# Why do the Students Rely on an English Dictionary to Speak English?

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| | *English communication is very important in this era. Students are expected to have proficient English skills. However, in reality, students often use English dictionaries when talking to others. A dictionary is a collection of words that functions as a reference that provides translations of words, meanings, and how to read words. Therefore, this research provide an overview of students who often rely on dictionaries when speaking English with other people. The purpose of this research is to see the presentations of students who rely on dictionaries when talking to other people. That way, it will be easier to conclude whether using a dictionary helps students or makes students dependent and ultimately unable to speak English fluently. The research method used is quantitative. Data were collected by using a survey method. The survey method aims to collect data as appropriate by giving questionnaires to the sample to be studied. To maximize the data collected, the survey that the researchers distributed used a Likert Item scale. The participants consisted of 85 of 5th semester students of the English Education Study Program at The University of Nias. The research results show that students still rely on using dictionaries when speaking English. The ongoing reliance on dictionaries indeed carries a detrimental effect; hence, it is recommended that dictionaries be employed only when necessary.* |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in English has become a very important skill in this globalization era. English as international language, enabling communication with individuals from other countries through the use of English. However, numerous students continue to depend on dictionaries while engaging in communication. According to Damayanti (2013), a dictionary is a book that contains words arranged alphabetically and contains the meaning of the words, their usage, or their translation. It means that dictionaries provide information regarding word derivation, word meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. Furthermore, Setiawati (2016) and Kushartanti, et al. (2009) state that dictionary is a work that functions as a reference. Dictionaries are not only provide definitions but also additional information such as the use of words in sentences and a basis of understanding for investigating this phenomenon further. This statement is supported by Kurniati in Damayanti (2013), who states that a dictionary usually contains pronunciation methods, syllable patterns, and examples of usage.

Dictionaries are categorized into two types based on their form: manual (offline) dictionaries and electronic (online) dictionaries. Manual dictionaries are dictionaries that can be accessed without requiring an internet connection. But, searching for vocabulary in manual dictionaries necessitates heightened concentration. In contrast, electronic dictionaries are technologically oriented reference tools that depend on an internet connection. An Android-based digital dictionary has complete features making it easier for students to find the

meaning of words, practical, and can be used anywhere and anytime. Nevertheless, the extensive functionality of these features can distract students from focused studying, and using a cellphone for learning is often associated with the temptation of accessing various other applications. It can be concluded that using an offline and online English dictionary has its advantages and disadvantages (Saragih, et al., 2017; Ratmini & Dahlia, 2019).

Currently, we have entered an era of globalization which is marked by the rapid development of information technology. All types of information can be swiftly accessed at any time and any location without constraints (Fadly., et al. (2020). Technology developments and easy access to online dictionaries are additional factors that should be taken into consideration. Researchers observed that students had easy access to various types of dictionaries through their electronic devices. The question arises whether this convenience factor influences students' tendency to rely on dictionaries in everyday conversation situations. Previous research conducted by Brown (2012), highlights the benefits of using dictionaries in enriching vocabulary and understanding the nuances of words. However, the question arises to what extent students can integrate knowledge from dictionaries into their daily conversations naturally. Many students only know the translation of words casually and then forget about them. This observation can offer additional understanding regarding the efficacy of current methods for learning from dictionaries. It is important to understand that students' use of dictionaries in speaking English may reflect certain needs or uncertainties in their understanding. According to Gardner (2013: 72), learning motivation is shaped by an individual's fundamental needs. Consequently, this study aims to investigate whether the utilization of this dictionary is predominantly driven by the necessity for clarity of meaning or by the aspiration to enhance self-expression.

This population were 5th semester students of The University of Nias. Researchers investigated whether the use of a dictionary, either manual or electronic, gave a positive or negative impact on English fluency. Students may use dictionaries as a key to understanding and conveying ideas, but does this reflect deficiencies in their learning? As previously stated by several researchers, there are two factors involve students using dictionaries, either they use dictionaries out of necessity or due to their inability to speak English proficiently. According to Fitriani et al. (2021), communication is a crucial activity, as it allows individuals to interact with each other. Therefore, mastering language skills enables a person to communicate easily with others. From this point of view, it is crucial to understand the importance of developing communication skills that do not only rely on dictionaries. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and consequences associated with dictionary usage among 5th semester students at The University of Nias in English speaking, hopefully can make a constructive contribution to the development of more contextual and effective learning methods. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify the reasons for employing dictionaries and investigate how they affect the progression of English speaking skills, particularly among 5th semester students at The University of Nias.

## 2. METHOD

The research method used in this research is quantitative research following Priadana & Sunarsi (2021), who stated that quantitative research is research that focuses on measuring and analyzing cause-and-effect relationships between various variables. This means quantitative data is numerical data that can be calculated accurately. An example of numerical data in quantitative research methods is represented by the findings derived from respondent surveys. In the present study, a questionnaire served as the research instrument. According to Sugiyono (2017), a questionnaire is a data collection technique that is carried out by giving a set of questions or written questions to respondents. Questionnaires can be either open, allowing respondents to provide answers in a descriptive form, or closed, where respondents choose one answer from the provided options.

The data were collected by using a survey method. The survey method is a data collection technique that is carried out by giving questionnaires or structured interviews to a population sample to obtain information about the characteristics of that population (Babbie, 2016; Widodo, 2008). In this case, the survey method aims to collect data as appropriate by giving questionnaires to the sample to be studied. To maximize the data collected, the survey that the researchers distributed used a Likert Item scale. The Likert scale is a scale that can be used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or group of people about a symptom or social phenomenon (Sugiyono in Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021; Anwar, 2019). By using a Likert scale, the variables to be measured are broken down into dimensions, the dimensions are broken down into sub-variables and then the sub-variables are broken down into indicators that can be measured. Likert is the most commonly used response format inattitude scales. Likert-style scales, which range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) or typically include a 5-point response range, for example, A = "strongly agree" to E = "strongly disagree," but can cover any range. A = strongly agree, B = agree, C = Neutral, D = disagree, and E = strongly disagree.

In this research, the research participants consisted of 85 fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at The University of Nias.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Results of the research

The research question is "Does the dictionary improve students' speaking skills in English or does the use of dictionaries have a negative impact on students?". From the survey, researcher found that numerous students still rely on dictionaries while speaking English. This is due to limitations in mastering English vocabulary, thus encouraging students to use dictionaries. Based on the collected data, among 82 students only 65 responded, even though they were always reminded. Therefore, the results of a survey on dictionary use for 5th-semester students at University of Nias can be seen as follows:

The first statement shows 26,2% agree, 6,2% strongly agree, 49,2% of students are neutral and 18,5% disagree which informs how often students use an English dictionary when speaking in English. It could be seen in Figure 1:
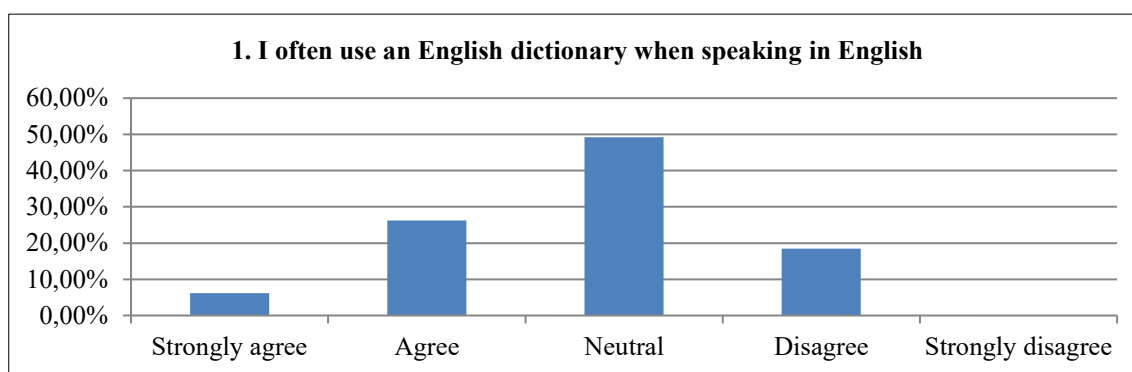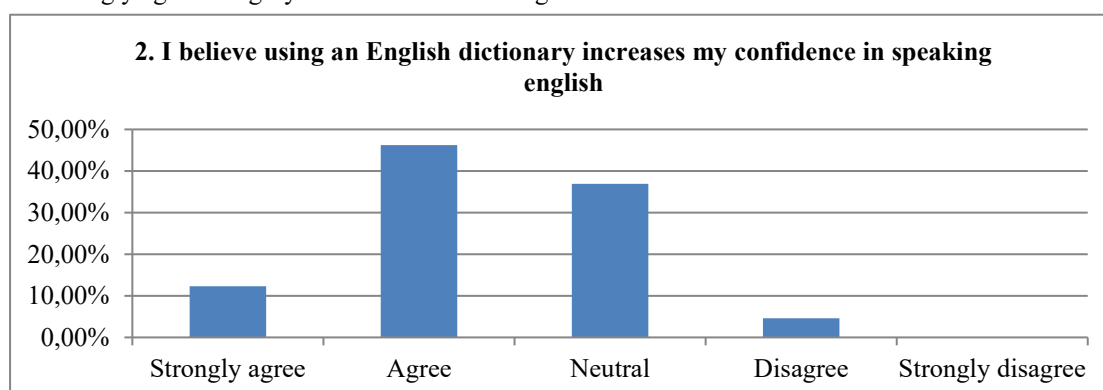


**Figure 1.** How often students use an English dictionary

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 4 students
- Agree: 17 students
- Neutral: 32 students
- Disagree: 12 students
- Strongly disagree: 0 student

The second statement shows 46,2% of students believe that the dictionary increases their confidence when speaking English in the agree category, 4,6% in the disagree category, 36,9% in the neutral category, and 12,3% in the strongly agree category. It could be seen in Figure 2:
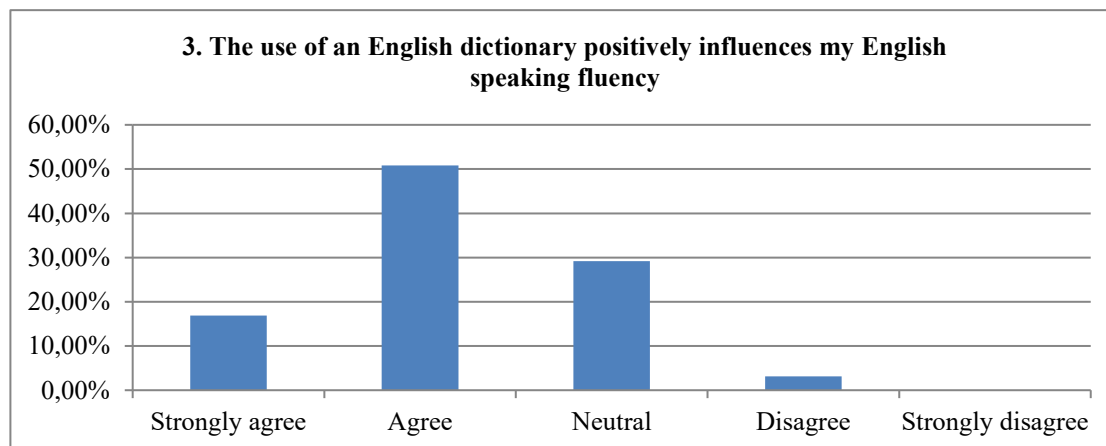


**Figure 2.** Self-confidence

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students are provided below:
- Strongly agree: 8 students

- Agree: 30 students
- Neutral: 24 students
- Disgree: 3 students
- Stronglydisagree: 0 student

The third statement shows that 50,8% of students believe that using a dictionary positively influences English speaking fluency in the agreed category, 29,2% in the neutral category, 3,1% in the disagree category, and 16,9% in the strongly agree category. It could be seen in Figure 3:
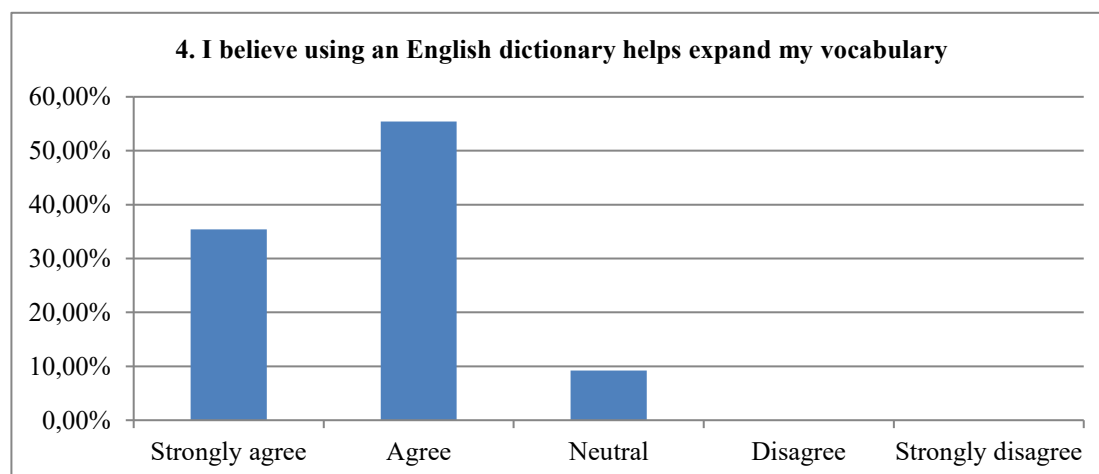


**Figure 3.** English speaking fluency

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below
- Strongly agree: 11 students
- Agree: 33 students
- Neutral: 19 students
- Disagree: 2 students
- Stronglydisagree: 0 student

The fourth statement shows 55,4% agree, 9,2% of students are neutral and 35,4% strongly agree which informs how confident students are that using an English dictionary helps broaden their horizons. It could be seen in Figure 4:
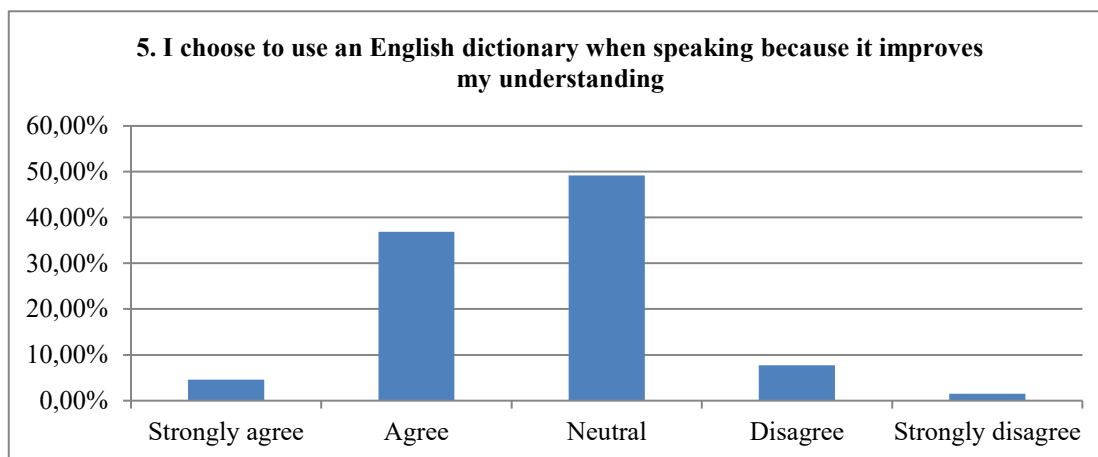


**Figure 4.** Using an English dictionary helps broaden their horizons

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below
- Strongly agree: 23 students
- Agree: 36 students
- Neutral: 6 students
- Disagree: 0 student

- Strongly disagree : 0 student

The fifth statement which informs that students use a dictionary when speaking because it improves their understanding is 49,2% in the neutral category, 36,9% in the agree category, 4,6 in the strongly agree category, 1,5% in the strongly disagree category, and 7,7% in the disagree category. It could be seen in Figure 5:
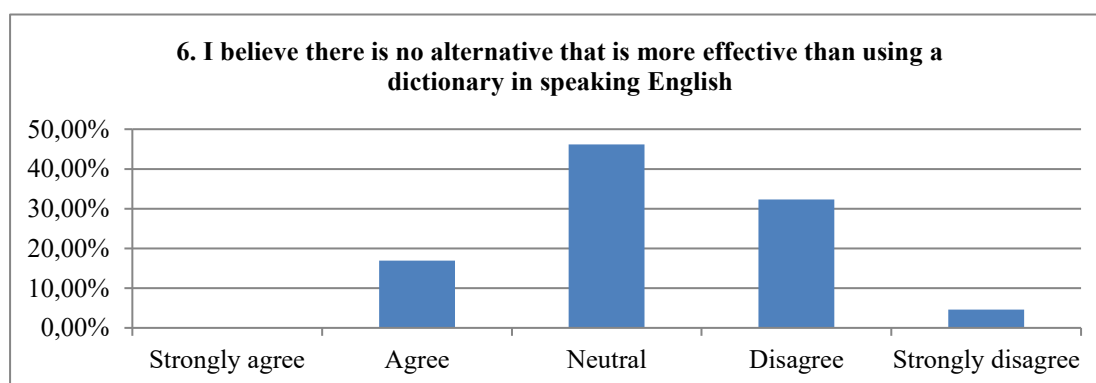


**Figure 5.** Increased understanding

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below
- Strongly agree: 3 students
- Agree: 24 students
- Neutral: 32 students
- Disagree: 5 students
- Strongly disagree: 1 student

The sixth statement shows 46,2% of students believe that dictionaries are the only effective alternative when speaking English in the neutral category, 32,3% in the disagree category, 4,6% in the strongly disagree category, and 16,9% in the agree category. It could be seen in Figure 6:
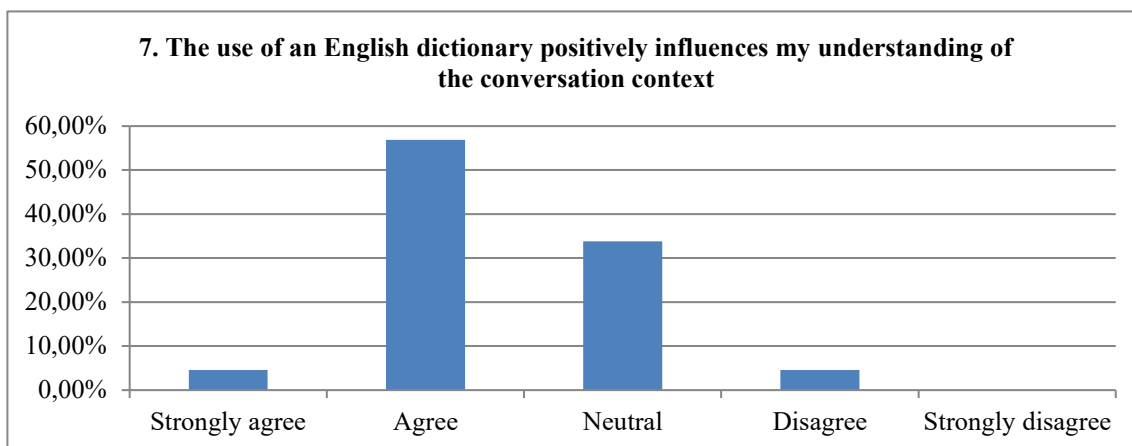


**Figure 6.** Dictionaries are the only effective alternative

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 0 student
- Agree: 11 students
- Neutral: 30 students
- Disagree: 21 students
- Strongly disagree: 3 students

The seventh statement shows that 56,9% of students believe that using an English dictionary positively influences their understanding of the conversation context in the agree category, 4,6% in the strongly agree and disagree category, and 33,8% in the neutral category. It could be seen in Figure 7:
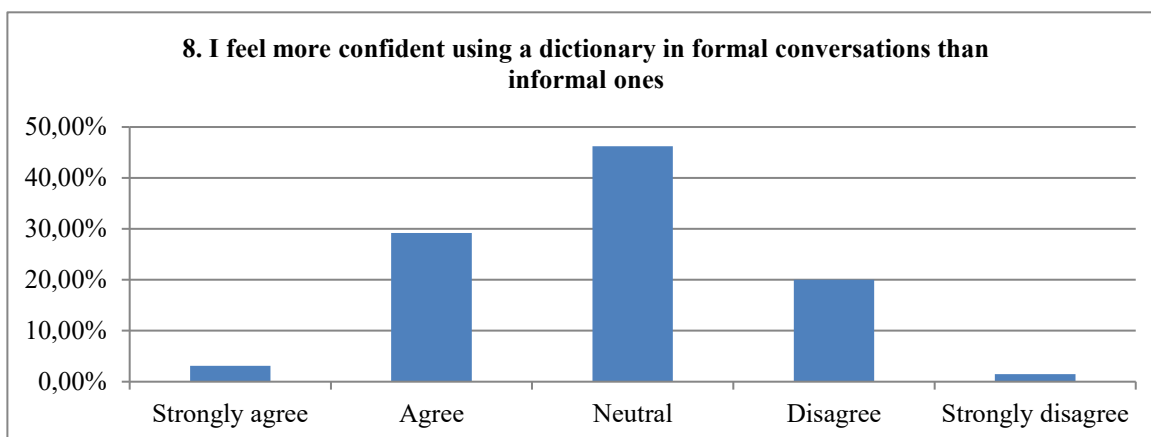


**Figure 7.** Conversation context

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 3 students
- Agree: 37 students
- Neutral: 22 students
- Disagree : 3 students
- Strongly disagree : 0 student

The eighth statement indicates 29,2% agree, 46,2% of students are neutral, 1,5% of students strongly disagree, 3,1% of students strongly agree, and 20% disagree which indicates confidence in using a dictionary in formal rather than informal conversations. It could be seen in Figure 8:
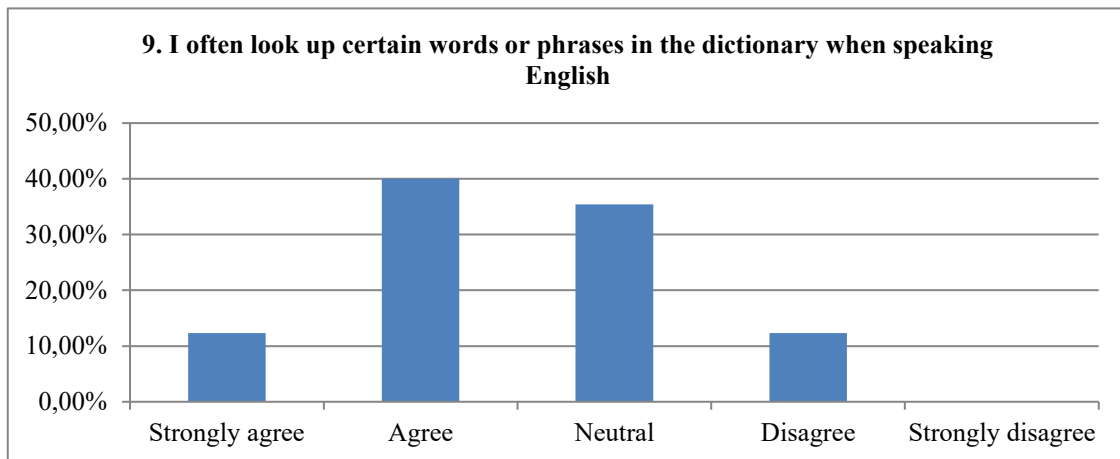


**Figure 8.** Formal and informal conversations

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 2 students
- Agree: 19 students
- Neutral: 30 students
- Disagree: 13 students
- Strongly disagree: 1 student

The ninth statement shows that 35,4% of students often look for certain words or phrases in the dictionary when speaking English in the neutral category 40% in the agreed category, 12,3% in the disagree category, and 12,3% in the very strong category agree. It could be seen in Figure 9:
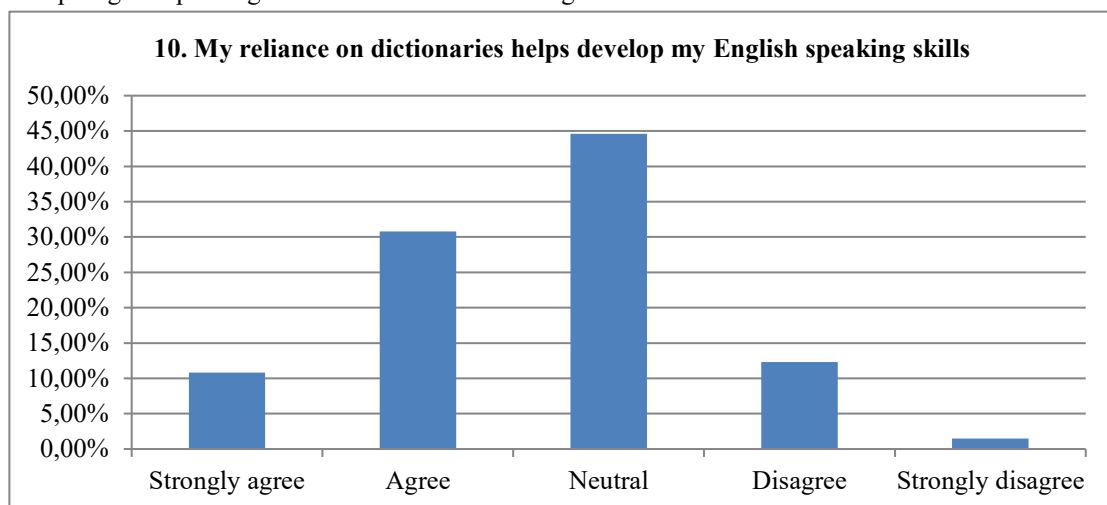
**Figure 9.** How students often look for certain words or phrases in the dictionary

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students can be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 8 students
- Agree: 26 students
- Neutral: 23 students
- Disagree: 8 students
- Strongly disagree : 0 student

The final statement indicates 30,8% agree, 44,6% of students are neutral, 12,3% disagree, 1,5% students strongly disagree, and 10,8% strongly agree which indicates that students' reliance on dictionaries can help develop English speaking skills. It could be seen in Figure 10:



**Figure 10.** Students' reliance on dictionaries

Details of the presentation regarding the number of students could be seen below:
- Strongly agree: 7 students
- Agree: 20 students
- Neutral: 29 students
- Disagree: 8 students
- Strongly disagree: 1 student

## 3.2 Discussion

Dictionaries are one of the media used by students in translating language vocabulary. The use of an English dictionary is intricately connected to the process of learning English, particularly during communication with others. A dictionary is a book that contains the meaning of a word or a translation of the meaning of a word in another language. English dictionaries provide many benefits for students in increasing vocabulary. Along with the development of technology, dictionaries have undergone innovation, and one such form of innovation is the electronic dictionary (Elyana, 2017; Hamidah, et al., 2020). Nowadays, many students translate words without giving proper attention to the translation itself and voiding this behavior is crucial. Therefore, conducting an analysis of translation results is crucial to identify any inaccuracies in the text translation. While using a dictionary, it is essential to maintain awareness and wisdom. In this context, awareness refers to understanding that the translation results obtained may not be entirely accurate or may have limitations. Furthermore, it is necessary to re-analyze the results when using a dictionary (Wahdah, et al., 2023; Maulida, 2017).

The findings above shows how important dictionaries are for students when speaking English. First position is agreeing category. Many students chose the category of agreeing with the use of dictionaries with a total of 389.3% among the ten statements provided. The results of this research show that most 5th semester students still depend on dictionaries and often rely on dictionaries when communicating in English. The neutral category takes the second position. These results indicate that 5th semester students mostly rely on dictionaries only when needed and do not rely too much on them. And finally, categories aside from the agree and neutral classifications. Previous researchers stated that the use of dictionary media can make it easier for students to understand the meaning of words because, for beginner students, dictionaries are the right media to understand the meaning of words according to the reading context (Damayanti, 2013; Ratmini & Dahlia, 2019). Dictionaries prove highly beneficial for students as they provide a means to understand the translation of words. By using a dictionary, students can discover the meanings of words, learn how to pronounce them, and many more. However, it is undeniable that constant reliance on a dictionary can lead to dependency, hindering students from effectively communicating in English with others.

Pramawati (2022) states that this world needs someone who can translate one language into another. According to the author's viewpoint, using a dictionary is important for comprehending the meanings of words and similar aspects. Nevertheless, this does not always give positive effects on students. According to Ardiani, et al. (2019), no matter how sophisticated the translation machine used is, the results obtained are no better than that of a professional translator. It would be a good idea to try to memorize new vocabulary and apply it when talking to others. Then start practicing English communication without depending on a dictionary from now on. The researcher found that the use of a dictionary has both positive and negative consequences. The positive side, a dictionary ensures smoother communication in spoken English. And on the negative side, it fosters students dependency, discourages vocabulary memorization, and obstructs students from confidently engaging in English communication. The researcher advise to use a dictionary when needed and avoid to rely on the dictionary. Memorize the vocabulary needed and make an effort to use it when communicating with your classmates.

## 4. CONCLUSION

A dictionary is a collection of words and phrases arranged alphabetically and given meanings along with translations in two or more languages. Dictionaries can be in book form or electronic form to help someone interpret a word. This study helps us understand how important dictionaries are for 5th semester English language education students at the University of Nias. The findings above shows that dictionaries are very important for students to get information about the meaning and translation of words. This research could be continued in the future for those students who rely on dictionaries. The research can explore into greater detail regarding strategies to reduce over reliance on dictionaries among students. Provide comprehensive insights into effective solutions that enable students to communicate fluently in English without overly relying on dictionaries.

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