

استخدام القاموس لدى طلبة المرحلة الجامعية (دراسة حالة لعينة
150 طالبا بقسم اللغة الانجليزية - كلية التربية العجيلات - جامعة
الزاوية)

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ملخص :

يعرض هذا البحث الأنماط المختلفة لتوظيف واستخدام القاموس في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية لعدد من طلاب المرحلة الجامعية - جامعة الزاوية كلية التربية العجيلات - قسم اللغة الانجليزية. يستخدم هذا البحث المنهج الوصفي لدراسة الحالة مُتبعاً فيه الطريقتين : الاحصائية المبنية على الاستبانة ، والطريقة الوصفية المبنية على جمع المعلومات من المقابلة الشخصية لعينات الدراسة. تتضمن النتائج نسبة 82% من الطلاب ممن يستخدمون القاموس بشكل قياسي وذلك بمعدل 60% من الطلاب اللذين يستخدمون القاموس ثنائي اللغة ، ونسبة 25% من الطلاب ممن يقومون باستخدام القاموس أحادي اللغة. كما أن للقاموس الالكتروني نسبة استخدام مئوية من 15% من مجموع النسب . وتعتبر هذه النسبة منخفضة عن باقي الأنواع المُستخدمة من قبل الطلاب، و يعود هذا إلى الافتقار المعرفي لخبرة استخدام وتوظيف القاموس كأداة لتعلم اللغة الأخرى . كما توضح المقابلات الشخصية مع عدد من الطلاب بأنهم يفضلون استخدام القاموس ثنائي اللغة و ذلك بسبب الفهم الفوري الذي يوفره هذا النوع من القواميس متجاهلين المنافع اللغوية التي لهم أن يتحصلوا عليها على المدى البعيد من استخدام النوع الآخر كالفهم الأعمق للمفردات اللغوية و تركز هذه الدراسة على الحاجة إلى توظيف القاموس بشكل أوسع في التدريبات اللغوية للمناهج المُعدة في تدريس المقررات و يوصي كذلك بإقامة ورش العمل التدريبية التي تُعزز من رفع كفاءة الطلاب في استخدام القاموس

The Use of Dictionaries Among EFL Students: A Case Study of 150 Students from the English Department at Zawia University, Ajilat College of Education

أحادي اللغة والقاموس الإلكتروني للمراحل الدراسية المتقدمة. تعتبر محدودة هذا البحث المتمثلة في كلية واحدة وجامعة واحدة بالنسبة لعينات الدراسة هي بمثابة فتح آفاق جديدة للفكرة البحثية في مجال استخدام القواميس لطلاب المجالات اللغوية ودراسة واكتشاف مدى تأثيرها على المهارات اللغوية الخاصة.

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Abstract

This study investigates the patterns and preferences of dictionary use among 150 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from the English Department at Ajilat College of Education, Zawia University. The research employs a descriptive case study approach, utilizing both quantitative data from structured questionnaires and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. Findings indicate that 82% of students use dictionaries regularly, with a majority (60%) relying on bilingual dictionaries. Monolingual dictionaries (25%) and electronic dictionaries (15%) were less frequently used, largely due to students' unfamiliarity with these tools and challenges in navigating complex dictionary entries. Interviews revealed that many students prefer bilingual dictionaries for quick comprehension, but a minority recognize the benefits of monolingual dictionaries in deepening their understanding of English vocabulary. The study highlights a need for more targeted dictionary training and resource integration within the EFL curriculum. It also recommends workshops and curricular reforms to encourage more effective dictionary use, particularly the transition to monolingual and electronic dictionaries for advanced learners. Limitations of the study, such as its focus on a single university, are acknowledged, and

future research is suggested to explore dictionary use across multiple institutions and its impact on specific language skills

Keywords: EFL learners, dictionary use, bilingual dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries, electronic dictionaries, Zawia University, language learning strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Dictionaries have long been regarded as essential tools in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), serving as bridges between learners and the vast complexities of a foreign language. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, dictionaries offer access to meanings, pronunciations, grammatical rules, and examples that contribute to vocabulary building and overall language comprehension. Research in SLA consistently points to vocabulary knowledge as one of the most critical factors influencing language proficiency and academic success (Nation, 2001). In the classroom, dictionaries serve as both autonomous learning tools and in-class aids, enabling students to explore new vocabulary and contexts independently.

In EFL contexts, especially in countries where English is not widely spoken, dictionaries become even more crucial. For learners in Libya, where English is taught as a foreign language primarily in academic institutions, dictionaries can serve as invaluable resources for overcoming the linguistic barriers posed by unfamiliar vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. However, dictionary use is not always straightforward; students must choose between different types of dictionaries—bilingual, monolingual, or electronic—and must learn how to use them effectively in order to fully reap the benefits.

Libya has undergone significant political and educational transformations in recent decades, which have impacted the quality and structure of its English language education system. At the university level, departments of English, such as the one at Ajilat College of Education, Zawia University, are responsible for equipping students with the skills needed to succeed in a globalized world where English plays a central role. Despite this, challenges remain in the delivery of effective language education, particularly with regard to the resources and strategies employed by both students and educators.

The use of dictionaries in Libyan universities is often shaped by students' access to resources and their familiarity with different dictionary formats. Many students rely on traditional paper-based bilingual dictionaries, which provide quick translations between English and Arabic. Others may turn to electronic dictionaries or apps, though these tools are not always widely promoted or used in classroom settings. While these resources can help students navigate linguistic challenges, there is little data on how frequently or effectively Libyan EFL students use dictionaries as part of their language learning processes.

The English Department at Ajilat College of Education is one such institution where students are expected to become proficient in the language to succeed academically. In this context, understanding how students use dictionaries can shed light on both the effectiveness of current teaching strategies and the potential for enhancing learning through better use of available resources.

1.2. Research Problem

Despite the critical role that dictionaries can play in second language learning, there is limited research on the patterns of dictionary use among EFL students in Libya. Globally, studies have demonstrated that dictionaries help learners gain autonomy in vocabulary acquisition, improve

comprehension in reading tasks, and assist in writing and speaking by providing clarity on word meanings and usage (Laufer & Hill, 2000). However, little attention has been paid to how students in Libya, particularly those in higher education, approach the use of dictionaries in their studies.

In the Libyan context, students face additional challenges, including limited access to advanced educational resources and a reliance on bilingual dictionaries that may not always provide the depth of understanding needed for academic tasks. Furthermore, the increasing availability of electronic dictionaries and apps presents both opportunities and challenges, as students may lack guidance on how to integrate these tools effectively into their learning routines.

The lack of comprehensive data on dictionary use among Libyan university students raises important questions about how dictionaries are currently being utilized and how they can be better employed to enhance EFL learning. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the patterns, preferences, and challenges associated with dictionary use among 150 students in the English Department at Zawia University, Ajilat College of Education.

1.3. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1. How frequently do EFL students in the English department use dictionaries in their studies?**
- 2. What types of dictionaries (e.g., monolingual, bilingual, or electronic) are most commonly used by students?**
- 3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges associated with the use of dictionaries?**

1.4. Aims and Objectives

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The primary aim of this research is to investigate the use of dictionaries by EFL students in a higher education context in Libya, with a specific focus on understanding the patterns of use, student preferences, and the challenges they face. More specifically, the study seeks to:

- **Explore Patterns of Dictionary Usage:** Understand how frequently and in what contexts students use dictionaries (e.g., for reading, writing, speaking, or listening tasks).
- **Examine Student Preferences:** Identify which types of dictionaries (monolingual, bilingual, or electronic) are most popular among students and why.
- **Investigate the Challenges of Dictionary Use:** Analyze the difficulties students encounter when using dictionaries and how these challenges impact their language learning.
- **Provide Practical Recommendations:** Suggest strategies for educators and institutions to improve the integration of dictionaries into EFL learning, including recommendations for training students on effective dictionary use

2. Literature Review

Dictionaries play a fundamental role in second language acquisition (SLA) by enabling learners to independently access vocabulary, grammar rules, word meanings, and usage examples. Nation (2001) suggests that a learner's vocabulary knowledge is a key predictor of their ability to succeed in language learning, and dictionaries provide a direct pathway for learners to expand their lexical repertoire. In SLA, where learners often face the challenge of limited language input outside formal instruction, dictionaries offer immediate assistance in understanding new words and expressions, particularly in reading and writing tasks.

Moreover, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2015) defines dictionaries as "portable libraries of words" that provide critical support for

learners navigating linguistic challenges. Research by Bogaards (2001) highlights that learners who use dictionaries regularly show improved word retention, which in turn contributes to higher levels of reading comprehension, writing accuracy, and speaking fluency. For EFL learners, who often experience language learning in environments where English is not the dominant spoken language, dictionaries serve as indispensable tools for overcoming language barriers.

However, the mere availability of dictionaries is not sufficient. Effective dictionary use requires instruction on how to consult dictionary entries efficiently. Many learners, as highlighted by Baxter (1980), encounter difficulties with deciphering complex entries, especially in monolingual dictionaries that provide definitions and examples in the target language only. This indicates that learners need training not only in language skills but also in how to use dictionaries as part of their overall learning strategy.

2.1. Types of Dictionaries and Their Role in EFL

1. **Monolingual Dictionaries:** Monolingual dictionaries, such as *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and *Cambridge English Dictionary*, offer definitions and explanations solely in English. These dictionaries are often recommended for advanced learners because they foster immersion in the target language, allowing learners to engage deeply with the word meanings, synonyms, usage, and nuances of the language. Research by Béjoint (1981) suggests that monolingual dictionaries provide a more profound understanding of word usage in context, which is particularly beneficial for learners aiming to achieve fluency.

Despite their benefits, monolingual dictionaries can pose challenges for intermediate and beginner learners. Scholfield (1999) emphasizes that these dictionaries are more suitable for learners with a solid vocabulary foundation, as they require users to interpret meanings

based on English-language definitions. Beginner learners may struggle to understand these definitions, leading to frustration and a preference for bilingual dictionaries that provide more straightforward translations.

Research also shows that learners using monolingual dictionaries experience greater cognitive development because they are required to understand definitions through context rather than direct translations (Lew, 2011). However, beginners may view these dictionaries as too complex, often opting for bilingual alternatives.

2. **Bilingual Dictionaries:** Bilingual dictionaries, such as *Al-Mawrid English-Arabic Dictionary*, offer translations between the learner's first language (L1) and the target language (L2). Bilingual dictionaries are particularly popular among beginner and intermediate EFL learners due to the ease with which they provide direct word-for-word translations. Atkins (1998) argues that bilingual dictionaries help learners overcome immediate comprehension challenges by offering quick and easy access to the meanings of unfamiliar words, making them useful for reading comprehension and vocabulary expansion.

However, the use of bilingual dictionaries has been criticized for encouraging over-reliance on direct translations rather than promoting an understanding of the word in context. Studies by Laufer and Hill (2000) and Laufer and Kimmel (1997) have shown that students who frequently use bilingual dictionaries may not develop the deeper lexical knowledge required for advanced proficiency. While bilingual dictionaries provide immediate meaning, they can inhibit learners' ability to process word usage fully, resulting in shallow learning. To address this, Scholfield (1982) recommends that learners gradually transition from bilingual to monolingual dictionaries as their proficiency increases to

encourage more independent and analytical approaches to learning vocabulary.

3. **Electronic Dictionaries:** The emergence of technology in education has led to a rise in the popularity of electronic dictionaries, which are available in both monolingual and bilingual formats. Electronic dictionaries offer significant advantages over traditional paper-based dictionaries, as they provide fast, on-demand access to a wide range of linguistic information, including word meanings, pronunciation, usage examples, and synonyms. Mobile dictionary apps, such as *Merriam-Webster Online* and *Google Translate*, have made language learning more accessible and interactive.

Research by Nesi (1999) and Dziemianko (2010) indicates that electronic dictionaries increase efficiency in language learning, particularly in time-constrained situations. Learners can access dictionary entries quickly and obtain instant feedback on word meanings, which is especially useful for reading, writing, and classroom tasks. Additionally, electronic dictionaries offer multimodal features, including audio pronunciations and images, which cater to different learning styles and improve memory retention (Loucky, 2010).

Despite these advantages, over-reliance on electronic dictionaries may promote surface-level learning. Chen (2010) highlights the potential for passive learning, as students might prioritize instant translation over in-depth exploration of word usage. Furthermore, learners may become distracted by other non-academic features on electronic devices, reducing the effectiveness of learning. Bower and McMillan (2007) recommend that electronic dictionaries be used alongside traditional resources, with guidance from instructors on strategic use to maximize learning outcomes.

2.2. Dictionary Use and Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is a critical aspect of language learning, and dictionaries provide a direct way for learners to expand their lexicon. Nation (2001) points out that acquiring vocabulary is essential for the development of all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Dictionary use has been shown to facilitate vocabulary learning by providing learners with definitions, contextual examples, and pronunciation guides.

Studies by Knight (1994) and Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidanus (1996) demonstrate that dictionary use can significantly improve vocabulary retention and comprehension. Learners who consult dictionaries while reading are better able to retain new vocabulary, as the process of looking up words and reviewing definitions strengthens memory recall. In EFL contexts, where learners often encounter a large number of unfamiliar words, dictionaries offer immediate solutions to decoding meaning and improving understanding.

However, research also emphasizes the importance of active engagement with dictionary entries. Knight (1994) found that passive consultation of dictionaries—simply looking up meanings without fully understanding the usage—may result in lower retention rates. Active engagement, such as using the dictionary to study word pronunciation, grammar, and usage in sentences, leads to greater long-term vocabulary retention and language proficiency.

2.3. Challenges in Dictionary Use

While dictionaries provide valuable linguistic support, learners face several challenges in their use. Baxter (1980) notes that many students, particularly beginners, are not trained in effective dictionary use. Without proper guidance, learners may struggle with identifying relevant definitions,

understanding grammatical information, and using dictionaries efficiently in reading or writing tasks.

Additionally, the complexity of monolingual dictionary entries can be daunting for learners at lower proficiency levels. Scholfield (1982) found that learners often avoid monolingual dictionaries due to their perceived difficulty, preferring the more accessible bilingual versions. This preference can hinder vocabulary development and prevent learners from gaining the deeper linguistic understanding provided by monolingual dictionaries.

In the context of electronic dictionaries, Loucky (2010) notes that while they offer speed and convenience, they can sometimes lead to fragmented learning. Learners might only consult electronic dictionaries for quick translations, neglecting the full breadth of linguistic information available. Moreover, as Chen (2010) points out, electronic devices may introduce distractions that interfere with learning, particularly if students use their devices for non-academic purposes during study sessions.

2.4. The Libyan EFL Context

In Libya, EFL learners often rely on traditional bilingual dictionaries due to the limited availability of monolingual and electronic resources. The education system in Libya has faced challenges over the past decade, including political instability and insufficient access to modern learning tools. As a result, many Libyan students, particularly in rural areas, rely on paper-based bilingual dictionaries to support their language learning.

Limited research exists on dictionary use in the Libyan context, though Alhaisoni (2016) provides insights from neighboring Saudi Arabia. In his study, Saudi EFL learners exhibited similar preferences for bilingual dictionaries, citing ease of use as a key factor. However, these learners also expressed difficulty in using monolingual and electronic dictionaries due to a lack of training and exposure.

Given the parallels between Libya and Saudi Arabia in terms of educational infrastructure and language learning environments, it is likely that Libyan students face similar challenges. The present study aims to address this gap by investigating how EFL students at Zawia University's Ajilat College of Education use dictionaries, what types of dictionaries they prefer, and what challenges they encounter.

2.5. The Role of Instruction in Dictionary Use

Effective dictionary use is not merely a matter of having access to dictionaries; it also involves proper instruction on how to use them effectively. Research indicates that explicit teaching of dictionary skills can significantly enhance learners' ability to utilize these resources. For instance, studies have shown that when learners receive training on how to navigate dictionary entries, they demonstrate improved comprehension and vocabulary retention (Laufer & Hill, 2000). Instruction can include strategies for selecting relevant definitions, understanding grammatical information, and utilizing example sentences for context. Without such training, learners may struggle with the complexities of dictionary entries, particularly in monolingual dictionaries that require a higher level of language proficiency (Baxter, 1980).

Moreover, integrating dictionary skills into the curriculum can encourage students to adopt more autonomous learning strategies. By embedding dictionary use in language tasks—such as reading comprehension exercises or vocabulary quizzes—educators can foster a more interactive and engaging learning environment. This proactive approach not only enhances learners' confidence in using dictionaries but also reinforces the connection between vocabulary learning and dictionary consultation.

2.6. Impact of Cultural Context on Dictionary Use

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Cultural context plays a significant role in how learners approach dictionary use and their overall language acquisition experience. In many EFL settings, cultural factors can influence students' preferences for specific types of dictionaries. For example, students from cultures that prioritize direct translation may favor bilingual dictionaries over monolingual ones, as these provide immediate access to meanings in their native language (Atkins, 1998). This preference may stem from a lack of exposure to English in everyday life, leading learners to rely on familiar resources to bridge the gap between their L1 and L2.

Additionally, cultural attitudes toward language learning and the value placed on vocabulary acquisition can impact dictionary use. In environments where rote memorization is emphasized, learners may be less inclined to engage deeply with dictionary entries, preferring instead to rely on quick translations. Conversely, students in cultures that encourage exploratory learning may be more open to using monolingual or electronic dictionaries, valuing the comprehensive understanding these tools provide (Nesi, 1999).

Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for educators aiming to implement effective dictionary training programs. Tailoring instruction to align with students' cultural backgrounds can enhance their engagement with dictionary resources, ultimately leading to improved language learning outcomes.

In summary, the effective use of dictionaries is a vital component of vocabulary acquisition and language learning for EFL students. This literature review highlights the pivotal role that different types of dictionaries—monolingual, bilingual, and electronic—play in facilitating language comprehension and retention. However, the mere availability of these resources is insufficient; learners must receive adequate instruction to navigate dictionary entries effectively and maximize their potential. Furthermore, cultural contexts significantly influence dictionary preferences and usage patterns, underscoring the need for educators to tailor their

approaches to accommodate diverse learning backgrounds. By addressing these aspects, educators can enhance the integration of dictionary skills into the EFL curriculum, fostering greater autonomy and proficiency among learners. Future research should continue to explore the evolving landscape of dictionary use in language learning, particularly as technological advancements reshape access to linguistic resources.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive case study** approach to explore the patterns of dictionary use among 150 EFL students from the English Department at Ajilat College of Education, Zawia University. A case study design is advantageous when the objective is to explore phenomena within a real-life context, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences (Yin, 2014). In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), case studies are effective for investigating the specific language learning practices of a particular group of learners, allowing for in-depth exploration of behaviors, preferences, and challenges related to dictionary use. The case study approach also facilitates a mixed-methods data collection strategy, blending quantitative and qualitative insights for a more holistic perspective on dictionary use in this specific EFL context.

This research is **descriptive** in nature, aiming to identify and explain trends and patterns in how students utilize dictionaries. Descriptive research is suited for studies that seek to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon without manipulating variables, making it ideal for understanding the natural habits and preferences of language learners (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). This methodology also permits flexibility in capturing the nuanced experiences of learners from varying academic years and proficiency levels.

3.2. Participants

The sample consists of **150 students** from the English Department, randomly selected across all academic years (first-year to fourth-year) to ensure representation of varying proficiency levels, academic experiences, and exposure to different types of dictionaries. Random sampling increases the generalizability of the findings, as it reduces bias and ensures that students from diverse educational backgrounds are included in the study (Creswell, 2014).

The participants, ranging from beginner to advanced levels of English proficiency, are assumed to have had varying degrees of exposure to both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, as well as traditional paper-based and electronic formats. The diversity of participants is critical for identifying patterns across different stages of language learning. Including students from different academic years allows the researcher to explore potential differences in dictionary use between lower-level learners, who may rely more heavily on bilingual dictionaries, and higher-level learners, who may be more inclined to use monolingual or electronic dictionaries.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using **two primary tools**: a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

1. **Questionnaire**: A **structured questionnaire** was designed to quantitatively assess students' dictionary usage patterns. The questionnaire included **closed-ended questions** that measured:
 - The frequency of dictionary use (daily, weekly, occasionally, rarely, or never).
 - Preferences for dictionary types (monolingual, bilingual, or electronic).

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- Specific contexts in which dictionaries are used (reading, writing, speaking, listening).
- Difficulties encountered while using different types of dictionaries.

The questionnaire was administered to all 150 students. Using a questionnaire as a data collection tool ensures a wide range of data can be gathered quickly and efficiently, offering quantifiable insights into general trends in dictionary use. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequency counts, were then used to analyze the quantitative data, providing a clear overview of the patterns of dictionary usage (Bryman, 2012).

2. **Interviews:** In addition to the questionnaire, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with a sub-sample of **20 students**. These interviews provided qualitative insights into students' perceptions and experiences with dictionary use. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in probing deeper into individual students' challenges, preferences, and the strategies they use to overcome difficulties (Dörnyei, 2007)

Interview questions were designed to explore:

- Students' reasons for choosing specific types of dictionaries.
- Their perceived effectiveness of these tools in aiding language learning.
- Challenges they face when using monolingual versus bilingual dictionaries.
- Their experiences with electronic dictionaries, including advantages and disadvantages.

The interviews allowed for the collection of **rich, narrative data** that illuminated the personal experiences and reflections of students,

complementing the broader trends identified in the questionnaire. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes related to dictionary use, which were then categorized and analyzed in relation to existing literature.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both **quantitative and qualitative methods**.

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** The responses from the structured questionnaires were analyzed using **descriptive statistics**. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to determine:
 - The prevalence of different types of dictionaries used by the students.
 - How often students consult dictionaries.
 - The specific contexts (reading, writing, speaking, or listening) where dictionaries are most frequently used.

This statistical analysis provided a clear, numerical understanding of the overall patterns of dictionary use within the student population, allowing for comparisons between different types of dictionaries and levels of usage. Software such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to perform these analyses, ensuring accuracy and efficiency in handling the data (Field, 2013).

2. **Qualitative Analysis:** The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. This involved identifying key themes and patterns related to the students' experiences with dictionaries, including their preferences, challenges, and perceptions of the effectiveness of different types of dictionaries. Thematic analysis is particularly useful for interpreting complex qualitative data, as it enables the researcher to categorize and make sense of the

diverse viewpoints expressed during the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis focused on uncovering **recurring themes** such as:

- Students' reliance on bilingual dictionaries for ease of comprehension.
- Their frustrations with the complexity of monolingual dictionaries.
- The perceived benefits and drawbacks of electronic dictionaries, particularly in relation to accessibility and distraction.

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses were then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of dictionary use among EFL students at Zawia University, allowing the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the challenges and opportunities in dictionary-based language learning.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authorities at Zawia University. Informed consent was sought from all participants, who were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. The research adhered to ethical guidelines concerning **voluntary participation**, ensuring that no student felt obligated to participate in the study. Additionally, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. This adherence to ethical standards ensures that the study maintains academic integrity and protects the well-being of its participants (BERA, 2018).

5. Conclusion

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This study has offered significant insights into the patterns, preferences, and challenges related to dictionary use among EFL students at Zawia University's Ajilat College of Education. Through a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from interviews, the research highlighted the predominant reliance on bilingual dictionaries, while also revealing underutilization of monolingual and electronic dictionaries among the student population.

The findings illustrate that while 82% of students use dictionaries regularly, the majority (60%) depend on bilingual dictionaries, with fewer students exploring monolingual (25%) or electronic options (15%). This heavy reliance on bilingual dictionaries indicates that many students are primarily concerned with achieving quick comprehension through translation rather than engaging deeply with the English language itself. However, this preference for bilingual dictionaries may limit their ability to develop the nuanced vocabulary and context-based understanding that monolingual dictionaries offer, especially at more advanced stages of language learning.

5.1. Implications for EFL Learning

The study reveals several important implications for EFL teaching and learning:

- **Bilingual Dictionaries as a Crutch:** The widespread use of bilingual dictionaries reflects students' comfort with translation-based learning, which can be particularly useful for beginners. However, as students progress to more advanced stages, continued reliance on bilingual dictionaries may hinder deeper lexical and contextual understanding of English. The challenge for educators is to gradually encourage learners to move away from bilingual dictionaries and engage with monolingual resources that foster a richer grasp of language nuances and usage.

- **Underuse of Monolingual and Electronic Dictionaries:** Monolingual dictionaries are particularly valuable for advanced learners, as they provide detailed definitions, examples, and usage contexts in English. However, only a small percentage of students use them, largely due to a lack of familiarity and perceived complexity. Similarly, electronic dictionaries, despite their convenience and additional features (such as audio pronunciations and real-time updates), are underused. This underuse can be attributed to the absence of training and the potential distractions associated with digital devices.
- **Challenges in Effective Dictionary Use:** The study also uncovered that many students struggle with understanding how to use dictionaries effectively, particularly when it comes to monolingual dictionaries. Students reported feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information provided and unsure about how to choose the most appropriate dictionary type for different contexts. Additionally, some students expressed concerns about the lack of access to high-quality monolingual dictionaries in local bookstores, creating a logistical barrier to adopting more advanced learning tools.

5.2. Practical Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several practical recommendations emerge that could enhance dictionary use and overall language acquisition among EFL students:

- **Training Workshops:** Implementing dictionary training workshops could help students develop a deeper understanding of the strengths and limitations of different dictionary types. These workshops should focus on practical skills for navigating dictionary entries, selecting the most appropriate dictionary for various tasks (e.g., reading, writing, speaking), and employing both print and electronic resources effectively.

- **Curricular Integration:** Dictionary use should be systematically integrated into the language learning curriculum, especially in the early stages of language education. Teachers can design activities that require students to consult different types of dictionaries and reflect on the benefits of each. By making dictionary use a regular part of language learning tasks, educators can equip students with the skills they need to make informed decisions about their learning tools.
- **Promoting Monolingual Dictionary Use:** For more advanced learners, teachers should actively encourage the use of monolingual dictionaries to deepen students' understanding of vocabulary, word usage, and context. Transitioning from bilingual to monolingual dictionaries can be challenging, so educators should provide guidance on how to interpret complex dictionary entries and how to use contextual clues to understand definitions in English.
- **Leveraging Electronic Dictionaries:** Given the growing role of technology in education, it is important to encourage the use of electronic dictionaries while also addressing the potential drawbacks. Educators should guide students in using these tools effectively, helping them avoid distractions and teaching them how to maximize features such as pronunciation guides, synonyms, and usage examples.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its focus on one specific institution—Zawia University's Ajilat College of Education. Therefore, the results may not be fully generalizable to other Libyan universities or EFL learners in different regions. Additionally, the study primarily focused on dictionary preferences and general usage patterns, without delving deeply into how dictionary use directly affects specific language skills such as reading comprehension, writing proficiency, or speaking fluency.

Future research could expand on these findings by:

- **Exploring Dictionary Use Across Multiple Institutions:** A larger-scale study that includes students from various universities in Libya would provide a more comprehensive understanding of dictionary use patterns across different educational contexts. This could help identify regional or institutional differences in access to resources and teaching methods.
- **Examining the Impact of Dictionary Use on Specific Language Skills:** Further research is needed to investigate the relationship between dictionary use and the development of specific language skills. For example, researchers could explore how different types of dictionaries impact vocabulary retention, reading comprehension, or writing accuracy. Understanding these relationships could help educators tailor dictionary use recommendations to specific language learning goals.
- **Evaluating the Role of Technology in Dictionary Use:** As electronic dictionaries continue to evolve, future studies could explore how emerging technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, voice recognition) influence language learning and dictionary use. Research could also examine how students' attitudes toward electronic dictionaries change with increased training and exposure to digital tools in the classroom.

5.4. Final Remarks

In conclusion, this research highlights both the potential and the limitations of dictionary use among EFL learners in Libya. While dictionaries remain a crucial tool for language learning, particularly for vocabulary acquisition,

students are not fully leveraging the variety of resources available to them. Addressing the gaps in training and resource availability will be key to helping students use dictionaries more effectively, thus improving their overall language proficiency and fostering a deeper engagement with the English language. Through targeted interventions and curricular integration, educators can empower learners to make more informed choices about dictionary use, thereby enhancing their capacity for independent learning and long-term language success.

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