A Descriptive Study on EFL Learners' Perceptions of Facebook

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Abstract: *There is a strong need to investigate English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' perceptions of Facebook as a language-learning environment, as their perceptions that directly influence their language development and achievement have not been examined within the EFL learning context. Thus, this study aims to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a language learning environment. The sample group of the study consisted of 174 EFL learners at a state university in Turkey. After administering a background questionnaire and a survey that assessed their perceptions, the frequencies, mean scores, standard deviations were computed. The results showed that Turkish EFL students perceive Facebook as an environment for communication, interaction, socialization, language learning and cultural interaction. It was recommended that further research should focus on the variables and determinants that may affect their perceptions to understand the theoretical and practical aspects regarding cultural differences.*

Keywords: *English as a foreign language, learning, Facebook, perception*

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak Öğrenenlerin Facebook Algıları

Öz: *İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenenlerin sahip oldukları algıları, dil gelişimi ve başarısı üzerinde doğrudan bir etkiye sahiptir. Diğer yandan bir öğrenme ortamı olarak Facebook'un nasıl algılandığına dair çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle, mevcut çalışma, yabancı dil öğrenenlerin Facebook'u bir öğrenme ortamı nasıl algıladıklarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklem grubu, bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören 174 yabancı dil öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılara, demografik bilgilerini ve algılarını ölçmeyi amaçlayan bir anket uygulanmış; elde edilen bulgular, yüzdelik dağılım, aritmetik ortalama ve standart sapma değerleri dikkate anılarak tablolar halinde sunulmuştur. Sonuçlar, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin Facebook'u bir iletişim, etkileşim, sosyalleşme, dil öğrenme ve kültürel etkileşim aracı olarak algıladıklarını göstermektedir. Sonraki araştırmaların algıları etkilemesi olası değişkenler ve kültürel farklıklılar dikkate alınarak algıların kuramsal ve uygulamaya dönük açıları üzerinde odaklanması önerilmektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, öğrenme, Facebook, algı*

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I. Introduction

This study aims to examine EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as an interaction, communication, socialization and education environment, harmful effects of Facebook, a language learning and cultural interaction environment, its contributions to basic language skills and knowledge areas and its effects on their affective states due to several concerns. The first reason is that there is a general lack of data on how social media contributes to language learning activities. In other words, the number of the studies on Facebook effects on foreign language learning process is too limited to draw conclusions. The studies reviewed in the following section on Facebook effects on foreign language learning process mainly focused several issues such as the Facebook effect on the awareness of target culture, electronic homework assignments, reading and writing skills, Facebook as a portfolio tool in process based-writing approach. However, it can be stated that it is not possible to evaluate how Facebook affects the foreign language learning process without investigating how learners perceive Facebook as a language-learning environment. Second, there is also a lack of research on Facebook as a language-learning environment in the Turkish EFL context. As learners' perceptions is a considerable issue with profound effects on their progress and achievement in language learning that are affected by their linguistic, psychological and social development, the study will contribute to the field of EFL learning and teaching.

Facebook, a registered trademark, is an online Web 2.0 technology and social networking service that has nearly 1.3 billion active users. Facebook that allows its users to have their profiles, add friends, send and receive messages and chat online may have the potential to influence education considerably (Aydın, 2012; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). For example, Facebook provides social interactions and supports social and active learning (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011) in a constructivist environment within the scope of Vygotsky's (1978) notion that culture and society affect cognitive growth. In this sense, Facebook as a social networking service helps learners connect with more knowledgeable others within zones of proximal development.

In a broad review of research on Facebook effects on education, Aydın (2012) stated that research mainly focused on the issues such as the characteristics of users, reasons to use it, Facebook as an educational environment, its influences on language learning and individual factors. Although Aydın (2012) concluded that Facebook may be used as an educational environment, it should be known that there is a lack of empirical research on its use as an educational environment, as the papers appeared on the issue mainly involve opinions rather than research activities. Moreover, even though it is implicated that Facebook may have positive effects on the learning process, research on how learners perceive it as a tool for education in a general context and as a language educational environment within a specific context is lacking. In addition, as language learners' perceptions directly influence the success in language learning (Abraham & Van, 1987), how EFL learners perceive Facebook as a language learning environment is a significant issue to research. Thus, EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook, which constitutes a social environment and context for language development, have to be investigated, as

their linguistic, social and cognitive development is directly affected by learning environment. In this sense, today's traditional language classrooms are not the only places where learners' language progresses. Thus, whether learners perceive Facebook as a language learning environment should be clarified before using it a social learning environment that may have positive contributions to their language learning experiences.

II. Literature review

The limited number of research shows that the main reason to use Facebook was communication and interaction with users' friends and family members, administrators, parents and teachers. For instance, Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) underlined that users mainly connected with their friends and family members, whereas it was used for social interaction (Pempek et al., 2009), interpersonal interactions (Huang et al., 2010) and communication (Decarie, 2010). Facebook also assisted in socialization (Ryan et al., 2011), participation in social activities (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), communication between teachers and students (Berg et al., 2007) and faculty members (Sturgeon & Walker, 2009). On the other hand, Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) found that undergraduate and graduate students preferred passive behaviors with their professor. Yet, it should be noted that none of the studies reviewed above focused on EFL learners' perceptions of interaction and communication on Facebook. Moreover, in the EFL context, only one study appeared in terms of communication and interaction, while no study was found on EFL students' perceptions of socialization of Facebook. In the mentioned study that focused on EFL learners 'communications and interactions with their teachers, Aydın (2014a) found that Turkish EFL students preferred passive behaviors regarding their interactions with their teachers.

Research also indicates that Facebook can be used as an educational environment. For example, Boon and Sinclair (2009) stated that Facebook had the potential for educational applications, whereas Roblyer et al. (2010) highlighted that it was a valuable resource for educational communications and collaborations. Moreover, Facebook could be used in educational contexts (Downes, 2007) to raise attention, participation and collaboration (Blankenship, 2011), achievement (Violino, 2009), logistical or factual information and moral support concerning learning (Selwyn, 2009). Research also showed that Facebook had positive effects on classroom practices, student involvement (Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Manzo, 2009) and engagement (Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008). In addition, Facebook constituted learning spaces and environments (Thomas, 2010) and could be incorporated into regular lessons (Taranto & Abbondanza, 2009). Research also concentrated on the Facebook effects on some specific fields. According to the related literature, Facebook could be used for social learning (Greenhow, 2009), e-learning (Durkee et al., 2009), art education (Shin, 2010) and Chemistry (Schroeder & Greenbowe, 2009). Yet, it should be underlined that the studies reviewed here were not directly related to language learners' perceptions of Facebook as a learning environment in a general context.

Research demonstrates that the utilization of Facebook also brings some harmful consequences. Those problems could be summarized as inappropriate comments (Butler,

2010), posts (Shelton, 2009) and photographs (Watson et al., 2006), cyberbullying among adolescents (Catanzaro, 2011; Holladay, 2010) and abuse (Wihbey, 2010). In addition, Facebook was also a source of problems regarding privacy among friends (Couros, 2008; Read, 2006). However, it should be clarified that the number of studies on the issue was fairly limited and that the studies reviewed did not focus on how foreign language learners perceive the harmful consequences of Facebook.

Studies that focused on Facebook effects on foreign language learning and the awareness of target culture show mainly positive results. To begin with, it can be noted that there was a positive relationship between cultural awareness and foreign language learning on Facebook (Birky & Collins 2011; Carrington & Hodgetts 2010; Christie & Bloustien, 2010). Moreover, Facebook could be used to adjusting to new cultures (Ryan et al., 2011) and to learn culture and language (Mills, 2011). Facebook also had has powerful effects on language teaching and learning (Aydın, 2012; Romano, 2009). According to the related literature, learners could engage electronic homework assignments (Kitsis, 2008), develop learners' reading and writing skills (Kabilan et al., 2010; Skerrett, 2010) and be used as a portfolio tool in process based-writing approach (Aydın, 2014b; Waters, 2009). To conclude, it can be stated that the number of the studies on the target culture seems too limited and that no study was found on EFL learners' perceptions of awareness of target culture on Facebook.

The use of Facebook has positive effects on learners' affective states. For instance, Facebook had benefits for experiencing self-esteem (Ellison et al., 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008), motivation and affective learning (Mazer et al., 2007). In addition, one study showed that the use of Facebook could decrease anxiety among students (West et al. 2009). On the other hand, it should be highlighted that the studies reviewed focused neither on foreign language learners' affective states nor their perceptions of affective states.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this literature review. First, no data were found on how EFL learners perceive Facebook as an interaction and communication environment, while only one study concluded that they preferred passive behaviors when they interacted and communicated with their teachers. Second, research is lacking in relation to Facebook as an educational environment. Moreover, no data were found on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a learning environment in a general context. Third, studies did not focus on perceptions of harmful consequences of Facebook among EFL learners. Last, though the limited number of studies indicated that Facebook had positive impacts on the awareness of target culture, electronic homework assignments and reading and writing skills, no study was found on EFL learners' perceptions of awareness of the target culture on Facebook as a language-learning environment. Last, the studies that focused on learners' affective states focused neither on EFL learners' affective states nor their perceptions of affective states.

In conclusion, several concerns call for an examination into EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a language learning environment in a general context, its harmful effects, its impacts on language learning and cultural interaction environment

and its effects on affective states. First, there is a serious lack of research on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as an interaction and communication environment. Second, findings were reached regarding EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a learning environment in a general context. Third, there are no data about how they perceive harmful effects of Facebook. Fourth, no study was conducted on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as language learning and cultural interaction environment and its effects on affective states. With these concerns in mind, this research asks four questions:

1. How do EFL learners perceive Facebook as an interaction and communication, socialization and education environment?

2. Do EFL learners perceive harmful effects of Facebook?

3. How do EFL learners perceive Facebook as a language learning and cultural interaction environment and its contributions to basic language skills and knowledge areas?

4. How do EFL learners perceive Facebook effects on their affective states?

III.Method

III.1.Participants

The participants in the research were students enrolled in the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of the Education Faculty at Balikesir University, Turkey. All students who had a Facebook account were invited to participate in the study. This resulted in a sample size of 174 participants. Of the participants, 115 (66.1%) were female and 59 (33.9%) were male. The gender distribution in the group was a reflection of the overall population in the ELT department. Their mean age was 20.9, falling within the age range of 17 and 32. Of the participants, 42 (24.1%) were first-, 36 (20.7%) were second-, 51 (29.3%) were third-, 45 (25.9%) were fourth-year students. Their academic achievement score mean was 2.7 within the range of 0.3 and 3.9. The average number of friends on Facebook was 347 within the range of 6 and 1000, whereas the average number of foreign friends with whom that the participants communicated and interacted in the target language was 26 within the range of 0 and 400. The mean score for the number of the Facebook groups joined by the students were 50, five of which were the groups related to language learning. The mean score of Facebook familiarity in years was 4.7 within the range of one and 10, whereas, of the participants, 150 (86.2%) used Facebook every day, 17 (9.8%) used once or twice a week, four (2.3%) used once or twice a month, and finally, three (1.7%) used once or twice a semester. Of the participants, 46 (26.6%) used it less than one hour a day, 55 (31.8%) used nearly one hour, 31 (17.9%) nearly two hours, 24 (13.9%) used nearly three hours, eight (4.6%) used nearly four hours, and nine (5.2%) used more than five hours. One-hundred and seven participants (61.5%) preferred restricting their profiles, while 68 (38.5) did not restrict. Last, of the students, 93 (53.4%) used their mobile and smart phones to log in

Facebook, 59 (33.9%) preferred laptop and notebook computers, 20 (11.5%) and two (1.1%) used tablets.

III.2. Tools

In this descriptive research, the data collection tools consisted of a background questionnaire and a survey instrument designed by the researchers. The background questionnaire probed participants' gender, age, grade, academic achievement score, the number of friends on Facebook, the number of groups joined, Facebook familiarity in years, the frequency of its use in hours and the media they logged in and whether they restricted their profiles or not. The survey interrogated 56 items that were assessed on a scale ranging from one to five (never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, usually=4, always=5). The items represented 56 items related to their perceptions of Facebook based on interaction and communication, socialization, educational environment, harmful effects, language learning, cultural interactions and affective states.

III.3. Procedure

After approval from the faculty administration was granted, the purpose, significance, research methodology, research ethics, the role of researcher and rationale behind participant choice were explained to the students were invited to participate in the research. It was underlined that their privacy would be respected, participation was voluntary and that there was no risk in participating the research and that the study would be carried out within the bounds of respect for the participants. Then, the researcher introduced the research and their rights and asked them to participate in the study.

The statements in the survey were derived from a study (Aydın, 2012) that reviewed the research on Facebook as an educational environment. Seventy-six statements from the study were transformed into a draft version of the survey and administered to 100 participants. The purpose of the pilot study was to see the reliability and validity of the survey. Then, the total variance and item-total statistics of the data were computed, and the number of the items was reduced to 56. Finally, the researcher distributed the tools and collected them after the participants completed them. The background questionnaire and survey were administered to the participants at the beginning of spring semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. The data gathered were analyzed using the SPSS software. Before giving the frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations, the reliability coefficients and total variance were computed. The reliability analysis indicated a high level of reliability (0.91) in Cronbach's Alpha as seen in Table 1. In addition, rotation sums of the squared loadings showed that the survey included eight sub-variables as interaction and communication, socialization, educational environment, harmful effects, language learning, cultural interactions, language skills and knowledge areas and affective states. The total variance (67.2%) demonstrated that the scale was valid for measuring participants' perceptions of Facebook.

Table 1. Reliability coefficients

Sections	Subsections	Reliability coefficients		
Perceptions of Facebook	Interaction and communication	0.73	0.86	0.91
	Socialization	0.83		
	Educational environment	0.89		
	Harmful effects	0.89		
Perceptions of Facebook as language learning environment	Language learning	0.81	0.88	
	Cultural interaction	0.83		
	Language skills and knowledge areas	0.88		
	Affective States	0.78		

IV. Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the study. The section first presents results on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as an environment for interaction and communication and socialization. Then, it gives the data on their perceptions of Facebook as an educational environment and its harmful effects. Finally, the section presents the findings on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a language learning environment and its impacts on cultural interactions and affective states.

According to the findings presented in Table 1, EFL learners perceived Facebook as a medium for communication and interaction. One of the reasons why EFL learners use Facebook was communication and interaction (x=4.0). EFL learners usually used Facebook to communicate with their friends (x=4.2) and classmates at their present school (x=3.7), whereas they sometimes communicated with their friends at their previous schools (x=3.3). However, the level of communication gradually decreased regarding with their family members (x=2.7) and teachers (x=2.7) when compared to the communication with their friends and classmates. More interestingly, EFL learners rarely preferred using Facebook for communication with school administrators (x=1.7).

Table 2. Perceptions of Facebook as a medium for interaction and communication

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
I use Facebook for communication and interaction.	174	0.0	2.3	23.0	48.3	26.4	4.0	0.8
I use Facebook to communicate with my family members.	174	13.2	39.1	25.9	12.6	9.2	2.7	1.1

Statement	Number						
I use Facebook to communicate with my friends.	170	0.0	2.9	14.1	45.3	37.6	4.2	0.8
I use Facebook to communicate with my classmates.	172	1.7	9.3	26.2	40.7	22.1	3.7	1.0
I use Facebook to communicate with my teachers.	172	7.6	39.5	36.0	12.2	4.7	2.7	0.9
I use Facebook to communicate with school administrators.	172	56.4	28.5	9.9	3.5	1.7	1.7	0.9
I use Facebook to contact with my classmates at my previous schools.	174	5.7	12.6	36.8	32.2	12.6	3.3	1.0

According to the values in Table 3, EFL learners also perceived that Facebook was an environment for socialization (x=3.5). Moreover, they stated that Facebook was a tool for social integration (x=3.5) and tool for social interaction (x=3.5). Last, EFL learners usually used Facebook to have information about social activities.

Table 3. Perceptions of Facebook as a socialization environment

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
Facebook is an environment for socialization.	173	6.9	10.4	27.7	35.8	19.1	3.5	1.1
Facebook is a tool for social integration.	173	3.5	14.5	28.3	34.7	19.1	3.5	1.1
I use Facebook for social interaction.	172	1.7	13.4	36.6	30.2	18.0	3.5	1.0
I use Facebook to have information about social activities.	174	4.6	9.8	29.3	39.7	16.7	3.5	1.0

As shown in Table 4, EFL learners perceived that Facebook was sometimes a platform of teaching and learning (x=3.0) and could be used for educational activities (x=3.3). They also thought that Facebook could be seen as a resource to support educational communications (x=3.2) and an environment for academic interaction with peers (x=3.1). In addition, they sometimes used Facebook as an educational environment

(x=2.8) and for academic purposes (x=2.5). Finally, EFL learners sometimes followed posts about education (x=3.0).

Table 4. Perceptions of Facebook as an educational environment

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
Facebook is a platform for learning and teaching.	174	5.2	20.7	46.6	21.3	6.3	3.0	0.9
Facebook can be used for educational activities.	174	3.4	12.1	43.7	29.3	11.5	3.3	1.0
Facebook is a resource to support educational communications.	174	3.4	14.9	42.0	31.0	8.6	3.2	0.9
Facebook provides an academic interaction with my peers.	174	3.4	23.0	36.2	31.0	6.3	3.1	1.0
I use Facebook as an educational environment.	174	7.5	27.0	44.8	17.2	3.4	2.8	0.9
I use Facebook for academic purposes.	173	12.7	35.3	38.3	11.6	1.2	2.5	0.9
I use Facebook to follow specific posts about education.	171	5.8	28.1	36.3	22.8	7.0	3.0	1.0

The findings given in Table 5 showed that EFL learners sometimes encountered inappropriate behaviors (x=2.8), posts (x=2.7), content (x=2.7) and behaviors related to abuse (x=2.5). Moreover, they thought that there was an invasion of privacy on Facebook (x=2.8). On the other hand, they stated that they rarely encountered content in relation to illegal activities (x=2.2) and sexually inappropriate behaviors (x=2.2). Last, they rarely encountered cyberbullying on Facebook.

Table 5. Perceptions of harmful effects of Facebook

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
I encounter inappropriate comments on Facebook.	172	12.2	30.2	29.1	21.5	7.0	2.8	1.1
I encounter inappropriate posts on Facebook.	171	11.7	31.6	33.3	19.3	4.1	2.7	1.0
I encounter inappropriate content on Facebook.	172	12.8	30.2	34.9	17.4	4.1	2.7	1.2
I encounter content related to illegal activities.	172	27.9	37.2	23.3	9.3	2.3	2.2	1.0
I encounter sexually inappropriate behaviors.	171	29.2	35.7	23.4	8.2	3.5	2.2	1.1
I encounter behaviors related to abuse.	170	20.6	38.8	24.7	13.5	2.4	2.5	1.0
I encounter cyberbullying on Facebook.	164	31.1	35.4	23.8	8.5	1.2	2.1	1.0
There is an invasion of privacy on Facebook.	172	11.6	23.8	41.9	17.4	4.2	2.8	1.0

According to the values in Table 6, Facebook was perceived as a language learning environment (x=3.1) that supported language learning (x=3.0). To begin with, they stated that Facebook was an appropriate platform to share language resources and materials (x=3.7), offered multimedia resources to improve language learning (x=3.2) and a resource for e-learning (x=3.5). They also stated that Facebook demolished borders and barriers in language learning at a moderate level (x=2.7) and constituted a good discussion forum for language learning (x=3.2). Moreover, they believed that Facebook could be seen as a resource for both individual (x=3.2) and collaborative learning (x=3.2). EFL learners also thought that Facebook sometimes provided moral support concerning language learning (x=2.9) and increased achievement (x=2.9). They have also positive perceptions of Facebook regarding its utilization in language classes (x=2.9), classroom practices and involvement (x=2.8) and projects related to language learning (x=2.9). On the other hand, EFL learners rarely believed that Facebook could be a part of regular lessons (x=2.2).

Table 6. Perceptions of Facebook as a medium for language learning

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
Facebook is a useful language learning environment.	173	1.7	24.3	42.8	24.9	6.4	3.1	0.9
Facebook supports language learning.	173	4.0	17.9	45.7	27.7	4.6	3.1	0.9
Facebook is an appropriate platform for language learning.	173	4.6	22.0	49.1	19.7	4.6	3.0	0.9
Facebook demolishes borders and barriers in language learning.	172	12.8	27.3	38.4	16.9	4.7	2.7	1.0
Facebook is a good discussion forum about language learning.	174	1.7	17.8	44.8	29.3	6.3	3.2	0.9
Facebook is a resource for e-learning.	173	1.7	16.2	41.0	31.8	8.7	3.5	3.0
Facebook is a resource for individual language learning.	173	3.5	18.5	44.5	26.0	7.5	3.2	0.9
Facebook is a resource for collaborative language learning.	174	1.1	19.0	39.1	33.3	7.5	3.2	0.9
Facebook provides moral support concerning language learning.	173	4.0	26.6	48.0	19.1	2.3	2.9	0.8
Facebook offers multimedia resources to improve language learning.	174	1.7	19.5	38.5	33.3	6.9	3.2	0.9
Facebook is an appropriate platform to share language resources and materials.	174	2.3	7.5	29.9	40.2	20.1	3.7	1.0
Facebook increases achievement in language learning.	173	3.5	27.2	48.0	17.9	3.5	2.9	0.9
Facebook can be used in language classes.	174	6.3	25.9	42.5	21.3	4.0	2.9	0.9

Facebook can be used in classroom practices and involvement.	172	4.7	33.1	41.3	19.2	1.7	2.8	0.9
Facebook can be a part of my regular lessons.	174	21.3	42.0	29.3	7.5	0.0	2.2	0.9
Facebook can be integrated into projects related to language learning.	173	3.5	31.2	38.9	22.5	2.9	2.9	0.9

The findings in Table 7 indicated that Facebook had considerable effects on gaining knowledge about target culture and cultural interactions. That is, EFL learner usually perceived Facebook as an environment that offered opportunities to know more about target culture (x=3.5). In addition, they believed that Facebook provided opportunities for cultural interactions (x=3.6).

Table 7. Perceptions of Facebook as a medium for cultural interaction

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
Facebook offers opportunities to know more about target culture.	174	1.1	16.1	33.3	33.3	16.1	3.5	1.0
Facebook provides opportunities for cultural interactions.	172	1.2	12.8	30.8	36.6	18.6	3.6	1.0

As shown in Table 8, EFL learners had positive perceptions of Facebook contributions to basic language skills and knowledge areas at a moderate level. First, they believed that Facebook sometimes improved their communicational and interactional skills (x=3.4) and their language skills in general (x=3.1). More specifically, they perceived that Facebook contributed their speaking (x=2.5), reading (x=3.3) and writing skills (3.1). For them, Facebook also helped them to improve their grammar (x=2.7) and vocabulary knowledge (x=3.4). On the other hand, EFL learners perceived that Facebook rarely contributed to listening (x=2.4) and pronunciation skills (x=2.2).

Table 8. Perceptions of Facebook contributions to basic language skills and knowledge areas

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
Facebook helps me improve communicational and interactional skills.	172	2.9	17.4	30.8	32.6	16.3	3.4	1.0
Facebook helps me improve my language skills.	174	4.0	25.9	37.9	24.1	8.0	3.1	1.0
Facebook helps me improve listening skills.	174	21.8	33.3	28.7	13.2	2.9	2.4	1.1
Facebook helps me improve pronunciation skills.	174	27.6	36.8	21.8	10.9	2.9	2.2	1.1
Facebook helps me improve speaking skills.	172	23.8	28.5	25.6	16.3	5.8	2.5	1.2
Facebook helps me improve reading skills.	174	5.2	18.4	28.7	32.8	14.9	3.3	1.1
Facebook helps me improve writing skills.	173	12.1	22.0	23.1	26.6	16.2	3.1	1.3
Facebook helps me improve grammar knowledge.	174	14.4	31.6	30.5	17.2	6.3	2.7	1.1
Facebook helps me improve vocabulary knowledge.	173	4.0	15.6	32.9	33.5	13.9	3.4	1.0

Finally, as shown in Table 9, EFL learners had a moderate level of confidence, motivation and anxiety when they were on Facebook. In other words, they stated that they rarely felt anxious (x=1.7) when they used Facebook. Moreover, they stated that they sometimes felt confident (x=2.6) and motivated (x=2.6) during the utilization of Facebook.

Table 9. Perceptions of Facebook effect on affective states

Statements	Number	Frequencies (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
I feel anxious when I am on Facebook.	174	51.7	32.2	9.8	5.7	0.6	1.7	0.9
I feel confident when I am on Facebook.	174	24.1	19.5	33.3	17.2	5.7	2.6	1.2
I feel motivated when I am on Facebook.	173	22.5	21.4	38.2	13.3	4.6	2.6	1.1

As a result, six conclusions were drawn from the research. First, Turkish EFL learners perceive Facebook as a medium for communication and interaction. They mostly use Facebook to communicate with their friends and classmates, while the level of their interactions and communications with their family members and teachers decreases. Dramatically enough, they rarely prefer Facebook to communicate with school administrators. Second, learners perceive Facebook as an environment for socialization, social integration and interaction. Third, EFL learners show positive perceptions regarding Facebook as a tool and environment for learning and teaching in a general sense. In other words, they generally think that Facebook can be used as a platform for teaching and learning, educational activities, educational communications and academic interactions. Fourth, though EFL learners complain about inappropriate behaviors, posts, content, privacy and abuse during the utilization of Facebook, some issues such as content in relation to illegal activities, sexually inappropriate behaviors and cyberbullying do not create problems. Fifth, for EFL learners Facebook constitutes an environment for language learning. Speaking specifically, they perceive that Facebook constitutes a platform to share and offer language resources and multimedia materials as well as it supports e-learning, discussions, individual and collaborative learning. Furthermore, they think that Facebook provides moral support concerning language learning and increases achievement. In addition, they state that Facebook can be utilized in classroom practices, involvement and project-based learning while they are not positive enough regarding Facebook as a part of regular lessons. Sixth, Facebook provides considerable gains regarding target culture and cultural interactions. They also believe that Facebook contributes to their speaking, reading and writing skills and grammar and vocabulary knowledge while it does not seem useful in terms of listening and pronunciation skills. Last, Turkish EFL learners perceive that Facebook offers a language learning environment where the learners feel motivated and self-confident whereas they feel a low level of anxiety. As a result, EFL learners' positive perception towards Facebook as an interaction, communication.

V.Discussion

The aforementioned results may relate to certain factors. First, the reason why EFL learners have a low level of interaction and communication with their family members and teachers while they mostly communicate and interact with their friends and classmates may be related to their parents and teachers' age groups, Facebook familiarity and the roles of their teachers (Aydın, 2014a; Harmer, 1991). In other words, as Aydın (2014a) notes, EFL learners mainly prefer passive behaviors on Facebook while interacting with their teachers due to the teachers' roles as controllers and assessors and teacher preference of traditional office hours whereas parents mostly prefer traditional communication tools instead of using Facebook due to their age groups. Learners' perceptions of interaction and communication with their teachers may be also seen as an indication of respect for teachers in Turkish culture and social distance as a discipline tool in the Turkish educational context (Aydın, 2014a). To be brief, that today's students seem to reach the normalization and internalization processes of social media constitute a dramatic generation gap regarding their teachers and parents. In addition, why learners have difficulties in communication and interaction with school administrators may relate to the lack of interest in communication and interaction with students via institutional accounts. Second, the reason why some harmful effects of Facebook such as content in relation to illegal activities, sexually inappropriate behaviors and cyberbullying do not create problems may relate to their age group and intellectual capacity as they are adult learners who are aware of communications and interactions at a mature level. Third, although they have positive perceptions of Facebook as a language learning environment, why they are not positive about using Facebook as a part of regular lessons may be a result of that they have no any experience on the issue and that teachers do not tend to use it in their regular lessons. Last, why they think that Facebook does not contribute to their listening and pronunciation skills is because communication on Facebook mainly depends on written communication.

A comparison of the results to previous findings is summarized below. First of all, the findings of the study contribute to the literature on EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as a language learning environment, as the research on the related issue is lacking. Second, though the limited number of studies (e.g. Berg et al., 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Sturgeon & Walker, 2009; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008) show that learners use Facebook for communication and interaction with users' friends and family members, administrators, parents and teachers, this study suggests that their interactions and communications with their family members, teachers and school administrators are limited, as found by Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) and Aydın (2014a). Third, when compared to the findings in prior research, the study reached similar results regarding Facebook as a socialization environment (e.g. Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011) and as an educational environment (e.g. Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Manzo, 2009; Roblyer et al., 2010). Fourth, the results of this study showed that EFL learners do not believe that Facebook can be a part of their regular classes on the contrary to the findings by Taranto and Abbondanza (2009). In a similar way, while research concluded that some of the harmful effects of Facebook relate to illegal activities,

sexually inappropriate behaviors and cyberbullying (e.g. Catanzaro, 2011; Holladay, 2010, Wihbey, 2010), Turkish EFL learners do not think that the mentioned items create problems. In terms of Facebook as a language learning environment and its effects on affective states, its contributions to language skills and knowledge areas, the study suggests similar results (e.g. Birky & Collins 2011; Carrington & Hodgetts 2010; Christie & Bloustien, 2010; Kabilan et al., 2010; Mazer et al., 2007; Mills, 2011), while they do not perceive that Facebook constitutes to their listening and pronunciation skills. Yet, it should be noted that how Facebook contributes to their listening and pronunciation skills have not been investigated yet.

Some practical recommendations can be made. First, language teachers and school administrators should revise their perceptions, communication and interaction strategies and roles to increase their interactions and communication with their students. Second, teachers should use actively Facebook to gain information about their students' socialization process to teach in a social learning environment. Third, EFL teachers should also use Facebook as a platform for teaching and convert their traditional teaching activities into Facebook-oriented e-learning, discussions, individual and collaborative learning and project-based activities. Moreover, they should share their language resources and multimedia materials and use Facebook as a part of their regular classes. Speaking more specifically, EFL teachers should concentrate on the use of Facebook in their courses regarding language skills and knowledge areas. They should give a special attention to listening and pronunciation skills, as learners do not seem positive regarding the mentioned skills. To be brief, by doing so, teachers will not only contribute to their students' learning process but also improve their interactions on Facebook as a communication environment to build better relationships with their students (Aydın, 2014a). However, it should be strongly stated that the realization of those benefits is directly related to the changes in pre- and in-service teacher training curricula to integrate teachers into social networking and social and cultural learning in the scope of a constructivist approach, as it is now an indispensable part of human communication and interaction. Fourth, given that Facebook creates some problems such as inappropriate behaviors, posts, content, privacy and abuse, teachers should inform their students in terms of ethical principles and standards of using Facebook (Birky & Collins, 2011) and how to protect the personal information of Facebook (Gallant, 2011). For this purpose, school administrators should develop definitive guidelines for participation in Facebook in the scope of its educational use (Gallant, 2011). Last, curriculum developers and course designers should focus on integrating their teaching materials, courses and textbooks. To conclude, the efficient use of social networking in EFL learning requires the mentioned steps to be implemented. By this way, it will be possible to use social networking in EFL the teaching and learning processes (Aydın, 2013).

One of the limitations of this research is that the participants were limited to 174 students studying in the Department of English Language Teaching at Balikesir University. The number of female participants is significantly higher than the number of males. In addition, the scope of the study is restricted to descriptive data obtained from

the background questionnaire and a questionnaire designed by the author. Last, the data obtained in the study are limited to students' perspective.

Further research should investigate the relationship between EFL learners' perceptions of Facebook as language learning environment and some other factors such as gender, age, grade, academic achievement, the number of friends on Facebook, the number of groups joined on Facebook, Facebook familiarity in years, the frequency of Facebook use, their perceptions of profile restriction and the tools to log in Facebook. There is also need to conduct cross-cultural research to understand the theoretical and practical aspects regarding cultural differences, variables and determinants that may affect their perceptions.

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