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Nationality idioms across monolingual dictionaries for learners of English

Abstract. This paper deals with practical aspects of nationality idioms in dictionaries from the viewpoint of English language learners as dictionary users. Based on old stereotypical ideas and considered biased or even inappropriate in present-day communication, differences in images of foreigners across languages fixed in nationality idioms may appear intriguing and attractive to L2 learners, but lack of reliable and accessible information may also lead to confusion and inaccurate assumptions about their use. After a short outline of the treatment of cultural information in dictionaries, I will compare the inclusion and treatment of selected English idioms with *Dutch* and *French* in free-access monolingual learner's dictionaries with printed editions of idiom dictionaries aimed at learners and compiled by the corresponding publishers.

Key words: *idioms, national stereotypes, learner's dictionaries, idiom dictionaries, learners of English*

1. Introduction

Derogatory expressions with references to foreign national or ethnic groups are easily found across languages. As BurrIDGE (2002: 211) puts it, "Linguistic taunts of this kind are an international pastime". Even if nowadays such expressions are rather infrequent and no longer carry the negative load, they are certainly worth looking at in reference to educational materials for learners of English. The cultural underpinnings of such expressions can further exploit the cultural or intercultural component of foreign language learning by discovering motivating links and analysing different language registers and taboos. The Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001) and its revised and updated version (Council

of Europe 2018) underline the knowledge of taboos and shared values as part of sociolinguistic knowledge required at more advanced levels of language learning. Differences in images of particular national or ethnic groups across languages encourage comparisons and curious discoveries of the cultural influences fixed in language. Unlike native speakers, language learners will need to rely on information in dictionaries and teaching materials to know the contexts and situations in which such expressions can be used in present-day communication. For non-native users, with their knowledge of the world and their cultural connotations about particular nationalities, there is no knowing their pragmatic properties may not coincide with similar expressions in their native language. Monolingual dictionaries, even if created with language learners in mind, cannot fully predict and address their users' L1 influences, parallels or asymmetries (Moon 2016: 124). On the other hand, dictionaries are often repositories of old or even forgotten words or phrases which reflect old values and attitudes and which users may need to understand texts from the past (Burrige 2002: 164). Therefore, precise, reliable and easily interpretable diasystematic information (information on register and restrictions of use) is vital in order to satisfy users' language queries and to show current usage and its limitations to prevent inaccurate or excessive use. Furthermore, given the amount of information which learners can freely access on the internet, the information in materials compiled by established institutional publishers is particularly relevant today as users still find it difficult to discriminate between quality, reputable resources from user-generated data of questionable quality and reliability (Lew and de Schryver 2014).

Building upon my previous study of the treatment of nationality idioms in major monolingual learner's dictionaries (MLDs) of English (Woźniak forthcoming), the present paper examines five items of nationality idioms with *Dutch* and *French* (*excuse/pardon my French*, *(take) French leave*, *double Dutch*, *go Dutch/Dutch treat*, and *Dutch courage*) regarding their inclusion and treatment in free-access online version of MLDs as compared to print idiom dictionaries for English language learners offered by the same publishing houses. It is expected that idiom dictionaries will provide a more detailed treatment of the idioms in question and will compensate for the deficiencies identified in learner's dictionaries. Before taking a closer look at the selected examples of linguistic xenophobia, it is necessary to outline the cultural load of idioms based on old stereotypes, the position of MLDs and idiom dictionaries within the spectrum of available lexicographic resources and the treatment of cultural and pragmatic information in dictionaries.

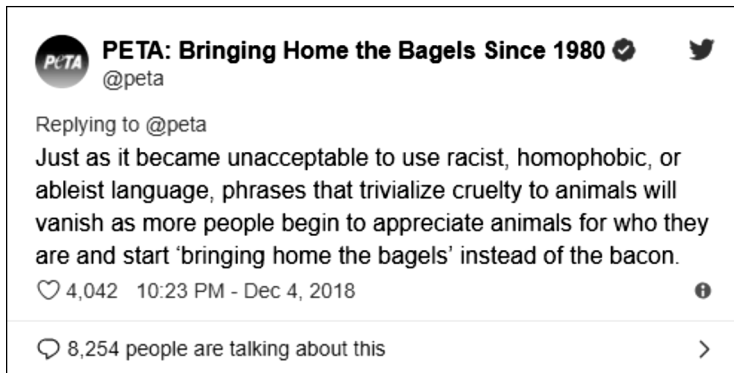
2. Culture, old stereotypes and dictionaries

The line between users' linguistic and cognitive needs is becoming increasingly blurred and dictionaries are also supposed to supply important information about the culture in question. As an integral part of language, culture is also part of dictionaries, even if cultural orientation is not their primary focus. Łozowski (2018) shows how dictionaries are cultural products which manifest human experiences and record speakers' cultural heritage, meanings and overtones like sexism or prejudice. In this way, dictionaries give us not only information about words but also about the speakers and their mentality (2018: 174). Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005) distinguish stereotypes as a special type of motivation of figurative phrases which can be traced back to specific ideas shared by the speakers in a given period of time, albeit generally not valid today. Such expressions were often coined to show negative attitudes between groups in conflict, so it comes as no surprise that the images of foreigners fixed in the English language mostly showed the Dutch and the French. Idiomatic phrases with *Dutch* and *French* were primarily based on old stereotypical ideas and prejudices triggered by the spirit of rivalry and hostility. As commercial and military rivals of the English in the 17th century, the Dutch became the object of numerous anti-Dutch expressions showing the contempt and negative feelings. *The Facts on File Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins* (Hendrickson 2008) lists over 60 phrases with *Dutch* and underlines that the list is still inexhaustive. References to the French, on the other hand, were mainly related to sexual life and social habits, whereas nowadays they are also used in cuisine to suggest sophistication and high quality (Allan and Burridge 2006). However, the link between language and culture is complex and not direct (Deignan 2003, Piirainen 2008). In the same line, the relationship between phraseology and stereotypes is not unidirectional and such national or ethnic references may prove difficult to be directly associated with the history, customs or traditions of a culture in question. Dobrovolskij (2000) draws attention to the problem of determining if a given word or phraseological unit actually reflects a given culture or was borrowed from another language and by extension, a foreign culture. From the perspective of Serbian expressions, Pejović and Travić (2018) note that the issue of stereotypes in phraseological units also poses the question whether phraseology reflects stereotypes shared by the speakers or, on the contrary, it is phraseological units and images fixed in them that create stereotypes.

Mature native speakers should have little problems with idiomatic expressions as they tend to focus on the holistic meaning rather than on the un-

derlying ideas (Ruhl 1989). Culturally loaded idioms may no longer reflect their current beliefs and attitudes and speakers may even dismiss ideas embedded in language as unacceptable today, as in *to kill two birds with one stone* (Moon 2015). This and other phrases with animal constituents have been recently marked as examples of 'anti-animal' language by PETA, the activist group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. In their tweets, the activists suggested 'animal-friendly' alternatives such as *to feed two birds with one scone*, *to bring home the bagels* instead of *to bring home the bacon*, or *to take the flower by the thorns* instead of *to take the bull by the horns*.

Image 1. PETA post copied 9th December 2018



Source: The Internet.

The posts were widely commented upon, though the reaction of the online community concentrated on mocking the suggested anti-animal phrases and inventing new ones like *curiosity thrilled the cat* instead of *curiosity killed the cat*. Some criticism was also raised against relating phrases with animals to discrimination and prejudice towards different groups of people (Wang 2018).

The comprehension, retention and production of idiomatic expressions are one of the most difficult areas for second language learners. In the case of phraseological units with national constituents, learners will automatically recognise national references, albeit they do not always refer to the country of origin. For instance, according to Morris and Morris (1977/1998: 231), *French* in *French-fried potatoes* refers to a method of preparing food which consists in cutting vegetables or meat into strips before cooking. In nationality idioms, the additional difficulty lies in apparently easy to identify references which may have different connotative meanings whereas the cultural overtone of such items may not be predicted without sufficient encyclopaedic knowledge

or information on its origin (Boers 2001, Boers 2003, Boers et al. 2004, Boers and Demecheleer 2001). Influenced by their own language and culture, English language learners may be attracted by this type of language curiosities which, in turn, may even result in what Richards (1996) calls “idiomatosis”. This term refers to blind and excessive use of idiomatic expressions which he partially attributes to commercial materials for idiom learning such as idiom dictionaries which often record low-frequency items and fail to provide reliable usage information. One of the functions of a dictionary for language learners is to prevent such overuse by providing potential users with a realistic picture of a given idiom in present-day communication.

Belonging to pedagogical lexicography and enjoying a long tradition and prestige, famous British monolingual learner’s dictionaries are aimed specifically at non-native speaking learners of English and have developed in parallel with the growth of English language learners around the world (Jackson 2002). First published as paper books, they have gradually transitioned to the digital medium in response to technological advances and users’ changing preferences. Given the intense competition of internet-based resources available free of charge, dictionaries for learners also offer free-access online versions. Apart from their lexicographic content, internet-based MLDs also contain word games, grammar sections, graphics, multimedia, blogs, etc. in order to attract the intended users’ attention and further assist them in their learning processes. Learner’s dictionaries are under constant developments and innovations (Miller 2018), and yet their shift from paper-based to electronic has mainly focused on enhancing search methods and particular dictionaries are becoming increasingly similar and losing their individual character of the past (Yamada 2015). MLDs target English language learners and aim to teach them not only linguistic (including pragmatic) but also cultural or encyclopaedic aspects of language. Limited to the space of paper books, dictionary compilers had to make important decisions concerning the inclusion of particular lexical items with a view to maximising the space available, but as Rundell (2015: 311) notes, dictionaries still maintain traditional criteria of inclusion based on ‘exclusion criteria’ as a point of departure. He suggests that modern internet-based dictionaries should rather follow the inclusion criteria with appropriate and comprehensive information about a given item.

Although phraseology has always been one of the key concerns of pedagogically-oriented dictionaries (Rundell 1998: 317), comprehensive all-purpose tools, learner-oriented general MLDs are not able to adequately address all possible reference needs of their potential users. These will have to refer to special-purpose dictionaries which supposedly offer more

detailed and precise information concerning particular areas of language they are curious about. Idiom dictionaries have made considerable progress in their treatment of idioms to offer information language learners need, such as register or language variety, in order to use them appropriately (Liu 2008: 113–114). Addressing this need, the website of the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* draws on both its learner's dictionary and its idiom dictionary, so users do not need to consult a separate print volume (Miller 2018: 362). However, we cannot ignore the fact that nowadays users have access to countless resources not necessarily compiled by professional lexicographers. Moon (2015) compares the material provided on non-lexicographical websites and web-based establishment MLDs and finds that, despite corpus-based lexicography, the treatment of idioms is still deficient and neglects their actual usage. On the other hand, conversations and comments written by users on non-lexicographical webpages clearly indicate their engagement with idioms and interest in their meanings and metaphorical content. Users would expect more detailed information on how to use idioms and other properties which cannot be found in general dictionaries.

3. Usage labels in dictionaries

Although dictionary users primarily focus on the meaning and often ignore stylistic labels, accurate and consistent labelling indicating register and usage is particularly vital for learner's dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries (Yong and Peng 2007). Landau (2001) distinguishes the following categories of pragmatic information in dictionaries: currency/temporality, frequency of use, geographic variations, specialized terminology (field labels), restricted/taboo usage, insult, slang, style or register/functional variety, standard/nonstandard/illiterate (status labels). As indicated by Nuccorini (1993), learner's dictionaries deal with pragmatic factors both explicitly, by means of notes, charts or stylistic and register labels, and implicitly in definitions and examples provided. However, as Dobrovól'skij (2000: 76) notes, dictionaries may focus their labels more on the origin of a given phraseological unit rather than its current usage, its peculiarities or restrictions of use. Dictionaries usually link labels and offer them together, but Baranov and Dobrovól'skij (2007) underline that stylistic and discursive labels are not interchangeable and recording them separately can help learners understand the difference between the contexts in which particular idioms can be used. Stylistic categories such as *rude*, *vulgar* or *taboo* rest on language users and

their decisions to use a given idiom according to social norms. As for discursive categories, in turn, the choice is based on the frequency of particular items in discourse types used by given socio-professional groups, for example, *literary*, *journalistic*, *jargon*, *low-lettered* or *folkloric*.

MLDs are expected to give detailed information on grammar and usage, but etymological information should also be considered, especially given the lack of space restrictions in the electronic medium. Heuberger (2018: 310) notes that OALD Online is the only learner's dictionary online to offer etymological information in 'Word Origin' boxes which can be displayed by the users. He argues that "at least a basic treatment of etymologies ought to be considered for MLDs. Clearly, it should not be a lengthy paragraph [...] but rather some facts on historical linguistic forms including origin" with an option for the user to open or not. I would argue that such information would be particularly useful for nationality idioms to better understand their origin and usage throughout the years and, by extension, the target culture and its speakers.

Although a growing number of users is turning to digital resources and the future of lexicography belongs to the digital format, Vrbinc and Vrbinc (2015) demonstrate that, contrary to print dictionaries, many MLDs online are deficient as regards information on diasystematic labelling or other metalexigraphic information. In their comparison of information provided by labels in different formats of the 'Big Five' (i.e. MLDs published by five British publishing houses), Vrbinc and Vrbinc (2015) indicate deficiencies in the use of labels provided and show that even different formats of the same dictionary (i.e. print, CD-ROMS/DVD-ROMS, and online versions) use different lists of labels. Additionally, intended users are very likely to experience difficulties distinguishing between the labels as their meanings might be difficult to infer. The authors underscore that all labels used in a given dictionary should be listed and clearly explained whereas explanations need to be short, to the point and consistently used. They note that online versions normally use the same labels as their printed editions but they rarely explain the labels used or other features of the dictionary. All this, next to lack of training in digital lexicography, brings confusion even further as many labels are not self-explanatory and should be clearly explained and even subtle difference should be easy to interpret by the intended users. Additionally, Vrbinc and Vrbinc (2015) underscore that the label *figurative* combines the stylistic level with meaning extensions regarding secondary senses, or conventional metaphors, of a given lexical item. They maintain that this label should be treated separately as it indicates a meaning extension rather than usage information.

4. Dictionaries consulted

The focus of the present study is the comparison of the treatment of selected nationality idioms in free-access internet versions of four major monolingual learner's dictionaries and the latest editions of idiom dictionaries for learners offered by the same four publishers (see Table 1). For Longman, two idiom dictionaries are available, the general and the American version, so both have been consulted. The abbreviations given after the titles in the table will be used throughout the paper to refer to particular dictionaries. As for the treatment, I mainly analyse diasystematic information provided in the form of labels which give information on the connotative value of the examined items and which are particularly relevant for non-native speakers.

Table 1. Dictionaries, last consulted in August 2018

Dictionary	Monolingual learner's dictionary (free access online)	Idiom dictionary for learners of English (printed version)
Oxford	<i>Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary</i> (OALD)	<i>Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English</i> (OIDLE)
Cambridge	<i>Cambridge Learner's Dictionary</i> (CLD) in <i>Cambridge Dictionary</i> (CD)	<i>Cambridge Idioms Dictionary</i> (CID)
Longman	<i>Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online</i> (LDOCE)	<i>Longman Idioms Dictionary</i> (LID), <i>Longman American Idioms Dictionary</i> (LAID)
Collins	<i>COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary</i> (CAED) in <i>Collins English Dictionary</i> (CED)	<i>Collins COBUILD Idioms Dictionary</i> (CCID)

Source: own research.

What regards MLDs online, OALD and LDOCE can be consulted as separate dictionaries on official websites, whereas CLD and CAED are incorporated into clusters of several dictionaries offered by their respective publishers and available together on the same website, *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* and *Collins Dictionary* respectively. In the CLD dictionary, the user needs to select the Learner's Dictionary as the source to be consulted, whereas the results in the CAED dictionary are displayed together with the results from other dictionaries included on the dictionary website and divided by means of easily selectable tags at the top.

Idiom dictionaries are special purpose dictionaries and are supposed to assist language learners in their learning and use of idioms and address their needs not satisfied by general dictionaries. The idiom dictionaries offered by the same publishers and examined in this paper are printed versions which record between 4,000 (LAID) and over 10,000 idioms (CCID). All the idiom dictionaries except for those published by Longman include amusing cartoons as additional comprehension help. The idiom dictionaries start with a guide explaining how to use the dictionary, find particular idioms and interpret the entries and labels used. As for regional variations considered, dictionaries for language learners still concentrate on British and American English with very scarce attention to other English-speaking regions around the world (Miller 2018). In the sample of idiom dictionaries examined, only OIDL and CCID offer label *Australian*. The latter dictionary describes itself as follows: "With over a thousand new idioms, this major new edition is packed with information on what idioms really mean and how to use them. Many of the new idioms come from varieties of English spoken all over the world, from Britain to the USA, from South Africa to Australia". The organization of all these idiom dictionaries is based on keywords listed in alphabetical order. The keywords in OIDL and CID are important words, nouns, verbs or adjectives, whereas LID and LAID chiefly record the idioms under the first noun. For this reason, some of the idioms discussed in this paper may not be easy to find for an untrained user. For example, at *French* LID records *pardon my French* (p. 129), but *(take) French leave* is recorded at *leave* (p. 205).

The idiom dictionaries examined underline that they aim to supply the information about the contexts and situations in which given idioms are used. The OIDL dictionary offers notes on the origin for some of its idioms and as far as our sample is concerned, a note for *(take) French leave* explains that it comes from the 18th century custom of leaving a party without saying goodbye to the hosts. Some of the idioms in the CCID dictionary are accompanied by additional notes on their history which are signalled by the vertical line beside them. For the idioms studied, only *Dutch courage* has an explanation and refers to the reputation of the Dutch in the past for drinking a lot of alcohol. No other idiom from the sample is offered a similar explanation although the Dutch were also attributed stinginess and other negative qualities. Given the cultural and historical underpinnings of the idioms discussed in this paper, it might be surprising that so little information about our sample is provided.

In the CID dictionary, some of the idioms are recorded in blue boxes as a way of signalling that they are common and useful to learn. As ex-

pected, none of our idioms is recorded in this way. The CCID dictionary uses frequency stars to highlight the most frequent idioms and thus guide learners and teachers. The *Guide* to using the Longman dictionaries explains that idioms with only one example are not used frequently. This is a useful piece of information though certainly easy to overlook when referring to the dictionary quickly and without a thorough reading of the guide. A label or a short note about the infrequent usage could be more effective.

The CCID dictionary includes exercises with idioms divided by themes like *Happiness* or *Money* as well as different types of vocabulary such as idioms with animals or colours, similes and proverbs with *Answer key* in the middle of the book. The *Topic index* section at the end of the book lists all idioms with example sentences under 18 topics. From our sample, *Dutch courage* is recorded under *Frustration and Fear* (p. 514) and *go Dutch* under *Money* (p. 522). Other idiom dictionaries also include sections with idioms grouped by their topic or constituents. The OID dictionary contains *Study Pages* in the middle of the dictionary with explanations on the nature and origin of idioms and practical exercises containing idioms from the dictionary and the key at the end. One of the sections is titled *Naming Names* and offers practice exercises with idioms with national or local references. CID contains *Topic Pages* with lists of idioms under 15 topics like *Agreeing and disagreeing*, *Anger* or *Money* and subsections for each topic with example sentences followed by practice exercises. For example, under *Money*, idioms are recorded in sentences under the following subsections (p. 485): *earning money*, *having a lot of money*, *not having much money*, *costing a lot of money*, *costing a little*. Nonetheless, none of the idioms described in this paper is included. The LID and LAID dictionaries contain *Idiom Activator* pages showing idioms in meaning groups, like *Problem*, *Start*, or *Difficult*.

5. Nationality idioms in dictionaries

The following subsections will show the treatment of the selected idioms in the dictionaries consulted.

5.1. *Excuse/pardon my French*

Excuse/pardon my French means 'I'm sorry for swearing' and might sound familiar to young users as it could be seen on T-shirts a few seasons ago. This

phrase is recorded in all dictionaries examined and features a great variety of labels used, which makes it quite problematic to decide when it can be appropriate.

Table 2. The idiom *Excuse me/pardon my French* in selected dictionaries of English

	Oxford		Cambridge		Longman		Collins	
	OALD online	OIDLE	CLD/CD online	CID	LDOCE online	LID	CAED/CED online	CCID
<i>Excuse/pardon my French</i>	informal	informal, humorous	Old-fashioned humorous	British humorous	spoken	spoken	no label (user suggestion pending investigation since 2013)	informal
						LAI		
						spoken		

Source: own research.

The dictionaries chiefly focus on the informal, humorous or spoken use of this phraseological unit. The definition offered by OID (p. 139) is more detailed than the one in OALD and indicates that the phrase is used after or before swearing, so the listener may expect bad language and examples show these two uses in sentences. Only CLD labels it as old-fashioned, which brings the question of what this label actually means. As Miller (2018) asks: "Does 'old-fashioned' mean that the word is no longer used, or that it is used by older speakers?" The dictionary explains that it means that the idiom is still used but sounds old-fashioned, which does not seem really helpful. The entry *pardon* includes the idiom *Pardon my French!* (no variant with the verb *excuse*) which is labelled as British and humorous, though not old-fashioned as in CLD. The definition is slightly longer, and a different example is provided. The entry *French* (p. 153) only records *French leave* and *French letter*, which makes finding *Pardon my French* difficult for a less experienced user. The definitions in the two versions of Longman idiom dictionaries are very similar, though slightly modified.

Another interesting example found in CED is related to the increasing trend to invite users to contribute to the dictionary content. In this dictionary, this phrase is recorded as a user's suggestion, but an untrained dictionary user may easily fail to notice this detail. Although one of the advantages of the digital format is the possibility to update the dictionary content quickly and easily, this user's suggestion has been displayed with the status Pending Investigation for five years (sic!). Displaying the user's suggestion may also lead to an assumption that the phrase is new and therefore not yet recorded in the official part of the dictionary (Woźniak forthcoming).

5.2. (*take*) *French leave*

The expression (*take*) *French leave* means ‘to leave work without asking for permission’. Although recorded only by some of the dictionaries, they show a greater level of agreement as for the labels used.

Table 3. The idiom (*take*) *French leave* in selected dictionaries of English

	Oxford		Cambridge		Longman		Collins	
	OALD online	OIDLE	CLD/CD online	CID	LDOCE online	LID	CAED/CED online	CCID
<i>(take)</i> <i>French</i> <i>leave</i>	British English	BrE, old-fashioned or humorous + info on the origin	no record	old-fashioned, humorous	no record	BrE, old-fashioned	no label	no record
						LAI		
						no record		

Source: own research.

The OIDL dictionary additionally offers a note on the origin which seems to be beneficial to understanding the idiom and its cultural background: ‘This idiom is said to refer to the eighteenth-century French custom of leaving a dinner or party without saying goodbye to the host or hostess.’ The CED dictionary does not offer register labels but it gives information about the origin and frequency accompanied by a line graph representing the usage throughout the years.

5.3. *Double Dutch*

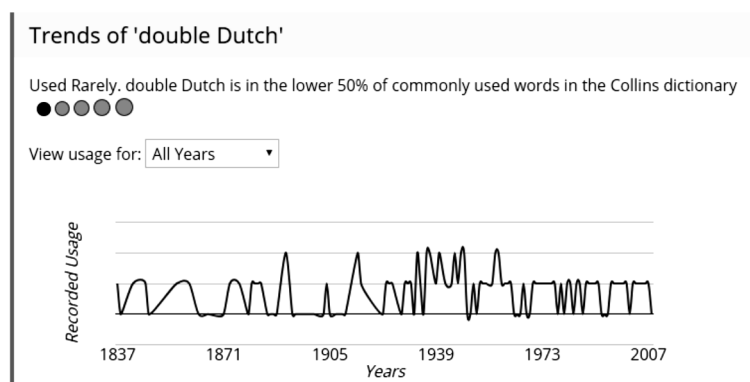
The expression *Double Dutch* can have two meanings and almost all learner’s dictionaries, apart from OALD, record both of them. The first meaning, which is relevant here, is ‘incomprehensible language’, whereas the other one is more American and refers to ‘a game with two skipping ropes’.

As for Oxford dictionaries, the definition in OALD specifies that the language which does not make sense can be both spoken or written, whereas OIDL does not specify it. Almost all dictionaries label it as British, but the CID dictionary also labels this phrase as Australian. The Collins dictionary displays records from CED for both meanings, but the accompanying graph of usage trends does not specify which of the two meanings are displayed, probably both.

Table 4. The idiom *double Dutch* in selected dictionaries of English

	Oxford		Cambridge		Longman		Collins	
	OALD online	OIDLE	CLD/CD online	CID	LDOCE online	LID	CAED/CED online	CCID
<i>double Dutch</i>	British English, informal	British English, informal	UK informal	British and Australian	British English informal	Spoken	British informal	no record
						LAIID		
						no record		

Source: own research.

Image 2. *double Dutch* in CED online

Source: The Internet.

5.4. *Go Dutch / Dutch treat*

Go Dutch means 'to share the cost of something', whereas 'an occasion when you share the cost of something' can be referred to as a *Dutch treat*. Both variants are based on the old reputation of the Dutch as thrifty.

The word origin section in OALD refers to the primary meaning of the word *Dutch* with no reference to the idiom recorded at the bottom or the secondary meaning of *Dutch* in numerous English expressions. The definition of the idiom *go Dutch*, recorded as *go Dutch (with somebody)*, does not specify what kind of costs can be shared, whereas other dictionaries indicate restaurants and meals as the main areas in which this practice can take place. As for Cambridge dictionaries, *Dutch treat* is not recorded in CLD/CD online, yet it is in CID, and is even accompanied by an illustrative cartoon

Table 5. The idiom *go Dutch* in selected dictionaries of English

	Oxford		Cambridge		Longman		Collins	
	OALD online	OIDLE	CLD/CD online	CID	LDOCE online	LID	CAED/CED online	CCID
<i>go Dutch</i>	no label	informal	informal	no label	no label	no label	informal	British, old-fashioned
						LAID		
						no label		
<i>Dutch treat</i>	no record	no record	no record	no label, illustrative cartoon	American English	no record	informal	recorded as a variant of 'go Dutch', not clear if the same labels apply
						no record		

Source: own research.

to reinforce comprehension and learning. LID and LAID offer *go Dutch* without any labels. CID offers *Dutch treat* as a variation of *go Dutch* but does not offer any labels and it is not clear if the same usage labels apply as in *go Dutch*.

5.5. *Dutch courage*

Dutch courage is 'the feeling of confidence after drinking alcohol'. Dictionaries offer a range of labels except for Longman dictionaries which do not offer any labels. Entries in LID and LAID are practically the same apart from an American variant *liquid courage* in the latter dictionary. Whereas CAED labels it as informal, CCID labels it as mainly British. The entry ends with a brief note explaining that the phrase can be traced back to the fame of the Dutch as heavy drinkers. Giving more details about the context in which the phrase was coined together with other negative qualities associated with the Dutch could be helpful for the users.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to ascertain the nature of the information provided for nationality idioms in learner-oriented monolingual dictionaries of English. It could be argued that idioms with national references are very few and far between and that nowadays native speakers do not use them

Table 6. The idiom *Dutch courage* in selected dictionaries of English

	Oxford		Cambridge		Longman		Collins	
	OALD online	OIDLE	CLD/CD online	CID	LDOCE online	LID	CAED/CED online	CCID
<i>Dutch courage</i>	British English, informal	British English, informal	UK; US liquid courage	humorous	No label	no label LID no label	informal	mainly BRITISH + a note at the end: 'In the past, the Dutch had a reputation for drinking a lot of alcohol'.

Source: own research.

very often, but lack of sufficiently clear and easily accessible information to answer users' queries about this type of idioms may lead to puzzlement and inaccurate assumptions about their properties. The cultural load and connotations involved in meaning extensions of nationality constituents make them difficult for language learners with other linguo-cultural backgrounds who need precise information to infer meanings and use them appropriately. The findings show that despite their focus on idioms and their learning, idiom dictionaries offer insufficient treatment as regards nationality idioms. In general, similar deficiencies have been identified in idiom dictionaries as in learner's dictionaries and both types of dictionaries may lead users astray (Woźniak forthcoming). In the light of the digital age and the high number of easily available resources of different quality, it seems even more vital for publishers to offer clear and comprehensive data to compete with less professional or unreliable initiatives which learners have at their disposal.

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Modismos con nacionalidades en diccionarios monolingües para estudiantes de inglés

Resumen

Este artículo trata sobre los aspectos prácticos de modismos con referencias a las nacionalidades desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes de inglés como usuarios de diccionarios. Aunque los modismos con componentes nacionales o étnicos como *Dutch courage* o *excuse/pardon my French* pueden no ser numerosos ni frecuentes en el inglés contemporáneo, su dimensión cultural se basa usualmente en circunstancias históricas, rivalidades y estereotipos que hoy en día pueden convertirse en un tema polémico tanto para los estudiantes extranjeros como para hablantes nativos. Sin embargo, como las referencias a extranjeros en lenguaje figurado se encuentran fácilmente en todos los idiomas, unidades fraseológicas de este tipo pueden resultar atractivas para los estudiantes, ya que fomentan las comparaciones y los descubrimientos sobre similitudes o diferencias en las imágenes de extranjeros en L1 y L2, además de contribuir a la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes. No obstante, la falta de información fiable y accesible en los materiales de aprendizaje y las fuentes de referencia también puede generar confusión y suposiciones inexactas sobre su uso. Después de una breve presentación del tratamiento de la información cultural en los diccionarios, el artículo compara la inclusión y el tratamiento de modismos seleccionados, con componentes *Dutch* y *French*, en diccionarios monolingües para estudiantes de acceso gratuito en internet con ediciones impresas de diccionarios de modismos dirigidos a los estudiantes y publicados por las mismas editoriales. Aunque los diccionarios de modismos se suelen consultar en busca de información más detallada que no se encuentra en los diccionarios generales para estudiantes de idiomas, los resultados sobre la información pragmática proporcionada indican que la cantidad y el carácter de la información para este grupo específico de modismos también puede dejar a los usuarios en la confusión o la ambigüedad.