A Tale of Two Halves: Writing a Bilingual Dictionary for Students of English.

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Abstract
By contrast with most bilingual dictionaries, *Das Große Oxford Wörterbuch für Schule und Beruf* was written for one user-group only, with the aim of creating a bilingual dictionary which was also a pedagogical tool. This affected editorial decisions about the shape of the dictionary at all levels: from coverage to the selection of which information should be shown on each side of the dictionary and the way in which it should be presented. This paper looks at the ways in which this dictionary is different from both conventional bilingual dictionaries and monolingual learners' dictionaries, and at the differences between the two halves of the dictionary.

1. A Tale of Two Halves: Writing a Bilingual Dictionary for Students of English

Most bilingual dictionaries are written for two language groups, each with two basic needs, encoding and decoding. It has long been acknowledged by lexicographers that this situation is less than ideal, but whether for commercial reasons or simply through a lack of attention to users' needs, it has remained the case that most dictionaries above the size of, say, a learner's pocket volume, tend to be bi-directional, i.e. they attempt to be four different dictionaries. In dictionaries which contain a minimum of information, with little beyond a translation, this problem is less apparent, but the limitations of such dictionaries are obvious. Dictionaries which give fuller treatment to both languages will inevitably include large amounts of information which is superfluous to one or other of the user groups: information about pronunciation or irregular forms of the L1, for example, or notes explaining customs and culture in one of the language communities. Equally, the language used for the disambiguation of multiple translations may be the 'wrong' one and add to the difficulty of using the dictionary for one group of users. In both of these cases, the bilingual dictionary was generally seen as unsuitable for use in ELT classrooms.

Our task when we embarked on the *Großes Oxford Wörterbuch für Schule und Beruf* was to write a dictionary which was only for learners of English. We did not attempt to meet the needs of English speakers learning German, and thus the task of writing four dictionaries was reduced to two. This enabled us to sharpen the focus of the dictionary and to concentrate on meeting the needs of our target audience: primarily German speakers in their final years of school and preparing for a school-leaving exam.

Because we were not aiming at professional users of language such as translators, but mainly at students who are upper-intermediate to advanced learners, the emphasis was very much on the pedagogical, and the dictionary bears many of the hallmarks of its relation, the monolingual learner's dictionary. However, the monolingual learner's dictionary caters for a worldwide audience with widely varying needs and does not aim to fulfil the specific requirements of one language group, which was our objective here.

So, although in many ways our approach mirrored that of our colleagues who produce monolingual ELT dictionaries, in others our narrower focus took us down a different path, and what resulted was not only a dictionary that was both different from 'traditional' bilingual dictionaries and different from monolingual learners' dictionaries but also containing two halves that are very different from each other, as even a glance at the dictionary reveals.

As more and more insights are gained into how languages behave, lexicographers feel under pressure to include ever more material in their dictionaries. However, where size, weight and price of a book continue to exert constraints, careful choices must still be made.

We are not serving our users well by simply giving them the maximum amount of information possible. I would go as far as to say that our aim was often to give them as little as possible. Any teacher will acknowledge that for the best of pedagogical reasons, what is taught to pupils is often only a part of the whole picture.

Our research with users showed that students at this level use the two halves of their bilingual dictionaries in quite distinct ways. They use the English side primarily for decoding, and the German side is the entry point for encoding. We decided therefore that the focus of the dictionary had to reflect that: on the English side the emphasis was to be on meaning; on the German side it had to be usage. On this basis we made decisions which affected the whole of the working method: decisions not only about what to include, but where it would be most useful.

2. Coverage

In Germany, teachers expressed the opinion that the wordcount on the English side of the dictionary had to be as high as possible, and in response to this, we included more entries on the English-German side of the dictionary. It is true that at this level, students have gone beyond the very controlled input of earlier years and may be exposed to widely varying types of text. Nor does one have the luxury of looking up a near synonym when the word one needs to know about is not in the L1. So, in terms of numbers of items included, the count is much higher – 34% - on the English-German side. On the German-English side, however, we could assume that the words that users would look up would be part of their active vocabulary and therefore unlikely to be, say, archaisms or highly technical items. On this side we could also assume that the users would in many cases be able to think of a new synonym to look up if the first search proved fruitless. In particular, we felt it was possible to exclude German idioms which could easily be expressed another way since we could rely on the native speakers' knowledge to guide them to a related item. An example might be the idiom *auf etwas geeicht sein* – be somebody's speciality. We didn't think that this was so common that it had to be included, particularly since the user could find translations by looking up something like *sich auf etwas verstehen.* On the other hand, it is much harder to

think of another way to express the idea *Partei ergreifen* (take sides), so that would be an idiom which definitely earns its place in the dictionary. One criterion for inclusion was therefore 'this is the only way to say X'.

3. Headword Information

Not only is the headword count higher on the English side of the dictionary, but this side remains the repository for most of the information about the headword: its part of speech, which can be a vital orientation, irregular forms and a transcription of the pronunciation, or in the case of compounds, an indication of primary and secondary stress. This is necessary since by no means all the words here will appear as translations on the German side, but the user looking them up may still need to recognize inflected forms or know how they are pronounced. Some of this information is of course also useful for encoding – irregular forms of verbs, plurals of nouns, and comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are included here for the purpose of recognition but are clearly useful for the user wishing to encode. In order to avoid repetition of this information, which would not only take up valuable space but make the GE entry unwieldy and difficult to read, the device was used of marking the item with an asterisk to alert the users to a morphological irregularity which, if in doubt, they should check on the other side.

The German headword, by contrast, looks rather lonely to the user who is familiar with the conventional bilingual dictionary and expects to see it flanked by information about its part of speech, possibly pronunciation, grammar, or gender. But this information is known to the users, and even if it is not, it is not the object of their search in the English dictionary. Rarely is this information needed for the purpose of locating the right entry – there are only a handful of occasions where we found it necessary to label German headwords with their part of speech, for example to distinguish homographs of different word classes from each other (*überlegen,* verb and adjective), or genders (*Leiter, der/die*).

4. Structure of Entries

The structure of the entries on both sides of the dictionary is translation-driven. Division into numbered groups is by translation, not 'sense'. If a monolingual dictionary saw the meaning of a word as having 7 subdivisions, but three of them could all be translated by the same German word, then those senses would be conflated. An example would be the English noun **life** which has 14 senses in the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* but can be translates by *Leben* in almost all of them. Similarly the German headword **Bogen** has one numbered group for the English translation *bow* with discriminators showing that this covers the archery, weaponry and musical senses. Nor did we follow the usual practice in bilingual dictionaries of splitting verb entries into transitive, intransitive, and reflexive sections, which often results in a great deal of repetition. An example would be **cry** which in one meaning translates as *schreien* or *rufen* in both the transitive and the intransitive use – this is treated in one numbered group in the *Großes Oxford Wörterbuch*, whereas these translations figure once in each section for most bilingual dictionaries which list all the transitive uses followed by all the intransitive uses.

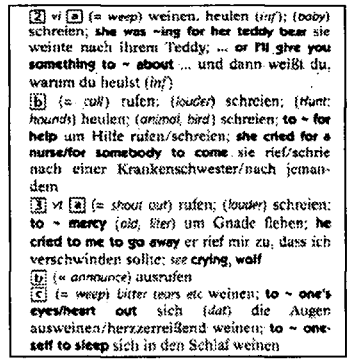

2 vi a (= weep) weinen, heulen (inf); (baby) schreien; she was ~ing for her teddy bear sie weinte nach ihrem Teddy; ... or I'll give you something to ~ about ... und dann weißt du, warum du heulst (inf)
b (= call) rufen; (louder) schreien; (hunt: hounds) heulen; (animal, bird) schreien; to ~ for help um Hilfe rufen/schreien; she cried for a nurse/for somebody to come sie rief/schrie nach einer Krankenschwester/nach jemandem
3 vt a (= shout out) rufen; (louder) schreien; to ~ mercy (old, liter) um Gnade flehen; he cried to me to go away er rief mir zu, dass ich verschwinden sollte; see crying, wolf
b (= announce) ausrufen
c (= weep) bitter tears etc weinen; to ~ one's eyes/heart out sich (dat) die Augen ausweinen/herzzerreißend weinen; to ~ oneself to sleep sich in den Schlaf weinen

Figure1: **cry** – Collins German Dictionary

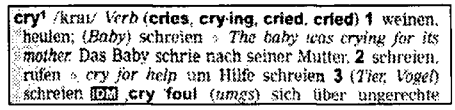

cry[1] /kraɪ/ *Verb* (**cries**, **cry·ing**, **cried**, **cried**) **1** weinen, heulen; (*Baby*) schreien ◦ *The baby was crying for its mother.* Das Baby schrie nach seiner Mutter. **2** schreien, rufen ◦ *cry for help* um Hilfe schreien **3** (*Tier, Vogel*) schreien IDM **cry foul** (*umgs*) sich über ungerechte

Figure 2: **cry** – Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

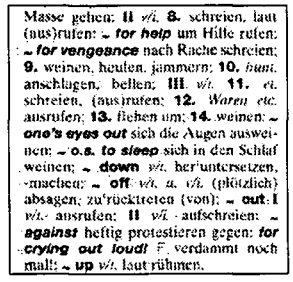

Masse gehen; II *vi.* **8.** schreien, laut (aus)rufen; ~ **for help** um Hilfe rufen; ~ **for vengeance** nach Rache schreien; **9.** weinen, heulen, jammern; **10.** *hunt.* anschlagen, bellen; III *vt.* **11.** *et.* schreien, (aus)rufen; **12.** *Waren etc.* ausrufen; **13.** flehen um; **14.** weinen: ~ **one's eyes out** sich die Augen ausweinen; ~ **o.s. to sleep** sich in den Schlaf weinen; ~ **down** *vt.* herunterreißen, -machen; ~ **off** *vt. u. vi.* (plötzlich) absagen; zurücktreten (von); ~ **out** I *vi.* ausrufen; II *vt.* aufschreien; ~ **against** heftig protestieren gegen; **for crying out loud!** F verdammt noch mal!; ~ **up** *vt.* laut rühmen.

Figure 3: **cry** – Langenscheidts Großes Schulwörterbuch

Idioms follow the pattern of monolingual dictionaries such as the newest editions of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* in that they are collected in a separate section at the end of the entry. Rather than being assigned to a particular sense - something which in any case is not always possible - they stand out better in this position and are clearly different from the examples and the numbered senses, which can be a problem in a 'standard' bilingual dictionary where there is often no typographic distinction between examples and more fixed expressions.

English phrasal verbs also appear separately after the main senses of the verb entry, a practice also followed by conventional bilingual dictionaries. However, the *Großes Oxford Wörterbuch* follows the practice of the learner's dictionary in giving the citation form as, for example, **look sth up**, which makes information about the position of the object pronoun explicit in the most straightforward way. The Collins German Dictionary gives the

information, using a label *vt sep.*, but other dictionaries, including the Langenscheidt and PONS dictionaries which are called *Schülerwörterbücher* ignore the issue completely. It could be argued that this information about phrasal and prepositional verbs is not vital for decoding, but we see it as part of the process of establishing **look sth up** as the pattern that should be learned and the form that is given as a translation on the German-English side.

nachschlagen[1] look *sth* up ◇ *ein Zitat nachschlagen* look up a quotation ☛ Vorsicht: **look up** wird immer mit einem Objekt gebraucht: *Schlag mal (im Wörterbuch) nach.* Look it up (in the dictionary).

Figure 4: nachschlagen – Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

In line with the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and other recent dictionaries, we have not included any nested compounds on the English side. Multi-word items become headwords in their correct alphabetical position. This addresses the problems formerly encountered by learners in locating compounds, but relies on their ability to recognize the item as a compound. To assist in this, cross-references are included from the individual entries to compounds which are not transparent, for instance, from **measles** to **German measles**. Derivatives, too, have their own entries, and thus alphabetical order is never disrupted. On the German side, compounds are nested to allow for high coverage in a language which is particularly rich in combined forms, but again, alphabetical order is retained and so the user has no difficulty in locating a nested item.

5. Translations

The aim on the German-English side was to give as few translations as possible. This, too sounds at first like heresy, an impoverishment of the text, but it is guided by the pedagogical approach. Our aim was to give the learner the smallest number possible of the most productive translations. This was arrived at by the comparative study of corpora , so for example for the verb **einbüßen** we were able to identify as common collocates: *Attraktivität/Reiz; Bedeutung, Faszination, Unabhängigkeit, Wert, Führungs-/Spitzenposition,* and amounts of money or time.

Possible translations include *lose* and *forfeit* but we were able to show that the English translations of the collocates all combined acceptably with *lose*, and while *forfeit* could stand with some of them, it was considerably less common. In this case we opted to leave *forfeit* out of the equation completely and to give a single translation, 'lose'.

Where multiple translations are necessary, they are never left undiscriminated, whereas on the English-German side, where the user is able to make an informed choice of translations based on native–speaker instincts, the need for disambiguation is not as crucial. The discriminators on both sides were in German to facilitate location of the correct translation. This did not give us the opportunity to show different translations dependent on English collocates – we preferred to show this information in example phrases.

6. Grammatical information

This is one area where the same principles were applied on both sides, although they were different from standard lexicographic practice for either monolingual learners' dictionaries or bilingual dictionaries. Here we focused on the places where there is a mismatch between the two languages, as these are the likely occasions when doubt or error may arise. Countability labelling, omnipresent in monolingual learners' dictionaries but generally rather neglected in conventional bilinguals, is therefore used selectively in the *Große Oxford Wörterbuch*. So a word like *Heizung*, which can be countable in German (*Wir lassen eine neue Heizung einbauen*) needs its translation *heating* to be labelled [U] = uncountable to warn the user off producing phrases such as **a new heating* or **new heatings*. More detailed information is given in a separate study section in the middle of the dictionary, so where a fuller explanation is needed than can be given within an entry, for example in the cases where a singular or plural verb can be used, there is a cross-reference to a paragraph there.

I mentioned above that verb entries were not explicitly divided into transitive, intransitive and reflexive sections. This was information which we concluded to be superfluous in the majority of entries. In many cases, the source and the target language matched and a mistake or a misunderstanding would be unlikely to occur. Where it was important to give some information about the presence or absence of an object, we opted for a pattern in bold type,

abhängen 1 von etw ~ depend on sth ◇ *Von dieser Entscheidung hängt sehr viel ab.* A lot depends on this decision. ◇ *Das hängt ganz davon ab, ob ...* It all depends on whether ... **2 von jdm** ~ be dependent on sb ◇ *Sie hängen finanziell von ihm ab.* They're financially dependent on him. **3 etw (von etw)** ~ (*herunternehmen*) take* sth down (from sth) ◇ *ein Poster abhängen* take down a poster **4 etw (von etw)** ~ (*abkuppeln*) uncouple sth (from sth) **5 jdn** ~ (*Wettbewerb*) leave* sb trailing; (*Verfolger*) shake* sb off **6** (*faulenzen*) lounge around **7** (*Fleisch*) hang*

Figure 5 : abhängen – Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

or, in a few exceptional cases, for a warning note (e.g. at **stören**).

stören 1 disturb ◇ *Stör ihn nicht bei der Arbeit.* Don't disturb him when he's working. ◇ *Lass dich nicht stören!* Don't let me disturb you! ◇ *Die Autoknacker wurden beim Diebstahl gestört.* The car thieves were disturbed on the job. ◇ *Lass ihn mitgehen — hier stört er nur.* Let him go with you — he's only in the way here. ◇ *Entschuldigen Sie, wenn ich Sie störe.* I'm sorry to bother you. ◆ **Disturb** muss im Englischen immer mit einem Objekt gebraucht werden: *Störe ich?* Am I disturbing you? **2** (*unterbrechen*) disrupt ◇ *den*

Figure 6: stören - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

The complement frame, or *Strukturformel* was also our vehicle of choice for conveying information about required constructions (infinitive or -ing-form?) and prepositions on both sides of the dictionary.

7. Examples

The role played by examples in the learner's dictionary is crucial, and the different roles taken by examples in the two halves of our dictionary is perhaps the most striking of the contrasts between the German and the English sides. On the English into German side, the users are likely to have met the word in a context and very often will be satisfied with a one-word translation which they can fit into their sentence, and even adapt as necessary. The only problems will arise when the translation given does not readily fit into the context in which the user has met it. The examples that we had to show on the English-German side were therefore those reflecting a common use of the headword, but one in which the simple substitution of the headword translation would not yield a satisfactory German sentence. They might therefore appear to be rather a collection of oddities. On the German-English side, however, where we know our user is going for information on encoding, the example must function as model sentence or phrase which will help students use the item correctly in context. So the examples must be useful in demonstrating typical patterns, collocations, contexts, etc. and also be generalizable. Thus, unsurprisingly, the average number of examples per entry is much higher (89%) on this side.

Sometimes the examples have to shoulder the entire burden of all the content of a sense group, because no translation is possible of the headword as a single item. This happens, for instance, with a whole group of German nouns, where, although there would appear to be a single-word translation, our corpus research showed that the it would not be an appropriate equivalent. An example would be the German noun *Klärung*, which is generally translated in bilingual dictionaries as 'clarification'. It seems logical that when *klären* means 'clarify', it should be possible to translate *Klärung* by 'clarification'. Comparison of English and German corpora showed us, though, that this translation will be unlikely to produce a natural-sounding English sentence.

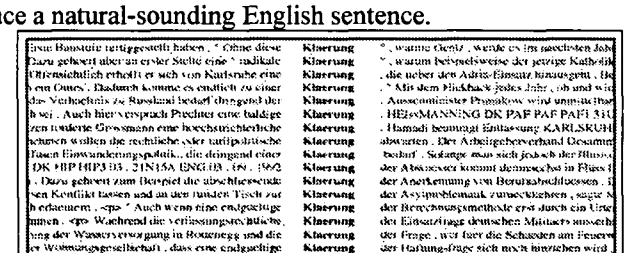


Figure 7 : Corpus Lines – Klärung

The German noun tends to come up in contexts like *'die Klärung der Lage, der Situation, der Verhältnisse'*, whereas 'clarification' does not come up in these types of sentence. There are no citations whatsoever on the British National Corpus of *'clarification of the question'* and only one of *'clarification of the situation'*. This is clearly not the typical way of expressing this kind of idea, so we had to look further for our translation by searching on the collocates to find how these ideas are typically expressed in English, and we find that very often, English uses a verbal construction, and so this is what we have shown in examples in our entry: *'His job was to resolve organizational problems'*, *'until the case is finally solved'* etc.

Klärung 1 (*meist mit einem Verb übersetzt*) ◇ *Er war für die Klärung organisatorischer Fragen zuständig.* His job was to resolve organizational problems. ◇ *Bis zur endgültigen Klärung hat die Polizei jede Auskunft verweigert.* Until the case is finally solved, the police have refused to give any information. ◇ *vor der Klärung der Eigentumsverhältnisse* before ownership is established ◇ *Sie fordern eine gerichtliche Klärung.* They want the issue to be settled by the court. ◆ *Siehe auch* KLÄREN **2** (*von Abwässern*) purification

Figure 8 – Klärung - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

I hope that by not giving the 'obvious' equivalent we will be helping steer students away from a one-for-one, word-by-word attitude to translation, which has long been a criticism levelled at the use of bilingual dictionaries.

8. Usage Notes

Usage notes familiar from the learners' monolingual dictionaries have become a feature of bilingual dictionaries in recent years. In fact they have become such a selling point that a sprinkling of boxes which go beyond what a normal dictionary entry can convey have become seemingly obligatory, even when it is difficult to see what real purpose they might fulfil. We were able to tailor the content of out notes to the needs of the German-speaking user.

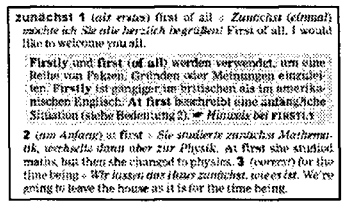
Cultural notes explaining features of life in the English-speaking world (again where a translation might give little enlightenment) obviously belong on the English side.

spon·sor[2] /'sɒnsə(r); *AmE* 'spɑ:n-/ *Verb* **1** sponsern ◇ *sports events sponsored by the tobacco industry* von der Tabakindustrie gesponserte Sportveranstaltungen

In Großbritannien ist es üblich, Geld für Wohltätigkeitszwecke zu erbringen, indem man z.B. eine bestimmte Strecke läuft, wandert oder schwimmt und Freunde, Bekannte, Kollegen u.a. bittet, Geld zu geben. Jeder Spender verspricht eine bestimmte Summe, z.B. 50 Pence pro Meile, die dann nach der Veranstaltung eingesammelt wird: *Will you sponsor me for a charity walk I'm doing?* ◇ *She's doing a sponsored swim.*

Figure 9: sponsor - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

We would not include notes on German culture, since this, again, is not the remit of the English dictionary for German speakers. This meant that the space on the German-English side could be used to deal with problems of encoding, for example, usage notes which help the user distinguish between possible translations appear at the German entry.


zunächst 1 (*als erstes*) first of all ◇ *Zunächst (einmal) möchte ich Sie alle herzlich begrüßen!* First of all, I would like to welcome you all.

Firstly und **first (of all)** werden verwendet, um eine Reihe von Fakten, Gründen oder Meinungen einzuleiten. **Firstly** ist geläufiger im britischen als im amerikanischen Englisch. **At first** beschreibt eine anfängliche Situation (siehe Bedeutung 2). ➡ *Hinweis bei* FIRSTLY

2 (*am Anfang*) at first ◇ *Sie studierte zunächst Mathematik, wechselte dann über zur Physik.* At first she studied maths, but then she changed to physics. **3** (*vorerst*) for the time being ◇ *Wir lassen das Haus zunächst, wie es ist.* We're going to leave the house as it is for the time being.

Figure 10: zunächst - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

Grammatical notes which give more detailed explanations than is possible within the normal scope of an entry clearly belong on the German 'encoding' side, but they would only be included if they were perceived as problematic for the German speaker. Other notes point out numerous pitfalls in using a particular word. One innocuous-looking word 'Mal' which in itself seems to translate quite unproblematically – 'time' in the sense of 'occasion', nächstes/letztes Mal = next/last time, etc. – actually causes numerous problems when used in expressions with 'zum ersten, zweiten, letzten' and so on – phrases such as 'Ich mache das nicht zum ersten Mal' or Heute singt sie zum letzten Mal'. This we felt worthy of special treatment in a usage box which would draw attention to the difficulty and show the learner how to construct natural sentences in English.

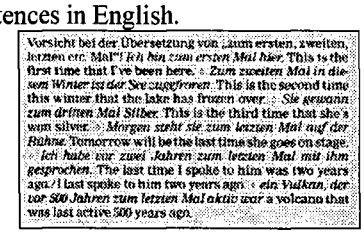
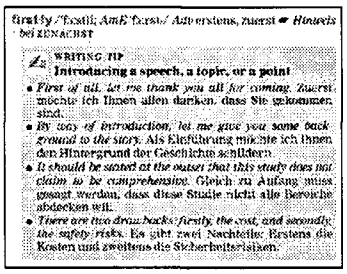

Vorsicht bei der Übersetzung von „zum ersten, zweiten, letzten etc. Mal"! *Ich bin zum ersten Mal hier.* This is the first time that I've been here. ◇ *Zum zweiten Mal in diesem Winter ist der See zugefroren.* This is the second time this winter that the lake has frozen over. ◇ *Sie gewann zum dritten Mal Silber.* This is the third time that she's won silver. ◇ *Morgen steht sie zum letzten Mal auf der Bühne.* Tomorrow will be the last time she goes on stage. ◇ *Ich habe vor zwei Jahren zum letzten Mal mit ihm gesprochen.* The last time I spoke to him was two years ago./I last spoke to him two years ago. ◇ *ein Vulkan, der vor 500 Jahren zum letzten Mal aktiv war* a volcano that was last active 500 years ago.

Figure 11: Mal - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

9. Vocabulary-building

Vocabulary-building is a feature which perhaps might be considered less essential in a bilingual dictionary, since the user always has the opportunity to look up individual items and theoretically build up a collection of related vocabulary. However, research in the market again showed that there is a need for 'synonyms' which we attempt to satisfy, however queasy the lexicographer may feel about the term. Whatever misgivings we have about the existence or not of true synonyms, we know that German students are encouraged to widen their vocabulary by learning 'synonyms' and are tested in their final exams on their ability to find other expressions for lexical items in the exam texts. We have therefore

included on the English side, pointers to related vocabulary indicated by the SYN and OPP symbols, and to further assist them in their essay-writing at this level, we have also included a series of boxes on the kind of language which helps them organize the arguments of their essays with variations on each theme to allow them to broaden their repertoire.


firstly /'fɜːstli; AmE 'fɜrs-/ Adv erstens, zuerst ▪ Hinweis bei ERSTAUNT

WRITING TIP
Introducing a speech, a topic, or a point

- *First of all, let me thank you all for coming.* Zuerst möchte ich Ihnen allen danken, dass Sie gekommen sind.
- *By way of introduction, let me give you some background to the story.* Als Einführung möchte ich Ihnen den Hintergrund der Geschichte schildern.
- *It should be stated at the outset that this study does not claim to be comprehensive.* Gleich zu Anfang muss gesagt werden, dass diese Studie nicht alle Bereiche abdecken will.
- *There are two drawbacks: firstly, the cost, and secondly, the safety risks.* Es gibt zwei Nachteile: Erstens die Kosten und zweitens die Sicherheitsrisiken.

Figure 12: firstly - Das große Oxford Wörterbuch

10. Conclusion

If bilingual dictionaries have been shunned in the English language classroom in recent decades, the reason must lie in part with the obsession with communicative methods and the attempts to ban the L1 from the learning situation. However, the fact that the dictionaries available to learners, inasmuch as they were most likely to be cut-down versions of the big four-way dictionaries, were not in any way tailored to their needs was a contributory factor to the bilingual dictionary's deserved poor image among teachers. Now, the tide would seem to be turning. The exclusion of L1 from the foreign language classroom is no longer seen as necessarily desirable and a role is seen for the mother tongue. This is an opportunity for bilingual dictionaries to come out from under the desk (for the truth is that they have always been used, albeit without the blessing of the teacher) and to play a part as a valuable pedagogical tool. To fulfil this purpose, they must be conceived from the start as learner's dictionaries, with specific users in mind to whom they can give focused help.

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