

## Dictionary Usage In English Language Learning

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**Abstract.** *This article examined about the important of using dictionary in English language learning. We cannot deny in learning a foreign language, we need to consult a dictionary. It is supported by Laufer in Koca believes that when word looks familiar but the sentence in which it is found or its wider context makes no sense at all, the learner should be encouraged to consult a dictionary. Sometimes the learners are reluctant to find out the other meaning of word from dictionary, as a result the meaning of that word is not based on the context of the sentence. This article also discussed about types and purpose of using dictionary, criteria of good dictionary, monolingual and bilingual dictionary use and skills in using dictionary.*

**Key words:** *dictionary usage, English language learning*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Dictionary is important tool in learning a foreign language. Walz and Cubillo in Koca et all (2014) state; “Dictionaries provide learners with useful linguistic and cultural information, especially when teachers are unavailable and learners are responsible for their own learning”. While Marckwardt (1973), comments; “Dictionaries often supply information about the language not found elsewhere. Dictionaries often supply information about grammar, usage, status, synonym discrimination, application of derivative affixes, and distinctions between spoken and written English not generally treated in textbooks, even in a rudimentary fashion” (cited in Bensoussan, Sim and Weiss, 1984: 263).

Laufer (1990) cites in Hayati, similarly, believes that when word looks familiar but the sentence in which it is found or its wider context makes no sense at all, the learner should be encouraged to consult a dictionary. Looking up dictionary during reading, speaking and writing help people to know the exact meaning of the word. It is supported by Huang et al, they say that a single word may have several possible meanings, and the appropriate one can often be determined based on context. For example, the word “interest”. The word class of interest can be as noun and verbs. Because this word can be as noun and verb so it has several meanings. Example of the word ‘interest’ as a noun: Do your parents take an interest in your friends”, this word of interest infers that wanting to know more. In addition, example of the word “interest” as a verb: She has always interested herself in charity work, this word of interest infers that to attract your attention and make you feel interested.

From those examples and definitions, it can be seen that each sentence can be understood with different meaning. It means that the use of the word interest is based on the context of the word and different definition of the word. So, based on the statement, it is needed for the language students to consult a dictionary to know the exact meaning of the word.

## **B. DEFINITION OF DICTIONARY**

Lew (2010: 292) states his point of view about traditional printed dictionary, he says that traditional printed dictionary have used a repertoire of devices for presenting meaning in paper dictionary, most of them having to do with words.

He also states that the traditional way in paper dictionary has been to explain words with words, using either a definition (typically in the language of the headword) or an equivalent (typically in another language). Jackson in Adriana and Ovidiu (2009) states that the dictionary as alphabetical lists of words followed by pronunciation information, definitions, and etymology. A dictionary is a reference book about

words. It is a book about language. People consult them to find out information about words.

From the definition above, it can be inferred that dictionary is alphabetical lists of words presenting meaning and consists of pronunciation information, definitions and etymology.

Another definition about dictionaries states by Tarp (2009: 29), he states that dictionary is utility products or tools which are, or should be, designed to satisfy certain human needs. On the other hand, dictionaries are tools for autonomous learning. According to T. Herbst and G. Stain as cited in Tores and Ramos (2003) dictionaries are a tool of achievement control. The dictionary is an institution which enables language learners to check their own knowledge, and to eliminate weaknesses in spelling, pronunciation, grammar and meaning. The dictionary is a tool that will when learners away from the classroom teacher and guide them towards further independent study. It can be concluded that dictionary is a tool to learn language independently which can be used to check their own language and avoid some weaknesses in spelling, pronunciation, grammar and meaning.

According to Al-Bulushy (2012), dictionary is derived from the word "diction" which means style. It is a simple tool which helps us to pronounce, respell and check grammar. It gives meanings to words that cannot be understood, or words that have more than one meaning. Besides meaning, it also provides information on the reader syllables, intonation and pronunciation of words. Moreover, it gives the information on how the words in a sentence are used. Dictionaries are used for words or phrases you do not know and you want to know the meaning. Another definition proposed by Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1998), a dictionary is a book that deals with the individual words of a language or certain spesific class of them so as to set forth their pronunciation, significant and use, their synonyms, derivation and history. A dictionary is a systematically arranged list of socialized linguistics forms

compiled from the speech-habits of a given community and commented on by the author in such a way that the qualified reader understands the meaning (Zgusta; 1971: 197). It can be inferred that dictionary is a book that systematically arranged that provides information about the meaning of the word, pronunciation, spelling, synonyms, derivation and history.

According to Nakamura in Koca et al, dictionary is a mine of information for language learners, providing them with knowledge about vocabulary, ranging from the most important things such as meaning, pronunciation, part of speech, collocation and structure, to detailed information such as etymology and register.

In conclusion, dictionary is a book consists of alphabetically list of words that display information about definition, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, etymology, and usage of words.

### **C. TYPES AND PURPOSE OF USING DICTIONARY**

Dictionary can be classified by many criteria. One way of categorizing dictionary is by number of languages contained in a dictionary. Nation (2001: 288) categorized dictionaries into three classes: monolingual, bilingual, and bilingualized (although trilingual and multilingual dictionary exist as well). Monolingual dictionaries are written in only one language, for instance English-English learner's dictionary while bilingual dictionaries are written in two languages (English-Indonesian and Indonesian-English). Bilingualised dictionary is a monolingual dictionary that also has first-language synonyms or definitions. They exist for only a few languages. Al-Bulushy (2012) also states the format of dictionary can be seen as follow:

#### **a. Printed dictionary.**

Printed dictionary vary from tiny pocket-sized versions that could be affordable and easy to carry, to large wide-ranging multi volume works.

b. Handheld electronic dictionary

Electronic dictionary are small devices that input through a little keyboard, voice recognition or a scanning device that reads printed text and shows the translation on a small LCD screen or speaks the translation by voice telling the accurate pronunciation.

c. Dictionary programs

These are computer software that allocates words or phrases to be entered and translated on a computer monitor.

d. Online

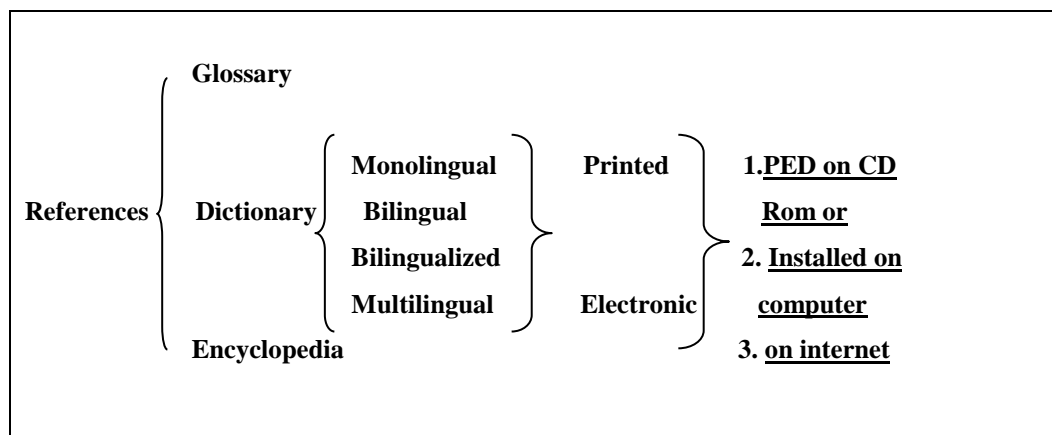
Online dictionary are similar to dictionary programs, these are often uncomplicated to search, but not always complimentary to use.

e. Visual

A visual dictionary is a printed dictionary that depends chiefly on illustrations to provide the user with a reliable way of identifying the correct translation.

The summary of types of dictionaries can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Dictionary



(cited from *ABAC Journal Vol.30 No. 3* (September-December, 2010 pp.56-74) in Al Bulushy

Nation (2000: 459) states some various types of information that can be found in the numerous reviews of particular dictionary. It can be seen in following table:

Table 2 Dictionary Information and What Is Involved in Knowing a Word

Form	Spoken	R P	Pronunciation
	Written	R P	Spelling, hyphenation (syllabification)
	Word parts	R P	Etymology Inflections, derived forms
Meaning	Form and meaning	R P	Derived forms, etymology, examples
	Concept and referents	R P	Meanings, illustrations Examples
	Associations	R P	Examples Synonyms, opposites, superordinate
Use	Grammatical functions	R P	Grammatical patterns, examples
	Collocations	R P	Collocations, examples
	Constraints on use	R P	Frequency, register, style

Nation (2000: 446) also explains some purposes of using dictionary as follows:

a. Comprehension (decoding)

- 1) Look up unknown words met while listening, reading or translating
- 2) Confirm the meanings of partly known words
- 3) Confirm guesses from context

b. Production (encoding)

- 1) Look up unknown words needed to speak, write, or translate
- 2) Look up the spelling, pronunciation, meaning, grammar, constraints use, collocation, inflections and derived forms of partly known words needed to speak, write or translate

- 3) Confirm the spelling
- 4) Check that word exist
- 5) Find a different word to use instead of a known one
- 6) Correct an error

c. Learning

- 1) Choose an known words to learn
- 2) Enrich knowledge of partly known words, including etymology.

In addition, Nation (2008: 114) states that dictionary can help learners in three major ways (1) they can help learners understand words that they meet in reading and listening; (2) they can help learners find words that they need for speaking and writing; (3) they can help learners remember words.

From the explanation above, there are some types of dictionary: monolingual, bilingual and trilingual dictionary. The format of dictionary is printed, handheld electronic dictionary, dictionary program, online and visual dictionary. In addition, the purposes of using dictionary are: comprehension, production and learning.

#### **D. CRITERIA OF GOOD DICTIONARY**

Nation also (1989: 68) explains about some criteria of good dictionary based on the finding research on vocabulary and vocabulary learning, they should contain the following information:

a. Information about the usefulness of words.

The dictionary should contain some indication of word frequency. This could be done by using numbers (as in the Cambridge English Lexicon) for the high frequency words of English, perhaps the most frequent 5,000 or so words and having no indication for the remaining low frequency words. Any word with a

number would be worth making an effort to learn. Other words could be left to the learners' discretion.

b. Contexts for the words

Wherever possible the dictionary should provide sentence contexts for words in order to enrich the chances of learning. Most learners' dictionary already do this. It would be advantageous if these sentences preceded the definition to encourage guessing from context.

c. Helpful etymology

Where it is useful, the dictionary should include simple etymological information. Such information is helpful where the meanings of the words parts can be related to the meaning of word.

d. Definition that relate to word parts

The definition given should be worded so that they contain the meaning of the parts of the words, *depreciate* for example in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987) is defined "to fall in value". A slight change in this definition to "to go down in value" includes "down", the meaning of the prefix *de-*. This type of change does not change the size of the entry for this item.

e. Keywords

Each dictionary entry could suggest a keyword for that item. This would encourage the use of this very effective mnemonic technique.

f. Underlying concepts

Definitions should cover as many uses of the word as possible, treating different uses as examples of the underlying concept rather than as separate meanings. This would have the added benefits of encouraging learners to be flexible in their interpretation of words in context and would encourage the development of concepts that are not poor translations of first language concepts.



g. The format of entries

The format of each entry should help learning. For example, the definitions might come *after* the examples of encourage guessing from context. The etymology would be pointed out before the definition is given.

h. Computer use

The dictionary should be available in both book form and on computer disc. This would allow the dictionary to be used in many ways with other computer materials.

#### **E. MONOLINGUAL AND BILINGUAL DICTIONARY USE**

Some researches have been done related to the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionary. Koca et al (2014) from the English Monolingual Dictionary (EMD), students can learn many aspects of the English language, such as the meaning of words and phrases, spelling and pronunciation, word stress, words' part of speech, grammatical information about the word, the use of target word in context, its synonyms and antonyms, the register of the word etc. The dictionary of lexicography defines a bilingual dictionary as "a type of dictionary which relates the vocabularies of two languages together by means of translation equivalents" (Hartmann in Lukac). Laufer et al investigated about the effectiveness of three types of dictionary: monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised. The results of the research suggested that different dictionary may be suitable for users with different abilities for dictionary use. Other research by Hayati (2006) focused on contribution of using bilingual versus monolingual dictionary. The result showed that in both groups the number of words decreased by the passage of time and the performance of monolingual group, contrary to the bilingual one's, has not showed a significant difference in interval of the last two tests.

Atkins (1985) in Marin, who made a comparison of both types of dictionaries, listed 13 components generally found in either BD or MD entries:

1. the headword, and any variant spellings;
2. pronunciation;
3. details of word classes (parts of speech) to which the headword belong;
4. morphology: inflection(s) which may cause difficulties;
5. syntax: the syntactic potential of the headword and any syntactic restrictions it may carry;
6. an explanation of the various senses of the headword;
7. exemplification of usage, including collocating words and fixed or semi-fixed phrases;
8. a listing of derived forms of the headword, with or without further explanation;
9. cross-reference(s) to related entries;
10. semantic (including selectional restrictions).
11. stylistic: indication of style and register, where relevant;
12. usage material for the purpose of further clarification, e.g. differentiation from near-synonyms, or warning of hidden hazards;
13. etymological: a diachronic view of the headword.

*(From Atkins, 1985:16)*

## **F. SKILLS IN USING DICTIONARY**

Nation (2000: 451) also explains about some skills that are needed in using dictionary as follows:

### **a. Receptive use**

Receptive use of a dictionary largely involves looking up the meaning of a word that has been met while reading or listening. The following steps make up strategy that can be the basis for learners training. The four steps in the strategy for looking up the meanings of words in a dictionary for comprehension purposes are:

- 1) Get information from the context when the word occurred. The skills needed for this steps include (1) deciding on the part of speech of the word to be looked up, (2) deciding if the word is an inflected or derived from that can be reduced to a base form, (3) guessing the general meaning of the words, and (4) deciding if the word is worth looking up by considering its relevance to the task and its general usefulness.
- 2) Find the dictionary entry. This skills needed for this include (1) knowing the order of the letters of the alphabet, (2) knowing the dictionary symbols for the different parts of speech, and (3) knowing alternative places to search.
- 3) Choose the right sub-entry: Once the correct entry has been found there may be a need to choose between different meanings and uses listed within that entry.
- 4) Relate the meaning to the context and decide if it fits: This steps involves adapting the meaning found in the dictionary to the context of the word in the text.

b. Productive use

Using a dictionary for productive use is sometimes called using a dictionary for encoding, that is, turning ideas into language. It involves finding word forms to express messages. It is possible to devise a strategy for using a dictionary for productive use.

From the explanation above it can be inferred that there are two types of dictionary skill: receptive and productive use.

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