"When We See Strange Words": Student-centered Experiences Using Dictionary Apps Within and Beyond the English Language Classroom in Palestine

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Abstract

Mobile technologies have been shown to be potential aids in improving language learning a long with computer technology, The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of their socio-affective learning practices when utilizing dictionary applications on their mobile phones. Twenty-five undergraduates were chosen at random from a group of 110 students to engage in five focus group discussions about their experiences using mobile dictionaries as learning tools in the West Bank and Palestine. The analysis of the data identified four main themes in the described experiences, each of which is related to specific socio affective aspects of learning and feelings of self-efficacy: feeling confident in their knowledge, independence in their learning, changing the pace of learning outside of the classroom, and overcoming obstacles like multiple meanings, Arabic accents, and technological distractions. The study's proposals for adding more socio-technical pedagogies to English language instruction for Arabic learners are its conclusion.

Keywords

dictionary apps, self-directed learning, English language learning, socio-affective strategies, emergencies, Palestine

Introduction and Problem Statement

The value of dictionaries in language instruction and education cannot be overstated (Al-Jarf, 2022). One of the most important components of learning a language is expanding one's vocabulary, which is also one of the most difficult things for language learners to do (Rai, 2020).

Lack of vocabulary hinders learning because vocabulary is the building block of all languages. Since they must comprehend a term's meaning, pronunciation, and use in a variety of contexts, second-language learners may find it challenging and annoying to learn vocabulary.

However, mobile learning has made vocabulary study outside of the classroom simpler (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011). Mobile educational apps can help learners of different ages and academic specialties achieve a variety of objectives, including language acquisition. On their smartphones, language learners who are learning English as a second language or a foreign language can browse and download a variety of specialized mobile dictionaries (Al-Jarf, 2022).

Historically, students have learned their L1 and L2 through the use of print (paper) dictionaries that are monolingual, bilingual, general, and/or specialized. They looked up the definitions of challenging words in both general and specific settings using the dictionaries. Since almost two decades ago, instead of cumbersome paper dictionaries, students use and bring portable (handheld) electronic dictionaries to class. An example of media technology that can facilitate learning is a digital dictionary. The meanings, definitions, spelling, and etymology of words are all included in a digital

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dictionary (El-Sawy, 2019). The use of learning media in teaching and learning can create new desires and interests, promote and stimulate learning activities, and have a good impact on students, claim Manoppo et al. (2021) Furthermore, by enabling students to participate in socially and culturally appropriate learning activities, mobile phone integration in higher education classes has highlighted potential learning benefits (Salim & Ahmed, 2018).

Many college students in the Middle East and North Africa see English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) as an essential skill (Erling, 2015). For a number of reasons, including improved social mobility, economic prospects, access to chances overseas, and the capacity to compete in a world that is becoming more and more globalized, the English language is regarded as important. In the Palestinian context, the Ministry of Education places a strong emphasis on the value of language study for increasing students' self-confidence and enabling their integration into the workforce in a globalizing world after graduation (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2016). This is especially important now that the rate of youth unemployment in Palestine attributable to the occupation has surpassed 55% for those between the ages of 15 and 29 (PCBS, 2018). The Palestinian Ministry of Education has fought for greater use of technology in the classroom in addition to its commitment to continual language learning (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2017).

It is envisaged that the usage of computer and mobile technology in English language learning will enhance students' learning and alters the classroom dynamic (Hashim et al., 2016). Therefore, English language instructors should look for ways to use mobile dictionaries to aid in the vocabulary development of their students. This study examines the experiences of Higher Education (HE) students enrolled in "Educational Readings in English" at MON's Faculty of Education in Palestine. The purpose of the study was to investigate how using mobile dictionaries could support self-directed learning for the acquisition of English vocabulary. In addition, it seeks to identify potential obstacles in order to develop future educational strategies.

This study's objectives can be attained by addressing the following research question:

- What experiences do students have when utilizing mobile dictionary apps to assist them in acquiring English vocabulary?
- How do mobile dictionaries aid in the development of English vocabulary through self-directed learning?
- What challenges can students have when utilizing mobile dictionaries?

Researchers created an experience-centered design-based research strategy to create a learning environment that will promote learning and comprehend the learning process from the students' point of view in order to help answer the aforementioned question (McCarthy & Wright, 2004, 2010, 2015; Porcaro, 2014). One hundred ten students used a mobile dictionary app over a 14-week period to help with language learning. The findings of this study are based on the participation of 25 out of 110 students in five focus groups at the end of the semester.

This study offers potential understandings for the use of mobile dictionaries to support student-centered learning and teaching methods to improve reading comprehension and self-efficacy through socio-affective strategies for ESL/EFL language acquisition both within and outside of the classroom. demonstrates the value of routine mobile technology use during emergencies because interruptions to formal learning may adversely impact students' classroom time as the world turns toward e-learning amid disasters and conflict (Brück et al., 2019; Bruhn, 2006). The importance of socio-affective learning using technological tools in the context of a crisis or conflict in English language acquisition has received relatively little attention, despite the fact that a significant amount of research has been done on instructors' and students' use of technology in the classroom. The lack of research on the use of mobile dictionaries for acquiring English vocabulary in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly in the MENA region, where protracted conflict may impede classroom learning, served as the impetus for this study.

Literature

Socio-affective Technology Enhanced Learning

It is commonly acknowledged that technology-enhanced learning improves emotional social development both inside and outside of the classroom, as pedagogies become more constructivist and student-centered (Nami, 2020). Social media platforms, forums, and chat rooms are examples of common social technologies that have been investigated in relation to more independent teaching and learning techniques. Despite the fact that these more "social" platforms are seen as less formal than more conventional classroom-based pedagogical practices, Delahunty et al. (2014) describe the distinction between task-focused participation and more socio-emotional interaction supporting "self-generated" opportunities for student engagement. They draw attention to the ways in which these platforms offer chances for identity validation as well as a feeling of community and belonging, which lessens the social isolation frequently connected to online or remote learning.

Some have argued that as mobile smart phones have proliferated in higher education classrooms (Nami, 2020), they provide better options for solitary study (Huang et al., 2017; Schuck & Maher, 2018). For instance, Dennen and Hao (2014) point out that mobile learning technology can boost output, offer adaptable physical access, encourage communication and cooperation, and link students with "outside" expertise. Schuck and Maher (2018) further suggest that there are opportunities to "untether" learning from fixed locations. Untethering can raise questions about the teacher's position as a source of knowledge and promote more constructivist, student-centered teaching methods. Others have asserted that seeing students use technology across "permeable boundaries" in their daily lives, as opposed to in and out of the classroom, further dispels myths about where learning takes place in digitally enabled contexts (Gronn et al., 2014).

Despite this, educators are becoming more aware of the specific challenges that utilizing mobile learning materials poses. Making time to plan technology use, become familiar with the various mobile platforms available to students, and understand instructional context restrictions (Lai & Gu, 2011; Schuck & Maher, 2018). If teachers do not include directive feedback in their lesson plans, common social interactions might also hinder learning (Alberth, 2019). In addition, it is crucial to take into account the students' preferred learning styles, individual skill levels, and cultural expectations when using technology that combines cooperative learning and socio-affective learning methodologies (Huang et al., 2009; Porcaro, 2014).

Language learning and self-efficacy. A critical component of better teaching and student learning is self-efficacy in technology-assisted language learning, which can also affect students' cognitive and behavioral engagement (Anam & Stracke, 2020; Lai et al., 2015). For instance, Alberth (2019) looked into how Facebook affected the intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy of writing performance among English language learners. In comparison to the classroom setting, students' connections with happier experiences tended to reduce stress and increase self-efficacy reports, which improved collaborative ideation and self-organized vocabulary brainstorming. Anam and Stracke (2020) state that research shows self-efficacy to be a significant predictor of academic success in courses including foreign languages and other subjects. They provided empirical support for the motivational role of self-efficacy beliefs in second language acquisition in their 2019 study.

Every language is built on the learning of vocabulary, and language learners face enormous challenges when they lack this skill. The cornerstone of language acquisition is learning vocabulary, which entails not only understanding a word meaning but also its sound and application in various contexts. In order to learn a language, reading is a necessary receptive skill and a precondition for speaking and writing (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014). English language learners use top-down (global) or bottom-up (local) reading strategies to increase their reading comprehension in two dimensions (local). Top-down strategies involve the capacity to anticipate text content, set objectives, and gauge reading proficiency. When pupils experience challenges, bottom-up approaches, on the other hand, place an emphasis on problem-solving, assistance, and socioemotional aspects of reading. These strategies might include cooperative learning, group projects, the use of dictionaries, and translations from one language into another or a foreign language (Huang et al., 2009).

The selection of reading strategies depends on the abilities and proficiency levels of the students; those with high proficiency choose to rely on global strategies, while those with low proficiency prefer to use local ways. Students who have higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to use a variety of language acquisition strategies, choosing how to respond to challenges. However, current research in higher levels of language proficiency (Language 2) overemphasizes metacognitive and cognitive strategies at the expense of researching socioaffective strategies because students may be less used to discussing their own emotions and understanding the significance of more social aspects of learning (Oxford, 1990; Shmais, 2003). Additionally, socio-affective methods linked to constructivist approaches might be less likely to be studied by researchers.

For students and teachers trying to integrate several learning styles, particularly in cross-cultural teaching and learning contexts, the socio-cultural backdrop of social learning associated with constructionism, such as cooperation and discourse, might in fact provide challenges. Porcaro (2014) addresses the challenges of incorporating cooperation, a key element of both constructivist and technology-enhanced learning, to the higher education classroom in Oman, where students want more authoritative, informed methods. Students in the Palestinian setting depend more on cognitive learning strategies than on social and affective ones when reading in a foreign language. According to accounts, the educational system and cultural environment in Palestine place a larger focus on subject-matter knowledge, with pupils seeking to pass exams and provide exact answers to textbook questions (Shmais, 2003).

Mobile dictionary apps and language learning. The use of mobile dictionaries apps for learning new words has increased significantly over the past two decades, as have

their advantages (Al-Jarf, 2022; Dashtestani, 2013; El-Sawy, 2019; Fan, 2000; Hua & Zarei, 2013; Hulstijn, 1993; Knight, 1994; Kobayashi, 2006; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Li & Xu, 2015; Manoppo et al., 2021; Nami, 2020; Nesi, 2009; Rai, 2020; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016; Salim & Ahmed, 2018; Stirling, 2003;). Technical developments, particularly mobile connectivity, are responsible for this expansion. Mobile dictionaries are beneficial, according to research, especially when compared to paper dictionaries, which are regarded to impede information search and retrieval. Due to their enhanced readability and usability, which speed up search processes, mobile dictionaries are becoming more and more common (Kobayashi, 2006; Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016; Stirling, 2003).

The use of mobile dictionaries in teaching and studying English as a second language has been the subject of several worldwide studies that looked at teachers' and students' perceptions (Al-Jarf, 2022; Chung et al., 2015; Dashtestani, 2013; El-Sawy, 2019; Kobayashi, 2006; Nami, 2020; Rahimi & Miri, 2014; Salim & Ahmed, 2018; Steel, 2012; Stirling, 2003; Wu, 2014). The studies discovered that both teachers and students had moderate to favorable attitudes toward using electronic dictionaries, but they also identified difficulties like a lack of training, the use of inappropriate versions, and disruptions to learning brought on by using electronic dictionaries in the classroom (Dashtestani, 2013). Despite these challenges, research has shown that mobile dictionaries help students learn the English language more (Al-Jarf, 2022; El-Sawy, 2019; Salim & Ahmed, 2018).

Overview of Palestinian Educational Context

The Palestinians have relied on human resources, particularly the human mind and abilities, to survive, prosper, and remain a resilient nation. Palestinians prioritize education as a means of surviving in this situation since it holds up the prospect of more freedoms and a fulfilling existence (Mikki & Jondi, 2010; Nicolai, 2007). More than a third of Palestinians (38.9%) are under the age of 15, and just under a third are categorized as youth (15–30 years) (PCBS, 2018). Although the occupation and security measures restrict physical movement and communication between regions, Palestinian youth have been able to form political and resistance-based alliances online by taking advantage of global and state-based social capital and networking opportunities (Barham, 2014). (Kabilan & Rajab, 2010). The Internet has become a "true boundary breaker in besieged occupied area," according to Khoury-Machool (2007, p. 31).

Youth unemployment in Palestine continues to present significant challenges, notwithstanding the political advantages of the internet era. In response, the Ministry of Education's goal is to provide kids the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century, like being able to communicate with people around the world and compete on a global scale (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2017). To help children gain more confidence in their language skills, they have implemented English-language instruction starting in the first grade, which is just one of the many steps they have done to prepare students of all ages (Barham, 2014). The Ministry of Education has put in place a communication technologies curriculum in addition to a technology curriculum that supports ICT topics in grades 5 through 10 through the creation of computer labs. By switching from teacher-centered to student-centered learning and embracing more constructivist learning approaches, the Ministry has also tried to improve the quality of education through recent curriculum reform (Palestinian Ministry of Education, 2016). The strategic plan for the Palestinian Education Initiative (PEI) places a strong emphasis on the value of communication technologies in education and how they serve as catalysts for pedagogical innovation and high-quality instruction. Many teachers are hesitant to use communication technologies in the classroom to improve student-centered learning, despite large investments in infrastructure and training.

Material and Methods

The first author felt that research into dictionary app use from students' perspectives was essential to evaluating their value in facilitating student-centered learning and the retention of new English vocabulary. This was based on her own experiences teaching English. Experience-centered design-led research was developed to make sure that the study design supported constructivist (Powell & Kalina, 2009) and student-centered perspectives on learning. According to Porcaro (2014), this approach "seeks to comprehend learning in situ by developing a learning environment or product that not only supports student learning but also sheds light on the learning process under inquiry" (Porcaro, 2014, p. 202). In order to better understand enhanced encounters of technology use and learning, we combined these design-led sensibilities with experience-centered design, as suggested by McCarthy and Wright (2004, 2010, 2015). We did this by drawing on pragmatic traditions (Dewey, 1916) and theories of daily esthetic experiences. The first author used reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) after the sessions and more formally with students in a focus group at the end of the semester to create and reflect on the environment to facilitate productive learning because she was both the teacher delivering the lesson and the researcher of students' experiences with mobile dictionaries.

Study design and rationale. The experiences of Palestinian Higher Education (HE) students taking "Educational Readings in English" in the Faculty of Education at MON are examined in this study. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was used in the investigation. The goal of this phenomenological analysis is to gather and examine the real-world experiences of college students taking "Educational Readings in English" who used mobile dictionaries to help with their language learning.

Working with students to use mobile dictionary applications of their choosing over a 14-week period while gathering both qualitative and quantitative measurements of experience was the study's design and data collection approach. The qualitative components of English language acquisition that emphasize the more socio-affective characteristics are the main emphasis of this article. The most effective technique for gathering qualitative data to gain a deeper comprehension of students' opinions was determined to be focus group discussions (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Participants. The study involved 110 students who were enrolled in two sessions of "Educational Reading in English Readings" at the Faculty of Education at MON, West Bank, Palestine, during the autumn semester of 2016 to 2017. Fifty-one students majoring in primary classroom teaching and hoping to teach grades 1 through 4 made up the first part. Fifty-nine first-year English language teaching technique majors made up the second section. Both parts of the class had to enroll in the course as a requirement for graduation.

Both groups used mobile e-dictionaries to pick up new terminology as part of their English language instruction. In five focus groups, 25 students from both sections took part. There were five pupils in each session, and they each lasted an hour on average.

Procedure. The course is implemented in three stages. At the beginning of the course, the instructor/first researcher explained to the students the purpose of using mobile dictionaries. Then she instructed them to download dictionaries to their smartphones so they could use them when reading particular articles during the course. The teacher/first researcher also gave the pupils the option to download a variety of dictionaries applications and then pick the one they wished to use. Due to the unreliable Internet connectivity at the university, the instructor/first researcher advised adopting offline dictionaries apps. Students who have access to the Internet at home were urged to use online dictionaries.

The instructor/first researcher met with the students to go over the types and titles of the dictionary programs they had been using at the beginning of the semester after they had been using the programs for a week. Issues were discussed and questions were answered at that meeting. At the start of the semester and on occasion following, students read each item on their own. The teacher of the class and the students then went over each item and defined any new lexicons. The pupils were then encouraged to research any challenging lexicons on their own before the lecturer clarified them. Additionally, they were advised to write down any inquiries they had regarding the material they had just read. Instructors and researchers urged students to use the pocket dictionaries throughout every class and allowed them time to look up the meanings of unfamiliar words before offering assistance. As a tool for students to reflect on the readings, teachers occasionally encouraged them to write a paragraph or two about how they understood the subjects discussed in the articles. When students were writing these paragraphs, the use of portable dictionaries was also advised. The entire semester was spent on this process. Students took part in the focus group discussion at the end of the semester.

The purpose of the study and the intended use of the data were explained at the start of each focus group discussion. Participants were informed by the researcher that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to respond to any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. All focus group discussions were audio recorded, followed by transcription and analysis.

Data analysis. The researcher employed theme analysis in order to interpret the data. Due of its versatility, thematic analysis (TA) is frequently used in qualitative research. It is a method for classifying, evaluating, and understanding patterns, often known as themes (Clarke & Braun, 2016). The researcher followed the six stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Start by familiarizing and becoming acquainted with the information. Then (2) writing codes and (3) looking into potential topics while keeping to the core principles of INEE. Then (4) review them and (5) assign names and definitions to each. Finally, we examine the results.

To help the first author understand the perspectives of the students, the audio data from the focus groups was translated into Arabic. After becoming familiar with the Arabic data, the first author conducted an initial inductive thematic analysis, during which significant themes related to socio-affective experience and self-efficacy started to emerge. The first and second writers performed a secondary collaborative deductive topic analysis while analyzing the study literature. The first author initially went over each student's comments and questions and translated them into English. The second author, who

also added early suggestions on interpretation that were appropriate for literary comprehension, typed these. The corpus of data was then rearranged around specific themes in light of constructivist education theory and literature, with an emphasis on epiphanies that corresponded with socio-affective student descriptions.

Research Findings

When using mobile dictionary apps to augment their language learning courses, students in both EREL (Educational Reading in English Language) groups and across a number of fundamental language learning skills reported overwhelmingly positive experiences. The improvement in their capacity to look up words during reading tasks was the main advantage mentioned. Due to the time and effort involved in searching and the availability of the dictionary for fast lookup, this in turn boosted their understanding and memory of terms. The use of paper dictionaries, which was thought to be time-consuming and frequently more challenging to use, was also compared to these benefits. Numerous students claimed that using this feature enhanced their pronunciation, particularly when pronouncing English vowel sounds, which can be problematic for Arabic speakers. This is because many mobile dictionary apps include the ability to play the sounds of the words. In the section that follows, we report on particular instances where students described in detail how these advantages and certain problems related to specific socio-affective components of learning and they experienced feelings of self-efficacy.

Feeling good about what you know. Positive learning experiences seemed to improve a person's abilities and self-assurance. This was made extremely evident in the focus group sessions where students discussed their experiences using dictionary apps as a learning tool. Their confidence and sense of fulfilment are boosted by their belief in technology and their perception that the technology they are using is acceptable. Moreover, because I am confident that it is accurate, my confidence is increased. Children were encouraged to share their experiences with siblings and friends because they believed that dictionary applications were powerful learning tools.

One students shared her feeling about using dictionary apps in front of her family:

> Developed my self-confidence, so when I speak with my relatives and siblings and I don't know the meaning of a particular phrase, I instantly get it translated and demonstrate my proficiency. Also in the classroom, I fight with myself to find the term quickly and provide you (the teacher) with its definition. This enhances my sense of self-confidence.

Students frequently used dictionary applications at home, such as when helping their younger siblings with their schoolwork. This usage was not limited to the classroom. One student, who said, stated this opinion:

> Not only do I utilize it in this course, but also when I teach my (younger) sisters difficult terms. Even though I have studied these words previously, I occasionally forget them. Consequently, I have begun using mobile dictionaries.

This favorable experience prompted students to describe their use of dictionary applications as "fun" and "interesting." It made them feel proud to be utilizing technology to study in front of their relatives and friends; using technology made me feel proud in front of my family.

Independent of others
Many students reported that using the mobile dictionaries increased their level of independent learning and reduced their dependence on others. This highlighted the importance of an outside-the-classroom network of parental, peer, and teacher-led support for language learning.

Student: *I no longer need to ask a friend or family member for a definition; I can do it myself. No longer do I turn to a member of my family or a friend for assistance. Not any longer. 'You do not even go to your teacher, per the interviewer. You ceased asking them as well.*
Student: *Even the instructor*

A number of students described similar experiences in which they felt a greater feeling of agency and self-recognition as capable learners despite having the technical means literally in their hands ("I am holding a phone and it is translating"). Numerous people also mentioned feelings of improvement ("you feel more advanced and up-to-date in comparison to others"), a willingness to try out novel learning strategies, as well as increased initiative and preparation for upcoming classes.

While these experiences may also reflect the age groups of the students as they transition from secondary to higher education at a time when youth are entering adulthood and desiring more freedom, they may also reflect the transition from secondary to higher education. The dictionary app also seemed to fit with students' strong desire to become more independent outside of the classroom, at home, and with their peers. Students discussed some of the less pleasant sensations related to asking for help in class and how using the dictionary app to study independently helped to lessen these emotions and social bonds. Because doing so would disclose their lack of knowledge or competence, or because doing so might make them feel vulnerable by disclosing this weakness to their instructors and colleagues, many students in

language-learning classrooms are sometimes too hesitant to ask questions. Consequently, using the e-dictionary led to independent learning, which was not only a desired attribute but also helped lessen feelings of embarrassment when asking for help. Because I no longer have to ask people, I no longer feel embarrassed. "you are not waiting to return a favor" implied that utilizing the e-dictionary lessened the pain of feeling obligated to others, something students occasionally experienced before.

Such self-sufficient students also voiced appreciation for the instructor's encouragement to look up definitions and use dictionaries, especially when it appeared that she herself was clueless about them. "The instructor's admission that she didn't know the meaning and was looking to us to give it to her was what I found most endearing. We felt more reliant." "Altering the pace of learning within and outside the classroom."

While there was a lot of focus on learning in the context of the particular English language courses that students were enrolled in, students also talked about how they were able to immediately apply what they had learned to other subject areas, leisure activities, and their everyday pronunciation thanks to the dictionary apps. Feelings of independence and the freedom provided by mobile access to dictionary applications also allowed for helpful adjustments in temporality, or when and where they could study, and spatiality, or where they could learn, which were observed to change the rate and place of learning.

Changes in learning's temporalities lessened feelings of boredom or irritability brought on by waiting for help. As a result, when they had a question, students appreciated how quickly they could conduct a search. The impact on the classroom environment was also discussed: "I used to wait for the English teacher to answer to my inquiry, but now I don't." When employing digital tools, this transformation inspired many students to take ownership of their own learning.

Immediacy was thought to be quite helpful when studying at home, especially when there was little social support from family or friends.

> When you come across a word you don't understand, you stop studying, especially if no one is around to help (e.g., you must wait until the next day to ask your teacher). You can now freely access information whenever you want, without anybody else's help. Women who lack education could find it difficult to support their kids in this way.

Despite the fact that studying at home is a popular strategy for many students to keep up with their coursework, some students were not always able to rely on family assistance for English language assignments. Students talked about getting into the learning groove and the distractions that result from having to seek for help when

the right kind of support isn't available in this part. As a result, the e-dictionary offered specific assistance when and where it was needed, avoiding these learning disruptions and maintaining the learner's flow.

In addition to bridging the gap between formal classroom instruction and learning at home, students discussed how dictionary applications encouraged greater chance learning in daily life. One pupil, for instance, emphasized:

> We consult the dictionary app to find the definition of words we are unfamiliar with or do not understand. For instance, we met English words like "fond" on the bus that we could not understand. We started looking for it right away.

The dictionary app, according to the students who talked about these interactions, gave them learning opportunities that were no longer limited to the concentrated time or locations associated with formal learning circumstances. Instead, the examples provided by the students show that the d-dictionary opens up chances for greater spontaneous learning in their daily lives. In addition, this was not only experienced privately but also in more communal settings, including on the bus, where peers may casually share knowledge.

Multiple meanings, Arabic accents, and digital diversions pose obstacles. Despite the apparent positive effects of mobile dictionary apps, students still encountered issues when using e-dictionaries. The first issue focused on the wide range of synonyms and definitions offered by dictionary apps. Students found it challenging to determine the precise meaning of the word they were looking for as a result. The initial perplexity was overcome by "reading the line numerous times to get the broad concept, which let us discern the correct interpretation," which helped them move past it.

The nuances of specific Arabic accents further added to the difficulty. For example, new English language learners could commonly use dictionary apps to assist them in constructing their ideas in English during writing exercises. Because some students first think in Arabic before translating into L2-English, they use mobile devices to access Arabic-to-English dictionaries. Arabic has distinctive accents from other languages; for example, if students want to seek up the definition of (سَلَطة), which means "salad," dictionary apps fail to recognize the accents and translate the word as (سُلْطة), which means "authority." Therefore, even minor accents can change a word's overall meaning. Students were able to see this when they contrasted their conclusions about relevance with those of their peers' and noted the discrepancy. Students to teachers suggested the creation of a unique mobile application dictionary with only terms for writing and reading lessons. To

help students find the right phrase and steer clear of distractions from alternative meanings, instructors should design a mobile app with all the terminology from our textbook.

The use of technology in teaching and learning raised concerns among students as well since it might cause distractions. When faced with a challenging topic, students saw their teacher utilizing a mobile dictionary app, but she did not provide her students with access to these tools. We observed our instructor using the Golden Dictionary app on her smartphone to look up the definitions of certain terms in our schools, so we asked her what it was. Students who participated in the study and those who used mobile dictionaries said they were more focused and aware of the need for attention when using dictionaries. As a result, they recognized the importance of educating students how to effectively use technology for educational goals as well as the necessity of using technology in teaching and learning. Students acknowledged that it was challenging to forbid them from using technology in class, thus it was essential from the perspective of a student to do it appropriately.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to understand how students used mobile dictionaries to learn vocabulary and the English language in the setting of Palestinian higher education. The research highlighted the significance of self-efficacy as a key component of self-directed, confident language learning. The importance of comprehending the socio affective elements of student learning, however, was most crucial in order to draw attention to other difficulties, particularly when moving toward more student-centered and social constructivist approaches to ESL. Although the study is primarily concerned with education in Palestine, the conclusions give more attention to the socio-affective aspects of learning in emergency situations, where self-directed learning may be advantageous due to disruptions in formal classroom education brought on by pandemics, conflicts, or scarce transportation resources.

As a result of a better understanding of the socio-affective significance of technology-enhanced language learning in the context of Palestine and, more generally, for other Arabic-speaking countries, we highlight future considerations necessary for the use of dictionary apps to support more student-centered self-directed learning. This includes recognizing the social and emotional components of self-efficacy, using socio-technical pedagogical strategies, and exploring opportunities to decouple the dynamics of learning.

Considering self-efficacy as a social and emotional construct. According to Alberth (2019), learning a second language necessitates a rather high level of self-efficacy, especially while speaking or writing. This is related to a person's tenacity in the face of challenges in addition to their confidence in carrying out a task (Bandura, 1995). (Alberth, 2019). As "native" technology users, study respondents reported that using dictionary applications raised their level of competence and self-assurance, which in turn increased their self-efficacy (Prensky, 2001). The use of mobile technology not only helped participants feel "fun and enjoyable" but also helped them feel "current" in contrast to their classmates and extended family. The study discovered that self-efficacy was indicative of individual intrinsic motivators, such as rewards perceived for the self, as well as in relation to important others. Both in the classroom and at home, through activities like supporting siblings' learning or during informal family gatherings, there was a strong desire to share with others in order to foster feelings of pride and to be acknowledged as informed by others. These more extensive socioemotional learning opportunities were thought to be quite beneficial.

It is thought that a learner's ability to master both cognitive top-down strategies best supports self-efficacy, which is particularly significant for reading as a core skill in language learning (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014). These strategies include text forecasting skills, socio-affective bottom-up techniques like using a dictionary and group projects, and knowing when to use them most effectively (Huang et al., 2009). Students participated in more group work as a result of classroom activities that stressed group collaboration, in addition to using social contacts outside of the classroom to look up terms and their meanings, so broadening the opportunities for learning. Many times, according to the students, using mobile applications prevented them from needing to ask others for help, which could be worrying or annoying. Because of this, using mobile apps gave students more confidence in their capacity to work independently while also reducing some of the more detrimental socioemotional components of learning.

Possibilities for altering the learning process. Some have argued that as mobile technologies like smart phones proliferate (Nami, 2020), they provide more opportunities for independent and student-centered learning by distancing learning from conventional learning environments and the teacher's authoritative knowledge (Dennen & Hao, 2014; Gronn et al., 2014; Schuck & Maher, 2018; Steel, 2012). Most significantly, though, was the shift in learning's temporalities, in that using dictionary apps gave students the choice between taking more responsibility for their education and being more

open to opportunities for informal social learning. Students frequently reported more spontaneous learning opportunities that went beyond the traditional educational environments of the classroom and university. When using their dictionary applications, students were able to modify the temporal dynamics of their learning in this way.

Students claimed that they routinely used their dictionary applications in class to kill boredom, get ahead, and avoid waiting for help from the teacher. Students were able to understand the value of being able to search for a word without having to wait until the next day to ask their teacher when doing formal study outside of the classroom, particularly when there was little familial support at home due to differences in parental educational attainment. The speed, portability, and accessibility of mobile dictionaries, according to students, allowed them to manage their studies without being disrupted in any situation. Designing for satisfaction and enjoyment necessitates understanding the dynamic flow of esthetic experiences with technology, as McCarthy and Wright (2004, 2010) demonstrate. Although disruptions and challenges can spur introspection and learning, it is crucial to foster fulfillment while attending to the diverse needs and interests of people. This is especially important in the context of Palestinian higher education institutions that strive to offer inclusive and student-centered teaching strategies. The environment in which students may experience academic disruptions due to a range of factors including persistent violence, occupation, and possibly insufficient resources, which may affect the infrastructure for learning and travel (Brück et al., 2019; Bruhn, 2006).

Studies show that pupils who have a high sense of self-efficacy are more self-regulatory, task-focused, and less afraid of failure (Anam & Stracke, 2020). These kids also frequently put in more effort, have a positive outlook, and persevere while dealing with difficult schoolwork. Due to these factors, students' academic achievement is attributed not just to their knowledge and skills but also to their level of self-assurance. In academic settings, self-efficacy can work as an internal incentive for students to show more motivation for, and behavioral and cognitive engagement with, their academic pursuits. The idea encourages pupils to persevere in the face of challenges or seductive temptations (Anam & Stracke, 2020). The participants in this study were internally motivated, which led them to look for particular coping mechanisms when they ran into problems using mobile dictionary apps.

Socio-technical pedagogical techniques are introduced. In the context of language acquisition and the use of dictionary apps, the importance of key pedagogical tactics and a knowledge of major socio-technical problems, such as confusion over various meanings and Arabic accents, was underlined by the study. Students claimed, for instance, that the teacher pretended not to grasp the definition of a certain phrase in order to increase student participation and make them feel more like experts. This was complemented by opportunities to assist students with technical or interpretive difficulties through group work and classroom discussion. This also needed the teacher to be familiar with social constructivist learning strategies and not to rely solely on technology to enable more student-centered learning from the outset. Furthermore, it was essential to take into account student concerns regarding the appropriate usage and learning through technology for higher education students.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

Young people's day-to-day lives are becoming increasingly reliant on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. In the context of English language learning in Palestinian classrooms, greater attention should be paid to socio-affective learning strategies to support students. For instance, students need to understand the value of learning at a pace that is tailored to meet their needs. Despite the widespread belief that technology improves student-centered learning on its own, this is not the case. This is of the utmost importance in the Palestinian context, where the continuous conflict threatens to disrupt formal education, as well as in other regions that are prone to sudden outbreaks of violence and instability.

Technology-enhanced learning improves emotional social development both inside and outside of the classroom. Referring to the result, students found that Mobile dictionary learning can boost output, offer adaptable physical access, encourage communication and cooperation. These findings justified the needs to incorporate the use of mobile devices as learning support to the learners EFL/ESL learning to improve their language competence. Mobile dictionaries allowed learners to see their instructor as a coach, supporter, and advisor rather than evaluators or judge on the watch. Students learn by asking questions, for clarification or verification.

However, our research was limited due to a number of different factors. We chose to conduct our research with a sample size of only 25 registered students; nevertheless, we are aware that increasing the number of participants might have increased the generalizability of the findings. Insights were also limited to reflective and descriptive data gathered from students in conversation- with the teacher who was also the researcher; as a result, students may have been more likely to report favorably on their experiences. We have not investigated whether or not there is a difference in the level of English vocabulary

knowledge among students who used or did not use dictionary applications. We are also aware that targeting students in higher education (HE) in Palestine requires a higher general level of education as well as a higher socioeconomic standing in order to be able to pay for university tuition; as a result, we acknowledge that access to smart mobile phones for students may be more limited in other socioeconomic contexts. Therefore, additional research is needed to get a fuller picture of how mobile dictionaries in language learning classes are used with different levels of curriculum development, pedagogical practice, and its impact on students' language acquisition and retention in the Palestinian context, as well as in international contexts. This is because the use of mobile dictionaries in language learning classes has the potential to impact students' language acquisition and retention in a variety of ways.

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