

Ursula Wingate. *The Effectiveness of Different Learner Dictionaries: An Investigation into the Use of Dictionaries for Reading Comprehension by Intermediate Learners of German.* 2002, X + 301 pp. ISBN 3-484-39112-X. Lexicographica. Series Major 112. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. Price: €88.

Unlike the long tradition of EFL dictionaries, German learners' dictionaries are quite recent and were first marketed in the 1990s. Ursula Wingate's book is quite unique, since studies in German learners' dictionaries are very few, as is empirical research conducted in dictionary use.

Ursula Wingate is responsible for the development of students' study skills at King's College, London. Her expertise in applied linguistics and in learning strategies has been a particular asset in this research. This book particularly focuses on language learners' needs and investigates the linguistic suitability and effectiveness of dictionaries by direct observation of a target group of intermediate learners. This investigation entails studying a group of Hong Kong Chinese learners of German, assessing the efficiency of monolingual dictionaries and bilingual foreign-language German–English dictionaries in their vocabulary acquisition and in their reading comprehension. Statistics show that, on the whole, language learners of German prefer the use of bilingual German–English dictionaries to bilingual Chinese–English and monolingual dictionaries. Because of the cultural similarity between English and German, Hong Kong Chinese learners generally opt for the German–English version. Only 1% of the sample investigated happens to favour a monolingual dictionary.

This book, with its emphasis on language learners' needs, is particularly aimed at dictionary compilers and publishers, as well as teachers, who will find help in determining the most useful dictionary for their students at all stages of their acquisition process. Despite the general belief that a monolingual dictionary is too demanding at such a level, quantitative studies showed that monolingual dictionaries are more effective than Hong Kong Chinese learners' preferred bilingual German–English dictionaries and should be recommended.

In a further stage of this study, the effectiveness of dictionary definitions in monolingual dictionaries was assessed. The think-aloud studies conducted on a sample of language learners shed light on major strategy mistakes in dictionary consultation. Such a comprehensive study highlights the importance of training dictionary users in dictionary consultation, and the little awareness of teachers that reference skills could clearly enhance language acquisition. The habit of using bilingual dictionaries often accounts for unsuccessful performance when shifting to monolingual dictionaries. The think-aloud studies also provide insight into particular weaknesses in the presentation of words or definitions found in dictionaries.

As suggested by Wingate, it would in future be advisable to assess the suitability of both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries by a group of advanced learners. The findings of such research brings to light lexicographers'

and teachers' lack of awareness of users' needs and point out users' inefficient ways or lack of strategies in using dictionaries, as well as how these dictionaries sometimes fail in providing effective information to language learners. Wingate's recommendations and strategies are a major contribution to an effective dictionary for language learners, not only to German learners specifically, but also to language learners generally.

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