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The Skill of Conducting Research (Part One)

Introduction

Research is an activity we engage in regularly in our daily lives. It begins with a natural curiosity or a need to discover information. This may involve searching for the meaning of a word, finding specific information, looking up a recipe, checking sports news, or completing school projects.

To conduct research, learners can rely on various resources such as dictionaries, books, novels, handouts, articles, textbooks, and magazines. In addition, people (e.g., teachers), social media, television, and online resources: including websites, emails, and academic journals also play an important role.

1. Using Dictionaries

A dictionary is an essential tool that helps learners deepen their understanding of words. Although it is sometimes overlooked due to the increasing availability of online resources, it remains one of the most reliable references.

2. Types of Dictionaries

Dictionaries can be classified into several categories:

- ✚ Printed vs. online dictionaries
- ✚ Monolingual vs. bilingual dictionaries
- ✚ Specialized dictionaries (e.g., slang, phrasal verbs, idioms)
- ✚ Field-specific dictionaries (e.g., medicine, law, computer science)
- ✚ Etymological dictionaries (focusing on word origins)

➤ What Does a Dictionary Provide?

While many learners use dictionaries primarily to find meanings, they offer much more detailed information.

➤ Basic Dictionary Features

1. **Word Division:** Words are often broken into syllables.
2. **Pronunciation:** Phonemic transcription indicates how a word is pronounced; some dictionaries include both British and American variants.
3. **Part of Speech:** Identifies whether the word is a noun, verb, adjective, etc.
4. **Multiple Definitions:** Words may have several meanings; learners must select the one that fits the context rather than relying on the first definition.

3. Advanced Dictionary Features

1. **Archaic Usage:** Indicates that a meaning is outdated or no longer commonly used.
2. **Origin:** Provides information about the historical development of a word.
3. **Related Forms:** Shows derivatives of the word (e.g., *order* → *ordinal*, *ordinary*, *orderly*).
4. **Synonyms and Antonyms:** Offers words with similar or opposite meanings.

Research suggests that learners often acquire new vocabulary incidentally while consulting dictionaries.

Examples of Reliable Dictionaries

- ✚ Merriam-Webster (online)
- ✚ Cambridge English Dictionary
- ✚ Oxford English Dictionary
- ✚ Longman Dictionary
- ✚ Collins English Dictionary
- ✚ www.onelook.com