Turkish EFL Teachers' Perspectives on WEB 2.0 Applications: Benefits and Potential Challenges

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Abstract

Web 2.0 applications such as Wikis, Blogs, Podcasts, and social networking including Myspace, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are important sources for Information and Communication Technology (ICT). in foreign language classrooms. This study investigates Web 2.0 tools used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, and the teachers' perspectives of such tools in terms of their benefits and potential challenges. A mixed-method research design was adopted, and data was collected using The Web 2.0 Application Questionnaire and written interviews. English teachers (n:56) working in TED (Turkish Education Association, Türk Eğitim Derneği) colleges completed the questionnaire, and interviews were held with 12 volunteer teachers. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data from the demographic information of the participants, as well as the mean and standard deviation scores of the Likert-scale questionnaire items. Qualitative data from the interview questions were analyzed through content analysis. The findings suggest that teachers are aware of the potential uses of ICT technology, and they use various Web 2.0 applications for instructional purposes. In addition, teachers consider using Web 2.0 tools beneficial in enhancing student motivation, collaboration, and communication skills, keeping students engaged with classroom tasks, and enabling teachers to adjust their instructional practices to students' varied needs, hence creating an effective learning environment. Not much challenge is reported in using Web 2.0 tools, except technology-related difficulties.

Keywords: ICT, Web 2.0 applications, ELT.

Introduction

Recently, rapid advances have taken place in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). Many institutions have started to employ technology to maintain their competitiveness. Barnatt (2008) reports that in a growing number of schools, numerous applications of technology have started to be used to create more effective education. In this digital age, if schools are to remain competitive, integrating technology into the school curriculum is inevitable (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012).

Web 2.0 application, one of the essential components of ICT implementation in education, is defined as "a variety of websites and applications that allow anyone to create, share, collaborate, edit and distribute online information or content" (Coyle, 2011, p. 8). Examples of Web 2.0 applications are Wikis, Blogs, Podcasts, social networking such as Myspace, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Web 2.0 applications have been found useful educational resources for teachers.

Relevant Literature

Web 2.0 applications are easily accessible and available in various communication forms; hence teachers can choose the most relevant tools for educational purposes. Incorporating Web 2.0 technology into the classroom offers numerous benefits. It helps develop students' critical thinking and creativity, keep them motivated and provides a more effective learning environment (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012). Students can utilize Web 2.0 platforms to interact, exchange ideas, create knowledge, produce and edit texts (Richardson, 2009).

Web 2.0 applications also help build a community spirit, increase interaction and communication between the instructor and students, and enable sharing resources. They also help teachers differentiate their teaching approaches according to students' needs. Due to such benefits, students can proceed one step further from the routine textbook-related practices.

Studies have demonstrated that teachers generally hold positive beliefs about incorporating Web 2.0 applications into lessons. Kay, Knaack and Petrarca (2009) examined 33 middle and secondary school teachers' perceptions of Web-Based Learning Tools (WBLTs) in Canada. Most teachers reported that WBLTs are user-friendly and engaging for students. On the other hand, some teachers found WBLTs time consuming in searching for appropriate tools, and reported some technological problems, and poor internet connection.

Çakır and Top (2015) explored pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of using Web 2.0 technologies in their lessons. Both groups of teachers were found to have positive perceptions about Web 2.0 technology. Teachers mostly used the gradebook, the Internet software and PowerPoint presentations. Solmaz and Bekleyen (2011) researched websites used by high school EFL teachers in one province in Turkey. Teachers often employed resources from websites, social networks, online dictionaries, magazines and blogs.

Balçıkanlı (2012) reports that using Web 2.0 tools helps promote on-line collaboration, cooperation and communication for students and increase their motivation in learning the target language. Similarly, Kavandı (2012) investigated the effects of blogs on students' English writing skills. It was found that students' writing skills improved in generating ideas, word choices, sentence fluency and presentation skills.

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study areto investigate

1. The types of Web 2.0 applications used by EFL teachers in their classes.
2. EFL teachers' perspectives of using Web 2.0 applications in terms of their benefits
3. EFL teachers' perspectives of using Web 2.0 applications in terms of potential challenges.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-method research design, which uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2014) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the EFL teachers' use of Web 2.0 applications, their perspectives on the benefits and potential challenges of such applications.

Participants

The participants of the study were English teachers (n:56) working in TED colleges in various provinces in Turkey. The schools were chosen using purposeful sampling to "select information-rich cases strategically and purposefully" (Patton 2002, p. 243), because it was important to select participants with some experience of using Web 2.0 technology in their lessons.

Research Instruments
Questionnaire

The Web. 2.0 Application Questionnaire was developed after investigating relevant studies (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018). It was reviewed by eight experts to ensure clarity of the expressions. Prior to applying the questionnaire, ethical approval from the school directors, and participants' written consent was obtained. The questionnaire comprises two sections. The first section gathers demographic information, and the second section contains 12 Likert-Scale statements to obtain teachers' level of agreement about the benefits and challenges in using Web 2.0 tools.

Interviews

Written open-ended interview questions were applied due to time limitation to 12 participants. Five interview questions asked the participants to express their opinions related to types the of Web 2.0 tools they use in their lesson, the benefits and potential challenges they may experience in using such tools. Data was collected from the TED private colleges in various provinces using "purposeful sampling" (Patton, 2002, p. 243) during the 2019-2020 academic year.TED colleges are prestigious schools, and they are technologically well-equipped. Teachers working in TED colleges are required to use Web 2.0 technology to enhance the quality of teaching (Özcan, 2020).

Data Analysis

To describe demographic information of the participants, frequencies were calculated. Descriptive statistics were employed to calculate mean and standard deviation scores of the Likert-scale questionnaire items. Findings are illustrated in Tables. Content analysis was applied for the qualitative data from the interview questions. Each participant was assigned a code such as 'P1 (Participant 1) and P2 (Participant 2).

Results and Analysis

The first section of the questionnaire illustrates the participants' demographic information, and teaching experience, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information about Participants

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	20	35.7
	Male	36	64.3
Year of experience	1-5	20	35.7
	6-10	22	39.3
	11-15	8	14.3
	16-20	3	5.4
	21-25	0	0
	Over 26	3	5.4
Teaching position	Primary	20	35.7
	Middle	17	30.4
	High	19	33.9
Use of computer for teaching	Frequently	19	33.9
	Rarely	3	5.4
	Almost always	22	39.3
	Occasionally	5	8.9
	All the time	7	12.5
Training on technology	Yes	6	10.7
	No	50	89.3

As seen in Table 1, 64.3% of the participants were male (f: 36) and 35.7% female (f: 20). Most participants had between 1-10 years of teaching experience; 39.3% of the participants (f: 22) had been working between 6-10 years, and 35.7% (f: 20) displayed 1-5 year-experience in teaching English. All participants used computers at various intervals. Most participants (f:50, 89.3%) had not received any training on using technology for education, and few participants (f:6, 10.7%) stated that they learned it through their personal interest.

Regarding the first research question which investigated the type of Web 2.0 tools used by the teachers, responses to the interview questions revealed that all participants used at least three different types of Web 2.0 tools. The most frequently used tools were Kahoot and YouTube, followed by Achieve 3000, TED-ed video, newsela.com, vialogues.com and lessonwriter.com. P7 stated that the kind of digital tool he uses depends on the topic, adding that he mostly used YouTube, Kahoot, and Prezi.

Table 2 presents the teachers' perspectives regarding the benefits of Web 2.0 tools in English lessons, as represented by the questionnaire Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

Table 2: Benefits of Using Web 2.0 Applications in English Classes

Using Web.2 technology in my English lessons.	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Increases students' academic success	0	0	9	16,1	0	0	19	33,9	28	50,0
2. Is effective because I can implement it successfully.	0	0	6	10,7	1	1,8	19	33,9	30	53,6
3. Promotes collaboration among students.	2	3,6	9	16,1	1	1,8	20	35,7	24	42,9
4. Develops students' communication skills	3	5,4	10	17,9	2	3,6	16	28,6	25	44,6
5. Is an indispensable teaching tool.	3	5,4	14	25,0	2	3,6	20	35,7	17	30,4
9. Meets the needs of students with varied ability to learn.	0	0	4	7,1	0	0	23	41,1	29	51,8
10 Helps accommodate students' with various learning styles.	0	0	6	10,7	0	0	10	17,9	40	71,4
11. Motivates students to be engaged in activities.	0	0	3	5,4	0	0	16	28,6	37	66,1
12. Develops students' interpersonal skills.	16	28,6	19	33,9	3	5,4	9	16,1	9	16,1

As seen from Table 2, most participants expressed their agreement from "strongly agree" (f: 28) to "agree" (f:19) to Item 1 "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons increases student academic success." In response to Item 2, most participants believed with strong agreement (f: 30) and agreement 33.9% (f:19) that "using Web.2 technologies in my English lessons is effective because I can implement it successfully". Similarly, 42.9% of the participants (f:24) strongly agreed and 35.7% (f:20) agreed to Item 3 "using Web.2 technologies in my English lessons promotes collaboration among students". Item 4, asked participants' beliefs about "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons develops students' skills for communication, to which participants strongly agreed (f:25) or agreed (f:16). Item 5 elicited participants' perspective concerning "using Web.2 technologies in my English lessons is an indispensable teaching tool", to which most participants' level of agreement ranged from "strongly agree" (f:17) to "agree" (f:20).

Item 9 elicited participants' views on "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons meets the needs of students with varied ability to learn", to which 29 participants marked "strongly agree" and 23 participants "agree". Most teachers expressed their strong agreement (f:40) and agreement (f: 10) to Item 10 "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons helps to accommodate students' with various learning styles". Another potential benefit of Web 2.0 tools was explored through Item 11 "using Web.2 technologies in my English lessons motivates students to be more engaged in activities", to which most participants noted strongly agree (f:37) to agree (f:16). Finally, Item 12 explored the potential of Web 2.0 technology in developing students' interpersonal skills, to which most participants (f:23) strongly agreed and agreed (f:23).

Content analysis of the open-ended interview questions resulted in six themes in relation to benefits of using Web 2.0 tools; "development of language skills" (f:12), "development of interactive and collaborative learning" (f:10), "increasing student motivation (f:9); "attracting students' attention and keeping them engaged" (f: 8), and "assesment of knowledge" (f:8), hence supporting the questionnaire findings.

The participants believed that Web 2.0 applications developed students' language skills and pronunciation. P3 stated that "I often use vialogues.com and lessonwriter.com to create reading lessons. This helps students with vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar." P11 used Voscreen to improve students' listening skills. P10 found Ted-ed videos, Kahoot and YouTube useful. He noted that "Using Ted-Ed videos, my students learn new things, and listen to useful information from native speakers", adding that at the end of the videos, they raise a

discussion topic, which improves students' speaking skills.

Using Web 2.0 tools also developed "interactive and collaborative learning" environment. P6 used Kahoot extensively in her lessons, and found it very beneficial as Kahoot enhanced collaborative learning. P8 agreed that "colloboration and cooperation are important 21st century skills. Web 2.0 tools help teachers raise skilled people for 21st century." Participants unanimously agreed that the regular and effective use of technological tools boost student motivation. "Students get motivated owing to technology integration in teaching, because they learn and entertain at the same time." (P2)

Additionally, Web 2.0 applications helped teachers capture student attention and keep them engaged with subject matter. P2, teaching in primary school, found that Web 2.0 tools, with sound and visual images, increased students' attention span and kept them focussed. Kahoot was used as an assesment tool. Teachers were able to review topics, reinforce and supplement textbooks and assess student learning. In this way, they noted that learning became more effective.

Teachers' perspectives on the possible drawbacks of using Web 2.0 tools was investigated through Items 6, 7 and 8 on the questionnaire, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Drawbacks of Using Web 2.0 Applications in English Classes

Using Web.2 technology in my English lessons	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
6. Takes up too much time to prepare instructional activities.	4	7,1	28	50,0	1	1,8	9	16,1	14	25,0
7. Increases students' stress and anxiety.	16	28,6	19	33,9	3	5,4	9	16,1	9	16,1
8. Requires too much time to spend on technical problems.	2	3,6	25	44,6	1	1,8	13	23,2	15	26,8

Participants were divided in their responses to Item 6 "using Web.2 technologies in my English lessons takes up too much time to prepare instructional activities", as 50% of them (f:28) expressed disagreement (f:4) and the remaining ones found preparing activities time consuming. Item 7 sought participants' opinion about "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons increases students' stress and anxiety". Most participants (f:19) disagreed with this idea. Participants were almost equally divided in their responses to Item 8 "using Web 2.0 technology in my English lessons requires too much time to spend on technical problems" (f:15 strongly agreed and f:13 agreed); the remaining participants did not believe that Web 2.0 technology needs extra time for technical problems.

The interview findings showed that some participants (f:5) did not experience much problem in using digital tools in their lessons. Those who faced some challenges was due to "technical problems such as, low internet connection, power cut, not always being able to get connected and speakers are unable to work sometimes." (P3) Most participants agreed that students experienced no problem as "they are digital natives except when our Internet is faulty and distracting adds." (P4)

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the type of Web 2.0 applications used by EFL teachers, teachers' perceived benefits and possible challenges they might experience in using such applications. Themost commonly used digital tools were Kahoot and YouTube, followed by Achieve 3000 and TED-ed video, newsela.com, vialogues.com and lessonwriter.com. The result confirms previous studies (Almekhlafi,& Abulibdeh, 2018; Çakır,& Top; Solmaz & Bekleyen, 2011) who found that teachers applied various Web 2.0 tools in their instructional practices.

Concerning the second research question investigated benefits of Web 2.0 applications, the questionnaire findings revealed that most participants found Web 2.0 technology beneficial in enhancing

students' language skills, motivation, collaboration, communication skills, and enabling teachers' to adjust their instructional practices to students' needs. This result is similar to those of other researchers such as Kavandı (2012) who found that students develop writing skills by using Web 2.0 tools and Balçıkanlı (2012) who report Web 2.0 increases student motivation.

It can be suggested that incorporating Web 2.0 technology can take learners one step further from the regular textbook-based studies to giving teachers an opportunity to create instructional activities to enhance students' learning. In line with earlier studies (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018; Ranasinghe & Leisher, 2009; Richardson, 2009), the present study has demonstrated that Web 2.0 applications can encourage students to get involved in activities and construct content knowledge. The study revealed that Web 2.0 technologies enabled the participant teachers to create an effective learning environment where their students were more engaged with classroom tasks. This finding confirms the argument put forward by Dudeney & Hockly (2007), and Kay et al., (2009) that Web 2.0 technology leads to a more engaging learning environment.

As for the challenges Web 2.0 technology may cause, most participants did not report much challenges in using Web 2.0 technology in English lessons, except some Internet-related problems, which is also reported by Kay et al., (2009). Teachers highlighted that students faced no challenge with using technology as most of them are "digital natives".

Implications for Further Research

The study offers insights for teacher educators, practicing teachers, and foreign language curriculum designers in incorporating Web 2.0 technology for instructional purposes. Teacher educators can give prospective teachers experiential hands-on practice on pedagogical purposes of different digital tools and create opportunities for them to design digital materials. Likewise, practicing teachers would benefit from guidance in using digital tools to become more digitally competent. Professional programs might be provided to teachers on how to use Web 2.0 technology to support classroom learning (Akayoğlu

et al., 2020). Curriculum designers can consider incorporating digital tools for instructional purposes. Finally, infrastructure facilities for the Internet could be improved to enable teachers to apply relevant technological tools without being concerned about the technology-related infrastructure problems.

Acknowledgment

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