

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
(Graduate Programme)**

**A Study of Dictionary Use Strategies of Grade-12 students:
The Case of a Government Preparatory School in Wollo**

**BY
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Abbreviations and Acronyms used in the study

- BD** Bilingual Dictionary
- EFL** English as a foreign language
- ELT** English language teaching
- DUSQ** Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire
- LDOCE** Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
- L1 - L2 dictionary:** Dictionary which translates users’ first language word into English.
- L2 - L1 dictionary:** Dictionary which translates English entries into users’ first language.
- Look-up Q-1** Dictionary look-up strategies questionnaire 1
- Look-up Q-2** Dictionary look-up strategies questionnaire 2
- MLD** Monolingual Learners’ Dictionary
- OALD** The Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary

Abstract

The study explores preparatory students' dictionary use strategies for written reception and production activities and types of dictionary they usually use. For the purpose of the study grade-12 students from a government preparatory school in Bati, Wollo, have been selected as research subjects. Three different questionnaires and two interviews were used to collect data for the study.

The results show that the students have generally positive attitude towards dictionary use in their studies; however, it is found helpful far more frequently for receptive purposes. The findings here suggest that many students may not use the dictionary to look up every unknown word from their readings. Nevertheless, the students may not sometimes use dictionaries well to improve their comprehension and vocabulary development through reading. On the other hand, the relevant data concerning 'look-up strategy' use indicate that students do not employ important search strategies required while consulting standard learners' dictionaries for meaning. With regard to the productive use, the results show that very often students do not utilize dictionary use to improve their vocabulary use in some tasks. They sometimes check meanings of vocabulary needed to use for production; however, much of the other dictionary information is rarely made good use of for the same purpose. The study indicates that when grade-12 students consult, they use (L2 -L1 type) translating dictionaries more often. The English learners' dictionary is only second choice to many students while some students use such dictionary very rarely. The English language teachers seem to be aware of the inadequacy of the students' dictionary strategies for the level and the importance of helping students in using and choosing dictionaries effectively. However, since it is not specified in the syllabus, and due to lack of relevant resources and experience for preparing and presenting activities, the teachers are unable to provide any guidance.

The study suggests that more attention should be given to improving students' control of dictionary related strategies in ELT. It is evident that preparatory level students need to be able to get information in order to learn new vocabulary or to cope with unfamiliar words while they are working on the language skills, or using the foreign language to study their school subjects. Students may employ dictionary use in various ways to facilitate their learning; they may also differ in their level of awareness and application of appropriate strategies. Furthermore, there is much evidence from the present study that many grade-12 students may be unable to get sufficient benefit from dictionary use and they may also face difficulties in using appropriate strategies. Providing instruction in dictionary use strategies can help many learners. This is particularly important for students in language related programme of instructions and thus the teaching of dictionary use strategies for reception and production purposes is needed in the EFL syllabus. Preparatory students should be helped to use English learners' dictionaries more confidently.

Chapter One

1.1 Background

Vocabulary knowledge is central to language users in general and is of critical importance to the typical language learner. Furthermore, achieving thorough vocabulary knowledge is a goal that may never be reached, even by intelligent adults because there are always words that are not known. This problem becomes even more serious in EFL contexts where learners have less input to develop their lexical competence to adequate level so as to use the language for various purposes. EFL learners would often need to be able to use various strategies in order to get information about words. Dictionary use is one of the options to gain information about what a given unknown vocabulary means and how it is used.

Indeed, the dictionary is generally believed to be one of the most widely used source of information about the English language by many learners (Bejoint, 1981; Baxter, 1980; Allen, 1983) and even users of English as a second language (Carter et al, 1988). Furthermore, the use of dictionary is not restricted to the EFL contexts as Howard Jackson (1988) observed. Summers (1988) also confirms that “the use of dictionaries is generally expected and actively encouraged in most native-speaker schools and colleges in the UK and USA” (pp.114).

Many scholars assert that the teacher can not and should not always help students with vocabulary problems. After students have reached a certain stage, they have to rely more on their own means and efforts to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary. The dictionary has been considered as “passport to independence” (Allen, 1983) which the EFL learner could use to gather information. Many ELT experts confirm Allen’s point. For instance, Allwright (1990) strongly suggests that the ability and willingness to consult the dictionary should be considered as “crucial to independence training”. Lewis (1993) states that learners should be able to exploit the dictionary “both for their immediate short term needs, and as an important learning strategy for use after any formal course.” In addition, Carter & McCarthy (1988:52) also described the value of the dictionary as “one of the few books which are retained after following a language course.” According to Harmer (2001) the dictionary can help learners to become “their own language researchers” by finding out information by themselves; they increasingly become more independent and self-reliant, and develop as autonomous learners, (see also Sheerin, 1986; Summers, 1988; Parrott, 1993; Bowen et al, 1994).

There are other valid reasons for giving serious considerations for the issues of dictionary use. Systematic application of dictionary use in combination with other strategies can make important contribution for the development of the EFL student linguistic resources. The learning of any word is a cumulative process (Nation, 2001). Even when a new word is deduced in some way, this cannot be expected to be learned in one meeting because it is only by repeated exposure that a word can enter a person's active vocabulary, whether in the first or subsequent language acquisition (Summers, 1988; Allen, 1983). In other words, the use of dictionary can be considered as part of the on-going process of vocabulary learning. For instance, when the reader consults English learner's dictionary to check a word from a textual input, the dictionary provides further exposure for the word in other context, with different collocations and constructions (Summers, 1988). The learner meets the word first in the text (the contextually bound use) and then the prototypical use given in the dictionary (Baxter, 1980). The user may gain a small amount from any one dictionary look-up, but this information may usefully add to what is already known and may be added to in later meetings with the word in variety of ways (Nation, 2001).

Again, it is accepted that the learning of word occurs across a range of different learning conditions (Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996). It is pointed out that intentional and incidental learning are complementary activities each one enhancing the learning that comes from the other. And as one source of information about words, dictionary use is considered as a kind of language focused learning (Nation, 2001:296), which may valuably contribute to L2 vocabulary acquisition, (Paribakht et al, 2006; Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995). Indeed, direct learning and teaching of vocabulary is now an accepted practice in language pedagogy because it has some important role to play for vocabulary development.

Many scholars, (such as Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Summers, 1988; Urquhart et al, 1998) assert that knowledge of a word is not an absolute but rather a continuum. Summers (1988:115) further points out that there is a cline of acquisition, as there is a cline of need, ranging from a minimal idea of the typical context of the word through to very comprehensive capability. In other words, information about L2 vocabulary may be sought at various levels, depending on a range of factors. The EFL learner may encounter low-frequency or "throwaway" word whose meaning could not be derived from the context, poly-words which have many shifting meanings, phrasal verbs, noun compounds, etc., which cause students widespread problems in the decoding sense. On the other hand, the learner may need to find out about words which have high utility across disciplines and thus detailed information may be needed to retain for later use. In many cases, dictionary use may sometimes prove

effective and efficient strategy for the particular purposes (Nation, 2001; Gu et al, 1996; Allen, 1983; Sesnan, 1997).

The role of dictionary use in academic contexts (i.e., for students in English medium schools) is even more significant because academic language may be particularly difficult for less English proficient students. One major cause of this problem is related to vocabulary. In fact, some scholars particularly consider “vocabulary knowledge as the single most important area of second language competence regarding academic achievement” (Saille-Trokia, 1984 in Jordan, 1997). Learners in such contexts also take L2 vocabulary seriously (Walker, 1987; de Lopez, 1987). Furthermore, many scholars would agree that as the material which is read becomes increasingly difficult, greater reliance will have to be placed on dictionaries to cope with a large vocabulary burden (Bright and McGregor, 1977; Carter & McCarthy, 1988). In those contexts, there are not only many new words to learn but there will also be a lot of new learning for many words (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983).

For the EFL students who have to read to learn information through the foreign language, successful dictionary use is particularly important. It can allow less proficient learners to increase their coverage (of the texts) which is required for high degree of comprehension. According to Nation (2001) the reader may need to know 95% of the running words in a text for reasonable comprehension. When the number of unknown words in a reading text is more than few, the reader’s overall understanding is based on guesswork at the expense of precise understanding (Swaffar et al, 1991; Nuttal, 1982). On the other hand, the reading text might give clues to less familiar words; however, when the student needs information for more productive purposes, the dictionary may be the only help available (Summers, 1988; Jackson, 1988). In fact, dictionary use may not reveal all there is to know about words or it may not even be the easiest source of language knowledge. However, many assert that the ability to use dictionaries judiciously, in conjunction with other strategies, is an important learning strategy which can provide much needed linguistic assistance as the students seek to become successful through the medium of the second language (Jordan, 1997; McDonough et al, 1993; Robinson, 1991; O’Malley et al, 1990).

Dictionaries are produced as language improvement devices which can provide access to so many words and often so much information about them. However, in spite of its high utility for the learners and perhaps also its prevalent use among many EFL learners, dictionary use has not received sufficient attention in ELT in terms of instruction in strategy teaching (Nesi, 1999; Lewis, 1993; Summers, 1988; Jordan, 1997). Teachers avoid directly dealing with the relevant issues in class. The students are left to choose and use such resources for

themselves, a situation which can be inadequate to make it productive for learning. Also students commit considerable time to dictionaries, and if unguided this can have an adverse effect on learning (Baxter, 1980; Bright & McGregor, 1977; Nuttal, 1982).

In recent years, however, writers from the many different directions assert that the learners' should be instructed in dictionary use so that learners can get the best advantage from such activities (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983; Lewis, 1993; Bright et al, 1977; Allwright, 1990; Partington, 1998; Summers, 1988; Harmer, 2001; Venkateswaran, 1995; Carter et al, 1988; Gouws, 1987). This is also reflected in the various books, articles, etc. aimed at teachers, which provide practical advice on teaching helpful strategies related to the use of dictionaries. Many standard textbooks also present learners not only with new words whose meanings that learners should acquire but also various dictionary activities to improve students' skills in using such linguistic resources to expand their vocabulary by themselves.

Given the importance of dictionary use in enabling learners to deal with foreign vocabulary by themselves, a precise understanding of how well the students utilize it is needed to inform instruction. The present study, therefore, explores grade-12 students' application of strategies related to dictionary use with mainly written reception and production tasks and considers the implications of this for instructions of pre-college/university students.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

One of the main objectives of EFL instruction at the fourth cycle of education (grade 11-12) is the development of the skills required for success in education at school and particularly at tertiary level. The development of the students' ability to gather information through the use of dictionaries is particularly important in contexts where students have to study other disciplines through English. It can sometimes play valuable role as students study in their own time or complete assignments in the foreign language. Many ELT experts assert that EFL students as language users need to know how to consult and use dictionaries effectively and that the training in proper use of the dictionary should be considered as one element of study skills training. However, the situation in our preparatory schools indicates no sign of systematic training of students in the proper dictionary use for comprehension or production of L2 texts.

The preparatory students often need to be able to get information about foreign vocabulary encountered in some reception activities or needed to complete some production tasks. It is widely observed that when the students are asked to read critically, their limited

English vocabulary knowledge often becomes major cause of frustration and hindrance. Their inadequate vocabulary affects both their comprehension of texts and it also influences their ability to accurately guessing meanings from context and that in turn aggravates the problems related to the development of their reading skills. Moreover, while working in the target school the investigator had observed that many students spent a lot of time and effort on some dictionaries. However, their self-initiated effort often appeared to have little effect in terms of improving their vocabulary deficiency.

The students' lexical problems were even more complicated when they were asked to produce some writing assignments. They faced great difficulties in using appropriate lexis when they were asked to write more carefully. Dictionary use is obviously one of the main sources of information that students can use to tackle lexical problems more independently. However, it was often seen that the students had little idea how they could access information in dictionaries to improve their use of L2 vocabulary in some production activities. Especially English learners' dictionaries contain various types of encoding information which could not be found in many books. However, the researcher suspected that many preparatory students might not employ dictionary use effectively for productive purposes. The prevalence of inappropriate use of vocabulary, wrong level of formality, incorrectly or unidiomatically used words in their works would reflect not only their lack of adequate L2 vocabulary knowledge, but it could also indicate that dictionary use had very limited utility for the students to improve their written performance.

On the other hand, despite its usefulness to the learners in various ways, dictionary use is not often seen as an aid in ELT for the promotion of the language skills by allowing learners to improve their vocabulary use in some activities. As if the use of dictionaries by the EFL learner were a big offence, it has sometimes been actively discouraged. In some cases, it is considered as too easy a solution. At other times successful application of the dictionary is taken as something that can be acquired easily without sufficient guided practice to make it productive for leaning. Thus, any forms of discussion on the issues of dictionary use have often been avoided in EFL class.

In short, dictionary use is one valuable means which allows the EFL learner to deal with less familiar L2 vocabulary more independently. Appropriate dictionary use can provide enormous benefits to students in FL medium schools. Moreover, the potential value of dictionary use for many EFL students depends upon various factors. Many writers on language learning and teaching note the complex nature of dictionary use. The user needs to have the skills and knowledge required for the use of the strategy to facilitate learning. While

disciplined dictionary use may promote autonomous learning, unskillful dictionary use may have an adverse effect on learning language as well as content. Some dictionaries are also considered more useful; others less helpful for the EFL learners who have reached certain stage. Thus, EFL students are expected to make informed decisions in their use and choice of dictionaries to get the best advantage out of such activities. Yet as far as dictionary use is concerned, our preparatory students are often left on their own and very little is known about how the students perceive and use EFL dictionaries for reception and production purposes. Furthermore, it seems quite obvious that more information is needed about the students' dictionary use strategies.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to explore students' familiarity with the use of appropriate strategies in using dictionary for reception purposes, the extent to which they recognize and employ dictionary use for production purposes, and types of dictionary those grade-12 students utilize more regularly. To this end, the researcher has formulated the following leading questions to be answered in the course of the study.

1. Do preparatory-2 students employ appropriate strategies related to dictionary use for reception purposes? That is, do they carefully consider how and when to employ the dictionary to resolve lexical problems in the context of reading?
2. Do they recognize dictionary use as a valid strategy for production purposes? That is, do they utilize dictionary use for text production, mainly for writing purposes?
3. What types of dictionary do preparatory students use more frequently when they consult dictionaries? Do they employ monolingual learners' dictionaries or do they often rely on translating dictionaries?

The study, therefore, seeks to find the answers to the above questions.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is:

- To explore preparatory students' application of strategies related to dictionary use for reception and production purposes and the dictionary types frequently employed and to consider the implications of this for instructions in dictionary use strategies to help the students make optimal use of efficient resources to improve their vocabulary use and learning.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out whether the students employ appropriate look-up strategies for the use of standard learners' dictionaries to search meanings from a reading text.
- To assess how often they make relevant decisions for the use of dictionary by choosing important, frequent and useful words from reading texts to look up.
- To explore how often they employ dictionary use for text production, i.e., whether they utilize dictionary resources to improve their vocabulary use, mainly for writing.
- To determine the types of dictionary (i.e., English learners' dictionaries or bilingual dictionaries) the students employ more frequently.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study on the learners' awareness and application of strategies related to dictionary use would benefit both the learners and teachers. When the study is completed, the findings may help the teachers to become responsive to the needs of the students as dictionary users. It provides the necessary information about their students' problems related to dictionary use so that the teachers can prepare relevant diagnostic measures, which will be suggested as an implication of the study. Having worked as a teacher in the particular context, the researcher had observed that many students had various problems in the use of dictionaries in their studies. Thus understanding their major difficulties would allow the teachers to improve the learners' proficiency and confidence in using appropriate learners' dictionaries that are more helpful for their immediate and future learning needs.

The study would also help learners to identify their own needs as dictionary users and to make necessary changes with regard to their use and choice of dictionaries. Learners need to be aware of how discriminate use of the dictionary can improve their efficiency of vocabulary use and they also need to gain the knowledge which is required to use the strategy. On the other hand, when they realized the complex nature of dictionary use, they would try to be more systematic and better users of such linguistic resources.

The findings would provide valuable information for material designers by highlighting the relevance of incorporating activities on dictionary use in teaching materials. The EFL courses at target stage are intended to prepare learners for tertiary level studies where the learner would need to be able to successfully employ appropriate dictionaries in order to ease the linguistic demand in the context. Furthermore, the study may also serve as a spring board for further studies on the subject.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

As it is indicated in the introduction section, the dictionary has recently been given much more attention in language teaching to make the use of such resources more productive for learning. The major focus of attention has been the needs of the EFL learner and the importance of improving the learners' proficiency in the use of dictionaries. And based on ideas derived from research and insights gained as a result of class room experiences, a number of points have been proposed in the description of basic strategies related to dictionary use. These range from the selection/choice of which dictionary to have to when and how to use the dictionary for different purposes.

Gu and Johnson's (1996) model was developed as part of a research into EFL learners' use of English vocabulary learning strategies, and includes:-1/ dictionary strategy for comprehension, 2/ extended dictionary strategies, and 3/ looking up strategies. They also identified knowing when to use such sources as a key component of the strategy. Hilary Nesi's (1999) specification was based on research on the skills that are taught in language syllabuses and surveys of published materials, such as textbooks and dictionary guides. She identified forty skills that are required at various stages, such as before study, before dictionary consultation, locating entry information, interpreting entry information, recording entry information. Nation's (2001) model consists of two broad categories: dictionary use strategies *for receptive use* and *for productive use*. Nation's descriptions of the strategies involve the application of a number of sub-skills and some prior knowledge. Moreover, other scholars (Allen, 1983; Scholfield, 1982; Jordan, 1997; de Lopez, 1987) proposed similar descriptions mainly for the receptive use of dictionaries. Other description (by McAlpin, 1988; Thornbul et al, 1993) focus on broad areas that are related to finding, understanding, or using various kinds of information in monolingual dictionaries from the *Longman* and *Oxford* families respectively.

As can be seen from the above specifications, there are many overlaps in the descriptions. Moreover, most of the points in the first classifications as well as the latter descriptions of the skills for the use of the specific learners' dictionaries from the *Longman* and *Oxford* families could be included under Nation's (2001) two major categories: dictionary use strategies for reception and production. The former includes the points concerning how and when to use the dictionary in conjunction with reading activities. Skillful application of the dictionary with EFL reading activities requires the user to apply a range of strategies including those from reading and other areas. The latter (i.e., productive use) is also a complex process. However, the focus is mainly on the use of the various information categories in the

dictionary for production purposes. In addition, it has been proposed that in order to put their strategies in to practice, dictionary users have to recognize which sources are more helpful in providing necessary information for their learning needs. Therefore, the researcher has decided to focus on grade-12 students' application of dictionary related strategies mainly with reception (i.e., reading) and production (mainly writing) activities and to determine the dictionary type the target students employed on a regularly basis.

1.6 The Limitation of the Study

As stated earlier, many EFL learners in the education system may use dictionaries. The study would be more comprehensive if it was studied at all levels to examine how learners apply dictionary use strategies in their studies. However, this study is restricted to Grade-12 students of a government preparatory school due to scarcity of resources. Further research needs to be conducted with more comprehensive samples including at least junior, secondary, and tertiary levels. Students may also use their dictionaries in various ways. This study is restricted, however, to dictionaries use mainly with academically related written reception (i.e., reading) and production (mainly writing) tasks, or other integrative learning activities in the foreign language. In addition, dictionaries vary in the way they provide information about lexical items. Many of the skills involved in the actual look-up process are also relevant for searching meanings in many dictionaries; however, this study is restricted mainly to English learners' dictionaries that are available in the target school and many other places.

This study attempts to explore a broad view and in-depth information about the ways in which preparatory school students in the EFL context make use of the dictionary to assist their learning. However, students at other preparatory schools may have different educational background; for example, in some community or private schools, training in the proper use of reference materials, such as the dictionary, may be given in earlier grades. As a result, the researcher has some reservations that the profile which has emerged from this study might not reflect the situation in other preparatory schools. Nevertheless, this study yields valuable results that can help to identify major problems of students as dictionary users and it can provide rationale for teaching some of the important strategies which students in language related programs of instruction could use for many different tasks.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Bilingual dictionaries: these dictionaries usually translate target language words, i.e., English entries into the user's L₁, and in few cases, other bilingual dictionaries list L₁ words and give possible target language equivalencies. In addition to the basic written and spoken forms, some bilingual dictionaries also give some grammatical information about their entries, (e.g., part of speech & sometimes the type of verb/noun).

Dictionary look-up strategy: It is used as part of receptive use of the English learners' dictionary, and it covers the systematic application of a wide range of skills and techniques as well as some prior knowledge required to obtain the information from the dictionary quickly and accurately. It covers the steps required to solve possible problems at several stages of the look-up process, e.g., getting information from the context, rapidly locating the entry, interpreting code, selecting the correct explanation and understanding it. Most skills are also applicable for the productive use of the dictionary but it is used here in relation to the receptive use of dictionary, i.e., to look up meanings of lexical items from a reading text.

Dictionary use strategy (also dictionary use): It is one way of dealing with important language items and/or a form of information gathering procedure about L₂ vocabulary in order to reach a particular goal. It is intended to enhance one's learning or performance in some leaning task and it requires understanding when and how to employ the strategy to facilitate or advance one's learning.

Monolingual learners' dictionary: This is designed specifically for learners of English as other language and defines English entry items in simplified English. English-English learners' dictionaries, such as OALD & LDOCE also give examples of usage and many other pieces of information about entries. This is also referred here as *all-English learners' dictionary* or just *learners' dictionary*.

Productive use: It is the deliberate application of dictionary use to generate linguistic input (i.e., word form, meaning, or use) for some production activities, especially while doing or editing some writing work or while preparing for some oral presentations. It is a measure taken by the learner in order to find out about language for some production activities, (this strategy has often limited use in fluency focused writing activities).

Receptive use: It is the deliberate application of the dictionary to interpret lexical items in textual input; it largely involves looking up the meanings of words while reading a text for information, (or as a post reading activity) to focus on some of the new / important language items from a reading text, especially when deriving the meaning of the word is not supplied as part of the reading task. (See also *Dictionary look-up strategy*).

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents three sections. The first section discusses major dictionary use strategies which EFL learners need to acquire in order to successfully utilize the linguistic resources to facilitate the target language vocabulary use and learning and to avoid potential pitfalls associated with undisciplined dictionary use. These are presented in two sub-headings: dictionary use strategies for reception and production purposes. The second section briefly looks at some kinds of dictionary in order to provide context for the presentation of some of the views of scholars about the relevance of helping the EFL learners in choosing to use appropriate dictionaries to their needs. The third section looks at some dictionary studies from the international and local contexts.

2.1. Descriptions of some Strategies for the use of the dictionary with reception and production

This section discusses some important strategies related to dictionary use. These are broadly presented under two sub-sections; dictionary use with reception and production tasks. The descriptions are mainly based on Nation's (2001) classification, but they have been made more detailed with ideas from different scholars including Gu and Johnson (1996); Nesi (1999); Allen (1983) as well as from other authors like Jordan (1997); Abdurrauf (1987); McAlpin (1988) and de Lopez (1987). The strategies are presented mainly with written reception and production activities.

Furthermore, the dictionary use strategies may be applicable with any kind of dictionary (i.e., bilingual or monolingual); however, they are presented here with particular reference to the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. The inclusion of other kinds of dictionaries (especially bilingual type) was not possible here because there are many of them and they do not often consistently follow standard dictionary designs. Those English learners' dictionaries are designed largely to be used by students (from different L1 backgrounds) studying English for general academic purposes. In addition, dictionaries differ in their coverage of the vocabulary of the language and the extent to which they provide necessary decoding and encoding information to users (see 2.2). EFL students at grade-12 level can get much support and guidance from English monolingual learners' dictionary. Thus, in the following sections, the dictionary use strategies would be examined mainly with reference to standard learners' dictionaries that are considered relatively more beneficial for EFL learners such as those at the target stage. The above learners' dictionaries are also available in the target preparatory school and perhaps in some other places.

2.1.1. Dictionary use strategies with reception tasks

The receptive use of the dictionary mainly involves using the dictionary to look up the meanings of vocabulary items which have been met in a reading text. This is usually to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary that prevents comprehension. However, it may sometimes go beyond the immediate task of comprehension. Moreover, effective use of the dictionary while reading is a complex process. The user needs to be systematic in order to efficiently retrieve what has been required to achieve the specific goal. This involves active processing of the word, including analyzing the grammatical and morphological features of the word, guessing its meaning from context, selecting the right dictionary definition using various clues from the context and the dictionary, comparing and combining dictionary information with contextual information to establish the appropriateness of the meaning (Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Allen, 1983; Nesi, 1999). Moreover, it requires the user to make a decision on the appropriateness of the strategy for the attainment of the learners' goals. Many of the following skills are equally important for the productive use of the dictionary as they are for the receptive use; however, they are discussed here with particular reference to the receptive use. The skills relevant at various stages are presented as: *Thinking about the context, Finding the right page and entry, Choosing the right sub-entry and Relating the meaning to the context and decide if it fits.*

2.1.1.1 Thinking about the context to get information

Many scholars stress the importance of paying careful attention to the context in which the unknown word occurs before looking it up. This is required to get information needed in the actual consultation act as well as to decide the appropriateness of the strategy in the situation. According to Nation (2001) the skills required at this stage include: *deciding the part of speech of the target word, deciding if the word is an inflected or derived form that can be reduced to a base form, and guessing the general meaning.* Successful application of the dictionary involves making choice from a repertoire of other strategies and the user is expected to decide this by considering the relevance of the item. Thus, deciding the appropriateness of the strategy in the situation has been postponed until the dictionary user has examined the immediate and wider context of the target item. The significance of each of these in relation to the receptive use of the dictionary will be discussed as follows.

a) Deciding on the part of speech of the word to be looked up

While thinking of looking up a word from a reading text, the reader needs to establish what word class the vocabulary item belongs (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.). This may be a more important skill for English language users than for users of languages where word

morphology gives greater indication of word class (Nesi, 1999). Many other scholars (such as, Scholfield, McAlpin, de Lopez, Allen, Bolitho & Tomlinson) emphasize the significance of deciding the part of speech of the unknown at the pre-consultation stage for finding the entry as well as for selecting appropriate definition from among the possible meanings that the dictionary offers. Thus, the users will have to examine what function the word performs in the sentence in order to determine the part of speech of the word. Such activities are practiced in class regularly and the most important of the basic word classes that make up the various sentence patterns are usually given in the appendixes of many textbooks.

b) Reducing to base form (if the word is inflected/suffixed)

The dictionary user should know the headword rule. Dictionary entries or “the citation forms of lexemes” are regarded as the base forms of words from which other forms are derived (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995; Jackson, 1988; McAlpin, 1988; Allen, 1983). Thus the EFL dictionary user has to decide if the word is an inflected or derived form that can be reduced to a base form (Gu and Johnson, 1996; de Lopez, 1987). If the words is inflected, the student has to remove the inflections to recover the form to look up (e.g. for *concealed*, look for *conceal*). If the word is composed of the root plus affixes, the student may need to isolate the stem to look up (e.g. for *gauntness*, look for *gaunt*). The dictionary user may need to be aware of the common affixes, in particular key suffixes in order to decide which part of the word to look up (Nation 2001; Nesi, 1999). Indeed, identifying characteristic inflections and suffixes may not be enough because the same word may serve different functions and belong to different grammatical categories in different sentences.

c) Guessing the general meaning

Guessing meanings of less known items in reading texts is an important strategy to tackle unknown lexical items and to increase one’s vocabulary. Furthermore, guessing from context is needed in dictionary use (Nation, Allen, Bolitho & Tomlinson, Abdurrauf, etc.). The reader should try to guess the general meaning from any available clues before looking it up. This may help to decide the significance of using the dictionary. Moreover, this will also put the dictionary user in a better position to choose from among possible meanings when trying to confirm or reject his/her impression by looking up in the dictionary (Allen 1983, de Lopez, 1987; Swaffar et al, 1991). Many English words which have the same spelling and grammatical function have several different or related meanings. This may cause trouble, especially if the dictionary user has not paid sufficient attention to the meaning related aspects.

Suppose the verb 'discharge' is unfamiliar to someone reading the sentence: '*They have been discharged.*' Having examined how the word is used, the reader may decide that it is a verb (because of its morphology and syntactic function). But when the reader looked up, she/he will find various meanings under the verb entry in OALD:

discharge v **1.** to give official permission for sb to leave, e.g. after they have carried out a duty. **2.** to dismiss sb from their jobs or position; **3.** (a) to perform a duty (b) to pay a debt; **4.** to give or send out liquid, gas, electric current, etc; **5.** to fire or shoot a gun, etc

As can be seen from the above example, knowing the part of speech of the unfamiliar word (in this case discharge = verb) is not sufficient to determine the most relevant definition. In addition to that, the student has to try to guess the general meaning from the context. When the dictionary user has some idea of what the word might mean in the given context, he will be able to systematically eliminate unlikely definitions and concentrate on the meaning that is appropriate to context. In addition to narrowing the range in selecting dictionary synonyms or meanings, guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar in its context is also seen as an aid for understanding metaphorical association or their likely register (Nation, 2001; Allen 1983; Nesi, 1999; Nuttal, 1982; Swaffar, et al 1991). In other words, guessing before looking up enables the individual to choose more intelligently from among the meanings offered by the dictionary. This skill is particularly useful to deal with common words that have several meanings and therefore cause misunderstanding (Allen, 1983). Furthermore, regarding the contribution of guessing from context prior to consultation, Nation (2001) states:

“When they guess such words in context, learners can predict whether it is likely to be common meaning or an uncommon meaning because this will give some indication of how far in an entry they need to search.”

d) Deciding the relevance of the target item to the task and its general usefulness

The dictionary user is required to make decisions regarding the appropriateness of dictionary use in certain contexts. They have to consider the task objectives, the relevance of the word and other possible options for tackling the problem. This is a key strategy that consistently distinguishes effective from less effective dictionary users. Scholars such as (Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Parrott, 1993; O'Malley et al, 1990) state that learners are expected to employ metacognitive strategies when they decide to use the dictionary to research the language needed to perform a particular task, just as they do when they choose to focus on contextual clues or ignore unfamiliar language whose meaning is not derivable from the context. The problem item which motivates dictionary use may be any type of vocabulary, including low frequency word or a high frequency word with special meanings in different texts (Allen, 1983; Summers, 1988; Nation, 2001).

de Lopez (1987) observed “a widespread tendency among many EFL students to attack a new text by reading word by word from the first sentence, stopping only to reach for a dictionary at the first word they do not understand.” Bolitho & Tomlinson (1995) also attribute this to some faulty reading habits which “consist of looking up every unfamiliar word regardless of its usefulness to the learner or its significance in the text”. In fact this is a typical case of undisciplined dictionary use.

Dictionary use generally takes time and such undisciplined way of using the dictionary may seriously affect rather than facilitate the attainment of a particular reading purpose (Nuttal, 1982; Swaffar et al 1991; Abdurrauf, 1987; Rundell, 1999). According to Parrott (1993) “trying to understand every word in a text probably accounts at best to inefficient use of time,” and may actually hinder learning since it may, “encourage the learner to depend too much on ‘knowing’ words in the process of deriving meanings from a text,”(p. 59). Others also caution that over reliance on dictionary use has the opposite effect.

According to Horsfall (1997:7 as cited in Nesi, 1999), ‘one of the most useful dictionary skills is to know when not to use a dictionary’. Many writers also note that the “dictionary means security for many” and that they should be helped to realize the disadvantages of indiscriminate dictionary use during reading. Scholars (Bright & McGregor, 1977; de Lopez, 1987) assert that what the students need is not protection from these dangerous tools but careful guidance on how to make good use of those language resources. This is important because effective use of strategies such as inferring or guessing meanings may be influenced by a number of factors: including subject matter familiarity, textual readability, the degree of detail needed, etc., (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983; Summers, 1988; Swaffar et al, 1991). Moreover, many assert that if EFL learners are to read to learn information and comprehend texts, they should be taught when and how to discriminately employ dictionary use while reading as well as when to guess and when not to do so.

Many writers suggest that before going to the dictionary to find a solution, the reader should think carefully about the context, and ask questions, such as; *Do I really need to understand it? Is dictionary use the best strategy? Or Can I safely ignore it?* This is important because the dictionary is not “the only, best, or easiest source of the linguistic knowledge needed to understand” (Summers 1988). Nor do readers usually need to understand every single word in order to understand a text. It is also pointed out that giving careful thought to the text before consulting may reveal to the reader that understanding of the word is not necessary to achieve the goal of the reading task (Allen, 1983; de Lopez, 1987). That is to say paying

selective attention to unfamiliar items that are crucial to successful understanding of a text is one essential component of effective dictionary use strategy while reading.

While discouraging indiscriminate dictionary use during reading, Nuttal (1982) points out that the dictionary should be consulted “effectively and with discretion” if the significance of the word impedes comprehension or if the reader requires close and accurate understanding. Other writers (de Lopez, Abdurrauf, Swaffer et al) also share the above assumptions. Nuttal (1982) suggests that while reading difficult texts, the readers need to consider the possibility of “ignoring what is not important for his immediate purpose”. Moreover, she notes that although it is impossible to give hard and fast rules about which words can be ignored, the reader can judge whether the word is worth attending to or not.

Observing the frequency of occurrence of the item in the discourse can help to decide whether it is worth attending to an unknown word while reading (Allen, 1983; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Parrott, 1993). According to Nation (2001) a brief glance at the most frequent content words is usually sufficient to determine what the topic is about. This may reflect the information content of the text because the frequency with which words occur in a text is the result of the particular text itself. The writer may also want to emphasize his point through repetition, and if (in spite of that) the reader could not work out the meaning, the reader might be unable to fully understand the intended message of the text or the writer’s attitudes to subject matter through the selection and use of vocabulary in such a way.

Furthermore, in the context of reading, the dictionary may be used for reasons other than the immediate task of comprehension. Many researchers suggest that the dictionary can serve as a valuable knowledge source which can contribute to the development of vocabulary through reading (Gu et al, 1996; Paribackht et al, 2006; Frasser, 1999 in Nation, 2001). There are occasions when direct or intentional studying of vocabulary items from textual input is needed to verify inferences or to complement information obtained through reading. The learners may choose new / important vocabulary from their readings to learn with the help of the dictionary (Nation, 2001). If the student frequently meets an unfamiliar word in different contexts, the dictionary should be consulted to know more about it. Baker & Yarber (1986) suggest that students “look words up the second or third time” they meet them in their readings. That is the repeated occurrence of a word, not necessarily in the same text, may suggest its importance for the learner to give it a closer attention (Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996).

On the other hand, some of the unfamiliar content words that occur most frequently in a particular text may not be that much useful when learners face a different text. Thus

dictionary use may be a valuable strategy to deal with the specific problems because dictionary use could allow the reader to focus on the message in the particular text by giving a quick solution to such low-frequency words. Once the dictionary user has decided to look up a word from a reading text, they have to be able to locate it as efficiently as possible. Thus, we will move on to the relevant skills for doing that.

2.1.1.2: Finding the dictionary entry

Dictionary use takes time but it may be unnecessarily laborious for some learners. Nuttal (1982) observes, "It is surprising how long it takes some students to find a word in a dictionary." The seriousness of the problem for some EFL learners has also been noted by many others. According to Nation (2001) some of the most important skills required to find an entry in the dictionary are alphabetization, knowing the dictionary symbols for parts of speech and knowing alternative places to search. In fact, the use of these skills is not restricted to receptive use of the dictionary.

a) Alphabetical Order

This is the first requirement for locating words in the dictionary quickly. The dictionary user needs to react quickly to the order of the letters in the alphabet. This can be particularly difficult "for students whose language use a different alphabet," (Nuttal, 1982) and also for those "with little experience in the use of reference materials," (Allen, 1983). The dictionary user needs to follow the catchwords that appear at the very top of each page of the dictionary to indicate the range of words on those pages. Nuttal also advises that even practice in opening the dictionary as near as possible to the right page can be useful. Regarding this, Jordan (1997:327) describes a special technique that the dictionary user needs to know/learn in order to save time while locating words in dictionary: "The first quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$ or 25 per cent of the pages) of the dictionary usually contains words that begin with **a** to **d**. The second quarter of the dictionary usually contains words that begin with **e** to **l**. The third quarter contains **m** to **s**. The last quarter contains **t** to **z**. Other writers also stress that the skilled dictionary user should be able to open the dictionary near the general location and then follow the guide words to locate the exact word. The whole process should *take no more than 20 to 30 seconds to find a word in a dictionary* (Abdurrauf, 1987).

b) Knowing the dictionary symbols for parts of speech

This involves interpreting the parts of speech labels for lexical items such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs and occasionally other grammar codes used in the particular dictionary consulted. This skill is another basic requirement for finding dictionary entries and

it is particularly useful when the dictionary user has to make a choice among definition of the same word form as in the following entries.

OALD **initial** adj **initial** n **initial** v **initially** adv
LDOCE **initiative** n 1 [u] . . . 2 [c]

The entries from the OALD show that the same word, i.e. *initial*, may serve different function and belong to different grammatical categories in different sentences. The main entry is followed by *adj*. This abbreviation means that the meaning of *initial* as an adjective will follow. Each sub-entry contains an indication of its part of speech; a noun (n), a verb (v), and an adverb (adv). In the other example from the LDOCE, the label [u] shows the meaning of the noun *initiative* as an uncountable noun, while [c] means that the countable sense of the word will follow. In addition, the users needs to understand some features, such as typographic conventions, numbered superscripts, symbols. When a word which belongs to the same word class has different senses, the meanings are numbered, for example (LDOCE) **date**¹ n, **date**² n; **palm**¹ n, **palm**² n.

c) Knowing alternative places to search

This has been identified as crucial skill that the student needs to develop in order to use his dictionary more efficiently. According to Nation (2001) the dictionary user should be able to have a good understanding of the arrangement of entries. Others writers (such as Nesi, 1999; Abdurrauf 1987; Jackson, 1988) also stress the significance of the above point. The student needs to know how the various pieces of information about headwords and other derived forms are given. In relation to this, scholars (such as de Lopez, 1987; Harmer, 1991) state that if the students are aware of the dictionary's methods and arrangement of its entries, they will benefit in two ways. They can find what they are looking for quickly and accurately. When the EFL students are able to analyze dictionary entries and classify their parts, they will gain the type of information that may be found in the specific dictionary. Furthermore, developing the student's skill to find his/her way about in the dictionary may help to bridge or narrow the gap, (which Carter et al, 1988 observed) between some features of dictionary design and the users "often rudimentary reference skills." It can hardly be stressed that understanding dictionary entries and their parts and knowing various alternative places to search should be essential for reception as well as production.

2.1.1.3. Choosing the right sub-entry

Once the main entry has been found, there may be a need to choose between different meanings and uses listed in the dictionary entry. It is generally stressed that the skill in selecting appropriate definition among listed possibilities is a necessary part of training in

the proper use of dictionary (Nesi, 1999; Allen, 1983; de Lopez, 1987; Nuttal, 1982; Sessan, 1997). Furthermore, research (Nesi & Meara, 1994) indicates that EFL dictionary users may misinterpret dictionary definitions. As we saw earlier, the successful application of this skill depends on the above two steps. That is when the user gets to the entry, they need to use the information gained from the context in order to choose the appropriate definition in entries (Nation 2001; Scholfield, 1982; Allen, 1983). For example, the word *initial* can be used as a noun, a verb, or an adjective. If the student has a clear idea of how it was used in the sentence, he should scan quickly all or most of the subentry to make sure the most appropriate meaning is chosen. If the dictionary user has not done any prior analysis (i.e., think about how the word was used in the original context) before looking it up, they will have to spend a lot of time and effort reading the whole definitions listed in dictionary entry.

Moreover, in order to extract relevant definition efficiently from long entry, they also need to know how meanings of multi-sense lexemes are listed in the dictionary. For instance, in learners' dictionaries this is done according to the frequency of occurrence of the use in the language, i.e., most common meanings are listed first, and then followed by second most common and so on, and important idioms are entered under each of their parts. The user also needs to understand and utilize some features in the dictionary; mainly definitions and examples of usage are particularly important while using the dictionary for receptive purposes (Jackson, 1988; Nuttal, 1982).

Most standard learners' dictionaries such as OALD and LDOCE recently use restricted defining vocabulary. This also means that a few common words that are 'easy' to understand are used to give a lot of information about many new and difficult headwords. Consequently, the dictionary user sometimes has to paying careful attention to every word in definitions.

Then, the users should also be familiar with the structure of dictionary definitions, which often contain superordinate terms followed usually by restrictive post modifiers (Baxter, 1980). Also definitions often contain common abbreviations to specify the meaning of a given word or use. Sufficient familiarity with these is very important to understand the range of definitions. As in these entries from OALD:

1. **blob** n a drop of (esp thick) liquid
2. **scrap** n a small piece of sth usu not wanted: *Scraps of paper /cloth / wood*
(fig) *scraps of news /information*
3. **peasant** n (infml, derog) a rough, rude or ignorant person
4. **solid** adj (geometry) having three dimensions, i.e. length, width and thickness
5. **pronounce** v (law) to pass judgement in court in favour of/ against sb/sth

In the definition for *blob*, the abbreviation *esp* (= especially) restricts the meaning to thick liquid not just any liquid such as water; in 2, the definition contains *usu* (= usually) to show

the user that *scrap* in this sense refers to a small piece of something which is usually not wanted. Here also it is important to check the example because the indefinite word something (also abbreviated as *sth*) does not give enough information as to what things the word represents. In 3 the labels before the definition indicate that the word expresses a particular attitude (*derog*=derogatory) and is used in a particular context (*infml*=informal). The subject labels in 4 and 5 give the specialized meanings of the words, (i.e. in *geometry* and *law*). The label *fig* before the second example in 2 indicates that *scrap* can also be used figuratively (in a non-literal way) to refer to news or information. The example specifies what things the noun *scrap* may refer to. Obviously, good understanding of such features of the dictionary is essential if the EFL student is to use it effectively and efficiently.

Illustrative examples of most lexemes or most senses of a lexeme are also intended to show the use of the senses of a lexeme and thus provide support for definitions, 'when editors consider that some definitions are in need of more support than other (Jackson, 1988:47). In fact, such sentences or phrases are generally given in recently published English learners' dictionaries (Rundell, 1999). Many experts would agree with David Crystal (2002) that using the dictionary examples is particularly important because very often a definition is unclear without an accompanying real life example, a citation of how a word is used. Gouws (1987) also asserts that illustrations of words help to enrich the context, (i.e., the language system context and real-world context) for appropriate decoding. Nation (2001) also stresses the above point by saying that examples and collocations help to guide the search and confirm the appropriate meaning has been found. Once the possible definition has been found, the EFL dictionary user has to be encouraged to move to the examples then back to the original context of the item in question (Baxter 1980:334).

2.1.1.4. Relating the meaning to the context and decide if it fits

The meaning of the word as encountered in the passage is contextually bound or a particular realization of the concept that the word expresses. There may be a need to adapt the meaning found in the dictionary to the context of the word in the text. Summers (1988) states that there may be mismatches with the prototypical meaning which would be shown in the dictionary, but the core is the same (p. 116). Nation (2001) also confirms that 'in few cases some narrowing or stretching of the dictionary meaning may be necessary'. This may sometimes be required to understand metaphorical associations or their likely registers; however, in many cases this will not be a big change' (p. 286). This process of matching archetypal or general dictionary meaning to specific textual meaning can be a complex task for the EFL learner (Baxter, 1980). Evaluating the success of the search is another important

skill at this stage. The dictionary user should check whether the definition fits nicely with the message of the text (Nation, 2001; de Lopez, 1987). This mainly involves matching the definition with top-down insights to consider differing interpretations. For example, the slang definition of 'cool' may not be appropriate, if the student is reading physics text.

This means that the student has to think about the words in relation to both the passage and the dictionary information. As stated earlier, the successful dictionary user is also expected to make use of definitions, example sentences, and sometimes usage labels in the dictionary to interpret words in context (Baxter, 1980; Summers 1988). In addition paraphrasing the original context with the dictionary definition has also been identified as important skill to determine the appropriateness of the information to the context in which the word occurs (Nation, 2001; Gu et al, 1996). According to Baxter (1980) by training students in this process of comparison, the skill of using text to determine the meaning of a lexical item, the skill of great value in reading would be developed.

In the above section, we looked at the strategies that are involved in the receptive uses of the dictionary. We saw that efficient and effective dictionary use with L2 reading requires systematic application of various skills. The first set of skills are all related to examining the target word in its original context, including deciding the part of speech, reducing suffixed/inflected words to base forms, guessing the general meanings, and deciding the relevance of dictionary use in the situation by considering mainly the importance of the word in the text, i.e., for the reading purpose, and its general usefulness, e.g., to check after reading the text for information. Then we looked at some skills needed for getting at the required entry quickly, selecting the appropriate sub-entry, adapting dictionary definition to the context and evaluating the success of the search. Now we will move on to examine some dictionary use strategies for more productive purposes such as written composition. Many of the skills discussed under the receptive use may be applicable for the productive use of the dictionary. However, in the next sub-section we will particularly focus on the use of the different information categories in standard learners' dictionaries.

2.1.2: Productive use

Many good dictionaries contain valuable information which the EFL student could sometimes use when information is needed for productive use of important but less known L₂ vocabulary. However, the general tendency among many people, as Lewis (1993:180) observes, is "to see the dictionary as useful only for looking up the meaning of unknown words". Monolingual learners' dictionaries provide much detailed encoding information than can be found in many other dictionaries. Scholars (such as Rundell, 1999; Partington, 1998;

Carter et al, 1988; Jordan, 1997) assert that unlike native speakers' English dictionaries, learners' dictionaries mainly aim to supply encoding information which will allow for productive use of the language. However, some studies have also shown (Bejoint, 1981; Harvey & Yuill, 1997; Nesi & Meara, 1999; Thompson, 1987) that learners do not adequately use their dictionaries well for productive purposes. Furthermore, other studies show that dictionary users were much more successful with comprehension than production (Summers, 1988). This is generally believed to be the result of the users' lack of awareness on the advantages of utilizing the valuable language resource coupled with the users' capabilities of extracting information from English-English dictionaries (Jackson, Carter and McCarthy, Summers). EFL students may need to be shown how useful some of the information can be for their productive use of the language. Let us look at some dictionary use strategies for productive use of important vocabulary items, especially for writing.

2.1.2.1. Finding wanted word form

This has been identified as one major obstacle for some EFL learners to use monolingual learners' dictionaries to help communicating in the foreign language English. Thompson (1987) argues that finding the most appropriate headword in a monolingual dictionary can be difficult. Other scholars (Nation, 2001; Scholfield, 1982) suggest that using a combination of bilingual dictionaries that go from the first language to the target language and a monolingual dictionary for this purpose. That is although the above L1 - L2 type dictionaries provide easy access to L2 vocabulary for production, this may also need to be complimented by looking up in a monolingual dictionary to gain more detailed information so as to allow productive use of the word (Nation, 2001).

On the other hand a relatively skillful user of the English learners' dictionary can follow certain search procedures to find other word to use. Using synonyms, opposites or related words which are often given in those dictionaries can be useful (Nation, 2001; Rundell, 1999; Guth, 1972). Learners' dictionaries often group or list related words of similar or different meanings together and discuss the similarity or differences. They also give a cross references to words of related meanings. They could provide or lead to a familiar equivalent for unfamiliar or difficult terms. Such pieces of information are very useful both for vocabulary use as well as learning. Another source of information is the thesaurus which "gives all the words which have similar meanings to the one you are looking up" (Sessan, 1997). It is noted that a thesaurus should be referred with caution: the danger lies in raiding this treasure too enthusiastically. Baker et al (1986:298) suggest that checking for meaning in a dictionary will help assure the student has expanded, not distorted, his vocabulary.

2.1.2.2 Checking constraints on the use of the word

Dictionary use can provide the necessary guidance when the student is not sure which word to use in a specific context. It can help the learner to decide the use of word to suit the degree of formality of the situation (Crystal, 2002; Nation, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Rundell, 1999; Carter et al, 1988; Guth, 1972). The most important ones are the restrictive labels that indicate a word or sense of a word is used only under certain circumstances and that it can be out of place when it is used without attention to its limitations. Such labels provide a guide when roughly synonymous choices have different associations. In the following dictionary entry the meaning of *paucity* is preceded by the restriction label *fml* (= *formal*).

paucity *n* (*fml*) a small amount; not enough of sth: a *paucity* of evidence

If the user has not developed sensitivity to these types of dictionary information, and focus only on the definition, the user will produce inappropriate language. In this particular instance, he/she concludes *paucity* is equal to “a small amount of /not enough of something” and says in an informal conversation, ‘*I have a paucity of money to go to the cinema*’ or ‘*There is a paucity of water in the bottle,*’ – Neither of which sounds natural or is even correct, because the word ‘*paucity*’ is a formal word which is only used in serious or official, especially written language (OALD, 1995). On the other extreme, the EFL dictionary user may pick informal or slang expressions from somewhere or even from his dictionary and use them in formal contexts, such as letter of application.

Many headwords and word senses in the English learners’ dictionaries are followed by labels to indicate the stylistic level of the word, attitude, frequency in different media, etc. These types of information are also given in definitions and examples. However, these are normally indicated with codes and the user may need to be able to interpret the codes (usually abbreviations) the specific dictionary uses to signal this information. If the word is used to express particular attitude, this may be indicated with labels, such as derogatory, (*derog*), approval (*approv*). Other dictionary restriction labels show that some words or meanings of words are not current at this time (*dated*) or are rather old fashioned (*archaic*). Still other labels indicate technical uses that are not likely to be familiar to the layman. In writing to the general reader, the EFL student may need to explain or define any such terms and the dictionary provides the necessary guidance. Furthermore, the constraints on vocabulary use are more closely related to meaning and would benefit more from explicit learning (Nation, 2001), which includes the use of dictionaries.

2.1.2.3. Working out the grammar and collocation of words

Dictionary use can be one source of information when the students need to get information about collocation and grammar. The guidance on these aspects of vocabulary items is important for the EFL student because it can be sometimes difficult to guess such matters (Benson et al, 1988; Summers, 1988). Thus, when students need to use less known vocabulary in some production activities, e.g., writing assignments, dictionary use can provide much needed assistance or reliable guidance to the EFL student about the range of possibilities (Nation; 2001; Allen 1983; Rundell, 1999; Crystal, 2002; Carter et al, 1988; Deveci, 2004; Guth, 1972; Gorrell et al, 1967).

With regard to the grammatical information in dictionaries, Lewis (1993) states, “because of the alphabetical organization of dictionaries, this information is easily accessible”. Nevertheless, that may not usually be the case if the user is unable to interpret the information. Some of the syntactic information can come, where this is appropriate, from the example sentences as in the English learners’ dictionary. However, much of the information about each individual item is mainly given using grammar codes which the user need to understand. Since this grammatical information can be of great support for the EFL learner to produce correct language, and training would be of great value in this particular skill of dictionary use (Nation, 2001; Summers, 1988).

In deed, interpreting the word class labels such as n (noun), v (verb), adj (adjective) etc, which give “the most general of information about the syntactic operations of lexemes” (Jackson, 1988) may not be enough to encode appropriate, natural sentences. The EFL student needs to be able to use the detailed grammatical information that is usually given by means of codes. For example, the following entry for the word **payment** from the OALD indicates three different senses:

1 [U] the act of paying sb/sth or of being paid: **2** [C] a sum of money paid: *make ten monthly payments of £50.* **3** [U, sing] a reward or gesture of gratitude for stg:

The information conveyed by the codes tell the user that in the first sense *payment* is a mass noun [U=uncountable], in the second it is countable [C=countable] and in the third sense *payment* is usually a mass noun and that it can also be used as countable but in the singular [U, sing = uncountable or singular]. The syntactic possibilities in the noun phrase represent important information for the foreign learner, “since the uncountability of nouns in other languages does not always correspond with English usage” (Jackson, 1988). Carter et al (1988) also confirm the value of such information for learners to produce appropriate language. Also, the information provided by the codes [c] and [u] relates not only to whether

the noun may be used in the countable or uncountable but also possible determiners (e.g., *a, the*) and quantifiers (e.g., *many, some, etc.*) that may occur with the noun.

In order to get sufficient information, the dictionary users should also be aware of how the examples can assist to interpret the codes and thereby indicate the correct use of the word. The following entries from OALD show how the examples and the codes are used to illustrate two senses of the verb **see**¹ (Using the eyes). The first sense is **see 1**= to become aware of somebody or something by using the eyes; to perceive something or somebody, and the other sense of the same verb, but intransitive is **see 2** = to have or use the power of sight.

see 1. [not in the continuous tenses)

[V *that*] *They could see (that) she had been crying.*

[Vn *adj*] *I hate to see you unhappy.*

[V *wh*] *Did you see what happened?*

[Vn] *I looked out of the window and saw nothing.*

[Vn to *inf only* passive] *She was seen to enter the building.*

[Vn *inf (no to)*] *I saw you put the key....*

see 2. [not usu in the continuous tenses; often used with *can, could*)

[V] *If you shut your eyes you can't see.*

The syntactic information about verbs is particularly useful for the EFL learner because the verb lexeme in a clause determines the potential occurrence of the other elements in the clause (Jackson, 1988; Rundell, 1999). As in the above example, the grammar codes in '1' show that the verb 'see' is used as a transitive verb which must be used with an object. The codes also specify the possible and impossible grammatical patterns the objects may take. In '2' the verb see is intransitive (i.e. takes no object). It is not used in the progressive and it is often used with the modal verbs *can, could*. The examples clearly show how the coding system should be interpreted, so they may equally be useful. The other important use of dictionary examples is related to collocation as we will see next.

The EFL learner is usually encouraged to look for patterns at various levels in the language system. This includes collocations of words. This information is often acquired unconsciously; however, when student sometimes want to use less known vocabulary, they may need to be able to get accurate guidance on the collocational features of words. Word-collocation is "very language specific" (Paribakht et al, 2006) and thus this can be difficult to guess (Summers, 1988). Many semi/fixed, recurrent combinations may be difficult for the students because "they are often arbitrary, unpredictable" (Benson et al, 1988). Certain combinations are right in particular contexts and not in others. Many writers (such as Lewis, 2000; Allen, 1983; Deveci, 2004; Carter et al, 1988) assert the value of such information for the EFL learner to produce natural and accurate language. This can be especially important for the student to improve their vocabulary use in some writing tasks (Nation, 2001).

However, many dictionaries do not provide sufficient guidance on collocations. English learners' dictionaries pay attention to such aspect to help users find out, e.g., the appropriate preposition that goes with a given adjective, the particle that goes with a given verb, an adjective that may be used with a particular noun, etc.

This type of information is given sometimes explicitly as part of the definition, but more frequently as part of the examples. Harvey & Yuill (1997) found a low incidence of look-up reasons concerning collocation. Moreover, if the users are inexperienced or unskillful, they may have no idea of what information is conveyed in an entry (Lewis, 2000; Nesi & Meara, 1994). Yet, great importance is attached to the collocational information in the monolingual learners' dictionary. Users need to know where to look for the information in the dictionary.

Grammatical collocations like prepositions are shown in dark type at the beginning of an entry, before the definition. Where the pattern is optional it is given in brackets.

bring v. 1 ~ sb/sth (**with** one); ~ sth (**for** sb)

3. ~ sb/sth **to/into** sth; ~ *the meeting to an end/a close*

Other types of collocational information are provided usually in the illustration and sometimes explicitly in definitions and usage notes. If the student looks at the example sentences at the entry for the particular noun in the OALD or LDOCE, s/he will find typical adjectives that are often used with the noun. These are usually separated by a slash '/'. For instance, the entries for the nouns *criticism* and *description* the OALD offers

- **description:** *The bank's actions attracted heavy / strong / widespread criticism*
- **criticism:** *Give a vivid / detailed / graphic description of what had happened.*

Conversely, if what is needed is the type of noun an adjective may be used with, the user will have to look up the adjective and find out what nouns it commonly describes; For instance, the illustrative examples of the different senses of the adjective *broad* reveal the following.

The tiled (~) is used to replace the headword in the entry, i.e., '**broad**'.

1. ~ street / avenue / river. ~ shoulders. *He is tall, broad and muscular*
2. a ~ range of people / opinions / backgrounds. a ~ spectrum of interests
3. the ~ outline of a plan / proposal. reached ~ agreement. 4. a ~ grin / smile. give a ~ hint that . . .

As can be seen from these examples, the adjective 'broad' can be used with a number of nouns in these four senses. Obviously, this type of information is important for the EFL student to produce appropriate language in different circumstances.

Other important collocations are usually printed in dark type within the examples to help the EFL student notice them. For instance, in LDOCE common phrases used with the verb *groan* and the noun *imagination* are shown like this:

- He's always **moaning and groaning** (= complaining) about something.
- His story . . . **stretches the imagination** somewhat,
- The pantomime really **captured** the children's **imagination** . . .

Similarly, the OALD shows these patterns for the adverb *hardly* as follows:

- **I could hardly believe** my eyes, she looked so different
- **Hardly** a week **goes by without** someone complaining (i.e. Nearly every week someone complains) about it.
- **It's hardly surprising that** she failed her exams when she did so little work

When the dictionary compilers felt that the meaning of a collocation is not clear from the examples, they provide a short explanation after it in brackets, (see *moaning and groan* from LDOCE and the second example for *hardly* from OALD).

Fixed expressions, such as phrasal verbs are given in alphabetical order at the end of the verb entry or in the phrasal verbs section. For example, *bring about* comes before *bring back*, *bring down* before *bring forward*, *bring of* before *bring off* etc. The syntactic operations such phrasal verbs enter are also shown in the same way as any ordinary verb (e.g. transitive, intransitive, etc) and guidance is also given whether a given phrasal verb is separable or not as in the following entries from those dictionaries:

LDOCE: skate over / round sthg;
skate through sthg

OALD: polish sth off,
polish sth up

The position of the indefinite pronoun something (sthg/sth) indicates whether the verb is separable or not.

2.1.2.4 Checking the Spelling and Pronunciation

These features of English cause big challenges for many students for various reasons. In English the relationship between pronunciation and spelling is complicated and all aspects of writing in English (i.e., reading, writing) cause major problems for many EFL learners (Swan, 2000:146). It can also be expected that the same holds true for many preparatory level students in Ethiopia. One of the options that EFL learners have for tackling such problems when they sometimes need to use new or partially known words is dictionary use. The use of good sources, such as the English learners' dictionary should enable them to get reliable assistance on these aspects of vocabulary when they need to check/find out spelling (e.g., while writing assignments) or pronunciation (e.g., word encountered in a reading text and/or needed to use). Furthermore, the dictionary can give access to inflected and derived forms and thus allow the students to construct important vocabulary using the correct word parts to express the meaning. The English learners' dictionary can provide much support with regard to correct pronunciation, stress patterns of the word and special phrases containing the key word, and alternative forms where these exist.

Checking spelling in a dictionary may be a relatively straightforward task; however, working out the pronunciation can be more complex. The English learners' dictionary user needs to be familiar with the notation system used to show pronunciation. When the user is not sure how to interpret a particular pronunciation symbol, he/she should use the pronunciation key in the dictionary. This key may be located in the front of the dictionary (as in LDOCE) or in the appendix and inside back cover (as in OALD). Here is part of pronunciation key:

ia near el say l: see l set e ten

The key tells the user, for example, that the sound of the long /i:/ is like the /i:/ in *see*, the sound of the short vowel /ɪ/ is like the /ɪ/ in *sit* and the sound of the short /e/ is like the /e/ in *ten*, etc. Similarly, there is a key for the consonants with common words like the above to show the user how to pronounce new words. The guidance on stress patterns is particularly essential for the EFL student because unintentionally shifting the stress from its normal position can affect effective communication, (e.g., 'progress ; pro'gress). The same is true with longer word groups; if a speaker changes the stress in the idiom *find one's 'feet*, the special meaning of the idiom may be lost (OALD).

2.2. Dictionary types and views

Dictionary use is a valuable strategy for EFL learners especially when they need to get information about important L2 vocabulary items while working on their own. However, the users need to have access to good dictionaries in order to put their dictionary use strategies into practice (Nation, 2001). This is important because dictionaries differ in their coverage and different dictionaries also fulfill different aims and purposes (West, 1987; Jackson, 1988). Moreover, some scholars (Baxter, 1980; Allen, 1983; Jordan, 1997; Harmer, 2001) went even further to say that some dictionaries are poor; certain dictionaries much more helpful than others. West (1987) notes that many learners may rely on translating dictionary for too long, past the stage at which they could derive more benefit from a monolingual dictionary. According to Baxter (1980) this can delay or hinder progress. EFL learners need to expand and refine their control of this helpful strategy, e.g., by choosing dictionaries to use, as they progress in their studies in such a way that it is more relevant to their immediate and future needs. Thus, EFL learners need to recognize which dictionaries contain sufficient descriptions about the target language vocabulary and they need to give more attention to those resources when they need to use one.

EFL students may normally need to employ the dictionary for decoding (especially reading) and for encoding (mainly writing and to some extent to gather language for some prepared production activities). Thus, quite different information may be needed. Many dictionaries

may give some support to the EFL learner to achieve the above objectives. However, since dictionaries differ in their coverage some dictionaries may be more helpful and appropriate than others to different users. Many scholars state that bilingual dictionaries may have some useful purposes especially at the initial stage of language learning (Lewis, 1993; Allen, 1983; Carter et al, 1988; de Lopez, 1987; Harmer, 2001). The EFL student beyond that stage should rely more on monolingual learners' dictionaries. The explanations given in monolingual learners' dictionaries can help learners not only to decode or understand but also to encode or produce target language (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983; Lewis, 1993; Carter et al, 1988; Rundell, 1999; Baxter, 1980; Jordan, 1997; Venkateswaran, 1995; de Lopez, 1987; Bright et al, 1977). Furthermore, as proficiency develops, in addition to the monolingual learners' dictionary, the user should have access to native speakers' dictionary since this has far wider coverage or more entries (West, 1987; Lewis, 1993; Sesnan, 1997). Indeed, it is not the place to provide a comprehensive survey of all types of translating and monolingual dictionaries and the range of views towards their relative advantages and limitations to the learners. We will briefly look at some of the relevant issues to the present study and with particular emphasis on the English learners' dictionaries that are considered relatively more beneficial for EFL learners such as those at the target stage.

a) Bilingual dictionaries

Bilingual dictionaries are those that use two languages. These may be further distinguished in terms of their main purposes, i.e., whether they are mainly intended to provide decoding or encoding information. The former types list target language entries (in our case English words) and give one or more equivalents in another language (e.g., *English-Amharic* dictionary). These are normally used for decoding activities in which the user needs to look up the meaning of English words. However, they can also be used for productive purposes in some ways, and part of the information, i.e., about the target language entry item, may also sometimes be common to both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. Bilingual dictionaries are also usually less expensive than all-English dictionaries and more easily obtained (Allen, 1983). Yet, such translating dictionaries are more generally employed in the initial stages of learning a language (Carter et al, 1988; Bright et al, 1977). When used correctly and under the right circumstances, the L2 - L1 type dictionaries could also provide valuable support for the EFL learners, not just at the initial stage of learning language only, for example, when the explanation is not sufficiently understood in monolingual ones. EFL students also often tend to prefer the bilingual dictionaries (Laufer et al, 1997; Baxter, 1980).

However, many ELT experts (Baxter, 1980; Lewis, 1993; West, 1987; de Lopez, 1987; Abdurrauf, 1987) discourage relying on bilingual dictionaries for too long because “they are unsatisfactory in many ways” (Allen, 1983). Furthermore, bilingual dictionaries are often criticized because, for instance, they provide insufficient (Allen, 1983; Harmer, 2001), or even sometimes inaccurate information, (Jordan, 1997; de Lopez, 1987). The absence of illustrative examples is frequently mentioned as the other major limitation of bilingual dictionaries. Jordan states that they often give a number of synonyms and that it may not be easy to select the most appropriate one.

Nation (2001) also states that while many bilingual dictionaries contain little information about each word, they can be seen as a compliment rather than a competitor to monolingual dictionaries, which contain substantial information about each word. Furthermore, Laufer et al (1997) suggest that the bilingualised dictionary (which contains the information in monolingual dictionaries together with L1 translations) may cater for a variety of look-up possibilities and individual preferences. They asserted, “When the bilingualised dictionary is consulted, both languages are used, albeit not simultaneously and not for each word. Learners may prefer one language for some words, the other language for other words,” (pp. 368).

Some kinds of bilingual dictionaries may go the other way; L₁ entries may be given possible target language equivalents, for instance, Amharic-English dictionary. These types of dictionary may provide easy access to vocabulary for productive use. However, Harmer (2001) observes that “all too often they fail to show students how words are used in the foreign language, providing simple answers for what is, in effect, considerably more complex.” Nation (2001) suggests that bilingual and monolingual dictionaries could be used to complement each other for productive purposes. However, it is unlikely that the student would do that (Thomson, 1987).

b) Monolingual dictionaries

Monolingual dictionaries are those written in only one language (in our case English). As we said earlier, these are also further distinguished in their construction and use. Some English dictionaries are prepared for native speakers. The main function of native speakers’ dictionaries is to give the meanings of a large number of words often with only limited encoding information. Carter et al (1988) and many others observed, for example, that native speaker dictionaries rarely give sufficient grammatical information other than the part of speech of entries. These are also mostly constructed on historical principles (i.e., they take synchronic approaches) in which meanings are presented in order of historical

occurrence and they may often include information which may have little use for the learner (Rundell, 1999; West, 1987; Jackson, 1988; Jordan, 1997).

There are also some English 'user-dictionaries' which serve highly specific aims or deal with relatively limited features of the target language (Jordan, 1997). They often provide more detailed specialist information given in general purpose dictionaries (Jackson, 1988). For instance, some of these dictionaries may deal with some aspect of the language, such as pronunciation, collocation, idioms, phrasal verbs and so on. Others are specialist subject dictionaries, which are concerned with the vocabulary of specific discipline (e.g. business, botany, computing, medicine, etc.) and which can be useful for ESAP students and teachers. However, these are, by definition, designed for a specific purposes and their usefulness depends on how closely the users' purpose matches that of the dictionary (West, 1987).

In semi-EAP contexts, such as preparatory school courses, it is difficult to ensure that all the students will follow the same academic disciplines in the near future. Consequently, students in those contexts may need to be more interested in those English monolingual dictionaries (such as OALD & LDOCE) which are, as Jackson (1988) notes, essentially general-purpose dictionaries, but they are tailored to the needs of a specific group of users, i.e., for EFL/ESL learners. They have been carefully researched and developed to provide reliable and detailed information that learners would need for various purposes (Rundell, 1999; Partington, 1998; Jackson, 1988; Summers, 1988; Gouws, 1987).

Regarding the specialist monolingual learners' dictionaries, such as the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Carter et al (1988) confirm, "Their appearance and widespread adoption serves to highlight the differences which exist between bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and between dictionaries for the native speaker and for the second or foreign-language learner." EFL learners are generally assumed to use their dictionaries more productively, for encoding as well as decoding (Bejoint, 1981) and thus, learners' dictionaries such as the above ones are syntactic and phonological as well as semantic - in addition to meanings they include comprehensive information about usage and pronunciation (West, 1987).

EFL learners' dictionaries are much more flexible and consist of ideas that can be exploited for a variety of purposes. They contain many words and word groups and give various meanings of their entries. The definitions are written in simplified language (Rundell, 1999; Partington, 1998; Carter et al, 1988; Scholfield, 1982). This can avoid the possibility that the definition is difficult to understand for the user with relatively limited resources (Harmer,

2001; Crystal, 2002; Nation, 2001; Baxter, 1980). This should also help students increase their vocabulary through the use of a basic vocabulary that they are likely to know.

Furthermore, West (1987) states that monolingual learners' dictionaries cover mainly, "contemporary or current English and include few archaic words" and "entries are arranged with the most common meanings first" and those meanings which are less likely to be useful to the learner may be listed last. Scholars (such as Scholfield, Nation, Partington) confirm the significance of the above points. Those dictionaries take learners' proficiencies into account and try to make sure that the information reflects common, current English based on representative corpus of all kinds of English, both written and spoken. In addition, the compilers use learner corpora to provide more relevant information (Rundell, 1999).

The presence of guidance on how a word is used may allow the student to use it in an original sentence. Unlike many dictionaries, English learners' dictionaries contain more detailed syntactic and collocational information about their entries. These dictionaries avail themselves of computer facilities for lexical analysis and provide more accurate information on the collocational and syntactic behaviors of words (Rundell, 1999; Partington, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Carter et al, 1988). They also give examples of the words in sentences and phrases, which provide further support to the different meanings that words have (Crystal, 2002; Gouws, 1987). Thus they can be very helpful for the learner to find right definitions without much confusion. Moreover, the examples illustrate the syntactic operations of their entries and show important collocations, i.e., what other words the target word collocates with (Allen, 1983; Rundell, 1999; Harvey & Yuill, 1997; Harmer, 2001) and help the students to get a very good idea of how they themselves can use the word. Scholars, such as Lewis (1993) assert that the examples offer further useful, and often fully contextualized, comprehensible input.

Another feature of the learners' dictionary is the use of pictures of objects, and especially those otherwise difficult to explain. Many scholars (including Crystal, 2002; Allen 1983) confirm the value of these features in terms of increasing the users' comprehension of unfamiliar words. West (1987) found in his study that the number and use of illustrations emerged as important criteria which separated different dictionaries even far more than the traditional linguistic features.

Clearly, English learners' dictionaries may be more beneficial since they provide much helpful guidance about the target language vocabulary to help the learners to understand and produce English well. Furthermore, experts assert that beyond a certain stage in

language learning, the use of a monolingual learners' dictionary rather than a bilingual dictionary enhances the learning itself (Jackson, 1988; Summers 1988; Allen, 1983). Learners use the language being learned to advance their learning of that language. Baxter, (1980) stresses, "Through use of a monolingual dictionary, students are led to the use of conversational definition in speech and thus benefit from the full range of resources offered in spoken English." (pp. 325). According to Summers (1988:116) the use of such dictionary may facilitate the learning of L2 vocabulary through providing further exposure for the word in other contexts, with different collocates and construction by making the student think about the word in relation both to the passage being read (i.e. contextually bound) and the dictionary information (i.e. the archetypal or prototypical meaning). Harvey & Yuill (1997) found from their studies that learners gained various types of incidental information other than what they originally intended to get while using a monolingual for text production.

In the context of Ethiopian preparatory schools, effective use of English monolingual learners' dictionaries should also enhance students' confidence about forthcoming advanced work. Furthermore, in contexts where learners come from different L1 backgrounds, these types of dictionary can have many advantages. For students at grade-12 level, the English-English learners' dictionary should be a valuable source of information. However, in practice this may be quite demanding for some learners (Allen, 1983; Nesi & Meara, 1994; Lewis, 1993; Harmer, 2001; Sheerin, 1986). In fact, as Harris (1966) put it, "Using the dictionary efficiently is just as dependent upon practice and good habits as other kinds of reading" (pp.175). Furthermore, studies (Nesi & Meara, 1994; Harvey & Yuill, 1997; Béjoint, 1981) indicate that even when a monolingual dictionary is used, learners may not use it well. In addition, many learners might not clearly see the advantages of using such dictionaries. There is also some evidence (Baxter, 1980; West, 1987) that second language learners may not usually make informed decisions in terms of choosing appropriate dictionaries to their stages.

2.3. Dictionary Studies

The following section presents a review of studies on dictionary. We will first look at some studies on dictionary use and users from the international context. Then we will look at one local study on the subject.

2.3.1. Studies on dictionary use and users in general

The studies focus on issues like the types of dictionaries students prefer, what the dictionary is used for and the effect of different entry organization in presenting information for

reception and production. One study investigated issues regarding the specification of dictionary skills in language syllabuses and/or course materials, another study explored dictionary use as part of EFL students' use of vocabulary learning strategies. The following review of research studies highlights some relevant insights gained on the subject.

Baxter (1980) used a questionnaire to survey the dictionary habits and preferences of EFL students in Japan. The response indicated that the great majority used bilingual dictionaries, and this was believed to be the most important reference book they used about the English language. The definitions in English dictionaries were reported to be difficult to understand. Baxter attributes this situation to lack of guidance. He notes that ESL students should be helped to choose appropriate monolingual dictionaries that are prepared for learners (not for native speakers) of English – particularly those dictionaries that use controlled defining vocabulary. He also stressed that the learner need to be able to read definitions, to use the examples to help understanding and to relate dictionary definition to the original context. Baxter points out that when students have established definite learning strategies in accordance with bilingual dictionary use, their feeling that such dictionary is easier to use must be given careful attention, and they should be carefully shown the advantages of using other dictionaries.

Second language learners' use of the dictionary was also investigated by Gu and Johnson (1996) as part of a research into Chinese university students' use of vocabulary learning strategies and outcomes in learning English. Among the reported strategies, three dictionary strategies, *dictionary strategies for comprehension*, *extended dictionary strategies* and *looking-up strategies* were compared with the students' scores on tests of vocabulary size and general languages proficiency. They found that "skillful use of dictionaries for learning purposes (as opposed to looking for comprehension only) positively correlate with the two dependent variables "(ibid: 668).

Hilary Nesi (1999) reports a research on the skills that a student may need in order to use dictionaries effectively. She asked 35 (EFL, ESL, EAP and ESP) lecturers in the UK and overseas for information regarding the specification of dictionary skills in language syllabuses and/or course materials. She also surveyed published materials, such as textbooks and dictionary workbooks. She identified a very long list of skills, presented chronologically, such as *before study*, *before dictionary consultation*; *locating entry information*; *interpreting entry information*; *recording entry information* and *understanding lexicographical issues*. The first five stages focus on the process of dictionary use, starting

with the choice of which dictionary to have available for consultation and knowing what kinds of information are found in dictionaries, and ending with the application and recording of dictionary information. She said that dictionary skills specifications tend to concentrate on stages three and four, (i.e., locating entry information & interpreting entry information). She believed that students should receive much dictionary skills instruction at all stages.

Studies of native speakers used of dictionaries were reported by Howard Jackson (1988) and Della Summers (1988). Jackson (1988) found that students in his survey claimed to use their dictionaries in different occasions, such as while reading, for writing essays, or letters, playing word-games, etc. Also while more than ninety percent used it for meaning and spelling, very few of the native speakers used the dictionary for checking pronunciation (10 -11%) and part of speech (< 5%), (ibid, 193-196). Summers (1988) also reports that in most UK households the dictionary was frequently used for meaning followed by checking for correct spelling. The meanings that were looked up were not for common words, but 'hard words': words commonly confused or misuses, encyclopedic words (e.g. for science and technology, politics, etc), new words, rare or obsolete words. Summers observes, "Clarification about word meaning appears to be the main native-speaker requirement."

Another dictionary study, which was reported by Summers (1988), attempted to test the effectiveness of different entries (i.e., *Definitions only*, *Examples only*, *Definitions + Examples*) for presenting information both for comprehension and production. Summers (1988) reported that in all three cases comprehension was substantially improved (p.120). For productive purposes, *Definitions+Examples* were found to be the most successful, being equal to *Examples-only* entry in producing correct sentences but producing fewer incorrect sentences than *Examples-only*. Abstract definitions were slightly more successful than the control condition in which only the original passage was available for guidance. These findings provide further support for the widely held belief that English learners' dictionaries should be the best choice for EFL students (Allen, 1983; Carter et al 1988; Lewis, 1993; Partington, 1998; Harmer, 2001; Jordan, 1997). This is because these dictionaries contain much helpful definitions in controlled vocabulary and corpus based examples which should help the EFL student to use less familiar words correctly and appropriately. Still others point out that such context sentences and phrases are valuable aids in intentional, language focused learning and that EFL learners make use of them in addition to the other information in learners' dictionaries.

Moreover, other dictionary studies have shown (Bogaards, 1999; Nation 2001) that access to the dictionary improved students' performance in different ways and that dictionary use

facilitated the learning of more words when inferring was followed by consulting a dictionary. Dictionary use has various roles to play in helping EFL students to tackle foreign vocabulary more independently as they complete assignments or study in their own time; however, the users' application of various strategies is crucial factor that can influence their success in using the dictionary to facilitate learning. They need to know how to consult and use dictionaries effectively and yet this often seems to have been taken for granted. Also it has been noted that most studies of dictionary use have involved sophisticated users and that there is a noted lack of studies on less proficient learners (Nation, 2001:283). The present study investigates preparatory level students' use of various dictionary related strategies with reception and production tasks. The study aims to assess various aspects of the subject, including how much dictionary use is utilized by students to enhance their receptive and productive use of the target language vocabulary, whether appropriate look-up strategies are applied and the dictionary type frequently employed. The information obtained from the present study will have important implications particularly for EFL teachers, learners and material writers in the local context.

2.3.2 Dictionary Study from the Local Context

In spite of its significance to the EFL learner and perhaps its prevalent use by many Ethiopian students, the dictionary has not received sufficient attention in terms of research to make it more productive for learning. However, the researcher managed to get a study by Fikre (1999). The study explored the use of "pedagogic monolingual dictionaries" at high school level. The participants of the study were 30 randomly selected grade 11th students at a high school in Addis Ababa and 20 English teachers. Data was gathered through a 30-item test of the use of English learners' dictionary to find the grammar of lists of words (nouns and verbs), and in few cases, to find the meanings. The study also observed, using electronics stop-watch, the students' speed at finding words in dictionary. The results show that the students had difficulty in getting the required information quickly. The questionnaire consists of a large number of items ranging from the possession of dictionaries to the purpose, frequency, etc. of dictionary use. Fikre concluded that the students gain very little from their dictionaries, 'using them only as a problem solving not as a pedagogic tool'. He also stated that the students received no support from their teachers.

Chapter Three: Methodology of the study

This chapter presents three sections. The first section introduces the target population, including the selection of the participants in the study. The second section describes the data gathering instruments. The third section discusses the techniques of data analysis and the complete procedures taken in the data collection.

3.1. Target Population and Sampling

The subjects of the study were preparatory students of the 2009/10 academic year. By the time of the study, these students had many years of English learning experience (from grades-1); they had also been studying their school subjects in English (from grade 7-12).

As far as the selection of the subjects is concerned, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique. This procedure was chosen because those grade-12 students have relatively large vocabulary learning burden in all subjects other than English. They also have to work more independently to prepare for the national examinations which will determine their entrance to higher institutions for more serious investigation in their chosen of carriers. There were seventy-nine students in two sections. Ten students who were taken in the piloting stage of the study were excluded, while sixteen students could not be included due to various reasons. Thus, during the first phase of the study, 53 students took part in the study. Data collection during the second phase of the study involved a practical activity and, due to lack of resources 22 students participated in the study. In addition, the English teachers who taught in the setting were purposively included in the study.

3.2 Data Gathering Instruments

The study investigated the students' application of dictionary related strategies for reception and production purposes and the types of dictionary students usually employed. The instruments used in this study were (1) questionnaires, (2) written retrospection after doing a practical activity with English learners' dictionary (3) a semi-structured interview with subjects; and (4) a semi-structured interview with the English teachers in the target preparatory school. These instruments are described in detail below.

The first instrument used in the study was *Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire* (DUSQ). This was intended to obtain a broader survey of the students' strategies of dictionary use with reception and production activities. It was mainly used to get information about the use of appropriate strategies for the receptive use of dictionary (i.e., reading) by choosing important, frequent and useful words to look up from a reading text; the use of dictionary resources to improve vocabulary use for production purposes (mainly writing); and the dictionary types the students frequently employed. The DUSQ was designed after a review of the literature (Nation,

2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nesi, 1999; Allen, 1983; Scholfield, 1982; Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995; Jordan, 1997; Lewis 1991; deLopez, 1987; Harmmer, 2001; Jackson, 1988; see also references). The initial draft of the questionnaire consisted of 21 items. This was given to specialists in English language education for their comments and it was piloted with similar population to ensure that the instrument would generate adequate and relevant data. Based on the comments and the insights gained from the piloting, the initial draft was modified. Here some questions were reformulated so as to be clearly understood by the students and few items had to be substituted or left out.

The final version of the questionnaire (DUSQ) contains 18 questions presented in two parts plus the introduction (see Appendix- A). The first part of the questionnaire was used to obtain information about the subjects' perceptions towards dictionary use and the types of dictionary they frequently used. The students responded by choosing from given alternatives. The second part of the questionnaire (i.e., 15 items) was designed to gather more detailed information on the students' application of specific strategies mainly with written reception and production activities. The items from these two categories were mixed up. The researcher used a five point scale, where 1-represents *Very true to me* and 5-represents *Very untrue to me* on strategy application. Here the numbers 1 to 5 were designated '*Very true to me*', '*True to me*', '*Uncertain*', '*Untrue to me*', '*Very untrue to me*'. Thus, the students responded on the rating scale to express how much a given statement reflects their ways of using the dictionary with reception and production activities.

The next two instruments were *Dictionary Look-Up Strategies Questionnaires*. These were designed to obtain empirical data on whether the students employed appropriate search strategies while consulting English learners' dictionary for receptive purposes. The instruments were designed in the light of available related literature and the specific behaviors are recognized by experts as appropriate pieces of evidence for describing the existence or lack of proficiency in using the dictionary efficiently. Before the instruments were used, they were tried out with similar population of preparatory students that were involved in the previous pilot of the DUSQ. Information obtained from the piloting phase as well as the comments from specialists in English language teaching provided the basis for improving the instruments by modifying some items, adjusting the administration time and clarifying some of the tasks. The *Dictionary Look-Up Strategies Questionnaires* were administered to a sample of twenty-two students due to some practical considerations.

The first of the two *Dictionary Look-Up Strategies Questionnaires* was 'Look-up Q-1' (see Appendix- C). This was a kind of immediate written retrospection in which the subjects were

engaged in real practical work, i.e., to find out the meanings of vocabulary items in contexts using standard learners' dictionary. Soon after that *Look-up Q-1* asked what they actually did during the activity, e.g., to prepare for the look-up, to find the entry quickly, to select the right definition, and to check the success of the search. *Look-up Q-1* consisted of four open-ended questions and required the subjects to describe (in Amharic or English) the skills and clues they might have used at various stages of the look-up process. In the activity (see Appendix-B), the subjects were given no hint that they would be required to retrospect. Thus, *Look-up Q-1* was used to assess the students' familiarity with the use of dictionary look-up strategies.

The second *Dictionary Look-up Strategies Questionnaires* was 'Look-up Q-2' (see Appendix-D). This questionnaire consisted of eleven close-ended items which were intended to elicit information on whether the students generally employed some skills, techniques and their knowledge of dictionary when they usually consulted to check meanings of words from a reading text. The researcher used the same techniques as in the DUSQ. Thus, *Look-up Q-2* required the subjects to respond to statement about the use of some skills and dictionary information in the process of looking up meanings in learners' dictionary. The participants, who took part in the preceding stage of data gathering, responded to the use of each activity and/or information in the description on a scale, where the numbers 1 to 5 were respectively designated as 'Very true to me', 'True to me', 'Uncertain', 'Untrue to me', and 'Very untrue to me'. It was emphasized in the introduction that the subjects should report based on their experiences or what they normally did. Also maximum care was taken during the construction of the instrument so as not to give any clues through the ordering of items.

Thus, two data gathering tools were used in the study to assess the subjects' application of strategies while looking up meanings in standard learners' dictionary. This is important to cross-check the responses obtained from each instrument (Nation, 2001; Nunan, 1992; O'Malley et al, 1990). That is any response may be reported after completing a task regardless of how unusual, or even peculiar it might be if it occurred in that particular occasion. Also the amount of time which elapses between the use of strategy and the reporting of that use may distort what is actually reported. Thus, in addition to allowing a wider coverage of the skills and techniques, the use of the two instruments at different stages of the data collection process had the above advantages in the study.

The other data gathering instrument employed in this study was interview. There were two types of interview: one with the students and the other with the teachers. The students' interview was mainly aimed to find out why some frequent dictionary users gave very little attention to English-English learners' dictionaries and to obtain more information about their

experience in the use of dictionaries (see Appendix-E). It was a structured interview and the interviewees were among those students who reported in the earlier DUSQ that they rarely used English-English learners' dictionaries. The second interview was conducted with the English language teachers in the target school. This was semi-structured interview and was used to find out whether they were aware of their students' dictionary strategies, its appropriateness, the kind of support offered in the use of dictionaries for various purposes, and whether they could provide any assistance to improve their students' proficiency in using dictionaries for various purposes (see Appendix-F).

3.3. Techniques of data collection and analysis

As mentioned above, data was collected through questionnaires, including written retrospection after completing a task, and interviews. The data collection was completed from November to December 2009. This section discusses the techniques of data collection and the complete procedures in the data gathering process.

Data of the Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire (DUSQ)

As has been stated earlier in this chapter, the study intended to include all grade-12 students at the target school. However, the study could not include the responses of 26 students due to various reasons. They were either absent at the time of data gathering, unable to give the required information, or involved in the piloting stage of the study. Thus, data of the DUSQ was collected from 53 students. When the subjects assembled at the school auditorium at the end of the afternoon class (3:30 p.m.), the researcher stated the purpose and relevance of the study. To avoid any misunderstanding, the researcher explained the instructions and each item with the help of examples. He emphasized that any responses would be acceptable and requested the subjects to report based on what they normally did and not based on what they think they should do. Once the questionnaires were distributed to each participant, the researcher remained there to answer any questions that they might have while filling the questionnaire. The students responded by choosing from given options on rating scales. The specific applications of dictionary use with reception and production tasks were tabulated and the students responded by circling the numbers representing: 'Very true to me', 'True to me', 'Uncertain', 'Untrue to me', 'Very untrue to me'. Finally, the technique used for analyzing the data was mainly quantitative in which the various responses given to each item were counted and percentages compared.

The Dictionary Look-up strategies Questionnaires (1 & 2)

Data of the students' use of appropriate strategies in the actual look-up process was collected in December, i.e., after the data from the DUSQ was analyzed. Both instruments,

Look-up Q-1 and *Look-up Q-2* were administered on the same date. As it was mentioned earlier, the study could not involve large population due to some practical considerations. Twenty-two grade-12 students were included in these phases of data gathering.

Before the *Look-up Q-1* was administered to the students, the researcher had made the necessary arrangement by discussing with the school librarian as well as by collecting materials from outside sources. So when the students arrived after the end of the afternoon class, the investigator explained the purpose of the study in general and stressed the importance of their genuine participation for its success. He assured the participants that the information obtained during the session would only be used in the study (and for no other purposes). Then he distributed the activity and a copy of English learners' dictionary to each participant. The activity consisted of five vocabulary items in sentence contexts. It required the subjects to use the dictionary to find out meanings of five vocabulary items in sentence contexts and to write down meanings and specify where they found it in the dictionary (e.g., definition numbers, letter). The subjects were not informed that they would be required to describe their strategies until after they had completed the task.

The first stage of data collection was undertaken immediately after the participants had done the practical activity. The questionnaire (*Look-up Q-1*) was used to help the students to recall how they approached the task of looking up meanings in English learners' dictionary. It asked what activities they performed at various stages and/or what information they used to enhance their performance during the look-up process. Moreover, the researcher encouraged them to describe the things they deliberately did or used while doing the dictionary activity. The subjects were allowed to report their strategies either in English or Amharic. Finally, the data was obtained and the responses were classified into four major categories and presented under skills needed to prepare for the task of looking up, to find the page and entry, to select the right definition and to check the success of the search.

The second data gathering (*Look-up Q-2*) was carried out some time after the subjects had returned the first questionnaire *Look-up Q-1*. In the *Look-up Q-2*, the students were required to indicate whether they normally performed some activities and/or utilized some information in typical consultation acts, i.e., when they usually looked up meanings of words from a reading text. Before the data collection resumed, the researcher explained the instructions to avoid any misunderstandings. The students were advised to report on the use of any skill in the questionnaire even if it did not appear in the previous dictionary activity but not the other way round, i.e., they were not to report any thing if it only appeared in the practical activity or even if they thought they should do it. Moreover, they were encouraged to think back on how they

usually looked up in typical situations as described in the questionnaire before they decided whether a statement diverges or converges with their ways of using the dictionaries in similar situations. Then a copy of the questionnaire (*Look-up Q-2*) was handed out to each participant. The researcher was always around when the students needed help. The students indicated how much a description reflects their ways of looking up by choosing on a rating scale of 1 to 5, representing 'Very true to me', 'True to me', 'Uncertain', 'Untrue to me', 'Very untrue to me' respectively. Finally, the data obtained from the questionnaire was collected and analyzed. Here the responses were counted and percentages were calculated.

The Interviews

The students' interviews were held in late December, 2009. This was after the analysis of the DUSQ questionnaire data. The interviewees were among those students who reported frequent use of bilingual dictionaries but who rarely used English-English learners' dictionaries. Nine students consented to be interviewed. Each volunteer was interviewed at a convenient place in the school. It was a semi-structured interview and each participant was asked two open-ended questions. Each session was conducted in Amharic to allow the students to speak freely about their experiences in the use of dictionaries in their studies and their reasons for not using English learners' dictionaries more regularly when they consulted. Each interview lasted for about ten to fifteen minutes. During the interview, the researcher encouraged the students to provide information about how important the use of dictionaries had been in their studies, when they started to use one, and why they did not use English-English learners' dictionaries, such as those in the school library; whether they encountered difficulties while trying to use these dictionaries; what they thought were the causes of the difficulties. Once the interview was completed, the data from each respondent was later analyzed. In the analysis, numerical system was used to identify each data entry. The code for each account indicated the learners' ID which was assigned by the researcher.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers after the students' interview. The interview was conducted with three English language teachers in the target school. This had also been done at a convenient place in the school. Each interview session lasted for about twenty-five minutes. The teachers were asked four open-ended questions regarding their level of awareness about their students' dictionary behavior, whether they thought it was appropriate to the level, and whether they could provide guidance and independent practice opportunities to improve their students' efficiency in using the strategy well. The researcher tried to obtain more specific information about their attitudes towards training students in using dictionaries for various purposes.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the study. The first section discusses the analyses and the findings of the *Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire* (DUSQ). The second section reports the results of the data of the two *Dictionary Look-up Strategies Questionnaires* (Look-up Q-1 and Look-up Q-2). The third section discusses the data obtained from the interviews.

4.1 Data of the Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire (DUSQ)

As mentioned in chapter one, the purpose of this study was to explore preparatory level students' application of strategies related to dictionary use. To this end, the *Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire* (DUSQ) was distributed to 53 grade-12 students (see Appendix-A). The questionnaire first elicited information about the students' general attitudes toward dictionary use and the types of dictionary they regularly used. Then it mainly focused on specific applications of strategies related to dictionary use with reception and production activities. The former aimed to find out about the use of appropriate strategies for the receptive use of dictionary by choosing important, frequent and useful words from a reading text to look up and thus it was examined in relation to other strategies. The latter focused mainly on the use of resources in the dictionary to improve vocabulary use for production, mainly for writing purposes. The responses to the DUSQ were gathered and the data was analyzed quantitatively. The results are presented in the following section.

4.1.1 Analysis and Results of the DUSQ

The study explored grade-12 students' application of some strategies related dictionary use with reading and mainly writing activities in the foreign language. The specific applications of dictionary use may sometimes go beyond the immediate demands of a particular task; however, these were presented under the major categories of reception and production. The researcher has mainly adapted the ideas proposed in the literature (Nation, 2001; Gu & Johnson, 1996). Moreover, to make the analysis easily readable, the findings regarding the students' general attitudes towards dictionary use were presented in the first sub-sections. The second and the third sub-sections present the main findings on the applications of specific dictionary use strategies with reception (reading) and for production (mainly writing) activities respectively. The last sub-section presents the findings of the study regarding the types of dictionary the subjects used more regularly. Furthermore, related questions were put together under their categories. Finally, they were tabulated and presented as follows. (See 4.1.1.1; 4.1.1.2; 4.1.1.3 & 4.1.1.4).

4.1.1.1 Students' perceptions to the use of dictionaries

The use of dictionaries is one of the major options that learners have to get information about target language vocabulary from a reading text and for writing purposes. Yet, some students may not appreciate the benefits of dictionary use in their studies. Thus, before going into the specific applications of the strategy with reception and production activities, questions were asked to know their general perceptions towards the use of dictionaries with such activities. The questions and the results of the study are presented as follows.

Table-1: Learners' attitude towards dictionary use

Item No.	Questions
1.	Do you use dictionaries? <u>Yes, very often</u> / <u>Often</u> / <u>Sometimes</u> / <u>Only rarely</u> / <u>No never</u>
2.	How important is the use of the dictionary to you in these situations: a. to search the meanings of words while reading school books? b. to find out about language as part of a task or project (e.g., written assignment)?

Table-1a: Learners' responses to the question: *'Do you use dictionary?'*

Item No.	(Total No. Students = 53)													
	Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Sub-Total		Rarely		Never		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%
1.	13	24.5	19	35.8	19	35.8	51	96.2	2	3.77	0	0	2	3.77

The first question asked of the students was whether they actually used dictionary while they study at home, in the library, or any other place. The overwhelming majority of the students reported that they used dictionary. Fifty-one students (96.22%) said that they consulted very often (24.52%), often (35.8%), sometimes (35.8%). A very small proportion, (3.77%) said they rarely consulted the dictionary and none of the students ticked 'never'.

As can be seen from the above responses, almost all of the students seemed to have great faith in their dictionaries, using them regularly while they study in their own time. In fact, this might be expected because lessons in the secondary school increase both in amount and difficulty (Mercer 1993) and as Bright and McGregor (1977:27) note, 'in English medium schools there will be a large vocabulary learning burden in all subjects other than English'. Students in such academic contexts have to deal with a large amount of L2 vocabulary while they study the various school subjects in English and they may naturally need to use the dictionary as an important knowledge sources about L2 vocabulary (Allen, 1983). Thus the widespread use of dictionary by these preparatory students may be motivated by the large vocabulary learning burden.

Question-2 was asked to find out how useful the students generally thought the dictionary was for them to get decoding and encoding information. They were asked to rate the usefulness of the dictionary for them while reading and for language production, (e.g., while doing some writing assignment). The following profile emerged.

Table-1b: Students' responses on the degree of helpfulness of dictionary use
(a) while reading school books & (b) gathering language for production tasks

Item No	DEGREE OF HELPFULNESS													
	Very High		High		Medium / Quite		Total Positive		Low		Very Low		Total Negative	
	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%	St. No.	%
a.	29	54.7	15	28.3	9	17	53	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
b.	8	15.1	11	20.7	16	30.2	35	66.03	11	20.7	7	13.2	18	33.9

The students attributed the higher degree of helpfulness of the dictionary for decoding function of the language, i.e., while reading their school books (a). All of the participants felt that the degree of usefulness of the dictionary to search meanings while reading was *Very High* (54.7%), *High* (28.3%) or at least *Medium* (17%). In deed, these preparatory students have to read to learn the various school subjects in the foreign language, and dictionary use may provide substantial linguistic support that is needed for detailed understanding. It is often noted that at certain levels reader strategies, such as inference may fail to compensate for language problems (Nation, 2001; Swaffar et al, 1991), there may not also be sufficient clues in the text to guide the guesses, (Urquhart et al, 1998; Harmer, 2001).

The above table also shows (in 2b) that the students' ratings for the usefulness of the dictionary while preparing or doing some production tasks (e.g., written assignments, prepared presentation activities). However, in comparison to the previous one, relatively fewer students (66.03%) thought of the helpfulness of the dictionary in these occasions. The usefulness of a dictionary for language production was rated as *Very High* (15.09%), *High* (20.75%) or at least *Medium* (30.2%). The rest of the students (33.96%) thought the usefulness of dictionary while they were sometimes preparing or finding out about language as part of a task or project was *Low* (20.7%) or *Very Low* (13.2%). This indicates that many students seemed to have somehow positive attitude towards productive use of the dictionary; however, about a third of the participants did not appreciate the role of dictionary use in terms of helping them improve their performance in some production activities.

The responses to the use of the dictionary and its perceived usefulness indicated that overall this particular population of preparatory students seemed to have positive attitude toward dictionary use in their studies. It was considered useful source of information for

production, but it was almost unanimously regarded useful for reception. That is the great majority found it more helpful to look up meanings while reading their school books than to gather language information for writing composition assignments or other integrative production activities. However, based on the above findings, we may infer that the students generally appreciate the value of dictionary use in their studies. In fact this may be expected in many EFL contexts and especially among students who are also involved in a language-related program of instruction because dictionary use may provide much needed linguistic support while they study their school subjects in their own time.

However, we may need to look further than the subjects' general perceptions toward dictionary use before we can make any valid comments on the students' dictionary strategies. Having positive attitude may not necessarily be identical with efficient and effective dictionary use. The subsequent sections present in greater detail the results of the study on specific applications of the dictionary with reception and production activities.

4.1.1.2 Dictionary use strategies with reception activities

The respondents in the study attributed a higher degree of usefulness of the dictionary for reception purposes. The responses also suggest that this is not only very important for them but they may also spend a lot of time on dictionary use while they read in their own time. One of the essential skills in successful application of dictionary use for reception (i.e., reading) involves making careful decisions on when to look up. Thus questions were asked to assess how strategic they were in using the dictionary by choosing important, frequent and useful words from reading texts to look up. The first five items represent helpful dictionary use strategies and the other two are less helpful or faulty ways of dictionary use with reading. The items in the main questionnaire were scrambled (see Appendix - A). However, related items were put together to make the presentation readable. Table-2 presents the items from the DUSQ.

Table-2: Dictionary use strategies with reception tasks (i.e., reading L2 texts)

Item No	Statements
1.	When a new vocabulary item prevents me from getting general understanding of the text, I look it up.
3.	When I see an unfamiliar word again and again in a text I look it up.
5.	I sometimes look for special meanings for familiar-looking words (e.g. plant, light, play, etc) if they appear in a sentence that is hard to understand.
12	I sometimes look up to confirm guessed meanings from contextual clues (when I have time)
14.	I look up new words if I think I will need to use it sometime in the future.
8.	I often prefer to look up the unknown before deciding its importance for adequate comprehension of every material that I read.
10	I usually look up every unknown as it appears in the text for effective understanding of every material that I read.

The following three tables preset the results of three dictionary use strategies for comprehension purposes. That is the use of dictionary to tackle some vocabulary items that are important for successful understanding of a text and/or that are significant in the text.

Table-2a: Learners' responses to the use of the dictionary to check a new vocabulary items which prevents general understanding of the text

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue To me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
1.	36	67.9	13	7.54	49	92.45	4	7.54	0	0	0	0	0	0

Overall, the students seemed to be strategic with some new words that are important for general understanding of a reading text. Forty-nine students (92.45%) said that when an unfamiliar vocabulary item prevents their general understanding of a reading text, they looked it up. A very small minority (7.54%) were not sure they applied dictionary use in such situations. At this point in the students' learning, the students should be mainly interested in whether they are able to comprehend the ideas and concepts presented in the text. And if the significance of a specific word in a reading impedes this, then by all means the dictionary should be used (Nuttal, 1982; de Lopez, 1987).

Table-2b: Learners' responses to the use of the dictionary to check the meaning of unknown word that is met again and again in a reading text

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue To me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
3.	17	32.07	20	37.7	37	69.8	16	30.18	0	0	0	0	0	0

Many of the participants reported that they consulted their dictionaries when they encountered an unfamiliar vocabulary item again and again in a reading text. Thirty-seven students (69.81%) showed their agreement to the statement (Very true to me=32.07% and True to me=37.7%). While none of the students chose very/untrue to me categories, sixteen participants (30.18%) could not confirm or reject the validity of the statement in terms of reflecting their way of dictionary use. This might indicate that they did not notice such features in a reading text when deciding to consult a dictionary. However, just over two third of the participants claimed to decide whether to attend to the unknown by observing its frequency of occurrence in the discourse. This is important because the frequency with which words occur in a text reflects the information content of the text, (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983; Gu et al, 1996; Parrott, 1993). The writer may also want to emphasize a point

through repetition, and if (in spite of this) the reader could not work out the meaning of the unknown, the reader might not be able to adequately understand the message that the writer tried to convey.

The following table presents the results of students' responses regarding the use of dictionary to check relatively common words when the context is not sufficiently understood.

Table-2c: Learners' responses to the use of the dictionary to check the meaning of familiar-looking words used in a special way

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
5.	3	5.66	5	9.43	8	15.09	6	11.32	20	37.73	19	35.84	39	73.58

As can be seen from the table, the majority of the students did not pay attention to seemingly familiar-looking words even if they did not understand the sentence in which such words appeared. Only eight students (15.09%) indicated that if they thought that a familiar-looking word was used in a special way in the text they looked it up. Six students (11.32%) expressed uncertainty, perhaps suggesting that they did not consistently apply it. However, thirty-nine respondents (73.58%) did not employ dictionary use to look for special meanings of familiar-looking words. We may infer from the above responses that most students did not deliberately try to use the dictionary to find a specialized meaning even when the word appears in a sentence that is hard to understand. This is consistent with Allen's (1983) observation that students do not usually think of checking familiar words on the assumption that they already know the meanings. However, a study reported by Summers (1988) concluded that intermediate students in secondary schools and colleges used the LDOCE to look up high frequency words, particularly abstract ones.

Words that are formally like high-frequency words but which have specialized meanings may cause trouble because reasonably common words in some contexts may have different meanings from subject area to subject area (Nation, 2001). Often a sentence that contains only familiar words may not be understood because certain combinations of words or even when the word is not part of a phrasal construction it may have special meanings, and this may cause difficulty or lead to miscomprehension while reading. However, from the above result, we can safely assume that the majority of the students, including the 'uncertain' ones, did not recognize the advantages of dictionary use to tackle such lexical problems while reading or perhaps they did not expect to find such information in a dictionary. Yet the habit of looking up such words will be needed if students are to read the English of

academic fields as Allen (1983) points out, “Ordinary meanings are not enough to know if one wishes to read English for science and technology”.

The students have to read to learn in the foreign language or as the English syllabus for the target level points out the students should be able to read “critically and make discriminating judgments”. The above three dictionary use strategies can be crucial if the reader is trying to get more than just the gist of the materials they read. The results indicate that dictionary use was employed to find out about unfamiliar words that were important for general understanding of a text and unknown items that were met again and again in a text. However, dictionary use was not utilized to check familiar-looking words even when the context is hard to understand.

The next table presents the results of two items that were related to the receptive use of the dictionary, to check some of the contextual guesses and to build L2 vocabulary through reading. They were asked to know whether the students deliberately applied dictionary use for the above purposes, especially after the students had read a text to derive the required information.

Table-2d: Learners' responses to dictionary use as a post reading activity to check guessed meaning from context & to focus on some of the words which are important to the reader

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue To me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
12	3	5.66	6	11.32	9	16.98	10	18.86	19	35.84	15	28.3	34	64.15
14	5	9.43	6	11.32	11	20.75	9	16.98	20	37.73	13	24.52	33	62.26

Question-12 asked whether they would take some time to confirm the meanings of some of the new words they had guessed using contextual clues. Only nine students (16.98%) said that they sometimes employed dictionary use to check guessed meanings from context. Out of the remaining (83%), ten students (18.86%) could not confirm that they deliberately tried to check guessed meanings after they had finished a reading task. However, (64.15%) gave negative responses (Untrue to me= 35.84%) or (Very untrue to me=28.3%). In deed, vocabulary is thought as an integral part of discourse and is developed along with reading strategies such as contextual guesses. However, that may sometimes be affected by a number of factors (including the density of the text, the familiarity of the topic, and the readers level), and this may result in not only poor understanding of the text but inadequate learning of new words from context since wrong guesses would sometimes be retained (Nation, 2001). On the other hand, this dictionary use strategy might in any context

valuably add to the acquisition of vocabulary through reading; it should facilitate the retention of that new vocabulary and increased availability of those items for active use (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Paribackth et al, 2006).

Question-14 was also asked whether the students considered dictionary use to find out about new words from a reading text if the students thought that they would need to use the unfamiliar word some time in the future. However, only few students deliberately applied this strategy. Eleven students (20.75%) said that they consulted to focus on some new words after reading a text to derive the required information from the text. However, the majority of the students (79.24%) did not seem to be strategic enough in using the dictionary in this way to extend their active vocabulary. Thirty-three students (62.26%) admitted that they did not apply the strategy while nine students were unsure (16.96%). From this, we may observe that most of the students did not use their dictionaries to focus on important vocabulary items which they would need to use at some time in the future. In fact it may also be the case that they did not deliberately try to build their vocabulary by themselves other than focusing on those words that the teacher or the textbook explains.

In deed, the primary purpose of the dictionary is not vocabulary learning and the students are expected to develop their L2 vocabulary mainly through their readings. However, one way of facilitating this process (words learning through reading) may also involves the use of dictionary as 'external knowledge source' to confirm guesses or to get more information about unknown but useful vocabulary items found in text (Gu et al, 1996; Nation, 2001; Paribakht et al 2006). Many ELT experts assert that the dictionary can help the learners to build their stock of vocabulary systematically which in the long term will be helpful (Baker & Yarber, 1986; Harmer, 2001; Parrott, 1993; Bowen et al, 1994) and thus allow the learner to personalize vocabulary expansion according to their needs, purposes, and goals. From the above two responses; however, we can conclude that the majority of the students did not deliberately apply dictionary use to compliment vocabulary information gained from meaning focused input or to focus on some new words from a reading text.

Less helpful dictionary strategies/ habits

While systematic use of the dictionary with L2 reading may facilitate comprehension and vocabulary development, indiscriminate dictionary use while reading may negatively affect the learning process. The following two items (Table-3) were asked to find out whether the students were likely to overuse the dictionary while reading with a dictionary. The two related faulty strategies were also asked to cross-examine the students' responses to the other items 1 & 5. The results are presents in (Table-3a).

Table-3: Less helpful dictionary use strategies while reading with dictionaries

Item No.	Statements
8	I often prefer to look up any unknown word from a text before I decide whether the word is important for adequate comprehension (if I read with a dictionary).
10	I usually look up every unknown as it appears in the text for effective understanding of any material that I read (if there is a dictionary nearby)

Table-3a: Learners' responses to the use of the above less helpful dictionary use strategies while reading

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT (reverse value)													
	Very untrue To me		Untrue to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		True To me		Very true To me		Sub-Total	
	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %	St. No	St. %
8	12	22.64	16	30.18	28	52.82	7	13.2	13	24.5	11	20.7	18	33.95
10	15	28.3	17	32.07	32	60.37	13	24.52	5	9.43	3	5.66	8	15.09

Item number-8 was asked to know if the students preferred to look up new vocabulary from a text before they could decide its significance for adequate comprehension of a text. Twenty-eight participants said that they did not favor this way of using the dictionary (Very / Untrue to me = 52.82%). Eighteen students reported that if they were reading with dictionaries, they preferred to look up any unknown before deciding its importance for adequate comprehension of a reading text (Very / True to me = 33.95%). Furthermore, seven students could not confidently confirm whether they preferred to decide the relevance of the word before they employed dictionary use (Uncertain =13.20%). The above responses show that even when they were reading with a dictionary, just over half of the students did not prefer to look up unknown words from a text before they decided the importance of the word for adequate comprehension. However, the remaining responses suggest that some students may not recognize the importance of this skill (deciding the significance of the unknown) for successful dictionary use while reading.

Question-10 was also asked to get related information. The item asked whether they tried to look up every unknown as it appears in a text, provided that they were reading with dictionary. The majority of the students did not generally look up every unknown as it appeared in a text (60.36% = Very / untrue to me). While only eight students (15.09%) said that they tried to do so as long as there were dictionaries around while they read, thirteen students (24.52%) could not decide either way. The students' response to this item seems to be consistent with the one they gave for the previous item. Although more students showed preference to the use of dictionary before deciding the significance of the word, many of the participants did not try to look up every unknown as it appears in a text.

From the responses given to the above seven items (i.e., receptive use), we may find that many students did not seem to overuse the dictionary while reading as some people remark. The students said that they looked up a new vocabulary that prevents general understanding or that is frequently met in a text (i.e., items 1 & 3). However, quite a few of the respondents may not apply those strategies consistently as the responses to items 8 & 10 indicated. On the other hand, the responses given to items-5 revealed that dictionary use was not employed to check familiar-looking items even when the text is not sufficiently understood. Furthermore, the responses on the use of the dictionary to confirm some of their guesses from context and to focus on some important vocabulary items from a reading text (i.e., items 12 & 14) revealed that the dictionary use was not employed by the preparatory students to facilitate vocabulary development through reading.

4.1.1.3. Analyses and results of dictionary use strategies for production purposes

The following sub-section presents the results of the investigation regarding the students' application of dictionary use to improve their performance in some production activities. That is whether the subjects employed dictionary use to improve their vocabulary use for production purposes. This may be while preparing or gathering language for production, mainly for writing or editing composition assignments.

Table-4: Some dictionary use strategies for productive purposes

Item NO	Statements
2	When I do not know how a word is spelt, I look it up before using it.
6	When I am not sure whether a given word has some inflected or derived forms, I check it in the dictionary.
7	I use the learners' dictionaries to work out the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
4	When I need to find out the collocation of a word before using it, I sometimes look for that information in different the learners' dictionary.
9	When I suspect slight differences in meaning between confusing words, I check in the dictionary before use.
11	I use the dictionary to find out or check constraints on the use of new or partly known words needed to use (e.g. derog, sl, infml, arch, law, etc)
13	When I need to use (e.g. while writing a composition assignment) a different word instead of a known one, I look for synonyms or related words in learner's dictionary.
15	I consult the dictionary to find out about the grammar of less familiar word that I want to use in some production activities, such as writing

The above items were intended to elicit information regarding the use of dictionary resources for productive use of important L2 vocabulary. They were asked to know whether and/or how much the students make use of the linguistic resources in dictionaries to improve their performance in some production tasks (mainly for writing purposes). The

results of the above dictionary use strategies are presented in detail in the following four tables: Table-4a, Table-4b, Table-4c, and Table-4d.

To make the analysis easier, items 2, 6 & 7 are presented and analyzed together under Table-4a because most of them are related to more or less the same area of word knowledge, i.e., *word forms*.

Table-4a: Learners' responses to the use of dictionary to check appropriate word forms including spelling, inflections/derivations, & pronunciation

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very True To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
2	5	9.43	7	13.2	12	22.6	7	13.20	19	35.84	15	28.30	34	64.1
6	3	5.66	3	5.66	6	11.3	4	7.54	22	41.50	21	39.62	43	81.1
7	1	1.88	2	3.77	3	5.66	4	7.54	25	47.16	21	39.62	46	86.7

Question-2 was asked to know whether the students consulted to check the spellings of less familiar words that were needed to use in written compositions assignments. Only twelve students (22.64%) of the participants expressed agreement to such way of using the dictionary. Out of the remaining majority, seven students (13.20%) could not confirm, may be because they did not consistently try to check the spellings of unfamiliar words with dictionary. Thirty-four students (64.15%) were less doubtful; (35.84%) and (28.30%) chose the 'Untrue to me' or 'Very untrue to me' categories respectively. It is generally recognized that the irregularity in the English spelling system often creates difficulty for learners of English. In fact, research shows that many high school and college EFL learners (Summers, 1988; Harvey & Yuill, 1997) and even native English speaking university students (Jackson, 1988) used their dictionary to check the spellings of words that are needed for some written production activities. However, most of the participants in the present study did not seem to employ this strategy to improve their written works.

Similarly, item number-6 was concerned with the use of dictionary to find out or check the correct inflected or derived word forms needed for writing tasks. Only six students (11.32%) confirmed the use of the dictionary to get morphological information about important words. Four students (7.54%) said that they were uncertain to the application of the dictionary for the same purposes. However, forty-three students (81.13%) admitted that they did not employ dictionary use to get morphological information, i.e., to find out or check the correct inflected or derived word forms for writing tasks.

From the above results we can conclude that the majority of the students did not employ dictionary to check the spellings or correct inflected or derived forms of less familiar words needed to use in their written works. One of the reasons why this dictionary use strategy was reported infrequently might have been attributed to the infrequent occurrence of relevant experiences in EFL classes. That is to say if the students are not sometimes required to write more carefully or their attention is not drawn to the importance of using correct word forms in their written works, they may not recognize the value of such dictionary information. On the other hand, this can also affect the learners' writing because some learners may try other strategies as they face "the inevitable anxieties of spelling" (Baker & Yarber, 1986). For instance, the student may use limited vocabularies in their writing, as they rely on simple words while avoiding words that are hard to spell in order to be safe in their writing, i.e., in case the reader might interpret poor spelling as a sign of lack of knowledge on the subject.

Question-7 was asked to find out if the students consulted the learners' dictionaries to check the pronunciation of important but less familiar vocabulary which they needed to use. Except a very small minority (5.66%), the overwhelming majority of the students did not deliberately apply dictionary use to find out about pronunciation related information.

The next items were concerned with two dictionary use strategies which the EFL student may sometimes need to check confusable vocabulary while writing composition assignments or to research vocabulary relating to a specific topic prior to delivering it or while preparing a brief presentation.

Table-4b: Learners' responses to the use of dictionary to check meanings of confusing words and to find wanted word forms (such as synonyms) to use

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very True to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
9	16	30.18	15	28.3	31	58.49	5	9.43	10	18.86	7	13.2	17	32
13	3	5.66	5	9.43	8	15.09	3	5.66	24	45.28	18	33.96	42	79.24

Questions-9 was asked to know whether the students sometimes considered dictionary use as one way to check meaning differences between partly known words. By far this meaning related use was the most frequently reported dictionary use strategy for production purposes. Thirty-one students (58.49%) have responded that when they suspected subtle differences in meaning between confusing words needed to use, they checked in the dictionary, (Very true to me =30.18% or True to me=28.30%). The remaining twenty-two

students could not confirm that they deliberately applied the dictionary to check meanings of partly known words that are needed to use in some production activities. While 9.43% ticked 'Uncertain', 18.86% and 13.20% chose 'Untrue to me' and 'Very untrue to me' categories respectively for the question. The above findings demonstrate that many participants employed the strategy to check meaning differences between less known vocabulary items that are needed to use in some production activities. However, it is evident that about a third of the students did not deliberately use the dictionary in such a way to improve their performance in some production activities.

Question-13 was asked to find out whether the students consulted their dictionaries to search for synonyms or other related words to use in some production activity. Only eight students (Very true to me & True to me=15.09%) reported the use of this dictionary use strategy to assist their language production, such as written composition. While (5.66%) were uncertain that they deliberately applied this strategy for productive purposes, the majority (79.24%) responded in the negative, (Very untrue to me = 33.96% & Untrue to me= 45.28%). Other studies of learners' use of dictionaries found that many students consulted to get such information especially while writing (Harvey et al, 1997; Bejoint, 1981). The students may not be aware of the presence of such information in the learners' dictionaries. Most of the subjects in the present study also reported frequent use of bilingual dictionaries and it is very unlikely that the information could be found in such dictionaries because normally translating dictionaries only give L1 equivalents. Furthermore, studies even among English dictionary users showed (Harvey et al, 1997; Partington, 1998) that learners may find it difficult to get appropriate synonyms to use in stead of known words. These may be some of the reasons why only a small number of participants in this study reported the use.

Table-4c: Learners' responses to the use of dictionary to find out about the grammar of word and to find collocations

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very True to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
15	4	7.54	7	13.2	11	20.7	6	11.3	23	43.3	13	24.5	36	67.9
4	2	3.77	2	3.77	4	7.54	5	9.43	27	50.9	17	32	44	83

As can be seen from the responses given to Question-15 most of the students did not deliberately consult dictionary to find out about the grammar of less familiar words to use in some production activities. Eleven participants (20.75% = Very true to me & True to me) said that they employed dictionary use as one way to find out about the grammar of less familiar

word for some production tasks. Six students could not confidently confirm (11.32% = uncertain) the use of dictionaries for the same purpose. However, thirty-six students were less doubtful; 67.92% (Untrue to me = 43.39% & Very untrue to me= 24.52%) reported that they did not consult to check the grammar of less known vocabulary for some production activity. From the above results we can conclude that for most of the students the deliberate application of the aforementioned dictionary use strategy had very little or no value in terms of helping them to use important but less familiar words grammatically correctly in their written works. There is also some evidence that many EFL students do not successfully use the grammatical information in English learners' dictionaries. Bejoint (1981:215 -216) found that many EFL students in his study did not use the grammatical coding in their dictionaries at all. Yet many experts assert the importance of the detailed syntactic information especially for written production (see the review).

Question-4 was asked to know whether the students sometimes considered dictionary use as one way to find appropriate collocations of important vocabulary item that is needed to use. Only four students reported in the affirmative (Very true to me & True to me = 7.54%). Five students could not say whether they employed dictionary use to get collocational information (9.43%= uncertain). However, forty-four respondents (83.01%) did not employ dictionary use for the same purpose: 50.94% and 30.18% ticked 'Untrue to me' & 'Very untrue to me' categories respectively. Based on the above findings, we can conclude that dictionary use had not received sufficient attention as a valuable source of information about collocations of words needed to use for some production tasks. On the other hand, the students may not have recognized that the information was there for them to use for their own purposes. Harvey & Yuill (1997) also found low incidence of look-up reasons concerning collocation. In addition, although many modern EFL dictionaries provide much information about collocation, some learners may find it difficult to access the information they want to help production unless they are given some guidance (Lewis, 2000). Dictionary entries contain long lists of helpful phrases containing a given headword, but this may also make finding particular bit of information more difficult for the learners especially if they lack sufficient experience and practice.

The following table presents the results concerning the use of dictionary to check the appropriateness of less known L2 vocabulary items to use in some contexts / situations.

Table-4d: Learners' responses to the use of dictionary to check constraint on use (where and when to use certain words)

Item No.	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very True to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3.77	22	41.5	27	50.94	49	92.4

Table-4d shows that dictionary use is hardly ever employed to check the appropriateness of less known L2 vocabulary items to use in some contexts / situations. When constraints occur it is usually important to be aware of them because they can “affect the interpretation of the communication” (Nation, 2001). Some words are affected by constraints on use and a word which is correct in one context can sound wrong in another. However, those grade-12 students did not utilize dictionary use to check information, such as formal-informal, polite-impolite, spoken-written, etc. Carter et al (1988:53) assert that the guidance on the cultural and stylistic restrictions about words can prevent the production of mistakes by learners. However, the above results clearly show that the students did not apply dictionary use to check constraints on the use of words. The responses were also consistent with the response they gave to another item, which is related to interpreting dictionary (i.e., usage, subject, etc.) labels to select the right definition.

The EFL students may be expected to use the dictionary for more productive purposes for various reasons. The reading text may also give clues to the meaning of unfamiliar words, but while doing some written composition assignments, the student is often on his/her own and the dictionary may be the only help available with regard to information about correct word forms, related words, grammar, collocations, and constraints on use, etc. Some students consulted to check meanings of less known words that are needed for some production tasks. However, from the above results we may conclude that the students' application of dictionary use strategies for production purposes is generally very low.

4.1.1.4 Dictionary types frequently used

Several scholars remarked that many learners may rely on some dictionaries even beyond the stage in which they could derive more benefit from others. Therefore, questions were asked to determine the types of dictionaries grade-12 students consult on a regular basis and to determine the extent to which monolingual learners' dictionaries were appreciated. The following table presents the results.

Table-5: Students' responses to the types of dictionary they frequently used

(Total No. of Students = 53)

Kinds Of Dictionary	FREQUENCY							
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
	No St.	St. %	No St.	St. %	No St.	St. %	No St.	St. %
a. English-English (e.g., Oxford / Longman learners' dictionary)	2	3.77	32	60.37	19	35.8	-	-
b. Two-language dictionary (e.g. English-Amharic)	39	73.5	11	20.75	3	5.66	-	-
c. Three-language dictionary (e.g.English-Oromifa-Amharic)	12	22.6	5	9.43	1	1.88	35	66.07
d. Two- language dictionary (e.g. Amharic-English)	0	0	2	3.77	1	1.88	50	94.33
e. Other (esp. ESP)	0	0	4	7.54	3	5.66	46	86.79

The participants were asked the types of dictionary they used and how often they consulted them when they did. Let us look at the results of the study more closely.

Some types of bilingual dictionary that translate English words often into Amharic were most frequently reported. Most of the students reported that they used them usually (73.58 %) or sometimes (20.75%). English-English learners' dictionaries were used less frequently. A very small proportion of the participants used them 'usually' (3.77%); however, thirty-two students (60.37%) reported that they used these 'sometimes'. The remaining nineteen students said that they 'seldom' consulted English learners' dictionaries (35.84%). A type of multilingual dictionary that translate English entries into Oromifa and Amharic was consulted 'usually' (22.64%), 'sometimes' (9.43%). The use of this type of dictionary was mainly reported by a particular group of Oromifa speaking students in the target preparatory school. The table also shows that a small number of students used subject specialist dictionaries 'sometimes' (7.54%). Another type of bilingual dictionaries that translates L1 (Amharic) words into English was referred 'sometimes' (3.77%).

From the above responses, we may observe that only two types of dictionary were found to be most often used by the students. Both of those dictionaries were, however, basically the same in that both translate English words into Amharic &/or Oromifa. The participants have had many years of English learning experience starting from elementary school, and they have been attending in English medium schools from grade-7 up to the present. However, most of them seemed to rely mainly on translating dictionaries. The students' dictionary choice seems to contradict with many scholars' expectations that many learners would begin to rely more on English-English dictionaries once they are beyond the elementary level (Lewis, 1993; Allen, 1983; McAlpin, 1988; Carter & McCarthy, 1988). To

some extent, the responses in the present study seem to be consistent with Baxter's (1980) findings, in which the use of bilingual dictionaries (both L2 - L1 and L1 - L2) was reported frequently while English-English were very rarely used by many EFL students in his study. However, the use of bilingual dictionaries which go from the first language to the second language, i.e., which translate L1 (Amharic) words into English was reported by very few of the students in the present study.

To sum up, data obtained from *Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire* (DUSQ) indicates that the students had generally positive attitude towards dictionary use, especially the students attribute a higher degree of usefulness of the dictionary for reception purposes, (i.e., reading) than for production purposes. The results concerning the specific applications of dictionary use also indicate that many students may employ the dictionary far more frequently for decoding than for encoding.

Moreover, while deciding to look up words from reading, they focused on new vocabulary that prevents general understanding or that was frequently met in the text and many reported they did not look up every unknown or even before deciding its relevance. However, many students did not consult to check familiar looking words even when the context was not clear nor did they employ the dictionary to compliment new information from context after reading a text (i.e., to check some of their guesses and to focus on some important vocabulary from the text). Some of the responses also suggest that students may not use their dictionaries well with L2 reading activities.

With regard to the productive use of the dictionary, the results indicate that dictionary use was not often employed to use new or partly known words required in some tasks. Many students did not employ dictionary use to find out or check correct word forms (e.g., spelling, inflection/derivation and pronunciation) and to find out about or check the grammar and collocation. Dictionary use was not employed to check constraints on use of less familiar words, and to find other words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms) to use in some encoding activity. However, the dictionary was sometimes consulted to check meaning of partly known words needed for production purposes.

Regarding the dictionary type, the results indicated that (L2 - L1 type) translating dictionaries were usually used. English learners' dictionaries were sometimes consulted by nearly two third of the participants but these were used only rarely by the rest of the participants. The use of other types of dictionary, such as L1 - L2 type bilingual dictionaries and other ESP dictionaries were rarely reported in the study. Overall, the data suggests that despite their enormous values to learners at the target stage, English learners' dictionaries

were only second choice for the majority of the students while these were only rarely utilized by just over a third of the respondents.

4.2 Data of the Dictionary Look-up-Strategies Questionnaires 1 & 2

The study examined whether the students were familiar with the use of appropriate look-up strategies while searching meanings in standard learners' dictionary. The information was elicited through the use of two instruments at different stages. The first procedure involved written retrospection after completing a practical activity (see Appendix - C). That is the subjects were interrupted just as they completed a practical activity and asked to describe what skills and information they used at various stages in the dictionary activity. The second data collection instrument (see Appendix - D) was an eleven-item questionnaire, which was used to find out whether the students normally employed appropriate look-up strategies in typical consultation acts (i.e., when they usually look up meaning from a reading text). Generally the researcher had considerable success in obtaining information about the students' level of awareness and application of strategies through the use of questionnaire-2 but less success in the questionnaire-1. However, the use of these two instruments in the study in a complementary way made it possible to get broader insight. This section presents and discusses the results of the study concerning the data obtained from the two *Look-up Strategies Questionnaires*, beginning with *Look-up Q-2* and then *Look-up Q-1*. Thus, the first part (4.2.1) discusses the results obtained through the dictionary look-up questionnaire-2, *Look-up Q-2* and the second part (4.2.2) presents the data obtained through *Look-up Q-1*.

4.2.1 Data of the dictionary look-up strategies questionnaire-2 (*Look-up Q-2*)

As it was mentioned earlier, the *Dictionary Look-up Strategies Questionnaire-2 (Look-up Q-2)* was used to find out whether the participants normally employed some helpful strategies when they consulted for decoding purposes, i.e., to look up meanings while reading EFL texts. This questionnaire covered wide areas and provided further support to the conclusions made on the basis of the other instrument regarding the students' application of specific skills and techniques for efficient and effective use of dictionaries for receptive purposes. Table-6 presents the items of the questionnaire.

The skills normally occur in steps as in strategies; however, the items in the questionnaire were scrambled as can be seen in the table so as not to lead the participants. Thus, the participants read each statement and provided their responses on a rating scale to express

how much each description reflects their ways of looking up (i.e., how much they employed the skills whenever they used English learners' dictionaries).

Table-6: Dictionary look-up strategies

Item No	Statements
8	If the unknown word is suffixed, I remove the suffixes before I look it up (e.g. advertising – advertise)
6	I always guess the general meaning of the word before I look up an unfamiliar word while reading
3	I decide the part of speech (the grammatical name) of the unfamiliar word before I look it up.
1	I use the dictionary symbols for the different parts of speech while searching a word.
7	When I pick up the dictionary to look up, I usually guess the general location of the word in the dictionary
10	I use the guide words at the top of the pages to locate a word.
5	I know various alternative places to search such as separate entries, sub-entries, word groups, derived forms, variant spellings and appendixes
9	If the dictionary gives several meanings to a word, I use various pieces of information (such as, examples, collocations) to eliminate inappropriate sub-entries.
4	I interpret usage & subject codes in the dictionaries to work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word
11	When I want decide if the dictionary meaning fits nicely with the message of the text, I paraphrase the original sentence with the dictionary definition.
2	I sometimes adapt the meaning found in the dictionary to the context of the word in the text, if there are some changes between the dictionary definition and the context.

4.2.1.1 Analysis and results of data of the 'dictionary look-up strategies' questionnaire-2 (LOOK-UP Q-2)

In the following section the findings would be presented and discussed under four stages in which relevant skills at each stage were put together: a) *Thinking about the context*, b) *Finding the dictionary page/entry*, c) *Selecting the right sub-entry* and finally d) *Checking the success of the search*. (See Table-6a, Table-6b, Table-6c & Table-6d).

a) Thinking about the context

The following table (Table-6a) presents the students responses to three questions that are related to getting information about the target word from the original context in order to look the word up in the dictionary. Let us look at them in detail.

Table-6a: Learners' responses to the application of the skills of deciding the part of speech, removing suffixes and guessing the general meaning of the target word to be looked up

Item no	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
3	0	0	2	9.09	2	9.09	3	13.6	7	31.8	10	45.4	17	77.2
8	0	0	3	13.6	3	13.6	3	13.6	9	40.9	7	31.8	16	72.7
6	1	4.5	4	18.1	5	22.7	6	27.2	7	31.8	4	18.1	11	50

Item-3 was asked to find out whether the students decided the part of speech of the unfamiliar word before they looked it up in the dictionary. Seventeen students (77.27%) reported that they did not work out what word class the target item belonged before they looked up. Three students (13.6%) were not certain, which might also show that they did not consistently decide this to look up. Only two students (9.09%) reported that they decided the part of speech of the unknown before they looked it up in a dictionary. From this data we can conclude that most of the students did not recognize the importance of deciding the part of speech of the unknown to look it up in the learners' dictionary efficiently. Many words can be used in more than one way and thus belong to different part of speeches (e.g., as noun, verb, etc). Unless the user has decided how the word was used in the original context, choosing the right dictionary definition efficiently may be unnecessarily laborious (Scholfield, 1982; Allen, 1983; Nation, 2001).

Item number-8 also asked whether the students analyzed words with suffixes to reduce them into base form before looking them up in a dictionary. Sixteen students (72.72%) admitted that they did not do this. Only three students (13.6%) said that if the unknown word was suffixed or inflected, they removed the suffix before they looked it up. The remaining three students could not decide either way (uncertain=13.63%), perhaps that may suggest irregular use of the skill to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. This clearly indicates that the majority of the participants did not recognize the important rule of head word order, that not all words are headwords (Bolitho, et al, 1995; Howard, 1988; Turnbull et al, 1993; McAlpin, 1988). Most suffixed words are normally included within the entry for the word to which the suffix has been added, thus, derivatives, plural forms, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, regular verbs, nouns, adjectives are listed in their base forms and most adverbs with '-ly' are included with adjectives. From the above data, it is possible to deduce that most students would often find difficulty while searching meanings of an inflected or many suffixed word forms in learners' dictionaries.

Item number-6 was asked to know whether the students recognized the importance of guessing the possible meaning of the unknown before looking it up in a dictionary. Five participants (22.72%) in the study confirmed that they guessed the possible meaning before looking up. More than three fourth of the participants could not confirm this. While eleven students (50%) were sure that they did not guess the meaning as long as they had decided to look a word up in a dictionary, six respondents (27.27%) said that they were 'uncertain' that they consciously applied the skill in order to look up. From the above data we can infer that the majority of the students did not deliberately guess the general meaning of a new

word in order to look it up. However, this must be done before the new item is checked in the dictionary because when the reader looks up the word in the dictionary, he will be able to select the right dictionary definition, (Allen, 1983) and/or “to slot the meaning straight into its place” (Nuttal, 1982: 67). In fact, this is even critically important to use bilingual dictionaries because they simply list L1 translations without illustrative examples.

Thinking about the unknown in the context in which it is met helps to decide the relevance of dictionary use in the situation. Moreover, the successful dictionary user is required to get information from the context of the target word for the actual use of the dictionary. However, the above responses to the use of some of the main skills at this stage indicate that many students may give inadequate attention to the context.

b) Skills related to finding the right page / entry quickly in dictionary

Table-6b presents the results of some basic skills and techniques that are directly applied on the reference material. These include guessing the general location of the target word in the dictionary, using the dictionary’s guide words, the part of speech indicators and knowing alternative places to search. Let us see each of them in detail.

Table-6b: Learners' responses to the application of the skills of guessing the general location of the target word in the dictionary, using the guidewords, part of speech codes and knowing alternative places to search

Item no	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true To me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
7	0	0	1	4.54	1	4.54	4	18.1	10	45.45	6	27.27	16	72.7
10	2	9.09	3	13.6	5	22.7	5	22.7	7	31.8	5	22.72	12	54.5
1	1	4.54	3	13.6	4	18.1	4	18.18	8	36.36	6	27.27	14	63.6
5	0	0	1	4.54	1	4.54	3	13.63	8	36.36	10	45.45	18	81.8

Item number-7 asked whether the students usually tried to guess the general location of the target word in the dictionary. Sixteen students (72.72%) admitted that they did not deliberately try to guess the general location when they picked up the dictionary to look up. Four students (18.1%) were not sure whether they consciously guessed the general location of the word in the dictionary (e.g. whether it would be in the first, second, third or fourth quarter of the dictionary). From the above result, it is possible to generalize that those students did not usually apply the technique to save time which is involved in the process of consulting while reading.

Item number-10 was asked to know if the students used the catch-words at the top of the dictionary pages to locate the needed word quickly. Here also only a small number of students (22.72%) reported the conscious use of guidewords. Many participants (54.54%) reported that they did not use the guidewords to find a word in a dictionary. Furthermore, the responses of the remaining five students (uncertain =22.72%) may also suggest that they did not consistently follow the guidewords at the top of dictionary pages. This clearly shows that the students lack the application basic reference skills such as following guidewords.

Item number -1 was asked to find out whether the students used the dictionary codes for the different parts of speech in order to find the required entry. Four respondents (18.18%) said they deliberately used the word class codes to locate the required information quickly. Four students (18.18%) were not certain that they normally used dictionary codes for part of speech of entries. Nearly three fourth of the respondents (63.63%) were more certain that they did not try to interpret the part of speech indicators to find the required entry. Overall, the students' responses seem to be consistent with the ones they gave for item number-9. However, some students might tend to go back to the text when they find it difficult to get the word in the dictionary because fewer students said they decided the part of speech of the unknown before they looked it up.

Item number-5 was asked to find out whether the students knew the various alternative places to search, such as separate entries, sub-entries, word groups, derived forms, variant spellings and appendixes. Only one student (4.54%) confirmed this. The overwhelming majority of the students either did not know the various alternative places (81.81%) or did not seem to have great faith in their own understanding of the arrangement of entries and other related areas in the English learners' dictionaries (13.63%). This clearly shows that the students did not make sufficient effort to find out about how and where the various pieces of information are presented in the dictionaries. In fact this is consistent with Bejoint's (1981) finding in which many EFL students reported they did not read the instructions in their dictionaries. However, any dictionary user should have a good understanding of how and where the information is presented in the dictionary (Jackson, 1988; de Lopez, 1987; Abdurrauf, 1987). It is also possible to infer from this and the other responses that most of the students may not even know very well what could be found in those language resources.

c) Skills related to choosing the right sub-entry quickly in dictionary

Even when the main entry has been found in the dictionary, the user may have to know how to systematically select the most appropriate meaning from among the various possible meanings the dictionary lists. Table-6c presents the results of the students' responses to the use of some relevant skills for selecting sub-senses in polysemous entry items.

Table-6c: Learners' responses to the application of the skills in using various clues to eliminate inappropriate sub-entries in the dictionary

Item no	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue To me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
9	2	9.09	3	13.6	5	22.7	5	22.7	8	36.3	4	18.18	12	54.5
4	0	0	1	4.54	1	4.54	3	13.6	7	31.8	11	50	18	81.8

Question number-9 was intended to obtain information on whether the students used sample sentences, collocations, etc., in the dictionary to eliminate inappropriate sub-entries. Five students (22.72%) reported that they used such clues. While six other students (22.72%) could not confidently confirm that they usually utilized such clues, the responses of twelve of the participants (54.54%) were generally negative: they chose *Very /untrue to me* categories on the scale. As we can see from the above results, many of the respondents did not deliberately use clues in the dictionary to select the appropriate definition. This is consistent with the responses they gave to a similar question in the immediate retrospection; many had reported that they had to read every definition the dictionary listed for each entry item from top to bottom, by constantly moving back and forth to check each dictionary definition against the reading text. Many of the students did not seem to read the examples illustrating various meanings of the word when they looked up a word. This is important because the collocations of the word (phrases or set expressions that go with the word) in the dictionary would help to decide the appropriateness of definitions (Crystal, 2002; Gous, 1987).

Item number-4 was asked to know whether the students interpreted the usage/style and subject codes in the learners' dictionaries to work out the appropriate meaning of the unfamiliar word, i.e., to choose the right sub-entry quickly. Eighteen participants (81.81%) reported they did not try to interpret the codes that the dictionary used to indicate specialized uses of entries. This is often important for students to efficiently select dictionary definition. For instance, if the unknown appears to be used in several ways or subjects, the dictionary indicates the various meanings with those codes.

d) Skills in checking the success of the search

Table-6d: Learners' responses to the application of some skills for checking the success of the search and relating the dictionary definition to the context

I tem no	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT													
	Very true to me		True to me		Sub-Total		Uncertain		Untrue to me		Very untrue to me		Sub-Total	
	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %	St. No.	St. %
11.	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9.09	3	13.6	17	77.2	20	90.9
2.	0	0	2	9.09	2	9.09	3	13.6	8	36.3	9	40.9	17	77.2

Question number-11 was asked to know whether the students try to paraphrase the original sentence with the dictionary definition in order to decide if the dictionary meaning fits nicely with the message of the text. None of the students reported that they substituted the dictionary definition for the unknown to check if it fits comfortably in the context. The students should be familiar with the use of this strategy in other vocabulary strategies; however, the great majority did not seem to apply it with dictionary use. They may simply take any dictionary definition without considering the possibility of different interpretations. On the other hand, it may also be the case that some students did not recognize the importance of paraphrasing guessed or dictionary meanings in the context for checking the appropriateness of meanings in context.

Item number-2 was asked to know whether the students tried to adapt the meaning found in the dictionary to the context of the word in the text, if there are some changes between the dictionary definition and the context. The majority of the students (77.27%) said that they did not try to do that, while three students (13.63%) ticked the uncertain category on the scale. Only two students (9.09%) confirmed they did try to adapt dictionary meaning to the original context in which the unfamiliar is met. Based on the above responses, we may conclude that if the exact meaning is not found in the dictionary, the students did not try to adapt the most likely dictionary definition to the context. The skill is very important for receptive or productive use of the dictionary, but this is particularly so to understand metaphorical meanings because even the biggest dictionaries could not possibly list all of them. Yet, the learner is normally expected to adapt the dictionary definition to the context if there are some changes by narrowing or stretching it (Summers, 1988; Nation, 2001). On the other hand, many scholars caution that doing the other way round (i.e., trying to twist the context to fit the dictionary definition could distort successful comprehension of the text (Nesi & Meara, 1994).

4.2.2 Data of the Dictionary Look-up Strategies Questionnaire-1 (*Look-up Q-1*)

As mentioned earlier (and in chapter three), immediate written retrospection data was collected through *Look-up Q-1*. This was intended to assess whether the students were familiar with the use of dictionary look-up strategies that are required for searching meanings of vocabulary items from context. The subjects were engaged in real practical task, i.e., searching meanings in standard learners' dictionary, and soon after that they were asked to fill *Look-up Q-1*. Here they were required to describe what they actually did at various stages; what skills or information they used during the activity, e.g., to prepare for the look-up, to locate the item quickly, to select the right definition, and to check the success of the search. The details of the students' achievement scores are not the major concerns of the study and so they are not presented here.

4.2.2.1: Analysis and Results of the LOOK-UP Q-1

This sub-section presents the data obtained immediately after the subjects had done some practical reception activity with the help of a learners' dictionary. The participants were asked to describe the skills, information, etc., that they employed to work out the meanings of five vocabulary items using the English learners' dictionary. They were asked to describe everything that they did or used at various stages to facilitate their performance in the activity, e.g., to prepare for the task of looking up, to find the dictionary page & entry, to select the right sub-entry or definition and to check the success of the search. The results could not provide acceptable evidence that the subjects were familiar with the use of appropriate skills and techniques in the actual look-up process.

Q.1: Did you do any thing before you actually picked up the dictionary to look up?
If so, what did you do? Why?

The first question was asked to find out whether the students gave sufficient attention to the target word in the context in which the word occurred before they looked it up in a dictionary. They were asked what things they did and why they needed to do them. The majority of the students did not seem to recognize the significance of examining the context of the word in order to look it up in the dictionary efficiently and effectively. By far, the most frequently reported statement was "I read the sentence." This was reported by six students. The question also asked why they needed to do that. None of the respondents explained how 'reading the sentence' might help them during the process of looking the words up. The rest of the participants in the activity did not have anything to report, or reported ineffective techniques or irrelevant information. Some of students reported, "I didn't do any thing", or "I just started to look for the word when you told us to start"; others students said, "I wrote

down each of the underlined words on a separate paper, at the bottom, back of the question paper” and four students returned blank paper for the first item in the questionnaire.

From the results obtained above, it is possible to infer that this particular group of students did not recognize the importance of getting enough information about the target word in its context before looking it up in a dictionary. This confirms de Lopez’s (1987) observation that many students tend to give insufficient attention to the context in which the unfamiliar word is met. Regardless of the type of dictionary consulted, the dictionary user will have to examine the context before going to the dictionary to check the meaning. This is critically important both in using the dictionary efficiently and in deriving the appropriate interpretation of the word as it appeared in the text.

Q-2: What did you do when you picked up the dictionary to locate the word quickly?

Did you use any techniques to help you do this?

The second question was asked to know whether the students employed some skills or techniques to save time once they have decided to look up the unknown word in the dictionary. Here also they were asked to describe everything they did in order to locate the pages and the main entries in which the required information about the target vocabulary items could be found. However, the majority of the students did not seem to follow any systematic procedures in the activity. The word ‘alphabet’ (i.e., with its different forms) was reported ten times though only three students mentioned the use of catch-words or guides at the top of the pages. Most of the students also said that they constantly and quickly moved back and forth between the dictionary and the problem-word (both in the list and in the question paper) and through the dictionary pages until they found the needed word. Few respondents mentioned that they used part of speech indicators while fewer students followed cross references in the dictionary to locate items. Furthermore, such responses as ‘the entry was difficult to find’ were frequently reported. Yet some of the items in the activity, such as ‘gaoler’, ‘left off’ and ‘economy size’ were also reported as missing in the dictionary. This might be one of the reasons why it had taken them on average twenty-eight minutes to search the meanings of five vocabulary items in sentence contexts. This is consistent with Allen’s (1982) statement that many students may find it difficult to find a word in the dictionary.

Q-3: Once you had found the main entries, how did you select the right sub-entries?
What did you do to choose the appropriate definitions?

The third question was asked to know how the students selected the right sub-entry once they had found the main entries of the target words. This task requires the student to apply many skills. This mainly involves the application of the information obtained from the original context. Some students earlier stated that they had read the sentences prior to looking the items in the dictionary. However, they did not mention how that helped them to select the right sub-entry. In addition to that eliminating inappropriate sub-entries may involve the use of various pieces of information (where this is appropriate, using examples, labels, codes, etc.) the dictionary provides about the entry items. It was found that the students were not aware of which sections of the entry, for instance, definitions, examples, part of speech and other indicators, they could use to find required information. Few students reported that the example sentences, phrases, collocations, helped them to select the appropriate dictionary definitions. Only few of the items had more than few sub-entries in the dictionary, the students did not seem to apply organized approaches search even in those entries. Some of the responses that were given for this question clearly indicate the prevalence of the problem. For instance, there were responses, such as 'the entry had many sections and I had to read them all carefully', or 'I just picked one of the definitions that were listed around the top of the listed definitions for the look-up item', 'I did not find the information in the entry', 'the entry did not give me the information I needed.' Most of the students thought it important to read carefully every definition that the dictionary lists for the entry item, often checking every definition as it appears in the entry by moving back to the text every time. This seemed the only method for many while they were trying to select the right definition from a list of definitions in entries, rather than scanning long entry for key words to find the required meaning. The use of various clues in the dictionary as well as from the original context of the word was rarely reported. The responses generally indicated that even when the main entry has been found many students may find it difficult to select the right sub-entry or appropriate sense in polysemous entry because they did not seem to have any ways of systematically eliminating inappropriate sub-entries.

Q-4: Did you check the appropriateness of the definitions you have chosen? If so, how?

The fourth question was asked to know whether the students thought of checking the success of their search. Most of the students reported that they did not try to do this. However, few students reported that they had ascertained that they had understood what the lexical items meant in the texts or the message of the text. In deed this is one way of

confirming the success of the search but since only sentence contexts were given that may not give sufficient clues as could be found in more extended texts. The results clearly indicate that many of the participants in the activity may not have thought of evaluating the success of their search by paraphrasing the original context with the dictionary definition to check if the latter fits well in the context, e.g., the message of the text, the part of speech of the target item, etc. On the other hand, the meanings of some of the items in the activity were reported as unavailable in the dictionary although there was sufficient guidance in the examples and definitions which the students failed to make use of to check the appropriateness of the definition to the context.

The results obtained from Look-up Q-1 revealed some important points about the students' level of awareness and application of dictionary look-up strategies. Moreover, the responses provided reasonably sufficient evidence that the subjects were not familiar with the application of appropriate look-up strategies. The responses indicated that the students did not gather relevant information from the context prior to picking up the dictionary to look up. They fail to apply some basic techniques to locate the target entry in the dictionary quickly. They did not often have clear strategies for selecting the right sub-entries from other possible dictionary meanings. The students seldom reported the use of any skills for checking the dictionary information against the original context. This may also indicate that students might have been unable to relate dictionary use with other vocabulary and reading strategies. They did not report any systematic transfer of learned rules, such as grammar, to facilitate effective dictionary use.

On the other hand, many of these skills are also involved in the use of any dictionary regardless of the language. It is noted earlier that the students had reported regular use of dictionaries for reception purposes so the infrequent occurrence of the task itself in the students' experience could not be reason for their difficulties. Furthermore, although they usually used bilingual dictionaries, the students had also reported that they sometimes used monolingual dictionaries. Yet, the results mainly revealed that the students often fail to apply the most basic skills. In addition, the students' problems were also observed from some of the responses they gave regarding the operations they performed at various stages during the activity. The findings suggested that students may employ some inefficient methods while looking up meanings of words in the learners' dictionary.

The other major problem observed from the Look-up Q-1 was that the students had difficulties in describing their strategies. The students were often unable to complete the questionnaire with relevant information. This might have been in part due to their lack of

experience in describing their strategies. However, the instrument was administered soon after they had finished the practical dictionary activity. The students' failure to provide adequate information about the steps they took during the activity as well as some of the less effective strategies identified from the responses suggested that the students were not familiar with the application of some basic skills that are involved in using the dictionary efficiently and effectively for decoding purposes. This was also confirmed by the results obtained from Look-up Q-2.

4.3 Analysis and Results of the Interviews

This section presents and discusses the results of the study regarding the data obtained from the students' semi-structured interview and the English teachers' structured interview. The first sub-section presents the data of the students' interview, and the second sub-section presents the teachers' interviews.

4.3.1 The Students' Interview

As mentioned in chapter three, the students' interview was conducted after the analysis of the data obtained through the DUSQ and the Look-up strategies questionnaires. The interviewees were among those who reported frequent use of bilingual dictionaries but who rarely used English-English learners' dictionaries. Nine students consented to take part in the interview. It was a semi-structured interview and each participant was asked two open-ended questions about their experience in using bilingual and monolingual dictionaries in their studies. The interview mainly focused on why they often exclusively relied on certain types of translating dictionaries; what problems they frequently encountered while trying to consult English-English learners' dictionaries. In the analysis, numerical system was used to identify each data entry. In deed, it should be noted here that the questions in the interview were asked not just to confirm the earlier responses only, but they were also intended to obtain further detailed information. The code for each account indicated the learners' ID which was assigned by the researcher. The data of the interview was analyzed and presented. Let us look at the findings.

Q-1: How important has the use of dictionary been in your study? What kind of dictionary, (bilingual or monolingual) do you use more frequently?

- When did you start to use it?
- How often do you use it now? Why?
- Do you employ it for reception or production activities or other?

The participants in the interview confirmed that the dictionary, (particularly L2 - L1 type translating dictionary) was the most important book which they frequently consulted to get information about the English vocabulary.

Most of the interviewees also had many years of experience in the use of bilingual dictionaries. They had been using such translating dictionaries more and more regularly since they went to high school (grade-9) or in some cases even before that. For example, **S₁** said that he had been somehow using a dictionary since he was grade-seven and that he almost always used his bilingual dictionary recently. He said, "I have to study from English books in almost all school subjects." **S₂** said that she frequently sought assistance from her bilingual dictionaries, especially to look meanings of unfamiliar words. She contended that she could not rely exclusively on her guesses, "I cannot afford to sit for examinations with only partial understanding of the various subjects." This student used a bilingual dictionary "at least once or twice a day." Similarly, **S₃** said that he did not remember when he started to use English-Amharic dictionary, but he said, "I have bought two bilingual dictionaries in the past four years and always use them to look for meanings." **S₈** was also a regular bilingual dictionary user. She reported, "I cannot possibly ask the teachers all those unfamiliar words which I encounter while I read in my own time, especially recently, I always need to use them to find information for various purposes." Another student (**S₅**) also reported that she had often used her bilingual dictionary, and she stated, "I have been using it more and more regularly after I came to high school but especially recently I think I would not be able to study in my own time or complete various assignments without it."

Obviously, they often need to get more than the gist of most of their school readings and they may sometimes need to seek assistance from the dictionary. However, the researcher had observed from some of the responses that the dictionary may be used more than was needed. For instance, responses such as "I think dictionary use is the best strategy to deal with every unknown", "I have no way to decide how to use the dictionary while reading so I do not usually want to take risk" and "I preferred to look up every unknown while reading" were reported by some students in the interview. Indeed, there are many factors that may motivate dictionary use; however, the above responses clearly show over reliance on the strategy. The ultimate goal should be to be able to read without any help.

Regarding the receptive and productive use of the dictionary, the tendency among the interviewees was that of seeing the dictionary as useful mainly for decoding purposes and particularly taking bilingual translation as the most important or even the only piece of

linguistic information from the dictionary. In fact, some students believed that they only needed to know the meaning of an L2 word in order to use it. For example, one student (**S₆**) said, “When I want to use a less familiar word in my composition assignments, I check its meaning in my English-Amharic dictionary.” Another student (**S₇**) claimed, ‘The only time I need to consult a dictionary while doing writing assignment is to check the meaning of unknown words that I needed to use.’ Many of the students also believed that they generally did not need to consult the dictionaries for language production. This attitude may have been encouraged by the dictionaries that they frequently used. As the researcher tried to observe, most of the bilingual dictionaries that the students used did not give detailed encoding information. They provide guidance on some matters but not on others, such as detailed grammatical patterns, collocations, morphological information, related meanings, constraints on use, etc. However, a few of the interviewees claimed to use their bilingual dictionaries to get encoding information. For example, (**S₃**) said, “I occasionally consult to know what grammatical patterns an unknown word can fit into while writing some composition assignments.” Another student (**S₉**) also reported that he very occasionally looked up to find out the part of speech of a less familiar word needed to use in some compositions. Indeed, it is necessary to know whether a word can be used as a verb, a noun, etc. but that may not be enough to use the word appropriately and correctly.

Furthermore, quite interestingly, a few of those grade-12 students also seemed to consult a dictionary for general interest, (not directly related to their school work). For example, **S₃** reported, “I sometimes use my bilingual dictionary to learn new words which I find from other sources of English outside the school e.g., newspaper, TV.” Another student (**S₈**) stated, “I found the dictionary very helpful to get information about new English vocabulary items which I read or heard from English materials that are not directly related my school subjects.” Another student also reported the use of his translating dictionary to check words that were not directly related to school subjects.

It also seems to be the case that the dictionary was occasionally used in some other ways to facilitate learning. For example, a few students occasionally used their bilingual dictionary to learn less familiar words that were not necessarily required to do specific task. Student (**S₄**) claimed, “I sometimes use a dictionary to check words which I often misuse in my writing.” According to **S₂** the dictionary helped her “to study some types of words” which often cause her trouble. Another student, **S₈** reported, “I occasionally use a dictionary while correcting mistakes in my own written works.” Responses such as the above ones were not common, and although the above respondents were frequent dictionary users, they did not

consistently apply the strategy in such ways. However, it is possible to infer from the few instances that some students might also tend to utilize the dictionary in some other ways to facilitate or enhance their learning.

The above interviewees were frequent dictionary users that had been identified in the DUSQ. The responses clearly show that the students had great faith in their bilingual dictionaries. They had been using their L2 - L1 type dictionary for a long time. In general, the students felt that they very often need to use their dictionary for receptive purposes and they spend a substantial amount of time on those types of dictionaries. The students basically used their dictionaries with academically related reading activities, i.e., to search meanings from a reading text. In fact, some of the respondents felt that they could not read their school books without their dictionaries. While the L2 - L1 type dictionary was frequently used with reading, (sometimes even at the expense of other strategies), it was occasionally consulted by a few students for production purposes, e.g., while writing. Furthermore, few of the interviewees reported the use of their L2 - L1 type dictionary in some other helpful ways but some of those strategies were not employed with any regularity even by most of the reporters themselves and thus it may not represent the entire population.

Q-2: Do you also try to use monolingual dictionaries, such as those in the school library?

- Why do you not use English-English learners' dictionaries more often when you use a dictionary?
- What problems do you encounter while trying to consult the dictionaries?
- How much do the other lessons in English class (e.g., vocabulary, grammar or reading lessons) help you to solve your problems in using English learners' dictionaries? Do you read the instruction in the dictionaries?
- Are you ever asked /advised to use one by the English teacher? When?

The responses revealed a range of important factors which may affect the students' motivation as well as success in using those rich sources of information about the English language. The responses also provided further support for the conclusions drawn based on the data from the other instruments. The answers confirmed that English-English learners' dictionaries were given little attention by the students. The interviewees generally had very little experience in using the various resources in English-English learners' dictionaries for productive purposes, such as written tasks. Moreover, the students reported that they encountered many difficulties on the few occasions they tried to use monolingual learners' dictionaries for receptive purposes. The responses given demonstrated that the students had various types of problems related to the use of monolingual learners' dictionaries. Some of the most prevalent problems that were noticed from the interview are presented as follows.

- **“I don’t need to use such dictionaries”**

Nearly half of the interviewees believed that they could find almost all of the language information they needed to know in their bilingual dictionaries so they very often ignored English learners’ dictionaries. For example, **S₃** very rarely consulted a monolingual learners’ dictionary. He asked, “Why do I worry about using English-English dictionary, when I can find all the meanings that I want to know in English-Amharic dictionary easily.” Similarly, **S₇** reported that monolingual dictionaries had very little use for him. He said, “I don’t normally consider the use of such dictionaries even when I’m studying in the library.” In fact, the researcher had observed that many of the students tend to share the above attitudes. That may suggest that many of the students did not have had good understanding of what is involved in knowing a word or the various aspects of word knowledge. They did not seem to recognize the relative importance of the various kinds of information in monolingual learners’ dictionaries.

- **“They contain too much information”**

Indeed, what may be normally considered as one quality of a good dictionary may be a source of problem for some users. The students felt that monolingual learners’ dictionaries contained ‘too much’ information. Some students perceived them as too big, and responses such as, ‘I don’t need to use them’ and ‘they are not suitable for me’ were often given during the interview. For instance, **S₉** stated, “The English dictionaries contain too much information about many words that I do not need.” And this made it difficult for him to get what he wanted easily or quickly. Furthermore, some students may be threatened by the physical size of the English learners’ dictionaries. According to **S₄**, “Those English dictionaries are very big and list too many words that whenever I tried to look up something, I always got confused.” In fact, this student’s problem is also reported by many of the interviewees.

- **“They are not appropriate for me”**

Some of the most frequently reported problems were related to the kind and amount of information in monolingual dictionaries. For example, student, **S₂** said, “I think those English dictionaries contain a lot of information; but I don’t think they are particularly useful for me.” **S₆** said, “I rarely turn to those English dictionaries; it is always new to me whenever I tried to look up any thing in those dictionaries.” Another interviewee **S₈** also stated, “The bilingual dictionary is easy to use,” since only few pieces of information (e.g., the part of speech, pronunciation and meaning) are given, but in the case of English-English dictionaries, “a large number of ‘things’ are listed for each entry item and that makes it difficult for me to

find the meaning of the word without much problem.” Thus she only occasionally checked meanings of words in monolingual dictionaries.

Problems such as inability to understand the arrangement of entries and finding alternative places, including the dictionary’s guides were shared by most of the participants in the interview. One student (S₂) confirms the above point by saying, “I don’t know what cues I should use in getting at what I needed without much confusion.” As a result of such difficulties in selecting appropriate information, they may be discouraged from searching anything in English-English dictionaries. For instance, S₉ experienced such problems with the long list of definitions those dictionaries give to some of the words. He said, “I have to read all of them before I find the right one.” Another student (S₄) reported, “I frequently quit the search without getting sufficient answer to my questions” or according to student S₇, “without any answers at all.” It seems that the students may be overwhelmed by what they find under the entry item and become unable to select the required information even after they had managed to find the word in the dictionary.

- **“There are many ‘things’ that I don’t know”**

English learners’ dictionaries provide much more information about each entry item but some of the information is often given using codes or symbols and this causes problems for many learners. Most students felt that it was very challenging or even impossible for them to interpret the various codes used in those dictionaries to provide encoding information. For example, S₈ complained by saying, “There are many ‘things’ which may be useful but not for me. They often caused me trouble even when I occasionally searched meanings in those dictionaries.” The above remark reflects many students’ perceptions with regard to the difficulties that prevented them from exploiting the various decoding and encoding information in monolingual learners’ dictionaries. It was also observed that some students did not know where to find the instructions in the dictionary, or did not try to use the guidance on the use of the various codes.

- **“It is not worth the effort”**

Moreover, other students reported that even when they failed to get adequate support from their bilingual dictionary, they would rather try any other alternatives before they turn to an English learners’ dictionary. The response given by S₄ illustrates this point. Even though he tried to consult them on very few occasions, he thought that “it was not worth the effort and time required to extract the information”. Similarly another interviewee (S₂) also stated that she occasionally tried to consult those dictionaries in the library, but she said, “Looking up anything in those dictionaries is by itself a difficult task.”

The researcher had observed that even when the bilingual dictionary could not provide sufficient assistance, some students may be reluctant to consult English-English dictionaries. For example, **S₇** reported that his bilingual dictionary did not include many words and meanings. He said, “I think most of those words could be found in the English-English dictionaries, but I’d usually prefer to ask someone to tell me the meaning, a teacher or friends because,” he said, “I find it difficult to get the right definition quickly.” In this respect student (**S₃**) also indicated that he frequently fail to find words in his bilingual dictionary, but “checking each of those words in English dictionary is very challenging. Another student (**S₅**) thought that the monolingual dictionaries must contain many words compared to her small bilingual dictionary. Yet she rarely tried to search in monolingual dictionary because “it is often difficult and time consuming.” The above remarks encapsulate the feelings that some other students had with respect to the difficulties that prevented them from exploiting the various resources in English learners’ dictionaries.

- **“I don’t have the habit of using reference materials in the library”**

Many of the subjects did not have their own English learners’ dictionary. However, even when they had access to English-English learners’ dictionaries, i.e., both in the school and outside, few of the interviewees reported that they very rarely tried to use them well. For example, **S₁** had access to such dictionaries at home and in the school library; however, he said, “I don’t think they are suitable to me.”

Moreover, some of those students also reported that they did not have the habit of using reference materials in the library, and as a result they could not make better use of monolingual learners’ dictionaries. In fact, further study is needed to find out the specific problems concerning the learners’ control of general study skills and particularly, in using library and other reference materials. The present case indicates; however, a lot should be done to introduce learners to the use of those language sources so that the students can confidently and independently get much linguistic support while they study their school subjects. It is evident that this training in the use of monolingual learners’ dictionaries should also contribute to the development of the learners’ skills in using other reference sources. And that would in turn contribute to their language development.

- **“They don’t contain L1 translations”**

The absence of L1 translation in English learners’ dictionaries was mentioned as the major cause of difficulty which prevented some learners from making good use of them. For some the problem was basically lack of sufficient vocabulary which forces them to use another bilingual dictionary to check some of the words in the English definitions. For instance (**S₈**)

confirmed the presence of the above problem when she said, “What I really need is meaning and the English definitions are so difficult to understand that I often need to use my bilingual dictionary to understand some of the words in the English definitions.” Those grade-12 students have been studying in English medium schools for many years. However, it seems that some of them are prepared to go (in few months time) to English medium universities/colleges, even without having sufficient vocabulary to understand simplified definitions in English-English learners’ dictionaries.

In addition, some students felt that understanding the meaning especially L₁ translation of an L₂ word was an end in itself in order to use it for various purposes. For instance, S₆ said, “What I really need from the dictionary is an L₁ translation of L₂ words and this is not given in English-English dictionaries.” However, knowing an L₁ translation of L₂ word may not be enough to use it correctly and appropriately either for production or reception purposes.

For other students translation was the only way to decide whether the dictionary information was appropriate to the context of the word in the text. Student (S₁) reported, “since no translations are given I feel less confident whether the information I get there is accurate.” Another student, S₅ also only occasionally tried English dictionaries because; she said, “I do not feel comfortable whenever I had to consult such dictionaries.” The above responses may indicate that that the students had difficulty in verifying the appropriateness English definitions to the context. The students did not recognize the role of some important skills and how the dictionary could provide guidance on such matters. The whole process of verifying English dictionary definition could improve the users understanding of the look-up item even better.

- **“I have difficulty understanding English definitions”**

It seems that some students may encounter problems with the English dictionary definitions. However, as the researcher had observed during the interview, the main causes of these difficulties were somewhat different from the previous ones. These were related to the structures or constructions of typical definitions in English learners’ dictionaries as we can observe from the following responses of S₂. This student said, “It is not because the meanings are given only in English that causes me problem, but the definitions themselves are difficult to understand and because of that getting what I want is very often problematic to me.” The above student’s problems were further confirmed by other students. For instance S₇ stated, “Whenever I try to look up something in those dictionaries, I usually have to stop now and then in order to interpret what the definitions meant, and that takes much

time.” This shows that one of the problems in using the English-English learners’ dictionaries for many students may arise from failure to understand typical dictionary definitions.

Moreover, the researcher had asked some of them whether they also encountered similar problems in other situations. For example, the students are regularly presented with lists of dictionary type definitions of new language items in the English textbooks. Some students confirmed the existence of the problem. Apart from that, because of their difficulties to understand English definitions, some even used bilingual dictionaries in order to complete vocabulary exercises. For example, one student (**S₅**) reported, “I first look up the words in my bilingual dictionary, before I matched the new words with the English definitions.” Similarly, another student (**S₈**) claimed, “the English definitions are often difficult, so I would sometimes use a bilingual dictionary to complete such exercises without much trouble.” The above responses represent clear case of abuse of the strategy because the students are expected to practice other strategies in those exercises. After all, dictionary use should not be considered as substitute to all other vocabulary strategies. Such students may need support on how to put the dictionary to good use. In other words, students should clearly understand when and how dictionary use can work well to facilitate or enhance learning.

Further study is required to determine the students’ general proficiency in the language; however, some of the responses indicated that students may have difficulty in understanding English definitions and this clearly suggests that they need support on this matter. Otherwise, some of those final-year pre-university/college students would face difficulty understanding even simplified definitions in English-English learners’ dictionaries, which employ controlled defining vocabulary (of usually around 2000 words).

- **The things learnt in English class can hardly help to solve problems in using monolingual / bilingual dictionaries**

The researcher had asked whether they tried to apply anything from the various lessons in English class (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, reading, lessons) in order to help them solve their problems in using monolingual dictionaries. Most of the interviewees did not see which skills could be utilized to facilitate their efficiency in using the learners’ dictionaries. For instance, they did not recognize the significance of applying some of their knowledge of the language and the skills they practiced in EFL (e.g., from their vocabulary, grammar, reading lessons) in the actual process of consulting English-English learners’ dictionaries.

Many students also blamed the absence of any relevant activities or practices on the use of monolingual dictionary in EFL classes. They reported that they were hardly ever required to use the learners’ dictionaries either by the English teachers or the textbooks. It is generally

true that the dictionary has not received sufficient attention in ELT in terms of instruction in strategy teaching. However, at this point the researcher invited the interviewees to explain whether they had been given any guidance in bilingual dictionary use, for example in earlier grades. The students could not verify this either. Also the participants had hardly made any attempts to learn what the dictionaries contain or how to use them well by reading the instructions in those dictionaries.

To sum up, the participants in the interview felt that dictionary use was very important in their studies. The students very often used L2 – L1 type dictionaries. This was particularly so to look up meanings from a reading text, in few cases even at the expense of other strategies and at other times more helpfully. However, the interview revealed that the students did not normally employ dictionaries for productive use of L2 vocabulary. With respect to the use of English learners' dictionaries, the interview data revealed that the students had various types of problems in making good use of the various resources in those dictionaries to assist their learning.

Some of the students' problems could be attributed to their lack of awareness about their own needs (i.e., what they need to know about L2 vocabulary). Depending on the type of word and the context, the EFL learners may be expected to seek various pieces of information about unknown words, ranging from very comprehensive information to very limited aspects of the unknown. However, some of the students felt that they only need L1 translations in order to use it for various purposes. Thus, they did not often try to search other things about new or less familiar L2 vocabulary items. Such attitudes may obviously affect the students' motivation as well as success in making better use of those rich sources of information about the English language.

The few occasions they tried to use English learners' dictionaries; they looked mainly for meanings of unfamiliar words. Moreover, the students reported that they encountered many problems on the few occasions they tried to use those dictionaries for receptive purposes. The students generally had very little or no experiences in using English learners' dictionaries for productive purposes.

Even though some of the interviewees acknowledge the value of using English learners' dictionaries, they were not willing to utilize them well. It was often observed that the participants had made very little effort to learn to use the various resources in those dictionaries. Obviously, the learners need to employ several skills in a systematic way in order to successfully use English-English learners' dictionaries or any other dictionaries. The researcher noticed that the subjects did not effectively apply relevant skills that they

practice in the various English lessons, e.g. analyzing the unknown word in its context, guessing its meaning, deciding the part of speech, quick scanning, ignoring, and etc. The students did not make sufficient effort to learn what types of information could be found in those dictionaries and how and where that information could be accessed efficiently. This is sometimes due to lack of confidence in their own ability to make better use of those dictionaries because many of them thought that English-English learners' dictionaries were inappropriate sources of information about the English language even at grade-12 level.

These problems may, in fact, be attributed to lack of sufficient guidance and independent practice opportunities. As we saw earlier, even when they occasionally tried to seek assistance from English-English learners' dictionaries the students face many problems. On the whole, the learners' responses clearly suggested that those grade-12 students would be preparing to go to English medium universities or colleges even without having enough experience in using English-English learners' dictionaries.

4.3.2 The Teachers' Interviews

The second interview was made with three English language teachers who taught in the target preparatory school. It was a structured interview and the teachers were asked four open-ended questions regarding (1) their level of awareness on the types and appropriateness of their students' dictionary strategies in general; (2) their attitudes towards the need for training students in successful dictionary use and choice of appropriate dictionaries to the level; (3) whether they had ever tried to help the students to use their dictionaries effectively for their own ends and if that was explicit or embedded in other activities; and (4) whether the teachers saw it possible or were willing to provide guidance on effective dictionary use in preparatory EFL contexts.

Q-1: Do you think your students generally employ bilingual or monolingual dictionaries in their studies? How appropriate do you think are their dictionary strategies for their level?

This question was asked in order to obtain data from the teachers regarding their level of awareness on the types of dictionaries their students used and whether they thought it was effective for the level. Based on their observations, all three teachers believed that the students predominantly used translating dictionaries. They were asked how they found that out. T2 stated that many students bring such dictionaries to class and used them. T1 also observed similar situations in his class and he irritably added that "even when they are asked to guess the meanings of words in a passage some students often start leafing through their dictionaries under the table." He thought that he could not do anything to stop such behaviors except watch them do it. T3 also thought that most of his students consulted

bilingual dictionaries. In addition to watching them use such dictionaries in class, he observed that some students wrote “typical dictionary translations” of vocabulary items. “These could be frequently found in their textbook and in some cases “at the back of some students’ exercise books.” The above responses of the teachers strongly suggest that the teachers were well aware of the fact that their students’ dictionary strategies were established in accordance with bilingual dictionary use. The findings from the teachers’ responses seem to coincide with that of the students’ responses, in which case 100% reported they normally used translating dictionaries.

The teachers were asked another question which was related to the above one. This refers to whether they generally thought the dictionaries that the students used were appropriate to the level the students were in. The teachers strongly believed that those grade-12 students would benefit more from monolingual dictionaries; however, T3 also thought that the bilingual ones could also be helpful to some students or on some occasions. T1 stressed that “the students at this levels need much information about English words and many of the students’ bilingual dictionaries could not give detailed information.” T2 also gave similar explanation as to why he thought the bilingual dictionaries were ineffective at this stage in the students’ learning. He maintained that “if the students have to use dictionary it should be a monolingual one because they can get a wide range of information about the language.” T3 also endorsed this view by saying, “EFL learners’ dictionaries list more words and more information about the words.” T3 also saw that “in some cases the bilingual or trilingual dictionaries that the students currently use seemed to contain a large number of entries, which is good, but they do not give sufficient information about individual entries.” The teachers were generally interested in the amount and quality of information included in the dictionary in their judgment of the in-/appropriateness of some dictionaries for their students.

Q-2 Do you think your students need to be trained in dictionary use? Why?

- Does it matter which type?

Based on their in depth knowledge of the students’ needs and the course objectives, all three teachers were convinced that the students do need to be instructed on how to make good use of the English learners’ dictionaries. T1 emphasized that most of these pre-university students would need to use those dictionaries for their immediate and future needs. The teacher underscored the fact that they could not teach them the whole of the language, nor did all of the students need the language for the same purposes or fields of studies. He asserted that the students could not cope with the ever increasing vocabulary learning burden as the students progressed to higher levels. T3 also stressed that the

students were in a transition stage into more serious studies in English medium colleges and universities, where they would have to read more authentic materials in English. And that means the students would encounter many unfamiliar words which have to be understood very well; “guessed meanings might not be enough”.

The teacher (T2) also noted that because “the students come from different backgrounds and have different learning styles” they should be exposed to different vocabulary coping and learning strategies so that they can use it when they need to. The other teacher (T3) further stated that it was crucially important to improve the students’ efficiency in using learners’ dictionaries. He particularly stressed that especially for those preparatory students efficient use of the dictionary was not just a matter of learning English per se. Most of the students had a limited proficiency in the language and unless they were able to use such language sources confidently they might get some problems in the other subjects as well. T3 contended that “it is not only the student’s ‘communicative ability’ (language skills) that suffers as a result of their limited vocabulary but their academic performance in the school as well.” This seems logical considering the role of English in the curriculum. This is because of the fact that the students are supposed to develop their language skills to certain level and they have to use the language to learn the other subjects and demonstrate their understanding of the concepts in those subjects. In addition, this teacher also stressed that “the students need to be trained how to learn by themselves.”

The teachers also seemed to agree in their responses to the second part of the same question. They were asked what kind of training they were thinking. All three teachers were of the opinion that the students should be trained in the use of English-English learners’ dictionaries. T2 noted that most of the students do not know how much information is available in those resources and providing training would be most useful. According to T1, it was unlikely that the students would get as much helpful information in many bilingual dictionaries as they would in English learners’ dictionaries. T3 observed that the dictionaries could be very useful; however, for many students it could be very difficult to use confidently and quickly, so the students should be shown how to use English learners’ dictionaries.

The three English teachers seemed to have positive opinions toward the relevance of training in dictionary use to preparatory level students. There was also a unanimous support for English-English learners’ dictionaries and the important role those dictionaries could play in those contexts. The teachers thought that if the students are given guidance on how to efficiently get linguistic support from their dictionaries, this would contribute much to improve their learning and achievements.

Q-3: Do you sometimes advise your students on how they could use dictionaries properly to promote their performance in the language skills? How? Is it explicitly or embedded in other regular classroom activities?

Despite their strong claims on the importance of providing training to students in proper dictionary use, the teachers showed very little conviction to put that into practice. The researcher asked more specific questions to find out if they advised their students on discriminate use of dictionary to complete some language tasks such as extensive reading, composition writing or any other integrative activities such as writing summary. None of the teachers confirmed. Such guidance was hardly ever given to students to help them to become efficient dictionary users either with some reception tasks such as reading activities or to research vocabulary relating to a specific topic, for instance, for composition writing or oral presentations.

Furthermore, the teachers were asked if they directed their students to the dictionary to correct vocabulary related errors in the students' written works. All three teachers admitted that they normally gave the correct answers or just put a cross on the error and leave it to the student, but they did not tell the students to correct their own errors with the help of the dictionary.

The English teachers also reported that they often advised the students to read other English material outside English class to expose learners to new language. However, they did not try to provide any guidance on how students could use their dictionaries to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary in those EL materials. In deed efficient dictionary use could have a significant contribution in terms of improving the students' motivation to read outside and the students could systematically expand their vocabulary in their own time.

As we can see from above responses, the teachers generally believed that monolingual learners' dictionaries were more helpful at this stage and that they also knew that the students did not use those dictionaries or other dictionaries well. However, as the above responses indicate, very little attempt was made in the EFL classes to promote the effective use of such language resources by the students. In other words, there was neither any guidance nor independent practice opportunities for the students.

Q-4 Do you think you can help up to a point by incorporating helpful dictionary use strategies into vocabulary or other lessons to make the learners more aware of the different options and to encourage them to experiment with these?

It is evident from their previous responses that the teachers believed that students should be given systematic training in dictionary use. Thus, the researcher tried to obtain information about the reasons for the teachers' non-participation in such training. This question was also asked to know whether they thought they could provide one to their

students. The teachers identified a number of problems which they thought were important. The following list represents a summary of the major problems mentioned by the teachers.

- ❖ Lack of time for either planning or implementing the instruction: much of the time is taken by the 'plasma teacher'; there is only a limited time for introducing such activities; we have other things to do & it would be difficult to prepare such activities.

- ❖ Lack of prior knowledge about and experience in teaching the strategies & techniques that need to be focused on: the teachers have been using dictionaries since their student days but two teachers had never been given any formal instruction in English classes in school, one teacher had some experience in college but he could not remember what it was; all of them had never seen how they could incorporate it into English instructions (i.e., while they were taking their professional courses).

- ❖ Lack of relevant materials to prepare and to present the instruction: although there are some English-English learners' dictionaries in the school library, there was not even one guide which could serve as a starting point for designing the activities.

- ❖ The instructions inside the dictionaries were found to be of little importance for the purpose: they either did not "provide sufficient information" or "could be used by the students themselves without the teacher's guidance" (although all three teachers had much doubt that any of their students could have done such deliberate attempts to learn how to use such dictionaries, because according to one teacher "I do not remember having done so while I was a student". Another teacher also confirmed that and said "I really tried to investigate such EFL dictionary in the early days of my teaching days when I bought my own Longman dictionary."

- ❖ Difficulties related to student apathy (lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern) for doing even routine class works: major problems include a/ many students often showed very little interest in doing even normal regular class activities let alone additional dictionary skills or any other activity, however helpful that might be; b/ since those grade-12 students were preparing to take their college/university entrance exams, all their attentions were focused on matters directly related to the examination such as doing questions from previous years or checking grammar books, etc. and that they would not give sufficient attention to such skills training, even if they knew that it was important for their short-term or/and long-term language related needs,

- ❖ Fear that the students would not respond appropriately: especially with all-English learners' dictionaries because students would always want to use their bilingual dictionaries; one teacher also felt that although most of them did not know how to use any dictionaries

well, some students might not respond well, thinking that doing such activity was much below their level.

❖ Even if we were convinced of the utility of such instruction and were interested in incorporating it into our teaching, we could not do that since it was not included in the text books, someone would accuse us of wasting the students' time.

The English syllabus for the preparatory level, though less explicitly, suggests the relevance of developing students' proficiency in using such sources of information. However, the teacher's guide states that vocabulary extension may be approached in a variety of ways, by focusing attention, amongst others, "on the use of the dictionary". One of the major objectives of the grade 11-12 English courses was the development of students' study skills which they will need to operate effectively at school and particularly at tertiary levels. Many ELT experts assert that the ability to use dictionary efficiently is needed in educational contexts which involve the use a foreign language. The students may frequently need some linguistic support as they try to understand the different materials in English that they would study or to produce the kind of writing expected of them in their chosen subject specialisms, such as summaries, essays etc. and the dictionary could provide substantial support.

All the same, the above concerns of the teachers clearly indicate that there are some serious issues that could influence the success of any such programme of instruction on efficient and effective use of dictionaries. In deed, the teachers seemed to have positive attitude towards the importance of the strategy in preparatory context. They also knew their students' problems in choosing and using appropriate dictionaries. However, they could not provide adequate support on how the use of dictionary could be made more productive for learning. Discussions on how/when to use one and when not to do so can be very important regardless of which kind of dictionary is used but the matter has hardly been raised in class. Very little or no independent practice opportunities have been created to help the students.

Many of the sub-skills are not actually new to the students because they usually utilize them in other language activities, but as the responses indicate, students did not recognize their applications in dictionary use. It is unlikely that the students would transfer the relevant skills and improve their proficiency and confidence in using the EFL dictionaries without sufficient support and guidance from the teacher. Lack of provisions of various kinds has also been mentioned as well as difficulties related to student apathy. All these need to be addressed if the students are to be helped to make better use of EFL learners' dictionary to facilitate their learning of the language as well as other content subjects in the target language.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study investigated preparatory students' application of strategies related to dictionary use with reception and production activities, and which types of dictionary the students use frequently. The subjects of the study were grade-12 students at a government preparatory school in Bati, Wollo. The investigation was carried out in different ways; three different questionnaires and two interviews were used to collect data for the study. A substantial amount of data came out on the various aspects of dictionary use (mainly with reading and writing) in the target context although response rates and coverage of the instruments varied. The first instrument (*Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire*) was intended to investigate whether and how well the students employed dictionary use for reception and production purposes and to determine the type of dictionary regularly used. The questionnaire was administered to fifty-three (i.e., out of a total of seventy-nine) grade-12 students at the target preparatory school. The second and third data collection instruments (*Look-up Strategies Questionnaires 1 & 2*) were intended to find out whether the subjects were familiar with the use of appropriate look-up strategies and if they applied them while consulting English learners' dictionaries to check meanings of words from a reading text. This information was gathered from twenty-two students due to limitation of relevant resources. The study also used interviews with some of the subjects and the English language teachers in the target setting. The instruments used in the study were mainly adapted from the relevant literature (Nation, 2001; Allen, 1983; see also review) and research (by Nesi, 1999; Gu & Johnson, 1996). In the following three sub-sections the summary, the conclusions and finally the recommendations are presented respectively.

5.1 Summary

1. The *Dictionary Use Strategies Questionnaire* (DUSQ) contained eighteen items. It was used to assess whether and how well the students employed dictionary use for reception by choosing important/useful words from reading texts and for production purposes by using dictionary resources to improve their vocabulary use mainly in writing. The DUSQ was also used to determine the type of dictionary the students used more frequently when they utilized one.
 - 1.1. Data obtained from *DUSQ* indicated that the students had generally positive attitude towards dictionary use, especially the students attributed a higher degree of usefulness of the dictionary for reception than for production purposes. That is the great majority found it more helpful to look up meanings while reading their school

books than to gather language information for text production. The results concerning the specific applications of dictionary use also indicated that many students employed dictionary use far more frequently for decoding than for encoding. Moreover, the results revealed the following points.

- a.** Dictionary use for reception purposes was employed in different ways. The students employed dictionary use to find out the meaning of new vocabulary that prevented general understanding or that was frequently met in the reading text and many reported they did not look up every unknown or even before deciding its relevance. However, some of the findings also suggested that some students may not consistently make careful decisions about the relevance of dictionary use while reading. In addition, most students did not consult to check familiar-looking words even when the context was not clear. On the other hand, many of the subjects did not employ dictionary use to compliment new information from context (i.e., to check some of their guesses and to focus on some important vocabulary from a text after reading a text for information).
 - b.** Dictionary use for production purposes was often perceived as helpful; however, the responses given to more specific items indicate that it was not actually utilized to get information about various aspects of L2 vocabulary for the same purposes. Many students did not employ dictionary use to find out or check correct word forms (e.g., spelling, inflection/derivation and pronunciation), to find out about or check the grammar and collocation of new or partly known words required to use in some tasks, to check constraints on the use of less familiar words, and to find other words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms) needed to use in some encoding activity. However, the dictionary was sometimes consulted to check meaning of partly known words needed for production purposes.
- 1.2.** Regarding the dictionary type, the results indicated that L2 - L1 type translating dictionaries were used frequently. English learners' dictionaries were sometimes consulted by nearly two third of the respondents; however, these were used only rarely by the rest of the informants. The use of other types of dictionary, such as L1 - L2 type bilingual dictionaries and other ESP dictionaries were very rarely reported in the study.
- 2.** The study employed two instruments (*Look-up Q 1 & Look-up Q 2*) to investigate students' level of familiarity with the use of *Dictionary Look-up Strategies* for using standard learners' dictionaries to check meanings from context. These focused on the systematic

application of relevant skills, techniques and prior knowledge that are required in the actual process of looking up meanings. The use of the above two instruments in a complementary way in the study made it possible to get broader insight about the students' level of awareness and application of look-up strategies required for successful use of standard learners' dictionaries for receptive purposes. The overall results of the two instruments revealed very little evidence that might indicate that the subjects employed appropriate skills in the actual look-up process. Here is the summary of the results.

2.1 Data of the *Look-up Q-1* was collected immediately after the students had done some practical reception activity with the help of English learners' dictionary. *Look-up Q-1* consisted of four open-ended questions which required the subjects to describe the steps they took at various stages (i.e., the skills, information, etc., they utilized to facilitate their performance) in the practical activity they had just completed. The results of the *Look-up Q-1* indicate the following.

- a.** The students did not gather relevant information from the context prior to picking up the dictionary to look up. They usually failed to apply some basic skills and techniques to find the target entry in the dictionary quickly. The students did not often have clear strategies for selecting the right meaning from among possible meanings offered in the dictionary (e.g., applying information obtained from the original context, interpreting codes and other clues in the dictionary). The students seldom reported the use of skills for checking the dictionary information against the original context.
- b.** The students' problems were also observed from some of the responses they gave regarding the operations they performed at various stages during the activity. It was found that students employed some inefficient approaches while looking up meanings of words in the learners' dictionary.
- c.** The other major problem observed from the *Look-up Q-1* was related to the students' difficulties in describing their strategies. They were often unable to complete the outline, i.e., *Look-up Q-1*, with relevant information although the instrument was administered soon after they had finished a practical dictionary activity. Furthermore, some students reported a number of difficulties that they encountered during the consultations, such as inability to find required information as well as the entry itself.

- 2.2** The *Look-up Q-2* was an eleven-item questionnaire which aimed to elicit information regarding the use of appropriate search strategies in typical consultation acts i.e., when the students normally tried to look up meanings from a reading text. The results of the *LOOK-UP Q-2* also indicated that the students were not systematic in their approaches.
- a.** Most of the students did not try to get sufficient information about the target word in its context in order to look it up, (e.g., deciding the part of speech, reducing it to base form if it is suffixed, and guessing the general meaning).
 - b.** The great majority did not know the various alternative places to search nor did they try to guess the general location of the target word in the dictionary. Most of the respondents did not use the guide words or the part of speech indicators to locate the target entry in the dictionary quickly.
 - c.** While trying to select appropriate meaning from among the various possible meanings in long entries, only less than a quarter of the respondents used example sentences, collocations. Moreover, less than five percent interpreted the usage/ subject codes in the learners' dictionaries for the same purpose.
 - d.** The students did not try to adapt dictionary definition to the context of the word where there were some changes between the two. They did not evaluate the success of their search by paraphrasing the context of the word with the dictionary definition.
- 3.** The analysis of the students' interview indicated that those grade-12 students had been using dictionaries for a long time in their studies. They generally believed that it was important for them, especially to look up meanings from a reading text. The interviewees showed greater reliance on L2 - L1 type dictionaries over monolingual dictionaries, since the former offered "only few pieces of information" and they gave needed information (usually translations) much more easily. These were also occasionally used in few other ways. In addition, the interview data suggested that some of those grade-12 students did not think or believe that they needed to know anything more than L1 translations of target language vocabulary. On the other hand, the English-English learners' dictionary was believed to contain "too much" or even "irrelevant" information and it was "difficult" to use. The major problems of the students that were revealed in the interview were summarized as: lack of awareness on the value of the information offered in the English learners' dictionary, inability to apply appropriate search strategies, and difficulties in understanding the

explanations, including definitions and the other pieces of information in the English dictionaries. For most of the interviewees, the school library is their main source of access to English learners' dictionaries; however, few of them did not use the library regularly. Others admitted they often preferred to use bilingual dictionaries even when they studied in the library where the English learners' dictionaries could easily be found. Some of the informants mentioned lack of relevant activities in EFL classes as cause for their inability to make better use of English learners' dictionaries.

4. The analysis of the teachers' interviews showed that the English language teachers were generally aware of their students' dictionary habits and that they felt it was not appropriate to the students' levels. The teachers also felt that it was important to help students in choosing and using effective dictionaries that were more beneficial to learners at the target stage. However, it was found that the teachers had hardly ever given any guidance and practice opportunities on dictionary use. The teachers mentioned a number of problems which prevented them from giving sufficient attention to the matter in EFL classes. The teachers felt that they had to carry out only what is specified in the syllabus and even if they wanted to introduce the training in successful dictionary use, they were constrained by a number of factors. For instance, in addition to lack of various relevant resources and the absence of dictionary related activities in the course materials, the teachers complained that they themselves had been given little or no training in their professional courses (e.g., methodology, linguistic courses) on how they could help their students in proper dictionary use.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

Based on these findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. The study confirmed that the target preparatory level students had positive attitudes towards dictionary use in their studies. This was in any case as expected because EFL students, especially those in English medium schools, may need to utilize such source of information to solve lexical problems. However, dictionary use was found to be helpful much more often for reception purposes, (i.e., reading) than for production purposes (e.g., writing assignments). This may be attributed to the types of relevant activities in the context; preparatory students are more often expected to read for information in their school subjects. The results concerning the specific applications of dictionary use also suggested that many students tend to use the dictionary far more frequently for decoding

than for encoding. From this we can conclude that grade-12 students need to employ dictionary use more often for reception than for production purpose.

2. Regarding the receptive use of the dictionary, the findings of the present study indicate that many grade-12 students are not systematic in using the dictionary to deal with useful or even important vocabulary in the context of reading. However, the data obtained here do not generally confirm some of the remarks that are often made by some teachers and writers on language learning.
 - a. The findings indicate that many students do not tend to turn to the dictionary to look up every unknown while reading. However, there were some indications in the study that some students may not consistently make careful decisions about the relevance of dictionary use while reading with dictionaries. Furthermore, most of the students do not consult to check familiar-looking words even when the context is hard to understand. Relatively common words in technical fields, idiomatic expressions, etc., may have unexpected meanings. That would obviously lead to miscomprehension and wrong interpretation of the text and this can have serious consequences for students who have to read English texts to learn their school subjects.
 - b. The study reveals that dictionary use is seldom recognized by many students as a valuable strategy to check some of the guessed meanings from context and to closely focus on some of the unknown words that are important for them. Direct learning and teaching of L2 vocabulary is now normal practice in language pedagogy. However, we can conclude that many students are not strategic enough in using the dictionary as a helpful information source to compliment some of the new vocabulary knowledge that was obtained from context (i.e., after reading a text for information).
3. The study obtained compelling, though indirect, evidence that many grade-12 students may not employ appropriate look-up strategies for using English learners' dictionary to check meanings from a reading text. The relevant data of the study (mainly from *Look-up Q-1* & *Look-up Q-2* as well as the interview) indicates that many students may not be familiar with the application of look-up strategies that are required for the receptive use of dictionaries. The participants' inadequate use of relevant skills in typical consultation acts, their use of ineffective strategies during a practical activity, the problems mentioned in the activity, their inability to describe the operations they performed as well as the difficulties reported in the interview point to the fact that many grade-12 students' level of familiarity with the use of look-up strategies was very low. In particular, the

analysis of the data from the above instruments revealed a number of problems. And based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made:

- a.** The students do not get sufficient information from the original context of the look-up item prior to consultation. Some of the skills, such as identifying the part of speech, isolating base form of suffixed word and guessing possible meaning, are regularly practiced in EFL classes. However, most students are not able to transfer these relevant skills in dictionary use.
- b.** The students do not apply some basic skills to find the target entry in the dictionary quickly. Many of them do not guess the general location of the word in the dictionary nor do they use the guidewords at the top of the dictionary pages. Most of the students do not even interpret the part of speech indicators in the dictionaries. They are not aware of the various alternative places to search, including the arrangement of entries. The possible effect of such dictionary skills and/or knowledge deficit could be very serious when they need to consult while reading.
- c.** The results of the study suggest that students do not usually have clear strategies for handling long entries. Since they often give insufficient attention to the original context, they do not effectively apply information from the context for this purpose. Moreover, they rarely interpret or use the various clues in the dictionary to select the right sub-entry when more than few definitions are listed for the entry items. Thus they will have to spend too much time and effort reading every definition listed for the look-up item because they have very limited resources for eliminating inappropriate sub-entries efficiently. In these situations, it is possible to conclude that the users will encounter difficulties while searching meaning from a reading text.
- d.** The study indicates that students do not try to relate the dictionary information to the context. They did not try to adapt dictionary definition to the context of the word when there were some changes between the two. Dictionaries do not list all the possible meanings of words; they list the archetypical meaning. This means the students may fail to get adequate support from the dictionary unless the dictionary offers the definition which exactly fits the original context. Conversely, the user may simply take any definition or get no help at all in such situations. Furthermore, the students did not evaluate the success of their search by paraphrasing the context of the word with the dictionary definition. Here also it is possible that the students would take everything the dictionary offers.

The findings suggest that the students' problems may also extend beyond the use of standard learners' dictionaries. In deed, this is a further confirmation that the development of appropriate dictionary look-up strategies can not be taken for granted, even among grade-12 students. It has been noted in the literature that more and more information is being included in learners' dictionaries for the learner to exploit the various resources. That may also cause problems for the students to get the right meanings, let alone the other useful language information, unless the students are familiar with the basic search strategies.

4. With regard to the productive use, the findings of the study indicate that many grade-12 students tend to focus on meanings even when they employ dictionary use for productive purposes. In addition to meanings, dictionary use can also provide access to much helpful information for text production, mainly for writing assignments or in some cases while preparing or gathering language for other production activities. However, the study indicates that most of the other possibilities that the dictionary offers are seldom utilized by the subjects for production purposes. Furthermore, based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn.
 - a. Dictionary use has very limited utility for most of the subjects of the study in terms of helping them to use correct/appropriate forms of new or partly known words in some production activities. There are many irregularities in the English spelling system, morphology and pronunciation. Systematic use of the dictionary could sometimes help to prevent the production of incorrect word forms.
 - b. Dictionary use is rarely employed by the majority of the students for checking correct grammar and appropriate collocation of words for some production tasks. Part of the explanation for this situation may be related to the types of dictionary students regularly use. However, the general conclusion that can be drawn from the results of the study is that the application of dictionary use for checking word grammar and collocation is very minimal.
 - c. Dictionary use is hardly ever considered as a valuable strategy to check constraints on use of words, (e.g., style, frequency, register). Some words are appropriate only to certain situations or limited to specific users. Dictionary use can give guidance on whether unknown word/use is formal-informal, polite-impolite, spoken-written, etc. However, this aspect of word knowledge is hardly ever sought in dictionaries in order to use less known vocabulary for production purposes.

d. Dictionary use is sometimes employed by students to check the meanings of partly known words that are needed to use in some activities. In deed this can help the students to improve their vocabulary use in some tasks, for example, while writing composition assignments. We can deduce that meaning is the main requirement for many grade-12 students when they employ dictionary use for productive purposes. However, dictionary use is not recognized as a possible source of vocabulary to use, e.g., to find synonyms, opposites, in some production activities.

On the other hand, the type of dictionary regularly used may sometimes limit how much the strategy might be utilized. To some extent, many dictionaries can also provide some information, such as spelling, part of speech, pronunciation; however, it was found out that those grade-12 students did not seem to seek guidance from their dictionaries for productive use of L2 vocabulary. Furthermore, some of the findings also suggest that both inadequate understanding of the advantages of dictionary use for text production and lack of relevant skills for using the strategy could be some of the reasons why the productive use is reported infrequently.

5. The study found that those grade-12 students mainly relied on L2 - L1 type translating dictionaries. For EFL students at the target stage, English learners' dictionaries can provide much more guidance on various aspects of L2 vocabulary (i.e., word forms, various meanings, and uses); however, these are consulted only sometimes or even rarely. Moreover, the English learners' dictionaries seem to be considered as unsuitable, inappropriate, or even less useful and thus they are often given inadequate attention when the students consulted. Furthermore, some specific look-up difficulties and the monolingual information were also found as causes of difficulty for the students. Some informants also mentioned lack of relevant activities in EFL classes as cause for their inability to make better use of English learners' dictionaries. On the other hand, the researcher observed that most of the L2 - L1 type dictionaries that the students used give very little or no guidance on how the students can use the entries for productive purposes while some of these even fail to provide enough guidance to find entries. The above findings may also provide part of the explanation for the students' problems in making good use of dictionary strategies for productive purposes. In addition, it was also observed that some of the bilingual dictionaries claimed to be suitable for college level students while few others explicitly state that the student at certain level should look for other dictionaries with more comprehensive coverage, such as monolingual learners'

dictionaries. Yet, the overwhelming majority of students mainly rely on L2 -L1 type translating dictionaries. This is a good indication of the students' problems in choosing to use dictionaries that provide much helpful information about the target language vocabulary.

5.3. Recommendations

The study shows that dictionary use is important for preparatory level students in some ways. This may be expected among EFL students in language related program of instructions because the dictionary can help them to tackle important vocabulary problems while they are using /learning the foreign language. However, the study found that grade-12 students have a range of problems in the application of helpful dictionary related strategies for reception and production purposes. The students frequently employ dictionary use to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary from L2 reading text; however, they do not sometimes employ it well to assist comprehension or vocabulary development. As far as the use of look-up strategies is concerned, the students do not usually perform the range of operations that are required in the process of looking up meanings in standard learners' dictionaries. Most of the skills are generally required for the use of many (bilingual or monolingual) dictionaries; however, the findings here suggest that the students are not familiar with their applications. For the majority of the student dictionary use has limited utility in terms of helping them improve their vocabulary use in some production tasks. Even when they sometimes employed dictionary use for production purposes, they often looked for meaning. The study confirmed that the students regularly employ translating dictionaries. The students had difficulties in using English learners' dictionaries which were only sometimes consulted for limited purposes. To solve these problems, the following recommendations are made.

- 1.** The results of the present study have indicated that grade-12 students do not often utilize some strategies related to dictionary use for reception and production purposes. Even after having so many years of experience of learning and using English in their academic studies, most of them do not use English learners' dictionaries well. Most of the students' problems may be expected when we consider the complex nature of successful dictionary use and the relative indifference given to the issues of dictionary use in EFL instructions and related learning/teaching materials that are prepared for the courses. On the other hand, the teachers felt that it was difficult for them to provide any instruction when this was not included in the syllabus. Under these circumstances, we may conclude that the development of the students' proficiency in the use of such

reference sources may suffer. The task of familiarizing students with the proper use of dictionary should also be largely the responsibility of people in charge of the EFL syllabus. Therefore, course writers and material designers should include relevant activities in the instructional materials both for the students and teachers. This may help to increase the students' confidence and competence in the use of important dictionary related strategies with written reception and production activities or other integrative learning activities. Furthermore, students should be introduced to the basic skills for dictionary use and some of the possible options that the dictionary can offer at earlier levels, e.g., at least in high school. This can help them to refine and further expand their command in the successful use of reference works at preparatory level and later at tertiary level.

2. The inadequate use of appropriate search strategies is one of the major problems of the students in using the dictionary for reception purposes. The findings indicate that many students do not often recognize the range of operations that are required in the process of looking up meanings in standard learners' dictionaries. When we consider the amount of time which would be lost on searching a word in such a haphazard way while reading and the possible misinterpretation of dictionary information due to their unsystematic methods, it hardly needs emphasizing that the EFL students should get sufficient practice with relevant reception (i.e., reading) activities. Moreover, they are strongly advised to give sufficient attention to the context of the word in order to look it up. They need to understand how and where the information is presented in their dictionaries. Then they have to improve their skills in locating words quickly. They need to be systematic while dealing with polysemous items. They need to be able to use information from the original context as well as the various clues offered in the dictionary in order to choose appropriate sub-entries. They may sometimes need to adapt the dictionary information to the context and they also need to check the information before using it, for example, by paraphrasing it in the context.
3. The study found that dictionary use seems to be employed for completely new words from a reading text. Though many grade-12 students may not use the dictionary to look up every unknown from a reading text, some students may employ it indiscriminately. Thus, they have to decide whether they really need to understand the unknown and if dictionary use is the appropriate strategy in the situation before they turn to the dictionary too quickly and frequently. On the other hand, the study found that the dictionary is not consulted to check relatively familiar-looking words even when the context is not sufficiently understood. Thus students are advised to check common words

when such words are used in a special way. Furthermore, the dictionary use is not employed as a post reading activity to check some of the contextually guessed meanings and to closely study some of the useful vocabulary items from academically related textual input. Systematic application of dictionary use can help to enrich contextually obtained information and make valuable contribution for vocabulary development (Nation, 2001; Gu et al, 1996). It can help to confirm some of the guesses from context as well as allow the student to study some of the new words that are important for them.

4. Dictionary use can offer various possibilities for text production, mainly for writing composition assignments or in some cases while preparing or gathering language for other production activities. Students may find out about spelling, inflected/derived forms, pronunciation, grammar, collocation, constraints on use of words, synonyms, opposites, etc. That is depending on the type of dictionary used, guidance on any or most of these can be found when the student sometimes needs to use new or partly known words. However, the results of the investigation regarding the specific applications of the dictionary revealed that students do not really utilize the various encoding information in the dictionary to improve their L2 vocabulary use in some production tasks. Teachers of English may find it useful to expose their students to the productive use of the dictionary. e.g., mainly for writing composition assignments or in some cases while preparing or gathering language for other production activities.
 - a. Initially, the teacher can identify the most widely available dictionaries and provide guidance about what can be found and how the students can extract the information to improve their vocabulary use in some production activities. Simply, telling students to use one or asking them to read the dictionary's instructions and learn to use it may not be enough. The teacher needs to confirm to the students that dictionary use is a valid strategy which can sometimes be utilized for tackling L2 problems. This also means that the topic is properly presented and discussed in class first to help students have some idea about what can be found in the dictionary and how that can sometimes be exploited for production of the target language. Thus guided practice on how they can extract various pieces of information is necessary and their progress is monitored and proper feedbacks are given. Once the students are familiar with the basics, they can be encouraged to take more and more responsibility with occasional support from the teacher before they are left on their own. Obviously, if the teacher really wants to draw the students' attention to the productive use of the dictionary, this can not be done in one or two classes.

- b. The students can be sometimes advised to exploit the various resources in their dictionaries to improve their works, for example, while they are preparing for some language production tasks or before they present their work to the teacher. The teacher can discuss how the dictionary can offer instantly usable information, for example, when the use of important but less familiar L2 vocabulary is sometimes required while writing/ editing some composition or other writing assignment.
 - c. After the teacher has marked their written works, he/she may sometimes direct the students to the dictionary, as a form of feedback. In deed, in stead of always giving the correct answers on the board, the teacher can help them to correct their works more independently with the help of the dictionary. And thus he/she can save some time for other communicative activities.
 - d. Moreover, the teacher might also want to stress right from the beginning that dictionary use is one source of information for productive use of L2 vocabulary and that it should not be considered as the only or even the main one.
5. Many grade-12 students may very often rely on translating dictionaries when they consult dictionaries. This type of dictionaries could be sometimes helpful yet they do not provide as much support for grade-12 students as monolingual learners' dictionaries do. Therefore, it is beneficial to introduce preparatory level students to the advantages of using English learners' dictionaries more regularly when the need for dictionary use arises. Moreover, it was found that students do not make informed decisions in their choice of dictionaries to use. It is important to provide support and advice on how they can select dictionaries to have/use for their learning needs. The following points are identified for the teacher especially to highlight the value of the monolingual information and to assist students to make better use of the various resources in the dictionaries. The students are also encouraged to make more efforts to improve their skills in using the learners' dictionaries.
- a. For the English teacher: The first type of awareness raising activity on how to choose dictionaries to use can be done by drawing the students' attention to the importance of the various aspects of word knowledge for successful language use. This may generally be expected in any formal language instruction but it should be emphasized while helping preparatory level students to make informed decisions on which dictionaries to give more attention for their present and future needs. For example, both the teacher and students can work together to compare entries from different kinds of dictionaries to examine which dictionaries provide the most useful

information or more contribution to the students' learning of the language or content in English. This may allow the students to gain more chances to see that dictionaries are not the same. In addition, this can also help the students to exploit the various resources in their dictionaries.

- b. For the English teacher: Besides their relative inexperience in the application of appropriate search strategies, some features of the English learners' dictionaries may pose problems for many students. Therefore, the teacher may need to help his/her students to overcome their difficulties in finding their way around in those types of dictionaries. The teacher can discuss some of the important features in the English learners' dictionaries in the school library. This may include features such as typographic conventions, headwords, inflected forms, spelling variants, register notes, numbered superscripts, sense numbers, the use of small capital, symbols, etc.

For example, in standard English-English learners' dictionaries from the *Oxford* or *Longman* families, the headword is printed in bold, different definitions are numbered from the most common to the least common, examples are written in italics and that these illustrate many things, the part of speech and other syntactic information are given in codes which are also illustrated in the examples, collocations are usually included in examples, idioms and other phrases containing the item are listed after the main definitions of the entry, the various codes and symbols (e.g., pronunciation, style/geographic labels) are explained in the dictionary's introduction and other places, etc.). All these and other similar descriptions may seem very simple to the more proficient dictionary user; however, the findings of the study suggest that such things may cause many problems to students. It is obviously the students' own effort that can make real difference. So they need to know the kind of support they can get from the dictionary itself, and so they have to know where to find that guidance, e.g., in the front matter and other sections. Thus, the English teacher needs to encourage the students to study the instructions in the dictionaries to improve the students' ability and confidence in using the various resources in their dictionaries.

- c. The study has also identified problems related to understanding English dictionary definitions. These were related to both the words in definitions and the structure of the dictionary definitions. Although the former may require considering multiple factors, the latter could be addressed by the teacher. Therefore, the teacher may want to help students in understanding typical English learners' dictionary definitions, including the common definition types, special abbreviations, punctuation marks, the

use of brackets, etc as well as the use of examples may need to be clarified to help students use English learners' dictionaries. In fact, helping students to understand and use definitions is not just important for dictionary use only, definition occurs very often in academic textbooks (Nation, 2001). It is also a fundamental language skill which is used when appropriate lexical item could not be found to convey a meaning (Baxter, 1980).

- d. For the students: Dictionary use is one of the various sources of information about the target language vocabulary. Students need to realize that in addition to meanings the use of good dictionaries can also give access to much useful information for productive use of less known EFL vocabulary in some activities. However, for whatever purpose the dictionary is employed, it requires systematic application of a number of skills and some prior dictionary knowledge as well as other things. Thus, students should make deliberate effort to learn how dictionary use can work well to enhance their vocabulary use and learning. Furthermore, dictionaries differ in the amount and type of guidance they provide to allow the students to use their entries for different purposes. For instance, preparatory level students need know that the English-English learners' dictionaries provide much more guidance about appropriate word *forms*, *meanings* and *uses* which could not be easily found in many other books. The students may need to give more attention to those learners' dictionaries when they consult. Thus, students have to study the instructions carefully in those dictionaries, and try to learn how to get information on a range of areas, including the spelling, inflection, derivation, various meanings, grammar, collocation, constraints on use, or other related words, such as synonyms, in the dictionaries.
6. School administrators should make every effort to provide access to appropriate dictionaries to students. While looking for some materials for collecting some of the data for this study, the researcher has observed that the English learners' dictionaries both in the target preparatory school and in the high school were the same, mainly *LDOCE* & *OALD*. Moreover, when the responsible officials from the woreda education bureau or from the school purchase new dictionaries to their school libraries, they should also bring the dictionary manuals or work books, which are usually issued by major dictionary publishers such as the above ones, so that the target users can make better use of the dictionaries.

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Appendix: A

Students' dictionary use strategies Questionnaire

Dear students the purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about preparatory level students' use of dictionaries (at home, in the library, or any other place) to get information about vocabulary items while reading English and for language production (e.g. to write). Your responses are of considerable importance for the success of the study. So you are kindly requested to provide genuine responses to the questions.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Part-One

Direction: The following questions (1-3) ask you to provide some information on whether you need to use dictionaries in your studies, & the types of dictionary you use. Read each question and indicate your responses to each by circling the alternative that closely reflect your experiences.

1. Do you use a dictionary?

a/ Yes, usually b/Yes, sometimes c/Only rarely d/ No, never

2. If you do, how important is the use of dictionary to you in these situations? Indicate how helpful it is to you on the scale from "Very High" to "Very Low".

a/ To search the meanings of words
while reading school books Very High High Medium Low Very Low

b/ To find out about language as part
of a task or project (e.g. written
assignments, speaking activities) Very High High Medium Low Very Low

3. Which kind(s) of dictionary do you use when you consult at home in, the library or any other place? If you use other types of dictionaries, please indicate the type and how often you use them on the space provided.

Note that there is no restriction that you can not use one particular type of dictionary with another one. You can tick as many as are appropriate to you by indicating how often you use them. For example, if you use both bilingual dictionary and a monolingual dictionary, indicate how often you use each of them while you study or do assignments: (*Usually/*

Sometimes/ Seldom/ Never). Please indicate which type of dictionary you use most frequently by circling ONE of the letters of the dictionary type.

	Dictionary type	Frequency of use			
A	English-English (e.g. Oxford/ Longman learners' dictionary)	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
B	Two-language dictionary (e.g. English-Amharic)	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
C	Three-language dictionary (e.g. English-Oromifa-Amharic)	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
D	Two- language (e.g. Amharic-English dictionary)	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
E	Other (please specify) _____	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Part-Two

Direction: - The following list is a list of statements about the ways in which the dictionary is used with reading and writing activities. I would like you to indicate how much you use a dictionary in certain ways while you study or do assignment in your own time (e.g., at the school library, at home, or any other place). I would like to know what you actually do, NOT what you should do or want to do. Please, read each of the statement and indicate how much the statement reflects your way of using the dictionary:

If you want to correct the circling, please delete it and circle your best choice clearly.

- Tick “*Very true to me -1*”, if it **very much reflects** your way of using the dictionary;
- Tick “*True to me -2*”, if it **reflects** your way of using the dictionary;
- If you are not sure/ if you can't decide (**3**) *Uncertain*
- Tick “*Untrue to me -4*”, if it **does not reflect** your way of using the dictionary.
- Tick “*Very untrue to me -5*”, if it **does not at all reflect** your way of using the dictionary.

	Statements	Very true to me	True to me	Uncertain	Untrue to me	Very untrue to me
1	When a new vocabulary prevents me from understanding the general idea of a text, I look it up.	1	2	3	4	5
2	When I am not sure about the spelling of a word that I want to use, I check it in the dictionary; e.g., Is it <i>exsiting</i> or <i>exciting</i> ?	1	2	3	4	5
3	When I see an unfamiliar word again & again in a text I look it up	1	2	3	4	5
4	I sometimes check in English learners' dictionary the right collocations (i.e., to find out about other words I can use with the item) e.g., 'Is it <i>commit</i> or <i>do</i> a crime?' , 'Can I say the <i>price</i> of the material is <i>expensive</i> ?'	1	2	3	4	5
5	I sometimes look for special meanings for familiar-looking words (e.g. plant, light, play, etc) if they appear in a sentence that is hard to understand.	1	2	3	4	5
6	If I am not certain whether a given word has some inflected or derived forms, I check it in the dictionary before I use it. e.g., Is the past tense of <i>choose</i> , <i>choosed</i> ? I can say <i>waterless</i> but can I say ' <i>waterful</i> ' ?	1	2	3	4	5
7	If I want to check the pronunciation, position of stress in important words, phrases, I consult English learners' dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I often prefer to look up the unknown word before deciding its importance for adequate comprehension any material that I read.	1	2	3	4	5
9	When I suspect slight differences in meaning between confusing words, I check in the dictionary before I use them.	1	2	3	4	5
10	If I read with dictionary, I usually look up every unknown as it appears in the text for effective understanding of any material that I read.	1	2	3	4	5
11	If I need to use partially known words, I sometimes consult the dictionary to check for constraints on the use of words: whether the word is appropriate to use in a given context (e.g. formal, slang, old fashioned, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
12	I look up to confirm guessed meanings from contextual clues (when I have time).	1	2	3	4	5
13	I consult a learners' dictionary to find synonyms, or other related words (e.g., in stead of using the same known word again and again in a composition assignment).	1	2	3	4	5
14	After I have finished reading a text, I look up some of the new words if I think I will need to use them some time in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
15	If I am unsure about the grammar of a word that I want use, I check it in the dictionary, (e.g., noun, verb, un/count, in/transitive, adjective, adverb, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX: B

The practical dictionary activity

Dear students, I would like to thank you for taking part in the activity. The purpose of the exercise is to gather information for the study on preparatory students' use of the dictionary. It has no other purpose. So you are kindly requested to provide genuine information. You do not need to write your names. You can ask for some extra paper if you need more to write your answers.

Thank you.

Direction: - Some of the words in each of the following five sentences are underlined. Use the English learners' dictionary to find out the meanings of the underlined. Write the meanings and the definition numbers or letters on the space provided.

1. I haven't brought the papers. I couldn't find the gaoler.

Dictionary definition: _____

2. I am convinced that he guessed the problem though he won't own it to this day.

Dictionary definition: _____

3. **Customer:** Do you have Highland water?

Shopkeeper: Yes. The 500 milliliter bottle is 4 birr. The 1000 milliliter bottle is 6 birr and the 2000 milliliter bottle is bottle is 8 birr. Which one do you want?

Customer: Please, give me the economy size.

Dictionary definition: _____

4. They have been playing cards, but they have left off to drink tea.

This means _____

5. She has a very vinegar tongue.

This means she _____

APPENDIX: C

Dictionary look-up strategies questionnaire-1

Dear students, you have just completed an exercise using an English learners' dictionary. Now I want you to think back and describe what things you did while you were consulting the dictionary to complete the activity. Try to remember every thing that you did and why you did them.

Thank you!

Direction: Complete the following outline by describing the activities you performed while you were using the dictionary to complete the task. You can ask extra paper if need more.

1. Did you do any thing before you actually picked up the dictionary to look up? Why did you do that?

(If so, what did you do? Try to list the main things that you did before you actually opened the dictionary to search. If you did not do anything, go to question number '2')

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(If you did anything) Why did you have to do the above?

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2. What did you do (when you picked up the dictionary) to locate the word quickly? Did you use any techniques to help you do this?

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3. Once you had found the entry, how did you select the right sub-entry? What did you do to choose the appropriate definition for the item? Please, give examples if you can.

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4. Did you check the appropriateness of the definitions you have chosen? If so, how?

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APPENDIX: D

Dictionary look-up strategies questionnaire-2

Direction: - How do you use English learners' dictionaries while you try to look up meanings from a reading text? I would like you to indicate how much true or untrue each statement is to you on the scale from 'Very true to me' (1) to 'Very untrue to me' (5). For example, if you always deliberately guess the general location of a word in the dictionary before you opened the dictionary, tick "very true to me - 1". If you do not do that at all, tick "very untrue to me -5".

- Tick "Very true to me -1", if a description very much reflects your way of using the dictionaries.
- Tick "True to me -2", if a description reflects your way of using the dictionaries.
- If you are not sure or you cannot decide, tick "Uncertain - 3".
- Tick "Untrue to me - 4", if a description does not reflect your way of using the dictionary.
- Tick "Very untrue to me - 5", if it does not at all reflect your way of using the dictionary.

	Statements	Very true to me	True to me	Uncertain	Untrue To me	Very untrue to me
1	I use the dictionary symbols for the different parts of speech of entries while searching a word.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I sometimes adapt the meaning found in the dictionary to the context of the word in the text, if there are some changes between the dictionary definition and the context.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I decide the part of speech (the grammatical name) of the unfamiliar word before I look it up.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I interpret the style/usage & subject codes in the dictionaries to work out the right meaning quickly	1	2	3	4	5
5	I know alternative places to search such as separate entries, subentries, word groups, derived forms, variant spellings and appendixes	1	2	3	4	5
6	I always guess the general meaning of the word before I look up an unfamiliar word while reading	1	2	3	4	5
7	When I pick up the dictionary to look up, I usually guess the general location of the word in the dictionary (e.g. whether it would be in the first, second, third or fourth quarter of the dictionary)	1	2	3	4	5
8	If the unknown word is suffixed, I remove the suffixes before I look it up (e.g. advertising – advertise)	1	2	3	4	5
9	If the dictionary lists many meanings to a word, I use various pieces of information (such as examples, collocation) to eliminate inappropriate sub-entries.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I use the guide words at the top of the pages to locate a word.	1	2	3	4	5
11	When I want decide if the dictionary meaning fits nicely with the message of the text, I paraphrase the original sentence with the dictionary definition.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX: E

Interview with the students

Q.1: How important has the use of dictionary been in your study? What kind of dictionary, (bilingual or monolingual) do you use frequently?

- When did you start to use bilingual dictionary?
- How often do you use it now? Why?
- Do you employ it for reception or production activities or other?

Q-2: Do you also try to use monolinguals English dictionaries, such as those in the school library?

- Why do you not use English-English learners' dictionaries more often when you use a dictionary?
- What problems do you encounter while trying to consult the dictionaries?
- How much do the other lessons in English class (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, reading, etc. lessons) help you to solve your problems in using English-English learners' dictionaries? Do you read the instruction in the dictionaries?
- Are you ever asked /advised to use one by the English teacher? When?

APPENDIX: F

Interview with the teachers

Q-1 Do you think your students generally employ bilingual or monolingual dictionaries in their studies?

- How appropriate do you think are their dictionary strategies for their level?

Q.2 Do you think your students need to be trained in dictionary use? Why?

- Does it matter which type (bilingual or monolingual)?

Q-3 Do you sometimes advise your students on how they could use dictionaries properly to promote their achievements in the language skills?

- How? Was it explicitly or embedded in other regular classroom activities?

Q-4 Do you think you can help up to a point to make the learners more aware of the different options and to encourage them to experiment with these?

- How do you think you can do that? Is it by incorporating helpful dictionary use strategies into vocabulary or other lessons or by presenting it as separate lesson?

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Name: Ermias Legesse

Signature: _____

Place: AAU: Institute of Language Studies