apply the created definitions to define nouns of the same category (e.g., from “butterfly” to “moth” and “dragonfly”).

With the Advanced Search function of CD-ROM dictionaries, students can view a list of entry words with definitions containing the word “insect”. Related words that may be useful for defining insects—such as “abdomen”, “bite” and “sting”—will also be obtained through this search.



[Activity] Think about how to say *raibaru no jakuten wo tsuku* ('exploit a rival's weakness') in English.

[Teaching notes] If *raibaru* can be translated as "rival", the next issue relates to the verb-object collocation for *jakuten* (object) and *tsuku* (verb). There are two approaches for collocation searches based on paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. If students consult a Japanese-English dictionary, a synonym dictionary, and/or a collocation dictionary, they will likely find collocations such as "take advantage of [exploit] somebody's weakness [weak point]".

## 6.4 Comprehensive activities

### Comparing different dictionaries

In order to consistently guide students on how to use dictionaries in class, it is ideal for every student to have the same dictionary. While this was not easy in the age of print dictionaries, nowadays students can take advantage of the multiple online English monolingual learners' dictionaries available at no charge. This creates a good environment for teaching how to use dictionaries in the classroom. The features and usage methods for each dictionary can be explained, with the hands-on training taking place while students consult the dictionaries online.

In addition, it is now possible for students to consult and compare dictionaries of the same genre. As explained in **4. Important points when selecting English monolingual learners' dictionaries**, six English-English dictionaries for advanced non-native learners are available online at no cost. Even though they belong to the same genre and have the same target audience, these dictionaries are not the same in terms of their structure and content. In some cases, the information not found in one dictionary (entry words, word meanings or patterns) is located in another. By reading definitions from different angles, students can gain deeper meanings. Moreover, various nuances and facts may come to light for the first time by encountering examples in multiple dictionaries.

I explained the usefulness of English monolingual learners' dictionaries to my students and had them actually use them. This was inspired by my desire for students to experience the real pleasure of using English monolingual learners' dictionaries and enable them to make use of this genuinely useful resource for their English studies. I gave them advice related to the usage of the dictionaries in three levels spanning from minimal to proactive. Students have different English-language skills, ways of thinking and preferences, so it varies by student as to how far they go:

- i) Students should not reject dictionaries before using them. (If students have used English monolingual learners' dictionaries in the past and decided that they do not like them, they may choose not to use them, or only use them as a supplement to other types of dictionaries.)
- ii) Students should find dictionaries that they like. (Students should find at least one English-English learner's dictionary they like and use it in a style that suits them, but it would be even better to use two dictionaries or more.)
- iii) Students should strategically use dictionaries for different purposes. (Students should thoroughly learn the unique features of dictionaries, assign them priority according to their goal and situation and start searching in the dictionary that seems likely to provide the best result.)

### Pair and group work

Dictionary consultation is an individual and private act. Except in special circumstances, there is no input from other people and no way for a student to know how other people use dictionaries. In addition, students have different vocabularies and search styles, so there is no one way of using them. Using a dictionary is also an ancillary activity, which is not a goal in itself. As a result, students do not realise or remember how they use dictionaries. Accordingly, as discussed above, it is effective to incorporate pair or group work when teaching dictionary use. It is very useful for students to reflect on how they look up words in dictionaries and compare their look-up processes with those of other people. This may also help improve their dictionary search abilities.

**[Activity]** Search for the underlined word in multiple (online) English monolingual learners' dictionaries and consider the most appropriate Japanese equivalent. Write down any definitions or examples that were useful during this process.

I believe the primary factor is obsession over customers.

<Jeff Bezos, "To Stay Focused on Our Customer", July 27, 1998. In Kamioka, Nobuo. *Meienzetsu de Manabu Amerika no Bunka to Shakai (Learning American Culture and Society through Famous Speeches)*. 2010. Kenkyusha. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.>

**[Teaching notes]** Although the word to be looked up is specified, this comprehensive problem involves referring to multiple dictionaries during the final part of the search process from Steps 5 to 7. By comparing different dictionaries, you will find the various levels of meaning for the word "obsession". In this context, it is used in a positive sense to mean 'being customer-centred'. Students should begin by doing the activity individually and then move on to considering this problem in pairs or groups. Afterwards, they should present their Japanese translations and basis for these translations in class. In order to review how to interpret the definitions and examples, the Japanese translations of the definition and examples of "obsession" (taken from *MED*) are shown below:

an emotional state in which someone or something is so important to you that you are always thinking about them, in a way that seems extreme to other people

(誰かまたは何かがとても大切に、他人には異常と思われるレベルでそのことばかり考えてしまう心理状態)

**obsession with:** Jack's obsession with personal cleanliness annoys everyone.

(...への執着：ジャックの潔癖症には皆が閉口している。)

The girls' interest in the star had bordered on obsession (=was almost an obsession).

(その少女のそのスターへの思い入れは狂気に迫った。)

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### Utilisation with maximum effectiveness

Dictionaries are not all-purpose; the information included in them is limited due to various factors. Two primary factors lead to unsuccessful dictionary searches: either the dictionary or the user is to blame. Even when dictionary look-ups are unsuccessful, it is possible to effectively draw out information from the dictionary by slightly changing one's viewpoint and taking other approaches.

**[Activity]** Fill in the blank space with the English term for *honkaku* ('real') in the phrase *honkaku chūka*:

(       ) Chinese dishes

**[Teaching notes]** If you try the paradigmatic approach, Japanese-English dictionaries and synonym dictionaries will provide "authentic" as one answer. However, it is difficult to find the appropriate adjective when searching in collocation dictionaries using the syntagmatic approach. Collocation signifies the affinity between different words, so relations that do not meet or exceed a certain level of closeness are not included in such dictionaries. In other words, the relationship between the noun "dish" ('food') and the adjective in a sense of 'real' is not sufficiently close. In this case, it is a good idea to look up different food-related nouns for adjective collocates meaning 'real'. The answer can be found at "cuisine", "recipe" and "taste" in *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (2nd ed., 2009). The answer is "authentic" again. In dictionary searches, it is

essential that students do not give up easily. They will not always find satisfying information, so at times they must use dictionaries in a “makeshift” manner. Learners should also improve their attitudes and abilities related to using dictionaries and search techniques to ensure they get the most from the information available.

Teaching how to use dictionaries in the classroom is an ideal and essential activity for helping students to use English monolingual learners’ dictionaries. Materials for guidance are widely available, so it is not difficult to incorporate dictionary components into classes. Teachers are in a unique position because they are also dictionary users themselves and can observe students’ dictionary use and provide guidance on dictionary usage. This knowledge is also valuable for the further development of English monolingual learners’ dictionaries. For this purpose, it is my hope that teachers, dictionary makers and researchers will exchange information on the content, usage and teaching use of dictionaries.

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<http://www.obunsha.co.jp/service/wp4/pdf/wp.pdf>

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