The Use of Electronic Dictionary among Iraqi EFL Students in Al-Kitab University

By

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Abstract

Being a language learner means that you are going to be a friend of dictionary for the whole journey of learning language, sometimes for the rest of your life specially if this learning in somehow becomes a part of your career. As it is, technology becomes part of everything in our lives, learning language and teaching language also have their shares of the technology. In the light of this study the electronic dictionary is the part of technology in learning language. In this study, the researcher tries to shed the light on the use of electronic dictionary among Iraqi EFL students in Al-Kitab university. For that purpose, the researcher set a questionnaire of five parts each part describes different data which in one way or another related to each other. The data reveal how the students use their electronic dictionaries and how this use should redefine in their study by their EFL teachers specially if their purposes are learning more target language vocabularies and raising their language capacity.

Keywords: Dictionary, Electronic dictionary, EFL, Iraqi, University

Introduction

Using dictionary may be the first tool that the students use to build bridges between their native and target language vocabulary learning process. Kefah (2017) and Rezaei and Dawoudi (2016) mention the confirmation of using electronic dictionaries by EFL students to find the meaning during the reading and listening to target language to provide them with quick and direct admission to many layers of vocabulary knowledge, and this is what every English language teacher can notice and see among his/ her students.

In general, using language dictionary can serve many purposes in learning vocabulary, such as; the definition of the word, the literature uses of it, the synonyms and antonyms. The electronic dictionary improves this learning aspects by adding the feature of using voice; voice searching and pronunciation of the word (Kefah, 2017), and videos illustrations and the use of links and cross references, as well as the usage of the word (Zheng and Wang, 2016).

Although the use of electronic dictionary accesses many aspects and facilitates, but it also drifts the students and the teachers in ways that can be highlighted through this study to help them to use the electronic dictionary as well as the use of handled copy dictionary and enlighten them to mention some etiquette to use dictionaries as EFL students.

Electronic dictionary

To define electronic dictionary one can, describe more than one type or copy of a dictionary, some identify it as any dictionary app in mobile phone, other describe it as an online website, etc. Zheng and Wang (2016) provide an idol comprehensive definition for electronic

dictionary by stating these lines:

'An electronic dictionary is a portable electronic device that serves as the digital form of any kind of dictionary. Available in a number of forms (dedicated handheld device, apps on mobile devices, CD-ROMs or DVD-ROMs and online products), electronic dictionaries range in function from general single-language dictionaries to very specific, terminology-based dictionaries for medical, legal, and other professional languages.'

Nowadays, students and teachers are highly affected by the use of technology, considering the electronic dictionary as one of the technological tool products, so we can notice the expanded rapidly usage of it in the last two decades (Dashtestani, 2013; Hua & Zarei, 2013; Li & Xu, 2015; Davoudi, 2016)

Previous related studies
Ayad, Zubaida Samir (2020)
In this study, the researcher uses the practical approach to study the effect of the electronic dictionary as a tool to improve the learning of English language vocabulary for non-departmental students (Geography department), her study includes 50 students of the third level at Tikrit university.

Kefah A. Barha. (2017)
This study is conducted through descriptive approach; it reports the experiences of using electronic dictionary by 25 students in English Reading Classes at the faculty of Social Sciences and Teacher Training Students at A-Najah National University. The experience includes the description of using the electronic dictionary during reading English article then writing a paragraph or two to explain their understanding and exploring the new lexicons.

Ronald and Ozawa (2008)
This study is designed descriptively to show the knowledge and use of some of the functions contained within the electronic dictionaries by conducting a questionnaire for 124 first year English students at a middle ranking Japanese University.

All of the above-mentioned studies studied some aspect related to electronic dictionaries, which may lead the reader to many similarities between them and the present study especially two of them are conducted descriptively. But the big and main difference which must be highlighted here that the present study, unlike the above-mentioned studies, deals with the use of electronic dictionary by the students of English language department in details, activity analysis.

Methods

Purpose of the study
This study is conducted for the reason of need to examine and describe in details the use of electronic dictionary among Iraqi EFL students in Al-Kitab University.

Aims of the study
This study is aim to discuss and describe the following itemsDescribing the details of knowing how to use dictionary in general,
1. Identifying the most useable dictionary among EFL Iraqi students,
2. The daily use of dictionary,
3. Describing the frequency of using dictionary in day,

4.   The trades-offs of detailed using for electronic dictionary and hard copy dictionary, and

5.   The students' perspectives about electronic dictionary.

Nature of the study

      The study is based on the descriptive study (Best and Kahn, 2014) since it describes the use of electronic dictionary among Iraqi EFL students in Al-Kitab University. To this end, it employs the observation and structured questionnaire.

Sample of the study

      A questionnaire of 5 main parts has been conducted to be responded by 121 students of English Department in College of Education/ Al-Kitab University, from both genders: 46 (38 %) males and 75 (62%) females.
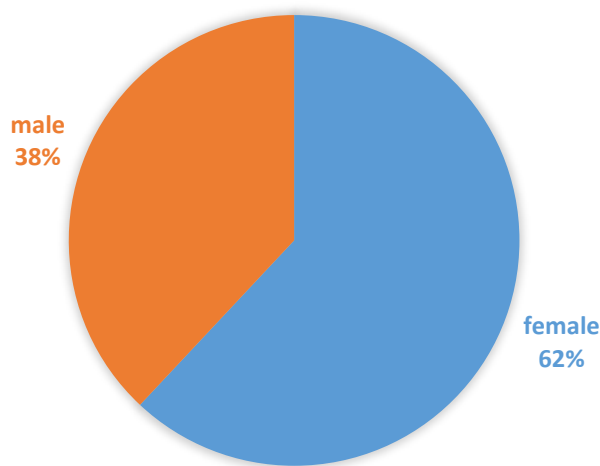

Figure 1: *Percentage of male and female*

Data collection instrument

      A structured questionnaire was built in the light of 5 parts; the first part identifies whether the students know how to use dictionary in general or not, the second part consists of 3 questions search the frequency of using dictionary in day. The third part consists of 13 questions shows out the detailed using of the dictionary. While the 4th part is designed to name the trade-offs of detailed using for electronic dictionary and hard copy dictionary. The 5th part: last part is set as free space for the students to add any comment related to the subject of the study.

      A note should be mentioned that the first third parts of questionnaire are set to be responded according to restricted scales; in order to figure out the usage of the electronic dictionary; in other hand, the last two parts of the questionnaire are set to be responded freely.

Data collection procedure

      In order to collect data, the researcher observe the problem among her university students for two months through her personal teaching experiences. Following this unstructured observation, a questionnaire is administered to 121 students from the first, second, third, and fourth levels of English language Department in college of Education/ Al-Kitab

University to attend this study. It was conducted through printed paper form from the period of 15th of January 2020 to 20th of January 2020.

Data analysis procedures

To analyse the data of the present study, percentage calculating is applied to describe the results of the first and fourth parts of the questionnaire. Meanwhile, Likert scales is applied to those summative parts of the questionnaire; second and third parts. And at last but not least, the fifth part is discussed as the comments are received by the students.

Validity & Reliability

The face validity of the questionnaire has been tested by consulting some of the teaching staff in English Department/ College of Education in Al-Kitab University. they agreed on the questionnaire as being appropriate for the aims of the study with a percentage of 93%.

In the name of the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient has been applied to all of the questionnaire parts reveal 0.887, which points it is quite reliable to be demanded.

Findings and Discussions

The following figure (figure 2) shows the responses and their percentages of the first four questions of the first part of the questionnaire. These questions reveal that most of the students (79%) know how to read phonemic transcription in a dictionary, and 64% of the students are aware of the diversity of dictionaries in their study field, and this absolutely makes sense for the guidelines the students have been taught by their teacher to learn how to use the dictionary; 93% of the students know how to use dictionary as an EFL student.
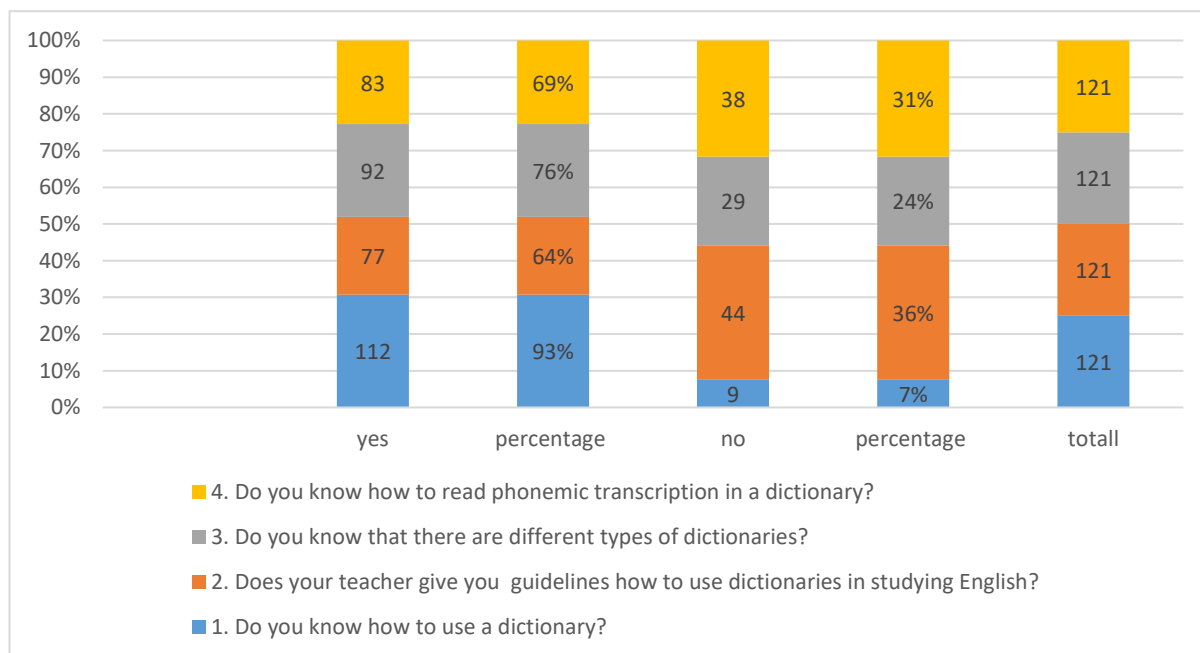

Figure 2: *Students' knowledge of using dictionary in general*

The fifth question of the same part is explained in separated figure (figure 3) to show the most useable dictionary and the results confirm what has been noticed during the untrusted observation that 50% of the students use the electronic dictionary and 39% use both electronic

dictionary and hard copy dictionary, while only 11% of the students use only the hard copy dictionary. These results may reveal more than expected also it can be as a light of new studies or articles about the students' perspectives in using electronic dictionary in Iraq. As what Wati (2020) did with her study in Indonesian vocational high school.
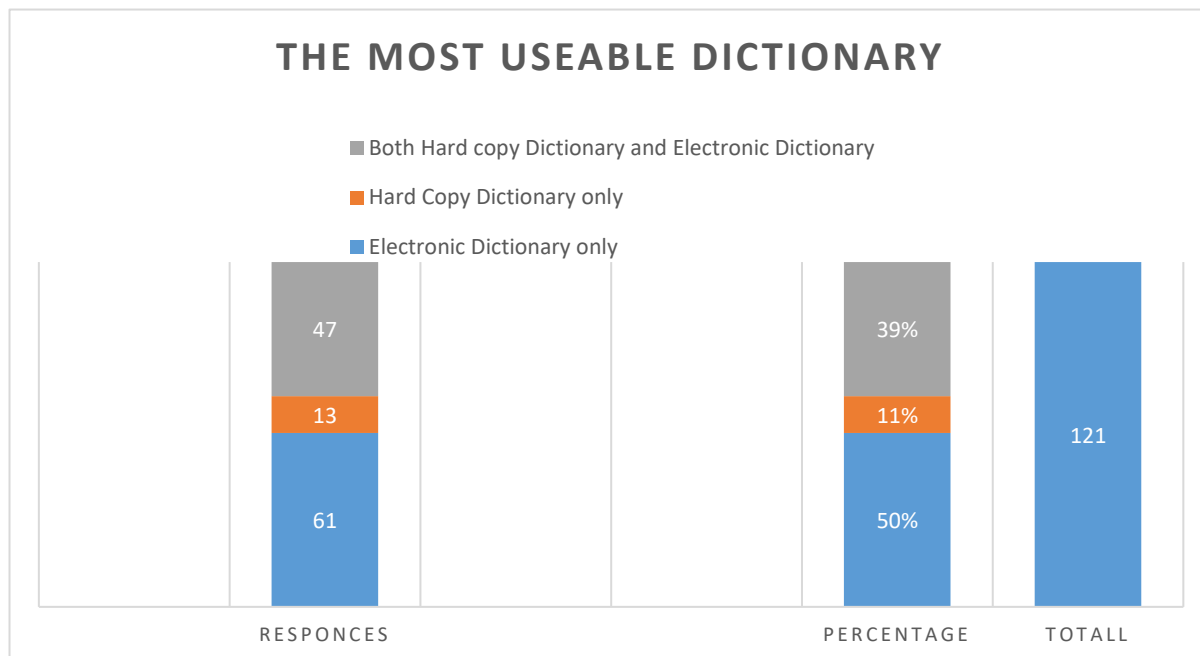

THE MOST USEABLE DICTIONARY

■ Both Hard copy Dictionary and Electronic Dictionary
■ Hard Copy Dictionary only
■ Electronic Dictionary only

RESPONCES: 47 / 13 / 61
PERCENTAGE: 39% / 11% / 50%
TOTALL: 121

Figure 3: the most useable dictionary

Table 1: *Data of Part*

	Data of Part 2			
No.	Questions	weighted mean	standard deviation	level of response
1	How many times do you use the electronic dictionary a day?	2.68	1.468	4 to 7
2	How many electronic dictionaries do you use?	2.14	1.362	1 to 3
3	How many hard copy dictionaries do you use?	1.77	1.174	none
	weighted mean	2.1956		
	standard deviation	0.94052		

Table (1) shows (Descriptive statistics for the frequency of using the dictionary and the number of electronic dictionaries and hard copy dictionaries the students use in their study or lectures) from which we find the highest average was awarded to the question 1 (**How many times do you use the electronic dictionary a day?**) with mean 2.68 and standard deviation 1.468 which it means that the students use their electronic dictionaries more than 4 times a day, followed by the second question (**How many electronic dictionaries do you use?**) with mean 2.14 and standard deviation 1.362 which it means that the students use 1 -3   electronic

dictionaries in their study, and finally the third question in this part (**How many hard copy dictionaries do you use?**) with mean 1.77 and standard deviation 1.174 which it means that the students do not use any hard copy dictionary in their study. The weighted mean of the second part of the questionnaire is 2.1946 and standard deviation is 0.94052.

Table (2) shows (Descriptive statistics for the detailed using of the dictionary) from which we find the highest average was awarded to the item 8 (**I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic dictionary**) with mean 3.3 and standard deviation 1.554, followed by the item 3 (**I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by writing its spelling.**) with mean 2. 92 and standard deviation 1.552. While the lowest average was awarded to the item 1 (**I search for new words immediately in the hard copy dictionary**) with mean 2. 25 and standard deviation 1.451. The weighted mean of the second part of the questionnaire is 2.64 and standard deviation is 1.0551.

Table 2*: Data of part 3*

no.	Items	weighted mean	standard deviation	level of response
	Data of Part 3			
1	I search for new words immediately in the hard copy dictionary.	2.25	1.451	often
2	I search for new words immediately in the electronic dictionary.	2.87	1.622	sometimes
3	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by writing its	2.92	1.552	sometimes
4	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by voice search.	2.49	1.501	often
5	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the native	2.73	1.494	sometimes
6	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the target	2.69	1.544	sometimes
7	I read phonemic transcription of the new word in electronic dictionary.	2.26	1.413	often
8	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic	3.03	1.554	sometimes
9	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic	2.66	1.498	sometimes
10	I compare between the electronic dictionary pronunciation and my	2.59	1.424	often
11	I search for the meaning in more than one electronic dictionary.	2.63	1.484	sometimes
12	I search in google for words that do not exist in the dictionary.	2.69	1.454	sometimes
13	I search in google image to fully understand the meaning.	2.64	1.528	sometimes
weightedmean		2.6491	**sometimes**	
standard deviation		1.05551		

The fourth part of the questionnaire 29% of (the highest percentage among other subjects) the students show their need to use dictionary in Translation subject or lectures. This result may be show the agreement with the results of Mahmoud (2017) who discussed not only

the use of dictionary in translation lectures and subjects but also in their exams. Instead 9% of the students represent the lowest need of using dictionary appears in listening and writing subjects, (See Figure 4).
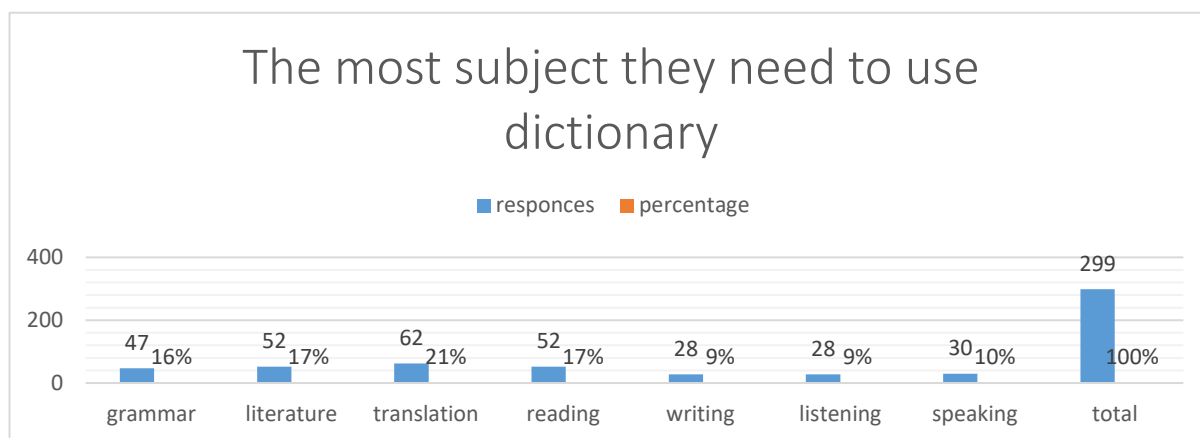

Figure 4: The need of using dictionary in different subjects

In the last but not the least, the fifth part which is set as a free space for any comment related to the study shows many comments that agree to the easiness of using electronic dictionary specially for those starters in studying English Language while most of the other responses were as NO COMMENT. Although, there is one comment '' برايي استخدام قاموس الالكتروني ليست جيدة كما نبحث ب قاموس ورقي افضل من الكتروني لان عندما نبحث عن كلمة ب قاموس ورقي فتبقئ في فكر الإنسان اكثر من قاموس الكتروني'' which it means that **the use of electronic dictionary is not** *good enough as the using of hard copy dictionary which help the word to stay in the human mind.*

Conclusion and suggestions

In the light of the above data, this study shows and describes every possible behaviour of using electronic dictionary among Iraqi EFL students to clear that 93% of the students know how to use the dictionary in their study in general, and 50% of the students use only electronic dictionary which represents half of every community in Iraqi EFL students group, which shows in the data of the second part that those students do not have any hard copy dictionary although they use the dictionary more than 4 times a day. Also, the students listen to the audio pronunciation provided in the electronic dictionary and do not read the phonemic transcript of the word (see table 2), the most need of dictionary in Translation text (according to figure 4 may help both the EFL teacher and students to redefine the use of electronic dictionary in more effective way suits their language learning habits. In addition to the unique and the only comment which has been copied from the data and inserted in above, the researcher may suggest that the students have not to learn how to use dictionary in general but also they have to learn how to use their electronic dictionary proficiently as if they use hard copy one; specially the technology nowadays attached more facilities such as show other related data, similar examples, see web results …etc.

A practical study may be a good suggestion for those who are interested in conducting research related to vocabulary and grammar in the light of this study to measure the effect of using the electronic dictionary as proficiently tool to learn vocabularies and raise the language capacity of EFL students, so the students can learn how the use of dictionaries can be more useful in studying language in many aspects not only finding the native language meaning equivalents.

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As part of my research in Al-Kitab University, I have conducted study to check ''The Use of Electronic Dictionary among EFL Students in Al-Kitab University''. Your response to the following questionnaire will be highly appreciated.

    Note: your response will confidential and will remain anonymous

    The Researcher,

Part 1

no.	Items	yes	no
1	Do you know how to use a dictionary?		
2	Does your teacher give you a guideline how to use dictionaries in studying English?		
3	Do you know that there are different types of dictionaries?		
4	Do you know how to read phonemic transcription in a dictionary		
5	I use electronic dictionary only hard copy dictionary only Both hard copy dictionary and electronic dictionary		

Part 2

no.	Items	none	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	More than 10
1	How many times do you use the electronic dictionary a day?					
2	How many electronic dictionaries do you use?					
3	How many hard copy dictionaries do you use?					

Part 3

no.	Items	always	almost	sometimes	seldom	never
1	I search for new words immediately in the hard copy dictionary.					
2	I search for new words immediately in the electronic dictionary.					
3	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by writing its spelling.					
4	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by voice search.					
5	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the native language.					
6	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the target language.					
7	I read phonemic transcription of the new word in electronic dictionary.					
8	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic dictionary.					
9	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic dictionary in different accents.					
10	I compare between the electronic dictionary pronunciation and my teachers' pronunciation.					
11	I search for the meaning in more than one electronic dictionary.					
12	I search in google for words that do not exist in the dictionary.					
13	I search in google image to fully understand the meaning.					

Part 4 In which subject do you need to use dictionary a lot?

1	grammar
2	literature
3	translation
4	reading
5	writing
6	listening
7	speaking

Part 5. Comment on The Use of Electronic Dictionaries in your study as a student of English as a foreign language.

2**. Detailed Questionnaire Data**

Part 2 scale	never	often	someti mes	usual ly,	always
part 3 scale	none	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	More than 10
Likert Scale	1 - 1.80	1.81 - 2.60	2.60 - 3.40	3.40 - 4.20	4.20 - 5

Data of Part 2

o.	Q uestions	sc ale	one	to 3	to 7	to 10	ore than 10	otal	w eighted mean	s tandard deviation	evel of respon se
	H ow many times do you use the electronic dictionar y a day?	fr equency	4	0	1	3	3	21	2 .68	1 .468	to 7
		p ercent	8.1	4.8	7.4	0.7	9	00			
	H ow many electronic dictionari es do you use?	fr equency	4	0	1	3	3	21	2 .14	1 .362	to 3
		p ercent	8.1	4.8	7.4	0.7	9	00			
	H ow many hard copy dictionari es do you use?	fr equency	6	4	1			21	1 .77	1 .174	one
		p ercent	2.8	1.6	7.4	.5	.8	00			
	weighted mean								2 .1956		none
	standard deviation									0 .94052	

no.	Items	scale	none	1 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	More than 10	total	weighted mean	standard deviation	level of response
Data of Part 3											
1	I search for new words immediately in the hard copy dictionary.	frequency	57	20	16	13	15	121	2.25	1.451	often
		percent	47.1	16.5	13.2	10.7	12.4	100			
2	I search for new words immediately in the electronic dictionary.	frequency	38	20	16	14	33	121	2.87	1.622	sometimes
		percent	31.4	16.5	13.2	11.6	27.3	100			
3	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by writing its	frequency	35	16	23	18	29	121	2.92	1.552	sometimes
		percent	28.9	13.2	19	14.9	24	100			
4	I search for the word meaning in the electronic dictionary by voice search.	frequency	46	24	17	14	20	121	2.49	1.501	often
		percent	38	19.8	14	11.6	16.5	100			
5	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the native	frequency	37	20	27	13	24	121	2.73	1.494	sometimes
		percent	30.6	16.5	22.3	10.7	19.8	100			
6	I use electronic dictionary to know the meaning of the word in the target	frequency	44	13	24	17	23	121	2.69	1.544	sometimes
		percent	36.4	10.7	19.8	14	19	100			
7	I read phonemic transcription of the new word in electronic dictionary.	frequency	54	21	20	12	14	121	2.26	1.413	often
		percent	44.6	17.4	16.5	9.9	11.6	100			
8	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic	frequency	29	21	23	13	35	121	3.03	1.554	sometimes
		percent	24	17.4	19	10.7	28.9	100			
9	I listen to the audio pronunciation of the new word in the electronic	frequency	38	23	27	8	25	121	2.66	1.498	sometimes
		percent	31.4	19	22.3	6.6	20.7	100			
10	I compare between the electronic dictionary pronunciation and my	frequency	39	22	28	14	18	121	2.59	1.424	often
		percent	32.2	18.2	23.1	11.6	14.9	100			
11	I search for the meaning in more than one electronic dictionary.	frequency	40	22	23	15	21	121	2.63	1.484	sometimes
		percent	33.1	18.2	19	12.4	17.4	100			
12	I search in google for words that do not exist in the dictionary.	frequency	37	20	27	17	20	121	2.69	1.454	sometimes
		percent	30.6	16.5	22.3	14	16.5	100			
13	I search in google image to fully understand the meaning.	frequency	43	17	26	11	24	121	2.64	1.528	sometimes
		percent	35.5	14	21.5	9.1	19.8	100			
weightedmean									2.6491	sometimes	
standard deviation									1.05551		