

What Students Think about Technology Usage in the ELT Classes

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of technology usage in ELT at university classes. To this end, we sent an online questionnaire about the topic we searched to 3rd grade students (N=54) in the ELT department at Uludag University. The questionnaire contains 7 Likert Scale items and one open-ended question in the end. The analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that effects of using technology are positive according to the thoughts of the participants, and that they benefit from technology in the classes as it is easier to follow the developments in the world. It was also revealed that technologic devices are generally used in universities, but according to the students, technological devices are too expensive to buy, and thus, not accessible by everyone. The findings of the study revealed a meaningful connection between using technology in ELT classes and increase in success.

Keywords: Technology, technology usage in university classes, technological materials, effects of technology usage.

Introduction

The rapid developments in technology have made tremendous changes in the way we live as well as the demands of the individuals involved in education. Additionally, with its spread around the world, English is used as a second or third language almost in every country. As the number of English learners with diverse needs and backgrounds increases, different teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching processes. The use of authentic materials in the form of films, radio, TV, etc. have been there for a long time. It is true that these technologies have proved successful in replacing the traditional teaching (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Today's teacher education institutions try to restructure their education programs and classroom facilities, in order to minimize the teaching

and learning technology gap between today and the future (Prensky, 2001). Usage of technology in classes is very important to take a good education. David Warlick, an educationalist, articulated as follows: “We need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher’s hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time, and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world.” Actually, there are many universities that switched to computerised systems for their lessons and libraries, and using technologic materials in classrooms during lessons, despite the revelations that technology usage has both positive and negative effects.

The present study focuses on the fact that technology is necessary for education. To test this idea, 22 students at Uludag University in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department were involved in this research. The purpose of the study was to investigate university students’ in-class learning preferences with regard to the effects of technology usage. The study sought to reveal the importance of technologic devices such as computers, smart boards, projection or playing some online games in classrooms.

Technology is considered important as it helps university students in the ELT department and enhances all of the educational processes in the technology era, which is progressing fast. According to some research studies, the materials used in old times in university education were overhead projectors, cassette-players, tape recorders and these were the devices which were hard to use, but now with our forward technology period, computers, projectors and smart boards are used with ease in education (Adiyaman, 2002). There is also a lot of support that technological devices used in universities are very useful for visual learning and aural learning in classes (White, 2003). However, there is also evidence that using technology in university classes is expensive and decreases students’ book reading habits. Moreover, it is believed that it increases the possibility of damage of the data storage units because of their shrinking due to the advance in technology (Ryan, 1999).

The personal belief of the researcher is that there are many benefits of using technology in classes in universities; especially, students are becoming increasingly digitally literate. Technology is useful for educators to ensure that students are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century (Sağlam & Sert, 2012). It saves money and time when used thoughtfully. In addition to this, using technology enables the use of more interactive educational tools, which allows for a dynamic learning experience that directly benefits students (Graddol, 1997). Another advantage of using technology in the classroom is its flexibility and adaptability to differentiated learning; students don't have to buy all books (Yildirim, 2000). As all these benefits are taken into consideration, the effects of technology usage will be investigated regarding the particular thoughts of the university students.

Literature Review

Definition of Technology

Technology is the collection of techniques, skills, methods and processes used in the production of goods or services or in the accomplishment of objectives, such as scientific investigation (Tomei, 2005). Technology can be the knowledge of techniques, processes, etc. or it can be embedded in machines, computers, devices and factories, which can be operated by individuals without detailed knowledge of the workings of such things.

The History of Technology Usage in Education and in ELT

Depending on widespread technological developments, technology has brought a lot of innovations to our daily life and of course to education. The increase in the diversity of technological developments has introduced more successful educators and the general public, so it should play a more integral role in education of students. The use of educational technology by schools has continued to steadily increase over the years, as educators introduce a variety of efforts to integrate technology into the curriculum (Bauer & Kenton, 2005).

Technology usage in education in the world started in USA at the end of 1950s with the use of computers. Computers were started to be used in 1950 with the administrative purposes in universities. In 1960-1970, the projects related to applying technology in education were started to develop with the invention of lower cost and smaller computers were spread to the whole world (Bernstein & Franco, 1996). In 1972, TICCIT system was started to be developed. After 1970s, a tendency cropped up from Personal Computers (PC) to web systems and Internet with the development of the World Wide Web (Holland, 1995; Warschauer, 1996).

Using technology in ELT emerged with using computers and has developed in time. In early part of the 21st century, the range of technologies available for use in ELT has become very diverse and the ways that they are being used in classrooms all over the world have become central to language practice (Graddol, 2000). Teachers are given a seemingly endless range of choices when it comes to the materials available to them, new technologies, and supposedly superior teaching methods. Many of these are regularly replaced over time by newer and better alternatives. It is not always clear, however, in what ways these alternatives are different, and even if they are, whether they are used differently in the classroom (Savaş, 2012).

The History of Technology Usage in Education and in ELT in Turkey

Technology usage in Turkey started in 1970s with the *five-year third development plan* and using radio and television was mentioned for non-formal education (Gülbahar, 2008). After 1995, technology took part in Turkish education system quickly because of new high-tech computers and rapid Internet usage (Aksoy, 2003).

Using technology in ELT departments in Turkey began with these innovations and started to be applied at schools in time. Many technological devices became useful for students in the ELT departments for their listening, writing, reading, speaking abilities, and also the devices enhanced the opportunity to students to gain vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation knowledge.

Some Technological Materials Used in Education

Old Materials

Type-writer
Dictaphone (Sound Recorder)
Type-recorder
Radio

New Materials

Video Recorder
Computer
TV
Telephone
E-mail
Projector
Smart Board
Electronic dictionary

Research Questions

1. Is technology really useful in university classes in the ELT department?
2. Are technologic devices beneficial for students' learning and teaching processes?
3. Is there any difference between schools using technology and schools not using it regarding the sufficiency of education in total?

Methodology

Participants

Randomly approached university students as participants were consulted for help in the evaluation of the questionnaire items in order to receive their unique subjective views. The participants of the present study were 54 students (27 males and 27 females) whose ages were between 18 and 23. The participants were studying at Uludag University and they were 3rd grade students in the English Language Teaching department. They were informed about the fact that they should respond to the questionnaire according to their own opinions and they should express their own ideas.

Instruments

A questionnaire (see the Appendix) was used to collect the students' thoughts about whether technology is really beneficial or not. The questionnaire included Likert Scale items that were used to collect quantitative data. The participants were asked to give answers on a scale from 1 (less) to 4 (more). The questionnaire included seven fixed items and one open ended question (useful for qualitative evaluation).

Procedures

The present study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approach that was realized by the help of a four-point Likert Scale and an open ended question which were applied together and in the same time.

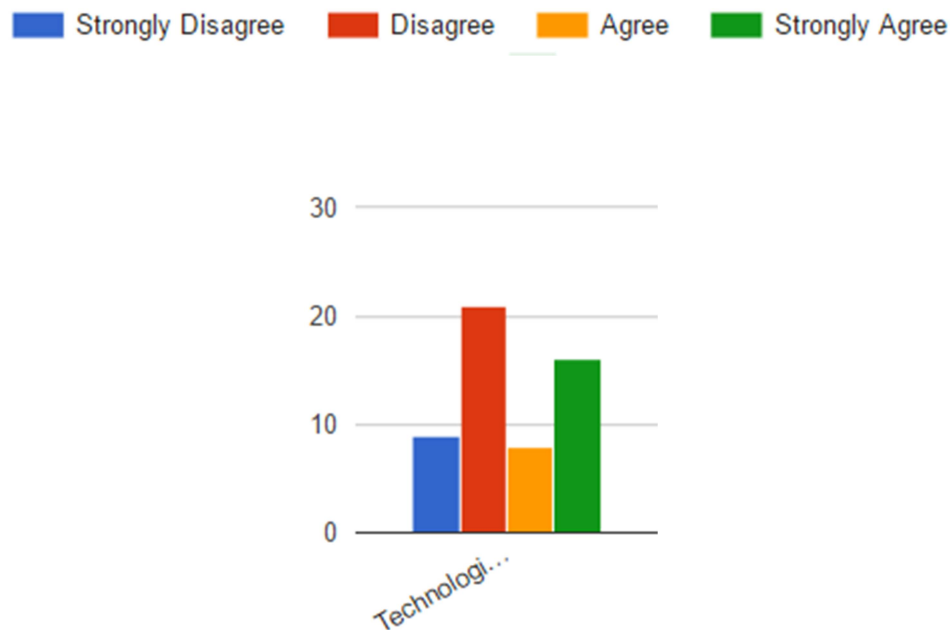
For this study, no extra preparation time or special equipment was needed for the students. The participants were asked to rate each question by giving a point between 1 (less) and 4 (more). These numbers refer to 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Agree, 4: Strongly Agree with relation to the usefulness of technology in contributing to the students in the ELT department at Uludag University.

The collection of the data lasted four weeks since the participants were approached randomly, during different periods and in different places within and outside the campus. Completing the questionnaire took 3 to 5 minutes for each individual. After the data were collected, responses for each item were estimated separately for the first 7 items while the last item was subjected to content analysis.

Results and Discussion

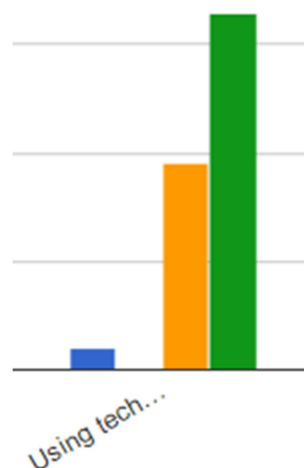
The major purpose of the study was to examine the influence of technology usage in university classes in the university. At the end of the 4th week, it was revealed that effects of technology usage are positive in the ELT department thanks to the technological materials such as projectors, smart boards, computers and many more devices that were available to all students and instructors. The students also agreed that they could learn and teach English as a foreign language easier and better by the

help of these facilities. The findings of the study are summarized and discussed according to the following colour chart:



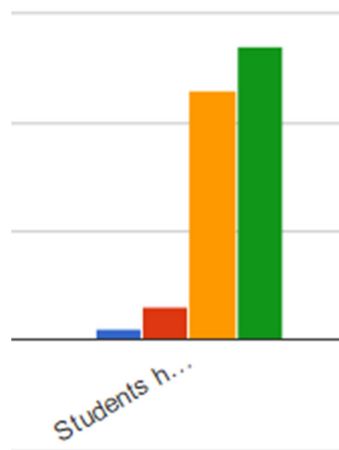
Item 1: Technological devices make us addicted to technology.

The answers given to item 1 were generally negative. They thought that technology usage makes them more hardworking than lazy, which is something good although, if any, there might be some kind of addiction effect.



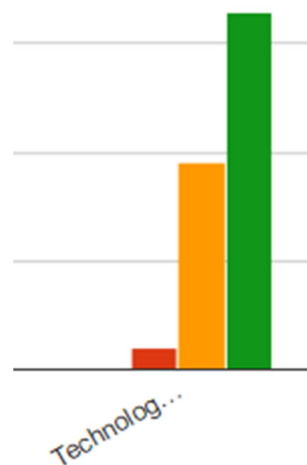
Item 2: Using technology in classes is very beneficial.

The answers given to item 2 were mostly positive. The participants as students thought that technology usage has a huge value in regarding their English learning and teaching processes. According to the informal notes of the students, the availability of the Internet connection and other facilities provided by the department contributed both to the well-being of the students and the instructors, which enabled good and smooth lessons.



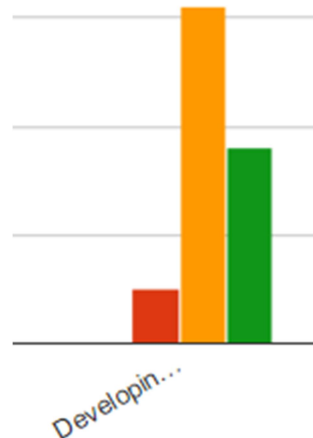
Item 3: Students have chance to convey a given idea best through technology (eg. video, animation, digital materials).

Students agree to item 3. Their thoughts are positive (23 agree and 27 strongly agree) and they highly appreciate the usage of technological equipment in the classes.



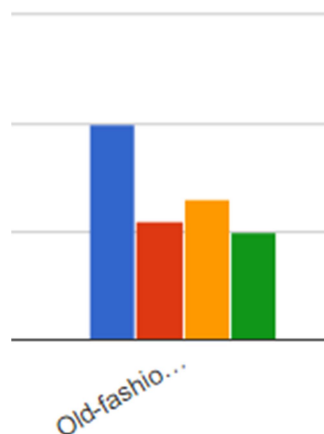
Item 4: Technology usage in ELT provides both visual and audio supports at the same time.

The participants agree to item 4 strongly. The answers are positive highly on the view that technology provides visual and audio support at the same time in the classes. This is very important for students who can easily get bored in traditional classes.



Item 5: Developing technological materials in ELT motivates students.

The students mostly agree to item 5 because they motivate themselves by developing and adapting digital materials by the help of technology, which they can use in their classrooms. Technology enables students to be creative and productive.



Item 6: Old-fashioned way (using pen and paper, course books black boards etc.) is more useful than technology in classes.

The answers were mostly negative for item 6 (20 strongly disagree and 11 disagree). However, it seems that a serious number of students are also very much used to the traditional style of education according to the results (13 agree and 10 strongly agree). This item shows that although technology is very much valued and mostly preferred by the students, they can still do with their usual pen and paper traditions, which however, doesn't influence the positive effect of technology.



Item 7: Thanks to technology usage in classes, we are aware of people's works about English language learning and teaching and we can apply them.

The students strongly agree with item 7. They have various classes that need to be integrated with the world knowledge, and by the help of technology they have opportunity to be aware of the works that other people in the globe do and follow the literature about English language learning and teaching.

Table 1. The Summary of the results.

Items	Male				Female			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	6	13	4	6	3	8	4	10
2	2	0	8	15	0	0	11	18
3	0	2	14	14	1	1	9	13
4	0	0	8	17	0	2	11	16
5	0	2	11	9	0	3	20	9
6	12	7	4	6	8	4	9	4
7	1	2	8	18	0	1	8	16

Considering the responses to item 8, a high percent of the participants' opinions are "yes" and they think that there are variety of causes for difference between classrooms using technology and classrooms not using it regarding the sufficiency of education in total. General causes are motivation, improvement, having good opportunities, using variety of materials and adapting to the new era. The open ended question item provided qualitative data as in the following:

yes
yes
Yes of couse technology can motivate new generation students
There are of course dlferences. Maybe we can say technology is always an advantage because we can search many techniques about language teaching.
Yer,there are.For example at classroom using technology students would ve more active.
Yes. We can improve ourselves with the technology lifelong.
Yes.
Yes, because classrooms not using technology have less opportunity than classrooms using it to improve themselves.
Yes.there would be different acticity thanks to technology.
No,it is upon teacher
No.We can our lesson more benefit with old-fashioned way.
No, because not each person is educated with technology and so only technology usage doesn't determine the education sufficiency.
Yes.Students is interested in technology and lessons take their interest more
Yes, technology usage is more easier than the classic ways.
Yes, we make our presentations easier by using computers and it's a chance for us having computers in all classes at the faculty
Yes because we are surrounded by technology and it is also useful for our courses.
Technology classes make our courses more effective.
Yes if we don't use technology we can not catch brand new techniques in education
Yes because it is useful everytime
Yes it is effective and easier
Yes we can not use papers all the time so technology is useful
Yes because we need technology now

Yes there are differences . Technology usage is more effective and it is easier rather than using papers.

No.

yes, there is because classrooms not using technology don't have enough opportunity to develop their teaching skills in ELT.

Yes, because we are in new era and there are lots of technological materials around the world, also they should be in education system. So classes using technology are more advanced.

no, there aren't a huge difference between them because only technology itself doesn't effect the education sufficiency.

yes, there are. Cause classes not using technology don't have enough visual and audio support.

yes. Cause, there is education sufficiency according to lack of technological materials in ELT classes.

yes, there is. because technological materials effect ELT students for example in the view of demonstration of a lesson part.

yes, because technology usage effects the education sufficiency like the other factors.

yes, there is because technologic equipments have very huge effect on education and of course there are

no, there isn't so many differences. Because not only technology usage effects education sufficiency but also other factors like teacher or family between these classrooms.

Yes, there ae differences in the view of sufficiency of technological and visual materials.

Yes of course because technology can motivate students more than the other usage

Yes. With technology we access everything in a short time. We don't waste with papers or blackboards

Yes.Students would be more successful at classroom that use technology

yes because technology has a huge effect on education so there are some differences between them such as insufficiency in

Yes.It is more motivating

Yes.It is fun fun for students to be interested in technology

Yes.Students will be more eager

if both of them use their techniques correctly they all can achieve success.

Yes there is. Because technology give us many opportunities

There are some differences.
Being classes that have technology motivates students to join lessons more
Of course there are. Thanks to technology students' development improves
yes there is
Yes of course technology can motivate students
Yes, there is because technology has a huge effect in these classes.
yes, there is. it motivates students using technology in classes.
yes, because it makes students eager to learn.
Yes, there is.

Conclusion

According to the whole results, it was comprehended that students in university classes think that technology is very useful in ELT. In addition to this, technological materials such as computers, smart boards, projectors, etc. are beneficial for their foreign language acquisition. According to the participants, using technology very often does not make them addicted to it. They also think that old-fashion way still can be used despite the fact that using technological equipment are preferred in classes. Most of the participants disagree that technology is harmful because it causes addiction or laziness. They also think that technology usage develops their language acquisition and their English teaching abilities, which encourages them to generally prefer to use technology in classes. According to participants' ideas, they can reach many sources about ELT thanks to technology, and technology facilitates learning and teaching English.

As may be understood, technology usage has beneficial and positive effects on education in general and ELT specifically. It was revealed that many people agree to this idea according to the results of the survey. Dr. Jennifer Fleming said "Teaching in the Internet age means teaching tomorrow's skills today." and April Chamberlain expressed the importance of technology usage as follows:

“Education is evolving due to the impact of the Internet. We cannot teach our students in the same manner in which we were taught. Change is necessary to engage students not in the curriculum we are responsible for teaching, but in school period.”

As the whole data suggest, technology usage and technological devices are needed in education especially in ELT department at universities. Thanks to technology, the youth will have an opportunity to educate themselves and one day and perhaps, they will do many innovations in the education field in the near future. If we see these good things, we should supply enough support for their education.

Limitations

1. All participants in the study were the ELT department students from Uludag University in Bursa city, Turkey. It might be better to involve students from other departments and universities.
2. The participants, selected by the researcher, focused on the items perceived as significant to the study by the researcher. A higher number of items with diverse focus on technology could be prepared and applied.
3. The qualitative items could be increased and more in-depth evaluation could be done. Some participants responded just by “yes” to item 8.
4. Due to the small size of the students who participated in the survey, it was difficult to determine the survey’s validity. The validity and reliability issues could be handled better.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this survey, we focused on the effects of technology on education in the ELT department, and according to the results of the questionnaire we determined that technology has mostly positive effects. Therefore, there are several areas for future case studies to address. Firstly they can search ways of increasing technology in ELT. Additionally, it can be researched whether the technological materials used in teaching appeal to all learning styles in ELT. Moreover, researchers can concentrate

on ways of encouraging the educators to use technology more often, or ways to improve the education system that will encourage students to be involved more often and appropriately in technology with the purpose to learn.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is about the technology usage in university classes in ELT department. Please, respond to the questions according to your own opinions. Your answers are very important for this survey. Thank you for your contribution.

The Answerer => Nickname:

Male/Female:

Chose your opinion.				
Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
1) Technological devices make us addicted to technology.				
2) Using technology in ELT classes is very beneficial.				
3) Students have chance to convey a given idea best through technology (eg. video, animation, digital materials.)				
4) Technology usage in ELT provides both visual and audio supports at the same time.				
5) Developing technological materials in ELT motivates students.				
6) Old-fashioned way (using pen and paper, course books black boards etc.) is more useful than technology in classes.				
7) Thanks to technology usage in classes, we are aware of people's works about English language learning and teaching and we can apply them.				
Briefly, explain your answer. 9) Is there any difference between classrooms using technology and classrooms not using it regarding the sufficiency of education in total?				