

*Online dictionaries and translation applications in the  
L2 classroom: A study of attitude differences between  
students and educators*

Małgorzata Karczewska

University of Zielona Góra, Poland

[m.karczewska@in.uz.zgora.pl](mailto:m.karczewska@in.uz.zgora.pl)

Richard Sharp

University of Zielona Góra, Poland

[r.sharp@in.uz.zgora.pl](mailto:r.sharp@in.uz.zgora.pl)

Abstract

It is becoming increasingly apparent that education is beginning to undergo profound changes due to the impact of the Internet and online applications. In the case of second and foreign language (L2) teaching, online technologies offer potent solutions and serious challenges to the way languages are taught in the classroom. Apart from the fact that the Internet offers an unprecedented wealth of learning materials for L2 students and educators, it also provides access to something potentially even more powerful, that is, online translation tools and dictionaries. Instantaneous, freely available and easy to use, online dictionaries could prove to be a highly effective technology if exploited appropriately. This paper does not focus on whether or not dictionaries aid L2 learning, but rather examines the attitudes of both students and educators towards the use of online dictionaries and translation applications in the classroom. This reported study attempted to determine the discrepancies and similarities between the attitudes of the two groups, and consider the potential implications of its findings.

*Keywords:* online dictionaries; translation applications; L2 classroom; English teaching; English learning

## 1. Introduction

The obvious developments taking place in modern technologies are having profound impacts on the everyday lives of people. The growing ease of access to the Internet and mobile technologies is also making itself present in the world of second and foreign language (L2) learning and teaching. New technologies offer teachers and students an unprecedented wealth of educational materials, with countless articles, videos, audio files and learning applications available online. Furthermore, the Internet offers a wide variety of online dictionaries and translation applications which are instantaneous, free and easy to use.

Such applications have greatly simplified the task of checking lexical items; gone are the days of needing to open a dictionary, locate the correct page and scan for the item of interest. Now, learners have access to various mono-, bi-, and multi-lingual dictionaries on their laptops, tablets or smartphones. Such applications, either hosted online or stored locally in the device, are highly portable, convenient and often contain a greater source of information than any single paper dictionary. Online dictionaries and translation applications offer translations in a broad spectrum of disciplines and specializations, often replacing the need for technical dictionaries. In addition, online dictionaries not only provide definitions of words, but also their pronunciation patterns, additional information (irregular verb and noun forms, etc.), synonyms and examples of use in contextualized sentences, all of which is a problem in traditional paper dictionaries due to space limitations. The advantages and potential attractions of online dictionaries are evident.

Still, the aim of the present paper is not to check if online dictionaries and translation applications are indeed helpful in language learning. It is assumed that, at the very least, online dictionaries and translation applications play a similar role in the process of language learning as do traditional print dictionaries. Rather, the aim of this study is to examine both teachers' and students' attitudes towards these innovative tools and their use in the L2 classroom. This is a key issue because in order for any new technology to be appropriately exploited in an educational setting, it needs to be viewed positively by both students and educators. Broad acceptance of a new technology would be the first step in understanding how it could be systematically integrated into educational methodologies.

## 2. Modern technologies in language teaching

### 2.1. Online dictionaries and translation applications

Modern online dictionaries and translation applications offer new opportunities of access to teachers and learners of a foreign language as well as promoting

new avenues of self-directed learning (Deifell & Jin, 2013). They are usable on a vast array of different electronic devices and consist of monolingual or bilingual variants. Both types of dictionaries are useful in the process of instructed L2 acquisition, albeit in slightly different ways, and the literature on the subject of dictionaries in the learning process is voluminous.

Bilingual dictionaries are used mainly when a learner wants to translate a word from his or her mother tongue into a foreign language, or vice-versa. Numerous studies have found that traditional print bilingual dictionaries tend to be more popular with language learners than monolingual dictionaries (Atkins & Varantola, 1997; Baxter, 1980; Tomaszczyk, 1979). The literature on preferences of online dictionary types is scarce, but similar findings could logically be expected.

Monolingual dictionaries can be used when a learner encounters a foreign word and wants to check how to use it correctly in terms of meaning, pronunciation, grammatical features and contextual examples, since online monolingual dictionaries tend to offer more options. However, it is important to note that many online bilingual dictionaries have developed into *hybrid* dictionaries that boast features of both types of dictionaries. For example, Diki.pl, which is a popular online dictionary in Poland, includes Polish-English translations together with grammatical information of words, audio-based pronunciation examples of almost all words, synonyms and contextualized examples of word usage in phrases and sentences.

## 2.2. Advantages of online dictionaries

It cannot be denied that online dictionaries present significant advantages when compared to their paper counterparts. First and foremost, they are more easily-accessible to most learners. All a learner needs is a smartphone, or some other internet-enabled device, and access to the Internet. This portability of access is a massive critical advantage over the inconvenience of traditional print dictionaries. At this stage, it might be important to point out that the advantage of accessibility refers to those countries in which most people have mobile phones and reliable access to the Internet. However, over 51% of the global population has access to the Internet as of June 2017 (Internet Usage Statistics, n.d.) and this number is only certain to increase.

Online dictionaries also offer certain advantages through their ease of use. Learners do not need to locate appropriate page numbers and search through an alphabetical list of items, but simply type a word or word fragment into the search application. This method is far quicker and more convenient for most learners (Liu & Lin, 2011). Furthermore, online dictionaries are stored electronically and are not affected by the space limitations that constrain traditional

print books. As a consequence, they can reference far more lexical items from a broader range of specializations. Online dictionaries may replace whole collections of dictionaries in terms of their lexical content.

Such dictionaries can demonstrate proper pronunciation via the use of audio-recordings or machine-generated speech and are often able to translate into and from multiple languages. A lot of modern translation applications, most notably *Google Translate*, offer extremely enhanced features such as real-time voice-to-text translation, text-to-audio translation, voice-to-audio translation and even real-time video translation. Assuming that technological trends continue, it is unlikely that we will keep comparing online dictionaries with print dictionaries much longer as the divergence in capabilities is too vast.

Finally, most online dictionaries and translation applications are free to use and require no commercial payment. This advantage should not be overlooked and is likely to act as a major pull factor for learners and educational institutions. People tend not to choose to pay for something they perceive to be inferior to something that they could have for free. Such is the case, potentially, with online dictionaries in comparison to print ones.

### 2.3. Disadvantages of online dictionaries

Regardless of their numerous benefits, online dictionaries are not without their disadvantages. The most obvious one is that online dictionaries require an Internet connection and a device on which to access them. Despite the fact that many people now have what it takes to do this, not all people do. By their very nature, online dictionaries are only a potential learning asset to people within a certain socio-economic bracket. Furthermore, online dictionaries are less likely to be exploited by people who do not feel comfortable with modern technology; this particularly affects members of older generations who are often less eager to adopt new technologies than those of younger generations (Czaja et al., 2006). Admittedly, this is not strictly a disadvantage of the technology itself, but the exclusion of certain groups could create a skill gap between users and non-users of online dictionaries and translation tools.

Another potential negative issue of online dictionaries relates to their use in formal classroom settings. Many educators view the use of electronic devices and mobile phones as disruptive (Campbell, 2006) and, very often, they are unable to trust if their students are using the devices for educational purposes. Indeed, some schools have introduced official bans on mobile phones as they seem to distract students from lesson content. This is hardly surprising, considering the vast array of entertainment that a student has at his or her fingertips.

Even if students do not engage in other activities, online dictionaries may still disrupt the learning process. Firstly, students may become over-reliant upon translation tools, not paying enough attention to the actual meaning of a given word and not verifying if it is suitable in a given context. Students should be instructed to reflect on their lexical choices and to treat clues given by dictionaries with circumspection. Secondly, by having online dictionaries constantly available, students might be less enthusiastic to use the risk-taking techniques of contextual guessing and avoidance. Risk-taking is widely acknowledged as a key skill of successful language learning (Gass & Selinker, 2008) and is a fundamental component of what effective language educators should try to foster in their students. Naturally, the same criticism could be levelled against traditional bilingual print dictionaries, but this point becomes vastly more salient due to the ubiquity and portability of online dictionaries. The fact that online dictionaries are so easy to use and access may make them so much more potentially disruptive to the formation and use of risk-taking strategies.

Finally, the relative lack of effort needed to check a new word might indeed have an inherent downside. It is possible that students are less likely to internalize new words and retain them in long-term memory. There is a risk that learners may simply use a given word when it is necessary and then move to the next one, processing new words temporarily to negotiate meaning with a given context, such as a particular conversation or piece of text. This danger is highlighted by Zheng and Wang (2016, p. 150) who claim that the “speed and ease of the use of electronic dictionaries may be disadvantageous for vocabulary learning”. The very simplicity of online dictionaries may make it unnecessary for learners to develop strategies by which to commit the new words to long-term memory. In a more extreme vision, an online dictionary or translation application may act as a stimulus for more advanced lexical communication of a sort that might be difficult without access to the technology that facilitated it.

#### 2.4. Translation applications

Apart from online dictionaries, which resemble to some extent their paper counterparts, students frequently use translation applications. The most popular is *Google Translate*, which is accessed by over 200 million users on a daily basis. It is a free tool that offers translation between 103 languages and capabilities that eclipse even the best online dictionaries (see section 2.2). However, *Google Translate* is not a classical dictionary per se; rather it is a translation application with the capability to translate single words or entire strings of texts or audio. *Google Translate* is so universally popular that it is often used by learners as a dictionary-like tool to translate words and hence its inclusion in the consideration of

online dictionaries. Arguably, *Google Translate* is the world's most popular online multilingual dictionary. Naturally, this application is not without its critics or disadvantages, but its presence in the world of L2 learning is undeniable and is most likely set to continue to grow. In 2016, Google changed the technology on which *Google Translate* operates to an artificial neural network, a form of artificially intelligent system with greatly improved accuracy and learning capabilities (Lewis-Kraus, 2016).

## 2.5. Previous research

Several studies on the use of dictionaries, especially online ones, have been published. In one of them Alhaisoni (2016, p. 32) states that "dictionaries are one of the most common lexical resources available", and nowadays students prefer online dictionaries to traditional paper ones as in general they express interest in modern technologies. Another reason why electronic dictionaries are so popular is the fact they do not require the knowledge of letter order within the alphabet, which some students have problems with, apparently. When it comes to the type of dictionary, they tend to prefer bilingual dictionaries to monolingual ones.

Online dictionaries may be less popular with teachers. The main problem here is connected to the fact that many teachers have concerns related to their computer literacy; they are also afraid to lose what Krajka (2012, p. 98) describes as "the omnipotent and omniscient position". In other words, teachers are afraid that they may not be indispensable in the classroom as they could be replaced by new devices or tools which have wider lexical knowledge than them. However, teachers who are more experienced and confident with technology tend to perceive new technologies as another, modern tool, not a threat (Krajka, 2012, p. 97). In other words, such teachers are aware of the potential of online dictionaries and want their students to benefit from them; they want to make use of tools that students anyway bring to the classroom. Indeed, in order to systematically introduce online dictionaries to classes, a lot of teachers may have to change their attitudes from viewing such devices as obstacles to treating them as assets. Regarding this issue, Ertmer (1999) distinguishes between *first-order barriers*, that is, a lack of technical support, and *second-order barriers*, that is, beliefs about teaching. Abdelraheem (2004) argues that the latter are more difficult to deal with as they are more personal and intrinsic. The implication is that the attitude of educators may be a bigger obstacle than technical issues to the successful integration of online tools in the classroom. Zheng and Wang (2016, p. 148) claim that foreign language teachers "have a negative attitude towards electronic dictionaries", while Krajka (2012, p. 109) observes that changes have to be "implanted in their intrinsic beliefs about teaching". In other

words, teachers themselves have to decide to use online dictionaries in the classroom. Truth be told, online technologies are here whether educators like them or not. Thus, the question is not if we should integrate online tools into language education, but how. Krajka (2012, p. 229) is convinced that “technology can be, and should be, integrated with all the modules and subjects (...) offered”, practical L2 classes being one of them as well.

The advantages of using online dictionaries for both teachers and students seem indisputable. Yet, studies have shown that attitude differences between educators and students may create the most significant stumbling block in their successful exploitation. Do such attitude differences actually exist? If so, an understanding of this phenomenon would be the first step in promoting better educational practices regarding online tools. In order to look for proof of the difference in attitudes, a study was carried out among language learners and educators at the University of Zielona Góra, Poland. Although modest in scale, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the on-going discussion of the role of online tools in the language learning process.

### 3. The present study

#### 3.1. Aims, participants and tools

The study was carried out in October 2017 at the University of Zielona Góra, Poland, among 102 students and 32 teachers. It employed questionnaires in order to elicit information regarding potential differences in attitudes towards the use of Internet technology in the L2 classroom, with emphasis being placed on online dictionaries and translation applications. It was assumed that students would be more likely to use online dictionaries and translation applications than their lecturers, both in the classroom and at home.

##### 3.1.1. The student questionnaire

The questionnaire for students was completed by 102 respondents, English philology students, 72 females and 28 males, with an evident predominance of the former. As females were expected to be less likely to use modern technologies than males, this, relatively large, sample of female respondents allowed us to confirm or reject this assumption. When it comes to age, 93 students provided their exact age, six gave an age range, three did not provide any information. The average age of those who gave an exact number was 23.88 years. The age group distribution was tilted towards the lower age bracket, with 67 respondents belonging to the youngest group, aged 18-24. Twelve students belonged to the 25-30 age group, nine

represented the 31-40 age group, and nine were over 40 years old. In five cases it was impossible to place respondents within any group as they either did not provide any information about their age or indicated the age range 20-30 which could place them in either the 18-24 or 25-30 age group. The data showed that most of the respondents, namely 69% of those who were included in one age range group, belonged to the youngest group. This observation is convergent with general tendencies in Poland in which most students, especially full-time ones, are aged 18/19-24. However, it is important to point out that 31% of the respondents were older, some being over forty years of age. This diversity is an important feature as attitudes towards new technologies are expected to change within different age groups.

The student questionnaires were anonymous and they were given in the form of paper sheets distributed and completed in class. The instrument consisted of ten questions, with the participants being also requested to provide their age and sex. Four questions were closed-ended:

1. Do you use online dictionaries?
2. Do you use online dictionaries during university classes?
3. Did your secondary school teacher let you use online dictionaries in the classroom?
4. Do university lecturers allow you to use online dictionaries during classes?

There was also a question in which students were asked to indicate whether they used mono- or bilingual dictionaries; they were allowed to indicate one or both responses. In three other questions the respondents were asked to choose the answer(s) they agreed with from four or six given options, but they could also write their own answers under the category of "others". In the first of these questions, the respondents were asked to state why they used online dictionaries, the options being as follows (more than one option was allowed):

1. They are easy to access.
2. They are quicker to use than traditional dictionaries.
3. They offer example uses of the word.
4. I believe that looking a word up on one's own makes one remember the word better.
5. Others (please state).

Another question with several options to choose from concerned the reasons why teachers allowed their students, according to the students themselves, to use online dictionaries during classes. The options were the following (more than one option was allowed):

1. They are easy to access.
2. They are quicker to use than traditional dictionaries.

3. They offer example uses of the word.
4. They believe that looking a word up on one's own makes one remember the word better.
5. They want to develop their students' independence.
6. I do not know.
7. Others (please state).

The third question in this group concerned the reasons why teachers did not allow students to use online dictionaries in the classroom (again, in the perspective of students themselves). The options to choose were as follows (more than one option was allowed):

1. There is no such need.
2. We use traditional dictionaries during classes.
3. The lecturer does not want his/her students to use mobile phones during classes as they use it for other purposes, not related to the class.
4. I do not know.
5. Others (please state).

Apart from the questions presented above, the respondents were also asked to name the dictionaries and translation applications they used most often (no options were provided) and to give reasons why they used or did not use online dictionaries in class (again, no options were provided).

### 3.1.2. The teacher questionnaire

The data were collected from 32 teachers of foreign languages, English being the most common. As most respondents preferred to indicate the age group they belonged to instead of stating their exact age, an average age cannot be calculated. However, the distribution in different age groups was the following: four teachers belonged to the youngest group, aged 20-30, ten were aged 30-40, eleven were aged 40-50, six were aged 50-65 and one person did not provide information regarding his or her age. In this part of the study no question about the sex of the respondents was asked. As a result, attitudes towards the use of online dictionaries will be related to only one factor, namely age. In addition, the respondents were instructed to indicate their workplace. The results were the following: 13 worked at university, 12 in primary school, 10 in junior high school or senior high school, two in a private language school and four taught private classes (the respondents could choose more than one answer, if applicable).

The teacher respondents were asked to provide their age (by either giving the exact age or choosing an appropriate age range) and to state where they

worked (primary school, junior high school/high school, university, private language school, private classes). Then, the teachers were asked five questions. The first one was closed-ended: "Do you use online dictionaries in your work?" The second was: "If yes, please provide their names (no options were given)". The third was again closed-ended: "Do you allow your students to use online dictionaries and translation applications during classes?" The last two questions concerned the reasons for either answer. If yes, the teachers had the following reasons to choose from (more than one option was allowed):

1. They are quick to use and handy.
2. They are easy to access.
3. They favor understanding words.
4. They help to expand one's vocabulary.

When answering in the negative, the teachers had the following reasons to choose from (again, more than one option was allowed):

1. I am not sure if my students use these technologies in an appropriate way.
2. Using them during classes disrupts.
3. Students stop paying attention to the teacher.
4. They are not necessary.
5. School rules forbid their use.
6. Others (please state).

The questionnaires were in Polish, the respondents' mother tongue. The aim of asking all these questions was to obtain insights into the attitude of educators and students towards the use of online dictionaries and translation applications, especially in class, and to possibly discover the factors responsible for such attitudes. We expected students to be more enthusiastic than teachers about using new technologies in the classroom, the main reasons being ease of access and less perception of associated disadvantages of the technology. However, we did expect possible differences in preferences in different age and sex groups, younger males being more stereotypically prone to using technologies. When it comes to the types of dictionaries and applications that are particularly popular among students, we expected *Google Translate* and bilingual dictionaries to be the favorites. Also, we expected a number of teachers to favor a ban on the use of online dictionaries in the classroom. Apart from personal decisions, it is the case that in some schools in Poland, official rules ban the use of mobile phones in the classroom, regardless of teachers' attitudes. Finally, this study attempted to elicit the underlying motives behind why an educator favored or opposed the use of online dictionaries and translation tools. The results obtained will be presented in the following section.

## 3.2. Results and discussion

As stated above, the teachers and the students who took part in the study were given separate questionnaires in which they answered questions regarding their perceptions and use of online dictionaries and translation applications. Firstly, the results obtained from the students will be described; secondly, the responses provided by the teachers will be presented.

### 3.2.1. Students' attitudes

In the first question, the students were required to state whether they used online dictionaries at all, in any circumstances. The results are meaningful since all the 102 respondents, whether male and female, younger and older, did report using such dictionaries. This result corroborates the general observation that students use online dictionaries and these tools are an important part of the learning process for them. What is significant is the fact that all the respondents, regardless of sex and age, claimed to use them. This means that the assumption that younger male students are more likely than females and older students to use modern technologies in language learning found no confirmation in this particular study.

When it comes to the types of online dictionaries that the students reported using, 45 respondents opted for monolingual ones and 87 for bilingual ones, which means that 30 used both types of dictionaries. These data confirm another observation, that is, that students preferred bilingual dictionaries to monolingual ones. This preference could be a result of two factors. Firstly, when dealing with an unknown word or looking for the English translation of a Polish word, students feel the need to use bilingual dictionaries. In such situations, monolingual ones are not as convenient. Secondly, many students may not be advanced enough to use monolingual dictionaries only. The analysis of the data showed that only 15 respondents used monolingual dictionaries exclusively while 57 students opted for bilingual dictionaries only. 30 respondents claimed to combine both types of dictionaries, which seems to be the most reasonable solution as unknown words can be checked in a bilingual dictionary and then looked up in a monolingual one for more information on their use.

As was expected, with respect to the dictionaries and applications used, the most popular tool was *Google Translate* (21%). Other popular examples given (students could name more than one dictionary or application) were as follows: *Diki* (17%), *Oxford* (12%), *Bab.la* (12%), *Pons* (7%). The remaining 31% was distributed among less popular dictionaries (see Figure 1). It is worth pointing out that many of these dictionaries provide contextual examples of the use

of a given word, some using original texts from different domains, such as technology or medicine. Also, it is important to note that some of the answers given referred to online dictionaries that are primarily popular with the Polish market. This finding is hardly surprising because people like services that they know of and probably which have a user-friendly interface in their native language. It may be logically assumed that similar preferences would be reported in other countries.

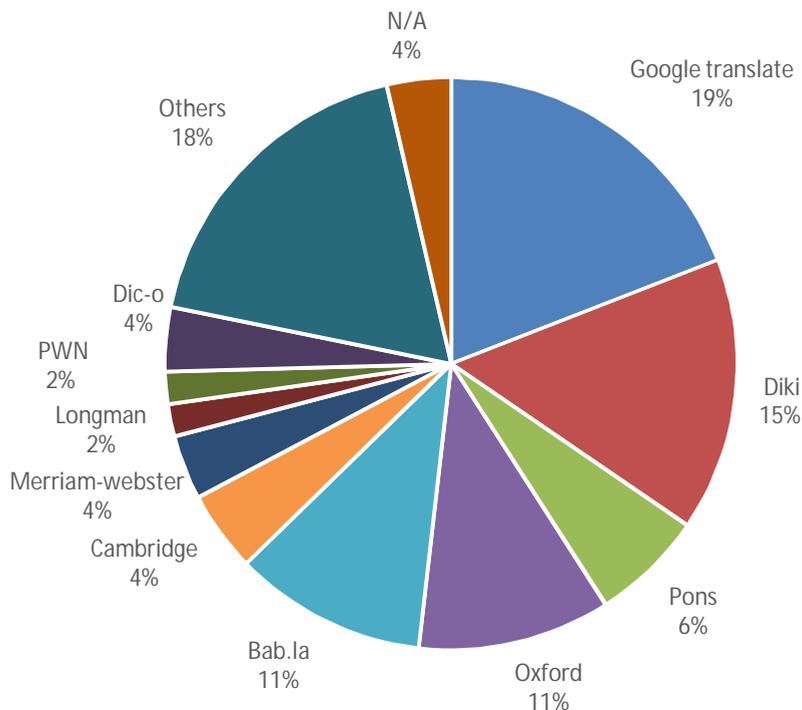


Figure 1 Online dictionary and translation application preferences of students (expressed as percentages)

Another question concerned the reasons why students choose to use online dictionaries and applications? The most popular reason was that they are quick to use (94 students indicated this option) and easy to access (89 participants chose this response). The remaining factors, that is, that online dictionaries provide examples of word use and that looking a word up on one's own helps remember the word better, were indicated 64 and 46 times, respectively. There were also ten other reasons given, such as that online dictionaries supply pronunciation patterns, they provide synonyms and antonyms of the word, or they offer more than one meaning of a word (see Figure 2). These results show that for students the key factors are the ease and speed of use, two features mentioned by Zheng and Wang (2016, p. 150, see above).

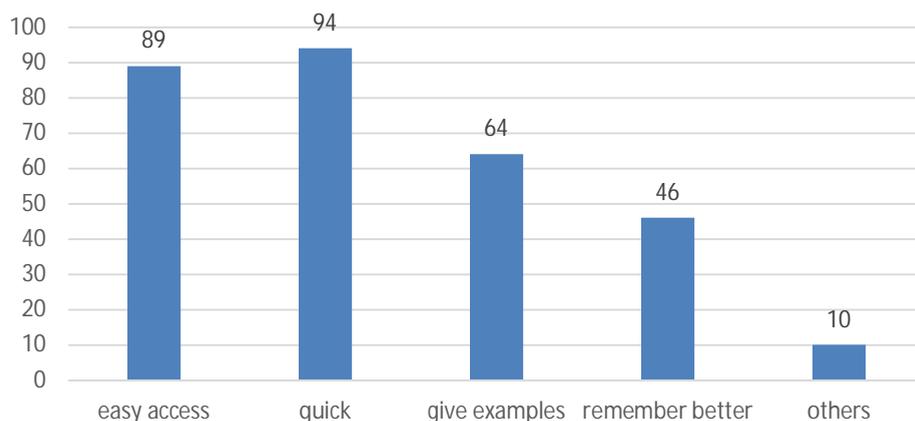


Figure 2 The reasons why students used online dictionaries and translation tools

The next question was related to the use of online tools during university lectures and classes. 71 respondents confirmed that they used them in class, while 31 students reported that they did not do so. This means that some students used online dictionaries only at home and in other situations, but not during language classes at the university. A related issue is why the students either used or did not use online dictionaries during classes. In this case, participants had to provide their own reasons, without any suggestions being made (students could provide more than one answer). Among those who confirmed that they used online dictionaries and translation applications during university classes, two justifications were the most popular. The first one, mentioned by 31 respondents, was “to check the meaning of a word”, which showed that the students focused on the role of dictionaries. The second most popular answer, “because they are quick/handy/easy to access”, was mentioned 25 times, further confirming the obvious: these features of online dictionaries make them popular among today's students. Six students stated that online tools helped them in L2 learning, five reported using them when the teachers allowed them to, while four used online dictionaries in order not to disturb the teacher in class. Fifteen other answers were also provided.

Among the 31 students who did not use online dictionaries in the classroom, eight did not feel such a need, four were not allowed to do so by the teacher, three did not want to use online tools as it was considered to be inappropriate (“a sign of disrespect for the teacher”, as one student wrote) and three claimed that the teacher explained the meaning of unknown words, so dictionaries were not necessary. Two students claimed that there were no clear rules regarding the use of online dictionaries during classes, two reported using online dictionaries at home, but not at the university, another two students tried to understand the meaning of

words from the context while another two complained about a slow Internet connection, which made the use of online dictionaries ineffective. Five other answers were given as well. In general, it turned out that some students were able to follow classes without using online tools while some were simply not allowed to make use of them.

In the following part of the survey the focus was on the perceived teachers' attitudes towards in-class use of dictionaries. Firstly, the respondents were asked if their secondary school teachers had allowed them to use online dictionaries. 29% of the students gave a positive answer, while 60% responded in the negative. In addition, 11% of the students explained that they had not used online tools during school lessons, as at the time when they were at school it was not technically possible because no Internet connection or smartphones were available. The results indicate that online dictionaries and translation applications are a relatively new phenomenon in terms of language education.

The same question was asked about the students' university lecturers. In this case, 74 students confirmed that their lecturers allowed them to use online dictionaries during classes, while 25 respondents claimed that university teachers banned the use of online dictionaries in class. Three respondents did not provide an answer. Among those who marked either *yes* or *no*, three explained that some lecturers let them use online dictionaries while others did not, five simply marked both answers, which can be interpreted in the same way, while two stated that the rules for the use of online tools in class were not clear. The results showed that a majority of university teachers seemed to approve of, or at least refrain from banning, the in-class use of online dictionaries. The reasons behind this attitude will be explored when presenting the results of the survey conducted among teachers (see Section 3.2.2. below).

After being asked about their lecturers' attitudes towards online dictionaries, students were requested to indicate possible reasons for such attitudes (they could indicate more than one reason). In the cases when teachers allowed the use of online dictionaries in the classroom, the students indicated the following reasons: 54 respondents stated that it was due to the fact that online dictionaries are easy to access, 53 respondents indicated that they are quick to use, and 31 observed that online dictionaries offer examples of use of a given word. Again, inherent features of online dictionaries seemed to be the key factors here. What is important, students also understood that teachers wanted them to develop autonomy (35 indications) as learners who look words up on their own tend to remember these words better (40 indications). Eight respondents could not explain the teachers' attitudes while six gave other answers.

In cases when in-class use of online dictionaries was prohibited, the most popular answer (43 indications) was "I do not know", suggesting that this issue is not discussed in the classroom and while the rules were presumably set, they were not

justified. 38 respondents claimed that teachers did not want them to use mobile phones as they could be used in an inappropriate way, such as playing games instead of focusing on learning. Seven students stated that the use of online dictionaries was unnecessary and one person reported that traditional dictionaries were used in class (so online ones might not be necessary). Also four other answers were given. The results in this case indicate a clear mismatch between the preferences of students, who wished to use online tools, and their lecturers, who are against such use.

The analysis of the responses to the student questionnaire allows us to draw some basic conclusions. All the students reported using online dictionaries and translation applications and they did it mainly because these tools are easy to access and quick to use. They also tended to use online dictionaries during university classes and most lecturers (around 75%) seemed to let them do so for the same reasons. The teachers who did not allow their students to use these tools most likely did not explain their reasons for such a ban or did not want their students to engage in activities not related to the lesson. To obtain a full picture of the phenomena related to in-class use of online dictionaries, it is also necessary to examine the teachers' attitudes.

### 3.2.2. Teachers' attitudes

The first question concerned the use of online dictionaries and applications: 25 teachers marked the answer *yes* while seven marked the answer *no*, the percentage being 78% to 22%. This means that online tools are not only popular among students, but also among teachers. It is worth pointing out that the question did not include any particular circumstances of dictionary use, as the idea was to check if teachers used them at all. To obtain a wider perspective of the issue, the cases of the negative answer were analyzed. It turned out that the respondents who did not use online dictionaries were three persons aged 30-40, three persons aged 40-50 and one person aged 50-65. This means that the teachers who did not use online dictionaries can be found in almost all age groups, except the youngest one, which may confirm the common belief according to which young people are more likely to avail themselves of modern technologies. These were four primary school teachers, three junior high school or senior high school teachers, and one university lecturer, one person working in both primary and secondary school. The high number of primary school teachers in this pool may be explained by the fact that they taught English at lower levels and ages and therefore dictionaries were not so indispensable.

As far as specific dictionaries are concerned, the respondents provided a wide range of titles (46), the most popular single one being *Diki* (7) followed by *Pons* (6). *Google Translate* was mentioned three times, which means that, in

contrast to the students, it was not the most popular online tool with educators. The reasons for this discrepancy might surely merit further research.

When asked about allowing their students to use online dictionaries in the classroom, twenty-five respondents marked *yes* while eight marked *no*, which means that one person marked both answers. Another conclusion is that, again, 78% of the teachers did allow their students to use online dictionaries knowing how useful they can be. One person added an interesting comment stating that while the use of online dictionaries in class was allowed, the use of translation applications was not, so a different attitude towards these two tools could be observed as well.

Similarly to the question concerning teachers' use of online dictionaries, the instances of negative answers were also investigated. It turned out that in the *no* group there were three teachers aged 30-40, three aged 40-50 and two aged 50-65. The results showed that teachers who were not in favor of in-class use of online dictionaries were more or less evenly distributed throughout different age and workplace groups. When it comes to distinct age groups, in the 30-40 age group the percentage was of about 30%, in the 40-50 age group it was about 27%, in the 50-65 age group it was about 33%. Clearly, no distinct differences could be observed, which can be attributed to the small size of the sample. In addition, three were primary school teachers, three secondary school teachers and two university lecturers, which gave 25%, 30% and 15% in each group, respectively. This means that university lecturers were the most in favor of their students using mobile phones in class, probably as there were also no official rules banning their use.

An interesting link between the attitude towards online dictionaries and in-class use of these tools by students could be observed. Four respondents did not use online dictionaries and did not let their students use them in class, three respondents did not use online dictionaries themselves, but allowed their students to use them in class, and four respondents who used online dictionaries themselves did not let their students use them in class. This means that some teachers did indeed appreciate the advantages of online dictionaries, even if they themselves did not rely on them. Alternatively, other teachers used online tools, but at the same time did not let students use them. In order to understand these discrepancies, it was necessary to explore why the teachers did or did not allow their students to use online tools in the classroom.

Among the teachers who were against in-class use of online dictionaries, the most popular answer (indicated six times) was "it is against the rules". Among these teachers, three worked in primary and three in secondary school, so these official prohibitions were related to pre-university stages of education. Five respondents feared that when allowed to use online dictionaries in class, students would use mobile phones for other purposes, unrelated to the lesson (see Figure 3).

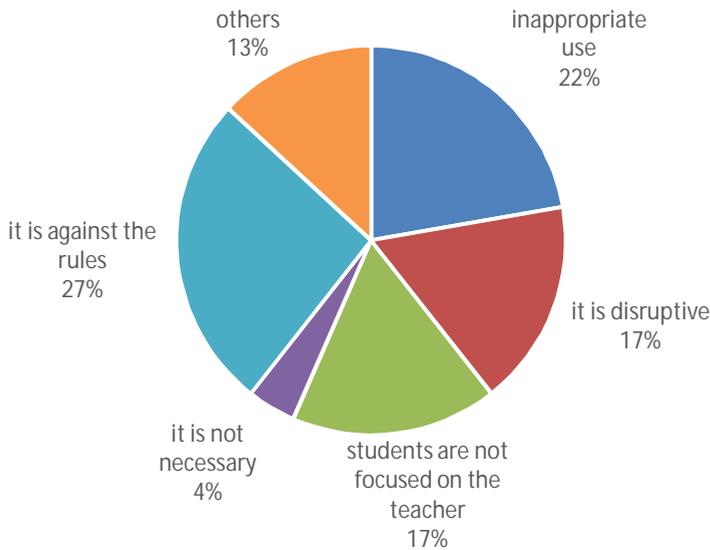


Figure 3 Reasons why educators did not allow students to use online dictionaries and translation tools in the classroom

It is interesting to observe that in this group there were two secondary school teachers and three university lecturers, suggesting some kind of distrust even in the case of adult learners (actually, one of these university lecturers did allow students to use online dictionaries, but still expressed his or her fear in the section dedicated to negative answers). Four respondents observed that using online dictionaries was disruptive to the flow of the lesson and the same number of teachers pointed out that students stopped paying attention to the teacher when using mobile phones. One respondent stated it was not necessary for students to use these tools and three teachers marked "other reasons". The most important factors (still, the sample was too small to be able to draw far-reaching conclusions) seemed to be official rules and little trust in appropriate use of mobile phones by students. Most of these answers failed to provide any serious form of methodological criticism against the use of online dictionaries. This is surely an interesting finding because if the educational weaknesses of online tools were so evident, it is inevitable they would have been pointed out.

Finally, the teachers were asked why they allowed their students to use online dictionaries in the classroom (again, more than one answer could be indicated). The most popular answer was "they are quick to use and handy", chosen 25 times. Then, 17 respondents chose "they are easily accessible" and "they help to understand the meaning of words". 15 respondents agreed that dictionaries helped learners to expand their vocabulary. Again, intrinsic features of online dictionaries – ease and speed of use and accessibility – are decisive factors determining their popularity.

#### 4. Conclusions

The data obtained in the study allows a few preliminary observations. Firstly, these data tend to confirm a general pattern that online dictionaries are popular with learners of a second language. Secondly, in general, students prefer bilingual dictionaries to monolingual ones, as was assumed prior to the study. When it comes to translation tools, *Google Translate* is the most popular choice. When it comes to student–teacher in-class interaction, it turned out that some students perceived the use of online dictionaries as inappropriate, or simply assumed that it was inappropriate in the eyes of the teacher. However, many teachers did indeed use online dictionaries themselves, stating that they were easy to access, handy and quick to use. In cases where teachers did not allow their students to use online dictionaries in class, it was usually because school policy forbade it or the teachers thought that such tools were disruptive and could distract students from class activities.

The results of this study suggest the existence of a gap between the attitudes of some educators and their students. In the majority of cases where students were not allowed to use online dictionaries and translation applications in the classroom, this seemed to be a result of educators' preferences or the rules imposed by the educational institution. Such instances of opposing the use of online dictionaries and translation tools seem to clash with the preferences of the learners who overwhelmingly prefer using them. The sample groups were not particularly large, so the results should be treated as tentative. Still, the results of this study point towards general tendencies found in other research and help stimulate the discussion of the use of online dictionaries and translation applications in foreign language teaching and learning.

The age of the Internet is clearly upon us. The question now is how modern educational institutions can create an effective policy that acknowledges the role of online tools and successfully promotes their beneficial utilization in L2 instruction. Undoubtedly, this question is being asked in many fields of education, not just foreign language teaching. A truly successful educational strategy must draw upon research; it is hoped that this study, however modestly, has contributed to this on-going quest. Future research may focus more deeply on the attitudes of educators and potential ideas of how online tools can be used to best promote the language learning process.

## References

- Abdelraheem, A. Y. (2004). University faculty members' context beliefs about technology utilization in teaching. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 3(4), 76-84.
- Alhaisoni, E. (2016). EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of dictionary use and preferences. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 6(8), 31-52.
- Atkins, B. T. S., & Varantola, K. (1997). Monitoring dictionary use. *IJL10/I International Journal of Lexicography*, 1-45.
- Baxter, J. (1980). The dictionary and vocabulary behavior: A single word or a handful? *TESOL Quarterly*, 14(3), 325-336.
- Campbell, S. (2006). Perceptions of mobile phones in college classrooms: Ringing, cheating, and classroom policies. *Communication Education*, 55(3), 280-294.
- Czaja, S. J., Charness, N., Fisk, A. D., Hertzog, C., Nair, S. N., Rogers, W. A., & Sharit, J. (2006). Factors predicting the use of technology: Findings from the center for research and education on aging and technology enhancement (CREATE). *Psychology and Aging*, 21(2), 333-352.
- Deifell, E., & Jin, L. (2013). Foreign language learners' use and perception of online dictionaries: A survey study. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 9, 515-526.
- Ertmer, P. (1999). Addressing first and second order barriers to change: Strategies for technology integration. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 47(4), 63-81.
- Gass, S., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd edition). New York: Routledge.
- Internet Usage Statistics* (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>
- Krajka, J. (2012). *The language teacher in the digital age: Towards a systematic approach to digital teacher development*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Lewis-Kraus, G. (2016, December 14). The great A.I awakening. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/14/magazine/the-great-ai-awakening.html>
- Liu, T. C., & Lin, P. H. (2011). What comes with technological convenience? Exploring the behaviors and performances of learning with computer-mediated dictionaries. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(1), 373-383.
- Tomaszczyk, J. (1979). Dictionaries: Users and uses. *Glottodidactica*, 12, 103-109.
- Zheng, H., & Wang, X. (2016). The use of electronic dictionaries in EFL classroom. *Studies in English Language Teaching*, 1(4), 144-156.