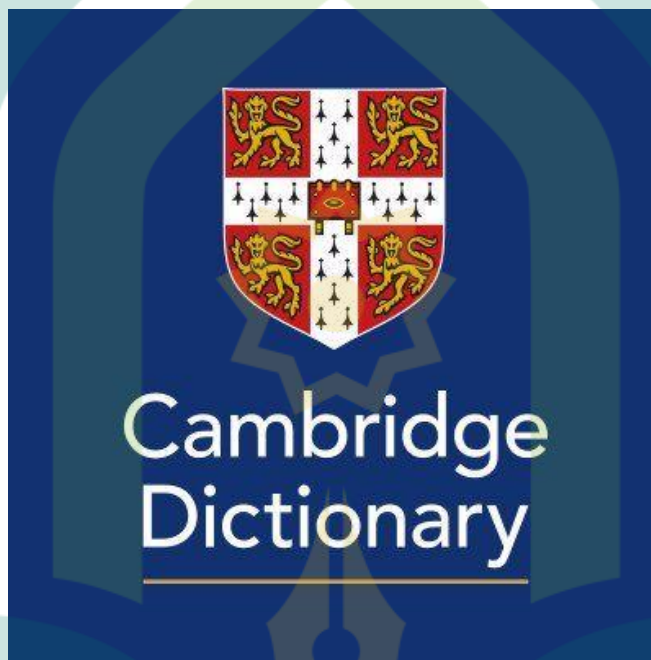




**ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES USING ONLINE
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ENGLISH VOCABULARY**

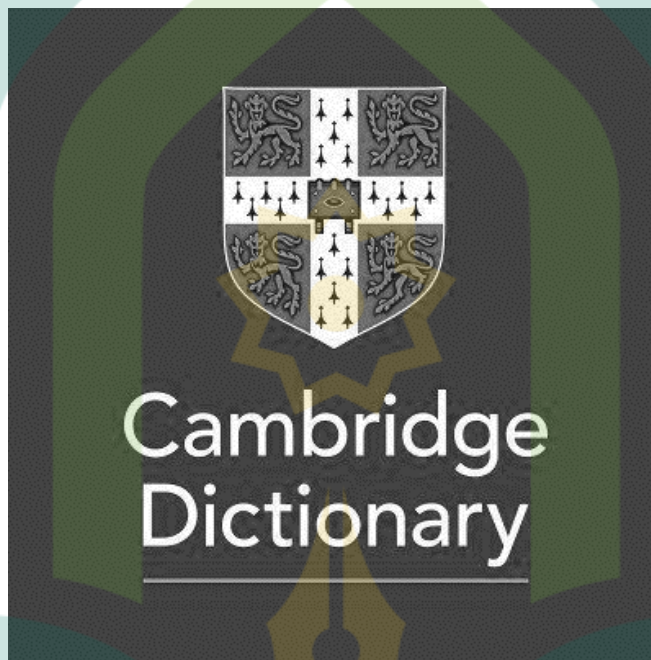


MERLINDA IRWANTI
SN. 2521018

2025



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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education



By:

MERLINDA IRWANTI
SN. 2521018

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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2025**

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EXPERIENCE USING ONLINE CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY
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Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

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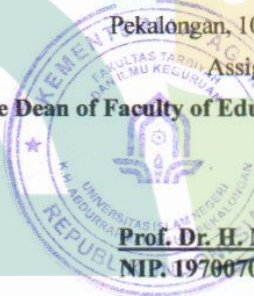
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MOTTO

“When life feels heavy and the road seems long, remember that Allah
never burdens a soul beyond what it can bear.”

— QS. Al-Baqarah verse 286



ABSTRAK

Irwanti, Merlinda 2025, “English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students’ Experience Using Online Cambridge Dictionary for Learning English Vocabulary”. *Skripsi*. English Education Department. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Pembimbing Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

Fenomena meningkatnya ketergantungan mahasiswa terhadap kamus digital semakin terlihat dalam konteks pembelajaran EFL, terutama dalam upaya mereka untuk meningkatkan kemandirian dalam mempelajari kosakata. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa EFL dalam menggunakan Online Cambridge Dictionary (OCD) untuk pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan naratif. Tiga partisipan dari salah satu universitas Islam di Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah, terlibat dalam wawancara semi- terstruktur dan analisis dokumen untuk mengumpulkan data. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik enam tahap Braun and Clark (2006) serta triangulation untuk memastikan keandalan temuan. Kerangka konsep yang digunakan mengacu pada teori pembelajaran eksperiensial yang meliputi tahap Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), dan Active Experimentation (AE), serta kerangka pengetahuan kosakata yang mencakup pronunciation (form), meaning, dan grammar (use). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman belajar mahasiswa melalui penggunaan OCD selaras dengan seluruh tahapan pembelajaran eksperiensial, di mana kamus digital berfungsi sebagai sarana eksplorasi, refleksi, pembentukan konsep, dan penerapan bahasa. Selain itu, temuan ini memberikan kontribusi penting terhadap pemahaman bagaimana keterlibatan eksperiensial dengan sumber belajar digital dapat mendukung pengembangan kosakata yang mandiri dan bermakna dalam konteks pembelajaran EFL.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, pengetahuan kosakata, online cambridge dictionary, mahasiswa efl, studi naratif kualitatif.

ABSTRACT

Irwanti, Merlinda 2025, “English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students’ Experience Using Online Cambridge Dictionary for Learning English Vocabulary”. *Thesis*. English Education Department. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Pembimbing Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

The phenomenon of increasing dependence of university students on digital dictionaries has become more evident in the context of EFL learning, particularly in their efforts to enhance autonomy in vocabulary learning. This study aims to explore EFL students’ experiences in using the Online Cambridge Dictionary (OCD) for English vocabulary learning. The research method used is qualitative with a narrative approach. Three participants from an Islamic university in Pekalongan, Central Java, were involved in semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect the data. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis and triangulation to ensure the reliability of the findings. The conceptual framework of this study refers to experiential learning theory, which includes the stages of Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE), as well as vocabulary knowledge framework, which consists of pronunciation (form), meaning, and grammar (use). The results of the study show that students’ learning experiences through the use of OCD are aligned with all stages of experiential learning, where the digital dictionary functions as a means of exploration, reflection, concept formation, and language application. In addition, the findings provide an important contribution to understanding how experiential engagement with digital learning resources can support independent and meaningful vocabulary development in the EFL learning context.

Keywords: experiential learning, vocabulary knowledge, online cambridge dictionary, efl Students, qualitative narrative study.

PREFACE

All praise is because of Allah SWT, who has given His mercy, guidance, and blessings, enabling the author to complete this undergraduate thesis entitled “English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students’ Experiences Using Online Cambridge Dictionary for Learning English Vocabulary.” This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Education in the English Language Education Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

The motivation behind writing this thesis arises from the author’s deep interest in exploring how digital tools, particularly the online Cambridge Dictionary, can enhance vocabulary learning among EFL students. This research focuses on understanding students’ experiences when using the dictionary as a self-directed learning resource. Employing a qualitative approach, this study aims to provide meaningful insights and practical implications for teachers, learners, and future researchers in the field English language education.

On this occasion, the author would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

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5. All the lecturers of the English Education Department, thank you for your invaluable knowledge, kind guidance, and inspiring lessons.

The author acknowledges this thesis may still contain limitations. Therefore, constructive feedback and suggestions for future improvement are welcomed. It is the author's hope that this thesis will be beneficial to all parties concerned with English language education.

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Penulis



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Vocabulary remains one of the most difficult components of language learning due to its dynamic nature and continuous expansion. Unlike grammar, vocabulary evolves rapidly as new words are created and existing ones shift in meaning based on context and usage trends (Alqahtani, 2015). Considering vocabulary learning involves continuous exposure, repetition, and in-depth contextual knowledge, EFL learners frequently struggle with it (Amin, 2025). Vocabulary learning is also one of the most time-consuming parts of language learning because it takes a long time and requires consistent, intentional effort (Pham and Nguyen, 2017). According to Rossiter et al., (2016) vocabulary learning requires an involved vocabulary acquisition process because it requires more than just knowing a word's basic meaning; it also includes understanding its form, meaning, context, collocation, and receptive and productive aspects. The researcher emphasize that although repetition might improve vocabulary memory, learning frequently progresses slowly because learners have few opportunities to effectively learn words in a variety of usage contexts. This explains why studying word is still one of the hardest and most time-consuming aspects of learning a second language.

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for language mastery since it has a direct impact on students' reading comprehension, writing accuracy, and spoken fluency. Without an appropriate vocabulary, students struggle to comprehend texts, construct coherent sentences, and convey their ideas effectively (Hidayatullah et al., 2022). Furthermore, vocabulary size is positively connected with academic success in language learning, as students with a larger vocabulary perform in all four language skills (Rahman, 2020). For this reason, vocabulary is regarded as a

key to overall language proficiency and communicative competence (Webb and Nation, 2017). In line with this, it's crucial to remember that while having a large vocabulary size does not always indicate that a student is an expert, having a small vocabulary can limit one's capacity to communicate and perform well on tests. Consequently, a large number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students prioritize vocabulary expansion as their primary learning objective. In the context of EFL, this has also been considered a requirement for achieving a higher score on an English proficiency test (Sun et al., 2023).

However, the development of digital tools has fundamentally changed how students access and acquire vocabulary. For example, online dictionaries give students instant access to word definitions, pronunciations, grammatical usage, and sample sentences, all of which promote self-directed and effective learning (Alharbi, 2016). It has been shown that integrating audio-visual media into language learning greatly increases students' motivation and engagement since it offers multimodal input that encourages both emotional and cognitive involvement (Novitri et al., 2023). Alamri and Hakami (2022) agreed, emphasizing that using online dictionaries to learn vocabulary and adapt to it can help avoid misunderstandings. Another reason is that, because of their trendiness, functionality, and convenience of use, online dictionaries are better at improving language proficiency than books. Online dictionaries also help students become aware of context, register, and collocations, all of which are essential elements of effective communication (Yukselir and Ucar, 2015). Therefore, students are using online dictionaries more frequently since they provide quick, thorough, and easy-to-use vocabulary study alternatives (Rohmatillah, 2016).

The online Cambridge Dictionary is one of the most popular digital dictionaries due to its credibility, easy-to-use interface, and extensive linguistic features. Dual-pronunciation choices (UK/US), grammar and usage input, synonyms, collocations, and real-world sample sentences are just a few of the

many resources it provides for learners. For students navigating unfamiliar words, this mix of elements offers both depth and clarity (Rezaei and Davoudi, 2016). Selcuk and Daniela (2023), for example, found that students had to use online dictionaries to help them write English short stories as part of a collaborative writing process that took place through Facebook groups. Learners were able to connect lexical searches, whether for definitions, synonyms, collocations, or contextual usage, with the communicative and creative requirements of the writing assignment by consulting digital dictionaries like Cambridge. This demonstrates that the Cambridge Dictionary's informative value arises from both its linguistic qualities and its practical relevance in improving vocabulary acquisition and usage in reality.

Similarly, Ambarwati and Mandasari (2020) found that the dual-pronunciation and vocabulary resources in the online Cambridge Dictionary helped Indonesian students master both pronunciation and vocabulary. These results show that the dictionary is meaningful for EFL learners because its useful features match students' learning experiences. Additionally, official updates such as the Word of the Year series by Cambridge demonstrate proactive adaptation to emerging linguistic trends, reinforcing the resource's relevance for today's learners. According to Garcia (2020), the Cambridge Dictionary is highly relevant for today's students due to its regular updates and integration of real-world usage. Furthermore, being advantageous in theory, these features are also evident in EFL learners' real experiences.

Numerous Efl students emphasized the comfort and simplicity of using the online Cambridge Dictionary to learn new words. Because of its interactive elements, clear display, and complete features enhanced their confidence, showing its practicality and value in helping EFL learners acquire vocabulary. In addition to their weak comprehension of word meanings, pronunciation, grammatical forms, and accurate usage, EFL students frequently struggle to master English vocabulary. Through their experiences with the online Cambridge Dictionary, they found

it easier to understand meanings, improve pronunciation, and recognize grammatical patterns, which contributed to a more effective and enjoyable vocabulary learning process. Students' lack of awareness for accurate phonetic knowledge also causes pronunciation issues. Furthermore, dependency on traditional classroom instruction minimizes their ability to learn vocabulary on their own. These difficulties show how crucial it is to explore how EFL students use online resources, like the online Cambridge Dictionary, to aid in their vocabulary growth. Considering the growing usage of digital dictionaries, there has been a lack of in-depth research into EFL learners' experiences with online tools such as the online Cambridge Dictionary in vocabulary learning. While studies by Rezaei and Davoudi (2016) and Tananuraksakul (2015) that the use of online dictionaries develops the learning autonomy of EFL students, these studies do not explore in depth the reflective and narrative experiences of students. For example, how students assess the usefulness of features such as context examples, pronunciation guides, and interface navigation in the context of their learning. However, fewer studies have explored students' reflective and narrative experiences in using such tools. In addition, little attention has been given to how learners evaluate the usefulness of these technologies in their specific learning contexts. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap by conducting a qualitative exploration to reinforce the methodological approach.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

In addition to the background information provided and to determine the goal of the study, the following questions must be addressed: How do EFL students experience in using the online Cambridge Dictionary for English vocabulary learning

1.3 Aims of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore one main research issue concerning EFL students' experiences using the online Cambridge Dictionary in their English vocabulary learning.

1.4 Operational Definition

The researcher provides the following explanations for the terms used in this study to clarify any misunderstandings:

1. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) : EFL is people who live in nations where English is not the first language used for business, education, or everyday communication learn the language (Broughton et al., 1978).
2. Students' Experiences : Students' Experiences are what give students a better understanding of the world and help them grow in the future (Dewey, 1986).
3. Cambridge Dictionary : The Cambridge Dictionary is an online dictionary that provides easy-to-understand definitions of English words along with examples of how they are used in familiar contexts (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).
4. Learning Vocabulary : Learn vocabulary means understanding and remembering word meanings so that students may utilize them effectively when speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Hiebert and Kamil, 2005).

1.5 Significance of the Research

1. Theoretical Significance

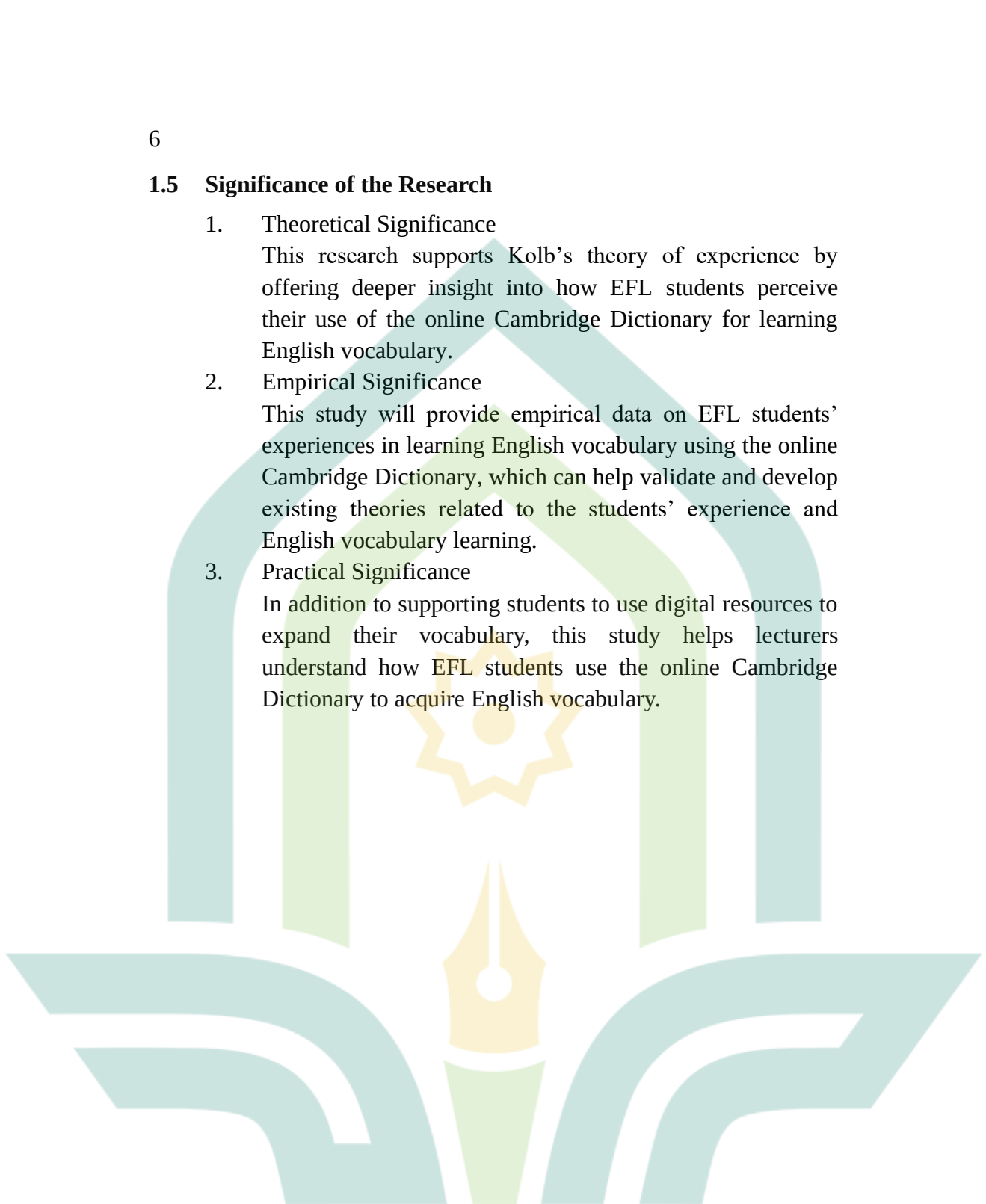
This research supports Kolb's theory of experience by offering deeper insight into how EFL students perceive their use of the online Cambridge Dictionary for learning English vocabulary.

2. Empirical Significance

This study will provide empirical data on EFL students' experiences in learning English vocabulary using the online Cambridge Dictionary, which can help validate and develop existing theories related to the students' experience and English vocabulary learning.

3. Practical Significance

In addition to supporting students to use digital resources to expand their vocabulary, this study helps lecturers understand how EFL students use the online Cambridge Dictionary to acquire English vocabulary.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of data analysis and discussion, using the online Cambridge Dictionary enhances EFL students' vocabulary development based on the findings of data analysis and discussion. The four phases of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation, are reflected in this study. Students experienced, interpreted, understood, and used vocabulary knowledge involving pronunciation, meaning, and grammar in significant ways during these stages.

The findings demonstrate that students developed contextual understanding of word meanings, enhanced grammatical awareness for correct word usage, and developed their pronunciation accuracy through audio and phonetic aspects. The dictionary helped students make the connection between theoretical and practical language use by promoting self-directed and reflective learning. Learners still need help to utilize the dictionary effectively, however, as evidenced by a few problems such early confusion with English-only explanations and the requirement for consistent use. As a result, the online Cambridge Dictionary deserves to be integrated into language classes as a helpful resource that encourages independence, contextual awareness, and active vocabulary growth.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings and conclusions, several suggestions can be proposed for students, teachers, and future researchers.

1. For EFL students, students are persuaded to use the online Cambridge Dictionary as an interactive learning tool in addition to a linguistic tool. Learners can improve their

vocabulary comprehensively by examining its pronunciation audios, example sentences, and grammar notes. In order to strengthen comprehension through practice, they should also use recently acquired vocabulary in both writing and speaking.

2. For English teacher, online dictionaries, specifically the Cambridge Dictionary, should be introduced by teachers into their teachings on grammar and vocabulary. Giving students guided practice with phonetic transcriptions, grammatical labels, and contextual examples can help them become more autonomous and trustworthy learners. By giving students assignments that require them to use dictionary features to explore new language, teachers can also promote reflective and active learning.
3. For Future research, future research could explore the use of online dictionaries and corpus-based tools for grammar learning in writing. Such studies may reveal how these tools help students understand grammatical patterns and improve the accuracy and fluency of their written work.



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