

# An Analysis of the *Oxford Learner's Thesaurus: A Dictionary of Synonyms*

YURI KOMURO  
YASUO ICHIKAWA

## 1. Introduction

By our everyday experience in teaching English at university, we may be justified in saying that one of the most frequently asked questions in an English writing or composition class is: *Can we use the word B instead of A here?* In order to answer this kind of question, teachers often consult various dictionaries and usage guides, ask their colleagues who are native speakers of English, do a corpus or Google search, and draw some conclusion about the interchangeability of words A and B. This may be a typical situation both English teachers and learners find themselves in, as the Preface of the *Oxford Learner's Thesaurus: A Dictionary of Synonyms* (2008) (hereafter *OLT*) states that “‘More help’ with synonyms has been one of the most frequent requests from students and teachers to us as lexicographers at Oxford University Press”.

There have been some innovative learners' dictionaries to help learners to produce English, such as the *Longman Language Activator* (1993, 2002), as well as traditional bilingual learners' dictionaries for productive use. Also, in the past decade, more and more collocations dictionaries for learners have been published or revised, such as the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (2002, 2009), the *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English*, third edition (2010), and the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary for Learners of English* (2010). However, dictionaries of synonyms truly for English learners have been the genre

waiting to be developed. To our knowledge, the *American Heritage Thesaurus for Learners of English* (2002) was the only monolingual learner's thesaurus widely available before the *OLT*. Therefore, the publication of the *OLT* should be greatly welcome.

The Oxford University Press has the *Oxford Thesaurus of English* (2000, 2004), a thesaurus for native speakers or experts of English; however, the *OLT* is not a derivative of the *Oxford Thesaurus of English*, second edition (2004), but owes a great deal to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, seventh edition (hereafter *OALD7*). According to Lea (2008: 545), editor in chief of the *OLT*, it was being compiled at the same time that the *OALD7* was being prepared. Since the periods of editing the two dictionaries overlap, a substantial amount of information is shared between them, which will be shown in detail later in our discussion.

Target users of the *OLT* are upper-intermediate and above (p. vi). Whom the dictionary aims to help is explained in more detail in the Introduction:

It is hoped that this thesaurus will be of use not only to language students, but also to teachers preparing classes, as well as to translators and people writing in English for academic purposes: in fact to anyone wishing to improve their own, or their students', fluency and precision in written and spoken English. (p. vii)

The present paper aims to review the *OLT* from the viewpoint of Japanese university EFL teachers. We will first argue what a learner's thesaurus is (Section 2), and then proceed to analyze the macrostructure (Section 3) and microstructure (Section 4) of the dictionary. We will make an analysis of the headword list and of, as for microstructure, definitions, examples, usage labels, usage notes, 'Synonym Scales', and pictorial illustrations, and examine what editorial policies and efforts were made in order to make the dictionary a real *learner's* thesaurus. We also make reference to the CD-ROM, where necessary, as it pertains to the paper dictionary.

## 2. What is a learner's thesaurus?

Traditionally, or typologically speaking, a thesaurus is a thematically organized reference work, and a synonym dictionary is an alphabetically organized reference work (Hartmann and James 1998: entries for *synonym dictionary* and *thesaurus*). Therefore, having both the terms *thesaurus* and *dictionary of synonyms* in one title seems rather contradictory. However, the word *thesaurus* has come to be used in a broader sense in keeping with its definition in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, fifth edition (2009) as “a book in which words are put into groups with other words that have similar meanings”. The *OLT* itself notes in its Introduction the definition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2003): “a book that lists words in groups of synonyms and related concepts”. Moreover, there has been a noticeable trend toward giving encoding dictionaries for learners an A-Z format, as in *Longman Language Activator* (1993, 2002), *Oxford Learner's Wordfinder Dictionary* (1997), and the *American Heritage Thesaurus for Learners of English* (2002).

The fundamental difference between thesauri for native speakers and learners' thesauri is whether or not their users are expected to be familiar with words provided as synonyms, that is, alternative ways to express the idea they have. The main function of a thesaurus for native speakers is to activate a user's mental lexicon by providing as many choices as possible. The Introduction of the *Oxford Thesaurus of English* (2004) states:

In this book, the broadest possible definition of the term ‘synonym’ has been adopted, as being the one that will be most useful to users. Even words whose meaning is quite distantly related to that of the headword are supplied if they can be used to get the same message across in some contexts or if they are synonymous with a part of the meaning of the headword. (p. viii)

Its basic principle is that offering more possibilities will cover a variety of contexts users may be in. As for the main purpose, it is to help users find the most appropriate or a better word to express their idea in order to refine the text they produce.

A thesaurus thus helps you to express yourself more accurately and in more interesting and varied ways. It is an invaluable tool for anyone who writes, whether for memos and reports at work, essays and dissertations at school and college, letters to business contacts, friends, or potential employers, or creative writing for a living or for pleasure. A thesaurus can provide the answer when a word is on the tip of your tongue, or it can expand your vocabulary to help you find new ways of saying what you want to. A thesaurus can also help in solving crossword puzzles and with many other word games. (p. vii)

On the other hand, a learner's thesaurus can be said to be a vocabulary learning tool. Of course, it also functions as a memory jogging tool, as does a general thesaurus. Given several choices, users are reminded of words they wanted to use but which did not spring to mind. However, the primary functions of a learner's thesaurus are to (1) make users aware of different connotations or shades of meaning synonyms have and to (2) enable users to choose and use the most appropriate word, which may not be part of their (active) vocabulary, in order to express their idea. Lea (2008: 545) explains what the *OLT* aims to do as follows:

The challenge for the learner is to know when two words can substitute for each other and when they cannot. The challenge for us was to produce a *learner's* thesaurus that would enable users to do just that. It would need to fill in gaps in their knowledge about the meaning and usage of words they have met before: what exactly are the differences between *easy* and *simple*? And it would need to introduce them to new, more precise and more interesting words and expressions — *effortless*, *painless*, *plain sailing* — together with enough information about meaning and context to enable them to use them correctly.

In a learner's thesaurus, users are guided through words they are familiar with to (more sophisticated) words that are unfamiliar or only vaguely familiar. If they are not given appropriate explanation about when and how to use these words, they can be misled and end up making dictionary-oriented mistakes. Therefore, a learner's thesaurus

requires explicit definitions to differentiate synonyms and examples to illustrate subtle differences between synonyms. These features show typical usage or appropriate context of use, which a thesaurus for native speakers does not usually provide.

### 3. Macrostructure

In this section, we will first introduce the *OLT*'s access structure, which is chiefly alphabetical, and then analyze its headwords in terms of their types and selection.

#### 3.1. Access structure

As mentioned above, the *OLT* is a thesaurus with its headwords alphabetically arranged. A user can find a word they are looking for straightaway in the main A-to-Z section if the word in question itself represents an entry, or in the alphabetical index, which contains all the headwords and synonyms listed under them, at the end of the dictionary. For example, if you are looking for a word more appropriate than the adjective *good*, you can first look for it in the main text and find the entry **good** in it. From the entry, which is subdivided into seven meanings, you are further referred to other closely related entries. Sense 1 of *good* tells you to see the entries **better**, **excellent**, **great** and **wonderful**, and sense 2 directs you to the entries **adequate** and **fine** for further possibilities, and the like. You can also go to the index, where you are referred to 16 entries or expressions the adjective *good* appears in: GOOD 1, GOOD 2, GOOD 3, GOOD 4, GOOD 5, GOOD 6, GOOD 7, HEALTHY, KIND, NICE 1, SUNNY, VALUABLE 2, WELL, **in a good mood**, **a good bet**, **have a good time**. After each suggested entry, a short example to illustrate the word sense is given in round brackets — KIND (good of you to come), SUNNY (if the weather's good), for instance — so that a user can tell in what sense the word *good* is used. When a word you start with is not as frequent as the adjective *good*, it is not as likely to merit its own entry. In that case, you would do better by going straight to the index. Bogaards (2008: 319) finds this two-step search troublesome and states that "I wonder whether a system without such an index would

not have been feasible. It would certainly have been more user-friendly.”

However, both these access structures are put together in the CD-ROM. To take the same example, if you type in *good*, then you are taken to the entry **good**, where you are guided to other relevant entries and you can jump to any of them by clicking on a word you chose. You are also given the list of all the entries which include the word *good* regardless of its part of speech in the window named ‘See this word in’. Most likely, the list gets generated automatically, so that it sometimes contains entries which do not seem particularly relevant, such as **truth**, where you find *good faith*, and **option**, where you find *a good/safe bet*.

There is also a topic index, which deals with thirty topics such as the arts, describing people, fame and fashion, health, money, politics and so on. Topics are alphabetically listed and under each topic, users can find a list of related entries. In the CD-ROM, users can create their own topics in “My Topics” by clicking the icon “Add to My Topics” in the A to Z section. This may be of use to learners who are engaged in an essay writing task.

### 3.2. Headwords

In this section we examine headwords, or entries. The *OLD* does not reveal the exact number of its entries, but says that it has over 2,000 entries (p. viii). However, by our count the number of the entries is 1,973. We will first analyze what constitutes the headword list and then discuss how headwords or entries were selected and whether the selection can be considered appropriate for Japanese learners of English.

#### 3.2.1. Constituents of the headword list

The headwords consist mainly of nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. It should also be noted, or made clear to users that not only single words but also compounds and phrases are built into entries in the *OLT*. This is due to its rigid principle that the most frequent item in a synonym group makes its headword. Noun compounds such as **the general public**, **good thing**, **turning point**, and **the middle class**,

make noun entries. Adjective entries include phrases such as **in love**, **mentally ill**, **used to sth** and **prone to sth**, though with the exception of *mentally ill*, they are labeled as *phrase* within a given entry. Similarly, some verb entries are phrases and idioms such as **be attracted to**, **give way**, **look like sb/sth**, **be/feel sorry for sb**, **take advantage of sb/sth**, **take care of yourself**, and **take your time**. They are labeled either *phrase* or *idiom* when they are described as individual synonyms in the entry.

Accordingly, we can assume that headwords are not labeled according to their own linguistic status, but to the grammatical category the whole entry has. For example, at the entry for *take advantage of*, which is labeled as *verb*, we can find the following items as synonyms: *take advantage of sb/sth* (idiom), *inconvenience* [T (= transitive)], *impose* [I (= intransitive)], *put sb out* (phrasal verb). All the synonymous expressions, regardless of their grammatical categories, are verbal phrases, and it is therefore appropriate to label the whole entry as *verb*.

However, this assumption does not work well as there are also quite a few entries labeled as *phrasal verb*. Examples of phrasal verb entries are: **bring sb up**, **come up with sth**, **confine sb/sth to sth**, **consist of sb/sth**, **deal with sb/sth**, **depend on/upon sth**, **dictate to sb**, **fight back**, **get in**, and **get out**. Also, there are entries which are labeled as *phrase* or *idiom*: **(be) in favour (of sb/sth)** (phrase) and **lose your temper** (idiom) though the number of such entries seems very small. The entry **bring sb up** has the following set of synonyms: *bring sb up* (phrasal verb), *adopt* [I, T], *raise* [T], *rear* [T], *foster* [T, I] and *be born and bred* (idiom). Needless to say, not all of these six lexical items are phrasal verbs. Therefore, the part-of-speech indication *phrasal verb* given to the headword only applies to the headword itself, but not to the whole entry. On the other hand, entries of such phrasal verbs as *fend sb/sth off* and *suffer from* are labeled as *verb*. The editorial policy regarding the indication of part-of-speech membership is not easy to comprehend and may be confusing to users.

### 3.2.2. Choice of headwords

The Introduction says “all the words and expressions included are such as might reasonably form part of a learner’s active vocabulary”, and that “Synonym groups were based around key words, mostly drawn from a 3,000-word core vocabulary for learners” (p. vi). The 3,000-word core vocabulary here means the Oxford 3000™, which is “carefully selected by a group of language experts and experienced teachers as the words which should receive priority in vocabulary study because of their importance and usefulness” (*OALD7*: R99). The compilation of the list was based mainly on frequency data drawn from the British National Corpus and Oxford Corpus Collection, and on familiarity to users of English. In other words, the list was not simply made according to frequency, but was compiled with pedagogical considerations. It is crucial that headwords are the words potential users would be familiar with as they provide access to more appropriate words.

We compared the *OLT* headword list to the JACET List of 8000 Basic Words (JACET 8000), which is a vocabulary list designed uniquely for Japanese learners of English, in order to evaluate the *OLT*’s accessibility for Japanese users. The JACET 8000 was compiled on the basis of frequency data drawn from the BNC and supplementary subcorpora created by the JACET team to reflect needs of Japanese learners, and was then further edited to meet their needs. It is a *learning* vocabulary list for Japanese learners of English, but can be, at the same time, considered as a yardstick to measure how familiar the *OLT*’s headwords may be to Japanese learners. Both the headword list of the *OLT* and the JACET 8000 are a vocabulary list compiled based on frequency and pedagogic appropriateness.

Ten headwords are taken at every 50 pages, and a total of 180 headwords were compared to the JACET 8000. The List has eight levels, and the levels to which the headwords randomly chosen correspond are tabulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Comparison of the *OLT's* headwords to the JACET List of 8000 Basic Words

Level	the number of headwords
1	70 (38.9%)
2	46 (25.6%)
3	21 (11.7%)
4	13 (7.2%)
5	8 (4.4%)
6	8 (4.4%)
7	2 (1.1%)
8	2 (1.1%)
Not included in the list	10 (5.6%)

(Percentages in round brackets are rounded off to the second decimal places.)

The Table shows that 76.2% of the headwords in the sampled pages are covered by words from Level 1 to Level 3, which may indicate that the *OLT's* choice of headwords is successful in making the dictionary, on the whole, quite accessible at least to Japanese learners. The ten headwords that were not included in the List (5.6%) are: **basics** (n.), **coward** (n.), **cramped** (adj.), **disable** (v.), **eradicate** (v.), **evade** (v.), **forbidden** (adj.), **put sth out** (ph. v.), **travelling** (adj.), **treacherous** (adj.), but *basic* (Level 1), *forbid* (Level 5), *put* (Level 1), and *travel* (Level 1) are included in the List. Therefore, the percentage of headwords which are not in the list is actually very small.

However, in just quickly flipping through the dictionary, we notice that it still has some entry words, such as **accomplice**, **vandalize** and **loss-making**, which are not highly frequent items and are considered to be of advanced level. In terms of less frequent items, cross-referencing from less frequent headwords to more frequent ones is necessary in order to avoid loss of information. For example, the entry **vandalize** can be cross-referenced from the entry for *damage*. Or *vandalize* should be dealt with in the entry **damage**, as in the *Oxford Thesaurus of English*, the second edition (2004). The *Longman Language Activator*, sec-

ond edition (2002), also has *vandalize* under the concept of *damage*, which is considered a much more accessible word to learners.

#### 4. Microstructure

Now we look into information provided in an entry. Atkins and Rundell (2008: 409) specify principal elements of an encoding dictionary as follows: (1) precise semantic features, (2) collocational and selectional preferences, (3) sociolinguistic features, (4) pragmatic and connotative features, and (5) contextual information. It can be said that the *OLT* does take all these factors into consideration and tries to describe words with similar meaning as clearly and distinctively as possible. In the *OLT*, (1) is described mainly by definition, notes, ‘Synonym scale’, and pictorial illustration; (2) is by ‘Patterns and collocations’, definition, and examples; (3) and (4) are by labels; and (5) is by examples and notes. In the following discussion, we will examine each of the information categories, as well as synonyms dealt with.

##### 4.1. Entry format

First of all, what an entry consists of will be briefly described. Within an entry, the most frequent lexical item of all the synonyms given comprises the headword, which is printed in blue and a larger font. Some entries refer users to other related entries by giving a note: “See also the entry/entries for . . .”. A list of synonyms to be dealt with in the entry is given in order of frequency. Right under the list, a brief definition is provided to explain the general, shared meaning of all the synonyms. Some entries have ‘Synonym scale’ (Section 4.8), which lines all the words up along an arrow in order of strength, with the weakest on the left and the strongest on the right. Below that, typical patterns and grammatical and lexical collocations shared by two or more synonyms in the group are presented in blue under the heading of ‘PATTERNS AND COLLOCATIONS’ (section 4.2). Then, synonyms are presented in order of frequency, from the most frequent to the least frequent. Each synonym, followed by grammatical information such as parts of speech, countability (in cases of nouns), transitivity (in cases of verbs),

and usage labels (section 4.6), is defined and illustrated. Derivatives are sometimes given without a definition, but with one or two short examples. Pronunciation is not usually given, except for “more difficult words” (inside the front cover) in the paper version, but both British and American pronunciations are, of course, given in the CD-ROM. Two types of notes supplement definitions and try to differentiate between synonyms as clearly as possible. Boxed NOTES compare and contrast two or three synonyms and explain differences between them (inside the front cover) (Section 4.7.1). On the other hand, ‘Information note’ is to “give extra information about one particular word or expression” (p. vii) (Section 4.7.2). Also, antonyms are given to some synonyms, preceded by the sign **OPP**.

#### 4.2. Patterns and collocations

Types of typical patterns and collocations provided are different from entry to entry, but the patterns covered are tabulated below in Table 2. The left column shows typical patterns and collocations dealt with, and examples are shown accordingly.

Table 2 Types of patterns and collocations

	noun entry	adjective entry	verb entry	adverb entry
<b>preposition +</b>	<b>in</b> anger/rage/ fury/outrage/ indignation, <b>by</b> origin/descent/ birth			
<b>+ preposition</b>	an exchange / a swap / a reversal <b>between</b> A and B, a fashion/ vogue/fad/trend/ craze <b>for</b> sth	amenable/sub- missive <b>to</b> sb/sth, precise/accurate/ specific <b>about</b> sb/sth	differ/diverge <b>from</b> sth, range/ vary <b>from</b> sth <b>to</b> sth	
<b>noun</b>	passenger/ commuter <b>fares</b> / <b>services/traffic</b> / <b>trains</b> , party/ dance/disco/rave <b>music</b>	partial/incom- plete <b>informa-</b> <b>tion</b> , an incom- plete/unfinished <b>sentence</b>	pay/settle/meet/ clear your <b>debts</b> , waste/lose/throw away/squander/ blow a <b>fortune</b>	

<b>adjective</b>	<b>public/wide-spread</b> anger/outrage/indignation, a <b>regular</b> passenger/traveller/commuter		become/get/grow <b>fat/old</b>	usually/normally/generally/commonly <b>accepted</b> , often/routinely <b>available</b>
<b>adverb</b>		<b>emotionally</b> difficult/challenging/demanding/taxing, <b>very/extremely/sadly</b> disappointed/disillusioned	differ/range/vary <b>enormously</b> , value/prize sth <b>highly</b>	<b>most</b> usually/often/generally/commonly, <b>fairly/very</b> often/frequently
<b>verb</b>	an idea / a thought / a notion <b>strikes sb</b> , <b>overcome</b> a disadvantage/drawback/pitfall/snag	<b>turn</b> pale/white/grey, <b>look</b> weak/frail/delicate	<b>try to</b> understand / relate to / identify with / empathize (with) (sb/sth), <b>agree to</b> disagree/differ	<b>occur</b> often/frequently, <b>crop up</b> occasionally / from time to time
<b>grammatical pattern</b>	the idea/thought/concept/notion <b>that . . .</b> , a tactic/device/ploy/manoeuvre <b>to do sth</b>	be likely/possible/probably <b>that . . .</b> , all right/OK/fit <b>to do sth</b>	enjoy/relish/revel in / delight in <b>doing sth</b> , to find/find out/hear/discover/learn <b>that . . .</b>	
<b>sentence pattern</b>	the fact/truth (of the matter) <b>is that . . .</b>	<b>make sb</b> angry/mad/cross, <b>find sth</b> worrying/disturbing/unsettling/disconcerting/unnerving	<b>have sth</b> cleaned/washed/shampooed/dry-cleaned, <b>It is</b> recommended/advised/advocated/urged <b>that . . .</b>	
<b>others</b>	a <b>bit of</b> an exception / an anomaly / a freak / an oddity	<b>fit and</b> well/healthy/strong	<b>be free to</b> decide/choose/determine	

A look at the table may tell us that the information provided is sure to be useful to users. However, it can be quite hard to go through a list, especially when the list is rather long (as in *result* and *control*). The list does not distinguish lexical collocations, grammatical collocations, or sentence patterns, so that *where to look for what* is not clear to users.

Sometimes, the way some collocations are presented makes acceptability of other collocations obscure. At the entry for the noun *claim*, four synonymous nouns are given: *claim*, *allegation*, *assertion*, and *contention*, and nine patterns and collocations are given. Among them are: “to **reject** a claim / an assertion / a contention” and “to **dispute** a claim / contention”. The noun *allegation* is not given as a collocate of *reject*, and *assertion* is not given as a noun collocate of *dispute*. However, *reject an allegation* and *dispute an assertion* are both given in the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English* (hereafter *OCDSE*). The ‘Guide to Thesaurus Entries’ inside the front cover simply says that “patterns and collocations shows the prepositions, structures and words that typically combine with two or more synonyms in the group”, and it does not say that patterns and collocations *not* listed are unacceptable, or that the ones listed are of higher frequency. However, some exercises in ‘Thesaurus Trainer’ (p. xi) ask users to delete words which do not fit patterns or collocations making reference to ‘Patterns and collocations’ sections. Users may well learn that patterns and collocations users do not find there are not acceptable or correct.

### 4.3. Synonyms

Early in Section 3.2.2, explanation about the choice of headwords is given. In this section, we will discuss how synonyms treated under each headword or each sense of the headword were chosen and presented to the users.

#### 4.3.1. Choice of synonyms

The *OLT* explains its selection of synonyms in synonym groups as follows:

As many synonyms as possible were gathered for each key word. The words in each group were then ordered according to frequency across a range of corpora. . . . Less frequent words were rejected. The aim was to present learners with manageable groups of between three and ten synonyms. (p. vii)

Frequency is the key element in selecting synonyms as well as ordering them in a group. Phrasal verbs and idioms as well as single words are given as synonymous expressions as they become headwords (Section 3.2.1). For example, the entry for *accompany* has: *accompany*, *go with sb* (phrasal verb), *tag along* (phrasal verb), and *keep sb company* (idiom). Moreover, what they call “phrases” are included as synonyms.

Synonyms dealt with are basically loose synonyms as “complete” synonymy is impossible as no two words ever have exactly the same sense in terms of denotation, connotation, formality or currency” (Hartmann and James: entry for *synonymy*). In some entries, co-hyponyms or superordinates are also provided. For example, the entry **church** has the following synonyms: *church*, *temple*, *mosque*, *shrine*, *cathedral*, *chapel*, *synagogue*, *abbey*, *sanctuary*, *place of worship*. *Church* becomes the headword since it is the most frequently used word in this group; however, *place of worship* has the most general meaning here, and most of the other words are its hyponyms as the definition of *place of worship* is “a building where people of a particular religion go to worship, such as a church, temple, mosque or synagogue”. So, *place of worship* is a superordinate of *church*. *Cathedral* and *abbey* can be considered as co-hyponyms of *church*, and the relation between *church* and *chapel* can be regarded as meronymy.

It should be also noted that quite a few taboo words are included in the *OLT*. For example, the entry **nonsense** contains three taboo words in its eight synonyms: *bullshit*, *crap*, *B.S.*. The first two are all labeled “taboo, slang, spoken, disapproving” and *B.S.* is labeled “AmE, taboo, slang”. An information note is given to *bullshit* and *crap* to warn users against using those terms casually.

**Bullshit** is very common in spoken English, used especially to say

that you think that what sb has just said is nonsense. However, it should only be used in an informal situation to sb who is your equal in age and status. If said to sb who is older or who considers themselves more important than you, it could cause very great offence

A similar example is the entry **villain**, which has four taboo words in its nine synonyms. However, we cannot recognize the necessity of including taboo words, especially when there are a plenty of alternatives as in the entry **poor**, second sense. As words to “describe something that is of a low standard or quality”, five adjectives, *poor*, *bad*, *cheap*, *low*, and *dismal*, are first given. Then, two taboo words, *crap* and *shit*, are given with three other adjectives, *inferior*, *hopeless*, and *second-rate*. Another example is the entry for *very* (adverb). Among its eleven synonyms, *bloody* (BrE, taboo, slang) is given. The core target users of the *OLT* are *learners* of English, and as long as the main purpose of a thesaurus is to help learners to *produce* English, offering words which the dictionary does not encourage users to use, especially when adequate choices are available, is fairly doubtful.

#### 4.3.2. The number of synonyms

The *OLT* explains that each entry has “between three and ten synonyms, a maximum of twelve synonyms in each group” (p. vi), and that “[i]n a few cases the upper limit was extended to twelve; a few entries present just a pair of synonyms, when there simply was not a third synonym to add to the number” (p. vii). The exact number of synonyms is not revealed by the editors, but according to the Introduction, the overall number of both synonyms and opposites is over 17,000 (p. vi). We counted how many synonyms are provided in each group and tabulated the results below. The left column shows the number of synonyms provided in each group, and the right column shows the number of synonym groups.

Table 3 The number of synonyms per synonym group

the number of synonyms per group	the number of synonym groups
2	38
3	215
4	399
5	423
6	423
7	328
8	253
9	157
10	90
11	35
12	8
13	1
14,099 synonyms in total	2,371 synonym groups in total

According to our count, a total of 14,099 synonyms is given. (The number contains those synonyms which appear in more than one sense of a synonym group.) The average number of synonyms per group is 5.95, and the modes are five and six synonyms per group. It is a demanding task to achieve the right balance between offering variety to users and keeping them from getting lost among too many choices. In the *OLT*, in order to attain a good range of choices to offer while giving accurate and detailed descriptions of synonyms, it allows each synonym to appear in only one synonym group.

The essential point to consider was the needs of the learners for whom the thesaurus was designed. It needed to offer both depth and range. The depth of information — in the form of definitions and guidance on usage — needed to be much greater than is offered in a traditional thesaurus. The range could be less, but could still be maximized by avoiding repetition. It was decided that each word could appear in only one synonym group (or in one synonym group for each of its senses, in the case of polysemous words). Each synonym group was to appear once. (Lea 2008: 546)

It will require user study to assess whether offering a choice of five or six (or any other figure) is most appropriate for users. However, compared to thesauri for native speakers, the average number of synonyms treated in one synonym group is much smaller and easier to handle.

#### 4.4. Definition

This section will first look at the *OLT*'s editorial policy on definitions and then argues its actual practice. Atkins and Rundell (2008: 450) state that a good definition requires two things: "content and form". It is emphasized in the Introduction of the *OLT* that (1) definitions need to be succinct so as to be read and comprehended easily; and (2) they need to differentiate synonyms as clearly as possible (Lea 2008: 547). Lea (*ibid.*) explains how carefully definitions are written in the *OLT*:

These [= definitions] had to be worded very carefully, so that any variation in the wording, however slight, signalled a distinct, if subtle, variation in meaning, which could be supported with evidence from the corpus, illustrated in the example sentences. Any differences that could not be wholly accounted for within the definitions and examples would be treated in tinted notes that clearly contrasted two or three of the words in the entry.

In terms of readability, definitions of the *OLT* may be considered intelligible to its intended users since it can be reasonably assumed that its definitions are basically written using the Oxford 3000, defining vocabulary. As we will discuss shortly later, quite a few of the definitions are found to be the same as in the *OALD7*, which uses the Oxford 3000.

As for content, the *OLT* seems to adopt a policy of providing explanations which clearly differentiate synonyms to be defined. However, most of the definitions of the *OLT* are not newly written for the *OLT*, but are taken from or developed from the *OALD7*. We selected, as our sample, the first three sets of 10 entries from every 100 pages, e.g. **abandon – accompany** (pp. 1–4), **child – claim** (pp. 100–103), and **difficulty – disable** (pp. 200–204), and compared them to the corresponding entries in the *OALD7*. The results of the comparison, albeit on such a small scale, suggest clearly that the *OLT* was compiled based

on the *OALD7*. Our 30-entry sample contains 187 synonyms and 455 examples. As for definitions, 104 out of 187 synonyms have the same definition as the *OALD7*, and 35 synonyms are given definitions only slightly altered from their counterparts in the *OALD7*. That is to say, about 75% of the definitions are practically identical to those in the *OLT*. Even the definitions that are not identical to those in the *OALD7* seem to have been developed from the *OALD7*. In cases where clearer differentiation is necessary between synonyms, definitions seem to be revised. For example, at the entry for *accelerate*, the definitions of *speed* and *hasten* are more precise in describing the range of typical objects than the *OALD7*'s.

*speed*

*OALD7*: (*formal*) to make sth happen more quickly

*OLT*: (*written*) to make sth happen sooner or faster, especially sb/sth's recovery or the development of sth

*hasten*

*OALD7*: (*formal*) to make sth happen sooner or more quickly

*OLT*: (*written*) to make sth happen sooner or faster, especially the death, destruction or end of sb/sth

In other cases, information about selection restriction is added in round brackets. In the entry for *abnormal*, no change has been made to the definitions of *deviant* and *anomalous*, but what sort of nouns are typically modified by the adjectives is specified.

*deviant*

*OALD7*: different from what most people consider to be normal and acceptable

*OLT*: (*disapproving*) (of people or their behaviour) different from what most people consider to be normal and acceptable

*anomalous*

*OALD7*: (*formal*) different from what is normal or expected

*OLT*: (*formal*) (especially of facts or situations) different from what is normal or expected

Deliberate efforts to provide close synonyms with distinctive definitions are observed throughout in the *OLT*. Nevertheless, the *OLT* admits that there are cases where synonym definitions cannot be avoided. In cases where synonyms compared are very often interchangeable and are, therefore, hard to distinguish, a synonym may be simply defined by another synonym and supplemented by a boxed note. For example, *hard* as a synonym of *difficult* is defined merely as “difficult” and followed by a note.

*difficult*: not easy; needing effort or skill to do or understand

*hard*: difficult

**DIFFICULT OR HARD?** **Hard** is slightly less formal than **difficult**. It is used particularly in the structure *hard to believe/say/find/take/come by*, etc., although **difficult** can also be used in any of these examples.

The note explains that these two words are used in almost the same way, though there is a slight stylistic difference between them. (See Section 4.7 more about notes.) Being informed about the fact that two synonyms are virtually interchangeable is as useful as learning about subtle differences between them. What is important is that users need to be informed that synonym definitions in the *OLT* do not result from a lack of due care, but are deliberately given.

#### 4.5. Examples

This section will first explain some policies on exemplification in the *OLT*, and then report some findings about how illustrative examples are actually presented. One cardinal principle the *OLT* applies is that every synonym (and its derivative[s]) are exemplified with *sentence* examples. In our sampling (see Section 3.4), the average number of examples per synonym is 2.1, and an average of 1.6 examples is added to each synonym in the CD-ROM. In terms of examples, too, the main resource is the *OALD7*. Examples are carefully chosen to fulfill the following purposes: (1) “to show the most typical and distinctive usage patterns” (p. vii) and (2) to “reflect the differences indicated in the

definitions” (Lea 2008: 548). Therefore, a synonym illustrated in such an example is not (fully) interchangeable with other synonyms given in the same group (*ibid.*). Take a look at the entry **person** for example. *Person* is the most frequent and general word for “a man, woman or child” and is simply defined as “a man, woman or child; sb who is not identified”. *Human* is, on the other hand, is defined in relation to things that are not persons: “a person rather than an animal, a machine or, in science fiction, a creature from another planet”, and its examples read:

*Dogs can hear much better than humans. | More work is needed on the interface between humans and machines.*

Both these examples clearly illustrate that the word human is used in contrast to animals or machines. It would sound odd to replace *humans* with *persons*. Another synonym, *individual*, is defined as “a person considered separately rather than as a part of group” and is given the following examples:

*The competition is open to both teams and individuals. | The teacher should treat each student **as an individual**. | Each course has to be tailored to **the needs of the individual**. | The school’s reputation is being ruined by the bad behaviour of a few individuals.*

In the examples above, *individual* is contrasted with a team, or a group as a whole. Also, they show common patterns or collocations such as (*treat someone*) *as an individual* and *the needs of the individual*. According to Atkins and Rundell (2008: 458), examples should be “natural and typical”, “informative” and “intelligible”, and the *OLT*’s examples, in general, have these three essential elements for a learner’s dictionary.

However, examples are not especially chosen for the *OLT*. About half of the examples in the *OLT* are exactly or almost the same as those found in the *OALD7*. As for the rest, more than half are developed from phrase examples in the *OALD7*. For example, *preference* in the sense of “a thing that is liked better or best” is illustrated with one phrase example in the *OALD7*: *a study of consumer preferences*, which is changed into a sentence in the *OLT*: *They are undertaking a study of consumer preferences*. In some cases, the *OLT* does not use examples in

the *OALD7* and gives new or adapted ones, often to show more idiomatic or fixed expressions. For example, *admission* at the entry for *access* has nine (four in the paper version and five in the CD-ROM) examples, and three of them, that is (b), (e), (h) below, are the same as the *OALD7*, another three of them, (a), (d), (f), are developed or adapted from the corresponding ones in the *OALD7*, and another three, (c), (g), (i), are new to the *OLT*.

### Examples of *admission* in the *OLT* and in the *OALD7*

---

#### *OLT*

- (a) Last admission 30 minutes before closing time.
- (b) Hospital admission for asthma attacks have doubled.
- (c) Admission is by ticket only.
- (d) The country has applied for admission to the European Union.  
[CD-ROM]
- (e) Hospital admission is not necessary in most cases.
- (f) She works in the college admission office.
- (g) Admission is free and no booking is required.
- (h) They tried to get into the club but were refused admission.
- (i) There is an admission fee of \$10.

#### *OALD7*

Hospital admission is not necessary in most cases. = (e)  
 Hospital admission for asthma attacks have doubled. = (b)  
 countries applying for admission to the European Union ≐ (d)  
 the university **admission policy/office** ≐ (f)  
 Last admissions to the park are at 4 p.m. ≐ (a)  
 They tried to get into the club but were refused admission. ≐ (h)  
 She failed to **gain admission** to the university of her choice.

---

What is common to (c), (g), (i) is that they are all idiomatic expressions used in certain situations. Instead, a verb+noun collocation *gain admission* is not illustrated in any example, which is probably because the

collocation is shown in 'Patterns and collocations'.

Also, the *OLT* provides new examples to synonyms which are not exemplified in the *OALD7* due to their low frequency. For example, *mosque* is not provided examples in the *OALD7*, but is given an example (at the entry **church**): *We were woken by the call to prayer from a nearby mosque*. The same is true of words like *soot* (under **dirty**), *breakfast* (verb) (under **dine**), and *conurbation* (under **city**).

As mentioned above, more examples are given in the CD-ROM. Not all the synonyms are necessarily given extra examples. If you see a plus sign under examples, the same ones you find in the paper version, and click the sign, then extra examples are displayed. In our sampling, the number of extra examples comes close to double of that in the paper version (455 examples in the paper edition, and 303 extra examples in the CD-ROM). The majority of added examples (about 80%) are newly added to the CD-ROM. It is certainly more beneficial for learners to observe more typical usages of a word defined. For example, *come to terms with* at the entry for *accept* is given only one example in the paper version: *She is still coming terms with her son's death*. However, three extra examples give users more ideas about what kind of unpleasant or sad situation may come as objects: *He said he had finally come to terms with his sexuality*; *They are trying to come to terms with the implications of the diagnosis*; and *He's struggling to come to terms with the disappointment of missing the final*. *Sexuality* is one of the common collocates, and possibility of serious illness and shock of defeat are good examples to illustrate how this phrase is used. *Voter* at the entry for *citizen* may be another good example to demonstrate that extra examples try to cover lexical collocations. While the paper edition has only one example with an adjective + noun collocation *eligible voter* in it: *Only 60% of eligible voters actually used their vote.*, the CD-ROM gives six extra examples:

*A clear majority of voters were in favour of the plan.* ◇ *In this election, voters chose candidates who promised economic security.* ◇ *More than two million voters participated in the election.* ◇ **Voter turnout** was very low. ◇ *The opposition alleged voter intimidation by the army.* ◇ *Many traditional Tory voters have said they are disillu-*

*sioned with the party's leadership.*

Every one of them shows a typical pattern or collocation in it: *voters be in favour of*, *voters choose*, *voters participate in*, *voter turnout*, *voter intimidation* and *Tory* (or any political party) *voters*.

However, criteria for extra-exemplification are not clear. While some synonyms with only one or two examples in the paper edition are not always supplemented, some synonyms with quite a few examples are given even more example. In the case of *select* at the entry **choose**, seven examples are given, and nine more examples are added in the CD-ROM. Another example is *route* at the entry **direction**. The CD-ROM gives seven more examples, together with three examples in the paper edition, but this makes it rather difficult to read through them, especially when each example does not start a new line. On the other hand, *youthful* at the entry **childish** has only one example (*She brought a tremendous youthful enthusiasm to the job.*), but is not given any extra examples. Information about common collocates would make it clearer how *youthful* is typically used as the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, fifth edition (2009) gives the following two sets of collocation of *youthful*: *youthful enthusiasm|energy|vigour* and *youthful appearance|looks|complexion*. Considering that general learners' dictionaries give less frequent items fewer examples, a more systematic approach to provide extra examples for less frequent items would be welcome.

It has been shown that the *OLT* examples try to illustrate as many typical patterns of usage as possible. They avoid repeating lexical collocations given in the 'Patterns and collocations' section. However, consistency is lacking in the use of bold type in examples. In the *OALD7*, it is explained that "common phrases" are shown in bold type, and common phrases seem to mean lexical collocations (e.g. *to **have an accident**, a **serious|minor accident***) and fixed expressions (e.g. *an **accessory before|after the fact**, an **accident of birth|fate|history**, Muscular **aches and pains** can be soothed by a relaxing massage.*). In the *OLT*, our examination reveals (1) grammatical collocations and grammatical patterns; and (2) phrasal verbs are shown in boldface.

## (1) grammatical collocations and grammatical patterns

e.g. *favourite* under **choice**OALD7: *This song is a **particular favourite** of mine.*OLT: *This song is a particular **favourite of** mine.*OALD7: *These biscuits are great **favourites** with the children.*OLT: *These **cakes** are great **favourites with** the children.*

Verb patterns and prepositions shown in brackets in the OALD7 are indicated in boldface in the OLT.

e.g. *accept* under **accept**OALD7: *~sth (as sth) They **accept** the risks as part of the job.*OLT: *They **accept** the risks **as** part of the job.*OALD7: *[V **that**] He just refuse to **accept** that his father was no longer there.*OLT: *He just refuse to **accept that** his father was no longer there.*e.g. *opt* under **choose**OALD7: ***opt (for/against sth):** After graduating she **opted** for a career in music.*OLT: *After graduating she **opted for** a career in music.*

## (2) phrasal verbs

e.g. *decide* under **choose***We're still trying to **decide on** a venue.*e.g. *opt* under **choose***Employees may **opt out of** the company's pension plan.*

However, the typographical treatment of lexical collocations is not consistent. In some cases, lexical collocations highlighted in the OALD7 are not marked in any way.

OALD7: *All our hotels have been **carefully selected** for the excellent value they provide.*OLT: *All our hotels have been carefully selected for the excellent value*

*they provide.*

OALD7: *How did the thieves **gain entry** into the building?*

OLT: *How did the thieves gain entry into the building?*

OALD7: *a **car/road/traffic accident**, a **climbing/riding accident***

OLT: *a road/traffic accident, a climbing/riding accident*

OALD7: *I can call back later — it's **no trouble**.*

OLT: *I can call back later — it's no trouble at all.*

In many other cases, lexical collocations are marked in boldface.

OALD7: *There is wheelchair access to most of the facilities.*

OLT: *There is **wheelchair access** to most of the facilities.*

OALD7: *She is the star attraction of the show.*

OLT: *She is the **star attraction** of the show.*

OALD7: *Students must **have access** to good resources.*

OLT: *Students must **have access** to good resources.*

OALD7: *You need a password to **get access** to the computer room.*

OLT: *You need a password to **get access** to the computer room.*

Overuse of boldface will lessen its impact and can make the text hard to read through; however, typographical consistency should be at least achieved.

#### 4.6. Labels

The number of labels in the *OLT* is much larger than that in the *OALD7*. In our sampling, 65 out of 187 synonyms (about 35%) are labeled, and 45 out of 65 labels (about 70%) are newly added to the *OLT*. The list of usage labels given at the back of the dictionary (p. 1006), and various types of labels are given: attitude labels (*approving*, *disapproving*), regional labels (*BrE*, *AmE*), style labels (*literary*), subject labels (*journalism*, *law*, *computing*) etc. What is unique to the list is to have labels like *rather formal* and *rather informal*.

For productive use the usual gradations of *formal*, *informal* and *slang* are not really sufficient. Consider the following sets of words: *pick* – *choice* – *selection*; *bargain on sth* – *expect* – *anticipate*; *all right*

– *safe - unscathed*. These words all appear unmarked in each of the five main advanced learner’s dictionaries\* and indeed, none of these words is really informal or really formal; and yet, across each set there is a fairly clear gradation of register from the less formal to the more formal. In the *OLT* six levels of formality are recognized, including *rather formal* and *rather informal*. (Lea 549)

\* *OALD*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Macmillan English Dictionary*, *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*.

In addition to register labels of six levels: *slang – informal – rather formal – neither formal nor informal – rather formal – formal*, the *OLT* uses *spoken* and *written* labels as “these very often coincide with the informal and the formal, but not always”. (Lea 2008: 549). Some of the words the *OALD7* labels as *formal* are labeled *written* in the *OLT*. (Examples are: *speed*, *hasten*, *quicken* at the entry for *accelerate*.) The *OLT* tries to be more specific about linguistic features of synonyms compared in order to make one synonym distinguishable from another. Frequent use of *especially* as in *especially written* and *especially journalism* is noticeable. Also, combination of more than one or two labels is frequently observed: *tag along* (rather informal, sometimes disapproving), *be of service* (formal, spoken), *do away with sth* (rather informal, especially spoken, often approving). We can regard these as results of the *OLT*’s effort to disambiguate synonyms.

(Sections 1–4.6 by Komuro)

#### 4.7. NOTE and ⓘ (Information) NOTE

We will look at the NOTE and ⓘ NOTE in this section. In the ‘Guide to Thesaurus Entries’ in the inside of the front cover, there is a description that “note compares and contrasts two or three words from the group to help you understand exactly what the differences are” and ⓘ NOTE “gives extra information about one particular word.” According to our count, 580 synonym groups (24.5%) out of 2,371 groups have neither NOTE nor ⓘ NOTE, and 1,791 synonym groups (75.5%) have either a NOTE or ⓘ NOTE. Out of 1,791 synonym groups, 663 groups

have no NOTE, and 509 groups have no ⓘ NOTE. From this calculation, we can say that 619 synonym groups (26%) have at least one NOTE and/or ⓘ NOTE. Generally speaking, it is good to have as many notes as possible, because they will provide the users with valuable information about the differences among the synonyms. It is true that the amount of notes is an important factor, but what is also important is that notes give really useful information for users to understand clearly the differences in meaning and usage between the synonyms. From this viewpoint, we will now examine the NOTE and ⓘ NOTE, respectively.

However, before going on to the examination of both NOTES, there is one point that must be made clear regarding the origins of the NOTE and ⓘ NOTE in the *OLT*. There is a colored zone for SYNONYMS in which synonyms are listed and explained in the *OALD7*. For example, *income* in the *OALD7* has a SYNONYMS. It includes explanations such as **WAGE, PAY OR SALARY?** and **INCOME OR EARNINGS?**. These are used as NOTES in the *OLT*. The first one is somewhat improved with the addition of an example sentence, but the second one is identical. There is also a case in which information given in MORE ABOUT in *OALD7* is used as NOTE in the *OLT* (cf. **meal** in *OALD7* and **dinner** in *OLT*). As to the ⓘ NOTE, the [NOTE] in the SYNONYMS in the *OALD7* is often used as ⓘ NOTE content in the *OLT*. For example, there are three [NOTE]s (one for *insolent*, *impertinent*, and *impolite* respectively) in SYNONYMS including *rude* in the *OALD7*. They are used as ⓘ NOTES in the *OLT*, and two of them are a little altered or improved but one for *impertinent* is identical. There is also a case in which the definition of a word in *OALD7* is used as ⓘ NOTE content in the *OLT*. For example, an ⓘ NOTE given for the synonyms *childish* and *immature* under the headword **childish** in the *OLT* is based on the definition given to **childish** [2]<sup>1)</sup> and **immature** [2] in the *OALD7*.

It is true that a lot of information and explanations given by **A OR B?** comparing more than two synonyms and the [NOTE] in the *OALD7* are reused as the NOTE and ⓘ NOTE in the *OLT*, but it is only fair to stress that they are mostly improved in the *OLT*.

#### 4.7.1. NOTE

First let us look at Table 4 below which lists the number of synonym groups with more than one NOTE.

Table 4 Number of synonym groups with more than one NOTE

	Number of synonym groups with more than one NOTE
One NOTE	930 (39%)
Two NOTES	182 (0.076%)
Three NOTES	12
Four NOTES	1
Five NOTES	0

The headword of the synonym group with four NOTES is **unfortunate** (adj.) [2], which has 9 synonyms (*unfortunate, pity, a shame, pathetic, too bad, sad, sorry, feeble, regrettable*: These words all describe things that are weak, useless or not successful, or that makes you feel disappointed.) The NOTES are **PITY OR SHAME?**, **SAD OR SORRY?**, **PATHETIC OR FEEBLE?**, and **UNFORTUNATE OR REGRETTABLE?**. The headwords with three NOTES are **campaign** (noun) 7, **demolish** 9, **desire** (noun) 10, **direction** 5, **frightening** 11, **high** [3] 6, **injure** 11, **irrational** 8, **national** 6, **purpose** 7, **reduction** 9, and **terrible** [3] 8<sup>2</sup>). Judging from the number of the synonyms in the group, we may say that plural NOTES are provided for headwords with more than 5 synonyms. But this is not always the case, as is expected from the design and purpose of this thesaurus, or from the differences between the editorial policies of the dictionary and the inherent characteristics of language itself. A lot of headwords with multiple synonyms are not given any NOTES or **i** NOTES at all. For example, five headwords (**arrive, button** (noun) [2], **case, eat, shake** (verb) [2]) with 11 synonyms, seven headwords (**bend** (verb), **mark** (noun), **post** (noun), **request** (noun), **shout** (verb), **supply** (noun), **tired** [1]) with 10 synonyms, and seventeen headwords (**ask** [2], **award** (noun), **button** (noun) [1], **class** [4], **cut** (verb) [3], **dare, desert, energy** [2], **fly** [2], **help** (verb) [1], **hold sb/sth up, push** (verb) [1], **ring** (verb), **shape** (noun), **sometimes, take** (verb) [2], **tell**

[2]) with 9 synonyms do not have any NOTES or **i** NOTES. In terms of sheer numbers of headwords, 45 headwords with 8 synonyms, 56 headwords with 7 synonyms, and 93 headwords with 6 synonyms have neither NOTE nor **i** NOTE.

As we have already seen and as is explained in the Guide, two or three words are compared and contrasted in the NOTE in such a way as **ADULT OR MATURE?** (**adult**, adj.) and **BREAK, CRACK OR FRACTURE?** (**break**, verb [1]), for instance. However, more than three synonyms are compared in some headword entries. For example, headwords such as **aggressive** [2], **benefit** (noun) [1], **conclusion, dawn** (noun), **disgrace** (noun) [2], **highway, immediate, limit** (noun) [1], **next, pay** (verb), **personality, professor, safe** (adj.) [1], **sharp** [2], and **threat** each have a NOTE which compares 4 synonyms, and headwords like **court** (noun), **crazy, creative, period, privacy**, and **waste** (noun) each contain a NOTE which compares 5 synonyms, and headwords **confuse** and **lawyer** each have a NOTE which compares as many as 6 synonyms.

The NOTE is usually placed after 'PATTERNS AND COLLOCATIONS' and amongst the synonyms because it is intended to give a comparative explanation to two or three synonyms in the same meaning group. However, **direction** has a NOTE before the synonyms and **fat** (adj.), **fool** (noun), **scene, section**, and **tramp** (noun) have a NOTE before 'PATTERNS AND COLLOCATIONS', and with a different style than the usual *A or B?* style. The headword **go away** also has a NOTE before 'PATTERNS AND COLLOCATIONS', and although it has the usual style **GO AWAY OR LEAVE?**, it compares the words in **leave** and those in **go away** as a whole.

With regard to the formality of NOTE, it must be pointed out that 20 headwords have NOTES beginning with **WHICH WORD?**. These are **bitter** (adj.) [1], **border** (noun), **dictator, film** (noun) [2], **foreign, harsh, honest, jump** (verb) [2], **legend** [2], **man** (noun) [2], **metaphor, partly, provide for sb, quite** [1&2], **recession, revenge** (noun), **sensitive** [3], **slump** (verb), **stop** (verb) [1], and **stubborn**. What is said in **WHICH WORD?** in the NOTE of **border** is the same as

**WHICH WORD?** in the SYNONYMS of *border* in the *OALD7*<sup>3)</sup>. Explanations given in **WHICH WORD?** in the entries **bitter** [1] and **honest** are almost similar to those in the *OALD7*, but no other **WHICH WORD?** except for **quite** in the above-mentioned headwords can be found in the *OALD7*<sup>4)</sup>. From the viewpoint of the uniformity of description, **WHICH WORD?** in **film** [2] can be altered to **FILM, CINEMA OR MOVIES?**, because it explains the usage of the three words. **WHICH WORD?** under the headword **sensitive** [3] explains three synonyms, and that under **dictator, foreign, harsh, jump** (verb) [2], and **legend** [2] explains four synonyms, and that under **man** [2], **recession** and **stubborn** explains five synonyms as a whole. **WHICH WORD?** under **metaphor** explains five words out of six synonyms, that under **stop** (verb) [1] explains eight words out of ten synonyms and that in **honest** explains nine out of twelve respectively. **Partly** and **quite** have different type of **WHICH WORD?** items, comparing the word groups of each other with nearly identical explanations.

Now we will examine the information given in the NOTE of the headwords cited above. First let us see the four NOTES under **unfortunate** [2]:

**NOTE** **PITY OR SHAME?** Both **pity** and **shame** are more more [sic] frequent in spoken than written English, but **shame** is far more frequent in spoken English than **pity**.

**NOTE** **SAD OR SORRY?** In many cases you can use either word: *a sad/sorry affair/business/episode/story/tale/saga/plight/sight*. However, **sorry** is used more often when you feel pity, and **sad** is used more often when you feel disapproval. **Sad**, but NOT **sorry**, is often used with words which refer to a sign that sth exists in a society or system: *truth, reality, fact, comment, example, indictment, reflection and reminder*.

**NOTE** **PATHETIC OR FEEBLE?** **Pathetic** is more informal than **feeble** and can show stronger disapproval or contempt (= lack of respect).

**NOTE** **UNFORTUNATE OR REGRETTABLE?** Both **unfortunate**

and **regrettable** can be used to describe things that happen and collocates include *incident, occurrence, error, consequence* and *tendency*. However, sth that is **regrettable** is usually considered to have been at least partly within sb's control: the use of **regrettable** suggests that sb wishes to accept some blame, or blame sb else. Sth that is **unfortunate** is more often considered to be the result of bad luck.

Judging from the information given in the above-cited NOTE, we can see that NOTE gives information about: which is used more frequently in spoken or written English? Which is more informal or more formal? What are collocates? What's the difference in the use of the words?

Now let us examine the headword **campaign** (noun) which has three NOTES.

**NOTE BATTLE OR STRUGGLE?** In many cases you can use either word, but a **struggle** is always about things that seem absolutely necessary, such as life and death or freedom. A **battle** can also be about things that are not absolutely necessary, just desirable, or about the pleasure of winning: *the battle/struggle between good and evil/man and nature* ◇ *a legal struggle for compensation* ◇ *a struggle of wills/wits*

**NOTE CAMPAIGN OR DRIVE?** A **campaign** is usually aimed at getting other people to do sth; a **drive** may be an attempt by people to get themselves to do sth: *From today, we're going on an economy drive* (= we must spend less). ◇ *an economy campaign*. A **campaign** may be larger, more formal and more organized than a **drive**.

**NOTE WAR, FIGHT OR CRUSADE?** A **war** is about stopping things, like drugs and crime, that everyone agrees are bad. A **fight** can be about achieving justice for yourself. A **crusade** is often about persuading other people to share your beliefs about what is right and wrong.

Comparing the above NOTES with the NOTES under the entry **unfortunate**, we can see a conspicuous difference in the above NOTES: there are examples which are crossed out. The crossed out examples *a*

~~legal struggle for compensation~~ and ~~a struggle of wills/wits~~ are contrasted with two examples given in the explanation of *battle* (i.e. one of the synonyms of *campaign*): *She finally won the legal battle for compensation.*  
 ◇ *Looking after a two-year-old needn't be a constant battle of wills* (= when each side is very determined to win). In this case we need to read previous explanations in order to grasp the different point, but this comparison makes it easier for users to understand the contrastive meaning or usage of the two words. Concerning the example in the second NOTE, a crossed out example is contrasted with the example sentence just before it. Therefore, it is quite easy to recognize and understand the difference in meaning or usage. With regard to the crossed out examples, we also find them in the explanations in **WHICH WORD?** in the SYNONYMS under **border** in the *OALD7*, which proves that the introduction of crossed out examples is not original in the *OLT*. However, without regard to the originality of them, it is undeniable that to cross out examples is a very good way to clearly show the unacceptability of the example sentence or phrase, and the difference in meaning and usage.

In the case of **unfortunate** [2], there are four NOTEs, but each of them compares only two synonyms. In the case of **campaign**, however, two NOTEs compare two synonyms, but one NOTE compares three synonyms. Looking once more at the NOTEs under the 12 headwords which have three NOTEs, each NOTE under 6 headwords (**desire** (noun), **high**, **injure**, **irrational**, **national**, **purpose**) compares 2 synonyms, and 4 headwords (**campaign**, **demolish**, **reduction**, **terrible**) have one NOTE which compares three synonyms and two NOTEs comparing two synonyms, and one headword (**frightening**) has one NOTE comparing 2 synonyms and two NOTEs comparing 3 synonyms. Another headword (**direction**) has three NOTEs and each of them compares 2, 3 and 4 synonyms respectively.

It may be reasonable to expect that a NOTE which compares five or six synonyms should be long, requiring more space or many lines for comparative explanations. To better understand this point, let us cite the NOTE given to the headwords **creative** and **confuse**.

**creative** [NOTE] INNOVATIVE, ORIGINAL, IMAGINATIVE, INGENIOUS OR INVENTIVE? **Innovative** is often used in practical and business contexts and is as much about using new ideas as having them; **original**, **imaginative** and **inventive** are often used in more artistic contexts. *Original/imaginative ideas* are interesting whether they work in practice or not; things that are **ingenious** are clever and must work, or they are not ingenious; however, they may not be as big or important as things that are **innovative** or **original**.

**confuse** [NOTE] CONFUSE, PUZZLE, BEWILDER, BAFFLE, MYSTIFY OR PERPLEX? When sth **confuses** you, it is difficult for you to think clearly and you are not sure what to say or do. With **bewilder** or **perplex** there is a sense of being upset or worried as well as being unable to understand. Something **puzzles** you when you don't know why it has happened or don't know what the answer is. **Baffle** and **mystify** are stronger words than **puzzle**; they suggest that you can't explain or understand sth at all.

We have a general impression that the explanation in the NOTE which covers 4, 5, or 6 synonyms has fewer examples than the NOTE which covers fewer than 4 synonyms. We can estimate as well that the NOTE which covers more 4 synonyms has a longer explanation. Sometimes this is true, but not always. For example, **conclusion** has a NOTE with an explanation as long as 21 lines. **Disgrace** (noun) [2] has a NOTE composed of 19 lines, and the NOTE in **highway** is composed of 18 lines. On the other hand, the NOTE in **dawn** explains four synonyms (i.e. *dawn, sunrise, first light, daybreak*) but it is just composed of 5 lines.

In regard to the space allocated to the NOTE, **man** [2] has the longest explanation in the NOTE beginning with WHICH WORD?; it has 23 lines. The headwords **conclusion**, **become**, and **energy** [1] have 21-line NOTE, **border** (WHICH WORD?), **opposite** (adj.), **stop** (verb) [1] (WHICH WORD?) have 20-line NOTE, **disgrace** [2], **committee**, **propose**, and **be/feel sorry for sb** have 19-line NOTE, **highway**, **tart**, **clean** (verb) [1], **game** [1], **hear**, **permission**, **recession** (WHICH

WORD?), **regard** (verb), and **relate** have 18-line NOTE, and **persuade**, **foreign**, **increase** (noun), and **take care of oneself** have 17-line NOTE. From the above count, we can say that the NOTE beginning with WHICH WORD? has a relatively long NOTE.

Now let us turn to the NOTE written in a few lines. According to our rough count, 57 headwords have three-line NOTE, and 12 headwords have two-line NOTE. Three three-line NOTES and twelve two-line NOTES are cited below because they show the kind of information typically given in the NOTE.

Three-line NOTE:

**bright** [NOTE] VIVID OR VIBRANT? **Vivid** emphasizes how bright a colour is; **vibrant** suggests a more lively and exciting colour or combination of colours.

**speech** [NOTE] SPEECH OR ADDRESS? A **speech** can be given on a public or private occasion: an **address** is always public: *He gave an address at the wedding.*

**swell** (verb) [NOTE] INFLATE OR BLOW STH UP? **Inflate** is more formal than **blow sth up**; it can also be used without an object: *The life-jacket failed to blow up.*

Two-line NOTE:

**burn** (verb) [2] [NOTE] SCORCH OR SINGE? Things are **scorched** by heat or fire. Things can only be **singed** by fire or a flame.

**cold** (adj.) [1] [NOTE] LUKEWARM OR TEPID? There is really no difference in meaning or use between these words.

**cunning** [NOTE] SLY OR SNEAKY? **Sneaky** is a less formal word than **sly** and shows less serious disapproval.

**fine** (adj.) [NOTE] ALL RIGHT OR OK? **OK** is only used in spoken English; **all right** can be written, although it is informal.

**frustration** [NOTE] IRRITATION OR ANNOYANCE? There is almost no difference in the way these two words are used.

**high** [3] [NOTE] HIGH OR TREBLE? **Treble** is a more technical word than **high**, used in singing.

**hoarse** [NOTE] HARSH OR ROUGH? A **harsh** voice is likely to be

higher in tone than a **rough** voice.

**like** (verb) [NOTE] LOVE OR ADORE? **Adore** is more informal than **love**, and expresses a stronger feeling.

**mess** (noun) [1] [NOTE] CLUTTER OR JUMBLE? **Clutter** is a more disapproving term than **jumble**, which is more simply descriptive.

**remove** [2] [NOTE] OVERTHROW OR TOPPLE? **Topple** is slightly more informal than **overthrow**, used especially in journalism.

**report** (noun) [4] [NOTE] SCANDAL OR GOSSIP? **Scandal** is always unkind and is usually more shocking than **gossip**.

**show** (verb) [1] [NOTE] SHOW OR PROVE? **Prove** is often preferred to **show** to give a stronger sense of justice being done.

In the three-line NOTE, there are crossed out examples, which, as we have already stated, help users to understand the difference between two synonyms. In the two-line NOTE, we can see the sort of information which is also given in other longer explanations. In general, these NOTES, regardless of the amount of allocated space, are useful and above all quite interesting to read. In that sense, the *OLT* can be regarded not only as a good thesaurus but also as good reading material for many learners, especially for lovers of the English language.

#### 4.7.2. ⓘ NOTE

In this section, we examine ⓘ NOTES. First let us look at Table 5 below, which lists the number of synonym groups with more than one ⓘ NOTE.

Table 5 Number of synonym groups with more than ⓘ NOTE

	Number of synonym groups with more than one ⓘ NOTE
One ⓘ NOTE	687 (29%)
Two ⓘ NOTES	330 (14%)
Three ⓘ NOTES	139 (0.58%)

Four <b>i</b> NOTES	76
Five <b>i</b> NOTES	34
Six <b>i</b> NOTES	10
Seven <b>i</b> NOTES	2
Eleven <b>i</b> NOTES	1

The headword with 11 **i** NOTES is **top** (adj.), the headwords with 7 **i** NOTES are **scream** (verb) and **serious** [1], and those with 6 **i** NOTES are **cupboard**, **do** [1], **famous**, **fatal**, **hat**, **highway**, **magic**, **popular**, **progress** (noun), and **well** (adj.). Among the headwords with 5 **i** NOTES, items such as **meantime**, which has an entry explaining five synonyms, each having one **i** NOTE.

Just like the number of NOTES, plural **i** NOTES are provided for headwords with multiple synonyms. Let us first cite **i** NOTES given under **top**:

*top* **i** **Top** can be used after a linking verb, but only in British English: (BrE) *He finished top in the exam.* ◇ *They're top of the league.*

*senior* **OPP** **junior** **i** A person in a **junior** position is low in rank or status, or lower than others: *junior employees* ◇ *She is junior to me.*

*chief* **i** **Chief** is mainly used in names of positions.

*leading* **i** **Leading** is often used in publicity for companies that produce products or provide services: *a leading brand|manufacturer|supplier*

*high* **i** In this meaning **high** is used in a fairly limited range of collocations: *high status|rank|position|office*; and in some more particular names of very important people and things: *a high court|magistrate|commissioner|priest*

*first* **i** When **first** means 'most important', typical collocates are *duty*, *importance* and *consideration*. When **first** means 'best in a competition', typical collocates are *prize* and *place*.

*high-ranking* **i** **High-ranking** is often used to talk about posi-

tions in the areas of politics and the military. Typical collocates are (*army/military*) *officer, bureaucrat, official*, and (*party*) *member*.

*premier* ⓘ **Premier** is often used in journalism and advertising to talk about popular and successful events or places, especially in relation the country or place they can be found in: *Scotland's premier resort/hotel/exhibition/tourist attraction*.

*superior* ⓘ In this meaning, **superior** typically collocates with *officer, status, position* and *power*. [OPP] **inferior** ⓘ An **inferior** officer or position is lower in rank or status.

*elite* ⓘ **Elite** is often used in texts relating to the army or education: *elite troops/force/corps*. ◇ *an elite force/corps* ◇ *an elite education/private school*. **Elite** is also often used to describe a group of people who share special knowledge or secrets.

As we can see from the above citation, **top** has 11 synonyms. Every synonym except *foremost* has one ⓘ NOTE, and *superior* has two ⓘ NOTES. Considering that *top* has two NOTES, **PREMIER OR FOREMOST?** and **SENIOR OR SUPERIOR?**, this headword can be regarded as one of the headwords which have much more additional information than those without either NOTE or ⓘ NOTE. We can recognize here several typical expressions used in the ⓘ NOTE, such as "X is (often) used in Y", "X is used to talk about [describe] . . .", and "In this meaning, X typically collocates with . . .". The ⓘ NOTE is often given after [OPP], just like those given in the explanation of *senior* and *superior* above.

In order to see further the kind of information given in ⓘ NOTES, let us cite the ⓘ NOTE in **serious** [1]:

*critical* ⓘ **Critical** is often used with *illness* and *condition* to describe medical situations in which there is a possibility that the patient may not survive. **Critical** is also often used with words relating to time such as *moment, period, phase, point, stage, time* and *years* to talk about a time during which an important situation could end in failure or success.

*grave* ⓘ **Grave** is used with such words as *error, mistake, offence*

and *violation* to talk about things that people do wrong. **Grave** is also used with words like *concern*, *doubt*, *misgivings*, *reservations*, *suspensions* and *worries* to talk about strong feelings that people have when they are worrying about sth. When **grave** is used to talk about situations, it is often used with such words as *consequences*, *danger*, *implications*, *problems*, *risk* and *threat*.

*desperate* ⓘ **Desperate** is used to talk about situations in which people need sth.

*dire* ⓘ **Dire** is not used to talk about medical conditions. In American English it is only used in the phrase *in dire straits*.

*acute* ⓘ An **acute** illness is one that has quickly become severe and dangerous: *He was suffering from acute chest pains*. [OPP]

**chronic** A **chronic** illness or problem is one that lasts for a long time and is difficult to cure or get rid of: *chronic bronchitis|arthritis|asthma* ◇ *the country's chronic unemployment problem*

*bad* ⓘ **Bad** can be used to describe many unpleasant situations, but it is not used to describe danger or an emergency. It is rather informal and used especially in spoken English; in formal or written English it is often better to choose one of the other words in this group.

*life-threatening* ⓘ **Life-threatening** is used to talk about medical conditions, and dangerous situations in which accidents might happen.

In the above ⓘ NOTE, in addition to the style “X is (not) used to describe [talk about] . . .” which we have already recognized in the ⓘ NOTE under *top*, we observe the expression “X is (often) used with words like . . .”. This is almost the same as “X collocates with . . .”, which is often used in other ⓘ NOTES as well. And another expression which is also used in many other ⓘ NOTES is concerned with the usage label, especially between the formal and informal, and spoken and written English. Similar expressions often used in ⓘ NOTES are “In British [American] English . . .”, “In literary English [language] . . .”, and so on<sup>5)</sup>. With regard to other kinds of information given in ⓘ NOTES, the

content varies from fairy tales (**turn** verb [2]) to grammar (**word**) and encyclopedic information (**revolution** [2]) and much more. In other words, as is explained in the 'Introduction', "NOTEs preceded by an **i** symbol, on the other hand, give extra information about one particular word or expression" (p. vii).

With regard to the length of **i** NOTE, there is a variety of **i** NOTEs, from very short ones (*raise* under **increase** noun) to very long ones (*handicap* under **disability**). And it should be noted that there are many **i** NOTEs, like NOTEs, which have a crossed out example as follows:

*loved one* (under **darling**) **i** **Loved one** is the only term in this group that cannot be used as a way of addressing sb: ~~*Are you all right, loved one?*~~

*appetizing* (under **delicious**) **i** **Appetizing** is not usually used with the verb *to be* unless the sentence is negative: ~~*The food wasn't very appetizing*~~ ◇ *The food was very appetizing.*

*drug* (under **drug** [2]) **i** Do not say take drugs if you are talking about legal, medical drugs: ~~*Are you taking any drugs for your headaches?*~~ ◇ *Are you taking anything for your headaches?*

On the whole, there is a large quantity of information about the usage of a particular word in the synonym group. The information is almost always very informative and useful, similar to the one-point lessons in sports that are valuable in improving player's techniques. As a result, reading them, just like reading NOTEs, delights the users and gives them the impression that they have access to a vast stock of useful information about many English vocabularies.

#### 4.8. Synonym Scales

In this section, we will look at the headwords which have synonym scales, and make a survey of these items. The synonym scale, according to the 'Guide to Thesaurus Entries', "shows all the words in the group in order of strength, from the weakest to the strongest." The number of the headwords with synonym scales is, according to our count, 126, but

the number of the synonym scales themselves is 129, because 3 of the 126 headwords, i.e. **beautiful**, **cold** (adj.), and **painful** have plural synonym groups subdivided to reflect the differences in common meanings, and each of these has two different synonym scales. Out of 129 scales, 9 have two levels of meaning strength, 106 scales have three levels and 15 scales have four levels. In the two-level group, seven scales include headwords on the left-hand stage, which is supposed to show relatively weak meaning in the synonym group. And two of them include their headwords on the right, which is the stronger part of the scale in terms of semantic intensity. In the three-level group, 38 scales include headwords on the left hand, weaker-meaning part of the scales, 58 scales include headwords in the middle part, and 10 scales include headwords on the right. In the four-level group, eight headwords are included on the second level, six headwords are on the third level, and one on the fourth level. A list of headwords with synonym scales is given in Appendix.

Let us look at the headword **surprise** (verb). It has a synonym scale which has three words (*surprise, startle, take sb aback*) on the left, and six words (*amaze, stun, astonish, bowl sb over, astound, stagger*) on the right (or a little to the right of the center, to be precise). Just by looking at the scale, we can understand which words have stronger meanings among the synonyms in the group. Similarly, if we look at the headword **frightening**, we see that it has three words (*alarming, daunting, intimidating*) on the left, five words (*frightening, scary, eerie, spooky, creepy*) in the middle, and three words (*terrifying, chilling, hair-raising*) on the right. In this case, the synonym group including *frightening* has stronger meaning than the synonyms in the left-hand group, but weaker meaning than the synonyms in the right-hand group. Finally, let us take a look at the headword **recession**. It has a synonym scale which includes four levels of meaning strength with one word (*slowdown*) on the first level, two words (*slump* and *trough*) in the second level, one word (*recession*) on the third level, and one word (*depression*) on the fourth level. The users can easily and quickly understand that *depression* means a more serious economic situation than *recession*.

It seems fair to say that the synonym scale enables us to grasp very quickly the relative strength of meaning among the synonyms, especially when we consider that it is not always easy to understand the exact difference in meaning among several synonyms. There is no doubt that it is important and useful to grasp the relative difference in meaning strength. However, there is some doubt about the need of synonym scales to words which have only three synonyms in the group, like **frown** and **gap**. On the other hand, we, non-native speakers of English, will surely be helped by the inclusion of synonym scales to headwords like **bully**, **ignore**, **influence** (verb), **long** (verb), **panic** (verb) and so on. Of course, we should recognize that synonyms in the same group have almost the same strength of meaning if they are not provided with synonym scales. On the whole, we would like to put a high value on the synonym scales in the *OLT* and the idea itself to show the difference in the meaning strength by means of a scale. Furthermore, the synonym scales are shown very clearly and very beautifully in the CD-ROM version.

Finally, we may hasten to add that out of 129 headwords with synonym scales, only 28 headwords or synonym scales reuse the information given in SYNONYMS of the *OALD7* in any way<sup>6)</sup>. The information in the **fat** and **quite** [1] entries in the *OLT* can also be found in the VOCABURARY BUILDING for **fat** and WHICH WORD? for **quite** in the *OALD7*. The headword **serious** [1] has a synonym scale but in the *OALD7* there is a SYNONYMS section for words which correspond to the words under **serious** [2] in the *OLT*, and this kind of mismatch can be seen in **disgusting** and **beautiful**. **Disgusting** [1] has no synonym scale in the *OLT*, but there is a SYNONYMS section for *disgusting* with the same meanings, and **disgusting** [2] has a synonym scale without corresponding SYNONYMS in the *OALD7*. A similar mismatch is found between **beautiful** [1] and [2]. The number in the parenthesis added to the asterisked words (in the list given in Appendix) shows the number of synonyms dealt with in the *OLT* and the *OALD7*. The larger numbers mostly put on the left show that more synonyms are dealt with in the *OLT*. When the cited headwords have the same num-

ber, both the *OLT* and the *OALD7* take up the same number of synonyms, but in the case of *plain*, *poor*, and *wet*, the synonyms are partly different, and in the case of *happy*, *mad*, and *recommend* the synonyms are the same in the *OLT* and the *OALD7*. Judging from the amount of information provided or borrowed from the *OALD7*, it can be said that the information used in the synonym scales seems to be based on new data and fresh editorial work.

#### 4.9. Illustrations

There are illustrations in entries for 26 headwords. The caption given to a group of illustrations is different from the headword in three entries (**bake**, **button**, **packet**), the caption of the illustrations is the same as one or two synonyms in the group in four entries (**car**, **diagram**, **pan**, **suitcase**), and the captions of the illustration group are the same as the headwords themselves in the rest of the entries (**award** (noun), **bandage**, **bend**, **chair**, **cough** (verb), **curve** (noun), **darkness**, **envelope**, **fold** (noun), **junction**, **knife**, **label** (noun), **length**, **lid**, **light** (noun), **oven**, **rope**, **sharp**, **wallet**). The captions of the above first group are *ways of cooking*, *fasteners*, and *packaging*, and those of the second group are *vehicles*, *diagrams and charts*, *pots and pans*, and *luggage/baggage*, respectively.

It is unavoidable that illustrations cannot be given to every word in the synonym groups because illustrations are generally limited to words which signify concrete things. For example, the entry *award* has four illustrations, and two of them are for 'medals', and two for 'trophies', in which one illustration is designated as 'cup'. In this group with 9 synonyms (*award*, *prize*, *reward*, *title*, *medal*, *trophy*, *honour*, *cup*, *championship*) only three words just mentioned are illustrated. However, the entries **fold**, **knife**, **length**, **light**, **packet**, **sharp**, **suitcase**, and **wallet** have an illustration for each word in the synonym group. In the case of **fold**, the synonyms (*fold*, *wrinkle*, *line*, *crease*) have three illustrations, but 'wrinkles/lines' share an illustration, and the difference in the two words is explained by ⓘ (NOTE) (A **line** in sb's skin may be thinner or less deep than a **wrinkle**, but in many cases you can use either

word.) in the explanation of *line*. Entries for *envelope*, *knife*, *light*, *sharp*, and *wallet* have more than enough illustrations for the synonyms, i.e., each word in the synonym group has at least one illustration. Headwords *packet* and *suitcase* have fewer illustrations than the number of the synonyms, but each word has an illustration because there is a case in which two words share an illustration. For example, *packet*(BrE) *pack*(AmE); *packet*(BrE) *package*(AmE); *tin/can*(BrE) *can*(AmE); *sachet*(BrE) *packet*(AmE) in entry *packet*, and *suitcase* *case*(BrE); *backpack*(BrE also) *rucksack*; *handbag* *purse*(AmE); *chest/trunk* in entry *suitcase* share an illustration. And it should be noted that those pairs sharing an illustration are given explanation in the NOTE or **i** NOTE. In other headwords with illustrations, some of the words in the synonym groups are not provided with illustrations, and the lack of illustrations is obviously due to the abstract meaning or concept of the words.

The headword *chair* has 9 synonyms (*chair*, *seat*, *couch*, *sofa*, *bench*, *stool*, *armchair*, *pew*, *throne*) and 11 illustrations, in which there are 4 illustrations with the name of *wheelchair*, *high chair*, *deckchair*, and *car seat*. These words are not included in the synonym group in the *OLT*. Why has this sort of disagreement emerge? One possibility can be attributed to the use of the illustrations already used in the *OALD7*. Comparing illustrations given both in the *OLT* and the *OALD7*, we can find that headwords **award** [*medal*], **bake** [R10–11: Cooking], **bandage** [R–18 Health: Accidents and injuries], **bend** [*kneel*; *duck*], **button** [*fastener*], **car** [*bus*; *truck*], **chair** [*chair*], **cough** [R18 Health: Disease and illness], **darkness** [*shade*], **diagram** [*chart*], **envelope** [stationery: stationery and office supplies], **label** [*label*], **length** [*dimension*], **light** [*light*], **oven** [R10–11 Cooking], **packet** [*packaging*], **pan** [pots and pans], **rope** [*cord*], **sharp** [cutlery], **suitcase** [bag] have almost the same or similar illustrations in the entries of the *OALD7*, in which captions of the illustrations are shown in the above square brackets. The illustrations in **knife** are similar to those in *penknife* in the *OALD7*, and the *OALD7* does not contain illustrations similar to those in **curve**, **fold**, and **junction** in the *OLT*.

Nine headwords (*award, bandage, bend, button, cough, curve, lid, rope, wallet*) out of 26 headwords with illustrations do not contain any NOTES or ⓘ NOTES, which seems to show the role the illustrations play in the explanations of the synonyms. But 17 headwords do contain either NOTE or ⓘ NOTE or both, in which case NOTE or ⓘ NOTE gives explanation about the difference in English and American ways of referring to the same thing illustrated. For example, under *suitcase*, there is an illustration of *chest/trunk*, and NOTE (**CHEST OR TRUNK?**) provides an explanation about the difference in the usage of the two words. Under *bake*, there is an illustration of *grill(BrE)/broil(AmE)*, and in the explanation of *broil*, there is an ⓘ NOTE which says "In British English use **grill** for this." Similar ⓘ NOTES can be seen under the headwords *packet, car, pan, junction, light, and oven*.

We cannot deny that illustrations play some role in the explanation of the synonyms, but some users may wonder if illustrations for *bandage, cough, and darkness* are really necessary or fit for that purpose.

Finally, let us look at the illustrations in the CD-ROM edition. When we type in a headword which has illustrations, there appears an illustration, and under which is a mark with a button labeled EXPAND (except for *knife*). If we click on EXPAND, other illustrations pop up. The illustrations in the *OLT* are in black and white, while those in the CD version are mostly in natural color. The *OLT* and the CD-ROM share the same illustrations but some of them are drawn from a different angle for no apparent reason. Furthermore, the number of illustrations for the 26 headwords is the same in the *OLT* and the *OALD7* in every headword except for *junction*. There are two illustrations in the *OLT*, while there are three in the CD, where an illustration of *round-about* is added. As its inclusion in the CD is desirable, it should be included in the *OLT* as well. If a very realistic illustration of a round-about in natural color is included in the CD (and in the *OLT*), it will make illustrations for *junction* much more satisfactory as a whole.

(Sections 4.7–4.9 by Ichikawa)

## 5. Conclusion

Our review of the *OLT* has revealed that the *OLT* makes extensive use of the *OALD7* as a source of information, but that on the whole, the *OLT* can be considered a groundbreaking *learner's* thesaurus and is “big step forward” as Bogaards (2009: 316) says. We have also pointed out some inconsistency or room for improvement, which we hope will be improved in the next edition.

The macrostructure of the *OLT* can be considered generally accessible to Japanese learners of English. The alphabetically arranged headwords and index both spare users a complicated process in finding what they are looking for; however, we cannot deny that it is rather troublesome to look up a polysemous word in the index to reach an entry in the paper edition. The choice of headwords seems to be appropriate for the level of target users. However, some inconsistency is observed in the way of indicating a part of speech of an entry. Also, doubts may be expressed as to necessity of including too many taboo words.

Within each entry, in order to avoid confusing users by providing too many choices but to offer a wider variety of choices at the same time, the *OLT* tries to reduce the number of synonyms treated together to an average of five to six, and to provide an in-depth profile of each synonym. Definitions and examples are mutually supportive and describe semantic features and typical usages of each synonym. While examples in the paper edition seem to have been carefully selected, there is plenty of room for improvement in terms of extra examples in the CD-ROM. Synonyms with fewer examples should have been supplemented, and examples to cover more typical usage patterns should be added rather than examples quite similar to ones already given.

In addition to definitions and examples, the *OLT* makes good use of labels and usage notes. The *OLT* gives more labels in order to be more specific about how words being defined are typically used. As we have stated in 4.7, roughly 76% of the synonym groups have either a NOTE or **i** NOTE, and these notes play a very important role in the explanation both of the difference in the usage of more than two synonyms in the group and of each word in the group, giving the users useful and

sometimes very interesting information about a word or a group of words. It can be said that the information given in both NOTES make a great contribution to the usefulness or importance of the *OLT* as a learners' dictionary (of synonyms).

Also, 'Synonym scales' can be regarded as an innovative method of showing or teaching the strength of meaning among the synonyms. It seems desirable to give an objective gauge of the divisions of semantic strength, and, hopefully, to include more 'synonym scales' in the revised edition if possible.

Lastly, concerning illustrations, these are helpful to some extent in understanding the differences in what some concrete words denote. But a simple doubt emerges regarding whether the illustrations inserted in the *OLT* are really necessary for the explanation of the semantic differences among the synonyms. It may be that they are included merely because it is easy to transfer some illustrations from the *OALD7* or because they are given solely for a feast of the users' eyes.

## NOTES

- 1) The number in square brackets indicates the subdivision number in an entry.
- 2) The number put after the headword, the part of speech in parentheses, and the subdivision number in square brackets shows the number of synonyms compared.
- 3) *Not* in the explanation given in the *OLT* has a bit different lettering from that in the *OALD7*.
- 4) The headword *quite* has an independent **WHICH WORD?**, which is, unlike *bitter*, *border*, and *honest*, not included in SYNONYMS in *OALD7*.
- 5) Further subdivisions are used for some entries. For example, *pew* in the entry **chair**, has an expression like 'In informal spoken British English . . .'
- 6) 28 headwords with synonym scales in the *OLT* are asterisked in the list in Appendix and the two numbers in parentheses show the number of the synonyms dealt with in the *OLT* and the *OALD7* respectively. Concerning the list, two errors must be pointed out: *strict* has eight synonyms but one of them (*rigid*) is left out both in the *OLD* and its CD, and *magnificent* in the *OLT* has 7 synonyms although there are eight synonyms with *splendid* added probably by mistake in the CD's synonym scale.

## APPENDIX

A list of headwords with synonym scales  
two levels

Left	Number of synonyms	Right	number of synonyms
*surprise[v] (9-7)	9 [3:6]	ruin[v]	4 [2:2]
close[a]	8 [5:3]	take advantage of sb/sth[v]	4 [3:1]
delight[v]	7 [2:5]		
*pleasure[n] (7-4)	7 [3:4]		
*plain[a] (6-6)	6 [3:3]		
expose[v]	4 [2:2]		
hungry[a]	3 [1:2]		

three levels

Left	number of synonyms	Middle	number of synonyms	Right	number of synonyms
serious[a]1	11 [3:3:5]	frightening[a]	11 [3:5:3]	hysterical[a]	9 [2:1:6]
praise[v]	10 [4:4:2]	hill[n]	11 [1:5:5]	beautiful[a]2	8 [4:1:3]
tired[a]1	10 [3:4:3]	run[v]1	11 [2:3:6]	ruthless[a]	8 [1:5:2]
*shock[v] (9-7)	9 [5:1:3]	*beautiful[a]1 (10-7)	10 [6:2:2]	concern[n]	7 [1:4:2]
distress[n]	8 [4:2:2]	defeat[v]	10 [3:3:4]	determine[v]	7 [2:2:3]
frequent[a]	8 [3:1:4]	friendship[n]	9 [1:6:2]	magnificent[a]	7 [2:2:3]
high[a]1	8 [3:1:4]	mentally ill[a]	9 [3:4:2]	worry[v]2	6 [1:3:2]
interest[v]	8 [4:1:3]	negative[a]	9 [1:5:3]	delicious[a]	5 [2:1:2]
nice[a]2	8 [4:2:2]	*rude[a] (9-7)	9 [2:6:1]	likely[a]	5 [2:1:2]
upset[a]	8 [4:2:2]	suppress[v]1	9 [2:5:2]	rape[v]	4 [1:1:2]
bad[a]	7 [2:3:2]	*well[a] (9-7)	9 [2:5:2]		
*interesting[a] (7-6)	7 [2:2:3]	annoy[v]	8 [2:5:1]		
lonely[a]	7 [3:3:1]	*cheap[a] (8-6)	8 [4:3:1]		
probably[adv]	7 [2:3:2]	cold[a]2	8 [2:5:1]		
small[a]	7 [4:1:2]	crazy[a]	8 [4:3:1]		
crisis[n]	6 [2:1:3]	*funny[a] (8-7)	8 [2:5:1]		
disgusting[a]2	6 [2:1:3]	*hurt[v]2 (8-6)	8 [3:3:2]		
emotion[n]	6 [3:1:2]	*love[v] (8-7)	8 [2:2:4]		
*exciting[a] (6-5)	6 [4:1:1]	*poor[a]1 (8-8)	8 [1:5:2]		
*fast[a] (6-3)	6 [3:2:1]	remarkable[a]	8 [1:2:5]		

impress[v]	6 [2:2:2]	star[n]1	8 [4:1:3]		
interested[a]	6 [2:2:2]	strict[a]	8 [1:3:3]		
*like[v] (6-5)	6 [4:1:1]	hot[a]	7 [2:2:3]		
painful[a]2	6 [2:2:2]	mean[a]1	7 [3:3:1]		
possibility[n]	6 [3:1:2]	*painful[a]1 (7-5)	7 [1:4:2]		
taste[n]1	6 [4:1:1]	*sure[a] (7-5)	7 [2:2:3]		
unhappy[a]1	6 [4:1:1]	*wet[a]1 (7-7)	7 [2:1:4]		
anger[n]	5 [2:1:2]	admiration[n]	6 [4:1:1]		
odour[ordor][n]	5 [2:1:2]	angry[a]	6 [1:4:1]		
respect[v]	5 [2:2:1]	childhood[n]	6 [1:1:4]		
disappoint[v]	4 [1:2:1]	convincing[a]	6 [4:1:1]		
embarrass[v]	4 [1:2:1]	*frighten[v] (6-5)	6 [1:3:2]		
modern[a]	4 [2:1:1]	*happy[a] (6-6)	6 [1:3:2]		
pressure[n]2	4 [1:2:1]	ironic[a]	6 [2:2:2]		
*recommend[v] (4-4)	4 [2:1:1]	lose your temper[idiom]	6 [1:3:2]		
sad[a]	4 [2:1:1]	love[n]2	6 [1:4:1]		
frown[v]	3 [1:1:1]	*mad[a] (6-6)	6 [1:4:1]		
		ridiculous[a]	6 [3:2:1]		
		rough[a]2	6 [1:3:2]		
		sorry[a]	6 [2:2:2]		
		temper[n]	6 [3:2:1]		
		ugly[a]	6 [2:2:2]		
		violent[a]	6 [1:2:3]		
		dictate to sb[pv]	5 [2:2:1]		
		flush[v]	5 [1:3:1]		
		hatred[n]	5 [2:2:1]		
		pain[n]	5 [1:3:1]		
		rain[v]	5 [1:3:1]		
		show[v]1	5 [1:3:1]		
		smile[v]	5 [2:1:2]		
		immediate[a]	4 [1;2:1]		
		inspire[v]	4 [2:1:1]		
		please[v]	4 [1:2:1]		
		revenge[n]	4 [1:2:1]		
		tight[a]	4 [1:2:1]		

		disapprove[v]	3 [1:1:1]		
		gap[n]	3 [1:1:1]		
		shock[n]1	3 [1:1:1]		

## four levels

1	2	number of synonyms	3	Number of synonyms	4	number of synonyms
	*afraid[a] (10-6)	10[3:5:1:1]	soak[v]	9[3:1:4:1]	*cold[a]1 (7-6)	7[2:1:3:1]
	anger[v]	10[2:3:2:3]	approval[n]	8[1:3:2:2]		
	*fear[n] (9-5)	9[1:2:4:2]	minute[n]	7[2:3:1:1]		
	*glad[a] (8-6)	8[1:4:1:2]	fat[a]	6[2:1:2:1]		
	*hate[v] (8-7)	8[2:2:1:3]	quite[adv.]1	5[1:1:2:1]		
	press[v]2	6[1:1:3:1]	recession[n]	5[1:2:1:1]		
	tear[v]	5[1:1:1:2]				
	radical[a]	4[1:1:1:1]				

## DICTIONARIES

*American Heritage Thesaurus for Learners of English*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2002.

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, seventh edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. [OALD7]

*Oxford Learner's Thesaurus: A Dictionary of Synonyms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. [OLT]

## REFERENCES

- Atkins, Sue, B. T. and Michael Rundell. (2008) *The Oxford Guide to Practical Lexicography*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bogaards, Paul. 2009. Review. *International Journal of Lexicography*, vol. 22, no. 3: 315-320.
- Hartmann, R. R. K. and Gregory James. 1998. *Dictionary of Lexicography*. London and New York: Routledge.
- JACET Kihongo Kaitei Iinkai (ed.) 2003. *JACET List of 8000 Basic Words*. Tokyo: Japan Association of College English Teachers.
- Lea, Diana. 2008. "Making a Thesaurus for Learners of English" in E. Bernal and J. DeCesaris (eds.) Proceedings of the XIII EURALEX International Congress, Barcelona: Institut Universitari de Lingüística Aplicada, Universitat Pompeu Fabra: 543-550.