

FACE TO FACE OR E-LEARNING IN TURKISH EFL CONTEXT

Ekrem SOLAK
Recep ÇAKIR
Amasya University,
Amasya, TURKEY

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study was to understand e-learners and face to face learners' views towards learning English through e-learning in vocational higher school context and to determine the role of academic achievement and gender in e-learning and face to face learning. This study was conducted at a state-run university in 2012-2013 academic year and subjects were 221 students from two different Vocational Higher Schools taking up English course through e-learning and traditional learning. The results of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between e-learners and face to face learners about the views towards learning English via e-learning. Furthermore, academic achievement and gender were not the strong determiners in e-learning compared with face to face learning.

Keywords: Face to face or e-learning, e-learning in language teaching, e-language learning.

INTRODUCTION

The use of technology is the most indispensable part of our modern life. Today's young generation is called net generation or digital natives, because students spend much of their time surfing on the net, playing multimedia, interactive and social online games. They are the biggest consumers of technology in ways that previous generation who is called digital immigrants can barely understand. (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007) Since students have grown with the technology and expect to use it at the universities, university programs or degrees consider the adaptation of technology vitally important to the education. Most of the well-known universities all over the world try to develop e-learning programs due to its many advantages (Lee et al., 2009). Since little research has been done so far comparing the role of e-learning and traditional way, face to face learning, in terms of academic achievement of Turkish EFL learners in vocational higher schools context, this study aims to determine the views of English language learners to e-learning and traditional way and to specify the role of gender and academic achievement which is the output of education in this process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stockey (2003) defines e-learning as "the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means. E-learning includes the use of a computer or electronic means in some ways to provide training, educational or learning material." E-learning which was first called internet-based training or web-based training has been widely used in education since the mid-1990s. Many Educational service providers offer online lessons and online tests to meet the demands of the people.

They help to enhance e-learning environment by using the Internet via discussion boards, chat rooms, course content management, etc. (Fuller, 2001). As a result of paradigm shift from face-to-face classrooms to e-learning, the students take the responsibility of learning. Buckley (2002) suggests that learners who recognize the paradigm shift and are eager to take learning responsibility will prefer online education to face-to-face classroom learning. There has been an argument for decades whether traditional learning is better than e-learning. However, there is no clear finding to support this argument. Rashty (2012) states that e-learning has many common points with traditional learning, such as: presentation of ideas by the students, group discussions, arguments and many other forms of conveying information and accumulating knowledge. Apart from traditional learning, E-Learning has also other advantages such as: "time for digesting the information and responding, enhanced communication among the learners, knowledge being acquired and transferred among the learners themselves, the ability to conduct an open discussion, where each learner gets more of an equal standing than in a face-to-face discussion, access to information and to discussion ability, responses may be made around the clock with no restrictions, a higher motivation and involvement in the process on the part of the learners"(Bencheva, 2010;64).

Table: 1
Comparison between traditional learning and E-Learning

	Traditional Learning	E-Learning
Classroom Discussions	The teacher usually talks more than the student	The student talks at least as much as or more than the teacher.
Learning Process	The learning is conducted with the whole class participating; there is almost no group or individual study	Most of the learning process takes place in groups or by the individual student.
Subject Matter	The teacher conducts the lesson according to the study program and the existing curriculum.	The student participates in determining the subject matter; the studying is based on various sources of information, including web data banks and net-experts located by the student
Emphases in the Learning Process	The students learn "what" and not "how"; the students and the teachers are busy completing the required subject matter quota; the students are not involved in inquiry based education and in solving problems, but rather in tasks set by the teacher	The students learn "how" and less "what"; the learning includes research study which combines searching for and collecting information from web data banks and authorities on the communications network; the learning is better connected to the realworld, the subject matter is richer and includes material in different formats
Motivation	The students' motivation is low, and the subject matter is "distant" from them	The students' motivation is high due to the involvement in matters that are closer to them and to the use of technology. Teacher's Role The teacher is the authority. The teacher directs the student
Teacher's Role	The teacher is the authority	The teacher directs the student to the information
Location of Learning	The learning takes place within the classroom and the school.	The learning takes place with no fixed location
Lesson Structure	The teacher dictates the structure of the lesson and the division of time.	The structure of the lesson is affected by the group dynamics.

Table: 1 shows the comparison between traditional learning and e-Learning in terms of classroom discussions, learning process, subject matter ,emphases in the learning process, motivation, teacher's role, location of learning, lesson structure.

Although the benefits of e-learning may be significant, there are some drawbacks to e-learning. Cantoni et al (2004) state that e-learning generally requires a high upfront cost, new pedagogical skills, and learners' self-discipline and motivation. In addition, Ramim & Levy (2006) consider security issues such as cyber attacks and hacking to e-learning systems as a concern to the learners and service providers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several researches have been conducted comparing e-learning and face-to-face learning especially in terms of learner satisfaction with e-learning. The early studies show that technology, technical competency, motivation, instructor characteristics, and student characteristics are the key terms that determine the success of e-learning (Dillon & Gunawardena, 1995; Volery & Lord, 2000; Soong, Chan, Chua, & Loh, 2001). Furthermore, Hofmann (2002) studied the benefits of e-learning technology and found that students taking the online course outperformed those taking the traditional classroom-based course.

Recent literature on e-learning has focused on three modes of learning as face-to-face, blended and e-learning in relation to learner satisfaction, learning effectiveness and materials used in these types of learning modes. Zhanga (2005) investigated the role of interactive instructional video in e-learning systems. He proved that learners involved in e-learning environment achieved better and expressed higher levels of satisfaction than those in a traditional classroom or those in a less interactive e-learning environment.

The findings are suggested that it may be important to integrate interactive instructional video into e-learning systems. In addition, Lim et al (2008) studied the acceptance of e-learning among distance learners in Malaysia and revealed that institutions offering distance learning via e-learning should open some non-credit courses to enhance students' acceptance of e-learning.

Larson & Sung (2009) studied three modes of delivery as face-to-face, blended and online in relation to student satisfaction, learning effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. They found no significant difference among delivery modes. In addition, blended and online modes were better when measuring student satisfaction, learning effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. Fahad (2010) studied student satisfaction toward e-learning as well and participants expressed high satisfaction with overall learning experiences in this research. Zhang and Goel (2011) focused on the internal-external framework of e-learning initiatives and they suggested a model which is a combination of favorable external and internal drives towards e-learning would result in higher e-learning outcomes. Kocoglu et al (2011) examined the effectiveness of a blended learning approach by comparing with a face to face MA Program in English Language teaching. They found no significant difference in content knowledge acquisition between teachers receiving blended instruction and face to face instruction. Finally, recent literature comparing traditional way and e-learning suggest that learners' satisfaction level on e-learning is very high and they have positive views on e-learning.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive study because researchers aim to collect data about the views of students towards e-learning and traditional face to face learning through a questionnaire by taking into consideration their academic achievement. There have been several studies comparing e-learning and face to face learning in various aspects so far but little attention has been paid the outcome, that is, academic achievement during this process.

In addition, teaching English in vocational higher schools in terms of English for specific purposes has been vital issue, however, views of vocational higher schools' students towards e-learning and their academic achievement through e-learning have rarely been studied. Therefore, the results and the implications of this study will highlight a different aspect of e-learning regarding a different population. It is hypothesized in this research that e-learning helps to reach institutional and personal goals in terms of English Language Proficiency as much as face to face learning by using technology effectively via less effort and financial aids.

This study will answer the following research questions:

- What are the views of e-learners and traditional learners towards learning English through e-learning?
- To What extent does e-learning influence the academic achievement of language learners?
- Are there any differences about the views and academic achievement of the learners towards e-learning in terms of gender?

Subjects

This research was conducted at a state-run university in 2012-2013 academic year and subjects were 129 male and 92 female from two different Vocational Higher Schools students taking up English course through e-learning and traditional learning. The subjects were elected on voluntary basis and the total number was 221. While 110 of them were e-learners, 111 students were face to face learners. The participants from the two groups study English course 2 credits a week.

Face to face group uses a main course book presented by a regular English Language teacher, however, e-learners benefit from videos, notes, files etc. prepared by language teachers in an e-learning context. Videos that are composed of 15-20 minute presentations, a discussion board which learners ask questions at any time and e-content which is supported by animations are the main characteristics of the present e-learning program. E-learning system is at students' disposal for 24 hours.

Instrument

E-learning scale was used to collect data about the students' views towards e-learning in terms of English language learning. The scale was developed by the researchers because no scale was found to the point in the current literature. In other words, it is believed that this questionnaire aiming to diagnose vocational higher school students' views towards face to face and e-learning can be best understood via this scale. The reliability of the scale was measured as Cronbach alpha ,83. The questionnaire was composed of two sections.

In the first section, demographic data was collected as gender, academic achievement and modes of learning. In the second section, there were 45 items in the form of three point likert scale as I agree, no idea and I don't agree. In this section, 45 items were used to compare e-learning and face to face learning and the items were structured on the basis of interviews done with the learners and teachers focusing on various dimensions of e-learning like testing, materials, language skills and physical environment. Then, the data collected was analyzed in SPSS program.

FINDINGS

The following Table displays the comparison of two modes in terms of academic achievement via independent t-test.

Table: 2
The comparison of two modes in terms of academic achievement

Method	X	N	S. S.	t	sd	p
e-learning	69,32	110	10,25	,62	219	,85
Facetoface	69,07	111	11,71			

In Table 2, although the academic achievement of e-learners ($X=69,32$) was comparatively higher than traditional learners ($X=69,07$), no significant difference was found between two groups as a result of independent t test [$t(219)=,62$, $p>.05$]. Table: 3 shows the gender differences in terms of academic achievement for e-learners, face to face learners.

Table: 3
Gender differences for two modes

Method	Gender	X	N	S. S.	t	sd	p
E-learning	Male	68,75	62	10,60	-,89	108	,32
	Female	70,50	48	9,85			
FacetoFace	Male	68,42	67	11,55	-,71	109	,44
	Female	70,04	44	10,36			

The mean of the academic achievement of female e-learners ($X_{e-learning}=70,5$; $X_{facetoface}=70,04$) and face to face learners was higher than male learners ($X_{e-learning}=68,75$; $X_{face\ to\ face}=68,42$). As a result of t test which was administered to find gender role in two modes, no significant difference was found between them. As to e-learning [$t(108)= -,89$, $p>.05$], as to face to face [$t(109)= -,712$, $p>.05$]. Table: 4 indicates the views of the participants in terms of gender for e-learners and face to face learners.

Table: 4
Views of the participants in terms of gender

Method	Gender	X	N	S. S.	t	sd	p
E-learning	Male	2,02	62	,25	1,3	108	,12
	Female	1,99	48	,23			
Face to Face	Male	2,06	67	,29	,68	109	,23
	Female	2,02	44	,26			

The mean of the views of male learners in two modes (Xe-learning=2,02; Xfacetoface=2,06) was comparatively higher than female learners (Xe-learning=1,99; Xfacetoface=2,02). As a result of independent t test which was administered to find gender differences in two modes in terms of views to e-learning, no significant difference was found between them. As to e-learning [t(108)= 1,3 p>.05], as to facetoface [t(109)= ,68, p>.05]. Table: 5 shows the overall views of the participants for e-learners and face to face learners.

Table: 5
The overall views of the participants

Method	X	N	S. S.	t	sd	p
e-learning	2,01	110	0,25	-1,59	219	,11
Facetoface	2,05	111	0,27			

According to Table: 5, The mean of the views of face to face learners (X=2,01 out of 3) was comparatively higher than e-learners (X=2,05 out of 3). In other words, face to face learners had more positive views to e-learning.

As a result of independent t test which was administered to find overall views of the participants, no significant difference was found between them. As to e-learning [t(108)= 1,3 p>.05], as to face to face [t(109)= ,68, p>.05]. [t(219)= -1,59, p>.05]. Table: 6 present the correlation between participants' views and their academic achievement.

Table: 6
The correlation between views of the participants and their academic achievement

	Pearson Correlation	Views
Grade Point Averagerage		,42**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,00
	N	221

The result showed that there was a significant difference between positive views and academic achievement. In other words, high achievers had more positive attitude towards e-learning. Of all the items, majority of the participants (57 %, N=126) disagreed with the idea that e-learning prevented socialization of learners.

Next, participants (54%, N=119) also disagreed that English couldn't be learned through e-learning. After this, participants (44%, N=98) had no idea that e-learning increased my motivation. Following this, 54% (N=98) also had no idea whether e-learning was more useful. Similarly, 56% (N=123) had no idea as well that e-learning was a better means of measurement.

Moreover, 76% of the participants with the highest rate (N=167) agreed that e-learning should be supported by face to face learning.

Finally, 61% (N=135) also agreed that they preferred to interact with other learners in e-learning. Table: 7 displays the featured items according to the data collected from the questionnaire.

Table: 7
The analysis of some featured items

Items		I disagree	No idea	I agree
3. I believe that learning English through e-learning is an important part of life-long learning	f	42	78	101
	%	19,0%	35,3%	45,7%
8. I believe that e-learning should be supported by face to face learning.	f	29	25	167
	%	13,1%	11,3%	75,6%
10. I believe that English cannot be learned through e-learning	f	119	36	66
	%	53,8%	16,3%	29,9%
13 I believe that e-learning prevents socialization of learners.	f	126	40	55
	%	57,0%	18,1%	24,9%
19 I prefer to interact with other learners in e-learning.	f	31	55	135
	%	14,0%	24,9%	61,1%
22 e-learning increases my motivation	f	85	98	38
	%	38,5%	44,3%	17,2%
26 reaching e-learning materials is easier	f	44	50	127
	%	19,9%	22,6%	57,5%
27 e-learning is more affordable.	f	39	58	124
	%	17,6%	26,2%	56,1%
28. e-learning is more useful.	f	62	120	39
	%	28,1%	54,3%	17,6%
39 e-learning helps me to Improve speaking skill.	f	126	66	29
	%	57,0%	29,9%	13,1%

DISCUSSION

Since e-learning and face to face learning have been compared in recent studies in some aspects and results have been varied from one population to the other and from one variable to others, this research's purpose was to highlight the factor of academic achievement and gender in English Language learning via e-learning and face to face learning from Vocational Higher Schools participants' perspective.

Research Question: 1

What Are the Views of E-Learners and Traditional Learners Towards Learning English Through E-Learning?

According to the results of the study, no significant difference was found between e-learners and face to face learners in terms of views to English learning through e-learning. Recent studies in this issue found that successful students expressed more satisfaction to the e-learning in terms of the amount and quality of interaction and support (Loo, 2010; Melton, Graf, & Chopak-Foss, 2009; Paechter, Maier, & Macher, 2010).

This result is in consistent with Larson's study (2009). His research demonstrated that there was no significant difference among three modes of delivery as face-to-face, blended and online in relation to student satisfaction, learning effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. In addition, blended and online modes were better when measuring student satisfaction, learning effectiveness and faculty satisfaction. Fahad (2010) also studied student satisfaction toward e-learning and participants expressed high satisfaction with overall learning experiences in his research. This result supports the finding of the present study.

In addition, this study reveals that e-learning should be supported by face to face learning. In other words, blended courses can offer more satisfaction in English language learning. This result is in line with Melton's research (2009) who found that students in the blended courses who were motivated and supported with the instructor and course policies tended to produce higher learning outcomes (Melton et al., 2009). Moreover, the result of the present study highlights the importance of interaction with other learners in e-learning. This finding is in consistent with Mahle's findings (2007) who revealed that interactivity plays a major role in student motivation in e-learning. Castaño et al (2013) also found that the time spent on studying online is fruitful when it involves interactive learning.

Research Question: 2

To What Extent Does E-Learning Influence The Academic Achievement of Language Learners?

According to the results of the study, no significant difference was found between e-learners and traditional learners in terms of academic achievement. Contrary to this finding, Hofmann (2002) found that students taking the online course outperformed those taking the traditional classroom-based course. In addition, there was a significant correlation between academic achievement and views toward e-learning. The higher academic achievement of the participants was, the more positive views they had towards e-learning. Owston et al (2012) revealed that learners taking blended courses were generally high-achievers and blended courses were more convenient and engaging for them. Furthermore, they expressed they learnt key concepts better in this mode of learning. Their study also implied that low achievers were not as successful as high achievers in blended learning environment.

Research Question: 3

Are There Any Differences about the Views and Academic Achievement of the Learners Towards E-Learning In Terms of Gender?

The present study reveals that no significant difference was found towards e-learning in terms of gender. In other words, the views to two modes of learning are nearly the same and the academic achievement does not play a significant role in males and females. This result is consistent with the Ladyshevsky's findings (2003) which suggested gender was not a significant determiner influencing the performance of e-learners and face to face learners.

On the other hand, Rovai & Baker's findings (2005) were not in line with the present study. Their findings were in favor of females in online learning. Because they were more aligned to educational values and goals and females learned more than their male peers in e-learning. In addition, contrary to the findings of the present study, Caspi et al (2008) studied gender differences in terms of participation in two modes of learning and they found that women preferred written communication more than men did.

CONCLUSION

The present study which aims to understand the views of vocational higher schools students towards e-learning and face to face learning suggest that learners have positive views towards e-learning and gender and academic achievement don't play a significant role in e-learning. The findings also prove that learning English via e-learning is as successful as face to face learning.

Overall, it is understood in this study that participants want more interaction and more activities towards improving speaking skill. In addition, e-learning should be supported with face to face learning, that is blended learning, and more enriched content and materials should be provided to use the system effectively. With the contribution of these suggestions, the performance of the e-learners is expected to be higher.

This study is administered to e-learners and face to face learners in a vocational higher education setting and this is the limitation of the study.

This study method can be performed in different settings to different target groups, and implications can be various for other studies.

BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the AUTHORS



Assistant Professor Ekrem SOLAK works at Amasya University, Foreign Language Teaching Department, Amasya, Turkey. He has Ph.D. in English Language Teaching. The focus of his studies is e-learning in ELT context, syllabus design, material development and teaching language skills. He has some articles and books published at the national and international level. Contact addresses are Amasya Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Merkez, Amasya. Email: ekremsolak@gmail.com



Recep ÇAKIR, PhD is currently an assistant professor in the department of the Computer Education and Instructional Technology, at Amasya University, Amasya, Turkey. His main areas of research include; pre and in-service teacher technology training, teacher professional development, information and communication technology integration, web based education. Contact addresses are Amasya Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Merkez, Amasya

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APPENDIX:

The analysis of all items in the questionnaire

Items		I disagree	No idea	I agree
1. I believe that everybody can learn English through e-learning.	f	75	91	55
	%	33,9%	41,2%	24,9%
2. I believe that learning English through e-learning is an indispensable part of our modern life	f	50	77	94
	%	22,6%	34,8%	42,5%
3. I believe that learning English through e-learning is an important part of life-long learning	f	42	78	101
	%	19,0%	35,3%	45,7%
4. I believe that learning English through e-learning enhances the quality of education	f	81	93	47
	%	36,7%	42,1%	21,3%
5. I believe that learning English through e-learning creates learning autonomy in learners	f	36	80	105
	%	16,3%	36,2%	47,5%
6. I believe that English can be learned through e-learning faster and easier	f	75	106	38
	%	34,2%	48,4%	17,4%

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7. I believe that I can reach information through e-learning whenever I need	f	80	59	81
	%	36,4%	26,8%	36,8%
8. I believe that e-learning should be supported by face to face learning	f	29	25	167
	%	13,1%	11,3%	75,6%
9. I believe that e-learning removes human factor in learning	f	114	55	52
	%	51,6%	24,9%	23,5%

10. I believe that English cannot be learned through e-learning	f	119	36	66
	%	53,8%	16,3%	29,9%
11. I believe that e-learning Individualizes learning process.	f	66	80	75
	%	29,9%	36,2%	33,9%
12 I cannot practice enough through e-learning	f	31	62	128
	%	14,0%	28,1%	57,9%
13 I believe that e-learning prevents socialization of learners.	f	126	40	55
	%	57,0%	18,1%	24,9%
14 I believe that I don't notice any differences between e-learning and face to face learning while learning English	f	61	88	72
	%	27,6%	39,8%	32,6%
15 I believe that e-learning is more fruitful because it takes learners away from classroom atmosphere	f	54	74	93
	%	24,4%	33,5%	42,1%
I believe that e-learning is very advantages because there is no time or venue limitation.	f	60	66	95
	%	27,1%	29,9%	43,0%
17 I think that I am talented enough to use e-learning effectively.	f	32	80	109
	%	14,5%	36,2%	49,3%
18 I have never met any technical difficulties while learning English through e-learning	f	91	100	30
	%	41,2%	45,2%	13,6%
19 I prefer to interact with other learners in e-learning	f	31	55	135
	%	14,0%	24,9%	61,1%
20 I believe that the materials used in e-learning today will replace books in the future	f	64	46	111
	%	29,0%	20,8%	50,2%
21 I prefer to learn through e-learning.	f	57	75	89
	%	25,8%	33,9%	40,3%
22 e-learning increases my motivation	f	85	98	38
	%	38,5%	44,3%	17,2%
23 e-learning is more enjoyable.	f	85	90	46
	%	38,5%	40,7%	20,8%
24 e-learning materials are more useful.	f	62	75	84
	%	28,1%	33,9%	38,0%
25 e-learning provides richer learning environment.	f	89	76	56
	%	40,3%	34,4%	25,3%
26 reaching e-learning materials is easier	f	44	50	127
	%	19,9%	22,6%	57,5%
27 e-learning is more affordable.	f	39	58	124
	%	17,6%	26,2%	56,1%
28. e-learning is more useful.	f	62	120	39
	%	28,1%	54,3%	17,6%
29 e-learning makes me more anxious.	f	62	78	81
	%	28,1%	35,3%	36,7%
30 e-learning is more interactive.	f	78	92	51
	%	35,3%	41,6%	23,1%
31 e-learning makes me satisfied.	f	69	93	59
	%	31,2%	42,1%	26,7%
32 e-learning is more learner-centered.	f	66	89	66
	%	29,9%	40,3%	29,9%
33 e-learning provides better feedback	f	69	77	75
	%	31,2%	34,8%	33,9%
34 e-learning is more flexible.	f	58	77	86

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35 the duration of the courses in e-learning is longer.	%	26,2%	34,8%	38,9%
	f	61	83	77
36 the duration of the courses in e-learning is shorter.	%	27,6%	37,6%	34,8%
	f	101	90	30
37e-learning standardizes education	%	45,7%	40,7%	13,6%
	f	103	69	49
	%	46,6%	31,2%	22,2%

38 e-learning helps me to improve listening skill.	f	111	59	50
	%	50,2%	26,7%	22,6%
39 e-learning helps me to improve speaking skill.	f	126	66	29
	%	57,0%	29,9%	13,1%
40 e-learning helps me to improve reading skill.	f	40	65	116
	%	18,1%	29,4%	52,5%
41 e-learning helps me to improve writing skill.	f	98	58	65
	%	44,3%	26,2%	29,4%
42 e-learning helps me to improve my grammar.	f	66	60	95
	%	29,9%	27,1%	43,0%
43 e-learning provides more reliable exams.	f	83	104	34
	%	37,6%	47,1%	15,4%
44 e-learning is a better means of measurement.	f	58	123	40
	%	26,2%	55,7%	18,1%
45 I prefer typing to Handwriting in exams.	f	94	40	87
	%	42,5%	18,1%	39,4%