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## **Language Empowerment through using a Dictionary**

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**Abstract:**

*This research paper mainly focuses on the paramount use of dictionary in enriching the knowledge of both teachers and students, in view of the fact that language determines one's status in a professional body. "Jack of all trades master of none" is a famous saying, but "master of glossaries can be jack of all trades", because it is proved by many researchers and CEOs of MNCs. Dictionary has the most important place in the present scenario, as communication makes one's mind up to the status. The chief aim of the probe is to ensure the tremendous significance of referring to a dictionary to purify one's language. After completing a degree a graduate can be a teacher but it is to be understood that a post graduate must be a master in one's subject to be able to explain it in a detailed, acceptable, standard language provided of course there is appropriate use of vocabulary using a standard dictionary.*

**Key words:** *Parts of speech, Reference, Usages, Affixes, Collocations, and Phonemes*

"Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man" – (Swami Vivekananda).

### **1. Introduction**

The presence of mind is vital for any learner, because he/ she can't predict what will be the apt or the accurate answer to the question, which was asked by a student/ a set of students. Sometimes novice may know the answer, as he/she would have heard of it from others or got it by viewing in some places. For example the word 'meanie' is a noun and it can also be used as a plural noun by adding -ies to the word. Children know the word since they experience in using it among them, but many educators have a doubt of its root word. Many researchers have stated that referring to a dictionary while reading is a waste of time, but a word can twist the reader in guessing the meaning sometimes.

### **2. Why Does One Refer to a Dictionary?**

A teacher need not take a dictionary inside the class but while preparing for the class, a teacher has to know the usages of words, then only he/she can use words correctly and to attract students. A teacher should explain everything using simple sentences mostly. Simple sentences in the sense, words used by a teacher should be understood by students, for example if a teacher tells that 'He came on bus this morning', students may question that why it is not "by bus". This can be explained only by referring to a dictionary because mostly students rely on authentic information.

The technique of using a dictionary should be taught to the user at an early age. They should be familiar with the different sections of a dictionary, the notations and abbreviations used in the dictionary. So it is advisable to have a close reading of the introductory part of any dictionary.

Gove points that users need to have with them a basic knowledge of the surrounding context when looking up a word in the dictionary:

"Words do not exist by themselves- they are surrounded by other words and live in a context of association and related ideas from which a consulter (the student) takes to the dictionary some little bit of understanding". (1969:198)

Dictionary must be used with regulations as "the use of dictionaries can encourage students to function at a word level rather than using content to decipher meaning" (Bilash, Gregoret & Loewen, 1999:4).

It is an irrefutable fact that a dictionary is an unavoidable tool for an educator to sharpen up his/ her language learning, especially in a situation, when he/ she wants to use the language. In fact most of the teachers use the dictionary to clarify their confusions, while proof reading or in writing something.

It is an unavoidable fact that concord is a very important ingredient in writing. Subject must agree with the verb used in the sentence, because verb is the heart of the sentence. Usually teachers or learners have doubts, while reading and writing an article about the use of verb, whether a singular or plural verb can be used. It can be clarified by referring to a dictionary, for example "Each / Every".

"Each" is used in front of a singular noun and is followed by a singular verb: Each student has been given his or her own email address. The use of his or her sometimes sounds slightly formal and it is becoming more common to use the plural pronoun 'their': Each student has been given their own email address".

"When 'each' is used after a plural subject, it has a plural verb: They each have their own email address, but 'every' is always followed by a singular verb: Every student in the class is capable of passing the exam".

"Each of, each one of and every one of" are followed by a plural noun or pronoun, but the verb is usually singular: Each (one) of the houses was slightly different". – A.S. Hornby (2010:477)

It is proved that no grammar book can clarify doubts elaborately than a good dictionary, because in a dictionary one can have abundant number of illustrative sentences with innumerable meanings and multifarious uses.

There is no substitute for purifying one's spoken or written statement other than referring to a good dictionary. One may have intention to learn something and sometimes one can learn something incidentally. It is an undisputable fact that a person, who has a repertoire of rich vocabulary, can be the best orator. Bejoint pointed that "dictionary use is not an end in itself; it is only a means that can be used to improve one's mastery of the language (or one's culture in general)" (Bejoint 1989:209).

To change one's passive vocabularies into active vocabularies it is mandatory to use a dictionary. A.S. Hornby stressed that "whether you are writing a business email or a long research essay, your dictionary can be a powerful tool to assist you in becoming a better writer in English"- (A.S. Hornby- WT1). A word can be used in different parts of speech. So a teacher should have a dictionary to differentiate the usage of a word, because learners learn this information from the instruction of their teachers. It is said that "dictionaries often supply information about the language not found elsewhere" ( Marckwardt 1973: 369).

It is said that guessing the meaning of a word is better than using a dictionary, but it does not hold good at all times. Sometimes the guess may go wrong, may be a wild goose chase, for example the word "do" can be used as a noun also. When the word "do" is used as a noun, it means party.

A word can be used in different parts of speech. If the word "fast" is taken in a sentence, based on its meaning, one can determine whether the word fast is an adjective or an adverb. Similarity lies not only in different parts of speech, but also in one parts of speech. The word "will" can be used as modal verb, as well as a main verb, but it is known that "will" can be used as an adjective and as a noun. Ex. "God has willed that my family is with me".

In the case of words like "a" (it is used not only as a noun, also used as an indefinite article and as well as a prefix. There are also two idioms: from A to B and from A to Z) and "to" (used as a preposition), one can find umpteen numbers of uses in a good dictionary. Undoubtedly it not only gives different meanings for the words but also various grammatical usages. The word "for" can also be used as a conjunction to mean to introduce the reason for something mentioned in the previous statement, for example "We listened eagerly, for he brought news of our family". The word "up" can be used as an adverb, an adjective, a preposition, a verb and a noun, for example "You look nice with your hair up (adverb); The mood here is resolutely up (adjective); We live just up the road, past the post office (preposition); He upped and left without telling anyone (verb); Business confidence is on the up (noun). – A.S. Hornby: (2010:1-1796)

### 3. A Dictionary- A Constant Companion

If a person refers to a good dictionary, he/ she can be the master of two productive skills namely writing and speaking, because of the certainty that he/ she has gained in the regular use of words which are his/ her own words , as he/ she has mastered the word power. A good dictionary is more than any grammar book, because in A. S. Hornby's Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary there are many examples and guidelines in different situations both in formal and informal contexts, and it is not only an alternative one for grammar books, but also gives guidelines to write bibliography and footnote in a research paper.

A teacher should try to understand the contextual meaning, but he/ she has to know the usages and different meanings of the word, when it is used in different parts of speech. It is known that a word can be used to mean many things even though it has only one parts of speech, for example the word "impression".

The word "impression" is a noun and it can be used in seven different meanings. "1. Idea/opinion (My first impression of him was favourable.), 2. Effect (His trip to India made a strong impression on him.), 3. Drawing (This is an artist's impression of a new stadium.), 4. Amusing copy of somebody (He did an impression of Tom Hanks.), 5. False appearance (Clever lighting creates an impression of space in a room.), 6. Mark (It is the impression of an elephant.), 7. Book (This is the impression of the first book.)" – A.S. Hornby( 2010:782)

Politzer and Mc Groarty suggest that "looking up all the unknown words before attempting to read a text is a negative behaviour" (1985:122).

Twaddell (1973:71) goes further and suggests that "rushing at once to a dictionary is the surest sign of a panicky language learner, and does nothing permanent for the learner's skill or resources". A teacher can also refer to a dictionary not for knowing the meaning of the word alone, but for strengthening his/ her language.

When a teacher reads something, it is not advisable to refer to the dictionary every time and it is known that a teacher can guess the meaning of the words by reading itself, but to enrich his/ her active vocabulary it is essential to refer to the dictionary. Marckwardt(1973:369) explains why teachers should use dictionary:

Dictionaries often supply information about grammar, usage, status, synonym discrimination, application of derivative affixes, and distinctions between spoken and written English not generally treated in textbooks, even in a rudimentary fashion.

Scholfield (1982) also argues that, “far from being a mechanical process, use of the dictionary involves the prior knowledge of the reader and his ability to make hypotheses about the context while reading. Using the dictionary, then, is an essential part of the reading process.”

Phrasal verbs play an important role to beautify one’s language. Most of the teachers have doubts in the use of multi-word-verbs (phrasal verbs), because it gives different meanings than the actual one, for example “to give” means to offer something, but if the adverb “up” is added with the word “give” (give up), it is a phrasal verb. It means to stop trying to do something (They *gave up* without a fight.) and also “give something up( to somebody)” means to hand something over to somebody else ( I would like to *give up* the stage to the President ( to allow him/her to talk).

Collocations rule sentences, because collocation is the way in which particular words tend to occur or belong together, for example, “We will have a meeting outside on the terrace, weather permitting”; but not “weather allowing”. Though both of these seem to mean the same thing (“allow” and “permit” have very similar meanings), “permitting” is the only correct word in this combination.

A.S. Hornby says that “in order to write and speak natural and correct English, You need to know which adjectives are used with a particular noun, which nouns a particular adjective is used with, which verbs are used with a particular noun and which adverbs used to intensify a particular adjective”. (A.S. Hornby-R13)

By referring to a dictionary one can also know literary criticism, punctuations, numbers, common first names along with its pronunciation (Phonetic symbols), phonemes, words used in American and British English are separately given in a standard dictionary with their spelling and pronunciations. It will be apt to say that a dictionary fulfills the requirements of grammar usages and the whole of literature.

A dictionary is an indispensable companion of a careful language user. As it has been pointed out earlier, one may devote sufficient time to go through the meanings and uses of all the new words. Apart from contextual guessing of the meaning of a new word, the other words could be reserved for checking up with the dictionary at a later stage to know more about them. One should ensure that when one knows a word, he / she must own that word.

#### 4. A Dictionary- A Must for a Teacher

For teachers other than teachers of English the importance of a dictionary can never be underestimated. Many things apart from their specified area of specialization can be made clear by making proper use of a dictionary. It is no exaggeration if it is said that it will add flavour to their language and fragrance to their usage. Many of the idioms and phrases, which they could have come across quite early in life and not used frequently, they get opportunities to use them in their day to day language transactions provided they constantly refer to a standard dictionary. Latest additions in the vocabulary can be easily mastered by them.

The classroom is incomplete without a dictionary. A resourceful teacher always banks upon a good dictionary. In the present student-centered- classroom scenario the teacher stretches his/her helping hand by simply asking them to refer to a dictionary and find out the meanings and grammatical points in relation to a few words, from time to time. Thereby the teacher standing at the backdrop encourages the learner to train himself/ herself for life. It is the bounden duty of a teacher of English to highlight the paramount importance of reference skills in which dictionary reference finds the significant place. The latest dictum is not learning about the language but learning the language. For this, the dictionary is undoubtedly a must use learning tool. Gone are the days when people thought that the dictionary is meant for knowing the meaning of a word. Now it has been proved beyond doubt that a dictionary is an authentic guide and a reliable companion.

#### 5. Conclusion

Day to day language learning is essential for an individual’s intellectual growth. Dictionary reference is an important study skill. It includes basic skills of understanding, reading and retaining information which will in the long run help an individual to communicate freely in the language through speech and writing. Ultimately the learner has to develop his own style of using the language. This can be done through reading books focusing on meeting the ever growing educational needs. A dictionary kept as stand by learning tool will further enrich the word power of the user, since word power is world power.

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