

Classroom-Based Use of Electronic Dictionaries by Turkish EFL Preparatory Students: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract: Electronic dictionaries are important tools for enhancing vocabulary among foreign language learners. This research investigates Turkish EFL preparatory students' perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of using electronic dictionaries (EDs) in English preparatory classes. Adopting a case study, the study involved 30 students aged 18 to 24 enrolled in an English preparatory program. Data were gathered through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Participant observations were carried out over a two-month period using an observation form to systematically record students' electronic dictionary use during classroom activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the data collection period to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences and perceptions of electronic dictionary use. Thematic analysis revealed that 90% of the students preferred electronic dictionaries for vocabulary development. Also, students highlighted four primary advantages of EDs: time efficiency (38.10%), voiced pronunciation (30.95%), comprehensiveness (23.81%), and easy accessibility (7.14%). However, they also identified several disadvantages, including distraction (58.62%), lower retention of learned vocabulary (27.59%), and dependency on internet access (13.79%). Based on the widespread preference for electronic dictionaries, the study suggests that teachers can allow the usage of electronic dictionaries inside the EFL classrooms on condition of closely monitoring to prevent distractions.

Keywords: Electronic dictionaries, EFL learners, preparatory class, vocabulary acquisition, mobile learning.

Türk İngilizce Hazırlık Sınıfı Öğrencilerinin Sınıf Temelli Elektronik Sözlük Kullanımı: Bir Nitel Durum Çalışması

Öz: Elektronik sözlükler, yabancı dil öğrenenlerin kelime dağarcığını geliştirmeleri açısından önemli araçlardır. Bu araştırma, İngilizce hazırlık sınıflarında elektronik sözlüklerin kullanımına dair İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen (EFL) Türk hazırlık öğrencilerinin bakış açılarını incelemektedir. Bu durum çalışmasında, 18 ile 24 yaşları arasında değişen ve bir İngilizce hazırlık programına kayıtlı 30 öğrenci yer almıştır. Veriler katılımcı gözlem ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Veriler katılımcı gözlem ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. İki aylık süreç boyunca, sınıf içi etkinliklerde öğrencilerin elektronik sözlük kullanımını belgelemek amacıyla bir katılımcı gözlem formu kullanılarak gözlemler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, veri toplama sürecinin sonunda, katılımcıların elektronik sözlük kullanımına ilişkin deneyimlerini ve algılarını derinlemesine incelemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tematik analiz sonucunda, öğrencilerin %90'ının kelime öğrenimi için elektronik sözlükleri tercih ettiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğrenciler, elektronik sözlüklerin dört

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temel avantajını vurgulamıştır: zaman açısından verimlilik (%38,10), sesli telaffuz imkânı (%30,95), kapsamlı içerik (%23,81) ve kolay erişilebilirlik (%7,14). Ancak, dikkat dağıtma (%58,62), öğrenilen kelimelerin daha az kalıcılığı (%27,59) ve internet bağlantısına bağımlılık (%13,79) gibi bazı dezavantajlar da belirlenmiştir. Elektronik sözlüklere yönelik yaygın tercihe dayanarak, bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin sınıf içinde dikkat dağınmıklığını önlemek için kullanım sürecini yakından takip etmeleri koşuluyla elektronik sözlük kullanımına izin verebilecekleri önerilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Elektronik sözlükler, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenenler, hazırlık sınıfı, kelime öğrenimi, mobil öğrenme.

Introduction

Learning vocabulary is essential in foreign language training as it forms the backbone of language proficiency (Min, 2008; Vasbieva et al., 2016). Vocabulary knowledge has been regarded as “the key type of knowledge necessary for any language use, because if words to express concepts are not known, all syntactic and discourse knowledge is of little use” (Schmitt et al., 2021, p. 10). Various strategies and tools are employed to improve vocabulary knowledge when acquiring a new language, and a dictionary is a crucial tool in the vocabulary development of foreign language learners (Knight, 1994; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016). Several studies suggest that students' vocabulary improves when they consult dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words or concepts during reading, listening, or writing tasks (Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016; Schmitt, 1997). Laufer (2000) noted that students who consistently use their dictionaries enhance their vocabulary compared to their friends who read without looking up unfamiliar terms in dictionaries. He suggested that readers can deduce unknown word meanings without using dictionaries by making educated guesses and disregarding new vocabulary. However, in this scenario, learners with poor deduction techniques either retain misguessed language or remember none, resulting in new vocabulary being disregarded or lost. Being significant resources for vocabulary development, dictionaries support learners to comprehend the meanings of unfamiliar words by mostly providing synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011). Additionally, a well-constructed English dictionary typically offers phonetic pronunciation of lexical items, as English has a complex phonological system distinct from most other European languages, making it challenging for non-native speakers to master correct pronunciation (Giba & Ribes, 2011).

Regarding their formats, a dictionary can be available electronically or in a printed copy (Alhaisoni, 2016), and Boonmoh (2010) states three main categories of electronic dictionaries as PC-based dictionaries or dictionaries on CD-ROMs, online or Internet-based dictionaries, and pocket electronic dictionaries (PED). This study mainly focuses on online or Internet-based dictionaries, referred to as electronic dictionaries (EDs) throughout this research. Although paper-based dictionaries have been in use for a long time and remain widespread, challenging the saying of Meijs (1990), who expressed that “I would not be surprised if for most general uses dictionaries in book form will be antiquated before the end of the century” (p. 69), they have been gradually replaced by EDs (Chen et al., 2010; Wei & Chang, 2022; Žammit, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021), which are becoming more popular technological tools for language learners to study vocabulary (Wei & Chang, 2022). Nesi (2000) defines EDs as any electronic-form reference source that offers information on several elements of a word, such as spelling, meaning, or usage. Electronic dictionaries are available on websites or as applications, either for a fee or free of charge.

EFL students have consistently leveraged EDs outside the class (Dashtestani, 2013) because their phones are with them, and they can ubiquitously use them to look up a word. The use of mobile dictionaries inside the classroom is a currently popularised issue, and their potential usage inside the class is anticipated (Dashtestani, 2013). Although many years have passed and technology continues to advance rapidly, the use of EDs inside the classrooms is not universally accepted in all educational contexts. In many Turkish educational institutions, educators do not allow the use of phones or tablets in classrooms for various reasons, and very few higher education institutions allow the use of mobile devices in classrooms, only for educational purposes. Some language-teaching departments are among those institutions that anticipate that mobile tools can be rewarding in language acquisition, specifically for vocabulary lookups. Though still quite limited, allowing students to use electronic dictionaries in language classrooms is a relatively recent practice in Türkiye; therefore, studies on EFL students' perspectives on EDs are few, highlighting a gap in the literature regarding their benefits, drawbacks, and future implications. On this basis, the present study is significant in contributing to an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using electronic dictionaries compared to paper-based ones in preparatory class settings in Türkiye. The present research answers the following questions:

1. Do preparatory students prefer paper-based or electronic dictionaries? Why?
2. What are the advantages of using an electronic dictionary for EFL vocabulary development in preparatory classes?
3. What are the disadvantages of using electronic dictionaries instead of paper-based ones in preparatory classes regarding EFL vocabulary development?

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Modern technology has been playing a dominant role in the twenty-first century (Alfahad, 2012). With the emergence of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches to language teaching and a growing emphasis on learners' active participation in authentic, meaningful and contextually grounded discourse, classroom technology use underwent a major shift during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010). From blackboards to smartboards, classroom technology has been continuously evolving and continues to develop. On this point, the continuous shift to mobile technology, also known as m-learning or mobile learning, in the classroom meets the demands of students in the twenty-first century (Ally & Tsinakos, 2014; Gerstein, 2013). Geddes (2004) claims that mobile learning and electronic learning (e-learning) are used to gain knowledge and skills that are accessible at any time and from any location, with performance-based evaluation and well-supported, fruitful engagement.

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has received substantial scholarly attention in recent years (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Dashtestani, 2016). Stevens and Kitchenham (2011) define mobile learning as “meaningful learning that occurs through the use of wireless handheld devices such as the cell phone, personal digital assistant, mini-computer, or iPod” (p. 3). Smartphones are referred to as mobile technology, and mobile dictionaries are expressed as electronic dictionaries for the sake of this study. The benefits of mobile devices are numerous. Unlike desktop computers, mobile devices are lightweight, portable, and take up little room in the classroom, making content conveniently accessible. Additionally, students are eager to utilise and learn from mobile devices (Hashemi et al., 2011). Mobile devices allow their users to download apps to meet their needs and wishes.

Among all academic subjects, language education requires the use of technology the most. As stated by Warschauer and Meskill (2013), nearly all activities related to language teaching and learning require the use of some form of technology. This study specifically focuses on the usage of mobile electronic dictionaries in EFL preparatory classes during foreign language training. A mobile dictionary is a significant language-improving app that language learners apply to learn the meaning or pronunciation of an unknown lexical item (Wei & Chang, 2022). EFL students generally have electronic dictionary applications installed on their mobile devices and use them frequently and ubiquitously. Despite the potential benefits of EDs, many instructors in EFL classrooms in Türkiye do not permit their use during the in-class course, as they remain uncertain about the advantages and disadvantages of mobile device use in the classroom. Therefore, this study aims to investigate EFL students' perceptions regarding the use of EDs in foreign language classrooms.

Vocabulary Learning and Technology

In recent years, the integration of technology into vocabulary instruction has become a prominent area of research within second language instruction. Technological tools, especially mobile technologies and digital platforms, provide learners opportunities for exposure, practice, and reinforcement of vocabulary outside traditional classroom settings. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), a subfield of technology-enhanced language learning, has been extensively investigated, with findings indicating that language-teaching mobile applications and digital flashcards significantly improve learners' vocabulary knowledge and engagement (Dashtestani, 2016). Technology-mediated vocabulary learning has also been associated with enhanced learner motivation and contextualised engagement with lexical content (Xodabande et al., 2022). Moreover, systematic reviews of mobile-assisted vocabulary learning research indicate that technology supports vocabulary acquisition across educational levels and contexts, with learners displaying positive attitudes and greater persistence when using technology-enhanced vocabulary activities compared to conventional methods (Okumuş Dağdeler, 2023). These findings underscore the growing consensus in the field that digital and mobile technologies enrich the cognitive and affective dimensions of vocabulary learning, supporting both instructional and autonomous learning processes.

In addition to mobile applications and digital learning platforms, electronic dictionaries have become a widely researched technological tool in vocabulary learning. Electronic dictionaries, including mobile dictionary applications and online lexical resources, offer learners immediate access to meanings, pronunciation, usage examples, and collocational information. Empirical studies indicate that learners using electronic dictionaries demonstrate better vocabulary retention and deeper lexical processing compared to those relying on traditional paper dictionaries, largely due to faster lookup, multimodal input, and contextualised examples (Laufer & Hill, 2000; Lew & de Schryver, 2014; Nesi, 2014; Trinh et al., 2021). Moreover, the availability of audio pronunciation and example sentences enables learners to connect form, meaning, and use more effectively, which is a crucial aspect of vocabulary acquisition in second language learning contexts. Additionally, studies suggest that using electronic dictionaries promotes learner autonomy and strategic vocabulary learning, as learners are more likely to engage in repeated activities and self-directed exploration of lexical items (Chen, 2010; Dziemianko, 2019). Furthermore, electronic dictionaries have been shown to support productive vocabulary use by providing rich information on collocations, grammatical patterns, and phraseology, which are often limited in traditional dictionaries (Lew & de Schryver, 2014). These

findings highlight electronic dictionaries as an essential component of technology-mediated vocabulary learning, complementing other digital tools and reinforcing the role of technology in facilitating effective and autonomous lexical development.

Usage of Electronic Dictionaries in the EFL Classroom

In the digital age, electronic dictionaries are widely accessible to most EFL students, making them an integral component of effective language learning (Metruk, 2017). EDs have become popular among EFL students and are recognised as valuable instructional tools for vocabulary development (Dashtestani, 2013). Even when mobile dictionaries were not so common in 2006, Li Lan's survey demonstrates that more than 70% of learners consulted electronic dictionaries more frequently than traditional ones, and she also stated that the days of paper dictionaries were passing (cited in Zarei & Gujjar, 2012). Reasons for preferring online dictionaries may vary. In Trinh et al.'s study (2021), it was found that most students (94.7%) preferred online dictionaries over print dictionaries (5.3%) for their increased popularity and ease of use. The same study indicates that thanks to sophisticated software, an online dictionary is more portable (96.7%), while only ten respondents (3.3%) think that a paper dictionary is portable. According to Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013), one reason for this inclination is that an ED's highly engaging display makes it a better and more appealing learning resource. Another explanation offered by Zamkova et al. (2023) and Zheng and Wang (2016) for this preference is that EDs are more information-dense than paper dictionaries. Li and Xu (2015) found that because online dictionaries are quicker to get and require less time, they are increasingly replacing heavy and antiquated print dictionaries. Lastly, using an ED speeds up search times for students (Mohamad et al., 2017; Töpel, 2014) and encourages quick vocabulary creation and recall (Chen, 2010). Unquestionably, compared to paper dictionaries, electronic dictionaries are much more constrained by screen size (Koren, 1997).

Regarding the advantages of electronic dictionaries, users of online dictionaries can benefit from a distinctive consultation service. For example, they do not have to search through every page of an ordinary dictionary's alphabetical list to get the phrase they are looking for (Kim, 2003); therefore, EDs are time-saving (Hojatpanah & Dashtestani, 2020; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016). According to an experimental study conducted by Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013), students using an online dictionary can define and understand new words more rapidly and accurately than their paper dictionary-using counterparts. In Trinh et al.'s study (2021), participants were asked to compare printed and online dictionaries (ODs) based on several factors. Of those who answered, 96.3% said that ODs are more time-saving and more effective at helping people pronounce words correctly, thanks to the audibility. Koyama and Takeuchi examined printed and electronic dictionaries in their 2003 study and found no discernible differences between the two in terms of word retention ratings, look-up times, or the number of entries searched as opposed to the aforementioned advantages of EDs.

In addition to contributing to the vocabulary development of language learners, EDs are essential resources for learning the correct pronunciation of words (Metruk, 2017; Tang, 1997). When learning a new word, EFL students must be aware of its correct pronunciation, as pronunciation plays a crucial role in communication, and mispronunciations can lead to misunderstandings and hinder effective interaction. EDs are vital educational resources in terms of pronunciation development because students, especially those who do not know the phonetic alphabet, can listen to the pronunciation of words through these dictionaries and internalise the

correct pronunciation of words. Focusing on the pronunciation aspect of these resources, Singleton (2016) stated that “an electronic dictionary has the potential to provide instant access from within a given entry to a key to the symbols used in the relevant phonological transcription and also, at the click of a button, to model the pronunciation of any given word in audio mode” (p. 208). According to a study conducted by Alfallaj (2013), 60% of the participants stated that they use electronic dictionaries for pronunciation, indicating that this type of media is helpful for students' pronunciation. Half of the participants in Kent's study (2001) revealed that the most beneficial aspect of electronic dictionaries was audio pronunciation. Though numerous studies highlight the advantages of the audio feature of electronic dictionaries (EDs), only a few studies argue otherwise. According to a survey conducted by Zheng and Wang (2016), audio pronunciation is not predominantly applied. Weschler and Pitts' research also shows that participants' interest in hearing an electronic dictionary's pronunciation was lacking (2000).

Zheng and Wang (2016) found that these dictionaries enhance students' learning independence and provide a wealth of information essential for their learning. EDs may supply nearly all semantic aspects of a lexical item, including synonyms, idioms, collocations, and antonyms (Hilary & Warwick, 2000). Dziemianko (2010) investigated the relative benefits of paper-based and electronic versions of a monolingual dictionary in supporting Polish learners' acquisition of lexical knowledge in a second language. She discovered that the online version was more beneficial for both the quick acquisition of vocabulary and the gradual retention of that knowledge. Research by Dwaik (2015) indicates that digital dictionaries may be more effective than traditional ones, depending on how efficiently students search for and utilise the terms.

On the other hand, although limited in number, several studies have identified disadvantages associated with electronic dictionaries. Among these, the distracting nature of mobile devices emerges as a key drawback. Although electronic dictionaries are attractive technological tools, they may divert students as they might use their phones for non-academic purposes, such as texting on WhatsApp or social media (Dashtestani, 2013; Rashid et al., 2015; Weschler & Pitts, 2000). Additionally, EDs prevent students from developing critical thinking, which in turn lowers their capacity for deduction (Zheng & Wang, 2016). Lack of facilities or difficulty in accessing the Internet can be a further limitation when utilising EDs (Hojatpanah & Dashtestani, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2017). Students without adequate internet access or those experiencing Wi-Fi connectivity problems may be unable to utilise electronic dictionaries; consequently, in the absence of a physical dictionary, they may encounter difficulties in accessing word meanings or pronunciations.

In the context of Türkiye, the number of studies focusing on electronic dictionary usage in EFL contexts is quite limited. In a survey by Tulgar (2017), twelve students from the Faculty of Foreign Language at a state university in Türkiye were interviewed one-on-one for approximately twenty minutes about the benefits, preferences, frequency of use, and sources of information (word meaning, pronunciation, and grammar) related to a dictionary. The study's overall findings indicate that while the majority of participants frequently use online dictionaries due to their quick access, they also recognise the advantages of print dictionaries because they are more comprehensive. Tulgar (2017) reveals that negative aspects of EDs include distracting images, losing connection, and a lack of content.

As a result, according to Rundell (2014), since the transition from print to digital dictionaries, people have been discussing the strengths and weaknesses of EDs and their potential

utilisation. However, most of these studies focus on the general usage of the EDs, not their potential in-class usage. The advantages and disadvantages of EDs for EFL students' vocabulary development inside the classroom and students' preference for EDs or printed dictionaries during an English language course remain debated. To the author's knowledge, only one study (Tulgar, 2017) has examined Turkish EFL students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries, indicating a notable gap in the existing literature. Since tolerance for the use of mobile devices in classrooms in Türkiye is a recent and scarcely accepted phenomenon, there is a need for further studies to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of electronic dictionary usage in the EFL educational setting in Türkiye. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by enhancing the understanding of EFL students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries in the language classroom.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore preparatory class students' use of electronic dictionaries in a Turkish EFL context. Qualitative research can be defined as research in which qualitative data collection methods, such as observation, interview, and document analysis, are used, and a process is followed to reveal perceptions and events realistically and holistically in their natural environment (Creswell, 1994). Additionally, A qualitative case study is an in-depth investigation of a bounded system, such as a class, programme, or institution, conducted in its real-life context. It is applied by using multiple qualitative data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, to develop a rich, holistic understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018).

Participants

The study's population consists of all language learners who are permitted to use an ED during the course. The participants of the study consisted of 30 Turkish EFL preparatory students. Table 1 presents the demographic and learning background characteristics of the participants, including gender, age, years of English learning, and years of in-class electronic dictionary use. The sample represents a relatively homogeneous age group, while showing variation in English learning experience and electronic dictionary use, which supports the exploratory nature of the case study. To identify relevant participants, the convenience sampling technique was adopted. The preparatory class aims to develop students' proficiency levels of the English language, ensuring they have an adequate level of language proficiency for participation in undergraduate study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	11	36.7
	Female	17	56.7
	Not specified	2	6.6
Age	18–20	26	86.7
	21–24	4	13.3

Variable	Category	n	%
Years of English Learning	1–3 years	24	80
	4–6 years	5	16.7
	7-10 years	1	3.3
Years of In-Class ED Use	1 year	8	26.7
	2 years	8	26.7
	3 years	11	36.7
	4 years or more	3	10

Data Collection Tools

By applying a structured interview form and participant observation, this study aims to determine the perspectives of preparatory students on the use of electronic dictionaries in the classroom.

Participant Observation

The participant observation form was developed by the researcher to examine students' use of printed and electronic dictionaries during classroom instruction. The observation focused on the frequency, purposes, and perceived functionality of dictionary use in the classroom setting. Specifically, the form included items related to students' frequency of printed and electronic dictionary use, their satisfaction with electronic dictionaries, difficulties encountered during use, purposes of use, preferred features, and the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. The researcher acted as a participant observer and systematically recorded observations using the form throughout the observation period.

Structured Interview

A structured interview was conducted to thoroughly explore students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries. Firstly, an interview form was designed to gather information concerning participants' dictionary preferences (electronic vs. paper-based), perceived advantages and disadvantages of electronic dictionaries, frequency of use, and level of satisfaction with electronic dictionaries in preparatory classes. The development of the interview form was a rigorous process that involved an extensive review of relevant literature and similar measurement tools. The semi-structured interview form was developed through a careful review of relevant literature on electronic dictionary use in preparatory classes. An initial draft of the interview questions was reviewed by three experts in language education to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research focus. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to improve the wording and organisation of the questions. The revised interview form was subsequently reviewed by an expert in educational sciences to ensure its suitability for the study context. Prior to the main data collection, the interview questions were refined through preliminary implementation, and participant feedback was used to adjust the duration of the interviews and to remove overlapping questions. As a result, the final version of the semi-structured interview form was considered appropriate for eliciting in-depth insights into participants' experiences with electronic dictionary use.

Data Collection Procedures

In Türkiye, preparatory class students in higher education studied the English language in high school for two years before coming to university, and during this period, most of them used paper-based dictionaries because the use of smartphones in class was not allowed in most high schools in Türkiye. However, allowing the use of mobile tools for educational purposes is under the control of the course instructor. Therefore, at the beginning of the term, the instructor informed the participant that using electronic dictionaries through their mobile device is permitted. The researcher, who was also the instructor of the preparatory course, observed the learners throughout the course, which was four hours per week for two months. The observation involved the dictionary type preferred by the students, how often this dictionary is consulted, and the students' satisfaction levels in this regard. After each course session, the instructors systematically noted important observations using the observation form. At the end of the observation period, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences, preferences, and perceptions regarding electronic dictionary usage. Interviews were conducted in the students' native language to ensure clear and detailed explanations, and the participants' responses were later translated verbatim into English. All data were collected following the provision of informed consent and in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Additionally, before the interviews and classroom observations, informed consent was obtained from all participants, outlining issues related to confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection. The participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the types of data to be collected through interviews and observations. They were assured that all data would be used solely for research purposes and that their identities would not be disclosed in any publications or reports. They were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Only participants who gave written consent were included in the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through structured interviews and participant observation were analysed using thematic analysis, as presented by Braun and Clarke in 2006. First, the data obtained from interviews and observations were transcribed and then reviewed from different perspectives to ensure a comprehensive view of participants' perceptions. Next, a systematic coding procedure was applied to the data, enabling us to identify significant portions of information related to the research topics. The coded data were then analysed for recurrent patterns and main themes, which reflected the dominant feelings of the respondents towards the use of electronic dictionaries. The concepts were validated and reiterated to ensure that the data represented the correct information and research questions. Finally, the themes were further examined concerning the research questions and relevant literature, providing valuable insight into students' views on the use of electronic dictionaries in English preparatory classes.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, multiple strategies were employed. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement in the research setting during the observation period and the systematic use of a participant observation form. Observational notes were recorded after each class session to ensure accurate documentation of electronic dictionary use. In addition, interview data were used to support and clarify the observational findings, contributing to data triangulation.

Findings

This section includes the study's findings, categorised according to the research questions.

RQ1: Do preparatory students prefer paper-based or electronic dictionaries? Why?

According to the results obtained through the structured interviews, 90% of preparatory class students prefer to use electronic dictionaries in the classroom because, as displayed in Table 2, they find the electronic dictionary more advantageous than the printed dictionary in terms of speed in word finding, comprehensiveness of the searched term, ease of usage, and portability.

Table 2

Reasons for Preferring EDs

Reasons for preferring EDs	Percentages	Frequency
Being fast	41.46	16
Being Comprehensive	29.27	12
Easy to Use	17.07	7
Easy to Carry	12.20	5

Although students were free to choose an ED or a paper-based dictionary during the course, and this was repeatedly stated to them by the instructor of the course, it was observed that no student brought a paper-based dictionary to the course for two months, and all of them preferred the electronic dictionary. 41.49% of the participants stated that they preferred electronic dictionaries due to the speed of word search. Additionally, some students mentioned that searching for vocabulary in printed dictionaries was too time-consuming, which led to frustration. For instance, Student 26 clarified this situation, stating:

It is more practical to use electronic dictionaries. After looking up the meaning of a few words in paper-based dictionaries, I get bored and don't look up the rest. Sometimes, while searching for a word, my eyes get caught up in other words in the dictionary, and I even forget which word I am researching. That's why I waste time.

29.27% of the participants indicated that they get comprehensive information while looking up words, like accessing the pronunciation of the word and getting the definition of words with extra meanings, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences. While S8 stated this situation as "it is a great advantage to be able to write the word using an electronic dictionary in the classroom and find various and different forms of the word directly and reach the most accurate pronunciation." S11 indicated the comprehensibility of ED, clarifying that "I prefer the electronic dictionary because I can access it more easily, and it helps a lot to see the synonyms of the words I am looking for. Also, in some applications, we can see opposite meanings, improving our vocabulary." Although the same situation prevails in some printed dictionaries, it is limited; otherwise, the volume of the dictionaries would be huge, which is not a problem in electronic dictionaries. These reasons are followed by ease of use, ease of transportation, and accessibility, with rates of 17.07% and 12.20%, respectively. S4, S11, S27, and S29 mainly emphasised the easy portability of EDs. S27 explained the reason for her preferring EDs as being "more convenient and portable in terms of comfort." Highlighting the easy accessibility of the EDs, S25 revealed that "since we always have it with us, we can easily access the meaning of a word whenever we are curious about it."

RQ2: What are the advantages of using an electronic dictionary for EFL vocabulary development in preparatory classes?

As shown in Table 3, preparatory class students identified four main advantages of electronic dictionaries (EDs): time efficiency, voiced pronunciation, comprehensiveness, and accessibility. The results for each theme are presented separately and illustrated with excerpts from students' responses.

Table 3

Advantages of Electronic Dictionaries

Advantages of electronic dictionaries	Percentages	Frequency
Saving Time	38.10	16
Providing Voiced Pronunciation	30.95	13
Being Comprehensive	23.81	10
Accessibility	7.14	3

Saving Time

Preparatory class students reported that consulting paper-based dictionaries is more time-consuming than using mobile dictionaries, as the latter enable rapid access to word meanings by entering only a few letters on a smartphone. To illustrate, S11 revealed that she “thinks the most important advantage of the electronic dictionary is saving time because looking up words in paper-based dictionaries took a long time”, pointing “after using an electronic dictionary, I do not spend much time searching for words because I can easily access any word I want.” Pointing out the same issue, Student 19 revealed that:

During the lesson, teachers ask us to check a word, and we are all curious about its meaning and want to quickly learn the meaning of the word. If we use a paper-based dictionary, it will be very challenging for us. But if we use an electronic dictionary, we can learn the definition of the word faster and in a more detailed way.

Additionally, highlighting the limited duration of lessons, some students believed that consulting a paper-based dictionary is time-consuming, and using an electronic dictionary provides a more time-efficient alternative. For instance, on this point, Student 16 specified that “since the lessons have limited duration, using a paper-based dictionary would be useless because it takes a long time to find the word in such dictionaries”.

Providing Voiced Pronunciation

English, characterised by its inconsistencies between spelling and pronunciation, poses significant challenges for language learners. Many publishing houses, being aware of this feature of English, generally add the phonetic pronunciations of the lexis when preparing dictionaries, but not every language learner may be familiar with the phonetic alphabet. An important advantage of electronic dictionaries is the ability to listen to the phonetic version of the searched word. As the researcher noticed during the observations, some students were listening to the pronunciation of words by lowering the volume of the phone and holding the phone close to their ears. Though “in some electronic dictionaries, word pronunciations are either missing or

incorrect” (S26), generally, it is a feature appreciated by EFL students. Student 28 emphasised the importance of listening to the pronunciation of lexis, stating, “the most basic advantage of an ED is that I can hear how words are pronounced in several accents.” Additionally, focusing on the same feature of EDs, Student 17 revealed that:

When we use paper-based dictionaries, we may not be able to learn exactly how words are pronounced, but while using electronic dictionaries, we can learn by listening to the pronunciation of words along with learning their meanings; therefore, I think this is very useful for vocabulary development.

Being Comprehensive

The limited space in printed dictionaries often restricts the inclusion of multiple meanings for a single word. However, electronic dictionaries do not face such spatial constraints, allowing them to provide a much larger number of meanings for a given word. Student 26 remarked on this situation as “in paper-based dictionaries, words have only a few meanings, but in electronic dictionaries, words have more than twenty or thirty meanings.” Additionally, Student 30 clarified this point, stating that “In the paper-based dictionary, you can only find the word you are looking up, but in the electronic dictionary, we can also learn a few words that have the same meaning as a word.”

Another point related to the comprehensibility of EDs is that some extra content, like videos, images, extra sentences, synonyms, or antonyms, can be supplied. For instance, though it is not the same for all EDs, some of them can provide video content to show the contextual usage of the lexis. Student 10 specified that “Electronic dictionaries offer many advantages, such as finding video content about words and the opportunity to learn synonyms while learning words.” Student 20 emphasised that example sentences facilitate a better understanding of a word, stating, “Electronic dictionaries provide multiple meanings of a word and illustrate its usage through example sentences.”

Though many students believe the comprehensibility of EDs is a benefit in vocabulary development, few students consider that there are some matters related to this issue. To clarify the point that all EDs do not have the same aspects, Student 5 stated that “Some applications provide sufficient information, while others fail to deliver it comprehensively. If we find a well-designed application, we can access the information we need completely and reliably.” Additionally, finding the number of sample sentences insufficient, students 8 and 11 stated, ‘Example sentences should be more comprehensive and greater in number. Furthermore, Student 19, expressing dissatisfaction about the comprehensibility of EDs, stated that having so many similar meanings and many examples may cause misunderstanding.

When using electronic dictionaries to look up a word, we often encounter multiple meanings of that word. While our primary goal is to fully understand and learn the correct meaning, the abundance of different definitions can cause confusion. Additionally, exploring these various meanings often leads to discovering numerous other words with similar meanings, which further complicates the learning process.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the availability of electronic dictionaries on mobile devices, eliminating the physical burden associated with paper-based dictionaries, which highlights the portability of mobile technology. Students prefer EDs because being accessible without any time

or place limitations is a significant feature that makes lookup easier. Students highlighted that the ability to use electronic dictionaries (EDs) on their mobile phones instead of carrying bulky paper dictionaries is a significant advantage in language learning courses. Student 27 revealed this situation as:

Because we carry dictionaries physically, and they are not always accessible, paper-based dictionaries make us, as students, biased against using dictionaries. On the contrary, since electronic dictionaries are always accessible, we have the opportunity to instantly check a word without thinking. I can say that electronic dictionaries do not cause the reluctance and boredom that occur when doing word research.

Besides stating the advancement of technology and proliferation of mobile devices through society from high school students to old people, Student 15 focused on the same issue, which is simplicity in the portability of EDs on a handheld device, and revealed:

Especially in this age, technology has developed a lot, and almost everyone has a phone, and it is always in our hands, so an electronic dictionary is something we always carry with us, and it is not difficult for us to carry it, but it is difficult for almost everyone to carry a printed dictionary all the time. For this reason, electronic dictionaries can always be with us and are more advantageous.

RQ3: What are the disadvantages of using electronic dictionaries instead of paper-based ones in preparatory classes regarding EFL vocabulary development?

When asked about the disadvantages of electronic dictionaries, students most frequently identified the distracting potential of mobile devices. As shown in Table 4, a substantial proportion of participants reported distraction as the primary drawback, followed by limited retention of learned vocabulary. Another reported disadvantage was dependence on internet connectivity, as many electronic dictionaries become non-functional during internet outages.

Table 4

Disadvantages of Electronic Dictionaries

Disadvantages of electronic dictionaries	Percentages	Frequency
Distraction	58.62	17
Lack of retention	27.59	8
Internet outage	13.79	4

Distraction

Distraction emerged as a salient concern among students regarding the use of electronic dictionaries, particularly in relation to mobile device use during learning activities. Although such instances were limited, instructors occasionally observed that students were viewing short Instagram reels while presumably looking up words in electronic dictionaries. Highlighting that it may not be easy to concentrate again after being diverted and the responsibility of the instructor in such situations, Students 8 clarify this situation, stating that “mobile phones may cause rapid distraction and use of other applications. Worse, it may be difficult for some students to regain this motivation and focus on the lesson during the lesson.” While checking the meaning of a word, students may get notifications and be diverted, as Student 23 and Student 10 stated that

“receiving notifications during the research may negatively affect us.” Additionally, student 14, pointing out the advantageous paper-based dictionaries inside the classroom, claims that

I think paper-based dictionaries are more advantageous in the classroom because, as an example, we will look up the meaning of a word on the phone. After looking at the meaning of the word in class, other things on the phone can distract our attention. After using the dictionary, we can also access social media. When we think about it this way, the electronic dictionary is a disadvantage for us, especially in the classroom.

Lack of Retention

Some students consider that they forget the words looked up from EDs more quickly compared to the paper-based dictionaries. Student 13 stated that this may be a result of the fast obtaining of the word just by writing a few letters. “Even though a few letters of the word are written, it extracts the whole word and makes the brain lazy in remembering the word.” Also, on the same issue, Student 24 emphasised that:

In general, I think electronic dictionaries are better than paper-based dictionaries in many aspects. I consider that there is only one disadvantage, which is that there is a possibility of forgetting a word we wrote immediately, so we may not be able to keep the word in mind and search for the same word more than once in the future.

Some printed dictionaries reinforce the meaning of the lexis with images to increase the memorability of the word. To enhance word retention, S20, S21, S23, and S30 suggest that electronic dictionaries (EDs) should include visuals, as this approach can significantly improve memory retention, especially for individuals with strong visual memory. Also, some students stated that seeing the pictures related to the meaning makes learning more efficient, and since EDs generally do not have this feature, the words learned in EDs are forgettable. On this point, student 27 stated that “when paper-based dictionaries are used, tactile learning, as well as visual learning, is involved, which increases the permanence of information. On the contrary, electronic dictionaries are less likely to have permanence in terms of learning because they are virtual.” Asserting the same idea, Student 12 remarked, “When we use paper-based dictionaries, we can both see the visual there and other neighbouring words come to our mind, helping us to remember the intended lexis.”

Internet outage

Another issue associated with EDs is their reliance on the Internet, as they cannot be utilised during an Internet outage. Although there may be technical problems with mobile devices, only one student mentioned this, and no technical problems were observed by the course instructor during the observation period. On the other hand, a few students mentioned some problems related to the internet outage, as EDs are mostly internet-based and do not run in the absence of the internet. For example, Student 1 and Student 18 highlighted that “the student must have a constant connection to the internet, but internet outages can sometimes cause problems. Therefore, in terms of course efficiency, electronic dictionaries can sometimes be problematic”. Additionally, during the problems with the WI-FI supplied by the university, Student 8, signifying a psychological perspective, stated that “every student may not have internet access, which may cause them to feel psychologically unwell in the classroom. Also, according to the instructor’s observation notes, while some students were asked the reason why they did not look up the unknown word on their ED, they stated their lack of Internet access.

Discussion

As the results of the current study displayed, 90% of the participants preferred to use EDs in the classroom because EDs are fast in looking up, comprehensive in terms of lexical information, easy to use, and portable. The observation forms of the instructor also indicated no usage of the printed dictionaries inside the classroom during the whole semester, and most of the participants supported the inclusion of electronic dictionaries in the learning setting. Aligning with the results of the studies conducted by Li Lan (2006) (70%) and Trinh et al. (2021) (94.7%), this study indicated that a high percentage of Turkish learners (90%) opted for EDs. According to Trinh's study, the main reason for preferring EDs is the ease of use, which is in line with the results of this study. However, according to this study, the most important reason for preparatory students is the speed of the research, as Mohamad et al. (2017) and Töpel (2014) found the same reason for students' preferring EDs. As several participants of this study noted that being effortlessly portable and easy to carry is another factor in students' preferences, in Trinh et al.'s study (2021), 96.7% of the participants stated that EDs are more portable compared to printed dictionaries. It should be noted that paper-based dictionaries, particularly those with complete content, might be cumbersome to carry for every course; however, since students always have their smartphones with them, accessing a dictionary is as simple as installing an app.

Considering the advantages of electronic dictionaries in attracting language learners to use them in preparatory classes, the current study's results indicate that the primary factor for the acceptance and usage of EDs is their being time-saving (38.1%). According to several participants of the current study, when looking up a term definition via an electronic dictionary, all it takes to get the meaning of the word is a mouse click and some up-and-down scrolling through the pages. This is in contrast to the time-consuming page-turning aspect of printed dictionaries that impedes learners' ability to find the lexical items, especially when it comes to words with various meanings and entries that are polysemous. In terms of the time-saving feature of EDs, this study's findings are consistent with a considerable number of studies (Hojatpanah & Dashtestani, 2020; Li & Xu, 2015; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016; Zheng & Wang, 2016). As a result, it can be argued that an appealing feature of EDs is their ability to facilitate quick glossary searches and instantaneous target retrieval. A sizable portion of participants in Trinh's study (96.03%) said they favour EDs due to their time-saving aspect. Furthermore, the researcher of the present study did not come across any studies indicating that printed dictionaries save more time than EDs; however, Koyama and Takeuchi (2003) claimed that there is no difference in time-saving between PDs and EDs.

According to 30.95% of the participants of this study, auditory pronunciation is another significant advantage of EDs. The ability to perform auditory pronunciation is a crucial and distinctive aspect of EDs because learners can access the correct pronunciation of lexical items thanks to this feature. Additionally, pronunciation is an aspect of language that requires careful attention, and it can be challenging for learners of English to learn how to pronounce words correctly because some letters have distinct sounds, and combinations of some consonants or vowels may create different sounds. Some printed dictionaries also include the phonetic form of the words, but since not all students are familiar with symbols, audio pronunciation of the lexis is a key feature of EDs that attracts students, which is why most studies (Alfallaj, 2013; Kent, 2021; Metruk, 2017; Tang, 1997) affirmed that learners consider audio pronunciation as an important aspect of EDs. Aligning with this study's result, Kent's study (2001) obtained that 50% of the participants identified audio pronunciation as the most useful feature of electronic dictionaries.

The findings of this study, which highlight the significance of audio pronunciation in EDs, are in contradiction with those of Zheng and Wang's study (2016), which asserted that learners rarely use audio pronunciation, and Weschler and Pitts' study (2000), which revealed low participants' interest in hearing the pronunciation of an electronic dictionary.

Other advantages of EDs, as the current study identified, although with lower percentages, are the comprehensiveness and accessibility of EDs. 23.28% of the students stated a high comprehensiveness of EDs compared to PEs. Since paper dictionaries have limited page numbers, it is not possible to include extra details about lexis; however, EDs do not have space restrictions and can provide comprehensive information related to the looked-up glossary. In terms of comprehensiveness, this study yielded a similar result to some other research (Tulgar, 2017; Zamkova et al., 2023; Zheng & Wang, 2016), which demonstrated that EDs are more information-dense resources compared to printed dictionaries. Being in line with Hilary and Warwick's study (2000), participants of this study indicated that EDs can provide various meanings of the words, extra examples, synonyms, and even video content, which makes them more comprehensive compared to their printed versions. This study displays opposite results from the study of Koyama and Takeuchi (2023), which contended no difference in the number of entries between EDs and PEs. The difficulty of carrying paper-based dictionaries (Li & Xu, 2015) discouraged students from bringing them into the classroom, a finding also reflected in the present study; by contrast, the portability of electronic dictionaries makes them more accessible. Students do not have to contemplate bringing an extra-thick book with them, but can utilise their smartphones, which are ubiquitously in their pockets and easy to transport (Tang, 1997).

Despite their advantages, EDs have some drawbacks, and the most widely mentioned one, according to findings of this study, is the potential to cause distraction due to notifications. Dashtestani (2013) reported that instructors expressed concerns about the use of electronic dictionaries (EDs) in the classroom due to their distracting nature; similarly, the findings of the present study indicated that distraction was the primary concern associated with ED use. According to the responses of participants in this research, 58.62% of the students revealed that being distracting was one of the main limitations of EDs. The same results with high percentages were identified in the study of Weschler and Pitts (2000), Dashtestani (2013), Rashid et al. (2015), and Tulgar (2017). Students have many other appealing applications on their smartphones, and while looking up a lexical item, they may be distracted by ads or notifications, or they may consciously check notifications. In this case, as some students have asserted, the instructor must seriously observe the class to prevent students from engaging in different practices throughout the course. Additionally, according to the instructors' observation notes, several students were distracted and checked Instagram reels and WhatsApp messages while looking up the meaning or pronunciation of lexical items. Although it is not easy to fully prevent students' diversion, the instructor's serious observation can minimise it.

Beyond the distracting nature of electronic dictionaries, limited retention of words consulted through these tools was identified as another factor negatively affecting the language learning process. 27.59% of the participants claimed that they could not remember the meaning of the lexical items they looked up on EDs. As one of the participants stated, the ease of finding a word in electronic dictionaries (EDs) by typing only a few letters may cause poor retention. The reason for limited retention may be that students often focus solely on obtaining the meaning of the lexical items and pay little attention to the detailed information provided in the glossary. This result, besides showing similarity with the study of Zheng and Wang (2016), contradicts the

study of Chen (2010), which stated that EDs help students recall vocabulary. Lastly, lack of Internet, or dependency on the Internet, is another limitation of EDs, which is expressed by 13.59% of the participants of the current study. This weakness of EDs was expressed in some other studies (Hojatpanah & Dashtestani, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2017) as well. Since EDs mostly run on the internet, students cannot use EDs for looking up in case of an internet outage. Though some institutions supply the Internet through WI-FI, it is not pervasive in all parts of the world, and students may not have enough Internet quotas to use EDs.

Conclusion

This study aims to search Turkish EFL preparatory class students' perspectives about the advantages and disadvantages of utilising electronic dictionaries in the classroom for formal education. According to the results of the current study, which applied a qualitative case study design and was conducted with 30 participants, EDs are advantageous in terms of saving time, providing pronunciation of the words, offering comprehensible information related to the word, and being accessible anywhere and anytime. On the other hand, EDs can be distracting, and words looked up can be forgotten easily. Another drawback of the EDs is their dependence on the Internet, as in the case of an Internet outage, students may not check the meaning of the unknown words. It can be concluded that Turkish students acknowledge the disadvantages of electronic dictionaries (EDs) and are cognizant of these limitations; however, the advantages they offer are more likely to motivate them to prefer utilising electronic dictionaries in the classroom, as 90% of them preferred using EDs compared to PEs.

Implications of the study

As technology advances, students increasingly use language learning apps to study outside the classroom; however, this is not the case within the classroom, as managing the use of mobile devices proves challenging for teachers, which is discouraging. Yet, this is a challenge that must be addressed, as the new generation is accustomed to relying on mobile devices for nearly all tasks. Teachers need to be familiar with the technological resources available to their students, such as dictionaries and apps, and should encourage mobile device usage for various educational purposes. Based on the observation notes of the researcher and quotes from the participants, it can be deduced that allowing students to use EDs in language instruction within the classroom has more advantages and less disadvantages. Letting the usage of EDs in class or not is a decision the instructor should make based on pondering all the advantages and disadvantages of EDs. Based on the results of this study, we recommend that educators allow students to use electronic dictionaries in preparatory language classes; however, they should also carefully monitor their use to ensure that students do not employ mobile devices for unrelated purposes.

Limitations

The research was conducted in a specific educational environment, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. The number of male participants was small because most students enrolled in the department that year were female; therefore, the results cannot be generalised to both genders. Additionally, because the researcher was also an instructor in the preparatory program, this may have influenced the participants' responses. Researchers need to be mindful of this factor, despite their best intentions.

Further Research

This study investigated Turkish EFL students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries inside the classroom for lookup; however, further studies are needed to learn instructors' perspectives about the utilisation of EDs in EFL classrooms. In addition, this study investigates only the perspectives of EFL students in higher education institutions regarding the use of electronic dictionaries; therefore, there is also a need for similar research at the high school level. Finally, a qualitative study can be conducted to examine EFL students' motivation when using EDs inside the educational settings.

Ethical Considerations: Before the study began, participants were asked to provide written informed consent, indicating their agreement and appreciation for participating. The study included information about the voluntary nature of their contribution, the confidentiality of their responses, and the reasons for their involvement. To ensure anonymity, the findings were presented in a way that did not reveal the identity of any participant.

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Geniş Özet

Giriş

Kelimelerin öğrenilmesi, yabancı dil ediniminin en temel unsurlarından biridir ve dil yeterliliğinin gelişmesinde belirleyici bir rol oynar. Günümüzde dijital teknolojilerin eğitim ortamlarına entegre edilmesiyle birlikte, dil öğrenme sürecinde sözlük kullanımı da önemli bir dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Özellikle elektronik sözlükler (EDs), kelime öğrenimini hızlandıran, telaffuz desteği sağlayan ve kapsamlı bilgi sunan dijital araçlar olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bu araçların sınıf içi kullanımına ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrencilerin farklı görüşleri bulunmaktadır. Türkiye'deki birçok eğitim kurumunda cep telefonlarının veya mobil cihazların sınıf içinde kullanımına dair sınırlamalar sürmektedir. Ancak, teknolojinin hızla gelişmesiyle birlikte, elektronik sözlüklerin yabancı dil öğretiminde özellikle kelime edinimi açısından önemli fırsatlar sunduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki İngilizce hazırlık sınıflarında öğrenim gören öğrencilerin elektronik sözlük kullanımına ilişkin algılarını ve elektronik sözlüklerin avantaj ve dezavantajlarını derinlemesine incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Alanyazında Türkiye bağlamında bu konuyu doğrudan ele alan çalışmaların oldukça sınırlı olması, araştırmayı özgün ve gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, öğrencilerin elektronik sözlük kullanımına

ilişkin tercih nedenlerini, algıladıkları yararları ve karşılaştıkları güçlükleri ortaya koyarak, elektronik sözlüklerin dil sınıflarında ne ölçüde etkili bir öğrenme aracı olabileceğine dair önemli bulgular sunmaktadır.

Yöntem

Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik desen doğrultusunda yürütülmüştür. Bu desen, bireylerin belirli bir olguya ilişkin yaşantılarını ve algılarını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma grubunu, yaşları 18 ile 24 arasında değişen, bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programına kayıtlı 30 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların seçiminde kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların büyük bir bölümü İngilizce öğrenimine 2 ile 5 yıl önce başlamış olup, 1 ile 3 yıldır elektronik sözlük kullanmaktadır. Veriler iki farklı yöntemle toplanmıştır: katılımlı gözlem ve yapılandırılmış görüşme formu. Araştırmacı aynı zamanda dersin yürütücüsü olarak haftada dört saatlik gözlem yapmış, öğrencilerin hangi sözlük türünü tercih ettiklerini ve kullanım sıklıklarını not etmiştir. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin elektronik sözlük kullanımına dair algılarını derinlemesine anlamak amacıyla yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşme formu geliştirilirken literatür taranmış, üç uzmanın görüşü alınmış ve ardından on öğrenciyle pilot uygulama yapılarak formun nihai hâli oluşturulmuştur. Elde edilen veriler, Braun ve Clarke (2006) tarafından geliştirilen tematik analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Görüşme dökümleri ve gözlem notları defalarca incelenmiş ve tekrar eden temalar belirlenmiştir.

Bulgular

Araştırmanın bulguları, öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun (%90) elektronik sözlükleri basılı sözlüklere tercih ettiğini ortaya koymuştur. Öğrenciler bu tercihi; zaman tasarrufu sağlama (%38,10), doğru telaffuz olanağı sunma (%30,95), kapsamlı içerik (%23,81) ve erişilebilirlik (%7,14) gibi avantajlara dayandırmıştır. Zaman tasarrufu açısından öğrenciler, basılı sözlüklerde kelime aramanın uzun sürdüğünü ve ders süresinin kısıtlı olması nedeniyle elektronik sözlüklerin daha verimli olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Telaffuz açısından ise, elektronik sözlüklerin sesli telaffuz özelliği sayesinde kelimelerin doğru biçimde öğrenilmesini kolaylaştırdığı görülmüştür. Bu özellik, öğrencilerin İngilizce'nin karmaşık ses sistemini kavramasında önemli bir destek sunmaktadır. Kapsamlı içerik teması altında, öğrenciler elektronik sözlüklerin kelimelere ilişkin örnek cümleler, eş ve zıt anlamlılar, hatta bazen görsel ve video destekli içerikler sunduğunu belirtmiştir. Bu durum, kelime anlamlarının bağlam içinde öğrenilmesini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Erişilebilirlik açısından ise, öğrenciler elektronik sözlüklerin her an ulaşılabilir olmasının önemli bir avantaj olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Bununla birlikte, öğrenciler bazı dezavantajlara da dikkat çekmiştir. Katılımcıların %58,62'si elektronik sözlüklerin dikkat dağınık olabileceğini; %27,59'u öğrenilen kelimelerin kalıcılığının azaldığını; %13,79'u ise internet bağlantısına bağımlılığın bir sorun oluşturduğunu ifade etmiştir. Özellikle cep telefonuna gelen bildirimler ve sosyal medya erişimi, öğrencilerin derse odaklanmasını olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Ayrıca, hızlı erişimin öğrenilen kelimenin bellekte kalıcılığını azalttığı da sıkça dile getirilmiştir.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Araştırmanın sonuçları, Türkiye'deki öğrencilerin elektronik sözlükleri tercih etme nedenlerinin daha önceki çalışmalarla büyük ölçüde örtüştüğünü göstermektedir (ör. Trinh et al., 2021; Amirian & Heshmatifar, 2013). Katılımcılar için en belirgin tercih nedeni, kelimeye hızlı erişim ve pratik kullanım kolaylığıdır. Bu bulgu, mobil öğrenme (m-learning) literatüründe vurgulanan "her zaman ve her yerde öğrenme" ilkesiyle de örtüşmektedir (Ally & Tsinakos,

2014). Ayrıca, elektronik sözlüklerin sesli telaffuz özelliği, İngilizce'nin karmaşık fonolojik yapısı göz önüne alındığında önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu sonuç, Metruk (2017) ve Kent (2001) gibi araştırmaların bulgularıyla paraleldir. Ancak, öğrencilerin bir kısmı, elektronik sözlüklerin sunduğu çoklu anlamların kafa karıştırıcı olabileceğini belirtmiş, bu durumun da öğrenme sürecinde belirsizlik yarattığını ifade etmiştir. Dikkat dağıtma ve kelime kalıcılığının azalması, literatürdeki bazı çalışmalarda da (Dashtestani, 2013; Rashid et al., 2015) vurgulanan bir sorun olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Elektronik sözlüklerin avantajları güçlü olsa da sınıf içi denetim eksikliğinde öğrencilerin gelen bildirimlerden kaynaklı farklı uygulamalara yönelme eğiliminde oldukları ortaya çıkmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu araçların eğitim ortamlarında etkili biçimde kullanılabilmesi, öğretmenlerin rehberliği ve sınıf içi kontrol mekanizmalarının etkinliğine bağlıdır.

Araştırma sonuçları, Türk hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin elektronik sözlüklere genel olarak olumlu yaklaştığını ve bu araçları kelime öğrenimi açısından faydalı bulduklarını göstermektedir. Katılımcılar, elektronik sözlüklerin zaman tasarrufu sağlaması, telaffuz desteği sunması, kapsamlı bilgiler içermesi ve taşınabilir olması gibi avantajların dezavantajlardan çok daha ağır bastığını ifade etmiştir. Bununla birlikte, dikkat dağınıklığı, internet bağımlılığı ve öğrenilen kelimelerin kalıcılığının düşük olması gibi olumsuz yönler de göz ardı edilmemelidir. Bu bulgular ışığında, öğretmenlerin elektronik sözlük kullanımına tamamen yasaklayıcı bir tutum sergilemek yerine, rehberlik eden ve denetleyen bir yaklaşım benimsemeleri önerilmektedir. Öğretim sürecinde elektronik sözlüklerin bilinçli biçimde kullanılmasına yönelik kısa bilgilendirmeler veya sınıf içi kurallar belirlenebilir. Ayrıca, öğretmenler öğrencilerin kelime kalıcılığını artırmak için elektronik sözlüklerden yararlanırken not alma, eşleştirme veya tekrar etkinlikleriyle süreci destekleyebilir. Gelecekte yapılacak araştırmaların, öğretmenlerin elektronik sözlük kullanımına ilişkin algılarını da kapsamaması ve farklı eğitim kademelerinde (ör. lise düzeyi) benzer çalışmaların yürütülmesi, konuya daha bütüncül bir bakış kazandıracaktır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, dijital çağın dil öğrenme süreçlerinde vazgeçilmez bir araç hâline gelen elektronik sözlüklerin sınıf içi kullanımına yönelik öğrenci perspektifini ortaya koyarak, Türkiye bağlamında önemli bir boşluğu doldurmuştur.