Original Paper

A Study of Dictionary Use by Saudi EFL Students at Qassim University

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Abstract

Dictionaries are an indispensable tool for learning a foreign language in general. Dictionaries provide students with valuable information in all aspects of language. They include phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic information in addition to etymological and usage information. Unfortunately, there is currently a paucity of research on dictionary use by EFL learners and very little is known about the behavior and preferences of dictionary users and the complex operation involved in a dictionary consultation. The main objective of this study is to identify types of dictionaries used by Saudi students, the frequency of dictionary use, and the lexical information examined while using a dictionary. Two data-collection instruments were used in this study, namely a questionnaires and interviews. The results of the questionnaire show that Saudi students do not take full advantage of the different dictionaries available, and that they are not trained on how to make full use of the dictionaries. For example, most of them pay attention only to the definition or meaning of a word while neglecting the pragmatic aspect of the word, collocations as well as word formation knowledge. Results also indicated the superiority of the e-dictionary over the other types of dictionaries. Another more important finding was that participants favored bilingual dictionaries over monolingual dictionaries particularly when finding meaning of unknown words. Other information such as pronunciation, usage, and examples was of secondary importance. The final conclusion reached reported some difficulties that the students face when they use dictionaries. The results suggest that failure to locate the right entry is a common problem among Saudi EFL students. The implications of these and other findings are discussed and suggestions made regarding the importance of teaching dictionary skills in educational settings.

Keywords

paper-dictionar, electronic-dictionary, online dictionary, monolingual dictionary, bilingual dictionary, bilingualized dictionary

1. Introduction

With a growing need for English as an international language among non-native English speakers, a good command of the language is deemed essential to function in a globalized world. For non-native speakers of English, learning English has become so important that it cannot just be confined to formal school curriculum: it is an activity which people feel they need to engage in throughout their lives --- mainly in a self-learning mode. However, English teachers are unavailable outside the schools and learners need to find reliable information that they can refer to when they encounter a variety of problems related to English.

English dictionaries can fill this void. In an EFL setting such as Saudi Arabia, where target language input is limited, a dictionary is an invaluable reference to the English language. They provide learners with useful linguistic and cultural information, especially when teachers are unavailable and the learners are responsible for their own learning (Cubillo, 2002).

Dictionaries are considered good companions to language learners, especially to second or foreign language learners because dictionaries can provide a quick and direct access to the meaning of an unknown word. In EFL contexts, the supporting role of dictionaries has been emphasized by both teachers and researchers (e.g., Tseng, 2009), and the training of dictionary skills is considered important and necessary because EFL learners may not be able to make good use of dictionaries without explicit instruction (Fan, 2000; Su, 2003; Wright, 1998).

According to Huang (2003) EFL learners consider dictionaries to be useful and fairly common even necessary tools in language acquisition and have certainly been long time companion to many foreign language students. In fact the dictionary is perceived to be an essential source of data concerning vocabulary and related information, and is not simply a classroom tool but an object of life-long use (Fan, 2000). Li (1998) stated that dictionaries are among the most successful and predominant books related to languages because they play an important role not only in native language acquisition but also in foreign language learning. It is because foreign language learning usually involves the considerable use of dictionaries that this study investigates the different types of dictionaries used as well as the lexical information learners are looking for from their dictionaries.

The dictionary is indeed one of the most readily accessible, most commonly used, and cheapest learning resources (Wright, 1988). It is a mine of information for language learners, providing them with knowledge about vocabulary, ranging from the most important things such as meaning, pronunciation, parts of speech, collocation and structure, to detailed information such as etymology and register (Nakamura, 2000). Its role does not stop at supplying information about vocabulary, but extends to assisting language learners in the comprehension and production of the text (Nation, 2001, p. 283).

In spite of the importance of English dictionaries for EFL learners, research on English dictionaries and dictionary use has captured the attention of language theorists and educators in recent decades (Jesun

Ryu, 2006; Hartmann, 1999; Sánchez, M. 2005; Li, L. 1998). The results of such studies indicate that most college EFL learners are not efficient dictionary users. Complaints are often heard about the confusion and frustration brought about by dictionary consultation.

From the researcher's observation and experience of teaching the EFL skills for more than 20 years, however, he has noticed that most of the students who enroll in the English Department of Qassim University have serious deficiencies in dictionary skills. This is especially observable when the students take the courses entitled "lexicography and terminology (ENG), Listening and Speaking (ENG 121) , reading(ENG236), writing Skills" (ENG 344) or translation (ENG 171) at first year level. The researcher observed that many students are not sure of what kind of dictionaries are appropriate to their proficiency levels and purposes, what functions of the dictionaries could specially benefit their learning, when and how they should look up a word in a dictionary, which definition gives the accurate meaning in the context of the tasks being performed. Besides, many ignore the collocations, stylistic and syntactic features of an entry word and focus only on the first explanation of a headword. Thus misinterpretations of a reading assignment often occur and many vocabulary mistakes appear in their language output tasks. Such problems were also noticed even by other instructors who were offering the same

courses to different groups. The same problem was also observed in many SL/FL countries. It was found that many SL/FL students, especially Asian learners, were not efficient dictionary users (Al Osier, 2012, Hartmann (2009, p. 207). These studies reveal a mismatch between the role a dictionary can play and the way language learners actually use it in their language learning process. The dictionary, which is a very useful language learning tool, may be neglected by some language learners. Be joint (1989, p. 208) argues that dictionaries are not used as hoped by their compilers, as indicated by dictionary research findings. A significant number of language learners are ignorant of all the advantages that dictionaries offer. Even learners who are aware of the usefulness of dictionaries do not always reflect this awareness in their practice. These problems need a systematic study relative to various types of dictionaries used, the various activities, and the types of information looked up, which may help us better understand why dictionary-user is not always successful. Thus, the current study emerges in response to the demand for further research in the field.

2. Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) Do the Saudi EFL students have any kind of training on dictionary use?

2) What kind of dictionaries do the Saudi EFL students use? And what attitude do they have to the different types of dictionaries: bilingual vs. monolingual dictionary and paper vs. electronic dictionary?

3) What are the various types of EFL activities requiring dictionary use?

4) What kind of information do Saudi EFL students look up in their dictionaries?

5) What are the difficulties of using dictionaries?

6) What are the implications and pedagogical recommendations that can be taken from this research?

3. Significance of the Study

The present study significantly benefits researchers and educators in the field of EFL learning. Since dictionary use has not been researched extensively, we know relatively little about how learners use dictionaries and how dictionary use is related to vocabulary learning. Given the evidence that EFL learners heavily depend on dictionaries (Fan, 2003; Kobayashi, 2000; Schmitt, 1997), it is necessary to discover more about dictionary use. This study investigating the use of electronic dictionaries contributes to an increase in the understanding of EFL learners' use of dictionaries.

This study also has significant pedagogical implications. Despite their importance for EFL learning, dictionary skills are not taught in many classrooms and are left to individual learners. Whatever instruction teachers provide on dictionary use is based on personal experiences or intuition. This is partially because there has been little empirical research on dictionary use on which teachers can base their instruction. The findings from this study inform teachers about students' dictionary use and improve the ways that they train their students in dictionary skills. Therefore, this study helps to know when to consult a dictionary. Finally, since this study involved Saudi EFL students, the findings are also useful for teachers working with other students in similar contexts who share some backgrounds with the participants of the study.

4. Literature Review

Nobody can deny the importance of the dictionary as an indispensable language learning tool. The dictionary, the prototypical work of lexical reference, classifies and stores information on words, phrases, and other lexical items, including their form, meaning, use, origin, and history. It is one of the oldest and the most widespread books in literate societies, and the number of its titles is enormous (Kirkness, 2004). Scholfield (1997, 20) says that the teaching and learning of English not only can be done through different grammatical studies, but also a large range of dictionaries can be used. A good dictionary must have certain characteristics mentioned in Bėjoint, 1981 such as having paper quality, good binding, containing encyclopedic information, clear definitions, giving guidance to usage, being easily accessible, and having idioms, synonyms, antonyms, etc.

The use of dictionaries has been of relatively little interest for L2 researchers and educators, and the negative view of dictionaries among these L2 specialists appears to explain partially this neglect. Many researchers and educators frown on the use of dictionaries because they believe that it encourages L2 learners to pay too much attention to individual words at the expense of comprehensive understanding of texts. Moreover, consulting a dictionary is believed by many to slow down reading and discourage L2 learners from reading as much as possible.

The use of dictionaries has drawn relatively little attention from researchers in the field of L2

acquisition (Scholfield, 1997). The studies that have been conducted in this area are not only few in number but also methodologically and thematically limited. A small body of studies investigated learners' general patterns of dictionary use through a survey (Baxter, 1980; Bėjoint, 1981; Tomaszczyk, 1979). More recent studies focused on learners' use of dictionaries or glosses and the relationship of dictionary use with learning outcomes while learners were engaged in a particular task that often involved reading (Ryu, 2005; Laufer & Hill, 2000).

Over the last thirty years, many researchers have attempted to classify the variety of dictionary types and have reached the same conclusion that the task is impossible (Béjoint, 2000; Hartmann, 2001; Kirkness, 2004). Although there is no agreed taxonomy applicable to all types of dictionaries, several broad distinctions are found to be practically useful (Béjoint, 2000; Hartmann, 2001; Kirkness, 2004). For example, Kirkness (2004) discusses distinctions such as monolingual and multilingual dictionaries, passive and receptive dictionaries, generalized and specialized dictionaries, native speakers' and non-native speakers' dictionaries, and dictionaries for adults and dictionaries for children. Similarly, Béjoint (2000) lists distinctions such as general and specialized dictionaries, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, encyclopedic and language dictionaries, foreign learners' and native speakers' dictionaries, and dictionaries for adults and dictionaries for children.

4.1 Language Learners and Use of Dictionaries

Language learners' use of the dictionary has been studied from various perspectives. For example, studies have focused on the accuracy of learners' dictionary use (Nesi and Hail 2002; Pousi; 2010), the effect of the dictionary use on vocabulary learning and reading comprehension; (Knight ,1994), and on the effect of different types of dictionaries such as bilingual, monolingual and bilingualized dictionaries (Laufer and Hadar 1997; Tomaszczyk 1979). Tomaszczyk (1979) was the pioneer and the first researcher to initiate an investigation into the dictionary use by non-native speakers of English (Tomaszczyk, 1979, as cited in Ryu, 2005). He conducted a study based on Polish learners at the university level for foreign language instructors, and translators. Although participants expressed their satisfaction with monolingual dictionaries, the majority preferred to use bilingual dictionaries over monolingual dictionaries. But the current study is focused on EFL foundation students not students who are majoring in English language as in the above mentioned study.

A similar study was conducted by Bejoint (1981) on French EFL students' use of monolingual English dictionaries. The results reveal that only 17% of the participants preferred the bilingual dictionary in contrast to Tomaszczyk's study. Moreover, recent studies focus on dictionary use training (Atkins and Varantola, 1998; Li, 1998; and Hartmann, 1999) as cited in Ryu (2005) in all these studies the majority of the students indicates that they never received dictionary use training. However, a study by Laufer and Hadar (1997) cited in Pousi, (2010, p. 6) on pre-advanced and advanced learners reveals that the unskilled dictionary users performed better in comprehension and production when using a bilingual dictionary, as opposed to using a monolingual one. Moreover, Loucky, (2001) conducted a study on

Japanese learners and the use of dictionary and it was found out that the majority of Japanese learners prefer bilingual dictionaries particularly the computerized ones. In addition, a similar study was conducted by Schmitt (1997) to survey Japanese EFL learners' perceptions about the use of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and the results indicated that (85%) of the respondents report that they prefer to use bilingual dictionaries and only (15%) preferred to use monolingual dictionaries.

Baxter (1980) investigated the use of dictionaries by 342 Japanese students of English at three national universities through a questionnaire. The results show that the Japanese students depended heavily on bilingual dictionaries. Whereas most of them used bilingual dictionaries daily, they seldom consulted monolingual dictionaries. Baxter suspected that bilingual dictionaries discouraged the students to use communication strategies such as paraphrasing in oral activities because bilingual dictionaries employ a single lexical item as meaning, unlike learner' monolingual dictionaries that use syntactic construction as a definition. Bèjoint (1981) examined the use of monolingual dictionaries by 122 students of English at a French university through a questionnaire. Many of the subjects used dictionaries on a daily basis. The students used dictionaries more often for written activities than for oral activities , and for decoding than for encoding. The students searched for information on meaning, syntax, synonyms, spelling, pronunciation , and language variety. They considered monolingual dictionaries more satisfactory than bilingual dictionaries. The subjects were not skilled in the use of dictionaries. In particular, many of them did not use the coding systems for syntactic patterns provided in learners' dictionaries nor did they read the front matter.

Fan (2000) reports on the use of bilingualized dictionaries by Chinese students, using the information from one section of the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire, which asked about information provided by bilingualized dictionaries. Fan found that the majority of students (90%) used bilingualized dictionaries and perceived them as useful. Students "often" looked up the context meaning of words and "sometimes" looked up the Chinese equivalents, the derived forms, the grammatical usages , and all meanings of words. They "seldom" looked up the collocations, pronunciation, frequency, and appropriateness of words. More proficient students in vocabulary knowledge used most of dictionary information more often than the less proficient students. In particular, they used information such as English definitions, pronunciation, frequency, and appropriateness significantly more often and regarded them as helpful. This study suggests that many students did not make full use of bilingualized dictionaries or were unaware of the importance of various aspects of word knowledge.

These studies employed a survey and demonstrated learners' general patterns of dictionary use. They show that: (1) most L2 learners, including advance learners, depend on dictionaries; (2) although they most frequently use dictionaries for word meaning, L2 learners use dictionaries for other information such as pronunciation, spelling , and syntax ; (3) although they primarily use dictionaries for written tasks, L2 learners also use dictionaries for oral tasks; (4) bilingual dictionaries are used more widely than monolingual dictionaries, even though learners consider them to be inferior to monolingual

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dictionaries ; (5) high proficiency learners use monolingual dictionaries more extensively than lower proficiency learners , although all learners continue to use bilingual dictionaries ; and (6) some learners may not be skilled enough in dictionary use to make the maximum use of dictionaries.

4.2. Research on Electronic Dictionary Use

As the use of the electronic dictionary is a relatively recent phenomenon, related studies are few. They were mostly on its effectiveness to the user's search purposes with similar methods employed to those in other dictionary use studies. Most of the findings lend support to the convenience that the various electronic features could provide to the users, allowing them faster search results (Diab and Hamdan, 1999: 297; Winkler, 2001; Chang, 2002). Aust, Kelley & Roby's (1993: 64) study involved 80 undergraduate foreign language learners, who took part in a comparison of online electronic aid and conventional paper dictionary use on the measures of consultation frequency, study time, efficiency, and comprehension. They found that readers consulted hyper-references much more frequently than comparable paper references.

Taylor and Chan (1994) report on the use of EDs by 424 students in a tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. A small number of students also participated in follow-up interviews. Additionally, 12 teachers were interviewed about their students' use of EDs. Taylor and Chan found that nearly all EDs used by the students were bilingual English and Chinese dictionaries. Although their EDs offered the functions that were not available in PDs (e.g., spoken pronunciation, a spelling checking, and a search function), they failed to meet several of the ten criteria of a good learner's dictionary stated by Hartmann (1992) (e.g., the provision of collocational, stylistic , and cultural information). Eighteen percent of students reported using an ED. The nonusers of EDs did not use them due to their poor quality (43%) and their costs (35%). Many students used their EDs to find the meaning of English words (all respondents), the spelling of English words (60%), and the Chinese equivalent of an English word (44%), the English equivalent of a Chinese word (34%), parts of speech (30%), synonyms (27%), and antonyms (22%). Twenty-eight percent of the respondents used their EDs more than their PDs, 46% used PDs more, and 26% used the two types of dictionaries about the same amount. Whereas the perceived advantages of EDs included portability, ease and speed of use, and the provision of speech, the perceived disadvantages included the brevity and inaccuracy of information, the limited number of headwords, and the absence or inadequacy of examples. Most of the teachers interviewed were concerned about the quality of EDs, and some also pointed out the possibility of discouraging students to guess word meanings from context. All teachers preferred their students to use PDs.

5. Subjects

The subjects involved in this study were 124 Saudi first-year students at the college of Arabic language and social studies at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. They were studying in the English department and were randomly selected from those willing to participate in the study.

6. Research Tools

This study used two investigative techniques namely, a structured written questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Both were chosen as the main investigative techniques for this study, taking into account their reliability, validity, appropriateness for research purposes, and feasibility. This study combined the two methods to reveal a more complete picture of learners' use of dictionaries.

6.1 Questionnaire

A fifty six item questionnaire was used to elicit the students' use of dictionaries. The questionnaire was constructed on the basis of a careful examination of previous questionnaires such as Bejoint, 1981; Diab, 1990; Battenburg, 1991; Al-Ajmi, 1992; Taylor and Chan, 1994; Alseweed, 1996; Alowimer, 2010, Alhaysony, 2011. The content was reworded and irrelevant questions were taken out to secure the intelligibility of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered during classes and students were briefed about the purpose of the study and their queries were taken into consideration.

The questionnaire consists of 5 sections. The first section of the questionnaire will provide an overview of the respondents' interaction with the dictionary. It will start with what kind of training that students have on the use of the dictionary. It will give background information about the respondents' previous experience with dictionaries, e.g., "When did you get your first dictionary?" The second section will investigate dictionary use from different angles. Dictionaries will be looked at according to their differences in type and format. The respondents' attitudes about the usefulness of these types and formats will be presented. The third section will then examine to what extent the respondents consult a dictionary in relation to various language skills. This is to discover whether the respondents use a dictionary more for encoding or decoding. The fourth section will explore the respondents' use of the information provided by a dictionary. The last section will shed light on difficulties in using dictionary. Students are asked to rate the statements given according to the following scale: (1) agree and (2) disagree.

6.1.1 Validation of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the researcher discussed the problem with English teachers who have had experience in teaching English and then distributed the questionnaire to four referees from the College of Arabic Language and Social Studies at Qassim University who are experts in this area. They were asked to judge the appropriateness of each item for the overall purpose of the study. Some of them suggested some modifications in the arrangements of some items which the researcher took into account.

6.1.2 The Reliability of the Instrument

To establish reliability, the questionnaires were piloted before administration to iron the wrinkles out and a new version was drafted that was easier with clear instructions for the students. The reliability of the study was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha formula. Accordingly, the reliability coefficient was 0.89 which fitted the purpose of the study.

6.1.3 Analyzing the Data Obtained from the Questionnaire

To analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire, the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. For Section A, the data obtained were converted into frequency and later into percentage. The computed data will be represented in tables.

6.2 Interview

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to elicit more detailed and broader information from participants based on their responses to the questionnaire. While the questionnaire was to provide the quantitative information of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data. The interviews were conducted to look into the issues that could not be clearly addressed from the findings of the questionnaires. Twelve of the students who had completed the questionnaire were randomly selected and interviewed.

-Have you ever been trained on the use of a dictionary?

-Who recommended that dictionary to you?

-What kind of dictionaries do you use?

-Do you like: bilingual or monolingual dictionary? And why?

-Do you like paper or electronic dictionary? And why?

-What kind of information do you look up in your dictionary?

- What are the various types of EFL activities requiring dictionary use?

-Have you had any problems in using dictionaries? What are they?

7. Results and Discussion

This section will discuss the results of the questionnaire supported by relevant comments from the data collected by the interviews. To present the statistical results of the questionnaire, the researcher used the frequency and percentages of the students' responses for the items.

7.1 Instruction Received in Dictionary Using Skills

The subsequent part of this study has been devoted to the first Question of the **research "**Have you ever been trained on the use of a dictionary?" The first section of the questionnaire will provide an overview of the respondents' interaction with the dictionary. It will start with what kind of training that students have on the use of the dictionary. It will give background information about the respondents' previous experience with dictionaries, e.g. 'When did you get your first dictionary?'

Table 1. Instruction received in dictionary use

Training on the use of the dictionary	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
1) Have you been taught in class how to use a dictionary?	50	40.3	74	59.7
2) If yes, were you given systematic teaching and precise instructions on how to do this?	12	9.7	112	90.3
3) I know how to use a dictionary.	80	65	44	35
4) I started to use dictionaries at university.	111	89.5	13	10.5
4) I started to use dictionaries at secondary school	48	38.7	76	61.3
5) I started to use dictionaries as early as at an intermediate school	9	7.2	115	92.8

Table (1) presents the answers to a simple yes/no question about whether the respondents had ever received any form of training in dictionary use. 50 (40.3%) respondents reported they had received some instruction, while 74 (59.7%) students responded that they had not. In many cases, secondary schools provide only superficial instructions in dictionary use, so I asked the participants again whether they had received a systematic training in dictionary use. Only 9.7% of the respondents (n=12) reported they had received a structured instruction. This finding is similar to the results of a number of studies (Al-Ajmi,1992; Diab,1990; and Hartmann's (1999) which have revealed a lack of formal instruction. Al-Ajmi, Diab and Hartmann's found that a lower number of students reported being trained on the dictionary use. The presentation above shows that training on dictionary use is an area of user profile that is still problematic despite the effort made by many researchers to raise the awareness of its significance. The problem as described by Li (1998) is when teachers at the pre-university stages think it is not necessary to give formal instruction on dictionary use, while teachers at the university stage believe it is a part of the pre-university curriculum. This leaves a gap in dictionary training in both the Chinese situation according to Li and the Saudi situation as the current research reveals. It seems that some students and teachers believe that reference skills are too simple to be taught. Hartmann (1999) argues that in many people's minds they are so basic that any training should not go far beyond the stage of primary education. One interviewee confirmed this view in relation to his secondary school stage in which he had a simple mini pocket dictionary that he only used to look up the meaning of a word. However, he described the situation at the university stage where a more advanced dictionary is needed and the focus is extended to cover areas other than meaning alone. He commented: *"We managed to satisfy our humble needs at the secondary stage, but we now feel that we are left alone when we look at an entry in a more advanced dictionary and find it starting with five dictionary symbols, for example, which we are unaware of"*. Contrary to our expectation, all the interviewees except one agreed that training is necessary. Another interviewee believed that even at the

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pre-university stage, training is needed to facilitate learning and to draw students' attention to dictionary features of which they are unaware. He regretted becoming familiar with some features of the dictionary at a later stage, which would have made life much easier for him if they were known from the beginning.

Regarding question 3, whether they know how to use the dictionary effectively or not, and 80 students (65%) answered with 'yes" and only 44 students (35%) claim that they cannot use the dictionary effectively. Therefore, it is quite evident that they do not know how to use the dictionary effectively. A small number of Saudi university students started to use dictionaries early at an intermediate school (7.2 %); whereas 56.5 % of our students did it at secondary school. This finding is similar to that reached by Alowimer (2010) who reported that the largest proportion of respondents (45.8%) did not own dictionaries before joining university. Nearly one third of them (31.6%) owned a dictionary at secondary school, while around one fifth (19.2%) claimed to have acquired one at an intermediate stage.

The information from the interviews and the open-ended questions suggests that the reasons why a first dictionary was acquired are based on the students' different levels of reaction towards their needs first and towards others' recommendations or even urgings to buy a dictionary. Some claim that they did not need a dictionary before university, and hence they did not need to buy one. Some blame the 'spoon-feeding' educational system where they used to ask their teachers for every new word, especially in school stages before university. One interviewee still thinks that even at the university level it is the teachers' responsibility to explain new words. He admits that some non-native speaker university teachers ask him to refer to the dictionary when he asks about new words but, in his view, this reflects their lack of knowledge rather than their opinion of what a student is supposed to do. He justifies his claims with the inclination of an English native-speaker teacher to explain every word he asked about in a language course he took earlier in the USA. There is a problem with such a student based on his confidence in his teachers or his view of a native speaker versus non-native speaker teacher.

7.1.1 The Involvement of Others in the Recommendation of the First Dictionary

The second subsequent part deals with the involvement of others in the recommendation of the first dictionary. We are interested to know whether their decision to buy a dictionary is independent or based on somebody's recommendation. Table 2 below presents the results of the involvement of others in the recommendation of the first dictionary for the students.

Table 2. The Reasons for Purchasing Dictionaries

The Reasons for Purchasing Dictionaries	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
6) My choice of dictionary was based on the recommendation of my teacher	78	62.9	46	37.1

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7) My choice of dictionary was based on the recommendation of the bookshop	36	29	88	71
8) My choice of dictionary was based on the recommendation of my parents	46	37	78	63
9) My choice of dictionary was based on the recommendation of a friend.	12	9.7	112	90.3
10) I decide to 'seek an expert's advice by searching the internet'	5	4	119	96
11) I get my dictionary as a gift.	29	23	95	77

Table 2 shows the major role played by the teacher, accounting for more than half of the sources of influential recommendations (62.9%). 29% of respondents chose a dictionary based on the bookseller's advice, while only 9.7% attributed the selection of the dictionary to the recommendation of their friends. The recommendations from other people rather than the teacher and friends influenced students' selection by 37%. These people were indicated to be relatives like a father or brother. A small number of students (29%) got their dictionary as a gift. Out of this percentage, only five persons claimed to 'seek an expert's advice by searching the internet'.

The results above are in line with the findings of other researchers like Bejoint (1981), Al-Ajmi (1992, p. 151) and Li (1998, p. 97) in acknowledging a significant role of the teacher in the recommendation of the dictionary. Bejoint (1981) found that 85% of his informants chose a dictionary based on the teacher's advice. Contrary to our finding, Li (1998, p. 97) detected a less influential role played by the teacher. Only 30.7% of Li's university students attributed their selection of a dictionary to the influence of their teachers and 27.3% attributed it to a friend, whereas the majority of them (71.9%) claimed to base their purchases of a dictionary on an independent evaluation. It is worth mentioning, however, that Li (1998, p. 193) asked about their choice of the dictionary in general, not the first dictionary and gave them the option to choose more than one answer.

Others' encouragement or urgings for students to acquire a dictionary goes in line with their view of the need to buy one. Some students reported the role of a father or an elder brother in encouraging them to acquire their own dictionary. However, there was an obvious role played by a teacher which starts from a mere recommendation to buy one and ends up with urging and insisting that a dictionary has to be bought. This extreme of forcing a student to buy a dictionary is based on the perception that 'some students do not act unless they are forced to' according to a number of interviewees' thoughts. Some students claim that they were annoyed at the beginning by being forced to have a dictionary, but they became happy later on when they realized the benefit they had gained from it. Teachers may see such action as a last resort as there are many steps before arriving at this point. One respondent referred to a positive step when he was given a dictionary by a teacher as a prize for his class work. This encouraged

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him a lot to use it. Issues such as this will be discussed further in the pedagogical recommendations.

7.2.1 The Attitude towards Dictionary Use

This section aims to present the statistical results and the data analysis in order to answer the second question addressed in the present study "2. What kind of dictionaries do the Saudi EFL students use? And what attitude do they have to the different types of dictionaries: bilingual vs. monolingual dictionary and paper vs. electronic dictionary?". Firstly, the results of the attitude towards dictionary use in general. Secondly, the results of what kind of dictionaries the Saudi EFL students use are presented and analyzed quantitatively. The second section provides the results and analysis of the attitudes that the students have to the different types of dictionaries: bilingual vs. monolingual dictionary and paper vs. electronic dictionary.

Table 3. The attitude towards dictionary use in general

The attitude towards dictionary use	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
12) I don't like to use a dictionary.	44	35	80	65
13) I like using a dictionary during lessons.	62	50	62	50
14) A Dictionary is an invaluable learning tool for me.	74	59.7	50	40.3
15) I find using a dictionary in the exam helpful to me.	55	44.4	69	55.6
16) I am satisfied with the kind of dictionary I use in classroom.	81	65	43	35

In response to question 12, whether they dislike the use of dictionary, 44 students (35%) chose the statement ' I don't like to use a dictionary.', whereas 80 students (65%), 'disagreed'. Therefore, it is quite clear that a substantial number of the students didn't like to use the dictionary in classroom.

As for question 13, whether they like to use dictionaries during lessons, 62 students (50%) said they like the idea of using dictionaries during lessons, and 50 students (50%) 'disagreed'. This suggests that a considerable number of the students are not in favor of using dictionary during lessons.

In response to question 14, whether a dictionary is an invaluable learning tool for them or not, 74 students (59.7%) agreed, and 15 students (40.3%) disagreed, so they believed that it is not a valuable learning tool. This result suggests that a considerable number of the students value the use of dictionary and they believe it is a valuable source.

Regarding the use of dictionary in the exam (Item 15), whether they have found the use of dictionary in the exam helpful, 55 students (44.4%) say they agreed, and 69 students (55.6%) claimed that the use of dictionary is not much useful. This indicates that the bulk majority of the students don not like using a dictionary in the exam.

Regarding their satisfaction of the kind of dictionary they use (Item 16), 81 students (65%) report that they are satisfied, whereas, 43 students (35%) say they are dissatisfied. It is quite evident that a

considerable number of students think they are unsatisfied with the kind of dictionary they are using which is monolingual dictionary.

The previous results presented in table 3 are in line with the views of the interviewees which were positive responses: Al Mousa, an interviewee says, "*I know how to use the dictionaries not only to find the meaning but also how to use articles etc.*"

Another interviewee, Al Nagran, adds, "*Dictionaries are useful in academic writing exams. The dictionary gives me knowledge in some difficult words (countable, uncountable, definite, etc.).*"

A *third* interviewee, AlBasem, thinks that the dictionary *is "an important tool in class. Helps you understand phrases/sentences and assists in the use of 'Articles' by telling whether it is a verb, adjective, noun etc."*

A *fourth* interviewee shows his attitude toward the use of dictionaries by saying, "*I think using a dictionary is an effective way to learn.*"

Only one student was not entirely satisfied: *Dictionary consultation is a boring process.*

I still did not like to use any dictionary.

7.2.2 The Attitude towards Types of Dictionaries in Terms of Language

Table 4 below shows the participants' attitude towards these types of dictionary.

The second section will investigate dictionary use from different angles. Dictionaries will be looked at according to their differences in type and format. This section elicits information about the respondents' view on how useful they think different dictionary language types are. The results of the respondents' attitudes about the usefulness of these types will be presented in table 4.

Table 4. Types of Dictionaries in Terms of Language

Dictionary language types	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
16) I like to use the E-A bilingual dictionary.	114	91.9	10	8.1
17) I like to use the A-E bilingual dictionary.	90	72.5	34	27.5
18) I like to use the E-E-A bilingual dictionary.	82	66.1	42	33.9
19) I like to use a monolingual dictionary.	50	40.3	74	59.7

7.2.2.1 The Attitude towards the Use of the E-A Bilingual Dictionary

The E-A bilingual dictionary topped the list of the most useful type the dictionary as it did in the most frequently used types list. A high percentage of the EFL Saudi students (91.9%) prefer the E-A bilingual dictionaries to the other types. This finding of greater use of the bilingual E-A dictionary compared to the other types of dictionaries is consistent with the results of previous studies on Arab students. Al-Ajmi (1992, p. 140), for example, found that the majority of his informants preferred the bilingual E-A over other types of dictionary. Diab (1990, p. 85) also noticed that this was the case for

his Jordanian students during their school education. Moreover, as indicated by Al- Fuhaid (2004, p. 169), the bilingual E-A dictionary was not only the most used type of dictionary, but also the most used strategy out of all vocabulary learning discovery strategies. Like Al-Fuhaid (2004) in investigating Saudi students, but in the British environment, Al- Owimer (2004, p. 36) found that even in an L2 environment, his EFL Saudi students used the bilingual E-A dictionary more than the monolingual dictionary. This preference for the bilingual E-A dictionary over the monolingual dictionary is not confined to Arab learners. It seems to be the case with language learners in general as indicated by other studies with their language equivalent to the bilingual E-A dictionary, for example Tomaszczyk (1979), Baxter (1980), Bejoint (1981), Hartmann (1983), and Kobayashi (2006).

The preference for bilingual dictionaries over monolingual is found to be so robust (Baxter, 1980; Hartmann, 1987; McCarthy, 1990; Laufer & Kimmel, 1997) that it is not only difficult but also often impractical to force the learner to give up the habit of using bilingual dictionaries (Hartmann, 1987: 22). It is not only learners of low and intermediate proficiency who rely heavily on bilingual dictionaries, but also advanced learners, who consult this type of dictionary more often than their monolingual counterparts (Tomaszczyk, 1983: 46). Affective factors are assumed to be involved in this kind of strong preference for bilingual dictionaries. The learner always feels more secure when he/she can access the translations or explanations in the native language (Laufer & Kimmel, 1997: 362). Presumably, one major obstacle in the use of monolingual dictionaries is that the learner cannot easily understand the definitions or target language synonyms. The definitions are especially difficult for learners of low and intermediate proficiency (Bejoint, 1981; Laufer & Kimmel, 1997).

Furthermore, Tomaszczyk (1983, p. 46) points out that L2 learners use bilingual dictionaries not only for productive but also for receptive skills, which supports the claim that one should know the LI equivalent in order to learn an L2 word. It is only a bilingual dictionary that can quickly provide such equivalents, especially for certain types of words such as technical terms (Stein, 1989, p. 41). Two interviewees emphasized this point in particular for their preference of the use of the bilingual dictionary, claiming that looking up an Arabic equivalent in a bilingual dictionary had helped them a lot in retaining the meaning of an English word. As Baxter (1980, p. 333) detects and as confirmed by some interviewees in the current research, it is also largely taken for granted that bilingual dictionaries are easier for consultation than the monolingual dictionary. Tomaszczyk (1983, p. 45) asserts the importance of the bilingual dictionary in carefully expressing the cultural specifics and the semantic properties of some L2 words that may not be understood unless they are compared with their counterparts in the LI.

However, by using a bilingual dictionary, learners can gain access to a lexical item even though they do not know it (Baxter, 1980; Scholfield, 1997, p. 293), although this is only the case with the bilingual L1-L2 dictionary since the bilingual L2-L1 dictionary has exactly the same entries as the monolingual dictionary (Scholfield, 1997, p. 293). Thus, as Scholfield (1997, p. 289) argues, what makes language

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learners prefer the bilingual L2-L1 dictionary is something within the entry itself. Bilingual entries are valued for locating the right sense (Scholfield, 1997, p. 289), and are ideal for quick consultation (Bejoint & Moulin, 1987). One interviewee argues that he resorts to the bilingual dictionary when he wants a precise equivalent for a word in English. Another interviewee highlighted the ability for quick consultation as the most crucial feature for him in a situation such as listening to the news. "If I use the monolingual dictionary to look up a word I have heard", he argued, "the news might end before I can manage to figure out the meaning." Another interviewee mentions that he prefers the E-A bilingual dictionaries to the other types because he thinks they are practical and straightforward and time-saving and they do not like to use monolingual dictionaries because they are confusing to them and they find difficulty in using them and they are time-consuming during lessons.

7.2.2.2 The Attitude towards the Use of the A-E Bilingual Dictionary

The second popular type is the A-E bilingual dictionary. 72.5 of the students favor the A-E bilingual dictionary to be their second choice. The bilingual A-E dictionary came second in the ranking order. The reason for this might be its role in encoding skills. Saudi EFL learners can use the bilingual E-A dictionary instead of the monolingual or the bilingualized dictionaries. However, the role the bilingual A-E dictionary can play in providing students with lexical items that might be used for their writing; speaking and Arabic-English translation is difficult to be played by any other dictionary type. Yet, there is one problem with this as revealed by an interviewee who argued that this dictionary sometimes provided him with uncommon words. Therefore, he sometimes tended to take the word he got from this dictionary and looked it up in a monolingual dictionary to check whether it is common or not. Moreover, as this dictionary might be the best option for encoding, there are some interviewees who justified their infrequent use of it by claiming they do not normally use a dictionary in encoding.

7.2.2.3 The Attitude towards the Use of the Bilingualized Dictionary

The bilingualized dictionary is a sub-type with hybrid features of the monolingual dictionary produced for native speakers and the traditional bilingual learner's dictionary produced for foreign language learners (Hartmann, 1992, 1994). They are "the results of an adaption of unilingual and monolingual English learners" (ibid). The bilingualized dictionary is defined by Laufer (1997.p.361) as "a dictionary that contains the monolingual information about a word and its translation into the learner's mother tongue". If the target English word has several meanings, then each meaning is translated.

The studies above suggest that the strength of the bilingualized dictionary lies in its catering for a variety of look up possibilities and personal preferences, and in combining the monolingual and bilingual information. Its weakness, on the other hand, lies in unidirectionality, from the target language, e.g. English, to the mother tongue.

When asked about their attitudes towards the use of the bilingualized E-E-A dictionary, nearly two thirds of the subjects (66.1%) were in agreement with the statement 'I like to use the bilingualized dictionary'. This finding supports the results reached by Al- Owimer, 2010; Diab, 1990 and Al-Ajmi,

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1992 who report that the bilingualized dictionary Is ranked third in terms of students' favorable use. However, Scholfield (1997, p. 292) believes the bilingualized dictionary provides the 'best of both worlds'. It avoids many of the shortcomings of using a bilingual or a monolingual dictionary alone. Nevertheless, some bilingualized dictionaries might not have the merits of a dictionary which is originally bilingual, such as sensitivity to language content (Scholfield, 1997, p. 292). Given the fact that this type is relatively new compared to other types, it is the least known among them by the subjects.

Although a number of interviewees indicated that they had used it some of the time, none of them claimed they used it as their primary dictionary. One of the interviewees expressed a problem with the bilingualized dictionary which can be taken as a contradiction to Scholfield's (1997, p. 292) statement given above that it provides the 'best of both worlds'. The interviewee claimed that in his view this type of dictionary neither carries the merits of the monolingual dictionary nor does it bear the advantages of the bilingual dictionary. The most positive view noted by the researcher from the interview data is that this type is best considered as a transitional type which can help learners move from the use of the bilingual dictionary to the monolingual dictionary.

7.2.2.4 The Attitude towards the Use of the Monolingual Dictionary

The monolingual dictionary is the least frequently used type of dictionary by Saudi EFL learners. Only (40.3%) of the respondents indicate their agreement to use the monolingual dictionary. This finding supports the results of previous studies conducted by Al- Owimer, 2010; Diab, 1990; and Al-Fuhaid (2004) who found that their subjects used the bilingual E-A dictionary more than the monolingual dictionary. On the contrary, this finding is inconsistent with the views of most teachers and language teaching methodologists who highly recommend the monolingual dictionary, the bilingual dictionary remains the predominant one (Tomaszczyk, 1983, p. 45) as is the case in Saudi EFL learners here and in many previous studies. The recommendation of the monolingual dictionary is normally based on its significant role in introducing learners directly to the target language (Laufer & Hadar, 1997, p. 189). In addition, the monolingual dictionary not only creates an impression that there is always an alternative way to express a lexical item by definition, but it also gives a language learner the practical means to do so (Baxter, 1980, p. 334). This in turn develops learners' fluency as when they get used to the alternative method of providing definitions, they will no longer encounter problems when seeking a certain lexical item (Baxter, 1980, p. 330). This outcome was supported by an interviewee's claim about a friend who used to rely on the monolingual dictionary. Referring to his friend, the interviewee said: "He always finds a way to express himself in English and gives the meaning of the English words he encounters, but don't ask him about their meaning in Arabic!"

The monolingual dictionary is also recommended for its comprehensive coverage of information about any given lexical item (Nakamura, 2000, p. 28). This superiority and precision in information (Laufer & Hadar, 1997, p. 189) when compared to bilingual dictionaries is always observed by language

learners. One interviewee said: "I am always in favor of the monolingual dictionary for the great deal of information it provides." When comparing the bilingualized dictionary with the monolingual dictionary, another interviewee claimed there is "no way to compare the extensive coverage of the lexical items provided by the monolingual dictionary with that provided by the bilingualized dictionary." However, the practice of dictionary users may lag behind their awareness of different dictionaries as has been shown by their fairly infrequent use of the monolingual dictionary (Tomaszczyk, 1979).

With regard to attitude, Saudi EFL learners are generally positive about all language types of dictionary. It appears from these findings that there is not much evidence to support clear distinctions between these. Baxter (1980) obtained similar results in his study of Japanese EFL students when he discovered that his subjects use all types of dictionaries, but at different frequencies. For example, Al-Small (2000) found that the bilingual dictionary on the whole proved to be more popular than the monolingual dictionary among his Saudi undergraduate English major students (63.8% as opposed to 36.2). Piotrowski (1989) concludes that no matter what their level of competence, foreign learners and dictionary users, in general, turn to bilingual dictionaries.

7.2.3 Dictionary Use according to Format

This subsequent section deals with the students' attitudes towards the paper dictionary, the e-dictionary and online dictionary. The questionnaire elicited information about the use of these different language-types and the attitude of the informants towards them. The results are presented in Table 4-1 below.

Table 5. Use of types of dictionary in terms of format

Dictionary format	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
20) I use Paper dictionary	56	45.2	68	54.8
21) I use Electronic dictionary.	100	80.6	24	19.4
22) I use Online dictionary	21	16.9	103	83.1

According to the results presented in Table 5, the e-dictionary is the most frequently used of the dictionaries as far as the format is concerned. 80.6% of the respondents like to use the e-dictionary, whereas45.2% of them like to use the Paper dictionary. The online dictionary is favored by only 16.9 % of the students. This result seems to be consistent with Ryu (2006) about Korean students who prefer to use the e-dictionary to the other types of the dictionaries. This finding goes in line some studies which found that ED groups were superior to PD groups mainly in terms of reduced search time. For example, Koga (1995) found that the students needed less time for dictionary consultation and read faster in the e-dictionary condition than in the PD condition. Similarly, Inami et al. (1996) found that when the students were allowed to search each word freely, search time was reduced, and they were able to

consult one word multiple times in the e-dictionary condition. Kobayashi (2006) found that the ED group was better at choosing the contextual meaning than the PD group.

However, this result is also in line with that reached by Tseng (2009) who reported that only about half of the participants (52%) reported that they would use the online dictionary often. This may be due to the fact that these students could not get access to the Internet whenever and wherever they wanted. In a classroom setting, an electronic or a paper dictionary may be more convenient to them.

This finding coincides with interview results. About 30% of the interviewees preferred paper dictionaries as it was reported that these dictionaries provide more detail and information about words such as frequency of use, grammatical structures, usage notes and pictures and illustrations whereas the information supplied in electronic dictionaries is likely to be limited despite fast accessibility, instant supply of translation and convenience (Huang, 2003). In addition, some interviewees claimed as an advantage that when a target entry is read in a paper dictionary, there is a tendency to read consciously or unconsciously related word information printed on the same or the opposite page because it is within eyesight. Moreover, unlike computer-based dictionaries, print dictionaries do not require special equipment such as a monitor, software, cables, or batteries to be accessed. Furthermore, the display limitations of the computer–based dictionaries maybe another reason for subjects' preference for print dictionaries. Learners sometimes have to scroll up and down or even left and right to see the whole entry when they use computer-based dictionaries, while they do not have to do this when they use print dictionaries.

It should be noted here that online dictionaries are used infrequently by our subjects. The reasons for these findings seem to be that, according to the participants' interview most of the available bilingual online dictionaries are not accurate. Moreover, most of the interviewees mentioned that one must have a PC available to use such dictionaries which is not always possible. For online dictionaries, many new Internet bilingual dictionaries contain very limited amounts of data, similar to current electronic dictionaries. Another disadvantage which is related to Internet dictionaries is that the internet lies outside the control of the pedagogues. Internet searches are too costly and time consuming to play a regular part in conventional classroom teaching.

In considering the attitudes towards different dictionary formats, the evidence that emerged from the data was not sufficient to draw generalized conclusions for the whole Saudi EFL population. However, the data does give a number of indications and guidelines. While it is possible to claim that the rating of the e-dictionary is the top ranked alongside the paper dictionary, there is evidence which supports the view that the paper dictionary is second ranked with another group. From this point of view, the e-dictionary is ranked by itself at the top. The second type in the ranking might be the paper dictionary, and the online dictionary occupies the third rank.

7.2.4 Reasons for Preference of an Electronic Dictionary

The subsequent section deals the reasons for preference of an Electronic Dictionary.

The students were also asked to state the reason why they prefer a particular dictionary, producing following responses as in Table 6.

Table 6. Reasons for preference of an electronic dictionary to paper dictionary

Reasons for Preference of an Electronic Dictionary	No	%
40) quick and easy to use.	99	79.8
41) easy to carry around	85	68.5
42) Make understanding the information easier	76	61.2
43) rich and significant amount of information	74	59.7
44) simultaneous consulting of multiple dictionaries	45	36.3
45) easy to find examples, synonyms, antonyms	32	25.8
46) availability of voiced pronunciation	30	24.2

Since the majority of students preferred PEDs and BDs, most of the responses appear to reflect the merits of both PEDs and BDs. The students seemed to consider the ease of use and portability as the most desirable feature of an English dictionary. Students also expected intelligible and all-inclusive information from their dictionary. These results support that of Nesi (1999) who reports that all students in his survey were excited about their electronic dictionaries. The perceived advantages included portability, ease of use, availability of sound, the provision of a variety of search routes, and the capacity of being expanded and/or linked to other applications

7.3 Use of Students' Dictionaries in Their English Language Class Activities

The third section investigates the purpose and directionality of dictionary use. It examines how far Saudi EFL learners consult their dictionaries on the four basic language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. It also follows Bejoint's (1981) investigation of his students in adding both directions of translation to these skills in order to see the directionality of dictionary use, i.e. how far dictionaries are used for decoding (listening, reading and E-A translation), and encoding (writing, speaking and A-E translation). The results of how far Saudi EFL learners consult their dictionaries on the four basic language skills are presented in table 7.

Table 7. Frequency of dictionary use for different language activities

Dictionary use for different language activities	Agree		Disagree	
	F	P	F	p
23) I use the dictionary during or after listening)	14	11.3	110	88.7
24) I use the dictionary as a result of reading an English text.	85	68.5	39	31.5
25) I use the dictionary when I want to write in English	66	53.2	58	46.8
26) I use the dictionary when I speak or want to speak in	24	19.3	100	80.7

English (either for preparation for or after speaking).

27) I use the dictionary to translate from Arabic into English or from English into Arabic.	115	92.7	9	7.3

Also, the survey results clearly show that the students use their dictionaries mainly while working on a translation exercise (92.7%) or on a written assignment (53.2 %). It seems that reading textbooks also requires frequent use of dictionaries (68.5%). As for the other skills, only 11.3% of participants reported using them for listening activities and 19.3% for speaking.

These results go in accordance with that of Alhaysony, 2011; Al owimer,2010; and Bejoint (1981, p. 209) concluded that EFL learners on average use the dictionary for different language activities according to the following descending ranking order of frequency: E-A translation, reading, A-E translation, and writing. They also use the dictionary for listening and speaking with a lower frequency than that of the aforementioned activities. However, on average Saudi EFL learners tend to use listening and speaking with a similar degree of frequency.

7.4 Information Looked up in a Dictionary

The fourth section deals with kinds of information that Saudi EFL students look up in their dictionaries. The 124 respondents were asked about the type of information they usually look up in their dictionary. Eleven types of information were introduced in the questionnaire to elicit answers on how usually they are checked by the respondents. Statistical data are presented in table 8.

Table 8. Kind of information Saudi EFL students look up in their dictionaries

Information looked up in a dictionary	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
28) I use a dictionary to look up the meaning of a word or a phrase.	108	87.1	16	12.9
29) I use a dictionary for synonyms (similar words).	19	15.3	105	84.7
30) I use a dictionary to look up antonyms (the opposites).	19	15.3	105	84.7
31) I use a dictionary to check spellings	89	72	35	28
32) I consult a dictionary when 1 want to know the pronunciation of a vocabulary item.	65	52.4	59	47.6
33) I consult a dictionary when 1 want to see some examples about the uses of a certain word.	24	19.4	100	80.6
35) I use a dictionary to find out what 'part of speech' a word is (i.e., n., v., adj., etc.) or the derivations of such vocabulary items.	6	4.8	118	95.2
36) I use a dictionary for etymology.	5	4	119	96
37) 1 use a dictionary to find out whether a word is in common usage.	23	18.5	101	81.5
38) I use a dictionary to check for collocation, i.e., words and phrases	5	4	119	96

that go with a vocabulary item (e.g., we say a 'low building' but we do not say a 'short building').				
39) I use a dictionary to check the grammatical function/structure of a vocabulary item.	21	16.9	103	83.1

Table 8 shows that the most frequently looked-up information is meaning, followed by spelling, pronunciation, usage, example, synonym, antonym, grammar, collocation, derivation, and etymology.

Table 8 clearly shows that the largest proportion (87%) of the respondents use a dictionary to look up the meaning of a word or a phrase. This confirms what was discovered in other key studies on dictionary use where subjects mostly checked their dictionaries for the earnings of words (Tomaszczyk, 1979; Bejoint, 1981; Battenburg, 1990).

Spelling is ranked as the second most frequently checked lexical information by subjects in this study (72%). This concurs with findings by Tomaszczyk, (1979); and Hartmann, 1999) which indicate that spelling is of great importance for learners of English. In addition, the high frequency rating for spelling is consistent with the frequent use of a dictionary for productive purposes as a dictionary is most practical and reliable source of correct spelling. In their study about writing and use of dictionary, Harvey and Yuill (1997) found that spelling was the most common lexical information that their subjects searched for.

Pronunciation is reported to be the third category of lexical information that Saudi students (52.4%) check in their dictionaries. This means that pronunciation information tended to be consulted more frequently by participants in this study. This finding is similar to that reached by Tomaszczyk (1979), Bejoint (1981), Kharma (1985), Diab (1990), and Al-Jarf (1999) who reported in their studies that students consulted pronunciation relatively infrequently. Such a finding is curious because language learners often insist they need assistance with pronunciation. Diab (1990), for example found that a vast majority of students desire help with pronunciation. Battenburg (1990) argued that the problem is that it is difficult to understand the pronunciation system employed in dictionaries. He added that instructors should teach their students how to use the pronunciation key and material concerning word stress (p. 96). Research findings have shown that when students know how to say a word, it is easier for them to commit the word to memory (Fan, 1998). However, it is a fact that most students have difficulty with phonetic transcriptions (Al-Jarf, 1999) and this will continue unremedied until they get help from the teachers or switch to electronic dictionaries with good audio capabilities.

To find the usage of a word the students (18.5%) reported they used use a dictionary to find out whether a word is in common usage. This finding supports that reached by Ryu, 2006 who stated that a considerable number of his students use their dictionaries to find out whether a word is in common usage.

Checking the grammatical function/structure of a vocabulary item does not seem to be very frequent

(16.9 %). It is worth noting that our results are very similar to those obtained by Ryu (2006), where only 23 out of 69 (33.3%) students claimed they used the grammatical information provided in a monolingual dictionary for the purpose of encoding in L2. Writing teachers in particular need to consider whether this low interest in the information category in question means that our students need no guidance on grammar or, rather, as in Bareggi (1989), that they are unable to retrieve this information from the dictionary.

As for synonyms and antonyms, a small number of the respondents (15.3%) use a dictionary to look up synonyms and antonyms. The use of dictionaries to check what 'part of speech 'a word is occupies the eighth rank with 4.8 %. Only 4% of the respondents also use a dictionary to check for collocation, i.e., words and phrases that go with a vocabulary item (e.g. we say a 'low building' but we do not say a 'short building'). This trend lends some support to the research of Fan (2000) who found that such lexical information was not much referred to by subjects. It could be argued that some L2 learners consider it unnecessary to check these forms in the dictionary as they have already acquired them from other sources like grammar books. Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia, teachers focus mainly on grammar paying much attention to verb conjugation and they give the students' quizzes regularly to evaluate student knowledge. In addition, students in high school and those at the intermediate level of proficiency must memorize irregular verbs from their text books. This may be one more reason why students don't feel the need to refer to their dictionaries to check the tense forms. Using dictionaries to find whether a verb should be followed by an infinitive or a gerund, Using a dictionary to find collocations of a word, using a dictionary to find out whether an adjective is followed by this or that preposition (e.g. fond of, keen on) or a verb (listen to) or noun (desire for)', tense form, if a word is singular or plural and entomology were reported to be the least sought out information among Saudi female students. Fan (2000) and Almuzainy (2005) found that their subjects claimed to use dictionaries infrequently to find out the collocations of words. It was clear that subjects in this study were not familiar with collocations as many inquired about the meaning of this statement as they were filling in the questionnaires. As non-native speakers of English, participants admitted to having difficulties mastering acceptable language use more than correct language; however they did not indicate a habit of consulting the relevant information from their dictionaries. This illustrates that participants place more emphasis on checking core information (Arabic equivalents, spelling, and part of speech) in their dictionaries and overlook the wider authentic aspects of language which are crucial to the acquisition of English. Knowledge of collocations involves what lexical words can be expected before or after a word or used with a word (Fan, 2000).

Finally, 96 % of the respondents answered that they never looked for the information. Etymology was another type of information rarely looked up.

7.5. Difficulties in Using Dictionaries

The fifth section of our survey includes some statements dealing with various difficulties that L2

learners may face when using dictionaries. The students were asked to choose from the list all the difficulties they encounter when using dictionaries. The statistical are presented in table 9.

Table 9. The difficulties in dictionary use

Difficulties while using dictionary	No	%
47) I cannot find the word sought.	83	66.9
48) It is difficult to understand the definition.	74	59.7
49) It is difficult to identify the right meaning in a polysemous word.	97	78.2
50) It is difficult to find the information I want.	37	29.8
51) I cannot use the dictionary whenever I want.	40	32.2
52) The information I found in the dictionary is insufficient.	32	25.8
53) It takes too much time to consult the dictionary.	30	24.2
54) Too few examples	54	43.5
55) Unclear examples	14	11.3
56) Failure to understand the pronunciation information	68	54.8

The results shown in Table 9 indicate that 'failing to identify the right word-meaning within an entry' is the most common problem that Saudi EFL students report facing with 78.2%. This result in some extent agrees with Al-Fuhaid (2004), who found that some of his Saudi university students – especially those at low proficiency levels – faced difficulties in identifying the right meaning of a word within an entry.

'Cannot find the word sought' is reported to be the second most-frequently encountered problem facing Saudi EFL students (66.9%). In the interviews, some interviewees complained that they could not find new words, including technical terms and those read in newspapers, in their dictionaries. They understand that dictionary compilers might not be able to update the information and incorporate new words, and it was agreed that this was one of the main limitations of both print and hand held electronic dictionaries.

Moreover, 'Unclear definition of word' is reported to be the third important difficulty Saudi EFL students (59.7%) face when using dictionaries. This means that in practice they face this problem. This finding is in line with that of Winkler (2002), who found that most of his students indicated that 'unclear definition' is one of the main problems they have with their dictionaries. This finding confirms what is said by the interviewees. However, the interviewees reported being puzzled by the wording in the definition, whether in monolingual dictionaries or the bilingual. They pointed out that the information in monolingual dictionaries or L2 in bilingual ones could be a source of difficulty for learners. For instance, Majid Al Hamed could not comprehend the explanations well when he studied them in a monolingual dictionary especially when he looked up difficult English vocabulary. On the

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other hand, some students had positive comments on definitions in the bilingual dictionary. Omer who is a user of Oxford Advanced Learner's English-English-Arabic dictionary, despite sometimes not understanding the dictionary definitions, agreed that checking meaning is the most necessary thing and liked to learn more synonyms from the L2 entries. For example, when he looked up the word important', he could come across synonyms like essential, vital and necessary in the definition. Clear word definitions, detailed explanations and comprehensive coverage of words, all of which facilitate the look-up process, were also praised by the subjects.

'Too few examples available' was reported to be the fourth most common difficulty that Saudi students (43.5%) face when using dictionaries. This means that the students do not face this difficulty regularly. The reason seems to be that they do not bother with trying to read the examples illustrating the word, and so face no problems with said examples. In the interview, the students who claim that they use monolingual dictionaries reported that they face difficulties with too few examples available and some of the examples being unclear. Hady, one of the best students according to his teachers' reports said: *"I rarely use bilingual Arabic but sometimes I found myself forced to use them. When I use monolingual, I sometimes do not find clear examples that can help me to understand the meaning of a word. Furthermore, sometimes, there are few examples available, which is another problem"*.

"Failure to understand information about pronunciation" is reported to be the fifth most problem that faces Saudi EFL students. This result is in line with what Bejoint (1981) found among his French students. He argued that dictionaries should all use the IPA, and indicate the pronunciation of all words, even derived forms (Béjoint 1981: 217). In the interview, the majority of the subjects claimed that they do not check the pronunciation in print dictionaries as they cannot understand the phonetic symbols, and they indicated that they rely heavily on electronic dictionaries as those give the pronunciation. However, machine pronunciation does present some problems, sometimes being unclear or even incorrect. Huang (2003) argues that most of her Chinese university students criticized the voice quality of machine-produced sounds, as they are unclear, fuzzy, or insufficiently realistic. It seems the sound varies between good and bad, depending on which Electronic dictionary is being consulted.

Another problem that the students had in using traditional paper dictionaries was limited convenience. 32.2% of the students chose 'I cannot use them whenever I want' as a major difficulty. Since most substantial traditional BDs for advanced learners are quite bulky, it is very inconvenient to carry them all the time. In addition to inconvenient, Time consuming' was also reported by thirty students who chose 'it takes too much time to consult the dictionary'. Moreover, the students (29.8%) also had difficulty when they could not find the information they want.

The insufficient information contained in Paper dictionaries represents one of the difficulties reported by 25.8% of students who seemed to find that the information contained in paper dictionaries was not as thorough or comprehensive as that found in their paper counterparts.

Unclear examples' is reported as being one of the least important difficulties facing the study subjects

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(11.3%). Moreover, 'Unclear definition of word' is reported to be the least important difficulty Saudi EFL students face when using dictionaries. This means that in practice they do not face this problem. This contradicts Winkler (2002), who found that most of his students indicated that 'unclear definition' is one of the main problems they have with their dictionaries. The reason for these conflicting results seems to be that this study's students relied heavily on bilingual dictionaries, and this conclusion was reinforced by the reports given in the interviews.

Hence, it is important Learners should be encouraged to read and refer to the prefatory matter in dictionaries for guidance on how to effectively use the dictionary. It is worth noting that selecting a dictionary and using it without guidance may actually have a negative impact on language learning (Baxter, 1980).

8. Implications and Pedagogical Recommendations for Teaching Dictionary Use to the Students

Dictionary is an essential resource for language learners. If the learners get some systematic guidance and practice in its use, they can get maximum benefits from it (Nation, 2008). As a result, what the teacher should do are:

1) Provide their students with information about dictionaries and the differences among them. They should be aware of their learners' needs in order to guide them to the dictionary that will best fulfill those needs (Scholfield, 1997).

2) Explain to their students the advantages and disadvantages of different dictionaries. This should be taken into account when deciding the most suitable type of dictionary for particular learners. It is the opinion of this researcher that despite the fact that bilingualized dictionaries may not be as rich in content as the monolingual dictionary students with lower vocabulary knowledge would benefit most from using bilingualized dictionaries which are a combination of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. Researchers of this study found that the bilingualized dictionary available in Arabic is very useful and it is a popular dictionary which combines simple English definitions with Arabic translations of all headwords, idioms and phrasal verbs.

3) Introduce their students to the various types of dictionaries. Ultimately however, the choice of dictionary should be one that the students like and enjoy using, one that provides them with the functions they feel they find most adequate to meet their lifelong study needs. It must be remembered that no current dictionary will 100% meet the needs of any one student. Hence, as "dictionary reference is a complicated business," it is not enough just to recommend dictionaries to students but students need help to reap the benefits of good dictionaries and need to be taught explicitly how to use them (Hartmann, 1991, p. 9). In fact, a skill in dictionary use is an area that requires further exploitation. Teachers should work closely

together with learners to find out ways to use dictionaries more efficiently for specific purposes.

4) Elucidate the importance of word knowledge to the students. The Students need to recognize that understanding a word not only involves knowing its L1 equivalents but other information related to the word. Teachers can assist students in this pursuit by instructing students in the various aspects of word knowledge provided by the dictionary (Fan, 2000).

5) Inform students about the importance of collocations , and pronunciation.

6) Put dictionary training into lesson sequences, so that the students will see how to use a number of Internet, CD-ROM, DVD-based dictionaries and what the benefits of such use are (Harmer, 2001).

7) To put the dictionary use strategies into practice, the teacher should provide easy access to good dictionary to the students. That is, the teacher should suggest how to select good dictionary which should contain the good following advantages stated by Nation (2008).

    Plenty of words

    Clear understandable definitions

    Many example sentences

    Information about grammar and collocations of the word

    The pronunciation of the word

    The spelling of inflected and derived forms

    Information about constraints on the use of the word

    Frequency information

    Information about related words and word parts

8) Motivate and train the students to use monolingual dictionary because most online bilingual dictionaries use a controlled defining vocabulary of around 2,000 words (Nation, 2008). In fact, those students will have no difficulty in understanding the definitions in monolingual dictionary as their vocabulary size exceeds 2,000 words.

9. Conclusion

This paper attempts to identify the dictionary use patterns of Saudi EFL students at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. The aim is to investigate not only the lexical information participants seek from dictionaries but what medium of dictionary is the most frequently used. It has been found that the overwhelming majority of students reported using E-A bilingual dictionaries more frequently than any other type of dictionary reported in the study. Analysis of data gathered revealed that most of students reported making only limited use of monolingual dictionaries, which support similar findings of other studies (Tomaszczyk, 1979; Baxter, 1980; Battenburg, 1989, Al Owimer, 2010; Alhaysony, 2011). In addition, it was found that in terms of medium of dictionary, the e- dictionary was reported to be used

more often than any other types of dictionary. With regard to attitude, Saudi EFL learners are generally positive about all language types of dictionary.

Data also suggest that looking up the meaning of words was the prime purpose of dictionary use. As one of the main functions of dictionaries is to provide word meaning, it is understandable that L2 learners consult dictionaries most frequently for this purpose.

The final conclusion reached reported some difficulties that the students face when they use dictionaries. The results suggest that failure to locate the right entry is a common problem among Saudi EFL students.

10. Recommendations for further Research:

Researchers interested in dictionary use may wish to present study with a variety of learners at different proficiency levels and in different settings. It would be a valuable contribution to the field if students at various proficiency levels were studied as this may yield different results.

- Future research could also be conducted to further investigate the effectiveness of using monolingual and bilingual, especially in college-level classes in EFL context.

-There may also be value in a comparison between the dictionary preferences of middle school students, high school and university students. This study is the first of its kind to look at Saudi EFL students' use of the dictionary.

-A study that includes males might provide some insight into what effect, if any gender might have on dictionary preferences.

-In addition, investigation into the effect of how training on dictionary use might influence successfulness of use would be a vital issue to consider for future research. -Further studies could also be conducted focusing on the usefulness of dictionary types and reasons for user failure when using dictionaries.

Additional studies could investigate whether or not the conclusion of this study can be applied to non-English majors as well.

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