

Fostering Learners' Online Dictionary Skills through Active Dictionary Rubrics

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Abstract: This article aims to explore new ways to improve dictionary skills for language learners by promoting the use of *active dictionary rubrics*. It also tries to get a deeper understanding on how students perceive dictionaries before and after this type of training in dictionary use. To this end, a total of 75 students participated in the study and answered a questionnaire on dictionary use previous to the experiment. A second questionnaire was delivered after the instruction period to compare the users' perception of dictionary affordances. A mixed-method approach is used to collect quantitative and qualitative data via both questionnaires. This study reports on students' dictionary content awareness and how this awareness may increase by creating a habit in dictionary use routines.

Keywords: DICTIONARY USE, DICTIONARY USERS, DICTIONARY RUBRICS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT), DICTIONARY SKILLS, ONLINE DICTIONARIES, DICTIONARY CONSULTATION, WRITING SKILLS, LEARNERS' DICTIONARIES, DICTIONARY USE TRAINING

Résumé: Favoriser les compétences des apprenants pour l'utilisation de dictionnaires en ligne à travers les rubriques actives. Cette étude vise à explorer de nouvelles façons d'activer les compétences dans l'usage des dictionnaires pour les apprenants de langues, en favorisant l'utilisation de ce que nous avons appelé des en-têtes actives d'utilisation de dictionnaire. Elle essaie également de mieux comprendre comment les élèves perçoivent les dictionnaires avant et après ce type de formation. À cette fin, un total de 75 étudiants ont participé à l'étude et ont répondu à un questionnaire sur leur utilisation du dictionnaire avant l'expérience. Une approche mixte est suivie dans laquelle certaines questions sont numériques tandis que d'autres sont qualitatives. Un deuxième questionnaire est livré après la période d'instruction pour comparer la perception des utilisateurs sur les possibilités des dictionnaires. Cette étude rend compte de la sensibilisation au contenu du dictionnaire et comment ces connaissances peuvent augmenter si on crée une habitude dans les routines d'utilisation du dictionnaire.

Mots-clés: UTILISATION DE DICTIONNAIRES, UTILISATEURS DE DICTIONNAIRES, ENTÊTE, ENSEIGNEMENT DE LA LANGUE ANGLAISE (ELT), COMPÉTENCES D'UTILISATION DES DICTIONNAIRES, DICTIONNAIRES EN LIGNE, CONSULTATIONS DE DICTIONNAIRES, COMPÉTENCES D'ÉCRITURE, DICTIONNAIRES POUR LES APPRENTIS, FORMATION POUR L'USAGE DU DICTIONNAIRE

0. Introduction

Dictionaries play an important role as an aid in the process of learning a language. In this sense, ability to use a dictionary is generally believed to yield better results in the language learning process as well as to foster learners' autonomy. In the area of dictionary skills, research focuses mostly on dictionary use with different purposes and in different contexts (Rundell 1999, Schofield 1999, Laufer 2011, Müller-Spitzer 2014, Liang and Xu 2018), the effectiveness of different dictionary designs, the role of outer texts in dictionary pedagogy, and information presentation options (Nkomo 2015, Dziemianko 2016, 2019, Ptasznik and Lew 2019, Ptasznik 2018). But the majority of studies on dictionary use do not tackle how dictionary users are trained to become proficient users or how the training may affect test results. That is, dictionary use is analysed without considering previous specific dictionary training methods of users or the lack of them. These analyses pay attention to how the use of dictionaries in a particular task may improve results as compared to not using dictionaries. This could be compared to testing a group of students on writing skills without considering their initial writing competency level. If the group has students with different language proficiency levels, it is logical that those with a high writing skills level will perform better than those with a lower level.

1. Literature review

This section deals with research related to dictionary use and dictionary skill training. Some studies on dictionary use directly address dictionary skill training (Bishop 2001, Nation 2001, Bogaards 2003, Carduner 2003, Hadebe 2004, Chi 2003, Lew and Galas 2008, Lopera 2019). Hadebe (2004) focuses on dictionary skill training in relation to the dictionary culture of the Nembere community in Zimbabwe. He identifies teacher training in dictionary skills as the first condition so that learners may receive the most adequate training according to their specific needs. Bogaards (2003: 28) points out the necessity for dictionary training and how its lack of development is in sharp contrast with the progress observed in dictionary quality. He states that:

One of the recurrent themes in all of these publications is that dictionaries have been improving considerably over the past fifteen years but that instruction in dictionary use remains essential if users want to take advantage of the real riches of their dictionaries. (...) It is remarkable that in most teacher training programmes no time is set aside for dealing with dictionary use, just as in most language programmes in schools no attention is paid to dictionary instruction.

Nation (2001) is more precise on how this should be done, and distinguishes six important strategies that should be considered for dictionary training: evaluating the need to look up a word, finding the entry, reading the entry, relating the meaning into the context, changing the word into its basic form and guess-

ing the meaning from context. Lopera (2019) uses these strategies to conduct dictionary use training in reading comprehension lessons and supports them with class and homework tasks as well as with field notes. Lopera states that the combination of reading strategies with dictionary training yielded positive results regarding metacognitive awareness, selective use of dictionary and improvement in the students' reading skills.

Chi (1998) designs a full course of academic writing in which for six weeks specific contents of dictionary use training are included (Chi 1998: 577). A more detailed program is illustrated in Liu (2014) explaining the contents of nine training lectures on the following topics, namely:

1. How to choose and use English dictionaries.
2. Introduction to some commonly used English dictionaries.
3. Using monolingual dictionaries in English study.
4. Using dictionaries to gain improvement in reading and vocabulary.
5. Using dictionaries in translation from English into Chinese.
6. Using dictionaries in translation from Chinese into English.
7. Writing conference (assisted by dictionaries).
8. Using semantic information in dictionaries.
9. English writing with the help of dictionaries

Procedures followed for each of the nine lectures are given (Liu 2014: 2139-2141) and each session was also used as feedback for the following lectures. After the training the researcher conducted a half-structured interview. Interview results detect that dictionary training had a positive influence in that the learners were able to observe word usage and collocational behaviour and that they were better at distinguishing synonyms. This researcher also underlines the role of the teacher in the whole training method and the necessity to train the teacher into dictionary skill teaching.

Bishop (2001), Carduner (2003), Lew and Galas (2008) and Ali (2017) provide pedagogical proposals after designing and implementing dictionary training courses. Bishop (2001) designed a self-study dictionary training course to assess the value of such training for writing skills. Accuracy and language quality were tested comparing intra and inter-student writing skills competence. Results showed improvement in both areas and pedagogical proposals direct towards the use of intensive correction and comparison procedures. Based on the results of a dictionary training course for Spanish students, Carduner (2003) discusses which dictionary skills should be included in dictionary skills courses and provides sample dictionary exercises used in the study. Lew and Galas (2008) place the emphasis on presenting and practicing different dictionary skills in 12 dictionary skills sessions with Polish final year primary school children. Their

study reports on the findings regarding students' improvement for each specific area of dictionary skills tested and includes samples of material and tests used for the study.

Following Tono (1989) and Yorkey (1982), Ali (2017) designs a 15-module dictionary skills course for Sudanese English majors to study the ability of students in their use of dictionaries before and after the training. The dictionary skills test used in the research is provided in this article. This is another important aspect that should not be overlooked in the field of dictionary skills training: the availability of tests and materials used as part of the research. If such material is given, a more detailed consistent research may be carried out by researchers working in this field of knowledge. Obviously, the possibility to replicate studies on dictionary skills training depends on how much a specific method and materials are made public and available.

Ranalli (2013a, b) differs from the previously mentioned studies in that he develops an online training program for learning vocabulary and developing dictionary skills. As such, this researcher bases his training in the multimodal learning theory and considers instruction from a multimodal perspective to which cognitive load theories, and different types of knowledge representation are applied. Tutorials, videos and multimodal exercises are integrated in this online training program and at different points there are links that take the trainee to a selected online dictionary. The efficiency of the prototype course (Ranalli 2013a) is tested with tertiary education students (Ranalli 2013b) and reports, among other issues, the improved ability of participants in selecting the best dictionary for a particular purpose and ability to correct the types of errors for which they had been trained in the course by using dictionaries.

As shown above, some research is carried out in an effort to include dictionary training and use in the curriculum. However, the majority of national curricula do not itemise the aspects of dictionary training that should be developed in the classrooms. The Common European Framework of Reference mentions dictionaries and reference materials but does not analyse their role in the language learning process. An exception in this panorama is the case of dictionaries in the South-African curricula (Nkomo 2015), which clearly outline dictionary use and training in relation to educational level and subject where they should be introduced, type of dictionary to be used and purpose of use, and the activities that may be developed in each case. Two recent studies need to be included in relation to dictionary skills: Egido Vicente (2021) who thoroughly discusses the value of dictionary as a language learning resource, lexicographical skills and their relation to curricula design, and Chi (2020: 79) who clearly evaluates the relationship between lexicography and language methodologies:

As EFL lexicography and teaching methodologies have been evolving on their own paths in the past decades, the relationship between the two areas has become less dynamic and supportive (complementary). The broken relationship has gravely impacted the use of the dictionary among EFL learners who follow a

structured language curriculum. One suggestion to bridge the gap between the dictionary and EFL teachers is to provide training to English language teachers on "dictionary literacy".

This study presents a new proposal for dictionary skills training that is embedded in the English language subject in the first year of an English for Special Purposes (ESP) university course. The experiment was developed during an academic semester in which 75 students participated and received instructions to better use online dictionaries. To this end, three online dictionaries were used as part of the training: *Cambridge Dictionary*, *Macmillan English Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. The bilingual sites (English-Spanish/Spanish-English) for the last two dictionaries were also employed. The following section explains the methodology followed and provides illustrative examples of the material employed.

2. Methodology

In this study, a new type of rubric — called *active dictionary rubric* — was designed by the author. Active dictionary rubrics start out from the concept of holistic rubrics. Holistic rubrics use the same criteria to assess overall achievement of a number of items. The different items in the rubric are assigned specific scores. Thus, Table 1 could be an example of a holistic rubric in which we aimed at assessing dictionary skills (Campoy-Cubillo 2015) in relation to the ability to locate, understand, interpret, evaluate, record, and implement information provided in dictionary definitions (DEF) and examples (EX):

Criteria	Score: ability to implement information in the task at hand
(DEF) Locate the required entry, find relevant word sense, interpret definition and evaluate which part is useful, note down information to apply to a given task.	50%
(EX) Locate examples provided for a word/word sense, understand word use in context provided by the examples, interpret rules of use, evaluate how to apply to own sentence, note down relevant information.	50%

Table 1: Example of dictionary skills holistic rubric

The holistic rubric evaluates performance in relation to defined criteria. But before these criteria are met, students need specific training. Otherwise, we would be assessing the individual's previous knowledge and skills instead of

the learning process or the effectiveness of a particular dictionary design and affordances without depending on the teacher's knowledge and experience or evaluating the quality of the dictionaries employed.

Thus, in any stage of assessment process, it is important to ensure that the assessment instrument responds to the training methods that prepare the learner for that particular assessment type. The challenge in teaching dictionary skills is that, in contrast to other language learning skills, there are no dictionary training methods that are clearly outlined nor dictionary training materials that may be easily found, and the literature on dictionary instruction is scarce. In order to assess dictionary skills in a fair and effective way, dictionary skills training methods and proposals are necessary. In the field of dictionary instruction, *active dictionary rubrics* are a step in this direction.

Following Nation (2001: 296), who stated that "Dictionary use is a kind of language-focused learning: the deliberate, explicit study of words" *active dictionary rubrics* are designed to make dictionary use "deliberate and explicit". This means that students are not expected to make an unguided one-time dictionary look-up for a word they choose to search. On the contrary, through the use of active dictionary rubrics they are guided to perform planned and repetitive word look-up activities. They also use dictionaries in a way that is clear and direct and in connexion with the writing task they are working on in class.

In this study, students were asked to deliver "micro-writing tasks". These are short texts that they are requested to write, responding to a basic question, for example: "When was the last time you felt anger?" or "When was the last time you felt frightened?" or "Do you remember a time when you really enjoyed yourself?" Students answer this question with a maximum of five sentences. The teacher corrects the writings and studies which mistakes can be corrected with the help of a dictionary. Student sentences are numbered (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5) and the mistakes are underlined in each sentence. The items in the first column of the rubric (see Table 2) state the type of information look-up process that will be helpful to correct the mistake. The first row in the rubric indicates the number of the sentence where the mistake appears. An active dictionary rubric can be created with the sentences of one micro-writing task presented by an individual, or with 4–5 sentences from different micro-writing tasks from several students. These rubrics can be used with all students, whether they wrote these sentences or not, because the aim is to interrogate the dictionaries in order to become aware of how and where to find information on words. The rubrics can also be used in the following academic years with a different group of students. Not all categories need to be used every time an active dictionary rubric is provided. The irrelevant ones may be left blank or can be removed if there is no item in the essay that fits the category. Appendix 1 shows a blank rubric with all the categories used in this study. Designing rubrics to work with other dictionaries may entail creating new categories. The number of sentences may also be changed depending on the amount of time a teacher wants to spend on this type of training.

The rationale behind the suggested dictionary actions are based on teacher knowledge of the students' difficulties as well as teacher's dictionary knowledge. Students' mother tongue also plays an important role. For instance, "I'll take care of your tent is safe" is a literal translation from Spanish, and the teacher knows what the student meant. This is how the teacher can think about the ways the dictionaries employed will provide an answer. Likewise, the student wrote "tent" because it sounds similar to "tienda" (shop). If they read the definition for "tent" they will see that it has nothing to do with the word they were trying to find, and then search again for a better result. The same happens for the use of collocations, teachers may identify wrong collocations and address the student to the place in the dictionary where they will find the answer. It is also frequent that students use dictionary translations without checking whether that translation is adequate in the sentence they are using, or that they select a similar word that is semantically related but does not fit a sentence. They are then guided for instance to read definitions (or compare two definitions of related words) and pay closer attention to word meaning to make informed choices. They may also be told to read example sentences for the same purpose.

Dictionaries used in the training were monolingual English dictionaries: *Macmillan English Dictionary Online*, *Cambridge Dictionary Online* and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*, and Spanish-English/English-Spanish bilingual options in *Cambridge* and *Merriam-Webster (Spanish Central) Online* Dictionaries.

MICRO-WRITING TASK

Q: *If you were a police officer, what would you say to someone who has been robbed?*

Sample of a student's answer to this micro-writing task:

- S1. Everything will return to normal. It is best to stay calm. I assure you, that personally I'll take care of your tent is safe.
- S2. We understand your frustration, but in fact there is nothing to care about because we already arrested the robbers.
- S3. We would like to inform you that you can rest easy knowing the thieves are on jail.
- S4. Let me give you a good advice: it will be better to remain calm all the time and also be positive.
- S5. I wish that this issue could be resolved soon so that we can feel more safer.

Micro-writing active dictionary rubric	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5
(DEF) Definition: check definition for a better understanding/use of word	Read entries for "take care of". Is that the best choice for this sentence?	Read definitions for "care about". Do they fit sentence 2?			

	<p>Check other entries for "take care" followed by different words (that, with ... etc). Read the definition for "tent". Is that the word you wanted to use here? If not, which word should you use instead?</p>				
(SENS) Check you have chosen the correct sense of the word				Provide a sentence of your own with 2 of the different senses of the word "calm"	
(COL) Check, learn or use correct collocation		<p>Find the collocations for "frustration" in Macmillan, read the examples and decide which one means "lleno de frustración".</p> <p>Find two adjectives collocating with "frustration" expressing degree of frustration.</p>	Which prepositions can you use with the word "jail" (noun)?		
(EX) Check examples for a more natural use of word(s) / expressions (click on "more examples" if you see this link in the dictionary)		<p>Read the examples for "care about" and "worry about". Which verb fits better in sentence 2?</p>			<p>Read the examples for the verb "wish". Rewrite the sentence or find a better choice using the Spanish-English dictionaries.</p>
(GRMM) Read the grammar information about this word					See Word Forms for "safe"

(US) Usage / get it right				Read the information for "advice" in the section "Get it right" inside Macmillan.	
(IDM) Look at the "More meanings" tab to find idioms, phrases and phrasal verbs related to this word to learn new expressions	Cambridge: see idioms with "return"				
(TH) Thesaurus (syn/antonym)		Find synonyms for "frustration" in Macmillan and note them down. Different meanings of the word will take you to different groups of synonyms organized under a common idea or concept.			
(R) (DE) Related words/expressions Derived words	"return" Macmillan: see Other Entries for this word.				
(TRANS) Find a better translation/word choice	Find translations for "encargarse" ⁱⁱ and see which one fits sentence 1			Find at least 2 ways to express "quedarse tranquilo" ⁱⁱⁱ in English. Read and note down the examples and their translations in Cambridge or Merriam Webster bilingual dictionaries.	
(i) lleno de frustración: in/with frustration; (ii) encargarse: see to; (iii) quedarse tranquilo: stay calm					

NOTES FOR RUBRIC COMPLETION: Students are required to (1) provide a correct version of the sentences, (2) find and note down the information required in the vocabulary expansion cells (for example find different ways to say something or gather synonyms, or provide new sentences with precise words). Students will get an active dictionary rubric every other week during one academic semester. Active dictionary rubric completion is followed by class feedback and correction.

3. Participants

A group of 75 first-year ESP university students enrolled in the Criminology and Security degree participated in the study. The group had a B1 level (37 points in the 30–49 range) in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as reported after completing the Oxford Placement Test. Participants live in a bilingual area where Spanish and Valencian are spoken. Students coming from other areas in the country as well as immigrants are taught both languages at elementary school and secondary school.

4. Procedure

A pre-training questionnaire elicited information on dictionary use and background knowledge. Micro-writing tasks (see first row in Table 2 as an example) were then set out in which the students' writings were used to design the active dictionary rubric. Since the rubric was intended to help them with their own writings, this was considered as a useful practice in the sense that students could become aware of their progress in using dictionaries and how dictionaries could help them write better. A second post-training questionnaire interrogated the students on the training experience in order to compare results with their initial dictionary use and dictionary skills habits. Both questionnaires can be seen in the Appendix.

5. Results

5.1 Pre-training questionnaire

A questionnaire of 8 questions (Q1 to Q8), six quantitative questions and two qualitative ones, was answered at the beginning of the course using Moodle. Table 3 illustrates the age and first dictionary type that the students employed. As can be seen in the table, the majority of students used a dictionary for the first time when they were between 8 and 10 years old, followed by a lower age range between 11 and 14 years old. Thirty-seven students started with a monolingual Spanish dictionary, followed by English–Spanish dictionaries, and Spanish–Catalan ones. It is remarkable not only that less than 50% started with a monolingual mother tongue dictionary but also that the second place was taken by the bilingual English–Spanish dictionary considering that the majority of students used this dictionary at an early age.

I used my first dictionary when I was ...		The dictionary was ...	
8–10 years old	63 (84.00 %)	A Catalan monolingual dictionary	3 (4.00 %)
11–14 years old	11 (14.67 %)	A Spanish monolingual dictionary	37 (49.33 %)
15–16 years old	0	A Spanish/Catalan Bilingual dictionary	14 (18.67 %)
16–18 years old	0	An English–Spanish bilingual dictionary	20 (26.67 %)
older than 18	1 (1.33 %)	An English monolingual dictionary	1 (1.33 %)

Table 3: Q1 and Q2: Age and dictionary type for participants' first encounter with dictionaries

The following question, (Q3) "Has anyone ever taught you how to use a dictionary (explanation longer than 10 minutes)? If so, please explain who, how and when" aimed at eliciting any experience of practical dictionary training. It was considered that a 10 minutes single explanation would not count as proper training. It was found out that 23 out of 75 students never got any training at all some simply said that they were not taught and a few answered that no one had taught them and that they had taught themselves. Those who gave a positive answer explained that they were taught to find entry words by first finding the first letter of a word and then the full word. Only two students mentioned definitions, only saying that teachers helped them find where the definition was. No other mention was made of word meaning or word senses or any other dictionary component. Some students stated that they needed dictionaries because they did not know the language(s). Both teachers and parents appear in the students' answers as they explained how to use dictionaries. Student sample answers are:

- my mom has explained me in our house quite good for ten years but I didn't listen her
- No, they just said me to use an application for the mobile phone which offers me an online dictionary
- No, I know how to use a English dictionary because is similar to Spanish version

- My teacher in primary school taught me to use it, she explained me how to search the words.
- Yes, my teacher when I was in the primary school. She explain to us to search the words watching the word that appears in the top and then think if our word stay before or after in alphabetical order.
- My English teacher when I came to Spain and I didn't know how to even talk in Spanish. So, she had to explain to me with a dictionary on her hand.
- My parents when I was a child, each word that I don't understand they oblige me search it in a dictionary. they explain me how do it, i have got know the first letter of a word that I want to find. the dictionary are ordered by abecedary, then i had find the letter that I was searching following the abecedary.
- No one taught me how to use it, I informed myself.
- generally nobody has taught me how to use the dictionary but sometimes in secondary school teachers have given me links to dictionaries

From the students' comments, it was revealed that the explanations received and class practice seem to be very basic for the participants in this study and do not seem to cover any skill beyond locating information. When questioning students on their satisfaction regarding their ability to use dictionaries, however, the majority of students were satisfied and only 1 of them was not happy with his/her dictionary skills and another student stated that he/she would like to improve such skills.

Are you happy with your abilities to use dictionaries?	Responses
Yes, I'm totally satisfied	18 (24.00 %)
Yes, I manage well	43 (57.33 %)
Yes, more or less	10 (13.33 %)
No, not really	1 (1.33 %)
I would like to use it better	1 (1.33 %)
No answer	2 (2.67 %)

Table 4: Q4: Students' perception of their skills in dictionary use

As regards the use of online dictionaries (Table 5), it was found out that most students use between two and three online dictionaries instead of sticking to a favourite dictionary, a practice followed by only 16% of the students. Of these, students were questioned on the type of dictionary they selected and for this question they were allowed more than one answer. Results indicated that 80.82%

choose bilingual dictionaries, closely followed by thesauri. Although monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised dictionaries may be both general or specialized, these last two options were included to find out about the students' needs regarding terminology in a particular discipline or the lack of it. The results were as expected of this particular group of students. Since they have just started their degree in Criminology and Security some of them (13.7%) start to consult information on specialised terms while the majority are still looking for general vocabulary.

How many different online dictionaries do you usually look up?		Please tick the dictionary types you use (more than one answer is allowed)	
1	12 (16.00 %)	general	32 (43.84 %)
2	33 (44.00 %)	specialized	10 (13.70 %)
3	20 (26.67 %)	bilingual	59 (80.82 %)
4	4 (5.33 %)	monolingual	30 (41.10 %)
more than 4	2 (2.67 %)	thesaurus (synonyms, antonyms)	34 (46.58 %)
		bilingualised (monolingual and ALSO the translation of the word, sometimes the translation of the examples)	26 (35.62 %)

Table 5: Q5 and Q6: Number of different online dictionaries the participants use and types of most frequently used dictionaries

The following question was Q7 "What do you use your dictionaries for NOW? If you use them for different purposes, please explain." There were three recurrent purposes: finding a translation, word meaning and finding synonyms. Some students also highlight a more general purpose: learning a language. While most students explain the purpose of dictionary use in general, a few students specify the type of dictionary they use depending on their needs. Sample answers are shown below:

- Now I use thesaurus dictionary when I not want repeat the same word in a writings all the time. I use the general dictionary to look for the meaning of words when I'm studing. Finally I use the bilingualised dictionary to look for the traduction of words in other languages as English when I write writings or I study it.
- to check vocabulary
- I use them mainly for translate words from spanish to english, but I also use it when I'm not sure of the meaning of a word or an specific sentence.
- I use them to look at specificated words that i don't remember how it were written
- I use the dictionary to translate into Spanish words that I do not understand in English and I also use it for university work
- I use dictionaries to search a word that I didn't understand.
- to be able to complete sentences

Students were also asked if they used those sections in the dictionary that explain how to use it (Table 6). The majority of students did not use that type of information. This is also a question to consider in relation to dictionary training: if students are not taught and do not read any guidance matter, then it is difficult that they come to appreciate dictionaries and their pedagogical innovations. The percentage of students who used the dictionary guidance was even lower (8%) than the findings reported by Lew and Galas (2008) on the same item (four students (14.3%) in the experimental and six (20.7%) in the control group). If we bear in mind that students in the present study were university students and those in Lew and Galas (2008) were primary school students, this can be seen as a major flaw in this particular group of Spanish university students.

Do you read the "how to use the dictionary" sections?	Responses
yes	6 (8.00 %)
no	52 (69.33 %)
sometimes	13 (17.33 %)
no answer	4 (5.33 %)

Table 6: Q8: Using "how to use the dictionary" sections in dictionaries

5.2 Training sessions

During the first session, one micro-writing task was assigned. This task was used to generate the first two active dictionary rubrics. In the following train-

ing session, one active dictionary rubric was explained with examples on how to use it, and the students were given another active dictionary rubric for homework. In the following sessions, one micro-writing task was assigned, the last active dictionary rubric was revised and a new active dictionary rubric was given. Revision of active dictionary rubrics entailed that students had to present their corrected sentences after following the rubric, as well as the notes they took as instructed in each rubric. During the training sessions, it was essential to solve any question regarding dictionary use for that particular task. Projecting the teacher's screen to show the specific entries that were consulted for the task aided in task comprehension and as part of the process of dictionary skills training.

5.3 Post-training questionnaire

After the training period, students were asked to complete a second questionnaire with five questions, three quantitative and two qualitative questions. The main aim of this questionnaire was to analyse the effect of dictionary training on the students.

The first question asked students whether they managed to find information in the dictionaries. This was an important question because it provides feedback on whether the rubric could be understood and whether it easily took the learner to the right places. Positive results confirm the usefulness of this type of rubric: 49.33% of the students said they found the information, as well as another 24% who stated that they nearly always found what they were looking for. The percentage of students with difficulties was very low.

Did you manage to find the information in the dictionaries?	Responses
yes	37 (49.33 %)
nearly always	18 (24.00 %)
sometimes	12 (16.00 %)
it was difficult but I found it	7 (9.33 %)
no	1 (1.33 %)

Table 7: Post-training Q1 for ease of information finding

The second question was about the usefulness of rubrics. The answers to this question indicated that participants found the practice either useful or more or less useful. Only three students did not find the rubric particularly useful.

Was the dictionary rubric useful for you?	Responses
yes	35 (46.67 %)
more or less useful	35 (46.67 %)
I do not know	2 (2.67 %)
no	3 (4.00 %)

Table 8: Post-training Q2 Rubric usefulness

Question 3 is related to the previous question, but was posed differently. While question 2 is general, question 3 is a little bit more specific in the usefulness of the rubric by asking students whether locating information in the dictionaries is now easier than before the training.

Do you now find more information in dictionaries than before the rubric exercises? (more than one answer is allowed)	Responses
Yes, now I find many more things that I didn't know before	29 (38.67 %)
Yes, now I know how to learn more things about the words I am looking for	37 (49.33 %)
Yes, now I can do things with the dictionaries that I had never done before	5 (6.67 %)
Maybe I find more things than before this experience	20 (26.67 %)
Now I find one new type of information, I didn't know it existed before the rubric exercises	9 (12.00 %)
No, I do not find more information than before	2 (2.67 %)

Table 9: Post-training Q3: finding information in dictionaries

Answers in table 9 indicated that the majority of students found it easier to both locate different types of information that they would not find or use prior to this study, and that they are now able to teach themselves new aspects of the words they might be interested in their future situations of dictionary usage.

The fourth question, (Q4) "Do you think your abilities to use dictionaries are now better? Why?" is related to the perception students had of their own dictionary skills after the training experience. Only five students gave a negative answer to this question, while the remaining seventy students affirmed that their dictionary skills had improved. Participants' answers point to the improvement in their ability to find different information types in a more effective way. Many of the answers also stated that they did not use dictionary-

ies very much before the training and that now they see the point in using them. Other aspects of dictionary use that appeared in the answers to this question were the students' ability to make a better word choice, paying attention to the context of examples, the value of creating a habit or familiarizing themselves with these tools. Some sample answers from students are shown below:

- Yes, because now I can find more things that before I don't see or that I don't give value, and now I'm faster to find the information.
- Yes, I think my abilities to use dictionaries is now better, because I can find new useful information for improve my redactions* such as, synonyms or the correct word depending the context. (*a mistranslation from Spanish "redacción", meaning "essay")
- I think that they had improved a little bit more than before because now I search in a more specific way to look for what I want more quickly.
- Yes, because I've learned a lot with the rubrics and now I've discovered lots of dictionaries I never used before and how to find the information in them.
- Yes, I think that my capacities have improved because before it was not using very much the dictionaries, however, now my vocabulary is richer and varied.
- I think that my abilities are better now but not too much.
- yes, because I used them so many times and I familiarized with them.
- Yes, I think my abilities to use dictionaries are better because now I have the habit of doing it, before I almost didn't do it.
- No, but I know which dictionaries I can use now.
- Yes, now I am able to contrast information in order to know which word is better for each situation
- In my opinion I believe that my skills with dictionaries are better, before I only looked for what the word meant, but now I look for if the word has some particle, or how to put the following verbs ...
- Yes, because when you had the indications to find the information you got some skills to search in the dictionaries.

The last question of the second questionnaire was Q5 "Tell me the things you can now do with dictionaries that you never did before". Answers to this question revealed how the majority of students are now more aware of the value of dictionaries as part of their language learning process. While most students said that they used dictionaries for two specific purposes, looking up the meaning of a word and translating the word, and for the general purpose of learning a language, they reported a number of newly gained insights and purposes in their post-training answers to Q5. Among these are the usefulness of example sentences for guidance on word usage, locating and learning about phraseology and idioms related to a word, distinguishing between different word senses, or choosing the right word among several options. Some students

also pointed to the fact that their dictionary use was now less time-consuming. Interestingly, dictionary training also proved to be a good instrument in raising students' awareness on the added values of using dictionaries in contrast to the use of Google translator, because they realised that dictionaries enable them to make informed decisions on their word choice and use.

- Use the examples to put in a better way the words inside a sentence and to use the prepositions that go before.
- For example, now I can find expressions in dictionaries and before I didn't know that it was possible
- Now, I have learned that some dictionaries like Cambridge or Macmillan are more useful than Google traductor.
- Before, I didn't search information in English dictionaries. Now, I can look words and meanings without needing the translator.
- For example, in the Cambridge dictionary you can see the grammar of words.
- Contrast information, know which preposition follows each word, read many examples...
- I have discovered the different meanings of a word
- When I'm reading a definition in a dictionary, now I can distinguish the type of word and possible expressions with the word.
- I can know if it is better to use another verb than the one I had chosen. I can know if that word is followed by a particle in particular.
- Before I read the definition of the words in English, I only looked for the meaning in Spanish and associated it with what I thought in Spanish. Now I also read in what situations the word can be used.
- I can find the words more quickly
- Now I can find phrases with the words I'm looking for for a better understanding of their meanings, expressions with those words and the most successful synonyms

6. Discussion

The comparison of students' skills and beliefs in their own dictionary use revealed important changes between pre- and post-training opinions. As reported in the pre-training questionnaire results, most students received very basic instructions on how to use dictionaries and these instructions are provided at a very early age (8–10 years old) for the participants' mother tongue dictionaries or the official languages spoken in the area. It seems that after that, no additional training is given other than suggesting suitable dictionaries to use in a foreign language. This is a situation which could be improved by implementing different dictionary skills training progressively from basic to more difficult abilities in the different educational levels. In spite of the little training, students believed themselves to be proficient dictionary users and 61.33% claimed

to be satisfied or manage well with dictionaries. This perception, however, changed after the training sessions. In the second questionnaire students stated that the active dictionary rubrics were useful (70 out of 75 students answered that they were useful or more or less useful), thus indicating that there was room for improvement, which can be achieved by instruction and training. This idea was further supported by the answers provided to the question "Do you now find more information in dictionaries now than before the rubric experience?" For this question, the majority of students either found more things that they did not know before or had learnt how to learn more things about words. Moreover, students reported that their abilities to use dictionaries was better after the training period.

Questionnaire results also indicated that the students' skills now go beyond the three typical dictionary use options (translation, definition (word meaning), and a general sense that dictionaries may aid in language learning). Dictionary use and training better acquaint students with dictionaries, offering a wider range of linguistic information that may help and make the students more confident in their language learning process.

7. Conclusions and pedagogical implications

This study is in line with previous research (literature review, this article) on the value of dictionary skills for the enhancement of language learners' linguistic competence. Conclusive results in this and previous studies on the improvement of learners' linguistic competence after dictionary instruction suggest that dictionary skills training is an objective that should be pursued by language teachers if they want to provide their learners with useful, adequate language tools that can also become life-long learning companions.

One of the findings of this and previous studies (particularly, Lew and Galas 2008) is the fact that most learners believe that they know how to use dictionaries and that there is not much that they can learn about them. However, training in dictionary skills shows them that they were missing a considerable amount of information that could help them in their learning process and that goes beyond translating a word or being able to find one definition for a word. Students' answers acknowledge that dictionaries allow them to better find their way with language use, helping them make informed decisions on word choice while learning about word usage. This acknowledgement includes awareness of the difference between obtaining a translation in Google or other online translation tools and deciding which is the best way to say what they want to say. Thus, specific training methods of dictionary users need to be part of the equation when reporting users' abilities to use dictionaries for a specific purpose in a given context.

Some pedagogical implications can be derived from studies in dictionary training. A recurrent conclusion is that consistent and systematic practice is necessary to achieve dictionary skills competences at different levels. Another

aspect that calls for closer attention is that the use and training reported in the literature refers to different dictionaries and types of learners. Further research should systematise these two aspects of research in dictionary skills, since both dictionary complexity and language learner competency level are relevant parts of the analysis. In this line of thought, researchers should consider how practice with different (online) dictionaries and the affordances each may have, could yield different results in the students' performance.

Finally, new methods to approach dictionary skill training and material provision needs to be aligned with language competence frameworks (Campoy-Cubillo 2015) so that dictionary training at different educational stages can be carefully planned out.

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Appendix

Active dictionary rubric

Active dictionary rubric	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
(DEF) Definition: check definition for a better understanding/use of word					
(SENS) Check you have chosen the correct sense of the word					
(COL) Check, learn or use correct collocation					
(EX) Check examples for a more natural use of word(s) / expressions (click on "more examples" if you see this link in the dictionary)					
(GRMM) Read the grammar information about this word					
(US) Usage / get it right					
(IDM) Look at the "More meanings" tab to find idioms, phrases and phrasal verbs related to this word to learn new expressions					
(TH) Thesaurus (synonym/antonym)					
(R) (DE) Related words/ expressions / Derived words					
(TRANS) Find a better translation/word choice					

Pre-training questionnaire

(Q1) I used my first dictionary when I was ...

- 8–10 years old
- 11–14 years old
- 15–16 years old
- 16–18 years old
- older than 18

(Q2) The dictionary was ...

- A Catalan monolingual dictionary
- A Spanish monolingual dictionary
- A Spanish/Catalan Bilingual dictionary
- An English–Spanish bilingual dictionary
- An English monolingual dictionary

(Q3) Has anyone ever taught you how to use a dictionary (explanation longer than 10 minutes)? If so, please explain who, how and when.

(Q4) Are you happy with your abilities to use dictionaries?

- Yes, I'm totally satisfied
- Yes, I manage well
- Yes, more or less
- No, not really
- I would like to use it better
- No answer

(Q5) How many different online dictionaries do you usually look up?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

(Q6) Please tick the dictionary types you use (more than one answer is allowed).

- general
- specialized
- bilingual
- monolingual
- thesaurus (synonyms, antonyms)
- bilingualised (monolingual and ALSO the translation of the word, sometimes the translation of the examples)

(Q7) What do you use your dictionaries for NOW? If you use them for different purposes, please explain.

(Q8) Do you read the "how to use the dictionary" sections?

- yes
- no
- sometimes
- no answer

Post-training questionnaire

(Q1) Did you manage to find the information in the dictionaries?

- yes
- nearly always
- sometimes
- it was difficult but I found it
- no

(Q2) Was the dictionary rubric useful for you?

- Yes
- More or less useful
- I do not know
- No

(Q3) Do you now find more information in dictionaries now than before the rubric experience? (more than one answer is possible)

- Yes, now I find many more things that I didn't know before
- Yes, now I know how to learn more things about the words
- I am looking for
- Yes, now I can do things with the dictionaries that I had never done before
- Maybe I find more things than before this experience
- Now I find one new type of information, I didn't know it existed before the rubric exercises
- No, I do not find more information than before

(Q4) Do you think your abilities to use dictionaries is now better? Why?

(Q5) Tell me the things you can now do with dictionaries that you never did before.