

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT

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Abstract

This research paper presents use of social media in foreign language teaching by academic staff in Turkey. The research instrument was a questionnaire about social media usage in language teaching by the academic staff in the lectures and the methodology of the research used a survey approach. The data collected from forty academic staff were scored by percentage and frequency. The degrees that academic staff held were BA in the first place with 40 per cent, MA in the second place with 35 per cent and PhD in the third place with 25 per cent. The most experienced majority of the participants were in their profession between six and ten years. Majority of the academic staff were female with a per cent of 67,5. According to the research results, 35% of the participants used social media in their lectures. Most used one was *YouTube* with 20.58% and *TedTalks* was the second with 17.64%. Academic staff used social media *always* by 50%, *often* by 21,42%, *sometimes* by 7,14% and *rarely* by 14,28%. 65% of the academic staff did not use social media in language teaching. All of the participants had access to internet and technology within their campus. The motives behind using social media were self-improving, catching-up with the colleagues and engaging more students in the lectures. Most of both learners and academic staff agreed on social media's fully positive effect on the lectures. Based on the data found through the research, suggestions on the matter were presented in the study.

Keywords: Social media, Foreign Language Education, EFL.

Özet

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki akademik personelin sosyal medyayı dil öğretiminde kullanmalarını göstermektedir. Araştırma yöntemi olarak akademik personelin yabancı dil öğretiminde sosyal medya kullanımına dair anket kullanılmıştır. Veriler kırk akademik personelden toplanmış olup yüzdeler ve frekansla değerlendirilmiştir. Akademisyenlerin 40%i lisans, 35%i yüksek lisans ve 20%si doktora mezunuydu. Katılımcıların çoğunluğu 6 ila 10 yıllık öğretim deneyimine sahipti. Katılımcı akademisyenlerin çoğunluğu %67 ile kadınlardı. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre katılımcıların 35%i derslerinde sosyal medyayı kullanmıştır. *YouTube* 20.58, *TedTalks* 17.64% ile en çok kullanılanlar olmuştur. Akademisyenlerin sosyal medyayı kullanım sıklığı; *her zaman* 50%, *sık sık* 21.42%, *bazen* 7.14%, *nadiren* 14.28% şeklindedir. Akademisyenlerin 65%i derslerinde sosyal medyayı kullanmamıştır. Tüm katılımcıların kampüs içerisinde internet ve teknolojiye erişimi vardı. Katılımcılar sosyal medyayı sırasıyla kendilerini geliştirmek, meslektaşlarına ayak uydurmak ve daha fazla öğrenciyi derse dahil etmek amacıyla kullanmıştır. He öğrencilerin hem de akademisyenlerin çoğunluğu sosyal medyanın derslere tamamen pozitif etkisi olduğu konusunda hemfikir. Çalışmada araştırma sonucu elde edilen verilere dayanarak, öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Yabancı Dil Eğitimi, Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce.

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Introduction

In the 21st century which is considered as information and technology era, technological and informational developments have the power to shape the life of people, the interaction among people, economy and culture. Besides, this era enables people to have a virtual world in which they can share their ideas, emotions, build their interaction structures with others, enjoy the time, do their jobs and learn new things in any field they are interested in through the use of web tools in other words social media. Since it is a constantly developing platform, social media has the potential to suit for every necessity of any field including education.

Integrating web tools with teaching and learning is increasing at an accelerating rate in higher education. The reason behind all the innovations in education is to enhance and enrich the quality of teaching and learning process. In this context, to have a better learning environment, self-control and mutual supporting are important acts for the quality of learning and teaching conditions. In align with this view Dalsgaard (2006) enunciated that social networks could be a better platform for a learning process which is collaborative and self-governed.

A large number of studies have indicated that use of social media may help foreign language teaching effectively. Academic staff can combine social media in their lectures in various ways such as designing learners' activities to put forward their materials and ideas, providing their own knowledge, having a discussion platform for course-related topics, thus making up a learning community (Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2011). Knowing the benefits of it most academic staff in universities have taken up mingled social media in the courses they teach since social media can be the way of technology in educational activities (Moran, 2011). In accordance with the academic staff, learners, likewise, have taken up combined social media in learning environment (Roblyer, 2010). In addition to this dimension, critical thinking skills can also be developed in foreign language context to support learning (Ordem, 2017). Therefore, social media alone may not be adequate. Approaching social media with critical eyes seem to be pivotal in language learning environment.

With the technology in the hands of almost everyone, people not only enjoy the time using social media but they also use the media for different purposes including education and developing critical thinking skills as well. In this aspect, Van Dijck (2011) claimed that going ahead of the original prompt of twitter "What are you doing?", the users of the social media adapted it to fit for their service in many field of life. With this in hand, many educators are turning this acquaintance into a fruitful learning and teaching all over the world where technology is within access.

Academic staff who teach foreign language within the universities in Turkey have different view of using social media in the lectures. This research concentrates on what percent academic staff is acquainted with social media and using it in foreign language teaching in the lectures at the universities. Besides, the study focuses on finding the way, frequency and the type of social media used by academic staff. Academic staff's access to internet and technology was checked out through the research. Opinion of both academic staff and learners at the universities were also another focused point of this paper. The big picture behind the aim of this study is to understand whether the academic staff at the universities use the social media well enough to have a revolutionized foreign language teaching atmosphere by attracting the learners' attention in terms of social media which are used mostly by them as Liu (2010) suggested educational structure will

be renovated in an accurate way if the learners are in charge of their own learning process.

With all the data acquired through this paper, academic administrations and educational designers of universities in Turkey may enhance the teaching and learning atmosphere at the universities to have a revolutionized system. Even in-service seminars on social media use in lectures by academic staff could be held by the university administrations to make the language teaching and learning much better by taking the findings of this study into consideration.

Main social media tools included in this study are as follows:

Twitter: This social platform offers its users a microblogging stage where people can share their emotions, ideas, build their social interaction circle, comment on the agenda, follow the other users whose ideas, lifestyle, mind attract themselves and so on within 140 characters. Academic staff and learners may use twitter through its facilities to enhance the education process.

Facebook: One of the most used platform by many. It has lots of facilities for people from sharing to receiving information about the topics according to their fields of interests. Its being popular among the young could be made use of in favor of education.

Podcast: It is a platform in which people can upload their voice record of anything to share with others and getting feedback from the ones who listen to the recorded information. This platform could be used for listening skills of language learners as well as their speaking skills.

Blog: Blog is a web based platform where people write their ideas, emotions, opinions and so on for other people to read them. This kind of social platform can be used to interact with learners on courses, activities, assignments and sharing every content of learning process.

Google +: Google-Plus is an environment on web where people can share any content with others and get feedback. This platform inevitably comes with Gmail as soon as you have an account. Through Google + educators can do a great many things through other applications provided by the company.

Pinterest: Pinning everything like your photos, cards, informational pictures, postcards even videos according to your interests is provided by this platform. As it suggests, academic staff and learners can pin anything to enhance the learning or teaching process according to educational interests.

Ted Talks: This platform is a product of people who gather in a place where they present their ideas, discoveries and so on to the people watching them. Educators may use this platform as an authentic language atmosphere for the students.

Instagram: Instagram is a photo and video sharing platform which has been very popular among many from every generation. Academic staff may make use of the popularity of this platform to enhance the quality of their lectures.

YouTube: YouTube is the leading video uploading website that has application for IOS and Android. It allows people to upload video and share it with millions of users while

watchers can comment on the posts, which allows interaction. Academic staff may make use of features of YouTube in lectures.

Skype: Skype is a platform through which people can call each other just like telephone as well as sharing the files like photos, papers, videos, and so on. Academic staff may use this platform easily as most students are acquainted with it.

Methodology

The research methodology used a survey to reveal the academic staff's way of using social media in university lectures in Turkey. The research instrument was a questionnaire and it is made up of statements rated on a five-point scale of Likert (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). The instrument was validated by two competent people in the diffusion of innovations, five experts in quality department of universities, and two experts in educational research and evaluation by means of the index of item-objective congruence (IOC). And the values of The IOC varied from 0.71 to 1.00. The instrument was applied to participants through online forms. The number of participants who were academic staff from 7 universities in Turkey was 40. The reliability coefficient was set through Cronbach's equation which was 0.92 to conduct the study. 40 academic staff completed the study. Collected data were scored by percentage and frequency.

Findings

The results of this study were divided into two groups. The first group of data were about the background information about the academic staff and their familiarity with social media while the second group of data were about the use of social media in universities by academic staff, both of which can be viewed in Table 1 and Table 2. The results in Table 1. illustrate the percentages and the frequencies of the academic staff's background about social media in their daily life.

Table 1. Percentage and frequency of the academic staff's background about social media in their daily life

The statements	Percentage	Frequency
1) Academic Staff's Level of Degree		
1.1 BA	40	16
1.2 MA	35	14
1.3 PhD	25	10
2) Academic Staff's Year of Experience in Academy		
2.1 1 - 5 years	10	4
2.2 6 - 10 years	45	18
2.3 11 - 15 years	27,5	11
2.4 16 - 20 years	15	6
2.5 Over 20 years	2,5	1
3) Academic Staff's Sex		
3.1 Female	67,5	27
3.2 Male	32,5	13

4) Academic Staff's acquaintance with social media		
4.1 Twitter	14,16	34
4.2 Facebook	16,66	40
4.3 Podcasts	5,83	14
4.4 Blogs	5,83	14
4.5 Google +	7,08	17
4.6 Pinterest	2,91	7
4.7 TedTalks	8,75	21
4.8 Instagram	13,33	32
4.9 YouTube	16,66	40
4.10 Skype	8,75	21
5) Academic Staff's daily use of social media		
5.1 Twitter	21,23	34
5.2 Facebook	22,61	38
5.3 Podcasts	2,38	4
5.4 Blogs	1,78	3
5.5 Google +	2,38	4
5.6 Pinterest	1,19	2
5.7 Ted Talks	2,97	5
5.8 Instagram	19,04	32
5.9 YouTube	23,80	40
5.10 Skype	4,16	7
6) Academic Staff's access to technology		
6.1 All the time	100	40
6.2 Often	0	0
6.3 Sometimes	0	0
6.4 Never	0	0
7) Academic Staff's access to internet		
7.1 All the time	100	40
7.2 Often	0	0
7.3 Sometimes	0	0
7.4 Never	0	0

Table 1. reflects the academic staff's relation and acquaintance with social media use in language teaching within lectures at the universities. The degrees that academic staff held were BA in the first place with 40 per cent, MA in the second place with 35 per cent and PhD in the third place with 25 per cent. The most experienced majority of the participants were in their profession between six and ten years. Majority of the academic staff were female with a per cent of 67,5. Facebook and Twitter most common social media the academic staff were acquainted with (Facebook=16,66% and Twitter=14,16). The order of daily use of

social media by the academic staff is Facebook (22,61%), Twitter (21,23) in the first and second place and Pinterest is in the last place (1,19%). 100% of the participants had access to technology and internet.

Table 2. Percentage and frequency of the academic staff's habit of making use of social media within language teaching

The statements	Percentage	Frequency
1) Academic staff's making use of social media within the lectures		
1.1 Yes	35	14
1.2 No	65	26
1.3		
2) Academic staff's choice of social media in the lectures		
5.1 Twitter	12,76	8
5.2 Facebook	2,94	2
5.3 Podcasts	16,17	11
5.4 Blogs	14,70	10
5.5 Google +	2,94	2
5.6 Pinterest	1,47	1
5.7 TedTalks	17,64	12
5.8 Instagram	8,82	6
5.9 YouTube	20,58	14
5.10 Skype	2,94	2
3) Academic staff's frequency of using social media in lectures		
3.1 Always	50	7
3.2 Often	21,42	3
3.3 Sometimes	7,14	1
3.4 Rarely	14,28	2
4) Academic Staff's access to internet & technology on the campus		
4.1 Every classroom	85	34
4.2 Some of the classrooms	12,5	5
4.3 Just Labs	2,5	1
4.4 None	-	0
5) Academic Staff's motive to use social media in the lectures		
5.1 Making the lecture more enjoyable	18,75	12
5.2 Self-improving	36,6	14
5.3 Catching up with the colleagues	36,6	14
5.4 Obligation in digital era	25	10
5.5 Engaging more students in the lectures	36,6	14

6) Academic Staff's way of using social media in lectures		
6.1 Searching information	27,92	14
6.2 Providing info for students	21,15	11
6.3 Providing audio-visual aids	27,92	14
6.4 Motivating the students	17,30	9
6.5 Communicating with students	7,69	4
7) Academic staff's view of using social media		
7.1 Fully positive effect on the lectures	78,57	11
7.2 Partial positive effect on the lectures	14,28	2
7.3 No effect on the lectures	-	0
7.4 Partial negative effect on the lectures	7,14	1
7.5 Fully negative effect on the lectures	-	0
8) Students' view of using social media (observed)		
8.1 Fully positive effect on the lectures	92,85	13
8.2 Partial positive effect on the lectures	7,14	1
8.3 No effect on the lectures	-	0
8.4 Partial negative effect on the lectures	-	0

Table 2. shows the results of social media being used in language teaching lectures in universities by academic staff. Only 35% of the academic staff used social media in the lectures. 65% of the academic staff did not use social media in language teaching. Most used one was *YouTube* with 20.58% and *TedTalks* was the second with 17.64%. Academic staff used social media *always* by 50%, *often* by 21,42%, *sometimes* by 7,14% and *rarely* by 14,28%. Most academic staff had the access to internet and technology in every classroom with 85%. *Self-improving, catching-up with technology* and *engaging more students* were the motives behind academic staff's using social media in the lectures. *Searching information* and *providing audio-visual aids* were the most frequently applied social media usage. 78,57 of the academic staff thought that using social media in language teaching had a *fully positive effect on the lectures*. Academic staff observation of students view show that 92,85% of the students shared the opinion that using social media had a fully positive effect on the lectures.

Discussion and Conclusion

Academic staff may increase the activity and the engagement of the learners by sharing every academic material through social media as the learners are keen on social media with their smart phones in their hand. Academic staff's sharing all academic material through social media may enhance learners' communicative skills. Besides, social media offer a collaborative learning environment. Academic staff's utilization and integrating social media in teaching/learning may enrich and enhance the quality of education for higher standards.

The degrees that academic staff held were BA in the first place with 40 per cent, MA in the second place with 35 per cent and PhD in the third place with 25 per cent. The most experienced majority of the participants were in their profession between six and ten years. Majority of the academic staff were female with a per cent of 67,5. Results show that although all these data show that the participants of the research are well-equipped in terms of degree and experience in their job with an average of 10

years, most of the participants did not use any social media in language teaching at universities. Whereas, academic staff who teach foreign language could make use of previous observation that show social media have gone through ascending popularity among youth since it enables youth to build instant communities of practice (Castells, 2007).

This paper found *Facebook* and *Twitter* were most common social media the academic staff were acquainted with and the order of daily use of social media by the academic staff is Facebook (22,61%), Twitter (21,23%), which is align with a finding that Twitter is used more commonly among the others as it is a network platform which enables people to send 140-letter posts to have environment of sharing and discussion (Junco, 2012). Though most of the participants use *Facebook* and *Twitter*, the percentage is quite low in terms of their use these media in their lectures. Whereas, our academic staff in Turkey should take the fact that *Facebook* is being considered and confirmed as a noteworthy learning platform rather than being only as a social networking site (Bosch, 2009).

McCarthy (2012) suggests that learners were in favor of the idea that they could have access to lecture information through *Facebook*, as it was a platform they were already online so often and didn't need to bother about logging process for an extra academic system pages on the web to have access to the necessary information provided by the lecturers. However, this research paper showed that only 35% of the academic staff used social media in the lectures. 65% of the participants did not use social media in language teaching. As social media is a place where people share whatever they wish, which makes people enjoy their time and it complies with the research result (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012) implemented by Harvard University that claimed sharing personal emotions and opinions trigger pleasure in human being.

Audio-visual aids in the form of social media could be a great way to get the learners into the learning process. One of the vital elements to teaching is active student participation, with engaging every one of them with successful learning (Ferdig, 2007). In this context, the paper shows that alongside *YouTube* with 20.58% and *TedTalks* was the second most used social media by the participants with 17.64%. And this could be a good way for the academic staff to incorporate visual media with the lectures of language teaching as an audio-visual aid. Academic staff used social media *always* by 50%, *often* by 21,42%, *sometimes* by 7,14% and *rarely* by 14,28%.

On the other hand, apart from the other forms of social media forms that can be seen in the *table 1* and *table 2* are not preferred as much and often as *YouTube* and *TedTalks*. This could be due to lack of knowledge about the alternative way of using them since they could be seen just a sharing and chatting medium. Facebook, for example, can be integrated into the lectures more to get most out of the language teaching process to lure the learners. The research results show that *self-improving*, *catching-up with technology* and *engaging more students* were the motives behind academic staff's using social media in the lectures. It was clearly found that motivations to use social media and other tools were social in nature and there were positive results (Henry, 2012). Besides these motives, use of social media could be seen as an obligation due to advanced trends in communication and technology as well as learners' interests and digital background as it is suggested that it is crucial for teachers to catch up the latest trends in technology and find out ways to utilize learner participation in activities that work in line with their philosophies of pedagogy and learning objectives (Ferdig, 2007).

The results show *searching information* and *providing audio-visual aids* were the most frequently applied social media usage, which can have a positive effect on the

interactions of the learners and lecturers with each other since it is claimed that there is obvious evidence reflecting technology may uphold these interactions (Denning & Smith, 1997). Besides these positive features, critical thinking dimension should also be added to the curriculum so that negative effects of pure teaching and learning can be avoided (Ordem, 2017). Thus, critical thinking can be used at each dimension of social media use. Social media is not a simple and innocent tool to use in classroom settings. Rather, this use can be criticized by practitioners and foreign language learners to make use of it in a more appropriate way.

78,57 of the academic staff thought that using social media had a *fully positive effect on the lectures*. And this result could be an illumination for the other academic staff who do not make use of social media in their lectures. In line with this, this research found that academic staff observation of students view show 92,85% of the students shared the opinion that using social media had a fully positive effect on the lectures. As the result show, though it is little, there is negative criticism about using social media in the lectures. This could be evaluated as a way and sign to alter the strategies used by academic staff. Social media is used by almost every learner at universities, which could be a great medium to incorporate into the learning a foreign language process. The findings of this study indicate that though most of the participants do not integrate social media into their teaching, learners are well open to incorporating social media into their education.

A platform to give and receive ideas, facilitate the teaching and learning, provide a platform where learners and lecturers collaborate, build their centers for interaction, gather in a place through which learners and lecturers understand each other and teach/learn at the same point are all highlighted facilities in education social media offer (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013). With this as the departure point and with the findings in this research, administrations at the universities can encourage the academic staff to benefit the social media use in their teaching foreign language and content delivery through enhanced interaction, communication and flexibility. Toetenel (2014) points out the social nature of learning second language, and emphasizes learning through interaction. More researches about social media use in foreign language teaching at universities may provide further insight and great benefits for both academic staff and learners of foreign language.

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