

Can bilingual dictionaries improve efl students' l2 vocabulary learning?

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



Vocabulary is the key to communication especially for those who learn a new language. According to Wilkins (1972) if vocabulary is not acquired first, a person will not be able to address their thoughts. In order to be able to communicate effectively in a foreign language, students must first acquire vocabulary. According to Schmitt, ; Clapham (2001), as cited in Lafuente ; Marmol (2013), the dictionary is a " building block of languages".

That is why the dictionary is needed as a tool for the process of vocabulary learning. As an EFL student, it is important to know the best dictionaries to use. There are at least two kinds of dictionary: Monolingual, and bilingual. According to (Hartmann, 2002) as cited in (Lukac, 2011) the bilingual dictionary is " a type of dictionary which relates the vocabularies of two languages together by means of translation equivalents" (p. 6).

While the monolingual dictionary is " a type of reference work in which the words of language are explained by means of the same language" (p. 7).

Both of these dictionaries have their own advantages and disadvantages, that is why even today, it is still hotly debated which dictionary is better - the monolingual or bilingual dictionary. My own view is that I consider a bilingual dictionary to be an effective tool for helping EFL students' vocabulary learning process, because it supports students' vocabulary learning with more benefits, and is generally the preferred dictionary for students.

In order to know which dictionary is the best to use, students should know the advantages of both dictionaries. One of the advantages of monolingual dictionaries is that it helps students to process words more deeply and

promotes fluency by offering definitions in contexts (Albus et al., 2005, cited in Huang; Eslami, 2013).

Because it provides all information in the target language (L2), it is considered to be useful to improve learner's skills in guessing from context. However, students with low proficiency will find it difficult to learn new vocabulary from the context (Lew, 2004, cited in Kung, 2015). It seems impossible for students with a lack of vocabulary to infer the meaning from the context. Also, it is only an advantage if the user has the time to digest the meaning of the word.

Because, as we know, the monolingual dictionary is time-consuming, while the bilingual dictionary is the opposite. The Bilingual dictionary helps students to know a meaning of a word accurately without wasting their time. To support, Nation (2008) as cited in Kung (2015) maintains that L2 learning will be faster if the word from L1 is included. In short, the bilingual dictionary's benefit of saving time is supposedly purposeful for EFL students.

Although monolingual dictionaries are not time efficient, another advantage should be taken into consideration that could benefit both the students and teachers. According to Kung's study (2015), the monolingual help to promotes learners with a greater learning interest. Also, monolingual dictionaries help teachers to have an effective vocabulary instruction in teaching L2 reading comprehension (Al-jasser, 2008, cited in Kung, 2015).

On the other hand, a study from Luppescu and Day (1993) as cited in Hayati (2006), revealed that the use of bilingual dictionaries not only helps the

students during their L2 reading comprehension but also improves their test score. There were 293 Japanese students during reading who showed higher scores in the vocabulary test when using bilingual dictionaries. Moreover, the bilingual dictionary, as shown in Mármol & Lafuente's (2013) study, can contribute to student's autonomy.

When EFL students use bilingual dictionaries, it enables them to monitor their own learning process without the help of a teacher. Unlike the bilingual, students may need clarification by the teacher due to the information not being provided in their L1 when using a monolingual. Therefore, the use of bilingual dictionaries will more positively affect EFL reading performance and increase the learner's autonomy.

Besides knowing the advantages of dictionaries, another way to know which dictionary is the most suitable one for EFL students is by their own dictionary preference. Bejoint's (1981) study, cited in Yaman (2015), revealed that the 122 French students of English at the University of Lyon, showed that 96% of students possessed a monolingual dictionary. However, from Atkins and Knowles' (1990) investigation into over 1,100 learners in seven European countries, it was found that the majority of the participants (75%) preferred to use bilingual dictionaries (Cited in Yaman, 2015).

Another study also showed that students are more likely to use a bilingual dictionary. Schmitt (1997), as cited in Ali (2012), analyzed Japanese EFL learners' perceptions about the use of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and the results indicated that 85% of the respondents reported that they

prefer to use bilingual dictionaries and only 15% preferred to use monolingual dictionaries. Dictionaries should be used according to the students' needs.

If a student does not feel comfortable using one particular dictionary, then the dictionary will lose its meaning as an essential source of information about the language. That is why using a bilingual dictionary for EFL students should be continued, as it conforms to their needs.

After knowing the benefits and how students preferred using bilingual dictionaries, a conclusion can be drawn. The benefits of the bilingual dictionary, such as saving time, the positive effects on reading performance and the improved student autonomy play an important role to support EFL students' vocabulary learning. Moreover, studies have proven that students are more favorable towards the use of bilingual dictionaries than monolingual dictionaries. That is to say, bilingual dictionaries can considerably improve EFL students' learning process, so that they can learn L2 vocabulary effectively. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should enhance the use of bilingual dictionaries inside and outside the classroom for a greater result in vocabulary learning.