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THE USE OF ONLINE DICTIONARIES IN SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING (L₂): TEACHING
DICTIONARY SKILLS FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with the advantages and tools supplied by new technologies nowadays. More specifically, the study analyses the use of online dictionaries for the learning and the study of new languages (L2). It reports the results of a research on how advanced language learners use online dictionaries and to what extent they take advantage of all the resources those provide. The data was collected through questionnaires given to 3rd and 4th grade students of the degree in English Studies at the University of Zaragoza. The results revealed how they use online dictionaries and what they think about them, they showed that advanced students still underuse online dictionaries for pronunciation, phonetic and grammatical tasks, although online dictionaries provide a wide range of tools for helping learners in all kind of tasks such as reading or writing. Most of them only use them for translating a word or finding its meaning. For these reasons I proposed a dictionary workshop involving different skills for making students aware of the different possibilities online dictionaries provide.

RESUMEN

Esta tesis trata sobre las ventajas y herramientas proporcionadas por las nuevas tecnologías en la actualidad. El estudio se centra en el uso de los diccionarios online para el aprendizaje y estudio de nuevas lenguas. Analiza los resultados de un estudio sobre cómo estudiantes de un nivel avanzado usan los diccionarios online y hasta qué punto se benefician de los recursos que estos proporcionan. Los datos se coleccionaron mediante encuestas dadas a estudiantes de tercer y cuarto curso del grado de Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad de Zaragoza. Los resultados revelaron cómo usan los diccionarios online y lo que piensan acerca de estos, también mostraron que los estudiantes de nivel avanzado siguen infrutilizando los diccionarios online para tareas de pronunciación, fonética y gramática, a pesar de que estos diccionarios ofrecen un amplio abanico de herramientas para ayudar a los estudiantes en todo tipo de tareas como la lectura o la escritura. La mayoría de ellos sólo los usan para traducir una palabra o saber su significado. Por ello, he propuesto un taller de diccionarios usando diferentes habilidades para concienciar a los estudiantes de las diferentes posibilidades que los diccionarios online proporcionan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of new technologies in our lives, they have become an important tool for the learning of new languages. Now, online dictionaries have got a major role on learning languages as they are easily accessible through mobile phones or laptops, which are most of the people have. The research on online dictionaries is becoming prominent but it still is a field to discover.

It is widely known that online dictionaries offer more possibilities and options than paper dictionaries, not to mention that most of them are free to use and easier to carry than paper dictionaries. Paper dictionaries only provide users with definitions or translations and phonetic transcriptions, but online dictionaries offer the same but with even more tools to facilitate the learning of new languages. Users of online dictionaries are able to hear or see a word, actions that are not possible in paper dictionaries.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show the possibilities and tools different online dictionaries provide and to offer some activities to develop skills needed to gain fluency and accuracy when using online dictionaries, as they are commonly misused by users.

In the first section of this work I discuss the advantages online dictionaries have over paper dictionaries. Later on, the different types of online dictionaries available to the users are classified. The third and fourth part of this study deal with a small research and its results. According to the results I have designed a workshop for raising awareness among students of the possibilities online dictionaries offer. Finally, the conclusions I reached while doing this study.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Online v. paper dictionaries

Researchers have speculated that printed dictionaries are becoming old-fashioned and not really useful in learning and acquiring a new language; this idea is motivated by the rapid development of technology and, as a consequence, the increasing use of online or digital dictionaries. There are many differences among these two types of dictionaries, printed and online dictionaries, some of them quite significant.

Several researchers, (Atkins, 1996; Coffey, 2015; McAlpine and Myles, 2003; Lew, 2015) have claimed that online dictionaries can be more useful for students of an L2 language because they offer a wider range of words and collocations due to the fact that they do not have a limited space as the printed dictionaries have; in such manner in online dictionaries is not necessary to remove elements which can be essential and interesting for the process of learning; this also implies that online dictionaries need a higher corpus to renew their entries and to add new words in order to satisfy the demands of the learners. According to Lew (2015) and Atkins (1996) printed dictionaries feel the “pressure” the commerce imposes on them, to compress their items in order to make their dictionaries feasible and easy to carry and work with, instead of designing a dictionary full of entries but which would be bulky and maybe more expensive, thus not being affordable and worthwhile.

In as much as online dictionaries do not have space limitations, they can show little texts or sentence usage examples to support the vocabulary displayed and this is shown to be of help to students, because these examples supply “guidance on grammar” (Lew, 2010). Online dictionaries can provide learners with multi-word lexis and collocations, with their proper examples. The linear organization that characterizes online dictionaries is also useful for students. This issue is well considered by researchers as McAlpine and Myles (2003) and Lew (2010).

Another advantage of online dictionaries is that they can help people to search the target word with a high accuracy. This is mainly thanks to the “flexibility” recognized by researchers like McAlpine and Myles (2003) that on-line dictionaries have when looking for a word. This is an important feature which provides learners with an easy access to the lexis and also a manageable navigation through the different paths of the dictionary. Owing to their innovative search system, word entries have hyperlinks in order to make the search easier and more quickly. Thus, learners could get to their needed point with almost no difficulty and quicker instead of thumbing through the whole printed dictionary, which slows down the search and makes the process quite boring, due to the fact that printed dictionaries are organised alphabetically. This feature is also useful because, as it takes less time to search a word, learners do not need to worry about not finding the needed material or about the feeling of wasting their time. Lew (2013) agrees with Atkins’s (1996) claim that with on-line dictionaries we are no longer bounded by alphabetical order search.

Pastor and Alcina (2010) classified the different search techniques available in online/electronic dictionaries:

- Exact word: most of the online dictionaries have the possibility of introducing the exact word and display its information, such as the definition, etymology or pronunciation. It is the most common way of searching in a dictionary.
- Partial word: it consists in typing half of the word, which lacks of the beginning, the middle or the ending and by using wildcards (the most used are ? and *) the dictionary displays a list of possible words that can match with your query. Another search tool available in many dictionaries is the auto-complete.
- Approximate expression: approximate expressions are considered the inflected form of a word or a similarly pronounced or spelled word. This can be useful for having a list of similar words and choose the most appropriate. This tool is quite used for users who are studying an L2 language and do not differentiate the past tense of a word.

- Anagram: it is also called the crossword search. An anagram consists of the transposition of a series of words and producing different words with the same letters. It is helpful because this technique offers a wide range of vocabulary containing the words the user typed.
- Combination of words: this way of searching in an online dictionary is not well known among the students and many online dictionary users but it can be very helpful. It consists of typing different words together and the dictionary shows the words which include in their definitions the entered words. In this technique there are different sections:
 1. Containing all the words: it is that all the words searched are in the result, the words showed. This is available in the dictionary *Wordreference*, as Pastor and Alcina (2010) exemplify by introducing the word yellow and fruit and it appears words such as lemon, banana and mango.
 2. Presence of one word and absence of another one: in this option it is needed to introduce two or more words separated by NOT, or the symbol!, depending on the dictionary, and it means that the results contain the first word introduced but not the other ones.
 3. Presence of any of the words: this way of searching consists of introducing two or more words with the symbol | or the word OR, and the dictionary shows the results containing one of the words introduced (word 1 |word2 | word3).
 4. Presence of an exact sequence of words: the sequence of words must be introduced using quotation marks and the online dictionary displays the word/s that fit in that exact sequence of words.
 5. Questions in natural language: it is used for answer the question entered, and the dictionary will show a list of words answering the question; this

works by combining the nouns or adjectives of the question. This option can be found in the online dictionary *OneLook Reverse Dictionary*.

Therefore, one positive feature of online dictionaries is that they can predict the word that the learner is looking for or its variants; the mentioned device is really valuable for poor spellers, but this is not possible in printed dictionaries, because of technological reasons. Moreover, there are other options available in some on-line dictionaries that are often considered by learners and can support learners through their tasks, such as the “voice search” (Lew 2014), the “quick find” (Sharma and Barrett, 2007) when dealing with a comprehension task or the possibility to hear a word (Lew 2014, 2013, 2010), which is sometimes offered in addition to or instead of phonetic transcriptions. The “voice search”, is a device taken into account by Lew(2014), from which students could benefit from it, as their searches would be quicker and useful for those accurate and fluent speakers of English but whose written English is neglected. The “quick find” tool (Sharma and Barrett, 2007) is a small browser that allows you to search a word without leaving your task and not having to change your page on the device. Regarding the possibility to hear a word (Lew, 2014), learners are able to hear the pronunciation of a word and manage to improve not only their listening comprehension but also their speaking skills. This feature would provide a chance to hear “real language” in addition to be exposed to the “stress, rhythm and intonation” (Lew, 2010). Most students use dictionaries for reading and writing tasks, but as can be seen some online dictionaries are also a useful tool for speaking tasks which involve accurate pronunciation.

Besides all the elements above mentioned, users of on-line dictionaries, also have the possibility to develop further their “own” material (Lan, 2005); that is a feature present in on-line dictionaries websites, such as the *Merriam Webster* site that allows the user to see the recent words searched by other users, and that could be of interest for the learner, because these word can guide them in their search and activate their background knowledge. There are other similar tools that involve some kind of interaction with other dictionary users. In other online dictionaries, there are some spaces where the

learners can post a doubt or simply a word and other users can interact with him/her, and help each other. These features are not possible in paper dictionaries as they have a passive role in learning, compared to on-line dictionaries.

Unlike printed dictionaries, on-line thesauruses and dictionaries are prepared not only to help in individual doubts and tasks, but also are thought to be helpful when learners do not find the word they are looking for and need to solve this problem quickly. This problem is usually solved thanks to chats opened for this task on on-line dictionaries, although the chat can sometimes be problematic as anyone is allowed to write what they want. For this reason, this special feature should be controlled by lexicographers who provide the content for the dictionary's entries.

The way of presenting dictionaries is also important as it can determine whether it is easily accessible and attractive or not for students. Whereas on-line dictionaries are more flexible in this aspect, it is not possible to make great innovations in the layout of printed dictionaries. As I said before, printed dictionaries have little space to include a wide range of lexis, but what makes this task complicated is the fact that they are paper dictionaries. Therefore they can only be organized by arranging an index search, that is with vocabulary in columns, with a small font size and each word separated by little space. This might seem difficult for students of a foreign language as they could have problems in finding the right definition of a word; and the font size makes reading annoying.

Unlike paper dictionaries, which might sometimes be difficult to use for non-native students, the accessibility and design of online dictionaries is constantly improved. Online dictionaries offer a variety of options to the user, which vary from enabling the user to customize the web page to adapting to the user by showing what he/she might prefer, in addition of a traditional view of the dictionary online which tries to simulate a paper dictionary for those who still have a more traditional concept of dictionaries,

according to Lew (2014). Lew (2015) states that as online dictionaries are “a digital product”, many different options are packaged in a single entity.

Another advantage of this type of dictionaries is that they can display only whatever is relevant for the user, making, in that way, the searching task easier for the user and not tough as when using paper dictionaries. Symbols, abbreviations or codes are quite common in printed dictionaries, as they introduce each word giving us the metalinguistic information a word has, but these symbols sometimes are problematic for dictionary users as they do not know how to interpret them. This could be harder for L2 learners. Whereas printed dictionaries explain the meaning of these abbreviations in their first pages, online dictionaries provide the explanations by pop-up windows, that is, just by passing the mouse through the word appears the explanation; this is easier and a better option than the one of printed dictionaries that makes the work of searching for the meaning of symbols difficult (Lew, 2013, 2010; Atkins, 1996).

A helpful tool when adapting to the needs of the users is Simultaneous Feedback (Lew, 2014). This is mainly done by collecting their “behaviour” or way of interacting with the dictionary (Lew, 2014), and offer them what might be helpful, a process which is done by a feedback provided by the online interface, in order to adapt their presentation and content to the user’s preferences.

There are some dictionaries that display animations on their entries to facilitate the understanding of a word, but even though many people interacted with animations (Figure 1), it was found that it produced a negative effect (Lew, 2014), because sometimes animations do not convey the proper meaning that the user might need, hence leading to word misinterpretation. Animations should only be used for simple words, and for beginners instead of advanced learners, who might need a more complex explanation of meaning.

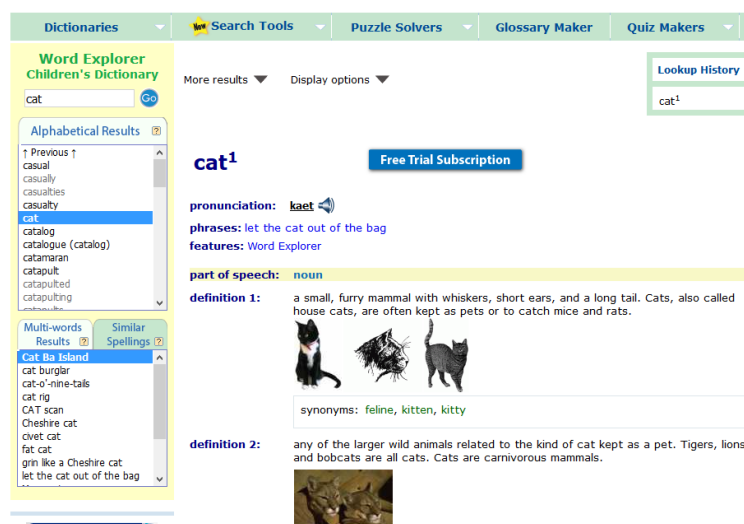


Figure 1- Dictionaries with animations

Equally important and one of the most helpful features of online dictionaries is the fact that a web page can present some tables and filters. By using them students can narrow their searches depending on the aim of their search. Thus, when the user filters the search, the online dictionary will display the information needed, more or less, in order to make the searching easy and more approximate to what the user demands. For example, according to Lew (2015), for text production a more detailed lexis is better, whereas for text comprehension a definition in different languages and an illustration might be more useful. For Lew (2010) the recording of a sound would also be more useful than just a simple definition. Actually, some dictionaries such as the Macmillan English Dictionary offer the “sound effects” tool (Figure 2), which represents words like “clap” or how a guitar sounds.

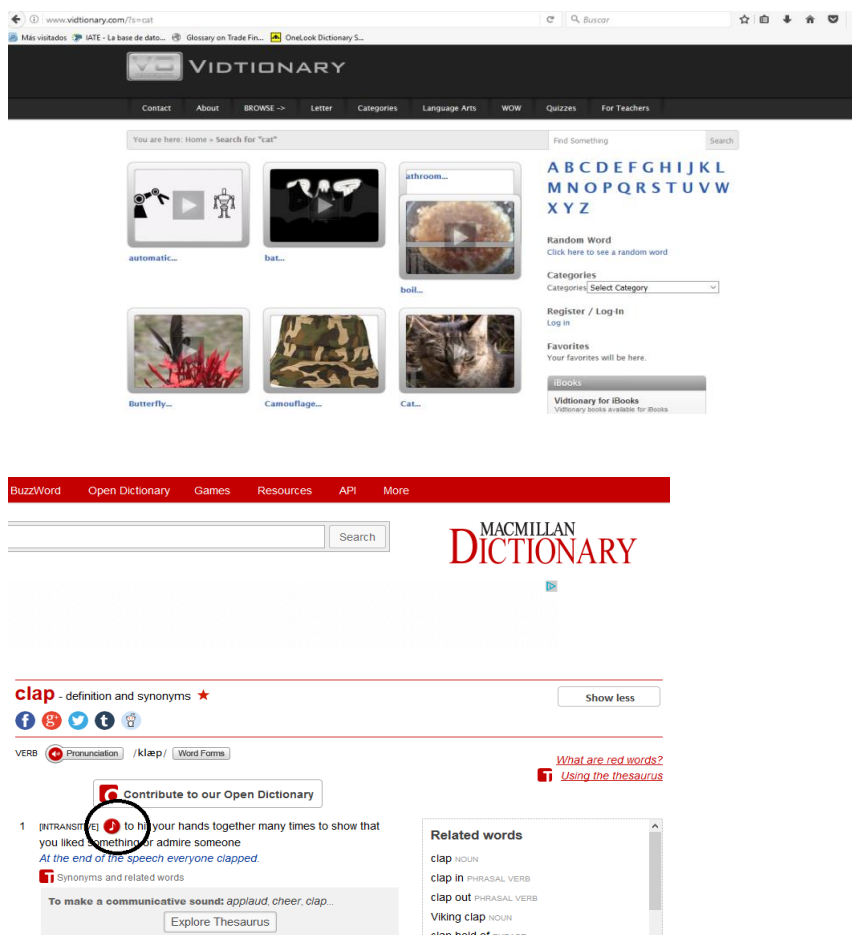


Figure 2- Sound effects tool

Online dictionaries can also be adapted to use the interface that students prefer. Lew (2014, 2015) makes reference to the studies by Kaneta (2011), and Koplein and Müller-Spitzer (2014) in which four types of interfaces were analysed, the “tabbed”, the “panel”, the “explorer” and the “printed view”, in order to know which mode of presenting an on-line dictionary was preferred by dictionary users; and it was found that the “tabbed view” (Figure 3) worked better for users than the other three layouts. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a tab is “a small part ... that sticks out from the edge of something, so you can find it more easily”. Although this study was made by using large screens such as computers, the tabbed view also appeared to be useful when using “small-screen device” (Lew, 2015), such as mobile phones or tablets.

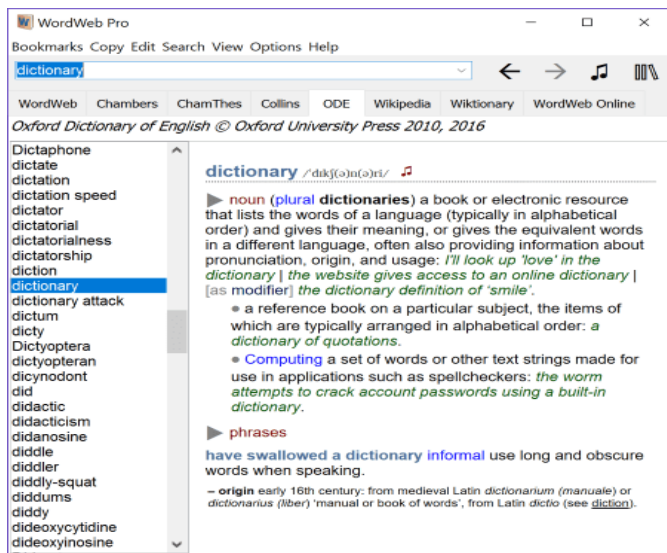


Figure 3- Tabbed view

The use of colour might be seen as an advantage in on-line dictionaries, especially for visual learners. Most of the entries found in printed dictionaries are monochromatic, sometimes just highlighting the words by putting them in bold; this can seem quite boring and confusing because there is no much difference among the entries and their explanation. Sharma and Barrett (2007) state that colour, which is more common in online dictionaries than in their printed counterparts, can help user to distinguish a group of words and to pay attention to some important or tricky things, which are misunderstood or ignored in paper dictionaries since everything is condensed and with no spaces. The issue of colour is a limitation in paper dictionaries but available in online dictionaries, which makes them more attractive, especially when teaching children or for beginners who need clarity in learning an L2 language; this has also been demonstrated by Lew (2015).

Another important feature of on-line dictionaries, which many researchers (Sharma and Bennet, 2007; Lew, 2015; Lan, 2005) have paid attention to, is the fact that on-line dictionaries can be up-to-date with changes made immediately, and constant improvements to make dictionaries helpful and useful for users. This is an advantage that printed dictionaries lack, because they need a longer process of production whereas on-line dictionaries can be improved at any time: just by typing the new entry electronically in a few seconds every user can benefit from that. This special

characteristic has also been found to be important for dictionary users when choosing what type of dictionary to use. This is why many people are starting to use on-line dictionaries; this added to the above mentioned characteristics make on-line dictionaries a good option when selecting the dictionary to use.

2.2.Types of online dictionaries

The classification of online dictionaries is not a simple task because there are many different online dictionaries in an attempt to adapt to the user's needs. Lew (2010) classifies online dictionaries into different types depending on the features of the online dictionaries. These are the categories Lew (2010) mentions in his paper:

- Institutional v. collective: the main difference is that institutional dictionaries have been created by an institution or a publishing house. An example of this is the Spanish dictionary *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* from Real Academia Española (RAE), whereas collective dictionaries are the one that need user-involvement, that means dictionary users are able to create their own dictionaries, but this type of dictionaries has not been popular yet, because they need some improvements. It is quite useful when looking for slang words and new socio-cultural terms, but they also show some disadvantages such as the fact that as entries are created by ordinary people reliability is not a strong point. Examples of this kind of dictionaries are *Wiktionary* or *Urban Dictionary*.
- Free v. paid: this is a more simple classification which distinguishes online dictionaries with free-access from those in which are needed a monthly subscription or in order to get access to the whole entry you need to pay. Although nowadays most of online dictionaries are free-access, some publishing houses are reluctant to provide their whole thesaurus.
- This new category includes the different forms online dictionaries have:
 1. Individual dictionaries: similar to the printed dictionaries, in that they consist of a single dictionary. It is the most usual type.

2. Clusters of related dictionaries: different connected dictionaries are shown on a single page, like *Cambridge dictionaries online page*.
3. Hyperlinks to actual dictionaries: it is an online dictionary that only presents hyperlinks, to the entry typed, directing to other dictionaries.
4. The content of various dictionaries is pasted on a single page: this type of online dictionary presents the entry you requested from different dictionaries but on a single page. A good example of this is *OneLook Dictionary*.

The basic classification most used to differentiate is the above mentioned between institutional and collective. Institutional dictionaries are the most prolific thus there is needed to make sub-groups to classify those dictionaries.

The first sub-group distinguishes among diachronic and specialized dictionaries, in which the main difference is the purpose of these dictionaries; diachronic dictionaries are mainly of scholarly use, whereas specialized dictionaries, as the name states, provide particular terminology about a specific field of study, as medicine or science. In addition to this sub-group, inside specialized type it is needed to make a differentiation between restricted macrostructure and restricted microstructure, which are very narrow focused dictionaries.

- Restricted macrostructure: this type of dictionary only focuses on one lexical feature, as it can be acronyms. An example is *Acronym Finder*.
- Restricted microstructure: it only provides the explanation of one part of a word, as for example pronunciation. An example is the *English Pronouncing Dictionary*.

Onomasiological dictionaries are another sub-group from the institutional classification. This kind of dictionaries is not as developed as the other ones. They lead the user to a linguistic form from a concept; they usually do not explain the meaning of the word, but

rather show it by using pictures. The online dictionary *VisuWords* is an example belonging to this group.

Many researchers such as Lew (2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015), Pastor and Alcina (2010) or Atkins (1996) mention the wide range of possibilities online dictionaries have by focusing in different fields, as are translation or education. But there is one aspect in which most of them agree that is teaching how to make the most of online dictionaries for users' purpose. For instance, Pastor and Alcina (2010) stated that in many cases people do not take full advantage of the different search possibilities these dictionaries offer. This situation can be due to sometimes online dictionaries are not quite user-friendly and is difficult or because people are unaware of how to really use them.

It is important to teach dictionary skills, especially on online ones because they are available for everyone and free to use. By taking into account all the options online dictionaries offer and the deficiencies people have on using online dictionaries, I have conducted a small research and offered a solution in the form of workshop, which will be explained below.

3. METHOD

The participants in the study were third and fourth year students from the degree of English Studies at The University of Zaragoza. The instrument used for this research, was a survey which could be completed either online or on paper. The survey was made up of 11 questions, in order to discover how advanced students of a second language use online dictionaries and for what purposes, and what difficulties they met when using this kind of dictionaries. The questionnaire was completed by 30 students, 23 through the online survey and 7 through the paper one. It consisted mainly of short questions, like multiple choice questions, polar questions, and questions in which a short answer was needed so as to get a clearer opinion from the students. The survey can be found in appendix 1.

By taking the results analysed below, a series of activities will be proposed for advanced students to teach them to take advantage of some features of online dictionaries for their academic work, which is the main purpose of their use.

4. RESULTS

When analysing the results of the survey it is necessary to bear in mind that the participants are advanced students of English who should be familiar with the use of dictionaries.

Most of the students are on the 4th year of the degree (76.6%) whereas 23.4% of the students are on 3rd year. They were first asked about their use of printed dictionaries. Although students participating on the survey are accustomed to using monolingual paper dictionaries in their exams, most of them prefer using bilingual paper dictionaries (53.3%), followed by monolingual ones (40%) and only 9 persons marked the option of “I do not use paper dictionaries”. Question number 3 asked the students the purpose for which they used paper dictionaries (see Table 1). The only purpose for which students most use paper dictionaries is for the translation of the word (50%), whereas another option was “to find out the meaning” and most of the people questioned responded that they only used paper dictionaries for that purpose “sometimes” (61.5%). However, paper dictionaries are underused in two situations: the first one is when they need to know “how collocations are used”, and the second one when they need information about grammar; the majority of the students stated that they never use paper dictionaries for these purposes, a 51.9% and 52% respectively. These results may be related to the fact that paper dictionaries have space constraints so in many of them either no explanation about grammar points is provided or the explanation is so technical that is hard to understand. Therefore, the searching for grammar information on dictionaries should be encouraged at the university, especially in online dictionaries as these do not have problems with space and can provide the explanation with examples

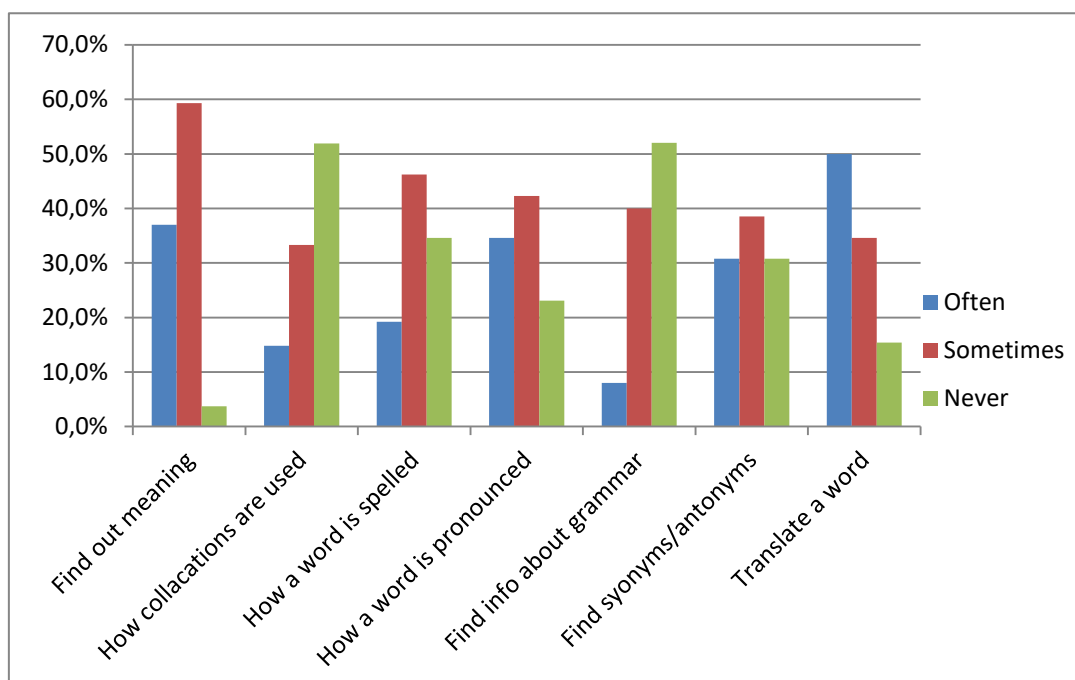


Table 1. Purposes for which students use printed dictionaries.

The following questions were related to the use of online dictionaries. All the students but one stated that they use online dictionaries. The reason might be because online dictionaries are easy to access and almost everyone has an electronic device where they can consult online dictionaries instead of carrying around a paper dictionary. When asked about where and when they use online dictionaries, the option “at home” got the highest result (96.6%). The option “when writing” also got a high result (93.3%), while “when listening” and “when talking” registered lower results, since only 2 people chose them. These results might be due to the fact that at school the use dictionaries is promoted when writing or even when reading but not when students are engaged in listening or speaking activities. Another possible reason might be that when listening or talking people can lose track if they are consulting something on the dictionary. But what should be taught, in advanced levels, is to look up the target word on the dictionary later or when preparing for a speaking task, such as a presentation.

The results also showed that online dictionaries are used mostly daily (53.3%). When students were asked about the purposes for the use of online dictionaries, their answers

showed some difference with the use of paper dictionaries, but there are also similarities. Looking at the choices of the students (see Table 2), again the two purposes which get better results are “to find out the meaning of a word/translation” with 76.6% and 80% respectively, whereas in both sections anybody answered never. The differences found among the uses of paper and online dictionaries, are related to their use to find collocations, 46.6% of the participants stated that they used online dictionaries for that purpose often, that is maybe because some online dictionaries display tables with the collocations that related to the searched word, as happens with *Macmillan Online Dictionary*. The searching on online dictionaries for info about grammar improves a bit, because most of the students (43.3%) use it sometimes followed by 40% that marked the option often, while on paper dictionaries they marked never. One striking result found is that not many students use online dictionaries for finding out how a word is pronounced just a 46.7% of students chose the option often, even though online dictionaries are a good option when you need to hear the pronunciation of a word since paper dictionaries do not provide the audio option. Besides, online dictionaries encourage the option to hear how a word is pronounced on their online pages or apps, because it is an advantage. When checking the use of online dictionaries, students were also asked whether they used online dictionaries to learn new words, as many dictionaries have a section named “The word of the day”. It was found that most of the students surveyed answered they use this option regularly (43.3%), but also a great number (40%) answered they use it occasionally. This option supplied by most of online dictionaries can be helpful and interesting, considering that in some of them the words are categorised according to different levels. Thus, advanced students can also benefit from this.

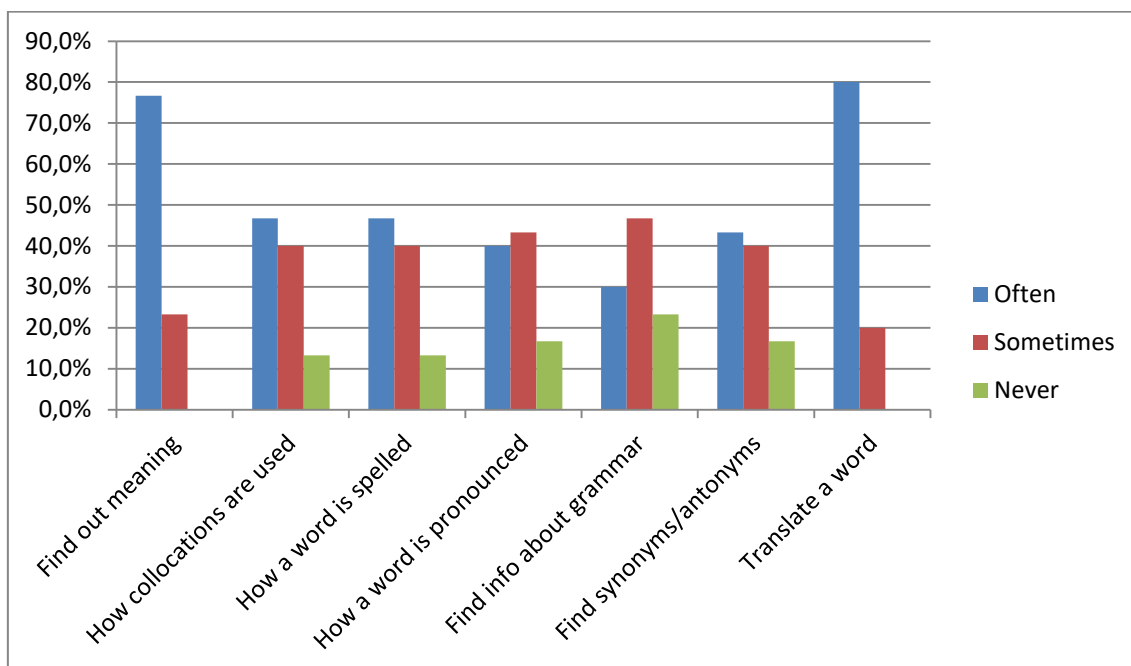


Table 2. Purposes for which students use online dictionaries

In the last two questions of the survey students had to explain why they found online dictionaries easy or difficult to use. The results are not really impressive as most of the students gave quite similar answers but there were people who provided useful information. One student answered that sometimes online dictionaries are not used because they do not know whether to rely on them or not. Although most online dictionaries are highly reliable, published by the same publishing houses as printed dictionaries, this answer may be due to the fact that many of them use the online dictionary *Wordreference*. Another person stated that as online dictionaries have the tool of predicting a word this sometimes is not useful as they direct you to a word which maybe is not the one you were looking for. Some of them also named an online dictionary, Cambridge, to argue that in many online dictionaries no translation is provided and this can make sometimes the search for a word hard. However, the majority of students do not have any complaint about online dictionaries. All of them agree that they find online dictionaries easy to use, because they are faster, handy and intuitive.

In conclusion, for most of the students online dictionaries are a good option when studying a language, in this case English, especially for translating words and

collocations but there are also some improvements to make in online dictionaries as reliability. However, students, as researchers said, also need to acquire some skills with dictionaries in order to fully benefit from online dictionaries, which as has been shown, provide more resources than paper dictionaries.

5. DICTIONARY WORKSHOP

In order to help students to fully benefit from online dictionaries, which are becoming more prominent and leaving paper dictionaries old-fashioned, I designed a workshop for the surveyed students with different kinds of activities involving the use of online dictionaries. This will be useful for them because they will be more familiar with all the possibilities an online dictionary provides and will get some fluency when using them which is also important, especially when studying. Besides, they will be provided with some examples of reliable online dictionaries so that they can feel confident when using some of them.

The workshop will last 75 minutes and will consist of five different activities so as to deal with most of the uses online dictionaries offer. These activities are thought to be carried out with the students participating in the research, of an advanced level, in order to try to solve their problems and the underuse of this kind of dictionaries; but they can also be adapted to other levels and raise awareness of online dictionaries from beginner level. The students will be asked to bring their own laptops in order to make them feel more confident.

Activity 1

Length: 25 minutes

Aim: to make students aware of the different types of lexical information that they may find in an online dictionary.

Procedure:

1. Students are arranged in groups of three or four, because it can be a bit tricky and boring if done alone.
2. Students are provided with a text (see Appendix II) with words in bold, and they have to try to find the different features of those words in different online dictionaries, taken from a list that the teacher will prepare for them. The features they have to look for will be:
 - Meaning
 - Pronunciation (phonetics)
 - Example (sentences)
 - Grammar
 - Collocations/phrasal verbs (2)
 - Synonyms
 - Difference British/American
3. At the end of this task students have to draw conclusions about what dictionaries they have found most useful and easiest to use to get information on each of the features.

Comment:

This will help students to get fluency when looking for the different aspects of a word, to know some reliable dictionaries and to decide what is the most useful for them. Besides, they will be developing a critical thinking and practising agreement with their classmates, as they have to work in groups.

Activity 2

Length: 15 minutes

Aim: to develop students' awareness of synonyms and get accustomed to using online dictionaries to get this type of information about words.

Procedure:

1. Students are given an example of what a word map is, and are asked to create one. They perform this task in pairs.
2. The teacher will provide them with online dictionaries and an online program to create word maps.
3. Students have to choose a word from a list given by the teacher (see Appendix II), and create a word map of at least 10 synonyms form that word.

Comment:

Students will become more confident when exploring an online dictionary and this activity will also provide them with a rich range of vocabulary. Moreover, they will have to work in pairs so they need to discuss and reach agreement with their partners, at the same time group work is encouraged.

Activity 3

Length: 20 minutes

Aim: to get fluency using synonyms, antonyms and collocations, and to acquire more vocabulary.

Procedure:

1. The teacher asks students to look at the text with the words in bold (see Appendix II) and read it. This task is performed individually.

2. Once they have read the text, they have to rewrite the text by using online dictionaries.
3. The whole class has the same text, and they have to rewrite it using synonyms, antonyms or collocations. They can also turn into negative/positive sentences.
4. When the whole class has finished the task, they compare their answers and the teacher provides feedback

Comment:

With this activity, students will have to solve the problem individually and they will be more fluent using the online dictionaries as they are constantly using them. In addition, they will know different words that may be unknown for them.

Activity 4

Length: 15 minutes

Aim: to be able to find the specific meaning that a polysemous word has in a specific context.

Procedure:

1. The teacher gives a sheet with different sentences (Appendix II), and asks them to read them. This task is performed individually.
2. Students are asked to look at the exact meaning of the word in bold of the sentences in one of the online dictionaries given.
3. When the task is finished, they check with the teacher if they have been accurate.

Comment:

This activity will help students to look for the exact meaning when searching a word in a dictionary. It will also bring them fluency in using online dictionaries and to feel confident.

6. CONCLUSIONS

New technologies help us in our everyday activities, so they are also a good option when learning a new language (L2). Many schools are implementing activities using new technologies, such as computers, tablets or even mobile phones. Although students are accustomed to using new technologies, they are sometimes underused for some purposes, that is the case of online dictionaries. Learners usually do not take advantages of all the affordances of online dictionaries.

Nowadays, most of the people, especially learners, use online dictionaries instead of paper ones, mainly because they are free to access and easier to carry, as users can access an online dictionary wherever it has internet. Besides online dictionaries offer a wide range of possibilities, such as option to hear the pronunciation of a word or display animations that paper dictionaries do not have. In addition to this the act of searching a word is easier in online dictionaries because they usually have the autocomplete tool which predicts the word you are typing and displays different words.

However, students are not aware of the wide range of tools and options online dictionaries offer, as the research shows, they still use online dictionaries for the typical task, such as looking for the meaning of a word or translating it. The study showed that although online dictionaries provide the possibility to hear or of arrow searching, many students underuse online dictionaries for tasks dealing with pronunciation or collocations. That is why I designed tasks for a dictionary workshop in order to help students develop dictionary skills, solve their problems when using them and for showing them how to benefit from online dictionaries. Besides they will be able to meet different tools unknown for them until then and that can make their tasks, as reading or writing, easier.

As many researchers argue, it is also necessarily to teach students dictionary skills because they are still unexplored and they can make help users a lot if they know how to really use them.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE OF DICTIONARY USE

1. Course:
2. Do you use a monolingual/bilingual paper dictionary for learning English or academic work?
 Monolingual Bilingual
 I do not use paper dictionary (ies)
3. If yes, how often do you use your paper dictionary? And, for what purposes do you consult it?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
To find out the meaning			
To learn how collocations are used			
To find how a word is spelled			
To find how a word is pronounced			
To find info about grammar			
To find synonyms/antonyms			
To find out the translation of a word			
Other (specify below)			

--

4. Do you use electronic dictionary (ies) for your English learning or academic work?
 YES NO
5. What online dictionary (ies) do you use?

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6. Where and when do you use a dictionary?
 At home At university When writing
 When reading When talking When listening
7. How often do you use electronic dictionary (ies)?
 Daily Weekly Monthly
 Very rarely It depends on when I need help
8. What type of device do you use to access an electronic dictionary (ies)?
 Computer Mobile phone/tablet
 Other (specify):

9. For what purposes do you use an electronic dictionary?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
To find out the meaning			
To find how collocations are used			
To find how a word is spelled			
To find how a word is pronounced			
To find info about grammar			
To learn new words			
To find out the translation of a word			
Other (specify below)			

10. Do you find online dictionary (ies) easy to use? Please explain you reasons

11. Do you find online dictionary (ies) difficult to use? Please explain your reasons

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

APPENDIX II

Activity 1

1. Please read the text carefully and for each of the words in bold, find the following information (meaning, pronunciation-phonetics, example-sentence, grammar, collocations/phrasal verbs, synonyms, difference British/American) in the three dictionaries in the box.

The British Museum, the first national public museum in the world, was founded in 1753. From the beginning it **granted** free admission to all 'studious and curious persons'. Visitor numbers have grown from around 5,000 a year in the eighteenth century to nearly 6 million today.

The origins of the British Museum **lie** in the **will** of the physician, naturalist and collector, Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753). Over his lifetime, Sloane **collected** more than 71,000 objects which he wanted to be preserved intact after his death. So he donated the whole collection to the nation in return for a payment of £20,000 to his heirs.

The founding collections largely consisted of books, manuscripts and natural specimens with some **antiquities** (including coins and medals, prints and drawings). In the early part of the nineteenth century there were a number of **outstanding** acquisitions. These included the Rosetta Stone, the Townley collection of classical sculpture, and the Parthenon sculptures.

Macmillan English Dictionary: http://www.macmillandictionary.com/ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: http://www.ldoceonline.com/ Wordreference: http://www.wordreference.com/es/
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2. Which of the three dictionaries did you find more useful to find information on each of the features.

Activity 2

1. Please choose **ONE** of the words from the list and create a word map.

Bargain

Groaned

Misheard

Eagerly

Wreck

Yelling

Loan

Hinterland

