Online specialised dictionaries: a critical survey

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Abstract

Online specialised free dictionaries offer assistance to everybody in need of information on the Web. More refined search tools are needed however in order to get as quickly as possible to the best terminological resource. At present Internet surfers can rely upon some lexicographical inventories and metasearch engines to acquire the information needed more easily. However, none of these resources offer evaluations of the collected vocabularies, or advice for a more efficient search. We present a critical inventory of 505 Web dictionaries, offering a broad overview of their main features. The analysis has been carried out using an evaluation form managed by a relational database (also published online) that assigns ratings and can also be used for analytical searches. The various fields of the form, and an adequate rating system allow us to define the specific parameters for three users' profiles (layman, semi-expert, expert) and four kinds of situations (cognitive, communicative, translation, learning) which are used for a qualitative analysis of dictionaries backed up by quantitative assessments.

Keywords: free online dictionaries; specialised lexicography; rating systems; lexicographical function theory

1. Free Dictionaries on the Web, an aid in terminology

Free specialised dictionaries have sprouted up everywhere on the Web, confirming the primacy of the Internet as a reference tool among the information media. These resources provide users with an extraordinary amount of data and no means to achieve the better information available in a reasonable searching time and effort. As Tarp (2010: 41) points out: "the risk of being suffocated by the overwhelming amount of data and suffering what could be called *information death* is omnipresent when browsing the Internet".

The great number of free dictionaries seems to be linked to the Web marketing strategies, which count dictionaries among the more reliable features to attract clients nowadays, since analysts (Lannoy, 2010) assure that browsing through dictionary pages warrants longer and in-depth visits of the host site.

Furthermore, the lemmatisation in alphabetic order is a fitting device to present contents on the Internet (Campoy Cubillo, 2002), and the 'Dictionary' appears to be the perfect text genera for the quick exchange of brief and thorough information in the digital space. In many cases 'dictionary' or, more often, the word 'glossary' labels summary pages of the industrial process relative to the products sold or advertised through the site[1].

Apart from their commercial implications, specialised dictionaries that users can access for free on the Web are useful sources for everybody needing readily available information. They can also be valuable orienteering tools at different levels of specialisation, depending on the kind of user in search of data, the specific needs that the dictionary should satisfy, and the context in which those needs are required.

These three factors constitute the basic parameters accounted for by the *functional lexicographic approach*, which is a prolific field of lexicographic research, proved to be useful both for dictionary writing and for their critical analysis (see, among others, Fuertes-Olivera, 2010; Nielsen & Mourier, 2007). This same frame of reference will be used here to evaluate the specialised free dictionaries available online, using a suitable judging form managed through a relational database, named *Web Linguistic Resources* [2], which is also published on-line to offer an effective guide to the Internet surfers in need of help with specialist terminology. The next pages will be devoted to the illustration of this inventory project of Internet dictionaries, which serves the 'democratic' aim of improving the potential reference function of the World Wide Web, since the reviewed vocabularies can all be accessed free of charge.

2. Guides and tools for surfers lost in definitions

The Web already offers valuable orienteering tools for quick and easy access to lexical resources. Metalexicographical sites present lists of vocabularies arranged by field[3] while metasearch engines display definitions taken from different glossaries[4] or, in other

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[1] See the 'glossaire' of *Bojo Novo*, which is devoted to the illustration of the general maceration process of Beaujolaise wines ("Généralités sur la Macération Beaujolaise") in comparison with that used by the owners of the site ("Processus de vinification à la Cave Beaujolaise de Saint Vérand"). Both processes are described in paragraphs headed by titles which are not set in alphabetical order.

[2] The database is accessible at: www.weblinguisticresources.org, and also at: http://www.cila.unior.it/index.php/it/risorse-linguistiche.

[3] See for example *metadictionary dot com*, *Glossarist*, or the "Speciality and Language Dictionaries" page of *YOURDICTIONARY*.

[4] *MetaGlossary*.

cases, find links to the pages of various dictionaries containing the definitions required. The latter search option, available through *OneLook*, scans the most credited lexicons on the Web for 'major fields' such as business and law, while other domains, for example oenology, are not as well supplied and users can access a more limited number of definitions, which can be read on separate pages, since the browser shows only links, not contents.

Definitions from different dictionaries are instead displayed on a single page at *MetaGlossary*, which is suitable for quick comparisons but has a less valuable assortment of source dictionaries. However both browsers do not supply users with comprehensive information, if we take into account that the clearest definition attainable for a particularly counterintuitive term such as 'extra dry' (or 'extra-dry'), used in oenology for champagne classification, says: "A term used on Champagne labels to indicate not-quite-dry; not as dry as Brut" [5]. The matter would be more comprehensible if the definition initially clarified that champagne is classified according to a sweetness-level scale, where extra dry means 'more than dry', even though the champagne in question tastes sweet, since the scale is thus made: brut zero[6], extra brut, brut, extra dry ('extra sec' in French), dry ('sec'), medium dry ('demi-sec'), and sweet ('doux'). Only a whole explanation would made it clear that 'extra', in 'extra-dry', refers to a lower degree of sweetness in comparison to that found in dry champagnes. This information is nevertheless available in some dictionaries not listed by the metaresources quoted above, two of which [7] figure among the highest rated oenological dictionaries of the *Web Linguistic Resources* database.

The dictionary collection is designed to be extensive and evaluative at the same time. To this end an appraisal form, managed through a relational database, assigns ratings on the basis of each given field. The form also functions as a search device, since every evaluation field is also given as a search criteria. In this way the database users can look not only generically for medical dictionaries, but more specifically for those reporting, for examples, etymological notes too, such as the following:

> «Anoxia: 1. Strictly speaking, the absence of oxygen. 2. The near absence of oxygen. 3. Sometimes used loosely as a synonym for hypoxia. From an- (without) + -ox- (oxygen) + -ia == the state of being without oxygen»[8].

Started as a collection of rated vocabularies, which were initially judged by simply adding grades as the features of the lexicons increased (Caruso & Pellegrino, in press), the project has been improved for a more accurate analysis of the collected material in relation to its utility for Internet surfers, and therefore adopting the standpoint of the *lexicographical function theory* (particularly Tarp, 2008). Within this framework, dictionaries are «social and cultural products made by human beings in order to satisfy certain needs» (Tarp, 2009: 22), therefore lexicography is concerned with situations in which a dictionary is expected to be used and with the variables that make it better suited to its predictable functions. In fact, the lexicographical analysis is not concerned with direct inquiries of real vocabulary use, since lexicographers are already provided with the basic types of needs a dictionary is expected to satisfy. These are called "lexicographically relevant users situations" and represent the more general needs that dictionaries must satisfy.

For lexicographers a 'situation' is nevertheless something different from what a pragmaticists could have in mind, as they are generic circumstances under which a user needs to: a) increase or acquire new knowledge (therefore called a *cognitive* situation); b) manage communicative issues (a *communicative* situation); c) acquire a skill and know how to do something (the *operative* situation); or d) *interpret* symbols (the *interpretative* situation). Though the order of the different situations listed here reflects that used by Tarp (2009: 25) himself, it is clear that the four situations satisfy two basic functions, such as to provide encyclopedic knowledge and to fulfil linguistic needs, both of which can be seen from an active or passive point of view. Knowledge is achieved in *cognitive* situations, while it is transformed into action or skills in an *operative* environment; whereas language requires a symbolic interpretation before active production can be realized in communication. For a qualitative evaluation of Internet specialized free dictionaries in relation to their potential users, here we have concentrated on the two basic situations[9].

Since the World Wide Web is such an immense universe, used for all kinds of aims by all kinds of people, it is impossible to account for detailed users profiles and situations. It is more reasonable to adopt general categories and scan the free lexicographical material in order to offer valuable resources to everybody accessing the Web.

3. From ratings to users needs

The inventory of specialised dictionaries on the Web collects 505 resources and is realised through a judging form addressing both the dictionary macro- and

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[5] *Sally's Place - A Wine Taster's Glossary.*

[6] The full scale is reported in the *D'Aprì Srl - Piccolo Dizionario dello Spumante e del Vino*, where many synonyms are given for brut zero: «brut integral, brut natur, brut nature, brut non dose, brut sauvage, brut zero, non dosage, pas dose, dosage zero, pas operé, nature».

[7] *WebFinance Inc. - Wine Define*, and *D'Aprì Srl - Piccolo Dizionario dello Spumante e del Vino*. Dictionary names are always preceded by the name of the host site.

[8] *MedicineNet.com - MedTerms medical dictionary*, entry: "Anoxia".

[9] Tarp (2008) himself outlined initially only two situations (the *cognitive* and the *communicative*) which were more recently doubled (Tarp, 2009: 25-26).

microstructure, which serves the purpose of collecting data analytically, but also of assigning scores, since fields are associated with grades. Grades assignment and the whole collection of data are managed through a relational database. Many features listed in the form can be evaluated as always present (the judging criteria is assigned a 'yes' answer and receives 5 points), not present ('no', assigns no grades), sometimes present ('sometimes' answer, 3 points). As we will see in the brief inventory that follows, the main characteristic of online dictionaries is their unsystematic nature, as they lack strict lexicographical organisation. It isn't surprising than that the majority of them have a title containing the word 'glossary' – instead of 'dictionary'. Their analysis is thus an exercise in careful reading and patient evaluation of lexical data hidden in the definitions.

In the evaluation form, the dictionary macrostructure is addressed by the *General Organisation*[10] field – whether it is arranged by alphabetical listings of the words, or by concepts or both; the *Number of Entries* (1-50, 50-100, more than 100); the *Access Structure* – whether by browsing or through a simple search engine or a smart one; the kind of *Word List* – if it has a one-word or a multi-word entry list; and the *Kind of Dictionary*. For this parameter the choice is among a *Multilingual Word List*, where only translational equivalences are given, a *Monolingual* dictionary or a *Multilingual* one. Besides these, a special Internet typology has been added, the *Plurilingual*, a dictionary comprised of many languages, whose glosses are written in the tongue of the entries, while cross-references between these languages is completely missing (see below, § 4).

If plurilingual dictionaries are in no way *Bidirectional* (another field of the evaluation form), this feature should characterise the multilingual ones. However less than a half (20) of the 41 bilingual dictionaries collected are equally accessible in both the languages involved. Moreover *Translation Equivalences* can also be found in monolingual dictionaries explaining specialist foreign words whose meaning could be obscure. See for example 'terroir' in two English dictionaries. While the first gives a translation, the second denies that English equivalences exist:

Terroir: A term for 'soil', terroir refers to the set of geographic factors, such as soil composition, altitude, topography, position relative to the sun, sunlight hours and water drainage, that combine to create a unique taste and wine quality representative of a particular location.[11]

Terroir: French term with no translation to describe the characteristics of a defined area. That includes soil, underground, exposure, climate and local traditions.[12]

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[10] Labels of the evaluative dictionary form fields are given here in Italics.
[11] *Jack's wine - Wine Glossary.*
[12] *French Wine a Day - Wine Glossary.*

If translation equivalences are the main feature of multilingual word lists, some of them also provide some *Encyclopedic Information*, such as the *Grabungswörterbuch (Eine Sammlung von Fachbegriffen für Grabungstechnik und Archäologie)*, which gives brief definitions for a small number of its headwords; or *Watson's wine glossary*, which sometimes provide brief 'descriptions'[13] of terms, or the *Pescheria Gallina - I pesci*, a rich inventory of fish names in many different languages and also in many regional Italian language varieties. At the bottom of every page there's always an encyclopedic piece of information, consisting in a list of the suggested months in which is it preferable to eat each species.

Another classification feature is the kind of *Lexicon* selected, which can have only specialist words or also ordinary language entries. For example, in *Investor Dictionary* users can find terms like *arrive*, *get back*, *add*, which are useful verbs in finance but have no special meaning in this sector. However the dictionary provides Explanatory *Phrases* (another field of the evaluating form) which show how the verb can be used in financial texts:

add, verb, to put figures together to make a total
Examples: If you add the interest to the capital you will get quite a large sum. • Interest is added monthly.

Referring to the microstructure, the form lists many fields. For *Cross References* and *Related Terms* separate fields are given: the former are direct cross-links among the dictionary entries, the latter are explicit references to other terms for a more detailed explanation of the subject (see figure 1).
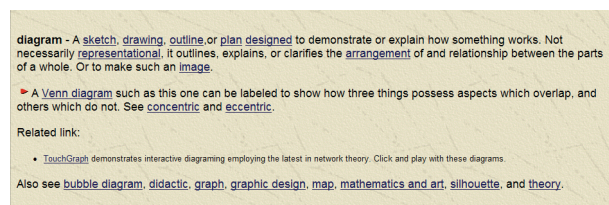

Figure 1: Cross-links and related terms in the *ArtLex. Art Dictionary for artists, collectors, […] and education*

Grammatical Category is also a separate field from *Morphological Indications*, which give evidence of every inflectional and derivational variation registered by the dictionary. Of the 505 dictionaries collected, 6% always give indications of the grammatical category, and 2% only report this information occasionally. Sporadic notes on morphology are given by 4% of dictionaries, even though they don't resemble what is usually listed in a standard lexicographical work. In bilingual resources, morphological indications are used to give minimal

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[13] For example the description for 'aroma' is «especially referring to aromatic whites», that for 'corredo aromatico' is «referring to aroma».

advice on the inflectional variations of the second language, such as in the following:

Tonel (toneis) (Portuguese) Large wooden cask(s) which lie on their sides, usually over 1000 litres capacity […].[14]

while in monolingual vocabularies they mainly serve to explain terms underlying their derivational formation:

SUIDECIDE - (sui-decide) RATIONAL SUICIDE by a TERMINALLY ILL individual (Schmerl).[15]

Only five resources give systematic evidence of the morphological component of terms, two of them are etymologically oriented, such as the *Bio-Top - Lexique de Terminologie Médicale*, organised as an etymological dictionary, with entries grouped by word bases, and entries provided with a detailed account of etymological roots. The other, the *Dictionary of Botanical Epithets*, which is also a valuable learning resource for the Latin language, is made up of explanatory tables giving separate columns for 'Definition', 'Stem', 'Type/Gender' (reporting the grammatical category of the word), and 'Meaning' of the single morphemes into which the source Latin word has been analysed. The following is an extract relative to the headword 'acridens':

Epithet	Definition			
	Derivation	Stem	Type/Gender	Meaning
acridens	sharp teeth			
acridentes	*acer*	acr	adj	sharp, irritating, pungent; some spellings, espcially modern, give acris as the masculine instead of acer
	i	i	cnct	connective vowel used by botanical Latin
	dens	dent	noun/m	tooth
	Rubus acridens Bailey			

Systematic notes on morphology are also provided by *The Debenhams fashion dictionary*, since it lists 20 blends, followed by their source words, which represent the latest fashion neologism explained to assist disorientated customers with terms they cannot understand, such as:

Blurt [Blouse/Skirt] all in one blouse and skirt combo.
Cardigown [Cardigan/Dressing Gown] Cardigan, usually long and belted like a cardigan.

A significant inventory also for morphologists, still not at ease with blends (see Bauer, 1983).

Another resource which always gives etymological indications (*Etymology* is another field form), is the *Glossario Enologico* compiled at the University of Genoa collecting pieces of specialised vocabularies already published, so the contents given are perfectly in line with the standards of lexicographical tradition:

olfactory examination […] Etimologia
Olfactory: Latin. *Olfactōrius*, adjective, from latin *olfactor*, one who smells, *undefined*, a smellin […].
Examination: late 14c., "action of testing or judging, judical inquiry," from O. Fr. *Examinacion*, from Latin *examinationem* (nom. *Examinatio*) […].

Furthermore, name explanations, which correspond to simplified etymologies for children, are always present in the *Enchanted Learning - Dinosaur and Paleontology Dictionary* in the form of short paraphrases: «Tyrannosaurus rex (meaning "tyrant lizard king")», «Tylosaurus (meaning "swollen lizard")», «Lesothosaurus, "Lizard from Lesotho, South Africa"». An extra page[16] (called *Hypertext* in the evaluation form) contains also notes on how dinosaurs' names are built, and offers a list of their roots and affixes.

Affixes are also listed in *aly-abbara.com - Lexique des affixes (préfixes et suffixes)*, an inventory of productive morphemes – and also lexemes – in the medical sector.
It is interesting as well to note the function assigned to etymological notes in dictionaries which use them occasionally. For example, the "Origins of Terms in International Economics" is a page in the *Deardorffs' Glossary of International Economics* dedicated to the first time some specialist terms were introduced, while almost all chocolate glossaries give notes on the origin of the word 'chocolate'. Particularly surprising are the examples of dictionaries which sometimes lack etymologies altogether, revealing in this way the different degrees of adaptation of the loanwords in specialised lexicons. In the *Wein.de - Weinglossar*, 'Amabile' is recognised as the Italian designation for a lovely taste, 'Aroma' and 'Aperitif' are explained through their Latin etymologies, however, for the adapted German borrowing 'Bukett' (from French 'bouquet') no etymological explanation is provided, while the term 'Finess' is simply considered as a synonym for 'Feinheit', 'subtil' or 'vornehm' in the wine jargon[17].

Other fields in the form register phonological information: *Phonetic Transcription*, *Pronunciation Annotation*, *Stress Information*, and *Syllabification*, since

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[14] *Graham's Port – Glossary.*
[15] *The Vocabulary of Loss: A Glossary of Suicide-related Terminology.*

[16] "Dinosaur Name Roots: What Do Dinosaurs' Names Mean?".
[17] «Finesse: Synonym für "Feinheit", "subtil" oder "vornehm" in der Weinansprache».

not all of them might be given at the same time. Generally speaking, pronunciation notations signal the foreign words and their eventual degree of adaptation in the specialist lexicon of one language. Even though 'ullage' is provided with a translational equivalence, the suggested pronunciation shows that it is and adapted loanword in English:

> **Ullage** (UL-ij)—The space in a bottle between the wine and the cork. Also called "headspace". If there is too much, the bottle has obviously leaked[18].

Many dictionaries however don't give accent annotations with pronunciation:

> **AGIORGITIKO**
> Pronounced "Ah-jee-or-jee tee-koh". (a.k.a St. George)[19].

while some others give full written indications and also audio files, as in the *National Cancer Institute - Dictionary of cancer terms*.

A noteworthy use of *Audio Files* (label of another field form) is made by the English version of the *NHGRI - Talking Glossary of Genetics*, a learning project of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), which gives audio definitions: spoken explanations given by the Institute scientists, as well as illustrations and many 3-D animations as extra *Learning Resources* (label of a field in form).

Other main linguistic features accounted for in the inventory are the *Frequency of Use*, *Linguistic Variation*, *Idioms*, *Collocations*, and *Examples*. The variations registered, relative to the *Linguistic Variation* field, are relative to geography and space (i. e. dialects, regional varieties), style:

> **Aroma**: Olor agradable cuyo bouquet es la expresión más refinada./Aroma: Pleasant smell. Its bouquet is the most refined expression[20]

context:

> **alopecia**
> **English**: Technical term: alopecia/ Popular term: baldness
> **Danish**: Technical term: alopecia/Popular term: skaldethed […]
> **Spanish**: Technical term: alopecia (nf)/Popular term: caída general o parcial de cabellos o pelos […][21]

but also to other differences over time and history:

> **Basque**: Section of bodice below waist, shaped to hips; late c20th name for corset[22]

or in spelling:

> **log** […] (Note the verbs can be spelled log on, log-on, or logon; log off, log-off or logoff)[23].

Annotations about the frequency of use are rare, and are conveyed through generic statements of the kind of «palabra muy empleada»[24], in Spanish, or «sometimes called…»[25] to specify the difference between two synonyms.
Some indications about collocations have been found in a small percentage of dictionaries (around 10%). They needed to be carefully detected since they are given in the body of the texts without any explicit signalling:

> **aroma**: [...] One might speak of the "floral aroma" of a Riesling, for example[26].

and sometimes they are provided in a prescriptive form:

> **inoculate**: […] (Note You inoculate someone with or against a disease.)[27]

Even more complicated is the search for idioms, since it requires a comprehensive reading of all the vocabularies collected, in order to distinguish idiomatic expressions[28] correctly. At present we can only give one example, but we cannot provide any quantitative analysis:

> **Catch a Falling Knife**:
> To catch a falling knife is an idiomatic expression which is used in investments. It is a phrase that refers to a dangerous investment strategy such as stocks that drop tremendously resulting to worthless investments[29].

In addition, dictionaries are valued as technical or non-technical on the base of their *Definitions*. These could be self-explanatory and non-technical, in the sense that no specific subject knowledge or only little effort is required in order to understand them. On the other end they could necessitate a certain degree of previous knowledge, being written for experts in the field – so they are defined as technical. Of the following definitions, the first is considered to be technical, the

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[18] *Napa Now - Glossary of Wine Terms*.
[19] *Epicurus.com - Wine Glossary*.
[20] *Welcome Argentina - El Lenguaje del Vino/The language of wine*.
[21] This is an excerpt from the entry 'alopecia' in *Multilingual Glossary of technical and popular medical terms in nine European Languages*.

[22] *Dictionary of Corset-related Words and Terms*.
[23] *WebFinance - Computing-Dictionary*.
[24] From the entry 'Cuerpo' in *Welcome Argentina - El Lenguaje del Vino/The language of wine*.
[25] From the entry 'Parole revocation hearing' in *Crime Victims Services-Criminal Justice System - Glossary of Terms*.
[26] *Top Side Wine and Spirits - Wine Tasting Terms*.
[27] From *Medical-Glossary.com*.
[28] We refer to the definition of *idiom* given by Ayto (2006): "The term idiom may be defined as an institutionalized multiword construction, the meaning of which cannot be fully deduced from the meaning of its constituent words, and which may be regarded as a self-contained lexical item".
[29] From *Investor Dictionary*.

second non-technical:

> **Gametes:** A collective term for haploid <u>reproductive cells</u> (<u>germ cells</u>; <u>male sperm cells</u> or <u>spermatozoon</u>, and female <u>egg cells</u> (oocytes, ovum) that fuse to form a diploid cell, the zygote from which multicellular organisms develop. For related information see also: <u>Cell types</u>[30].

> **Gamete**: Mature male or female reproductive cell (sperm or ovum) with a haploid set of chromosomes (23 for humans)[31].

As seen in the first entry above, *Examples* are additional features for a better understanding, but also *Synonyms*, *Antonyms*, *Hypernyms*, *Hyponims*, and the indication of the *Domain Field* can serve this purpose. About a half of the dictionaries collected (42%) have synonyms, a small number give antonyms (13%), and only one[32] gives also hyponims and hypernyms, while these conceptual relations are necessary to clarify generic or specific terms in definitions:

> Action: […] parlando di mercati finanziari, la tipica Action è quella di comprare (Buy) o di vendere (Sell) dei titoli quotati[33].

Other features listed for the digital dictionaries collected, are *Video Files* and *Pictures*. However, only 2% of the present inventory offers video files, while 12% has images. The dictionaries can also be hosted by different *Kind Of Sites*: *Amateur*, *Commercial*, *Institutional*, *Collective*, *Specialised*. While *Amateur* and *Collective* refer to the dictionary authors, the others specify the main character of the host site. In particular *Collective* dictionaries are user-made resource such as WIKITIONARY (see Fuertes-Olivera, 2009), while *Institutional* sites are only those belonging to public or private Institutions, such as foundations, universities, and research organisations.

The various fields of the evaluation form are associated with marks, and this allows us to assign a *General Rating*, which gives a rough judgment of the variety of information and languages present in a single dictionary – since every translation language warrants 5 points and each foreign language present as a foreign entry word gives 3 additional points.

However, in order to evaluate the collected dictionaries on the base of their usability for Internet surfers, a qualitative analysis has also been carried out. It will be discussed below in § 5 and 7, after a brief explanation of

the new kind of dictionaries hosted by websites, that we have called plurilingual.

4. Lexicology between translation and marketing: plurilingual dictionaries

The plurilingual dictionaries are generally hosted by multilingual commercial sites whose contents have undergone what is technically called 'a localization process', the specialized translation activity with high-technological expertise that combines cultural needs with selling requirements. At present the most valuable strategy for trading on a global scale through the Internet is considered to be the capability of offering linguistically and culturally adequate contents. Products and their selling correlates, such as websites or packaging, must have the specific target culture requirements, so translators have become part of the industrial production. Dictionaries are no exception to this role, and major wine producers try to offer lexical resources on their websites to attract wine lovers and diffuse wine culture as much as possible. So far as we can see from the examples collected[34], *plurilingual* dictionaries are translations of a given vocabulary across the various language versions of the same website, with no cross-reference between them. Very often the translated dictionaries are reductions of the original, both in the number of entries and text contents, as in the wine glossary of Sapareta, a wine producer:

> *It*. CORPOSO: Si usa per indicare in un vino una piacevole ricchezza di componenti fra di loro equilibrati, soprattutto di estratti e alcol, che presenta colore e sapore in armonia.
> *En*. FULL-FLAVOURED: used to indicate a wine with a delightful richness of balanced components.
> *Fr*. ETOFFÉ: s'emploie pour indiquer un vin dont on apprécie la richesse des composants bien équilibrés entre eux[35].

The Italian 'corposo' in the plurilingual dictionary of Cavit has a different English correspondent term, 'full-bodied', while the French and German version seem to provide no translation at all for that, since the dictionary versions of these languages are shorter than the Italian (one fewer headword) and the English one (two fewer entry words). In other cases it is possible to browse the entry lists of different languages of this same dictionary and try to find linguistic correspondences, such as:

> *It*. MATURO: vino che ha raggiunto lo stadio ottimale di maturazione./*En*. MATURE: wine which has reached an optimum stage of maturation./*Ge*. ROBUST: Ein Wein, der reich an Alkohol und Körper ist./ *Fr*. VIN FAIT: vin qui a atteint son vieillissement optimal.

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[30] *C O P E - Cytokines & Cells Online Pathfinder Encyclopedia*.
[31] *BERIS - DOE Human Genome Program - Genome Glossary*.
[32] *C O P E - Cytokines & Cells Online Pathfinder Encyclopedia*, and *Terminologie zur Lichtplanung und Lichtsimulation / Lighting Design and Simulation Terminology*.
[33] *Il Faro Finanziario - Glossario. Dizionario dei termini in uso nei mercati anglosassoni*.

[34] Only 20 of the 505 dictionaries collected belong to the plurilingual type.
[35] *Azienda Agricola Sapereta – Glossario del vino*.

Though not particularly reliable as cross-linguistic reference tools, the offspring of this kind of dictionary is worth the notice, as it is the product of a wider Internet process (*Content Localization*), involving lexicographical resources.

The same marketing process has given birth to hybrids, dictionaries which are conceived as plurilingual, with no cross-reference system between the different languages, but giving many translational equivalences in brackets anyway, such as in the German and English versions of the *Bordeaux.com* lexicon.

However in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese this same dictionary is actually multilingual, indexing French terms, followed by English equivalents, and giving the Chinese, Korean, or Japanese correspondence in brackets. The following is the Chinese one (figure 2):

Figure 2: Chinese section of *Bordeaux.com*

5. A fitting analysis for users needs

As previously mentioned (§ 3), the fields used in the evaluation form can serve also for qualitative analysis. Referring to the *lexicographically relevant users situations* already discussed, we can attribute ratings to each specific field taken into consideration as characterising features for the *cognitive* and *communicative* situations and, in addition to these, for *translation* and *learning*, other two situations that could be useful to Internet surfers.

We can also estimate the kind of user accessing the specialized Web dictionaries in relation to their level of field expertise. For this aspect we refer to the distinction made by Bergenholtz & Kaufmann (1977: 101-102) among laymen, semi-experts and experts. In particular semi-experts are «experts from other related subject fields» who are confronted daily with other sectors, for example journalists writing about scientific issues, or political advisors or workers in the public administration that are particularly familiar with sectors related to their professional activities. The experts are instead considered by Bergenholtz & Kaufmann as the kind of users that do not rely upon dictionaries, since they refer to other sources in order to acquire new knowledge. Though this assumption is unquestionable, the present

aim is different from that of Bergenholtz and Kaufmann, and other professional lexicographers. They need clear instruction in order to write valuable dictionaries, while we offer orienteering tools for quicker and successful Internet surfing. A more refined scale of expertise (divided in layman, semi-expert and expert) will help to achieve better this purpose.

The rating scale is explicitly designed to obtain clear orienteering indications: 2 points are given to the most characterising features, 1 point to less important ones and penalizing marks (-1 and -2) help to avoid contradictory responses, such as dictionaries highly valuable for experts and laymen, or for cognition and communication at the same time. For this purpose the rating distribution of the *Definition* field is given as such:

Definitions	Layman	Semi-expert	Expert
Technical	-2	1	2
Non-Technical	2	-2	-2

All users' profiles may reach 13 points maximum, the cognitive and communicative functions can reach 16, while learning and translation 15. The following list shows how points are given[36]:

Layman profile
Cross-references: Yes, 2; Smt.[37], 1/ Definitions: Technical, -2; Non-Technical, 2/ Encyclopaedic information: Yes, 2/ Examples: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Kind of site: Institutional, 1; Specialised, 1/ Lexikon: Specialist & Ordinary Words/ Explanatory Phrases: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Pronunciation notation: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Quotations: Yes, -2; Smt., -1/

Semi-expert profile
Access structure: Search engine, 1; Smart search engine, 1/ Bibliographic resources: Yes, 2/ Definitions: Technical, 1/ Etymology: Yes, 1; Smt., 2/ Kind of site: Institutional, 2; Specialised, 1/ Lexikon: Only Specialist words, 2/ Linguistic variation: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Quotations: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/

Expert profile
Access structure: Browse, -2; Search engine, -1; Smart search engine, 1/ Bibliographic resources: Yes, 2/ Definitions: Technical, 2; Non-Technical, -2/ Entries number: 0-50, -2, 50-100, -1, over 100, 1/ Etymology: Yes, 2/ Etymology: Smt., 1/ Kind of site: Institutional, 1; Specialised, 1/ Phonetic transcription: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Quotations: Yes, 2; No, -2/

Cognitive situation
Antonyms: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Domain field: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Encyclopaedic information: Yes, 2; Smt., -1; No, -2/ Kind of site: Institutional, 2; Specialised, 2/ Pictures: Yes, 2;

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[36] Since the inventory of idioms is still to be done, they couldn't be used as rated features at present.
[37] Smt.= sometimes.

Smt., 1/ Related terms: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Synonyms: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Video files: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/

Communicative situation
Audio files: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Collocations: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Frequency of use: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Kind of site: Institutional, 2; Specialised, 2/ Linguistic variation: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Stress information: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Syllabification: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Synonyms: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/

Translation
Bidirectionality: Yes, 2/ Cultural notes: Yes, 2/ Kind of dictionary: Multilingual, 2; Multilingual word list, 1; Plurilingual, 2/ Kind of site: Institutional, 2; Specialised, 2/ Explanatory Phrases: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Translation equivalences: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/

Learning
Audio files: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Grammatical category: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/ Hyperlinks: Yes, 2; Yes, 2/ Hypertexts (explanatory pages): Yes, 2/ Kind of dictionary: Multilingual, 2; Monolingual, 2/ Kind of site: Institutional, 2; Specialised, 2/ Learning resources, 2/ Morphological indications: Yes, 2; Smt., 1/

6. Conclusions

Using this grading system, we are able to present an evaluative estimation of the data collected (see Figure 3).
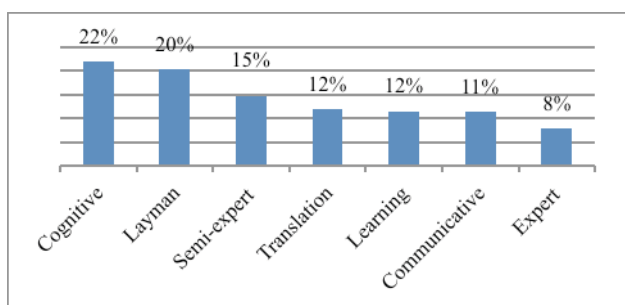
Figure 3: Percentage of users' profiles and lexicographical situations in the collected dictionaries.

The majority of dictionaries satisfy the parameter of the cognitive situation (22%), while the communicative obtains half this result (11%). Translation and learning obtain similar results, being equally represented by 12% of the collected resources while, referring to users' profiles, Laymen (20%) and semi-experts (15%) can quite similarly find adequate tools on the web. Only experts can count on fewer resources to refer to (8%).

In addition, only a few dictionaries highly satisfy the requirements for translation, learning, cognitive situation, expert and semi-expert profiles, since on average this parameters receive low scores (see Figure 4). On the contrary, a lot of Internet resources gain high marks for the layman profile, while communication is the lowest rated of all, so the average marks gained by dictionaries for this profile aren't much lower than the highest score
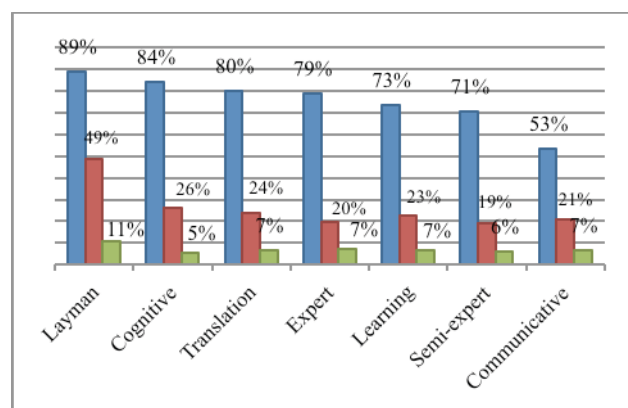
obtained.

Figure 4: Highest (in blue), lowest (green) and average (red) scores for each user profile and lexicographical situation in the collected dictionaries.

This means that the Internet offers many useful resources for the layman, while only a few are well suited for experts and semi-experts. The same can be said for translation, learning and cognitive situation, which can only count on a few good dictionaries. Whereas for communicative needs, users are not provided with valuable free lexicographical tools yet.

The table below (table 1) lists the best and worst rated dictionaries for each category:

Situation/Profile	Dictionary Name	%
Cognitive	ArtLex - Art Dictionary for artists, collectors, ….	84%
Cognitive	Italian VI Trading Wine Glossary	5%
Communicative	Wine Lovers Page - Wine Lexicon	53%
Communicative	Wine Road - Glossary	7%
Expert	Glossario Enologico	79%
Expert	Whonamedit? A dictionary of medical eponyms	7%
Layman	ArtLex - Art Dictionary for artists, collectors, ….	89%
Layman	Watson's wine glossary	11%
Learning	Math Spoken Here! An Arithmetic and Algebra Dictionary	73%
Learning	Wein-plus - Translator for wine terms	7%
Semi-expert	WebFinance - Computing-Dictionary	71%
Semi-expert	Wineeducation.com - Wine Glossary	6%
Translation	DiCoInfo - Le dictionnaire fondamental de l'informatique et de l'Internet	80%
Translation	Winetasting.com - Wine Glossary	7%

Table 1: Highest and lower rated dictionaries for each user profile and lexicographical function.

While another report (table 2) can be given on the basis of the additive rating system described in §3, which gives particular evidence of the number of different languages used in the dictionaries:

Dictionary Name	rating
Scouting Dictionary	203
Glossario Enologico	118
Multilingual Glossary of technical and popular medical terms in nine European Languages	118
DermIS.net (Dermatology Information System)	117
AskPhil - Glossary of Stamp Collecting Terms	96
ArtLex - Art Dictionary for artists, collectors, ….	94
CILF - Dictionnaire Commercial	93
HON Foundation - List of rare diseases	92
Islamic Philosophy Online - Dictionary of Islamic Philosophical Terms	88
Wein-Plus Wein-Glossar Ehrenfelser	85

Table 2: The best rated sites.

However, while the general estimation of features provided might be valuable for quite a long time, the single dictionaries listed in the tables will probably disappear soon, since things change quickly on the Web. The present research started some months ago with an inventory of more than 700 Internet dictionaries, and 200 of them have since vanished. Some of the vocabularies collected are digital versions of printed books, while only one was created on the Internet and then subsequently printed[38]. We have tried to give as many examples as possible throughout our inventory, in order to give future evidence of this vanishing repertory of writing.

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[38] *Investopedia - Dictionary of Financial Terms*, printed as Guinan (2009).

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