

The Beliefs of Tertiary Level EFL Teachers and Students on Digital Learning

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the attitudes of university prep students and English teachers working at university preparatory schools towards digital learning. In this study, a different questionnaire was applied to students and teachers. The "teachers' beliefs in digital learning" questionnaire prepared by the researcher and approved by the ethics committee was applied to 25 lecturers working at a foundation university. It is the 'Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic' survey prepared by Adnan & Anwar (2020) for 100 middle-level Turkish students studying at the same foundation university. The results of the study revealed the importance of digital learning of students and teachers in foreign language teaching. According to the results, recommendations were made to support and develop digital teaching in foreign language teaching.*

Keywords: Digital Learning, Student Beliefs, Teacher Beliefs, Attitudes on Digital Learning

1. Introduction

Language learning can be difficult for students. Educators can use digital learning, particularly when it is used during the teaching and learning procedure. Studies backs up the advantages of digital education (Zhu, AU, & Yates, 2013) (elik & Aytın, 2014). (Chhabra, 2012). The primary goals of establishing an effective language learning experience are EFL instructors' opinions and dispositions toward the use of digital learning. To present, digital learning has also been employed to improve the effectiveness of language acquisition (Voogt et al., 2009; Voogt & McKenney, 2017).

Despite the fact that digital learning has indeed been acknowledged as an efficient method of language acquisition in the past, it was widely assumed that it would be devoid of interaction. This breakdown in dialogue would hinder students taking benefit of the tangible reaction of teachers or other pupils and impact academic progress (Schultz, 2001; Fielder, 2003). (Schultz, 2001; Fielder, 2003). Jiang & Zhao (2018) concur with Schultz and ponder on the importance of learners interacting with their professors as a vital feature of digital learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Beliefs on Digital Learning

Possessing proper educational and technological abilities are two critical components of an effective transformation to a digital classroom. The academic world largely believes that the implementation of student-centred pedagogical techniques is critical to the success of digital courses and curriculum. (Duffy & Kirkley, 2004; Grabinger, 2004;

Polin, 2004). Thus, the online teacher's responsibility is to develop, establish, and encourage dynamic engagements among students in way to sustain students engaged. Learners are routinely required to take on new obligations in well online courses, some of which was once the privilege of teachers.

On the other hand, some scholars believe that digital learning is a less worthy form of education (Seaman, 2009; Adams & Defleur, 2005). Even if teachers are very experienced in their respective field, they sometimes might have difficulties to apply digital tools in their digital lessons so it might cause a breakdown to cover the lessons effectively.

2.2. Student Beliefs on Digital Learning

The language learning would be reinforced and maintained when schools assist the students in becoming dedicated and happy with their online activities (Tinto, 1993). Digital learning may not be suitable for all language learners. During the language learning process, some students may feel uninterested and detached. A lack of interaction may raise unhappiness as well as decrease in their attendance rates. According to Rovai (2002), a strong sense of community and solidarity among students is essential not just for increasing attention in schoolwork but also for encouraging collaboration and dedication. Barr and Miller (2013) claim that teachers may also contribute to reducing alienation in the online environment by teaching one-on-one in a classroom, by recording student engagement and integrating in digital courses. Students who need to connect with colleagues and the teacher can arrange digital study groups to contribute and answer questions, tasks, difficulties

and projects. Scholars believe that teachers of online learning initiatives may reduce students' feelings of alienation and strengthen their community spirit by boosting consignment and participation, providing basic positive language, creating small group interactive activities, assuring that project meetings are beneficial for all, implementing various instructional approaches, and minimizing ambiguity (Rovai, 2002).

3. Statement of Purpose & Problem

The fundamental goal of the research is to assess and expose the views and attitudes of tertiary stage Turkish instructors and students towards digital learning at a foundational institution. Prior research on digital learning contains teacher perceptions (Çelik & Aytın, 2014), student attitudes (Zhu, AU, & Yates, 2013) (López-Pérez, Pérez-López, & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2011), system use (Chhabra, 2012), evaluation of digital learning and conventional techniques (Hendriks, 2016), and the importance of digital learning in Learning English (Mutambik, 2018). As a consequence, this paper provides quantifiable data on the perceptions and views of preparatory school Turkish EFL instructors and students regarding digital learning. As a result, the focus of this study is to research and examine Turkish EFL instructors' and learners' attitudes about digital learning.

Statement of Significance

Despite the fact that digital learning has grown in popularity in recent years, both instructors and students are often unaware of and dismissive of digital learning ideas and attitudes (elik & Aytın, 2014). Primarily, this study looks into language instructors' perceptions on digital learning. It provides a chance to improve knowledge and, as a result, the adoption of digital education in schools. The importance of digital learning may be underlined by using diverse works of numerous academics as resources.

3.1. Research Questions

- 1) What are the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish EFL students and teachers on digital learning?
- 2) Is digital learning an effective method for Turkish EFL students in terms of language learning?

4. Method

4.1. Setting and Participants

This study was carried out at a Foundation University's Preparatory School in Istanbul, Turkey, during the semester year 2020-2021. Students have one year to accomplish preparatory school. Students will have main classes when they graduate from preparatory school. Learners learn English for one calendar year and complete a competency final exam. Once they are competent, they will be able to begin their BA curriculum. The pupils that took part had an intermediate level of English. Their linguistic curriculum consisted of 18 sessions of English courses each week. These lessons featured 6 hours of main course, 6 hours of hearing and speaking, and 6 hours of reading and writing. The participants are 100 intermediate level Turkish students and 25 Turkish EFL instructors. The students' age is 20 on

average. Firstly, the details of the study were provided to the students and then the questionnaire was applied.

The experiences and ages of the instructors vary in the research. They work at the preparatory department of the same foundation university. They teach from level A1 to level B2.

5. Data Collection Instruments

The study employs a quantitative approach. Two questionnaires were used to obtain the results. According to Cohen (1980), statistical method is societal study that employs practical technique and critical argumentation. Furthermore, according to Bryman (2001, p20), quantitative evaluation is categorized as a time-saving investigation that emphasizes on numbers and percentages in data collecting and data processing.

The very first survey is titled 'Online learning in the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic' (Adnan & Anwar, 2020), and the second is titled 'Teacher beliefs on digital learning,' which was created by the investigator and validated by specialists. There are a total of 14 things. The questions are designed to elicit learners' thoughts and ideas about digital learning, as well as to identify some of the problems and motivations for adopting digital technologies. The second research tool is divided into three sections and has a total of 17 items. The first part contains three elements on the qualities of teachers. The next section includes four elements on instructors' digital learning skills. The final portion has ten items concerning teachers' attitudes and attitudes on digital learning.

The elements of both questionnaires are scored using a 5-point Likert rating scale in this research. They are numbered from 1 to 5 and are as follows: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). The questions were filled out in English.

6. Procedure

In this study, two questionnaires were conducted via Google Forms. Due to the conditions of Covid-19 pandemic, this is the best way to conduct a questionnaire. All details were provided in the form for the participants. Online forms for surveys are generally suggested because they are more practical and are time-saving than the traditional way of conducting surveys. Lefever, Dal, & Matthiasdottir (2007) state that conventional ways are not cheap and restricted because of place and time, while digital surveys can lead to a successful accomplishment.

Table 1 describes the items 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 of the teachers' questionnaire and Table 2 illustrates the items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 of the students' survey. Table 1 and 2 show the results of preparatory level EFL Turkish intermediate students and Turkish EFL teachers' positive views and attitudes on digital learning.

Table 1: Teachers' Beliefs towards Digital Learning

	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
5. I believe the conventional language teaching methods are better than digital teaching.	Strongly disagree	4
	Disagree	20
	Neutral	24
	Agree	24
	Strongly agree	28
6. Digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes.	Disagree	4
	Neutral	12
	Agree	56
	Strongly agree	28
7. Digital learning does not support learning.	Strongly disagree	36
	Disagree	48
	Neutral	16
8. Students can be more motivated through digital platforms.	Disagree	36
	Neutral	32
	Agree	20
	Strongly agree	12
12. I am able to manage the class during the digital lessons.	Strongly disagree	4
	Disagree	4
	Neutral	12
	Agree	48
	Strongly agree	32
13. I can make my students understand my objectives better in digital teaching.	Disagree	36
	Neutral	32
	Agree	20
	Strongly agree	12
14. I can engage my students better in digital teaching.	Disagree	20
	Neutral	52
	Agree	24
	Strongly agree	4

Table 2: Students' Beliefs towards Digital Learning

	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
3. Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet.	Strongly disagree	29
	Disagree	21
	Neutral	22
	Agree	14
	Strongly agree	14
4. I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course.	Strongly disagree	25
	Disagree	32
	Neutral	24
	Agree	9
	Strongly agree	10
5. I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.	Strongly disagree	11
	Disagree	19
	Neutral	31
	Agree	24
	Strongly agree	15
6. I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	4
	Disagree	12
	Neutral	27
	Agree	31
	Strongly agree	26
7. I can work in a group during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	3
	Disagree	12
	Neutral	19
	Agree	29
	Strongly agree	37
8. I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.	Strongly disagree	3
	Disagree	14
	Neutral	20
	Agree	25
9. I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.	Strongly agree	38
	Strongly disagree	9
	Disagree	6
	Neutral	23
	Agree	26
	Strongly agree	36

7. Discussion

First of all, the beliefs of Turkish students and EFL teachers were asked to reveal the results. Although all major respondents, students, think that they are proficient enough to utilize digital innovation and assume that digital learning is very beneficial and functional in language learning that interaction for language education is essential and that it is better for one another in one-to-one learning as a percentage of 40 students disagree with Table 2. Teachers, as secondary participants, feel they are capable of applying digital education in language instruction, but yet, they perceive that they also require training in order to enhance on digital education.

Secondly, it is examined whether digital learning is beneficial in order to grasp perspectives effectively. Most of the attendees, the students, were pleased about digital learning. The large percentage of learners feel that digital learning is an effective method, as shown in the students' survey. In addition, most participants say that they can digitally finish their work. Nevertheless, %57 of students also think that face-to-face education is more engaging. Likewise, the secondary respondents, the instructors believe, even if not as efficient as face to face, that digital learning is needed. The assumption that traditional methods of instruction are superior than digital learning as shown in the Table 1 with the percentage of %52 of instructors agreed. They also feel that digital learning may be utilized in language education and promote learning, but they do not feel that digital learning is as stimulating as traditional learning in any way. Turkish EFL instructors believe that digital learning might improve language skills and language capabilities. Moreover, instructors feel that for students' speaking abilities that learners are more prepared to talk in face-to-face classrooms. Teachers also believe that during lessons they can control their students. In contrary, 36% of instructors feel that students cannot grasp their aims and, in addition, 20% of instructors say they cannot get students' interest in courses, whereas 52% stay undecided. Generally, students and instructors are predominantly committed and eager to embrace digital learning, and believe it is an efficient way that helps them learn their language.

8. Conclusion

Digital learning is a means of learning that should not be ignored, especially in the 21st century. It has an inevitable impact on language learning that cannot be underestimated by students, teachers, and institutions. The findings of this study revealed that even though the majority of students and teachers think that digital learning is useful for language learning, the belief that face-to-face learning should also take place in language classes in order to supply motivation. Another significant result of this research is that teachers mostly need training about digital learning or on how to implement it into language classes.

The interesting point is that while teachers' beliefs vary on the management of digital. They still put emphasis on face-to-face teaching by justifying their beliefs with the necessity of interaction in language classes. As can be seen in the question 8, %63 of students in total (%25 agree, %38

strongly agree), similar to teachers' beliefs %52 of teachers (%24 agree and %28 strongly agree in the question 3) agree that face to face learning is better and necessary in foreign language learning. Face to Face teaching/learning in language classes needs to be improved with digital tools but communication and cooperation tasks should not be neglected. Thus, the scope of this research does not allow for more detailed data to enlighten the contrast answers. Nevertheless, for further studies, it could be better if larger sample sizes are used.

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