Adverb use in EFL student writing
1. Introduction
Adverbs are a somewhat neglected linguistic category; adverbs functioning as submodifiers even more so. Yet they play a central role in the conventional collocations that advanced learners are expected to produce in argumentative writing: ***deeply*** *troubling*; ***widely***-*known*; ***strongly***-*held beliefs*. Adverbs of degree have been identified as being problematic for Italian learners of English, in that *very* and *really* are over-used, while their corresponding lexical adverbs (such as *highly*, *closely* and *deeply*) are virtually unused (Philip 2007). While the EFL curriculum contributes to the problem, dictionaries too are at fault. This contribution focuses on lexical adverbs of degree, most of which are metaphorically motivated, examining their treatment in monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. It suggests improvements to layout and content which would enable students to adopt alternatives to the over-used forms *very*, *really* and *a lot*.

2. Rationale
The rationale behind this study of dictionary treatment of adverbs is the awareness that Italian learners of English systematically avoid using lexical adverbs in their written work (Martelli, 2006, Philip 2007). While Martelli suggests that adverbs are less problematic than teachers believe, citing the fact that that there are no instances of adverb+verb collocation errors in the Italian subset of the ICLE corpus (2006: 1008), this fails to take into consideration the observation that Philip makes (2007: 7), namely that, "there is a distinct preference in the writing of borderline B2-C1 students to use *very* and *really* to the virtual exclusion of any other adverb". Such basic adverbs of degree pose few problems – learners rarely use them incorrectly, and seem never to use them inappropriately. They are a lexical safety-net which few learners are prepared to cast aside in favour of a more idiomatic, lexical equivalent, such as *highly, closely*, or *widely*. It is precisely this class of adverbs that are examined in this paper: adverbs of degree derived from adjectival forms, used mainly as submodifiers in conventional collocations.

Adverbs are taught relatively early on in the EFL curriculum, and students who have achieved a level of competence equivalent to A1 are already able to use adverbs of frequency and quantity, and by A2 can form adverbs derived from adjectives in order to modify verbs. The use of adverbs of different sub-classes is developed and extended afterwards, but there are two substantial gaps in the curriculum: the explicit recognition of the submodifying function of adverbs, and the insufficient attention paid to polysemy in vocabulary-building in general, which has repercussions on the acquisition of collocations in the language as a whole. If not incorporated into the curriculum, these elements must necessarily appear in dictionaries, which are the language reference works that students consult most often. How then do learner dictionaries address the matter?

3. Adverbs in monolingual and bilingual learner dictionaries
The dictionaries consulted in this study are five monolingual dictionaries for advanced learners (CALD, COBUILD, LDOCE, MED and OALD). Additionally, four bilingual dictionaries specifically aimed at Italian learners of English were examined: three pocket-sized dictionaries of the type that many students bring to class (Longman, Oxford Study, and Rizzoli-Laroussse) plus the Oxford-Paravia, whose (free) online version is widely used by university students. Other large bilingual dictionaries principally aimed at translators and other language specialists (il Ragazzini, Sansoni) were excluded from the study as they are neither aimed at, nor used regularly by language-centre learners.

3.1 Adverbs in monolingual learner dictionaries
3.1.1 Looking up adverbs
The five monolingual dictionaries consulted varied considerably in their positioning of adverbs. Taking *broadly* as an example, is can be seen that CALD is the only one not to grant it headword status, inserting it at the end of the entry for the subsense of the adjective to which it corresponds. This is the style adopted throughout by CALD, which separates adjective subsenses into distinct headwords, under which the adverb appears where appropriate. COBUILD adopts a similar approach to the inclusion of adverbs. While the adjective subsenses are numbered and clearly

indicated in bold type, they appear under the same headword entry. The adverb form is included where appropriate under each of the nine subsenses, is cross-referenced at the end of the adjective entry and also appears as a headword in its own right, with a cross-reference to the adjective entry. LDOCE distinguishes *broad* from *broadly* to such an extent that no connection is made apparent between the two. Each has its own entry and, as if they existed in a vacuum, no cross-reference is made from one sense to another, and no adverbial form appears under any of the eleven subsenses of the adjective. MED adopts a similar approach but provides a cross-reference to *broadly* from the adjective entry, though none from the adverb to the adjective. The adjective entry in OALD too includes a cross-reference to *broadly*, but as this appears between the final subsense and the run-on phrases, it is easily missed. No indication is given at broadly that it has any relation to the adjective.

Lexical adverbs such as *broadly* are derived from an adjectival base, so it is not surprising that adjective entries should cross-reference to the adverb. It is odd, however, that the same is not true in reverse, with the adverb often being 'orphaned'. CALD's choice not to grant the adverb headword status is understandable, though it should be remembered that learners often lack look-up skills, and may not think to consult the adjective from which the adverb is derived. This problem does not apply to the CD-ROM, which leads the user directly to the relevant adjective entry.

3.1.2 Finding the right meaning
Once the headword has been located, the meaning of a polysemous adverb has to be established. As the most polysemous of the adverbs studied is *heavily*, the performance of the monolingual learners dictionaries will be judged on their treatment of this word. *Heavy* and its derivatives pose additional difficulties for the Italian learner because the figurative meanings of the equivalent, *pesante / pesantemente* do not overlap completely.

CALD does not use signposting, but separates the main senses into distinct entries with a clearly-identifiable gloss provided immediately after the headword and numbered subsenses following. Phrases appear at the end of the third entry, and these are followed directly by *heavily* and *heaviness* as derivatives. As the phrases do not all refer to the third sense, it is unclear whether *heavily* it is limited to the 'to a great degree' sense cited, or if it can also be used with the other senses 'solid' and 'man'. COBUILD provides *heavily* with a short entry – not the core sense, but he one which does not correspond to any of the adjectival senses. This entry is followed by a cross reference to *heavy*, which is the successive entry on the page. As with *broadly*, the COBUILD approach is to include all derivatives in each of the subsenses where appropriate. Thus *heavily* appears under subsenses 3, 4, 7 and 8, and *heaviness* under 1 and 3; yet despite being apparently lumped together, the derivatives are easily identified (e.g. ♦ **heavi|ly**) in the entry. LDOCE sets each of the six subsenses on a separate line of text, forfeiting valuable space for clarity. The number of the entry is therefore easily located and the gloss follows on immediately in bold. MED adopts signposting at the start of the entry, indicating that there are seven subsenses plus phrases. Each of these senses appears on a new line, as in LDOCE, with phrases appearing at the end. The signposting makes it easy to navigate this entry, and is especially effective when an entry extends over a page turn, as is the case of *heavy*. . The seven senses of the OALD entry for *heavily* are clearly numbered and the glosses are informative, but this entry illustrates how useful signposting would be: the entry occurs over two facing pages, with the fourth entry ending one page and the fifth starting the next. Were this to occur over a page turn rather than over facing pages, the final three senses would probably be missed because the user is provided with no indication the entry continues overleaf.

MED's adoption of signposting at the start of a polysemous entry is a great help to learners, as it limits the amount of scanning (in a foreign language) which has to be done in order to locate the meaning of a polysemous lexical item. It is a practice that could be usefully adopted by the other four dictionaries; and MED's use of signposting for items which have five or more senses could be extended downwards to include items with three or four senses when these are long and/or include several subsenses. Numbering senses makes them stand out, especially if the numbers appear on new lines of text, but dictionary users still have to scan the entire entry to find the relevant meaning. The print layout can help in this – COBUILD's layout is densely packed but easy to scan, because only headwords and derivatives appear in bold. CALD's decision to provide separate entries for main senses reflects the notion that distinct senses are really different words. However

this style might be more appropriate for a dictionary for native speakers who are already aware of the individual senses. Learners tend to look up character strings, not meanings.

3.1.3 Information about usage
One of the main differences between dictionaries for natives and those for learners can be found in the usage information provided. As well as pronunciation, learners are provided with example sentences, syntactic information, and even information boxes explaining uses of similar words, collocation preferences, or frequently misused forms.

All of the dictionaries included example sentences for adverbs, even when treated as derivatives and relegated to the end of an entry. They also all contain syntactic information where necessary, although the fact that lexical adverbs do not have peculiar patterning limits the need for such information. The exception to this 'minimalist' rule is COBUILD, whose entries contain a vast amount of syntactic and pragmatic information. These annotations are found in a narrow side column next to the entry, where they can be consulted if necessary, otherwise ignored. Essentially, COBUILD makes explicit what the example sentences illustrate as normal, typical usage of the word in question. While explicit in its syntactic presentation, COBUILD does not feature lexical information boxes, keeping such notes to a bare minimum, to indicate, for instance differences between American and British usage ("in AM, use **high-strung**" at *highly-strung*), otherwise cross-referencing. CALD too cross-references to related entries, while the remaining three make use of information boxes. Some of these, such as the disambiguation of *high* and *tall* (MED and OALD) are of a rather remedial nature, and seem out of place in an advanced learner's dictionary where collocational information is of more value. Others, such as LDOCE's word focus on *strong*, are helpful vocabulary builders. On the whole, though, once a student has found the relevant entry, s/he should have no problem understanding how to use the word correctly.

3.2 Adverbs in bilingual dictionaries: *molto*
In production, a student will try to identify a target form by looking up the source language, so it is useful to examine the information about English adverbs that an Italian can obtain from the Italian-English side of the bilingual dictionaries selected. This section will focus on translations of *molto* ('very') and some of the forms that students might select when translating from Italian submodifier+adjective collocations into English.

Italian use of adverbs is not equivalent to English usage. More common than adverb+verb collocations is the structure *in modo*+adjective ('in a[n] adj. way'). This preference has repercussions on Italians' English production and, potentially, in their look-up preferences. However, Italian does use similar submodifier+adjective collocations as English does, and it is because of mistranslations and calquing in student writing that this area of research has been identified (see Philip 2007: 6-9).

A student who wishes to translate *molto* may well rely on the familiar forms *very*, *rather* and *a lot*, but s/he may wish to opt for a more idiomatic alternative and, in order to do so, consult a bilingual dictionary. Do the entries in Longman, Oxford Study, Rizzoli-Laroussse and Oxford-Paravia provide information for this purpose?

Longman's entry at *molto* is very clear, comprising a focus box with four senses. It provides information regarding fairly elementary grammar points, but a student trying to translate *molto* as a submodifier is given only one option: *very*. The Oxford Study and Rizzoli-Laroussse entries, while providing a little more detail and more sense divisions also give *very* as the only translation of *molto* with adjectives and adverbs. The main preoccupation with *molto* is that is it used in the correct syntactic position, that it is used to quantify time, and that it is used with negative verbs, while *a lot* should be used in the affirmative. The Oxford-Paravia, is a larger dictionary and, as expected, more detail is provided for the adverb sense of *molto*, yet still the translations offered are still limited to *very*, *much*, *really* and *a lot*. None of the bilingual dictionaries offers information regarding synonyms of *very* or *really* in the English-Italian section.

4. Conclusion and recommendations
Given the information provided by both monolingual and bilingual learner's dictionary, students' over-use of *very* and *really*, and under-use of other adverbs of degree is cast in a different light. Users demand dictionaries which serve as complete language reference books, not simply books

of words, and the resulting inclusion of grammatical notes is eating away at space which could be dedicated to more detailed lexical notes.

There is always a mismatch between desiderata for dictionaries and what can realistically be included in the space available. Adverbs of degree may not appear to be a top priority for the majority of learners. In its "Improve your Writing Skills", several of the adverbs examined in this study appear within collocation boxes; but being cited as collocates of adjectives and verbs, means that they are hidden from view. At the very least, cross-references should be provided under *very* to these synonyms; even better would be to include a box which highlights the value of using lexical adverbs in its place; and the CD-ROM accompanying the dictionary could provide further information and practice exercises. Bilingual dictionaries too could include some specific advice on the use of synonyms of *very*, by including lexical usage information alongside grammar notes, or simply by cross-referencing. Only in this way will students be able to expand their vocabulary and begin to use lexical adverbs of degree in their written production.

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