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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Exploring Translation Students' Dictionary Use, Preferences, and Attitudes in Translation Courses**

**Issam Mostafa Ta'amneh**

*Associate Professor, English Language & Translation Department, Isra University, Jordan*

**Corresponding Author:** Issam Mostafa Ta'amneh, **E-mail:** [issam.taamneh@iu.edu.jo](mailto:issam.taamneh@iu.edu.jo)

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**| ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to explore translation students' dictionary use, and preferences in their translation courses. Moreover, it aimed to explore the students' attitudes toward the dictionary while using it as a major tool in the translation process. To achieve the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was prepared in advance by the researcher. It consisted of 35 items. The quantitative method based on a questionnaire was used in this study. Data were collected by administering the questionnaire to 84 students, who were purposefully chosen at Isra University in the first semester of the academic year 2023/2024. The results revealed that the participants agreed that they knew how to use an online and a book dictionary in their translation tasks and lessons. Moreover, the results indicated that the majority of them preferred using an online dictionary in their tasks because it was a quick and easy tool that students could deal with in a perfect way to look for difficult or unknown words. In addition, the analysis showed that the majority of the participants agreed that they had a positive attitude toward using different types of dictionaries because they were helpful in doing different tasks in their translation lessons. Finally, the study recommended that students should be provided with enough training and practice on how to use online as well as book dictionaries. In addition, students must be encouraged to depend on the context first to guess the meaning of the new words before they start looking for their meanings using different types of dictionaries.

**| KEYWORDS**

Translation, dictionary use, preferences, and attitudes.

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### **1. Introduction**

Translation is an important section in different fields in the world as it helps-students, businessmen, scientists- in understanding what was written in other languages. Catford (1965, p. 7) asserted this idea when he said that "translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and it is a subject of interest not only to linguists, professional and amateur translators, and language teachers but also to electric engineers and mathematicians".

In the field of education and translation, students use two methods to know the meaning of difficult words. They depend on either guessing the meaning of difficult words from their contexts or using dictionaries to find the exact meaning of these difficult words. Students depend heavily on dictionaries to find the meaning of odd and difficult words. Students find a lot of difficulty when dealing with multi-word expressions because they are indispensable and difficult for language learners (Tomczak & Lew, 2019).

Wilkins (1972, p. 111) indicates that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". In fact, students depend on vocabulary to convey and transmit their either spoken or written ideas. They have to know a lot of vocabulary to understand the written texts or even the spoken utterances.

In this context, Nation (1991) supports this fact when he declares that L2 students feel that inadequate vocabulary is the main reason for many difficulties and challenges they face in both receptive and productive language use. Consequently, students tend to memorize simple vocabulary, but when they face difficult words, they have to follow two strategies; either to guess the meaning of these words through their contexts or the use of different dictionaries to know the meaning of these odd or ambiguous words.

Dictionaries are defined as books that contain lists of different words in an alphabetical order with use descriptions of their meanings (Landau, 1984). Dictionaries are classified into two types: Monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Monolingual dictionaries are designed to meet the social and academic needs of people, students, and learners learning a foreign language or a second language such as Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, and Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners.

These dictionaries are available in hard copies or online versions. A clear explanation of the differences between a monolingual dictionary, and a bilingual one is that the first one explains the meaning of a word in the same language that you are learning whereas the bilingual one provides a translation, explanation, or meaning using another language that is usually your native language such as Arabic or French.

In the process of translation, the translator tries his/her best to convey the meaning from the Source Language Text (SLT) into the Target Language Text (TLT) properly. In many cases, translators as well as students face many difficult or new words, so they depend on dictionaries to get the meaning of these odd words.

Translation is considered a human activity, that seeks to find the equivalent text in the TL, so translators and students must have good experience in how to deal with and use different types of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries to succeed in their tasks.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Several studies have been carried out on the students' use, preferences, and attitudes toward dictionaries but few of these studies were conducted to discuss this issue in its different aspects in the Jordanian context.

In their study, Levy and Steel (2014) investigated the extent of electronic dictionary use by language learners in an Australian university. 587 students, who were in their first, second, or third-year level, participated in the study. The data were obtained from a large-scale survey conducted. The quantitative and qualitative data techniques were used. The researchers got the data from the participants' mobile phones, dictionaries, and some discussion forums. The findings indicated that both online dictionaries and mobile apps were highly used by the participants. The results indicated that the use of online dictionary was the participants' favorite technology.

Levy & Steel (2014) conducted a study to look for students' best choice of using electronic dictionaries. The sample of the study was 587 students. The researchers got the data from a survey that was distributed for the Australian learners. Many instruments were used in the study such as cell phones, dictionaries. The findings pointed out that the participants looked at smartphone applications and online dictionaries as useful tools. The findings showed that learners preferred using the online dictionary in doing different tasks in the process of translation.

Dweik & Abu Helwah (2014) conducted a study to look for the cultural difficulties that the students at The Middle East University faced. The study took place in the first semester of the academic year 2012–2013. The sample of the study was 20 M.A. students. A translation test was the main instrument to get the data. It consisted of 6 religious and historical Arabic texts. The findings showed that the linguistic and the cultural issues were real challenges for the participants because of the differences between Arabic and English. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that the lack of training on how to use the dictionaries was a real challenge for the students to look for the meaning of the words in a correct way.

Wolter (2015) tried to investigate Saudi students' use and opinions about dictionaries. The researcher used different instruments to collect the data. 20 Saudi students participated in the study. To collect the data, the participants were asked about dictionary use, habits, and preferences. The results indicated that the participants used both book and online dictionaries, despite that a good number of them preferred using online dictionaries. Furthermore, the findings showed that they received a good training from their instructors. This training helped them a lot to deal with different parts of speech and collocations.

Jabak et al., (2016) conducted a study to look for the difficulties that students faced while translating collocations from Arabic into English. The sample of the study consisted of 50 students at the Department of English at King Saud University. The researchers used a quiz as a main instrument to collect the data. The test consisted of 15 Arabic collocations. The results indicated that a

good number of participants did not provide the equivalent and the natural translations for the collocations. The researchers attributed that to many reasons such as giving the literal translations for the collocations, and misuse of the dictionaries.

Taamneh (2018) investigated the most common translation problems that Saudi students faced while translating some of the literary items from Arabic into English. A translation test was used by the researcher to collect the data. It consisted of 20 items and expressions. In addition, the researcher held individual interviews with the participants to inquire about the reasons behind encountering such translation problems. The sample of the study consisted of 15 male university students. The results pointed out that the lack of practice in using the different types of dictionaries, and the lack of translation courses were considered main challenges for the participants.

Sabbah & Alsalem (2018) conducted a study to investigate if the participants had an acceptable awareness of the availability and usability of online vocabulary and terminology search tools that could be used as valuable tools for translators. The sample of the study was 50 female students at Prince Sultan University in Saudi Arabia. The researchers prepared a survey to collect the data from the participants. The results of the study indicated that the participants' lack of experience in using the monolingual dictionaries in different tasks was a real challenge in translation.

Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo (2022) tried to look for the most challenges that students encountered while translating five of Poe's poems. The sample of the study consisted of 30 students at Isra University who were randomly divided into 5 groups. The participants were asked to translate five poems and mentioned the challenges they faced while translating them. The findings of the study indicated that the presence of unfamiliar words was a main reason for the difficulty in translating the poems. In addition, the results pointed out that the participants used a variety of dictionaries - monolingual and bilingual - to obtain the intended meaning. Moreover, the participants mentioned that they heavily depended on the context to guess the meaning of the new and the odd words.

The studies that were discussed and presented above show the effect and the importance of using different types of dictionaries in translation. Consequently, more studies are needed in different contexts to prove the importance of dictionaries in the learning and translation fields.

The study was conducted to investigate and explore the translation students' dictionary use, preferences, and attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in translation courses. When the student does not know how to use the dictionary, either the book or the online one, it is expected to face many problems in searching for the odd words easily and quickly.

### **3. Statement of the Problem**

Students who learn English as a foreign language look at translation as a difficult task because it needs practice and intensive training. Moreover, learners face many challenges when trying to translate from Arabic into English or vice versa due to the cultural and linguistic differences among the two languages.

The researcher has noticed from his wide experience in teaching different translation courses and in many countries that the majority of Arab EFL students face many difficulties in using and dealing with dictionaries either in the exams or when doing their assignments at home.

### **4. Significance of the Study**

This study tries to explore the students' best strategy in dictionary use when dealing with different ways to find the meaning of odd and new words. Moreover, it tries to shed the light on their preferences in using either the monolingual, the bilingual, or the online dictionaries. In addition, it also helps in exploring their attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in translation courses.

### **5. Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to explore Jordanian EFL students' dictionary best strategies when using the dictionary. In addition, it tries to find the students' preferences in using either the monolingual, the bilingual, or the online dictionaries. Finally, it seeks to explore their attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in translation courses.

### **6. Questions of the Study**

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1-What are the students' best choices when using the dictionary?
- 2-What are the dictionary types most and least used by students in their translation courses?
- 3-What are the participants' attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in translation courses?

## 7. Limitations of the Study

The following considerations precluded generalizing the study's findings:

1. There is a restriction on the quantity of items that were selected for the questionnaire. A total of thirty-five items were selected for the investigation.
2. A rather small sample size was used in this study.

## 8. Methodology

### 8.1 The population of the study

The population of the study, which was selected purposively, was comprised of all the students studying some translation courses at Isra University. They were counted for 200 students according to the statistics of the department for the academic year 2023-2024.

### 8.2 Sample of the study

It was selected purposefully based on the following equation:

$$n = [N] / [1 + (N \times e^2)] \dots \dots \text{EQ (1), where}$$

**N** is the population size

**E** is the marginal error

**n** is the sample size

Therefore,  $N = [200] / [1 + (200 \times .0025)] = 133$  students. However, 100 questionnaires were distributed to the students. The researcher recovered 84 questionnaires. Thus, the recovery rate is 84% which is considered a good percentage to get the needed data from the participants.

84 students from Isra University's Translation program, both male and female, took part in the study. The study was carried out during the first semester of the academic year 2023–2024. Each participant had taken a variety of translation courses, and their academic backgrounds varied.

**Table 1. The Distribution of the Participants' Sample According to their Gender, Frequency and Percentage**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	19	22.6%
Female	65	77.4%
Total	84	100%

### 8.3 The Research Instrument

To achieve the objectives of the research study, the quantitative method based on a questionnaire was used in this research study. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher as it was considered the main tool for collecting the needed data. The importance of this data collection strategy is highlighted by the fact that it allowed the researcher to ask questions and receive quick responses and reach as many participants as possible. A detailed description of the questionnaire is presented below.

The questionnaire that was used in the study consisted of three sections:

- I- The first section is under the name of dictionary use. It consisted of 12 items. The purpose of this section was to investigate the type of dictionaries that the students use most in their translation courses (online dictionaries or book dictionaries).
- II- The second part consisted of 10 expressions. They were used to inquire about the participants' preferences when using different dictionaries in the translation courses that they study each semester. The purpose of this section was to discover the students' most common translation problems in the three types.
- III- The third section was about the participants' attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in their translation tasks or exams.

**8.4 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

**8.4.1 Validity**

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a jury of six specialists in the field of translation in different departments of Translation at different Universities were asked politely to judge the suitability of all the items of the questionnaire. Their comments, suggestions, and modifications were valuable, and they were taken into consideration.

**8.4.2 Reliability**

To ensure the reliability of the instrument that was used in the study, the internal consistency of the participants' responses in the pilot study was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all three sections. The results of this reliability are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for all the Three Sections**

Section	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Number of items
Dictionary Use	0.92	12
Participant's Preferences	0.82	10
Participants' Preferences	0.85	14
Overall	0.86	36

Table 2 shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all the sections. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the first section were found (0.92). As for the second section, it was found (0.82). The last section was calculated, and it was found (0.85). As for the overall reliability for all the items (35 items) it was found (0.86) which means that there is an internal consistency in the data.

**8.5 Data Collection**

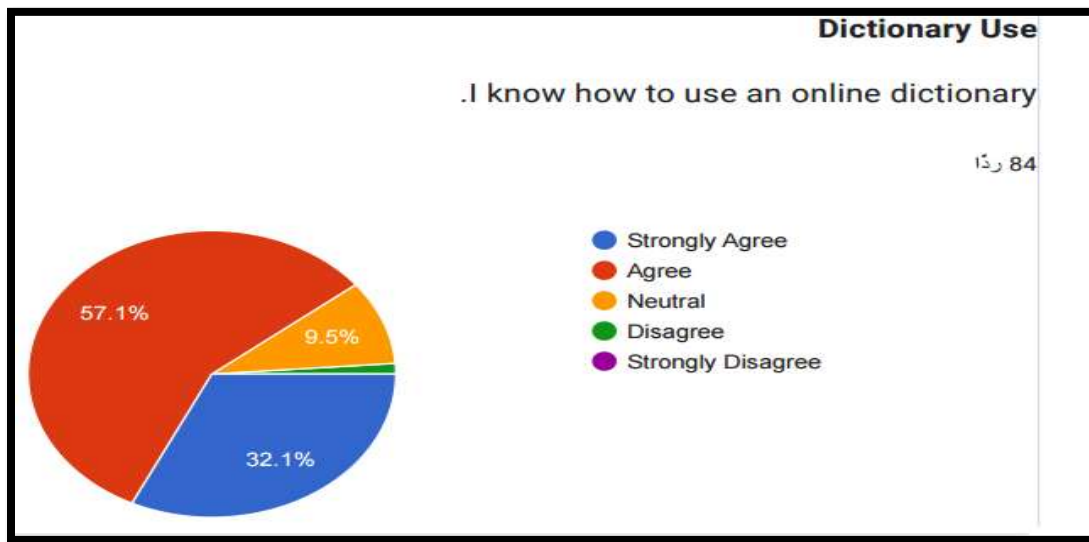
A quantitative technique was used to analyze the data obtained from the participants' responses to the items of the questionnaire.

**9. Results and Discussion**

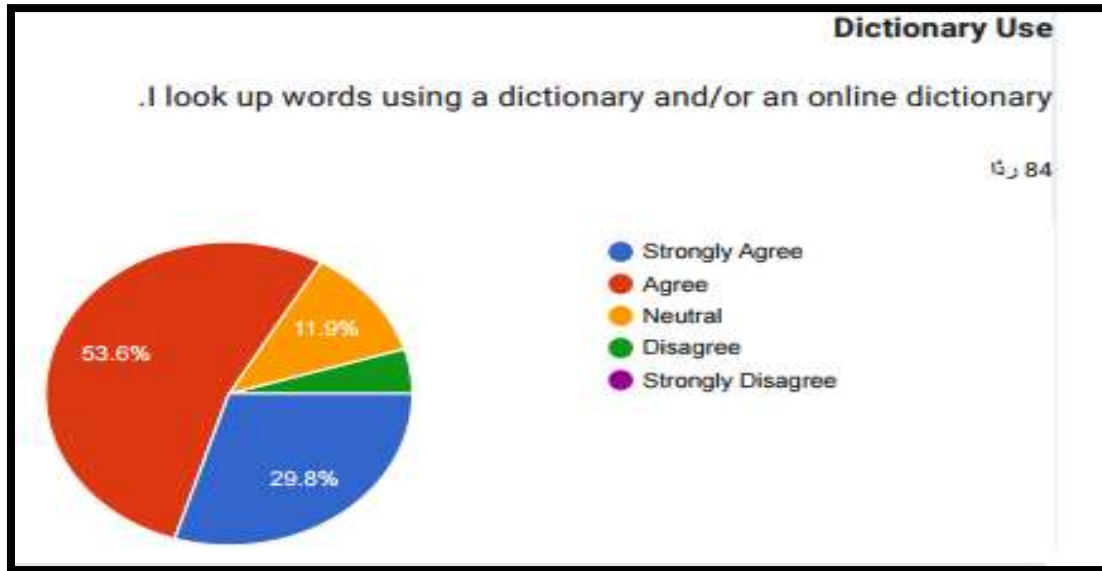
The findings of the study will be presented mainly in three sets: students' uses of dictionaries; students' preferences, and students' attitudes towards the use of dictionaries in their translation courses.

**9.1 Findings related to the first research question**

The study's first question was: What are the students' best choices when using the dictionary?

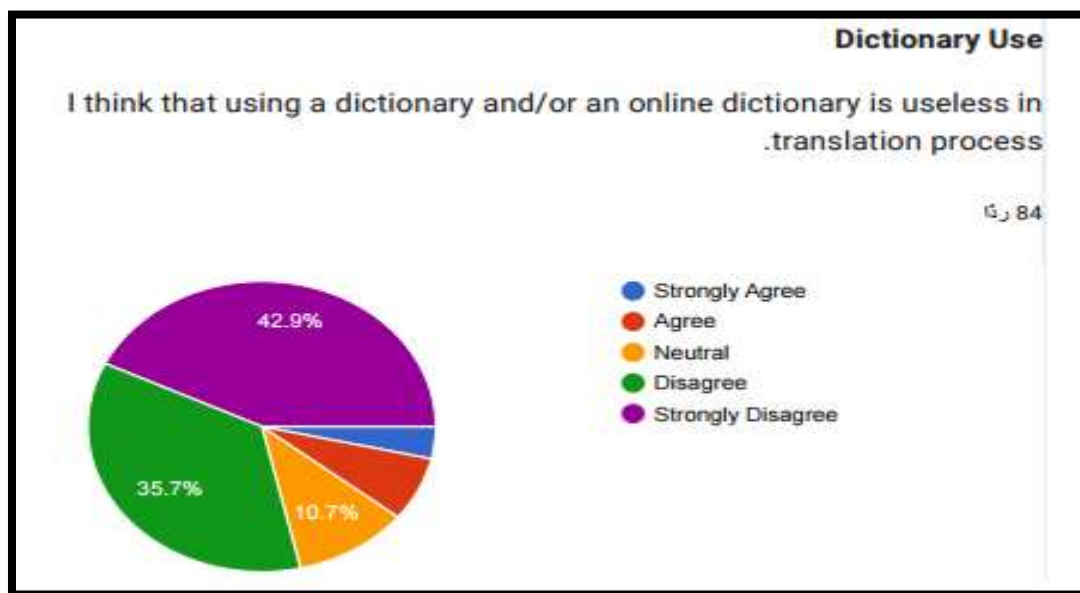


When questioned about their usage of dictionaries, Figure 1 above demonstrates that around 57.1% of the participants said they were familiar with using an online dictionary. This is not a surprising finding given that the sample consisted of translation trainees; they preferred using the online dictionary for their translation classes because it was free to download on their iPads or smartphones. Using an online dictionary is the best option for them because it saves time and effort when looking up unfamiliar words.



According to Figure 2 above, 53.6% of the respondents agree that they use a dictionary and /or an online dictionary which indicates the importance of using both types in their translation courses to do different tasks not only in exams.

Figure 3 below supports the results in Figures 1 and 2 as 42.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that using a dictionary and/or an online dictionary is useless in the translation process. This result strongly supports the importance of using both types of dictionaries in translation, as the respondents depend on them heavily to look for ambiguous words.



The skill of mastering the use of both paper as well as online dictionaries is considered a must for all students. This skill should be acquired and mastered by trainee translators in their translation courses. One of the obvious challenges is that students do not receive good training or practice on how to use dictionaries (Law, 2009; Kodura, 2016).

Roberts (1992, p.68) believes that the correct use of dictionaries for transition trainees and students is considered at the heart of translation pedagogy. In this context, Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo (2022) found that using different dictionaries to find the intended and the exact meaning was the most common strategy that the participants followed in their translation activities.

### **9.2 Findings related to the second research question**

The study 's second question was: What are the dictionary types most and least used by translation majors?

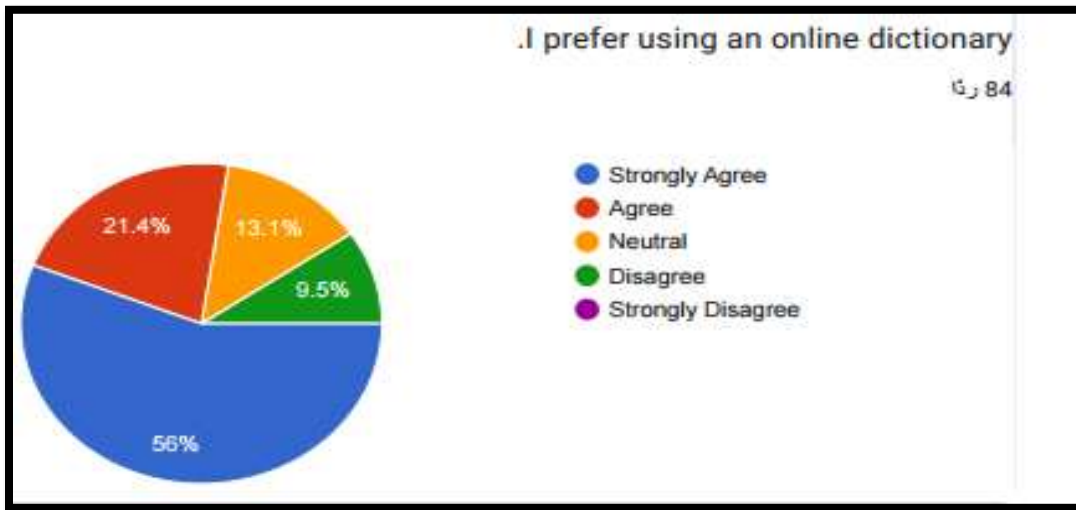
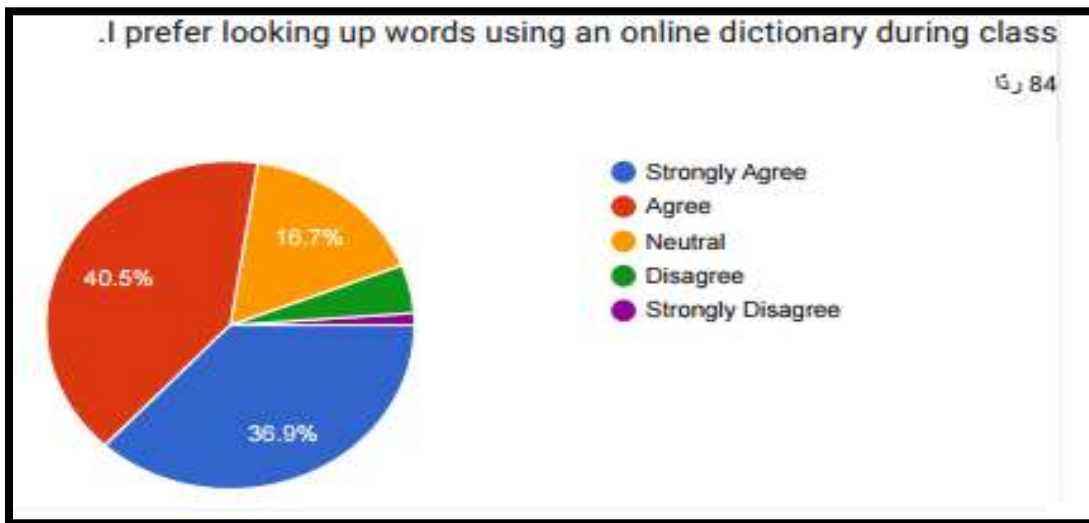
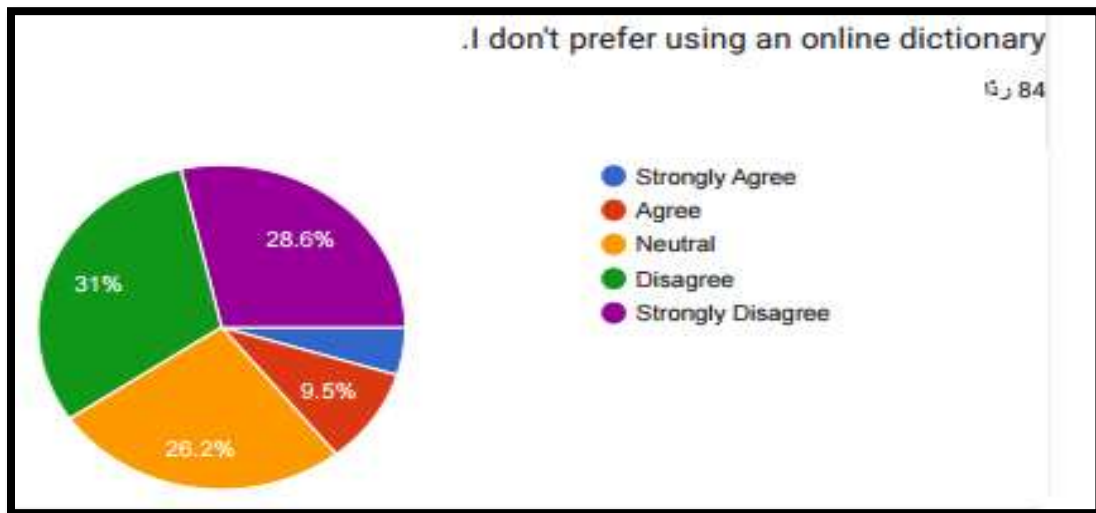


Figure 4 above shows that when the participants were asked about the dictionaries that they prefer to use in their translation courses, around 56% of the respondents preferred using an online dictionary in their tasks. Students prefer such a kind of dictionaries for many reasons as they were mentioned above. Students are fond of using an online dictionary simply because they can just type the word that they would like to search for its meaning and within a second huge information that they are related to the word appears in front of them on their mobiles or iPads and this finding is supported by the Figure 5 below.



The figure above shows that 40.5% of the respondents prefer looking up words using an online dictionary during their classes. This result reflects the students' best choice toward using the online dictionary in their translation classes, The researcher has noticed, through teaching different translation courses, that the majority of students depend heavily on online dictionaries to search for the odd or the ambiguous words because it is a quick easy simple tool that students can deal with perfectly. Figure 6 supports this finding.



The figure above illustrates that few of students do not use an online dictionary throughout their study. This indicates that the majority of students – as stated above – prefer using the online dictionary in doing their tasks and assignments.

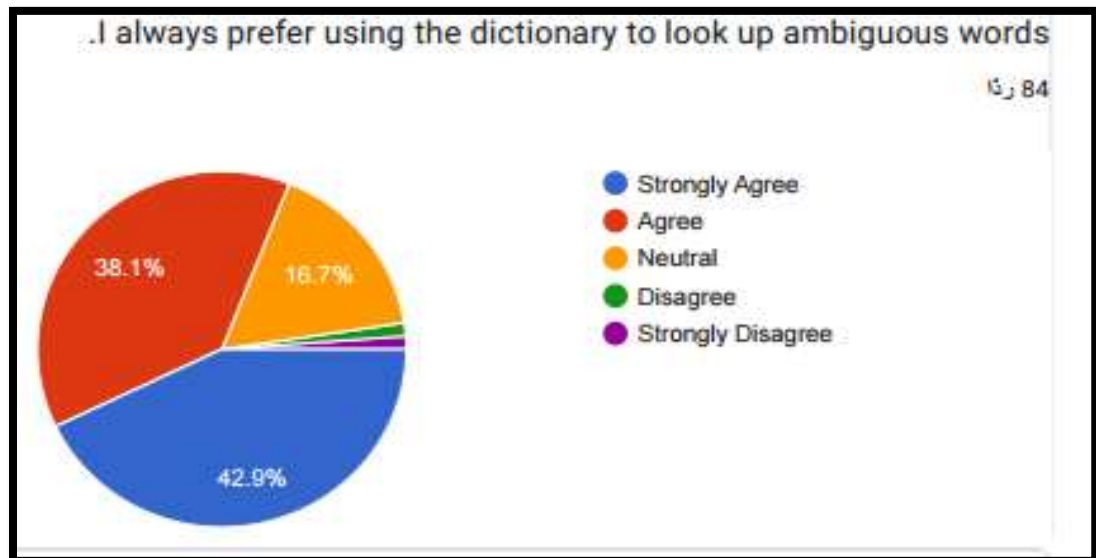


Figure 7 above shows that 42.9 % of the respondents strongly agreed that they always prefer using the dictionary (hard copy) to look up ambiguous words. Dictionaries are considered the main source that students need to look for the meanings they need for the unknown words. Roberts (1992) believes that the different kinds of dictionaries that are used by the students in their translation courses are all considered at the heart of translation pedagogy.

One of the reasons for this is that students don't have a lot of vocabulary because they don't remember a lot of vocabulary when studying English as a Foreign Language. Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo (2022) added that the difficulties of using dictionaries, the difficulties of guessing the meaning in both languages, the lack of knowledge of how to use dictionaries, and the lack of good knowledge in the target language (TL) are considered real difficulties for students when translating some literary works. When comparing online or electronic dictionaries to paper ones, Altuwairish (2020) indicated that the online ones are more dynamic and flexible because they provide the learner with different aspects of information about the odd words.

### **9.3 Findings related to the third research question**

The third question was: What are the participants' attitudes toward the use of dictionaries in translation courses?



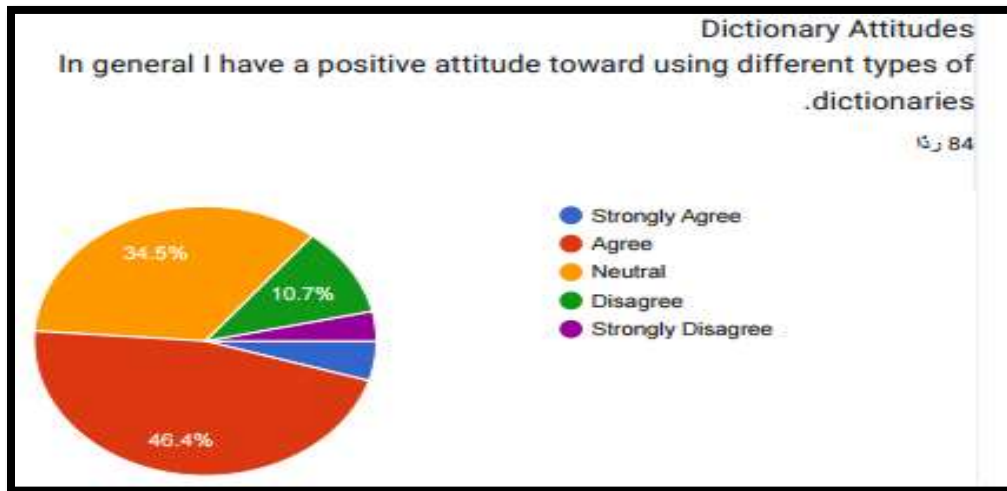


Figure 8 above indicates that 46.4% of the respondents agreed that they have a positive attitude toward using different types of dictionaries. Students need to deal with different kinds of dictionaries for different purposes.

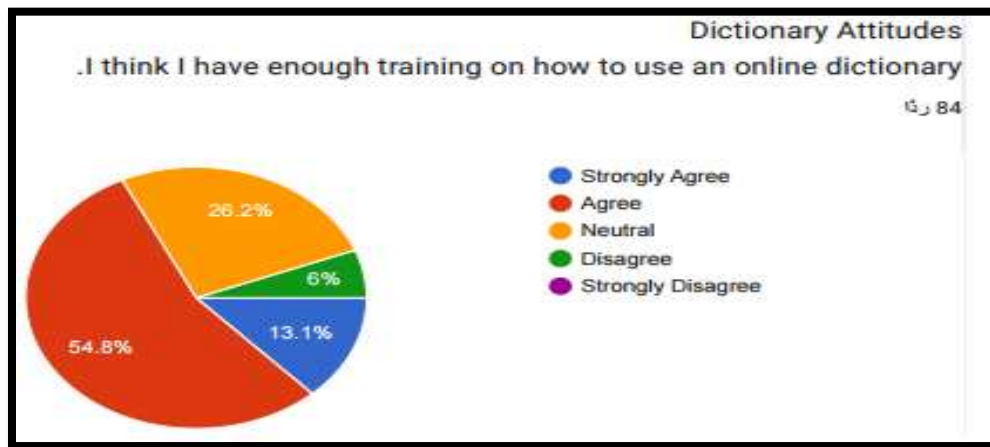


Figure 9 above shows that 54.8% of the respondents agreed that they have enough training on how to use an online dictionary. This shows and supports the students' willingness to use online dictionaries more than paper ones because they are more flexible and dynamic. In this context, Levy and Steel (2014) indicated that online or E- dictionaries, in particular, were on top of the list of technologies used by different language learners because they are easy to deal with.

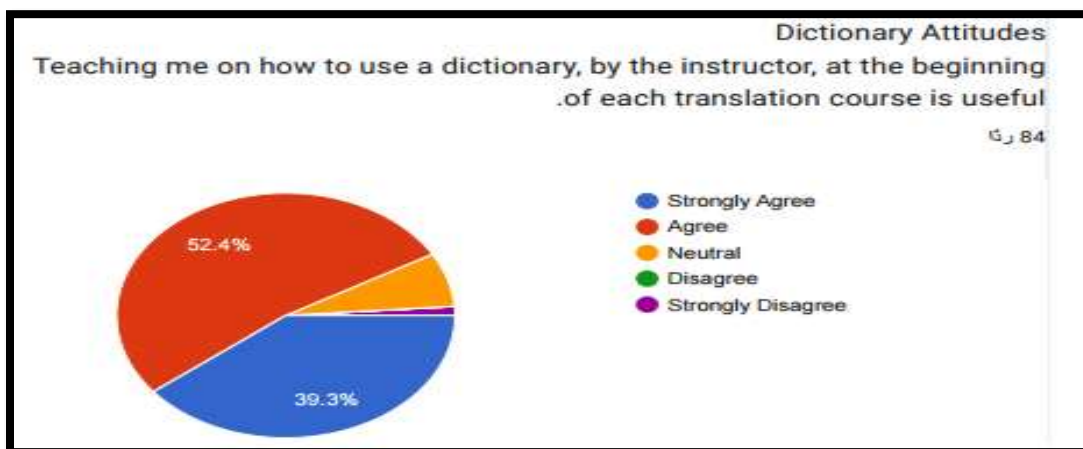


Figure 10 above demonstrates that 52.4% of the respondents look at the training that the instructor provides his trainees on how to use the dictionary as an important step toward mastering the perfect use of different dictionaries. The instructor's training is considered very useful for the students. In this training, the instructor could save students' time and effort on how to deal with different types of dictionaries easily and quickly.

Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo (2022) believed that there were some reasons that were considered a real challenge for students in responding to some translation tasks such as:

1. The lack of enough translation practice.
2. The poor use of using the dictionary.
3. The disability in choosing the appropriate meaning of the word that is going to be translated. As the word in Arabic as well as in English may have more than one meaning." P.279.

This opinion is supported by Figure 11 below.

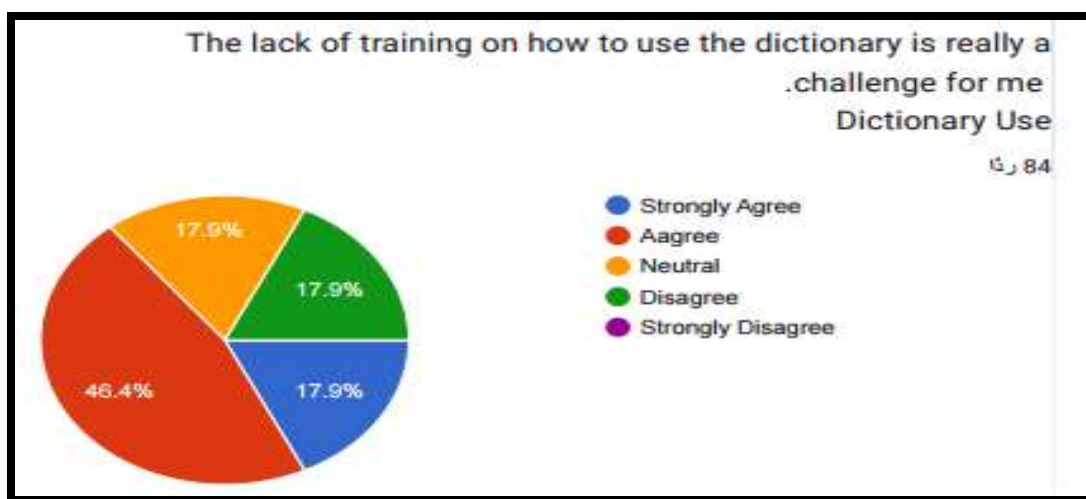


Figure 11 above shows that 44.6% of the respondents agreed that the lack of training on how to use the dictionary is considered a real challenge for them. The researcher believes that students should be trained on how to use dictionaries before starting the practical translation lesson because this will help students in the translation lessons. The Figure shows that only 17.9% disagreed with the statement and this shows that few of the respondents have an acceptable training on how to use the dictionaries.

The researcher believes that the appropriate use of dictionaries for students who study translation is a must due to the differences between Arabic and English in different linguistic and cultural domains. Moreover, Students should increase their practical translation exercises either inside or outside the class because in doing so they are going to train themselves on how to use the dictionary to look for ambiguous words easily and quickly, as this strategy will save their time, especially at tests or quizzes.

## 10. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study tried to investigate the students' dictionary use, and preferences toward the different types of dictionaries. Besides, it tried to explore the students' attitudes about the use of dictionaries in translation courses. The results of the study showed that a good number of the participants agreed that they knew how to use an online dictionary. Students prefer using such a kind of dictionary because, as stated above, it is easy to use and deal with. Moreover, the participants looked at the use of both a dictionary and /or an online dictionary as important and necessary in their translation courses to do different tasks not only in exams.

In addition, the results indicated that the majority of the participants preferred using an online dictionary in their tasks because it is a quick and an easy simple tool that students could deal with in a perfect way to look for the odd or ambiguous words. On the other hand, respondents strongly agreed that they always prefer using the dictionary (hard copy) to look up difficult or unknown words.

As for the participants' attitudes about the use of dictionaries in translation courses, the analysis showed that most of them agreed that they have a positive attitude toward using different types of dictionaries because they depend on them heavily to do different tasks in their translation lessons.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommends the following: Firstly, the researcher sees that students should be provided with enough training and practice on how to use online as well as the book dictionaries. In addition, students must depend on the context first to guess the meaning of the new words before they start looking for their meanings using different types of dictionaries. In other words, students should be encouraged to depend on the context because it is very useful in guessing and knowing the meaning of odd words as the words are meaningless without their contexts.

In addition, lecturers as well as professors should present some practical lessons, on how to use the dictionaries correctly, at the beginning of each academic semester as a good number of the students have a lack or poor use of dictionaries which stands against their good achievement in translation courses.

**Conflicts of Interest :** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**ORCID iD:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4185-6261>

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