

DIGITAL PHRASEOLOGICAL DICTIONARIES FOR PRIMARY LEARNERS: LINGUISTIC AND PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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Abstract: *The rapid digitalization of educational resources has fundamentally transformed lexicographic practices, particularly in the field of learner-oriented dictionaries. This article explores the linguistic and pedagogical design principles underlying digital phraseological dictionaries intended for primary school learners. Special attention is paid to the interaction between phraseological complexity, cognitive development of young learners, and digital affordances such as multimodality, interactivity, and adaptive presentation. Drawing on contemporary theories of educational linguistics, phraseology, and digital lexicography, the study proposes a principled framework for selecting, structuring, and presenting phraseological units in digital dictionaries for early foreign language education. The article argues that digital phraseological dictionaries, when grounded in age-appropriate linguistic criteria and pedagogical objectives, can significantly enhance phraseological competence and overall lexical development in primary learners. The findings contribute to the ongoing discussion on child-centered lexicography and offer practical guidelines for the development of effective digital phraseological resources.*

Keywords: *digital lexicography, phraseological dictionary, primary learners, educational linguistics, bilingual dictionaries*

1. Introduction

Phraseological competence is increasingly recognized as an essential component of communicative competence in foreign language education. While traditional lexicography has largely addressed phraseology at advanced stages of

language learning, recent pedagogical paradigms emphasize early exposure to fixed expressions and idiomatic patterns. At the same time, the transition from printed to digital dictionaries has opened new possibilities for presenting complex linguistic material in a learner-friendly manner.

Primary school learners constitute a particularly sensitive target group, as their cognitive, linguistic, and metalinguistic abilities are still developing. Consequently, the design of digital phraseological dictionaries for this audience requires careful consideration of both linguistic and pedagogical factors. This study addresses the following research question: **What linguistic and pedagogical principles should guide the design of digital phraseological dictionaries for primary learners?**

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Phraseology in Early Language Learning

Phraseological units, including idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions, are characterized by semantic non-compositionality and structural stability. For young learners, these features may pose comprehension difficulties; however, research in cognitive linguistics suggests that early exposure to formulaic language facilitates naturalistic language acquisition and pragmatic awareness.

From an educational perspective, phraseology at the primary level should not aim at exhaustive coverage but rather focus on high-frequency, contextually transparent, and pragmatically relevant units. This approach aligns with usage-based models of language learning, which emphasize repeated exposure to meaningful linguistic patterns.

2.2 Digital Lexicography and Learner Dictionaries

Digital lexicography differs from traditional dictionary-making not merely in format but in functionality. Hypertextual structure, multimedia integration, and user interaction enable a non-linear and adaptive presentation of lexical information. For learner dictionaries, digital environments allow for gradual disclosure of information, scaffolding, and personalization based on learner needs.

In the context of phraseological dictionaries, digital platforms make it

possible to visualize meaning, provide contextualized examples, and support comprehension through audio and visual cues—features that are particularly valuable for primary learners.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach, synthesizing insights from linguistic theory, pedagogical research, and existing digital dictionary models. The analysis focuses on identifying core design principles relevant to digital phraseological dictionaries for primary learners. Rather than conducting an experimental study, the article aims to develop a theoretically grounded framework that can inform future empirical research and practical dictionary development.

4. Linguistic Design Principles

4.1 Selection of Phraseological Units

The selection of phraseological units for primary learners should be based on frequency, functional relevance, and semantic transparency. Units that occur frequently in child-directed discourse and educational materials are more likely to be internalized. Highly culture-specific or semantically opaque idioms should be introduced cautiously and supported with strong contextualization.

4.2 Simplification of Semantic Representation

Given the limited metalinguistic awareness of primary learners, definitions must avoid abstract terminology and circular explanations. Meaning should be conveyed through simple paraphrases, situational descriptions, and concrete examples. Digital dictionaries can enhance this process by combining verbal explanations with visual representations.

4.3 Gradual Linguistic Complexity

Digital environments allow for layered presentation of information. Basic meaning can be presented initially, with optional access to additional linguistic details such as usage restrictions or stylistic notes. This principle ensures that learners are not overwhelmed while still providing depth for advanced users or teachers.

5. Pedagogical Design Principles

5.1 Age-Appropriate Presentation

Pedagogical design must reflect the cognitive and emotional characteristics of primary learners. Interface simplicity, intuitive navigation, and consistent visual cues are essential. Linguistic information should be embedded in familiar contexts, such as everyday activities, stories, or classroom situations.

5.2 Multimodality and Interactivity

Multimodal representation—combining text, images, audio, and animation—supports different learning styles and enhances comprehension. Interactive elements, such as clickable examples or simple quizzes, promote active engagement and reinforce learning through practice.

5.3 Learning-Oriented Functionality

Unlike general-purpose dictionaries, digital phraseological dictionaries for children should explicitly support learning objectives. Features such as repetition, feedback, and self-assessment contribute to the development of phraseological competence and learner autonomy.

6. Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that effective digital phraseological dictionaries for primary learners emerge at the intersection of linguistic adequacy and pedagogical intentionality. Linguistic simplification alone is insufficient if not aligned with clear educational goals, while pedagogical innovation must remain grounded in sound linguistic principles.

Importantly, digital lexicography offers solutions to long-standing challenges in teaching phraseology, such as contextualization and motivation. However, without a principled design framework, digital tools risk replicating the limitations of traditional dictionaries in a new format.

7. Conclusion

This article has outlined key linguistic and pedagogical design principles for digital phraseological dictionaries intended for primary learners. By integrating frequency-based selection, semantic simplification, multimodal presentation, and

learning-oriented functionality, such dictionaries can become powerful tools for early foreign language education.

Future research should empirically test the proposed framework through classroom-based studies and learner performance analysis. From a practical perspective, the findings provide lexicographers and educators with a conceptual foundation for developing child-centered digital phraseological resources.

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