"Corpus-based vocabulary research and the use of dictionaries"

Reasons for using a dictionary

- **Comprehension (decoding):**
    - To look up unknown words met whilst listening, reading or translating
    - To confirm the meanings of partly known words
    - To confirm guesses from context
- **Production (encoding):**
    - To look up unknown words needed to speak, write or translate
    - To look up the spelling, pronunciation, inflections and derived forms of partly known words needed to speak, write or translate
    - To confirm the spelling, pronunciation, meaning, etc. of known words
    - To check that a word exists
    - To find a different word to use instead of a known one
    - To correct an error
- **Learning:**
    - To choose unknown words to learn
    - To enrich knowledge of partly known words, including etymology

Skills needed to use a dictionary

- **Receptive use:**
    - Get information from the context where the word occurred
    - Find the dictionary entry
    - Choose the right sub-entry
    - Relate the meaning to the context and decide if it fits
- **Productive use:**
    - Find the wanted word form
    - Check that there are no unwanted constraints on the use of the word
    - Work out the grammar and collocations of the word
    - Check the spelling/pronunciation of the word before using it

What to consider when choosing a dictionary

- **For comprehension:**
    - The dictionary should contain lots of words and word groups.
    - The meanings should be easy to understand.
    - Derived words and word groups should be easy to find.
    - The meanings should be easy to find.
    - There should be examples and collocations to guide the search and confirm that the appropriate meaning has been found.

- **For production:**
    - There should be ways of finding the appropriate word.
    - The dictionary should provide information about constraints on use of the word.
    - The dictionary should provide plenty of understandable example sentences as models for use.
    - The dictionary should contain easily understood information about the grammar and collocations of the word.
    - The dictionary should show the spelling of inflected and derived forms.
    - The dictionary should show how the word is pronounced.