

Problems in Dictionary Didactics. How to Solve Them: The Georgian Case

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The scientific study of dictionary use began back in the 1960s. This included both quantitative and qualitative research on dictionaries and dictionary use. Numerous studies (Laufer, Hadar 1997; Atkins 1998; Bejoint 2010, Rundell 1999, etc.) conducted in different countries by outstanding lexicographers revealed many problems in dictionary didactics, namely they strongly indicated poor dictionary use skills in learners both at schools and universities. Many studies showed that without proper prior training and lexicographic education, students tend to use various types of dictionaries erroneously and inefficaciously. Such an unprofessional and amateurish approach to dictionary use results in inadequate and insufficiently proficient command of foreign languages. Language competence in such cases becomes shallow and superficial. Another negative consequence of such a situation is the inability of such students to correctly communicate their thoughts, poor vocabulary, and the failure to associate foreign words and concepts with their proper counterparts from their native language or languages.

“One of the major problems in any society and even more so in a multilingual society, is the lack of an established and comprehensive dictionary culture”, stated Rufus Gouws in his keynote speech at the XX International Congress of EURALEX in Mannheim. His emphasis on the lack of the dictionary culture and the responsibilities that not only lexicography has towards society but society also has towards lexicography is an important statement that is relevant for many societies, including Georgian society.

“It is genuinely puzzling how methods which explicitly condemn the use of the native language in the classroom, effectively banning bilingual dictionaries, could ever have been considered beneficial in the teaching and learning of foreign languages”, wrote Arleta Adamska-Sałaciak (2014) in her article “Bilingual Lexicography: Translation Dictionaries”.

“Research on dictionary use has significantly changed the lexicographic practice and made dictionaries more user-friendly. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the field of dictionary didactics concerned with the education of users. No extensive teaching of dictionary use is provided in schools and universities; this is especially the case in the Hungarian context”. This excerpt is from the article of the Hungarian scholars, Katalin P. Marcus et al, published in the *International Journal of Lexicography* in 2023.

Educators are well aware of this problem, and as a result, many countries have incorporated the use of dictionaries into their curricula.

In my presentation, I will describe our efforts as lexicographers to bring back the dictionary culture in our society and make society feel the responsibility towards our field.

Keywords: dictionary use; dictionary culture; dictionary didactics; dictionary use skills.

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