

Dictionary Using Habits of Electrical Engineering Students in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

The modern-day dictionaries, particularly the EFL learner dictionaries have improved enormously on their micro-macro and super structure, yet the potential users of these kinds of dictionaries are not fully aware of this comprehensive improvement. As a result, the wealth of information, both linguistic and encyclopedic goes unheeded by the potential learners. The main cause of all this is attributed to the lack of requisite reference skill (Dictionary using skills) by the learners. The aim of this study is to find out the extent to which the students of electrical engineering at UMT possess the necessary reference skills to be able to use the EFL learner dictionaries efficiently in situations of linguistic and pragmatic failure. The research methodology used in this investigation is eclectic drawing on the essential principles of both qualitative and quantitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the situation under investigation. As many as one hundred students were selected randomly for this study. The findings of the pilot study suggest that most of the students lack the necessary dictionary using skills to make the most of the information provided in the dictionary which, of course, underscores the need to teach the students on how to use the dictionary, the kind of dictionary most suitable for them and integrating the dictionary with the language class. Such a measure is expected to improve the linguistic and communicative competence of the learners and will make them confident and self-reliant in their study.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of a dictionary
plans as well as classroom teaching

1.2 Background and literature review

1.3 Aim of the study

Referencing skills are part and parcel of study skills of university students. There is a growing trend in universities to include dictionary using skill as part of study skills, note taking and intensive reading. Dictionaries can lead to enormous vocabulary growth in L2 learners. Main aim of this study is to find out the use of dictionary by students. The study is limited to address the following research questions.

1.4 Research question

1. Do the students use dictionaries outside and inside classroom?
2. Are they familiar and self efficacious in using dictionaries for grasping meaning or pronunciation?

2. Methodology

The method of study is quantitative as well as qualitative. A questionnaire that comprised of 21 questions was conducted among 100 selected students of Electrical Engineering at UMT, Lahore, Punjab.

2.1 Population and sample

The population and sample of study is mentioned below:

A questionnaire is administered through 100 students who were randomly selected from electrical engineering department at UMT, Lahore. All of them participated in filling up the questionnaire about dictionary use. Likert scale was used in questionnaire in measuring student's responses on a continuum of five degrees. Questions were asked to know students' habits of using dictionary as well as their proficiency. Based on their responses, the researcher suggests the ways to improve the existing situation.

2.2. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher. It has 21 questions. Questions deal with students' referencing skills, knowing the pronunciation, stress pattern from dictionary, use of dictionaries inside and outside classrooms, effectiveness of pictorial, online and mobile and bilingual dictionaries.

2.3 Data analysis

Age graph of sample population indicates that the selected university students participated in the research. 87 percent of them are pursuing a B.Sc. degree. While asked how do they understand the meaning of a word. 100 percent people said they used a dictionary and use of internet was the second-best choice selected by them. 96 % people agreed that they preferred using an online dictionary because of its omnipresence in computer lab. Since all the students belong to engineering group, they rely on technology more than a printed book that is hard to carry.

Dictionary preferences show a very striking result. 100 percent students agreed that they used dictionaries of other languages to understand English. It implies that students find it very comfortable to access bilingual dictionaries. Similarly, 98% percent students have also agreed that they prefer to use English to English dictionaries. It clearly shows that consultation of dictionary only occurs when the students do not understand a word and it does not matter for engineering students whether it is necessarily a bilingual dictionary or a monolingual dictionary. Dictionary has a strong link with learning new words; students’ responses show a huge discrepancy over this issue. 37 % of them strongly agree that their classroom assignments forced them to consult a dictionary. 33% agreed that they also consulted dictionaries while making assignments. Only 14 % students said that they didn’t consult dictionaries while conducting assignments. Many students appreciated the use of dictionaries by saying that they made their course content easier. English language assignments mostly demand use of dictionaries. 61% people agreed that dictionaries help in getting the assignments done.

3. Results and Findings

These results have been extracted from SPSS data tables. Student’s responses have been written against each statement. Complete research questionnaire and data tables have been given in the annexure.

Sr. No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. Many of your assignments in English language class forced you to use dictionary.	37 %	33%	16%	13 %
2. While learning English language dictionaries are useful.	37%	43%	14%	
3. Dictionaries are extremely helpful in understanding the course content.		27%	37%	18%
4. Dictionaries also help in getting English assignments done.		32%	29%	21%
5. You like to use picture dictionaries.		25%	41%	23%
6. Pictures help you, while learning nouns.	29%	39%	23%	7%
7. Pictorial dictionary explains meanings better than simple dictionary.	36 %	36%	21%	6%
8. Online dictionaries give sufficient information regarding any expression.	35%	39%	17%	
9. While studying, you use Google or Yahoo for searching meaning of difficult words.	38%	42%	14%	
10. You think you feel difficulty in understanding terms/ meanings in a bilingual dictionary. e.g: Urdu to English or vice versa.	18%	36%	22%	

11. Dictionaries should be made available 7% in classrooms for the students to use extensively during lessons.	27%	31%	20%	15%
12. You feel any problems of comprehension of 14% 4% meaning while consulting any dictionary.	18%	36%		28%
13. You frequently seek help in learning 1% pronunciation of an unusual word.	19%	33%	33%	14%
14. You learn stress pattern from dictionary. 4%	22%	31%	24%	19%

1. The relationship between assignments and the dictionary use but does not practice it adequately.
2. One may call it a strange response of Electrical Engineering class that they find picture dictionaries useful and they like to use such dictionaries. At mature level, the explanatory or descriptive dictionaries are considered more useful than pictorial ones but the labeling habit of engineering students may find it more convenient to use pictorial dictionaries.
3. The response of sixth and seventh queries in the line of fifth query. The students like picture dictionaries and a large number of them find these dictionaries helpful in acquiring nouns and they think pictorial explanation is easier than explanatory one. Probably the second language learners face certain barriers in the use of monolingual dictionary. Sometimes they search the meaning of a word or phrase in the monolingual dictionary and they come across another unfamiliar word or its unfamiliar use. In such a situation picture dictionaries help them and they do not indulge in any sort of anxiety.
4. An overwhelming majority agrees that the online dictionaries give sufficient information

Discussion

Role and importance of dictionary can't be denied in the global scenario of language teaching. We can't stop relying on them rather we must find suitable ways to reconnect with

dictionaries as it is clear from the findings that students are more prone to use internet and mobile dictionaries. It's high time to incorporate them in our teaching. As language teachers it's our responsibility to keep ourselves updated with the new trends and also facilitate the need of students.

It is very much evident that students lack necessary reference skills. They have succumbed to easy practices of using mobile phone dictionaries and goggling meanings. Now it's the role of the teacher to establish a link between classroom and home assignments with the use of dictionaries. In this way students can be self-sufficient in learning language. Deficiency of self-efficaciousness in the use of dictionaries makes students lethargic as well as incompetent in language learning. Dictionaries help in your study and work.

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