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# 注意理论视角下英语高阶学习词典的用法说明初探 -项基于五大学习词典的实证研究

Approaching Usage Notes in English Advanced Learner's Dictionaries from the Perspective

of Noticing Theory: The Case Study of the British 'Big Five'

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### **Abstract**

The acquisition of word usage constitutes an essential part in the language proficiency of the second language learners. The learner's dictionary, which is specially designed for the students learning a foreign language, should provide sufficient and helpful usage information to meet the needs of users. As an important device to complement word meaning, presentation of usage information is also a crucial factor for dictionary quality. Most studies of usage information in the learner's dictionary center on usage labels and the specialized study of usage notes is very few. Also, the noticing theory is mostly used for the study in second language acquisition, but the combination of the noticing theory and lexicography into the study of the learner's dictionary is rare, which leaves a niche for this study.

In order to explore the presentation of usage notes in the English Advanced Learner's Dictionary (EALD), this paper targets at the five representative EALDs, namely the Big Five, in their latest versions, which include Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD), Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary (COBUILD), and Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (MED). Based on some principles in the noticing theory, the different treatments of usage notes in the Big Five are compared through the examination of both their macro- and micro-structures.

The comparative study reveals some advantages and insufficiencies in the Big Five's presentation of usage notes. They share some common features and each has some innovations that make them unique. In light of the shortcomings, this thesis puts forward some suggestions for improvement: 1) In the macrostructure: explicit instruction and enumeration for entries that contain usage notes covered in the dictionary should be made available to assist retrieval; 2) In the microstructure: explicit, informative and stratified usage information should be presented to facilitate

noticing and avoid redundancy; 3) Based on the interlanguage theory, sinilization of the EALD is explored to better cater to Chinese learners. Some patterns of negative transfer that need to be illustrated in usage notes are advanced and tentative samples of corresponding usage notes are provided to help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners get the best out of the learner's dictionaries.

**Key words:** English Advanced Learner's Dictionary; usage note; noticing theory; interlanguage; negative transfer

### 摘要

词汇用法信息的掌握是二语学习者语言能力的一个重要组成部分。学习词典作为专门为学习者设计的词典,应该提供充分和有益的用法信息以满足学习者的需求。用法信息的设置能有效地补充词义信息,因而也是决定词典质量的关键因素。大部分关于学习词典中用法信息的研究都专注于用法标签,专门针对用法说明的研究寥寥无几。此外,注意理论主要用于二语习得的研究,将该理论和词典编纂相结合是一个新的尝试,因此本文将填补这一空白。

为了探讨英语高阶学习词典中用法说明的设置,本文选取了五本具有代表性的英语高阶学习词典即"五大学习词典"的最新版本作为研究对象,包括朗文当代英语词典(LDOCE)、牛津高级英语学习词典(OALD)、剑桥高级英语学习词典(CALD)、柯林斯高级英语学习词典(COBUILD)和麦克米兰高级英语学习词典(MED)。基于注意理论的一些原理,本文将从五大学习词典的宏观和微观结构对比分析其对用法信息的不同处理。

对比研究揭示了五大学习词典处理用法说明的优势和不足。五大词典在用法说明的设置上有一些相似之处,又各有特色和创新。鉴于不足之处,本文提出了一些改善的方案: 1) 宏观结构: 词典中有设置用法说明的词条应给出明确的说明和列举以促进检索。2) 微观结构: 用法信息的设置应清晰、充分、有层次,从而促进使用者的注意,并且应避免信息冗余。3) 基于中介语理论,本文探讨了英语学习词典的国别化以期更好地满足中国学习者的需要。文中列举了一些常见的负迁移模式以及相应的用法说明示例,建议词典编撰者提供相应的用法说明,使学习词典能最大化地满足二语学习者的需求。

关键词: 英语高阶学习词典 用法说明 注意理论 中介语 负迁移

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### **Chapter 1** Introduction

#### 1.1 Rationale for the Present Research

#### 1.1.1 The Importance of Usage Notes in the English Learner's Dictionaries

In the age of globalization, good communication skills in English are the key to success both professionally and personally since English has spread to become the international language. For foreign learners who do not have enough exposure to natural English and sufficient classroom instruction, it is difficult for them to acquire language proficiency, and their ability of self-learning is important.

When it comes to learning a second language, dictionaries are an indispensable aid for second language learners. With English communication skills becoming a worldwide demand, English learner's dictionaries have developed to meet such demands for English learners all over the world. They are very popular with rich information on pronunciations, word meanings, collocations and syntactic behavior etc. A major trend in learner's dictionaries is the provision of more detailed and varied information, including usage information.

According to Wu Jianping (吴建平, 2007), there are five types of lexical meaning: conceptual meaning, connotative meaning (including affective meaning, figurative meaning and stylistic meaning), cultural meaning (including culture-specific meaning and culture-associative meaning), structural meaning (including grammatical meaning and collocative meaning), and pragmatic meaning. The definition given in the dictionary cannot exhaust all these meanings. Generally, only conceptual meaning is reflected in the definition, and the other meanings are offered in some other parts of the entry, in the form of usage labels or usage notes. It can be seen that usage notes take a large share in presenting word meaning and therefore represent a crucial factor for dictionary quality. For advanced learners of English, a good mastery of word usage is crucial for language proficiency, and learner's dictionaries should provide

explicit guidance and even warnings about usage to help them produce both correct and appropriate English.

### 1.1.2 Difficulties of Acquiring Usage on the Part of EFL Learners

Usage information, among other obstacles, is a hard nut to crack for most English learners and even for advanced learners. Chances are that they would produce correct but inappropriate language. The problems of language usage on the part of learners are varied. Common confusions about usage include differences among synonymous words such as "fit", "match" and "suit", formal and informal expressions of the same meaning such as "get well" and "recover", grammar points that are often misused such as the use of modal verbs, pragmatic usage applied in different situations such as the different use of "thank you" and "extend heartfelt gratitude to someone", underlying cultural information that cannot be inferred from the context such as some biblical allusions, to name just a few. The right usage of language in the right time is tricky for second language learners and should therefore be carefully dealt with in the learner's dictionary.

## 1.1.3 The Lack of Detailed Investigations on the Treatment of Usage Notes in the EALD

In spite of the rapid advances in researches on usage information in English learner's dictionaries, a close examination of relevant literature reveals that most of them focus on usage information in the form of usage labels. Detailed discussions on the treatment of usage notes in learner's dictionaries are few and far between, which leaves a niche for the current study.

### **1.2** Methodology of the Present Research

"Monolingual dictionaries for advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language form a league of their own in pedagogical lexicography and English lexicography, and are among the most highly regarded and widely researched in the dictionary world" (Kernerman, 2007: 139). My research has concentrated on the EALDs, and of the

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