Bridging the Gap between Dictionaries and Learners
From Bilingual to Monolingual Dictionaries

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1. Introduction

Dictionaries play an important role in learning a foreign language. This seems to be an accepted wisdom in the realm of English learning and teaching. Furthermore, it is vocabulary that tends to be a major concern of learners in that they consider inadequate vocabulary knowledge to be the main impediment to success in language learning (Carter, 1987; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990). To expand their vocabulary, it is recommended that they learn the meanings and behavior of as many words as possible through extensive reading (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Coady, 1997; Hafiz & Tudor, 1990). To this end, most learners try to take advantage of dictionaries as a source of reference for learning unfamiliar words and to consolidate their knowledge of those they have already encountered. In the same way, it is dictionaries that learners count on most when they are required to write in English after they have attained some basic knowledge of grammar. Those who are intent on achieving greater proficiency often consult a dictionary. Even when Japanese learners of English finish their formal school education and continue studying English on their own, the dictionary still has an essential role as a prime source of information on word meanings. Certainly, learners are far more likely to rely on a dictionary when reading or writing English than refer to a grammar book (Krashen, 1989).

The number of dictionaries marketed in Japan is ever expanding and their variety is unprecedented. These days, it is quite common to find a conventional type of dictionary printed in a book-like format and the same dictionary in a computer readable format on CD-ROM. An increasing number of Japanese university students have an electronic dictionary resembling a hand-held computer. It may not be long before students with an electronic type of dictionary outnumber those with a conventional type of dictionary in university classrooms. In Japan, the past few years have seen a dramatic increase in the production of portable electronic dictionaries whose sales point is that they contain multiple types of dictionaries including bilingual (English-Japanese/Japanese-English), monolingual, and a Thesaurus. Currently, companies marketing electronic dictionaries

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are becoming more aware of the importance of featuring monolingual (English-English) learner dictionaries among their products and it has become a challenge for learners of English to choose the most appropriate electronic dictionary from among the wide variety available. The growing sales of electronic dictionaries in Japan would seem to reflect a genuine need for more portable and accessible dictionaries, and a greater appreciation on the part of learners of the value of dictionaries in learning English.

In spite of this, the issue of learners' dictionary skills has long been neglected and has not been accorded a prominent position in English teaching in Japan. It is not unusual for the syllabuses in university English courses to ignore dictionary skills training in their course designs. In fact, it is well known that the vast majority of Japanese university students have a strong affinity for bilingual dictionaries on account of their greater accessibility and convenience (Baxter, 1980; Schmitt, 1997). It is felt, however, that the exclusive use of a bilingual dictionary will have a detrimental effect on learners in that they may come to view reading as a process of word-for-word translation. In particular, a reliance on one-word synonyms in place of more detailed definitions will not suffice where one-to-one equivalence in meaning or usage does not exist (Stein, 1989; Winter, 1992). Furthermore, even apparent equivalents tend to be only partial at best and will not be ready-made for learners to use in any given context. Overall, therefore, while the information in a monolingual dictionary is extensive but difficult to access, the use of a bilingual dictionary is convenient but the information is based on translation equivalents that may at times be misleading for learners. This kind of dilemma has led to the recent publication of a fully bilingual version of the *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary* which has the unique feature of retaining the original English definitions and explanations along with conventional Japanese translations.

Nevertheless, learners also seem to appreciate the potential usefulness of monolingual dictionaries even though they may still be used for receptive rather than productive purposes (Schmitt, 1997; Tono, 2001). However, despite their need for clear and explicit information on word meaning and usage, learners may have difficulties in interpreting dictionary entries or may overlook certain important information as a result of not understanding the meaning of definitions written in the target language (Amritavalli, 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 1988). This is largely because their reference skills are undeveloped and they may therefore lack the linguistic resources to take full advantage of all the information offered (Béjoint, 1981, 1994). In this sense, monolingual dictionaries may be considered too burdensome in that they are "not cost-effective for many learners in terms of rewards (correct choice of word) versus effort" (Thompson, 1987, p. 284). That is to say, the wider definitional information contained in a

monolingual dictionary is not so simple to extract, which may thereby discourage learners from fully accessing all the information available. It is therefore necessary for teachers of English to become aware of this deficiency and instruct learners in how to effectively use not only bilingual but also monolingual dictionaries, especially monolingual learner dictionaries. It is certainly undesirable that so many university students, who are learning English for academic purposes, depend solely on a bilingual dictionary for their studies.

With this background in mind, we decided to investigate how Japanese university students use dictionaries and in what ways they fail to obtain useful and sometimes crucial information. In this paper, we report the results of an analysis in the form of case studies and, in the light of Japanese learners' rudimentary dictionary skills, try to illustrate the vital importance of training students to make more effective use of dictionaries.

2. Overview of Research on Dictionaries and Learners

2.1 Monolingual Dictionaries

In the field of second language learning, attempts have been made to move away from the traditional type of native-speaker dictionary that has focused mainly on receptive use. Now, new types of learner dictionaries have been developed (e.g., *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Collins COBUILD*, *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English*) that are designed to incorporate a variety of information on productive use as well. In this way, they are more in accord with learners' communicative needs in presenting relevant information that was not so easily available before. Furthermore, production dictionaries (e.g., *Longman Language Activator*, *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*) have also appeared which have been designed specifically to satisfy the communicative requirements of learners at intermediate to advanced level.

There are, however, a number of problems inherent in production. For example, there are cases where the precise word used to express a given meaning may not be known by learners and they have to resort to a substitute or paraphrase to fill the semantic gap. Alternatively, where a word is known for a particular meaning, there may be a lack of knowledge concerning its syntactic patterns or its collocational and stylistic constraints. Moreover, when they come to produce sentences in a target language, learners suddenly become aware of how little they know about the words they thought

they had acquired. In particular, they have little information on how each word is normally and typically used in different contexts since they rarely pay attention to lexical relations when learning vocabulary. This is largely because the relations between words have long been neglected in the field of language learning and not treated as a legitimate teaching or learning unit in the same way as grammatical relations. It is therefore necessary for the new genre of dictionaries to provide information that will help learners formulate more precise expressions in speaking or writing that accurately convey their intended meanings.

With regard to the lexical information contained in dictionaries, it is important to ensure that this type of information is well organized so that it may be easily accessed by learners. Furthermore, apart from the quality of the information provided, it should be presented in a variety of ways to match the needs of different types of learners so that their search for the precise meaning and use of a word or expression may proceed smoothly. In this way, learners may come to understand the meaning of a given word and successfully apply what they have learned in their productive discourse. At the same time, however, while there is now a greater awareness of the potential value of learner dictionaries in providing a variety of relevant information on productive usage, it is still not clear how this information actually contributes to improving learners' communicative abilities. It is therefore necessary to examine the productive role of the dictionary in meeting learners' communicative needs. In particular, it is important to uncover the reasons why learners consult a dictionary, how effectively they actually use it, and how well it is able to help resolve their communicative problems. Certainly, finding out more about what happens during the process of dictionary look-up may lead to more effective dictionary designs (Scholfield, 1997).

2.2 Quality of Dictionary Definitions

As for monolingual learner dictionaries, attempts have been made to introduce greater clarity into second language definitions of English words by means of a limited or controlled vocabulary. Such modifications to the metalanguage of dictionary definitions have managed to reduce some of the complexity involved in their comprehension, thereby allowing easier access and making the use of a monolingual dictionary a less formidable task than before. It is necessary, however, for such a restricted vocabulary to have sufficient depth and flexibility so as to provide accurate definitions. If it is inadequate to the task, this may result in a certain amount of circularity and imprecision in the definitional wording (Jain, 1981). Care should

therefore be taken to ensure that accuracy is not unduly compromised for the sake of simplicity of expression. Certain decisions will also have to be made regarding the needs of learners at different levels of proficiency. Moreover, the accompanying usage examples found in such dictionaries are considered to complement and extend the definitions. In particular, the use of such examples is felt to be "an integral part of learning a word" (Fox, 1987, p. 137) that serves not only to consolidate the meaning of a word but to illustrate typical patterns of behavior and its relations with other words.

In this respect, monolingual learner dictionaries have traditionally favored the use of invented examples rather than samples derived from a corpus of authentic native-speaker English. This was motivated by the belief that the information in an invented example could be made to reveal more information on meaning and usage than would be possible with a single sample taken from a native-speaker corpus. However, the selection of representative examples depended to a large extent on the use of intuition for deciding appropriate usage in various contexts. More recently, therefore, the use of invented examples has been discarded in favor of using sample sentences taken from a corpus of authentic native-speaker language (e.g., *Collins COBUILD*). Here, the frequency of occurrence is an important factor in the selection of appropriate examples of the various words, collocations, and typical patterns of use. The need for intuition may thereby be offset to a certain extent. However, the language in direct citations is often difficult for learners, and the content of such examples is often hard to understand when encountered outside of the context from which they were originally drawn. In view of this, an alternative course has been to introduce a restricted vocabulary to help make the entries easier for learners to comprehend (e.g., *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*). In this approach, while the examples are again based on a corpus of naturally occurring texts, these have been modified to eliminate any nonessential words (such as references to people, places, and events) that might not be readily understood in isolation and out of context. It therefore seeks to strike a balance between the conflicting positions mentioned above.

2.3 Comparing Dictionaries

A number of learner dictionaries have been compared with a view to evaluating their respective merits concerning intelligibility and ease of use. In an early study, MacFarquhar and Richards (1983) compared two learner dictionaries (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDCE), *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALD)) with a native speaker dictionary (*Webster's New World Dictionary* (WNWD)),

in order to assess learners' perceptions of definition difficulty. In the case of the LDCE, it incorporated a restricted defining vocabulary of 1,500~2,000 words whereas the OALD focused more on providing clear and unambiguous definitions that avoided difficult words. Conversely, the WNWD emphasized accuracy more than simplicity and was not confined to any set number of defining words. When presented with samples of definitions from the three dictionaries, learners expressed a preference for those contained in the LDCE which were considered more helpful and easier to understand. It would appear, therefore, that it was the controlled vocabulary condition that these learners perceived to be most beneficial. Supporting evidence is provided by Tickoo (1989) who also found the use of the restricted defining vocabulary and phrasal definitions of the LDCE to be most effective and practical for learners.

A further study conducted by Machi and Horowitz (1990) sought to extend these findings by comparing three learner dictionaries (OALD, LDCE, Collins COBUILD). In this case, the results showed that learners found the defining style of the LDCE, featuring phrasal definitions supported by examples of usage, to be the most clear and simple. The sentence definitions of the COBUILD were also well received in that they consisted of natural samples of language and also provided information about meaning and usage. In the same vein, Cumming, Cropp, and Sussex (1994) compared the short phrasal definitional format of the LDCE with the full sentence format of the COBUILD to see which was considered to be more effective and useful by second language learners. Their findings showed no significant difference between the effectiveness of phrasal and sentence definitions, leading to the conclusion that the learners' performance in this study was not a function of the particular format to which they were exposed. There were clear preferences, however, for having usage examples and definitions in sentence form.

2.4 Research into Receptive Dictionary Use

With regard to monolingual learner dictionaries, the use of a limited or controlled second language vocabulary has been generally well received by learners in that the definitional information presented in this way is made more accessible. Learners also appear to favor having usage examples and definitions in sentence form in order to bring out the meaning more clearly. However, the use of second language definitions may also have a detrimental effect on learners' comprehension on account of the extra time required for processing and understanding the foreign language.

In this connection, Bensoussan, Sim, and Weiss (1984) found that dictionary use had no significant effect on learner performance in terms of their comprehension test

scores. In particular, it seems that consulting a dictionary may sometimes be misleading in that learners may misinterpret dictionary entries and fail to select the meaning that is most appropriate in the context. This may be due to difficulties in selecting the appropriate meaning of a particular word from among all the possible meanings listed. In spite of attempts to ease the burden on learners by introducing a controlled vocabulary, it appears that learners still have considerable problems in understanding the information contained in definitions. In many instances, such definitions are not able to adequately represent the complex inter-relationships and behavior of words in text, thereby leading to misconceptions about the meanings of words.

In a replication of the above study, Nesi and Meara (1991) also found no significant difference in the scores of learners who used a dictionary and those who did not. At the same time, however, a clear correspondence was found between dictionary use and the speed with which the test was completed. Accordingly, the length of time required to finish the test was significantly longer for those with access to a dictionary than for those without. It would appear, therefore, that dictionary look-up tends to result in slower processing of text in that learners who refer to a dictionary require more time to complete a task than those who do not use one. This is especially true when learners have to choose the appropriate meaning of a word from among a large number of dictionary entries. Furthermore, while consulting a dictionary may be helpful in pinpointing the meaning of a particular word, the time taken to look up a word may interrupt the reading flow and have an adverse effect on learners' comprehension of text.

It has also been found that dictionary look-up frequency is linked to vocabulary knowledge in that learners with a larger vocabulary tend to look up fewer words than those whose vocabulary is more limited. In this regard, however, the perceived relevance of a word is also an important factor in whether it is looked up by learners. For example, Hulstijn (1993) found that the words which learners considered relevant in the understanding of a text tended to be looked up with greater frequency than those which were regarded as having a more peripheral role. Moreover, learners were less inclined to look up the meaning of words which could be easily inferred from the context, preferring instead to focus on words whose meaning could not be so clearly determined from contextual cues. They therefore demonstrated a certain strategic sense in their reading. However, making assumptions about meaning based on a word's apparent familiarity may lead learners astray in certain cases in that the meaning they ascribe to a particular word may not apply in all circumstances and may change in accordance with its lexical environment. There are also many instances where no genuine semantic correspondence exists between words of apparently equivalent meaning in the native and target

languages.

While certain findings have revealed no difference in performance between learners with or without access to a dictionary, others show that learners with dictionaries perform better than those without, although the use of a dictionary can sometimes be misleading. Such apparently conflicting results, however, may be largely due to a lack of dictionary skills on the part of learners rather than to defects in the dictionary itself. In this respect, it has been found that learners are apt to ignore or misinterpret the definitional information contained in the dictionary entries. This would seem to apply to learners from all levels of ability in that they are not able to make optimum use of the full range of information provided.

In this regard, Knight (1994) investigated the effects of dictionary use on the reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition of learners at different proficiency levels. The results revealed that learners who used a dictionary performed better than those who did not. Furthermore, while no significant differences in reading comprehension scores were recorded for higher proficiency learners with regard to whether they had access to a dictionary or not, the same did not apply to lower proficiency learners who were shown to be far more reliant on the dictionary as a means of compensating for their more limited vocabulary knowledge. It also appears that higher proficiency learners tend to use the dictionary to verify their guesses while lower proficiency learners are inclined to use it more as a practical aid to comprehension. It is important, therefore, to be aware of the particular needs of learners from differing proficiency levels and to take these into account when presenting strategies for improving language skills.

2.5 Research into Productive Dictionary Use

Harvey and Yuill (1997) investigated the productive role of a dictionary (COBUILD) in the performance of certain writing tasks. In particular, they focused on discovering what prompted learners to resort to a dictionary in writing and the usefulness of the dictionary as a source of information for solving productive problems. Results showed that the prime reasons for dictionary look-up were for checking spellings and confirming meanings. In some cases, however, a particular word could not be located owing to misspelling on the part of learners, thereby causing them to give up their search. It would therefore be worthwhile for dictionary makers to consider using pronunciation as a route to correct spellings. At the very least, common misspellings could be marked as such and accompanied by cross-references to the correct spelling.

With regard to synonyms, it was found that learners felt unsure about their use

owing to a lack of accompanying context exemplifying matters of register, connotation, nuance or collocation. In many instances, learners displayed a tendency to use such synonyms in an inappropriate way whereby the sentences produced were ill-formed or inaccurate. Accordingly, the authors suggest that it is important to provide guidance on the semantic, stylistic, and collocational attributes of synonyms and focus on their differences rather than treating them as undifferentiated equivalents. Moreover, regarding syntactic information, most learners seemed to elicit information mainly from the examples and encoded definitions. The column of coded grammatical information was largely ignored. It seems that learners either have an aversion to traditional codes and symbols or may find them rather intimidating and impenetrable. As a result, learners appear to rely far more on analogy to extract grammatical information than on explicit coding. Finally, with regard to collocations, learners did not tend to look these up to any great degree, which suggests that such information is acquired unconsciously rather than directly sought in reference books. While most of the collocational searches were carried out successfully, some were not so successful owing to lack of information which would perhaps indicate that dictionaries should place more emphasis on this linguistic area. It is therefore suggested that a clearer and more explicit treatment of collocation is warranted.

On the whole, rather than the complexity of the information in definitions and examples, it was found that learners experienced difficulties in processing entries that were overly lengthy or that required them to look at different parts of the dictionary. In view of this, there is a possibility that the overuse of cross-referencing and multiple sections could lead to user-fatigue and discourage learners from exploiting the available information to the full.

Nesi and Meara (1994) examined the performance of learners in composing sentences containing unfamiliar words whose meanings had been derived from dictionary definitions. Rather than focusing on the effectiveness of dictionary definitions, therefore, their prime concern was to identify the behavioral patterns of students with regard to definitions so as to better understand what led students to make errors of interpretation. Results showed a high proportion of errors in that 56.5% of the sentences containing the target words were judged to be unacceptable. Upon further analysis, student performance was found to be characterized by the following behavioral patterns: (a) failing to apply grammatical information appearing in the dictionary entry, (b) failing to apply collocational information, (c) confusing words on the basis of phonological or orthographical similarity, and (d) rejecting definitional information that deviated from their preconceived notions of word meaning. In addition, there were numerous instances (25%) of a type of "kidrule strategy" (Miller & Gildea, 1987) whereby they focused on

only a small segment of the dictionary entry and overlooked the rest. In such a case, learners would look for a familiar word or phrase appearing in the dictionary definition and then substitute this with the target word in their writing. This arbitrary selection of a word or phrase in the dictionary entry to represent the meaning of the target word resulted in a number of semantic errors. Such a strategy therefore seems to account for a substantial number of errors of interpretation among learners.

Nesi (2000) evaluated both the accessibility of dictionary definitions and learners' skills in extracting useful information. To this end, she examined the performance of learners on a writing task incorporating certain target words that they had previously consulted in a monolingual dictionary. In this way, it was possible to gain some insight into how learners had interpreted the definitions and see how much word knowledge they had acquired in the process. The findings revealed a high proportion of semantic errors (63%) involving the inappropriate use of the target word. In this regard, errors were found to occur more frequently in cases where the target word had a restricted range of lexical collocations. This resulted from learners neglecting to apply the relevant grammatical and collocational information presented in the dictionary entry. In other cases, however, learners were unable to derive the necessary information on collocational patterning since this was lacking in the dictionary entry. There were also instances where learners once again resorted to the "kidrule strategy" (Miller & Gildea, 1987) where the target word was simply substituted for a segment of the dictionary definition that was familiar to them. This resulted in sentences that were either nonsensical, or reflected only a partial understanding of the word in question.

Other errors could be attributed to the misreading of dictionary entries where learners were misled by phonological or orthographic similarity with other words. In other instances, learners were led astray by their preconceived notions of a word's meaning, which would then supersede all the conflicting information provided in the dictionary entry. In such cases, it may be difficult for learners to assimilate new information that might either support or contradict their prior assumptions. In view of this, Nesi (2000) states that "Productive dictionary use can be likened to a juggling act, where the learner has to activate both old and new data for a given word, but may be unable to call into play all the available information, all at once" (p. 105). It is important, therefore, to ensure that learners possess the necessary skills to access all the relevant information that will help them to more fully understand the meaning of a particular word. In this way, they will derive greater benefits from their dictionary consultation.

3. Case Studies

Method

To elucidate how Japanese learners of English use dictionaries, several passages were selected and given to intermediate level first-year university students as reading materials. The number of participants amounted to 117, with the majority specializing in medicine and the remainder in economics or biology. They were required to translate a particular part of each passage into Japanese. With one exception, the parts chosen for the translation task included words that were expected to be unfamiliar to the students and would therefore prompt them to consult their dictionaries. All the participants were allowed to use their own English-Japanese dictionaries.

The responses were collected and analyzed from the perspective of how they had misunderstood particular word meanings. In this way, it was possible to focus on the individual words for which the students failed to retrieve appropriate meanings from their dictionaries. We first examined the definitions and explanations of those words in three English-Japanese dictionaries (EJDs) (*Taishukan's Genius English-Japanese Dictionary*, *Kenkyusha's New College English-Japanese Dictionary, Kenkyusha's English-Japanese Dictionary for the General Reader*) which represented the main dictionaries used by the students during the task. By closely examining the information provided in the three bilingual dictionaries, we tried to determine what inappropriate definitions or explanations the students had adopted in their translations and the reasons for their choice. To make our analysis as clear and objective as possible, we also interviewed the students in cases of ambiguous responses in order to obtain further information and to clarify how they had actually understood the target sentences.

The following studies focus on typical errors found in the students' responses and our analyses are given in each case. The definitions and explanations from another four monolingual learner dictionaries (MLDs) (*Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*) were also examined. In addition, a further three monolingual dictionaries (MDs) originally meant for native-speakers of English (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, *The American Heritage Dictionary, Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*) were chosen for purposes of cross-comparison so that we could evaluate how these different types of monolingual dictionaries, with which most Japanese learners of English are unfamiliar, could possibly have helped them.

3.1 Case Study of 'a number of'

TASK 1: <u>The President decided to visit Japan for a number of reasons</u>.

The students were required to translate the whole sentence into Japanese. This sentence did not seem to pose a problem for them since it consisted of familiar words. Few students had to consult a dictionary to fulfill the task. It is not surprising that most students felt no urge to get help from a dictionary when they assumed there were no unfamiliar words in the target sentence. However, this is exactly where the teacher of English may intervene and encourage them to re-examine what they assume they have already learned about word meaning in the dictionary.

Most of the students interpreted 'a number of' as equivalent to 'many' and the Japanese translations included the words '*taksan/ooku no riyu de*' (for many reasons). Judging from the errors, it appears that they have learned that 'a number of' means 'many' and have neglected to gain a clearer definition of this particular English expression. Examining the English-Japanese dictionaries, we found they provided a definition and/or explanation that could be understood as either 'many' or 'some/several.' As for the approximate numbers that native speakers associate with this expression, the English-Japanese dictionaries try to be neutral and remain ambiguous. However, all of the bilingual dictionaries use the Japanese expression '*ooku no*' (many) in the accompanying translations of the sample sentences, which may result in causing Japanese learners to assume 'a number of' equals 'many.' One of the dictionaries even notes that it is more common for this particular expression to be used to mean 'many' rather than 'some.' Even though most English-Japanese dictionaries try to avoid giving this false impression, most Japanese learners seem to be satisfied with just a portion of the definition or explanation given in the dictionaries. This case provides an example of how underdeveloped Japanese learners' dictionary skills are.

While all the English-Japanese dictionaries cited here use the Japanese expression '*ooku no*' (many) in the definition or explanation, the definitions given in the monolingual learner dictionaries have no word or explanation suggesting that 'a number of' implies 'many.' Instead, they use the words 'some' or 'several' to convey the meaning of the given expression. One of them explicitly notes that 'a number of' does not mean 'many.' For learners to acquire the true meaning of this expression, the MLDs appear to serve their learning purposes much better and may help them avoid the type of misunderstanding caused by bilingual dictionaries.

After the translation task was completed, the students were informed that most of

their interpretations concerning 'a number of' were a little skewed and they were then invited to compare the definitions given in their English-Japanese dictionaries with those in the MLDs. The students who believed that 'a number of' meant 'many' explained why they made a mistake in this task. They assumed this particular phrase was a kind of fixed expression, as is the case with 'a lot of,' and they remembered learning that these two expressions could be interchangeable in meaning. Some English-Japanese dictionaries seem to suggest that 'a number of' is a phrasal expression that could be interpreted as a fixed expression and students therefore treated it as such despite the fact that it is not so inflexible or unchanging. Those who assume that 'a (great) number of' can be replaced by 'a lot of' should be aware that they may encounter problems when writing academic papers because these two expressions are stylistically incompatible. This is another type of information that learner dictionaries (EJDs/MLDs) are particular about but which learners tend to overlook.

Such a case shows once again how teachers can instruct learners in the effective use of dictionaries. Learners should be taught not to neglect stylistic information when consulting a dictionary and learn that 'a lot of' is classified as 'informal' or 'colloquial' while 'a number of' is not. Most learners might be indifferent to this kind of information because they think dictionaries mainly serve the purpose of getting a Japanese equivalent for an English word. However, advanced second language learners, who have not had sufficient exposure to the target language in multiple contexts, are often found to make interlingual errors in their speaking or writing in which stylistic, syntactic, collocational, and semantic inaccuracies are intertwined (Martin, 1984). This case shows that dictionaries can, to some extent, help learners avoid stylistic dissonance by providing relevant information concerning a word's register that could assist them in discriminating 'a (large) number of' from 'a lot of.'

Another aspect of learning difficulty in the case of 'a number of' may be attributed to the general Japanese insensitivity to the indefinite article used in this expression. This is because Japanese learners tend to have great difficulty in learning how to properly use the English article system even at an advanced level (Goto-Butler, 2002; Yoon, 1993). The first two words, 'a number,' should be understood as referring to an indefinite number as opposed to fixed numbers such as five, twelve, or a hundred. That is why the definitions given in the English-Japanese dictionaries are a little vague and make it possible for it to be interpreted as either 'some,' 'several,' or 'many.' To reach a better understanding of an ambiguous word or expression like this, learners should be aware that finding a Japanese translation for it is not sufficient in some cases and be encouraged to closely read the sample sentences provided in the dictionaries.

These days, electronic dictionaries enable learners to retrieve all the sentences that include a particular word or words in one or more dictionaries. Therefore, by scanning the numerous sample sentences, learners have more opportunities to re-examine the subtle meanings of a target word or expression. This kind of convenient and crucial function is also often neglected because of learners' rudimentary dictionary skills. It is desirable, therefore, that learners can take advantage of the information provided in the form of a concordance to deepen their knowledge of the actual uses of a word (Ohtake & Morren, 2001). For example, the COBUILD dictionary on CD-ROM is designed to allow learners to retrieve all the sentences pertaining to a particular word from the corpus within and can help learners understand how the word is actually used in many authentic sentences. In the case of 'a number of,' learners can see how various kinds of adjectives may be inserted between the indefinite article 'a' and the following noun 'number.' In so doing, learners may come to realize that the expression 'a number of' is not as fixed an expression as 'a lot of,' 'after a fashion,' 'all at once,' and so forth.

Judging from the Japanese students' learning environment, in which they learn English not as a second language but as a foreign language, they lack sufficient exposure to English words appearing in various contexts. They should therefore be encouraged to further enhance their dictionary skills by taking advantage of the information about word usage that can be obtained through examining a multitude of sentences retrieved in a type of concordance system. It is unfortunate that most Japanese learners of English, including those who are using English for academic purposes, tend to equate 'a number of' with 'many' or 'a lot of' since it can be very detrimental in some cases. The expression could therefore be used as an introductory example for the purpose of training learners in the skillful use of dictionaries.

3.2 Case Study of 'compensate for'

TASK 2: It is my freshman year. Morrie is older than most of the teachers, and I am younger than most of the students, having left high school a year early. <u>To compensate for my youth on campus, I wear old gray sweat shirts and box in a local gym</u> and walk around with an unlit cigarette in my mouth, even though I do not smoke. (*Tuesdays with Morrie*, p. 30)

The students were required to translate the underlined part into Japanese. Most of the errors centered on 'to compensate for my youth.' In the case of 'to compensate for,' most of the students used the Japanese word '*oginau*' (make up for/supplement) directly from the English-Japanese dictionaries and left their translation a little vague. In the subsequent interviews with the students who used that particular Japanese word, it turned

out that almost all of them interpreted 'to compensate for my youth' as meaning to regain something enjoyable or important from the time of one's youth. They did not bother to reconfirm the definitions given in their dictionaries because they believed that they already knew the word 'youth,' which then resulted in their erroneous interpretation. Distorted as their translations are, they sound quite natural as Japanese expressions, which may have deterred them from looking further into the definitions in their English-Japanese dictionaries, including another interpretation for 'youth.' Even though they were expected to know that something negative connected with damage, loss, or injury should come as an object noun for the verbal phrase 'compensate for,' they falsely accepted the positive meaning of 'youth,' the time when a person is young and with which young students would most likely associate something enjoyable and pleasant.

Before commencing the task, the students were advised to make their translations as clear as possible by using their own familiar, colloquial Japanese words in the event that the definitional wording in the English-Japanese dictionaries was found to be insufficient to express the intended meaning. This was meant as a way of avoiding any ambiguity in their responses. However, few students were successful in clearly conveying their interpretations of the underlined part of this passage by using different Japanese words from those found in the dictionary such as '*wakaku mirarenai youni*' (to avoid being looked down upon as a young person). Most students appear to firmly believe that they should use the words found in the dictionaries when translating into Japanese.

Certainly, guessing word meanings from the context is very important and so is choosing an appropriate definition in the dictionaries according to the context (Haynes, 1993; Laufer, 1990; Nation & Coady, 1988). The case cited here shows that learners can make errors in interpretation even when they succeed in choosing a contextually suitable definition in their English-Japanese dictionaries. Once they get the Japanese equivalent for an English word, they start to think in Japanese and are likely to be influenced by the connotations of the Japanese word. Excessive dependence on bilingual dictionaries will lead learners to form the habit of assuming that there should be an equivalent expression in their native tongue for each and every English word or expression (Yorkey, 1970). As for 'compensate for,' both the bilingual and monolingual dictionaries try to give a clear-cut definition, but the bilingual dictionaries treat the explanation concerning the nature of the object as additional information, which learners are often likely to neglect. If they encounter the definition given in monolingual dictionaries, they might try to read the complete explanation and understand it as a whole (e.g., OALD: … to balance or reduce the bad effects of damage, loss, etc.).

3.3 Case Study of 'terrific' and 'father'

TASK 3: A woman I considered to be a very close friend for six years asked me to father her baby to fill a void in her life. She promised she would ask nothing from me in return. I was flattered. My ego was stoked by the idea she wanted my 'special seed' because I'm such a great guy. So I did it.

She became pregnant, had the baby and moved away. I felt guilty and ashamed because I knew I had done the wrong thing. In the meantime, I met a terrific woman. We married and had a couple of kids. Five years into my marriage, this woman shows up with legal papers and a paternity test, requesting back child support since birth, health insurance, future child support, a college savings plan, and reimbursement for other past expenses related to the child. (*Dear Abby 26/9/2002*)

The students were required to translate the underlined part of the passage into Japanese. The only problematic word in the sentence which may have prompted students to consult their dictionaries was 'terrific.' While most of the students were successful in giving satisfactory responses according to the context and interpreted 'a terrific woman' as meaning 'a wonderful woman,' some of them failed to get the intended meaning and misunderstood it as meaning 'awful' or 'terrible.' Given the context, which refers to marriage with a woman, it may not be so difficult for students to associate something positive with this particular word. However, the post-task interviews with those who made an error and chose a rather negative meaning for 'terrific' revealed that they were at a loss in deciding which one of the two apparently opposite meanings given in their bilingual dictionaries they should choose. Some of them said the negative meaning 'terrible' looked more impressive than the positive one and attracted them more.

The English-Japanese dictionaries list the negative meaning of the word 'terrific' as well as its positive meaning. The two defined words for 'terrific' (wonderful and terrible) have an entirely opposite meaning to each other and are completely incompatible. To some extent, therefore, it is not surprising that some of the students were mystified by those definitions and misread the given part. All the monolingual learner dictionaries examined here list only the positive meaning for 'terrific,' and none of them refer to its negative meaning. This illustrates how MLDs may sometimes be lacking in a detailed explanation of the target word. However, from a practical viewpoint, understanding the word 'terrific' as having a mainly positive meaning should help learners determine its appropriate use. As the entry order for the definitions of the word 'terrific' in the MLDs shows, its most frequent usage is to mean 'wonderful' and 'excellent.'

In general, the presentation policy adopted by bilingual dictionaries varies from one to another and they are therefore not mutually consistent in their ordering of definitions. The entry order for the word 'terrific' and the most frequently used meanings (wonderful

or excellent) are not always listed at the top of the definitions. On the other hand, the MLDs provide the positive meaning first, and in so doing they try to meet the requirements of learners who wish to know the most common usage of the word. As for the MDs cited here, the order of definitions was also found to vary according to the particular dictionary.

In this regard, it has been found that learners with poor dictionary skills tend to adopt the first listed definition among many (Yorkey, 1969). One of the advantages of MLDs lies in their policy that the most common usage should be listed first, followed by other less common usages in descending order of frequency. Given the general tendency of poor dictionary skills, such a policy adopted by the MLDs is likely to benefit Japanese learners. As mentioned above, no MLDs introduced the negative meaning of the word 'terrific,' which may serve learners well at the initial stage of learning this particular word. Among the monolingual dictionaries cited, only the COD provides important information regarding the meaning of 'terrific' when used as a negative expression by noting that such a use is archaic. Successful dictionary users should therefore realize that the word 'terrific' means 'wonderful' and take care not to use this particular word when conveying a negative feeling or impression because that use has now all but disappeared. Most English-Japanese dictionaries fall short in giving the requisite information about how to properly use this particular word, which may have resulted in some of the students choosing the negative meaning in their responses. The erroneous translations produced in this task may have been avoided if they had consulted either MLDs or MDs in addition to their bilingual dictionaries.

While the task given to the students was to translate the underlined part into Japanese, we were intrigued by how they interpreted another word in the passage, 'father,' as used in the expression 'to father her baby.' We conducted an additional oral survey after the students submitted their answer sheets. Most of the students replied that they did not feel compelled to look up this seemingly familiar word in their dictionaries, partly because they did not take the expression seriously and/or the expression did not seem to bear a direct relation to the original task. They said they had understood it as an already learned word, namely as a noun meaning a male parent. When a close reading of the given expression made them recognize that 'father' should in this case be grammatically classified not as a noun but as a verb, they realized that even seemingly familiar words occasionally require some further scrutiny with the aid of a dictionary (Laufer, 1990). This is where teachers may intervene, because students are often inclined to assume that some apparently familiar words are already learned and they therefore do not have to check their meanings by consulting a dictionary.

Even though dictionaries are recognized as a useful resource in learning word meanings, they may be considered by learners as just another type of dull and unattractive reference book unless they are used to their full potential. Moreover, it is entirely up to individual learners to decide when it is necessary to consult their dictionaries, and their decisions to access them are quite arbitrary. As the case introduced here shows, they appear most compelled to rely on dictionaries when they are examining unfamiliar words included in the target sentence(s) of a translation task. In view of this, it may be difficult for teachers to find an effective way to encourage learners to use dictionaries when learners themselves assume they already know a particular word. However, one way to tackle this problem is to take advantage of the hypertext type presentation of teaching materials. This can highlight some seemingly familiar words (which may be ignored by learners because of their apparent familiarity) in different colors on the computer display in order to make students realize the importance of reconsolidation. Teachers should certainly explore ways of raising learners' awareness of the benefits of dictionary use.

3.4 Case Study of 'detail'

TASK 4: French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen knocked political rival Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin out of the first round of the presidential election by less than 200,000 votes. Final count results released on Tuesday by the Interior Ministry showed that Le Pen won a total of 4,805,307 votes compared to 4,610,749 for Jospin — a difference of 194,658 votes. Le Pen, who has been accused by his rivals as being a racist and anti-Semitic — he campaigned on an anti-immigrant ticket and once called the Holocaust a detail of history — took 16.86 percent of the vote compared to Jospin's 16.18. (*CNN News 23/4/2002*)

The students were required to translate the underlined part of the passage into Japanese. Most errors centered on 'a detail of history,' and the definition of 'detail' was misunderstood as something that is described finely and minutely point by point, which tends to have a positive connotation in Japanese. Relatively few students succeeded in interpreting the word 'detail' as a rather unimportant thing which could be ignored. Many students seemed to remember this word as it appears in the phrasal expression 'in detail,' which could mean something small but worth close attention. They seem to have acquired only this positive feature of the word 'detail' and adopted a particular Japanese word with a positive connotation in translation. The translated Japanese expression read '*rekishi no shousai*' (a detailed explanation of a historical event), which was somewhat vague and could be interpreted in a number of ways. The follow-up interviews revealed that the Japanese expression was used to mean that the Holocaust was a very significant

event in history. The first definitions for 'detail' provided in the English-Japanese dictionaries are given in Japanese words which are usually associated with something important. Conversely, the MLDs explain its meaning as 'an unimportant thing' or 'a less important thing' and do not allow learners to attach an exclusively positive meaning to the word.

Even though the English-Japanese dictionaries list the Japanese definition as meaning something unimportant and peripheral, those who failed to find the correct response for the task might have either overlooked it or neglected to consult a dictionary. This may have been because they assumed that they were completely familiar with the word 'detail' and the definition in their mind was sufficient to produce a translation in Japanese. Reading the first definitions and sample sentences in the English-Japanese dictionaries may have led the students to consolidate their preconceived notions about word meaning in an incorrect manner. The English-Japanese dictionaries appear to elaborately refer to the positive aspect of 'detail,' which prevents Japanese students from constructing a more neutral or sometimes negative image for this particular word.

English-Japanese dictionaries generally favor using Japanese '*Kanji*' (Chinese characters) in giving definitions for English words. The more abstract the meaning an English word has, the more conspicuous this tendency appears. Most Japanese students have a habit of learning a Japanese equivalent for a target English word in the form of the combination of Chinese letters appearing in their English-Japanese dictionaries. However, in their everyday encounters with familiar English words and expressions, an excessive dependence on words expressed in Chinese characters may sometimes interfere with their ability to think about a word's possible range of meanings. This may then prevent them from engaging in image expansion. In other words, when learning English, Japanese learners may find themselves confined within the limits of the images derived from Japanese words expressed in Chinese characters. This is because, in many cases, English-Japanese dictionaries prefer to use concise expressions consisting of Chinese characters that may be more appropriate for formal academic purposes. Conversely, if they are encouraged to read the definitions in the MLDs, they will first try to transpose them into their own colloquial Japanese words and only then try to search for a more precise Japanese expression consisting of Chinese characters. The explanations provided in the MLDs usually do not require learners to read between the lines and are generally sufficient for verbatim translation. The decoding process for definitions in the MLDs may therefore serve as good practice for learners in imagining the meaning of a target English word first in their daily casual Japanese expressions and then in Chinese characters.

3.5 Case Study of ' blip'

TASK 5: The quieter news is that while immortality is beyond us, that 125-year life-span is still out there beckoning. Eliminating the dietary and lifestyle habits that are setting you up for the heart attack that is going to kill you at 50 can, in a blink, extend your life by decades. Doing the same thing on a global level — and throwing in progress on disease treatment too — can cause the life expectancy of the entire species to inch further and further out. <u>There are about 50,000 centenarians in the U.S. — a blip in a country of close to 300 million people</u>. (*Time vol.159-3*)

The students were required to translate the underlined sentence into Japanese. As expected, they seemed to find the word 'blip' hard to understand and therefore consulted their dictionaries. However, the majority of the students failed to come up with a correct response for this translation task in spite of using their dictionaries. Most of the students chose the seemingly easiest definition from among all the others, '*ichijitekina mondai*' (a temporary problem). We speculated that they had browsed through the definitions, found most of them classified as some kind of technical word, and then dismissed them as irrelevant. In a sense, they felt they had no choice but to select the only comprehensible definition provided in their dictionaries. Few students appeared to consider how to interpret the word properly in the context. The expression 'a blip' is used figuratively here, so that even if they had been inclined to consult the MLDs it might still have been difficult for them to reach a successful resolution.

The word 'blip' refers to a small flashing point of light on a radar screen as defined in the English-English dictionaries. If students can grasp the picture-image as it is, they may be able to avoid any problem of interpretation and successfully arrive at the right answer. They were expected to imagine from this word that the number of centenarians living in the U.S. amounts to only about 50,000, which is a small figure compared to the total population of approximately 300 million people, and therefore like a tiny flashing dot on a rather wide radar screen in this context.

Learners' over-reliance on definitions in the dictionaries (in this case English-Japanese ones) may result in a futile effort to find an exact equivalent for a target English word and ultimately cause them to neglect to search for an appropriate definition or interpretation apart from the definitions given in the dictionaries. When learners encounter an overwhelming number of definitions or explanations in dictionaries, they tend to choose the easiest and most understandable one, resorting to a type of "kidrule strategy" (Miller & Gildea, 1987). This seems to be the case both with MLDs, which require learners to decode the definitions given in the target language, and with bilingual dictionaries, which do not seem to pose a serious problem in that definitional information is provided in their native tongue.

As illustrated in this case study, when learners encounter definitions such as technical terms, which are difficult even in their mother language, they are often mystified and sometimes choose the wrong definitions. While it may sound contradictory to say that learners can benefit from reading the definitions in MLDs despite having difficulties even with bilingual dictionaries, the definitions given within a restricted English vocabulary are likely to prove more helpful and make it easier for learners to understand (e.g., MED: a small flashing light on a computer screen or similar piece of equipment). MLDs can be seen as having an advantage in that they explain technical terms in plain language. Much more remains to be clarified, but the case of 'blip' is another indication of the benefits and advantages of using monolingual learner dictionaries.

3.6 Case Study of 'hell'

TASK 6: … Monsanto disagrees — and not without reason. Say what they will about Terminator, <u>even some detractors admit that the company designs a hell of a seed</u>. The maker of one of the world's most popular herbicides, Monsanto has created crops that are resistant to the toxin. With it, farmers can spray away weeds without spraying away their harvest. The company has also developed plants with a built-in toxin that is harmless to humans but lethal to insects. If farmers in the developing world use these muscled-up crops — even with Terminator genes — their harvests might increase enough to cover the cost of buying seeds each spring. (*Time vol. 153-4*)

The students were required to translate the underlined part of the passage into Japanese. Most of the translation errors were related to the interpretation of the word 'hell.' Those who misunderstood the word as having to do with something bad or terrible interpreted 'a hell of a seed' as a devil-like seed or a terrible seed. In the preceding paragraphs of this passage, 'Terminator' was introduced as a target of criticism and given a totally negative image, and thus the assumption that 'a hell of a seed' should have a negative meaning probably affected the students' interpretation of this particular phrase. Few students succeeded in inferring something different from their preconceived notions derived from the word 'hell.' Given the beginning part of the sentence, 'even some detractors admit,' the students should have realized that 'a hell of a seed' might convey rather a positive meaning to conform to the context. Some students seemed not to have consulted their dictionaries while others appeared to have checked their dictionaries but failed to find an appropriate definition.

It may be difficult for learners to recognize that 'a hell of a' is a type of phrasal expression and should be treated as such. Learners should therefore be encouraged to take advantage of dictionaries whenever they find some discrepancy in the interpretation

of a word or expression based on contextual conformity. Furthermore, most learners of English have experienced missing the point of a certain utterance because they failed to recognize a particular phrasal expression. When learners encounter such phrasal expressions as 'You can say that again,' or 'Type this on the double,' they may be satisfied with the literal translation because they can manage some kind of meaningful interpretation of these expressions. As for the latter example, learners may interpret it as meaning 'Type this in double space format' and not realize their mistake owing to a lack of appropriate feedback. Since identifying a phrasal expression in any given text can be troublesome and may sometimes go unnoticed, teachers may intervene to make students aware of their importance.

The task cited here requires learners to first notice that the ordinary definitions for the word 'hell' are not relevant and then refer to a dictionary. They subsequently browse through the definitions and explanations and identify 'a hell of a' as a kind of phrase. Even when Japanese learners manage to recognize it as a phrase, there still seems to be scope for choosing a wrong interpretation for it, since the English-Japanese dictionaries give a definition that is firmly slanted toward its negative meaning. Thus, learners may assume that 'a hell of a' means something very bad or terrible. The MLDs are careful to avoid this misinterpretation and list both the positive and negative definitions, which should help learners form a better word-image in their mind regarding this particular expression. As for the MDs, they do not treat this expression as a set phrase and learners may therefore miss the opportunity to learn this usage.

3.7 Case Study of 'theatre'

TASK 7: The 250-member parliament accepted in a vote on Tuesday a recommendation from its foreign relations committee to reject the resolution. But it also urged the "political leadership" to "adopt what it considers appropriate to defend the Iraqi people and Iraq's independence and dignity and authorizes President Saddam Hussein to adopt what he sees as appropriate, expressing our full support for his wise leadership." The U.S. White House shrugged off the rejection of inspections and disarmament, with a senior official telling CNN: "We view this as pure theatre ... There's one voice that matters in this regime and that is Saddam Hussein's." (*CNN News 12/11/2002*)

The students were required to translate the underlined part of the passage into Japanese. Although the sentence chosen for the task looked simple, we were intent on discovering whether the students would be able to find a suitable translation for 'pure theatre.' While few students considered the word 'theatre' as a place where plays are performed, the majority took the word 'theatre' to mean '*geki*' (drama) and others

misinterpreted 'theatre' as a place where fighting takes place, because contextually they assumed that the word 'theatre' could be connected with war.

The bilingual dictionaries almost exclusively use the Japanese word '*geki*' (drama) for 'theatre' which serves to distract Japanese learners from associating this particular English word with another Japanese word '*shibai*' (drama) that can be used in a variety of ways to convey different shades of meaning. These two Japanese words can be used interchangeably, but few students noticed that, unlike '*geki*' (drama), '*shibai*' (drama) could also be used in certain kinds of phrasal expressions such as '*shibai wo utsu*' (put on an act) and '*saru-shibai*' (a foolishly transparent plot), both of which refer to a simulated action or performance. If the bilingual dictionaries had also listed the Japanese word '*shibai*' (drama) along with '*geki*' (drama), this might have led to more expanded mental imaging on the part of the learners in deriving the meaning. They may thereby have been able to make the necessary leap of imagination and reach the correct conclusion. In this case, however, neither the bilingual nor the monolingual dictionaries seemed to match learners' requirements in the sense that the definitions provided do not necessarily lead to an association with something spurious or deceitful. Furthermore, as for the definitions provided for 'theatrical' (the adjectival form of 'theatre'), both the bilingual and monolingual dictionaries define it as having something to do with an exaggerated or feigned action that is intended to attract attention or create a particular effect. This example illustrates that, in certain cases, learners may also benefit from referring to the definitions given for the derivational forms of a particular word.

Regarding the adjective 'pure,' immediately preceding 'theatre,' most students considered it as equivalent to 'genuine,' which does not completely diminish the interpretation or translation although it sounds a little awkward when put literally into Japanese as '*junsuina shibai*' (genuine drama). The students failed to obtain a more appropriate definition for this adjective (e.g., mere/only) either because they did not consult a dictionary or because they were not sufficiently attentive and overlooked the most suitable definition for this combination of words. As illustrated in the preceding case studies, the Japanese words introduced in the bilingual dictionaries are not meant to serve all possible contexts or purposes. Only those students who were able to imagine the equivalent Japanese expression for '*gek*i' (drama), namely '*shibai*' (drama), could have associated the word 'theatre' with something false and deceitful and reached the right interpretation.

4. Pedagogical Implications

In the above case studies, an attempt was made to clarify how Japanese learners misused or abused their English-Japanese dictionaries through an analysis of the errors found in their translation tasks. The aim was not to point out how these dictionaries failed learners, but to show how undeveloped the average Japanese learner's dictionary skills are. In fact, the English-Japanese dictionaries cited are well organized and have long been effective in assisting Japanese students in their English learning. With regard to improving their dictionary skills, however, instruction in dictionary use has an important role to play in their learning of English (Cowie, 1999). While English-Japanese dictionaries are meant to help learners gain useful information about not only word meanings but about their usages as well, there still remain some problems because of their bilingual nature. On the other hand, monolingual learner dictionaries have been made more attractive for learners through the use of a restricted defining vocabulary, in the hope that this will save users the burden of interpreting otherwise difficult definitions of words written in the target language. However, such efforts at reducing difficulty have sometimes resulted in oversimplification or a lack of detailed explanation. This is because the use of a restricted vocabulary serves to reduce the scope of a dictionary's internal lexicon resulting in a small number of words being used to express various senses in sometimes awkward and roundabout ways.

Nevertheless, as shown in the above case studies, MLDs have great potential in making up for the shortcomings of bilingual dictionaries. The special characteristic of MLDs, whereby unfamiliar words are explained in clear and simple English, is expected to help users improve their English skills, since every time they consult these types of dictionaries they encounter useful information in their reading of the definitions or explanations written in the target language. As most Japanese learners of English have few opportunities to use English in their everyday life, MLDs provide a chance for them to start thinking in English without resorting to Japanese translations. Furthermore, given the high-difficulty levels of authentic materials widely adopted as teaching/reading materials in Japanese university English classes, the English definitions and explanations provided within a restricted English vocabulary should not pose a serious comprehension problem for learners. In view of this, teachers in charge of those classes should closely examine the limited vocabulary list and help learners to acquire the basic words on the list as early as possible so as to enhance their dictionary skills. Attempts to directly acquire vocabulary from word lists have been reported to be a successful learning strategy in some cases (Nation, 1990; Tinkham, 1989). It may therefore be useful to

provide direct instruction that focuses on as many high-frequency words as possible. In this way, learners will develop greater word-recognition skills and become far more fluent in their processing of words. In particular, it is considered essential for learners to rapidly acquire a basic vocabulary of the most frequent 2,000~3,000 words in English that will provide around 80% coverage of written text (Laufer, 1992; Nation, 1993). Teachers of English can therefore encourage learners by introducing such an approach as a prerequisite to becoming a skillful user of monolingual learner dictionaries (Coady, 1997).

While the persistent adherence of Japanese learners to bilingual dictionaries has much to do with their convenience and familiarity, it may be more closely related to Japanese teachers' neglect in providing any formal instruction or training in dictionary skills. Since most Japanese university students rely exclusively on bilingual dictionaries, it is necessary for teachers to find ways of remedying the situation by drawing their students away from such an excessive dependence on bilingual dictionaries and introducing them to MLDs. To gain a better understanding of English words including their nuances, learners who are aiming to go on from the threshold level to the intermediate and advanced levels should recognize MLDs as a primary resource. These days, learners are no longer required to choose either one particular type of dictionary or another due to the advent of electronic type dictionaries that usually contain two bilingual dictionaries (English-Japanese/Japanese-English) plus a monolingual learner dictionary. This has resulted in the trend of more and more university students using them in place of the more conventional types of dictionary.

However, learners' dictionary skills are generally quite rudimentary and far removed from the aspirations of the dictionary makers. Most learners are satisfied with finding an equivalent word in Japanese for the particular English word in question. Moreover, few seem inclined to read the introductory part of the dictionary that contains important and useful information on how to make the most of dictionaries, including the conventions they employ in giving definitions and explanations. When we conducted a survey on how electronic type dictionaries are used by students, most of them answered that they invariably used them to look for Japanese translations in the English-Japanese dictionaries. Few said they checked for meaning in monolingual learner dictionaries even though they were fully aware that the monolingual dictionaries were available and just a click of a button away. They said they were quite satisfied with the bilingual dictionaries because they felt comfortable with them and did not have to struggle to decode the information given in English. The fact remains, however, that those students may never have had the opportunity to experience the effectiveness of MLDs on account of their

perceived difficulty. In other words, they falsely assume that MLDs are beyond their English level and are out of their reach.

Certainly, students' attachment to bilingual dictionaries is deep-rooted and it is therefore not practical for teachers to prohibit their use (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Instead, teachers should endeavor to make their students appreciate the usefulness of monolingual learner dictionaries by urging them to take advantage of this type of dictionary whenever they cannot get a clear picture of an English word by reading Japanese translations or explanations in their English-Japanese dictionaries. The problem is that most teachers of English have never been trained to be assiduous users of dictionaries and they do not tend to focus on this area of language development in the classroom. They also seem to assume that their students have already received instruction on dictionary use by other teachers. Unfortunately, as shown in previous studies and surveys, this is not often the case and students' overall dictionary skills are therefore rather poor. However, most university students now have an electronic type of dictionary and their success in English learning is largely dependent on their dictionary skills. In this regard, to fully access the useful information in both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, students should acquire some advanced skills as well as basic ones.

It is clear that teachers are responsible for turning language learners into successful dictionary users by providing them with dictionary training (Luppescu & Day, 1993; Summers, 1988). Successful dictionary skills would include (a) rather simple uses of electronic dictionaries such as using the jump button to get a sort of second opinion for a definition, (b) slightly more advanced uses such as retrieving all the sample sentences in which a given word is used, and (c) advanced uses such as getting a concordance-like result as provided in the COBUILD dictionary. At first glance, these electronic dictionaries may give the impression that their portability and the multiple types of dictionaries included are great advantages in comparison with conventional dictionaries. However, exploiting their full potential is not as easy as it looks and special attention, care, and training are required for learners to attain effective dictionary skills in their formal English courses. Above all, it is desirable for teachers of English to be enthusiastic and critical users of dictionaries themselves. In this respect, Marckwardt (1973) urges all teachers of English to be "an inveterate, an ingenious, a critical and sophisticated dictionary browser" (p. 379). In this way, teachers may become more conscious of their own strategic approach to dictionary use and be more sensitive to the dictionary look-up problems of their students. Moreover, by developing a greater awareness of their own particular strategies of dictionary use, teachers may become more skilled at modeling these effectively. Certainly, by passing on what they have learned

from their own direct experience of using dictionaries, teachers may enjoy greater success in motivating their students and helping them to also become skillful dictionary users.

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Dictionaries

(English-Japanese Dictionaries)

Kenkyusha's English-Japanese Dictionary for the General Reader (2nd Edition)
Kenkyusha's New College English-Japanese Dictionary (6th Edition)
Taishukan's Genius English-Japanese Dictionary (3rd Edition)

(Monolingual Learner Dictionaries)

COBUILD: Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary (1st Edition)
LDCE: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (3rd Edition)
MED: Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English
    (1st Edition)
OALD: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th Edition)

(Monolingual Dictionaries)

The American Heritage Dictionary (3rd Edition)
Concise Oxford Dictionary (10th Edition)
Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (3rd Edition)

Abbreviations

MLD: monolingual learner dictionary
MD: monolingual dictionary