

Research on the Use of Dictionaries of M.A. Majored in English

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Abstract

English dictionary is one of the necessary tools for English learners. Compared to the paper dictionaries, the use of electronic dictionaries is relatively common. But which kind of dictionaries is more effective for learners? This thesis adopts the research methods of questionnaire and interview. A comprehensive survey interview was conducted on the use of English dictionaries of 30 M.A. English majors. It turns out that in the daily study of them, more students prefer to use electronic dictionaries. But at the same time they think it's also important to pay attention to the paper dictionaries. It is suggested that the paper dictionaries should be combined with electronic dictionaries in the process of learning English.

Keywords

M.A.; English dictionaries; Questionnaire survey; interview.

1. Introduction

English dictionaries are essential tools for English learners. It also has an irreplaceable relationship with studying English effectively. Dictionaries are used both at home and abroad for thousands of years, mainly in the form of paper dictionaries. With the rapid development of technology, Domestic electronic dictionaries came into being in the early 1990s, and gradually became language learners' favorite. It is a method of converting traditional printed dictionaries into digital ones. And the electronic ones are required for fast query processing. It can be constantly updated. And you can also hear the words' pronunciation. It's much more convenient and practical than the paper dictionary. [1]

The use of dictionaries is also relatively common. The research on it started in the second half of the 20th century. In recent decades, great progress has been made in dictionaries' researches. [2] Many scholars in the academic circles of China have also given a lot of care to the use of dictionaries. Why need to study them? It's because the compiling of the dictionaries is lack of extensive and reliable research data. It is hard to meet the needs of the readers for the information that they needed do not provide for them, while the information provided by the dictionaries are not needed. As a result of that, it is necessary to carry out systematic and in-depth study on dictionaries' usage. [3]

In addition, with the expansion of English teaching scale in China, a variety of English learning dictionaries were launched on the market. In this case, we can provide reference for improving the level of English dictionary compilation by investigating the use of English dictionaries. It can also help to guide the students to strengthen their abilities to use dictionaries and improve their autonomous learning efficiency. [4] So these related studies are taken for granted.

Postgraduate students who majored in English have a rich experience in English learning. They have profound knowledge of English. The use of English dictionaries is bound to have a deeper understanding and experience. And doing the research on the use of their English dictionaries would surely get much more quantity of fresh results than before. [6] Based on the above considerations, this thesis conducts a quantitative survey on the use of English dictionaries in

a university in Guangxi. And analyze the collected data scientifically through SPSS20.0 data statistics software in order to obtain more detailed, accurate and effective feedbacks. This will make more practical suggestions for the use of English dictionaries for English learners.

2. English Dictionaries Usage Research

2.1. Research Subjects and Questions

This thesis makes a qualitative survey on the use of English dictionaries of 30 M.A. English majors in a university in Guangxi. The research presents three questions as following. First of all, what are the situations of using electronic dictionaries and paper dictionaries in daily English learning? Second, is it possible that different kinds of English dictionaries would result in difference in vocabulary memory effect? Thirdly, whether the paper dictionaries would be replaced by electronic dictionaries or not. On the basis of the investigation and analysis of the problem, the author puts forward how to use English dictionary effectively.

In November 2017, the survey was conducted on 30 students majored in English in colleges and universities in Guangxi. The main method of qualitative investigation is individual interviews. The selected interviewees were three M.A. students of English major. The interview question involves six aspects of the paper dictionaries and the electronic dictionaries. Using the method of randomly selecting interviewees. To ensure the universality and validity of the interview results, the main way of quantitative survey is questionnaire survey. The investigation was anonymous. The questionnaire covers 17 questions of paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries and all are closed ones. A total of 32 questionnaires were distributed, 30 recovered, and the recovery rate was 94%. The survey results are summarized as follows.

2.2. Qualitative Investigation and Analysis

The author interviewed three M.A. students of English major in the foreign language institute of the university under investigation. The results are as follows.

2.2.1. About Electronic Dictionaries

The three students were basically in agreement about the opinions of electronic dictionaries in this interview. They all talked about the convenience and rapidity of looking up English words. As a result of that, in order to save time and improve the efficiency of the search term, it tends to use electronic dictionaries. At the same time, all three students agree that electronic dictionaries update faster than paper ones. There are many languages involved in them. It can look up the words more effectively with higher value. Electronic dictionaries also have an advantage over the number of words. And you can see a lot of examples. For unfamiliar words, you can also hear a more authentic pronunciation, which cannot be done by paper dictionaries. Although the use of electronic dictionaries is convenient, but all three of them thought that electronic dictionaries had little effect on the effective memory of words while paper dictionaries have the advantages. So electronic dictionaries cannot replace paper dictionaries entirely.

2.2.2. The Use of Paper Dictionaries

When it comes to paper dictionaries, all three students think that the paper dictionaries are heavy. They're inconvenient to carry. And it's slower for looking up words which means wasting time. But for word memory, three students think it's better to have a paper dictionary. When you look up the words, you will be very impressed with the words. Even the left or right version of the words will be memorized. The main reason is that learners are time-consuming to query words. When you find out, you'll stay a little longer on the words to see more usages and examples. So it's better to memorize words. The electronic dictionaries are the same screens at any time with no change. So it's better to have a paper dictionary for one-time memory effect. The paper dictionaries update slowly. There are a lot of new words that can't

keep up with the development of society. It is difficult to meet the learning needs of English learners to query the exact meanings of words. The words in the paper dictionaries are more authoritative. Especially in the context of current online definitions, the authority of words is precious.

3. Quantitative Survey Analysis

The survey of the use of English dictionaries by M.A. English majors involved 30 students. There are 17 questions in the survey paper with all closed questions.SPSS20.0 which is a more objective and scientific statistical software was used in this survey. Reliability in the questionnaire survey means availability. It refers to the consistency of the results obtained from repeated measurements of the same object by the same method. The reliability coefficients of the components are best at more than 0.7 point, and 0.6 ~ 0.7 is also acceptable. If Cronbach's alpha number of value is at 0.6 or below, we should consider to recompile the questionnaire. The Cronbach's scale of this questionnaire survey is 0.692, which is approximately equal to 0.7. It Indicates that the reliability is high.

The author will analyze the results from the following parts, the use of electronic dictionaries and their effects on memorizing words and the use of paper dictionaries and their effects on memorizing words.

3.1. The Use of Electronic Dictionaries

The developing of science and technology pushes the developing of electronic dictionaries. Their advantages are obvious. They not only can update the words at any time and look up more example sentences, but also can hear the British and American pronunciations of the words which meet different needs of most learners.

The survey shows that 53% of M.A. students will buy the electronic dictionaries without considering the price of them. Half of the students think that electronic dictionaries are fast and easy to carry, also can constantly update the words. But only 20% of them believe that the use of electronic dictionaries could help them memorize the words. At the question of "It's more convenient to look up words in electronic dictionaries. Will you be lazy to memorize the words and less efficient?", only 17% of students agree. 23 % think electronic dictionaries would prompt them to memorize more words.When answering to "Are the electronic dictionaries the best tools for words memory?"Only 20 % of the students say yes.

3.2. Paper Dictionary Usage

Paper dictionaries have long history. Almost every student has used it in the process of learning English. But with the popularity of electronic dictionaries, their challenges are getting bigger and bigger. Nonetheless, the paper dictionaries have their own value.

The author's survey shows that 80% of M.A. students think that the paper dictionaries are heavier. It's inconvenient to carry, so they don't want to use. But at the same time, they think the paper dictionaries are more authoritative, accurate and the meanings and usage of words are more comprehensive. 83 % of students think that paper dictionaries let them get down to their studies and think more carefully of words using. While asking if paper dictionaries are better than electronic dictionaries, 87% students agree, for when one turns to a page in a paper dictionary, you will see other words of same meaning and opposite meaning or relative phrases when looking up the words.

3.3. Correlation Analysis

Are there any differences between the paper dictionaries and the electronic dictionaries for looking up English words? If exist, are they obvious? And in terms of these two issues,SPSS20.0 software analysis was used in this questionnaire. Table 1 is the mean value and standard

deviation of the scores of two groups' words corresponding to the two levels of the English dictionaries variables.

Table 1. The influence of paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries on word memory.

Group Statistics					
	Dictionary type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	The paper dictionaries affect the words.	30	3.5113	.80593	.14714
	Electronic dictionaries affect words.	30	2.7333	.76826	.14027

In Table 2 which is called independent sample test, by knowing the Sig. value 0.808 which is bigger than 0.05 in Levene's Test for Equality of Variance, the results of the independent sample T test should check the statistical results of the equal variances assumed column. Because p value is 0.000 which is obviously less than 0.05. That means the null hypothesis is overthrown. The use of paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries has significant differences in the memory of English words. We know that $d = 1.7$. It's obviously bigger than 0.8, which explains there is a great difference in the memory effect of English words between the paper dictionaries (3.5113 + 0.80593) and electronic dictionaries (2.7333 + 0.76826).

The independent sample T test clearly shows that there are significant differences in the memory effects of English words for M.A. English students using paper dictionaries (3.5113 + / -0.80593) and electronic dictionaries (2.7333 + 0.76826). $t(58) = 3.827$, $P < 0.05$, $d = 1.7$.

Table 2. Independent Sample T Test Data analysis

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
score	Equal variances assumed	.059	.808	3.827	58	.000	.77800	.20329	.37108	1.18492
	Equal variances not assumed			3.827	57.868	.000	.77800	.20329	.37106	1.18494

4. Results Discussion

English dictionaries are of great importance to learners. Because of the diversity of English dictionaries, how to choose the right dictionary is the biggest problem for learners. Through the questionnaire and interview on the use of the master's English dictionaries, we know that at present, it is so different between paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries of the most frequently used. The difference is big, and different choices can affect the validity of word memory.

Electronic dictionaries are fast and convenient with quick updation. They can show the pronunciation and query more examples. The advantages are obvious, but the use value of the paper dictionaries has its reasons too, their authority for example. Although the paper dictionaries lag behind the electronic dictionaries in some respects, but it will never be replaced by electronic dictionaries.

According to the scientific analysis of the data, the difference between the use of electronic dictionaries and paper dictionaries for the validity of word memory is quite obvious. The paper dictionaries have a slight advantage in the learning effect of English words.

And if you measure it in a comprehensive way, the most feasible one is for English learners to combine the electronic dictionaries with the paper dictionaries when using the dictionaries. This can avoid the excessive waste of time caused by a single use of a printed dictionary when using an electronic dictionary, and the ability to use a paper dictionary without the trouble of using an electronic dictionary to remember the words. The organic combination of these two kinds of dictionaries is the most ideal choice for English learners. It is very helpful for learners to learn English vocabulary effectively.

5. Conclusion

This thesis adopts qualitative methods to conduct a comprehensive survey and research on the use of English master's dictionaries, and SPSS20.0 was used. The data is analyzed scientifically. When using a dictionary, considering the convenience of the search term, more M.A. students choose to use electronic dictionaries, while considering the validity of the words memory, more M.A. students tend to use the paper dictionaries. In order to better integrate these two aspects, the author suggests that in the course of actual English learning, combining the two kinds of dictionaries is the ideal choice for English learners. It is also helpful for learners to remember the validity of English words.

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