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Pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Computer Assisted Language Learning, any kind of language learning or teaching activity conducted by using computers, has increasingly become an important part of the language-learning process. As Computer Assisted Language Learning has been an integral part of education, it is inevitable that it attracts the attentions of pre-service English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of pre-service EFL teachers of English as a Foreign Language towards Computer Assisted Language Learning. The participants of the study include 112 pre-service EFL teachers studying in the English Language Teaching Department of Dokuz Eylül University. The data collection instrument consists of a questionnaire which measures the participants' attitudes towards Computer Assisted Language Learning. The data obtained from the questionnaires are analysed. It is expected that pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language have positive attitudes towards the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning. In the light of the findings, some practical recommendations are presented.

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1. Introduction

Computers have tremendously affected not only the way people live but also the way people do their jobs. A few decades ago, it was very hard to imagine that computers would be so widespread, available and practical. Today, almost every aspect of our lives involves the use of computers. As they have been an integral part of our lives, it was inevitable that computers would attract the attentions of pre-service EFL teachers. One of the uses of computers in education is Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Over the past decade, CALL has increasingly become an important part of the language-learning process. In broad terms, CALL may be defined as "the search for and study of applications on the computer in language teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997: 1). It is often regarded as the use of computers as an aid for presenting the language material. Schofield (1995) defines CALL as any kind of language learning or teaching activity done by using computers. Another definition of CALL that accommodates its changing nature is "any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language (Beatty, 2003: 7). The term is widely used to refer to "the area of technology and second

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language teaching and learning" (Chapelle, 2001: 3). CALL has come to include issues of materials design, technologies, pedagogical theories and modes of instruction (Beatty, 2003). It is now used routinely in a variety of instructional situations.

The use of CALL and web-based environments are appropriate to the alternative methodologies of modern foreign-language instruction. Use of a variety of educational technologies both improves the quality of education and strengthens learning environment in a way to enable students to learn a foreign language effectively. CALL helps students improve their language skills rapidly and helps them study at their own pace and get immediate feedback, corrections, and error analysis. In other words, it gives the student the means to control his or her own learning, to construct meaning, and to evaluate and monitor his or her own performance (Hanson-Smith, 1997). Jaber (1997) also mentions that with the aid of the computer, students are able to collaborate, to use their critical thinking skills, and to find alternatives to solutions of problems in the student-centered classrooms.

Related literature shows that foreign language learners usually have positive attitudes towards CALL. In Al-Juhani's study (1991) that aimed to investigate the EFL learners' attitudes towards CALL, it was noted that the participants held positive attitudes towards CALL. In a study conducted by Askar, Yavuz & Köksal (1992), it was found that all assessed perceptions of both the computer assisted and traditional environments were in favour of CALL. Students reported developments in concentration and self-evaluation while studying in a computer assisted class. In another study (Önsoy, 2004) that focused on the attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of CALL, both students' and teachers' attitudes towards CALL were found to be positive. However, the study of Min (1998) which investigated the attitudes of Korean adult students toward the use of computers in learning English as a foreign language, suggested that a significant group of these Korean adult language learners did not express a positive attitude towards the use of computers in English-language learning. Furthermore, Tang (1995) aimed at determining the attitudes of ESL learners towards CALL and no significant differences were found with regard to participants' attitudes towards computer-assisted instruction. To sum up, though most studies show that learners have positive attitudes toward CALL, it is necessary to emphasize that there are also some studies which discuss the negative attitudes of students towards CALL. Taking all these into account, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the attitudes of pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language towards Computer Assisted Language Learning. It is assumed that the attitudes of pre-service EFL teachers may provide valuable information about the strengths and weaknesses of CALL and necessary improvement can be provided.

2. The Research Method and the Participants

112 pre-service teachers studying in the ELT Department of Dokuz Eylül University in İzmir, Turkey participated in the study. The data collection instrument consists of a questionnaire, adapted from *The Attitudes towards CALL Questionnaire* designed by Vandewaetere & Desmet (2009). The reliability of the scale was calculated to be 0.80. The first part of the questionnaire interrogates the participants about their computer availability, computer experience in years, academic courses in which they use computers, and frequency of computer use. The second part of the questionnaire involves an attitude scale containing 27 items in Likert type and aims to measure the participants' attitudes towards Computer Assisted Language Learning. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed descriptively using the SPSS software.

3. Findings

Statistical findings in the present study can be divided into three sections. The first section gives the findings on computer availability, computer experience, academic courses in which computers are used, and the frequency of computer use. In the second section, the findings on the attitudes of the participants towards CALL are presented. The third section presents the relationship between their attitudes and the independent variables.

According to the findings presented in Table 1, almost all participants (96.4 %) have their own computers while only 3.6 % of them do not own any computers. The values also indicate that the percentage of the participants who have been using computers for 1-3 years and for 7-9 years are the same (22.3 %). The percentage of the participants who have been using computers for 4-6 years and for more than 9 years are also the same (27.7 %). Most of the pre-service EFL teachers say that they use computers in language skills (61.6 %) most whereas 26.8 %

of them use computers in literature course and 11.6 % of them use them in methodology course. Moreover, it is clear that most of the participants (83%) use computers daily.

Table 1. Computer availability, computer experience, academic courses in which computers are used, and the frequency of computer use

Variables		N	%
Computer availability	Yes	108	96.4
	No	4	3.6
Computer experience	1-3 years	25	22.3
	4-6 years	31	27.7
	7-9 years	25	22.3
	More than 9 years	31	27.7
Academic courses in which computers are used	Language Skills	69	61.6
	Literature	30	26.8
	Methodology	13	11.6
The frequency of computer use	Daily	93	83.0
	Once a week	18	16.1
	Once a month	1	0.9
	Never	-	-

As seen in Table 2, findings show that the participants' attitudes vary in the statements in the questionnaire. The participants believe mostly that computer assisted language learning develops their listening skills and vocabulary knowledge. Most of the participants also think that CALL gives flexibility to language learning and constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere. Additionally, they regard CALL as valuable as traditional language learning. For them, CALL is a valuable extension of classical learning methods. They also believe that learning a foreign language assisted by computer enhances their intelligence. However, they do not think that CALL can stand alone. According to them, CALL does not develop their writing skills. Lastly, they do not agree that learning a foreign language assisted by computer is as good as oral practice.

Table 2. Frequency tables for the attitudes

Statements	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Totally Agree
	% (f)	% (f)	% (f)	% (f)	% (f)
15. Computer- assisted language learning develops my listening skills.	0.9 (1)	4.5 (5)	9.8 (11)	45.5 (51)	39.3 (44)
6. Computer- assisted language learning gives flexibility to language learning.	0.9 (1)	6.2 (7)	14.3 (16)	53.6 (60)	25.0 (28)
9. Computer- assisted language learning constitutes a more relaxed and stress-free atmosphere.	2.7 (3)	6.2 (7)	23.2 (26)	46.4 (52)	21.4 (24)
19. Computer- assisted language learning develops my vocabulary knowledge.	0.9 (1)	5.4 (6)	27.7 (31)	41.1 (46)	25.0 (28)
7. Computer- assisted language learning is as valuable as traditional language learning.	1.8 (2)	9.8 (11)	36.6 (41)	36.6 (41)	15.2 (17)
5. Computer- assisted language learning is a valuable extension of classical learning methods.	3.6 (4)	11.6 (13)	33.9 (38)	34.8 (39)	16.1 (18)
10. Learning a foreign language assisted by computer enhances your intelligence.	5.4 (6)	14.3 (16)	31.2 (35)	31.2 (35)	17.9 (20)
14. Computer-assisted language learning develops my reading skills.	4.5 (5)	17.0 (19)	30.4 (34)	33.9 (38)	14.3 (16)
4. People who learn a language assisted by computer- assisted learning are less proficient than those who learn through traditional methods.	15.2 (17)	33.0 (37)	33.9 (38)	14.3 (16)	3.6 (4)
26. In a face- to- face situation (classroom) I often feel anxiety when speaking in the foreign language.	5.4 (6)	15.2 (17)	32.1 (36)	31.2 (35)	16.1 (18)
25. I feel less inhibited when communicating in the foreign language via computer than in face- to- face situation.	2.7 (3)	17.0 (19)	35.7 (40)	34.8 (39)	9.8 (11)
18. Computer- assisted language learning develops my grammar.	0.9 (1)	17.9 (20)	38.4 (43)	33.0 (37)	9.8 (11)

27. For me, it takes longer to start a face to face conversation than a virtual one on computers.	8.0 (9)	13.4 (15)	37.5 (42)	26.8 (30)	14.3 (16)
24. I have faith in computer- based language exercises.	2.7 (3)	18.8 (21)	39.3 (44)	33.0 (37)	6.2 (7)
3. Computer- assisted language learning is less adequate than the traditional learning.	8.0 (9)	31.2 (35)	42.0 (47)	17.0 (19)	1.8 (2)
21. Teacher's enthusiasm in CALL largely defines my own motivation.	3.6 (4)	10.7 (12)	47.3 (53)	30.4 (34)	8.0 (9)
2. Computer based language tests can never be as good as paper -and- pencil tests.	11.6 (13)	26.8 (30)	41.1 (46)	12.5 (14)	8.0 (9)
12. The feedback provided by computer is clear.	2.7 (3)	23.2 (26)	38.4 (43)	25.9 (29)	9.8 (11)
23. I have faith in computer- based language tests.	1.8 (2)	25.9 (29)	36.6 (41)	31.2 (35)	4.5 (5)
11. I would like to learn foreign language by computer.	4.5 (5)	32.1 (36)	29.5 (33)	19.6 (22)	14.3 (16)
13. The feedback provided by computer gives me enough information on where I went wrong.	8.0 (9)	25.0 (28)	34.8 (39)	25.9 (29)	6.2 (7)
17. Computer- assisted language learning develops my speaking skills.	8.9 (10)	32.1 (36)	26.8 (30)	19.6 (22)	12.5 (14)
22. Teacher's proficiency of using computers in language learning largely defines my own attitude to CALL.	1.8 (2)	17.9 (20)	48.2 (54)	25.9 (29)	6.2 (7)
16. Computer- assisted language learning develops my writing skills.	10.7 (12)	28.6 (32)	33.0 (37)	19.6 (22)	8.0 (9)
20. Teacher's attitude towards CALL largely defines my own attitude.	3.6 (4)	19.6 (22)	58.0 (65)	15.2 (17)	3.6 (4)
1. Learning a foreign language assisted by computer is not as good as oral practice.	3.6 (4)	14.3 (16)	39.3 (44)	24.1 (27)	18.8 (21)
8. Computer- assisted language learning can stand alone.	29.5 (33)	36.6 (41)	21.4 (24)	8.9 (10)	3.6 (4)

As indicated in Table 3, multivariate statistical analysis shows that there is a significant correlation between the frequency of computer use and three items in the questionnaire as these items have significance levels less than 0.05 ($p_1=0.03$, $p_{11}=0.04$, $p_{22}=0.04$). According to the findings, the pre-service EFL teachers who use computers daily believe more that learning a foreign language assisted by computer is as good as oral practice in comparison with the students who use computers once a week. They are also more eager to learn foreign language by computer. Furthermore, they believe more that teacher's proficiency of using computers in language learning largely defines their own attitude towards CALL.

Table 3. The correlation between the frequency of computer use and attitudes

Statement	The frequency of computer use		F	Sig.	
	Mean	St. D.			
1. Learning a foreign language assisted by computer is not as good as oral practice	Daily	2.5	1.0	3.3	.03
	Once a week	2.7	0.9		
11. I would like to learn foreign language by computer	Daily	3.1	1.1	3.2	.04
	Once a week	2.6	1.0		
22. Teacher's proficiency of using computers in language learning largely defines my own attitude to CALL	Daily	3.2	0.8	3.1	.04
	Once a week	2.7	0.7		

However, findings gained from multivariate statistical analysis show that there is no significant correlation between attitudes towards CALL and some independent variables such as computer availability, computer experience and academic course in which computers are used ($p>0.05$). In other words, there is no significant correlation between computer ownership/ computer experience or academic course in which computers are used and 27 items in the survey.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The results of the research can be summarized in two topics: Positive and negative attitudes of pre-service EFL teachers towards CALL and correlations between attitudes and independent variables. First of all, pre-service EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards CALL as they believe that CALL constitutes a more relaxed and

stress-free atmosphere (67.8). They think that CALL gives flexibility to language learning (78.6). Moreover, they view computer assisted language learning as valuable as traditional language learning (51.8). They also agree that CALL is a valuable extension of classical learning methods (50.9). As for the language skills, they believe that they can develop their vocabulary knowledge (66.1) and listening skills (84.8) with the help of the use of computers in language learning. Additionally, they agree that learning a foreign language assisted by computer enhances their intelligence (49.1). Nevertheless, pre-service EFL teachers also have negative attitudes towards CALL. For instance, they do not think that CALL helps them develop their writing skills (27.6). They do not agree that learning a foreign language assisted by computer is as good as oral practice (17.9). Finally, they agree that CALL cannot stand alone (12.5). As stated above, some of the independent variables are correlated significantly with some statements in the survey. As an example, the pre-service EFL teachers who use computers daily believe more that learning a foreign language assisted by computer is as good as oral practice in comparison with the students who use computers once a week. They are also more enthusiastic about learning foreign language by computer. However, some independent variables such as computer ownership, computer experience, and academic courses in which computers are used do not have effect on the pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards CALL.

The results of the present study do support previous findings (Al-Juhani, 1991; Askar, Yavuz & Köksal, 1992; Önsoy, 2004) that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards computer assisted language learning. Some limitations of this research include that the participants were restricted to 112 pre-service EFL teachers studying in the English Language Teaching Department. Moreover, the scope of the study was confined to the descriptive data obtained from the questionnaire designed by Vandewaetere & Desmet (2009). Further research should be focused on other factors that could affect pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards CALL.

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