

A Study of Comparatively Low Achievement Students' Bilingualized Dictionary Use and Their English Learning

Szu-An Chen, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Education & International Development 2015
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The aim of this survey study is to investigate bilingualized dictionary use (i.e. Longman Active Study English-Chinese Dictionary in paper form) of comparatively low achievement college students. It focuses on EFL learners' overall dictionary use behavior and their perspectives on this book dictionary as well as the advance guidance of dictionary use offered by their English teachers. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed by SPSS 15.0. Findings of the study indicate that lower proficient students in general hold positive perspectives towards the helpfulness and effectiveness of using bilingualized dictionaries in learning English whereas roughly half of the participants have formed the habits of dictionary use out of the classroom after their one-year English education at college. Frequencies of finding out different types of word information might be determined by classroom activities and written assignment. Both L1 and L2 information of head words is viewed as useful resources for the student participants. This article concludes by arguing that low proficiency students need to receive solid training in using L2 information in bilingualized dictionaries to expand their knowledge of English vocabulary. Pedagogical implications and suggestions have been made for the dictionary publisher as well as teachers in the EFL contexts.

Keywords: low-level students, English learning, paper dictionary use

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Choosing the most appropriate dictionary for students to accommodate their abilities and needs in the language classroom is a common and recurrent problem to language teachers. When target language input is quite limited in real life, EFL learners rarely have the chance to pick up English or to acquire English vocabulary in natural acquisition environments. Dictionaries might be an invaluable source of and effective reference to English as they can solve learners' problems by providing them with useful linguistic and cultural information. Especially when teachers are unavailable for immediate consultation, English dictionaries can serve as the means to filling this void. For EFL learners, advancing their English proficiency might have become a life-long learning task and should not be merely confined to formal school education at any stage of their language development. When they encounter and want to solve problems related to their use of English, learners need reliable information that they can refer to. Not only can good dictionaries provide learners with English cultural knowledge but also sustain their long-lasting interest in learning the language. Hence, dictionaries can be a useful tool in turning users into independent problem solvers and autonomous language learners.

In the language classroom, if not dealing with the dictionary selection problem, teachers might face some consequences, such as failing to integrate dictionary use in students' learning process and depriving students' chance of further language development. However, leaving students, particularly beginning and lower proficiency learners, to choose dictionaries for themselves might have an adverse effect on their L2 learning too. Many researchers (e.g. Fan & Xiao, 2006; Lou & Li, 2012; Shi & Pan, 2005; Wang, 2007) suggest that English learners need to choose dictionaries in which the contents can accord with their English levels and their needs. Without the awareness of how dictionary use can assist them in learning a language, learners might trap themselves into just getting by whenever they need to consult dictionaries. To such students, English teachers play a role of successful English learners and professional dictionary users. Based on their teaching and learning experience, English teachers can advise students to choose dictionaries as well as compensate students' lack of familiarity with English dictionaries, so as to improve students' dictionary look-up skills through proper training and exercises.

Significant research related to the effectiveness of using dictionaries in boosting learners' L2 vocabulary and reading comprehension has been done in Taiwan. The majority of the research focuses on educators' evaluative perspectives. A limited understanding of actual dictionary users' perspectives needs to be expanded. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to explore comparatively low English proficiency level students' perceptions toward their use of *Longman Active Study English-Chinese Dictionary* (i.e. LASECD) for one year in their General English courses at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages (i.e. Wenzao; this college has been upgraded to Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages in 2013). This group of students' overall College Student English Proficiency Level Test (i.e. CSEPT) scores ranged from 120 to 150. In this study, data was collected through questionnaires in order to elicit information concerning these student participants' dictionary use behavior and their overall perceptions of LASECD. The questionnaires consist of 29 items and were administered to 147 students. The findings reveal that around half of the participants perceived that they had formed habits of using LASECD in studying

English. The findings also indicate the types of word knowledge which these students frequently looked up when they used LASECD. In addition, most of the participants held positive perceptions toward LASECD and their use of this dictionary. Please see the research results in more details in the section of Findings and Discussion.

Literature Review

Nowadays many dictionaries are available in a variety of formats: book dictionaries, pocket electronic dictionaries, CD-ROMs, online dictionaries, and the up-to-the-minute dictionary APPs for smartphones. In explaining the main function of dictionaries in language learning, Béjoint (2002) and Lou and Li (2012) claim that after readers find out and check the meaning of unknown or unfamiliar words, they will not only read and comprehend the text but also improve their acquisition of vocabulary. The expanded vocabulary bank can move learners toward their long-term learning objectives of using their target language spontaneously and expressing themselves explicitly and completely.

Tomaszczyk (1979, as cited in Ryu, 2006) pioneered research into dictionary use and investigated 449 Polish university students of English, foreign language instructors, and translators. The results showed that dictionaries were mainly used for translation, which is not a rare situation at all in EFL contexts. Bilingual dictionaries can quickly provide L1 equivalents of L2 words in this term, so that they are popular among learners at all levels (Atkins & Varantola, 1998; Baxter, 1980) and particularly useful to L2 beginning learners (Béjoint & Mouli, 1987). Among research into bilingual dictionaries, Knight's (1994) study showed that lower proficiency learners improved their reading comprehension by using bilingual dictionaries to look up totally unfamiliar words. Other researchers, such as Hulstijn, Hollander and Grenadius (1996), found that learners of all levels can use bilingual dictionaries to learn vocabulary while advanced learners are more likely to use bilingual dictionaries to confirm their understanding of partially known L2 words (Atkins & Varantola, 1997; Hulstijn, 1993; Knight, 1994).

In spite of quick consultation of L2 words and L1 equivalents, bilingual dictionaries have attracted criticisms; for example, low level L2 learners might have a wrong impression that they can find perfect equivalents in both languages. Due to limited information provided in bilingual dictionaries, L2 learners hardly receive correct knowledge of semantic characteristics of different languages. Hunt (2009, p.14) argues that this weakness of bilingual dictionaries may transform language learning into "a matter of one-to-one word translation," and in turn learners might prefer to employ this strategy to deal with the meanings of unknown words. Simplistic translations are very likely to blur learners' view of correct L2 knowledge and delay their L2 development.

On the other hand, monolingual dictionaries contain rich information of L2 words and usages, including definitions, word classes, example sentences, phrasal verbs, idioms, synonyms, etc. all presented in L2, which can deflect L1 translations of L2 words. By using monolingual dictionaries, learners can receive more of L2 inputs, turn down the possibility of making interference errors, train their ability of thinking in English, and then enhance their comprehension of L2 (Lou & Li, 2012). Despite more reading that L2 learners can have through using monolingual dictionaries, the contents of

monolingual dictionaries used by native speakers and advanced L2 learners might equal to information overload to L2 learners at the low proficiency level. While they are busy identifying the correct meaning of a new word, they might need to crack many other unfamiliar words suddenly appearing in the view of an entry, from which these preoccupied learners might hardly benefit much. In order to counterbalance the cons of using bilingual and monolingual dictionaries and combine their pros, bilingualized dictionaries are published and growing in popularity. As Hartman (1994, p.243) suggests, bilingualized dictionaries are a “hybrid dictionary type” and “a compromise” between two types of L2 dictionaries so that learners can get the best of both worlds. Laufer and Hadar (1997) claim that bilingualized dictionaries give low proficiency learners an additional choice of which types of information they need to refer to (e.g. L1, L2, and both).

Various aspects of L2 words are provided in bilingualized dictionaries. In addition to L1 equivalents, the definitions, example sentences, phrasal verbs, idioms, etc. of L2 words are all presented in both of learners’ L1 and L2. Hence, unlike monolingual dictionaries, L2 information of L2 words is an alternative to L1 explanations for lower proficiency learners to enhance their understanding of L2 word knowledge and to refine their ability to define L2 words by using L2. Other than that, for higher proficiency learners, bilingualized dictionaries can be used to reassure that their knowledge of L2 vocabulary is accurate (Laufer & Hadar, 1997).

In the present study, LASECD (please see one page of the dictionary contents taken from LASECD in Appendix) was chosen to help the comparatively low achievement college students at Wenzao familiarize with the wealth of information that bilingualized dictionaries offer. At the beginning of the fall semester in 2011, the participants’ English teachers provided their students with a training session of dictionary use and exercises for four to six hours. Then, these teachers assigned the students to work on individualized glossary of head words that these students learned in English classes. In their glossary, they wrote down English words, Chinese equivalents, parts of speech, example sentences, family words, and so on. In addition, the three teachers often designed and arranged activities which were relevant to the learning materials in class. They expected to help the students establish their habits of using LASECD, increase their experience of using bilingualized dictionaries to comprehend the reading text, and build vocabulary in order to have a positive influence on the students’ vocabulary learning. Hopefully, these students might stave off their reliance on Chinese translations of words and enrich their understanding of other kinds of knowledge concerning the words to be learned. Around the end of the spring semester in 2012, questionnaires were distributed to 147 students to generate their overall opinions of the dictionary and their dictionary use behavior.

To reiterate, as the dictionary is an indispensable instrument for L2 learning, how learners perceive their dictionary use and their perspectives toward the dictionary which they are using can help the publisher improve the quality of the dictionary as well as shed light on the instruction of dictionary use for teachers and educators.

Objectives of the study

This study aims at researching into comparatively low achievement college students’ perceptions toward using bilingualized dictionary-*Longman Active Study*

English-Chinese Dictionary-when they study English. Their perceptions will be identified to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is students' dictionary use behavior?
2. What types of information in the bilingualized dictionary do students look up?
3. How do students perceive LASECD?
4. How do students perceive the helpfulness of using bilingualized dictionaries in learning English?
5. How do students perceive the instruction of dictionary use?

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable information to understand how comparatively low achievement college students evaluate their dictionary use in learning English. This study may also serve as a pilot study for further research into dictionary use in the vocational college EFL contexts in Taiwan.

Research Methodology

The participants in this study were 81 freshmen and 66 sophomores, who were attending the required General English Level II Course, constituting of a weekly five-hour integrated English skills class, in the 36-credit English program at Wenzao during the academic year 2011/2012. All these comparatively low achievement participants had roughly a homogeneous background in terms of their first language (i.e. Mandarin Chinese) and the amount of formal English instruction at Wenzao. Their overall CSEPT scores were between 120 and 150, which have been considered as an indicator of their English proficiency. The anonymity of the questionnaire respondents was established by specifically asking them not to write their names on the questionnaires unless they were voluntarily willing to be interviewed in the future when necessary.

The questionnaires were used as the initial survey instrument and the final questionnaires were composed of 29 items including two open-ended questions. The finalized questionnaires were written in Chinese. Questions 1 to 27 used a five-point Likert scale, (item 1~4 and 19~27: 1=strongly agree; 2= agree; 3=somewhat agree; 4=disagree; 5=strongly agree; item 5~18: 1=always; 2= nearly always; 3=half of the time; 4=seldom; 5=never), and asked about the respondents' experience and perceptions of dictionary use. In addition, question 28 and 29 were two open-ended questions to elicit opinions from the students concerning the effectiveness of using dictionaries in English learning and the necessity of receiving instruction of dictionary use at the initial stage of English course. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using test-retest on 46 EFL college students who were excluded from the sample. Chronbach alpha was calculated and found to equal .868 in the pilot study and .883 in the survey. The questionnaire data were gathered in the last 10 to 15 minutes of the students' class time, via prior agreement with the teachers. Of the 152 copies distributed, 147 copies were returned to the researcher, yielding a response rate of 96.71%. Questionnaire data was analyzed through using the statistical software SPSS 14.0.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, questionnaire data is presented describing the habits and perceptions of using bilingualized dictionaries of 147 Taiwanese EFL college students under study.

The research findings will be discussed by answering five research questions mentioned earlier. In presenting the results of the study, the percentages of each item were calculated to describe and summarize the responses of the students. The results of the items that relate to each research question are presented in tables, and explanations are provided accordingly. For the purpose of illustration, Longman Active Study English-Chinese Dictionary will still be abbreviated as LASECD in the following.

The first research question: “What is students’ dictionary use behavior?” was measured through 4 items (item 1~4) in the questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 1.

| Item | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------|--|-----|------|------|------|-----|
| 1 | I am in the habit of using LASECD. | 2.8 | 16.6 | 37.2 | 40 | 3.4 |
| 2 | I look up unknown English words in the LASECD. | 2.7 | 19 | 29.3 | 45.6 | 3.4 |
| 3 | I use LASECD when I study English at home. | 2 | 9.5 | 27.9 | 54.4 | 6.1 |
| 4 | I find LASECD helpful to me. | 7.6 | 28.5 | 40.3 | 22.9 | 0.7 |

(1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=somewhat agree; 4=disagree; 5=strongly disagree)

Table 1: Habits in using the dictionary (response frequencies in percentages)

As Table 1 suggests, 56.6% of the students agreed that they were in the habit of using LASECD. Though it cannot be sure whether these students used LASECD only for their English course use or also for their personal self-study purpose, around half of the students (i.e. 51%) tended to look up unknown English words in this specific bilingualized dictionary. Table 1 also reveals that more than 60% of the students disagreed that they used LASECD at home, which might imply that these students kept treating LASECD use as a classroom requirement and yet learned how to make good use of this language learning tool to improve their English proficiency.

Honestly, this percentage is not satisfactory if students are expected to expand their word knowledge through using dictionaries as frequently as possible. Whereas many of the students did not use LASECD outside the classroom, 76.4% of the students confirmed the helpfulness of LASECD, based on which we might speculate that these students acknowledged the effectiveness of using LASECD in completing the task at hand no matter what it was. Indeed, during the past year the English teachers kept designing activities to focus their level-2 students’ attention on vocabulary learning, to familiarize them with LASECD, and to improve their dictionary-use skills. By doing so, their students were explicitly informed and guided to experience how to learn English words by heart, which might result in better retention and employment of vocabulary in their English outputs through using dictionaries. In response to the first research question, the above findings might suggest that these comparatively low achievement students coming from different learning backgrounds and fields of study would like to use LASECD, and the majority of them perceived it relatively helpful in their English study.

The second research question: “What types of information in the bilingualized dictionary do students look up?” was measured through 14 questionnaire statements (item 5~18). The percentages of their responses are presented in Table 2, and these

types of looked-up information in the dictionary are ranked in Table 3.

| Item | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| 5 | I use LASECD to find out Chinese equivalents of words. | 9.5 | 24.5 | 40.1 | 25.9 | 0 |
| 6 | I use LASECD to find out English definitions or words. | 8.8 | 30.6 | 33.3 | 27.2 | 0 |
| 7 | I use LASECD to find out pronunciation of words. | 6.1 | 17 | 25.9 | 43.5 | 7.5 |
| 8 | I use LASECD to find out derived verb forms. | 2.7 | 22.4 | 40.1 | 30.6 | 4.1 |
| 9 | I use LASECD to find out collocations. | 5.4 | 21.1 | 43.5 | 27.9 | 2 |
| 10 | I use LASECD to identify the right meaning of words. | 5.4 | 21.8 | 43.5 | 27.2 | 2 |
| 11 | I use LASECD to find out parts of speech. | 6.8 | 33.3 | 32 | 27.2 | 0.7 |
| 12 | I use LASECD to find out family words. | 7.5 | 22.4 | 38.1 | 31.3 | 0.7 |
| 13 | I use LASECD to find out phrasal verbs and idioms. | 6.1 | 22.4 | 38.8 | 32.7 | 0 |
| 14 | I use LASECD to find out synonyms of words. | 4.1 | 21.1 | 37.4 | 35.4 | 2 |
| 15 | I use LASECD to find out opposites of words. | 2.7 | 19 | 36.1 | 39.5 | 2.7 |
| 16 | I use LASECD to find out example sentences. | 12.2 | 30.6 | 30.6 | 26.5 | 0 |
| 17 | I use grammar exercises in the learner's handbook of LASECD. | 2 | 5.4 | 26.5 | 51 | 15 |
| 18 | I use the picture dictionary of LASECD to learn vocabulary. | 2 | 7.5 | 31.3 | 46.3 | 12.9 |

(1=always; 2=nearly always; 3=half of the time; 4=seldom; 5=never)

Table 2: Types of dictionary information (response frequencies in percentages)

| No. | Type of information | percentages | No. | Type of information | percentages |
|-----|---------------------|-------------|-----|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Chinese equivalents | 74.1 | 7 | phrasal verbs and idioms | 67.3 |
| 2 | Example sentences | 73.5 | 8 | verb forms | 65.3 |
| 3 | English definitions | 72.8 | 9 | synonyms | 62.6 |
| 4 | part of speech | 72.1 | 10 | opposite words | 57.8 |
| 5 | collocations | 70.1 | 11 | pronunciation | 49 |
| 5 | right meaning | 70.1 | 12 | picture dictionary | 41.1 |
| 6 | family words | 68 | 13 | grammar exercises | 34 |

Table 3. Ranked types of looked-up dictionary information (response frequencies in percentages)

The most frequently looked-up information, Chinese equivalents, did not come as a surprise in response to these comparatively low achievement students' strong reliance on the meanings of unknown English words translated into their first language. The high ranking of example sentences, English definitions, part of speech, and the right meaning of words, family words, etc. perhaps can be explained by the fact that the students needed to find out such information in their dictionaries to complete the

assignments or tasks in/after class. Summer (1988) indicates that the definition with examples in the dictionary would benefit reading comprehension to the greatest extent. In order to help students improve their reading comprehension and avoid lack of consistency in using dictionaries, the English teacher asked their students to individually make a glossary of English head words from their textbooks or supplementary reading materials. Students either chose by themselves or were assigned at least five key words every week, looked these words up in their LASECD in their free time, and wrote down Chinese equivalents, English definitions, parts of speech, and example sentences of these must-learned words in their writing pads. Other information, such as pronunciation, usages, phrasal verbs and idioms, synonyms, antonyms, etc., or extra word knowledge of associated lexical items are not compulsory in this assignment. In addition, the English teachers asked their students to bring LASECD to the class from time to time to accomplish in-class activities by finding out key information from their reference materials. By means of glossary and vocabulary learning activities, students could practice their dictionary look-up methods as well as have hands-on experience of viewing the richness of information in dictionaries. Hence, the overall results shown in Table 3 are somehow predictable. As to the least frequently looked-up information, grammar exercises in the learner's handbook had been gone through in the beginning weeks of the first semester in 2011 as part of the instruction of using LASECD.

The third research question: "How do students perceive LASECD?" was measured through 9 items (Question 19~27) in the questionnaire and the results are presented in Table 4.

| Item | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------|---|------|------|------|------|-----|
| 19 | The layout of LASECD is designed properly. | 11.6 | 51.7 | 34.7 | 1.4 | 0.7 |
| 20 | The amount of vocabulary in LASECD is sufficient. | 15.6 | 50.3 | 29.9 | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| 21 | LASECD provides sufficient user guidance. | 13.7 | 57.5 | 26.7 | 2.1 | 0 |
| 22 | LASECD provides sufficient grammar exercises to familiarize users with this dictionary. | 9.7 | 44.1 | 39.3 | 6.9 | 0 |
| 23 | The picture dictionary of LASECD is interesting. | 8.2 | 34.7 | 43.5 | 12.9 | 0.7 |
| 24 | The experience of using LASECD is enjoyable. | 10.2 | 38.8 | 42.9 | 8.2 | 0 |
| 25 | The LASECD contents suffice my current needs. | 13.6 | 52.4 | 30.6 | 3.4 | 0 |
| 26 | LASECD defines words clearly. | 15.6 | 49 | 33.3 | 2 | 0 |
| 27 | I can easily search an entry in LASECD. | 15.6 | 45.6 | 35.4 | 3.4 | 0 |

(1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=somewhat agree; 4=disagree; 5=strongly disagree)

Table 4: Perceptions of LASECD (response frequencies in percentages)

As Table 4 suggests, merely 2% or so of the respondents (strongly) disagreed with the layout of LASECD, while approximately nine tenths of the participants (95.9% and 97.9%) responded positively toward the dictionary contents including its amount of vocabulary and user guide. As for grammar exercises, 93.1% of the students (9.7% strongly agreed, 44.1% agreed, and 39.3% somewhat agreed) reported their agreement

with the importance of workbook in the learner's handbook in assisting their familiarity with LASECD. In terms of picture dictionary in item 23, a slightly lower percentage (i.e. 86.4%) here might respond to the second least frequently looked-up information in LASECD as shown above in Table 3. Whether or not the picture dictionary is interesting, this finding may be a suggestive remark implying that teachers can refer students to this picture dictionary when the topics in the textbooks are relevant to it such as body parts, action verbs, foods, musical instruments, sounds, directions, sports, and so on. After all, through careful selection by the publisher, the vocabulary words in the picture dictionary must be high frequency words used in real life, and can be learned systematically and collectively. As Schmitt (2000) suggests, learners use visual images to create a strong connection with the word and its meaning to strengthen their memory of this word. In this term, the picture dictionary in LASECD can be a starting point and a likely role model for students to make individualized picture dictionary through drawing and taking notes in their own glossary. The findings also indicate that more than 90% of the respondents claimed their enjoyable experience of using LASECD. Furthermore, 96.6%, 98%, and 96.6% of the respondents at least agreed that the contents of LASECD can satisfy their current needs, and provide them with clear definitions of words as well as easy identification of an entry.

In response to the third research question, the results of the student questionnaire demonstrated that these comparatively low achievement students responded favorably to LASECD overall. Not only might such perceptions establish grounds for the students' future consistent use of LASECD but also indicate that LASECD has achieved user-friendliness to some extent to this group of students.

The fourth research question: "How do students perceive the helpfulness of using bilingualized dictionaries in learning English?" was answered through an open-ended question (item 28). Based on their experience, the respondents were told to include as much information as they thought necessary to answer the question: "How does LASECD help you learn English?" The findings are presented in Table 5.

| Item | Responses | Number of responses |
|------|---|---------------------|
| 28 | Positive comments: | |
| | Overall word information | 22 |
| | Related to word information | |
| | - Usages | 13 |
| | - Synonyms | 5 |
| | - Pronunciation | 4 |
| | - Example sentences | 2 |
| | Extended learning | 19 |
| | Longer retention of words | 15 |
| | Clear definitions | 13 |
| | English definitions | 12 |
| | Chinese equivalents | 7 |
| | Amount of vocabulary | 7 |
| | Easy to search an entry | 6 |
| | Pictures in the dictionary | 2 |
| | High frequency words | 1 |
| | Useful when there aren't any electronic | 1 |

| dictionaries | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 28 | Other comments: |
| | Not helpful 12 |
| | Demotivation for using LASECD 1 |
| | Not portable 1 |

Table 5. Comments on the helpfulness of LASECD in learning English

In Table 5, most of the comments were made on overall word information in LASECD. For example, one student reported “I think information is more detailed in LASECD than in my pocket electronic dictionary. I can easily find out complete information, such as thesaurus, opposite words, past tense, etc. This dictionary helps me a lot!” Related to word information, some students mentioned specific aspects of word knowledge in response to the question, such as usages (N=13), synonyms (N=5), pronunciation (N=2), and example sentences (N=2). In addition, some students confirmed their extended learning. For example, one of them reported that “I can learn much more when I use the dictionary because there is always other information I didn’t expected to learn.”

Another student stated that “one English word can bring about many phrasal verbs and usages to help me learn more. Good!” In terms of longer retention of words, some students commented on this advantage of using dictionaries in paper form to learn English. As one of them reported, “... looking up English words in the paper dictionary can enhance my memory of them.” Another student reported, “Using the bilingualized dictionary and taking notes in my glossary is the best way to memorize new words. Besides, word information is full and rich.” 13 comments were made on the explicitness of definitions provided in LASECD. 12 comments were concerned with the helpfulness of English definitions of words in learning English, such as “I can learn how to explain a word in English,” “There are no perfect Chinese translations of English words. So I want to know how to define a word in English,” and “English definitions help me better understand example sentences, synonyms and opposite words.” Other opinions were also proposed regarding Chinese equivalents, the sufficient amount of vocabulary in LASECD, search of an entry with ease, colored pictures, and commonly-used words in the questionnaire.

However, a number of students made quite different comments on the helpfulness of using LASECD in English learning. Most of their comments presented the tendency stating that instead of using LASECD they chose to use electronic dictionaries, including pocket electronic dictionary and internet dictionary, when looking up English words. Therefore, they reported that they did not benefit much from this reference book. Furthermore, one student mentioned the issue of portability of paper dictionaries. Limited convenience of paper dictionaries has been reported in many studies (e.g. Ryu, 2006). This finding is not unexpected at all here. Overall, the majority of the comments generated from item 28 shed light onto the effectiveness of using LASECD in learning English in the present study. The students were aware of the extent to which their dictionary use could assist them in learning English words. All in all, L2 can only be acquired through learners’ own efforts. As long as they would like to involve themselves into this learning task, they could gain a great deal from this language learning resource.

Lastly, item 29 (i.e. “Do you think it is necessary to learn how to use LASECD correctly before you start to use it?”) was used to elicit some ideas from students concerning the necessity of advance training or exercises of dictionary use to find the answer to the fifth research question: “How do students perceive the instruction of dictionary use?” 104 students ticked ‘yes,’ 18 students ticked ‘no,’ and 25 chose not to comment. Among these 122 respondents who checked the box, quite a few students stated their reasons in the questionnaires. Most of their responses demonstrated the importance of such guidance given in the beginning of their journey of using dictionaries. For example, dictionary users need to know English words are listed alphabetically in the dictionary, what symbols like [U] and [T] or abbreviations like ‘BrE’ and ‘phr v’ stand for, why some words are printed in bold colors or highlighted, and so on. Such knowledge can assist users in quick search of English words and interpreting and identifying information correctly when they look up words in the dictionary. Even though almost 83% of the respondents confirmed the importance of advance dictionary-use training, few students disagreed with this kind of dictionary use training, and stated that “I already know how to use the dictionary,” “we should learn how to use the dictionary on our own rather than learn it in class,” and “we don’t need to learn it particularly.” In response to item 29, the majority of these written comments present the overall outlook toward the instruction of dictionary use as useful, helpful, and indispensable.

Conclusion

The present study attempts to find out the dictionary look-up behavior of comparatively low achievement level college students in the research context. In accordance with their English proficiency, LASECD was selected and used in the Level II English Course to help students arrive at better English vocabulary learning in the academic year 2011-12. English teachers guided their students in using this dictionary in the beginning of the fall semester. Students then came to get familiar with dictionary use through completing learning activities, exercises, and assignments in their English classes. After eight months of dictionary use (four months in Semester One and Semester Two), the questionnaires were attributed to 147 students to generate their opinions of using LASECD and their perceptions toward this dictionary and its helpfulness in learning English.

The overall results of this survey suggest that these comparatively low achievement students could benefit from LASECD in learning English and started to build up the habit of dictionary use when looking up English words. Although less than 40% of the students would use LASECD at home, the results suggest that 76.4% of these LASECD users found this dictionary helpful in studying English. It is a given fact that when users gain positive experience and hold positive inclinations toward this reference input, they will be more likely to maintain their user habits and consequently expand their bank of English vocabulary. Thus, students’ views on LASECD might respond to their preference style of vocabulary learning, which may make suggestions to their teachers in subsequent course design.

In this research, we can see that Chinese equivalents are the most frequently looked up information in the dictionary. As far as this group of students is concerned, perhaps it is not necessary to forbid learners at this low English proficiency level from looking up Chinese equivalents of unknown or unfamiliar English words. Rather, teachers can

try to transfer students' attention to word information interpreted in the target language (i.e. English definitions), and guide them to actually employ definitions through making reference to example sentences suggested in dictionaries or making new, correct sentences. As Baxter (1980, p. 334) argues, "(L2) definition is an alternative to the use of lexical items." Being able to define words in English can not only heighten students' confidence in using the language but also enhance their holistic understanding of new vocabulary. Hunt (2009) also suggests that consulting both L1 and L2 information might lead to students' better retention of word knowledge than when students gain access only to L1 information. When learning a new word this way, the deeper mental processing is more likely to help students remember the word as one of the research results has been discussed earlier. This benefit can sort of outweigh the elongated time period of consulting words in book dictionaries.

Despite its strength points, the publisher might take the necessity of advance training sessions and exercises into consideration before students start to use dictionaries independently. Such guidance can be arranged at the initial stage of the English course in order to help those who have not understood the correct concept of word information, who have yet acquired correct knowledge of dictionary use, and who have never been aware of this vocabulary learning strategy. In addition to teachers' instruction and the learner's handbook which has been compiled in LASECD, there can be other possibilities of making this reference book more user-friendly and convenient. For example, a teacher's book can be designed to provide instructors with suggestions for dictionary-use activities or classroom assessment to make sure if students all have learned how to use LASECD accurately and efficiently.

Professional guidance and useful exercises need to go hand in hand in boosting students' understanding of how LASECD can help them learn English better. As Hartmann (1991, p. 9) suggests, "it is not enough just to recommend dictionaries to our students. To help them reap the benefits of good dictionaries, they need to be taught explicitly how to use them." By revealing the relation between dictionary use, classroom vocabulary behavior, and students' success in finding words to meet their communicative needs, this is an important issue both for the publisher and instructors to think when they face low level English learners and dictionary users.

References

- Atkins, B. T. S., & Varantola, K. (1997). Monitoring dictionary use. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 10(1), 1-45.
- Atkins, B. T. S., & Varantola, K. (Eds.) (1998). Using dictionaries: Studies of dictionaries use by learners and translators. *Lexicographica Series Major 88*. Tübingen: M Niemeyer.
- Baxter, J. (1980). The dictionary and vocabulary behavior: A single word or a handful? *TESOL Quarterly*, 14, 754-760.
- Béjoint, H. (2002). *An introduction of modern lexicography*. Beijing: Foreign Teaching and Research Press.
- Béjoint, H. B., & Mouli, A. (1987). The place of the dictionary in an EFL programme. In A. P. Cowie (Ed.), *The dictionary and the language learner* (pp. 381-392). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Fan, M. Y. (2000). The dictionary look-up behavior of Hong Kong students: A large-scale survey. *Education Journal*, 28(1), 123-138.
- Fan, M., & Xiao, D. (2006). A survey of EFL learners' use of English dictionaries: Toward understanding features of the good dictionary user. *Yantai Normal University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 23, 112-114.
- Hartmann, R. R. K. (1991, March 6). What's the use of learners' dictionaries? A lecture given at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.
- Hartman, R. R. K. (1994). The learner's dictionary—Unilingual or interlingual? In L. Flowerdew & K. K. Tong (Eds.), *Entering text* (pp. 239-250). Hong Kong: The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Language Centre.
- Hulstijn, J. H. (1993). When do foreign-language readers look up the meaning of unfamiliar words? The influence of task and learner variables. *Modern Language Journal*, 77, 139-147.
- Hulstijn, J., Hollander, M., & Grenadius, T. (1996). Incidental vocabulary learning by advanced foreign language students: The influence of marginal glosses, dictionary use, and recurrence of unknown words. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80, 327-339.
- Hunt, A. (2009). Dictionaries and vocabulary learning: The roles of L1 and L2 information. *外國語學部紀要創刊號*, 13-25.
- Knight, S. (1994). Dictionary use while reading: The effects on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition for students of different verbal abilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 285-99.

Laufer, B., & Hadar, L. (1997). Assessing the effectiveness of monolingual, bilingual and bilingualized dictionaries in the comprehension and production of new words. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81(2), 189-196.

Longman Active Study English Chinese Dictionary. (2001). (4th ed.). London: Longman.

Lou, X., & Li, L. (2012). A survey on English majors' dynamic trends of dictionaries using. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 2(2), 79-83.

Ryu, J. (2006). Dictionary use by Korean EFL college students. *Language and Information Society*, 7, 83-114.

Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shi, B., & Pan, P. (2005). Analysis of a survey on English learning dictionary using. *Journal of Shanxi Coal-Mining Administrators College*, 3, 78-79.

Summer, D. (1988). The role of dictionaries in language learning. In R. Carter & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary and language teaching* (pp.111-125). London: Longman.

Tomaszczyk, J. (1979). Dictionaries: Users and uses. *Glottodidactica*, 12, 103-119.

Wang, Y. (2007). On use of dictionary in English learning at different stages. *Theory and Practice of Education*, 27, 63-64.

Appendix A: Contents of LASECD (one page taken from the dictionary)

766

mobile
 a shop etc in a vehicle which is driven from place to place 流動商店/流動攤位/診所等
mobile² /'mɒbi:l/ n [C] 1 a mobile phone 移動電話; 手機 2 a decoration made of small objects that hang down on wires or strings and move when air blows around them (裝飾的) 風鈴飾物
mobile 'həʊm n [C] 1 84 a large caravan which always stays in the same place and is used as a house [英] (固定在某地居住用的) 旅行拖車 2 AmE a type of house made of metal, that can be pulled by a vehicle and moved to another place (美) (可用車輛拖拉的) 活動住房
MOBILE PHONE n [C] Bt a telephone that you can carry with you and use anywhere [英] 1 移動電話; 手機 2 手提電話



To use a mobile phone, you first **switch it on**.
 ☆ 使用手機時先要把它打開 (switch on).
 Then you can either **call** someone or **listen to messages** that people have left you on your voicemail. You can also read **text messages** (written messages) or **text** someone (=send them a text message). ☆ 然後你可以給某人打電話 (call someone) 或收聽別人在你語音信箱 (voicemail) 裡的留言 (listen to messages). 你也可以看短訊 (text messages) 或發短訊 (text someone).
 → TELEPHONE

mobility /mɒ'bi:lɪti/ n [U] 1 the ability to move easily from one job, area, or social class to another 流動性; 易變性; **social mobility** 社會階層的流動性 2 the ability to move easily 流動性; 靈活性的 **elderly people with limited mobility** 行動不便的老人
mobilize also 文件 -ise Bt [英] /'mɒbl.aɪz; 'mɒb.laɪz/ v [T] to encourage people to support something in an active way 組織; 鼓動; 動員; **a campaign to mobilize support for the strike** 動員大家支持罷工的宣傳活動 2 [T] if a country mobilizes, or mobilizes its army, it prepares to fight a war (國家等) 動員起來
mobilization /mɒ'bi:l.aɪz.ə'n/ n [C,U]
mobilizer /'mɒb.aɪz.ə/ n [C] especially AmE a member of a criminal group [尤美] 犯罪團成員; 匪徒
mobile /'mɒk; mɒk/ v [T] to try to make someone see sth stupid, for example by copying

them or saying unkind things about them 罵人; 嘲弄; 'Are you afraid?' he **mocked**. '你害怕了?' 他嘲笑道。— mockingly adv
mock² /mɒk/ v [T] (only before noun) 使用貶名詞; not real, but intended to be very similar to something real 假裝的; 模仿的; **a mock interview** 練習面試 [英] **mock surprise/horror etc** She shook her head in **mock disgust**. 她裝出厭惡的樣子搖了搖頭。
mock³ n [C] Bt a school examination, taken as practice for an official examination [英] 模擬考試
mockery /'mɒk.ər.i/ n [U] 1 **make a mockery of sth** to make a plan, system, organization etc seem useless or stupid 使...得無用/無效; **His release makes a mockery of the law**. 他的釋放是對法律的嘲諷。 2 [U] when someone laughs at someone or something or tries to make them seem stupid 嘲笑; 嘲弄
'mock-up n [C] a model of something, made before the real thing is built, or made for a film, show etc 實體模型; 實物模型
modal verb /'mɒd.l/ 'vɜ:b/ also 'vɜ:b/ n [C] technical a verb such as 'can', 'might', or 'must' that is used with other verbs to show ideas such as possibility, permission, or intention (修辭) 情態動詞
mode /mɒd/ n [C] formal a particular way of behaving, living, or doing something [正式] 方式; 方法; **a-of different modes of transport** 不同的交通方式
MODEL /'mɒd.l/ 'mɒd.i/ n [C] 1 a small copy of a building, vehicle, machine etc, especially one that can be made from separate parts 模型; **-of a model of the Eiffel Tower** 艾菲爾鐵塔的模型 [Simon spends hours **making models**. 西蒙花很多時間製作模型。] 1 **a working model** (=one with parts that move) of a steam engine 蒸汽機活動模型 2 someone whose job is to show clothes, hair styles etc by wearing them at fashion shows or for photographs (專業模特; 裝師等的) 模特兒; **a fashion model** 時裝模特兒 3 a particular type or design of a vehicle or machine (汽車或機器) 的款式; 型號; **the latest (newest) model from BMW** 寶馬推出的最新型號 4 a computer representation or scientific description of something (用於模擬實物的) 電腦模型; 電腦模擬; 科學模型; 科學模式; **-of computer models of climate change** 氣候變化的電腦模型 5 someone or something which people want to copy because they are successful or have good qualities 模範; 典範; **-for This approach may serve as a model** (=be used as a model)

for projects in other cities. 這種方法可以為其他城市發展項目提供借鑑。
 someone who is employed by an artist or photographer to be painted or photographed (畫家或攝影師的) 模特兒
 → ROLE MODEL

model² /'mɒd.l/ n [U] 1 a copy of a plane, train etc, especially one that you can make (飛機/火車等) 模型 2 a model student, wife etc does everything exactly as they should 模範的; a model employee 模範僱員
model³ v modelled, modelling Bt [英]; modelled, modeling AmE [美] [T] to wear clothes at a fashion show or in magazine photographs in order to show them to people 當模特兒; She models for Elle magazine. 她為《她》雜誌做模特兒。 2 **model yourself on sb** Bt [英]; **model yourself after sb** AmE [美] to try to be like someone because you admire them 以某人為榜樣; Pete models himself on Elvis Presley. 皮特以艾爾維斯利為榜樣。 3 **be modelled on sth** to be designed in a way that copies another system or way of doing something 模仿(效法); 仿製(某事物); a constitution modelled on the French system 以法國體制為藍本的憲法
modelling /'mɒd.lɪŋ/ n [U] the work of a fashion model 時裝模特兒的工作; a career in modelling 模特兒生涯
modem /'mɒd.əm; 'mɒd.əm/ n [C] a piece of electronic equipment used for sending information along telephone wires from one computer to another 調制解調器
moderate¹ /'mɒd.ər.ət/ 'mɒd.ər.ət/ adj 1 not very big or very small, very hot or very cold, very fast or very slow etc 中等的; 不過分的; 適度的; **Cook over a moderate heat**. 用中火煮。 2 having opinions or beliefs, especially about politics, that are not extreme 不偏激的; 溫和的; 穩健的; moderate Republicans 溫和的共和黨人; —moderately adv
moderate² /'mɒd.ər.ət/ 'mɒd.ər.ət/ v [T] formal to make something less extreme, or to become less extreme [正式] (使) 和緩; (使) 減緩; 克制; The students moderated their demands. 學生們降低了他們的要求。
moderate³ /'mɒd.ər.ət/ 'mɒd.ər.ət/ n [C] someone whose opinions or beliefs, especially about politics, are not extreme (尤指政治上) 的溫和派
moderation /'mɒd.ə'reɪ.ʃən; 'mɒd.ə'reɪ.ʃən/ n [U] 1 **in moderation** if you do something in moderation, you do not do it too much 有節制地; 適度地; He drinks only in moderation. 他只

767

modest
 謙虛; 樸素 2 [U] formal sensible control of your behaviour and ideas [正式] (行為和思想上的) 節制; 克制; 中庸
MODERN /'mɒd.ər.n/ 'mɒd.ər.n/ adj 1 (only before noun) 屬於最新時期; belonging to the present time or most recent time [= contemporary] 現代的; 當代的; **in the modern world** 在當今世界 | **people in modern society** 現代社會中的人們 | **one of the greatest events of modern times** 現代的大事之一 2 using the most recent designs, methods, ideas etc. 新式的; 現代的; **the use of modern technology** 現代技術的應用 | **advances in modern medicine** 現代醫學的進步 | The school is very modern in its approach to sex education. 這所學校的性教育理念非常新穎。

MODERNIZATION
 the latest 最近的; 最新的; the very latest mobile phones 最新型號的手機 | the latest summer fashions 最新的夏裝
up-to-date - used about modern equipment or methods (設備或方法) 現代的; 新式的; **up-to-date training methods** 最新式的培訓方式
advanced - used about modern weapons, machines, and systems (武器、機器等) 先進的; **an advanced security system** 先進的保安系統
high-tech/high-tech - using very modern electronic equipment and machines, especially computers, high-tech 高科技的; **high-tech graphics** 高科技排版圖
 → NEW

3 (only before noun) 僅用於最新時期; modern art, music, literature etc uses styles that are very different from traditional styles (藝術、音樂、文學等) 當代風格的; 現代派的; **modern dance** 現代舞團
 —modernity /mɒ'dɜ:n.ə.ti; mɒ'dɜ:n.ə.ti/ n [U] a conflict between tradition and modernity 傳統和現代的衝突
modern-day adj (only before noun) 僅用於多時期; existing now, not in the past 現代的; 當代的; **modern-day Egypt** 現代埃及
modernize also 文件 -ise Bt [英] /'mɒd.ə.n.aɪz; 'mɒd.ə.n.aɪz/ v [T] to make something more modern, or to become more modern (使) 現代化; **plans to modernize the factory** 工廠現代化計劃 —modernization /'mɒd.ə.n.aɪ.zə.tʃən; 'mɒd.ə.n.aɪ.zə.tʃən/ n [C,U]
modern languages n [plural] 被(英) 法(法) 德(德) 俄(俄) 日(日) 韓(韓) 等語言 that are spoken now such as French or German, studied as a subject at school or university [英] (作為一門課程的) 現代語言
modest /'mɒd.ɪst; 'mɒd.ɪst/ adj 1 approving someone who is modest does not talk in a