

A Comparative Study of Collins Learner Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary in the Range of EFL Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This essay would discuss the application of Collins learner Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary for EFL teaching. There will be 5 parts consisting in the following. The first part is relevant research and concepts which are needed to explore. The target learners this essay would mainly discuss are at upper-level. They are aiming at find the meaning of unknown word's meeting in reading and acquire the related collocations for using in future study. For upper-level students, the focus of using dictionaries is not only for improving receptive skills but also productive skills.

KEYWORDS

Corpus-based study; Language learner; Comparative study

1 Introduction

This essay would discuss the application of Collins learner Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary for EFL teaching. There will be 5 parts consisting in the following. The first part is relevant research and concepts which are needed to explore. The second part will expose the benefits and challenges of these two dictionaries facing when they are applied to the EFL aspect. They will be evaluated more than the tools for language learners to improve the amount of vocabularies. The third part is the practical examples from these two dictionaries. Sketch would act as a supporter at this part. The fourth part will be suggestions and limitations of the research. The fifth part is the summary of this essay. The target learners this essay would mainly discuss are at upper-level. They are aiming at find the meaning of unknown word's meeting in reading and acquire the related collocations for using in future study. For upper-level students, the focus of using dictionaries is not only for improving receptive skills but also productive skills.

2 Relevant Concepts to be Explored

"Dictionary is an acknowledged learning tool which has a tremendous role in acquiring a language." (Wajahat & Mudassar, 2019)The importance of dictionaries is widely believed for vocabulary learning. it is obvious that good learners are required to have A wide range of vocabulary and good quality lexis. Hartmen (1987) argues that the main aim of using dictionary is presenting or at least reducing the conflicts arose from lexical deficit. In fact, using dictionaries for learning EFL is not only beneficial to lexis but also developing language proficiency. Dictionaries support language learners to get sufficient and appropriate information for their lexis or proper usage. ELT dictionaries mainly have only two types, monolingual and bilingual. Monolingual dictionaries are more suitable for EFL while bilingual dictionaries play better roles for learning

translation. Monolingual dictionaries act better roles in potential than bilingual dictionaries for avoiding enforce learners taking one-to-one translation from target language to native languages. (Wajahat & Mudassar, 2019) Students are able to choose the type of dictionary based on their inclination. Especially for the learners above low levels, bilingual dictionaries could offer more profits. (Geoff, 1987) Based on Laufer and Melamed (1994), monolingual dictionaries are most efficient either in production or comprehension. Widely used vocabularies would be treated better in monolingual dictionaries than other dictionaries because those are used in English textbooks so that there are some phenomena showing well skillful language learners are prefer to use bilingual ones. (Montse & Di'dac, 2010)

In 1979, Tomaszczyk has looked for which type of dictionaries is widely used for NNS. Based on his research, most learners are willing to use bilingual dictionaries in their learning process. There is a same result showing in Schmit (2020) that the majority of English language learners in Japan are used to rely on bilingual dictionaries. Pousi (2010) found that learners who are never been trained about how to use dictionaries more relying on bilingual dictionaries than monolingual dictionaries. It is clear that using monolingual dictionaries is important for students to their language study but it is necessary for learners to get related guides about how to use monolingual dictionaries appropriately.

3 Benefits and Challenges of Using Monolingual Dictionaries in Language Teaching

3.1 Relevant Research and Arguments

Monolingual dictionaries do not only pay attention to the definitions of words but also other meaningful area. 16 Monolingual dictionaries could help students get ridding of the habits of translation. MC would help students develop critical thinking about the results shown from the websites. Doubts help improvements. However, Thomson (1987) holds a different view. He believes that bilingual dictionaries provide as much information as monolingual dictionaries so that bilingual dictionary is more practical than monolingual one.

Tulger (2017) argues that even using monolingual dictionaries could help learners in many different aspects, it is not easy to use them as bilingual dictionaries. Lew (2004) also agree with these standpoints. He said that due to the grammatical structure, using monolingual dictionaries for language learning is more complicated than expected. Otherwise, EFL learners have more interests in using bilingual dictionaries because of the easy and quick.

The purpose of learners using dictionaries are divided into 3 types by Scholfied (1997), which are comprehension, production and learning. At comprehension stage, language learners use dictionaries for decoding. (Carter, 1998) For example, students aim to confirm guesses for unfamiliar words or needs translation for listening and reading. If learners use dictionaries looking up the spelling, pronunciation or collocations for writing or speaking, they are at the production or encoding stage. The last but not the least, sometimes students would like to enrich knowledge of unknown vocabularies then the dictionaries are required to offer sufficient learning materials.

Those are what learners want from dictionaries so what kind of dictionaries could be viewed as good dictionaries for language learners. Nation (2007) argues 3 points that a good dictionary should be examined, the information it provides, the way learners use it and the effect of use it. In the following, two dictionaries, The Collins Learner Dictionary (COBUILD) and Oxford learners' dictionary would be evaluated based on Nation's argument. And the next part would discuss how to apply these 2 monolingual dictionaries in EFL learning and teaching appropriately with examples on their websites.

What instructors need to pay attention is that learning is a long-term program, which should not

be expected that one word could be learned one time but a little contribution to the final income. Nation also concludes the progress of learning word by dictionaries into 4 steps, meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning focused output and fluency development. (Carter, 1998)

Dictionaries act as an irreplaceable role in the advanced language learners, especially at vocabulary and grammar learning. After obtaining numbers of lexis, the needs of advanced learners is not satisfied only by identifying new words' meaning, knowing their pronunciation and how should use them. B1 learners pay more attention on what are their synonyms, anonymous and collocations. The more important is how categories new words into their word list should. As a result, monolingual dictionaries show more benefits than bilingual dictionaries facing to advanced learners. Based on that, I would like to discuss two monolingual learner dictionaries, Collins Learner Dictionary and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary about how they could be used in the second language teaching.

3.2 The Advantages of Using Dictionaries in the EFL Teaching or Learning

Collins is making changes happened. The submission of new vocabularies would transfer to open to any users who can speak English in short time, which would format a kind of on-line cooperation in the range of dictionary users. In my own opinion, this change would have positive effects for the language learners' experience of using monolingual dictionaries. Part Wikipedia could be wide-used and accepted by people is partly because it offers chances to population for interacting with the knowledge. If the language learners could have opportunities for improving their degree of participation, they would feel high-motivated for using dictionaries. Especially for the upper-level students, it is a valuable chance to build to their ability of using language for academic purpose. In addition, the cooperation of editing dictionaries could also be used as an activity that test students' lexis level.

The included vocabularies in the Collins came from 4.5 billion-word Collins Corpus. The corpus is composed of large range of spoken and written tokens, which is not only involved text materials like newspapers and books, but also include the vocabularies mentioned from radio and social media. Students who use Collins are able to get access to all kinds of vocabularies related to the social life. Besides improving language levels on academic purpose, students could use Collins for their daily lives. It is a good choice for students to use monolingual dictionaries because the new words faced in everyday life are lower level than academic lexis. So for the students preferring to use bilingual dictionaries, could get familiar with monolingual dictionaries from the daily using words. Oxford Advanced learners' dictionary is an efficient tool for students to improve their pronunciation. The users of Oxford dictionary are able to feel much closer to the pure British and American accent based on the collocation applied by the dictionaries. As one of the productive skills, speaking skills are gradually viewed as the hardest part to improve. Different from writing articles or essays, EFL learners do not have many opportunities to train their accent from existing materials. Especially for the students living in single-language country, developing advanced speaking skills with great accent is really difficult. As for the majority of students at upper-level students, their amount of vocabulary has attached the goal. The main problem they might face about speaking aspect is how to speak in L2 fluently. It is obvious that modifying their accent in the daily life is a good choice for them to make progress step by step.

In order to take a further discussion about how to use monolingual dictionaries for EFL learning, this essay would use 10 real examples from The Collins Learner Dictionary and Oxford learners' dictionary each. According to the students' level, there will be 5 different kinds of words chosen from British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE) Sketch. Two options are settled for the word-list, students' level and first language. Samples all come from upper level students whose first

language is Chinese Mandarin.

Table 1 Selected Word from Sketch

Sequence	Word type	Lemma	Frequency
1	adj	social	153
2	adj	human	141
3	adv	more	130
4	adv	only	98
5	n	labour	187
6	n	value	168
7	pron	it	410
8	pron	they	169
9	v	use	62
10	v	make	60

Except the two verb lemmas, “use” and “make”, the other lemmas are all the first and second lemma in the word-list of BAWE. The reason why not choosing the first and second verb lemma is that the first 7 lemmas are all auxiliary verbs. It is a little difficult to figure out and compare the usage of this kind of verbs so that I choose the first two normal verbs as sample.

Table 2 Examples form Collins Learner Dictionary

Sequence	Type	Lemma	Definition	Idiom	Other result	Nearby words
1	adj	social	5	0	8	5
2	adj	human	3	3	8	5
3	adv	more	1	1	8	5
4	adv	only	2	3	8	5
5	n	labour	5	1	8	5
6	n	value	5	0	8	5
7	pron	it	9	2	8	5
8	pron	they	4	0	8	5
9	v	use	5	2	8	5
10	v	make	19	11	8	5

According to the table 2, the Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries mainly offers four types messages per word. As similar to the Collins, there are several example sentences following per definitions. There is an attractive aspect on the Collins that every word or phrase is following with a level symbol. It is really valuable for students to release what the level of their needed vocabularies, which is beneficial to organize their learning plan. It is obvious that the Oxford expands much more language information than the Collins whether in definition amounts or information types. In another hand, the Oxford has separately resource about language learning, named grammar, word lists and resources. The grammar resources offer practical usage for all users. Upper level students could do the grammatical practice at the same time they learn grammar on the website. One of the most attractive aspects is the free resources listing on the website, like text checker and free sample worksheet -collecting vocabulary about a topic, which encourage upper-level students to take self-study.

4 Suggestions and Limitations

Either the Collins or the Oxford is excellent monolingual dictionaries for language learners. Both of them could act as important role in the EFL learning process. In my own opinion, Collins Learners Dictionary is more suitable for using in the class. Because of the numerous information showing on

the page, it is not easy for language learners to fully use those materials. Even for the upper-level students, distinguishing how to use these messages is not easy. Instructors are able to apply it in the class for helping students' language learning. Students could acquire new knowledge following teachers' guild. Besides, plenty of pronunciation exercise activity could be organized based on the abundant materials showing per word. Moreover, upper-level students would have benefits from the idioms, which is a good opportunity to improve their lexis quality. For the Collins, students could take fully self-study based on the website. Especially using the free source, word-list, it not only offers existing lexis materials but offer topic for students to build their own lists. Students could find the vocabularies they would like to learn in word-list by following the symbol with each word on the definition page. Upper – level might be motivated for enriching their individual word-list, which would support them with taking reviews. Besides, the Oxford would be a excellent teaching materials if it could contain more kinds of materials, like the Collins. Due to the limited examples, this essay doesn't take a deep discussion about the contribution in these two monolingual dictionaries but focusing on how to apply them in EFL teaching. Besides, the most arguments mentioned in this essay is came from the related lectures and personal study experience so that the lacking of observation students to might turn this essay being less accuracy. The future study could pay attention to recording the students' using process, analyzing it and taking evaluation by interviewing test students.

5 Conclusion

It is obvious that dictionary producers try their best to collect high-quality information into the dictionaries they made but language learners and their teachers should have a conservative attitude of learning vocabulary by dictionaries. The knowledge gained from monolingual dictionaries might need long time to use in different aspects in the lives.

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