

A Think-aloud Protocols Investigation of Dictionary Processing Strategies among Saudi EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine qualitatively how Saudi EFL female students look-up word meanings in their dictionaries while reading. We aimed to identify and describe the look-up strategies used by these students. The subjects of the study were ten third-year English major students. A think-aloud protocol was used in order to gain insights into the detailed process of dictionary consultation while reading an English text. The results produced empirical evidence to support the claim that strategy use is indeed complex. In addition, this study showed that most students attempted a variety of strategies and the frequency of the strategies used fluctuated. Although a wide variety of strategies were used, not every strategy was used frequently. It was obvious that the participants utilized strategies that were familiar to them or that they thought were effective in retrieving the correct solution.

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of English as an international language has resulted in the rapid rise of various dictionaries over the past decades. This boom reflects the tremendous need and demand for learners' dictionaries in EFL and ESL learning settings. Many EFL learners consider dictionaries as useful and helpful in learning English, and dictionary use is fairly common and probably necessary in language learning (Huang 2003). Dictionaries are among the most successful and significant books about languages. They play a vital role not only in native language acquisition but also in foreign language learning (Li 1998). The process of foreign language learning usually involves considerable use of dictionaries. Furthermore, dictionaries of different types have