

Dictionary Use by Korean EFL College Students

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Ryu, Jesun. 2006. **Dictionary Use by Korean EFL College Students.** *Language & Information Society* 7, 83-114. The present study investigates the needs and habits of Korean EFL college students in using English dictionaries. The data from the survey questionnaire reveals that about 60% of the students have never been taught how to use an English dictionary. Most students had at least one English dictionary; English-Korean dictionaries were the most common. Pocket electronic dictionary ownership included 38.6% of the students. Participants favored bilingual dictionaries over monolingual dictionaries particularly when finding meaning of unknown words was the main purpose. Other information such as pronunciation, usage, and examples was of secondary importance, and collocation information and the introduction in the front matter of a dictionary were almost never used. The most desired features in a dictionary were portability, quick and easy search, rich content, and comprehensibility.

1. Introduction

As English is now considered as an international language, 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 Korea, 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 (Walz,1990; Cubillo, 2002).

In spite of the importance of English dictionaries for EFL learners, little research on English dictionaries and dictionary use has been conducted in Korea. Until recently, the criteria used to select lexical items and compile them was based on a pure linguistic description and determined by intuition or impression of editors and lexicographers, not by scientific user research. However, lexicographers and linguists are "the least representative of all dictionary users" (Béjoint, 1994:107) because of their extraordinary interest in words and well-honed skills in handling dictionary information. This creates a huge gap between them and the typical users, language learners, who have a very limited understanding of dictionary conventions. Nevertheless, "all dictionaries are motivated by and judged against the lexical needs of the language user whom they serve" (Hartmann, 1983). When it comes to the EFL learner's dictionary, the knowledge of the learner, or the user's reference needs and their skills should be taken into account in order to make the information in the dictionary easily accessible to the learner. Cowie (1983) argues that the intended users' reference needs can influence the order of entry arrangement or its internal organization. It is very important for dictionary manufacturers to know exact needs of dictionary users and the purposes for which they consult a dictionary.

The importance of user research has been increasingly recognized in our computerized world where user-friendliness permeates everything. Many dictionaries are now available in a variety of formats: hand-held pocket dictionary, CD-ROMs, the Internet and even as a cell-phone feature. These electronic

dictionaries can store a vast amount of information without suffering from space limitations and provide a flexible interface tailored to specific users for particular tasks. Whether a vast body of information or ease of access is really beneficial to EFL learners' needs to be studied through scientific research. In addition, a thorough understanding of dictionary users' needs should be acquired if those electronic dictionaries are to achieve true user-friendliness (Mackintosh, 1998).

Since the 1980's, there has been a growing body of research on dictionary use. Most of the studies have been conducted in Europe with a focus on language learning and needs and skills analysis. However, there have been few attempts to investigate the needs of EFL dictionary users in Korea. Monolingual dictionaries are increasingly acknowledged and appreciated by many Korean EFL learners, and thus imported from foreign countries such as Britain and the United States. Portable electronic dictionaries have also increased in popularity which has created competition among commercial dictionary publishers. Many students, who inevitably frequent the Internet daily, often use Internet-based dictionaries when they engage in a variety of on-line activities. Needs analysis of such dictionary users is now urgent in order to educate the learners regarding which dictionary they should choose for their specific needs and how to retrieve and utilize the information in the dictionaries. Such analysis will also help improve user-friendliness in all kinds of dictionaries, whether in paper or electronic format.

The present study aims to investigate the habits and needs of Korean EFL university students in using EFL dictionaries in both paper and electronic dictionaries by finding answers to the following questions:

1. How much instruction have the students been given in the use of dictionaries? Does the instruction affect the quantity or quality of dictionary use?

2. How many and what kind of dictionaries do the students have and what attitude do they have to the different types of dictionaries: bilingual vs. monolingual dictionary and paper vs. electronic dictionary (hand-held pocket dictionary and Internet-based dictionary)?
3. How often and for what purpose do they use each type of dictionaries?

2. Literature Review

Tomaszczyk (1979) was the first researcher to initiate an investigation into dictionary use by non-native speakers of English. He collected his data from a survey questionnaire completed by 449 Polish EFL learners at university level, foreign language instructors, and translators. The questionnaire contained 57 items concerning the personal and language learning history, current language use, use of dictionaries, and the evaluation of the information in the dictionaries. The results showed that dictionaries were used mainly for translation, while writing and reading tasks were of secondary importance. Although participants found greater satisfaction with monolingual dictionaries, the majority preferred to use bilingual dictionaries (94% for L2-L1, 77.5% for L1-L2) over monolingual dictionaries (59.9%). Tomaszczyk also found that EFL learners consulted their dictionaries in the following ways: meanings (85%), synonyms (74%), idioms (72%), spelling (72%), pronunciation (65%), grammar (59%), taboo words (45%) and etymology (19%).

Béjoint (1981) conducted a survey based on that of Tomaszczyk with the aim of revealing how French EFL students use monolingual general English dictionaries. 122 French students of English at the University of Lyon comprised his sample population. Most of the students (96%) owned a monolingual dictionary, many of which were purchased on the recommendation of their instructors (85%). Only 17% of the

participants preferred a bilingual dictionary, which contrasts the result of Tomaszczyk's study. Béjoint also discovered that dictionaries were used more frequently for decoding than encoding, more specifically for meaning (87%), syntax (53%), synonyms (52%), spelling and pronunciation (25%), and etymology (5%). While the respondents were mostly satisfied with their dictionaries, dissatisfaction arose from poor definitions, missing words, unsatisfactory syntactic guidance, overly lengthy entries and incomprehensible coding, insufficient examples, and unclear layout.

Batternburg (1989) administered a similar survey to 60 EFL students with diverse first language backgrounds at Ohio University. His study focused on the relationship between users' reference habits and their proficiency levels. Similar to previous studies, the largest number of participants owned bilingual dictionaries, but at more advanced levels, bilingual and monolingual learners' dictionary use decreased, and native speaker dictionary use increased. While all participants preferred to look up definitions the most and etymological information the least, there was significant differences in the search patterns across different proficiency groups.

The similar survey-questionnaire based studies have been carried out by other researchers with a variety of participants, and they confirm the findings of the preceding research (Atkins and Varantola, 1998 Li, 1998 Hartmann, 1999 Sánchez, 2005).

Recent studies include dictionary use training as a questionnaire item, and they uniformly indicate that the majority of students never receive dictionary use training (60% in Atkins and Varantola, 1998 70% in Li, 1998 34.6% in Hartmann, 1999 45.9% in Sánchez, 2005). Li (1998) further emphasizes that the level of education, gender, and motivation affect dictionary ownership and frequency of dictionary use.

In contrast to the survey-questionnaire based studies

mentioned above, Cubillo (2002) employs a rather task-oriented approach to the investigation of dictionary users' needs. Cubillo hypothesized that a self-produced dictionary would satisfy the English language study needs of his students and eventually raise their awareness in regard to their own needs for particular dictionary reference skills. He had 85 first-year university chemistry students choose about 100 of the most important words appearing in the course textbooks, and create their own dictionaries using those words. They were told to include as much information as they thought necessary or of interest for the future utility of their dictionaries. The results revealed that the most frequent information item was an L1 equivalent, which confirms the users' strong focus on meaning for the translation activity in prior research. Most examples were very short and usually not very helpful, which he interpreted as a phrase to prove that a word existed and could be used in a sentence. Only 5 students included collocational information, indicating that it is rarely regarded as important.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants were 181 freshmen students who were taking the same general English classes as a requirement course in the spring semester of 2005 at the University of Seoul. All the participants had a roughly homogeneous background regarding their native language (Korean), the amount of formal instruction in English, and general academic ability measured by the Korean college entrance examination. Although they were from six different major fields (as shown in Table 1), they were expected to have little specific knowledge or training of their field of study since they were in the first year of the college and mainly enrolling required general education courses.

Table 1. Number of the Participants

Major	Frequency	Percent (%)
Law	29	16.0
Business Management	35	19.3
Electronic Engineering	22	12.2
Mechanical Engineering	31	17.1
City Engineering	28	15.5
Environmental Engineering	36	19.9
Total	180	100.0

3.2. Material

Dictionary user profiles (survey questionnaires) were constructed to reveal various facts about the participants such as the number of years of English study, their reasons for studying English, whether they had received instruction in dictionary use, dictionary ownership, the reasons for purchasing their own dictionaries, the kinds of information they frequently look for, and their search habits and attitudes to various types of EFL dictionaries. The survey questionnaire is shown in Appendix.

3.3. Procedure

Separated into several different classes by their areas of study, all participants were taking College English I, a required general English course constituting of a weekly two-hour reading and writing class and another weekly two-hour listening and speaking class. About three weeks before the end of the spring semester 2005, during each of their reading/writing classes, each of the students received a copy of the survey questionnaire and were given a half an hour to complete it.

4. Results

4.1. The Length of English Education

Most of the participants had 6-11 years of experience in studying English ($M=8.4$). About 60% of the students reported

that they began studying English at fifth or sixth grade in elementary school. In addition to the length of English instruction, the curricula of English classes in secondary schools are almost the same.

4.2. The Reasons for Studying English

Question 3 in the survey questionnaire asked the participants why they were studying English. They were allowed to mark all the possible reasons provided in the questionnaire. The majority of the students had an instrumental motivation for learning English; many students studied English to get a good job usually by achieving high scores on the TOEIC or other English proficiency tests. The responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for Studying English

Reasons	N	Percentage (%)
To improve chances of employment	107	59.1
Necessary for studying other subjects	69	38.1
To prepare for English proficiency tests	45	24.8
To prepare for TOEIC	67	37
To prepare for TOEFL	10	5.5
To travel	51	28.2
To fulfill social and school requirement	19	10.5
To enjoy English culture	8	4.4
To communicate with foreigners	6	3.3

4.3. Instruction Received in Dictionary Using Skills

The participants were asked whether they had ever received any instruction regarding English dictionary use. 75 (41.4%) respondents reported they had received some instruction, while 106 (58.6%) 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 9.4% of the respondents (n=17) reported they had received a structured instruction.

4.4. Dictionary Ownership

In survey question 5, 7 and 10, the students were asked what kind(s), monolingual, bilingual, bilingualised and/or electronic, and how many dictionaries they own. The participants also chose the reasons why they purchased or possessed those specific dictionaries.

4.4.1. Paper dictionary ownership

About 90% of the students owned at least one English dictionary in paper form. Forty nine (27%) students had two dictionaries and 23 (12.7%) students owned three dictionaries. Only one student had more than three dictionaries.

Only 57 (31.5%) out of 181 respondents reported they owned monolingual dictionaries. Four students had more than two monolingual dictionaries. The most popular monolingual dictionaries among the 57 students were published by *Longman*, including *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE) and several abridged versions of LDOCE (n=28). Oxford dictionaries were the second most popular, as revealed in the responses of 15 students. *Collins COBUILD Dictionary* (COBUILD) was owned by 8 students and *Macmillan English Dictionary* (MED) was owned by 5 respondents. In many cases, the exact titles of the dictionaries were not reported on because most of the students could not remember and simply wrote down brand names, such as *Longman* or *Oxford*, which are also the names of the dictionary publishing companies.

Unlike monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries (BD) were owned by the majority of the students (n=128 (70.7%)). 22

participants (12%) possessed two BDs. The most popular BDs were *Prime*, published by Doosan Dong-A, owned by 42.1% of BD owners, and *Essence*, published by Minjungseorim, owned by 32.8% of BD owners. *Elite*, published by YBM/Si-sa, was owned by 14.8%. 10% of BD owners had other kinds of dictionaries.

All Korean dictionary publishers produce a variety of English dictionaries for various specific user groups. However, as in the case of monolingual dictionaries, most students did not remember the exact titles of the BDs they own. Since they are college students, most of the dictionaries they referred to are assumed to be the similar size of advanced learners.

Another kind of bilingual dictionary is the 'Korean-English Dictionary (KED)', which is usually used when finding an English word or expression for an intended meaning in Korean, specifically for writing or speaking in English. 163 (90%) students answered they did not have this type of productive dictionaries. Among the 18 respondents who reported they own a Korean-English dictionary, 5 students owned *Prime Korean-English Dictionary* and another 5 respondents had *Essence Korean-English Dictionary*. The other 8 respondents had the other kinds of KE dictionaries compiled by several different publishers. Bilingualised dictionaries, that is, English-English-Korean dictionaries (EEKD), were owned by 28 (15%) students. Most of them (n=17) answered that they did not remember the titles of the dictionaries. 3 students reported that they had *Handy English-Korean, Korean-English Dictionary* published by Minjungseorim. Another 3 students answered that they owned *Longman English-English-Korean Dictionary* published by KUMSUNG Publishing Company.

4.4.2. Reasons for specific paper dictionary ownership

The students were asked to select from a list all the reasons why they bought or happened to have specific English

dictionaries. Many students could not provide reasons why they purchased specific dictionaries except those for BDs, simply because they did not own them. The results were slightly different between the different dictionary types as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Reasons for Purchasing Dictionaries (paper form)

Reasons	MD		BD		KED		EEKD	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teacher's recommendation	31	54.4	13	10.2	3	16.7	1	3.6
recommended by the bookstore	7	12.3	17	13.3	4	22.2	2	7.1
recommended by parents	7	12.3	15	11.7	2	11.1	0	0.0
recommended by friends	1	1.8	3	2.3	2	11.1	0	0.0
reasonable price	4	7.0	25	19.5	2	11.1	2	7.1
easy to use	13	22.8	32	25.0	5	27.8	4	14.3
good illustration	2	3.5	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
a gift	5	8.8	38	29.7	5	27.8	10	35.7
used by other family members	3	5.3	17	13.3	0	0.0	2	7.1
sufficient amount of information	2	3.5	3	2.3	1	5.6	0	0.0
good design	1	1.8	3	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
good portability	1	1.8	3	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
others	2	3.5	3	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0

Most MD owners (54.4%) chose 'teacher's recommendation' for the reason of purchase. 14 of them (24.6%) valued the recommendation of other people such as bookstore managers or their parents. As for BDs, however, many students bought them based on their own opinion, considering the price and usability. The recommendation of teachers, bookstores, or parents had

relatively little effect on choosing a specific dictionary. The most frequent reason, as reported by 38 students (29.7%), was that they had received their BDs as gifts. The participants were also asked to specify in writing any other reason, which did not appear in the list. Among written responses, the most frequent answer (n=22) was that they would simply use the dictionary which has been used by other family members. The number of KED and EEKD owners was very small and there were no significant reasons other than 'as a gift'.

4.4.3. Pocket Electronic Dictionary (PED) ownership

PED ownership has been rapidly increasing. A PED usually contains several English dictionaries--monolingual, bilingual (or EKD), KED, and sometimes additional specialized dictionaries such as collocation dictionary and thesaurus. Seventy (38.6%) students reported they owned PEDs. Since most of the PED owners brought their PEDs to the test rooms, they were able to record the exact model names of the dictionaries. There are three main PED distributors in Korea: SHARP, CASIO and AONE. Each of the distributors introduce a variety of PED models depending on the size, the sophistication of features and the price. However, the main features including the number and the kinds of dictionaries contained in each model which shares the same distributor appear to be identical, and thus it can safely be said that there are three main kinds of PED available in Korea. SHARP was the most popular PED among 38 respondents, followed by CASIO, owned by 15 students, and AONE, owned by 10 students. Four students stated they could not remember the model name and three respondents recorded the names of their PEDs which are different from the three PEDs mentioned above.

When asked about the main reason for purchasing a PED, many students answered 'easy to use' (n=30). Another main

reason was 'reasonable price'(n=23). There was no indication of 'teacher's recommendation' or any authoritative advice for the purchase, indicating that the students are not adequately guided in selecting PEDs. Eight students chose 'as a gift' for their reason for the ownership. Participants were also prompted to write-in other reasons, and the most frequent response was 'it was the newest model' (n=5). 'Accessibility to several different kinds of dictionaries simultaneously' and 'a variety of function features' werereported by three respondents, respectively.

4.4.4. The merits and shortcomings of PEDs

The increase in PED use has been noticeable in recent years. Even without an adequate guidance from the EFL authorities, as indicated in the previous section, the students may have personal priorities when purchasing a PED. In an attempt to set the criteria for a desirable PED, survey question 10 asked the students to state, in their own words, the merits and shortcomings of their PEDs. From the 70 responses to the question, the merits of PEDs were reported as in Table 4, and the shortcomings of PEDs were reported as in Table 5 below.

Table 4. The merits of PEDs

Merits	N	%
easy to search entries	24	34.2
easy to carry around	22	31.4
quick searching process	14	20
simultaneous accessibility to several dictionaries	9	12.8
large amount of information	7	10
extra features other than dictionary	7	10
voiced pronunciation	5	7.1

Table 5. The shortcoming of PEDs

Shortcomings	N	%
insufficient or incorrect information	18	29.5

there are no shortcomings	11	18
difficult to find examples and idioms	5	8.1
no voiced pronunciation available	4	6.5
battery life is too short	4	6.5
poor memory retention of searched words	4	6.5

4.5. Students' Habits in Dictionary Use

4.5.1. The type of information looked for in dictionary

The 181 respondents were asked, in the Dictionary User Profile Q-12 (see Appendix), about the type of information they usually look for in their dictionary. For each of the eleven types of information in the list, the respondents were asked to indicate how often they would usually use the information on a four point scale, from 'always' (4) to 'never' (1). The responses are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. The type of dictionary information looked for

Information	always		often		sometimes		never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
meaning	140	77.3	39	21.5	1	0.6	1	0.6
pronunciation	33	18.2	64	35.4	71	39.2	13	7.2
thesaurus	5	2.8	49	27.1	104	57.5	23	12.7
spelling	51	28.2	76	42.0	46	25.4	8	4.4
grammar	10	5.5	43	23.8	88	48.6	40	22.1
example	11	6.1	51	28.2	90	49.7	29	16.0
derivation	0	0.0	26	14.4	87	48.1	68	37.6
etymology	2	1.1	11	6.1	68	37.6	100	55.2
usage	12	6.6	68	37.6	73	40.3	28	15.5
collocation	2	1.1	50	27.6	75	41.4	54	29.8
front matter	0	0.0	10	5.5	49	27.1	122	67.4

Most of the respondents (77.3%) looked for 'meaning' with the greatest frequency. The majority of the remaining students

answered that they 'often' look for 'meaning' in the dictionary. Front matter was the least consulted information, which usually presents guidelines on how to use the dictionary: 67.4 % of the respondents answered that they never looked for the information. Etymology was another type of information rarely looked up. The means and standard deviations of the frequency of each information lookup are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Means and Standard Deviations of Lookup Frequency

Information	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
meaning	181	3.75	.515
pronunciation	181	2.64	.875
thesaurus	181	2.19	.700
spelling	181	2.93	.860
grammar	181	2.11	.849
example	181	2.24	.805
derivation	181	1.76	.694
etymology	181	1.52	.671
usage	181	2.35	.834
collocation	181	1.99	.799
front matter	181	1.34	.644

Table 7 shows that the most frequently looked-up information is meaning, followed by spelling, pronunciation, usage, example, thesaurus, grammar, collocation, derivation, etymology, and front matter.

4.5.2. Dictionary use in MDs and in BDs

In Dictionary User Profile Q-8, the students were asked how often they usually used monolingual dictionaries. Only 3.3% of the students responded they 'always' use them, and 12.2% answered they use them 'often'. 56.4% of the students answered they 'sometimes' use MDs and 26% of the students responded they never used monolingual dictionaries. 2.2% did not provide

any answer.

The participants were also asked how often they would use bilingual dictionaries in Dictionary User Profile Q-9. 31% of the respondents answered they 'always' use them, and 48.1% responded they 'often', 15.5% of them answered 'sometimes', and 2.8% answered they 'never' use BDs, clear indication they prefer BDs to MDs. 2.2% provided no answers.

In Dictionary User Profile Q-12, the participants were asked to indicate which dictionary, MD or BD, they used for the purposes stated in the list. Bilingual dictionaries were highly preferred when they wanted to find the meaning of unknown words. Their preference of BDs was higher when they translated English into Korean. To find the usage of a word or to write in English, the students reported they used both BDs and MDs. Six students added Korean-English dictionaries for this purpose. As for the purposes other than those in the list, 8 students recorded that they used MDs when they could not understand the word meaning found in other kinds of dictionaries. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. The purposes of using MD or BD

Purpose of use	MD		BD	
	N	%	N	%
To find the meaning	34	18.8	146	80.7
To translate E to K	13	7.2	165	91.2
To find the usage	87	48.1	83	45.9
Others	12	6.6	9	4.9

4.5.3. Internet dictionary use

The students were asked about their use of Internet dictionaries in Dictionary User Profile Q-11. 68% (n=123) of the respondents answered they use Internet dictionaries. The most popular Internet dictionary was *NAVER*, used by 61% (n=111) of

the students. *YAHOO* dictionary was used by 7% (n=13) of the students, and *DAUM* dictionary by 4% (n=7) of the students. Internet dictionaries are capable of storing an infinite amount of information together with a variety of other functions or features, the usability of which are of interest in the present study. The students, therefore, were asked to answer how often they use the Internet dictionary features in the list on a five-point scale, from 'always' (5) to 'never'(1). The results are summarized in Table 9 and Table 10.

Table 9. The features used in Internet Dictionaries

Information	5		4		3		2		1		NA*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
BD(E-K)	53	29	34	19	25	14	12	7	9	5	48	27
MD(E-E)	5	3	16	9	34	19	40	22	37	20	49	27
Hyperlink	3	2	6	3	12	7	17	9	81	45	62	34
Thesaurus	0	0	4	2	22	12	24	13	72	40	59	33
Pronunciation	8	4	12	7	26	14	27	15	51	28	57	32

*NA: No Answer

Table 10. Means and Standard Deviation

Information	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
E-K	181	2.81	1.999
E-E	181	1.70	1.414
hyperlink	181	1.05	1.127
Thesaurus	181	1.12	1.066
pronunciation	181	1.50	1.452
Valid N	181		

Similar to paper dictionary use, users greatly preferred a bilingual dictionary to find word meanings. Other features were rarely used by users. About 30% of the responses regarding each feature were recorded as NA, meaning that those

respondents did not answer because they do not use any Internet dictionary. The other features written-in by the users were 'examples and idioms' (n=5) and 'Korean-English Dictionary' (n=4).

4.6. Difficulties in Using Dictionaries

The students were asked to choose from the list all the difficulties they encounter when using dictionaries. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. The Difficulties in Dictionary Use

Difficulties	MD(paper)		BD(paper)		PED		ID	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No entry in the dictionary	8	4.40	39	21.5	46	25.4	22	12.2
Difficult to understand the definition	104	57.5	22	12.2	7	3.9	4	2.2
Difficult to find the right sense	40	22.1	69	38.1	27	14.9	12	6.6
Difficult to find the information I want	36	19.9	40	22.1	22	12.2	15	8.3
Difficult to learn how to use	29	16.0	16	8.8	16	8.8	3	1.7
Cannot use them whenever I want	61	33.7	87	48.1	5	2.8	81	44.8
Incorrect information	1	0.6	18	9.9	17	9.4	25	13.8
others	10	5.5	21	11.6	10	5.5	5	2.8

MD(paper)= paper monolingual dictionary, BD(paper)= paper bilingual dictionary, PED= pocket electronic dictionary, ID= Internet dictionary

The biggest problem that the students had in using traditional BDs was limited convenience. 48.1% 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. 'It is difficult to find the right sense in polysemous words' was the second biggest problem chosen by 38.1%. The students also had difficulty when they could not find the entry or the information they looked for in BDs. The most frequent response among written-in responses was 'It takes too much time to consult the dictionary', reported by 14 students.

MDs in paper form, like paper BDs, also suffered limited convenience (33.7%). But the bigger problem the students had with paper MDs was 'It is difficult to understand the definitions', reported by almost 60% of the students. 'Time consuming' was also reported by 5 students as one of the reasons other than those in the list.

The difficulties involving PED use were relatively fewer than the other types of dictionary. The major difficulty was the insufficient information contained in PEDs, reported by 25.4%. Many students seemed to find the information contained in PEDs was not as thorough or comprehensive as that found in their paper counterparts.

The ID users reported limited access as a major difficulty (44.8%). The result was quite predictable because online access is usually not available in EFL classrooms. Even in self-learning mode, students do not necessarily sit in front of a computer to read an English text, the activity prompting major dictionary use. Insufficient and incorrect information was reported as the next major concern for the ID users. The results suggest that electronic dictionaries, both ID and PED, are often regarded as unreliable source of reference by the students.

4.7. The Reasons for Difficulties

The students were then asked why they thought they had the

difficulties they mentioned in Q-14. Four choices were possible selections, producing the following results as in Table 12.

Table 12. Reasons for Difficulties in Dictionary Use

Reasons for Difficulties	Percentage(%)
I have poor or no skills in dictionary use	41.5
I do not use dictionaries very often	35.6
the dictionary interface is problematic	15.7
my dictionary is of poor quality	9.3
Others	9.3

Most of the respondents blamed their unskilled and infrequent use of dictionaries for their difficulties.

4.8. Students' Evaluation of Dictionaries

Finally, the students were asked to indicate their favorite dictionary types. The pocket electronic dictionaries were the most highly favored, as reported by 40.3% of the respondents. The second most popular dictionaries were bilingual dictionaries (27.5%), followed by monolingual dictionaries (15.8%). By 'bilingual dictionary', the students meant either paper or electronic dictionary which gives Korean equivalents and explanations for English head words. The bilingual dictionaries in paper form were specifically mentioned as a favorite by 12.3% of the students. Internet dictionaries were favored by 10% of the students.

The students were also asked to state the reason why they prefer a particular dictionary, producing following responses as in Table 13.

Table 13. Reasons for Preference of a Dictionary

Reasons for Preference	Percentage(%)
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quick and easy to use	34.5
easy to carry around	29.8
easy to understand the information	18.7
rich and significant amount of information	18.1
simultaneous consulting of multiple dictionaries	8.2
correct and reliable information	8.2
familiar with the dictionary interface	7.6
easy to find examples, synonyms, antonyms	5.3
availability of voiced pronunciation	4.1

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.

5. Discussions and Conclusion

The participants' English learning experience was generally homogeneous: they had received about 8 years of formal instruction in English with standardized curricula. Their primary motivations to learn English were rather instrumental: most wanted to improve their English skills to obtain better opportunities for employment. Since TOEIC scores have often been considered as an indicator of one's English proficiency, students reported that preparing for TOEIC was one of their main reasons to study English.

About 60% of the respondents answered that they had received no instruction for the use of dictionaries, and only 9.4% reported that they had received a systematic training in dictionary use. A similar result was reported in the EURALEX project, where 60% of the students had received no instruction, and 14% had received 'precise and systematic' instruction on how to use their dictionaries (Atkins and Varantola, 1998). The students in this study were not asked to describe how they

learned to use their English dictionaries, but in general, the instructions on dictionary use are given at the initial stage of English education in secondary schools. The lessons are usually brief, and students are asked to bring a dictionary to the classroom and are then drilled in searching for some head words and their meanings. Therefore, the dictionary instruction remains superficial, not sufficient to train the students to become competent dictionary users. It is likely that the respondents have received a similar training in dictionary use.

Most of the students (90%) reported that they have at least one English dictionary in paper form. Bilingual dictionary ownership drastically exceeded monolingual dictionary ownership: 70.7% of the students owned bilingual dictionaries, compared to 31.5% of monolingual dictionary owners. Bilingualised dictionaries (EEKD) and Korean-English dictionaries (KED) were owned by a very small number of the students.

It was surprising that many students failed to report the exact titles of their dictionaries because they could not remember them. They only remembered the names of the publishing companies which are oftentimes, but not always, the same as the brand name of the dictionary. Because many publishers produce several different versions of their dictionaries and come in different sizes and names for specific user groups, it is possible that the students have a variety of dictionary editions. Considering the sales report by online bookstores and the fact that they are college students, it can only be assumed that most of them possess the sizable dictionaries for advanced learners manufactured by major publishing companies. Their ignorance of the dictionary titles may indicate that the students were not using their English dictionaries very often, or that they were not aware of or did not appreciate the differences between the different dictionaries or publishers.

The primary consideration in purchasing a MD was 'teachers'

recommendation', while the major reason for BD ownership was 'as a gift'. The students' reliance on their teachers' advice when buying a MD was also reported in Béjoint's study (1981), where 85% of the respondents gave 'tutor's recommendation' as their reason for choosing one MD over another. Other frequently reported considerations for BD purchase were 'reasonable price' and 'easy to use'. The students' indifference to the teacher's recommendation for BD purchase is noticeable, compared to their heavy dependence on teachers' guide for MD purchase. The students seem to feel there is little difference between various BDs in terms of their contents whose quality can be judged with a professional eye, or they just think their own judgment is sufficient. A BD seems to be treated by the students as an essential tool in the EFL environment, the values of which can be judged in terms of the price and user-friendliness. On the other hand, MDs come with rather diverse and distinctive features, depending on the publisher, and they tend to be acquired by more advanced or serious learners who appreciate an expert's opinion.

Pocket electronic dictionaries (PED) were owned by 38.6% of the respondents. SHARP was the most popular PED, followed by CASIO and AONE. Their ease of use and reasonable price were the students' priorities in purchasing a PED. The students saw greater advantages in PEDs: they valued 'the ease of use' and 'good portability' the most, while they only expressed some dissatisfaction over 'insufficient or incorrect information'. There seems to be a need for a more enlightened guide to purchasing a PED, and for more improvement in the contents of the PEDs presently on the market.

The most common use of a dictionary was to find the 'meaning' of a word. The other types of dictionary information were less important to the participants: spelling, pronunciation, usage, example and grammar were grouped as the second most

looked-up information; and collocation, derivation, etymology and front matter were the least looked-up information. The results are congruent with those of previous research on dictionary use, which showed the users' excessive preoccupation with meaning (Tomaszczyk, 1979; Béjoint, 1981; Battengburg, 1991; Li, 1998; Hartmann, 1999; Cubillo, 2002; Sánchez, 2005). Pronunciation was not neglected: 54% of the respondents said they always or often use a dictionary to check the pronunciation of a word. This result contrasts with the findings of Tomaszczyk (1979), Béjoint (1981), Battenburg (1991) and Hartmann (1999), but congruent with the results of Li (1998). Like all the prior studies, word-origins and introduction or guide in the front matter of a dictionary were rarely sought information.

BDs were more commonly used than MDs: 79% of the participants answered they use a BD 'always' or 'often, while only 15% used MDs with the same frequency. When they found the meaning of a word and translated English into Korean, they almost always used a BD. Even when they had to find a usage of a word to write in English, their preference for a BD was still about the same as a MD. The preference for BD use by all levels of EFL dictionary users has been repeatedly confirmed in the survey-based studies of dictionary use mentioned above, in the test-based EURALEX project and in an observation-based study by Mackintosh (1998). She claimed that the avoidance of MDs is due to the EFL dictionary users' inability to cope with L2 definitional metalanguages.

The same patterns of dictionary use were also revealed in the use of Internet dictionaries. Although there is an infinite amount of information which features a variety of functions, 'meaning', in BD form, was the most frequently sought information. Monolingual information and pronunciation were looked up, but much less frequently than meaning. The students' Internet dictionary habits may also reflect their usage

of PEDs because they are both in electronic form, although the latter is more accessible. No matter how much information was available to the learners, they appeared to simply repeat the same habits, without exploring the greater potential of more sophisticated dictionaries.

The students regarded paper dictionaries as a more reliable source than electronic dictionaries. The result was surprising because present electronic dictionaries on the market use the same contents of their paper counterparts. The students may have been using old electronic dictionaries which had limited data, or they did not realize the full potential of electronic dictionaries because they were not familiar with the electronic interface and specialized functions such as searching for examples and phrasal expressions. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the perceived quality of an electronic dictionary by students is not as high as a paper dictionary.

The portability of paper dictionaries was reported as a major problem: paper dictionaries are bulky and heavy to carry. Internet dictionaries also suffered a similar dilemma because online access is often unavailable in the EFL classrooms.

The students had fewer complaints about pocket electronic dictionaries. However, 'finding the right sense in a polysemous word' was unanimously reported as a problem for the students regardless of the type of dictionary. Most of the students blamed their poor skills in dictionary use for their difficulties, which is probably due to their lack of familiarity with their dictionaries. This may be a very suggestive remark, implying that their current problems in dictionary use can be solved by more frequent dictionary use and improved skills, which they can acquire through proper training and exercises.

The most popular dictionary types among students were pocket electronic dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries.

Apparently, they care for portability, quick and easy search, together with psychological security of using their L1 in understanding dictionary content. Portability, usability and substantial content seem to be desired features for a 'perfect' EFL learner's dictionary.

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Appendix

Dictionary User Profile (Survey questionnaire)¹⁾

Major _____ Student No. _____ Name _____

1. How many years have you been learning English for? _____

2. In what kind of schools or colleges have you studied English?

1)) Elementary School

How many years? _____ How many lessons per week? _____

(and the same two questions for the following)

2)) Middle School

3) High School

4) University

5) Private Institution

3. Why are you learning English? Tick more than one box if you wish.

1) In order to prepare for a specific examination ((ex) TOEIC, TOEFL)

2) Because you are doing a degree in English

3) Because you are studying another subject for which English is
necessary

4) In order to improve your chances of employment

5) In order to travel

6) Other (please **specify**) _____

4. 1) Have you been taught in class how to use a dictionary?

Yes _____ No _____

2) If yes, were you given systematic teaching and precise
instructions on how to do this?

Yes _____ No _____

5. If you personally own a dictionary or dictionaries that you use for
your English studies, say which ones: (paper dictionary only)

Title Published by Date of publication

¹⁾When distributed to students, all the questions and choices in this survey were translated into students' native language, Korean, in order to avoid distraction.

A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____

6. How long have you owned the dictionary or dictionaries that you listed above?

Dictionary A _____ years Dictionary B _____ years
Dictionary C _____ years Dictionary D _____ years

7. What were your reasons for choosing the dictionary or dictionaries?
Write the choice numbers in the spaces provided for each dictionary.
Choose more than one if you wish.

- 1) Recommended by the teacher
- 2) Recommended by the bookshop
- 3) Recommended by parents
- 4) Recommended by a friend
- 5) The price was reasonable
- 6) It looked easy to use
- 7) It had good illustrations
- 8) It was a gift
- 9) Other (please specify)

Dictionary A

Dictionary B

Dictionary C

Dictionary D

8. Do you ever use a monolingual English dictionary?
Always _____ often _____ sometimes _____ never _____

9. Do you ever use a bilingual dictionary?

Always_____ often _____ sometimes_____ never_____

10. 1) Do you own a pocket electronic dictionary? Yes ____ No ____
(If yes, please answer the following questions, 2), 3) and 4).)

2) What is the name of pocket electronic dictionary?

3) What were your reasons for choosing the particular pocket electronic dictionary? (Choose from the choices for the question 7 above)

4) What do you think the merits and weaknesses of your dictionary?

11. 1) Do you ever use English dictionaries on the Internet?

Yes_____ No_____

2) If yes, what is your favorite dictionary site on the Internet?

3) How often do you use each of the following information in the Internet dictionary? Tick from 1(never) to 5 (always).

(1) Bilingual Dictionary	5	4	3	2	1
(2) Monolingual Dictionary	5	4	3	2	1
(3) Hyperlink	5	4	3	2	1
(4) Thesaurus	5	4	3	2	1
(5) Recorded pronunciation	5	4	3	2	1
(6) Other (please specify)					

12. What kind of dictionary would you normally use for each of the following purposes?

1) To understand an English word, e.g. during reading

English monolingual_____ Bilingual_____

2) To find Korean equivalent for an English word, e.g. for translation

English monolingual_____ Bilingual_____

3) To check on how to use an English word that you already know,
e.g., during writing in English

English monolingual_____ Bilingual_____

4) Other (please specify) _____

English monolingual_____ Bilingual_____

13. How often do you use each of the following information?

- 1) definition always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 2) pronunciation always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 3) synonym always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 4) spelling always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 5) grammar always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 6) example always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 7) derivation always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 8) etymology always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 9) usage always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 10) collocation* always___ often___ sometimes___ never___
- 11) front matter* always___ often___ sometimes___ never___

(* Explanations were provided for the terms in students' native language.)

14. What are the difficulties in using each of the following dictionaries?

Select choices from the list and choose more than one if you wish.

Bilingual Dictionary (paper form)_____

Monolingual Dictionary(paper form)_____

Pocket Electronic Dictionary_____

Dictionaries in the Internet or CD-ROM_____

- 1) There is no entry I am looking for in the dictionary.
- 2) It is difficult to understand the definition.
- 3) It is difficult to identify the right sense in a polysemous word.
- 4) It is difficult to find the information I want.
- 5) It is difficult to learn how to use the dictionary.
- 6) I cannot use the dictionary whenever I want.
- 7) The information I found in the dictionary is incorrect.

8) Other (please specify)_____

15. What do you think are the causes of the difficulties mentioned above?

- 1) Because my dictionary is of poor quality
- 2) Because I do not use dictionaries very often
- 3) Because I have poor or limited skills in dictionary use
- 4) Because the dictionary interface is problematic
- 5) Others(please specify)_____

16. In your opinion, what is the most useful English dictionary? And why?

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