



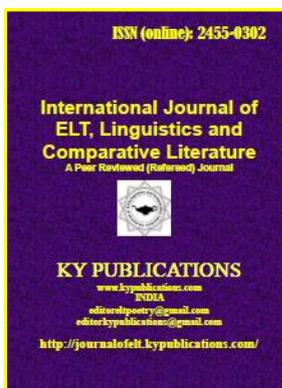
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL) IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

The use of computers in language classroom is becoming one of the fundamental parts of language learning process as a result of changes in computer-technology. The aim of this paper was to focus on the foreign language learners' attitudes towards the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning among English preparatory school students. A questionnaire was employed to collect data with 214 participants (94 female and 120 male) who are currently enrolled in English preparatory school. Finding of this study showed that, participants had positive attitudes towards Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as a useful language-learning tool that encouraged them to enlarge their knowledge through various language inputs in real authentic context. Even though female participants scored slightly higher than males, gender difference was not statistically significant ($t(212) = -1.402, p > .05$) which showed both male's and female's attitudes similar. Moreover, based on study findings, students show positive approach and they tend to use technology in English classes.

Key words: Attitudes, Learning, Technology, Computer, English, Language

INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology in language classes becomes helpful teaching tool when students accept it as thoughtful and seamless for their own language learning process. An effective designed-technological tool directs students' attitudes to the classroom dynamics because it can bring a challenge to facilitate a traditional classroom to be more knowledge-constructed classroom. Moreover, the use of technology in teaching is also gaining importance for teachers to follow the latest innovations in education and it will help a tremendous change from being teacher-centered to student-centered (learner-centered) classroom. CALL is mainly about the issues of using computers in teaching process (Naba'h, Hussain, Al-Omari, & Shdeifat, 2009). Levy (1997) describes CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning". Computer assisted language learning is a language tool CALL abbreviation stands for the use of computers as an important part of language courses to teach, and support teachers to use computers in language classrooms (Hardisty & Windeatt, 1989). With prevalence of CALL in educational purposes, it is also critical to take into consideration teacher's perspective on the use of technology in their classrooms (Mueller et. al, 2008). However, this radical shift may also bring teachers some extra obligations such as revising their methods, teaching styles etc (Jaber, 1997; Muir-Herz, g, 2004; Dwyer, Ringstaff & Sandholtz, 1991). As a result of conducted studies in last decade, despite the advantages of



technology in education, the use of technology is still not in highest level. Since computers become one of the most powerful tools in many fields, particularly in language teaching, it challenges students to be more energetic in learning process (İşman, Çağlar, Dabaj, Altınay&Altınay, 2004; Kitchakarn, 2015). Part of the problem in this issue is to state how the technologies will faster students learning process (Baylor & Ritchie, 2002). It is undeniable that technology has changed educational settings and part of the problem is understanding to what extend technology affects students' learning.

Recent studies in this field point out that the condition of using educational technology in an effective way, it can help students to be educated in a better environment. In the last three decades, many research studies have been done to illustrate the advantages of using technology in teaching basic language skills. A number of studies come to conclusion that students using CALL shows better performance than ones who are not. One study conducted by Halderman (1992) found that the demand of using technology in classes gives chance students to learn much faster. Thou, Wang and Li (2002) state that students who were taught in CALL showed an important increase in their testing scores.

Christopher (1995) conducted a study with students who used computers in their classes. The author investigated these students under three different groups. The first group used computer one hour every week, the second group used it less and the third group continued to their traditional instructions. The author states that the results of this study show how computer played an important role in students' achievement in the end of term. Alsouki (2001) researched the effect of using computer in the process of teaching writing skills. The result clearly showed that the use of computer is quite helpful tool to improve students' writing skill. Nutta (2001) conducted a study to compare two instructions type namely teacher-directed grammar and computer-based grammar instructions. The main focus was to find out which type is more applicable to teach grammar to students. The results showed that the students who enrolled computer-based instruction got higher grades than the other group in open-ended tests. The author also says, computer-based instruction could be used to teach grammar as well. Abu-Seileek (2004) investigated the possible impacts of computer-assisted language learning on students writing skills in English. The results of this study showed that there were statistically significant differences between two groups. Experimental group students showed better performance in writing skill.

Another study conducted by Shang (2007) researched the impact of composing writing e-mail on Taiwanese students' writing skills. The results of this study indicated that students showed great improvement on accuracy while they perform their writing. The author also states that writing e-mail is useful for students to be better writer. This study aims to contribute to literature by revealing students' attitudes towards CALL in a foreign language context. Thus, it will allow comparison of attitudes with other contexts.

Research questions

Based on similar studies that encompassed students' benefits from learning English by using computers, we defined the following three research questions:

1. Do students have positive attitudes towards using the computer as a tool in learning English?
2. Are there any gender differences in this kind of attitudes among students?
3. Are there statistically significant correlations between these variables: improving reading skills, enriching grammatical knowledge, enjoyment, productivity, creativity, and critical thinking, while using computer as a learning tool?

The first two questions comprise general attitudes towards CALL as well as possible differences between male and female students. The third question was posed in order to examine the relationships between various categories of participants' attitudes and experiences linked to the use of computers in foreign-language classroom.



Methodology

Participants

The sample of this study was comprised with 214 participants. These participants were English preparatory school students whose departments and faculties give instructions in English language during their undergraduate periods. The departments of these students were English language and literature (ELT), Architecture, and Management. First, participants were asked to provide information on their age, institution that they attend, and their gender. Their age ranged from 18 to 20 years of age. To be more specific, this sample included 120 males (or 56.1% of the total sample) and 94 females (i.e. 43.9% of our sample).

Instrument of the Research

In this study the scale called *Students' Attitudes towards Using Computers as a Learning Tool* was applied (Kitchakarn, 2015). The main interest in this research was to observe students' attitudes towards the use of computer assisted language learning during their preparatory school terms. This instrument consists of 16 items, in the form of Likert's five-point scale. Answering options ranged from 1 (totally disagree with the content of an item) to 5 (totally agree with its content). Its reliability (expressed as the coefficient of internal consistency) was $\alpha = .795$ (Kitchakarn, 2015). In this research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the mentioned scale was $\alpha = .713$. In particular, this scale includes various educational topics such as doing assignments (e. g. 'Using the computer makes me learn and do my assignments easier and more convenient'), making contacts with other students and my teacher ('Using the computer in learning English helps me communicate with my teacher and classmates easily'), improve their grammatical knowledge ('Using the computer in learning English helps me improve grammatical knowledge'), reading skills ('While using the computer, I can improve my reading skills'), critical thinking ('Using the computer in learning English improves learners' critical thinking'), enjoyment ('Using the computer in learning English makes me more enjoyable'), production ('Using the computer in learning English increases my productivity'), and creativity ('Using the computer in learning English increases my creativity'). The last six topics will be analyzed in this article.

Research Procedure and Data Processing

This research was conducted at one of the Foundation University in the Southeast region of Turkey and it was conducted with the help of an online server for data collection (in this case, it was the Google Docs service).

The first step was to create an online form of the instrument that was supposed to be used in this research. The second step was to make a link to this online form and to forward it to students. The third step was to wait for participants' answers (interval of three days), and the fourth step was to transfer data into MS Excel sheet.

Next, data transferred into *SPSS 16.0 for Windows*, where it was performed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. In other words, minimum and maximum value, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, as well as frequencies and percent related to each of the answering options were calculated. These results represented descriptive statistical values. Several coefficients of correlation and t-test for independent samples were also calculated. The first technique was conducted to examine the sign, magnitude, and significance of correlations between some variables. The second technique was performed in order to test the significance of gender differences.

Findings

In the first part of this section, descriptive statistical values are displayed, which can allow to answer the first research question completely. In the second part of the results section, the results of t-test for independent samples are presented in order to provide answer on the second research question. Finally, the last part of results dealt with correlations between variables mentioned in the third research question.



Table 1: Descriptive statistical values of the scale

Effects of CALL and participants' attitudes toward it	Min	Max	M	SD
Enjoyment	3	5	4.48	0.51
Increasing creativity	3	5	4.44	0.53
Improving productivity	3	5	4.50	0.51
Improving critical thinking	3	5	4.51	0.54
Improving reading skills	4	5	4.56	0.50
Enhancing grammatical knowledge	3	5	4.55	0.52
Average score of the total scale	3.62	5.00	4.53	0.18

As can be noticed (Table 1), all average values were above 4. The highest arithmetic mean was calculated for improving reading skills ($M = 4.56$). The lowest value was that of "Using the computer in learning English increases my creativity" ($M = 4.44$). Other mean values were as follows: $M = 4.55$ (enhancing grammatical knowledge), $M = 4.51$ (improving critical thinking), $M = 4.50$ (improving productivity), and $M = 4.48$ (enjoying the learning process by using CALL tools). On the other hand, the lowest variability was obtained for improving reading skills ($SD = 0.50$) whereas the largest variability, i.e. standard deviation was that of improving critical thinking ($SD = 0.54$).

The last row of the Table 1 shows descriptive values of participants' average scores on the whole scale. As can be seen, the range of their average results was 3.62 to 5, the arithmetic mean was $M = 4.53$, whereas the standard deviation was $SD = 0.18$.

Table 2: Results of t-test analysis based on gender variable

Gender	N	M	SD	SE _{ΔM}	t	df	p
Male	120	4.51	0.19				
Female	94	4.55	0.18	0.025	-1.402	212	.162

Note: SE_{ΔM} – the standard error of the mean difference; df – degrees of freedom

By inspecting Table 2, females, on an average, scored slightly higher than the males ($M = 4.55$ vs $M = 4.51$). However, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(212) = -1.402, p > .05$). Hence, this kind of attitudes of males and females were alike.

In order to make Table 3 below, the content of each variable with one or two words were displayed: item no. 4 – "enjoyment"; item no. 5 – "creativity", item no. 6 – "productivity", item no. 7 – "critical thinking", item no. 10 – "grammar", and item no. 13 – "reading".

Table 3: Results of Correlation Analysis

	Creativity	Productivity	Critical thinking	Reading	Grammar
Enjoyment	.170*	.154*	.318***	.042	.004
Creativity		.194**	.030	.003	.036
Productivity			.257***	.073	-.036
Critical thinking				.060	.024
Reading					-.056

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In Table 3, the enjoyment while using computers in learning English was in a low to moderate, positive and statistically significant correlation with creativity ($r(212) = .170, p < .05$), productivity ($r(212) = .154, p < .05$), and critical thinking ($r(212) = .318, p < .001$).

Creativity in this kind of learning English was in a low, positive, and statistically significant correlation with productivity ($r(212) = .257, p < .01$). Finally, productivity correlated positively and significantly with critical



thinking ($r(212) = .257, p < .001$), and the magnitude of this correlation coefficient was low. The other variables were not in significant correlations with each other.

Conclusion

Since computer technology has placed in education, it is important for teachers and students to learn how to integrate CALL in school environment. Moreover, the possible advantages of using technology do not appear automatically, it is more about how teachers implement CALL in language settings (Kozma,2013). Teaching as well as improving students learning should be placed as an important obligation in every teacher's job (Milliken & Barnes, 2002). Therefore, the use of education technology in language classes challenges instructors to be in much more interactive learning environment (Gömleksiz, 2004).

Foreign language instructors who mainly use CALL integrate their students with native (particularly English) speakers(Egbert & Paulus and Nakamichi, 2002).This study aimed to focus on the importance of CALL in language teaching platform. The findings show that education technology has an essential place in the process of teaching a foreign language in English classes. Another finding is most students prefer to use computers during learning a particular language because it can make their work easier to reach any information they need. Students have positive attitudes towards using computers as a tool that can help them learn English. The findings of this study also report that students have positive attitudes the use of CALL in language learning. The interaction is the most important way for learners to obtain the data and CALL gives chances to students to work according to their own pace and interact with one another. Another interesting finding is female participants scored slightly higher than males ($M=4.55$ vs $M= 4.51$) but this difference ($t(212) = -1.402, p > .05$) is not statistically significant. Both male and female participants have the familiar attitudes. Ultimately, similar research in this field should continue to investigate the needs of students and teachers; also, how technology should be integrated into classroom. This study also found that the results are quite similar with Kitchakarn (2015) study. Enjoyment, creativity, productivity, and the improvement of critical thinking are mutually related variables, whereas improving reading skills and enriching grammatical knowledge are not related to the previous set of variables. Of course, these relationships were obtained within the frame of English learning by using computers.

This article dealt with an up-to-date topic (using new technologies in learning English) and its main contribution to the educational sciences. More specifically, learning English as a second language (ESL). Some limitations of this research are the following ones: generalization issues (Can the results be generalized to all students who learn English as a second/foreign language?), socially desirable responding (Were participants honest while filling in the scale that was applied?), and their familiarity with the Computer Assisted Language Learning tools (Where they really familiar with the CALL tools). However, there are several strengths of our research that should be highlighted: examining various attitudes, opinions and effects with regard to the CALL tools, analyzing not only the scores on a whole scale, but gender differences as well as the relationship among six categories of attitudes toward the CALL tools.

In order to look more deeply at this subject, we listed the following recommendations for future studies: correlating IT skills with attitudes toward the CALL tools, investigating gender differences in IT competences and skills and their impact on CALL-tools-related attitudes, and examining teachers attitudes and their experience with various CALL tools.

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Appendix

1. Using the computer makes me learn and do my assignments easier and more convenient.
2. Using the computer while doing activities or assignments saves time.
3. Using the computer helps learners search and get information related to English language and others from around the world.
4. Using the computer in learning English makes me more enjoyable.
5. Using the computer in learning English increases my creativity.
6. Using the computer in learning English increases my productivity.
7. Using the computer in learning English makes learners more autonomous.
8. Using the computer in learning English improves learners' critical thinking.
9. I have more opportunities to practice my writing while using the computer.
10. While using the computer, I can improve my reading skills.
11. Using the computer in learning English helps me learn and use new vocabularies.
12. Using the computer in learning English helps me practice my listening and speaking skills easily.



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13. Using the computer in learning English helps me improve grammatical knowledge
 14. Using the computer in learning English helps me communicate with my teacher and classmates easily
 15. Using the computer in learning English helps me update my course information
 16. Using the computer in learning English makes me download teaching materials or upload assignment and homework easily.Kitchakarn, O. (2015).
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