

THE ROLE OF E-DICTIONARIES IN MODERN WORLD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article that differentiating of paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries to learners' vocabulary learning. And also which one is the most advantage or disadvantage for students and this article discusses the e-dictionaries during the end.

Keywords: paper dictionary, electronic dictionary, vocabulary, reading comprehension, order of alphabet, functions, curriculum development, classroom management.

INTRODUCTION

Dictionaries are a very important language learning tool. Alfonso Rizo-Rodriguez (2004) says that the teaching and learning of English not only can be done through different grammatical studies, but also a large range of dictionaries can be used. To appreciate how useful dictionaries are, one must acknowledge the role of dictionaries in English vocabulary building. Vocabulary plays an important role in second language acquisition and academic achievement (Taylor, L. 2005). Moreover, it is now increasingly agreed that there is a reciprocal, well-documented relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Constantinescu, 2007).

Generally, dictionaries are classified into paper and electronic dictionaries. The present research was conducted to see if there were any significant differences between the above-mentioned dictionaries in the learning and retrieval of new lexicon. This study is an attempt to assess their advantages and disadvantages in the field of second/foreign language learning. Being able to make the most of a dictionary requires a comprehensive training. Students should be familiarized with different kinds of dictionaries in the market as well as their advantages and disadvantages. Collecting data pertaining to the form of an electronic dictionary or paper dictionary is a remarkably hard task. According to Cerna (2006), publication of dictionaries is a challenging and time-consuming enterprise with its own peculiar difficulties. The same or similar problems may exist in the preparation of electronic dictionaries. Before the advent of electronic science and the development of electronic dictionaries, traditional paper-dictionaries were prevailing. Features like shape, size and quality were different but application policies were the same. As mentioned in Encarta Dictionary on CD-ROM version 2005, from the age of Sumerian, when the first dictionary was used, until recently paper dictionaries have been the only source for vocabulary learning and research works. Special advantages of paper dictionaries have encouraged publishers to continue using them then and now. To name some of the specifications of paper dictionaries, reference can be made to the following:

Advantages of paper dictionaries (henceforth, P-D)

- They are easy to browse; you just flip the papers alphabetically and look the word up.

- They are easy to buy; cheaper than some usual book.
- They are easy to replicate in different size and word volumes.
- They are easy to use; all you require is the power of vision and knowledge of the order of alphabet.
- Concise ones are durable; you can put them in your backpack and carry them everywhere with yourself.

These features coerce proponents to keep using paper dictionaries. According to the results of a seminar on Localization and Human Technology entitled “making a traditional dictionary into an electronic lexicon”, which was held in Bangalore University, Mysore in Nov. 2001, some of disadvantages of paper dictionaries include the following:

Disadvantages of P-D:

- Abridged paper dictionaries are not comprehensive.
- Comprehensive ones are bulky.
- Bulky ones tear off easily.
- Weight makes them difficult to handle.
- Difficult to make them more than bilingual.

As for paper dictionaries, Nesi (1998) maintains that good paper-based dictionaries are too fat. That is the reason why students leave them at home, why teachers do not carry one from classroom to classroom; and why all but the most enthusiastic users deal with only one dictionary at a time, rather than pooling the resources of several different volumes. Similarly, Chen-Josephson (2006) says: "When I ask students about their dictionaries, I find that nearly all of them have paper dictionaries -- often bought for them by parents or other relatives -- but few of them use them. When they want or need to know something about a word, they usually look it up on line" (Chen-Josephson, 2006, p. 1). In short, the advantages and disadvantages of E-D are listed below.

Advantages of E-D

- Many volumes get compressed into one electronic dictionary.
- Storage and retrieval become quick and easy.
- They are light, compact and faster than any paper dictionary.
- One can easily update some of the brands by using internet and software.
- To make a large dictionary like OED 44 years (1884 – 1928) have been used, while for converting it into electronic dictionary a 10- year period of time is needed.
- They have certain unique functions, such as error tolerant input which helps users to look up words with wrong spelling.
- They have cross-referencing as well as colorful pictures word and spelling games.
- They encourage cooperative attitude among users because a view of the screen is more easily shared than a view of the page.

Disadvantages of E-D

- Electronic dictionary is fragile; you should take good care of it, you can't put them in your backpack as you do with you paper dictionary.
- you need to prepare extra battery; no power means the electronic dictionary is useless so you have to spend some money every time.
- They are far more expensive than their paper counterpart and so they are subject to theft.

- They cause users to forget alphabetical order gradually.
- They decrease student ability in pronunciation and spelling because machine does this for them.

In conclusion, further research is required to have comprehensive picture of utilizing mobile dictionaries in language learning classes regarding curriculum development, classroom management, and its effect on students language acquisition and retention in context.

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