



*A study on the use of mobile dictionaries in vocabulary teaching

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Abstract

In recent years, rapid developments in technology have placed books and notebooks into the mobile phones and tablets and also the dictionaries into these small boxes. Giant dictionaries, which we once barely managed to carry, have been replaced by mobile dictionaries through which we can reach any words we want with only few touches. Mobile dictionaries with their audiovisual contents, have become an important source for vocabulary teaching. Further studies are needed to use this source in a more efficient way and to benefit from it more effectively. Starting from this point, this study elaborates on the use of mobile dictionaries in vocabulary teaching. In the first place, advantages and the limits of the use of these dictionaries in vocabulary teaching are tried to be determined students' viewpoint to them and how frequently they are used. In light of the emerging data, new ways are sought to use these dictionaries as a more efficient teaching material. For this purpose, a survey was conducted to seventy-eight students studying in German, French and English Translation and Interpreting Departments of Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Marmara University in 2015-2016 academic year. A survey form was prepared by receiving opinion of an expert and reviewing related literature. Descriptive statistic techniques were used in the analysis of data gathered. At the end of the study, almost all students expressed that they were constantly using mobile dictionaries to learn vocabulary. Besides, students put forth the advantages and limits of them. We hope this study will make contribution to studies regarding more efficient way to use of these dictionaries in vocabulary teaching.

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1. Introduction

Vocabulary is one of the most important elements among others while learning a new language. Because, learning a new language takes place with acquisition of new words. Unknown words pose obstacles while understanding a language. In order to eliminate these obstacles, vocabulary enrichment is needed. Undoubtedly, one of the most important sources of reference is the dictionaries. Dictionaries as one of the fundamental references have long been one of the most important sources helping students by bringing in any words, phrases, terms or idioms, correct ways of writing, vocalization, and assistance to use properly for ages.

While a dictionary has various meanings, it is generally defined as a book that deals with a language, certain part of a language or words and idioms used in a specific time period typically in the order of the alphabet and sometimes according to conceptual areas a dictionary makes definition in the same language, clarified with examples or gives the words with their equivalents in another language

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(Topaloğlu, 2010:25). Specialized dictionaries constitute an important part. These dictionaries are compositions recording the current state of applied research done in a particular sphere and time (Bingöl, 2006).

Although inventors of the first dictionaries remain unknown, it is widely accepted that dictionaries have been used since the very ancient times. A work done approximately in the 2nd century BC by Aristophanes of Byzantium, who was the Alexandria Museum curator, is referred as the very first dictionary considered now similar to modern dictionaries. This dictionary was a piece of work banding together several Greek words rarely used and hardly explained (Bingöl, 2006).

Over time, many dictionaries in many languages have been created and brought into use of people. As for today, thanks to advancing technology, dictionaries based on computer systems such as electronic, digital and mobile ones have emerged and positioned itself as a source of information. Particularly, mobile dictionaries is drawing more attention among them since it can be used via our mobile phones. Doing required researches and studies should be the task of educators to improve the qualities of the mobile dictionaries which are becoming indispensable source in terms of vocabulary teaching.

1.1. Mobile Dictionaries and Vocabulary Teaching

Since the late 20th century, parallel to the recent developments in technology, a radical change has occurred in the education realm and thanks to the information technologies, new facilities and opportunities have appeared. There is no doubt that mobile devices come first among them. Kukulski-Hulme, Shield, (2008) describe learning experience regardless of space bound with the help of mobile devices as mobile learning. According to Sharples (2006), at first mobile learning focused on the role of mobile technologies and devices in education and then a form of informal learning taking place outside classes and requiring no specific place to use. Small devices such as mobile media players, mobile phones and tablets contribute to the mobile learning (Rahimia & Mirib 2014 :1470).

During recent years, rapid developments in technology have placed books and notebooks in mobile phones and tablets and also the words into these small boxes. Giant dictionaries that we barely managed to carry have been replaced by mobile dictionaries through which we can reach any words we want with only few touches. One of the most important and distinctive attributes of mobile dictionaries is its provision of opportunities to listen to correct pronunciation. Additionally, some of their attributes such as suitability to update regularly, easy access and portability, being free of charge of majority of them can be counted as factors differing it from those printed dictionaries.

Mobile dictionaries with their above-mentioned characteristics, are important source for vocabulary teaching as well because with their audiovisual contents, mobile dictionaries provide with great opportunities in efficient and permanent vocabulary teaching. Doğan (2014:90) points out the necessity not to neglect making use of visual things in vocabulary teaching and says: “showing pictures and photographs during studies is more effective than just noting down the words and simply explaining them. Employing visual materials means solidification and this should be considered at all stage, notably at beginner (A1, A2) level, of language teaching”.

Demirel (2004) argues that teaching vocabulary in a proper and right way ensures person to properly use the recently learned words in each realm of a language and counts some of these techniques as follows:

1. Real objects are shown related to the word.
2. Drawing shapes, images and sketches onto the blackboard to explain words.

3. Pictures or paintings, posters and banners taking from materials such as newspapers and magazines are shown.
4. Visual methods are used. (Flash cards, Posters, Interactive CD's, Videos, Short Films and so on)
5. Clarification is made by using formerly thought words.
6. Synonyms and antonyms of the words are given.
7. The word is separated if it is a compound in order to explain (qte. Büyükkız ve Hasırcı 2013:150).

When we look at the structures of mobile dictionaries, it is seen that above-sorted techniques can be successfully used with these dictionaries. For instance, real objects, images, pictures and videos can be presented through them. Furthermore, improving qualifications such as antonyms and synonyms are also among the ability of these dictionaries. A number of positive results have also been received from studies with respect to this capacity. While Browne and Culligan (2008) received positive results from vocabulary teaching by using flash cards via mobile phones, Thornton and Houser (2005) got successful results from activities via them as for English idioms. Students found these activities not only positive but also beneficial and entertaining at the same time (Stockwell, 2010:96). And in our study, in line with students' remarks, we tried to identify what the limits and advantages of these dictionaries are and how efficiently it is employed in classes. For this purpose, answers were sought to following questions:

1. What are students' points of view about the use of mobile dictionaries?
2. How frequently mobile dictionaries are used in classes?
3. What are the advantages of using mobile dictionaries?
4. What are the problems confronted while using mobile dictionaries in class?

2. Method

In this study, Single Screening is employed among General Screening Models. It examines single variable with its state at a certain moment or change in a certain period. It can be done instantly and temporally (Şimşek, 2012:92).

2.1. Sample / Participants

Study consists of French, English, German translator candidates studying at university. Sampling is composed of a total of 78 students 28 of them from Department of French Translation and Interpreting, 32 from Department of English Translation and Interpreting and 18 from Department of German Translation and Interpreting in a way of accidental sampling. 69 % of the participants are constituted by women and 31 % of them by men.

2.2. Instrument(s)

A structured questionnaire is used as data collection tool. The form is created by reviewing literature and consulting experts

2.3. Data collection procedures

In analysis process, Descriptive Statistics are employed. "Descriptive Statistics includes summary information such as how many times each value or a set of value in a variable repeats, how values are

distributed around a point designated as the centre, the distance from the midpoint and distance/relative distance among them” (Akbulut, 2012:168).

3. Results and Discussion

Results gathered after the survey and discussion related to them is provided below.

Table 1. Frequency of the Use of Mobile Dictionary

Responses	f	%
Always	71	91
Rarely	6	8
Never	1	1

Students were asked how often they made the use of mobile dictionaries and 91 % of them gave the response “Always” % 8 of them “Rarely”, and 1 % stated “Never”. These findings prove that students take advantages of mobile dictionaries to a great extent and these dictionaries are one of the most referred sources.

Table 2. The Adequacy of the Number of Words

Responses	f	%
Adequate	16	21
Partly Adequate	54	69
Inadequate	8	10

While 21 % of the students surveyed gave the response of “Adequate”, 69 % of them said “Partly Adequate” and 10 % of them found the number of words “Not Adequate”. Although a considerable number of students made positive remarks, we understand from the gathered data that the word content of these dictionaries should be enriched to turn into a considerable reference.

Table 3. Difference between Mobile Dictionaries and Printed Dictionaries

Responses	f	%
Usability	21	27
Easy Access to Information	42	54
Portability	12	15
Audio-visual Content	0	0
Regularly Updatable	3	4

While 54 % of the students expressed easy access to information as the most important distinguishing feature of mobile dictionaries, 27 % of them assessed these dictionaries as easy to use. 15 % of them gave prominence to portability and 4 % viewed regularly updatable feature as the most important distinguishable feature. Features like easy access to information and usability were viewed as the main factors differing these two types of dictionaries from one another.

Table 4. Limits of Mobile Dictionaries

Responses	f	%
Internet Connection Problems	40	51
Small Screen and Keyboard Sizes	3	4
Inability to View the Content of All Kinds	29	37
Alignment Problems in Word Display	6	8

Lack of internet access was considered the most important limitation. Inability to view the content of all kinds was ranked the second limit with a proportion of 37 %. While 8 % of students evaluated alignment problems in word display as the limits of these dictionaries, 4 % of them prioritized small screen and keyboard sizes. Based on these results, we can conclude that in order to be able to use these applications effectively, the Internet infrastructure should be reinforced. Additionally, the Internet connection problem brings about inability to display content. Small size of these devices are not seen as a problem, at least not big enough that might affect the vocabulary teaching.

Table 5. Limits of Mobile Dictionaries in Vocabulary Teaching

Responses	f	%
Deficiency in translating words with various meanings	36	46
Deficiency in the provision of synonyms and antonyms	10	13
Deficiency in the display of way of word use (such as verbs and inflectional suffix)	17	22
Deficiency in explaining of idioms	15	19

46 % of students pointed out the deficiency in translation of words with various meanings as limitation in terms of vocabulary teaching, whereas 13 % of them emphasized deficiency in the provision with synonyms and antonyms. In the same way, 22 % of students signified deficiency in the display of way of word usage (such as verbs and inflectional suffix) and 19 % of them viewed the explanation of idioms as insufficient. Ratios of given responses are close to one another as seen. This puts forth the necessity to improve content related to each issues.

Table 6. Advantages of Mobile Dictionaries to Students at Vocabulary Teaching

Responses	f	%
Correct Pronunciation of Words	28	36
Correct Spelling of Words	22	28
Correct Uses of Words	16	21
Improvement of Vocabulary with Activities	12	15

Alongside the above-mentioned limitations, advantages should also be stated. Correct Pronunciation was appraised as the most significant advantage of the use of mobile dictionary with a rate of 36 %. Correct spelling received 28 % of responses, correct uses of words received % 21 of responses and improvement of vocabulary with activities had % 15 of responses. It is concluded here that opinions are expressed at certain proportions.

4. Conclusions

We see the fact that mobile dictionaries are being used commonly. More effective utilization of this material used with such frequency is needed. Therefore, the number of mobile dictionaries should be increased in the first place. They can be transformed into more efficient applications with enrichment of content regarding words with various meanings, synonyms and antonyms. Opportunities offered by mobile dictionaries should be well utilized. For instance, their assistance with correct spelling and pronunciation should be enjoyed. They should be used as references in various activities.

One of the most prominent features of these application is certainly its motivational nature. These kind of materials play important parts in an effective and efficient teaching activity. Besides, audiovisual contents make the learning environment more enjoyable, appealing and attractive. By sparking sense of wonder, this situation makes positive contributions to the learning process. Thanks to the rich contents offered by mobile devices, students could acquire vocabulary knowledge through

mobile devices with additional information and research (such as verb conjugation and inflectional suffixes) and they could solidify their knowledge with activities.

At the same time, the Internet connection emerges as a serious problem. Both lack of infrastructure and expensive internet access create the root of the problem. In this sense, relevant institutions have duties to improve required infrastructure. Furthermore, universities should provide for students with cheaper internet access by signing various protocols with mobile operators concerning prices or directly mobile operators should provide cheaper access to the Internet so as to support education. Otherwise, appliances functioning inefficiently and having connection problems may affect the motivation of students in a negative way and thus make learning process tiresome and may cause failure.

The portability and accessibility of mobile dictionaries ensure learning opportunity regardless of time and space. A student can carry out learning activity thanks to instant access to information at any moment. Indeed, students view this instant access as the major distinguishing characteristic of mobile dictionaries separating it from printed equivalents. Based on all these, we can say that mobile dictionaries have become an indispensable tool of language and particularly vocabulary teaching. Further studies will make a great contribution to the development and enrichment of these applications and so that more effective and efficient teaching material and teaching environment would be created.

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Mobil Sözlüklerin Sözcük Öğretiminde Kullanımı Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Öz

Son yıllarda teknoloji alanında yaşanan hızlı gelişmeler, kitapları ve defterleri cep telefonu ve tabletlerin içine yerleştirdiği gibi sözlükleri de bu küçük kutulara sığdırmıştır. Eskiden taşımakta zorlandığımız kocaman sözlüklerin yerini birkaç dokunuşla istediğimiz kelimeye ulaşabildiğimiz mobil sözlükler almıştır. Sahip olduğu görsel ve işitsel içerikler ile mobil sözlükler, sözcük öğretimi için önemli bir kaynak durumuna gelmiştir. Bu kaynağın daha verimli bir şekilde kullanılması ve bundan daha etkin bir şekilde yararlanması için gerekli çalışmaların yapılması gerekmektedir. Buradan hareketle bu çalışmada mobil sözlüklerin sözcük öğretiminde kullanılması üzerinde durulmuştur. Öncelikle öğrencilerin mobil sözlüklere karşı bakış açıları ve bu uygulamaları kullanma sıklıkları ortaya konularak sözcük öğretimindeki avantajları ve sınırlılıkları tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Ortaya çıkan veriler ışığında mobil sözlüklerin daha etkili bir ders materyali olarak kullanılmasının yolları aranmıştır. Bu amaçla 2015-2016 eğitim-öğretim yılında Marmara Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Almanca, Fransızca ve İngilizce Mütercim Tercümanlık bölümlerinde öğrenim gören 22 öğrenciye bir anket uygulanmıştır. Kullanılan anket formu alan yazın taranarak ve uzman görüşü alınarak hazırlanmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde Betimsel İstatistik Tekniği kullanılmıştır. Çalışma sonunda öğrencilerin hemen hemen tamamına yakını mobil sözlükleri sözcük öğrenmek amacıyla sık sık kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca öğrenciler bu uygulamaların avantajları ve sınırlılıklarını da ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu çalışmanın mobil sözlüklerin sözcük öğretiminde daha verimli kullanılması konusundaki çalışmalara katkı sağlayacağı umulmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mobil sözlükler, sözcük öğretimi, yabancı dil, mobil öğrenme, sözlük uygulamaları

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