



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MOBILE APP BASED E-DICTIONARIES AND PRINT DICTIONARIES

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ABSTRACT

A dictionary has been the most trustworthy source for second language learning. In the technophobic world today, mobile dictionaries proved as a boon for the young ESL learners. It is commonly observed that today's young generation is smart enough in the use and practice of technology in a smarter way. These days, smart phones have explored newer avenues when it comes to learning, acquiring or updating knowledge. Today, learners carry completely new world of learning in their pocket through different apps in a mobile phone. Even the time has passed over when learning new vocabulary needed bulky, hardbound, printed dictionaries. Moreover, these app based dictionaries help students in different ways. E-dictionaries enrich vocabulary by offering several meanings to the specific word one looks for. Mobile dictionaries assist different users across all professions and areas viz. law, medical, trade and commerce, pharma, etc, as they find several thousands of words with meanings in a fraction of second. Many types of mobile dictionary software are designed and made compatible to any type of smart phone. These days, android and iOS are the two major operating systems, which support different dictionaries. U-Dictonary: Oxford Dictonary Free Now Translate (50 Million + downloads), Oxford Dictionary of English English: free (50 Million + downloads), Dictionary – Merriam Webster English Dictonary – Offline (10 Million + downloads), English Dictonary – Offline (10 Million + downloads), Dictionary.com: Find Definitions for English Words, etc. are some of the well-known and the most downloaded mobile dictionaries. All these dictionary applications provide different striking user interface, and are comfortable even for the non-techie users. The present comparative study compares and contrasts varied lexicographic features that make dictionary user-friendly. The present study aims at vocabulary enrichment among prospective users who aspire to be good at English with the help of mobile app based dictionaries.

Key words: Dictionary, vocabulary, mobile phone, applications, software, technology, android, iOS, language learning.



1 INTRODUCTION

Since about 4000 years ago, lexicography has been a component of all cultures in which script was known. The journey began with word lists on clay tablets to computer-stored data banks that ensured the path of development. Nowadays, lexicography follows a scientific and a non-scientific form. The earlier lexicographic form contains works on several sources of information and reference. It serves various important purposes, for example, it assists in the learning of the mother tongue and of other languages. It helps us in acquisition of scientific and technical knowledge. As far as technological considerations go, dictionaries are being explored in line with different linguistic theories. Although lexicography has many advantages, it encounters new problems that arise with the application of the computer in lexicography. Nowadays, lexicography is being studied altogether from a different perspective. The emergence of the study of dictionaries as a scientific discipline accompanies the increase in the interest of lexicon. Lexicography studies dictionary not only as a tool of reference, but even studies its form, structure, utility, and history. Moreover, it also studies all these features pertaining to the culture it surrounds.

During my school days in 1990s, technology was definitely not a dominant factor in the learning of English as a second language. We were instructed by our teachers to refer to dictionaries to look for word meanings. Initially, we were not conversant in handling printed dictionaries. Teachers used to advise us to look up meanings of words in a dictionary. We were not trained in how to look up the meaning of any word. On the flip side, today's generation does not find any difficulty in searching word meaning. They simply refer to the mobile app based dictionaries. Today, a word search and getting to its meaning is at the fingertip. Klein (2015:940) highlights the constructive sides of digital lexicography in his scholarly article. He mentions that digital methods began to change, and in fact to overthrow, traditional lexicography over the last decades. He identifies five main advantages of this development. At first, digital dictionaries digitally process tasks of natural language processing, such as machine translation, man-machine dialogue systems, or automatic text analysis. Digital dictionaries are a machine-readable version of an existing printed dictionary. Secondly, the increasing numbers of databases, mostly accessible via the Internet, provide computer-generated information about various lexical properties of a language. Thirdly, digital dictionaries have improved the search faster and more exhaustive. It easily revises and updates the information. One can easily search with the help of spoken sound instead of phonetic transcriptions, which is not available in book format. Large numbers of mostly free web sites provide links to or even host dozens of bilingual dictionaries as well. Fourthly, computers compile huge text corpora that comprise all varieties of a language. They scan texts for all occurrences of words or word combinations sort these occurrences by various criteria. Finally, they link them with other occurrences and add as much context as needed. Finally, the complex digital lexical systems integrate various sources of information that



consist of a computer-accessible and expandable corpus and a set of tools. It does not only search certain items, but also performs statistical analysis.

1. Difference between print and electronic dictionary

Prior to the computer age, there were many questions about patterns in language that could not be definitively answered. Dictionaries were the most important source of information about word meaning, and said little if anything about the syntagmatic aspect of semantics - how words derive meaning from their context. Currently, with computational approaches to language description and analysis, we have a bulk of valuable information, and can pose questions, the answers to which derive from the sum of many instances of a word in use. (Herbst, Thomas et al., 2011) Similarly, Mulhall (2016) differentiates between a paper dictionary and electronic dictionary. He states that paper dictionary is an Aladdin's cave of language with valuable linguistic objects such as irregular plurals, compound nouns and idioms. Most significantly, it presents linguistic categorization in a carefully classified manner. At this particular point, electronic lexicography loses its grip. A paper dictionary, although greatly ill assorted to the feasibility of the modern age, continually informs users about language explicitly inferred at every turn of a page. However, it is a very static physical object; it cleverly offers an important dynamic to the user by showing defined boundaries to language through its relative completeness in a limited space. In contrast, electronic dictionaries assist users looking up specific words without being engrossed into the depth. It can be called as a language-learner-turned-sniper approach wherein words are picked off selective. The present era is called age of information wherein information available just at the fingertip. When it comes to transition from paper dictionaries to electronic, it is seamless. Nowadays, the concept of word search in a paper dictionary is ideologically obsolete. Beginning of 'Googalisation' has opened many avenues. A word lookup is commonly observed in Google search engine.

2. Rise of mobile app based dictionaries

Nowadays, the rise of internet has brought a digital revolution. It is hard to think a day without internet. It has become an inseparable part in everyone's life. The era is also known as age of information wherein any sort of information is available just at the fingertip. The transformation is even applicable to transformation of print dictionaries to digital dictionaries. Sharma (2020) quotes views of Vivek Mathur a copywriter by profession on transition of print dictionary to mobile dictionary in the news article 'Is the print dictionary losing meaning?' Mathur states that until six months ago he was habitual of carrying a print dictionary in his bag whenever he used to move out. However, he too adopted a digital version of dictionary in the smart phone. We may find several similar remarks on the use of digital format of dictionaries. Furthermore, Sharma draws attention on the declining number



of sales of Oxford University Press (OUP) published print dictionaries over the last five years. Besides, Sharma cites the insights of Professor Niladri Dash on emergence of digital dictionaries as they have made things so easy to look up a word's meaning and usage on the go. It is practically, not easy to refer to a print dictionary every time one comes across a new word. The Internet has revolutionised the concept of dictionary look up through audio and visuals.

3. Advantages of app based e-dictionaries

Dictionary either print or electronic serves a significant role in the linguistic development of its user. It assists learners in learning a new language effortlessly. However, when it comes to discussion about advantages of electronic dictionary, we come across with many rationales. They are as follows:

- a) E-dictionaries help learners with spelling, pronunciation, grammar, word families, prepositions, phrasal verbs, idioms, collocations and more just at a single click.
- b) In a certain case, when a user does not recall spelling of any specific word, e-dictionaries provide pronunciation facility by which the user can pronounce the word and gets the spelling without any difficulty.
- c) Knowing the meaning of any word does not mean how to use it in different sentences. E-dictionary provides learners how to use the word, and which words commonly collocate (go with) that word. Users can also look for phrases, idioms and phrasal verbs to come across examples of how to use them. It can provides whether a verb is transitive or intransitive; what preposition a word takes; different word forms; whether the word is formal or informal; whether the word is mainly used in UK or US, etc. (Courtney, 2016)
- d) In case, a learner is not the native speaker of English and wants to learn it, then several e-bilingual dictionaries are available on different platforms such as Google Play Store or Apple iOS store. The most amazing thing is that all these e-dictionaries are available either free of cost or charging negligible amount as compared to print dictionaries.
- e) As compared to the bulky size and weight of print dictionaries, e-dictionaries can fit in some mega bytes somewhere in the phone's internal memory.
- f) E-dictionaries have been proved beneficial for the people with vision deficit or blind. There are several talking dictionaries available that are assisting to all these specially-abled people.

4. Leading e-dictionaries and their features:

- a) **U-Dictonary: Oxford Dicitonary Free Now Translate** (50 Million + downloads),



It is a FREE dictionary and translation app. Remove language barriers anytime anywhere. It takes in originally developed dictionaries, Collins Advanced Dictionary, WordNet Dictionary, Native Examples, Synonyms, Antonyms and so on. It also provides English videos, games and quizzes to help improve English. It is a simple dictionary, which effortlessly translates texts, pictures, or conversations in 108 languages. It satisfies all your translation needs, which include studying, working and traveling abroad.

b) **Oxford Dictionary of English:** free (50 Million + downloads),

It covers the latest vocabulary, with over 350,000 words, phrases and meanings. It reflects the unique richness and global adaptability of English. It covers over 75,000 audio pronunciations of both common and rare words, including those with varying pronunciations. It facilitates word translation while using other apps with our Tap to Translate feature.

c) **Merriam Webster English Dictionary – Offline** (10 Million + downloads),

It encompasses new vocabulary-building quizzes, fun, fast quizzes to learn new words or test your vocabulary. It avails ‘Voice Search’ that enables learners looking up a word without having to spell it. It provides ‘Word of the Day’ for learning a new word every day. It has an Integrated Thesaurus wherein synonyms and antonyms are included with the dictionary. It provides Quick Definitions perfect for on-the-go lookups.

d) **English Dictionary – Offline** (10 Million + downloads)

It encompasses More than 356000 English definitions and large number of inflected forms. It avails word meaning through camera search via OCR Plugin. It is available only on devices with back camera. It explains the meaning of English words and provides definitions that are based on English Wiktionary. It facilitates fast search, easy and functional user interface.

e) **Dictionary.com:** Find Definitions for English Words

It provides 1.5 million definitions and synonyms to help improve your vocabulary, study for the SAT or prep for the ACT, or boost your Words with Friends skills. It avails spelling and learning new words all the way through voice-search to find dictionary definitions without typing a single word. It explores a host of education features designed to help learners pick up new vocabulary, including Word of the Day, language trends, and more. It provides synonyms and antonyms in the thesaurus.

f) **English-Marathi Dictionary**



It translates words from English to Marathi and vice versa. It is available free of cost and does not require internet connectivity. It also provides voice search facility. Word games are also available for new learners.

6) CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention towards dictionaries as an important resource material rather than differentiating print and e-dictionaries and their pros and cons. Whatsoever be the variations, for me dictionaries have been benefitting learners across the globe either by print or by e-formats. Advent of internet has broadened the learning span. Nowadays, learners are referring to different dictionaries in different formats at any point of time and getting their purpose served. However, the advent of internet and technology has increased learning possibilities on a greater scale. There are still a good number of people find print format dictionaries comfortable. Whatever be the choices, one thing is for sure that dictionaries have become inseparable part of everyone's life.

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