

EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English

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Abstract

Despite the abundance of research conducted to investigate English as a foreign language (EFL) students' or teachers' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries (e.g., Bower & McMillan, 2007; Issac & Jamil, 2011; Nesi, 2002; Wang, 2012), limited research has been undertaken to compare both EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English. Therefore, the current study was carried out to contribute to this area of research. Participants of the study were 126 EFL students and 73 EFL teachers and were invited to respond to questionnaires. Among them, 81 students and 66 teachers participated in follow-up interviews. The results of the study suggest that both EFL teachers and students held moderately positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. They also indicate that there are several obstacles and challenges, including lack of training on the use of electronic dictionaries, students' use of unsuitable versions of electronic dictionaries, lack of facilities to use electronic dictionaries in EFL classrooms, and distraction from learning caused by using electronic dictionaries in the classroom. The analysis of data further revealed that the majority of Iranian EFL students use electronic dictionaries installed on their cellphones. The students showed a preference for using electronic dictionaries over paper dictionaries. The Iranian EFL students reported that they need to receive training on how to select a suitable electronic dictionary and use its services for learning EFL. Considering the fact that the use of electronic dictionaries will be indispensable in the near future, the study would have direct implications for the successful implementation of computer assisted language learning (CALL) and effective use of electronic dictionaries in EFL contexts.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, electronic dictionaries, training, CALL, perspectives

Introduction

There has been growing interest in the use of electronic dictionaries for learning foreign languages. Accordingly, there has been a rise in students' use of electronic dictionaries for EFL purposes (Boonmoh, 2010; Nesi, 2002). Despite students' general acceptance of electronic dictionaries, a great number of EFL teachers express their concerns over using electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. Additionally, previous research has illustrated a number of challenges and obstacles to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL (Stirling, 2003). Specifically, the use of electronic dictionaries might create a number of challenges, including distraction from learning and participating in class activities, over-simplified explanations and description of words, low-quality sound, lack of access to appropriate electronic dictionaries and insufficient examples provided for EFL learners.

As for the merits of electronic dictionaries, Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, and Freynik (2012) point out that electronic dictionaries offer a wide range of benefits for EFL students, including possibility of conducting quick searches, enhancement of the input provided for students, and recognition of different learning styles and strategies. Furthermore, students who use electronic dictionaries are reported to complete reading activities more quickly than those who use paper dictionaries (Koyama & Takeuchi, 2007). Easy application, speed, small size, and improvement in student autonomy are the other considerable advantages of the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL (Stirling, 2003).

According to Boonmoh (2010), pocket electronic dictionaries (PED), online or Internet-based dictionaries, and PC-based dictionaries or dictionaries on CD-ROMs are three major types of electronic dictionaries. While the use of online dictionaries is very common and frequent, the use of dictionaries which are available on PCs is not very common (Boonmoh, 2010). However, PEDs are not as available and cost-effective as the other types of electronic dictionaries.

Literature review

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate students' perceptions on and attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries in educational contexts. In general, the findings of the majority of studies showed that students adopt positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries and find them beneficial and facilitative for their learning (Boonmoh, 2003; Chatzidimou, 2007; Golonka et al., 2012; Nesi, 2002). Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research into the attitudes of teachers toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL (Boonmoh, 2010; Stirling, 2003).

In Iran, Zarei and Gujjar (2012) examined the efficiency of the use of paper and electronic dictionaries for learning vocabulary in an experimental study. The experimental group used electronic dictionaries while the control group used paper dictionaries. The results of the experiment revealed that the experimental group improved significantly regarding their vocabulary learning compared to the control group. Likewise, Jian, Sandnes, Law, Huang, and Huang (2009) investigated the role of electronic dictionaries in English learning of undergraduates of engineering and humanities. They reported that the speed of reference was a very important merit of using electronic dictionaries while multimedia properties were not considered as a significant benefit.

Similarly, in Japan, Bower and McMillan (2007) explored Japanese EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of portable electronic dictionaries. They found that most EFL students had electronic dictionaries and used them frequently. However, the majority of participants were not aware of different services that electronic dictionaries offer for language learning. Analyzing Japanese EFL students' electronic dictionary look-up behaviors, Koyama and Takeuchi (2007) maintain that the use of electronic dictionaries might improve look-up behaviors and patterns in EFL students. This frequent look-up behavior would not result in improvement in students' reading comprehension. In addition, Boonmoh (2010) conducted a survey study on EFL teachers' use and knowledge of electronic dictionaries in Thailand. He discovered that the teachers did not use electronic dictionaries and had very limited information about the content and use of

electronic dictionaries. They were not aware of different technological affordances of electronic dictionaries as well.

In a recent study, Wang (2012) examined Chinese students' use of e-dictionaries to read Chinese electronic texts. While the use of e-dictionaries had a number of benefits for intermediate students' reading comprehension improvement, it was less effective for the improvement of advanced students' reading comprehension proficiency. The issue of the benefits of online and electronic dictionaries was the focus of another study conducted by Loucky (2005). Three groups of Japanese college students of engineering were the participants of the survey. He reported that the students preferred electronic dictionaries over paper dictionaries and had positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning to read English texts.

As the review of literature on the use of electronic dictionaries in EFL contexts illustrates, there is very limited research conducted on comparing teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries. The comparison of EFL teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL would present valuable findings based on which EFL teaching and learning can be improved and redesigned. Dashtestani (2012) argues that we need context-based and localized studies on the use of technology in EFL courses. Specifically, no comparative research has been directed toward the issue of the efficiency of electronic dictionaries in Iran and other countries. Therefore, the current study would provide insights into the limitations and merits of electronic dictionaries from the perspectives of EFL teachers and students. Specifically, to investigate the efficiency of using electronic dictionaries for learning English, three research questions were formulated:

1. What are EFL teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries? Is there any significant difference between EFL teachers' and students' attitudes?
2. What are EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the obstacles to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL?
3. What is the current state of the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL?

Participants

A total of 126 EFL students and 73 EFL teachers participated in this study. All the students took part in the study voluntarily. The majority of EFL students (94.44 %) were those who usually used electronic dictionaries for their EFL purposes. The average age of students was 21.34. These students were at the upper-intermediate or advanced levels of proficiency at their language learning institutions. The teachers had taught English for an average of 8.4 years and their average age was 37.7. The EFL teachers were BA/BS holders (67.12%) and MA/MS holders (32.88%). A total of 73.23% of the EFL teachers had studied English-related majors at university while 28.77% had studied other majors. A cluster sample was used to select the participants from 11 language teaching institutions from the provinces of Alborz and Tehran in Iran. After participation in the survey study, the same participants were invited to take part in follow-up interviews. A total of 81 EFL students and 66 EFL teachers who had participated in the questionnaire phase of the study accepted the invitation to take part in the interviews.

Research design and instruments

For the purposes of this study, a mixed-methods research design was employed. Both questionnaires and interviews were used to gain an in-depth insight into the perceptions of both EFL teachers and students about the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. Methodological triangulation has been regarded as one of the most significant measures to ensure the validity of the results obtained from each instrument (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Accordingly, in this study the use of questionnaires and interviews provided supplementary and confirmatory data concerning students' and teachers' perceptions.

The design of the questionnaire was inspired by reviewing the previous studies which have examined the perceptions of teachers and students on the use of electronic dictionaries (Boonmoh, 2010; Boonmoh, 2003; Chatzidimou, 2007; Golonka et al., 2012; Nesi, 2002; Stirling, 2003). To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire, the items of the questionnaire were examined through holding several consulting sessions with a jury of eight EFL teachers. Improvements, deletions, and additions were applied to the items of the questionnaire based on the comments and suggestions of the jury of teachers. Additionally, the Cronbach analyses demonstrated a satisfactory range of reliability (0.83-0.94) for the sections of the questionnaire.

The impetus behind developing the first section of the questionnaire was to explore both EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. This section comprised seven items for students and 10 items for EFL teachers. The section was developed based on a Likert scale format from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The second section, including 12 items, was designed to explore students' perceptions on their current state of the use of electronic dictionaries. This section was a combination of Likert scale format items and multiple choice questions. The second section was administered to students.

Following the questionnaires, interviews were also conducted. The same literature was reviewed in order to develop the questions of the interview. The same jury of eight EFL teachers validated the content of the questions. Specifically, the questions of the interview were posed to investigate "the perceptions of the EFL teachers and students on the limitations of use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL", "EFL teachers' and students' attitudes toward the benefits of the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL", "the way the EFL students use electronic dictionaries", "the need for having training on using electronic dictionaries", "the current use of electronic dictionaries", and "the kinds of electronic dictionaries the Iranian EFL students use".

Data analysis

The mean and standard deviation were used for analyzing the results of the questionnaires and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to identify differences between the attitudes of the two groups of participants (EFL teachers and students). SPSS version 16 was employed for data analysis. Based on content analysis, the responses to the questions of the interviews were read line by line and translated into English. Afterwards, the emerging themes were identified and reported. Also, actual statements of EFL students and teachers are presented in the relevant sections.

Findings

EFL teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL

The results of questionnaires

As Table 1 illustrates, in general, the EFL students and teachers had positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. Moreover, significance differences among the perceptions of EFL teachers and students were found regarding some benefits of the use of electronic dictionaries, including ease of use and access, audio-visual features of electronic dictionaries, portability, and online access.

Specifically, the mean score more than 3.5 shows that the participants adopt positive attitudes toward a specific merit of electronic dictionaries. Accordingly, it can be asserted that the EFL students had positive perspectives on ease of use and access, audio-visual features, portability, and online access to electronic dictionaries. On the other side, the EFL teachers held positive attitudes toward some benefits of electronic dictionaries, including portability, provision of sufficient input for students, and enhancement of students' autonomy (Table 1).

Table 1. EFL teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL

Participants		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD	P
		%	%	%	%	%			
It is easy for students to use electronic dictionaries	Students	1.6	4	12.7	8.7	73	4.45	1	0.000*
	Teachers	9.6	17.8	40	21.9	10.7	3.06	1.11	
Electronic dictionaries are easily accessible to EFL students	Students	5.5	11.1	13.4	24.6	45.2	3.91	1.25	0.000*
	Teachers	5.4	13.7	31.9	36.7	12.3	3.39	1.03	
Audio-visual features are used in electronic dictionaries	Students	2.3	9.5	19.8	38.1	30.3	3.84	1.19	0.032*
	Teachers	6.8	10.3	37	19.4	26.5	3.49	1.05	
Electronic dictionaries are easy to be carried	Students	0.8	3.1	7.1	34.9	54	4.38	0.83	0.005*
	Teachers	0	5.5	5.5	57.4	31.6	4.14	0.77	
Buying electronic dictionaries is less costly than buying paper dictionaries	Students	15.1	12.7	23.8	29.4	18.2	3.22	1.31	0.086
	Teachers	11	23.3	35.6	19.2	11	2.96	1.15	

More detailed definitions are provided in electronic dictionaries compared to paper dictionaries	Students	12.6	17.5	26.9	40	3	3.02	1.1	0.191
	Teachers	8.2	34.2	31.9	15.1	10.5	2.87	1.12	
Electronic dictionaries can be accessed online via the Internet	Students	2.4	5.6	11.9	49.2	31	4.01	0.93	0.000*
	Teachers	1.4	5.5	45.2	38.4	9.6	3.5	0.8	
Electronic dictionaries provide students with sufficient input	Teachers	6.8	9.6	18.2	29.7	35.6	3.77	1.23	
Using electronic dictionaries will encourage students to use different learning styles and look-up strategies	Teachers	4.1	11	17.8	26	41.1	3.18	1.17	
The use of electronic dictionaries enhances student autonomy	Teachers	8.2	12.3	21.9	34.2	23.3	3.52	1.2	

($P \leq 0.05$).

The results of interviews

The results of interviews were consistent with the results of the questionnaires in many aspects. It seemed that the students were eager to use electronic dictionaries while the EFL teachers showed hesitations regarding the use of electronic dictionaries. Possibility of conducting searches easily, easy portability, and time efficiency were important benefits of the use of electronic dictionaries mentioned by the EFL students:

I really enjoy using electronic dictionaries. It is very easy to use electronic dictionaries. Also, I think I learn better when I use these types of dictionaries. In every cellphone you can see that there is at least one kind of electronic dictionary installed and used (student 3).

Well, to be honest, I use electronic dictionaries both in English and other classes. At home again I use them a lot. I think the most important benefit is that you don't need a lot of space to carry electronic dictionaries. Paper dictionaries are hard to be carried and used though (student 8).

Hum...the benefits of electronic dictionaries? I guess the benefits are a lot. You can have fast searches and you can install different kinds of dictionaries on your phone and use them simultaneously. In general, electronic dictionaries are easier to be used in my view (student 32).

I reckon the advantages of the use of electronic dictionaries are clear for us (EFL students). For example, the definitions for the entries are much easier and shorter to be understood compared to those of paper

dictionaries. Electronic dictionaries are very useful when you don't have time and you need to check words quickly (student 65).

That's a good question. Actually, I am of the opinion that electronic materials and resources can improve students' learning and motivation. The case of the use of electronic dictionaries is the same. We should motivate our students to use them because in the near future students have to use electronic dictionaries when paper dictionaries will have been out of use and date (teacher 17).

Electronic dictionaries are beneficial and students should be helped to use them (teacher 44).

EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on limitations of the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL

The results of interviews

The EFL teachers and students pointed out several limitations of electronic dictionaries. More specifically, the EFL teachers (n=53, 80.3%) reported that EFL students lack training on how to use electronic dictionaries.

At the time that I learned English there was nothing called an electronic dictionary. When I compare myself and my colleagues, who used paper dictionaries, with students of the present time, I understand that we knew more vocabulary and we were also more proficient in how to use a dictionary. Obviously, EFL students are not competent enough to efficiently use electronic and even paper dictionaries. However, I believe electronic dictionaries can help students to learn English if they are not overused or misused (teacher 6).

Generally speaking, electronic dictionaries can be useful for EFL learning provided that students know how and when to use them. My experience tells me that most students do not know how to use electronic dictionaries and when they can make efficient use of them (teacher 26).

Each teacher is responsible to train his/her students how to use any type of electronic dictionaries, including electronic dictionaries. Without training students how and when to use electronic dictionaries, students will use them inappropriately (teacher 39).

Of all 66 EFL teachers who took part in interviews, most EFL teachers (n=59, 89.4%) stated that EFL students use unsuitable versions of electronic dictionaries. Most of them criticized EFL students' use of English-Persian (bilingual) electronic dictionaries.

One of the problems is that students do not know what type of electronic dictionary is necessary for a certain purpose or context. The students usually use bilingual dictionaries which are not standard ones. They don't use suitable monolingual dictionaries as well (teacher 4).

I have seen that most of my students use bilingual dictionaries while most of these bilingual dictionaries provide wrong and ambiguous definitions for words (teacher 19).

The other limitation which was mentioned by 62.1% of EFL teachers was the issue of lack of facilities to use electronic dictionaries in classrooms. They asserted that most students use dictionaries installed on their cellphones while teachers do not have enough supervision on their use of electronic dictionaries in classrooms. The EFL teachers (56.1%) also reported that electronic dictionaries installed on students' cellphones can be distracting:

I agree that there are some affordances but electronic dictionaries sometimes distract students in the classroom. Every day, I can see some students who start using their cellphones to check words and other students are disturbed and distracted. The use of electronic dictionaries can also distract teachers when they are teaching (teacher 58).

When students use electronic dictionaries, all the time they try to check new words quickly and this prevents them from guessing the meanings of new words from the context. Students who use electronic dictionaries in the classroom can easily disrupt teachers' teaching and students' learning (teacher 40).

We should have computers or other devices to control students' use of electronic dictionaries. If we have enough facilities to guide students how to use electronic dictionaries, electronic dictionaries will be more useful (teacher 43).

The EFL students further mentioned several limitations to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. Incomplete definitions (n=45, 55.6%), low quality of the audio properties (n=39, 48.1%), lack of access to and expensiveness of original versions of electronic dictionaries (n=51, 63%), lack of access to updated versions of electronic dictionaries (n=48, 59.3%), and students' unfamiliarity with different types of electronic dictionaries (n=37, 45.7%) were the major limitations that students experience when they use electronic dictionaries.

The only problem of electronic dictionaries for me is that I don't have access to new and updated versions of electronic dictionaries. I use the old versions (student 13).

I don't know which electronic dictionary is good and which is not. I just choose to use the ones which are available for me (student 26).

The electronic dictionaries that we use are not original ones. Most of them lack detailed definitions and examples (student 75).

Current use of electronic dictionaries

The results of questionnaires

As Table 2 shows, the majority of EFL students (94.44%) reported that they use electronic dictionaries.

Table 2. Types of dictionaries EFL students use

I usually use paper dictionaries	1.58%
I usually use electronic dictionaries	94.44%
I usually use both electronic and paper dictionaries	3.97%
Total number of participants: 126	

It is also obvious that a great number of students (92.06%) use bilingual electronic dictionaries (Table 3).

Table 3. EFL students' use of bilingual and monolingual electronic dictionaries

I usually use bilingual electronic dictionaries	92.06%
I usually use monolingual electronic dictionaries	7.93%
Total number of participants: 126	

Table 4 shows that most students (81.75%) use electronic dictionaries installed on their cellphones.

Table 4. Type of electronic dictionary EFL students use

I usually use online electronic dictionaries	3.17%
I usually use electronic dictionaries installed on my cellphone	81.75%
I usually use electronic dictionaries installed on my PC	13.49%
I use all types of electronic dictionaries	1.59%
Total number of participants: 126	

Moreover, the EFL students frequently check the definitions of each entry while they sometimes check different parts of speech of a certain entry. The EFL students reported that they rarely or never use voiced pronunciation, phonetics of words, examples, hyperlinks, and etymologies of the entries (Table 5).

Table 5. EFL students' use of services of electronic dictionaries

	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Frequently %	Always %	Mean	SD
Listening to voiced pronunciation of words	33.3	38.1	17.4	6.3	4.8	2.11	1.09
Checking the phonetics of each entry	14.3	42.1	20.6	16.7	6.3	2.59	1.11
Reading examples provided for each entry	18.3	39.7	25.4	12.7	4	2.43	1.05
Using the hyperlinks available on electronic dictionaries	52.4	22.2	19.8	5.6	0	1.8	0.96
Reading the definition of entries	1.6	4	21.7	44.1	28.6	3.93	0.92

Checking different parts of speech of an entry	8.7	21.4	33.8	24.1	11.9	3.09	1.14
Checking etymology of entries available in electronic dictionaries	54	28.6	10.3	6.1	1.2	1.71	0.95

Most EFL students reported that they were a little proficient or fairly proficient in the use of electronic dictionaries (Table 6).

Table 6. EFL students' ability to use electronic dictionaries

	Not proficient%	A little proficient%	Fairly proficient %	Proficient %	Mean	SD
Students' ability to use electronic dictionaries	4.76	47.3	33.6	14.28	2.56	0.80

Most EFL students also agreed to have training on how to use electronic dictionaries (Table 7).

Table 7. EFL students' perspectives on having training on using electronic dictionaries

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	SD
I need training on how to use electronic dictionaries	0	0.8	20.6	41.3	37.3	4.14	0.78

The results of interviews

In interviews, most EFL teachers (n=52, 78.8%) believed that EFL students need training on how to use and select suitable versions or types of electronic dictionaries relevant to their proficiency levels and learning styles. The teachers further asserted that EFL students should be encouraged and trained to use English- English dictionaries and they believe that students will learn more effectively if they use monolingual dictionaries.

The results of the interviews are similar to the questionnaire results regarding students' perceptions. The students reported that they usually use electronic dictionaries and they just check Persian translation or equivalents of English words. The students reported if they are

supposed to use monolingual dictionaries, they will need training. They stated that they needed to know what kind of dictionary they should have and what features of that electronic dictionary might be useful for their learning.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, the results demonstrated that both the EFL students and EFL teachers had moderately positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. The results of the Mann-Whitney test revealed that there were significant differences between the attitudes of EFL teachers and students toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL. It appeared that the EFL teachers were aware of various obstacles to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English. The finding regarding the positive attitudes of EFL students toward the use of electronic dictionaries accords with previous research which indicated the positive attitudes of students and teachers toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL in other EFL contexts (e.g., Boonmoh, 2003; Chatzidimou, 2007; Golonka et al., 2012; Laufer & Levitsky-Aviad, 2006; Nesi, 2002). If technology is supposed to be used in EFL courses, students should feel that technology is useful and interesting for their learning (Jones, 2001). It is obvious that the EFL teachers were aware of the challenges and barriers to the use of electronic dictionaries since they pointed out the relevant benefits. Taking into account students' interest in the use of electronic dictionaries and their benefits for EFL learning, the use of electronic dictionaries would improve students' motivation to learn EFL. EFL teachers can play a considerable role in raising students' awareness of the appropriate use of electronic dictionaries in order to maximize the effects of the affordances which were perceived by the EFL students.

Specifically, the survey findings indicated that the EFL teachers supported the view that the use of electronic dictionaries would provide students with sufficient input and enhance their autonomy. Golonka et al. (2012) assert that EFL students can receive elaborated and individualized input when they use electronic dictionaries for their English learning. As the EFL teachers pointed out in the survey, it can be concluded that if EFL teachers train students how to use electronic dictionaries properly and effectively, EFL students will be less dependent on their teachers since they can check and learn different aspects of a new vocabulary item on their own. As Stirling (2003) argues, to achieve the aim of student autonomy, EFL teachers should motivate and persuade students to use electronic dictionaries out of the EFL class. For instance, EFL teachers can assign tasks which require students to use electronic dictionaries at home. EFL teachers can foster EFL students' awareness of the use of electronic dictionaries through providing them with guidance on how to use electronic dictionaries wisely for their learning experiences. Inevitably, EFL teachers should strive to improve their knowledge of the use of electronic dictionaries if they are supposed to help their students make efficient use of electronic dictionaries. Admittedly, if EFL teachers do not have the required knowledge of using electronic dictionaries and training students to use electronic dictionaries efficiently, EFL students should not be blamed for their lack of proficiency to use electronic dictionaries. Therefore, EFL authorities and supervisors can provide EFL teachers with workshops and meetings to motivate and train them to improve their knowledge of electronic dictionaries as well as their pedagogical knowledge related to the use of electronic dictionaries for EFL purposes.

More importantly, the interview results provided insights into teachers' and students' perceptions about the limitations of electronic dictionaries. Lack of students' training on the use of electronic dictionaries, the use of unsuitable versions of electronic dictionaries by EFL students, lack of facilities to use electronic dictionaries in classrooms, distraction caused by electronic dictionaries in EFL courses were the limitations which were reported by EFL teachers. On the other hand, the EFL students lacked familiarity with different types of electronic dictionaries, lacked access to new versions of electronic dictionaries, and complained about the existence of incomplete definitions in electronic dictionaries. These limitations are commensurate with the limitations which Stirling (2003) reported on the use of electronic dictionaries, including lack of English-English dictionaries, students' overuse of electronic dictionaries, and limited nature of electronic dictionaries. EFL teachers and authorities should strive to remove these limitations and obstacles and pave the way for helping students to use electronic dictionaries for their EFL purposes efficiently and intellectually.

Additionally, the findings related to the obstacles to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English show that both teachers and students are aware of the limitations of electronic dictionaries while they adopt positive attitudes toward using them. Lack of access to suitable versions of electronic dictionaries was a major obstacle to their use. Since selecting appropriate versions of electronic dictionaries depends on considering several factors, such as students' levels of proficiency, age, learning and cognitive styles, and context of learning, it is essential that EFL teachers, supervisors and course designers conduct specific needs assessment projects to become acquainted with the parameters which can help them recommend suitable versions of electronic dictionaries to EFL students. In addition, providing access to reliable and credible publishers and electronic dictionary providers might help EFL teachers and students to select suitable versions of electronic dictionary. Alternatively, EFL teachers can advise EFL students of the benefits and merits of using suitable versions of electronic dictionaries. When EFL teachers decide to recommend suitable versions of electronic dictionaries to their students, they should take a myriad of factors into account before they make any recommendation. A connection between the distractive factor related to the use of electronic dictionaries and the problem of lack of computer-based facilities might exist. To explain, when teachers do not have adequate and high-quality computer-based facilities, they may not be able to provide sufficient supervision for the use of electronic dictionaries. This problem would distract both students and teachers. Therefore, computer-based facilities which facilitate EFL students' and teachers' use of electronic dictionaries in the EFL class should be provided by EFL authorities and providers.

Also of note was the finding about the participants' perceptions of the current use of electronic dictionaries. Initially, both teachers and students stated that EFL students need training on how to use electronic dictionaries efficiently. Boonmoh (2010) suggests that EFL teachers should help students to choose suitable electronic dictionaries and train them to use electronic dictionaries effectively. The need for training on how to use electronic dictionaries was also expressed by Sánchez Ramos (2005). The EFL students further reported that they did not have sufficient proficiency to use electronic dictionaries. This issue necessitates the provision of training on the use of electronic dictionaries for EFL students. The EFL students used a limited number of services of electronic dictionaries i.e. checking definitions and different parts of speech. The majority of students preferred the use of electronic dictionaries over paper dictionaries. It was revealed that the students preferred bilingual electronic dictionaries over monolingual ones. The

students preferred the use of electronic dictionaries installed on their cellphones over the other types of electronic dictionaries.

Moreover, several measures can be taken to improve the status quo regarding the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English. EFL teachers can design various tasks and activities in which students compare and use different services of electronic dictionaries. It is extremely crucial that EFL students be able to make use of a wide range of services of electronic dictionaries (Stirling, 2003). The use of collaborative tasks might be highly beneficial. When students work collaboratively, those who have more knowledge of using different services of electronic dictionaries can help those who do not have the adequate proficiency and confidence to use electronic dictionaries. Apparently, EFL teachers can provide continuous scaffolding for students on how to use electronic dictionaries during the collaborative tasks. Besides, the use of bilingual dictionaries might be linked to several factors. Students who use bilingual dictionaries might lack English proficiency to decipher the definitions provided in monolingual electronic dictionaries. The other impeding factor concerning the nonuse of monolingual dictionaries would be students' low levels of electronic literacy. Some students may not be aware in what occasions they should make use of bilingual dictionaries. Thus, EFL teachers should take these factors into consideration when they encounter situations in which students persist in using bilingual electronic dictionaries. EFL students should also be trained and motivated to use different types of electronic dictionaries. Currently, it appears that the EFL students prefer using dictionaries installed on their cellphones. EFL teachers can design specific tasks which require students to use different types of electronic dictionaries.

Above all, caution should be exercised when the use of electronic dictionaries is recommended to EFL students in an EFL context. It is advisable that prior to the use of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL, a plethora of contextual, pedagogical, linguistic, and affective factors be taken into consideration. Failure to evaluate these crucial factors and parameters might result in inefficient use of electronic dictionaries or resistance to using them. Furthermore, for efficient and successful use of electronic dictionaries for EFL purposes, all EFL stakeholders should work collaboratively to remove the barriers and impediments. Obviously, teachers or students should not be blamed for the nonuse of electronic dictionaries when the necessary requirements for the use of electronic dictionaries are not met.

Lastly, the issue of the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English should be considered more seriously by CALL and EFL researchers. Despite considerable research which has been directed toward this issue, several aspects of the use of electronic dictionaries for EFL purposes have remained uninvestigated. Further contextual and local research into the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English is required. Considering the fact that in the near future electronic resources and materials will be used more extensively, further research into the nature of impeding factors and benefits of the use of electronic resources should be carried out. Definitely, it is the efficient and wise use of technology which helps language teachers and students to achieve their educational goals effectively.

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