

GAINING SKILLS FOR USING ONLINE DICTIONARIES

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Abstract: *Two elements are necessary for successful dictionary use: competent dictionary users and excellent, user-friendly dictionaries. Making better dictionaries is the main focus of current lexicography research, with new opportunities provided by the electronic media. On the other hand, not as much focus is placed on the other component, which is user education. This article examines dictionary reference abilities to see how they should change from traditional print dictionary skills to enable users to make the most of electronic dictionaries, especially those that are available online.*

The most notable feature of electronic dictionaries is their innovative approaches to lexicographic data access. The necessary abilities are found by looking through some pertinent books on electronic dictionary search strategies as well as some research on web search skills.

Keywords: *information literacy, dictionary skills, electronic dictionary, online dictionary, reference skills, internet skills, digital literacy,*

When someone uses a dictionary, both the dictionary and the user are involved. As such, effective lexicographic consulting is a two-way process that relies on two factors: the user's proficiency with the dictionary and the dictionary's ease of use. We are currently actively looking for new criteria of quality for electronic dictionaries as the electronic revolution approaches. However, user education is still a legitimate problem, as demonstrated persuasively in the case of online dictionaries. Although there isn't a lot of research on dictionary skills training, some reliable and valuable conclusions have already been made (e.g. Kennedy, 1972; Herbst & Stein, 1987; Chi, 1998; Nesi, 1999; Bishop, 2000, 2001; CampoyCubillo, 2002; Carduner, 2003; Osuchowska, 2003; Lew & Galas, 2008; Van der Merwe, 2012).

The article refocuses on using electronic dictionaries, emphasizing online dictionaries in particular. It is evident that the way information is accessed in print and electronic dictionaries differs significantly from the user's point of view.

As a result, it's also critical to emphasize an effort to pinpoint or deduce the talents that seem to be involved in using the search strategies.

Ultimately, the digital competencies utilized in web search tactics pinpoint additional competencies that may be pertinent while utilizing online dictionaries.

Hartmann (1999) identified a set of skills that are necessary for dictionary users, although these skills have not been empirically proven. This is still the case today, with the

majority of the dictionary abilities currently required being determined by introspection—that is, by attempting to consider what transpires during a dictionary consultation act. Nesi's (1999) list of dictionary skills, which was created with university students, is the most extensive to date. Though, obviously, at that time the coverage of concerns related to electronic dictionaries, and in particular online dictionaries, could not have been very wide by today's standards, the list was meant to be pertinent for both print and electronic dictionaries. Nesi divides her skill set into phases that correspond to the main, fictitious processes that would be engaged in using a dictionary while enrolled in college.

These phases consist of five, in addition to a sixth cluster of metalexicographic abilities grouped together under the heading "Understanding lexicographical issues."

Therefore, the following are the four steps that are covered:

1. Prior to studying (i.e., choosing a dictionary for the educational research)
2. Prior to consulting a dictionary
3. Finding the entry details
4. Examining entry-level data

This study identified several phases and abilities necessary for using dictionaries.

Step 1: Prior to research

The first ability is identifying the different kinds of dictionaries and selecting the one or ones to purchase or consult.

Ability 2: Understanding the kinds of data that dictionaries and other reference materials contain.

In the print period, knowledge about the variety and kinds of dictionaries and (more broadly) reference works used to be quite steady. On the other hand, the reference works of today are changing so quickly that it is difficult to stay up to date. It is getting harder and harder to keep up with the best reference books.

Luckily, this need not be the real problem; in fact, with so many options accessible, it might be enough to choose the adequate tool. If we think that teaching students about dictionaries should be the responsibility of the educational system, this is complicated by the fact that teachers in many nations have been left behind by the digital revolution. They struggle to keep up with new technology and often perform worse than their students in this regard (Langegard, 2011). Dictionary users are therefore essentially on their own.

Step 2: Prior to consulting a dictionary

Ability 3: Determining if consulting a dictionary is required

The main consideration in making this choice is balancing the possible advantages of consultation against its costs, which include time, inconvenience, and distraction. Overall, choosing to consult a dictionary is simple, as is the act of consulting one: research frequently indicates that people use digital dictionaries more frequently than those printed on paper.

Ability 4: Selecting what to search for

Selecting the proper look-up item form is the fifth skill. Identifying the locus of difficulty, selecting between a single word and a multi-word item, and then developing a citation form likely to have headword status in the dictionary are crucial steps in this pre-lookup phase in print dictionaries.

The user does not have to worry about some of the aforementioned issues with more advanced electronic dictionaries; multi-word expressions might be simpler to identify, and inflected-form search and incremental search can help locate the necessary item (Lew, 2012b).

Selecting the lexicon that will most likely fulfill the consultation's objectives is skill number six. One could be spoilt for choice by the abundance of dictionaries that are readily available online. Users may not be able to detect bad and/or outdated content promoted by many online dictionaries since they are often (mis)led by looks and unable to tell the wheat from the chaff.

Ability 5: Interpreting the look-up item's meaning contextually

Until e-dictionaries can truly help with contextual sense disambiguation, this ability is largely applicable to receptive dictionary use and is relevant to both print and electronic dictionaries.

Ability 6: Determining the look-up item's word class

This ability limits the look-up to a particular grammatical class (noun, adjective), which should make things easier. It is pertinent to dictionaries that employ part of speech as a key factor in organizing their lexicographic information. The user might not have to recognize the part of speech if they have access to an electronic dictionary that is connected to the text they are reading. This is fairly insignificant if the word form that appears in the text is a distinct inflectional form (required, for example). If not, some parsing and tagging is needed to positively identify the part of speech (e.g. requires).

Step 3: Finding the admission details

Ability 7: Recognizing the dictionary's structure

Electronic dictionaries are structured entities, just like print dictionaries. Even for users who are accustomed to using paper dictionaries, the electronic media can be somewhat challenging due to its ability to support a wider range of structural types. In contrast to paper dictionaries, which have evolved a rather uniform set of norms over centuries, electronic dictionaries are structurally more convergent. This wide diversity of electronic dictionary types is an indication of technological divergence.

Ability 8: Recognizing phonemic and graphic correspondence

Today's electronic dictionaries are not very good at providing clear phonemic look-up options, but speech recognition appears to be the way of the future—that is, once it can get over the challenges of handling individual quirks and foreign accents. English language learners frequently attempt to respell words in order to mimic their pronunciation, and more accurate "did you mean" systems are frequently able to determine the word that was truly intended (Lew & Mitton, 2011, 2013).

Ability 9: Selecting homonyms

The difference between polysemy and homonymy is not always as relevant for contemporary dictionaries. Current practice, largely influenced by learner lexicography, groups senses according to parts of speech rather than historical relatedness. In any case, this skill seems to be a subset of a more general skill: finding the relevant sense in the dictionary.

Ability 10: Locating derived forms

An electronic dictionary can greatly help users locate derived items by offering explicit links between the related forms or, alternatively, by being able to compute derived forms in real time when equipped with "morphological awareness."

This could be challenging for less experienced native writers, but it is especially important for non-native language dictionary users, whose grasp of the language's derivational morphology may be far from full.

Ability 11: Identifying multiword phrases

Nesi (1999) asserts that finding multi-word units is a skill that is frequently overlooked. According to Lew (2012b), complete treatment under every pertinent component can greatly improve access to this infamously problematic type of item and lessen the impact of the user's inability to predict the keyword of an expression. Furthermore, this ability is rendered useless by dictionaries that can extract precise information from their database and recognize multi-word units (provided they can "see" the text being read or translated).

Ability 12: Recognizing hyperlinking in electronic dictionaries and the cross-referencing method in print dictionaries

With the increasing importance of the Web in modern life and business, dictionary users' capacity to utilize the hypertext elements of dictionaries is probably going to get better. The ability requires knowledge of the related pieces and their destinations. Although user-centered design principles should guarantee that hyperlinks are visible to users, the choice of whether or not to follow a hyperlink must be based on knowledge of the content and organization of the dictionary.

Step 4: Analyzing the data from the entry**Ability 13: Differentiating the elements that make up the entry**

Understanding a dictionary's microstructural composition in the context of electronic lexicography might be a more sophisticated skill depending on how the various lexicographic data types are arranged and shown in a given e-dictionary. In theory, not all of the information stored in the database has to be included in the data shown.

Ability 14: Differentiating between pertinent and unrelated data

A general cognitive skill is determining if information is relevant to the task at hand. This ability depends on having a solid grasp of one's information needs in a given environment.

Users must be aware of the kinds of information that dictionaries can provide in order to match their demands against the content.

Finding knowledge about word spellings is skill number eighteen.

Finding spelling knowledge has never been easier thanks to modern electronic dictionaries. Initially, users can enter fictitious spelling variations into the search bar, making the headword order—which is essential to print dictionaries—virtually meaningless. Second, if you enter the first few characters of a word correctly, a suggest-as-you-type feature can fill in the missing character (Lew, 2012a). Third, reasonable misspellings stand a chance of being corrected by the 'did you mean' function (Lew & Mitton, 2011, 2013).

Ability 15: Recognizing typographical conventions and using symbols, numbered superscripts, and punctuation

One can, to some extent, abandon typographical conventions driven primarily by space constraints in electronic dictionaries, as these dictionaries still adhere to presentation space constraints (Lew). However, some of the traditionally cryptic shorthand symbols may still be spelled out, while dictionaries can provide pop-up explanations for others.

Ability 16: Interpreting pronunciation information

Due to technological limitations, print dictionaries are unable to include pronunciation information. However, an increasing number of electronic dictionaries are able to do so by providing spoken audio representations of objects.

These are effective for native language speakers, but because speech sounds are perceived differently depending on one's home language's phonological system, a language learner might not be able to identify an item's phonemic composition just by hearing it. Therefore, the simplicity of auditory representations might be misleading for language learners. Because transcription offers a clear and precise phonemic representation, it is still useful in computerized dictionaries. It goes without saying that understanding transcription interpretation is a very technical ability and is not something that the average user would be expected to possess.

Ability 17: Analyzing etymological data

Ability 18: Analyzing information based on morphology and syntax

Ability 19: Analyzing definitions or translations

Ability 20: Analyzing data on collocations

Ability 21: Analyzing data regarding colloquial and metaphorical language

Ability 22: Gathering data from illustrations

These abilities are more concerned with how specific information is represented than they are with the print vs. electronic debate. The aforementioned competencies are therefore equally applicable to e-dictionaries, with the possible exception of situations in which the electronic format can provide a more user-friendly presentation than that of paper dictionaries.

Ability 23: Referring to additional dictionary information (in front matter, appendices, hypertext links)

Generally speaking, there is potential for improved integration of the key textual components of paper dictionaries that were previously distinct in the electronic media. By embedding, integrating, and hyperlinking, this is accomplished. Likewise, it need also be simpler for users to move between the various lexicographic data areas.

Ability 24: Applying and confirming look-up data

After data has been taken out of an entry, it must be used in the production, translation, or comprehension process that originally caused the lookup.

This is a complicated talent, and turning digital won't make it any simpler, unless the dictionary is included into a more advanced lexical instrument, like an intelligent writing assistant.

Skill 25: Information and digital literacy

Given that online dictionaries are available via the internet, proficiency with them shouldn't be separated from proficiency with the internet in general. Conceptualizing abilities connected to computer-mediated information retrieval can be done in a number of ways. Digital literacy and information literacy are two words that are often used (Bawden, 2008; Lankshear&Knobel, 2008). A search of the relevant literature reveals that these concepts tend to be described in fairly broad terms but usually include recognition of an information need, its nature, and extent. Slightly more specific items include entering search terms and understanding site navigation. Hargittai (2005) made an attempt to reduce active internet skills to declared familiarity with internet terms. Web users tend to resort to very simple strategies for internet-based information retrieval.

The abilities required to use dictionaries effectively are changing in tandem with the move to electronic dictionaries. Certain old abilities, like turning a word form into its citation form or navigating a paper page, are essentially going extinct. Nonetheless, the various new search methods made possible by electronic dictionaries lead to the development of new abilities.

Finding a suitable setting for teaching e-dictionary skills is a major challenge. It seems intriguing to have an online course platform that incorporates language awareness and dictionary abilities into the curriculum (Ranalli,2013).

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