Unveiling the Dictionary: Typological Exploration of Types of Dictionaries

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Abstract: Dictionaries are often viewed as simple repositories of definitions and words. In fact, they offer a much richer and more diverse landscape in lexicography. This article grills into typological exploration of dictionary types. It reveals the specialised domains hidden within their covers. The study also explores the distinctions ranging from general to specialised dictionaries by examining how resources are tailored to meet the demands of language learners, lexicographers, professionals, linguists and language users in general. This exploration highlights the remarkable range of dictionaries available to serve specific linguistic needs, professional needs, and specialised interests.

Keywords: Dictionary; Typology; Lexicography; Linguistics; Lexicons, Classification.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dictionaries serve as vital gateways to the expansive and ever-evolving world of language. As lexicographers aptly notes, dictionaries are much more than just word lists; they are complex information systems that reflect a culture's way of using language (Ezeh et al., 2022; Lowe, 2024). They not only document words but also reveal the nuances of cultural identity and communication. According to Béjoint (2010), dictionaries fulfil diverse functions, including linguistic standardisation, knowledge dissemination, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Dictionaries come in a remarkable array of shapes and sizes, each catering to specific linguistic, academic, or cultural needs (Hartmann & James, 1998). For instance, monolingual dictionaries provide native speakers with definitions and usage nuances, while bilingual dictionaries bridge linguistic divides (Atkins & Rundell, 2008). Furthermore, Vera et al., (2002 argues that, historical and etymological dictionaries offer unique insights into the evolution of words, shedding light on their origins and development over centuries.

This article embarks on a typological exploration, delving into the multifaceted world of dictionaries to uncover their types, functions, and contributions to linguistic scholarship, with particular attention to the intriguing realms of general purpose and specialised dictionaries.

1.1 Study Question

What are the key features that differentiate one type of dictionary from another *e.g., organisation, intended audience, information provided*?

1.2 Study Objectives

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of the various types of dictionaries available.

- To identify the key features that differentiate one type of dictionary from another.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 Dictionary

A dictionary is a reference tool designed to provide meanings, pronunciations, and other pertinent information about words and phrases. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025), a dictionary is "a reference source in print or electronic form containing words usually alphabetically arranged along with information about their forms, pronunciations, functions, etymologies, meanings, and syntactical and idiomatic uses". This definition underscores the critical role dictionaries play in linguistic reference and education. Also, Ambarwati and Mandasari (2020) argue that there are different types of dictionaries and that, the classifications of dictionaries can be made with reference to either the number of languages in the dictionaries or the format in which the dictionary is presented. Moreover, the evolution of dictionaries has paralleled the development of language and society. Initially focused on providing translations and explanations for complex words, modern dictionaries have expanded to include detailed definitions, usage notes, and multimedia features, especially in digital formats (Lew, 2021; Fuertes-Olivera & Bergenholtz, 2022). This expansion reflects the growing complexities of language and the diverse needs of its users.

2.2 Typology of Dictionaries

The typological exploration of dictionaries reveals a wide variety of forms, each tailored to different user needs and contexts. Though, there are three prominent typologies of dictionaries which are based on (i) number of languages in a dictionary (ii) scope and (iii) format. As for number of language, for instance, El-Sayed and Siddiek (2013) assert that monolingual dictionaries which offer definitions and explanations within one language are primarily used by native

speakers and advanced learners to deepen their understanding of vocabulary and nuances. Moreover, recent studies emphasise the growing importance of monolingual dictionaries in language acquisition, particularly in digital formats that enhance interactivity and user engagement (Fuertes-Olivera & Bergenholtz, 2022; Lew, 2021). In the same vein, El-Sayed and Siddiek (2013) argue that, bilingual dictionaries which provide translations between two languages are serving as essential tools for language learners and translators. They often include grammar notes and example sentences to aid in comprehension. Recent research has shown that digital bilingual dictionaries, especially those integrated into language learning apps, significantly enhance language acquisition by providing immediate translation and contextual usage examples (Muñoz-Bertomeu, 2023). This trend highlights the importance of bilingual dictionaries in facilitating cross-cultural communication and language learning.

On the other hand, there is general vs. specialised dictionaries, wherein, general dictionaries cover a broad range of vocabulary, including everyday language, slang, and idiomatic expressions, while specialised dictionaries focus on specific fields such as law, medicine, or technology (Tarp, 2023). For instance, a legal dictionary details explanations of legal terminology; medical dictionary focuses on healthcare terms, etc. The increasing specialisation of dictionaries reflects the growing complexity of professional fields, with online specialised dictionaries offering extensive, regularly updated content (Fuertes-Olivera & Bergenholtz, 2022).

Furthermore, regarding format there is printed versus electronic dictionaries in which the transition from printed to electronic/digital dictionaries has brought significant changes in accessibility, usability, and content delivery. Electronic dictionaries offer numerous advantages, including regular updates, multimedia content, and user interactivity (Kosem et al., 2022). A recent study Liu & Zhang (2023) found that online dictionaries with user-centred design significantly enhance usability and learning outcomes, especially in educational settings. Despite these advancements, printed dictionaries remain valuable for their tactile experience and ease of use without needing digital access. Moreover, Atkins & Rundell (2008) posits that dictionaries can also be descriptive or prescriptive, in which, descriptive dictionaries aim to capture language as it is used, without prescribing rules or norms, whereas prescriptive dictionaries provide guidelines for the correct language use, often reflecting standardised language norms. The balance between descriptive and prescriptive approaches has evolved, with many modern dictionaries adopting a more descriptive stance to better reflect the dynamic nature of language (Lew & De Schryver, 2022). This shift is evident in contemporary lexicography, where the focus is on documenting language in use rather than enforcing strict rules.

2.3 Functions and Importance of Dictionaries

Dictionaries play several crucial roles in society, particularly in education, communication, and cultural preservation: firstly, educational role; dictionaries are indispensable tools in language education as they are instrumental in understanding word meanings, pronunciation, and usage as far as vocabulary expansion and reading comprehension is concerned (Béjoint, 2010; Liu & Zhang, 2023). Recent research by Liu and Zhang (2023) demonstrated that students using digital dictionaries with integrated learning tools showed significant improvements in vocabulary retention and language proficiency. This underscores the importance of dictionaries in facilitating effective language learning.

Secondly, communication facilitation; dictionaries enable effective communication by providing accurate meanings and pronunciations of words, which is especially important in multilingual contexts where precise translation and interpretation are necessary (Lew & de Schryver, 2022). For instance, online dictionaries, with their instant access and multimedia features, have become vital in cross-cultural communication by enabling users to navigate linguistic and cultural differences more effectively (Muñoz-Bertomeu, 2023). This is particularly important in today's globalised world, where communication across languages and cultures is increasingly common.

Thirdly, cultural preservation; Pinnock & Paulsen (2023) assert that dictionaries play a key role in documenting and standardising languages, particularly those that are endangered or lacking written forms. This is possible since dictionaries are used to keep records of words, phrases, and expressions of a given speech community so as to preserve linguistic heritage and promote cultural identity. In addition, recent projects in digital lexicography have focused on creating online dictionaries for endangered languages, making them accessible to a global audience and aiding in language revitalisation efforts (Pinnock & Paulsen, 2023). These efforts are crucial in preserving linguistic diversity and ensuring that endangered languages are not lost to future generations.

2.4 Usage Patterns of Dictionaries

Recent studies reveal a significant evolution in dictionary usage patterns, particularly with the rise of digital platforms. Lew (2021) notes that while traditional printed dictionaries remain valued for their tactile experience, digital dictionaries are increasingly preferred for their accessibility, frequent updates, and interactive features and that, this trend is especially prominent among younger users and language learners (Lew & De Schryver, 2022). Bilingual digital dictionaries, as studied by Muñoz-Bertomeu (2023), have proven effective in supporting quick translations and context-specific comprehension, enhancing language acquisition and retention. Similarly, Liu and Zhang (2023) highlighted those integrated features like quizzes and flashcards in digital dictionaries foster self-directed learning and improve vocabulary retention.

2.5 Dictionaries and Language Learning

Dictionaries, particularly digital versions, play a vital role in language learning. Kosem et al. (2022) found that user-centred digital dictionaries with intuitive interfaces and personalised content improved learners' understanding of complex linguistic concepts and academic performance. Lew and De Schryver (2022) further emphasised that features such as instant translations and audio pronunciations enhance multilingual perspective which increases users' confidence in navigating foreign languages. These tools are especially valuable for non-native speakers in grasping idiomatic expressions and cultural nuances.

2.6 Dictionaries and Professional Use

Specialised dictionaries have gained importance across professional fields. Tarp (2023) identified the growing reliance on dictionaries in law, medicine, and technology for accurate and exact information. Features like multimedia content (*images, figures, etc.*) in dictionaries and customisable interfaces (for digital versions) have made these resources indispensable for professionals navigating complex concepts. Fuertes-Olivera and Bergenholtz (2022) also noted a shift towards user-specific dictionaries that cater to professionals' expertise levels and industry needs. This reflects the growing demand for tailored lexicographical resources.

2.7 Related Studies

Finegan and Adams (2024) explored the intricate classifications of dictionary types in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Dictionary*. The study emphasises how the needs of diverse user groups dictate the creation and design of dictionaries, underscoring the interplay between lexicographic principles and practical usability. The research draws on an analysis of over 50 dictionary projects worldwide, revealing a growing trend towards hybrid dictionaries that combine bilingual, monolingual, and learner-centric features. Adams' findings highlight the importance of user-centric design, especially in addressing evolving linguistic challenges in globalised contexts.

Caballero (2024) contributes to this area by focusing on the role and categorisation of examples within bilingual dictionaries. His empirical analysis evaluates the inclusion and efficacy of example sentences across 15 bilingual dictionaries, demonstrating their critical role in enhancing comprehension, particularly for language learners. The study also identifies gaps in the consistency and cultural relevance of examples, calling for greater standardisation in lexicographic practices.

Taking into account E-dictionaries and digital lexicography, Bothma and Fourie (2024) investigated the implications of digital lexicography on information behaviour. Their research surveys 200 e-dictionary users from diverse linguistic backgrounds, assessing how interface design, search functionalities, and interactivity influence user experience. The findings reveal that digital dictionaries are increasingly preferred due to their accessibility and user-friendly features.

However, the study identifies challenges such as information overload and the lack of personalised content, suggesting the need for adaptive algorithms to enhance user satisfaction.

Laying emphasis on historical and etymological dictionaries, Tietze (2021) represents a landmark project in documenting the linguistic evolution of the Turkish language. The research involved the digitisation and cross-referencing of over 200,000 entries from archival sources. The study provides empirical insights into the socio-political and cultural shifts that have influenced Turkish vocabulary over centuries. The project underscores the importance of historical dictionaries in preserving linguistic heritage and aiding comparative studies across related languages.

Generally, these empirical studies collectively emphasise the dynamic nature of lexicography, particularly in the digital age. From Adams' typological framework to Bothma and Fourie's analysis of e-dictionaries, the findings highlight a shift towards user-centric and technology-driven approaches in dictionary design. Furthermore, projects like the *Historical and Etymological Dictionary of Türkiye* Turkish demonstrate the enduring relevance of historical lexicography in understanding language evolution and cultural identity. In a nutshell, while existing research provides valuable insights into dictionary typologies and historical lexicography, several gaps remain. For instance, there is limited empirical data on the integration of artificial intelligence in e-dictionary platforms and its impact on learning outcomes. Additionally, comparative studies on user preferences for digital versus print dictionaries are sparse, particularly in non-Western contexts. Future research should address these gaps to advance lexicographic practices and enhance dictionary usability.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding how users interact with dictionaries and the various functions dictionaries serve are crucial aspects of a typological exploration. The study incorporates User-centred theory championed by Norman (1988). The theory emphasises the importance of meeting the needs of specific user groups. This framework analyses how different dictionary types cater to audiences like learners, translators, and general users. Key considerations within this framework include information selection and presentation (*i.e., systematised definitions, usage notes, grammar explanations based on user needs, etc.*) and accessibility and usability (*such as examining layout, organisation, and search functionality for ease of navigation, etc.*).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically through documentary reviews, aimed at exploring and analysing the typologies, usage patterns, and functionalities of dictionaries. The methodology involved a systematic review of existing literature, including journal articles, books, and reports, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving typologies and impacts of

dictionaries in language learning, communication, and cultural preservation.

4.1 Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study were academic publications, including peer-reviewed articles, books, and lexicographic reports. Key databases such as *JSTOR, AJOL, ResearchGate, Academia, Scopus, Google Scholar,* etc., were used to access relevant materials. The selection criteria for the reviewed documents included:

- Publications within the last ten years (2014–2024) to ensure the inclusion of contemporary trends and developments in typologies of dictionaries.

- Empirical reviews focused on the typology and role of specific types of dictionaries in education, professional use, and cultural preservation, etc.

- Studies addressing the typology of dictionaries.

4.2 Data Analysis

The collected documents were analysed thematically, with specific focus areas including (i) usage patterns of dictionaries; (ii) impact on language learning and communication; (iii) role in professional fields such as law, medicine, technology, etc.; and (iv) the contribution of dictionaries in documenting and revitalising endangered languages.

4.3 Limitations

As a documentary review, this study is limited by the availability and accessibility of relevant resources. Additionally, the findings rely on secondary data, which may reflect the biases or limitations of the original studies reviewed.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research practices by properly citing all reviewed materials and ensuring the accurate representation of authors' perspectives.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Lexicographers, the architects of dictionaries, have developed typologies to categorise dictionaries based on several key factors. As for our investigation, we will explore into several such factors namely, the number of languages involved, the physical form of the dictionary, and the speciality of its content. By examining these aspects, we can not only appreciate the diversity of dictionaries but also grasp how each type caters to specific needs and purposes.
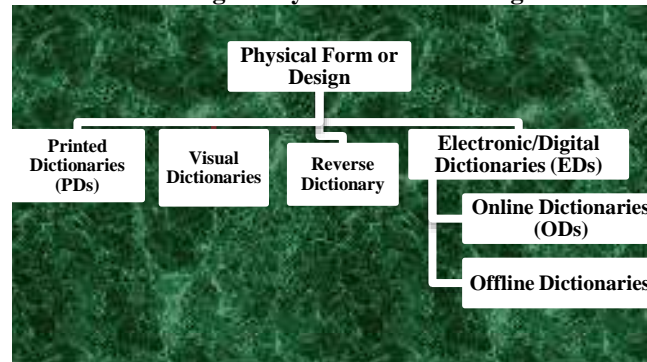
5.1 According to Physical Form or Design/Format

Figure 1: Typology according to the Physical Form or Design/Format

5.1.1. Printed Dictionaries (PDs)

A printed dictionary is a physical reference book that provides information about words. It is essentially a bound collection of alphabetically ordered entries, each containing details about a specific word. Chiu and Liu (2013:2) argue that,

Printed dictionaries are often compared with electronic dictionaries with regard to both their functions and their effects on language learning. Some researchers have suggested that PD should be the best form of dictionary for learning. For example, de Schryver (2003) listed the advantages of PD that have been outlined in the literature, including users' familiarity, comfort of reading, ability to make physical annotations, durability without fear of serious damage or loss of functionality, no requirement of a computer to be switched on, and so on.'

In a world dominated by digital devices, printed dictionaries remain a valuable companion for language learners and to anyone curious about the complexities of words. They create focused learning environment. That means, they minimise distractions like pop-ups and notifications. Unlike their digital counterparts, PDs do not require an Internet connection. Additionally, high-quality PDs often provide in-depth definitions, detailed etymological information and illustrative examples (Chiu & Liu, 2013). Hence, they offer a more comprehensive learning experience compared to some basic online entries.

5.1.2. Visual Dictionaries

A visual dictionary clarifies through pictures. It shows a picture, photograph, diagram, or another image that explains a word. This means that visual dictionaries generally teach nouns since they can easily be shown using pictures (Beare, 2020). Visual dictionaries are a valuable resource for language learners and those struggling with abstract concepts (Nation & Cox, 2008). These dictionaries combine clear and concise definitions with corresponding images. Learners benefit from visual aids to grasp complex ideas. Visual dictionaries utilise

both visual and textual cues, which strengthens the association between the word and its meaning. This enhanced connection improves comprehension and retention of information, making visual dictionaries a powerful tool for vocabulary acquisition and understanding. For example, _Merriam-Webster visual dictionary_[1]. However, it is potential to note that when explaining more abstract and emotional terms such as "freedom" or "justice", visual dictionary offers a very little help (Beare, 2020).

5.1.3. Reverse Dictionary

A reverse dictionary is a dictionary that works the other way around from a traditional dictionary. Instead of looking up a word to find its definition, they are used to look up a concept or idea and to find words that express it (Edmonds, 2011). Therefore, they allow users to search for a concept or describe an idea, and in turn, reverse dictionaries provide a list of words that effectively capture that meaning of the described idea. This functionality proves particularly helpful for writers and speakers seeking to express themselves precisely but struggling to pinpoint the most fitting word (Crystal, 2008). Additionally, they can unlock new concepts by allowing users to explore associated terms. (Hartmann & James, 1998).

5.1.4. Electronic/Digital Dictionaries

Murnani and Salehi (2015) as cited by Oktriviani (2022:28) argue that the term electronic dictionary is supposed to be used for referring any reference material saved in electronic arrangement that provides information on spelling, meaning, or words usage. Electronic dictionaries exist in digital formats and offer a range of features beyond simple word definitions. Moreover, EDs are readily available on various devices, including computers, smartphones, and tablets (McKendrick, 2008). This allows users to access definitions and translations anytime, anywhere, all they need is an Internet connection (for ODs) or the necessary software installed (for offline dictionaries). As an advantage, many electronic dictionaries go beyond basic definitions by offering audio pronunciations to aid with correct word sounds (Benson & Greaves, 2018). Some might even include images or videos to enhance understanding (McKendrick, 2008). They also allow for advanced searches beyond just word definitions whereby users can search by etymology, synonyms, antonyms, or even find usage examples in sentences (Benson & Greaves, 2018). Some electronic dictionaries allow integration with other software, such as word processors. Thus, they allow users to search for definitions without leaving their current task (McKendrick, 2008).

Boonmoh (2010) as cited by Dwaik (2015:2) lists three types of electronic dictionaries that are available for learners, namely, CD-ROM dictionaries, pocket electronic dictionaries (PEDs) and ODs. Boonmoh goes on to argue that PEDs are not readily available for learners and that the use of PC or CD-ROM dictionaries is not popular when compared to the use of

ODs which are favoured by the majority of students (Dwaik, 2015).

5.1.4.1. Online Vs. Offline Electronic Dictionaries

Electronic dictionaries come in two primary forms which are online and offline. Each form serves to specific user needs. As McKendrick (2008) points out, ODs reign supreme in accessibility. They offer information anytime, anywhere only with a browser and Internet connection. They boast vast databases full of word entries that contains the latest terminologies and vocabularies that might not be readily available in offline versions (Benson & Greaves, 2018). McKendrick (2008) further highlights that online dictionary can be easily integrated with other online platforms like word processors. As noted by Benson and Greaves (2018), ODs are characterised with regular updates that ensure users have access to the most current information. However, ODs have a dependency on Internet connectivity. This can be a limitation in areas with poor access (McKendrick, 2008). As Benson and Greaves (2018) argued, it is important to note that, online environments can be spoiled with distractions (with pop-ups, messages, ads and other Internet-related notifications), potentially hindering focus and concentration while using the online dictionary.

On the contrary, offline electronic dictionaries prioritise portability and focus. They are often available on smartphones and other dedicated devices. These dictionaries can be used without an Internet connection. Thus, they are ideal for travel or unreliable Internet situations (McKendrick, 2008). They promote better concentration by fostering distraction-free environment (Benson & Greaves, 2018). As an advantage, offline dictionaries are not susceptible to online security breaches (McKendrick, 2008). However, offline dictionaries might have less content compared to their online counterparts. Hence, they potentially lack the latest terms due to less frequent updates (Benson & Greaves, 2018). Additionally, some dedicated offline electronic dictionaries can be expensive (due to some which require subscription fees) compared to free online options (McKendrick, 2008). In the long run, the ideal electronic dictionary hinges on an individual's needs. If accessibility, extensive content and regular updates are paramount, an online dictionary might be a better fit. However, if portability, focus, and offline access is more important, an offline electronic dictionary could be the best option.

5.2 Typology According to Online Dictionaries

Online dictionaries (ODs) have revolutionised language learning by offering easy, time-efficient access to definitions, pronunciations, translations, phonetic transcriptions, and more. As Oktriviani (2022) notes, ODs are preferred for their simplicity and convenience. They provide multimedia features such as audio pronunciations, images, and even videos, enhancing user experience and supporting various learning

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[1] https://visualdictionaryonline.com/

styles (Trinh et al., 2021). Unlike print editions, ODs are constantly updated to include new terms and trends (Lew, 2015) and offer advanced search functions, allowing users to explore word meanings in-depth (Dwaik, 2015). ODs also integrate with other online tools, enabling seamless access to definitions while reading online (Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020). Some platforms, like Wiktionary, foster a collaborative approach, allowing users to contribute to definitions (Staff, 2023). However, it's essential to ensure ODs come from reputable sources to avoid bias.

5.2.1. Types of Online Dictionaries

According to the scholar Goe (2012:423 - 426) in the paper titled "Online English dictionaries: Friend or foe", there are three types of online dictionary namely, one, *"clicks-and-mortar" dictionaries*, two, *one-stop dictionaries*, and three, *Do-It-Yourself (DIY) dictionaries*.
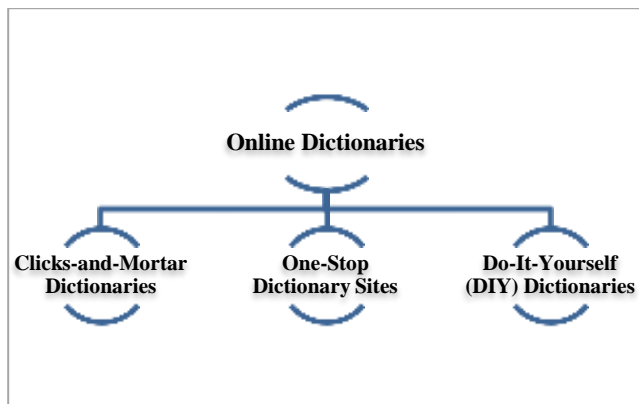

Figure 2: Typology According to Online Dictionaries

Firstly, the "clicks-and-mortar" dictionary is the online forms of some current PDs references. For example, oxford advanced learners dictionary (OALD) becomes (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.com) Cambridge becomes dictionary.cambridge.org and MacMillan becomes MacMillan dictionary.com, TUKI becomes Mobituki.com. Therefore, PDs are exchanged from print out dictionaries to digital dictionaries.

The second type of online dictionary is one-stop dictionary sites. It is also known as dictionary aggregators (Goe, ibid.: 424). This is because this dictionary works like *"one-stop shopping"*. The one-stop dictionary site provides a website which can show the readers the meaning of some words sourced from several ODs. For example, Dictionary.com, OneLook.com, the Free Dictionary.com for Kiswahili Lexicologos.Com, among others.

The last type of online dictionary is DIY dictionaries. It can be said that the author of this dictionary is thousands of people. Almost no editorial team is required. As for all intents and purposes, any individual who visits the site can contribute their own entrances or edit the existing ones. Goe (ibid:425) claims that,

It is a truth universally acknowledged that dictionaries are compiled by lexicographers who are, in most cases, experts worth their salt, thus making dictionaries a reliable source of reference. Traditional dictionary-making usually involves an editorial team that consists of a considerable number of such experts. However, for a certain category of online dictionaries, almost no editorial team is needed as virtually anyone who visits the website can contribute their own entries or edit existing ones. This practice has given rise to a few DIY dictionaries such as Wiktionary and Urban Dictionary. This new trend in online lexicography originated from the novel practice of contributing entries for free online encyclopaedias. The success of Wikipedia has popularised this new way of compiling reference works.

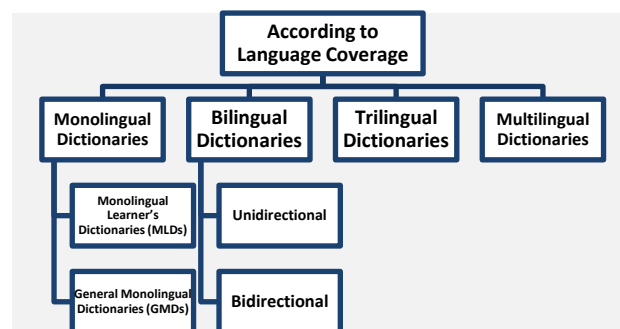### 5.3 Typology According to Language Coverage.

Figure 3: Typology According to Language Coverage.

5.3.1. Monolingual Dictionary

Refer to the type of dictionary in which the words of a language are explained by means of the same language (Hartmann & James, 1998). For example, in Kiswahili there is (*Kamusi Kuu ya Kiswahili & Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu*) which is a dictionary that contains entries with definitions in Kiswahili itself. There are two main types of monolingual dictionaries which are Monolingual Learner's Dictionaries (MLDs) and General Monolingual Dictionaries (GMDs). MLDs specifically focus on language learners by providing simplified definitions, usage examples, and sometimes even grammatical guidance (Ard, 1982). Meanwhile, GMDs are designed for native speakers and offer a more comprehensive exploration of the language, including multiple definitions, etymology, and advanced features like pronunciation guides (Mugglestone, 2011; Bernard et al., 2010).

5.3.2. Bilingual Dictionaries

Bilingual Dictionary is a variety of dictionaries that relates vocabularies of two different languages which stay together by means of translation equivalents between the languages used (Hartmann & James, 1998). Learners use this kind of dictionary in order to know the direct meaning of any word in their target language. According to Yong (2007) as quoted by Oktriviani (2022:25) states that,

"a bilingual dictionary helps to obtain a more active use of the source language and a better understanding of source language texts by providing target language equivalent".

The key feature of bilingual dictionary is directionality: unidirectional (e.g., *Kiswahili-English*) and bidirectional (e.g., *English-Kiswahili* then *Kiswahili-English*). Bilingual dictionaries come in various formats, from physical books to online applications. They offer a range of features to enhance user experience. They cater to different proficiency levels (simpler versions for beginners and more comprehensive for advanced learners). Assertively, though it is argued that bilingual dictionaries hinder language acquisition by providing an easy "out," (simple solution), recent research suggests that they can still be a valuable tool when used strategically. For instance, a study by Baker (2018) found that bilingual dictionaries, when used thoughtfully, can support vocabulary development in L2 learners.

5.3.3. Trilingual Dictionaries

Although many research focuses are on monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, trilingual dictionaries offer word translations between three languages. They can be valuable for multilingual learners acquiring proficiency in several languages simultaneously (Wei, 2018). Travellers navigating areas where multiple languages are spoken or professionals working across languages like translators and interpreters might also find them useful (Munday, 2016). Altogether, it can be said that, a trilingual dictionary is a linguistic resource that encompasses three languages by providing translations, definitions and explanations across this triad.

5.3.4. Multilingual Dictionaries

A multilingual dictionary encompasses content in three or more languages. It provides translations, definitions, and explanations for words and phrases across this linguistic spectrum (Mugglestone, 2011). In language learning, as Hornberger (2006:202) highlights, multilingual dictionaries can support learners acquiring proficiency in multiple languages simultaneously. They allow learners to compare translations, fostering a deeper understanding of vocabulary nuances and the relationships between languages. For professionals, such as linguists, translators, interpreters, and others working with multiple languages rely on various reference tools, including multilingual dictionaries (Munday, 2016:48).

5.4. Typology According to Specialisation

Specialised Dictionaries delve deeper into specific fields or topics, offering detailed definitions and terminology relevant to that area. For instance, a medical dictionary, Legal dictionaries, among others (McArthur, 1996). These dictionaries are crucial for professionals and anyone seeking in-depth knowledge within a particular domain. The following are some examples of specialised dictionaries.

Figure 4: Typology According to Specialisation

5.4.1. Learner's Dictionaries

These are dictionaries specifically designed for people learning a new language. They provide simplified definitions, often accompanied by grammar notes, pronunciation guides, and example sentences to aid comprehension (Richards, 2001). Learners' dictionaries cater to different proficiency levels, making them a valuable resource for language acquisition.

5.4.2. Thesaurus Dictionaries

Refers to the treasure trove of synonyms and antonyms which facilitate users find words with similar or opposite meanings (Platt et al., 1993). Thesaurus dictionaries typically organise entries alphabetically whereby each entry focuses on a single word, followed by lists of synonyms and sometimes antonyms (McArthur, 1992). They allow users to express themselves with greater precision because they list synonyms (words with similar meanings) and antonyms (words with opposite meanings) for a particular word. For instance, when writing to say "happy", a thesaurus dictionary might suggest synonyms like "joyful," "elated", or "ecstatic", each conveying slightly different shades of happiness. Similarly, if writing to express the opposite of "happy", it might give antonyms like "sad," "depressed", or "gloomy".

5.4.3. Acronym and Abbreviation Dictionaries

Refers to reference materials that provide definitions and explanations for acronyms and abbreviations from everyday life, technical fields, etc. (Karen, 2010). For example, an unfamiliar abbreviation like "FYI" in an email, this dictionary would reveal it as "For Your Information." These dictionaries are helpful for understanding technical jargon in fields like medicine (e.g., "HDL" for High-Density Lipoprotein) or government (e.g., "UNESCO" for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation).

5.4.4. Rhyming Dictionaries

Rhyming dictionaries are a special type of reference tool designed for anyone who works with crafting words with matching sounds at the end (Priku et al., 2014). These dictionaries typically organise words alphabetically, but with a twist. That is to say, instead of focusing on the first letter, they categorise words based on their ending sounds. They help users to find words that share similar ending sounds, with a sense of rhythm and flow in written or spoken language (Wood, 1992). This makes them particularly valuable for poets, songwriters, and anyone interested in wordplay. For instance, when preparing a poem with words that rhymes with "sky". A rhyming dictionary would list words like "high," "night", or "bye," "shy".

5.4.5. Biographical Dictionaries

These are a unique type of reference tool dedicated to writing down the lives and achievements of notable individuals. They include fascinating stories of people who have shaped history, culture, and various fields of human endeavours including details about a person's birth, education, career highlights, significant accomplishments and so forth (Libguides, 2024). These dictionaries can range in scope, covering a broad spectrum of individuals across different historical periods and professions, or focusing on a specific geographic region, profession (e.g., scientists, artists), or even gender (e.g., women in history). For instance, Harvard library categorised them according to Occupation; Gender; Ethnicity, etc. for instance:

Table 1: Example of biography dictionary

Name of Dictionary	Author(s)	Year	Place	Publisher
Biographical Dictionary of Scientists	H. I. D.	2000	New York	Facts on File
Women in World History: Biographical Encyclopaedia	A. J. H.	2002	Farmington Hills, MI	Gale Group
The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography	H. C.	2004	Oxford	Oxford University Press

5.4.6. Phonetic Dictionary

Phonetic dictionaries, also known as pronunciation dictionaries are reference tools that provide not only the meaning and definition of words but also a detailed representation of their pronunciation using phonetic symbols (Eckhard, 2008). Also, a phonetic dictionary is a specialised reference tool that provides the pronunciation of words using phonetic notation systems, such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) They play a vital role in language acquisition,

particularly for mastering pronunciation. As for learners, through phonetic dictionary, they gain a clear understanding of how individual sounds are produced and how they are combined to form words (Kenworthy, 1987). Moreover, they allow learners to improve pronunciation accuracy, develop listening comprehension, and boost spelling skills (Nation, 2009; Leong & Wong, 2013).

Table 2: Example of phonetic dictionaries

Name of Dictionary	Author(s)	Year	Place	Publisher
A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics	David Crystal	1985	London	Longman
The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language	David Crystal	1995	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press
The Phonetic Dictionary of English	J. C. Wells	1990	London	Penguin Books
The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language	Houghton Mifflin Company	2000	Boston	Houghton Mifflin

5.4.7. Encyclopaedic Dictionaries

Encyclopaedic dictionaries are a type of dictionary that combines features of both traditional dictionaries and encyclopaedias. They provide a more extensive information about each entry including detailed definitions, background information, illustrations, and examples (Crystal, 2008; Jackson, 2005; Urdang, 1983; Bergenholtz & Nielsen, 2005). This comprehensive approach makes them valuable for a variety of purposes, such as thorough learning, research foundations, and building background knowledge (McArthur, 1998; Rundell, 2004; Siegel, 2004). However, Collison and Preece (2024) claim that it is worth acknowledging that encyclopaedic dictionaries provide a condensed overview and may not offer the same level of detail as those dedicated encyclopaedias.

5.4.8. Slang Dictionaries

Slang dictionaries are a valuable resource for tracking the evolution of language by documenting informal vocabulary used in everyday communication ("The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang," 2008). These dictionaries include newly emerged slang terms and regional variations. Thus, they provide a description of how language changes and adapts over

time. However, it is advised to evaluate the credibility of the dictionary before using an entry from the source. This is because anyone can contribute content particularly online resources like Urban Dictionary[2]. Another example of slang dictionaries is SLANG.org[3].

Table 3: Examples of slang dictionaries

Name of Dictionary	Author(s)	Year	Place	Publisher
The Oxford English Dictionary of Slang	John Ayto	1999	Oxford	Oxford University Press
Green's Dictionary of Slang	Jonathon Green	2010	London	Chambers Harrap Publishers
Dictionary of Contemporary Slang	Tony McEnery	2006	London	Routledge

5.4.9. Music Dictionaries

Music dictionaries are packed with information on musical terms, instruments, genres, and even famous composers (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012). They act as a comprehensive guide to the world of music (Bennett et al., 2019). Additionally, music dictionaries provide clear definitions and explanations, often accompanied by helpful illustrations or audio samples. Furthermore, they decipher the difference between different styles of music such as reggae, jazz, Afropop, etc. example of music dictionaries is *the online Metronome-music dictionary*[4] and *Music dictionary/Musicca*[5]

Table 4: Examples of music dictionaries

Resource.	Description
Grove Music Online	Extensive online resource with a comprehensive music dictionary covering history, theory, genres, and biographies.
The Oxford Companion to Music	Reference book offering insights into musical forms, genres, composers, and instruments.
Harvard Dictionary of Music	Guide providing definitions of music terminology, broader concepts, and historical contexts.

5.4.10. Dialect Dictionaries.

Dialect dictionaries document the diverse variations in speech used in different regions (Markus, 2021). They explore the unique vocabulary, pronunciation patterns and grammatical nuances that distinguish different dialects. They are helpful in enhancing deeper understanding of how language can be shaped by cultural and historical influences because language is not monolithic. Moreover, these

dictionaries may include regional words, colloquialisms, idioms, and phonetic spellings, making them invaluable resources for understanding the richness of vernacular speech. Some dialect dictionaries are comprehensive, covering a wide range of terms, while others may focus on specific subsets of language, such as a particular geographic area, cultural group, or historical period. Examples include the Oxford English Dictionary's regional entries, the American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms, and various online platforms dedicated to documenting vernaculars.

5.4.11. Quotation Dictionaries

Quotation dictionaries provide a large collection of famous sayings organised by theme, speaker, or historical period ("Oxford Dictionary of Quotations," 2009). These dictionaries can be a valuable resource for writers seeking to enhance their work with relevant and credible quotes to support arguments or introduce topics. Therefore, this dictionary comprises quotes from prominent figures, inspirational quotes, motivational quotes, etc. In other words, it can be said that, quotation dictionaries are specialised reference works that compile quotations from a variety of sources, including literature, speeches, films, and more. These dictionaries not only provide the quoted text but often include details about the author, context of the quote, and sometimes the source from which the quote originated. They serve as valuable resources for writers, speakers, and anyone looking to find or use impactful sayings and expressions in their own work.

The selection of quotes in a quotation dictionary may be organised by theme, subject matter, or alphabetical order, making it easier to locate relevant quotes for different occasions or topics. Some quotation dictionaries may focus on specific authors, historical periods, or cultural contexts, allowing users to delve deeper into particular styles or philosophies. Additionally, many modern quotation dictionaries now exist in digital formats, making them easily searchable and more accessible than ever. These tools are particularly useful in academic writing, public speaking, and social media, where impactful quotations can help convey ideas succinctly and resonate with audiences.

5.4.12. Etymology Dictionaries

Etymology dictionaries look into the etymological roots of vocabularies. They uncover the earliest forms of vocabularies in ancient languages and trace their evolution up to their contemporary usage (De Vaan, 2018). They contribute to a deeper understanding of language by tracing the historical development of words. Through etymology dictionaries, the interconnectedness of languages can be realised. Furthermore, etymology dictionaries show how vocabulary outlines and

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[2] https://www.urbandictionary.com/
[3] https://www.slang.org/

[4] https://theonlinemetronome.com/musical-dictionary
[5] www.musicca.com/dictionary

reflects cultural history. Hence give insight on the past and the ongoing evolution of language.

In a nutshell, they are specialised references work that provides information about the origin, history, and development of words and their meanings. It traces the linguistic roots of words, revealing how they have evolved over time, including their derivations from earlier languages. Such dictionaries include details on phonetic changes, semantic shifts, and the geographical and cultural influences that contribute to word evolution. For example, it can explain that the word "etymology" itself comes from the Greek word "etymon", meaning "true sense", combined with the suffix "-logy," which denotes "the study of" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). Etymology dictionaries serve as valuable resources for linguists, writers, historians, and anyone interested in the intricate tapestry of language and communication.

5.4.13. Citation Dictionaries

Citation dictionaries serve as essential resources in academic writing, aiding scholars and students in accurately referencing various sources. These dictionaries provide comprehensive information about citation formats and styles, ensuring that authors adhere to discipline-specific guidelines. According to Citas (2021), citation dictionaries not only clarify the mechanics of citation but also emphasise the importance of proper attribution in scholarly work (Citas, 2021). In recent years, the evolution of citation practices has influenced the design and content of citation dictionaries. As noted by Smith and Johnson (2022), the advent of digital platforms has led to an increase in the accessibility and usage of online citation aids, which complement traditional citation dictionaries (Smith & Johnson, 2022). This shift has prompted updates in citation dictionaries to include guidelines for citing multimedia sources such as websites, videos, and podcasts, adapting to the diverse range of materials utilised in modern research (Doe, 2023).

Furthermore, researchers stress the importance of teaching citation skills in academic curricula. Brown (2020) argues that early exposure to citation practices through structured educational frameworks can enhance students' research abilities and academic integrity (Brown, 2020). This highlights the relevance of citation dictionaries not only as reference materials but as educational tools that contribute to the development of critical academic skills. In summary, citation dictionaries play a pivotal role in supporting the proper citation of sources within scholarly writing. They evolve in response to changing citation practices and serve as effective educational resources. By continually adapting to the needs of researchers and students, citation dictionaries ensure the integrity and credibility of academic work.

5.5. Typology According to Functionality and Features

According to functionality and features, dictionaries can be categorised into various types, each designed to cater to specific user needs and enhance the language learning or reference experience.
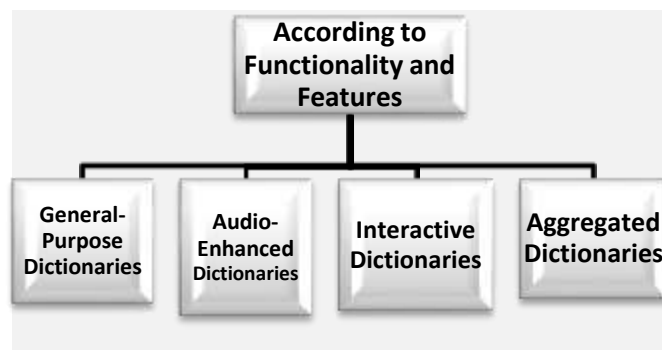
5.5.1. General-Purpose Dictionaries

General-purpose dictionaries are comprehensive lexical tools that provide definitions, pronunciations, grammatical information, and usage examples for a wide variety of words in a given language. These dictionaries are designed to cater to the everyday needs of users, including both language learners and proficient speakers. They serve as essential references for understanding common vocabulary and language usage in both written and spoken contexts (Atkins & Rundell, 2008). General-purpose dictionaries often cover general language topics rather than specialised fields, making them versatile and useful for various linguistic needs.

5.5.2. Audio-Enhanced Dictionaries

Audio-enhanced dictionaries incorporate audio files or phonetic transcriptions to offer accurate pronunciations of words. These features are especially valuable for language learners, as they provide an auditory component that helps in improving speaking and listening skills. By including phonetic notations or native-speaker recordings, these dictionaries make it easier for users to learn the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar terms. The integration of such multimedia elements not only enhances the learning experience but also helps to engage learners more interactively (Liu, 2017). These tools cater to the needs of modern learners who seek a more dynamic and comprehensive approach to language acquisition.

5.5.3. Interactive Dictionaries

Interactive dictionaries are digital or online resources that enable users to actively engage with the content. Features such as word games, quizzes, and customisable search filters are often integrated into these platforms to make learning more interactive and enjoyable. These dictionaries are particularly useful for learners who benefit from active involvement in the learning process. The use of interactive elements enhances the comprehension and retention of vocabulary, making these dictionaries more effective in language learning (Groot, 2010). Moreover, they cater to diverse learning styles, providing tools for auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic learners.

5.5.4. Aggregated Dictionaries

Aggregated dictionaries compile information from multiple dictionary sources into a single, accessible platform. This consolidation allows users to cross-reference definitions, translations, and explanations from various authoritative resources. Aggregated dictionaries are particularly useful for advanced learners and professionals who require a broad, nuanced understanding of words. By offering multiple perspectives on word meanings and usage, these dictionaries provide a richer linguistic experience. They also facilitate the comparison of definitions and translations across different languages and dialects, making them indispensable tools for translators and interpreters (Tarp, 2008).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the typological exploration of dictionaries presented in this study, it is recommended that dictionaries be categorised based on a multi-dimensional framework that considers their purpose, functionality, technological integration, target audience, and language-specific features. Dictionaries should be classified according to their primary purpose, such as general-purpose or specialised dictionaries, and their functionalities, such as audio-enhanced or interactive dictionaries. Technological integration plays a crucial role, necessitating distinctions between printed, digital, and mobile dictionaries. Furthermore, categorisation should reflect the intended user group, distinguishing learners' dictionaries from expert-level resources. Finally, dictionaries should be organised by language coverage, distinguishing between monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual dictionaries to meet the diverse needs of language users. This comprehensive categorisation will improve the understanding and accessibility of dictionaries, ensuring that users can select the most suitable resources based on their specific linguistic and educational requirements.

7. Conclusion

The typological exploration of dictionaries highlights their diverse functions and specialised form. This reveals that these tools extend far beyond simple definitions. For instance, printed dictionaries offer a tactile and focused learning experience with in-depth content, whilst visual dictionaries aid comprehension through images, though they are limited in addressing abstract concepts. Also, electronic dictionaries enhance accessibility and functionality with features like audio pronunciations and multimedia, though online versions can face challenges such as Internet dependency and distractions. Furthermore, monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, and multilingual dictionaries cater to varying linguistic needs, from deepening single-language understanding to bridging multiple languages. Moreover, specialised dictionaries, such as those for learners or thesauri, provide targeted support for language acquisition and precise expression. Largely, this examination underscores the importance of recognising the unique attributes and purposes of different dictionary types to

effectively address the diverse needs of language users and learners.

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