

Blended Learning: using technology in and beyond the language classroom

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This first update focuses on innovative software to support a business English course, and some of the exciting features on the latest electronic dictionary from Macmillan.

Courseware on DVD-ROM (Chapter 3: ELT materials)

2007 sees the launch of a DVD-ROM to support the Business, a new business English course book (John Allison with Paul Emmerson). The course is supported by a DVD-ROM designed to be used as part of a blended learning approach, to reinforce and expand the work done inside the classroom. A DVD-ROM has more storage space than a CD-ROM. The disc includes several business dilemmas, where students read a problem, choose an option and work their way through a “maze”. <See: Figure 1> The multimedia format works extremely well with this activity type. Tasks on the disc include the ever-popular ‘text-reconstruction’ activity, where learners guess the words in a text and reconstruct the original on-screen. In a ground-breaking development, the audio-files on the DVD-ROM are available as mp3 files, allowing business English students to copy them to their computer and / or mp3 players and listen on the move.

Electronic dictionaries (Chapter 4: Electronic dictionaries)

The launch of a new dictionary is in itself a notable event; the new features on the accompanying software make the launch of the *Macmillan English Dictionary (Edition 2)* especially significant. One extremely useful feature is that students can add their own annotations to words. To do this, they click on a “Note” symbol, and type their comments into the box. This annotation is then saved and appears next time they look up the word. Students can add a translation in their own language, or write a meaningful sentence which is relevant for them. <See: figure 2> This feature enables learners to create a personalised set of comments within the electronic dictionary to help them with their vocabulary learning.

The fast and powerful tools are an outstanding feature of electronic dictionaries. The *MED2* contains the facility to search for subject-specific vocabulary. You can use the Advanced search to locate words connected with areas such as business, computing, economics, finance, legal and medical. <See: Figure 3> It is easy to find collocations of interest to particular groups of students, such as: ‘gold standard’, ‘consumer goods’, ‘command economy’ etc.

Blended Learning: using technology in and beyond the language classroom is supported by a teacher training course. For more details, visit the authors’ web-site at: [www.te4be.com](http://www.te4be.com)

## **Practical ideas for electronic dictionaries**

### **‘Collocation match’ warmer**

**Aim:** to raise awareness of collocations in ESP

**Level:** intermediate and higher

**Technology:** none in-class: the teacher needs access to an electronic dictionary and search for collocations from specific areas

**Rationale:** Collocations are a key feature of ESP. Electronic dictionaries allow students to find collocations related to a number of fields, such as finance, legal and medical

**Before class:** Use the CD-ROM to locate words specific to the field of your learners. Prepare collocation cards i.e. select some useful collocations which your learners will find useful, and write each word on a small card. Note: you will need an even number of cards; you should be ready to join in the activity when dealing with an odd number of students. Note: to do an in-class dictionary demonstration, you will need an electronic projector or interactive whiteboard.

#### **Procedure:**

- 1 Issue each student with one card. Ask students to stand up, mill around and find their partner. Students are allowed to tell people the word on their card.
- 2 When students have sat down next to their new partner, ask them to read out their collocations in pairs i.e. do a class check that the word partnerships are correct.
- 3 Follow up: ask if any collocations were new. Tell students they can access many of the specialist words and collocations they need from their own fields using an electronic dictionary. If possible, demonstrate the search feature to the group. This activity can lead into a reading text from the students’ field.

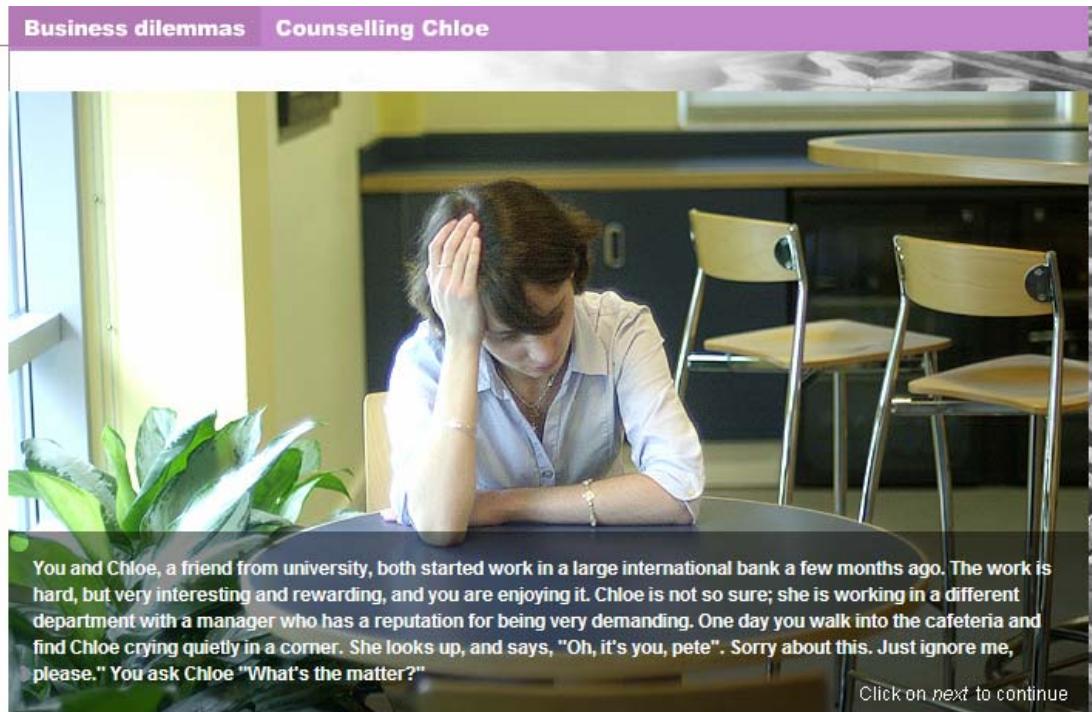


Figure 1: the start of the Business dilemma “Counselling Chloe” from The Business.

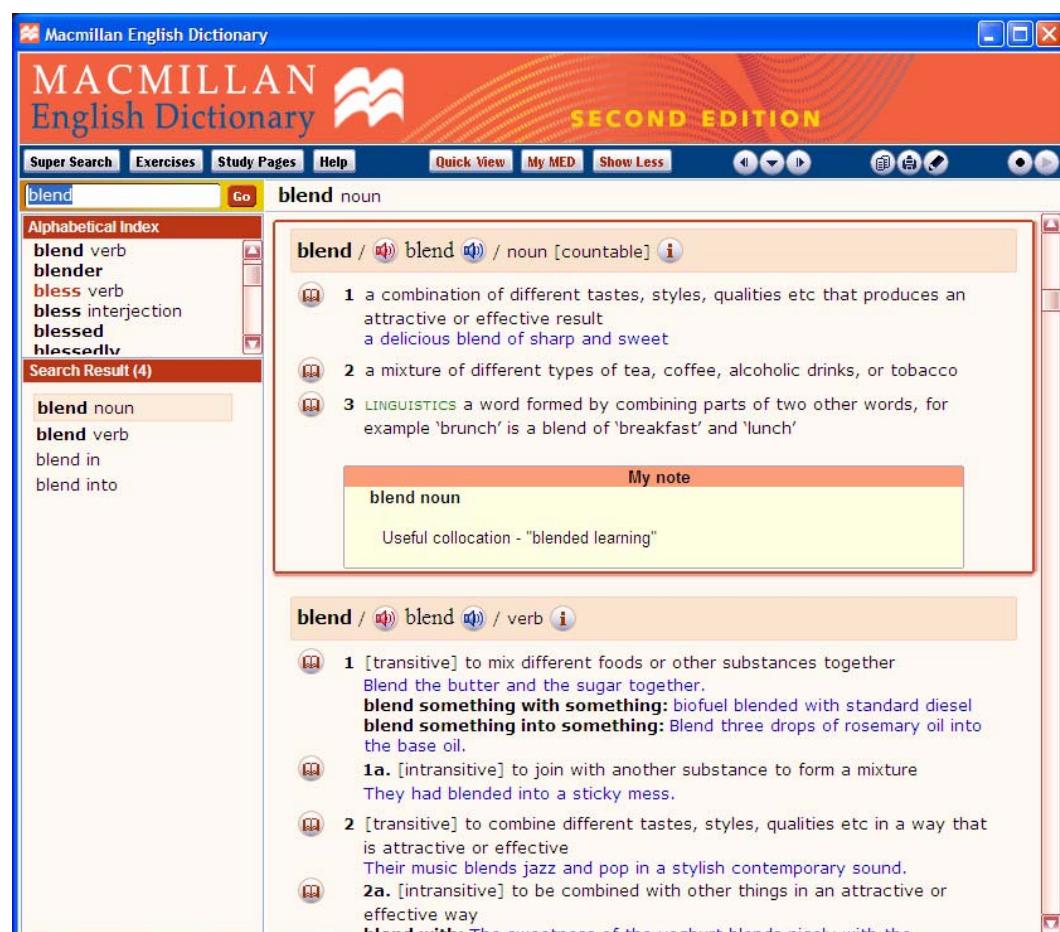


Figure 2: Adding a note to a dictionary entry

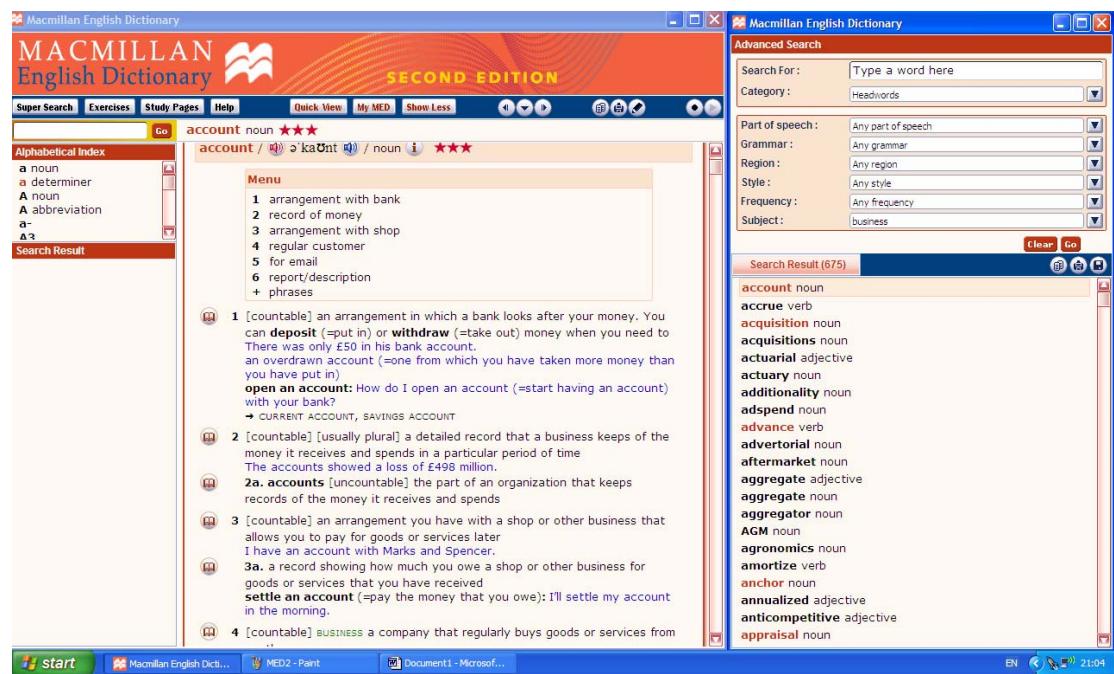


Figure 3: Macmillan English Dictionary (Edition 2): Advanced search (business words)