Online Resources:
Selected English Resources on the World Wide Web

Introduction

In this unit, we will be looking at a range of websites which provide helpful resources for the language professional. It would be impossible to present a comprehensive list of all useful sites. Instead, this unit will present a selection of resource types, with a few examples of each. It will concentrate on:

- General monolingual reference resources in English
- General bilingual and multilingual dictionaries
- Multilingual terminology databases
- Directories, link lists and portals for language professionals

First Stop: The IUED Links & Tools Site

Highly recommended as a first stop for students at IUED is our Links & Tools site at http://www.iued.zhaw.ch/de/linguistik/iued/links-tools.html. Here we have collected together a range of annotated links to pages, sites and resources that are of particular interest to language professionals. A number of the resources mentioned in this unit can be accessed from the "Wörterbücher und Terminologie-Datenbanken" and "Lexika" sections.

General Monolingual Reference Resources

The major monolingual reference resources can be categorised according to the type of information they provide:

- Linguistic information can be found primarily in online dictionaries, thesauruses and corpora.
- Encyclopædic information is contained predominantly in online encyclopædias, fact books and almanacs.

Certain search platforms allow users to simultaneously search a range of linguistic resources; there are also a number of sites where users can consult reference collections comprising both linguistic and encyclopædic resources.

The various types of reference resource and the way to use them effectively were discussed in some detail previously on this course. What follows is rather a showcase of resources to try out and compare.

Monolingual Dictionaries, Thesauruses and Corpora

As already mentioned in the previous unit, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessible via the ZHAW library page, is the leading dictionary resource for the English language, and the established standard work for British English. It is first and foremost a definition dictionary, but has a range of additional features as well. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* supports basic and advanced searches using Boolean and proximity operators as well as wildcards (please refer back to the previous unit for further information on these search options).

Another, more limited definition dictionary is available at *WordReference.com* at http://www.wordreference.com/, which ia a popular, quick and easy-to-use online resource for current English usage – remember to check the "English only" button to get English definitions.

English Only: ⊙ English definition

A very reliable resource for American English is *Merriam-Webster Online*, at http://www.merriam-webster.com/, which provides a free online dictionary and thesaurus service (and also a Spanish-English and medical dictionary), while if you need more thesaurus references, the most comprehensive online site is *thesaurus.com* (http://thesaurus.reference.com/).

Corpora (the singular noun is **corpus**) are collections of linguistic data, either written texts or a transcription of recorded speech, which can be used as a starting-point of linguistic description or as a means of verifying hypotheses about a language. They are also of great practical use to language professionals, because they prove a ready means of checking collocations, grammatical structures and individual terms against a vast body of data.

The *British National Corpus* at http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/ is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, both spoken and written. Searching the corpus is quite easy, and specific operators can be used. The free online service limits the range of search facilities and results, but these should be more than adequate for the standard type of research required of the language professional. A better way of accessing the *British National Corpus* is via the flexible, quick and user-friendly portal at http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/.

An excellent American English resource of the same type is the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* or COCA at http://www.americancorpus.org/.

Another interesting corpus sampler is provided by *Collins* and can be found at the following URL: http://www.collins.co.uk/corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx. Here you can search the corpus for concordance results, i.e. actual examples of sentences in which your search term is used:

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                    Close Window

is with managing the affairs of the Trust, to implement a ban without properly studying the
UK Nirex Limited, whose responsibility is to implement the UK Government's strategy for the
          with commercial criteria. These could implement social, employment and training commitments
   who would allow students to develop and implement a unit of their own creation, support
     being condemned by the EC for failing to implement the directive quickly enough-things are
weeding fork and bare hands. The particular implement which I use depends very much on the size
in Ethiopia say they are willing and ready to implement an immediate ceasefire and have called on
cent. They say the new President's task is to implement an economic programme tough enough to
       of reform packages they would prefer to implement.  The alternatives include a radical plan
    and General Bashir signed an agreement to implement the planned integration of their countries.
   attractive sounding policies than it is to implement them There is one policy above all which if
       and the UN Mission, which was trying to implement the Security Council demand that there
     that Moscow and nine republics intend to implement radical reforms.  Mr Yeltsin said a further
          in 3rd world, where health budgets to implement conclusions from research as low as &
principle, was left to Petain and himself to implement. In other words, he was confident that he
      not selected. It is probably impossible to implement such a large-scale programme for future
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or for information on collocates which appear together with your search term, giving you a good idea of the way the term habitually occurs with other words in natural English usage:

Close Window

Collocate	Corpus Freq	Joint Freq	Significance
to	1104731	363	14.690222
government	25153	23	4.401245
plan	7798	17	3.980815
it	494702	67	3.638381
peace	6734	13	3.465038
would	97660	24	3.399201
plans	5108	12	3.353165
its	53185	18	3.299516
programme	6474	11	3.169769
ceasefire	956	10	3.139533
un	3455	10	3.080079
decision	6988	10	2.996025
reforms	1184	9	2.970308
and	1129483	117	2.960630
changes	5864	9	2.852942

Before using the corpus for multiple word and complex searches, you should consult the information on search syntax at the bottom of the page.

Finally, a wholly new corpus-based suite of tools is represented by the very interesting *WebCorp*, developed at Birmingham City University in England and which can be found at http://www.webcorp.org.uk/index.html. This site actually uses the World Wide Web as a corpus for linguistic research. As the guide itself says (http://www.webcorp.org.uk/guide/): "however large and up-to-date the electronic text corpora available are, there will always be aspects of the language which are too rare or too new to be evidenced in them. WebCorp is a suite of tools which allows access to the World Wide Web as a corpus – a large collection of texts from which facts about the language can be extracted".

The basic interface should suffice for most general needs and allows you select a search engine, set the concordance span (i.e. the number of words to display as the left and right contexts of your search term) and whether your search is case sensitive or not:

Search term:

Enter a word, phrase (no quotes necessary) or **pattern**

Search engine: Google

Concordance Span: 5 word(s) to left and right

Case options: Case Sensitive

For advanced search options, consult the guide. Especially useful for our purposes is the collocation search feature, described at http://www.webcorp.org.uk/guide/advanced5.html.

WebCorp is a progressive suite of tools. The major disadvantage of this resource, as its developers freely admit, is that it is currently very slow in returning results. However, performance speed is expected to improve over time.

Encyclopædias, Fact Books and Almanacs

The world's leading English-language encyclopædia is *Britannica*. It is available online at http://www.britannica.com/, where non-subscribers have limited access to articles. The facilities available to subscribers are far more extensive, and – as we have already seen in the previous unit – the ZHAW library has full access to this fine encyclopædic resource.

When searching *Britannica*, you can enter multiple terms in the basic search interface. Wildcards and the Boolean operators **AND**, **NOT** and **OR** are supported as well. You can also put a word pair, as well as longer phrases, in quotation marks to find text strings. An alternative to the operator **AND** is **+**; instead of **NOT**, you can use **-**. *Britannica*'s search features are very similar to those of search engines like Google. Its advanced search offers the chance to use the same operators in a more user-friendly interface. The advanced

search also allows you to select which information source you wish to consult, and to search either titles alone (which is faster) or full text alone.

An increasingly influential encyclopædic resource on the Internet is the very large *Wikipedia*, which is free and contains literally millions of articles in a number of languages. As one might expect, the most comprehensive collection is in English. Unlike *Britannica*, it relies on unedited contributions, which may at times be inaccurate. Its great advantage, however, is – besides its sheer scale – the fact that many entries are in various languages, providing readily searchable parallel or near-parallel texts. You can access the English version of Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/ and the various language versions via the Swiss portal http://wikipedia.ch/.

Another fine online resource is *HighBeam Encyclopedia* at http://www.encyclopedia.com/, which gives free online access to 60 million articles from a variety of edited, reputable sources.

Good information also comes from books of facts and almanacs. The most famous fact book is undoubtedly the *CIA World Factbook*, at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/, published every year. It is a prime source of country-specific information, with extensive statistical data and maps on all countries of the world. If that is not enough for you, search multiple almanacs at *Factmonster*: http://www.factmonster.com/almanacs.html.

Search Platforms and Reference Collections

In addition to single reference sources, many sites offer portal access to multiple databases containing a variety of linguistic and encyclopædic information: dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopædias and other reference works.

OneLook Dictionaries (http://www.onelook.com/) is a search platform covering hundreds of indexed dictionaries containing millions of words. Search queries support wildcards, and you can restrict searches to definitions only. The large number of sources, however, has one disadvantage: you must pay close attention to the source displayed and to the credibility of that source. Properly evaluating sources is the subject of another unit in this course.

Similar to *OneLook* is the multi-source platform at http://dictionary.reference.com/:
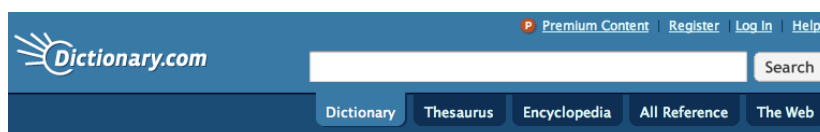
As the screenshot shows, here you have to chance to search dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopædias, all reference sources together or the web itself.

Bartleby.com at http://www.bartleby.com/reference/ is another very popular resource. It claims to be the most comprehensive public reference library ever published on the web, combining the best of both contemporary and classic reference works.
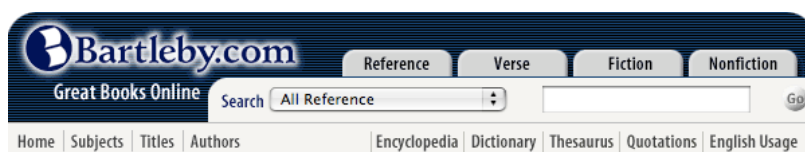
The highest level of reliability can be obtained from resources made available by publishers with long-standing credentials – such as the Oxford University Press, providers of *Oxford Reference Online* and already mentioned in the previous unit. This puts trusted resources

from a wide range of fields at the disposal of users: language dictionaries, dictionaries of proverbs and quotations, dictionaries and other reference works covering the humanities, the social sciences, economics, business, law, science, technology and medicine. As with all Oxford digital publications, advanced search facilities with Boolean operators, wildcards, etc. are possible. The resource is available via the "Nachschlagewerke Online" link on the ZHAW library page.

Bilingual and Multilingual Dictionaries and Directories

The strengths and weaknesses of bilingual dictionaries, together with strategies for their use, were considered in detail in the previous unit. What follows is a brief run-down of bilingual and multilingual resources.

A popular online dictionary covering English-German, French-German, Italian-German, Spanish-German and even Chinese-German is LEO (http://dict.leo.org/). Be careful with this resource: Although many entries are accurate and idiomatic, some are of dubious quality.

Searches can be bi-directional or mono-directional:

You can either enter individual words or perform a multi-word query. In the case of the latter, the search provides results for as many of the entered words as possible, irrespective of the order they are in. A fuzzy or wildcard search can be done by adding an asterisk - * - before or after a word. This provides hits where the query forms the word prefix (* immediately in front of word) or suffix (* immediately behind word). It makes no difference to the search whether you use upper or lower case. Keep an eye on the announcements published on the main page in both the German and English versions of this dictionary to discover new features.

Another resource is *Logos*, is a large multilingual dictionary database for translation queries at http://www.logosdictionary.org/pls/dictionary/new_dictionary.index_p. It has both a simple search interface and an advanced search:

The advanced search is certainly the most advisable one to use for professional purposes.

Finally, *Webster's Online Dictionary with Multilingual Thesaurus Translation* at http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/ purports to be the "Earth's largest dictionary with 90 modern languages". The resource is excellent for monolingual English research but you can also enter foreign words to receive a list of English equivalents. These entries are linked to pages containing full information on the English terms – definitions, collocations, synonyms etc. The only problem with this site is its intransparency – which sources does it draw on?

Multilingual Terminology Databases (Termbanks)

In addition to the thousands of dictionaries and glossaries in the web, there are some very reliable online terminology databases accessible to the public. These termbanks are particularly valuable because they contain a wide range of terminological information, including contextual examples, cross-references and source information.

One major database maintained by an international organisation is the European Union's multilingual resource IATE, at http://iate.europa.eu/. The quality of entries is uneven, but the resource is obviously very reliable for EU political, administrative and legal terminology.

You should select a source language and a target language before starting your search, and you can set additional options such as the domain associated with the query or the type of search (term, abbreviation, phrase or everything) you wish to conduct.

Directories, Link Lists and Portals for Language Professionals

The Internet also contains a number of specialised directories dedicated to language tools: dictionaries, glossaries and the like. One prime example is *lexicool.com*, at http://www.lexicool.com/, which, a very large directory of bilingual and multilingual dictionaries covering a range of language pairs and a variety of general and specialist fields.

YourDictionary maintains a large and comprehensive index of more than 2,500 multilingual resources at http://www.yourdictionary.com/languages.html. Less extensive but also quite useful is the directory of dictionary resources at *Word2Word Language Resources* (http://www.word2word.com/dictionary.html).

Translators' Sites

In addition to these organisational resources, there are pages and sites maintained by individual translators providing dedicated search facilities and links for translators and other language professionals. These will often vary according to language combination and specialisation.

One example is *Peter's Translation Links* at http://home8.inet.tele.dk/p-spitz, a regularly updated set of links to translation resources where the main focus is on German, English and Danish.

A more comprehensive site, with links to all manner of resources for translators, is Tanya Harvey Ciampi's http://www.multilingual.ch/. In particular, this site links to a wide variety of general and specialised monolingual and multilingual glossaries, dictionaries and other resources. It also features a number of search interfaces for translators and other language professionals. In essence, these are a series of ready-made strings at the which virtually automate the process of finding the types of document needed. To access these, click on "WWW Search Interfaces for Translators":

Home | Contact | About Me | **Translations** | **Proofreading** | WWW Search Interfaces for Translators | Tools | Inter FAQ | Guestbook | Search | Sitemap |
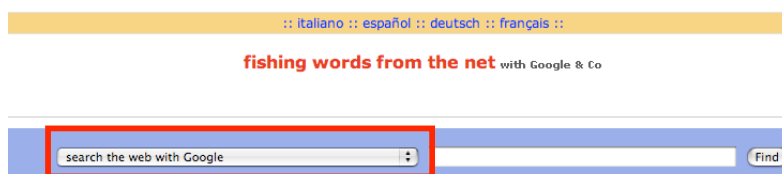
choose a source language:

wwwsift
Pick a source language
English   Go!

then use one of the interfaces to find glossaries, parallel texts, abbreviations or idioms:

Find a glossary using Google Use " " for phrases! (Help)
synonyms of "glossary" in TITLE – 1   Find   Reset

Find parallel texts using Google Use " " for phrases! (Help)
(SL = source language / URL = internet address)
(EN=English, DE=German, ES=Spanish, FR=French, IT=Italian, PT=Portuguese, NL=Dutch, SV=Swedish)
EN-DE   SL in URL & language link – 1   Find   Reset

Term-minator (http://www.term-minator.eu/) is a multilingual translators' search portal developed by Hellmut Riediger. Functioning in a similar way to Tanya Harvey's search interfaces, it is very easy to use, and offers the user a host of helpful search strings via the pop-up menu next to the text-entry field.
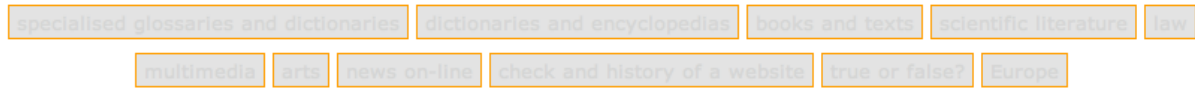
Term-minator

:: italiano :: español :: deutsch :: français ::

fishing words from the net with Google & Co

search the web with Google   Find

The pop-up menu on the left provides a very extensive list of possible search strings, enabling you, for instance, to quickly look for definitions, translations, idioms, proverbs, thematic portals and directories, or to search in various forms of text (literary, biblical) or by site (museums, libraries, movie databases, etc.).

The site also provides a more detailed advanced search function:

Advanced Search

| specialised glossaries and dictionaries | dictionaries and encyclopedias | books and texts | scientific literature | law |

| multimedia | arts | news on-line | check and history of a website | true or false? | Europe |

This portal facility provides comfortable, one-stop access to web-spanning glossary and dictionary searches, to thematically linked linguistic and encyclopædic resources and to the search engines of specific sites, such as the previously mentioned *OneLook* or the *British National Corpus*.

Summary

This unit has presented a broad typology and selective overview of the general language and translation resources offered on the web. It is intended as a showcase and has by no means offered an exhaustive catalogue of tools. You are expected to use this as a springboard for your own personal research to find further useful Internet-based resources.