MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES FOR EDUCATION: ATTITUDES TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Sibel Ergün Elverici[i]
Yildiz Technical University,
Istanbul, Turkey
orcid.org/0000-0002-6921-5013

Abstract:

It is true that mobile technologies are growing day by day and as part of they are becoming more and more integrated into everyday lives of people of all ages. One of the reasons of their growing popularity is because they serve different needs of individuals. Since mobile technologies have gained importance and become a powerful asset, different uses of them and their integration in education have become a question of many researches in the field. To have better communication and reach the new generation integrating technology to education programs is among these questions. More importance is attributed to technology enhanced teaching and learning activities than in the past. In this regard, as part of mobile technologies, social media has also become more significant. One of the descriptions of social media is platforms where students have constant access to information. Within the education context, it has become prominent that not only social media provides constant access to information, but it also supports students by allowing them to share content, collaborate and support learning. Therefore, again in the context of mobile technologies, by investigating the attitudes of students in higher education towards using social media for educational purposes, this study aims to develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding about their possible use in education. 202 university students formed the sample of this study. Descriptive survey design with a 5 point Likert survey and semi-structured interview were used for the study. The findings of the study suggest that students have a high opinion of social media use and support its use for educational purposes.

Keywords: mobile technologies, social media, educational technology, technology integration, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), attitudes, MALL, MELL

1. Introduction

Rapid developments in technology have changed the lives of people all over the world. With the emergence of the internet, the term web 1.0 which included text as well as

---

[i] Correspondence: email elverici@yildiz.edu.tr, sibelelverici@gmail.com

visuals and allowed one way communication has entered into our lives. As the technology improved, the term web 2.0 has started to be used widely. What are Web 2.0 technologies? In its simplest form they are web-based online systems which are formed by internet users (Peltier-Davis, 2009). With web 2.0 tools people have been able to access information anywhere and anytime easily with these tools' having features such as opportunities of interaction, communication, content creation and sharing. In time, many terms have appeared to describe and define these tools such as social software and social web but among the most common ones remain "social media" and "web 2.0 tools". Since they are also constantly changing it is difficult to set a definite limit in defining them. Therefore, in educational settings social media and web 2.0 are usually used interchangeably like in this study (O'Reilly, 2007; Mason & Rennie, 2008) and they continue to be the subject of many researches in the field (Greenhow & Askari, 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2016).

Whether called Web 2.0 tools or social media, they are important in many senses one of which is that they allow autonomy and easy access to information for the individuals. They are believed to help foster interaction among users which can transmit learning environments from being places with limited time and space to places beyond classroom walls (Yang, 2012; Peeters, 2018). Moreover, social media tools are thought to support students in their journey to learn a foreign language. There are many researches suggesting their use in English language learning environments for various purposes. These purposes range from improving skills in English to socialization, gaining motivation and self-esteem which would support students' learning a foreign language (Aşıksoy, 2018; Barrot, 2016; Grant, 2016). In this context, it can be claimed that a better understanding of students' attitudes to social media would cater for finding better learning environments.

2. Literature Review

Given that Internet is part of everyday lives of people all around the world as it contains many different services as source of information its use has been the topic of many researches with different majors (Ay & Deveci, 2016). Web 2.0 tools are first defined by O'Reilly (2005) as second generation of web tools which foster communication, collaboration and information sharing. As aforementioned and as these technologies are constantly changing it is difficult to define Web 2.0 tools under one definition that everyone agrees. Yet, Web 2.0, and in this context social media, represent changes in the communicative uses of the web platform (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007) and thanks to mobile technologies and internet connection, students have constant access to any type of information they want. In terms of language education, it is suggested that language learning can be more authentic, efficient, relevant and effective with the help of mobile technologies (Traxler, 2013).

Among Web 2.0 tools, there are many definitions of social media too. In this context, "*social media usually refers to any application or technology through which users participate in, create, and share media resources and practices with other users by means of digital*

networking" (Reinhardt, 2018, p.4). Social media tools are internet-based applications and they allow content creation as well as encourage communication. Within the context of educational use of social media, it is possible to claim that social media can help individuals to create content in the way they like. This includes sharing documents, visuals, videos at their own pace. Among the benefits of social media suggested are encouraging producing information while allowing collaboration with different environments which can actively be used for learning activities (Newland & Byles, 2014; Huffman, 2017). Talking about language learning in particular, it should be noted that language learning by nature involves sharing materials and resources with as much interaction as possible in continuous input (Ma, 2017; Akbari, Naderi, Simons & Pilot, 2016). This brings with it the inevitable conclusion that students need to be exposed to interactive learning environments where they can have a chance to practice the target language in which social media can be of some use by allowing them to produce, revise, receive feedback and interact as the source of providing valuable learning experience.

One of the most important benefits of using social media in education is that social media's being free from time and place limitations (Sundgren, 2017) and it has attracted many researchers' interest in education (Karademir, Erdoğdu & Gökçearslan, 2017). In other words, with social media tools, students can go beyond temporal and contextual boundaries. Therefore, students' attitudes to social media gains more importance as it may shed light on studies and learning applications regarding mobile English language learning (Yurdagül & Öz, 2018). Another view that considers social media as an encouraging environment for language learners is related with its allowing for inquiry. By using social media, students can have as much information as possible be it textual, audio or visual which paves way to individual research (Şahin Kızıl, 2017). In a study conducted by Westerman, Daniel and Bowman (2016), the results suggested students' being positively affected by social media as college students although they had concerns about the content.

There are many studies highlighting the negative impacts of social media tools in the field, too. In a study conducted by Çakır and Solak (2014), the researchers aimed to elicit EFL students' attitudes towards using technology in English lessons as well as to explore the impacts on academic success which resulted in students' negative opinions on the matter. In another study which came out again with students' serious concerns regarding social media in English lessons was by Selevičienė and Burkšaitienė (2016). In their study, students' awareness of social media tools was highlighted while their use for learning English was not welcomed by the students. There is also research suggesting that students' perceptions regarding the usefulness and importance of social media are influenced by their degree of familiarity with the social media (Liu, McKelroy, Kang, Harron & Liu, 2016).

Consequently, acknowledging that students might have different views regarding social media and their use for educational purposes, this study attempts to explore students' attitudes to social media in English language learning context. This is because investigating attitude may serve as an important indicator of purpose in technology integration as well as acceptance (Hamutoğlu, Savaşçı & Gültekin, 2019). It is also

suggested that although increasing, research regarding social media is still young (Lai, 2016; Al Shekaili, 2016) and examining students' attitudes to these tools should be considered significant in that social media tools can be a way to create better learning environments. More specifically this study sets out to investigate the following research questions:

1) What are English prep-school students' attitudes towards using social media in general?
2) What are English prep-school students' opinions towards using social media as part of their English language studies?

3. Research Design

The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of the English prep-school students towards social media and their opinions about using social media in learning English. Descriptive survey design along with semi-structured interview was used. When describing situations that are present or in the past survey research model is suggested as it is a way of defining situations as they are (Balcı, 2004) and semi-structured interviews are known to enable researchers to get systematic and comparative data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

3.1 Participants
The participants of the study were 202 students who were studying in the School of Foreign Languages at a state university in the 2018-2019 fall semester. All the students were studying English at B1 level and were placed to their classes after taking a placement test. The classes the survey were given, were chosen randomly for this study. The students were from various departments of different faculties. The demographic information of the participants regarding students' gender, age and faculties are given in the tables below. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants regarding gender.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Gender	N	Percentage
Female	97	48
Male	105	52

It can be seen from the table that there were 97 female students forming the 48% of the sample and 105 male students forming the 52% of the sample. All of the students were from English prep school of the university.

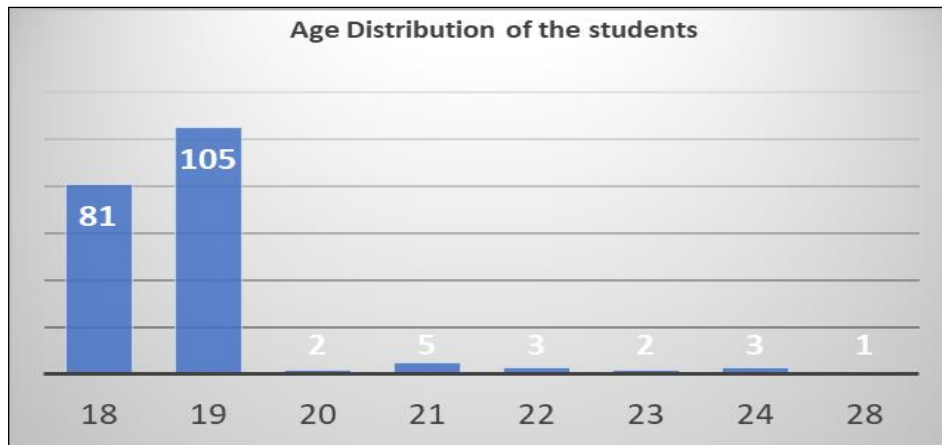Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the students.

Figure 1: Age distribution of the students

It can be seen from the figure that although they were all newcomers, students' age differed due to factors such as some students' taking the exam again and starting to study after getting their associate degree or some students' returning their studies after a gap year or dropping out. Their age varied from 18 to 28.

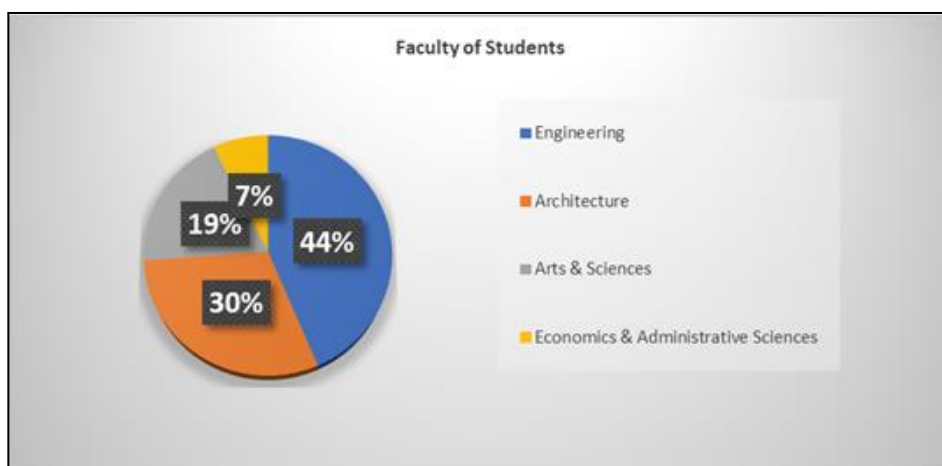Figure 2 shows the faculties students were registered.

Figure 2: Faculty of students

There are 88 Faculty of Engineering, 61 Faculty of Architecture, 38 Faculty of Arts and Sciences and 15 Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences students. Among participants, 43,6% students were registered to the Faculty of Engineering, 30,2% of students were registered to Faculty of Architecture, 18,8% were registered to Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 7,4% were registered to the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences.

3.2. Instrument

For data collection a survey developed by Otrar & Argın, 2015 specifically for university students was used. 5 point Likert type survey had sub-categories focusing on fun and sharing, social interaction and education. The survey's Cronbach α=.85. For the fun and sharing category there were 8 items and Cronbach α=.826 and 3 items for social

interaction with the α=747. For the education category there were also 3 items and Cronbach α=.661. Semi-structured interview with 5 randomly chosen students was also conducted to find out students' opinions about educational use of social media in their English lessons. The survey questions already covered areas like whether it is fun to use social media or the activities students preferred as well as having social interaction, so the questions asked in the interviews were kept specific to social media use for educational purposes. In the first question the term "education" was used because the idea was to obtain students' opinions regarding social media use in general not specifically English. The second question included "English studies" to be more specific according to students' current studies as they were all studying English at prep-school. The questions are prepared by the researcher and a second opinion was referred to by asking another researcher in the field. The interview questions are as follows:

1) What do you think of using social media in education?
2) What do you think of using social media to support your English studies?

3.3 Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the data obtained from the social media attitude survey was applied. Mean and standard deviations of the questionnaire items were calculated. The questions asked in the interview were recorded and later transcribed. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Content analysis is defined as a technique that includes summarization of the text according to the messages they transmit (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

4. Results

The results of the descriptive analysis conducted in order to determine the attitudes of prep-school students towards using social media according to the categories are shown below. Table 2 shows the results of the descriptive analysis asked about fun and sharing.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics regarding fun and sharing

Item No	Items	X	ss
1	It is fun to share content on social media (writings, video, music, etc.)	3.67	1.24
2	It is fun to spend my free time on social media.	3.64	1.20
3	Most of the time I spend on the internet is on social media.	3.22	1.38
4	Social media is a good entertainment tool.	3.82	1.25
5	It is nice to reach people who I have common values with through social media.	3.45	1.35
6	It is nice to follow the current affairs on social media.	3.18	2.63
7	I like sharing my beautiful moments on social media.	3.72	1.18
8	I enjoy liking contents shared on social media.	3.52	1.28

Table 3 shows the results of the descriptive analysis asked about social interaction.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics regarding social interaction

Item No	Items	X	ss
9	I find new friends by using social media.	3.03	1.41
10	I think I can make more friends thanks to social media.	3.48	1.35
11	I would like to meet people I have met on social media face-to-face as well.	2.50	1.36

Table 4 shows the results of the descriptive analysis asked about education.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics regarding education

Item No	Items	X	ss
12	Using social media in education increases the quality of education.	3.50	1.28
13	Social media helps me increase my academic success.	2.24	1.30
14	It would be nicer if lessons are conducted through social media.	3.66	1.22

Overall value of the survey being x= 3.35 can be interpreted as students' having positive attitudes towards social media.

After applying the survey, the researcher interviewed five randomly chosen students who volunteered to participate in the study to obtain their opinions regarding using a social media tool to support their English lessons. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Content analysis is defined as a technique that includes summarization of the text according to the messages they convey (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) as well as coding, categorization, description and interpretation (Patton, 2002). In the coding stage another expert's opinion was also referred to and the students' real names were given codes as K for girls, and E for boys which are the first letters of sexes in Turkish.

The findings imply that students have positive attitudes towards using social media as part of their English lessons as well as in other aspects of education. In the interviews conducted with the students, it was seen that students supported using social media in their English lessons. The opinions usually focused on students' already using social media tools frequently for various purposes and they did not see why it would not be used as part of their studies in terms of education in general and in their English language courses. The frequency of themes that came out of the interviews can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5: The themes from the interviews

Social media	f	%
It is **enjoyable** to share	12	26.7
It is **easy** to use	10	22.2
It allows constant access (**availability**)	9	20
It is **fast**	7	15.6
It is **collaborative**	5	11.1
The messages are the same (**repetition**)	2	4.4

Some of the extracts from the interviews are as follows:

"I already use the internet and social media a lot. You know like Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp. Why not? It would be good. Internet is already in our life everywhere. We do lots of Google Translation and have language apps on our phones. If our teacher follows and tells us what to do, it will be a lot more useful." (Student K1)

"I think it is the best thing to do. Everyone has internet connection. The school gives us internet too.. And we all have social media on our mobile phones. It will be fun and it won't be boring. I ask my teacher some questions on WhatsApp and it would be good if the teacher shows us things or I don't know may be teach some vocabulary" (Student E5)

"I am not sure about social media use in other subjects but for English I would like that. Everything is in English. To use social media, we need English as well so it would help us a lot. It's something we use anyway." (Student K3)

5. Conclusion

It is now widely known that mobile technologies, therefore social media as part of it, allow users to interact and collaborate with their peers while also allowing them to create content and do practice they prefer according to their interest. Keeping this in mind, this study was interested in investigating the attitudes of prep-school students at university to social media use in education particularly in English language education. One of the reasons of this was because social media is believed to provide an educational environment to foster and facilitate learning by enriching learning environments in foreign language education. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore prep school students' attitudes towards social media and to describe their opinions towards using social media in education in general especially in their English language studies.

The results of this study are aligned with many studies in the field. In a study conducted by Shishkovskaya & Sokolova, 2015, having a variety of materials in increasing students' proficiency skills in language learning social media tools have been found to have a great impact. In another study carried out by Stevenson & Liu, 2010, an understanding of how users of language learning websites use them for learning and social purposes was tried to be explored. The results showed that users had a great interest in even websites and may provide benefits for the students. By the same token, at the end of the study, it is seen that the results reveal mostly positive attitudes of prep school students towards social media and their opinions were mostly for the use of social media in their English lessons which coincides with existing research (Balaman & Sert, 2017; Tarchi & Pinto, 2017).

Considering all the features social media has such as providing direct interaction, being easy to use and access it can be claimed that they can be a way to support learning environments especially in the case of English language in EFL context. This may also be because these features include forming creative and flexible environments where users can share materials and interact. The findings also indicate that students have fun when

they are using social media and think it would be more effective to use social media in their studies. Parallel to this result, there are many researches suggesting the use of social media for educational purposes as they help to create more entertaining learning environments and foster learning (Karaman, Yıldırım, & Kaban, 2008; Barbara & Linda, 2013; Munzur, 2017

On the whole, it should be noted that the results of this study are not to promote using social media or replacing classroom resources with social media tools but to show that prep-school students hold positive opinions towards social media and value its use in their English studies. This makes it possible to claim that social media can assist in supporting and enriching educational practices as part of mobile English language learning and can result in positive gains. Therefore, before making overgeneralizations or discarding social media use for educational purposes, the attitudes and opinions of students can be taken into consideration as they may lead to social media's being taken as an asset that can possibly have a positive effect on the language education process which students can benefit from to a great deal.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Sibel Ergün Elverici is currently teaching at Yildiz Technical University. She graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Education, ELT Department as the highest ranked student with a first class degree. She received her M.A in Bogazici University ELT department and conducted her PhD on Educational Technology in Bahcesehir University. After her PhD, she started an M.A programme on Special Education in Marmara University and is now working on her thesis. Her research interests focus on technology integration, English as a Foreign Language, social media, social presence and teacher development in ELT including individuals with learning difficulties.

References

Akbari, E., Naderi, A., Simons, R. J., & Pilot, A. (2016). Student engagement and foreign language learning through online social networks. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *1*(1), 4.

Al Shekaili, B. (2016). Investigating teachers' actual levels of use of WhatsApp application with English foundation and credit program students at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 4(1), 39-48.

Aşıksoy, G. (2018). ELT Students' Attitudes and Awareness Towards the Use of Web 2.0 Technologies for Language Learning. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 14(2), 240-251.

Ay, T. S., & Deveci, H. (2016). Ways of Using Internet by Classroom Teachers in Social Studies Course. *Journal of Education and Future*, (9), 31-48.

Balaman, U., & Sert, O. (2017). Development of L2 interactional resources for online collaborative task accomplishment. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 30(7), 601–630.

Balcı, A. (2004). Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntem, teknik ve ilkeler (Dördüncü Baskı). Ankara: Pegema Yayıncılık

Barrot, J. (2016). Using Facebook-based e-portfolio in ESL writing classrooms: impact and challenges. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 29(3), 286–301

Cohen, L. M., & Manion, L. (2001). l. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*, *6*.

Cakir, R., & Solak, E. (2014). Exploring the factors influencing e-learning of Turkish EFL learners through tam. TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 13(3). https://search.proquest.com/openview/2e02dd1d81f6843282434c79b3d0b673/1?pqorigsite=gscholar&cbl=1576361

Grant, S. (2016). Peer review process completion rates and subsequent student perceptions within completely online versus blended modes of study. System, 62(1), 93-101.

Greenhow, C., & Askari, E. (2017). Learning and teaching with social network sites: A decade of research in K-12 related education. *Education and information technologies*, *22*(2), 623-645.

Hamutoğlu, N. B., Savaşçı, M., & Sezen-Gültekin, G. (2019). Digital Literacy Skills and Attitudes towards E-learning. *Journal of Education and Future*, (16), 93-107.

Huffman, K. (2017). Web 2.0: Beyond the concept practical ways to implement RSS, podcasts, and Wikis. *Education Libraries*, *29*(1), 12-19.

Karademir, T., Erdoğdu, F., & Gökçearslan, Ş. (2017). Two Birds with One Stone: Enhancing Technology Perception with Peer Interaction using Web 2.0. *Journal of Education and Future*, (11), 111-136.

Karaman, S., Yıldırım, S., & Kaban, A. (2008). Öğrenme 2.0 yaygınlaşıyor: Web 2.0 uygulamalarının eğitimde kullanımına ilişkin araştırmalar ve sonuçları. *XIII. Türkiye'de İnternet Konferansı Bildirileri*, 35-40.

Lai, A. (2016). Mobile immersion: an experiment using mobile instant messenger to support second-language learning. Interactive Learning Environments, 24(2), 277-290.

Liu, M., McKelroy, E., Kang, J., Harron, J. & Liu, S. (2016). Examining the Use of Facebook and Twitter as an Additional Social Space in a MOOC. American Journal of Distance Education, 30(1), pp. 14-26.

Ma, Q. (2017). A multi-case study of university students' language-learning experience mediated by mobile technologies: a socio-cultural perspective. *Computer assisted language learning*, *30*(3-4), 183-203.

Manca, S., & Ranieri, M. (2016). Facebook and the others. Potentials and obstacles of social media for teaching in higher education. *Computers & Education*, *95*, 216-230.

Mason, R., Rennie, F. (2008). E-Learning and Social Networking Handbook: Resources for Higher Education, Routledge, New York.

Munzur, Z. (2017). Impacts of Technology Enhanced EFL Reading Classroom on Student Learning and Achievement. Journal of Education and Future year, 12, 49-66.

Newland, B., & Byles, L. (2014). Changing academic teaching with Web 2.0 technologies. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *51*(3), 315-325.

O'Reilly, T. (2007). What is web 2.0: Design patterns and business models for the next generations software, September 2005.

Otrar, M., & Argın, F. S. (2015). Öğrencilerin sosyal medyaya ilişkin tutumlarını belirlemeye yönelik bir ölçek geliştirme çalışması. *Eğitim ve Öğretim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, *4*(1), 391-403.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, *1*(3), 261-283.

Peeters, W. (2018) Applying the networking power of Web 2.0 to the foreign language classroom: a taxonomy of the online peer interaction process, Computer Assisted Language Learning, 31:8, 905-931, DOI: [10.1080/09588221.2018.1465982](10.1080/09588221.2018.1465982)

Peltier-Davis, C. (2009). Web 2.0, library 2.0, library user 2.0, librarian user 2.0: Innovative services for sustainable libraries, Computers in Libraries, November/December, 16-21.

Reinhardt, J. (2019). Social media in second and foreign language teaching and learning: Blogs, wikis, and social networking. *Language Teaching*, *52*(1), 1-39.

Selevičienė, E., & Burkšaitienė, N. (2016). University Students' attitudes Towards the Usage of Web 2.0 Tools for Learning Esp. A Preliminary Investigation. Societal Studies, 7(2), 270-291. https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/societal-studies/article/viewFile/4307/4038.

Shishkovskaya, J. V., & Sokolova, E. Y. (2015). Integration of Web 2.0 Technologies into the Process of Students' Self-Directed English Learning. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 6(2), 541545. Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2p541

Stevenson, M. P., & Liu, M. (2010). Learning a language with Web 2.0: Exploring the use of social networking features of foreign language learning websites. *CALICO journal*, *27*(2), 233.

Sundgren, M. (2017). Blurring time and place in higher education with bring your own device applications: a literature review. Education and Information Technologies, 22, 3081–3119. doi: 10.1007/s10639017-9576-3.

Şahin Kızıl, A. (2017). Exploring EFL Learners' Use of WEB 2.0 Tools: Preliminary Findings. *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute/Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (27).

Tarchi, S., & Pinto, G. (2017). Reciprocal teaching: Analysing interactive dynamics in the coconstruction of a text's meaning. The Journal of Educational Research, 109(5), 518–530.

Traxler, J. (2013). Mobile learning for languages: Can the past speak to the future. *TIRF Mobile Language Learning (MLL) Papers*.

Westerman, D., Daniel, E. S. & Bowman, N. D. (2016). Learned risks and experiences rewards: Exploring the potential sources of students' attitudes toward social media and face-to-face communication. Internet and Higher Education, 31, pp. 52-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2016.06.004.

Warschauer, M., and Grimes, D. (2007). Audience, Authorship, and Artifact: The Emergent Semiotics of Web 2.0, Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 27/2007, 1–23.

Yang, S. H. (2012). Exploring college students' attitudes and self-efficacy of mobile learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, *11*(4), 148-154.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2006). Qualitative research methods in social sciences. *Ankara: Seckin Publications*.

Yurdagül, C., & Öz, S. (2018). Attitude towards Mobile Learning in English Language Education. *Education Sciences*, *8*(3), 142.