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**COURSE NAME:
INCREASE KNOWLEDGE WITH DICTIONARY**

Student profile



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1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are known to be social beings. This is to say that they interact with one another by the use of language to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and beliefs. Ai-Duleimi (2018) states that ‘language as a key component of culture becomes a relevant feature of the individual’s social and cultural identity’ (p.27). Britannica defines language as a ‘system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols through which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture express themselves’¹. Besides, Britannica stresses that the ‘function of language is communication’² As far as communication is concerned it is important to underline that in the process of communication, there is a sender and a receiver. The first one encodes the message after combining the words according to the rules and signs of the source language and the second, decodes the message that is transmitted. Moreover, for the message to be understood both the sender and the receiver should share the same symbolic signs. However, this is not always the case since new words arise from several domains such as science, technology, politics, and economy due to social changes or societal evolution.

The rise of new concepts that emerge continuously requires that lexicographers work constantly to create and renew dictionaries. This is to say that there are continuously new words to learn. Besides, in a multicultural world where people tend to connect the problem of communication is likely to occur since there are varieties of languages in the world. One understands the need to learn a foreign language for social beings.

¹ Britannia

² idem

Foreign language learning and speaking have become more important across the world. Due to its many advantages, English is one of the most important foreign languages that most people desire to acquire to connect with the English-speaking world. This echoes what Ai-Duleimi (2018) says ‘Learning English continues to be an important goal of people, just as learning to be an expert in technology in the modern world’ (p.4). Besides, English is valued as a ‘prestigious’ language (Ai-Duleimi, 2018, p. 29). It is important to stress here that the acquisition of English as a foreign language takes several forms according to context and that it goes from formal to informal and from individual to group. Besides, it can be pointed out that the need to learn a foreign language gave rise to uncountable English language centers and schools and many English monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and special dictionaries

In this essay, I summarize and discuss Rohmatillah’s article on Dictionary Usage In English Language Learning.’ Firstly, I define the word dictionary by looking first at the definition given in the article, then I join the conversation of other scholars about the definition of dictionary. Secondly, I pinpoint and describe the types of dictionaries. Thirdly, I emphasize the importance of the use of a dictionary by highlighting the criteria that can be considered while looking for a good dictionary. The essay will end with a conclusion that sums up the content of the article.

2. BODY OF ASSIGNMENT

A dictionary is considered to be an important tool in learning a language. Its importance is highlighted in that it facilitates language learners in that it gives them information about what they do not know and completes what they have already acquired in a given language. Besides, dictionary helps them increase their knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand what a dictionary is, what its purposes are, and how a learner can make a profit from it.

Research shows that several studies have been done on dictionaries and that many definitions have been proposed to define it. Nevertheless, it is also shown that scholars have difficulties in giving a suitable and satisfactory definition of dictionary. (Sterkenburg, 2003, b P. 3) for instance, underlines that the variety of dictionaries with appropriate definitions makes it difficult to give an appropriate definition of dictionary. What makes them find difficulties in defining a dictionary is the fact that there are various dictionaries and that the definition of dictionary cannot include all the purposes. He says that to look for a definition of dictionary for them is to look for a definition of the prototypical dictionary' that they define as 'the alphabetical monolingual general dictionary' (p.4). That is, dictionary is concerned with 'language to describe the word and provide its meaning' (p. 4).

After the analysis of some definitions, Rohmatilah (2016), came up with the following definition dictionary 'is a book consists of an alphabetical list of words that display information about definition, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, etymology, and usage of words (p. 189). What they all say about dictionary is that, it is a book in which words are classified alphabetically and that it informs the reader about the definition of the word and how it is spelled, pronounced, and conjugated in case of a verb.

Zgusta (1971) provides what he calls 'one of the best definitions of dictionary' by C.C. Berg' (Zgusta, 1971, p. 197) 'A dictionary is a systematically arranged list of socialized linguistic forms compiled from the speech-habits of a given speech community and commented on by the author in such a way that the qualified reader understands the meaning...of each separate form, and is informed of the relevant facts concerning the function of that form in its community' (P. 197).

However, Zgusta warns us that this definition is only concerned with the category of dictionaries that are concerned mainly with lexical meaning. In their turn Bergenholtz, & Sven (1995) define dictionary in this way: ‘Dictionaries are complex units made up of a number of independent components which together constitute a whole, the dictionary’ (p. 167). They compare the dictionary to a novel because of its division into chapters in that taken together they constitute the whole story. Therefore, they describe a dictionary as ‘a book containing a number of independent, yet interrelated chapters, referred to as components, the information content of the individual components combining to form the dictionary’(p. 167).

Hacken (2009) finds that all the definitions that have been provided are ‘vague on the nature of the information’ (p. 414). However, he underlines that it was ‘understandable because there is no objective set criteria that determines what information ought to be given in a dictionary’ (p. 414). He points out that the first information in a dictionary should be obtained from the title that is claimed to be ‘useful’ such as ‘*Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*’, or *Collins Dictionary of the English language* (p. 414). He says that in the first title, the term medical is already an indication that the dictionary provides information about medical terms. Similarly, in the second title, English indicates that the dictionary deals with the English language. He highlights that the title of a dictionary should be considered as a place where to get the first information about the issue one is trying to solve

It follows from the above discussion that the number of definitions provided for the dictionary proves that dictionary is indeed difficult to define. Even the best definition of the godfather of lexicography is criticized today in that it is outdated and that it does not take into account e-books. What is important is that there is an understanding that a dictionary is a reference book and it gives

information about the words of a language and that it takes care to provide their meanings, spelling, pronunciation, and their relation to other words.

After the definition of dictionary, Rohmatillah classifies the types of dictionary. He underlines that dictionary can be categorized according to various criteria and that one of them is to look at a dictionary according to the number of languages it covers. Following the classification of Nation (2001, 288), he distinguishes ‘monolingual, bilingual, and bilingualised or multilingual dictionary’ Rohmatillah (p.189) explains that the first category of dictionary has one language such as ‘English –English learner’s dictionary and that the second one contains two languages such as English-French and French –English dictionary and also that the third one used in few languages is considered to be a monolingual dictionary that encompasses the definition or synonyms of the first language (P. 189). The second category is that dictionary can be classified into printed, handled, electronic dictionary, dictionary program, online and visual dictionary’ (p. 192). He specifies that printed dictionary comprises small and big version and that electronic version is ‘small devices or computer software that allocates words or phrases to be entered and translated on a computer monitor’ (p.190).

It follows that the above classification is limited to the category of the number of languages included in the dictionary and the format of the dictionary. Other scholars such as Zgusta (1971: p.197) give a wider classification of the most important dictionaries. He states that there are many types of dictionaries and that the various types of dictionaries are engendered by the diverse functions played by the linguistic forms and ‘their meaning’. First, he distinguishes encyclopedic and linguistic dictionaries. Zgusta points out that the first category deal with ‘the denotation of lexical units’ and that it gives information about extra linguistics words and that the second

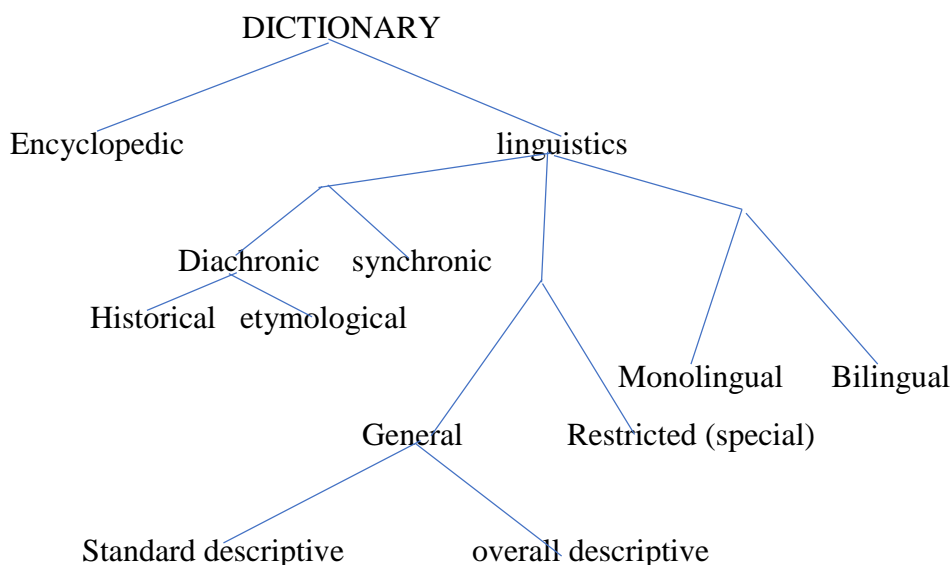
category which he considers 'the most important' deal with language, I will limit myself to linguistic dictionaries.

Zgusta divides linguistics dictionaries into various categories. First, he distinguishes diachronic and synchronic dictionaries. He explains that the diachronic dictionary is divided into historical and etymological dictionaries. He points out that a historical dictionary deals with the history of the language. That is, it shows the beginning and the development of words or lexical units. To put it another way, a historical dictionary looks at the changes that occur through history 'to the forms and meaning of words' (p. 200) while an etymological dictionary puts its interest in the origin of the words. That is, it is concerned with the pre-history of the word or lexical units. Besides, an etymological dictionary puts its interest in the form of the words and provides 'only schematic indication' of the meaning' (p. 201) and does not care about its meaning. He states that despite their differences, historical and etymological dictionaries 'intermingle' (p. 200) in that some dictionaries are both historical and etymological. Finally, he underlines that synchronic dictionary looks at 'the lexical stock of the language at one stage of its development' (p.202).

In the second category, Zgusta distinguishes general and restricted dictionaries. He says that general dictionaries deal especially with general languages (p. 209). Besides, he warns us not to believe that general dictionaries include all entries. In the last category, he distinguishes dictionaries that deal with regional dialects that are based on 'oral material and different questionnaires' or on written sources or both (p. 205). He explains that this category of dictionaries is mainly interested in 'the geographical distribution of linguistic phenomena' (p. 2005) and those that are devoted to professional language. Besides, in this category, one can distinguish abbreviation dictionaries, dictionaries of foreign words, acronyms, and synonyms.....

Finally, Zgusta distinguishes monolingual and bilingual dictionaries as described above. Monolingual deals with one language and bilingual deals with two languages. It is concerned with the native language that is translated into the target languages and vice-versa. It is inferred from this categorization that one can distinguish several types of linguistic dictionaries such as: diachronic, synchronic, historical, etymological, descriptive, monolingual, and bilingual

Summary of the types of dictionaries



The above categorization of dictionary shows that the dictionary can be classified according to several factors. Therefore, one can distinguish technical, terminological, dialect, general, pronunciation, etymological, proverb, phraseological, thesaurus, bilingual, monolingual, and second language learner dictionaries. Many other specific dictionaries are not listed here. Besides, the classification of dictionaries indicates that one can use a dictionary for several purposes. It can be used to get historical, general, specific, and etymological information about a word in different contexts. Furthermore, dictionary can be used to check the spelling and the meaning of the words.

After the categorization of dictionary, Rohmatillah highlights the purposes of the uses of dictionary. He underlines that the purpose of the dictionary is threefold: firstly, it can be used for comprehension or decoding. That is, someone can use the dictionary to look up difficult words encountered ‘while reading, listening or translating a text’ (p.191). Besides, dictionary can be used to check the meaning of a known or unknown word or the context in which a word is used. Secondly, Rohmatillah points out that a dictionary can be used for production (encoding). This is to say that someone can encounter difficulties while using the language either to write, speak, or translate a word. In this context, the dictionary will be useful to learn new words. It can be pointed out here that the use of dictionary will increase the learners’ word register in English. Accordingly, the learner will become confident in the use of language. Besides, Rohmatillah underlines that dictionary can be used to check ‘the spelling, pronunciation, meaning, grammar, constraints use, collocation, inflections and derived forms of partly known words needed to speak, write or translate’ (P. 191}. Furthermore, he points out that dictionary may be needed to ‘confirm spelling, check that word exists’, and find synonyms of the words (p.191). Thirdly, Rohmatillah states that one uses dictionary for learning purposes. It enriches knowledge in that it gives the learner a better understanding of new words encountered while reading or listening. It improves the learner’s language in that it adds new vocabulary to the word register. Therefore, it improves his/her writing and speaking skills. Thus, it can be said here that frequent use of dictionary helps the learner to easily remember words and also that dictionary is a learning place where the learner can learn new words to improve his/ her language and become confident in the use of language.

Dealing with the purpose of dictionaries, Britannica observes that ‘although one may speak of a ‘general purpose of dictionary, it must be realized that every dictionary is compiled with a

particular set of users in mind'³. That is to benefit of dictionary one should have in mind the purpose for which he/she is looking for the dictionary. An English language learner for instance will make good use of a dictionary if he/she uses a monolingual or bilingual dictionary. This echoes what Bergenholtz & Tarp (1995) say that in writing a dictionary the lexicographer should consider not only the purpose but also the user 'requirements'. Besides they underlines that 'individual dictionary functions differ in terms of the degree of detail needed by different user types in connection with different functions' (p. 25). Overall, it can be said that lexicographers pay attention to the user in writing dictionaries, therefore the dictionary user him/herself is responsible for the best result of his/her search. In this context, the learner should have in mind the criteria for choosing a good dictionary.

Rohmatillah pinpoints eight criteria that can help to choose a good dictionary. First, he underlines that a good dictionary should give useful information about the word. That is, it should indicate the word frequency for instance by the use of number such as 5000 words. Second, it 'should provide sentence contexts' in which the word can be used. Third, the dictionary 'should include simple etymological information.' Fourth, the dictionary should provide a definition that 'relate(s) to word parts'. Fifth, a good dictionary 'should suggest a keyword for that item'. Sixth, it should take into account 'the underlying concept', that is 'definitions should cover as many uses of the word as possible, treating different uses as example. Seventh 'the format of each entry should help learning'. Eight, the dictionary should be in both book form and on computer disc' (P.192-193).

It follows that a good dictionary should record and provide good information to help the learner master the language, use it appropriately, and find a solution to his/her problem. Accordingly,

³ Op.cit

Britannica states that ‘when a dictionary goes beyond its function of recording accurate information on the state of the language, it becomes a bad dictionary) (4).

As far as the choice of a good dictionary is concerned, it appears that learners do not always have the choice to select dictionaries. This may be due to many factors such as the environment of the learners and its economic situation. Consequently, the learners will take the first dictionary he find or the cheapest one. Others do not have information about good and bad dictionaries. Consequently, they are happy to pick the first or any dictionary they find on their way. Therefore, it is important to educate learners about the criteria of good dictionaries and their advantages, more specifically about the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries that are common for language learning.

After listing the type of dictionary and the criteria that can be considered to find a good dictionary, Rohmatillah singles out the monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and highlights their importance in the learning progress. He says that ‘students can learn many aspects of the English language from monolingual dictionary such as ‘the meaning of words and phrases, spelling, and pronunciation, words, stress.....’ (p.194). He provides lexicography’s bilingual dictionary that is defined as ‘a type of dictionary which relates the vocabularies of two languages together by means of translation equivalents’(p.194).

It follows that learners have difficulties in finding good dictionaries because of lack of information, it is better to single out five top dictionaries that can help the learners acquire the language. First, I would like to stress that monolingual dictionaries should be preferable in language learning. In this category, one can consider the following list which contains the five top dictionaries of English language learning according to my own experience.

1. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is convenient for advanced-level learners of English. This dictionary provides a comparison between American and British English excellent for those who want to learn a universal language. It is considered to be the best seller in the world. It is in its 10TH edition.
2. Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary of English is said to provide crucial resources for English language learners. Besides, this dictionary is suitable for British English language learners
3. Longman Learner's Dictionary of American English
It is described as the best English language learning dictionary that provides in-depth information not only for words but also for idioms, phrasal verbs, and others
4. American Heritage Dictionary for Learners of English
It is said to be designed for learners of English as a second language. Its lists of words and definitions are always up-to-date. Besides they are collected from 'the American Heritage Dictionary Databases'. Furthermore, this dictionary provides the context in which the sentences can be used.
5. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary is known to be the best reference book that prepares English language learners for the Cambridge Advanced exam. It encompasses a CD-ROM for the learners⁴

Finally, Rohmatillah highlights two skills that are needed for the best use of dictionary. The receptive and the productive skills. The first one requires that the learner looks for the new or difficult word by looking at its context and the dictionary entry of the word for a better understanding of its meaning and the second one is used for encoding. That is the learner uses the dictionary to find a better word to express his/her ideas.

From this article I have learned that dictionary is a good companion in the learning process of a language. Its regular use renders the learner more confident in both spoken and written English. Besides, I have also learned that a monolingual dictionary is more beneficial for learners of a

⁴ Thoughts.com

foreign language. In addition, this article challenges me as a foreign language learner in the choice of dictionary. Henceforth, much attention will be paid to the choice and use of dictionaries while looking for or checking the meaning, use, or spelling of a word. Furthermore, I have learned that the use of dictionary will help improve my English and increase my word register to speak fluently and write with much confidence in English. The knowledge I gained from this article will help me in the acquisition of necessary knowledge at AIU. The strategic use of dictionary that I have learned will be applied in the writing of essays, proposals, and thesis to produce work that will make a substantial contribution to knowledge

3. CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have summarized Rohmatillah's article on the use of dictionary. I have classified and analyzed the category of dictionaries according to Rohmatillah and other researchers, I have emphasized the importance of the use of dictionary by highlighting their purposes and the criteria that can be considered while looking for a good dictionary. I listed the 5 top dictionaries according to my own experience of learning English as a foreign language.

It is inferred from this essay that dictionary is a useful tool that has to be used carefully to improve the learner's language. Besides, many categories of dictionaries give information to lexical items. However, they do not have the same purpose. Therefore, one should be attentive to the choice of dictionaries. It can be remembered here that the best dictionary gives good enough information to help the learner acquire the language. Besides, the use of a good dictionary increases the learner's word register which renders the learner confident in the use of the language both in writing as well as in speaking it. Furthermore, the learner should understand the importance of the use of dictionary and the criteria of good dictionaries in their search for a learning dictionary

It can therefore be concluded that vocabulary is the core of the language. Without it human beings cannot express their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and ideas, consequently, interaction between human beings becomes impossible. Accordingly, social beings lose an important component of their societal status. That is to communicate between them. Therefore, the continuous use of a dictionary is of utmost importance to increase vocabulary in the acquisition of the language.

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