

Interest levels on using mobile dictionaries of students learning Turkish as a foreign language in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, it is known that the interest of foreigners in Turkey and learning Turkish has increased. The best example of this is the students who come to Turkey for education from different countries. Again, with the development of technology and the spread of internet use, dictionaries are known to change format and move from printed dictionaries to digital media. This study examines the interest level of students on using a mobile dictionary who came to Turkey for education and learned Turkish as a foreign language in their first year in the 2019-2020 academic year. In the study, data collected through two different scales from 50 students at the B1 level in Turkish studying at Turkish Education Center in a state university (TÖMER) who know also English very well and use mobile phones. The first scale is to determine "the types of mobile-based dictionaries used by foreign students while learning Turkish and the reasons for using this dictionary", and the second to reveal "the interest level of foreign students learning Turkish on using a mobile-based dictionary". Questions on the first scale are semi-structured open-ended and the second uses likert scale for measuring their interest level and reasons. Data from both scales were interpreted as percentages and frequencies. The results show that students who are in Turkey for educational purposes and learn Turkish as a foreign language most often use Google Translate and Turkish English Dictionary mobile dictionaries. The interest level of these students on using a mobile dictionary was determined at a 'good' level based on the classification developed by Arikunto (2008).

Keywords: Mobile dictionaries, students who learn Turkish as a foreign language in Turkey, level of interest.

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INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world, education, like all tools and equipment, behavior and understanding, has acquired a different dimension in accordance with the understanding of "our world home". Now individuals can choose schools abroad as much as schools within their national borders. They can choose anywhere where they can feel comfortable economically, socially or culturally. For example, around 1400 foreign students from 44 different countries study at the university where this research is conducted. Foreign students enrolled in school in Turkey attend Turkish preparatory school for one year before they start to study law, engineering, medicine, etc. For students who learn Turkish in these preparatory classes, dictionaries are the easiest information consultation tools.

In the preliminary study, almost all students who studied the language at the Turkish Teaching Center (TÖMER) declared that they used a dictionary. These students often use dictionaries to find the meaning of words, phrases or formulaic expressions, checking for correct spelling and pronunciation.

Today, with the global expansion of the internet, such features as wireless access (universities in Turkey provide this service to their students for free), multiple presentation formats, portability, constant updates, search speed and ease, and visual and auditory capabilities have laid the groundwork for using mobile dictionaries more than other dictionary formats. For this reason the research is designed to deal with the use of

mobile dictionaries.

Mobile dictionaries and research on the use of mobile dictionaries in Turkey

Dictionaries have undergone major changes from their initial form so far. They are the only educational and cultural tools that have managed to keep up with every new technology. Although the available data indicate that the first dictionaries were in the form of cuneiform tablets, over time dictionaries have appeared in papyrus, paper, and other forms. Technology in recent years has revolutionized the way people use it and dictionaries have moved to digital media. Today, there are many dictionaries available that work online or offline through computers and phones. Dictionaries that can be accessed through a computer or phone are called mobile dictionaries.

Mobile dictionaries are resources that can be updated quickly and easily added and removed. Because of these characteristics, they can easily reflect words or terms that have recently entered the language. Accordingly, it reflects the most vivid version of the spoken and written language. In addition, in these dictionaries, which do not have space restrictions, new entries can be easily added according to user needs, and incorrect or missing entries be quickly rewritten. Data needed by users can be searched according to different criteria and needs. Again, many additional features, such as audio, graphics, video, and animation, can be added to the dictionary entries (Wójtowicz, 2003: 62).

As with printed dictionaries, the languages used in mobile dictionary applications are divided into various types in terms of the subject(s) it addresses and the scope of its vocabulary. But mobile dictionary applications are mainly divided into types according to the dictionary usage. In this respect, these dictionaries are considered in two general categories: Online and offline dictionaries. Offline dictionaries are dictionaries that can be accessed without the need for an internet connection. The only difference from printed dictionaries is a different physicality and an access mode. Online dictionaries are those available on the Internet or on various application distribution platforms and accessed via a web browser on a computer or mobile device (Web: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/online-dictionary>, retrieved on February 15, 2020). Online dictionaries are stored in a central database and can be accessed through internet from a search screen. Offline dictionaries are designed for use on a personal computer without the need for an internet connection. Offline dictionaries can also be downloaded in text, MSWord, or PDF format (Wójtowicz, 2003: 60).

In addition to online and offline dictionaries, there are systems that offer instant translation services and allow not only words, but structures larger than words to be

transferred to a second language. These are also classified under the mobile mobile-based dictionaries heading. The most well-known of these are Google, Yahoo, Yandex, etc. which are actually machine translation systems (MT) provided by various search engines. Machine translation is a type of automatic translation that translates language elements, from the source language to the target language not only as words like other mobile dictionaries, but also phrases, fragments of text, or even text as a whole. According to Karami (2014: 1), there are two commonly machine translation technologies used commercially today: Rule-Based Machine Translation and Statistical Machine Translation. Rule-based machine translation systems use large rule corpuses that are manually developed over time by human experts who map structures from the source language to the target language. This process requires extensive words and rules containing morphological, syntactic and semantic scientific knowledge. The software uses these complex rule systems and then transfers the grammatical structure of the source language to the target language. Translations are built on numerous dictionaries and complex linguistic scientific rules. Statistical machine translation systems combine small pieces of text to produce the best possible translation and use computer algorithms for this work. It also uses data from single and bilingual corpus analysis and statistical translation models. A minimum of 2 million words is required for a specific area and even more for a general language. For Ghasemi and Hashemian (2016), Statistical Machine Translation uses a bilingual text corpus which is a database of sentences in both the source language and the target language. In this model, the machine calculates the probabilities of words for the translation of a series of sentences from one language to another. For example, if a word like X has a 75% chance of being translated to Y, the machine automatically selects Y as the translation of X.

The literature review shows that there is a very limited amount of research on the use of dictionaries by foreigners learning Turkish. It seems that the vast majority of these studies are conducted on the topic of printed dictionaries. In these studies, it tried to explore the situations of the students' dictionary culture, dictionary usage skills and dictionary usage attitudes and habits. For example, Özbay and Melanlıoğlu (2013) aimed to determine the dictionary using skills of foreigners at the A2 level in Turkish studying at Gazi Turkish Education Center in the 2011-2012 academic year. Kardaş (2016) conducted a study with 110 students at the A2 and B1 levels at Gazi Gazi Turkish Education Center, and examined the students' dictionary usage habits while learning Turkish. Göçer and Karadağ (2019), on the other hand, revealed that in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, dictionary reading method can be used for vocabulary teaching and that students can use dictionary reading as an option while learning more than

one meaning of words, as a result of a study they conducted with students studying at TÖMER. In addition, there are also studies (Gür, 1999; Özcan, 2006; Akman, 2019; Mumcu, 2020) on the quality, content, methods etc. of the dictionaries to be used while teaching Turkish as a foreign language. But these studies are mostly based on printed dictionaries and dictionary user relationship. Since mobile-based dictionaries and mobile device applications have been recently launched, there has not been much research on them yet. This study, which explores the types of mobile-based dictionaries and demonstrates a fairly strong interest in these dictionaries, will also contribute to the field.

METHODOLOGY

Research model

The study was designed in the case study model from qualitative research methods. The case study is a qualitative research method in which the researcher examines one or a few situations that are limited in time with data collection tools (observations, interviews, audio-visuals, documents, reports) that include multiple sources, and defines situations and situational themes (Subaşı and Okumuş, 2017: 420).

Purpose of the research

The aim of this research is to determine “the types of mobile-based dictionaries used by foreign students enrolled in higher-level education and learned Turkish as a foreign language in the Turkish teaching center, and the interest level of students on using a mobile dictionary”.

Data collection tool

Data was collected through a questionnaire developed by Sepyanda (2019). The data collection tool is a questionnaire consisting of two parts and a total of 35 questions. The first part deals with the mobile dictionaries that foreign student learning Turkish use the most and their reasons for choosing these dictionaries. The second part is designed to measure the level of interest of foreign students learning Turkish on using a mobile dictionary.

The first part includes 10 questions about the use of mobile-based dictionaries in second language learning. Students received the same questions as in Sepyanda (2019), but the dictionary options were updated taking into account the number of downloads in the *Google Play Store* and *App Store*. For the second part, there are 25 expressions that allow students to indicate their interest on using a mobile dictionary in second language learning. This part used likert scale 5 points for measuring their

interest level. Responses to expressions are coded as in Table 1. All data obtained have been interpreted as percentages and frequencies.

Table 1. Likert scale.

Score	Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Universe and sample of the research

The sample of the study consists of foreign students enrolled in school in Turkey attending Turkish preparatory school for one year before they start to study at university. The number of these people has increased day by day. At the university chosen as a sample, around 1400 foreign students from 44 different countries receive education. Since the data collection tool was previously prepared and applied in English, this study was conducted with students whose native languages were English or with students who declared that they know English at C2 level. All of these students are 50 people and at B1 level.

Data collection and analysis

Data was collected from students in one course hour (40 minutes). While interpreting the students' responses, frequency (frequency) values were taken into account for the first part (Table 2). For the second part, the formula developed by Sudjana (2009) was used:

$$P = F / N \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage

F = Total Score Frequency

N = number of students

The values obtained were then interpreted according to the following rating table developed by Arikunto (2008).

Table 2. Frequency range and their level of interest equivalent.

No.	Frequency range (%)	Classification level
1	81 - 100	Very good
2	61 - 80	Good
3	41 - 60	Average
4	21 - 40	Poor
5	0 - 20	Very poor

RESULTS

Information on mobile-based dictionary types used by foreign students learning Turkish, factors affecting dictionary choices, dictionary applications popular in the classroom and types of mobile-based dictionaries that are recommended and not recommended to be used while learning Turkish are presented in Table 3.

When Table 3 is examined, the following results have been obtained. The vast majority of students who learn Turkish as a foreign language in Turkey

and declare that they use a mobile dictionary (41 out of 50 students, 82% of participants) use Google Translate (Question 1).

The use of a mobile-based dictionary is recommended by lecturers (Question 2). 46% of lecturers suggest using Google Translate and the rest suggest using other apps. This rate is 60% for friend recommendations (Question 3). Again, recommendation rate of Google Translate is 54% when considering the recommendation of those who are out of both groups (Question 8). Another popular application in terms of dictionary recommendation

is Turkish – English Dictionary, which is recommended by 10% of lecturers and 16% by friends. Those outside these two groups recommend the Turkish – English Dictionary by 18%.

Google Translate takes the first place (28%) in the results of the dictionary application, which is not recommended and even inconvenient to use for students when learning Turkish (Question 9).

Students declared that they knew Google Translate as the best application (66%) (Question 4). This app is followed by Sesli Sözlük (8%), Turkish – English Dictionary (6%), etc.

Table 3. Mobile dictionaries used and reasons for using dictionary.

Questions	Mobile Based Dictionary Types											
	Google Translate	Tureng	Sesli Sözlük	TDK Büyük Türkçe Sözlük	Zargan	NND (Nedir Ne Demek) Sözlük	Cambridge Dictionary	Oxford Dictionary	Turkish – English Dictionary	Dictionary.com	Merriam English	Other
Kind of mobile based dictionary that students have on their smartphone	41	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	4	-	1	2
Mobile based dictionary is recommended by their lecturer	23	2	1	4	-	-	3	2	5	4	-	7
Mobile based dictionary is recommended by their friends	30	2	1	-	-	3	1	2	8	1	-	4
Mobile based dictionary that students know well	33	-	4	1	2	2	1	2	3	-	1	1
Mobile based dictionary that really helps students in learning Turkish	29	-	4	4	-	1	-	1	10	1	-	4
Mobile based dictionary that is really useful as translating tools	35	-	2	2	-	2	-	2	4	1	1	1
Mobile based dictionary that is interesting for the students in learning Turkish	26	1	6	2	-	1	1	-	11	1	1	2
Mobile based dictionary that is recommended to use	27	2	4	2	2	1	2	1	9	1	-	2
Mobile based dictionary that is not recommended to use	14	2	2	-	4	2	3	3	4	2	1	5
Mobile based dictionary that is most popular in the class	38	1	3	1	-	-	1	1	5	1	-	2

Table 4. Students' interest in mobile dictionaries used.

Statements	Student responses					Total	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1 Mobile based Dictionary is application that I really like to use in learning Turkish	24	15	8	3	0	210	84
2 I enjoy using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning every time	20	15	7	5	3	194	78
3 Using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning is an exciting activity	17	16	8	5	4	187	75
4 I am confident when I use Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	17	14	10	6	3	186	74
5 I feel more satisfied when my lectures ask me to use Mobile based Dictionary	18	13	8	9	2	186	74
6 I am directly interested in using Mobile based Dictionary since I used it at the first time	16	15	10	7	2	186	74
7 I never get bored in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	16	12	9	8	5	176	70
8 I am more interested in using Mobile based Dictionary in translating any difficult words	27	14	5	4	0	214	86
9 I am more fascinated in using Mobile based Dictionary rather than printed dictionary	21	8	7	7	7	179	72
10 I am concerned to use Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning because of the interactive application	17	18	10	2	3	194	78
11 I am enthusiastic in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	15	12	12	8	3	178	71
12 I am generous in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	19	18	7	6	0	200	80
13 I always want to know anything that related about Mobile based Dictionary	19	12	15	1	3	193	77
14 I always find by myself other newest application of Mobile based Dictionary	15	14	14	6	1	186	74
15 I always want to know the newest update about Mobile based Dictionary that I recently use	15	13	13	8	1	183	73
16 Using Mobile based Dictionary makes me have more attention in Turkish learning	26	14	3	3	4	205	82
17 I prefer to use Mobile based Dictionary rather than printed dictionary in Turkish learning	22	14	6	5	3	197	79
18 I always pay attention to the lecturer while giving direction in using the newest application	21	14	9	5	1	199	80
19 I have more attention to the subjects that allow me to use Mobile based Dictionary	19	13	12	6	0	195	78
20 I open to new experiences in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	17	12	17	2	2	190	76
21 I am very enthusiastic in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning	12	14	14	8	2	176	70
22 I always use Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning at any subject	19	9	6	15	1	180	72
23 I can be more active in Turkish learning when I use Mobile based Dictionary	19	12	13	4	2	192	77
24 I explore directly Mobile based Dictionary which recommended by my lecturer	18	17	9	4	2	195	78
25 I explore Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning which recommended by my friends	19	10	13	5	3	187	75
Total Score						4768	76

They stated that they made use of mobile-based dictionaries while learning Turkish and these applications really helped them (Question 5). In this case, students' belief in Google Translate application is high (58%). This application is followed by Turkish – English Dictionary (20%).

Based on the data obtained, the most useful mobile dictionary app is Google Translate (70%) (Question 6).

The most interesting mobile dictionary applications for students are Google Translate (52%), Turkish – English Dictionary (22%) and Sesli Sözlük (12%) (Question 7).

The most popular mobile-based dictionary in the classroom is Google Translate (76%) (Question 10).

Research results on the interest level of foreign students learning Turkish on using mobile-based dictionaries are presented in Table 4.

Two types of scoring were noted when examining Table 4. The first is the sum of the score value (student preferences between 1-5 points) of the answers given to the question asked to the foreign students learning Turkish in Turkey (second column from the left). Here, it should be understood that students' interest in the items that receives a lot of score is high. The second scoring type is the percentage value calculated according to the formula ($P = F/N \times 100\%$; P = percent, F = total score Frequency, N = number of students) developed by Sudjana (2009) in order to reveal the situation (very good, good, medium, poor, very poor) of the students' interest in the rating table developed by Arikunto (2008). Based on these two scoring, the highest scores were obtained from the following items:

For the item *“I am more interested in using Mobile based Dictionary in translating any difficult words (Item 8)”*, students got 240 total points, ranking 86 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is very good according to Arikunto (2008).

For the item *“Mobile based Dictionary is application that I really like to use in Turkish learning Turkish (Item 1)”*, students got 210 total points, ranking 84 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is very good according to Arikunto (2008).

For the item *“Using Mobile based Dictionary makes me have more attention in Turkish learning (Item 16)”*, students got 205 total points, ranking 82 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is very good according to Arikunto (2008).

For the item *“I am generous in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning (Item 12)”*, students got 200 total points, ranking 80 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is good according to Arikunto (2008).

For the item *“I always pay attention to the lecturer while giving direction in using the newest application” (Item 18)”*, students got 199 total

points, ranking 80 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is good according to Arikunto (2008).

The values of other items are also in the “good” category (61% -80%) according to Arikunto (2008), and the total score values are 176 (Item 7 and 21) and above. The data for item 7 and 21, in which the lowest scores are obtained, are as follows:

For the item *“I never get bored in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning (Item 7)”*, students got 176 total points, ranking 70 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is good according to Arikunto (2008).

Again for the item *“I am very enthusiastic in using Mobile based Dictionary in Turkish learning (Item 21)”*, students got 176 total points, ranking 80 out of 100 as a percentage, and this score is good according to Arikunto (2008).

DISCUSSION

While learning a foreign language, a person needs all kinds of information about the target language. He often consults a dictionary for spelling, pronunciation, usage, and meaning of words. During this consultation process, he uses sources containing a great deal of information about words, and having all the answers of the questions he has in mind. In the virtual world, these are: Online Translator, Online Dictionary, and Search Engine. Technical differences between these three information providers were not observed in this study and were presented to students as a mobile dictionary as a general concept.

Dictionaries have transformed in parallel with the evolution of information technologies in the world and have served information to people through the most modern tools throughout history. They have managed to meet the human need as a source of information in every period through such tools as clay tablets, layers of leather, papyrus, paper and finally virtual platforms. Today, when almost everyone has smartphones and the internet, it is possible to use many dictionaries both through regular internet sites and phone applications. It is possible to summarize the results or data obtained in this study related to the use of these latest version (mobile) dictionaries by university-age students who learn Turkish as a foreign language in Turkey as follows:

The mobile dictionary application that foreign students who learn Turkish in Turkey use most is Google Translate, and the application that they use least is Merriam English. Google Translate is one of the information packages offered by Google. This company, usually known for its search engine, also has information and culture packages such as Google Academic, Google

Books, Google Earth, Google Translate, etc. In particular, the fact that the search engine is used by almost everyone increases the level of awareness of other products of this company. This may be one of the reasons why Google Translate is preferred more than similar mobile dictionaries (Yandex Translate, Yahoo Translate etc.).

Google Translate is a translation system that works online. It is a system that synchronically translates word or word units into a second language and provides users with alternative translation options with the help of the semantic schemes it contains. It is simple and easy to use. This is also the reason why the dictionary in question is the most recommended, used, and also not intended to be used by lecturers. It is not a contradiction, although its proposal and prohibition are two opposite situations. Dictionary users always want access to information easily and quickly. But teachers want students to become aware of something, to make an effort in learning and to make everyone produce their own knowledge. So, two different thoughts arise. For teachers this dictionary, which offers ready-made information, causing them to focus only on meaning, and not taking into account students' semantics, morphological, syntactic, etc., should not be much preferred. This is because language teaching is not just teaching meaning. It is a long process which encompasses such subdimensions as meaning production (different from knowing meaning), teaching linguistic structures and forms, and syntax, etc. Therefore, while students desire to access information easily and quickly, two different perspectives have emerged as the lecturers focus on showing the multiple layers of the language, making students aware of it, and improving students' skills to see others while acquiring information. Similar results were found in O'Neill's (2019) research. Students prefer these translation programs, which are forbidden. Aslan (2016), in his research on the use of mobile dictionaries in vocabulary teaching, listed the reasons why students who learn languages prefer these dictionaries as follows: Instant and easy access to information (54%), easy to use (27%), portability (15%), continuous updating (4%).

Students have stated that they use mobile-based dictionaries while learning Turkish, believe in the accuracy of the information provided by these dictionaries, and that these tools facilitate their work. Recent research and studies addressing mobile-based dictionary usage offer the same results. For example, O'Neill (2019), in his experimental study conducted with 310 students learning Spanish or French in the second and third year of the university, stated that 9 out of 10 students (87.7%) occasionally used mobile dictionaries, and online machine translation systems were banned at the institution where the study was conducted. But again the same percentage of students (87.7%) used online translation systems. The study also found that almost all

participants (93.9%) had positive opinions about online dictionaries. A study by Oflaz (2019) also concluded that approximately 95% of students in German Language Teaching Preparatory Program classes use online and mobile dictionaries, and that the advantages of mobile dictionaries, such as quick access to words and ease of use, make these dictionaries attractive to the student. To Oflaz (2019), the most frequently used mobile dictionary is Google Translate (65.7%). This situation is the same in Sepyanda's (2019) research.

The study of Sepyanda (2019) also offers the same results. For example, in Sepyanda's study (2019) with students who learned English as a foreign language in the 2018-2019 academic year, the students' interest in using mobile-based dictionaries was found as 75%. This is 76% for students who learn Turkish as a second language in Turkey. So it is almost the same. Both studies show that students in the second language acquisition process have a 'good' level of interest on using mobile dictionaries based on the classification developed by Arikunto (2008).

The studies on students' interest levels for mobile dictionary use offer the same results not only with Sepyanda (2019), but also with other studies conducted in this area. For example, in a study by Zou et al. (2015) with 82 intermediate university students learning English as a foreign language in Hong Kong, students were asked to comprehend 10 underlined target words in the reading text, and 32 participants estimated the meanings of these words from the context. 50 participants looked at word meanings using mobile dictionaries. In the study, it was concluded that mobile dictionaries significantly facilitate vocabulary learning and that students tend to use mobile dictionaries in cases where difficult and unknown words are encountered. In Rezaei and Davoudi's study (2016), it was also observed that students' levels of interest in mobile dictionaries were high. In fact, these results are not limited to university-age students. Secondary school students exhibit similar behaviors and tendencies. For example, according to Jin and Deifell (2013), English language learners enrolled in secondary language courses in the United States consider online dictionaries an important part of learning the language and are highly attracted to them.

As a result, they often use these dictionaries which are an important part of language teaching. In particular, they prefer systems that can translate word and word units, such as Google Translate. Generally, the interest level of students on using a mobile based dictionary is high. Their overall average is 76%. In order for these learning tools to be used correctly in language teaching, it is useful to do the following:

* Appropriate dictionaries should be recommended by taking into account learning levels of students. For example, such suggestions as "students at level A1-A2 use bilingualized dictionaries. B1-B2 students use

bilingual dictionaries. C1-C2 students also prefer monolingual dictionaries." should be made.

* Students should be informed about the qualities of the dictionaries. For example, each dictionary may be good at different types of information, that the content of all dictionaries is different from each other. It should be noted that they should apply to the appropriate dictionary according to their needs. In this regard, lecturers should be well acquainted with dictionaries and guide their students accordingly.

* Special, graded mobile dictionaries should be produced for students learning Turkish in Turkey. Existing dictionaries must be well introduced in classrooms by lecturers until they are produced. In this way, instead of translation programs, it should encourage to use dictionary applications that offer many features of the word, demonstrate the use of examples, and stimulate the student's reasoning ability.

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