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## Before Compiling a Primary School Dictionary

### Abstract

The use of a dictionary stimulates the development of lexical competence; therefore, using a dictionary in class is essential. Secondary school dictionaries of Slovene do not yet exist, but there are a few primary school dictionaries, which are, according to our definition and to the education system in Slovenia, dictionaries for children aged 6–10. They are of a modest size and design; moreover, teachers are not familiar with them and do not use them in class. I have analysed existing Slovene primary school dictionaries and some foreign ones to determine the shortcomings that should be kept in mind and avoided when compiling a quality and modern primary school dictionary of the Slovene language. It is important that such a dictionary to be used in class as early as possible, and regularly. At the same time, society must be made aware that a dictionary is useful in all school subjects, not just in learning native and foreign languages.

### 1. Introduction

Using a dictionary in class is essential, because it stimulates the development of the lexical competence (Menyuk & Brisk 2005, as cited in Rozman 2010: 17), which constitutes a part of linguistic competence. The latter is one of the main components of the communicative competence, the development of which is the fundamental goal of Slovene language lessons in school (Bešter Turk 2011). According to the Slovene curriculum (Poznanovič Jezeršek et al. 2011: 49), pupils should learn to use dictionaries, for example the general purpose Slovene monolingual dictionary *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (*Dictionary of Slovene Literary Language*, referred to as the *SSKJ*), in grades 7–9 (for pupils aged 12–14). Secondary school dictionaries<sup>1</sup> of Slovene do not (yet) exist, but

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<sup>1</sup> The term *secondary school dictionary* (Slo.: *šolski slovar*) is used in this paper to refer to dictionaries for children aged 11–14 (grades 7–9, according to the education system in Slovenia).

there are a few primary school dictionaries, that is dictionaries for children aged 6–10. They are of a modest size and design and, as revealed by the studies conducted by Stabej and Rozman (2011) and Čebulj (2013), teachers are not familiar with them and, therefore, do not use them in class. If they use a dictionary, then they use the *SSKJ*,<sup>2</sup> which requires a high level of user competence and skills, and this makes it inappropriate for classroom purposes (Weiss 2001: 180; Stabej et al. 2008: 4; Rozman 2010: 17, 91, 262; Stabej & Rozman 2011: 54). Furthermore, it was published in 1970–1991, and should, therefore, be updated and thoroughly revised.<sup>3</sup> Since there is no appropriate and user-friendly school dictionary of Slovene, it is of paramount importance that a quality Slovene primary school dictionary and a secondary school dictionary be compiled as soon as possible.

This paper focuses on the primary school dictionary. The term *primary school dictionary* (Slo.: *otroški šolski slovar*) is used in this paper to refer to dictionaries for children aged 6–10, that is for primary school children in grades 1–5, according to the education system in Slovenia. Given that terminology is not unified because the authors of dictionaries use various designations in the titles of dictionaries, including *children's*, *first*, *primary*, *beginners'*, *junior*, *school* and, in Slovene, *mali* 'little' and *prvi* 'first', it seems sensible to differentiate between dictionaries for pre-schoolers and dictionaries for primary and secondary school children. Landau (2001: 25) divides children's dictionaries into three tiers: dictionaries for children aged 8–10; for children aged 11–14/15; and for children aged 14–18. Weiss (2001: 179–181) wrote about the need for a school dictionary<sup>4</sup> in Slovene and proposed school dictionaries also in three tiers: for pupils in grades 4 and 5 (9 and 10 years old); for pupils in grades 7–9 (12–14 years old); for upper secondary school students (15–18 years old). Rozman (2010: 260) believes

it would be good to have at least two [school dictionaries in Slovene], one for younger pupils in primary school and another one for older pupils in lower secondary school and for upper secondary school students.

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<sup>2</sup> Even in primary school.

<sup>3</sup> The *SSKJ* is also available online: <<http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/sskj.html>>. *SSKJ* 2, a supplemented and partially revised version was published in October 2014 (<<http://www.sskj2.si/uporabnik/prijava>>), but the access to this version is not free.

<sup>4</sup> When referring to primary school dictionaries and secondary school dictionaries together, the term school dictionary is used as a hypernym.

According to the structure of the Slovene education system, I propose the following designations: children's dictionary (for infants and pre-schoolers), primary school dictionary (for children aged 6–10),<sup>5</sup> and secondary school dictionary (for children aged 11–14).<sup>6</sup> Upper secondary school students (aged 15–18) would be expected to be capable of using a general monolingual dictionary. However, Weiss (2001: 180) thinks that the standard Slovene dictionary (i.e. *SSKJ*) is too complex for them. Moreover, a survey by Stabej et al. (2008) has shown that 75.5% of lower and upper secondary school students do not use the *SSKJ*, although its use at school is part of the curriculum. The authors are convinced that the reasons for non-use of the *SSKJ* are in that it is outdated and complex to use (Stabej et al. 2008: 91). Rozman (2008: 1317) asserts that “the comprehensibility of the defining language and the comprehensibility of the complicated labelling system” in the *SSKJ* are particularly problematic. It is obvious that there cannot be one school dictionary for pupils of different grades/ages.

## 2. Role of a dictionary and its structure

A dictionary contains a great deal of information on words and phrases, the most important being definitions. We usually consult a dictionary to check the meaning of a word and its spelling or to establish whether a word exists at all (Jackson 2002: 23). A dictionary has many different functions, for instance, a symbolic one, a practical one, a documentary one, and it also functions as a source material (Stabej 2009: 118–119; Svensén 2009: 1). In the case of a pedagogical dictionary, its pedagogical function is also important, as dictionary use strengthens linguistic communication and improves language competence.

Most general-purpose monolingual dictionaries are structured as follows. The core part of a dictionary is the A–Z section, which is preceded by front matter and followed by back matter (Hartmann 2001: 59; Atkins & Rundell 2008: 176–177), and sometimes the A–Z text is also interrupted by a centre section, called *middle matter* (Hartmann 2001: 59). All three sections apart

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<sup>5</sup> Age groups may differ according to different education systems in other countries.

<sup>6</sup> All three types of dictionaries can be classified under pedagogical dictionaries. Hartmann (2001: 74) defines the pedagogical dictionary as “a reference work specifically designed for the practical didactic needs of teachers and learners of a language”. Another type of pedagogical dictionary is a dictionary for non-native speakers of a language, that is a learners' dictionary.

from the A–Z word list constitute a dictionary's outside-matter, while the entire structure of a dictionary is called the *megastructure* (Svensén 2009: 76–77). In a primary school dictionary, illustrations are also important. The arrangement of pictorial illustrations in a dictionary is represented by iconostructure (Béjoint 2010: 14). The contents of the front, middle and back matter depend on the nature of the dictionary (Landau 2001: 149) and on the perceived needs of users (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 176).

The most important and practically compulsory component of the front matter is the user's guide (Svensén 2009: 381). A user's guide in a children's or school dictionary must take into consideration that children probably have no prior experience with dictionary use. It must, therefore, be more detailed, yet written in simpler language than that of a dictionary for adults, and will typically contain several examples of entries from the A–Z section, sometimes with questions or exercises (Landau 2001: 150). Unfortunately, none of the existing Slovene primary school dictionaries include a user's guide.

The back matter can contain one or more lists, for example of irregular verbs, numbers, weights and measurements, chemical elements, Roman numerals, etc., and it may also include maps, diagrams and other material depending on the needs of the target user (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 177; Svensén 2009: 77). However, this is not typical of Slovene dictionaries in general. The same applies for the middle matter.<sup>7</sup> In pedagogical dictionaries, mid-matter can also be found in the centre section; it usually provides additional language information (it can contain a short grammar, a section on collocations or a chapter on word formation) or guidance on writing different types of text, such as essays, reports, CVs, letters and e-mails (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 177). This would be too complex for users of a primary school dictionary, but it would be useful in a secondary school dictionary.

The macrostructure represents “the arrangement of the list of entry words” (Béjoint 2010: 11); it is “the order of, and relationships between, the lemmas making up the lemma list” (Svensén 2009: 78). A primary school dictionary should use an alphabetical macrostructure. Children navigate dictionaries and other alphabetically arranged lists with difficulty; however, alphabetical ordering is a normal part of our everyday lives (e.g. contacts on our smartphones – to mention only one of the several gadgets children and teenagers like to use – are ordered alphabetically, pupils are

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<sup>7</sup> Middle matter in English dictionaries (if the dictionary has it) usually contains survey entries and illustrations (which can also be included as back matter) (Svensén 2009: 380).

ordered alphabetically by last name on various school lists, etc.), and children should, therefore, master it as early as possible.

There are two types of macrostructure: the headword list can be either non-homographic or totally homographic (Atkins 1992/1993, as cited in Béjoint 2010: 282). Given that the *SSKJ*, *Slovar novejšega besedja slovenskega jezika* (*Dictionary of New Words of the Slovene Language*, referred to as the *SNB*)<sup>8</sup> and the dictionary part of the *Slovenski pravopis* (*Slovene Orthography*, referred to as the *SP*)<sup>9</sup> have a partially homographic macrostructure, I consider it appropriate for the primary school dictionary of Slovene to have the same arrangement, that is for it to treat homonyms in separate entries if they belong to different parts of speech and if their senses are unrelated. Such a macrostructure seems to be appropriate, because children in Slovene schools learn about polysemous words in the 5th grade. Besides, they will grasp the arrangement by the time they will use the above mentioned general purpose dictionaries.

The dictionary microstructure is the order of information on the entry word provided in one entry, and the relationship between different pieces of information (Svensén 2009: 78). The number of data fields and the way they are organised differs depending on the type of dictionary. However, there is a typical dictionary microstructure with the left-core formal comment and the right-core semantic comment (Hartmann 2001: 59) or with lemma section, formal section, semantic-pragmatic section, and contextual section, to which some dictionaries add a fifth section: etymology (Svensén 2009: 345–348). There is no need to include etymology in a primary school dictionary, since this information is not crucial for children. Furthermore, this part traditionally has not been included in Slovene dictionaries; only the *SNB* includes an etymology section.

A dictionary will typically also use several labels. In primary school dictionaries, labelling should be used sparingly, and any labels used must be clear and easy to grasp. Often labels are not abbreviated but written out in full, and simplified, such as in *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* (*The Primary School Dictionary of the Croatian Language*), where preference for the Croatian word over the borrowed synonym is stated

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<sup>8</sup> The *SNB* is a dictionary supplementing the *SSKJ*. It contains new words and phrases that appeared in Slovene since 1991 and that are not included in the *SSKJ*. They have later been included in the revised *SSKJ* 2. The *SNB* is available for free online: <<http://www.fran.si/>>.

<sup>9</sup> The *SP* contains rules of the Slovene orthography and a related dictionary. The *SP* is available for free online: <<http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/sp2001.html>>.

explicitly by “It is better to say...” (1). In terms of upholding the language norm, this dictionary is also prescriptive in an implicit way: marked lexemes, such as dialect and jargon words, are not included in the word list.

- (1) *avion* – *Avion je letjelica koja služi za prijevoz ljudi i različitih tereta. Bolje je reći ‘zrakoplov’.*  
 ‘plane – A plane is a type of aircraft used to transport people and goods. It is better to say “airplane”.’

In addition to a careful selection of grammatical information on the lemma, the most important sections of a primary school dictionary entry are definitions, examples of use and illustrations. There are several types of dictionary definitions, such as synonym definitions, lexicographic definitions, full-sentence definitions, definitions of function words, encyclopaedic definitions (Svensén 2009: 216–241). The prevalent types of definitions in primary school dictionaries are full-sentence definitions for content words and functional definitions for function words.

Examples of use illustrate and supplement the meaning of the defined word. Apart from this semantic function, they also have a syntagmatic, connotative, encyclopaedic, pragmatic, and documentary function (Svensén 2009: 285–287). Whether examples of use should be fully authentic or edited is an ongoing issue in lexicography. Rundell (1998, as cited in Svensén 2009) proposes a middle way: if a corpus provides natural and typical examples clearly illustrating a particular piece of language use, they should be used; however, the authentic material can always be adjusted to form slightly more “pedagogical” examples. The existing primary school dictionaries of Slovene offer “editorial examples” (Svensén 2009: 283), because they are not corpus-based. However, a modern primary school dictionary will have to be based on a corpus of Slovene, and examples of use should be selected as proposed by Rundell.

A corpus of school essays in the Slovene language already exists, it is called *Šolar* (literally *Pupil*).<sup>10</sup> *Šolar* is a collection of authentic texts written by Slovene children and teenagers in class with marked teachers’ corrections. It consists of 2,703 texts by upper secondary school students aged 15–19 and lower secondary school children aged 12–14 (grades 7–9), with a small percentage of texts written by 6th graders. Therefore, there is a need to compile a corpus of schoolbooks and study materials, literary works for children aged 6–10 (grades 1–5 of primary school according to

<sup>10</sup> It is available on: <<http://www.slovenscina.eu/korpusi/solar>>.

the Slovene education system), and a corpus of their own texts. A corpus of texts for children can be used not only to help choose appropriate child-centred examples, but above all to make a headword list, and also to identify key collocates and phrases that children are exposed to (Wild, Kilgarriff & Tugwell 2013: 190). A corpus of texts written by children will aid in identifying particular features, i.e. spelling errors and overused words (ibid.).

Another important dictionary element is illustrations. Pictures have been proven to improve the learning effect, evoking memories of previous experiences in users and eliciting the “a-ha” reaction (Svensén 2009: 298).

With the advent of electronic dictionaries, the components of dictionary entries have changed. The typical structure of printed dictionaries remains, but new elements can now be added, such as audio pronunciations, videos, dynamic and sound illustrations, a greater number of examples of use, and numerous links to various additional dictionary-internal and dictionary-external content (Svensén 2009: 445). E-dictionaries are growing in popularity, mainly because “they are easy to operate and produce information very quickly” (Landau 2001: 96). The speed and ease of electronic lookup are not, however, necessarily advantageous to the learning process (Nesi 1999, as cited in Hartmann 2001: 86–87); whether fast searching helps us memorise things faster and more easily remains undetermined. Béjoint (2010: 256) believes that the popularity of e-dictionaries, particularly with the young, is due to the increasing interest in new technologies.

### **3. Using a dictionary**

Using a dictionary is a complex process, but this should not be overestimated; every average adult user of a language has the necessary skills (Béjoint 2010: 226). The fact that dictionary users do not know dictionaries very well and cannot make use of all that they offer has been confirmed by my teaching experience. Even though Slovene undergraduate students have finished secondary school, according to the curriculum of which they should have learnt to use language reference books (such as the *SSKJ* and *SP*), many of them do not know how to use the dictionary and cannot find the relevant information in it. Despite the fact that students are probably very computer literate, many are not aware that the *SSKJ* and *SP* are freely available online; therefore, they do not use them, neither in print nor in electronic form.

Two things are required in order to bring dictionaries closer to their users: making them better and easier to use, and training users so that they become more competent (Rundell 1999, as cited in Béjoint 2010). This is best achieved through the education system, by having pupils regularly use dictionaries in class (Svensén 2009: 459; Béjoint 2010: 259–260). It is important to form the habit of using a dictionary early in life (Landau 2001: 26), and this can be achieved with the primary school dictionary.

## 4. Research and analysis

### 4.1 Dictionaries analysed

The research has focused on the primary school dictionary, and for this purpose nine English, one Croatian and four Slovene primary school dictionaries have been analysed. I wanted to examine the characteristics of this type of dictionary and identify potential shortcomings so as to avoid them in designing the primary school dictionary of Slovene. The dictionaries were analysed in such a way, that their characteristics were described and compared. They were analysed and compared using the document analysis method, and their characteristics were described using the descriptive causal-non-experimental method of pedagogical research (Sagadin 1993).

The following dictionaries were analysed and compared: English dictionaries *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary*, *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary*, *Oxford First Dictionary*, *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary*, *Oxford Junior Dictionary*, *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary*, *Oxford Primary Dictionary*, *Oxford School Dictionary*, *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links*, Croatian dictionary *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*, and Slovene dictionaries *Moj mali slovar (My Little Dictionary)*, *Besede nagajivke (Playful Words)*, *Moj prvi slovar (My First Dictionary)*, *Moj slovar (My Dictionary)*. The printed dictionaries included in the analysis were those available at the Maribor University Library and the Ljubljana Faculty of Education Library,<sup>11</sup> and sample pages available online. Also included were English children's e-dictionaries freely available online.

The analysis included examining the dictionaries' megastructure, macrostructure, microstructure, and iconostructure. As I did not have full access to all dictionaries but rather, in case of a few, only to their sample

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<sup>11</sup> This means that all Slovene primary school dictionaries were analysed.



pages, I could not compare all parameters for all of them. Despite this, they were included in the analysis, because some crucial information (especially on the level of microstructure, i.e. about the structure of dictionary entries) could be gained merely on the basis of sample pages. In Table 1, some basic data about the analysed dictionaries are presented, i.e. language, size (number of entries), in what form they appear (printed or electronic version), and who the target user is.

**Table 1.** Some data about analysed dictionaries

Dictionary	Printed (P) / Electronic (E)	Language	Number of entries <sup>12</sup>	Analysed	Target user (age) <sup>13</sup>
<i>Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary</i>	E	English	app. 6,000	whole	8–9 years
<i>Word Explorer Children's Dictionary</i>	E	English	?	whole	9–14 years
<i>Oxford First Dictionary</i>	P	English	3,000	sample page	5–7 years
<i>Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary</i>	P	English	10,000	sample page	7–9 years
<i>Oxford Junior Dictionary</i>	P	English	over 10,000	sample page	7–9 years
<i>Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary</i>	P	English	50,000	sample page	8+ years
<i>Oxford Primary Dictionary</i>	P	English	30,000	sample page	8–10 years
<i>Oxford School Dictionary</i>	P	English	45,000	sample page	10–11 years
<i>Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links</i>	E	English	2,511	whole	7–9 years
<i>Moj mali slovar</i>	P	Slovene	1,021	whole	7–10 years
<i>Besede nagajivke</i>	P	Slovene	774	whole	7–10 years
<i>Moj prvi slovar</i>	P	Slovene	478	whole	7–8 years
<i>Moj slovar</i>	P	Slovene	891	whole	9–10 years
<i>Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika</i>	P	Croatian	2,500	whole	6–8 years

The age group of the intended users is expressed in different ways in the dictionary titles, for example with modifiers, such as *very first*, *first*, *junior*,

<sup>12</sup> “The extent of a dictionary is normally indicated by the number of ‘entries’. Sometimes vaguer terms such as ‘words’ or ‘references’ [and even] ‘words and phrases’ may occur” (Svensén 2009: 25).

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes age group in a dictionary is not defined. Instead grades are mentioned. According to different education systems, the age of target users is approximate.

*children's, primary, school*. The modifier *prvi* 'first' in the case of Slovene and Croatian dictionaries signals that the dictionary is aimed at younger children, as *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* and *Moj prvi slovar*, which are targeted at children aged 6–8, as opposed to the modifiers *moj* 'my' without first in case of *Moj slovar*, which signals that the target audience is children who are a year or two older (9–10). The modifier *mali* 'little' in the title *Moj mali slovar* probably expresses the modest size of the dictionary.

Children's dictionaries contain up to 3,000 entries, primary school dictionaries between 3,000 and 10,000, and secondary school dictionaries between 30,000 and 50,000 entries. The Croatian primary school dictionary includes 2,500 entries, with its Slovene counterparts containing much fewer (478–1,021).

*Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*, *Moj slovar*, *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary* and *Oxford First Dictionary* all have attractive designs. Dictionaries with a user-friendly dictionary page, which is colourful, not cramped, contains enough white space and uses an appropriate font size, include the *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary*, *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary*,<sup>14</sup> *Besede nagajivke*, *Moj prvi slovar*, *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*, and the majority of the analysed Oxford dictionaries. In contrast, *Moj mali slovar* is black-and-white, little thought seems to have been given to design and, therefore, looks dull. The *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links* seems to have an overly crowded and information-laden design, while the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary* website includes numerous disturbing and superfluous ads. *Moj mali slovar* is black-and-white, while the text in *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary* is dense and in flashy colours. Most dictionaries include an alphabet index on the margin, the top of each page contains guide words, and text is distributed into two columns.

## 4.2 Megastructure

The users' guide is exemplary and comprehensible, for example in *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* and in the electronic *Wordsmyth*

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<sup>14</sup> The layout of a dictionary entry in the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary* can be seen on <<http://kids.wordsmyth.net/wild/>>. The layout of a dictionary entry in the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary* can be seen on <<https://kids.wordsmyth.net/we/?ent=bridge>>.

*Illustrated Learner's Dictionary*; however, all of the analysed Slovene dictionaries are missing this section. Dictionaries feature illustrations on virtually every page, and their back matter provides either exercises for various topics, as in *Moj prvi slovar*, or blank pages onto which users can write new words and full dictionary entries themselves, as in *Besede nagajivke*. In the Croatian dictionary, there are also sections with related words, i.e. hypernym and hyponyms.

The reviewed dictionaries feature various fun exercises. E-dictionaries, such as the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary*, include, for instance, glossary makers, quiz makers, puzzle (anagram and crossword) solvers, etc. Printed dictionaries feature exercises in the dictionary itself, as in *Moj prvi slovar*, or in the accompanying workbook, as in *Moj prvi slovar* and *Moj slovar*. Exercises test users' dictionary reference skills, with users asked to look up words according to various semantic relationships or associations, to find the meanings of words, or to create their own glossaries. Oxford dictionaries offer quality work sheets free of charge on their websites. Numerous exercises encourage children to become familiar with their dictionary, to master the alphabetical order of words, to become familiar with definitions, to learn to differentiate between different parts of speech, to recognise words in semantic relationships, such as antonyms or words from the same thematic field, to form words, and so on. *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* comes with a CD-ROM with fun exercises, which help young users learn about words through play. The exercises require children to for example complete words by filling in the missing letters, type the letters appearing on the screen, and "photograph" objects and creatures in response to their names appearing on the screen.

### 4.3 Structure of a dictionary entry

A typical dictionary entry in a primary school dictionary consists of an entry word (with syllabification, which is typical only for English dictionaries), a part of speech label, pronunciations, irregular inflectional forms, a definition and an example of use. In some dictionaries, some of these elements are missing, while in others there are some additional ones. In *Moj mali slovar* and in *Moj slovar*, the entry consists only of an entry word and a definition, while there are also examples of use in *Besede nagajivke* and in *Moj prvi slovar*. In *Little Explorers*, an entry word is followed by a definition that is simultaneously an illustrative example. In the *Oxford First Dictionary*, there are only entry words, inflectional forms

(also regular ones) and definitions, while in the *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary* there are also part of speech labels and examples in some cases. In the *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary* and in the *Oxford Primary Dictionary*, only pronunciations are missing.

In some dictionaries there are additional elements, such as word phrases or collocations, e.g. in *Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*; similar words (with synonyms and antonyms), e.g. in the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary*; etymology, e.g. in the *Word Explorer Children's Dictionary*, *Oxford School Dictionary*; and Spanish translation, e.g. in the *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary*. In the *Oxford Junior Dictionary*, there is sometimes an additional element *word family*, e.g. at the end of the dictionary entry of word *build* there is a word *builder*. The grammar label used in the analysed dictionaries is a part of speech label, and in some dictionaries a label for informal usage, e.g. in the *Oxford Primary Dictionary*, *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary* and *Moj slovar*, or subject labels are used, e.g. *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary* and *Oxford School Dictionary*.

In Table 2 some typical features, especially of dictionary entries, are summarised and some extra features (mainly regarding mega- and macrostructure) are presented. The latter are mentioned according to what it is written in the dictionaries or on the web pages describing dictionaries.

**Table 2.** Some features of analysed dictionaries

Dictionary	Typical features	Extra features
<i>Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary</i>	Structure of a dictionary entry: <sup>15</sup> H (Syll), PS, P, Infl, Def, Ex, T, Ill (along most definitions). One can choose the entry options one would like to see.	Controlled vocabulary of 1,500 words; fun-to-read example sentences; integrated visual environments; activities for promoting literacy.
<i>Word Explorer Children's Dictionary</i>	H (Syll), P, PS, Infl, Def, Ex, related words. Some more sections, e.g. Related words. Ill: at some definitions. Layout of a dictionary entry is more like the one in dictionaries for adults. Interesting features in the menu: e.g. Puzzle Solvers.	Examples written specifically for young learners; language notes; images and animations to stimulate learning.
<i>Oxford First Dictionary</i>	H, Infl, Def.	Fun word jokes; more information on some topics.

<sup>15</sup> H = headword, Syll = syllabification, PS = part of speech, P = pronunciation, Infl = inflections, Def = definition, Ex = example of use, T = translation, Ill = illustration, MWE = multiword expression, WO = word origin.

Dictionary	Typical features	Extra features
<i>Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary</i>	H, PS, Infl, Def, Ex (only in some entries).	Help with grammar, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation; illustrated section.
<i>Oxford Junior Dictionary</i>	H, PS, P (sometimes), Def, Ex (sometimes). Definitions of different types. A separate section in some entries: Word family.	Supplementary spelling tips; grammar panels; word families; pronunciation guides; cross-curricular subject vocabulary.
<i>Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary</i>	H, PS, Infl, Def, Ex, MWE with Def. Definitions of different types.	Pronunciation guides; word origins; labels.
<i>Oxford Primary Dictionary</i>	H, PS, Infl, Def, Ex, MWE with Def. Label <i>informal</i> is used.	Spelling and grammar support; example sentences from children's authors; interesting word histories.
<i>Oxford School Dictionary</i>	H, PS, Infl, Def, Ex (sometimes), WO.	Word families; usage notes; subject labels; supplement on grammar, spelling and usage; formal rules for writing.
<i>Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links</i>	Each headword is used in a sentence illustrating its meaning. Headwords are arranged by alphabet or they are in thematic sections, e.g. Adjectives, House.	Links to hundreds of carefully-chosen child-friendly sites; worksheets.
<i>Moj mali slovar</i>	It is a list of words with mostly synonyms.	Focus is on spelling.
<i>Besede nagajivke</i>	H, Def, Ex. App. one illustration per page.	The main purpose is that children learn the right spelling.
<i>Moj prvi slovar</i>	H, Def, Ex, Ill. A section with short exercises and a section for writing "my words".	19 illustrated thematic sections with short exercises; a separate workbook.
<i>Moj slovar</i>	H, Def, Ill (at some entries). Some instances of labels: informal, derogatory, dialect word. A section to write own words and a section with words, which spelling is difficult for pupils.	19 illustrated thematic sections; a separate workbook.
<i>Prvi školski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika</i>	H, Infl, Def, Ex (not always), MWE with Def (and Ex), Ill (at some entries). Sections presenting word relations.	The aim of the dictionary is to teach pupils how to define words they already know. CD-ROM with audio pronunciation, illustrations, different searching possibilities, and games.

#### 4.4 Shortcomings at the level of macrostructure

The analysis of the selected dictionaries' macrostructure, microstructure and iconostructure also revealed individual shortcomings, which were grouped into several categories. At the level of macrostructure, it was

noticed that in addition to common nouns, the word lists in *Moj mali slovar* and *Moj slovar* include a handful of redundant proper names for which the criteria for inclusion are unclear. Another shortcoming observed in the analysed dictionaries is that entries with homonymous lemmata belonging to different parts of speech are not always ordered according to the same principle. For instance, it is unclear why the *Oxford School Dictionary* gives the verbal entry before the nominal one in the case of *boost* but the nominal entry before the verbal one in the case of *boot*. The reason might be in the frequency or user familiarity. Furthermore, entries are not in the appropriate thematic category. In the *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links*, for instance, the nominal entry (2) is categorised under the category of Adjectives.

- (2) *courage* – A quality in which a person can face danger or pain without showing excessive fear.

#### 4.5 Shortcomings at the level of microstructure

According to the order of microstructure components, it was observed that the order is sometimes unusual, as in the *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner's Dictionary*, which gives the part of speech label before the pronunciation instead of vice versa. Another shortcoming is that irregular forms are not always and consistently listed, as in the *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary*, which gives for example the inflected forms of the adjective *bloodthirsty* (3) but not of *bloody* (4).

- (3) *bloodthirsty* adjective (*bloodthirstier, bloodthirstiest*) – enjoying killing and violence
- (4) *bloody* adjective – 1. bleeding, or covered in blood [...]

At the level of the entry word, it was observed that entry words of the same type are not always treated consistently. In *Moj mali slovar*, all entry words denoting persons are only in the form of the male gender noun (5–6). However, in the case of (7) *Moj mali slovar* gives the female form within the headword denoting a person of male sex (i.e. in Slovene the male form is *najditelj*, the female form is *najditeljica*). There is also an instance of two separate entry words – one denoting a male and the other a female (8).

- (5) *učitelj*  
'teacher (masculine)'

- (6) *vzgojitelj*  
'preschool teacher (masculine)'
- (7) *najditelj-ica*  
'finder'
- (8) *ljubljenček; ljubljenska*  
'pet (person, masculine)'; 'pet (person, feminine)'

Sometimes dictionaries unnecessarily provide two spelling varieties of an entry word (9), although one is prevalent (the one written as one word), as it is in the case of *Moj slovar*.

- (9) *avtocesta / avto cesta*  
'motorway'

*Moj mali slovar* marks unpredictable pronunciations inconsistently. Bold type is used to mark letters representing phonemes that are pronounced differently than they are written, but sometimes incorrectly (10–15).

- (10) *aplavz*  
'applause'
- (11) *učitelj*  
'teacher'
- (12) *uhelj*  
'auricle'
- (13) *vaditelj*  
'coach, trainer, instructor'
- (14) *šilček*  
'pencil sharpener'
- (15) *bezeg*  
'elder tree'

For instance, the word (10) has a bold “z” because it is not pronounced as /z/, which would be expected from the spelling but rather as /s/. The letter “v” should be given in bold for the same reason (it is pronounced as /v̥/ not as /v/), but it is not. The same type of inconsistency is present in the treatment of (11–13), all of which should have a bold “lj” instead of just “j” as in (11) and (12). The schwa (written with e) is also marked inconsistently, for example in (14) versus (15), where the schwa in the

former is correct, while it is not indicated in the latter, where the initial “e” is pronounced /ə/ instead of /e/. The letter “g” in (15) is in bold, because it is pronounced as /k/.

In dictionaries that include pronunciations, they were not always given for all entry words, and the criteria for or against inclusion are not clear (e.g. the *Oxford Junior Dictionary*). In dictionaries with audio pronunciations, these are not always available for all entry words, e.g. in *Wordsmyth Illustrated Learner’s Dictionary*. In the *Oxford Junior Dictionary*, pronunciations are given in regular letters of the alphabet instead of in the phonetic alphabet (16).

(16) *bruise* [brooze]

With respect to definition, it was observed that different types of definitions are used for words that belong to the same part of speech, for example the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* uses a lexicographic definition for *buffet* (17), a synonym definition for *bug* (18), a full-sentence definition for *bubble* (19), etc.

(17) *buffet* – 1. a meal where a lot of different cold foods are put onto a table and you help yourself to the food that you want 2. [...]

(18) *bug* – 1. an insect 2. [...]

(19) *bubble* – Bubbles are small balls of air or gas inside a liquid, for example like the ones you find in fizzy drinks.

The entry word is sometimes redundantly repeated in the beginning of the definition, as in (20) in the *Oxford Illustrated Children’s Dictionary* or in (21) in the *Oxford Primary Dictionary*, although other definitions (22) in the same dictionary are not of this type.

(20) *bloodstream* – the bloodstream is the blood running round your body [...]

(21) *bone* – a bone is one of the hard pieces of a skeleton [...]

(22) *bonfire* – a large fire lit out of doors

Some definitions are difficult to understand because of the abundance of pronouns they use, such as (23) in the *Oxford Illustrated Children’s Dictionary*. Some entry words do not have definitions, with their meanings illustrated by means of examples, such as (24) in *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links*, or (25) in *Moj mali slovar*. In the latter, some entry words are not explained at all, such as (26–28). Finally, some entry words



are defined by means of synonyms, but the synonyms are more difficult to understand than the entry words, such as (29–30) in *Moj mali slovar*.

- (23) *bluff* – *to bluff someone is to make them think that you will do something that you don't intend to do or that you know something that you really don't*
- (24) *fast* – *This girl can run very fast.*
- (25) *dedek* – *dedek Mraz, pri dedku*  
‘grandpa – Grandpa Frost, at grandpa’s’
- (26) *čevljar*  
‘shoemaker’
- (27) *dolgčas*  
‘boredom’
- (28) *bonbon*  
‘candy’
- (29) *avgust* – *veliki srpan*  
‘August – lit. “the big sickle”, i.e. the month of the harvest’
- (30) *arheologija* – *starinoslovje*  
‘archaeology – lit. ‘antique-ology’

With regard to examples, it would be appropriate to accompany all definitions, not only the ones of rare or selected entry words, which is the case in the *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary* and *Oxford Primary Dictionary*, and they should not be entirely missing from a dictionary, as they are in the *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary* and in *Moj slovar*.

The fact that there are examples after each definition is typical of Slovene monolingual general dictionaries (*SSKJ*, *SNB*); therefore, this tradition should be kept in the primary school dictionary. Moreover, examples of use clarify the sense and indicate collocations and grammatical patterns (Wild, Kilgarriff & Tugwell 2013: 215). They should be clearly separated from the definition and always introduced in the same way within one dictionary. In *Moj slovar*, there are no examples, but in some cases they are a part of a definition following the abbreviation *npr.* ‘e.g.’ (31) or following the definition without any explicit or even implicit markers (32) or appearing within brackets (33). An additional problem is the fact that the abbreviation *npr.* is used elsewhere in the above-mentioned dictionary with another function, for example, to introduce synonyms (34). Brackets are

used elsewhere in the dictionary to mark collocates (35), as well as hyponyms (36).

- (31) *akcija – prizadevanje; organizirana dejavnost z določenim ciljem, npr. akcija zbiranja papirja*  
 ‘action – endeavour; organised activity with a specified goal, e.g. (literally) paper collection action’
- (32) *celzij – enota za merjenje temperature, vrelišče vode je pri 100 stopinjah Celzija (100 °C)*  
 ‘Celsius – unit of measurement for temperature, the boiling point of water is 100 degrees Celsius (100 °C)’
- (33) *čvrst – poln življenjske energije, zdravja (kljub starosti je bil čvrst)*  
 ‘sturdy – full of energy, packed with health (he was sturdy in spite of his age)’
- (34) *dvoživka – žival, ki živi v vodi in na kopnem, npr. žaba*  
 ‘amphibian – animal that lives on land and in water, e.g. frog’
- (35) *bezati – drezati v kaj (v nos, v luknjo)*  
 ‘poke – poke something (your nose, a hole)’
- (36) *agrumi – južno sadje kiselkastega okusa (limone, pomaranče)*  
 ‘citrus – southern fruit of a sour taste (lemons, oranges)’

#### 4.6 Labelling

The use of labels was also examined, and it was observed that in some dictionaries there are labels for parts of speech but in others there are none, e.g. in the Slovene primary school dictionaries. Some dictionaries provide plural forms also in cases in which the plural noun is regular and predictable, e.g. *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary* and *Prvi šolski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika* (37).

- (37) *šala, šale*  
 ‘joke, jokes’

#### 4.7 Shortcomings at the level of iconostructure

The analysed dictionaries reveal some shortcomings in iconostructure as well. Illustrations are sometimes included not to supplement definitions and illustrate meaning (i.e. their elementary dictionary function) but to make the dictionary more appealing, such as in *Besede nagajivke*. Sometimes

illustrations are inappropriate, such as in the *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links* where the entry word *swim* is accompanied by an illustration of a diver. The same illustration is sometimes used to support several entry words, but there is no guidance to the reader to aid in differentiating between them. In the *Little Explorers Picture Dictionary with Links*, for instance, the headwords *dash*, *go*, *move* and *run* are all accompanied by the same illustration. Sometimes illustrations appear behind text, where they are not easily visible and where they interfere with the readability of the text, such as the *boomerang* illustration in the *Oxford Junior Illustrated Dictionary*, or it is not clear to which entry word an illustration belongs. An example is the illustration with the identifier label *blossom* in the *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary*<sup>16</sup>, which contains two entries with this headword, both polysemous, and it is not clear to which headword or which sense the illustration refers. A similar instance is the illustration for *kraljica* 'queen' in *Besede nagajivke*.

Certain illustrations contain obtrusive, redundant details, such as those accompanying the entry words *rilec* 'snout, trunk', *ogenj* 'fire' and *cedilo* 'strainer' in *Besede nagajivke*. If the user does not know the meaning of the word *rilec*, the illustration will not help. The image depicts the whole elephant, and *rilec* does not stand out in the illustration; it is not explained, making it unclear to what the illustration refers. Moreover, the illustration portrays an elephant, which is inconsistent with the example of usage in this entry, which mentions a wild boar: *Divja svinja je z rilcem iskala korenine* 'The wild boar was digging for roots with its snout'. The example should instead mention an elephant and its trunk.

Furthermore, certain illustrations depict objects as they used to be in "the olden days" and look nothing like the objects children know today, such as the illustration of an old cash-register under *blagajna* 'cash-register' in *Besede nagajivke*. It seems that the role of illustrations in *Besede nagajivke* is mainly to make the dictionary attractive, and not to help the user understand the meaning of a word.

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<sup>16</sup> This can be seen in the sample page of the mentioned dictionary on the webpage <<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/oxed/dictionaries/dictionary-selectors-2014/childrens.html>>.

## 4.8 Typography and layout

Typography and layout are also very important in a dictionary. Definitions and synonyms are sometimes not clearly separated from each other, as in *Besede nagajivke* for (38). The synonym should be separated from the first part of the definition with a semicolon instead of a comma.

- (38) *astronavt – je človek, ki je usposobljen za polete v vesolje, vesoljec*  
 ‘astronaut – is a person trained to travel into space, spaceman’

In the *Oxford Illustrated Children’s Dictionary*, phrases with the entry word as one of the constituents are given immediately after the definition or example, if there is one, without any demarcation by means of punctuation (e.g. a semicolon) or symbol; the new data field is signalled only by a lighter font colour, such as the phrase *to get the blues* in the entry for *blues*. When reappearing in a full-sentence definition, entry words are not always given in a different typeface from the rest of the sentence, as is typically the case in dictionaries, or they are not consistently marked by means of another colour throughout the dictionary; the former appears in the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* and the latter in the *Word Explorer Children’s Dictionary*. Flashy, unpleasant colours are sometimes used instead of pastel shades, such as the bright yellow margin in the *Oxford Illustrated Children’s Dictionary*. Finally, attention should be paid to the distribution of text; distribution in three columns makes the text too dense and less clear, as in the *Oxford Illustrated Children’s Dictionary*.

## 5. Discussion

School dictionaries are intended for (school) children. The selection of entry words, the definition language, the quantity of information on entry words to be included, the microstructure, the manner of presentation, and the appearance of the dictionary, therefore, differ from those typical of dictionaries for adults. Dictionaries should be adapted to users’ skills, which is why a single school dictionary for all ages and grades is inappropriate. A secondary school dictionary for the Slovene language currently does not exist; instead, teachers use, as stipulated in the curriculum, the *SSKJ*, a general-purpose dictionary for adults, not adjusted to the reference skills of the school-going population. The existing Slovene primary school dictionaries – *Moj mali slovar*, *Besede nagajivke*, *Moj prvi*

*slovar*, *Moj slovar* – are too small in size. Quite the contrary is true of English pedagogical dictionaries: they are numerous and diverse, and range from large-format picture book dictionaries aimed at children just beginning to read, to school dictionaries that begin to resemble adult dictionaries (Jackson 2002: 83).

School dictionaries are designed for the needs of school-goers:

Their wordlists are based on what is found in schoolbooks, and their microstructural information is what [children and] teenagers need for their schoolwork (Béjoint 2010: 47).

The basis for every contemporary dictionary is a corpus; therefore, the wordlist of a primary school dictionary should be based on a corpus of textbooks and study materials, literary works for children aged 6–10, and on a corpus of their own texts. For Slovene, such corpora will have to be built. Another crucial decision is to compile an e-dictionary, not a printed one. According to the development of technology and children's use of electronic devices, it seems to be the only possibility. One important advantage of an e-dictionary is the possibility for a user to select only parts of information he or she would like to see and compilation for users of different age groups. Finally, it is vital that the compilers be lexicographers, not only language teachers, as it was in the case of existing Slovene primary school dictionaries.

The characteristics of primary school dictionaries can be summarised as follows: the wordlist and language used in the dictionary should be adjusted to the target users' cognitive capacities.<sup>17</sup> This means that definitions should be phrased using simpler vocabulary and that certain senses of polysemous lexemes should be left out. Furthermore, the quantity of included information should be limited, e.g. etymology is usually not included. Colours and quality illustrations should be used, including photographs, drawings and diagrams appearing in the text to clarify the meanings of headwords. Whether or not to include an illustration and what should it be like must be a matter of thorough consideration.

What the dictionary looks like is also important: usually they are of a larger format with carefully selected typography. A dictionary should be attractive rather than dull, which means that clutter, information overload, too many links, and obtrusive and redundant ads should be avoided. A dictionary page should be user-friendly, colourful, not cramped, with

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<sup>17</sup> This can be said for all types of dictionaries.

sufficient white space and an appropriate font size, instead of black-and-white, with high text density or in flashy colours.

A primary school dictionary should include front matter with a simple yet precise users' guide and example entries, which should be exemplary and clear. An important element of primary school dictionaries is the didactic component; therefore, the dictionary should come with enjoyable exercises. These should be of high quality, such as the Oxford worksheets, as opposed to the rather pedestrian exercises in the Croatian primary school dictionary. Faced with unpleasant reference books or interfaces, the user will not do the exercises even if the assignments and word games are beneficial. According to the children's habits, their use of electronic devices, current trends in lexicography and education, in which the presence of digital medium is increasing, it would be appropriate to design an electronic/online primary school dictionary. In this case, the exercises and games could be a part of a dictionary itself and reachable by clicking on words or they could be all in one place on a separate webpage.

The dictionary microstructure should be visually clear, systematic and consistently applied. Individual components should stand apart visually and typographically. It is advisable that each definition be placed in a separate paragraph, and that examples (which should accompany all definitions) be separated from definitions by means of a different typeface or colour. If an entry word has several senses and thus several definitions, these should be enumerated. The senses of a polysemous word belonging to the same part of speech should be clearly separated from the senses belonging to another part of speech. The definitions of related concepts should be structured similarly.

Dictionaries intended for children aged 6–10 should feature audio pronunciations, because children cannot yet read the phonetic alphabet, and pronunciations given in regular letters (such as for *bruise* [brooze] in the *Oxford Junior Dictionary*) may cause them to learn the misspelled version of a word. In an e-dictionary, there is no problem of presenting audio pronunciations and no need to present them in a written form.

Considering that as a language reference book a school dictionary indirectly forms the user's orthographic competence, a primary school dictionary of Slovene should be designed without orthographic errors and inappropriate use of punctuation. The *Oxford Illustrated Children's Dictionary*, for instance, has definitions end in a full stop even though they do not begin with a capital letter. It is also inappropriate for a primary school dictionary to provide two spelling variants of a word in an entry,

such as *avtocesta* and *avto cesta* ‘motorway’ in *Moj slovar*. This seems to be superfluous and confusing for the young user. It is more appropriate for the dictionary to only give one variant that is the preferable one according to the *SP* or, if they are completely synonymous, the more frequent one.

## 6. Conclusion

Despite having analysed a relatively small number of primary school dictionaries, the results have shown that they share typical characteristics. Certain shortcomings were also discovered, which should be avoided in designing an appropriately-sized and modern primary school dictionary of Slovene. It is obvious that the compilation of a dictionary is a demanding task that requires a certain amount of flexibility. The principles set in advance of such a project are sometimes deviated from, which probably leads to occasional inconsistencies.

A modern primary school dictionary should be based on a well-established children’s corpus and designed as an e-dictionary. I am aware of the fact that this cannot be done by a single person. Recently, I made an inquiry among teachers in the grades 1–6 of primary school and among pupils in the 3rd and 6th grades to learn something about their needs and habits of using a dictionary. I believe that those results will also help in preparing a theoretical concept of a Slovene primary school dictionary.

It is important for such a dictionary to be used in class as early as possible, and regularly. At the same time, society must be made aware that a dictionary is useful in all school subjects, not just in learning native and foreign languages.

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