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Usage, Usage Dictionaries and Usage Notes

Abstract

The paper focuses on the concept of usage in English and on how it has been interpreted and represented in, one, specialized reference sources usually referred to as dictionaries of usage, and two, usage notes incorporated in selected general English dictionaries. The second part addresses the issue of how the rich and longstanding all-English "usage tradition" could be usefully transformed in the contrastive framework of a specific language pair, specifically in general – and also specialized – bilingual dictionaries.

Jezikovna raba, slovarji jezikovne rabe in opombe o jezikovni rabi

Prispevek se osredotoča na pójem jezikovne rabe v angleščini ter na to, kako so ga razlagali in predstavljali v specializiranih priročnikih, ki jim pravimo slovarji jezikovne rabe, ter v opombah o jezikovni rabi, kot jih vključujejo izbrani splošni slovarji angleškega jezika. V drugem delu je glavna misel usmerjena v možnost, kako bi lahko bogato in dolgoletno angleško »tradicijo jezikovne rabe« koristno preoblikovali takó, da bi jo vključili v protistavni okvir dveh specifičnih jezikov, in to v splošnih – pa tudi specializiranih – dvojezičnih slovarjih.

1 Introduction: Usage Issues at Large

While *usage* can mean, according to the *Longman Dictionary*, either "the way that words are used in a language" or more generally "the way in which something is used, or the amount of it that is used" (Fox and Combley eds. 2014, 2014 [*sic*]), this paper focuses exclusively on the former sense. In linguistic terms, *usage* at large thus refers to "the way in which the elements of language are customarily used to produce meaning; this includes accent, pronunciation, spelling, punctuation, words, and idioms" (Allen 1992, 1071). A highly complex topic, "usage refers to the conventional ways in which words or phrases are used, spoken, or written in a speech community" (Nordquist 2017b).

Word meaning and word use often embrace a sociolinguistic aspect of **attitudes to language use**, often summarized under the catchall term of **usage** (Gabrovšek 2005, 57-58). Usage can be approached either *prescriptively*, i.e. in the authoritarian spirit which insists on a given solution advanced by someone, often a self-proclaimed authority[1], or *descriptively*, which involves sifting through available evidence before summarizing actual-usage-based arguments in favor of a given linguistic solution (cf. Gilman ed. 1989). In line with the two modes – descriptive and prescriptive – *usage* in language "can mean two things: the way people actually use language; or the way one group of people feels other people ought to use it" (Butterfield 2008, 137). More narrowly but significantly, *usage* can be used as "a collective term for various *judgements* on aspects of language" (Hartmann and James 1998, 149). Indeed, language can be observed in action *objectively (descriptively)* and without prejudice, which requires patience and evidence; by contrast, *subjective linguistic intuition (prescription)* is invoked when judging a word or phrase as 'correct' or 'appropriate', supplemented by arguments about non-linguistic factors such as 'logic' or 'beauty' (ibid.), coupled with "attempts to lay down rules of correctness as to how language should be used, using such criteria as purity, logic, history, or literary excellence"[2] (Crystal 1992, 58). Small wonder, then, that *usage* "occurs neutrally in such terms as *formal usage, disputed usage*, and *local usage*, and it has strong judgemental and prescriptive connotations in such terms as *bad usage, correct usage, usage and abusage*, and *usage controversies*" (Allen 1992, 1071). Even though there is no official institution "that functions as an authority on how the English language should be used", "there are [...] numerous publications, groups, and individuals

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1   This approach is epitomized in the original [1926] edition of Henry Watson Fowler's magisterial guide, *Modern English Usage*. Fowler was a grammarian and a lexicographer.

2   A distinction is sometimes drawn within the prescriptive mode between *prescriptive* and *proscriptive* rules, the latter being rules which forbid rather than command. (Crystal 1992, 58)

(style guides, language mavens, and the like) that have attempted to codify (and sometimes dictate) rules of usage" (Nordquist 2017b).

While "the present-day scholarly concept of usage as a social consensus based on the practices of the educated middle class has emerged only within the last [i.e. 20th] century," it is a fact that "for many people [...] the views and aims of the 17th-18th century fixers of the language continue to hold true: they consider that there ought to be a single authority capable of providing authoritative guidance about 'good' and 'bad' usage." Nevertheless, "with the classical model of grammar in rapid decline, the users of English collectively set the standards and priorities that underlie all usage." (Allen 1992, 1072) But is this the way they see it, most of them at any rate?

Linguists and lexicographers today almost invariably insist on a descriptive approach, pointing out that language must be *described* and not *prescribed*. Accordingly, "linguistics has been generally critical of the prescriptivist approach, emphasizing instead the importance of descriptively accurate studies of usage, and of the need to take into account sociolinguistic variation in explaining attitudes to language" (Crystal 1992, 58). However, matters are not always this straightforward,[3] witness the following observation made by a seasoned lexicographer: "There is always the danger, notwithstanding the liberal, unprejudiced views of linguists who themselves are conveniently a few rungs above those whom they would bid to accept them, that certain regional and other accents mark a speaker as educated or uneducated, cultured or uncultured, intelligent or stupid. They may well be undemocratic, but it is undeniable. Some prejudicial barriers have probably been breached during the last half century, but others have taken their place." (Urdang 2008, 113)

Usage information is selectively provided in the general dictionary (sometimes referred to as *usage dictionary* because of this)[4], often by means of descriptive labels, usage notes, and/or example sentences and phrases. These are typically provided far more liberally in learners' dictionaries than in native-speaker dictionaries. Moreover, there are in existence specialized dictionaries (also called *usage guides*) codifying only usage information in various ways, "intended to help users with encoding tasks such as speaking or writing." Entries are often mini-essays on (unresolved) issues rather than articles on particular words or phrases; examples include

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3   Thus Wardhaugh (1999, 92) points out that linguists must recognize that many people's attitude toward a dictionary is different from their own.

4   For the most part, a *usage dictionary* is considered a type of *specialized language dictionary* (such as those of idioms, collocations, pronunciation, etymology etc.) as contrasted with the *general dictionary*.

advice on spelling, hyphenation, stress, regional usage, grammar (Hartmann and James 1998, 149-50). Moreover, *usage* as related to language use can be given a more restricted "field-type" treatment, as in guides to business writing or to technical writing, and – in a rather different vein – to usage in academic writing (Clark and Pointon 2016). Finally, dictionaries, or rather A-Z treatments, of usage can be supplied as parts of larger publications, as in Ehrlich (1986), where a concise dictionary of usage is provided in an appendix (pp. 289-348). Sometimes even a general dictionary offers a lot more in the way of usage than is customary: Thus e.g. the one-off *Penguin Wordmaster Dictionary* (Manser and Turton 1987) includes a large number of expository panels "which present a point of usage, the history of a word, an area of vocabulary, or the nuances of a definition"; this is why it "is a dictionary to be read, as well as used" (Crystal 1987, vii-viii).

Even though usage guides incorporate – sometimes emphatically – a number of grammar issues, usage at large clearly differs from grammar: "Unlike grammatical *rules*, principles of usage are more flexible, depending on the *audience*, purpose and occasion of a statement for guidance as much as on the strictures arrived at by academics or others." (Princeton Language Institute and Hollander eds. 1993, 298-99) Also, as Allen (2009, 339) points out, "[T]he term *usage* is a broader one than *grammar*, and is more judgemental."

Importantly, unlike theoretical linguistics, usage issues represent an area where both linguists and laypersons hold an interest: Wardhaugh (1999, 13, 96) observes that people have strong opinions about language use; in English, they often focus on well-known shibboleths such as *between you and I/me*, the split infinitive, sentence-ending prepositions, double negative, and the (non-)use of *whom*. Butterfield (2008, 136), too, refers to "a handful of what can be described as the folk commandments of English usage." Even popular almanacs can report on native-speaker usage problems, the *World Almanac* (McGeveran ed. 2004, 624), for example, identifying the top-ten "most misused words": *lie - lay, affect - effect, it's - its, who - whom, fewer - less, principal - principle, their - there - they're, your - you're, I - me, imply - infer*. Next, Todd's (1997) usage dictionary's dust cover features a big question mark over the well-known usage shibboleths each followed by a question mark too: *harass* or *harass*, *to boldly go* and *to go boldly*, *supercede* and *supersede*, *different to/than/from*, *ambiguous* and *ambivalent*.[5] As it turns out, quite a few dictionaries of English usage are (mildly) prescriptive (e.g. Manser ed. 1988/2011 or Garner 2016), even though today's trend – backed by most linguists (but not necessarily by many language users!) – toward more

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5   Let us note, as an aside, that Todd (1997, 382) also tells us that an inhabitant of Slovenia is a *Slovene* and that the derived adjective is *Slovenian,* a "rule" many language users do not seem to observe.

objective and corpus-based reporting of language facts is clearly in evidence, and sensible attitudes are in plain sight. However, there may well be a significant difference, in principle, between a linguist's view of usage and the perspective of the language user about to consult a usage guide.

Usage dictionaries typically offer a single answer to each of the usage issues indicated in their entries. In actual fact, "most questions about modern English usage have more than one answer" (Crystal 1984, 9). Regarding the relation between language speakers and usage, "people fall into three broad groups, in their concern over how their language works. Some couldn't care less. Many – I think, the majority – care at least some of the time. And some care all of the time." (ibid., pp. 9-10) Additionally, one might venture to say, many of those who consult usage guides are likely to seek authoritative answers, preferably one per entry/issue – and hopefully "the best one" at that.

The works highlighted in this study are called *usage dictionaries* (alternatively also either *usage guides* or *usage handbooks*). The related type of reference work labeled *style manual, style guide*, or *style-book*, such as the famous *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS), published continuously since 1905, or the *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (Ritter ed. and comp. 2000 [1981]), its cover subtitle being "The Essential Guide for Anyone Who Works with Words", and its successor (Ritter ed. and comp. 2014)[6], typically combines elements of usage with writing conventions / the mechanics of writing. The style manual usually includes a large number of concise entries prominently including those on spelling difficulties, capitalization, hyphenation, punctuation issues, abbreviations, and foreign words and phrases. Some of the major newspapers (e.g. *The Guardian and Observer Style Guide*) and publishing houses create their own style guides too. The style guide has been defined as "a set of editing and formatting standards for use by students, researchers, journalists, and other writers." "Style guides are essential reference works for writers seeking publication, especially those who need to document their sources in footnotes, endnotes, parenthetical citations, and/or bibliographies." (Nordquist 2017d)

2 English Usage Dictionaries

The dictionary of usage is a type of specialized language dictionary that historically represents an outgrowth of the older lists of "improprieties" and language

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6   The genre known as style-book seems to have started with *Authors and Printers Dictionary*, originally published in 1905 (Ritter ed. and comp. 2000, "Editor's Note," p. vii).

errors to be avoided.[7] It is a monolingual reference work that typically includes discussions and recommendations regarding a variety of language issues and topics, which is why it is often advertised as "a [...] guide to modern grammar, punctuation, usage and style" (Johnson 1982, front cover). There are in existence a large number of English dictionaries of usage (e.g. Manser ed. 1998/2011, Butterfield ed. 2015; Gilman ed. 1989, Garner 2016); they often command respect and admiration, notably in the USA. Most of them have been designed for native speakers of English. They concentrate on *standard (written) English*, i.e. "the form of English that is most widely accepted and understood in an English-speaking country and tends to be based on the educated speech of a particular area, in England the south-east (although it can be spoken in a variety of accents). It is used in newspapers and broadcasting, and is the form normally taught to learners of English." (Butterfield ed. 2016, 569); it is sometimes also called *edited English*" (Trask 2001, 1). I am aware of only one such work, viz. Todd and Hancock (1986), that has been expressly "designed for all users of English" and that, moreover, "offers a balance between *description* and *prescription*, basing its insights on recent research throughout the English-speaking world." Further, it "adopts the position that English belongs to all those who have learnt to speak it, and that established regional varieties, whether spoken natively or not, have as much legitimacy as British, American or Australian dialects of the language." (Todd and Hancock 1986, Introduction, pp. iv-v)[8]

There is a strong and long-lasting tradition of turning out usage guides and (hand)books in dictionary form[9] focusing on problems of English usage from a monolingual and profoundly native-speaker-based perspective. Such works have been typically authored by journalists, editors, writers, teachers, literary critics, schoolmasters, grammarians, educators etc. rather than by professional (academic) linguists. These good people often evince a keen interest in language matters, prominently including usage, and are quick to give their opinions on specific usage

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7   This paper ignores the issue of (the status and impact of) the varieties of English, especially American vs. British English, as discussed in usage dictionaries. I cannot, however, resist adding the following remark made by a British expert: "Nowadays [...] British language watchdogs tend to be most suspicious of American imports. Cynics would say it is a case of the older sibling being jealous of the younger sibling's success." (Butterfield 2008, 155) Also, I have made no mention of usage dictionaries of varieties of English other than the British and American ones.

8   Todd and Hancock (1986) is one of the few usage dictionaries to include among its entries both "real-usage-type" items and "general-issues-type" items as well as linguistic concepts, so that it incorporates, say, both *ante-/anti-, ago, among/amongst, borrow/lend/loan* and *Americanisms, analogy, animal terms, collocation, comparison of adjectives and adverbs.*

9   Some, to be sure, are arranged not in alphabetical order but in either topical (Strunk 1918/1979) or alphabetized chapters (e.g. Fieldhouse 1982).

issues. Thus e.g. the American writer Robert Claiborne, a folk singer and labor organizer, wrote a usage guide with a front-matter essay entitled "What Is 'Good English' – and Who Says So" (Claiborne 1986, 1-35). Garner's (1998, 709-19) "Timeline of Books on Usage" yields some 350 titles spanning the period from 1786 through 1997, with almost 50 titles published in 1990-1997 alone. The most famous of all such works – on both sides of the Atlantic, that is – is the authoritative and resolutely prescriptive Henry Watson Fowler's *Modern English Usage* (1926), currently in its fourth edition (Butterfield ed. 2015), and in a third concise "pocket" edition (Butterfield ed. 2016) that, despite being *concise*, offers some 4,000 A-Z entries offering "clear recommendations on grammar, pronunciation, spelling, confusable words, and written style" (back cover). At least one American "native-speaker-type" usage dictionary, first created in 1997 (Brians 2013), can be either obtained in book form or accessed online free of charge; it is entitled *Common Errors in English* (the print version being *Common Errors in English Usage*). Also, Lynch (2007 [cf. also 2011]), a modern guide to English usage for the 21st century, was updated and expanded from a popular grammar website.[10] Finally, even two recent (15th and 16th) editions of the influential *Chicago Manual of Style* (2003, 2010) found it necessary to incorporate, for the first time in its long history, a sizable A-Z chapter on grammar and usage (Garner 2010), thus testifying to the great importance of usage issues in edited contemporary American English.

Among the fairly few English usage dictionaries that cater specifically to the needs of non-native users (primarily foreign-language teachers and learners as well as translators), i.e. EFL-oriented usage tools, Heaton and Stocks (1966) was an early attempt. It was followed nearly three decades later by the 800-page Collins CO-BUILD (Sinclair ed. 1992) and the widely used Swan (1995/2005/2016). Dictionaries of usage can have a more restricted scope; Turton and Heaton (1996) and Trask (2001) both concentrate on learners' "common errors", and Turton (1995) on grammatical errors. Another "restricted-content" subtype of usage reference is the dictionary of confusables, a listing of confusing or confused words together with comments, explanations and exemplification, such as Room (1985) and Heacock (1989), or the online Farlex Grammar Book.[11] Other "restricted-usage-type" works include those offering guidelines for nonsexist usage (e.g. Miller and Swift 1988), and guides to computer- and Internet-related usage (e.g. Hale and Scanlon 1999 or the scholarly Walker and Taylor 2006).

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10 Significantly, such guides often go beyond the basic "either – or", prescriptive right vs. wrong paradigm by including examples of weak/strong, good/better, disputed/preferred, informal/formal usage (taken from the abebooks.com online ad for Lynch's 2007 book).

11 Such words, to be sure, also figure in certain general-usage works, sometimes in special alphabetized sections, such as "Confusable Words", pp. 137, 138-40 in Butterfield (ed. 2016).

3 A Bit of History

Usage in language has been around for quite a while: "[T]he first person we know of who made *usage* refer to language was Daniel Defoe" at the end of the 17th century (Butterfield 2008, 137-38). Allen (1992, 1075), too, points out that the concept of usage and usage criticism in English dates from the 17th century, when the first grammars of the language were written by William Bullokar (1586), Ben Jonson (1640), John Wallis (1658), and others. Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770) was one of the earliest works that would now be regarded as a usage book. "Since the turn of the century, usage criticism in print has proliferated, in the form of reference books, usually arranged alphabetically as dictionaries, and columns on language in newspapers." (ibid.)

Moreover, usage was quick to become recorded also in the early monolingual dictionaries of English. By 1749, all of the basic lexicographical devices for describing usage – abbreviated labels, usage notes, verbal illustrations – had been developed (Wells 1973, 47). Among the early English lexicographers, Edward Phillips, John Kersey, Nathan Bailey, and Benjamin Martin took great trouble to warn users about the status of certain words. (Osselton 2006, 103-4)

As to the dictionary of usage, in Great Britain, Henry Watson Fowler's classic, *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926)[12], remains the best-known example of the genre. It was also used as a model for its American counterpart (Nicholson 1957) said to be "an adaptation" of Fowler (p. v). The last century or so has witnessed a steady stream of usage productions on both sides of the Atlantic, starting with the perennial favorite William Strunk Jr. (1918) and including Sterling A. Leonard (1932), Eric Partridge (1942/1957/1999), Margaret Bryant (1962), Michael Swan (1980/1995/2005/2016), Loreto Todd and Ian Hancock (1986), Martin Manser (1988/1994/2007/2011), E. Ward Gilman (1989), all the way to John Sinclair (1992/2004), Robert Burchfield (1996), Bryan Garner (1998/2009/2016), Steven Pinker (2014), Jeremy Butterfield (2015) – and many more.[13]

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12 Three revisions have followed: The first one by the civil servant Sir Ernest Gowers (1965), the second one by the Oxford lexicographer Robert Burchfield (1996), and the third one by the former Collins Dictionaries editor Jeremy Butterfield (2015). An abridged (some 40% of the original), revised and expanded (c. 150 new entries) version, *Pocket Fowler's Modern English Usage*, was published in 1999 (revised 2nd edition 2008) under the editorship of the lexicographer Robert Allen.

13 Most usage books published before the descriptive Merriam *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (Gilman ed. 1989) were largely prescriptive. But there were some early works that tried to give facts rather than opinions and largely unsupported advice: J. Lesslie Hall's *English Usage* (1917), *Facts about Current English Usage* (1938) by Albert Marckwardt and Fred Walcott, and Margaret Bryant's *Current American Usage* (1962) exemplify the descriptivist tradition (Algeo 1994, 107).

Parenthetically, there are works similar to usage dictionaries that focus on a broad but single language-related desideratum, such as *The Plain English Guide* (1995), with a cover subtitle of "How to Write Clearly and Communicate Better," by Martin Cutts, a writer, editor, and teacher who founded the Plain English Campaign in 1979, and established, in 1994, the Plain Language Commission.[14]

Naturally, usage advice is also available online (cf. McKean 2010). *Wikipedia*, for one, offers several relevant articles ("List of English Words with Disputed Usage", "English Usage Controversies"), and so do Oxford Dictionaries editors. There are in existence also a number of popular individual usage-focused websites (e.g. Larson 2003). In addition, Internet communication and "the quandaries of our new techno-language" (back cover) have spawned a pioneering *Wired Style* by two California journalists (Hale and Scanlon 1999). Recent works of this kind (e.g. Ritter ed. 2014) have increasingly focused on publishing issues in the digital age.

4 Usage Dictionaries: Monolingual vs. Bilingual Orientation

Usage is typically viewed as a **monolingual** topic that is preference-based, largely sociolinguistic and native-speaker-oriented. However, it can also be given either a **bilingual-type** ("specific-contrastivity") or an **EFL-type** ("non-specific-contrastivity") treatment, which, if anything, is likely to affect the choice of entries in usage dictionaries. The former looks at a language topic or a specific issue as it is reflected in a given language pair, whereas the latter highlights usage as a difficulty-oriented practical-language matter that bears on any bilingual environment with English as an L2. The bilingual-type and the EFL-type vantagepoints are clearly related, their common focal point being the non-native speaker. For this reason, they can, in principle, be implemented in both the general dictionary and the specialized dictionary; however, what we actually find in dictionaries is a selection of usage notes scattered in some general bilingual dictionaries and a fairly small number of monolingual EFL-oriented all-English usage dictionaries (referred to above, i.e. in the first place Swan 1995/2005/2016, Sinclair ed. 1992/2004, Ilson and Whitcut 1994, Turton and Heaton 1996, and Trask 2001). Indeed, one would be hard put to find examples of bilingual usage dictionaries;

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14   Cutts, a leading voice in the international plain language movement, also wrote *The Oxford Guide to Plain English* (4th edn. 2013).Cf. the official website at http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/.

the only bilingually oriented usage dictionary I am aware of is *Practical Guide to English Usage* (n.a. 2013) which, while being written entirely in English, has been designed specifically for speakers of Catalan.

In the *monolingual tradition*, *usage* is a choice among alternatives to which users attribute social value (Algeo 1991, 2-3). That is, for something to be a question of usage, three factors must be present:

- there must exist alternatives of use;
- language users must be able to choose among them;
- those same or other users must think that the choice means something.

The three factors (alternatives, choice, and value) are obviously related implicationally. To have value, there must be choice, and to have choice there must be alternatives; but alternatives may exist without choice, and choice without value. Usage has an important dichotomy: *use* vs. *attitude*. To understand usage, we must be aware of both what people *say* and what they *think* about what is said. There are often striking disparities between the two (*ibid.*), often related to and reflected in the two (competing) usage traditions – the prescriptive one and the descriptive one. The former lays down subjective rules regarded by someone as "educated," "right," useful, recommended, etc., such *normative rules* "setting out a norm, i.e. what users of a language should say or write according to some ideology rather than a rule describing what users actually say or write," "an example [being] the rule that *different* is followed by *from* and not *to*" (Brown and Miller 2013, 314). The latter, by contrast, provides an objective description and unbiased interpretation of language facts based on factual evidence.

And the *bilingual tradition*? It is clearly different, and very modest in terms of its written record. In any case, it is clear that to invoke sociolinguistics, the status of an item, its social value, preferences, correctness etc., means to be firmly grounded in the monolingual mode. The bilingual mode, by contrast, while often including many items from the monolingual (chiefly EFL-oriented) works, is likely to embrace an overall educational, language-teaching, translation-friendly removal-of-errors-oriented attitude, cast in the framework of two specific languages. It provides valuable and wide-ranging assistance first and foremost to (usually advanced) foreign-/second-language learners.

The choice of usage orientation will hardly fail to have important consequences in both monolingual and interlingual frameworks. Today's linguists' almost universal insistence on the descriptive approach does not mean that the topic is, or has become, uncontroversial: In a language-teaching and/or EFL-oriented context, for example, some (enlightened) prescription seems almost unavoidable; moreover,

it is something that many language users, apparently oblivious of linguists' complaints, expect – and even demand.

5 The Usage Note: Usage Information in the General English Dictionary and in the General Bilingual Dictionary

The usage note as a distinct element of dictionary description has been employed by a great variety of English dictionaries, not only the general ones published by Oxford, Longman, Collins, Merriam-Webster etc., but also specialized ones. An early example of incorporating usage notes in a general bilingual dictionary can be found in Claudius Hollyband's *A Dictionarie French and English* (1593), the first French-English dictionary with a known author.

One must first explain what is meant by a *usage note*. Sometimes, the concept is simply equated with that of a *usage label*: "In a dictionary or glossary, a label or brief passage that indicates particular limitations on the use of a word, or particular contexts or registers in which the word customarily appears is called a usage note or label." (Nordquist 2017c) In this work, however, the two – even though they may serve basically the same purpose – are regarded as two distinct devices, the usage note being always longer, typically an explanation of a challenging or problematic language fact/situation. By contrast, a usage label is merely a (commonly abbreviated) "tag", i.e. often a one-word indication of a usage restriction, whether regional, field-related, or having to do with the status of a word or word combination in the broadest sense.

Atkins and Rundell (2008, 233-35) note that entry components carrying information about usage are a feature of most dictionaries, especially those – monolingual and bilingual – for language learners. They distinguish two types of usage note, viz. the *subject-oriented usage note*, which has as its focus a group of words relating to one subject, and is normally cross-referenced from all the headwords it applies to (e.g. how to translate into French various constructions containing names of countries and continents, shown in a long note located near the entry for *country*). The other type is the *local usage note* that can contain many different types of information relating specifically to the headword of the entry where they are found (e.g. the difference in usage between *although* and *though*, a wrong usage of *to ask [*to ask to somebody]*, *to beat* and its near-synonyms *batter, pound, pummel, lash*, and *hammer*, and advice on how the English-speaking user should put the preposition *into* in French). If we

consider the nature of the two types of usage notes, it would be only logical to assume that a good dictionary of usage is likely to incorporate both, with the local-usage-note type of entries usually prevailing over the subject-oriented-usage-note type. One should not forget, though, that a bilingual dictionary of usage may well incorporate very short lexical or grammatical entries as well.

One of the best-known controversial examples related to the usage note as used in the general English dictionary goes back almost half a century – and is still around: *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1969), a native-speaker-oriented general U.S. dictionary, introduced the "Usage Panel"[15] to provide their own material for a set of usage notes, i.e. their pronouncements on specific usage points, chiefly advice on grammar and style. There are currently (2018) some 200 Panelists, "a group of [...] prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. The Panelists are surveyed annually to gauge the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions."[16] However, the *American Heritage* Usage Panel was also criticized for its authoritarian approach and prescriptivism as embodied in the frequently dogmatic opinions about usage. There were 501 usage notes in the original edition, of which 225 included reference to a vote taken by the Usage Panel, i.e. were among the items that the panel was actually asked to comment on. The 4th edition (2000) of the *American Heritage*® includes 1,800 notes "that provide a deeper appreciation of words than is possible in traditional dictionary format", of which 500 notes analyze usage issues.[17]

Usage notes are not infrequently included in the general bilingual dictionary; they differ from dictionary to dictionary, sometimes appearing to be simply idiosyncratic selections. What they do have in common is that they typically reflect a contrastive-specific (bilingual) orientation, such dictionaries incorporating a number of notes – both general/topical and mini-essays on particular issues – on specific contrastive L1/L2 points focusing chiefly on selected words and phrases, usually prepared for the benefit of speakers of one of the two languages covered. In this sense, no set of notes in a given general bilingual dictionary can be taken as a "reference model"; by contrast, the EFL-type English

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15   A kind of usage panel was likewise used by the prolific American usage-book author and lawyer Bryan Garner in the 3rd edition of his *Garner's Modern American Usage* (2009), for which every page had been reassessed and updated with the assistance of a critical panel of 120 commentators.

16   *American Heritage Dictionary* panelists are listed at https://ahdictionary.com/word/usagepanel.html (this being also the source of the quotation later in this paragraph).

17   The other notes discuss synonym sets, word histories, and regionalisms that help give American English its distinctive character. Additionally, there are some 50 notes, labeled "Our Living Language", that address the social dimensions of language.

usage dictionary can be used in this way thanks to its orientation referred to above as *non-specific contrastivity*.

6 The Bilingual Dictionary of Usage: Slovene and English

Given the above, what are the principles along which a bilingual usage dictionary might be created? This is a basically encoding-oriented reference tool providing decoding information as well, designed chiefly for the advanced learner. It should, to begin with, be based on the idea of teaching a foreign/second language, educating, providing also valuable interlingual information for translation purposes, combining the two interrelated "non-monolingual" approaches referred to above, viz. the bilingual one ("specific-contrastivity") and the EFL one ("non-specific-contrastivity"). Of the two, the latter is exemplified in the EFL-oriented English dictionaries of usage of the general kind referred to above (e.g. Swan 1995/2005/2016, Sinclair ed. 1992/2004). At least in the first stage, it is these sources that are to be preferred over the more specialized, removal-of-errors-type of EFL-oriented usage dictionaries, as well as over the native-speaker-oriented English usage guides. The former, i.e. bilingual-type, mode, by contrast, is far more difficult to capture comprehensively, as there is in existence no systematic coverage, for most language pairs, of specific interlingual/contrastive topics and difficulty points compiled and designed for the benefit of speakers usually of one of the two languages in question. The selection of issues/topics/items in the A-Z-format is to be based on the best and the most reliable existing studies and research, both traditional and corpus-based, as well as on teaching experience in the bilingual, chiefly L1/L2 environment.

In what follows, Slovene (as L1) and English (as L2) will be used consistently.

As to the entries, they are based especially on the following:

1) They are diverse: very broad/general, rather general, specific, long and short, and varied in content.
2) The two languages in question are to be combined so as to encourage comprehension, efficiency, one's own (dictionary) (re)search, and an overall encoding stance.
3) Some of the short entries will only spell out – or even only hint at – the problem without offering a solution, hopefully encouraging the user to find it for themselves (cf. e.g. *besides/beside* and *deciding* or *decisive* below).
4) Abbreviations are to be used sparingly.

Given that it is to be an online work, the suggested bilingual dictionary of usage would be firmly based on the continuous-revision policy, and be possibly crowd-sourced. We clearly need to know more about the nature of such a reference work, and – significantly – how users go about using it, when, and who exactly is likely to need it and consult it.

What follows below is merely a first step, a foretaste of things to come – a first attempt at offering a small selection of the different kinds of entries to be considered for inclusion in such a usage dictionary:

accident (SI nesreča): is it car accident, road accident, traffic accident, or street accident?

aspect vs. **respect:** Pogosta napaka nematernih govorcev: *v tem oziru* **-** *in this *aspect* namesto pravilnega *in this respect***.**

BESEDNE DRUŽINE (=WORD FAMILIES): Some are easy, others more demanding (e.g. *exhibit, exhibition, exhibitor* – [!!] *exhibitionist*). The contrastive aspect is often significant, especially in similar forms across languages: e.g. SI *revolucionar, revolucionaren* vs. EN *revolutionary* (adj./n.!); SI *kiropraktika, kiropraktik* vs. EN *chiropractic, chiropractor*. Consider e.g. SI *melanholija, melanholik, melanholičen* – do you (believe you) know their EN equivalents? Cf. also LAŽNI PRIJATELJI.

besides vs. **beside:** to nista sopomenki!

capable of something / capable of doing something (NE *to do something)

COMMA usage: Pazite na rabo pred veznikom *da* (EN *that*): V SI je vedno treba uporabiti vejico, v EN nikoli! Npr. *Rekel je, da je bolan. – He said that he was ill.*

complement(ary) vs. **compliment(ary):** SI *dopolnilo/-len* vs. *pohvala/-len***.** This is one of the problems with similar-looking words (also *lie – lay* and *disinterested – uninterested*) with different meanings that are often found in native-speaker use too.

»CONFUSABLES«: To so angleške besede, ki so si glede na pisavo in/ali izgovarjavo zelo podobne, v resnici pa imajo delno ali popolnoma različne pomene, besednozvezne povezave in/ali slovnične lastnosti, npr. *affect* in *effect, all right* in *alright, allusion* in *illusion, advice* in *advise, biannual* in *biennial, classic* in *classical***,** *complement(ary)* in *compliment(ary), conscious* in *conscience, deduce* in *deduct, disinterested* in *uninterested, entry* in *entrance, exciting* in *excited, genius* in *genial***,** *intend* in *intent, lose* in *loose, lie*

in *lay*, *quite* in *quiet*, *principal* in *principle*, *raise* in *rise*, *than* in *then*, *troubling* in *troubled*, *weigh* in *weight*, *arise*, *rise* in *raise*. Tovrstno tematiko v angleščini obravnavajo tudi specializirani slovarji in spletni viri (npr. Room 1985; Nordquist 2017a; Farlex Grammar Book).

deciding or **decisive**? Obe pomenita *odločilen*. Kako pa ju lahko ločimo?

to deduce (SI *sklepati*) vs. **to deduct** (SI *odšteti*), pa še samostalnik **deduction** (ki ima pomena OBEH pravkar navedenih glagolov!)

despite vs. **in spite of** – ne pa ***despite of**

drunk vs. **drunken:** Pridevnika z enakim pomenom, ki pa se uporabljata različno. *Drunk* nikoli ne rabimo pred samostalnikom, *drunken* pa VEDNO samo pred samostalnikom. Pravilno je torej npr. le *He was drunk (on whiskey)*. ter *A drunken driver*.

dynamic ali **dynamics**? V resnici gre za tri oblike: pridevnik *dynamic,* samostalnik *dynamic* in samostalnik *dynamics*.

emigrant, immigrant, migrant

enough – vedno ga rabimo ZA pridevnikom, na katerega se nanaša. Torej npr. SI *dovolj velik* dosledno prevedemo v EN kot *big enough*, ne pa kot *enough big.

evidence (neštevno) – SI **dokaz(i)** (števno) (npr. *veliko dokazov – ample evidence; bistven dokaz – a vital piece of evidence*)

exhausting (naporen) – **exhaustive** (izčrpen, temeljit) – **exhausted** (izčrpan)

implicirati – pravilni prevod je z glagolom *imply* in ne z *implicate!

interested vs. **interesting:** *I'm interested <u>in</u> books that are interesting <u>to</u> me.*

komičen – **comical** ali **comic?**

LAŽNI PRIJATELJI (EN false friends): Medjezikovni problem besed v SI in EN, ki so si pravopisno in fonetično (zelo) podobne in običajno izvirajo iz klasičnih jezikov, imajo pa delno ali popolnoma različne pomene. Nekaj primerov: *fitnes (*EN *gym), faktografski (*EN *fact-ridden), rebalans (*EN *revision)*, profesor (EN *professor*, še večkrat pa *teacher*).

literal, literally, literate, literary → Dober primer »confusables«

nadomestiti, zamenjati – *replace / substitute***:** Imata podoben pomen, a rabo v različnih strukturah: *replace something/somebody* in *replace something <u>with</u>*

something ter *substitute something <u>for</u> something* (npr. *nadomestiti kislo smetano z jogurtom – to replace the sour cream with yoghurt* toda [isti pomen] *to substitute yoghurt for the sour cream*). Pogosta napaka: *substitute* s strukturo glagola *replace*, npr. *We can *substitute this word with that one.* (pravilno *replace*)

none (of us) is ali **none (of us) are?** V glavnem ednina (*is*).

PREDLOGI (EN **prepositions**) – Primeri značilnih »slovenskih« predložnih napak pri prevajanju v angleščino:

na koncertu – *on / at a concert
na postaji – *on / at/in a station
alergičen na – allergic *on (to)
odločiti se za – to decide *for (on)
ostati na večerji – to stay *on dinner (for)
priti do vasi - to arrive *to a village (at/in)
rešitev za (problem) – solution *for (to) a problem
vplivati na – to influence *on (0)
zaskrbljen za svojo prihodnost – worried *for (about) one's future
značilno za – typical *for (of)

Pazi!
to be fond <u>of</u> something – toda *fondness <u>for</u> something*
to consist of = to be comprised of (TODA LE *to comprise*)

to predominate – *prid/prisl* **predomiNANT(LY)**!

problematika – nima AN ustreznice *problematic (prim. *problems, issues, matters*), saj je ta oblika v EN le pridevnik. Prevod: *issues, problems, problem area*; *topic*.

revolucionar(en) – revolutionary (to je samostalnik in tudi pridevnik)

SOPOMENKE: So lahko težavne glede učinkovitega ločevanja. Npr. *varnost* je lahko *safety* ali *security*; *skrivnost* je *secret* ali *mystery*, toda v zvezi ... *ostaja skrivnost* je možno le ... *remains a mystery.* Podobno s težavo ločujemo (glede pravilne rabe!) npr. glagole *dovoliti – EN to let, to allow, to permit* in *dogoditi se – to occur, to happen, to take place***.**

ŠTEVNOST (EN countability): Nekateri samostalniki v slovenščini in njihove ustreznice v angleščini se ločijo glede na *števnost***.** *Števni* samostalniki imajo tudi množino, *neštevni* pa praviloma ne. Primeri takšnih razlik: *election(s) – volitve, interest – obresti, news – novica/-ce, pyjamas/pajamas – pižama/-me, real estate – nepremičnina/-ne***,** *door/doors – vrata***.**

!! advice – nasvet/-ti, evidence – dokaz(i), information – informacija/-je (v EN je vedno možna le ednina!).

V EN množino pri neštevnih samostalnikih pogosto izražamo z zvezo samostalnika *item, bit, piece + of*, npr. *a piece of advice***,** *an item of furniture, a piece of real estate* ali *real estate property*. [Prim. npr. Swan 2005: 128–32]

Števnost v EN včasih povzroči spremembo pomena, npr. *liberty* (neštevno) pomeni 'svoboda', *liberties* (množina, števno) pa 'svoboščine.'

unable (prid.) toda **inability** (sam.) ter **unjust** (prid.) toda **injustice** (sam.)

And Finally...

I have written this piece in honor of Stanko Klinar's 85th birthday. It is not a coincidence that it deals with real-language, real-life issues. So, dear Stanko, without further ado, all the best for many more happy years to come!

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