



TEACHING ENGLISH STUDENTS HOW TO MAKE A CORRECT USE OF DICTIONARIES

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ABSTRACT

Dictionaries have traditionally been an essential tool for language learners, and they are still considered a basic tool for those who are involved in the process of learning a foreign language.

Traditionally, lexicography has focused on word meaning, but nowadays dictionary entries provide much more information than headwords' definitions and they go beyond the field of semantics, providing other relevant types of information such as countability, phonetic transcriptions or collocations.

Nonetheless, Chan (2014) explains how for different reasons, dictionary users do not make a correct use of dictionaries and, as consequence, they do not make the most out of them.

A possible solution to this problem could be instructing language students to make a proper use of dictionaries. For this reason, the aim of this MA thesis is to design multiple activities that can be implemented in the English classroom in order to teach students to make a correct use of English dictionaries.

Key Words: information types in dictionaries, dictionary users, monolingual dictionaries, dictionary entries, foreign language learning, English as a foreign language (EFL).

1- INTRODUCTION

Although it is a well-known fact that dictionaries are a basic tool for language learning, we cannot frequently find students using them in class, and it is even less common to find a teacher explaining how to properly use dictionaries to their students. However, teaching how to take advantage of the different possibilities that dictionaries offer, should become a habit at schools.

In contrast to the lack of lessons employed to make students familiar with dictionaries, it is evident that language learners in general use dictionaries. Moreover, electronic and specifically online free dictionaries are increasing the number of users. Multiple studies (Momcilovic & Petrovic, 2017; Jin & Deifell, 2013; Jian, Sandnes, Law, Huang & Huang, 2009) demonstrate that language learners all over the world usually consult electronic dictionaries to complete their language tasks, not only because they consider them useful but also due to the quick and readily access that current technologies provide.

It is the absence of instructions that leads to the common mistakes that the majority of users make. For example, Chan (2014) claims that students only consult dictionaries when they find new or difficult words. However, familiar words can be tricky, since they also present unexpected meanings and uses (Chan, 2014).

In addition, since electronic dictionaries are cheaper (or even free) and faster to use than traditional ones, the transition from paper to digital format has promoted students' accessibility to dictionaries. Moreover, Lew (2010) explains that electronic dictionaries can hold some content such as audio or video which couldn't be included in paper dictionaries.

The inadequate use that language learners make of dictionaries is still increasing in spite of the transition of paper dictionaries to electronic dictionaries, because there is also no instruction on dictionary use. It is at this point that the increasing interest in lifelong learning, which is explained below, can be connected to the need to instruct students in the use of dictionaries. For this reason, the aim of this MA thesis is to devise multiple activities that could be implemented in class in

order to teach students how to take advantage of the different features that dictionaries provide.

2- INCREASING INTEREST IN LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING

Lifelong learning is a central concern in current European education and “to become lifelong learners is the ultimate goal of many if not most learners irrespective of their target of learning” (Chan, 2014, p. 33).

The idea of learning in all the stages of life is not actually an innovative philosophy since it was also a main concern in various ancient cultures (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako & Machu, 2001), but in the recent years, the idea is gaining force and it demands a reform in formal education.

Mackiewicz (2002) explains that the European Council has set multiple targets to overcome the challenges of globalisation and the worldwide spread knowledge-based economy. One of these targets is described as providing a set of basic skills through lifelong learning, including foreign languages skills.

In order to achieve this goal, along with the promotion of plurilingualism, the Council of Europe has designed the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The idea of this portfolio is to make students more “autonomous” by getting them involved in their own learning process and to motivate learners to learn languages throughout their lives.

However, the Council of Europe does not provide language learners with sources to self-learn and neither is it fostered in compulsory education, where students seldom acquire a sufficient level to communicate in a foreign language, and some of them just forsake their learning process once they leave school.

For their part, Bryce and Withers (2003) work on the idea of preparing students to be lifelong learners. In their paper, they include six main points (information literacy; values, dispositions and attitudes; skill sets beyond the ‘basic’; oneself and one’s learning: self-concept; learning how to learn; and teachers as model lifelong learners) that educational institutions must integrate in their programs in order to establish the bases of lifelong learning.

Of the six points mentioned above, is of great relevance for this project the one referring to *information literacy* as it consists in the capacity of the learner to handle information, and dictionaries are popularly known as rich sources of information that language learners can consult on their own. Nevertheless, a great part of students ignore the multiple functions of dictionaries and they limit their potential to word meaning suppliers. Even so, students tend to use wrong strategies when consulting meaning.

This problem together with other wrong habits that language learners present when using dictionaries, are addressed in the next point.

3- PROBLEMS ARISING WHEN USING DICTIONARIES

Using dictionaries does not always result in a perfect use of the language. When despite the use of dictionaries errors and mistakes are still made, there are two candidates to blame: dictionaries themselves on the one hand and unskilled learners on the other hand.

3.1- DICTIONARIES AS RESPONSIBLES FOR LANGUAGE MISTAKES AND ERRORS.

Christianson (1997) gathers information resulting from several investigations on which dictionaries are more suitable for second language learners. In his paper, bilingual dictionaries seem to be less recommended for second language students because they lead to short- and long-term mistakes and errors that do not take place when students consult monolingual dictionaries.

Out of these problems caused by the use of bilingual dictionaries, Christianson (1997) found that the one that most authors make reference to is the reinforcement of the erroneous idea that two languages have a one-to-one equivalent at word level.

Nevertheless, Thomson (1987) explains how monolingual dictionaries are neither the ideal source of information for language learners. He claims that foreign language definitions may be difficult to understand and as consequence not helpful at all for second language students.

Finally, some experts do not have a preference for any of the previous options, as they explain that errors do not depend on the kind of dictionary that users resort to, but they result from incomplete entries where headword definitions lack sufficient information (Maingay & Rundell, 1978; in Christianson 1997).

Many years have passed since Maingay & Rundell included this information in their paper, but a compilation of data presented in section 4 (see table 1) of the current document shows that nowadays even online versions of the most prestigious English dictionaries are still incomplete and as result their entries lack relevant information.

More recently, Nesi (2012) realised that dictionaries in general are designed bearing in mind lexicographers' skills and strategies and as consequence they ignore students' needs and strategies, who have to acquire the necessary abilities to successfully consult a dictionary.

The following section focuses on regular errors that take place when unskilled learners consult language dictionaries.

3.2- UNSKILLED STUDENTS AS RESPONSIBLE FOR LANGUAGE MISTAKES AND ERRORS.

Even though students are aware of dictionary usefulness, only a small percentage of them spend sufficient time to notice all the relevant information that they need to complete their tasks. This is probably caused by the absence of a proper training in consulting dictionaries, which results in the bad habits and assumptions that Chan (2014) describes.

The first problem explained by Chan (2014) is that students only use dictionaries to search unfamiliar words, ignoring that sometimes familiar words can be tricky as some of them are polysemous. Moreover, in the context of learning English as a foreign language, familiar words are used in different contexts that may require different prepositions, but most students disregard this fact and they only make use of the most frequent prepositions.

A second problem related to the previous one is that language learners do not accept the existence of unfamiliar meanings for familiar words, so they do not abandon the familiar meaning even when it does not make sense in a certain situation (Durkin & Manning 1989; Huang, 2003; in Chan, 2014).

Most dictionary users also present the bad habit of taking a cursory glance at the dictionary to check information instead of *acquiring* new information. In these situations, learners simply resort to dictionaries to confirm preconceived usages and meanings (Chan, 2014) and once they find this information, they stop the look-up process without even looking at other information from the same entry that could be useful to the context.

4- ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

4.1- INFORMATION INCLUDED IN PRESTIGIOUS ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

According to Chan (2014) students in general are only aware of dictionaries' usefulness for decoding meaning, but dictionaries are also a rich source of word usage and grammatical information which is explicitly and implicitly displayed.

As a consequence, grammatical and semantic explicit information has been analysed in the online free version of six of the most prestigious English dictionaries: The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the Cambridge Dictionary, the Collins Dictionary, the Macmillan Dictionary, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the Lexico Dictionary.

Thereupon a checklist with relevant pieces of information found in each of the previously mentioned dictionaries has been devised (see table 1). This checklist is the basis for the development of the activities, since at least one activity per type of information is created later.

At this point, it is important to explain that in Table 1, numbers next to check marks mean that some problems have been found with that type of information in that particular dictionary. Each number makes reference to a different specific problem. Below the table a list with the meaning for each number has been

included. For example, the box for comparative/superlative forms in Cambridge Dictionary contains a check mark followed by a (4)*. If we check (4)* in the list under the table, we can interpret that comparative and superlative forms in the Cambridge Dictionary are only present in the entry of some irregular adjectives.

Table 1 – *Information provided by prestigious English online free dictionaries.*

	SYNONYMS	SIGNPOSTS	VERB PATTERN	COUNTABILITY	COMPARATIVE / SUPERLATIVE
CAMBRIDGE	✓ (1)*	✓	✓	✓	✓ (4)*
LONGMAN	✓ (1)*	✓ (1)*	X	✓	✓
COLLINS	✓	X	✓	✓ (2)*	✓
MACMILLAN	✓	X	X	✓	✓
MERRIAM WEBSTER	✓	X	X	X	✓ (5)*
LEXICO (OXFORD)	✓	X	X	✓ (3)*	✓ (1)*

	BRITISH/AMERICAN EQUIVALENT	COLLOCATIONS	GRADABILITY	PHRASAL VERBS
CAMBRIDGE	✓ (1)*	✓ (8)*	X	✓ (12)*
LONGMAN	✓ (6)*	✓ (9)*	✓ (11)*	✓ (13)*
COLLINS	✓	✓ (10)*	X	✓
MACMILLAN	✓ (1)* (7)*	X	X	✓
MERRIAM WEBSTER	✓	X	X	✓ (13)*
LEXICO (OXFORD)	✓ (1)*	X	X	✓

- (1) The information is only present in some random entries
- (2) The information is not clear in some entries. E.g.: In Collins Dictionary, the word *bread* is labelled as a *variable noun*.
- (3) Only indicates *mass nouns* (uncountable nouns). It can be confusing for students.
- (4) Only gives some irregular forms.
- (5) Includes the form of adjectives ending in *-e*, *-y*, consonant + vowel + consonant, and irregular adjectives such as *good* or *bad*.
- (6) Some equivalents are included as regular synonyms.
- (7) The information is explained in the description section.
- (8) Collocations are mixed in the example sentences.
- (9) Collocations for some words in the thesaurus.
- (10) Some collocations in COBUILD Collocations, but the section is on its beta version.
- (11) For some non-gradable adjectives there is a grammar note saying that they cannot be used with *very*. E.g. You cannot say “it is very impossible”.
- (12) Some phrasal verbs lack basic definitions.
- (13) Some phrasal verbs are included in the entries but they are not categorised as phrasal verbs.

However, as we will see below, the amount of information included in a dictionary is not the only relevant aspect to bear in mind when analysing language dictionaries.

4.2- THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL PRESENTATION IN DICTIONARIES

Visual presentation and organisation in language dictionaries is also of the utmost importance. Bogaards and van der Kloot (2001) use the concept ‘user-friendliness’ to make reference to the “efforts on the part of dictionary makers to present information in ways that are assumed to be most easy for intended users” (Bogaards and van der Kloot, 2001, p. 98).

This concept of ‘user-friendliness’ can be explained as the result of combining ‘findability’ and ‘usability’. The first one has to do with how easy or fast it is for the user to find the piece of information he/she is looking for. The second concept

refers to how comprehensible the piece of information found is for the user. (Bogaards, 1996; in Bogaards and van der Kloot, 2001).

Thus, teachers who want to implement activities with dictionaries must not only care about which information is included in each dictionary but they must also consider how the information is presented in terms of 'findability' and 'usability'. So, when vacillating between two dictionaries that contain the information required to carry out a particular task they will have to choose the one presenting the information with a higher degree of 'user-friendliness'.

Moreover, as mentioned in section 3.1. Maingay and Rundell (1987) claim that dictionary entries lack sufficient information. For this reason, using more than one dictionary in class assists to the development of the good habit of resorting to different dictionaries when students aim to obtain new language knowledge, and by applying this technique the absence of certain content in one of the sources is covered by consulting a different source that includes the desired information.

4.2.1- EXAMPLES OF 'FINDABILITY' FOUND IN EXPLORED DICTIONARIES.

When exploring the free online version of some of the most well-known English dictionaries, different tools to equip the entries in terms of 'findability' and 'usability' were found.

For 'findability', typographical emphasis devices (words in different colours, and size, **bold** and *italic* words, highlighted words, and so on) are frequently used (Campoy-Cubillo and Edo-Marzá, 2019). A clear example of how these devices are used is the online version of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)*. For instance, in the entry for the word "habit" (see figure1) the headword is written in bold and in a relatively big font size on the top of the page. With the same typographical features but in red colour, information on the number of syllables can easily be noticed on the upper part of the entry. In a smaller font size and green colour, word class and countability are given.

In the same entry, several senses of the headword and several common expressions containing the headword are listed by placing numbers in front of

them. For each different sense of the headword there is a signpost highlighted in orange followed by the countability in this particular sense. Due to their length, definitions and examples for each sense of the headword are also easily found. Moreover, words in black are used in definitions to prioritize them over the grey words that are used for example sentences.

habit

Word family (noun) **habit** **habitué** (adjective) **habitual** (verb) **habituate** (adverb) **habitually**

From Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

Related topics: [Clothes & fashion](#), [Religion](#)

hab·it /'hæbɪt/ ●●● **S3** **W3** noun 🔊 🔊

1 **USUAL/REGULAR** [**countable, uncountable**] something that you do regularly or usually, often without thinking about it because you have done it so many times before

- 🔊 Regular exercise is a good habit.
- 🔊 Thinking negatively can become a habit.
- 🔊 She has a habit of playing with her hair when she's nervous.
- 🔊 Some people drink alcohol as much from habit as from desire.

by/out of/from habit (=because this is what you usually do in this situation)

- 🔊 I did it out of habit.

2 **DRUGS** [**countable**] a strong physical need to keep taking a drug regularly

- 🔊 A lot of drug addicts get into petty crime to support their habit.

heroin/cocaine etc habit

- 🔊 His cocaine habit ruined him physically and financially.

3 → not make a habit of (doing) something

4 → I'm not in the habit of doing something

5 → have a habit of doing something

6 → old habits die hard

Figure 1. *LDOCE Online. Entry for the word habit.*

Another mean to improve 'findability' is the use of boxes. In LDOCE most of the entries contain boxes with blue borders where information about relevant grammar rules, collocations and the thesaurus are included (figure 2). Boxes are also used in Collins Dictionary for regional notes where users can find American and British synonyms of the headword.

COLLOCATIONS

VERBS

have a habit (of doing something)
He has a habit of being late.

something becomes a habit
Once you have been driving for a few weeks, it becomes a habit.

get into a habit (=start doing something regularly or often)
Try to get into the habit of walking for 30 minutes each day.

get out of a habit (=stop doing something regularly or often)
She couldn't get out of the habit of saying 'sorry'.

break/kick a habit (=stop doing something that is bad for you)
I've smoked for years, but I really want to kick the habit.

develop/form a habit
I developed a habit of eating porridge for breakfast.

Figure 2. *LDOCE Online. Box including collocations for the word habit.*

These are the main devices found in the consulted dictionaries, but not all of them, because as new technologies provide more possibilities for electronic dictionaries, dictionary makers are constantly including and experimenting new ways to improve 'findability'.

4.2.2- EXAMPLES OF 'USABILITY' FEATURES FOUND IN EXPLORED DICTIONARIES.

When comparing the entry for the headword "habit" in the LDOCE (figure 1) with the entry in the Cambridge Dictionary (figure 3), it can be observed that the latter is more simple in terms of how easy is for the user to find the information that he wants (findability). However, the pieces of information provided are easy to understand, providing a good degree of 'usability'. In addition, users can click on the terms and codes that they do not understand to access a glossary where the great majority of them are explained. If a user, for example, do not understand the code [T] in an entry for a verb, meaning that the verb is transitive, he can click on the code to check the information in the glossary (figure 4).

habit

noun

UK  /ˈhæb.ɪt/ US  /ˈhæb.ɪt/

habit noun (REPEATED ACTION)



B1 [C or U]

something that you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it:

- I always buy the same brand of toothpaste **out of** (= because of) habit.
- I'm trying not to **get into** (= start) the habit of always having biscuits with my coffee.
- I used to swim twice a week, but I seem to have **got out of** (= ended) the habit recently.
- I was taught to drive by my boyfriend and I'm afraid I've **picked up** (= caught) some of his bad habits.
- I'm trying to get him to **break** (= end intentionally) the habit of switching on the TV when he comes home at night.
- I don't mind being woken up once or twice in the middle of the night by my flatmate so long as she doesn't **make a habit of it** (= do it frequently).
- I'm not really **in the habit of** looking at (= I don't usually look at) other people's clothes, but even I noticed that awful suit!

Figure 3. Cambridge Dictionary. Entry for the word habit.

Verbos

verb	Una palabra que describe una acción, estado o experiencia.
[T]	Verbo transitivo: un verbo que tiene objeto directo.
[I]	Verbo intransitivo: un verbo que no tiene objeto directo.
auxiliary verb	Los verbos be , have y do , que se combinan con otros verbos para hacer formas compuestas como <i>la pasiva</i> , <i>la interrogativa</i> y <i>las continuas</i> .
modal verb	Verbos como must y can que aportan al verbo principal una condición, por ejemplo de <i>seguridad</i> u <i>obligación</i> .
past simple	El pasado simple del verbo (eat ate eaten).
past participle	El participio pasado del verbo (eat ate eaten).
present simple	El participio presente del verbo (tying tied).
phrasal verb	Un verbo seguido por un adverbio o una preposición.
[L]	Verbo copulativo: un verbo intransitivo que va seguido por un sustantivo o un adjetivo que se refiere de nuevo al sujeto de la oración.
[L only + adjective]	Un verbo copulativo que solamente puede ir seguido por un adjetivo.
[L only + noun]	Un verbo copulativo que solamente puede ir seguido por un sustantivo.
[+ adv/prep]	Un verbo que debe ir seguido por un adverbio o preposición.
[+ that clause]	Un verbo seguido por una oración que comienza por <i>that</i> .
[+ question word]	Un verbo seguido por una partícula interrogativa.
[+ speech]	Un verbo que se usa con el estilo directo.
[+ to infinitive]	Un verbo seguido de infinitivo con <i>to</i> .
[+ infinitive without to]	Un verbo seguido de infinitivo sin <i>to</i> .
[+ -ing] verb	Un verbo seguido por la forma <i>-ing</i> del verbo.

Figure 4. Glossary for terms and codes related to verbs in Cambridge Dictionary.

The online version of Cambridge Dictionary also uses signposts for polysemic entries. These signposts can be found in different forms. In the entry of the polysemic headword “habit” signposts take the form of short definition (repeated action) in the first sense and the form of superordinate (clothing) in the second sense.

DeCesaris (2012, p. 539) criticises the variety of forms in which signposts are presented because the “lack of systematicity is odd in dictionaries [...] It does not seem impossible to decide upon one type of signpost —synonym, for example— and use it throughout the dictionary”. On the other hand, Dziemianko (2019) defends the idea of using different types of signpost:

[...] since not only meaning-based cues can be useful in the process of guessing meaning of unknown words, signpost heterogeneity (which involves, among other things, referring to grammar or extralinguistic reality) does not have to be a disadvantage to guiding users to right senses in dictionary entries, either. (p.5)

Moreover, the results of her study (Dziemianko, 2019) show that heterogeneous signposts are more beneficial than homogeneous signposts for sense identification and language reception.

5- ACTIVITIES DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF DICTIONARIES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

This section contains multiple activities designed to implement the use of language dictionaries in class. Throughout these activities, students will discover that these linguistic treasures are more than a rich source of definitions that they can consult to clear up doubts that are not only related to meaning.

Each activity contains instructions for the student not only on how to complete the task but also on which dictionary they must use to do the activity and how to find the necessary information.

The rules followed to select the most suitable dictionary for a particular activity are two: Firstly, it must contain the required information to properly complete the

activity. Secondly, if the information is present in more than one dictionary, the dictionary providing a higher degree of 'user-friendliness' will be the chosen one.

At this point, it is important to mention that studies on which particular codes are more effective (in terms of 'findability' and 'usability') for English language learners are scarce. Hence, when paying attention to the degree of 'user-friendliness', the opinion formed by the author when scrutinizing English dictionaries for the present project will be used to decide which dictionary is better for a certain activity.

Moreover, all the dictionaries employed in this project include codes that are known as 'transparent'. These codes sacrifice conciseness and accuracy to gain transparency and in turn become learners friendly (Dziemianko 2008). So, 'usability' will never be a problem when students resort to the chosen dictionaries.

In what follows, I will introduce different activity proposals classified by linguistic objectives.

5.1- SEMANTIC ACTIVITIES

The aim of these activities is to make students use pieces of information that are related to the meaning of the headword. The section is composed of three activities in total: In activity A students work with signposts of polysemic terms, in activity B students have to find synonyms for the underlined words in the dictionary, and in activity C learners are required to find an American equivalent for each term.

Activities working on semantic features are displayed below as they would be presented to students.

Activity A

Choose the correct word to complete the gaps. Then, write two more sentences using different senses of the same word. Make one of the sentences to be wrong. Finally, in pairs try to find out which of your partners' sentences is wrong. You must also orally reason why you think a particular sentence is wrong.

For this activity consult the different senses the words on the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/>). To easily identify each sense, use the signposts that are in brackets above definitions in form of synonyms, superordinates and short definitions. The picture below is an example of signpost in the Cambridge Dictionary.

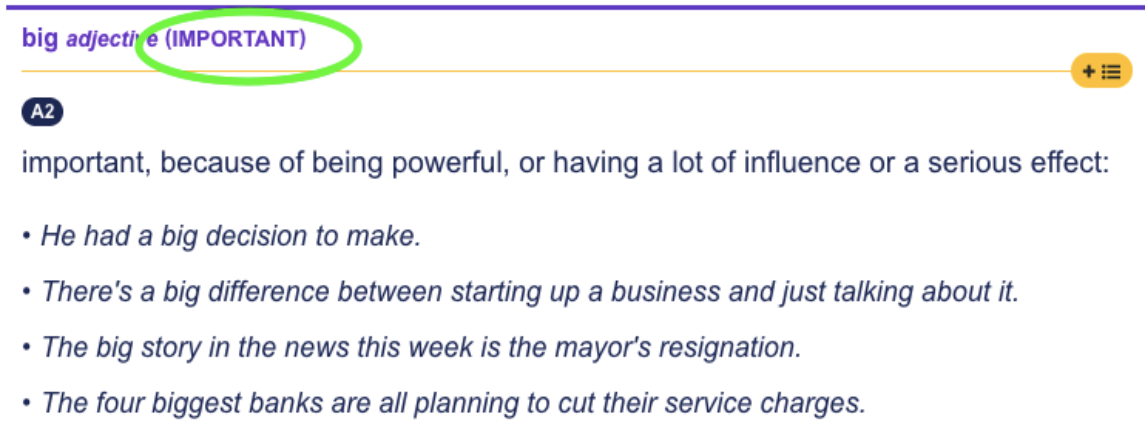


Figure 5. Example of how signposts are included in Cambridge Dictionary Online.

1- Dana has been since she lost her mother.

- a- intelligent b- yellow c- blue d- optimistic

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

2- You can buy soda drinks in a bottle or a

- a- bag b- can c- table d- factory

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

3- I was planning to have a party. Are you this weekend?

- a- free b- old c- unbusy d- given

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

4- Since I have joined a team, I weekends playing football.

- a- go b- spend c- like d- play

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

5- The of this organisation is to end modern slavery.

- a- problem b- aim c- context d- legacy

Sentence 1

Sentence 2

Activity B

Find a synonym word in the dictionary to substitute the underlined term. Make sure the synonym also fits the sentence. Then, write a new sentence using the synonymous word.

Resort to the Collins Dictionary (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/>) to find the synonyms. Synonyms can be found at the end of each subentry. To make sure that the chosen word fits the sentence you can click on the word to access its entry and check its definition and example sentences. The picture below is an example of where you can find synonyms in the Collins Dictionary.

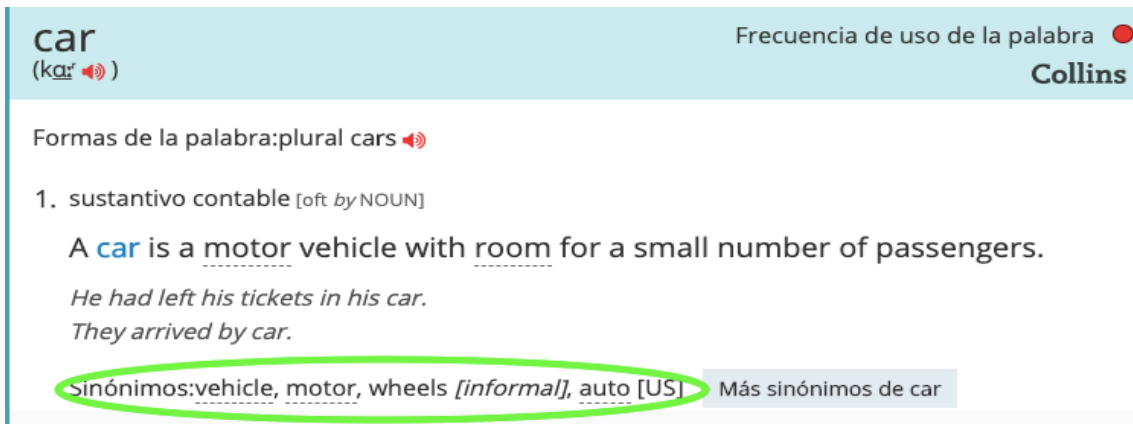


Figure 6. *Synonym words in Collins Dictionary Online.*

1- When Beck gave birth to her son, he had to forsake her studies to get a job.

Synonym

Your sentence:

2- Her soul was gentle, but unfortunately, he had a hideous appearance.

Synonym

Your sentence:

3- He is the most obstinate person I have ever met, so it is no worth negotiating with him.

Synonym

Your sentence:

4- They had a nefarious plan to conquer the world.

Synonym

Your sentence:

5- It wasn't pure coincidence, we arranged to meet at the party.

Synonym

Your sentence:

6- The government has shown certain antipathy towards immigration.

Synonym

Your sentence:

7- She vacillated for a few seconds, but in the end she decided to marry him.

Synonym

Your sentence:

8- Argentines venerate Maradona.

Synonym

Your sentence:

Activity C

Find an American equivalent for the words below and match each term with its corresponding picture.

Use the Collins Dictionary (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/>) for this activity. American and British synonyms are placed in a grey box after definitions or example sentences. An example of where to find them is shown in the next picture.

7. sustantivo contable

A **lift** is a device that carries people or goods up and down inside buildings.

[British]

They took the lift to the fourth floor.

REGIONAL NOTE:
in AM, use **elevator**

Sinónimos: elevator [mainly US], hoist, paternoster Más sinónimos de lift

Figure 7. Where to find British and American equivalents in Collins Dictionary Online.

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1- Lorry | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 2- Boot | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 3- Waistcoat | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 4- Aubergine | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 5- Rubbish | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 6- Dummy | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 7- Postbox | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 8- Torch | → Am synonym: | Picture: |
| 9- Petrol | → Am synonym: | Picture: |



Picture A



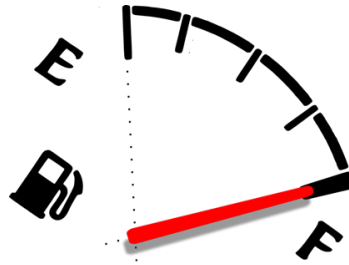
Picture B



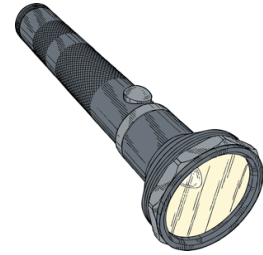
Picture C



Picture D



Picture E



Picture F



Picture G



Picture H



Picture I

5.2- GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES

Activities in this section are designed to make students familiar with the use of dictionaries for non-semantic purposes. In activity A students are trained to search for information on verb patterns, which is the way two verbs are conjugated when they are placed together. Activity B will help students to learn how to find information on adjectives' gradability and comparative-superlative forms of gradable adjectives. Then, in activity C students have to find the countability of certain nouns. The fourth and fifth activities (activities D and E) are designed to teach students to find collocations in dictionaries. Finally, with activities F and G students will learn to find different phrasal verbs with a same verb.

Below, grammar activities as they would be presented to students are displayed.

Activity A

Complete the sentences with the *to + infinitive / infinitive without to* or *-ing* form of the verb in brackets.

For this activity resort to the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/>). Information about verb patterns is given in brackets next to example sentences where they are employed. An example is provided in the picture below.

need verb (MUST HAVE)

A1 [T]

to have to have something, or to want something very much:

- *Babies need constant care.*
- *The doctor said I needed an operation.*
- [+ to infinitive] *I need to go to the toilet*

Figure 8. *Verb pattern for the verb “need” in Cambridge Dictionary Online.*

1- Beethoven learnt (play) the piano when he was just 5.

2- I love..... (drink) a cup of hot chocolate on the cold days of winter.

3- They aimed a gun at me and made me(accept) the terms.

4- They aimed a gun at me and pushed me(accept) the terms.

- 5- He wanted to score a goal against Real Madrid, but the manager didn't let him (play).
- 6- The defendant admitted (kill) all the victims.
- 7- Because of the financial crisis, James is considering (change) careers.
- 8- She made a desperate attempt (win) John's heart.
- 9- Jane suffers from insomnia, so she avoids (drink) coffee in the morning.

Activity B

Classify the following adjectives as gradable or non-gradable, then write sentences using the comparative and superlative form of each gradable adjective.

For this activity you will use two dictionaries. Firstly, you must consult the LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/>) to identify which adjectives are non-gradable. In this dictionary the entries for non-gradable adjectives contain a blue box with grammar information saying that the adjective cannot be used with 'very', as in the following picture.

Grammar

In this meaning, **brilliant** is not used with 'very' You say:

We had an absolutely brilliant time.

X Don't say: We had a very brilliant time.

Figure 9. Example of how to identify non-gradable verbs in LDOCE Online.

Once the adjectives are classified, you must resort to the Macmillan Dictionary (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>) to get the comparative and superlative forms of gradable adjectives. To see the different forms that an adjective has, introduce the word on the dictionary's search box and click on the grey box that says 'word forms'. An example is provided in the picture below.



Figure 10. How to find word forms in Macmillan Dictionary Online.

GRADABLE ADJECTIVES	NON-GRADABLE ADJECTIVES

- excellent - far - big - huge - amazing - bad
- well - angry - cold - terrible - impossible
- small - good - enormous - awful - hot

Activity C

Complete the sentences with *little*, *a little*, *few* or *a few*. Use *little* and *a little* with uncountable nouns. On the other hand, use *few* and *a few* with countable nouns. Also take into account that *a little* and *a few* mean some, while *little* and *few* mean not much/many.

To complete this activity, use the LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/>). In this dictionary the countability of nouns is written in green between brackets at the beginning of the entry, next to the information on word class. You can see an example on the next picture.

car

From Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

Related topics: [Motor vehicles](#), [Technology](#)

car /kɑː \$ kɑːr/ ●●● **S1** **W1** noun **(countable)**  

1 a vehicle with four wheels and an engine, that can carry a small number of passengers

 Dan got out of the car and locked the door.

 He isn't old enough to drive a car.

Figure 11. Example of how countability is displayed in LDOCE Online.

- 1- I can't go out tonight because I have..... exams on next week.
- 2- It's a quiet beach, tourists new about it.
- 3- Please, hurry up! We just have..... time before the film starts.
- 4- We can go to the supermarket tomorrow, there is water for the dinner.
- 5- Are you late? I want to run errands on the way.

- 6- The house included furniture, so we had to buy most of the things.
- 7- As they were about to close the bakery, they only had bread to sell.
- 8- There were opportunities in her country, that's why she had to move abroad.

Activity D

Collocations are words that are frequently used side by side, so they sound natural for native speakers. Bearing this in mind, choose the correct word to form collocations.

For this activity employ the LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/>). To find collocations for a word, enter the word in the dictionary and scroll down the screen in the entry to find a box with blue borders containing collocations for the headword. Inside this box, collocations are classified according to the class of word that is used to form it. In the picture below you can see an example of collocations for the headword sport.

COLLOCATIONS

VERBS

play (a) sport
My ambition was to play sport at the highest level.

take part in (a) sport
Students are encouraged to take part in a sport of some kind.

do sport British English, **do sports** American English
I did a lot of sport at school.

take up a sport (=start doing it)
I took up the sport six years ago.

compete in a sport (=do that sport in competitions)
She competed in various sports when she was young.

ADJECTIVES/NOUN + SPORT

a team sport
I liked playing team sports such as football and rugby.

an individual sport
You have to be mentally tough to compete in individual sports.

a spectator sport (=one that people enjoy watching)
Football is the most popular spectator sport.

Figure 12. Collocations with the word “sport” in LDOCE Online.

- 1- A **strong / thick** rain surprised me on my way home.
- 2- I **did / made** several mistakes, so I didn't pass the exam.
- 3- Could you please **make / take** us a photograph?
- 4- Tourists always **say / make** good comments about the Spanish food.
- 5- She **made / gave** a good impression at the meeting.
- 6- She **made / gave** them the impression that she is not really interested in working with us.
- 7- You will **make / take** an exam at the end of the course.
- 8- Kevin **said / told** me the bad news.
- 9- We **had / took** lunch at 1:30 p.m.
- 10- Melissa did not like the music but she **had / felt** fun talking with her friends.

Activity E

Search for collocations with the words below and write one collocation for each word. Exchange your collocations with your partner and write a sentence for each of your partner's collocations.

For this activity resort to the LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/>) as in the previous activity.

· *Habit*

· *Traffic*

· *Hair*

· *Wish*

· *Day*

Activity F

Choose the correct option to form the phrasal verb that better fits each sentence.

For this activity it is recommended to use the Macmillan Dictionary (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>). To find all the phrasal verbs that can be formed with a particular verb, access the entry of the main verb and click on *phrasal verbs* in the menu. Then, click on any phrasal verb to see its definitions. The following pictures show the example of phrasal verbs formed with the verb *to look* and how to find their meanings.

The screenshot shows the Macmillan Dictionary entry for the verb 'look'. The main entry is titled 'look - definition and synonyms' and includes a pronunciation guide (/lʊk/) and a 'Word Forms' button. Below this, there are buttons for 'Synonyms' and 'Contribute to our Open Dictionary'. A 'Menu' section lists various phrasal verbs, with '+phrasal verbs' circled in green. To the right, a 'PHRASAL VERBS' section lists several options, with 'look back' circled in green. Further right, the 'look back' entry is shown, including its definition: 'to think about a time or event in the past' and an example sentence: 'Most people look back on their school days with fondness.' There are also buttons for 'Synonyms' and 'Contribute to our Open Dictionary' for 'look back', and a 'Explore Thesaurus' button at the bottom.

Figure 13. *Phrasal verbs formed with the headword in Macmillan Dictionary*

- 1- Jack's father passed **away / out** last summer.
- 2- The enemy tried to blow **out / up** the president's car.
- 3- My parents are going to the cinema tonight and they asked me to look **up / after** my little brother.
- 4- It was pouring, but the match went **in / on** until the final whistle.
- 5- My mother was too young when I was born, so my grandparents brought me **on / up**.

- 6- The city is famous because someone made **down / up** a romantic story taking place here.
- 7- They seemed happy together. I don't know why they broke **down / up**.
- 8- The teacher thought I copied during the exam, but I just wanted to pick **back / up** my pencil from the floor.
- 9- Mike can't hold **after / on** to tell his friends the good news.
- 10- They had technical problems and had to call **away / off** tomorrow's party.

Activity G

The teacher will spin a wheel with some verbs on wheeldecide.com (as in the picture below), and when the wheel stops you must form two phrasal verbs with the chosen verb. Swap your phrasal verbs with the ones written by your partner and write a sentence each of them.

For this activity use the Macmillan Dictionary (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>) as in the previous activity.



Figure 14. Wheel with verbs created in www.wheeldecide.com.

Main Verb

Phrasal verb 1

Sentence with phrasal verb 1

.....

Phrasal verb 2

Sentence with phrasal verb 2

.....

5.3- GENERAL DICTIONARY SKILLS ACTIVITIES

This section includes an activity combining different types of information that can be found in language dictionaries. To complete the activity students are free to consult any of the previously used dictionaries. Some information is only included in one dictionary so they must resort to more than one dictionary in order to find all the requested information. This activity will promote students' autonomy, preparing them for real life where most of the times they will use dictionaries on their own, without any specific guidance.

Activity A

For this activity you must make teams of three students. The teacher will write the words from the list below in different pieces of paper and mix them. Then, he will take a piece of paper by chance and read the word out loud. Your team must write down the information requested (word, definition, synonym, collocation and sentence using the collocation). You can consult multiple dictionaries to find all the necessary information. The first team to find all the information gets 6 points and the rest obtain a point per piece of information.

Try to remember which of the dictionaries used in the previous activities is better for each piece of information. The previously consulted dictionaries are: the LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com/>), the Macmillan Dictionary (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>), the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/>) and the Collins Dictionary (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/>).

List of words: Risk, sick, light, deal, faith,

- Word
- Definition
-
- Synonym
- Collocation
- Sentence using the collocation
-

6- FINAL REMARKS

This project has proposed multiple activities that can be implemented in the EFL classroom in order to instruct students on how to make an appropriate use of monolingual dictionaries. The idea is that by doing these activities students, who so far had only resorted to dictionaries looking for word meaning, will become aware of the real value of these major linguistic sources.

For this reason, most of the activities created in the present project go beyond meaning and try to take advantage of deeper types of information that are provided by language dictionaries, such as verb patterns or collocations which are practised in activities A, D and E in section 5.2.

Nonetheless, this project does not contain activities to approach all the information contained in dictionaries. An example is the phonetic transcription,

which is included in most English dictionaries, but it cannot be taught at secondary schools as students do not know the phonetic symbols. If properly instructed, though, users may take advantage of pronunciation audios to improve their speaking skills.

The vocabulary learning activities presented in thesis are just examples of how English learners could be instructed in the use of dictionaries. Further research on teacher training may address how real teachers who want to implement these kinds of activities in their classrooms should study how to adapt them to the academic syllabus. Moreover, as online dictionaries are continuously edited, teachers must be aware of the last upgrades before using them in class.

Finally, as further investigation it would be interesting to study how to create activities to instruct language students in the use of other modes different from words in dictionaries, as with the transition from paper to electronic dictionaries not only traditional dictionaries have been improved, but also new modes such as video sequences and audio recordings are now employed (Lew, 2010).

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PICTURES

Aubergine <https://pixabay.com/es/vectors/berenjena-p%C3%BArpura-hortalizas-frutas-575429/>

Lorry <https://pixabay.com/es/vectors/cami3n-18-ruedas-309398/>

Chupete <https://pixabay.com/es/vectors/chupete-maniqu%C3%AD-consolador-beb%C3%A9-821266/>

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