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Online English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries

Introduction

The article presents the history of dictionary making, with special reference to English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries (MLDs) available online. Most well-established publishing houses offer them free of charge. Because such versions differ in their design and layout, the present contribution discusses the options that can prove helpful for their users (be it students or teachers). Its aims include characterising, comparing and contrasting some of the features of a typical entry in online English MLDs. Consequently, the scientific approach adopted in the analysis is a mixture of the comparative and the empirical method.

Although the article is related to previous research into a dictionary entry structure and dictionary design, it mainly focuses on online MLDs and presents a case study (an end-user perspective). The issue of (digital) MLDs and their users has already been under investigation, but either in a broad context (see Heuberger 2020; Lew 2011; Müller-Spitzer 2014), in the context of specific users (see Frankenberg-Garcia 2020), or only in passing (see Calzolari, Picchi, Zampolli 1987: 73–74; Nesi 2009: 472–476).

The following sections present (a) a brief account of the early history of dictionary making and English Monolingual Dictionaries, (b) distinctive characteristics of Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries, and (c) a case study and selected features of online English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries.

1. English Monolingual Dictionaries – the beginnings

Explaining (foreign) words in interlinear or marginal glosses had had a long tradition before alphabetical and thematic word lists appeared:

> The alphabetisation of word lists goes back to the Latin–English glossaries compiled by scholar monks during the Old English period, but so does the arrangement of vocabulary by topic (Jackson 2002: 147).

Although the alphabetical tradition dominated, remarkable thematic word books were also compiled. According to Jackson (2002: 148), *Ianua linguarum reserata* (*The Gate of Tongues Unlocked*) by Johann Amos Komensky (1592–1670) is a notable example.

At first, alphabetical vocabulary lists were bilingual, coupling English with Latin, later French. English monolingual dictionaries evolved from the 15th century word lists compiled for various reasons (Osselton 2009: 132). The emergence of first dictionaries was a process that lasted more than a century[1]:

> It was not until 1604 that the first English monolingual dictionary, Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall*, was published. It was soon followed by others, but they generally were restricted to a list of difficult words (Jucker 2016: 58).

Even though the earliest dictionaries were lists of words from the realm of architecture, mathematics, theology, medicine and the like, they fulfilled criteria for a monolingual dictionary proper, because they were separate publications devoted to English words and their definitions in English. They functioned as a point of reference. In the seventeenth century, initially, they were used to help less literate readers with the semantics and orthography of more learned words, usually of foreign etymology; later, they were used to reveal 'secret' technical or discipline-oriented terminology from various areas of competence (using it as a marketing gimmick). Towards the end of the century, English dictionaries were not only learners' aids, but also

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[1] Characteristically, the process towards the first English monolingual dictionaries involved what can be called "tweaking", or "near-plagiaristic copying from predecessors", which became "a long-lasting tradition" (Osselton 2009: 136). For example, some elements from the spelling list in Richard Mulcaster's *Elementaire* (1582) appear in alphabetically arranged lists with explanations added in Edmund Coote's educational manual *English Schoole-maister* (1596), which in turn are echoed in Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* (1604). Similarly, later publications, e.g. John Bullokar's *English Expositor* (1616), Henry Cockeram's *The English Dictionarie* (1623), and others, can be traced back to older sources (Osselton 2009: 134–138).

a must-have in a gentleman's library. On the other hand, it was then that low-life language (including offensive words) began to be incorporated into English dictionaries, e.g. Elisha Coles' *An English Dictionary* (1676). The tendency spread to the eighteenth century and resulted in even bigger numbers of everyday terms in dictionaries. Also in the eighteenth century, the first English synonym and pronunciation dictionaries (e.g. showing a stress-mark after the accented syllable) appeared to cater to the needs of middle-class social-climbers. In 1755, two volumes of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* appeared in an attempt to establish norms for speaking and writing. In 1828, Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English language* was published overseas with the same intention.

Within centuries, dictionaries, their entries, and dictionary making as such have changed significantly (in terms of quality, quantity, design, etc.). The development was facilitated partly by the recognition that products of lexicographers' work differ in the intended target readers, who have their specific needs, and partly by the technological advances, which made it possible to access and analyse enormous amounts of data. More sophisticated technology has offered us electronic corpora and their tools, corpus derived resources, and e-lexicography.

2. Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries as a distinct genre

From the beginning, lexicographers have had to make many decisions about the form and content. And since then their work has been subjected to scrutiny. Around the turn of the sixteenth century, William Caxton[2] was accused of using words of foreign origin, and the same objections were raised even later:

> [...] new words attracted bitter criticism from people who insisted that the language should remain pure and undefiled by obscure foreign words or «inkhorn terms» as they came to be called (Jucker 2016: 52).

The name 'inkhorn terms' appeared first in Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553).

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[2] Knight (1877: 14–15) writes about Caxton: "Indeed from his earliest youth to the close of his literary career, the English language was constantly varying, through the introduction of new words and phrases; and there was a marked distinction between the courtly dialect and that of the commonalty. [...] But towards the close of his life, in a book printed by him in 1490, he mentions the difficulty he had in pleasing «some gentlemen, which late blamed me, saying that in my translations I had over curious terms, which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations. [...]»".

Another challenge, which has always been a potential source of criticism, is the selection of the right headwords, which should be words of (what is now known as) high-frequency. The choice to include low-frequency (low-life) words or non-existent words (hapax legomena, ghost items) was prone to scorn. Other lexicographic dilemmas concerned questions how to make the entries concise, or what to include in their descriptions.

Generally, it is preferable to include only the material that is likely to be relevant from the point of view of the dictionary user, "since irrelevant material makes it harder to locate the information that *is* of value" (Lew 2015: 2). Yet the dictionary as a digital product can be equipped with superfluous data, which can be presented selectively: either (a) 'on demand', by means of customization, which enables the users to show / hide entry features intentionally, or (b) beyond their control, by means of artificial intelligence that 'learns' to select appropriate information.

Making decisions about the form and content results in adopting various strategies, conventions, designs and layouts. However, typically, a dictionary entry consists of a headword, its definition, and (a combination of) information from various branches of theoretical linguistics:

a. morphosyntax (also called 'grammar'),
   a1. morphology: *word class*, *grammatical categories*[3], (irregular) *inflections*, *compounds*, *derivatives*, etc.;
   a2. syntax: *collocations*, *phraseology*, (valency) *patterns*, etc.;
b. semantics,
   b1. lexical semantics (the headword level): *denotation*, (positive or negative) *connotations*, (polysemous or homonymous) *senses*, *lexical field*, *sense relations* (also called *lexical relations*, e.g. synonyms, antonyms, meronyms, superordinates – also called 'hypernyms', and their hyponyms, etc.);
   b2. sentence semantics (the phrase / sentence level): *paraphrase*, *examples*, etc.;

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[3] Grammatical categories include: number, gender, person, case, degree, definiteness, tense, aspect, mood, and voice. "In synthetic languages, such as Classical Latin or Greek, the grammatical categories are expressed almost exclusively by inflectional endings, whereas in analytical languages, such as Present-day English or French, the grammatical categories are expressed primarily by word order (the position of a word in a sentence) and by function words, as well as a few inflections" (Brinton, Brinton 2010: 113–114). Since languages are on a cline between these two types, and some of them make use of periphrasis, e.g. *the owner of the cat*, which is functionally equivalent to an inflection, e.g. *the cat's owner*, assigning grammatical categories to "a1. morphology" is only a matter of convenience here.

c. phonology: *pronunciation*, *division into syllables*, etc.;

d. historical linguistics: *etymology*[4] (origin, provenance, first attestation, diachronic development);

e. pragmatics (but also discourse semantics and sociolinguistics): *diasystematic information* on constraints that govern the use of certain items (*dialect*: British English, American English, Scottish English, etc., *register*: formal, informal, etc., *mode*: written or spoken, *style and technicality*: colloquial, academic, scientific, field-specific, etc., *discourse type or genre*: poetic, literary, etc., *obsolescence*, *level of politeness*, *the item's status in the language*: slang, taboo, etc.).

The entry may present individual lexical items in isolation and in chunks or sentences. The former presentation is aimed at showing the form and structure of the item (hence, the dictionary information may concern orthography and spelling variants, the pronunciation and attested variants, division into syllables, division into morphemes, etc.). The latter presentation is aimed at showing the context of use (hence, the dictionary information may concern lexical chunks, lexical bundles, usage in a specific context restricted because of geography, formality, mode, field, text-type, time, frequency, attitude, normativity etc.). However, the lexicographer also needs to decide if other elements are of value, and consider potential supplements: (a) other linguistic issues, e.g. cross-references, more elaborate usage-notes and comment boxes, (b) non-linguistic structures, e.g. encyclopaedic or cognitive-psychological knowledge, or graphical illustrations. Additionally, the question arises if or how cultural information should be incorporated, so that it does not convey stereotypes or opinions:

> Dictionaries may also carry symbolic meaning, by making a political statement as identity symbols, giving tangible testimony to the status or identity of a language-speaking community (Lew 2015: 1).

If the lexeme is polysemous, its senses need to be differentiated and another decision has to be made about the taxonomy, i.e. how to order and present them.

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[4] Although Jackson (2002: 181) states: "Since the etymological dictionaries of the eighteenth century, it has been customary to include information about etymology in native speaker dictionaries, though not in learners' dictionaries", some online English MLDs do provide etymological data. Of the three dictionaries discussed in the article, the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (OLD) gives the most extensive and user-friendly descriptions.

According to Rundell (2008: 222), the conventions characteristic of MLDs as a distinct genre include (a) vocabulary control; (b) grammatical information; (c) phraseological units; and (d) pedagogically motivated examples.

In other words, the defining vocabulary in MLDs is simple and limited to ca. 3000 common high-frequency words. The descriptions of grammatical categories and syntactic preferences are more detailed than in a Native Speaker Dictionary, including the information about ready-made, holistically processed multiword units (chunks). The examples are more like templates that learners can use as models, and the contemporary compromise is that such examples can be derived from a corpus but modified by lexicographers to adjust the context dependence, as opposed to purely invented examples (Lew 2015: 5).

Digital MLDs (available online or on CD-/DVD-ROMs) additionally offer advanced search modes, audio recordings of headwords, external and internal links to applications and word-processors, instant look-up of words used to define or exemplify the headword (hyperlinks), pedagogical games, exercises, quizzes, and more (see Rizo-Rodriguez 2004: 39), including advertisements, cf.:

> Online dictionaries also attract users to publishers' sites where other activities and products are on display; these might include news items, 'word of the day' or 'word of the month' features, lists of the most frequently looked-up words, teaching and learning materials, and, of course, information about how to buy the publishers' products (Nesi 2009: 474).

3. Online English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries

Contemporary learners of English have a wide range of online dictionaries at their disposal. An interesting example that shows some of them collectively is *OneLook* dictionary search engine[5], which pre-views data from various online sources. Its unique feature is that it allows the users to enter queries in a natural language format: 'which country has a sea', 'country with sea', 'country and sea' return similar results, but in a different order.

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[5] It is available at <https://www.onelook.com/>. *OneLook* has many of the above mentioned features (e.g. links redirecting to particular dictionaries, or *Google* search engine and *Wikipedia*). Its component, *OneLook Thesaurus*, available at <https://www.onelook.com/thesaurus/>, has pop-up windows that show usage examples.

The present contribution, however, focuses on free online versions of the well-established print edition dictionaries[6]: the *Cambridge Dictionary* (CD), the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE), and the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (OLD). The analysis is based on the information in the main and side panels of the entries for the verb *bear*. Fig. 1–3 present the typical entry components visually. Table 1 enumerates them descrip-tively.
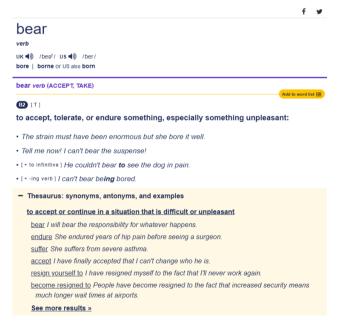
Table 1. Typical entry components in CD, LDOCE and OLD; the symbols + and – stand for, respectively, 'the feature is present' and 'the feature is absent'

Feature	CD	LDOCE	OLD
headword	+	+	+
definition	+	+	+
pronunciation – audio	+	+	+
pronunciation – transcription	/beəʳ//ber/	/beə $ ber/	/beə(r)//ber/
word class	+	+	+
other grammatical hints	[T]	transitive	[transitive]
senses separated visually	+	+ (numbered)	+ (numbered)
paraphrased sense definition	+	+	+
examples	+	+	+
'more examples' section	+	+	+
paraphrased examples	-	+	-
inflections	*bore* *borne* or US also *born*	*bore* *borne*	*bear* *bears* *bore* *borne* *bearing*
paradigm	-	+	-
related topic	-	*birth*	-
thesaurus: synonyms, etc.	+	+	+
word family	-	+	-
patterns encoded in metalanguage	+	-	-

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[6] They are available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/>, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>. Other online English MLDs are: the *Collins English Dictionary* <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>, the *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary* <https://chambers.co.uk/>, the *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>, etc.

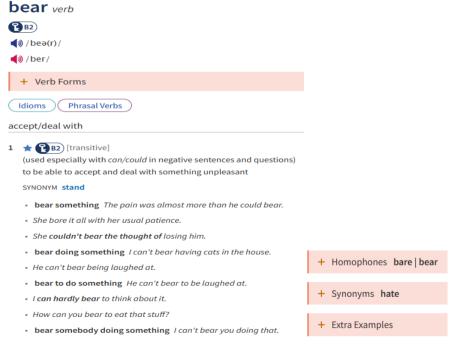|			
usage notes and boxes	+	+	+
multiword units	+	+	+
external links	Facebook Twitter	-	-
internal links to:			
- some words in the definition	+	-	-
- more extensive usage notes	+	-	-
- multiword units	+	-	+
- 'add to my word list' section	+	-	+
- 'help' section (notation)	+	-	-
diasystematic information	+	+	+
other labels	CEFR B2-C2	high-frequency top 2000 spoken top 2000 written	CEFR B2
unique features	multilingual translations	example sentence audio	homophones

Source: autor's own compilation

Figure 1. The entry *bear* in CD (the first few lines, main panel view)

Source: *Cambridge Dictionary*

Figure 2. The entry *bear* in LDOCE (the first few lines, main panel view)

Source: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

Figure 3. The entry *bear* in OLD (the first few lines, main panel view)

Source: *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*

All three dictionaries provide shorter versions of their sense definitions. In the case of the verb *bear*, CD lists the following: 'accept, take', 'keep, have', 'produce', 'bring', and 'change direction'. Some of the senses are labelled with B2, C1 and C2 symbols which correspond to the levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). OLD combines verbal paraphrases ('accept/deal with', 'be responsible for something', 'support weight', 'show', 'not be suitable', 'carry', 'turn') and non-verbal paraphrases ('negative feeling', 'name', 'yourself', 'child'). Similarly, LDOCE paraphrases *bear* verbally ('deal with something', 'accept/be responsible for', 'support', 'sign/mark', 'able to be examined/compared etc.', 'have feelings', 'carry') and non-verbally ('baby', 'wind/water', 'name/title', etc.).

Additionally, the dictionaries differ in other respects. CD as the only in the group encodes characteristic patterns in a metalanguage, e.g. "[+ to infinitive]", "[+ two objects]". It also depends on numerous links. The internal ones redirect to other parts of the dictionary, e.g. more extensive usage notes and the help section with lists of the used abbreviations and notation conventions (metalinguistic symbols are clickable). The external ones allow sharing the content on Facebook and Twitter.

LDOCE offers a few useful elements such as "related topic", "word family", and paradigms (which are on the side panel, to the right of the screen). It also paraphrases parts of own examples, e.g. "Passengers could be insulting, and stewardesses just had to **grin and bear it** (=accept it without complaining)". Some example sentences have audio recordings. Unlike CD, LDOCE transcribes the past simple and past participle forms of the verb phonetically. With respect to word-forms, OLD goes even further as it enumerates them, transcribes them and provides their audio recordings.

Both LDOCE and OLD introduce their own frequency labels. The former dictionary has a four-degree scale: three red dots are for high-frequency, two red dots mark medium-frequency, one red dot is for lower-frequency. More advanced or specialised headowords are not marked with the dots at all. LDOCE further assigns headwords of high-frequency to categories such as S2 'top 2000 spoken words' and W2 'top 2000 written words'. OLD has two labels: Oxford 3000 and Oxford 5000. The former corresponds to CEFR A1-B2 and is a list of 3000 "core words". The latter corresponds to CEFR B2-C1 and is a list of additional 2000 of "the most useful high-level words".

Interfaces of the three dictionaries allow searches (of lexemes) in the dictionary content as a whole. While typing the letters, the user sees

a dropdown list of maximally ten dictionary entries (OLD has eight). Thus, typing the sequence *wron* in the search box results in the suggestions: *wrong*, *wrong-foot* (the form in LDOCE is not hyphenated), *wrongdoer*, *wrongdoing*, *wrongful*, etc. However, if the user does not click on any of them, but presses the enter button only after typing *wron*, another list (of maximally 10 terms) appears: *wrong*, *iron*, *pron*, *won*, *wren*, etc. In the so-called assisted search, when the search word is not found (for example, due to misspelling), the list of suggestions encompasses the items that bear word-initial or word-final orthographic similarity to the entered sequence of letters. Consequently, when a spelling mistake occurs in the middle of the word, e.g. *Balcans instead of *Balkans*, neither of the dictionaries provides relevant suggestions.

The searches cannot be refined with filters or combined with other searches (e.g. to show only a particular word class or results from a particular section of the entry, such as the definition). Although OLD allows the users to select language-specific letters with diacritics (they are available on a pop-up toolbar that appears after clicking on the keyboard sign, to the left of the search icon), the option is practical only for those with an access code to the related bilingual dictionaries. The dictionary's strength lies, however, in its high-resolution illustrations, which can be easily enlarged to show more details in order to expand learners' vocabulary. For example, the entry 'balcony' shows a clickable picture of a house with a list of twenty illustrated items, including *dormer window*, *sash window*, or *French window*. Also, the dictionary presents information on homophones, which have the same pronunciation, but different spelling, e.g. *bare/bear*, *flour/flower*, or *pear/pair*. Homophones are very common in English, and the data in OLD can be useful in raising learners' awareness of the phenomenon.

Also, there are other types of information that can be displayed. For example, in the entry *restaurant*, there are three additional sections in CD ("More examples", "SMART Vocabulary: related words and phrases", and "Examples from literature") and five in OLD ("Collocations", "Wordfinder", "Extra Examples", "Oxford Collocations Dictionary", and "Word Origin"). In both sources, the options are activated/deactivated by means of the plus/minus symbol. LDOCE organises data linearly with no possibility to show or hide entry features.

However, LDOCE provides audio recordings, not only of the headwords (all three dictionaries do, and all of them distinguish between British and American English), but also sample sentences. In LDOCE, this option is marked by means of a grey loudspeaker to the left of the example. Although

audio recordings of the headwords differentiate between the British and American variants, only CD does it explicitly by means of the acronyms "UK" and "US". Distinctions in OLD and LDOCE, however, may be vague and unnoticeable for an average user. Both dictionaries use colours: in OLD, the blue loudspeaker corresponds to British pronunciation, while the red one to American (the acronyms "BrE" and "NAmE" appear only after placing the cursor on the loudspeaker); in LDOCE, the same colours are used but in a reverse order: the blue loudspeaker is for American English, the red one is for British English.

Of the three dictionaries, only CD has a multilingual translation component which is available at the bottom of the page and provides equivalents in Polish, Spanish, Chinese, etc. The availability of translations depends on the frequency of the headword, so the more common the headword, the more likely it is to find the translation.

Online English MLDs seem to be expanding their entries, heading towards even more attractive, interactive and customizable elements. If it is the case, it is surprising that none of the dictionaries shows graphemic – phonemic and graphemic – morphemic correspondences. They can be detected not only on the level of a particular language, e.g. English *oa*k, *boa*t, *foa*m, *loa*f, etc., in which *oa* encodes the same diphthong, but also in bilingual or multilingual correspondences. The former may be exemplified by e.g. English *wa*t*er*, *nu*t, *foo*t, *tha*t, and German *Wa*ss*er* 'water', *Nu*ss 'nut', *Fu*ß 'foot', *da*s 'the, that' / *da*ss 'that', etc., while the latter by Latin neuter nouns *strat*um, *dat*um, *aquari*um, *odi*um, *laboratori*um, which correspond to English *stratum*, *datum*, *aquarium*, *odium*, *lab(oratory)*, and German (*das*) *Stratum*, *Datum*, *Aquarium*, *Odium*, *Labor(atorium)*. What these and similar forms have in common is that their singular and plural forms are predictable, cf. the English plurals: *strat*a, *dat*a, *aquari*a (alongside *aquariums*), and German plurals: *Dat*en, *Laboratori*en, *Aquari*en.

Odium, which is an abstract noun in English and German, is used only in the singular, while *laboratory*[7] in Present-day English has the regular -*s* plural. Moreover, in German, which has grammatical gender, the singular forms are invariably neuter. Interestingly, the same is true of the Polish equivalents: (*to*) *akwarium*, *odium*, *laboratorium*, *podium*, *solarium*, etc. Their

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[7] The lexeme *laboratory* is an example of another systematic graphemic – morphemic correspondence between Latin -*ia* and -*ium* and Present-day English -*y*, which can also be exemplified by Lat. *glor*ia, *memor*ia, *victor*ia, *lil*ium, *stud*ium, *dictionar*ium and Eng. *glor*y, *memor*y, *victor*y, *lil*y, *stud*y, *dictionar*y, etc. (see Smith 2016: 30).

nominative plural forms (if attested) take -*a*, as in: pol. *akwaria*, *laboratoria*, *podia*, *solaria*. Moreover, the singular forms of such nouns in Polish show syncretism – they are isomorphic with the nominative form. In other words, all singular forms of all neuter nouns in -*um* from Latin, including geographical names, have only one form, i.e. the one in -*um*, which is untypical of the Polish language (Jadacka 2008: 34).

It seems dictionaries should teach or inform that some vocabulary items evolve due to language contact, which is responsible for stylistic alternatives. For example, some lexemes of Germanic origin (the common nouns *moon*, *sun*, and the verbs *break*, *end*, etc.) are related to some items of Latin origin (the learned adjectives *lunar*, *solar*, and the verbs *fracture*, *terminate*, etc.).

Native words in English may be related to native words in other languages, and although the list of cognates in English and, for example, Latin is extensive, the information about such relationships is non-existent in online English MLDs. Similarly underrepresented is the history of doublets, such as *can* and *know*, triplets, such as *idea*, *vision* and *wit*, etc. which come from the same ultimate source. Knowing that such items have something in common can be useful for more advanced learners.

Conclusions

English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries have had a long tradition, and have evolved into a distinct genre. Their characteristics are learner-oriented, include simple and numerically limited vocabulary, and focus on presenting relevant morphosyntactic information (including multiword units) and pedagogical examples. New technological advances made it possible to incorporate even more data into digital MLDs, partly to make the final product more attractive to the end user.

Each of the online dictionaries discussed in the paper has unique advantages. For example, CD offers multilingual translations, LDOCE has a few useful elements such as "related topic", "word family", paradigms, and audio recordings of sample sentences, OLD provides word-forms (with their transcription and audio recordings), publishes esthetic illustrations and presents information on homophones. Partly due to their unique features, dictionaries are very useful tools. Because their content is complementary, they should be consulted collectively.

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Internetowe słowniki jednojęzyczne do nauki angielskiego

Wraz z rozwojem technologii renomowane wydawnictwa zaczęły praktykować udostępnianie w Internecie darmowych wersji angielsko-angielskich słowników do nauki języka. Słowniki tego typu mają swoją historię oraz cechy wspólne i różnicujące. W artykule omówiono pokrótce zarys historyczny kolejnych etapów rozwoju angielskich słowników jednojęzycznych, zamieszczono syntetyczny opis głównych i pobocznych składników hasła słownikowego oraz tabelarycznie przedstawiono (nie)obecność tychże składników w trzech internetowych słownikach jednojęzycznych do nauki języka angielskiego: *Cambridge Dictionary*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, oraz *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie charakterystyki, porównanie i przeciwstawienie niektórych cech typowego hasła w internetowych słownikach jednojęzycznych do nauki języka angielskiego. W związku z tym badanie zawiera elementy metodologii porównawczej i empirycznej. W przeciwieństwie do wcześniejszych opracowań związanych z tematem, obecne studium ukazuje wspólne i różnicujące cechy wspomnianych słowników i wskazuje ich praktyczne zalety (z punktu widzenia użytkownika).

Abstract: Due to the development of technology, well-established publishers began to provide their English Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries (MLDs) online and free of charge. Dictionaries of this type have their own history, as well as common and distinctive features. The article presents a brief outline of the subsequent stages of the development of English Monolingual Dictionaries, with special reference to MLDs available online. Also, the article includes a synthetic description of the primary and secondary components of a dictionary entry and demonstrates if these components are present or absent in three online Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries: the *Cambridge Dictionary*, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, and the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. The article aims to characterise, compare and contrast some

of the features of a typical entry in online English MLDs. Consequently, the scientific approach adopted in the analysis is a mixture of the comparative and the empirical method. Unlike previous topic-related research, the present study shows both common and distinctive features of the mentioned dictionaries and hints at their practical advantages (from the point of view of the end user).

Keywords: *MLD, online MLD, online Monolingual Learner's Dictionary, learning English*
Słowa kluczowe: *słownik jednojęzyczny, słownik internetowy, internetowy słownik jednojęzyczny, nauka języka angielskiego*