

Illustrations in *Macmillan English Dictionary*

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1. Introduction

Pictorial illustrations of lexical items in a dictionary can be a highly effective means of conveying the meanings of words to language learners, yet their use in the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (hereafter, *MED*), regrettably, does not live up to their potential.¹⁾ It has been a prevailing tendency for learners' dictionaries to provide illustrations for their basic words, and this is true as well of *MED*, which gives its basic vocabulary attractive illustrations. A close examination of these, however, reveals many shortcomings.

This analysis will deal especially with problems that concern illustrations for the non-encyclopaedic entries. Before going into the subject, we shall examine what kind of illustration is found in this dictionary from the following points of view: 1. the UK and American editions compared; 2. the type of lexical entries with illustrations; 3. the printed and CD-ROM editions compared.

2. Illustrations in *MED* summarised

2.1. The UK and American editions compared.²⁾

MED has its illustrations in the A-Z text and on the Colour Illustrations pages inserted in two places between the pages of the text. Counting the number of entries which have illustrations, no significant difference is found in the number of illustrations in the text between the two editions: 196 entries in the UK edition and 195 in the American edition. This slight difference in number results from the fact that the UK edition has an illustration for **peg**, while the American edition does not. Some change is

found in the members in the composite illustrations: e.g., **bowl**, **bread**, **glass** and **scale**, and also in the pictorial designs: e.g., **bed**, **bowl**, **column**, **crack**, **knot**, **quarter** and **tunnel**. These changes, however, do not seem to reflect the difference between Britain and America or between British and American vocabulary, but are apparently due to editorial decisions.³⁾

Illustrations in the Colour Illustrations in both editions deal with 14 themes in all: artificial objects and things involved in human activities such as **HOUSE**, **OFFICE** and **GAMES**, or natural objects like **TREES**, **VEGETABLES** and **ANIMALS**. They are mostly encyclopaedic in character.

Illustrations in the Colour Illustrations are much the same in both editions, but the linguistic information attached to them shows some careful differentiation between UK and American vocabulary. For example, the theme **MOTORWAY** in the UK edition is changed to **HIGHWAY** in the American edition. A fine distinction between UK and American vocabulary is also reflected in 'labels'⁴⁾ attached to the objects in the illustrations: e.g. **stove/cooker**, **waste bin/trash can** and **tea towel/dishtowel** at **KITCHEN**; **trousers/pants**, **waistcoat/vest** and **tights/pantyhose** at **CLOTHES**; **rubber/eraser**, **in tray/in box**, **mobile phone/cellphone** at **OFFICE**; and **windscreen/windshield**, **wing/fender**, **boot/trunk** and **handbrake/emergency brake** at **CAR**. There are also cases where the illustrations in one edition are quite different in the other. See, for instance, those at **CAR** and **MOTORWAY/HIGHWAY**, which reflect the road systems of both countries. At **HOUSE** a big house typical of the country is illustrated along with some other types of house, but the illustrations differ in kind and number in both editions.

The difference of usage in encyclopaedic vocabulary is presented not only in the Colour Illustrations but in those in the body of the text: e.g. **football/soccer ball** and **rugby ball/football** at **ball**; **chopping board/cutting board** at **board**; and **polo neck/turtleneck** at **neck**.

Apart from encyclopaedic entries, only one illustration in the text is shown at different words in the two editions. The same picture, in which a needle is bursting a balloon, is placed at **burst** in the UK edition but at

pop in the American edition.

2.2. The type of lexical entries with illustrations

MED prints frequently-used lexical entries in red, further dividing them into three frequency groups by adding one or more stars.⁵⁾ With this system as our guide, let us see what kind of lexical entries have an illustration in the text of the American edition.⁶⁾

none	49
★	32
★★	43
★★★	71
total	195

Out of the 195 illustrated lexical entries, the number of those with one or more stars (★), i.e. the red entries, is 146, accounting for nearly 75 percent of the total. Out of these 146 entries, 96 words are included in the defining vocabulary. This fact shows that *MED* gives illustrations mostly to basic words.

Further, the 195 illustrated entries are classified according to their parts of speech as follows:

nouns	126
verbs	63
adjectives	6
total	195

Of the 6 adjectives, only **dizzy** and **symmetrical** have no star, and of the 63 verbs, only **dodge**, **drip**, **eavesdrop**, **juggle**, **prop**, **prune**, **scoop** and **wink** have none.⁷⁾ This means that the entries without any star are mostly nouns: cultural items like **bonsai**, **boomerang** and **gargoyle**, or such superordinate words as **fastener** and **stringed instrument**, which do not constitute a large group that requires treatment in the Colour Illustrations. In short, regardless of part of speech, illustrations in the text are mostly given to basic words, and the Colour Illustrations deal with encyclopaedic entries which constitute large groups.

Judging from what we have seen in this subsection, *MED* seems to

follow the recent trend of EFL dictionaries and use illustrations as part of the definition, not as mere appendages. But *MED*'s use of illustrations is limited to the three major parts of speech, and to content words only. On the other hand, illustrations in *LDOCE*, for example, cover adverbs and prepositions. *LDOCE* makes an ambitious attempt to visualise the meanings of words like **ago**, **above** and **enough**. Even for nouns, verbs and adjectives, *LDOCE* gives illustrations to highly abstract words such as **facet**, **absorb**, **hear**, and **back**, while *MED* does not. *LDOCE* also illustrates phrasal verbs far more often than *MED* does.⁸⁾ Compared to *LDOCE*, it is regrettable to say, *MED* does not make full use of illustrations.

2.3. The printed and CD-ROM editions compared

There are two major ways to refer to the illustrations in the CD-ROM edition. Let us quote from the Online Guide: 1. 'In the A to Z text view, if a dictionary entry has an illustration attached to it, the illustration is displayed in the right-hand panel of the window. Clicking expands the illustration and the object links become active.' 2. 'In the Illustrations view, *MED* displays the illustration in the main panel of the window. In the left panel, a list of Illustrations and their Objects is displayed.'

Either way, the user will be cross-referred from a lexical entry to its illustration, or from an illustration to its entry and the relevant description. While an illustration of a single object refers only to the definition of the corresponding word in the printed edition, in the CD-ROM edition it may be linked as well to other lexical entries that refer to one of the object's constituent parts. In other words, an illustration with an apparent single object will be able to function as a composite illustration.

One of the advantages of the CD-ROM edition is that not all identifying labels need be on the same plane, which helps to keep illustrations from getting complicated. If the user chooses a word that he or she wants to know about from among the list of Objects, the relevant part of the illustration on display is highlighted. This is something we could hardly wish for in the printed edition. Thus the usefulness of these illustrations could be greatly enhanced by expanding this list. The user may want to

know the name of a tool with 'a needle fitted to a plastic tube' when he or she sees the illustration at **inject**. Many users may want to know what 'an **elephant**'s long nose' is called and what its 'very long pointed [tooth]' is called, or more may wonder what a 'pocket on the front of [a **kangaroo**]'s body' is called. Also the colour of highlighting needs to be reconsidered. If colouring is expected to be an efficient identifying label, it should stand out more clearly against the background.

Still more unfortunate is the fact that many editorial mistakes are found in the CD-ROM edition. If you believe the illustration at **horn**, a **bull** is the head of 'an adult male of the cattle family' without its **horns**. Likewise, the illustration at **cup** will tell you that a **mug** has no handle. A 'small round flat dish' is called a **saucer** when it is under a **teacup**, but not when under a **coffee cup**. In the printed editions **wink**, **frown** and **blink** are grouped in the same illustration, helping to distinguish between the words, whereas in the CD-ROM edition the picture illustrating **frown** is left out of the illustration for no obvious reason, with no links being made among the three. In the American CD-ROM edition, placing the cursor at **mask** to activate the object misses its target. In the UK edition, the illustration for **egg** cannot be reached from the entry in the text.

3. Illustrations and verbal support⁹⁾

3.1. Legends, identifying labels, and differentiating labels

OALD places each illustration right above the relevant entry across the full width of a column, which, even without any legend added to it, would enable the user to identify the entry for an illustration. *LDOCE*, which tends to place illustrations in a less systematic way, adds a legend to each illustration for easy reference.

MED, on the other hand, seems to have no systematic method of placing illustrations in the text. Some illustrations are found far away from the relevant definitions. Even when an illustration is placed just above or below the definition in question, it can sometimes happen that the illustration ends up on a different page from the headword. The problem is that in a case like this verbal support is not always provided in the illustration to show the user the lexical entry for which it is intended. See a few

examples from the American edition: **glass**, **hat** and **shape**. Legends, therefore, are indispensable to illustrations. There are some ambiguous illustrations for which it is difficult to find their corresponding entries. For example, at **rescue**, **sieve** and **spin**, which have the same form both for the noun and verb, the user may be at a loss about the part of speech the illustrations are intended for. Illustrations like these can be used for both parts of speech at the same time, and I think they should. When they are used to serve such a dual purpose, the intention must be expressly shown. On the other hand, the CD-ROM edition is so organized that these dual purpose illustrations are reached from one part of speech but not from the other. It is a pity that *MED* does not take full advantage of the CD-ROM format.¹⁰⁾

As regards polysemous words, it is helpful when the illustration has some kind of indication as to which meaning of the entry it is intended for. This is true of all three dictionaries discussed here. Since several meanings have evolved from the original meaning of a word, the meanings of a word do not exist alone but in a continuum. A single illustration can be used to show the evolution, covering the original and derived meanings of a word. An illustration has the power to visualise a notion. For example, at words like **line** and **fork**, pictures showing several senses of the entry are successfully grouped in a single illustration. But words like **horn**, **crane** and **reach** ought to be accompanied by the sense number in question.

Presence or absence of a legend not only decides the ease of reference, but also causes a problem concerning definition. Especially in the case of the nouns which represent concrete objects, sporadic use of legends obscures the denotation of the lexical entry in question. By way of example, let us look at **hat** in *LDOCE*, which Stein mentions in her article. An object lacking a differentiating label will be readily recognized as a type of **hat** thanks to the legend **hats**, and at the same time all kinds of headgear exhibited here will be understood to be called hats as a whole. It means that this shows that a superordinate word can also be used as a prototype for its co-hyponyms. Moreover, in this case, the legend has a plural form, 'hats', which shows the word **hat** is a countable noun. So much information can be incorporated into a small element of a legend.

Unfortunately, however, *MED* does not show a coherent use of legends, as will be seen from the illustrations for the following words other than **hat: bag, bed, bell, board, bowl, bread, cake, chair, container, corner, cup, fastener, fire, game, glass, hairstyle, jewelry, knife, mask, nail, needle, pen, pin, pot, puppet, scale, shape, shell, shoe, spoon, stick and tool.**

Lines and red colour are also utilised to serve part of the functions of identifying labels, but in some illustrations in *MED* these are not fully utilised. *MED* appears to regard red colour merely as a useful means to make illustrations stand out. For example **angel** is a case in which red colour does nothing but contribute to the complication of the illustration. Red colour should be more fully used as a means to identify the highlighted part. To give an example, in the illustration at **dodge**, one of the two participants, the agent, needs to be highlighted by using the colour.¹¹⁾

3.2. Captions

As mentioned above, *LDOCE* makes a positive use of illustrations for function words and highly abstract words, and it is the caption that makes it possible. In *MED* out of the 195 illustrations, only one caption is used, i.e. at **fit**. A caption combines a notion and a lexical entry; in other words, it not only serves as part of the definition but also gives information about *how* the lexical entry is used.¹²⁾ Illustrations have a far stronger power than letters in attracting the attention of the user instantaneously. If an illustration has an illustrative sentence in it to tell the user how to use the word, the sentence, the caption, will exert a powerful effect. Even if the text has a sentence synonymous with the illustrative one in the illustration, the sentence will be the most effectively placed in the position where the user easily recognises it as the description of the illustration. The following is a list of the entries with those illustrations which would be twice as effective with added captions as they are now: **bite, dent, dizzy, dodge, duck, eavesdrop, fire, insert, knot, needle, open, patch, peak, pour, press, reach, rescue, scoop, scratch, shake, sharp, shell, shiver, shrug, sit, slip, spill, spin, stick, symmetrical, wink, wrap, and yawn.**

Although the process of dictionary-making has been said to be an

eternal struggle for space, adding captions to illustrations would be very effective. If the illustrations as at **prop** and **bounce** in the American edition and at **cake** in the UK edition, which occupy far too much space, are to be reduced to a more reasonable size, enough space for captions will be easily secured.

4. Conclusion

Illustrations, which directly appeal to the learner's perception or experiences, are an ideal tool for vocabulary building for the learner. It is written in p. iv that in editing the dictionary they have consulted 'a corpus of common errors made by learners of English', and the results are reflected in the illustrations. Contrastive illustrations which intend to show the proper use of synonyms and synonymous expressions may be devised based on EFL corpora; see, for example, **close/fasten/lock, bend/bow/bend down/hunch, carry/lift/pick up, draw/sketch/trace/copy, be dressed in/be wearing/get dressed/put on, and spiky/jagged/pointed/sharp/serrated/blunt/prickly.**

As has been mentioned in 2.2., since *MED* gives most of its illustrations to basic words and provides illustrations concerning the senses and usage of basic words, *MED* does not seem to regard them as a mere appendage. So to make illustrations more effective and well interlinked with the text, we would suggest that *MED* should enrich legends, identifying/differentiating labels and captions, reconsider the effective use of red colour, and make a coherent use of these throughout the illustrations.

Lastly we would like to make two more requests as regards the Colour Illustrations. At **VEGETABLES, FRUIT** and **ANIMALS**, instead of listing items at random, *MED* should consider adopting the subdivision system as *OALD* and *LDOCE* do. What kind of entries constitute a group is itself a useful piece of linguistic information. Secondly, at **ANIMALS** each member should be drawn to scale. We would not want to live in a world where we would have a **wasp** larger than a squirrel.

NOTES

1) By illustrations are meant pictorial ones only. *MED* does not use tables or diagrams

such as those analysed in Ilson (1985). Incidentally, G. Fox, Associate Editor, visited Japan and gave a lecture on 13 December, 2002. She said in this lecture something to the effect that she was not the least interested in illustrations.

2) In this analysis, when examples are shown on either side of a slash, an example from the UK edition is placed on the left and its American counterpart on the right.

3) On closer examination the UK edition shows some refinement in the illustrations. On the whole the UK edition is superior in the following points: the use of red tint at **knot** and **column**, the subtle difference of arrangement of the quarters of an apple at **quarter**, an addition of a line at **tunnel**.

4) In this article 'verbal support' added to illustrations is divided into four categories according to Stein (1991): (1) 'legends': verbal elements which assign the illustration its place within the (alphabetical) macrostructure of the dictionary and which single out that part in the illustration which it is supposed to represent (p. 107); (2) 'identifying labels': inserted words with lines drawn to help dictionary users to identify what the pictures are meant to illustrate (p. 113); (3) 'differentiating labels': words which differentiate the different objects and actions illustrated to delimit their respective meanings (pp. 116–7); (4) 'captions': (very often) full sentences which actualise the lexical item in question and guide the interpretation of pictorial illustrations (pp. 123–4).

5) *MED* has no red entries without any stars added.

6) Like those at **rescue** and **glass (ware)**, which will be discussed below, there are some illustrations which, in the absence of appropriate legends, may seem to be stranded. In this case the CD-ROM edition is used for identification, where each illustration is linked to its entry. Composite illustrations, i.e. illustrations which are made up of a group of pictures, are counted, not by counting all members of each group, but by counting entries to which the composite illustrations belong in the printed edition. For phrasal verbs, the number of verbs is counted.

7) As for **wink**, in the same illustration there are pictures for **frown** and **blink**, which are words with ★★ and with ★, respectively.

8) Since there is a large difference in the total number of illustrations between these two dictionaries, no comparison will be attempted here by giving the exact numbers. According to the counting made the same way as in note 6, *LDOCE* has 335 illustrations. For further detail see Shimizu, A. *et al.* (1989), p. 230.

9) Cf. note 4.

10) Incidentally, when the illustration is used for a homographic entry, not only the intended entry word should be given in the legend, but also its small number.

11) Furthermore, this illustration needlessly occupies too much space. And there is another problem: from the way the participants are drawn in the illustration, it is not quite certain whether they are two or four.

12) In this respect the caption in *MED* 'Bob's clothes don't fit.' is far from what it should be. There is some ambiguity in the illustration: the user is not sure whether the boy is Bob or somebody else.

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