



ELT students' attitudes and awareness towards the use of Web 2.0 technologies for language learning

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Abstract

Web 2.0 technologies provide rich resources and environments for both educators and students in English learning and teaching processes. In this context, the aim of this study was to investigate the ELT students' attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools to improve their language skills and to identify the Web 2.0 tools used by the students. The study conducted with the descriptive, survey design was carried out in the spring semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The sample of the study was composed of 207 students studying in the English Language Teaching department at Gazi University and Hacettepe University Faculty of Education. The data of the study were obtained by using the "Attitude questionnaire for Web 2.0 tools". The study found that students were aware of the existence of Web 2.0 tools used in Learning English and that they had a positive attitude towards the use of the tools. The findings have shown that the vast majority were aware of the Web 2.0 tools in language learning and that they believe these tools help them in learning English. Students have stated that Web 2.0 tools developed their English listening skills the most.

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1. Introduction

As the rapid development and change in the 21st century, which is called the age of information and technology, have changed the social life, they have also reshaped the educational and business environments that require access to information, the creation of information and using knowledge (Özerbaş & Mart, 2017; Seferoğlu, 2009). They also rapidly change the recruitment of new environments, roles in the educational environments and competency requirements which enable communication, interaction and activities to be performed easily in order to enhance success and to improve the performance (Altıok, Yükseltürk & Üçgül, 2017; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

With the emergence of the internet, rapid change in the field of education has supported Web 1.0 technology where one-way communication was carried out. Web 1.0 was used to define pages that did not interact with the user, but that consisted only of visual elements and text. Web 1.0 technology, also referred to as the first generation web, which did not have a function of the user and did not allow content creation, then leaves its place to the second generation technology which is Web 2.0 (Jeng, He,

Jiang & Zhang, 2012). Web 2.0 technology is preferred to be used in the field of education because it provides the users with the opportunities of communication, interaction, information sharing, easy access to information, content creation, content storage and sharing, evaluation and visualization (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Grosbeck, 2009; Kutlutürk & Akbayrak, 2010). Web 2.0 technologies which the educators, researchers and students can easily and often freely access, can also be easily used in different disciplines (Kurt, 2017). The potential of the new technologies is limited when the field of education is taken into consideration (Dolgunsöz, Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2018). Web 2.0 tools not only provide a natural environment and cooperation in language learning, but they also help to teach in a way that students can control their own learning.

According to Özel (2013), Kavaliauskiene and Anusiene (2009), Web 2.0 tools enhance students' fluency in listening, reading, speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary. For this reason, Web 2.0 environments used in language learning help students control their own learning according to their own needs (Thomas, 2009). It appears in the literature that positive results have emerged in the foreign language learning environments of Web 2.0 tools which are the improvements of the students' attitudes, motivations, self-esteem and aims towards the target language, having benefits on the targeted language skills and the foreign language learning being facilitated and accelerated (Barrot, 2016; Grant, 2016; Ke & Cahyani, 2014). However, it shows that one of the important elements that enable the effective use of educational technology tools and products in learning-teaching environments is the attitude of the user (Çobanoğlu & Yücel, 2017; Ramos et al., 2014). In this regard, it is thought that it is important to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of these technologies and to follow a path according to the current situation. In this context the following research questions were investigated:

Research Questions:

1. How are ELT students' attitudes towards using Web 2.0 technologies in language learning?
2. What are the perceptions of ELT students' towards the use of Web 2.0 tools for developing their language skills?
3. What Web 2.0 tools do ELT learners use to improve their language skills?

1.1. Literature review

Web 2.0 Tools

The new generation internet technologies which are called Web 2.0 tools give the participants at every level opportunity, such as communication, interaction, sharing information and easy access to information, creating collaborative content, evaluation and visualization, in a way that they can easily use (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Altıok, Yükseltürk & Üçgül, 2017).

Because of these opportunities provided by Web 2.0, it is also possible to receive education on the internet environment (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009). With the features that Web 2.0 tools have, they are able to enhance the interaction between teacher-learner and learner-learner in the education processes by providing richer environments. Web 2.0 environments enrich the learning processes with features, such as multimedia sharings, tagging and social page marking (Albayrak, & Kıyıcı, 2017). Web 2.0 offers virtual platforms that enables people to learn new things outside the classroom. In these environments, individuals are able to learn and express their ideas in accordance to their own pace and wishes. In addition to this, users are also able to socialize in these environments (Lee, & McLoughlin, 2007).

When the results of the study on the effects of Web 2.0 tools towards the education process have been analysed, it has been found that the Web 2.0 tools had many advantages on the students who

were using them to improve their learning. Some of the advantages that have been investigated are as follows:

- Students who are using Web 2.0 tools transform from being only individuals who consume information, into an active group of students who produce information, manipulate it, interrogate the source and produce new information (Huffman, 2017).
- Students participate in the educational environment with their sensory organs which allows them to acquire permanent informations and it also enables them to develop cognitively (Cochrane, 2014).
- Since Web 2.0 tools provide interactive environments, they enable students to collaborate with different environments for learning activities (Barbara & Linda, 2013).
- Web 2.0 tools enable students to form their own dynamic, creative and flexible learning environments (Cochrane, 2014; Rahimi, van den Berg, & Veen, 2015).
- Students reach the latest informations (Rahimi, Van den Berg, & Veen, 2015).
- They encourage students to become technology literate, active and participating individuals. Thus, they enable students to start their career one step ahead after graduating (Lu, Lai, & Law, 2010).
- The most important advantage of Web 2.0 tools is that teachers and students can share information worldwide. The basic elements that are shared are projects, environments, ideas and connections, and individuals transform into an active group of students who interrogate the source and produce new informations.
- Because the students work with Web 2.0 tools in a product-oriented way, the results of the efforts are seen tangibly (Cochrane, 2014)
- They also increase the motivation of the students to participate in the activities with the products that they have developed with these different web tools, and transform the students into an active group who interrogates the source and produce new informations (Huffman, 2017; Lu, Lai, & Law, 2010).

Web 2.0 Tools and Language Learning

Information technologies enable communication, interaction and information sharing for students in learning a foreign language and in this way, allow them to experience things similar to real life in the learning environments (Johnson et al., 2016). Studies on the effects of Web 2.0 technologies on foreign language learning have found that the Web 2.0 tools have positive effects on the students' attitudes and motivations in learning the target language and that they facilitate and accelerate the foreign language learning (Crook, 2008; Grant, 2016; Şahin Kızıllı, 2015). For instance, in the studies carried out by Wang and Vasquez (2012), it has been found that Web 2.0 tools make it easier for students to use the writing strategies and that they improve students' general writing skills. The results of the study towards the experiences of the EFL students' in using the Web 2.0 tools conducted by Kızıllı (2017) have shown that the students are not a frequent and competent user of the web technologies in language learning. As a result of the study conducted by Kavandı (2012) in order to investigate whether the blogs had an effect on students' English writing skills or not, it has been found that students' writing skills have been influenced positively and that there were positive developments in their ideas, word choices, sentence fluency and presentation skills. The aim of the study conducted by Cakir and Solak (2014) was to understand the EFL students' attitudes towards the use of technology in English lessons and to determine the role of these factors towards academic success. It has been stated in the study that the students' concerns towards using the web tools had a negative

effect on their academic success. In another study, Selevičienė and Burkšaitienė (2016) have investigated the awareness and levels of acceptance of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students' towards using Web 2.0 tools in learning English. As a result of the study, the students were aware of these tools, however, their levels of acceptance in using these tools for learning English were low.

It is not enough to emphasize the positive results of using Web 2.0 tools, especially in foreign language learning. Language learners must be able to use Web 2.0 tools effectively for all these to be able to take place. Therefore, the attitudes and awareness of students' and pre-service teachers' towards Web 2.0 tools are very important.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The purpose of this study conducted with the descriptive, survey design was to determine the attitudes of the ELT students' towards using Web 2.0 tools in language learning. The survey research model is an appropriate model for describing a past or present situation as it exists (Balçı, 2004).

2.2. Participants

The participants of the study were the 207 students who were studying in the English Language Teaching department at Gazi University and Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education in Ankara, in the 2017-2018 spring semester. English pre-service teachers have been chosen as the study group, due to the critical importance of qualified teachers in effective English language teaching (Mirici & Yangın Ekşi, 2016). The demographic information of the participants has been presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

		N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	155	74.9
	Male	52	25.1
University	Gazi	130	62.8
	Hacettepe	77	37.2
Year of study	1st grade	58	28.0
	2nd grade	7	3.4
	3rd grade	111	53.6
	4th grade	31	15.0
Total		207	%100

It can be seen in Table 1 that there were 155 female and 52 male students in the study group in which 130 students were from Gazi University and 100 students were from Hacettepe University. In addition to this, 58 of the participants were the first year, 7 of them were the second year, 111 of them were the third year and 31 of them were the fourth year students.

2.3. Instruments

The attitude questionnaire for the Web 2.0 tools developed by Selevičienė and Burkšaitienė (2016) and adapted by Keleş (2013), has been employed in this study in order to determine the ELT students' attitudes towards using Web 2.0 technologies in language learning. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire consists of items for determining the students' attitudes in using Web 2.0 tools for language learning (1-13). The second part consists of items for determining the Web 2.0 tools that are used in order to improve their language skills (13-20). The questionnaire was presented to 2 educational technology specialists and 1 ELT specialist in order to check the validity of the items. The questionnaire was adjusted and finalized according to the remarks and feedbacks of the experts. Cronbach's alpha has been calculated for the reliability of the questionnaire. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002), 0.90 indicates that the items are "highly reliable." The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire used in the study was calculated and found to be .92.

2.4. Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the data obtained from the attitude questionnaire for using Web 2.0 technologies in language learning was carried out, and mean and standard deviations of the questionnaire items were calculated.

3. Results

3.1. Students' attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools in language learning

The results of the descriptive analysis conducted in order to determine the attitudes of ELT students towards using Web 2.0 tools in language learning are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics regarding students' attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools

Item No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Deviation
1	I am aware of the existence of Web 2.0 technologies	8.70	1.45	11.11	50.24	28.50	3.88	1.11
2	I am aware of the usage of Web 2.0 technologies	7.25	11.10	15.46	47.83	18.36	3.59	1.13
3	I am aware that I can learn English language using Web 2.0 technologies	7.73	0.97	19.32	50.72	21.26	3.77	1.04
4	Web 2.0 technology is useful for my studies	2.42	0.90	28.99	40.58	27.12	3.89	0.90
5	Web 2.0 technology is a good strategy in learning English	3.10	1.58	26.05	43.96	26.57	3.91	0.88
6	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes learning more entertaining than traditional ways of teaching	2.90	1.45	19.32	42.05	34.30	4.03	0.93
7	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes learning more effective than traditional ways of teaching.	2.42	6.28	28.99	44.93	17.39	3.69	0.92

SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree

As seen in Table 2, according to the attitude questionnaire obtained from the ELT students, the item with the highest mean score is (\bar{X} =4.03) “The use of Web 2.0 tools makes learning more entertaining than traditional ways of teaching”. Most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as “agree” (42.05 %) and “strongly agree” (34.30 %). On the other hand, students who did not agree that the Web 2.0 technologies were more entertaining than traditional ways of teaching expressed their opinions on this matter as “disagree” (1.45 %) and “strongly disagree” (2.90 %).

“Web 2.0 technology is a good strategy in learning English” (\bar{X} =3.91) has been identified to be the item which has the second highest score in the questionnaire. Most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as "agree" (43.96 %) and “strongly agree” (26.57 %). Students who thought that Web 2.0 technologies were not a good strategy for learning English, expressed their opinions as “strongly disagree” (3.10 %) and “disagree” (1.58 %).

The item with the lowest arithmetic mean was determined to be “I am aware of the usage of Web 2.0 technologies” (\bar{X} =3.59). Most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as “agree” (47.83 %) and "strongly agree" (18.36 %). Students who thought that they were not aware of Web 2.0 technologies expressed their opinions as "disagree" (11.10 %) and "strongly disagree” (7.25 %).

3.2. Students' perceptions towards using Web 2.0 tools in order to develop their language skills

Descriptive analysis of the data obtained in order to determine the ELT students' perceptions towards Web 2.0 tools in developing their language skills has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the students' perceptions on the use of Web 2.0 tools in order to improve their language skills

Item No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Deviation
8	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my reading skills	7.73	5.31	26.57	45.41	14.50	3.55	1.07
9	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my writing skills	7.24	8.70	32.85	38.16	12.56	3.42	1.07
10	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my listening skills.	2.40	3.38	12.10	41.55	40.58	4.14	0.93
11	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my speaking skills.	4.83	10.14	19.32	39.61	25.68	3.72	1.11
12	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my pronunciations skills.	2.42	2.90	18.36	37.68	38.65	4.07	0.95
13	The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my vocabulary skills.	3.10	3.28	12.08	57	24.63	3.98	0.86

SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree

According to the results obtained from the ELT students, it is seen in Table 3 that the item with the highest mean score is “The use of Web 2.0 tools to improve my listening skills” (\bar{X} =4.14). Furthermore, most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as “agree” (41.55 %) and

“strongly agree” (40.58 %). Whereas, the number of students who thought that the use of Web 2.0 tools did not improve their listening skills is very low and their opinions are expressed as “disagree” (3.38 %) and “strongly disagree” (2.40 %).

The item with the second highest mean in the questionnaire was found to be "The use of Web 2.0 tools makes improve my pronunciations skills" ($\bar{X}=4.07$). In addition to this, most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as "agree" (37.68 %) and “strongly agree” (38.65 %). On the other hand, there are few students who thought that Web 2.0 tools did not improve their pronunciation skills, and they have expressed their opinions as "strongly disagree (2.42 %) and “disagree” (2.90 %).

The item which had the lowest arithmetic mean was determined to be “The use of Web 2.0 tools to improve my writing skills” ($\bar{X}=3.42$). Most of the participants expressed their opinions on this matter as “agree” (38.16 %) and neutral (32.85 %). Students who thought that Web 2.0 tools did not improve their writing skills expressed their opinions as "disagree" (8.70 %) and "strongly disagree" (7.25 %).

3.3 Web 2.0 tools used by the students to develop their language skills

Descriptive analysis of the data obtained in order to identify which Web 2.0 tools are used by the ELT students to improve their language skills are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Web 2.0 tools used to develop students' language skills.

Item No	Web 2.0 Tool	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Deviation
14	Blogs	207	3.62	1.17
15	Social networking tools	207	3.74	1.28
16	Podcast	207	2.96	1.20
17	Video sharing	207	3.58	1.29
18	Social photo tools	207	3.59	1.30
19	Voice Thread	207	2.44	1.34
20	Youtube	207	4.14	1.25

Not at all, Not too much, Somewhat, Very, Extremely

As seen in Table 4 according to the data obtained from the ELT students, the tools used by them are respectively “Youtube” ($\bar{X}=4.14$), “Social networking tools” ($\bar{X}=3.74$) and “blogs” ($\bar{X}=3.62$). It has been determined that “Podcasts” ($\bar{X}=2.96$) were the least preferred tools by students for language learning.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine ELT students' attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools in language learning and for developing their language skills. In addition to this, the aim was to identify Web 2.0 tools that were used by students in language learning the most. As a result of the analysis in the study, it has been found that the vast majority of the students are aware of the existence of Web 2.0 tools and that they believe these tools help them in learning English. It is believed that Web 2.0 tools motivating students to be self-regulated learners and supporting them in becoming

independent individuals who can assess their learning goals have an effect on this result. In parallel with this result, Keleş (2013) has emphasized that Web 2.0 tools used in or outside the classroom have a positive effect on the ELT students' English learning skills and that the students believed that the Web 2.0 technologies had an effect in enhancing their English knowledge. Similarly, Shishkovskaya, and Sokolova (2015) pointed out the impact of Web 2.0 technologies, which contain different types of materials in the development of students' knowledge and language communication skills. Another finding indicates that students find learning by using Web 2.0 tools more entertaining and effective than traditional learning. Web 2.0 tools enabling students to create their own dynamic, creative and flexible learning environments, and creating a rich, dynamic, creative and flexible learning environment from visual and audial materials may have an effect in reaching this result. It is also believed that collaborating with different environments for learning activities enable students to experience learning away from vapidness (Barbara & Linda, 2013).

Parallel to this result, there are studies in the literature which have reached the conclusion that Web 2.0 technologies create more entertaining learning environments and that students prefer to learn through Web 2.0 technologies, instead of learning with traditional ways of teaching (Karaman, Yıldırım, & Kaban, 2008; Thompson, 2007).

The study has analysed the perceptions of the students' towards using Web 2.0 tools in order to improve their reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary skills in English. The data obtained have reached the conclusion that Web 2.0 tools have improved students' English listening skills the most. Parallel to this study, there are studies in the literature indicating that Web 2.0 technologies have an important influence on students' listening skills in English (Chartrand, 2012; İnce, & Akdemir, 2013)

Another result of the study shows that students prefer YouTube and social networking tools the most in order to improve language skills. It is believed that the reason for students' preferring Youtube the most is because they are able to watch large number of videos depending on their interest, which are free and have different styles of pronunciations. On the other hand, Youtube is an ideal source for improving the skill to understand different accents (Duffy, 2009; Watkins, & Wilkins, 2011). In parallel with this result, Shishkovskaya, and Sokolova, (2015) have stated that the online and offline videos were preferred by the learners in listening skills because of the positive effects.

Social networking tools are the most preferred tools for students after Youtube. The preference of these tools may be influenced by the opportunity for students to interact directly with the native language speakers. The main purpose of social networking tools towards language learning is to learn new languages with social interaction. According to Stevenson, & Liu, (2010) many social networking tools have a large and active number of users that regularly interact and log in to interact with one another.

In summary, the easy to use, accessive and inexpensive Web 2.0 technologies' impact on language learning is indispensable. Educators should guide the preservice teachers for using these technologies that have a positive effect on motivational, pedagogical and affective factors which may lead to significant contributions to the progress of learning.

Limitations and future research

There were limitations in this study as well. The first limitation was that the study was composed of ELT students. In future studies, ELT educators, as well as ELT students may be involved in the study. The second limitation was that gender factor was not considered in the study. The female and male students' attitudes towards the Web 2.0 tools can be compared in future studies. Another

limitation was that only questionnaires were used as data collection tools in the study. Data can also be obtained through semi-structured interviews with students.

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ELT öğrencilerinin dil öğreniminde Web 2.0 teknolojilerini kullanmaya yönelik tutumları ve farkındalıkları

Öz

Web 2.0 teknolojileri İngilizce öğrenme ve öğretme süreçlerinde hem eğitimcilere hem de öğrencilere zengin kaynaklar ve ortamlar sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmanın amacı ELT öğrencilerinin dil becerilerini geliştirme amaçlı Web 2.0 araçlarının kullanımına yönelik tutumlarını incelemektir. Bununla birlikte öğrencilerin kullandıkları Web 2.0 araçlarını belirlemektir. Betimsel türde tarama modeli ile yürütülen çalışma 2017-2018 eğitim-öğretim yılı bahar döneminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın örneklemini Gazi Üniversitesi ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim fakülteleri ELT bölümünde öğrenim gören 207 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma verileri “Web 2.0 araçlarına yönelik tutum ölçeği” kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Çalışmada öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmede kullanılan Web 2.0 araçlarının varlığından haberdar oldukları, kullanımına karşı pozitif tutumlarının olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Büyük çoğunluğunun dil öğreniminde web 2.0 araçlarının varlığından haberdar oldukları ve bu araçların İngilizce öğrenmelerine yardımcı olduğu düşüncesinde olduklarını göstermiştir. Öğrenciler Web 2.0 araçlarının en fazla İngilizce dinleme becerilerini geliştirdiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Web 2.0 araçları; tutum; eğitim teknolojileri; İngilizce dil öğretimi

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