

Methods of research into dictionary use: online questionnaires

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1. Online questionnaires

- Online questionnaires are a method of **questioning** – they are not necessarily a method of observation, experiment / test, or content analysis.
- They are **written**, while interviews are a method of spoken questioning.
- They are also a method of **empirical social research**, which is here used for research into dictionary use.

1. Online questionnaires

- Conducting an online survey is an efficient method, when there is a need to find out more about **opinions, attitudes, behaviour, preferences, and socio-demographic factors** concerning a certain field, product, etc.
- If online questionnaires are employed to research the use of dictionaries, they have to be planned carefully, thus avoiding the **danger** of creating a unnatural situation of dictionary usage.

2. IDS-studies: general remarks

Several studies were undertaken in the project „User-adaptive access and cross-references in *elexiko* (BZV-*elexiko*)“ at the IDS in order

- to clarify general questions of online dictionary use,
- to identify different needs for online dictionaries,
- to learn more about monolingual online dictionaries like *elexiko*.

2. IDS-studies: general remarks

The surveys were

- made available in English and / or German (international target group),
- designed using the online survey software UNIPARK as a web-based survey that took 20-25 minutes to complete,
- distributed through various channels (online platforms, mailing lists, etc.),
- activated for roughly a month each.

2. IDS-studies: general remarks

Each survey

- reached between approximately 400 and 700 participants,
- was answered by linguists, students of linguistics, translators, teachers of German as a first and a second language, and non-experts,
- implemented several examples, illustrative transitional paragraphs, and explained all basic terms with the aim of being easily understandable for non-experts.

2. IDS-studies: general remarks

How important are the following aspects of keeping the online dictionary up-to-date?

Please use a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents 'Not important at all' and 7 represents 'Very important'. Of course, you may select any number between 1 and 7.

	1 = NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	2	3	4	5	6	7 = VERY IMPORTANT
Edited words are displayed online immediately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recent linguistic developments (regarding changes in spelling or new typical contexts) are quickly incorporated into the online dictionary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New words are quickly included in the online dictionary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current research is incorporated into the lexicographical work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Extract from one of the IDS studies in the print version of the questionnaire in UNIPARK

3. Example from *elexiko*-studies

- **Goal:** to improve the online presentation of the lexicographic information in *elexiko*
- **Research question:** How should lists of collocators, paradigmatic partner words, or word formation products be presented? (horizontally – vertically, in alphabetic order – in order according to frequency, etc.)
- **Method:** presentation of two lists of word formation products in two different orders followed by indication of preference for one presentation

3. Example from *elexiko*-studies

- Results:**

		Bevorzugte Sortierung			
Testpersonen		alphabetisch	frequenz-orientiert	keine Präferenz	Summe
Gesamt		50,00 %	36,62 %	13,38 %	100,00 %
Studierende der Sprachwissenschaften	Ja	62,50 %	32,50 %	5,00 %	100,00 %
	Nein	45,10 %	38,24 %	16,67 %	100,00 %
Sprachwissenschaftler	Ja	38,00 %	44,00 %	18,00 %	100,00 %
	Nein	56,52 %	32,61 %	10,87 %	100,00 %

3. Example from *elexiko*-studies

- **Results:** general preference for alphabetical order, but linguists prefer order according to frequency
- **Consequence** for *elexiko*: both orders are offerend, the alphabetical order is the default order:

Komposita		Derivate	Andere Wort- bildungsprodukte
Nomen und Nomen als zweiter Bestandteil alphabetisch ▲ Häufigkeit		Nomen und Nomen als erster Bestandteil alphabetisch ▲ Häufigkeit	
Arbeitsplatzcomputer	14	Computerabteilung	66
Bankcomputer	42	Computeraffäre	9
Bordcomputer	1761	Computeraktie	10
Börsencomputer	16	Computeranalyse	135
Buchungscomputer	20	Computeranimation	1233
Bürocomputer	42	Computeranlage	1016
	mehr »		mehr »

4. Problems and chances

Problems of the method:

- The creation of an online questionnaire is time consuming and requires expertise.
- Since each questionnaire shouldn't take too much time to answer, the number of possible questions is limited.
- Not every research question can be answered by data collected in an online questionnaire, e.g., whether users really follow hyperlinks in an online dictionary.

4. Problems and chances

Advantages of the method:

- Many participants can be reached easily.
- Online surveys are carried out, where online dictionaries are being used: on the Internet. Thus, participants should have an affinity for the medium.
- The data collected can be easily processed with different statistical methods (to interpret the data is a different matter, though).

Thank you!