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# Students Perceptions of the Use of Technology in Teaching English and its Practices

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## Abstract

This presentation is based on a research project conducted in an English Language Teaching department at a foundation university in Turkey to investigate students' perceptions of using technology in education and how much they make use of it to prepare their papers, presentations, and lesson plans for micro and real teaching practices. In the first step, information on students' perceptions on the use of technology was collected through a questionnaire. In the second step, the students were asked how much they use technology to prepare their papers, homework and presentations. In this step, the same questions were given to instructors to increase the validity of the study. The aim was to see the relationship between students' perceptions and what they really do.

**Key Words:** Using technology, English language teaching.

## Introduction

Technology is used in all parts of life. In education there are a lot of debates on its uses but it is a common belief that if we use it properly, students would be motivated and interested in the lesson more. Another common belief is that, since the dependency on technology keeps increasing, schools need to prepare students who are competent in its use. One way to ensure this is to effectively integrate technology into the curriculum. However, teachers need to make sure that technology does not dominate the learning environment but just support it. One major goal could be to show learners how to use it for their benefits and to solve problems.

Educational departments in Turkey have been trying to equip teacher trainees with the latest technological developments to facilitate teaching and learning (Koç, 2013). Some classes related to this topic are: Computer, Computer-assisted Language Learning, Instructional Technology and Materials Design, all of which are directly related to technology. There are still others, like Methodology, Language Teaching Skills, Teaching English to Young Learners, Teaching Literature, in which the students are asked to prepare micro lessons and presentations using technology.

However, when we look at the educational system at public primary, secondary or high schools, we cannot see any use of technology at all. Many teachers working at those schools blame the syllabus, textbooks or lack of money and resources at schools. Fortunately, there are some teachers who find a way to integrate technology into their classes whatever the conditions are.

At the Departments of English Language Teaching (ELT) prospective teachers study the theory about the use of technology first. Later, they observe the instructors / professors use it and experience adapting what they have learned both by preparing papers / projects for their courses and by using it to prepare micro / real teaching lesson plans. The aim of this study is first, to find out student perceptions on the use of technology. Secondly, to identify the courses in which they really make use of technology to prepare papers and also lesson plans. Thirdly, to find out how much instructors are aware of whether students use it to prepare papers and micro / real teaching lesson plans. In this triangulation, the aim is to see whether there is a relationship between student perceptions on the use of technology and how much they really use it in their studies and in teaching English to learners.

## Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify the relationship between the perceptions of different groups, such as students, parents, employers, teachers, workers, etc., with varying aims in mind. Some of them are: to provide a better technologically literate workers and students (Robinson, 2008); to find out the perspectives on effective computer-based pedagogy (Niederhauser & Stoddart, 2001) and to determine the technologies that promote learning (Tang & Austin, 2009).

Lam, McNaught, Lee and Chan (2014) conducted a detailed survey on 1438 students from different disciplines. They concluded that all participants had a similar view and that is positive, towards the use of technology in teaching and learning. Tang and Austin (2009) developed a scale called "Students' Perceptions of Technology Scale" (SPOTS) and 215 university students took part in it. The results revealed that when professors used technologies; such as, internet, video, PowerPoint, projector, they could promote student learning and cater for their needs and aims. In another research on students, Başöz & Çubukçu (2014) found out that students using computers everyday have more positive

attitudes towards CALL and feel enthusiastic about learning a foreign language through computers than students using computers once a week. Another result of the same study is computer ownership, experience and academic courses on computers do not have a positive correlation with the attitudes of pre-service teachers.

In their article, Niederhauser and Stoddart (2011:15) examined the "relationships between teachers' instructional perspectives and their use of technology in instruction" and concluded that their "perspectives about effective computer-based pedagogy are related to the types of software they use with students" (p. 29).

## Method

### Participants

The questionnaire was given to thirty-two junior and twenty-three senior students at the Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, at a foundation university with about 5000 students. There are thirty female and twelve male junior and twenty female and three male senior students, aged between 20 and 25. Moreover, five course instructors of third and fourth grade students were asked three questions about the students' use of technology.

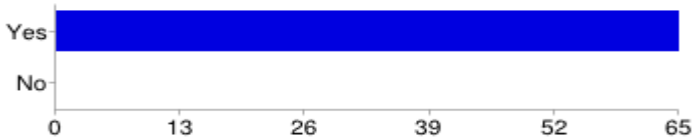
### Instrument

The attitude towards computer-assisted language learning (CALL) questionnaire was given to 65 students. The questionnaire was taken from Vandewaetere & Desmet (2009:353)'s research aiming at "introducing a general framework to validate questionnaires measuring latent or unobservable constructs in research on CALL". In the first part of the questionnaire, student demographics and thoughts on the use of CALL were elicited. The technological devices they use for doing homework, presentations and preparing lesson plans were asked both to students and to five instructors who teach those students.

## Results

### Results of the student questionnaires

1) Do you have a computer?




| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 65 %100 |
| No | 0 %0 |

2) In which courses do you use computers?

| | |
|---|---|
| Teaching Language Skills | 63 %97 |
| Teaching Literature | 58 %89 |
| Language Teaching Methodology | 54 %83 |

3) How long have you been using computers?

| Years | Number of students | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|
| 1-3 years | 1 | 2 |
| 4-6 years | 2 | 3 |
| 7-9 years | 15 | 23 |
| More than 9 years | 47 | 72 |

Table 1. Use of Computers

As can be seen from the table, almost all the students, 95% have been using computers for more than seven years. We can say that they have started using them when they were teenagers.

4) How often do you use the Internet?

Daily 65 %100

According to this question all the students use the internet every day.

**The attitude towards computer-assisted language learning (CALL) questionnaire**

| **CALL questionnaire** | Totally disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Totally agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1- Learning a foreign language assisted by computers is not as good as learning through oral practice. | (5) 8% | (12) 18% | (15) 23% | (20) 31% | (13) 20% |
| 2- Computer-based language tests can never be as good as paper-and-pencil tests. | (9) 14% | (19) 29% | (8) 12% | (13) 20% | (16) 25% |
| 3- CALL is less adequate than traditional learning. | (8) 12% | (17) 26% | (22) 34% | (16) 25% | (2) 3% |
| 4- People who learn a language assisted by CALL are less proficient than those who learn through traditional methods. | (14) 22% | (16) 25% | (19) 29% | (13) 20% | (3) 5% |
| 5- CALL is a valuable extension of classical learning methods. | (0) 0% | (2) 3% | (30) 46% | (21) 32% | (12) 18% |
| 6- CALL gives flexibility to language learning. | (1) 2% | (3) 5% | (9) 14% | (24) 37% | (28) 43% |
| 7- CALL is as valuable as traditional language learning. | (2) 3% | (9) 14% | (27) 42% | (19) 29% | (8) 12% |
| 8- CALL can stand alone. | (14) 22% | (20) 31% | (15) 23% | (8) 12% | (8) 12% |
| 9- CALL constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere. | (2) 3% | (3) 5% | (8) 12% | (28) 43% | (24) 37% |
| 10- Learning a foreign language assisted by computer enhances your intelligence. | (4) 6% | (7) 11% | (20) 31% | (22) 34% | (12) 18% |
| 11- I would like to learn foreign language by computer. | (11) 17% | (18) 28% | (13) 20% | (11) 17% | (12) 18% |
| 12- Feedback provided by computers is clear. | (17) 26% | (14) 22% | (14) 22% | (13) 20% | (7) 11% |
| 13- Feedback provided by computer gives me enough information about my mistakes. | (12) 18% | (17) 26% | (22) 34% | (7) 11% | (7) 11% |
| 14- CALL develops my reading skills. | (4) 6% | (9) 14% | (16) 25% | (17) 26% | (19) 29% |
| 15- CALL develops my listening skills. | (2) 3% | (1) 2% | (5) 8% | (24) 37% | (33) 51% |
| 16- CALL develops my writing skills. | (7) 11% | (13) 20% | (23) 35% | (11) 17% | (11) 17% |
| 17- CALL develops my speaking skills. | (16) 25% | (17) 26% | (15) 23% | (11) 17% | (6) 9% |
| 18- CALL develops my grammar. | (2) 3% | (6) 9% | (22) 34% | (25) 38% | (10) 15% |
| 19- CALL develops my vocabulary knowledge. | (1) 2% | (2) 3% | (10) 15% | (19) 29% | (33) 51% |
| 20- Teacher's attitude towards CALL largely defines my own attitude. | (3) | (6) | (35) | (15) | (6) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5% | 9% | 54% | 23% | 9% |
| 21- Teacher's enthusiasm in CALL largely defines my own motivation. | (3) 5% | (5) 8% | (28) 43% | (18) 28% | (11) 17% |
| 22- Teacher's proficiency of using computers in language learning largely defines my own attitude to CALL. | (3) 5% | (6) 9% | (25) 38% | (23) 35% | (8) 12% |
| 23- I have faith in computer-based language tests. | (4) 6% | (7) 11% | (23) 35% | (19) 29% | (12) 18% |
| 24- I have faith in computer-based language exercises. | (3) 5% | (6) 9% | (20) 31% | (23) 35% | (13) 20% |
| 25- I feel less inhibited when communicating in the foreign language via computer than in face-to-face situations. | (2) 3% | (10) 15% | (23) 35% | (17) 26% | (13) 20% |
| 26- In a face-to-face situation (classroom) I often feel anxiety when speaking in the foreign language. | (8) 12% | (14) 22% | (21) 32% | (15) 23% | (7) 11% |
| 27- For me, it takes longer to start a face-to-face conversation than a virtual one on computers. | (10) 15% | (7) 11% | (24) 37% | (20) 31% | (4) 6% |

Table 2. Frequencies

When we look at the table, we can summarize the positive attitudes of students towards the use of CALL as follows:

- Half of the students believe that CALL is a valuable extension of classical learning methods,
- Most students (80%) think that CALL gives flexibility to learning; only 7% believe it does not,
- 80% of students believe that CALL constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere, only 8% think it does not,

In terms of enhancing intelligence, 62% of students think CALL can do so,

- 55% of students think that CALL develops their reading skills,
- A great deal of students (88%) believe that CALL develops their listening skills,
- 53% of students think CALL develops their grammar,
- Most students (80%) believe CALL develops their vocabulary knowledge,
- More than half (55%) of the students have faith in computer-based exercises,

On the other hand, the negative attitudes can be summarized as follows:

- More students, 51% think that learning through oral practice is better than CALL. 26% disagree with this,
- Only 38% of students think that CALL is more adequate than traditional learning,
- Less than half, 47% of students believe that CALL is more effective than traditional methods, Similarly, almost half, 42% of the students are not sure whether CALL is as valuable as traditional learning or not,
- Undoubtedly, since the participants are trainee teachers, more than half (53%) think CALL cannot stand alone, while 24% think it can,
- Almost one third, 35% of students want to learn a foreign language by computers and 45% do not want such a thing,
- Almost half (48%) of the students think that feedback provided by computers is not clear,
- For 44% of students, computers do not give them enough information on where they went wrong,
- Only 34% of students believe that CALL develops their writing skills,
- Similarly, only 26% of students think CALL develops their speaking skills,
- Less than half of the students (47%) have faith in computer-based language tests,

- Similarly, less than half of the students (46%) feel less inhibited when communicating in the foreign language via computer than in face-to-face situations

**Results from the Instructors' questionnaire**

Five "Teaching Language Skills, Teaching Literature and Language Teaching Methodology" course instructors of third and fourth grade students are asked three questions about the students' use of technology. The results are:

1. In the courses I am teaching, the students use the following technologies to prepare their papers:

- Computer
- Internet
- University databases
- Other(s): _____

Computer and internet are mentioned by all the instructors. Only one of them mentioned university databases. For others, they mentioned tablets and smart phones. For university databases, one instructor said: "Not all students visit the library to access digital data. Perhaps they are not aware of the type of information sources provided by the university or perhaps their English is not good enough to allow them to use these sources."

2. In the courses I am teaching the students use the following technologies to prepare their presentations:

- Computer
- Internet
- PowerPoint
- Projector
- Prezi
- Other(s): _____

Computer, internet, PowerPoint and projector are mentioned by all the instructors. Nobody mentioned Prezi. One instructor said: "I believe that students' PowerPoint skills vary a lot. There are some advanced level users who come up with amazing graphics that I cannot find on the net no matter how much time I spend. There are some average users and some poor users but regardless of the efficiency, it seems that most students know and spend considerable of time on the web sites."

3. In order to prepare lesson plans, fourth grade students use the following technologies:

- Computer
- Internet
- PowerPoint
- Projector
- Prezi
- Other(s): _____

The results for this one are the same with the previous point. Computer, internet, PowerPoint and projector are mentioned by all the instructors. Nobody mentioned Prezi. One comment for this is: "I witness that my students have used all these technological programs and devices."

## Conclusion

In conclusion, when we examine the overall attitudes of students towards computer-assisted language learning, we can say that they have doubts about its usage in the classroom. They do not fully support it. However, when we look at their instructors' responses, we see that almost all the students use technology to prepare their homework, presentations and lesson plans.

When we look at the results in more detail, we can say that their attitudes are not very negative at all; for example, they believe that CALL constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere (80%). This result supports the result of Başöz & Feryal (2014), which was 67.8%. Another very similar result is about the flexibility CALL gives to language learning,

which is 80% in the present study and 78.6% in the other. In both studies half of the students believe that CALL is a valuable extension of classical learning methods. The two studies are similar not only in terms of students' positive attitudes toward learning, but they are similar in their negative attitudes. For example, in both studies, students disagree that CALL develops their writing (34% in the present study, 27.6% in the other one) or oral skills (26% in the present study, 17.9% in the other one). In both studies the students do not think that CALL can stand alone.

To sum up, it is a common belief that technology use is necessary for the digital natives. We believe that as long as the students support the use of technology, they will continue using it when they become teachers and keep developing their abilities in this field and be useful to their students. As a result, we can say that further research can focus on the effective ways of using computers in language teaching.

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# Appendix

**SECTION I: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

*Please tick (√) the appropriate choices and provide the necessary information below.*

**1.** Do you have a computer?

□ Yes □ No

**2.** How long have you been using computers?

□ 1-3 years □ 4-6 years □ 7-9years □ More than 9 years

**3.** In which areas of language learning do you use computers?

□ Language Skills □ Literature □ Methodology

**4.** How often do you use the Internet?

□ Daily □ Once a week □ Once a month □ Never

**SECTION II: THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Through this questionnaire, we would like to know what your attitude is towards Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Please read each statement carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Please mark your response by circling the number on the right of each statement ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).*

| | **Totally disagree** | | | | **Totally agree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1-** Learning a foreign language assisted by computer is not as good as oral practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **2-** Computer based language tests can never be as good as paper-and- pencil tests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **3-** Computer- assisted language learning is less adequate than the traditional learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **4-** People who learn a language assisted by computer-assisted learning are less proficient than those who learn through traditional methods. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **5-** Computer- assisted language learning is a valuable extension of classical learning methods. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **6-** Computer- assisted language learning gives flexibility to language learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **7-** Computer- assisted language learning is as valuable as traditional language learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **8-** Computer- assisted language learning can stand alone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **9-** Computer- assisted language learning constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **10-** Learning a foreign language assisted by computer enhances your intelligence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **11-** I would like to learn foreign language by computer. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **12-** The feedback provided by computer is clear. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **13-** The feedback provided by computer gives me enough information on where I went wrong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **14-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my reading skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **15-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my listening skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **16-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my writing skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **17-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my speaking skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **18-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **19-** Computer- assisted language learning develops my vocabulary knowledge. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **20-** Teacher's attitude towards CALL largely defines my own attitude. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **21-** Teacher's enthusiasm in CALL largely defines my own motivation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **22-** Teacher's proficiency of using computers in language learning largely defines my own attitude to CALL. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **23-** I have faith in computer- based language tests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **24-** I have faith in computer- based language exercises. | | | | | |
| **25-** I feel less inhibited when communicating in the foreign language via computer than in face- to- face situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **26-** In a face- to- face situation (classroom) I often feel anxiety when speaking in the foreign language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **27-** For me, it takes longer to start a face-to-face conversation than a virtual one on computers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |