An Analysis of the *Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*

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1. Introduction

This paper is a critical analysis of the *Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (2008) (hereafter abbreviated as *MWALED*). The dictionary is the first endeavor by the long-established American dictionary publisher, Merriam-Webster, to produce a dictionary specifically for learners of English as a second or foreign language, and in fact it is the first attempt ever by an American publisher to produce a full-sized EFL dictionary comparable to those published by British competitors. In 1997, the *Random House Webster's Dictionary of American English* was published by an equally prestigious publishing house in the United States, but strictly speaking it is an 'ESL' dictionary. That is to say, it is a dictionary for learners of English as a 'second' language as it claims on the top cover, and it is much smaller in size, comprising 859 pages of A-Z dictionary text, as opposed to 1,909 pages of alphabetical entries in *MWALED*. Thus, until the advent of *MWALED*, the global market of EFL dictionaries featuring American English was lead by British publishers that produced American versions of their EFL dictionaries. Major works of that kind include the *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (the latest (second) edition was published in 2007, abbreviated as *LAAD2* hereafter), the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English* (2002) and the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of American English* (2007, hence-

forth *COBAm*). We would like to examine what features the *MWALED* has as a truly American-born EFL dictionary of American English, and how it compares to its British-made counterparts of our time, including the seventh edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (henceforth *OALD7*).

Merriam-Webster offers a free online version of *MWALED*.[1] If you are hooked up to the Internet, you have free access to the A-Z full text of this dictionary, including audible pronunciation of the headword as well as verbal and pictorial illustrations. The publisher also offers a downloadable e-book version of the A-Z dictionary text of *MWALED*, readable on Mobipocket reader installed in your computer. The downloadable e-book version is not accessible to audible pronunciation and pictorial illustrations.

For the comparison between *MWALED* and other EFL dictionaries, all the entries taken from every 50 page (76 pages in total)[2] and corresponding parts of other dictionaries are used for sampling except in Section 6. Other pages will also be examined whenever necessary.

2.   Headwords, phrases and phrasal verbs in *MWALED*

In this section, the differences between *MWALED* and *LAAD2* are discussed, focusing on their headwords, important words, and run-ons (including phrasal verb, idioms, and derivatives). These differences are observed from the viewpoint of the degree of Americanization, for one of the *MWALED*'s characteristic features is its full coverage of American English, as described in Preface as "unparalleled" (p. 7a). In 2.1, the format of each dictionary is analyzed, while 2.2 explores important words, 2.3 headwords, and 2.4 run-ons.

2.1.   Format of each dictionary

First of all, the overall format including the treatment of number, abbreviation, and part of speech in each dictionary are discussed, followed by the comparison of number of items.

2.1.1. Formats

As in other learners' dictionaries, the entries in *MWALED* "are arranged in alphabetical order according to their headwords" (p. 10a) although the order of headwords **unrecorded** and **unreconstructed** (p. 1800) seems to be wrong. Homographs have separate entries when they are related but have different parts of speech, and when they are unrelated. In this point, *MWALED* can be considered as adopting relatively "detached entry style," referring to the style which presents information on different parts of speech of the same word separately in independent numbered headwords. The degree of detachedness, however, is greater for *LAAD*2.

In *MWALED*, geographical names are concentrated after the headwords pages (pp. 1910–1926), unlike in *LAAD*2, where they are contained in the dictionary text A-Z. This kind of separation is not unusual in the recent EFL dictionaries: for example, *COBAm* also divides geographical and nationality names from headwords. Other proper nouns such as biographical names are not included, which might be because they are more open-ended than geographical names. In the pages of Geographical Names, the major countries, islands, oceans, rivers, cities etc. are included, although the criterion of headword choice is not evident. From a pedagogical point of view, this might confer both advantages and disadvantages.

In the case where a user notices that the word he/she wants to look up is such a geographical one and knows that *MWALED* has separate pages for geographical names, a detached list may be less demanding, because the number of words is much more limited. Moreover, due to its focus on geographical names, *MWALED* has achieved a bigger word list than *LAAD*2: for example, while the latter contains capital cities of countries or states, the former includes not only capital cities but also non-capital ones.

However, when a user does not know that the word is geographical or that *MWALED* adopts the detached system, he/she might not be able to find the word with ease. Atkins and Rundell (2008) argue that from a theoretical viewpoint, the detached system "meant a 'purer'

headword list, but from the point of view of users (who don't normally care about such things) it was simply another obscure idiosyncrasy of dictionary editors." This is why "[c]urrent practice is to include all headwords in one single list" (p. 179), which is opposite from the *MWALED* system.

When considering the importance of including proper nouns such as geographical names in dictionaries, it might have become less necessary, for it may be the case that a user would search for proper nouns on the Internet rather than look them up in a paper dictionary. Taking this point into consideration, it might be suggested that the necessity of including proper nouns is decreasing.

As for treatment of number, *MWALED* spells out numbers: for example, **catch-22** appears between **catchphrase** and **catch-up**. *LAAD*2, on the other hand, introduces numbers before "A" except in cases where a headword starts with a number, which is spelled out as in *MWALED*. Therefore, in *LAAD*2, **catch-22** comes before **catchall**.

As regards abbreviation, a label *abbr* is attached to abbreviated entries in *MWALED* in order to indicate that the entry words are abbreviated variations, while *LAAD*2 implies abbreviation by writing "the abbreviation of . . ." in the definitions. The followings are examples of **yd.** from the two dictionaries.

yd. *abbr* yard (*MWALED*)

yd. a written abbreviation of yard or yards (*LAAD*2)

Although the question of which system is more user-friendly depends on users, the *LAAD*2 system (i.e. beginning the definition with a phrase "the abbreviation of . . .") might be space-consuming but is easier to understand for those who do not know the meaning of the label.

2.1.2. Number of words

Comparing *MWALED* and *LAAD*2, *LAAD*2 contains more words than *MWALED* in respect of headwords, while with regard to run-ons *MWALED* surpasses *LAAD*2 in numbers (see Table 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1   The number of headwords in sample pages and corresponding estimated word number in *MWALED* and *LAAD*2.

	MWALED	*LAAD*2
Sample pages	1581	1834
Average per page	20.8	24.1
Estimated total no.	39707	44368

Table 2.2   The number of run-ons in sample pages and corresponding estimated word number in *MWALED* and *LAAD*2.

	MWALED	*LAAD*2
Sample pages	350	295
Average per page	4.6	3.9
Estimated total no.	8781	7180

This difference in the number of words is mainly due to the different way of treating of proper nouns: while *LAAD*2 incorporates various kinds of proper nouns, such as biographical names and geographical names, *MWALED* detaches geographical names, as mentioned in 2.2.1, and excludes biographical names, which could be considered to follow the tradition of Merriam-Webster style. However, *MWALED* makes "honourable exceptions for proper names with metonymic force" (Atkins and Rundell 2008: 187) such as **White House** and "cultural entities" such as **Big Brother**, since it could cause users difficulty in grasping their additional meanings or connotations. Although recent trends have been moving toward including proper nouns as headwords, according to Atkins and Rundell (2008), "[t]he actual decision about what to include and what to exclude will depend on how important the various classes of proper name are for the dictionary's intended market" (p. 187). In the case of *MWALED*, as is stated in Preface, it is aimed at "learners of English as a second or foreign language" (p. 7a), and these learners would be predicted to look up words which are relatively common in the corpus. In this sense, *MWALED* can be said to have made a rational headword choice, for its main focus in choosing entries "has been to include the language that people are most likely to need and encounter in their daily lives" (p. 7a) and the evidence used in head-

word choice was drawn from their database of texts, resources from the Internet, and the enormous databases of Lexical-Nexis.

Besides, the gap in the word number is also caused by the richness of compounds and derivatives. Unlike *MWALED*, *LAAD*2 tends to include compounds whose meaning can be easily guessed from their constituents. Although there exist some claims that users may "fail to find them as full headwords because they expect them to be tucked away in the entry for the first element" (Atkins and Rundell 2008: 181), it is logical to treat compounds as headwords given their behaviour as a single word in English grammar. *LAAD*2 also includes a large amount of derivatives with suffix such as -ed, -ing, and -ly, which are run-ons in *MWALED*. While the style of *LAAD*2 is slightly more space-consuming, including them as run-ons may make it more difficult for users to find the words.

2.2. Important words

MWALED defines its important headwords as "3000 basic English words." These words are underlined in blue. According to the explanation in Using the Dictionary, they are "selected by Merriam-Webster editors as being the most important for learners to know" (p. 10a). The importance of headwords is described differently in each dictionary. For example, *LAAD*2 also chooses 3000 headwords as the most frequent and important words. Not only being highlighted in red, they have tags which refers to their place in "the most frequent 1000/2000/3000 words in spoken English" and "written English" (p. ix). The number and the choice of important words are, however, not radically different in the two dictionaries: important words found only in *MWALED* (33 words = 18.6%), while those found only in *LAAD*2 (35 words = 19.8%).

2.3. Headwords

As mentioned in 2.1.1, the number of headwords was significantly larger for *LAAD*2 than *MWALED*. This tendency can be observed even more clearly when the number of headwords which are found

exclusively in either dictionary is counted: while the number of head-words found only in *MWALED* is 196 words, one found only in *LAAD2* is 418 words. Figure 2.1 shows the characteristics of these words are analyzed, which were arbitrarily classified by the author for convenience.

Figure 2.1   The categories and the number of headwords found only in *MWALED*.
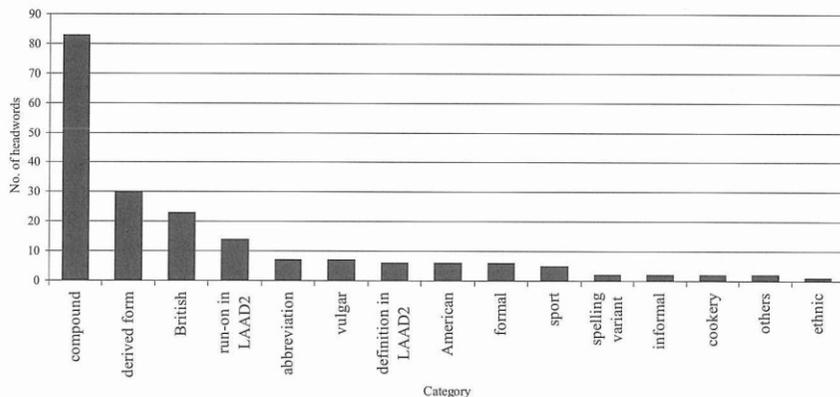
Here, although compounds are the most frequent, it cannot be con-sidered as a unique feature of *MWALED* because compounds also can be found in the words appearing only in *LAAD2*. Derived forms and British terms, however, seem to be relatively specific to *MWALED*. Although many derivatives with common suffix achieve a status as a headword in *LAAD2*, as mentioned in 2.1.2, a great number of derived forms have their own entries in *MWALED*; they are mainly informal words, or those with a prefix un-, a suffix -man which refers to a male having a specified occupation. What is notable here is that *MWALED* includes many British usages which might be rare in the United States. For example, **Inland Revenue** is one of the British government departments, which is not related to the US, and **snook** is a British informal word which is nearly exclusively used in a phrase "cock a snook at." Thus, it could be suggested that *MWALED* has a stronger "Britishness" compared with other American dictionaries, namely

*LAAD*2. From the viewpoint of Americanization, these words may not be necessary, although they could of course be encountered by English learners.

2.4. Run-ons

Run-ons can be divided into three groups: phrasal verbs, idioms, and derivatives. First, as for phrasal verbs, no definite characteristics could be observed notwithstanding that many of those are found in the entries of the main verbs, that is, they are contained as a part of the definition of the verb. This tendency also applies to idioms, where the definitions of main words cover major idioms. With regard to derivatives, although both dictionaries assign a run-on status to derivatives with suffix such as -ing, -ly or -tion of headwords, *MWALED* makes more use of run-ons to a slight extent: *MWALED* contains more run-ons than *LAAD*2 (See Table 2.2 in 2.1.2), and includes more words which have the same form as the headwords but of a different part of speech, which are entered as headwords or omitted in *LAAD*2. Because this tendency is different from the main style of *MWALED*, it can be suggested that the words with low frequencies do not follow the detached entry style but have a more integrated entry style. In this style, blocks of information on different parts of speech of a word and/or run-on information are incorporated in one entry under a headword.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, *MWALED* can be regarded as a standard dictionary with a rational style, in spite of the fact that there are claims suggesting that its style of separating geographical names from the body of the dictionary is different to the current norm. In addition, although it includes more British English words than other American dictionaries, it also contains plentiful headwords of Standard American, which follows its objective of providing coverage of both American and British English.   (R. Aoki)

3. Pronunciation

This section compares the phonetic transcription of *MWALED* with that of three dictionaries, *COBAm*, *LAAD2*, and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, seventh edition (hereafter *OALD7*). The differences between the transcription of *MWALED* and *MWCD11* will also be discussed. In *MWALED*, "Pronunciations are shown between a pair of slashes / / following the entry word" (Using the Dictionary, p. 11a). Websterian dictionaries such as *MWCD11* are generally known for their use of a diacritical system in which the pronunciation is transcribed by diacritics based on orthography. In contrast, *MWALED* uses a rewriting system in which the pronunciation is rewritten using symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (Using the Dictionary, p. 11a).

MWALED does not specify its model pronunciation; it only explains that the pronunciation provided in this dictionary is the most "commonly used" (Using the Dictionary, p. 11a). Since *MWALED* targets learners of American English, users can assume that its model pronunciation is General American (GA), which "is spoken by the majority of Americans, namely those who do not have a noticeable eastern or southern accent" (*LPD3*, p. xx). As for variants, "Only one pronunciation is given for most words . . . Additional pronunciations are shown when the word can be pronounced in different ways that are equally common . . ." (Using the Dictionary, p. 11a). When variants are presented, they are divided by a comma. According to the preface (p. 8a), "The pronunciations throughout the dictionary were provided by Joshua S. Guenter."

3.1. Symbols overview

The phonetic symbols used in *MWALED* are listed in Pronunciation Symbols (p. 22a) and are divided into three groups: Vowels, Consonants, and Other Symbols. Each vowel and consonant symbol is introduced along with keywords. The consonant symbols used in *MWALED* are basically the same as those in other dictionaries that use the IPA. Among consonant symbols, two are given with diacritics /n̩, l̩/. These are used

when both /n, l/ function as syllabic consonants, as in **button** and **pedal**.
Four symbols are listed in the section titled Other Symbols: the label *Brit*,
which indicates British pronunciation; a slash; and two stress marks.

The characteristics of *MWALED* can be observed in vowel symbols.
Table 3.1 summarizes the vowel symbols of the four dictionaries by
categorizing the vowels into three groups. Symbols for each vowel are
introduced on the basis of Wells' (1982) Standard Lexical Sets (SLS).

Table 3.1   Comparison of vowel symbols

	SLS	*MWALED*	*COBAm*	*LAAD2*	*OALD*7 (RP|GA)
Short Vowels	TRAP	æ	æ	æ	æ
	LOT	ɑː	ɒ	ɑ	ɒ|ɑː
	DRESS	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	e
	KIT	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ
	FOOT	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ
	STRUT	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ
	COMMa	ə	ə	ə	ə
Long Vowels	FLEECE	iː/iːj	i	i	iː
	GOOSE	uː/uːw	u	u	uː
	THOUGHT	ɑː	ɔ	ɔ	ɔː
	PALM	ɑː	ɑ	ɑ	ɑː
	NURSE	ɚ/ɚr	ɜr	ɚ	ɜː|ɜːr
Diphthongs	FACE	eɪ/ej	eɪ	eɪ	eɪ
	PRICE	aɪ/aj	aɪ	aɪ	aɪ
	MOUTH	aʊ/aw	aʊ	aʊ	aʊ
	CHOICE	ɔɪ/oj	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔɪ
	GOAT	oʊ/ow	oʊ	oʊ	əʊ|oʊ
	START	ɑɚ/ɑr	ɑr	ɑr	ɑːr
	SQUARE	eɚ/er	ɛər	ɛr	er
	NEAR	iɚ/ir	ɪər	ɪr	ɪr
	FORCE/NORTH	oɚ/or	ɔr	ɔr	ɔːr
	CURE	uɚ/ur	ʊər	ʊr	ʊr

Table 3.1 shows that few differences are observed in the category of
short vowels. One is the transcription of LOT words, which will be dis-
cussed in 3.4.1. The use of length marks for long vowels is one char-
acteristic of *MWALED*. Among the four dictionaries, *MWALED* and
*OALD*7 use length marks. "Vowel length in American English is
generally considered to be conditioned by phonological environment"

(*EPD*17, p. ix), and because of this, length marks are often not used in the description of American English pronunciation. However, length marks are helpful for learners who have a length contrast in their mother tongue, such as in Japanese. In *MWALED*, only the NURSE vowel does not accompany the length mark, but no explanation has been given for this. For diphthongs, a slight difference is observed in which vowel symbol each dictionary uses as its starting quality.

3.2. Two versions of symbols for diphthongs and long vowels

As shown in Table 3.1, two different symbols are given for diphthongs and long vowels /iː, uː, ɚ/. This is explained in Pronunciation Symbols (p. 22a): "the second symbol is used when the sound occurs immediately before another vowel and the first symbol is used elsewhere." The following are examples.

Pre-vocalic positions		Elsewhere	
diet	/ˈdajət/	**die**	/ˈdaɪ/
heroic	/hɪˈrowɪk/	**hero**	/ˈhiroʊ/
theater	/ˈθijətɚ/	**theme**	/ˈθiːm/

When close vowels or closing diphthongs are followed by another vowel, [j] or [w] is inserted as a glide (Takebayashi 1996: 340). Thus, the transcription of *MWALED* may be phonetically correct. However, to assign two different symbols to one vowel may be confusing for learners of English.

3.3. Rhotic vowels

MWALED is different from the other dictionaries in regard to the transcription of rhotic vowels. Table 3.1 shows that only *MWALED* consistently uses a hooked schwa /ɚ/ for all rhotic vowels. The only exception is the use of /ɚ/ for NURSE words in *LAAD*2. All the other dictionaries employ the sequence of a vowel symbol followed by /r/ to transcribe rhotic vowels. Takebayashi (1987) argues that transcribing rhotic vowels by combining a vowel and /r/ is not accurate and it is also misleading for learners of English. For example, the symbol /ɝr/ or /ɜːr/

for NURSE words indicates that the vowel sound consists of two different qualities, but in fact, the vowel is a monophthong, and its quality does not change throughout its production. The application of a hooked schwa for rhotic vowels in GA should be welcomed from the pedagogic point of view.

3.4.   Open back vowels

In general, both GA and RP are said to have the three-way contrast of open back vowels. For both GA and RP, an open unrounded /ɑː/ is assigned to PALM, and an open back rounded /ɔː/ is assigned to THOUGHT. The length mark may or may not be present for GA. In the case of LOT words, an unrounded /ɑ/ is used in GA while a rounded /ɒ/ is used in RP. Finally, for CLOTH words, GA speakers use /ɔː/ and RP speakers use /ɒ/. In general, in spite of a distributional difference, both GA and RP speakers use three vowels in contrast. Nevertheless, the recent pronunciation change in GA is most noticeable in vowels of the open back area. Subsections 3.4.1–3.4.3 discuss the description of open back vowels in *MWALED* in more detail.

3.4.1.   LOT-PALM merger

The distinction between GA and RP LOT vowels is lip-rounding; the former uses an unrounded vowel, while the latter uses a rounded one. In addition, LOT vowels in GA have been lengthened and have become equivalent to PALM vowels (Wells 1982: 246, Trudgill and Hannah 2008: 43). Table 3.2 compares the transcription of the two vowels in the five dictionaries.

Table 3.2   The transcription of LOT and PALM

	LOT (e.g., **bomb**)	PALM (e.g., **balm**)
MWALED	ɑː	
COBAm	ɒ	ɑ
*LAAD*2	ɑ	
*MWCD*11	ä	
*OALD*7 (RP|GA)	ɒ|ɑː	ɑː

Table 3.2 shows that the recent dictionaries reflect the LOT-PALM merger of GA in their transcription. Except for *COBAm*, which distinguishes the two vowel phonemes by assigning a different symbol to each group, the other dictionaries use the same symbol for both vowel phonemes reflecting the merger. Even *MWCD*11, which uses a diacritical system, rewrites LOT vowels with the symbol \ä\.[1] By using the length mark, *MWALED* also emphasizes the lengthening of LOT vowels.

3.4.2. LOT-THOUGHT **merger**

Recently, the merger of /ɑː/ in LOT and PALM and /ɔː/ in CLOTH and THOUGHT has been observed in GA. Wells calls this the LOT-THOUGHT merger and explains that "what may once have been a western Pennsylvania regionalism is now clearly very much more widespread" (1982: 473). The development seems to have spread such that "fewer and fewer Americans distinguish these two vowel sounds [= LOT and THOUGHT] from one another" (*LPD*3, p. xxi). In addition, Trudgill and Hannah (2008) say that the spread of this merger is ongoing in some regions but complete in others.

According to Wells (1982: 474), the quality of the merged vowel is unrounded. Similarly, Ladefoged (2006: 89) explains that the quality of the merged vowel is closer to /ɑ/. In other words, the LOT-THOUGHT merger resulted in the disappearance of a long back rounded vowel /ɔː/ from the vowel system of GA. The following table compares the transcription of LOT and THOUGHT vowels.

Table 3.3   The transcription of LOT and THOUGHT

	LOT (e.g., **cot**)	THOUGHT (e.g., **caught**)
MWALED	ɑː	
COBAm	ɒ	ɔ
*LAAD*2	ɑ	ɔ
*OALD*7 (RP|GA)	ɒ|ɑː	ɔː

Table 3.3 shows that only *MWALED* reflects the LOT-THOUGHT merger. The other dictionaries still distinguish the two vowels by using separate symbols. *LAAD*2 refers to the LOT-THOUGHT merger in its sec-

tion titled "Pronunciation-American English" and explains that "the vowels /ɔ/ and /ɑ/ are both shown, but many speakers do not use the sound /ɔ/. These speakers say /ɑ/ in place of /ɔ/..." However, the merger is not reflected in its transcription. *MWCD*11 provides two possibilities for some words. For example, it only gives \o\ for **caller** and **stalk** but gives both \o\ and \ä\ for **caught**, **dawn**, and **naughty**. Still, it presents \o\ as the primary pronunciation. *MWALED* is the only dictionary that consistently transcribes LOT and THOUGHT words with one vowel symbol, /ɑ:/.

3.4.3. CLOTH **words**

An investigation of the transcription of all CLOTH words listed by Wells (1982) shows that most CLOTH words such as **off**, **loss**, **soft**, **cost**, **gone**, **coffee**, and **office** are transcribed with /ɑ:/ in *MWALED*. Even for words such as **gong**, **long**, and **wash**, which Wells (1982) describes as showing fluctuation among regions, *MWALED* consistently uses /ɑ:/. The only exception is CLOTH vowels which appear in front of the intervocalic /r/, for example, in words like **authority**, **horrible**, and **quarrel**. For these words, *MWALED* uses /o/ and not /ɑ:/.

In short, the three-way contrast of open back vowels in GA is completely lost in the transcription of *MWALED*, as Table 3.4 summarizes.

Table 3.4   The transcription of PALM, LOT, CLOTH, and THOUGHT

	PALM	LOT	CLOTH	THOUGHT
MWALED	ɑː			

The phonetic transcription in *MWALED* is innovative in that it correctly reflects the quality of current GA vowels. It may be simple and easy for learners because the number of symbols is reduced. At the same time, it may not be pedagogic because important information such as the distinction between free and checked vowels is lost. Also, the faithful reflection of vowel mergers in GA results in widening the

distance between American and British pronunciation. Learners who want to know the British pronunciation using *MWALED* need to be careful.

3.5. Vowels before intervocalic /r/

It is said that vowel neutralization is often observed in front of the intervocalic /r/. In particular, the distinction between /æ/ and /ε/ is often lost in this position (Cruttenden 2008: 84). Table 3.5 summarizes the transcription of three groups of vowels followed by /rV/.

Table 3.5   The transcription of DRESS, SQUARE, and TRAP followed by the intervocalic /r/

	DRESS + /rV/ (e.g., **merry**, **very**)	SQUARE + /rV/ (e.g., **Mary**, **vary**)	TRAP + /rV/ (e.g., **marry**, **narrow**)
MWALED		er	
COBAm	εr	εər	ær
LAAD2	εr	εr or εr, ær	ær
MWCD11	er	er	er, ar
OALD7 (RP|GA)	er	eər|er, ær	ær

Table 3.5 shows that only *MWALED* uses one symbol for all three groups. The other dictionaries use either a three-way distinction or a two-way distinction for the three word sets. Here again, *MWALED* tries to reflect the vowel merger in the current GA.

3.6. Weak vowels

The distribution of weak vowels is said to fluctuate between accents and speakers. It is said that RP speakers tend to use /ɪ/ while GA speakers prefer /ə/. Also, the increased use of /ə/ is observed among young RP speakers. To observe the transcription of weak vowels in *MWALED*, 15 suffixes whose pronunciation is said to be different between RP and GA speakers are surveyed (Takebayashi 1996: 276).

Fourteen of the 15 suffixes are said to have /ə/ in GA but /ɪ/ in RP. They are **-ace** as in **furnace**, **-et** as in **carpet**, **-ice** as in **justice**, **-id** as in **liquid**, **-ily** as in **happily**, **-in** as in **cabin**, **-ine** as in **doctrine**, **-is** as in **basis**, **-ist** as in **chemist**, **-it** as in **credit**, **-ization** as in

civilization, **-ed** (the marker of the past tense and past participle), **-es** (the marker of the plural and third-person singular present tense), and **-est** (the marker of the superlative). Despite variation among individual words, suffixes, and dictionaries, a general tendency is that both *MWALED* and *MWCD*11 favor /ə/, whereas *COBAm*, *LAAD*2, and *OALD*7 use /ɪ/. The only exception is the suffix **-ist**, for which even *MWALED* and *MWCD*11 use /ɪ/. On the other hand, the suffix **-acle** as in **miracle** is said to show the opposite pattern, that is, /ɪ/ in GA but /ə/ in RP. For this suffix, both *MWALED* and *MWCD*11 use /ɪ/ whereas the other three dictionaries use /ə/. For the suffixes **-ed**, **-es**, and **-est**, both *MWALED* and *MWCD*11 provide not only /ə/ as the primary pronunciation but also /ɪ/ as the secondary one. To conclude, the analysis of the transcription of suffixes shows that the two Merriam-Webster dictionaries prefer /ə/ in unstressed syllables where other dictionaries use /ɪ/.

3.7. Yod-dropping

Compared to vowels, consonants do not show regional differences, and the transcription does not vary greatly among dictionaries. Thus, the consonant transcription of *MWALED* is not very different from that of other dictionaries. Minor differences can be observed in yod-dropping, that is, the elision of /j/ when preceding /uː/ (Wells 1982: 206). This phenomenon shows regional variation. According to Take-bayashi (1996: 253), /j/ is elided when following alveolars /t, d, n/, and a dental /θ/ in GA. *MWALED* as well as *OALD*7 transcribes words such as **tube**, **dew**, **new**, and **enthusiasm** without yod for GA but with yod for RP. In contrast, *COBAm* and *LAAD*2 only provide the pronunciation without yod. In *MWALED*, yod is preserved when following /z/ as in **presume**, whereas it is dropped in both GA and RP when following /s, l/ as in **assume** and **absolute** respectively. When we focus on yod-dropping in unstressed syllables as in **attitude**, **avenue**, and **residue**, we can see that yod is elided for GA but preserved for RP in *MWALED*.

3.8. Stress and weak forms

MWALED marks the stress pattern of a word by putting the symbol ' in front of a syllable that carries the primary stress and the symbol ₍ in front of a syllable that carries the secondary stress. *MWALED* calls the primary stress "high stress" and the secondary stress "low stress" (Pronunciation Symbols, p. 22a). *LAAD2*, *MWCD11*, and *OALD7* use the same symbols. *COBAm* uses a different system in which it underlines the vowel symbols that carry stress. Let us compare the following transcriptions.

personality   *<MWALED>*   /ˌpɚsəˈnæləti/
                    <COBAm>   /pɜrsənælɪti/

MWALED marks all monosyllabic words with the primary stress symbols, as *MWCD11* and *COBAm* do.

Next, we compare the transcription of weak forms. *MWALED* is different from other dictionaries in that it presents the strong form of function words first. Most function words possess weak forms, which are the default pronunciation unless the function words are emphasized. Thus, most dictionaries provide weak forms first for the function words, and many even use special labels to highlight the difference between weak and strong forms. To illustrate, the transcriptions of the word **them** are listed below.

them   *<MWALED>*   /ˈðɛm, ðəm/
            <COBAm>   /ðəm, STRONG ðɛm/
            <LAAD2>   /ðəm, əm; *strong* ðɛm/
            <MWCD11>   \(th)əm, 'them, *after* p, b, v, f, *also* ᵊm\
            <OALD7>   /ðəm; *strong form* ðem/

Although *MWALED* is a learner's dictionary, its transcription of function words is not user-friendly.

3.9. American and British pronunciation

With regard to regional differences, Pronunciation Symbols (p. 22a) states as follows: "British pronunciations are shown in this dictionary when the most common British pronunciation is very different from the

American pronunciation." The label *Brit* is used to indicate British pronunciation. Also, in Pronunciation Symbols (p. 22a), the vowel symbols /ɒ, ɔː, əː, əʊ, ɪə, ɛə, ʊə/ are introduced with keywords, and it is explained that these symbols are specifically used for British pronunciation.

In *MWALED*, both American and British pronunciations are consistently provided for BATH words such as **ask** and **example**. /æ/ is used in GA and /ɑː/ is used in RP. In contrast, only GA pronunciation is provided for CLOTH words. As for rhoticity, the pronunciation difference between GA and RP is not systematically transcribed. However, for individual words, *MWALED* tries to describe the difference between the two varieties as much as possible. Examples of words for which *COBAm* and *LAAD2* do not provide British pronunciation but *MWALED* does are as follows: **advertisement**, **ate**, **clerk**, **cuckoo**, **docile**, **erase**, **figure**, **herb**, **laboratory**, **lieutenant**, **of**, **primarily**, **quinine**, **schedule**, **shone**, **tomato**, and **Z**.

3.10. Conclusion

In summary, the phonetic transcription system in *MWALED* is simple: for example, the number of vowel symbols is reduced by applying vowel mergers, and the number of variants and the allophonic information provided are kept to minimum. However, characteristics such as the use of two symbols for diphthongs and long vowels, and the transcription of weak forms, may be difficult and confusing for learners. The most conspicuous and innovative characteristic of *MWALED* is its faithful and exhaustive reflection of the latest change in American pronunciation. Examples of this include the consistent transcription of the LOT-PALM, LOT-THOUGHT, and /ærV/-/ɛrV/ mergers.

(J. Sugimoto)

4. Definitions

This section discusses the definitions of *MWALED* mainly based on the comparison of the definitions of other EFL dictionaries. The following sections begin with the discussion of defining vocabulary (4.1),

and then move on to sense descriptions (4.2), and labels (4.3).

For the examinations of each aspect, basically 76 sample pages (two-page spread of every 50 pages of *MWALED*; see Section 1 for details) are used. Other pages used will also be mentioned whenever necessary. Definitions of *COBAm*, *LAAD2*, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, fifth edition (henceforth *LDOCE5*) and *OALD7* are compared to reveal the features of *MWALED*.

4.1. Defining Vocabulary

It is now customary for ordinal EFL dictionaries to claim that they use a limited number of words for their definitions, called "defining vocabulary" (henceforth DV), and *MWALED* is no exception. According to the blurb on the back cover, the words and phrases in the dictionary are defined with "3,000 core vocabulary words." However, the list of DV does not appear in the dictionary itself; the user can only access the list through the Internet.[1] The following discussion will be based on this online list and will conclude that it is not DV in a strict sense.

Although *MWALED* claims to use 3,000 core words, the list which appears on the website actually contains more than 3,000; to be exact, 3,541 words are listed. However, every part of speech of each word is included as separate items; for example, both **worry** (noun) and **worry** (verb) are listed. The number of types in the list is 2,804. The following are some random examples:

> above (preposition), absent (adjective), become (verb), British (adjective), child (noun), Christmas (noun), different (adjective), fine (adjective), hide (verb), left (adjective), load (verb), mine (noun), mine (pronoun), nature (noun), paint (verb), people (noun), radio (noun), seal (verb), some (adjective), teacher (noun), unique (adjective), upstairs (adjective), wait (verb), welcome (noun), young (adjective)

As is seen from the above items, no phrases or idioms are included in the DV. However, the definitions of *MWALED* are, of course, not free from phrases, as the following definitions show (underline mine):

babysit: to <u>take care of</u> a child while the child's parents are away
harem 2 *informal*: a group of women who <u>are associated with</u> one
    man

Because the meanings of phrases are often not the sum of the words
used, they should also be listed as in *LAAD*2 and *OALD*7, to draw the
user's attention to such idiomatic items.

Generally, words which are not included in DV but used in the
definitions are marked in some way. For example, *LAAD*2 uses small
capitals as follows:

<*LAAD2*>
baby blues: a feeling of DEPRESSION that some women suffer from
    after they have had a baby

However, *MWALED* does not employ any graphical markings for non-
DV items. Consider the following definitions where the words not in
the DV list are underlined by the author.

<*MWALED*>
on/at the receiving end ✧ If you are *on/at the receiving end* of
    something bad or <u>unpleasant</u>, you are the person it is directed
    at.
never/not in a thousand/million/billion years — used as a strong
    way of saying that something is <u>extremely</u> <u>unlikely</u> or impossi-
    ble

This policy of not marking non-DV items should not be welcomed in
terms of user-friendliness as long as the dictionary claims to use re-
stricted vocabulary for its definitions. On the other hand, we might
assume that the list provided on the website is not intended as the list
of DV in a strict sense. Rather, it might be the list of frequently used
vocabulary which the user might therefore need to know to understand
the entries. The reason for claiming to have used a core of 3,000 words
in the definitions may be closely connected with dictionary makers'
commercialism (cf. Kawamura 2000). Without specifying the range of
words used in the definitions, the dictionary might look much more
advanced or even give the wrong impression that the dictionary is in-

tended for native speakers, which may have a serious impact on sales. Also, in the context of this new learner's dictionary, it might be necessary for the publisher to put a restriction on the defining vocabulary to clearly distinguish it from their non-learner's dictionary, that is, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. While it might be true that too strict a use of DV may result in awkward definitions (cf. Hanks 2009), the absence of markings on words not included in the list may be a drawback from the perspective of user-friendliness.

4.2. Sense description

One of the most striking features of the definitions in *MWALED* is that it marks definitions according to their types by using a colon (:), dash (—), or star (✧). This subsection addresses features of each definition type and examines whether they are employed systematically.

4.2.1. Features of each definition type
4.2.1.1. Colon type

A colon indicates that the definition is basically a paraphrase of the headword. The following serves as an example:

> **baby** 1 a: a very young child

This is the most common type, as indicated in the preface: "most definitions begin with a boldface colon" (13a), which accords with a general principle of lexicography, that a definition should be substitutable (Svensén 1993, Jackson 2002).

4.2.1.2. Dash type

A dash precedes definitions that begin with "used," as the following definition illustrates:

> **baby** 3 b —used as an informal way of addressing a lover, friend, etc.; used especially by men to address women and by women to address men

Heuberger (2000) calls this rule-based definition, which is particularly

useful in defining idioms and functional words.

In the sample pages, the most common verb that follows "used to" is **describe** (33 times), followed by **say** (30 times) and **refer** (10 times).

> **ample** 2 — used to describe a person's (especially a woman's) body as being large in usually an attractive way
>
> **as a matter of form** — used to say that something is done because it is polite, usual, or required
>
> **we** 1 — used to refer to the speaker and another person or group of people as the subject of a verb

The definitions beginning with "used to describe" are mostly observed in the entries of adjectives such as **ample**, **reciprocal** and **double-blind**. The ones beginning with "used to say" are often colloquial phrases such as **as a matter of fact**, **shit happens** and **that is that**. "Refer" is mainly used in the definitions of pronouns and deictic items such as **we**, **right** and **that**.

This type of definition is effectively used in *MWALED*. Compare the following definitions of **consumable** from *OALD*7 and *MWALED*.

> **consumable**
> <*OALD*7>
> intended to be bought, used and then replaced
> <*MWALED*>
> — used to describe products that need to be replaced after they have been used for a period of time

Clearly, *MWALED*'s definition is much easier to understand, since it refers to the hypernym "product." In addition, this type seems to work to avoid the circularity of definitions (cf. Svensén 1993: 126). The following are the definitions of **deserving** from *LAAD*2, *OALD*7 and *MWALED* (underline mine):

> **deserving**
> <*LAAD*2>
> 2: to <u>deserve</u> something
> <*OALD*7>
> : that <u>deserves</u> help, praise, a reward, etc
> <*MWALED*>

— used to say that someone or something should have or be given something

Because **deserving** is the adjectival form of the verb **deserve**, using **deserve** in the definition is not an ideal way of defining the derived forms. However, *LAAD*2 and *OALD*7 employ it in their definitions. On the other hand, *MWALED* employs a rule-based definition that is easy to understand for the user without using the verb **deserve**.

One regrettable thing is that the same symbol is also employed to introduce notes and usages that begin with "used". Consider the following taken from **hot water**:

hot water: a difficult situation: TROUBLE   — used with *in* or *into*

Since exactly the same symbol is used in both definitions and notes, the user may well wonder whether it is a definition or a note. It might be better to use other symbols for usage notes, such as a circle or triangle, to avoid such confusion.

4.2.1.3.   Sentence definition

A star represents that the definition is given in a full sentence. The following definition, taken from the entry of **back**, is a case in point:

watch your back: ✧ If people tell you to *watch your back*, they are telling you to be careful.

This type of definition is also employed in other dictionaries. Particularly, *COBAm* defines every meaning in full sentences. Consider the following definition of **baby**:

<COBAm>
baby: 1: A baby is a very young child, especially one that cannot yet walk or talk.

The advantages of sentence definition can be summarized as follows: it indicates the typical collocations and colligations, provides constructional information, and adds encyclopedic information about the definiendum (Rundell 2006). The following definition of **lay up** best describes these features:

<COBAm>

lay up If someone is **laid up** with an illness, the illness makes it necessary for them to stay in bed.

This definition not only tells the user about the meaning of this phrase, but also provides collocational information that the phrase can be followed by "with" and constructional information that the phrase is often used in the passive form (cf. Rundell 2006). However, in spite of these attractive advantages, according to Rundell (2006), full sentence definition has not replaced all of the other definitions used in EFL dictionaries. This is due to the fact that it is space-consuming, overspecifies the context, and requires new conventions to understand full sentence definitions (ibid.). He continues that it is important to keep in mind that full sentence definitions are not always the best choice for the definition and should be used case by case. This is what *MWALED* has attempted explicitly for its entries, highlighting them with star marks. Such indication is highly useful for the user, and it is no doubt a welcome feature that, I believe, should be employed in future versions of other EFL dictionaries as well.

Let us now examine how this type of definition is used in *MWALED*. As far as the sample pages are concerned, full sentence definitions are used effectively to provide collocational and constructional information. Consider:

<MWALED>

by a nose ✧ If an animal wins a race *by a nose*, it wins by a very short distance.

cut from the same cloth ✧ If people or things are *cut from the same cloth*, they are very similar to each other.

In the former example, it is explicit from the definition that the phrase **by a nose** is mainly used with the verb **win** to describe a situation with racing animals. In the latter example, the definition indicates that **cut from the same cloth** is generally used in the passive construction.

However, there are three points to note here. First, *MWALED* does not seem to systematically employ full sentence definitions. Consider

the following:

catch somebody's eye

<LAAD2>

to attract someone's attention and make them look at something

<OALD7>

to attract sb's attention

<MWALED>

✧ If someone or something *catches your eye*, you notice that person or thing.

In this example, *MWALED*'s definition does not provide any collocational or constructional information, and the definitions in *LAAD2* and *OALD7* suffice to convey the meaning of the phrase. Since full sentence definitions tend to be lengthy, they should be used only when they are effective enough.

Second, there are some definitions that seem to be a mixture of a definition and a note. The following serves as an example:

a hostage to fortune ✧ In British English, *a hostage to fortune* is something (such as a promise or an action) that someone has made or done that may cause problems in the future. In U.S. English, this phrase is much less common and is usually understood to mean a person whose future success or failure is controlled by luck or fortune.

Although this conveys much information, it should not be welcomed because the user may need to read the whole entry to understand the meaning of the phrase. Rather, the definitions should be separated as *OALD7* does:

<OALD7>

a hostage to fortune: something that you have, or have promised to do, that could cause trouble or worry in the future

Finally, it is regrettable again that the same symbol is also used to introduce notes that are written in a sentence. Consider:

poll tax: a tax that each adult has to pay in order to vote in an election ✧ Poll taxes are no longer legal in the U.S.

Using the same symbol for both definitions and notes cannot be justified because it may confuse the user.

4.2.2. Sense describing policy of *MWALED*

One of the features of *MWALED*'s definitions is that definitions are given from various perspectives. According to the preface, "the inclusion of multiple definitions thus helps learners both to expand their vocabularies and to gain a fuller picture of a word's meaning by approaching it from a slightly different direction" (7a). The following definitions are cases in point:

> **baby**[3] 1: to treat (someone) like a baby: to be kind or too kind to (someone)
>
> **brilliant** 1: very bright: flashing with light
>
> **amuse** 1: to make someone laugh or smile: to entertain (someone) in a light and pleasant way

Multiple definitions add information useful for understanding the nuance of the word. In the definition of **baby**, for example, the second definition tells the user that a typical way of treating someone like a baby is to be too kind to him/her. In addition, this policy contributes to avoiding ambiguity in a definition (cf. Landau 2001: 170). For example, if the definition of **brilliant** were only "very bright," the user might wonder which meaning of **bright** should be used in this context (**bright** has five senses according to *MWALED*).

Such specifications, however, are usually given as selectional restrictions in parentheses as in *OALD7*:[2]

> <*OALD7*>
>
> **brilliant** 4 (of light or colours) very bright

This implies that *MWALED*'s policy of using multiple definitions is not always justified. It should also be noted that giving synonyms may suffice to indicate the content of the second definition. Consider the definitions of **amuse** in *LAAD2* and *OALD7*:

> **amuse**
>
> <*LAAD2*>

2 to make someone spend time in an enjoyable way, without getting
  bored $\boxed{\text{SYN}}$ entertain
<OALD7>
2 [vn] to make time pass pleasantly for sb/yourself $\boxed{\text{SYN}}$ entertain

Indicating **entertain** as a synonym of **amuse,** which concisely repre-
sents the second definition of *MWALED,* may be enough in this case.
Although multiple definitions may be helpful for the user in some cases,
it seems that they are not user-friendly in all cases, in that they require
the user to read the whole entry to understand the definiendum.

4.2.3.   Arrangement of senses

In an ordinary learner's dictionary, each sense is usually given in
order of frequency, and *MWALED* follows this trend. However, in
some cases, etymological criteria seem to be employed. **Brilliant** and
radio are cases in point:

Table 4.1   The sense order of **brilliant**

brilliant	*MWALED*	*COBAm*	*LAAD2*	*OALD7*
very bright (color)	1	3	2	4
successful	2	2	3	2
intelligent	3	1	1	1/3

Table 4.2   The sense order of **radio**

radio	*MWALED*	*COBAm*	*LAAD2*	*OALD7*
system	1	4	—	3
program	2	1, 2	2	1
device	3	3	1	2
business	4	—	3	—

The first definition of each in *MWALED* is given below:

brilliant 1: very bright: flashing with light
radio 1: the system or process that is used for sending and receiv-
   ing signals through the air without using wires

These meanings are undoubtedly less frequent than other meanings, as
is clear from the fact that other dictionaries do not place them first.

MWALED may need to be more consistent with respect to its policy of listing senses.

Since *MWALED* is a dictionary of American English, senses that are mainly used in the United States are listed first. Consider:

> **big dipper** 1. *the BIG Dipper* US: a group of seven stars in the northern sky that form a shape like a large dipper or ladle 2. *Brit, old-fashioned*: ROLLER COASTER 1

In *LDOCE*5 and *OALD*7 the order is the opposite; the second meaning precedes the first. It should be noted in passing that this Americanism naturally contributes to the wider coverage of American English. For example, the first meaning of **big wheel** below is only covered in *MWALED*:

> **big wheel** 1 *chiefly US, informal*: a powerful or important person: BIG SHOT 2 *Brit*: FERRIS WHEEL

These facts firmly indicate that *MWALED* is a dictionary of American English.

4.3. Labels

This subsection deals with the labels in *MWALED*. *MWALED* has labels of grammar, region, status, register and subject. The following list is taken from the front matter:

> Grammatical labels:
>   Nouns: [count] [noncount] [singular] [plural]
>   Verbs: [+ obj] [no obj] [auxiliary verb] [linking verb] [modal verb] [phrasal verb]
> Regional labels: *US, chiefly US, Brit, chiefly Brit*
> Status labels: *slang, offensive, obscene, impolite*
> Register labels: *informal, formal, literary, old-fashioned, humorous, technical, disapproving, approving*
> Subject labels: *medical, law, baseball* etc.

In terms of grammatical labels, the system is relatively simple compared with other EFL dictionaries. As a result, descriptions of meanings are not sufficient in some cases. Let us consider the description of

the verb **amuse**. First, here is the definition of *OALD7*:

<OALD7>

amuse 1 to make sb laugh or smile: [vn] *My funny drawings amused the kids. This will amuse you.* [vn to inf] *It amused him to think that they were probably talking about him at that very moment.*

[vn] indicates that the verb is used with a noun and [vn to inf] means that the verb can be used in the sequence of "verb + noun + to + verb" as in "It amused him to think . . .".

On the other hand, *MWALED* does not provide the latter constructional pattern as a grammatical label. Rather, it is given as an example as indicated below (underline mine):

<MWALED>

amuse 1: to make someone laugh or smile: to entertain (someone) in a light and pleasant way [+ obj] His silly jokes amused the audience. = The audience was amused by his silly jokes. [= the audience found his silly jokes funny/entertaining/amusing] It amuses me to think of how he looked when I last saw him. That joke doesn't amuse me. [= I don't think that joke is funny] The loss did not amuse the coach. [= the coach was not happy about the loss] [no obj] a funny story that never fails to amuse

This can be a reflection of the *MWALED*'s policy that "the real heart of the dictionary is its examples" (7a) (see Section 5 for details). However, the absence of grammatical labels is entirely user-unfriendly because it is unlikely that the user can generalize the grammatical pattern from a single example. The simplicity and transparency of grammatical labels are of course important for EFL dictionaries, but oversimplification may result in missing necessary information for the user.

As for the regional labels, although only *US* and *Brit* labels are listed, some other labels are employed whenever necessary. For example, *chiefly Scotland* is used in the definition of **bonny**:

bonny *chiefly Scotland*: very pretty or attractive

Turning to the register labels, it should be pointed out that

MWALED does not have the labels of *spoken* and *written*.[3] One may think that such distinction can be covered by employing *formal* and *informal* labels, considering that spoken items are often informal and written ones are formal. There are, however, some expressions that are formal but spoken, and informal but written. Consider the following examples taken from *OALD6* (cf. Komuro et al. 2006):

>   **lots of love (from)** (*written, informal*) used at the end of a letter to a friend or to sb you love, followed by your name
>   **son 4 (my son)** (*spoken, formal*) used by a priest to address a boy or man

This implies that the lack of *spoken* and *written* labels cannot be filled by *informal* and *formal* labels, and that the exclusion of these labels may be a drawback of *MWALED*'s labeling system.

4.4.   Conclusion

In this section, definitions of *MWALED* were examined. Although the blurb on the back cover claims to use 3,000 core words, the list appears only on the website, and they are not strictly employed as defining vocabulary. One of the most remarkable features of the sense describing policy is that the types of definitions are indicated by symbols. This surely helps the user to quickly understand the definitions, though it is regrettable that the same symbols are used for usage notes immediately after the definition as well. Words are defined with several definitions in many cases to convey the nuances correctly; however, they are sometimes redundant and space-consuming compared with the way other EFL dictionaries employ. *MWALED* uses a relatively simple labeling system; on the one hand, it makes descriptions more transparent and easy to understand, but on the other hand, some important information might be missing at times. Overall, although the definitions of *MWALED* have many attractive features, there is still much that needs improvement.

<div align="right">(S. Uchida)</div>

5.   Illustrative Phrases and Sentences

MWALED makes the following claim in its blurb: "More than 160,000 example sentences — the most of any learner's dictionary." The publisher attaches considerable weight to example sentences. They explain the reason for doing so in the front matter (p. 7a): "In writing this book we have devoted a great deal of care and attention to creating simple and accurate definitions, but our feeling throughout has been that the real heart of the dictionary is its examples." The truth of the above assertion is also suggested by the dictionary's following external characteristics:

(1)   The example sentences are highlighted by using "the blue text", which is adopted to allow "users to find the information they want quickly" (p. 8a). The use of a blue font also impresses on users the considerable space used for example sentences.

(2)   Unlike most other EFL dictionaries, almost every run-on entry comprises example sentences.

(3)   Some additional information is added to example sentences through the use of paraphrases. These paraphrases are placed after equal marks (=). Several types of information are added using this notation.

One of the most striking facts about the examples found in *MWALED* is that most of them are "made-up" ones. The editors argue that the examples "have been carefully written to show words being used in appropriate contexts which accurately reflect their uses in actual speech and writing" (p. 7a). This seems to buck the growing trend of relying upon citations from corpora. Indeed, in his latest review of this dictionary, Hanks (2009) criticizes some of these "made-up" examples (according to his estimate, they amount to 30,000) as unnatural. He argues that "Each example is there, not to illustrate idiomatic usage, but to support a definition — a preconceived theory, as it were, about the word's meaning." It may certainly be dangerous for non-native lexicographers to follow this format, but it seems unlikely that the experienced editors at Merriam-Webster would come up with seriously misleading example

sentences. Actually, Hanks' citations (p. 309) inadvertently reveal that the problem he points to is not really serious. In other words, the problems are exclusively confined to the encyclopedic knowledge of the featured words and the context in which they are used. He admits, "[F] or the most part, they do their job" (p. 314).

What indispensable prerequisites should the example sentences be satisfying? These, in our opinion, can be outlined as follows: (1) adequate illustration of the usage of a lexical unit, and (2) provision of clues to remind users of the usage. In the latter respect, "made-up" sentences are actually advantageous: the editors can present the relevant information in simple sentences, eliminating distracting details that are necessarily involved in citations from corpora. The opinion of native English speakers on this point might be at variance with that of non-native speakers; for non-native speakers, sentences that are "perfectly natural but too detailed to remember" are more troublesome than those that are "slightly odd but readily understandable and easy to learn by heart."

Nevertheless, as stated in the preface (p. 7a), some examples are cited from British and American classic works by authors like Shakespeare, Henry D. Thoreau, and Stowe. (Thus Hanks' comment that "The illustrative examples in MWALED are not taken from a corpus, nor even from MW's collection of citations" is not true.) This is in line with Merriam-Webster's established tradition (for instance, *MWCD*11 abounds with those citations). These examples are especially effective when used to illustrate archaic usages and obsolete meanings. Although the pedagogical advantage of the examples cited from famous works is not attested, this kind of example is certainly an appropriate way of illustrating archaic usages and supplying users with cultural knowledge.

Another policy the editors seemed to have followed is of using as few symbols as possible — a policy that vests the example sentences found in *MWALED* with myriad functions. For example, as the front matter suggests — and our subsequent analysis proves — the examples in this dictionary are used in lieu of synonym articles, definitions of run-on entries, usage notes, etc., and are usually supplemented by paraphrases, as mentioned above. The pros of this policy are:

(1) Users can use the dictionary without referring to the extra columns that are dispersed over the pages of the other famous EFL dictionaries.

(2) Instead of formally defining it, the editors can describe a subtle nuance of a phrase or a structure by explaining its meaning through a paraphrase, which leads to a wider coverage of idiomatic phrases, idiomatic structures, and discourse markers.

Of the abovementioned advantages, the latter has important implications. The explanatory comments introduced by equal marks are given with respect to specific contexts and are easily comprehensible. They also contribute to the conciseness of some definitions, as shown below.

On the other hand, one of the aforementioned policy's cons is that users have to "read" the dictionary closely and carefully as opposed to "search for information" in it. They are obliged to struggle through a lot of examples before getting the relevant information. Although this can be considered a pedagogically desirable situation, some keys like the "signposts" found in *LDOCE*5 might as well be introduced. Moreover, users might have some trouble comparing the context in which they come across certain words or phrases with the context in which the dictionary gives specific explanations of the said words and phrases using paraphrases. In other words, users might wonder whether the explanation (i.e., paraphrase) is applicable to the expression or structure whose meaning they want to know.

On the basis of the above argument, we can conclude that both the major advantages as well as disadvantages regarding the examples incorporated in *MWALED* lie in the use of paraphrases. Therefore, we focus on the use of paraphrases in the dictionary's example sentences in the following subsections.

5.1. The functions of the paraphrases attached to words/ phrases/ sentences in *MWALED's* verbal illustrations:

The editors briefly describe the usage of the dictionary's featured examples comprising paraphrases in the front matter:

Many examples include synonymous words or phrases shown within brackets, thus allowing the reader either to learn a new word or to have the connection between the meanings of words reinforced. Examples also often include glosses, so that phrases and compound terms whose meanings are not obvious can be explained clearly and simply. And we have very frequently explained the meaning of entire phrases and sentences by restating them with other, simpler words. Many examples also show how the same word can be used in slightly different ways — or how related words can be used in different ways — to say the same thing. . . . (8a)

In addition to the above specifically stated functions of the paraphrases found in the dictionary, we found a few additional ones that the editors do not mention. Here, we will classify the usage of paraphrases according to their grammatical contexts, that is, the words, clauses, or sentences to which paraphrases are attached. We then discuss functions of paraphrases in each context.[1]

5.1.1. Functions of the paraphrases attached to words

The paraphrases that are attached to words are mainly used to present synonyms and quasi-synonyms. The relevant point here is how (or, in what respect) these synonyms or quasi-synonyms *differ* from the entry words.

(1) To present synonyms
²yak Half the people on the train were *yakking* [= *yammering*][2] (away) on their cell phones.

As stated above, the advantage of this paraphrase type is that through it, the editors can present those synonyms that are appropriate to the relevant context. Consider the following example:

inkling a slight, uncertain idea about something: a slight amount of knowledge about something.
I didn't have an *inkling* [= *clue*] of what it all meant. · Nothing gave me any *inkling* that it would happen.

The paraphrase used here indicates clearly the difference between the

meanings of the headwords in the first and the second examples.

(2) To present equivalents in the major English variations
     ¹yard Children were playing out in the *yard*. [= (*Brit*) *garden*]
     cubicle 2 *Brit*: a small space in a public room (such as a bath-
     room) that has walls for privacy · a shower/toilet *cubicle* [= (*US*)
     stall]

(3) To present figurative meanings
     ¹nose 2: the ability to smell things: the sense of smell . . . often
     used figuratively · He is a good reporter with a **nose for** news.
     [= he's a reporter who is good at finding news] · a baseball scout
     with a *nose for* talent [= a scout who is good at finding new talent]

(4) To present the meanings of words used in non-compositional com-
     pounds
     X-rated an *X-rated* [= *pornographic*] Web site

(5) To present more commonly used words
     doppelgänger I saw your *doppelgänger* [= (more commonly) *dou-
     ble*] yesterday.

(6) To present the more polite forms of words
     ¹fat 1: She's gotten really *fat*. [= (more politely) *big*, *heavy*]

(7) To present the meanings of the run-on entry words
     — **faultless** a *faultless* [= *perfect*, *flawless*] performance

How should these types of information be dealt with? Type (2) para-
phrases, especially those similar to the first citation, are usually found
at the beginning of the entry in other EFL dictionaries. On the other
hand, types (4) and (5) are usually explained through some kind of in-
dependent article, such as "thesaurus," "usage," etc. A comprehensive
comparative discussion of the features of this and other EFL dictionar-
ies is undertaken in 5.3 below.

5.1.2. Functions of the paraphrases attached to phrases

Paraphrases of this type are chiefly adopted to explain the meanings
of non-compositional phrases.

(1) To present the meanings of non-compositional phrases or phrases
     with low compositionality
     — **X-ray** *adj, always used before a noun* · *X-ray* radiation [= radia-
     tion from X-rays] · *X-ray* machines [= machines that use X-rays]
     ¹cuff 3: The nurse put a blood-pressure *cuff* [= a cuff that mea-
     sures blood pressure]

(2) To present the meanings of affixes in their specific contexts
     ¹-y 1a: full or having a lot of something
     a muddy river [= a river with a lot of mud in it]

(3) To present figurative meanings
     ¹knee . . . ***bring (someone) to his/her knees***: to completely defeat
     or overwhelm (someone) . . . often used figuratively · The increase
     in oil prices could *bring* the economy *to its knees*. [= it could great-
     ly hurt the economy]

(4) To present contextual meanings
     y *or* **Y** 4: Turn left when you come to the *Y*. [= when the road/
     path splits like the top half of a Y]
     ²yard . . . ***the whole nine yards*** EVERYTHING · I served a huge
     Thanksgiving dinner: turkey, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie — *the*
     whole nine yards. [= all the foods that are traditionally served for
     Thanksgiving dinner]

(5) To present more common phrases
     descend to (something) She was desperate for money, but she
     would not *descend to* [= (more commonly) *stoop to*] asking her
     friends for help.

(6) To present equivalents in the major English variations
     ²dormitory *Brit*: lived in by people who go to another town or city
     to work · a ***dormitory town*** [= (*US*) *bedroom community*]

(7) To present cross-references
     ¹cult 2: ***a cult of personality*** = ***a personality cult***
     (The definition of "a personality cult" is given under the entry of
     personality.)

(8) To present definitions for idiomatic phrases with relatively low
     frequency, which are often highlighted in bold face in the verbal
     illustrations.

¹father 1: He's a **single father**. [= a father who does not have a wife or partner]

As regards this example type, some readers might complain that in the case of some examples, similar example sentences are repeated within the entry:

²line . . . **line up** 1: to form a line . . . (*US*) People *lined up* [= (*chiefly Brit*) *queued up*] at the theater waiting to buy tickets. 2 **line** (**people or things**) **up** *or* **line up** (**people or things**): to put (people or things) into a line · (*US*) People were *lined up* [= (*chiefly Brit*) *queued up*] at the theater waiting to buy tickets.

²mark 8: to show that (someone or something) is special or different in some way · Her very first book *marked* her as a great poet. [= showed that she was a great poet] · She was evidently *marked* [= *destined*] for greatness. . . . **mark out** 3 **mark** (**someone or something**) **out** *or* **mark out** (**someone or something**) *chiefly Brit*: to show that (someone or something) is special or different in some way · Her very first book *marked* her *out* as a great poet. [= showed that she was a great poet] · She was *marked out* [= *destined, marked*] for greatness.

However, although the above sentence examples are seemingly repetitive and redundant, they clearly illustrate the difference between the transitive and the intransitive structures comprising the entry word — a feature that is certainly useful for users.

5.1.3. Functions of the paraphrases attached to sentences

The last paraphrase type (or restatements, as some of them should be called) is mainly used to give syntactic or pragmatic, rather than semantic, explanations.

(1) To present another example sentence with the same truth-conditional meaning, using an equal mark without square brackets
     bring 1: to come with (something or someone) to a place . . . I'll *bring* you another drink. = I'll *bring* another drink to you.

This type of paraphrase is often used to show the variety of construc-

tions the entry word can take.

²fathom to understand the reason for (something) · I couldn't *fathom* why she made such a foolish decision. = I couldn't *fathom* her reasons for making such a foolish decision.

The problem is that some sets of paraphrases of this type are not used to explicate the usage of the entry word; rather, they are used to show the usage of other phrases. Look at the citation below:

¹fault 1a: a bad quality or part of someone's character: a weakness in character · In spite of her *faults*, she's a loyal friend. = For all her *faults*, she's a loyal friend.

This kind of "diversion," however, often provides culturally important information. Consider the following:

¹go 27 *of a sports team or player*: to have a specified record . . . The shortstop *went* two for four in yesterday's game. [= the shortstop had two hits in four times at bat in yesterday's game]

Sometimes both the [= . . .] and = . . . patterns are used side by side.

¹catch 4: to affect (someone) in a sudden and surprising way · They were **caught unprepared** by the crisis. = The crisis **caught them unawares**. [= they were not prepared when the crisis occurred]

(2) To present contextual meanings
²yank 2: to quickly or suddenly remove (something or someone) · The show was *yanked* off the air. [= the show was suddenly canceled; it was suddenly decided that the show would no longer be broadcast]

cuddle 2: He *cuddled up* with a good book. [= he sat down in a comfortable position and began reading a good book]

Sometimes, example sentences that have paraphrases attached to one of their words are restated through a whole sentence, which explains the contextual meaning.

¹dope 3: What's *the dope* [= *skinny*, *scoop*] on the new guy? [= what do you know about him?]

(3) To present figurative meanings
engrave to cut or carve lines, letters, designs, etc., onto or into a hard surface . . . often used figuratively · That incident was *engraved* in my memory. = That incident *engraved* itself on my memory. [= I will never forget that incident]

(4) To explain the meanings of discourse markers
yeah 2 "I'm from Maine." "***Oh yeah***? [= *really*?] I didn't know that"

(5) To present the contextual meanings of the example sentences in the non-defined run-on entries
— amply You will be *amply* rewarded for your efforts. [= you will be given a large reward for your efforts]

5.2. The relation between the definition and example types

As we have discussed in Section 4, there are three types of definitions in *MWALED*:

(1) Sentence definitions, marked with "✧"
(2) Synonym definitions (Heuberger 2000), marked with " : "
(3) Rule-based definitions (Heuberger 2000), marked with "— used"

Examples with "=" notations are usually employed with type (2) definitions. Rule-based definitions (type (3)) are often followed by this kind of example, but sentence definitions (type (1)) are rarely accompanied by it. This may be because sentence definitions themselves are rarely included in this dictionary. The statistics gathered from the sample pages are given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 The Relation between the Definition and Example Types

	Definition Type		
	Sentence	Synonym	Rule-based
Word	0	284	11
Phrase	8	381	23
Sentence	3	312	45
Total	11	977	79

In the examples following type (1) definitions, the paraphrase tends to be attached to a phrase. As for type (2) definitions, there seems to be an interesting correlation between the elaborateness of the definitions and the existence of examples with paraphrases. Example sentences following type (3) definitions are often supplemented by restatements. These observations will be closely examined by comparing the definitions and the examples of some major EFL dictionaries in the following discussion.

5.3.   Comparison of several American English EFL dictionaries
5.3.1.   Examples used with sentence definitions

MWALED comprises a small number of definitions that adopt the sentence-definition form. A paraphrase explaining the meaning of the relevant phrase is often used in these examples.

> *<MWALED>*
> ✧ If you **take something hard** you are very upset or hurt by it. She *took it hard* [= she was very upset] when he left.

> *<LAAD2>*
> 7 **take something hard** *informal* to feel upset about something, especially bad news:
> *Dad didn't say much, but I could tell he took it hard.*

The paraphrase explains the situation well in the citation below:

> *<MWALED>*
> ✧ A **death knell** is a sign or indication that something will fail or end soon.
> Many people thought that the Internet would **sound/ring/toll the death knell** for newspapers. [= cause the end of newspapers]

> *<LAAD2>*
> **death knell** a sign that something will soon stop existing or stop being used:
> *Plans for a new bridge **sounded the death knell** for ferry services.*

Often, the editors add examples of the figurative usages of the phrases in question — a format to which the paraphrase lends itself well.

<*MWALED*>

✧ If you are (*flat*) *on your back* you are lying with your back against the ground, on a bed, etc.

The accident left him (lying) *flat on his back* (in bed) for two weeks. This phrase is sometimes used figuratively. The stock market has been *flat on its back* [= has been doing very poorly] in recent weeks.

<*LAAD2*>

17 be (flat) on your back to be so sick that you cannot get out of bed:

He's been flat on his back in the hospital for a week.

5.3.2. Examples used with synonym definitions

In some entries, *MWALED* adopts brief and abstract synonym definitions and supplements the provided information with paraphrases or restatements. For example, in their entries for **ire**, both *MWALED* and *LAAD2* adopt the same strategy:

<*MWALED*>

ire: intense anger . . . The proposal has raised/roused/provoked the *ire* of environmentalists. [= had made environmentalists angry]

<*LAAD2*>

ire anger: **raise/draw somebody's ire** (= make someone angry)

Cf. <*COBAm*>

Ire is anger. [FORMAL] Their ire was directed mainly at the government.

However, *LAAD2* often applies the contrary strategy: it provides diversified and elaborated definitions and gives fewer examples:

<*LAAD2*>

unreasonable 1 not fair or sensible:

I don't want to argue, but I think you're being unreasonable.

it is unreasonable to do something

It's unreasonable to expect a child to sit still for two hours.

unreasonable demands/expectations etc.

Don't let your boss make unreasonable demands on you.

2 unreasonable prices, costs etc. are too high

COBAm, which solely uses sentence definitions, explains the entry word through several definitions.

> <*COBAm*>
> 1 If you say that someone is being unreasonable, you mean that they are behaving in a way that is not fair or sensible.
> The strikers were being unreasonable in their demands, having rejected the deal two weeks ago. It was her unreasonable behavior with a Texan playboy which broke up her marriage.
>
> 2 An unreasonable decision, action, price, or amount seems unfair and difficult to justify.
> . . . unreasonable increases in the price of gas.

Compare the above citations with the following citation from *MWALED*:

> <*MWALED*>
> **unreasonable**: not fair, sensible, or appropriate: not reasonable · I told him that I wouldn't pay unless he sent me a replacement. Am I being *unreasonable*? . . . You are entitled to compensation for *unreasonable* delays. *unreasonable* demands/expectations · The prices were not *unreasonable*. [= were not too high]

The appropriateness of the followed format depends on the users' reading comprehension ability. *MWALED* might prove somewhat demanding for intermediate learners as it requires them to infer the meaning of the word or phrase in question on the basis of examples. A paraphrase or a restatement should be added to every given example if the editors provide brief synonym definitions.

The construal of noun phrases often depends on the user's cultural background. In those cases, the use of "=" has some advantage. Consider the examples below:

> <*MWALED*>
> **unreliable** 1: not able to be trusted to do or provide what is needed or promised · Public transportation here is *unreliable*. The buses never come on time. · an *unreliable* car [= a car that breaks down often]

<LAAD2>
The local bus service is unreliable.

Cf. <COBAm>
Diplomats can be a notoriously unreliable and misleading source of information. His judgment was unreliable.

If they give only example sentences or phrases, editors often have to look for appropriate nouns that refer to typically "unreliable" referents (for example, some diplomats might complain about the example in *COBAm*); on the other hand, by using "=" and describing the meaning of the example sentence or phrase, they can adopt examples easily.

5.3.3. Examples used with rule-based definitions

Rule-based definitions are likely to be abstract and difficult to understand. Paraphrases or restatements are often used to supplement these types of definitions. In *LAAD2*, this type of definition is sometimes given in a sentence definition. Compare the following citations:

<MWALED>
the other way around 2 — used to say that the opposite situation is true. ... "I thought he wanted a divorce." "No, it was *the other way around*." [= she wanted a divorce]

<LAAD2>
9 **the other way around** if the situation, process etc. is the other way around, it is actually the opposite of how you thought it was:
Students translate from French to English and the other way around.

<MWALED>
forgiving 2 — used to describe something that produces good results even when it is not used perfectly · The tennis racket is designed to be *forgiving*. [= designed to produce good shots even when the ball is not hit perfectly]

<LAAD2>
forgiving 2 if something is forgiving, it does not matter if you make small mistakes with it:
This recipe is very forgiving.

Although these paraphrases are useful, a problem might arise from applying them to the context a user wants to understand. Especially in cases like **the other way around**, sufficient examples with paraphrases are indispensable.

5.4. Another function of examples

Some technical terms or geographic names are explained in examples (and/or their paraphrases), which are often explained in the definition or other information categories in other EFL dictionaries.

<*MWALED*>
transitive *adj, grammar, of a verb*: having or taking a direct object · a *transitive* verb · In "I like pie" and "She makes hats," the verbs "like" and "makes" are *transitive*.

<*LAAD2*>
ENG. LANG. ARTS a transitive verb has an object. For example, in the sentence "I hate bananas," "hate" is transitive. Transitive verbs are marked [T] in this dictionary.

<*MWALED*>
cubic 1 — used to describe a measurement that is produced by multiplying something's length by its width and its height · one *cubic* centimeter [= a measure of volume that is one centimeter long, one centimeter wide, and one centimeter high]

<*LAAD2*>
MATH a measurement of space which is calculated by multiplying the length of something by its width and height:
What's the cubic capacity of this engine?

<*MWALED*>
Norman *adj, always used before a noun* · the *Norman* conquest [= the time when Normans conquered England in 1066]

<*MWALED*>
the Pacific Northwest [= the northwestern part of the U.S. near the Pacific coast]

<*LAAD2*>
the Pacific Northwest the area of the U.S. that includes the states

of Oregon and Washington, and can include the southwestern part of British Columbia, Canada

Although users are not likely to face any problems in acquiring adequate information through this kind of entry, some dictionary makers would criticize it for not being well-organized.

5.5. Conclusion

The editors of *MWALED* give considerable importance to examples. Their attitude is reflected through two characteristics: (1) the use of made-up phrases or sentences, and (2) the addition of paraphrases or restatements. Both of them suggest that the editors want users to understand the meaning of a headword by carefully reading the whole entry rather than by "searching" the entry for the information they need at the time of consulting. This attitude signals a complete departure from the trend followed by the current EFL dictionaries. Some users would probably find this dictionary difficult to use. Teachers, however, might appreciate the policy adopted by the dictionary because it presents a pedagogically desirable situation for students and they themselves can use it to obtain useful example phrases or sentences while taking their classes. Therefore, we conclude that the evaluation of this dictionary varies according to reviewer ability and social or cultural milieu.   (M. Ryu)

6. Boxed Notes in *MWALED*

According to our count, there are 154 boxed notes throughout *MWALED*. They may be categorized into four types according to their format as follows:

Table 6.1

Types	'Do not confuse A with B'	those titled 'synonyms'	those titled 'usage'	untitled	total
Counts	68	28	49	9	154

6.1. 'Do not confuse A with B' type notes

Boxed notes of this type are basically presented in pairs and trios in *MWALED*. That is, if one headword has a 'Do not confuse A with B' (henceforth DNC) note, the other word(s) mentioned in the note should also have a DNC box in the corresponding entry, with only one exception, which we deem to be an accidental omission. The notes are given in order to tell the user not to confuse homophones, quasi-homophones and words with similar spellings but different pronunciations. Notes of this type are presented in quite a simple pattern, without any further distinction of pronunciation or meaning:

> Do not confuse *allude* with *elude*.   (s.v. **allude**)

In the entry of the counterpart, the headword of the entry is mentioned first:

> Do not confuse *elude* with *allude*.   (s.v. **elude**)

The pairs and trios that we found in *MWALED* are as follows:

Homophones and quasi-homophones (24 pairs and 3 trios):
allude/elude, allusion/illusion, arrant/errant, bare/bear, boor/bore, capital/capitol, [1]complement/[1]compliment, [2]complement/[2]compliment, complementary/complimentary, council/counsel, councilor/counselor, currant/current, discreet/discrete, eminent/imminent, faze/phase, hoard/horde, inequity/iniquity, parlay/parley, principal/principle, review/revue, stationary/stationery, their/there/they're, to/too/two, troop/troupe, trooper/trouper, who's/[1]whose/[2]whose, your/you're

Words with similar spellings but different pronunciations (6 pairs):
apprise/appraise, bouillon/bullion, censor/censure, climactic/climatic, dessert/desert, exalt/exult

Of the 30 couples and 3 trios above, **faze/phase** distinction is given

only at **faze**, making the count of DNC notes 68. This sort of information used to draw the users' attention to confusing words using conspicuous notes can be found in other EFL dictionaries such as *LAAD*2 and *OALD*7, as well. However, they are in the form of WORD CHOICE notes in the case of *LAAD*2 (e.g. distinction of *affect* and *effect* presented at the entry of **affect**, with cross-reference from **effect**) or WHICH WORD? notes in *OALD*7 (e.g. pairing of *compliment* and *complement* at **compliment**, without any cross-reference from **complement** that appear two pages before **compliment**), and they include an extensive explanation of meaning distinctions as well as illustrative sentences. *MWALED*'s system is much more laconic than *LAAD*2 or *OALD*7, calling for users to look up the counterpart entries if they want to know the distinction, but such a system allows *MWALED* to present information on look-alike words much more casually and extensively, taking much less space. In fact, DNC information, which may be quite helpful for language learners, appears much more abundant in *MWALED* than in other EFL dictionaries.

6.2. 'Synonym' notes

We recognized 28 groups of synonyms presented in boxed notes in *MWALED*. When we looked at the eleventh edition of a very popular collegiate dictionary from the same publisher, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (hereafter *MWCD*11), clearly, most of the boxed synonym notes in *MWALED* are adaptations from synonym notes in *MWCD*11. Thus:

> ***synonyms*** HIGH, TALL, and LOFTY mean being above the usual level in height. HIGH is used for things and not people, and it refers to distance from the ground or some other surface. ■ A high fence surrounded the house. TALL is used for both people and things. ■ tall buildings ■ She is tall for her age. LOFTY is a literary word that is used for something that rises to a very great or impressive height. ■ lofty mountains

(s.v. **high** in *MWALED*)

syn HIGH, TALL, LOFTY mean above the average in height. HIGH implies marked extension upward and is applied chiefly to things which rise from a base or foundation or are placed at a conspicuous height above a lower level <a *high* hill> <a *high* ceiling>. TALL applies to what grows or rises high by comparison with others of its kind and usu. implies relative narrowness. <a *tall* thin man>. LOFTY suggests great or imposing altitude <*lofty* mountain peaks>.

(s.v. **high** in *MWCD*11)

The format is nearly the same in both dictionaries, but the explanation of distinction, meaning, and connotation of the constituent words, as well as illustrative phrases and sentences are completely rewritten to be of more help to EFL users. The choice of words in each group is also reorganized. The following are words referred to in the comparable synonym differentiations in *MWALED* and *MWCD*11. Synonyms are presented in the listed order, in small capitals in both dictionaries, and the first word in each group (tabulated cell) below is the headword under which synonym distinctions are made.

Table 6.2

MWALED	*MWCD*11
anger, rage, fury, wrath	anger, ire, rage, fury, indignation, wrath
appreciate, value, prize, treasure, cherish	appreciate, value, prize, treasure, cherish
assert, declare, affirm, avow	assent, consent, accede, acquiesce, agree, subscribe
attempt, try, endeavor, strive	attempt, try, endeavor, essay, strive
beautiful, pretty, lovely, handsome	beautiful, lovely, handsome, pretty, comely, fair
clothing, clothes	— (*no synonym comparison note*)
concise, terse, succinct, laconic, pithy	concise, terse, succinct, laconic, summary, pithy, compendious
deadly, mortal, fatal, lethal	deadly, mortal, fatal, lethal
decay, decompose, rot, putrefy, spoil	decay, decompose, rot, putrefy, spoil
destiny, fate, lot	**fate**, destiny, lot, portion, doom
eat, consume, devour	—

fear, dread, alarm, fright	fear, dread, fright, alarm, panic, terror, trepidation
gaze, gape, stare, glare	—
high, tall, lofty	high, tall, lofty
implement, tool, instrument, utensil	implement, tool, instrument, appliance, utensil
injure, hurt, harm, damage, impair	injure, harm, hurt, damage, impair, mar
jail, prison, penitentiary	—
law, rule, regulation, statute, ordinance	law, rule, regulation, precept, statute, ordinance, canon
lean, thin, skinny	lean, spare, lank, lanky, gaunt, rawboned, scrawny, skinny
meager, scanty, sparse	meager, scanty, scant, skimpy, spare, sparse
moist, damp, dank	**wet**, damp, dank, moist, humid
obscure, vague, ambiguous	obscure, dark, vague, enigmatic, cryptic, ambiguous, equivocal
old, ancient, antique, archaic	old, ancient, venerable, antique, antiquated, archaic, obsolte
plentiful, abundant, ample	plentiful, ample, abundant, copious
price, charge, cost, fee	—
remark, observation, comment	—
speak, talk	—
task, duty, job, chore	task, duty, job, chore, stint, assignment

(emphasis mine)

There are seven groups of synonyms not found in *MWCD*11, most of which we regard as welcome additions. **Clothes/clothing** and **speak/talk** distinctions may not be necessary for native speakers of English who are the main target of *MWCD*11, but they could present basic uncertainties for learners of English, and so could the differentiation of **price, charge, cost** and **fee**. On the other hand, *MWALED* may have been too selective in drawing and refashioning only 21 synonym groups from the copious synonym resources presented in *MWCD*11. For instance, many learners of English would like to have **declare** and **announce**, **decline** and **refuse**, **decide** and **determine** contrasted respectively, to name a few, which *MWCD*11 does in its

synonym distinction notes, but *MWALED* fails to do. Today's EFL dictionaries give quite generous and sophisticated synonym distinction information as extra notes, and there should certainly be many more synonyms that EFL learners may want to discern than *MWALED* has.

Also, the restriction of words to be treated in synonym notes from *MWCD*11 to *MWALED* is sometimes puzzling. *MWALED* may not have needed to cross out **wet** and **humid** from **moist, damp** and **dank** group, when the omitted two may well have an overlapping use and meaning with the remaining three, and probably respectable corpus frequency. So is the omission of **ire** and **indignation** from the 'anger' group, which the advanced learners of English may well encounter as they read English (they may at times encounter the former in newspaper headlines, as it is the shortest among the words with similar meanings.)

We may say that taking resources from *MWCD*11 synonym information was not a wrong starting point for *MWALED*, but we expect some more sophistication in the future regarding the number and selection of the synonyms and synonym groups to be discussed in *MWALED* boxed notes, from the standpoint of providing more useful information to EFL learners.

6.3. 'Usage' notes

There are different sorts of information presented in *MWALED*'s boxed notes entitled 'usage.' Most of them are concerned with usage as the title goes, but as the term 'usage' is quite a comprehensive notion, possibly comprising anything from the word grammar to geographical (mainly American and British) difference as regards the use of a word, *MWALED*'s usage notes comprise a wide variety of elements. The following is a list of items with usage notes in *MWALED* and the summaries of the comments provided.

Items in question	Summaries of remarks in the usage notes
actor	some women prefer to use 'actor' to 'actress'

affect	do not confuse the verbs *affect* and *effect*.
ain't	usually regarded as an error, but commonly used
alright	regarded by some people as an error
altogether	do not confuse *altogether* with *all together*
American English	in the US, only used to distinguish from other kinds of English
amount	sometimes used with plural count nouns disputably
any	usage of *some* in contrast with any
anymore	in some parts of the US it is used informally in positive statements
Asian	in the US it refers to East Asian, in Britain it refers to South Asian
can	on *can/could* and *be able to* in reference to ability, etc.
cannot	*can't* and *cannot* in speech and formal writing
cleanse	difference of *clean* and *cleanse*
data	plural in form but used with both plural and singular verbs
deceased	gentler term compared to *dead*, and used for friends etc.
different	whether it is followed by *from*, *than* (in the US) or *to* (in Britain)
dinner	meaning of *dinner* and *supper* in the US
don't	sometimes used as a contraction of "does not" disputably
either	in informal English, a plural verb could be used after *either of* . . .
family	American English: + plural verb, British English: + singular/plural
female (n.)	refers to a human only scientifically or humorously
fish	plural form: *fish* for more than one fish, *fishes* for plural species

fizzle	in the US, *out* is optional, in Britain, almost always used with *out*
flaunt	*flaunt* in the sense of "flout" is popular but disputable
fortuitous	*fortuitous* in the sense of "fortunate" is popular but disputable
goddamn	an angry word that many people find offensive
have (sense 24)	shortened form regarding *have*
have got (s.v. have)	use of *have got* in place of *have*
insane	use of the word *insane* for the mentally ill
less	distinction of *less* and *fewer*
let	followed by an infinitive verb without to; not used in the passive
[6]like (as)	adverb uses in informal speech
[7]like	use of like as a conjunction is disputable
likely	use of *likely* in the sense of *probably* is common but disputable
[2]male	refers to a human only scientifically or humorously
matter (sense 4)	difference of "*What's the matter?*" and "*What's the matter with you?*"
me	on the use of *me* instead of *I*
Native American	most common term now as opposed to offensive "(American) Indian"
neither	in informal English, a plural verb could be used after *neither of* . . .
[1]shop	difference of uses of *shop* and *store* in American and British English
staff	may be used as a plural noun to mean the members of a staff
sulfur	in the US, the spelling *sulphur* is also used in nontechnical writing
[1]take	*bring* and *take* are sometimes used in opposite meanings

[2]than	prepositional *than* is disputable, but *than me* is especially common
[2]that (conj.)	often omitted in informal speech
[4]that (relative pron.)	often omitted in informal speech
[1]this	"Is this John?" (US) / "Is that John?" (UK) is used on the phone
[2]used to	usually used in the form *use to* when it occurs with *did*
whom	more formal than *who* and is uncommon in ordinary speech & writing

Of the 49 usage notes in *MWALED*, 8 (**alright, amount, don't, flaunt, fortuitous, [7]like, likely, [2]than**) may be identified as referring to various sorts of disputed usage, or the discrepancies between the popular or rather common usage and what is supposed to be 'right' or appropriate, with such comments as "it is usually regarded as an error" and "it is considered by many people to be incorrect." *MWCD*11, which is noted for its abundance of usage notes on disputed usage, attaches usage notes to only three of them (**amount, don't** and [7]**like**). Being a dictionary for non-native learners of English, the *MWALED* editors may have felt more need to ostensibly warn the users of their linguistically controversial status than the editors of *MWCD*11. Also, several informal expressions are commented with usage notes in *MWALED* (**ain't, alright, have got,** [6]**like** and **me** (as in 'taller than me')), indirectly eliciting the user's attention to its casualness and suggesting that they are not appropriate in formal or written language. Incidentally, in *LAAD*2, the disputed or informal items mentioned in usage notes in *MWALED* are only endowed with status labels (e.g. SPOKEN for **don't**, SPOKEN INFORMAL for [7]**like**, SPOKEN, NONSTANDARD for **ain't** and NONSTANDARD for **alright**) or just left uncommented.

Also, a number of usage notes in *MWALED* refer to the difference between usages, meanings and/or connotations in the American and British English (**Asian, different, family, fizzle, shop** and **this**) or

makes reference to usage in the United States (**dinner** and **sulfur**). One usage note even comments on some regional American usage (**anymore**), which is information not found in any other EFL dictionaries.

There are three usage notes which are more or less related to political correctness: notes for **actor, insane** and **Native American**. The number may be too small and not quite representative of the whole host of presumed PC-related lexical items and notions born in the home country of considerations for the rather underprivileged. There may even well be an extensive 'usage note' for the entries of 'politically correct' and/or 'politically incorrect' that *MWALED* has as headwords without any usage note at present. Learners of English would certainly want to know how far the political correctness is actually in operation in the U.S. and how much consideration they are supposed to give to that matter in actual practice when they use the English language in America. Such information doubtlessly strengthens the identity of and reliability of the purely American-born EFL dictionary.

We noticed one usage note in *MWALED* that may be quite helpful for the learners of English to grasp the meanings of fundamental English verbs. That is the one attached to the first sense of the entry ¹**take**, which expounds as follows:

> *usage* The verbs *bring* and *take* are sometimes used in a way that shows that they have opposite meanings. When this is true, *bring* suggests that something is moving toward someone or something, and *take* suggests that something is moving away. ■ Here, I *brought* you some flowers. ■ May I *take* your luggage to you room for you?

Such an explanation may be very effective when presented as an usage note that highlights the difference normally unnoticed only by reading the definitions of each verb.

6.4. Untitled notes

There are 9 untitled boxed notes in *MWALED*. One is at the entry **at**, which explains the use of 'at' and '@' in e-mail. Two of them are paired, for **maybe** and **perhaps**, which compares each other and ex-

pounds their common meaning and uses. These three may well have been titled 'usage.' Another untitled note is for **¹bail**, that consists of additional information to the definition. The note goes: "The bail paid by a person accused of a crime is returned when the person comes back to court for a trial," followed by collocations and idioms using the word **bail**. The format of the boxed note for this entry appears rather haphazard, and the idioms and collocations there could well be presented outside the box.

6.5. Conclusion

Of the four (or three major) types of boxed notes in *MWALED*, DNC notes may be quite successful in that they draw attention to much more misleading look-alikes than any other comparable EFL dictionaries, by giving them in a very laconic but quite systematic fashion. Synonym information presented in boxed notes in *MWALED* may have room for future sophistication and enrichment. Usage notes in *MWALED*, which embraces quite a few interesting features, including representation of a number of notes on disputed usage, may be still a little too reserved in number. Generally speaking, one of the advantages of boxed notes in dictionaries (especially in monolingual dictionaries) is that they stand out to allow the information presented in them to catch the user's eyes quite easily (in fact, that is what the boxed notes are designed for and aimed at). *MWALED* presents essential information such as grammatical points on plurality in quite an effective way using boxed notes, as long as it is presented in boxed notes at all! Only 154 boxes throughout a dictionary of 1,909 page A-Z text may well be regarded as too reserved. Also, specific and readable information on American language and culture in greater numbers may elicit and contribute to the keener interest of the users of the dictionary and are awaited.   (T. Kokawa)

7. Concluding Remarks

MWALED has a number of unique and appealing features, such as faithfully reflecting on current American pronunciation changes, apro-

pos use of different definition types and their user-friendly demarcation before the definitions, effective and generous use of paraphrases for verbal illustrations as well as the integrated structure of the entry and copious examples that may allow a reader of the whole entry to grasp the lexical item in question more pertinently. However, there is room for future improvement as well. As an indigenous American EFL dictionary, more entry and treatment of American-proper lexical and culture specific or encyclopedic items (as headwords and in other information categories), more cultural/cross-cultural notes, as well as more contrastive information regarding American and British language and culture which is unique to *MWALED* and may not be found in British-born EFL dictionaries are awaited. The birth of an EFL dictionary produced by a highly reputable American publisher is a welcome beginning of a new era of learner's lexicography. We hope to witness the development of *MWALED* and other prospective American-born competitors into a comparable genre of EFL dictionaries with their British counterparts.

NOTES

Section 1

1) http://www.learnersdictionary.com

2) **amoral—analogous, b—back[1], bidet—bilateral, brickwork—bring, cataclysm —catchment area, closed-captioned—clove[1], constrained—contact[1], crystalized —culture[2], dervish—designate[1], dope[2]—double bogey, energy—enigmatic, fat[2]— favor[1], forgave—format[1], glow[2]—go[1], hard-and-fast—harlequin, host[1]—hot-water bottle, injury time—inquest, kittenish—knife[1], limited—lined, mark[3]—married name, money-back—monorail, Nordic—nosejob, outlive—outsourse, perambulator—perfect pitch, politic—pom-pom, protectionism—province, recapitulate— recitative, rickets—right[1], scenic—sciatica, ship[2]—shock[2], sneak[3]—snoozer, starch[2]—start[2], sunstroke—supplant, thankful—thaw[2], transact—transliterate, unready—unseasoned, way[2]—wean, X-rated—year**

Section 3

1) Whenever a phonetic symbol of *MWCD*11 is referred to within the text, a symbol will be given between inverted slashes, as presented in *MWCD*11.

Section 4

1) http://www.learnersdictionary.com/browse/words3k/

2) In *COBAm*, the relevant sense is indicated in the form of a sentence as follows:
brilliant 3: A brilliant color is extremely bright.

3) *COBAm* has both labels and *LAAD*2 has a *spoken* label. Although both *spoken* and *written* were used in *OALD*6, *OALD*7 abandons them. See Komuro et al. (2006) for details.

Section 5

1) Almost all the citations have been taken from the sample pages.

2) Italics are not used consistently in the example sentences. We have made no alterations here.

Section 6

1) *OALD*7 differentiates **declare, state, indicate** and **announce** in its highlighted SYNONYMS box (s.v. **declare**), with special focus on **declare** and **announce**, while *LAAD*2 lists **refuse, turn sth down, say no** and **decline** in contrast to **reject** for distinction in one of its also highlighted THESAURUS note (s.v. **refuse**). *LAAD*2 also distinguishes **make up your mind, choose, resolve, determine**, and **come down in favor** in the entry **decide**.

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COBAm   *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of American English.* 2007. Boston: Thomson Heinle

*EPD*17   *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary.* 17th ed. 2006. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*LPD*3   *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary.* 3rd ed. 2008. Harlow: Pearson Education.

*LAAD*2   *Longman Advanced American Dictionary.* 2nd ed. 2007. Harlow: Pearson Education.

*LDOCE*5   *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.* 5th ed. 2009. Harlow: Pearson Education.

*MWCD*11   *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.* 11th ed. 2004. Springfield: Merriam-Webster.

MWALED   *Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary.* 2008. Springfield: Merriam-Webster.

*OALD*7   *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English.* 7th ed. 2005. Oxford: Oxford University Press

RHWDAE   *Random House Webster's Dictionary of American English.* 1997. New York: Random House.

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