T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE BELIEFS OF TERTIARY LEVEL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON DIGITAL LEARNING

MASTER'S THESIS

Aygül BAHADIR

Department Of Language And Literature
English Language Teaching Program

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Thesis Advisor: Prof. Dr. Birsen TÜTÜNİŞ

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ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "The Beliefs of Tertiary Level Teachers and Students On Digital Learning", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (.../.../20...)

Aygül BAHADIR

FOREWORD

I would first like to thank my thesis supervisor Prof. Dr. Birsen Tütüniş for her dedicated contribution, invaluable feedbacks, support, and guidance.

Special thanks go to my husband, Ertan BAHADIR who encouraged and supported me during the process in every circumstance. I dedicate this thesis to him.

June, 2021 Aygül BAHADIR

THE BELIEFS OF TERTIARY TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' BELIEFS ON DIGITAL LEARNING

ABSTRACT

Digital learning involves any means of education supported by technology or instructional practice that efficiently incorporates technology. A broad variety of practices comprise hybrid and digital learning. Institutions and teachers provide education on a wide range of digital platforms to assists students in learning. Digital learning can be employed in many subjects, including foreign language teaching and learning. These means of learning offer especially significant potential to improve students' foreign language proficiency and communication. The implementation of digital teaching, fully or partly, with foreign language teaching may increase interest in students' and teachers' beliefs in digital learning, and the present study aims to examine the competences, beliefs, and attitudes of Turkish students and teachers at the higher education preparatory level regarding digital learning. For this purpose, two surveys were conducted. The researcher conducted a survey of 100 intermediate English preparatory students, the primary participants, who were studying in a foundation university preparatory department and a different survey of 25 instructors, the secondary participants, who worked at the same university. The questionnaire for the student survey was adapted from Adnan and Anwar (2020). The data collection instrument used for teachers is called 'Teachers' beliefs about digital learning' and was written by the researcher and approved by experts. The results were examined with the SPSS software suite. The results of the present study show that both students and teachers have positive beliefs on digital learning in foreign language education. Based on the results, suggestions for further research are proposed.

Keywords: digital learning, student beliefs, teacher beliefs, beliefs on digital learning

ÜNİVERSİTE HAZIRLIK DÜZEYİ ÖĞRETMEN VE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN DİJİTAL ÖĞRENME ÜZERİNE İNANÇLARI

ÖZET

Dijital öğrenme, teknolojiyi verimli bir şekilde birleştiren teknoloji veya öğretim uygulamasıyla desteklenen bir eğitim aracıdır. Çok çeşitli uygulamaların kullanımını kapsar: karma ve dijital öğrenme. Çeşitli dijital platformlar; öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerin ve kurumların eğitimi aktarması için sağlanmıştır. Dijital öğrenme, farklı alanlarda kullanılabileceği gibi yabancı dil öğretim ve öğreniminde de kullanılabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu öğrenme araçları, öğrencilerin yabancı dil yeterlilikleri ve iletişimleri için yabancı dil becerilerini geliştirmek için kullanılabilir. Dijital öğrenmenin tamamen veya kısmen yabancı dil öğretimiyle uygulanması, öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin dijital öğrenmeye yönelik inançlarına ilgi uyandırabilir. Bu çalışma, yükseköğretim hazırlık düzeyindeki Türk öğrenci ve öğretmenlerinin dijital öğrenmeye yönelik yeterlilik, inanç ve tutumlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla iki anket yapılmıştır. Araştırmacı, bir vakıf üniversitesi hazırlık bölümünde okuyan birincil katılımcılar olan 100 orta düzey İngilizce hazırlık öğrencisine ve ikincil katılımcılar olarak, aynı üniversitede çalışan 25 öğretim elemanına farklı bir anket uygulamıştır. Öğrenciler için ilk anket Adnan ve Anwar'dan (2020) uyarlanmıştır. Öğretmenler için anket, araştırmacı tarafından yazılan ve uzmanlar tarafından onaylanan "öğretmenlerin dijital öğrenmeye olan inançları" dır. Sonuçlar SPSS programı ile incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin yabancı dil öğretiminde dijital öğretimle ilgili olumlu inançları olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda, yabancı dil öğretimini destekleyecek dijital öğrenim ile ilgili öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dijital öğrenme, öğrenci inançları, öğretmen inançları, dijital öğrenmeye karşı inançlar

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ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

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I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars believe that the emergence of digital learning technology may constitute a critical point that raises awareness of learning second languages (Ganderton, 1998). Digital technology has vast multinational assets and worldwide applicability. Moreover, it can provide authentic scenarios that expand learners' multicultural perceptions and enable them to understand and embrace cultural diversity.

The emergence of digital tools has added new facets to language teaching and learning. Al-Mutairi and Al-Qallaf (2015) found that, in combination with other forms of learning practices, digital learning may greatly affect English teaching and learning. Though digital learning technology is widely used to support conventional education, digital learning tools have evolved over the years to facilitate students' learning that is linked to their everyday lives.

As Miltiadou (2001) stresses, the ultimate capacity of digital learning is not to employ state-of-the-art technology but rather to create an interactive and authentic learning atmosphere in which students are offered greater access in the sense of different experiences that involve both the students learning a language and the instructors who are teaching it. Miltiadou (2001) also states that students outside conventional schools can receive supplementary training and a focus on providing lifetime learning experiences in digital learning settings to increase their productivity. For example, digital learning technology, according to Bull and Ma (2001), gives language learners virtually limitless tools and ways to learn a language. It can thus be inferred that digital technology may develop innovative settings for language learning.

Regarding the teaching process, Harmer (2007) and Genç İlter (2015) stress that teachers should enable students' efforts to complete appropriate tasks to be effective in language learning when using digital technology. To make language learning effective, there must be sufficient tools. Clements and Sarama (2003) claim that it can be advantageous for students and teachers to use appropriate digital learning tools.

While digital learning is thus an important component of the language learning experience, Eady and Lockyer (2013) caution that it poses major challenges for teachers, from planning learning activities to carrying out all aspects of the teaching and learning process. It can be inferred that even though digital learning may initially be regarded as an effective teaching tool; teachers may have some difficulties communicating with their students in practice.

One concern about digital learning is a lack of human interaction. According to Schultz (2001) and Fielder (2003), digital learning can entail a lack of communication that might discourage students from taking advantage of the concrete response of teachers or other learners and thus affect academic achievement.

Zhu, Au, and Yates (2013), meanwhile, state that the importance and benefits of digital learning are covered by previous literature. For example, Jiang and Ting (2000) reflect on the necessity of digital learning for students to engage with their teachers and argue that learners value contact with their teachers as a key component of digital learning. It can thus be understood that this means of learning is beneficial for both teachers and students to connect and build effective relationships. In addition, how teachers and students perceive digital learning is crucial to enabling an effective learning process by using digital learning technology appropriately.

In this respect, Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020) claim that the perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours regarding the use of digital learning by second language teachers and students are the principal points to establish and maintain a productive use of digital language learning technology in the twenty-first century.

However, even though digital learning has been around for more than a decade, the clear benefits of digital learning have been neglected by both teachers and students (Çelik & Aytın, 2014). Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) state that, because of this failure, English as a second language (ESL) experts have been progressively increasing access to technology and begun to pay close attention to digital learning and English practice by ESL teachers and students using digital language learning technology.

The digital language learning and practice process may create both extrinsic and intrinsic barriers. For example, according to Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020), even when first-order limitations have been resolved, intrinsic variables will affect teacher success in implementing digital learning in language classrooms (Hew & Brush, 2007). When teachers have problems with implementing digital teaching, it is inevitable that students will face some of the same barriers.

Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum (2020) also state that the extrinsic barriers reflect on factors of operational resilience, such as internet accessibility, network infrastructure, and teachers' skills. The competence of using digital learning is also vital for students. In this respect, Dahlkwist (2012) stresses that the engagement and enthusiasm of students in language learning can be enhanced by multiple ways of digital teaching and learning.

However, Tondeur et al. (2017) state that mastering the philosophy and understanding of digital learning does not necessarily assure the efficacy of technology integration despite these learning barriers.

In this respect, on the other hand, Cheng and Xie (2018) suggest that integrating the digital learning that they are familiar with or interested in will lift their interest and bring their attention to lessons. Besides, digital learning provides potential possibilities for meaningful interaction between teachers and students in a manner that has never yet arisen (Dawes, 2001). It can be said that students may gain direct support from their teachers on their learning success.

Also, Park and Son (2009) suggest that digital learning incorporation will make students' learning more desirable. The use of digital content, in other words, will lead the students' interest in lessons and draw their love of language learning. Moreover, it can be inferred that using digital learning with language teaching can boost the learning process. For example, Hafner's research (2014) reveals that for students, the implementation of digital teaching into an activity of English learning is regarded as authentic and efficient.

Hafner (2014) also argues that digital learning, which holds as a system has revealed many interactive opportunities to English learners and offered a medium of real language. The integration of digital learning into English learning will maximize the engagement of students with real tools and boost their confidence, imagination, and inspiration for learning (Hafner & Miller, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that students' autonomy, creativity, and motivation can be increased by digital learning while language learning.

To this perspective, an examination of beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish teachers and students on digital learning can alleviate the understanding of this means of learning while language learning and teaching.

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate and reveal the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary-level Turkish teachers and students on digital learning.

Earlier literature about digital learning covers the attitudes of teachers (Çelik & Aytın, 2014), attitudes of students (Zhu, AU, & Yates, 2013) (López-Pérez, Pérez-López, & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2011), use of the digital learning platforms (Chhabra, 2012), comparison of digital learning and traditional methods (Hendriks, 2016) and role of digital learning in English language (Mutambik, 2018).

Nonetheless, none of the research in the recent literature covers the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish teachers and students on digital learning. Moreover, none of the literature mentioned in this paper covers the Turkish population. The quantitative research design was seen as suitable for this study and the data was collected with a questionnaire designed for students for this purpose. Therefore, this paper also supplies the quantified data about the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish teachers and students on digital learning.

Hence, understanding the beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning is important to successfully implement digital teaching; moreover, digital learning for foreign language teaching may be enhanced with the feedback collected from the participants. Even though digital learning has been gaining importance in recent times, the beliefs and attitudes toward digital learning generally may remain unknown, especially after the pandemic era.

Thus, to unveil such circumstances, this study tried to evaluate the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish teachers and students on digital learning. This study contributes to the literature as it revealed the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and students on digital learning.

For this reason, two questionnaires were conducted. The researcher administered a questionnaire to 100 intermediate English preparatory students, the main participants, who were enrolled in a foundation university preparatory department, and a separate questionnaire to 25 teachers, who were employed by the same institution. The questionnaire for students was adapted by Adnan and Anwar (2020). The "teachers' beliefs on digital learning" was written by the investigator and accepted by authorities as to the data collection tool for teachers.

To this perspective, the following research questions are seen as appropriate:

1. Do tertiary-level Turkish EFL students and teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes on digital learning?

2. Is digital learning an effective method for Turkish EFL students in terms of language learning?

3. Do tertiary level Turkish EFL learners’ beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age?

Therefore, the main hypotheses are:

1. The tertiary-level Turkish EFL students and teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes for digital learning.

2. Digital learning is an effective method for tertiary-level Turkish EFL students in terms of language learning.

3. Tertiary level Turkish EFL learners’ beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age.

The study includes 4 chapters. Chapter 1 divulges the literature review. Chapter 2 presents the research methodology that provides participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis. The findings of the research are presented in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 presents a summary and the conclusions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

This literature review aims to encapsulate the conducted studies on the perspectives of the teachers and students towards digital learning and contribute to the literature by carrying out questionnaires to students and instructors. It aims to address the research questions of whether digital learning is an effective tool. The literature review begins with the importance and the role of technology in teaching.

The literature review mainly reviews the beliefs of teachers and students on digital learning. Moreover, it consists of the motivation and benefits of digital learning. It continues with barriers and challenges; to that respect, intrinsic and extrinsic barriers were explained. Lastly, the benefits of digital learning in improving language skills and digital learning versus face-to-face learning were stated.

B. 1.2. The Role of Technology in Teaching

Technology is an efficient and necessary tool for both the learners and the teachers recently. To meet the educational needs, all educational institutions had to train themselves to use the digital tools more effectively. Therefore, the use of digital tools may make learning more interesting. In terms of productivity, they offer several possibilities to make education meaningful and more fruitful (Patel, 2013). Learning a new language can be problematic, and thus English language teachers employ diverse methods and techniques in teaching. Students use diverse parts of English language skills like writing, reading, speaking, and listening for their communication and proficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Moreover, Ahmadi (2018) underlined that one of the most significant components for learning is the approach that teachers utilize in the classrooms to accelerate the process of language learning.

Technology provides unlimited means for language learners (Genç İlter, 2015). Genç İlter (2015) highlighted that teachers should embolden learners to establish appropriate activities over digital learning means to be successful in foreign language learning. Genç İlter also (2015) underscored that digital learning provides appropriate materials and rapid information to learners. Moreover, Anderson and Larsen-Freeman (2011) claim that digital learning provides a variety of teaching resources and brings the learning experience to the learners.

Diverse authentic materials can be acquired by learners and thus they can be encouraged by digital learning for language learning. Gilakjani (2017) further suggested that language teaching methods have been altered due to technology. Gilakjani (2017) also underlined that the digital learning methods have a decent potential to augment the current language teaching, as it both satisfies the auditory and visual senses of the learners.

Multiple authors have investigated digital technology. It is the functional utilization of information, notably in a certain field according to İŞMAN (2012), and is a means of performing a project, mainly through technological procedures, or expertise. The use of technology includes not only digital devices (computer hardware) and resources, but also formal environmental relationships (İŞMAN, 2012).

Technology implementation is described according to Hennessy, Ruthven, and Brindley (2005) and Gilakjani (2017), in terms of how instructors employ systems to function recognizable tasks more efficiently and how such exercises can be re-shaped by this implementation. Technology implementation was characterized by Dockstader (2008) as the application of innovation to enhance the learning atmosphere. It facilitates education in the classrooms by providing possibilities for students to fulfil digital projects instead of the traditional handwritten notes (Ahmadi, 2017).

For students, digital technology is a powerful instrument and as a key component of their educational experience, students need to use technology (Ahmadi, 2018). Instructors could template the use of tools to facilitate the teaching to improve the actual use of technology to enhance the language skills (Costley, 2014; Murphy, DePasquale, & McNamara, 2003). The collaboration of students can be improved via technology.

Collaboration is one of the most essential methods for education. Students collectively work to develop plans and benefit from one another by reviewing the performance of each student (Keser et al., 2011). Bennett et al. (2000) reported that the implementation of digital technology resulted in enhancing the teaching of instructors and the learning of students in schools.

The use of digital technologies enables teachers to fulfil the instructional learning objectives. According to Bransford et al. (2000), the implementation of digital technologies stimulates teachers and learners to create specific and national groups that link themselves with individuals and enhance their academic abilities.

Dawson, Cavanaugh, and Ritzhaupt (2008) and Gilakjani (2014) believed that technology will promote an atmosphere of learning based on the student rather than the instructor, which in turn produces productive adjustments. They stressed that the use of digital technologies makes the language classroom an engaging area full of practical activities whereby the students are in charge of their learning. Drayton et al. (2010) concluded that the use of digital technologies implies a genuine learning environment that improves learners' obligations. Technology allows students to understand independently and to treat themselves responsibly. Autonomous use of technology allows learners self-directed instruction.

C. Teacher Beliefs on Digital Learning

Ahmadi (2017) noted that the approach that teachers use in their classes to promote the practice of language learning is one of the critical facets of learning. According to Becker (2000), digital devices are a significant educational tool in language classes that the instructors have easy accessibility, are adequately trained, and have some autonomy in the curriculum. Especially after the breakout of the pandemic, instructors understood the significance of being able to use digital devices to cover effective lessons.

Harmer (2007) and Genç İlter (2015) stressed that to be effective in language learning, instructors should enable students to discover innovative opportunities by utilizing digital technology. However, the prolonged views and beliefs of teachers about specific teaching activities are often recognized as the intrinsic barriers that obstruct the effectiveness of technology incorporation in a language classroom (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

The beliefs of teachers anticipate, represent, and maintain their authentic teaching strategies (Wilkins, 2008). Basically, it can be understood that even if the teachers have the same background, knowledge, or use the same activities, their performances might change accordingly to their beliefs of digital teaching. Moreover, language instructors could face many limitations during language teaching. EFL teachers are confronted by a number of restrictions in many EFL contexts, such as insufficient resources an inflexible school curriculum, and institutional encouragement (Zheng & Borg, 2014).

Lam (2000) conducted a study about the beliefs of teachers towards technology use in language classrooms and it was found out that educators might struggle with *technophilia*- the teachers' extreme reluctance to use technology-, but as a part of this experiment, a specific emphasis was that certain reasons directly linked to the lack of use of digital platforms could potentially be the demographic reasons and experiences of teachers. Nevertheless, Yang and Huang (2008) focused on evaluating the beliefs and behaviours of Taiwanese EFL teachers in the use of language classroom technology. The results showed that the use of technology did not affect teachers' willingness in the lessons. Eventually, it might be inferred that the beliefs of instructors might depend on the environmental, social, and technological backgrounds.

D. Student Beliefs on Digital Learning

According to UNESCO (2006), in several developing countries, digital learning has emerged as a fundamental method of teaching and learning triggering the percentage of qualified teachers to go in the wrong direction. However, according to Nichols (2003), digital learning is a collection of innovations that are integrated exclusively for the intention of supporting education.

Craig and Patten (2007) underline that the digital means for learning have been established as an effective source for learners in developing their reading, vocabulary, and verbal interaction skills. Nevertheless, even though the benefits of digital learning in language learning have been established by many researchers, learners are rather taught with the instructional materials (like coursebooks) and traditional methods of teaching (Çelik & Aytın, 2014); and thus, students are not able to engage with digital learning methods (Kessler & Bikowski, 2010).

However, Yellend (2001) suggests that the traditional methods for language learning fail to sufficiently endorse the skills of learners necessitated for success in modern world’s society; and thus, lack of digital learning is critical, especially in the classrooms where English learners have little room to exercise their English skills in an interactive and authentic environment.

In this respect, Merron (1999) stated that learners fared better whereas Lake (1999) found that the psychology of digital learning could help minimize the sense of alienation and absenteeism levels. Lake also argued (1999) that digital interactions empowered introverted students to share their opinions since they are more thoughtful and not sensitive as they would be in face-to-face learning.

However, previous academic findings have also discovered negative student's perceptions toward digital learning. Students' negative views toward digital learning were associated with a lack of computing experience, technical anxiety, and networking equipment issues, as well as inadequate research skills, a lack of confidence, and a failure to act freely (Smith, et.al.2000:59-81, Govindasamy, 2001; Rosenberg, 2001). A further disadvantage to digital learning is the lack of face-to-face interaction with the teacher and students. A few other experiments found that whenever students were forced to confront a computer monitor, they experienced feelings of alienation and solitude. They were denied face-to-face interaction with the teacher, as is common in conventional classrooms (Ponzurick, et. al, 2000:180-187).

E. Motivation and Benefits of Digital Learning

Motivation is both a requirement and a consequence of successful teaching, according to Winne and Marx (1989). Focused on those arguments, the encouragement of students to excel in digital learning perception plays a key role, and the digital setting may increase students' motivation to learn a foreign language when applied appropriately (Ushida, 2005).

Digital learning is relatively productive and can be upgraded whenever emerging technology develops everywhere, anytime, and can be used in big or small groups. It has a broader regional scope, automatic instruction to accommodate the learner, manageability, efficient learning, a range of accessible means of schooling, and further success monitoring (Koller, et al., 2001). Catherall (2005) said that some digital learning can be versatile, enhances the technological abilities of learners, enables a greater connection between learners and learners, applies to a wide range of experts.

Digital learning encourages cooperative learning; inner learning; pair replication between teams; (The Economist, 2008). Moreover, digital learning guarantees learning priorities, provides constructive input, defines criteria, templates tactics, ensures directed and autonomous practice, task participation, and productivity; monitors the learning of students and activates students for language and conceptual comprehension (Schwartzbeck&Wolf, 2012).

Digital technology offers personalized education, improvement of resources, awareness and evaluation, interactive content or applications, mixed and blended learning, online classes, tools, and currencies (Schwartzbeck&Wolf, 2012).

A viewpoint that considers the introduction of digital learning in academic institutions as advantageous, has been generated by the rising value of online systems. However, in several cases, the concept of digital education fails since there is an inadequacy of preparation, objectives, and procedures to control that adaptation (Kelsen&Flowers, 2004).

Therefore, to accomplish a successful learning-teaching process in digital learning platforms, instructions, learners, and instructors should get ready by all means because the absence of sufficient policies and programs makes the learners, teachers, and schools struggle with the performance, learning opportunity, and advantages.

Broadbent (2000) states that when the organizations’ strategies are reasonable and well-embraced, then an atmosphere of accomplishment can be created. More efficient incorporation, preparation, and development towards digital technology can be facilitated by that climate.

A study conducted by Betts (1998) shows that the key motivating factors are intrinsic and based exclusively on self-fulfilment as shown by the students’ already utilizing digital learning. Furthermore, Betts notes that intrinsic factors had a positive impact on instructors in digital education, but extrinsic factors had no considerable impact.

F. Challenges and Barriers to Digital Learning

With the emergence of digital education, especially after CoVid-19, all instructors and learners have had to adapt to the process in a short time. A study conducted by Maguire (2005) contrasts the results of past studies in digital technology in consideration of several dimensions about digital learning, like intrinsic and extrinsic challenges and intentions.

Competition among educational institutions, professional and career security issues, technological fear, lack of awareness of online learning and what would operate at a distance, and aversion to creativity were the intrinsic challenges (Albalwi, 2008). Instructors and students must get prepared for using the digital tools but also for their courses. Also, as they participate in online learning, teachers are then presented with a large range of problems and requirements (Levine & Sun, 2002; Arabasz et al., 2003).

Moreover, some barriers might be cost-effective; strategy is damaging; a strong, conventional learning organizational culture; technology can disturb classes when it is open; exposure to and availability of information may lead to increased deception and plagiarism (The Economist, 2008). Dawes (2001) thinks that reform may not be welcomed readily, since a certain level of opposition remains. Different levels of digital awareness and the decrease of teacher and student-learner engagement in the perception of learning are the problems posed by all that have access to these innovations (Koller et al., 2006).

Conventional teaching and learning happen as the instructor teaches students to ask queries based on guidance from their professors. This will affect personal success because the teacher needs to attend a course; students must take courses due to their age and the content and background depending on age. The education is delivered personally, and students can instantly consult the educator, there is no barrier to the forms of knowledge exchange (Joseph, 2012).

In any case, the transition from conventional learning to digital education was too fast and this dramatic switch is currently connected to many difficulties and barriers (Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Rudolph, & Glowatz, 2020). To that respect, barriers have been established in the literature for digital learning: intrinsic and extrinsic barriers.

1. Intrinsic barriers

Intrinsic barriers are the lack of confidence in language learners, lack of technical instructions, lack of digital literacy, and the risk of exposing students to inappropriate materials (Çelik & Aytın, 2014). The students who are shy to participate in the lesson may become even more introverted when teaching digitally. In the classroom, introverted learners could have the opportunity to see their peers' participation in face-to-face education. Also, those students could open themselves up while the pair or group works. These activities could make the shy learners feel belonged to the class and adapted to the learning process which enables them to become confident.

On the other hand, sometimes learners could have some drawbacks while learning a foreign language. In this process, digital learning may be the opportunity for some students to express themselves better and focus on the lessons even more.

What's more, having some technical issues such as being not competent enough to use the digital tools or materials may cause students to build several barriers to digital education. Nowadays, many students are not having these kinds of barriers because they were born with technology.

2. Extrinsic barriers

Extrinsic barriers are rapid changes in technology and high costs of equipment, lack of computer availability, lack of specialists available to help learners to develop their computer skills, and lack of onsite administrative and technical support (Çelik & Aytın, 2014).

These kinds of barriers may be more common among students who are having digital education. Buying or having a computer, a laptop or any other digital device may not be easy for the student's families, especially in those Covid-19 days. Teachers should take into consideration all those drawbacks to understand their students' situations better and treat them fairly. On the other hand, learners may access the materials or the recorded lessons whenever they would like.

G. Benefits of Digital Learning in Improving Language Skills

The advantages and effectiveness of applying digital learning and digital learning tools in the teaching-learning process have been investigated by many researchers. Hennessy et al. (2005) mentioned that the application of those tools acts as a catalyst for inspiring teachers and learners to function in innovative methods. Teachers could feel that they can just promote and endorse their learners to behave and think critically as learners get more autonomous.

The integration of digital technologies has transformed the way from instructor to student. Instructors ought to be enablers and lead the education of their students and this adjustment is beneficial to students to improve their skills (Riasati, Allahyar, & Tan, 2012). Gillespie (2006) said digital learning utilization maximizes collaboration between students in educational projects. It allows them to capture the details and information and to communicate with tools including images. Eaton (2010) said interaction via digital tools is a valuable language learning function. This way of interaction is much more balanced than face-to-face conversation (Ahmadi, 2017).

To assist the curriculum, instructors could also simulate the use of technological advances so that students can enhance the accurate use of technology in education their language skills (Costley, 2014; Murphy, DePasquale, & McNamara, 2003). The collaboration of students can be improved by digital learning technologies. One of the essential instruments for language learning is teamwork. Learners work together collaboratively to build assignments and learn from each other by observing the work of their peers (Keser, Uzunboylu & Ozdamli, 2012).

Arifah (2014) states that digital technology use boosts the enthusiasm of students. Once the technology is used in language learning with the use of digital technology, learners can learn in a meaningful way. When students engage with digital learning technology, it allows them to improve their higher-order needs through thought skills. It can be argued that to reach out to the potential of students to English language learning, the accurate fusion of digital tools and instructional methods plays a very significant role.

According to Peregoy and Boyle (2012), reading and writing skills can be improved by using digital learning technologies. The outcomes of their study indicated that since the digital learning tools are easy to use, these tools boosted students' reading and writing skills and students can learn in a faster and more efficient way. Moreover, the study also showed that when students use digital resources rather than conventional teaching methods, children understand much more successfully because the Internet offered a conducive learning atmosphere for learners, facilitating a new platform for students who can find easy accessibility to learning classes.

Mohamadkhani, Farokhi, N. & Farokhi (2013) showed that the use of emerging technology has a significant influence on listening comprehension. Wagner et al. (2008) also states that the application of visual sources helps listeners to draw further accurate conclusions, and this would, in turn, contribute to the expansion of listening skills. Fielder (2003) also had the same viewpoint and claimed that visual signals can influence our understanding of the interaction. Multiple analyses have been carried out on the impact of technology on strengthening awareness of listening (Diao, Chandler, & Sweller, 2007; Jones & Plass, 2002; Mohamadkhani, Farokhi, N. & Farokhi, 2013). The analysis indicates that double-mode practice (sound and text) outperformed the learning of single-mode students (sound).

In an online program for Spanish students, Volle (2005) and Baniabdelrahman (2013) explored the practice of oral skills. Students were asked to use digital e-mails, one at the start of the process and the other at the end, to record two speaking engagements. These were contrasted to having a clearer image of the increase in the verbal competence of students. The findings of this research found that learners greatly increased their speaking skills.

A study examined by Baytak, Tarman, and Ayas (2011) about the impact of digital learning technology on language learning has been carried out. The outcomes from this research show that students have improved their learning skills by implementing technology into their courses. The researchers stressed that digital learning technology makes learning exciting and immersive for students and increases their encouragement, interpersonal experiences, and participation.

H. Digital Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning

Teachers perform in front of students in conventional classrooms and give lessons, explanations, and guidance by using blackboards or whiteboards. With regard to the advancement of technology, these approaches must be updated, or digital tools must be integrated into the lessons to form an atmosphere which is conducive to learning, especially in the digital era.

Digital learning offers unique tools for students in conventional education and much more options for engagement in various ways that enhance their personal characteristics (Hobbs, 2002). Digital learning helps students and teachers to "interact, cooperate and coordinate with each other regardless of their external or linguistic situation" (Hobbs, 2002).

Dawson, Cavanaugh, and Ritzhaupt (2008) and Gilakjani (2014) argued that the use of digital platforms could build a positive learning environment based on the student rather than the instructor, which in turn generates meaningful progress. They stressed that the language class remains a productive space full of practical roles by using digital technology where the learners are in charge of their learning. Drayton et al. (2010) proposed that the application of digital platforms reveals a real educational experience that increases the obligations of learners. Digital tools could allow students to develop and cultivate constructive actions independently. The autonomous utilization of those tools may give self-direction to students.

Barr, Leaky, and Ranchoux (2005) conducted a research to assist French learners in their face-to-face communication classes with collaborative and independent learning through a digital platform. The findings collected from this study showed that the control group reported stronger improvement in oral competence at the conclusion of the research than the experimental group.

In the light of previous studies, it can be inferred that digital learning has a positive impact on learners.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

This chapter presents specific information about methodology of the thesis study such as research design, context and participants of the study, data collection tools, data collection procedures and data analysis. The principle aim of this study is to figure out the beliefs of Turkish EFL tertiary level teachers and students on digital learning.

B. Research Design

The fundamental aim of the study was to figure out the beliefs of Turkish EFL tertiary-preparatory level teachers and students towards digital learning. In addition, this study aimed to reveal the challenges and benefits of digital learning in language learning and the beliefs of students and teachers on digital learning comparing face-to-face learning. Hence, the research adopted quantitative data collection designs. To monitor a lot of details regarding science and societies, quantitative data is a form of information that copes with statistics. For the study of facts and figures, statistical methods may be utilized (Walliman, 2011).

According to Bryman (2012), quantitative research is "a research technique that stresses quantifying of data gathering and interpretation. It implies that quantitative analysis entails calculating anything. This research approach seeks to find answers to concerns such as how many, how many, and to what degree (Rasinger, 2013). It can be inferred that the approach stresses calculating something or factors that occur in the social universe. To that respect, Payne and Payne (2004) state that quantitative approaches pursue correlations in people's lives through grouping the social universe into analytical sections called variables that can be interpreted statistically as frequencies or rates, whose relations with each other can be investigated by statistical tools, and obtained by investigator prompts and data.

Another important advantage of the quantitative method is that since it includes a broader spectrum that was randomly chosen, the experimental results are liable to be generalized to a greater group or a sub-group (Carr, 2010). Aside from sampling, data collection takes less time because it employs computational tools such as SPSS (Connolly, 2007). For example, according to research conducted by Rahman (2017) at the University of Plymouth, resulted that quantitative analysis approaches use a greater sampling size and do not necessitate too much time for data processing.

In this regard, Dornyei (2007) indicates that quantitative examination is structured, thorough, oriented, and closely supervised, requiring accurate calculation and providing consistent and replicable evidence that is transferable to other contexts, according to quantitative proponents. Dornyei (2007) further states that the statistical methodology is comprehensive and detailed, and it also contains several built-in consistency tests and indexes (such as statistical significance) to assist readers in assessing the relevance of quantitative results.

Thus, in this study, two questionnaires were conducted. Questionnaires are one of the measurement ways of conducting a quantitative method. Dornyei (2007) points out that factual questions are used to learn specific information regarding participants such as demographic features (such as age, gender, and race), residential position, marital and socioeconomic status educational level, profession, language learning background, amount of duration consumed in an L2 setting, and so on. Behavioural inquiries are also used to discover what participants are doing or have done in the past, with an emphasis on acts, activities, routines, and past observations. Attitudinal assessments are used to assess what people believe and they include perceptions, views, attitudes, desires, and principles.

Hence, in this research, behavioural and attitudinal questionnaires were conducted by 5 Likert scales from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ that is said, undeniably, the most well-known type of closed-ended object (Dornyei, 2007).

C. Context and Participants of the Study

This research was conducted at a Preparatory School of a Foundation University in İstanbul, Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. To complete the preparatory school, learners have a period of 2 years. They will have major classes after they leave preparatory school. Their level was intermediate. They have 18 hours of English classes per week. These classes include 6 hours of the main course, 6 hours of listening and speaking, 6 hours of reading and writing. There are18 classes in the preparatory school. The levels of the classes are Beginner, Elementary, Pre-intermediate, and Intermediate.

The universe of the research constitutes the preparatory departments in universities in Istanbul. 25 Turkish Preparatory Class teachers from the preparatory department of a foundation university located on the European side of Istanbul and 126 students studying at the university's preparatory school were selected as the sample, and 100 students were returned. The students were Intermediate level preparatory school students at the same foundation university. The average ages of learners are 19. There are some students who are from different cities in Turkey. All students are non-native speakers of English. They are all native speakers of Turkish. The first step was to give information to students about the study. Then, the questionnaire was conducted.

The instructors' experiences and ages vary in the study. They all currently from the same preparatory school of the foundation university, as well. They are all native Turkish speakers. First, the instructors were given information about the research and after that, the questionnaire that is developed by the researcher was conducted.

D. Data Collection Tools

The data were collected via two questionnaires. The questionnaire for students consists of two parts: socio-demographic information and students' attitudes towards digital learning scale. The questionnaire for instructors has three parts: socio-demographic information, instructors' Competence towards Digital learning scale, the Teachers' Beliefs towards Digital Learning scale.

A very productive quantitative methodology is the questionnaire sample approach, as it allows large empirical data to be collected within a brief span of time. The first one is 'Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic' (Adnan&Anwar, 2020) and the other one is 'Teacher beliefs on digital learning' that was developed by the researcher.

The first research tool was Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Students' perspectives (See Appendix 1). It was developed by Adnan&Anwar in 2020. There are 14 items in total. The items are developed to find out the perspectives and beliefs of students on digital learning and figure out some challenges and reasons for using digital tools. The second research tool was developed by the researcher to reveal the beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards digital learning (See Appendix 2). There are 3 sections and 17 items in total. The first section consists of 3 items about instructors' demographical characteristics. The second part consists of 4 items about teachers' competence towards digital learning. In the last section, there are 10 items about instructors' beliefs and perspectives towards digital learning.

In this study, a 5-point Likert-type scale is used to score the items of two questionnaires. They range from 1 to 5 points: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). The questionnaires conducted in English.

1. Socio-demographic information form

The "Sociodemographic Information Form" was used via Google Docs to determine the students' age, gender and their proficiency levels. Also, the instructors' experiences, gender, age, and which proficiency level they teach currently were asked in the form.

E. Data Analysis

In this research, two different questionnaires were conducted both with students and instructors. A correlation model was used to evaluate the data obtained by applying the scales used in the research on teachers and students. In this context, a questionnaire consisting of the socio-demographic information form, the competence scale of the instructors towards digital learning, the beliefs of the instructors towards digital learning versus the face-to-face learning scale, and the attitudes of the students towards digital learning was used.

In the evaluation of the data obtained as a result of the questionnaires, descriptive statistical methods (average, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage variations), as well as parametric tests and non-parametric test methods, were used. In addition, the relationship between the scales was defined by regression analysis.

The hypotheses determined within the scope of the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Hypotheses

Number	Hypotheses (H)
H1-main	Tertiary-level preparatory EFL students and teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning.
H2-main	Digital learning is an effective method for language learning for EFL students.
H3-main	Tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners’ beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age.

Statistical analyses were applied with the SPSS 21.0 program on the data collected with the Socio-demographic Information Form of the instructors and students, the attitudes of the students on digital learning scale.

Before analysing the collected data, the normality variations and skewness and kurtosis values of the scale scores were examined in order to decide which statistical techniques to use as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Skewness and Kurtosis Tests Related to Normality Variations of Scales

Scale	Ave. (out of 5)	Standard Deviation(S.D.)	Skewness coefficient	Skewness error coefficient	Kurtosis coefficient	Kurtosis error coefficient
Instructors’ Competence for Digital Courses Scale	3,96	0,455	-0,194	0,464	2,710	0,902
Instructors’ beliefs towards Digital Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning Scale	3,48	0,510	0,085	0,464	-2,174	0,902
Students' Attitudes on Digital Learning Scale	3,48	0,575	-0,102	0,241	-0,631	0,478

In Table 2, the skewness and kurtosis values were examined in order to investigate the normality variations of the data collected by the Instructors' Competence Scale for Digital learning, the Teachers' Scale for Face-to-Face Learning versus Digital Learning, and the Attitudes of Students on Digital Learning Scale, and the standard Z scores were calculated to examine them in a comparable way.

The variations of normality at the .05 significance level were examined. In order to examine the kurtosis and skewness values in a comparable way, it is checked whether the standard Z scores are between the ± 1.96 values to be p < (possibility value). While calculating the Z scores, the skewness value is divided by its error value and the kurtosis by its error value, it is checked whether the Z value obtained as a result of the division is between -1.96 and +1.96 (Cramer, 1998; Doane & Seward, 2011; Field, 2009).

Accordingly;

- Instructors' Competence Scale for Digital Learning: $Z._{Kurtosis}$ = -0,48; $Z_{Skewness}$ = 3 (Variation not normal)
- Instructors' Fact-to-Face Learning versus Digital Learning Scale: $Z._{Kurtosis}$ = 0,18; $Z_{Skewness}$ = -2,41 (Variation not normal)
- Students' Attitudes on Digital Learning Scale: $Z._{Kurtosis}$ = -0,42; $Z_{Skewness}$ = -1,32 (Variation normal)

In addition, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to examine the normality distribution of the scales as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality Variations of Scales

Scale	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	Degrees of Freedom	p	Statistics	Degrees of Freedom	p
Instructors' Competence for Digital Lessons Scale	0,415	25	0,000	0,624	25	0,000
Instructors for Digital Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning Scale	0,347	25	0,000	0,639	25	0,000
Students' Attitudes on Digital Learning Scale	0,094	100	0,068	0,985	100	0,303

As seen in Table 3, the distribution is not normal since p <.05 for the Instructors' Competence towards Digital Lessons scale and the Instructors' Scale for Digital Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning, and the distribution is normal since p> .05 for the students' attitudes towards digital learning scale is understood.

In this direction, the following analyses were made in accordance with the normality distribution of the research:

- Non-parametric link / unrelated groups Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test were applied in order to determine the difference between the teachers' competence towards digital courses and the attitudes of instructors towards digital learning versus face-to-face learning and their socio-demographic characteristics.
- In order to determine the relationship between students' attitudes towards digital learning and their socio-demographic characteristics, Independent Sample t-Test and One-Way Analysis of Variance were used.

In all statistical calculations, the basic level of significance was accepted as 0.05.

IV. FINDINGS

In this section, the socio-demographic status of instructors and the instructors' competence towards digital lessons, the beliefs of the instructors on digital learning were determined. Also, the socio-demographic status of the students and the students' attitudes towards digital learning were determined.

A. Findings Regarding the Demographic Characteristics of Instructors and Students

Table 4. Demographic Variables of Instructors and Students.

Demographic Variables of the Participants				
	Variables	**Level**	**n**	**(%)**
Instructors	Experience	1-5	3	12
		5-10	10	40
		10-15	4	16
		15-20	2	8
		20+	6	24
	The proficiency level of your students (choose the level you have most lesson hours)	A1	1	4
		A2	9	36
		B1	13	52
		B2	2	8
	Educational Degree	BA	16	64
		MA	7	28
		PHD	2	8
Students	Your age	16-20	91	91
		21-25	9	9
	Your gender	Female	56	56
		Male	40	40
		Rather not to say	4	4
	Education	Undergraduate	99	99
		Master	1	1
	Do you have proper Internet access at home? *Here proper internet access refers to access through digital subscriber line (DSL, ADSL, SDSL, and VDSL), cable internet access or fiber to the home	Yes	94	94
		Limited (Access through mobile phone or hand-held device)	3	3
		No	3	3
	What is the main reason you have limited Internet access?	Cost/Too Expensive	16	16
		Signals availability/strength problems	43	43
		Other	41	41

According to Table 4, it is seen that 10 (40%) of the instructors who participated in the study had 5-10 years of experience, and 6 (24%) of them had more than 20 years of experience. 13 (52%) of the instructors teach students at B1 level and 9 (36%) at A2 level. 16 (64%) of the instructors have BA, 7 (28%) MA, 2 (8%) PHD education degree. 56 (56%) of the students participating in the study were female, 40 (40%) were male and 4 (4%) did not want to specify their gender.

It is seen that 91% of the students are between the ages of 16-20, and 9% are between 21-25 years old. It is seen that 99 (99%) of the students are at the undergraduate level and 1 (1%) of them are at the master level. Students' answers to the question "Do you have a suitable internet access in your home?"; They stated that 94 of them have internet access, 3 of them (3%) are limited, and 3 of them (3%) do not have an appropriate internet access. Students "What is the main reason for your limited Internet access?" their answers to the question; 43 (43%) stated that there were signals availability / strength problems, 41 (41%) were other problems, and 16 (16%) were Cost / Too Expensive.

Table 5. Reliability Analysis Findings of Items Regarding the Scale of Instructors’ Competence for Digital Lessons

Items of Instructors’ Competence for Digital Learning Scale	Ave.	S.D.
I can be creative while using digital platforms.	4,04	0,889
I am competent enough to use digital platforms.	4,28	0,678
I know how to integrate digital tools into the lessons.	4,28	0,737
I believe I need training about how to use digital platforms.	3,08	1,32
Cronbach’s Alpha	0,879	

As can be seen in Table 5, the item with the highest average in the ‘Instructors’ Competency for Digital Learning Scale’ of the instructors participating in the research is "I am competent enough to use digital platforms." and "I know how to integrate digital tools into the lessons." (4.25), the item with the lowest average is "I believe I need training about how to use digital platforms." (3.08) was seen. When the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items was examined (, 879>, 80), it was determined that the scale had high reliability.

Table 6. Reliability Analysis Findings of the Items Regarding the Instructors' Scale for Face-to-Face Learning versus Digital Learning.

Items of Instructors' Beliefs Digital Learning vs. Face-to-Face Learning Scale	Ave.	S.D.
I believe the conventional language teaching methods are better than digital teaching.	3,52	1,229
Digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes.	4,08	0,759
Digital learning does not support learning.	1,8	0,707
Students can be more motivated through digital platforms.	3,08	1,038
Students can improve their reading and writing skills through digital learning.	3,8	1,118
Students can improve their listening skills through digital learning.	3,96	1,02
Students are more enthusiastic to speak in face-to-face classes.	4,04	1,274
I am able to manage the class during the digital lessons.	4	1
I can make my students understand my objectives better in digital teaching.	3,08	1,038
I can engage my students better in digital teaching.	3,12	0,781
Cronbach's Alpha	0,803	

As seen in Table 6, the item with the highest average in the "Instructors' Scale for Digital Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning" is "Digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes." (4.08) and the item with the lowest average is "Digital learning does not support learning." (1.8) was seen. When the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items is examined (, 803>, 80), it is determined that the scale has high reliability.

Table 7. Reliability Analysis Findings of Items Regarding the Beliefs of Students on Digital Learning Scale.

Items of Students' Attitudes on Digital Learning Scale	Ave.	S.D.
I am pretty good at using the computer.	3,98	0,921
I am comfortable communicating electronically.	4,12	0,856
Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet.	2,63	1,397
I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course.	2,47	1,243
I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.	3,13	1,212
I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.	3,63	1,116
I can work in a group during Internet activities outside of class.	3,85	1,14
I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.	3,81	1,178
I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.	3,74	1,26
Cronbach's Alpha	0,801	

As seen in Table 7, the item with the highest average in the "Students' Attitudes Towards Digital Learning Scale" is "I am comfortable communicating electronically." (4.12), the item with the lowest average is "I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course." (2.47) was revealed. When the Cronbach's Alpha value of the items was examined (, 801>, 80), it was determined that the scale had high reliability.

B. Findings on Research Main Hypotheses

The main hypotheses of the study are "Tertiary level preparatory Turkish EFL students and teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning." and "Digital learning is an effective method for language learning for EFL students." expressed in the form.

Table 8 includes the analysis of tertiary-level preparatory EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning.

Table 8. Teachers' Beliefs on Digital Learning

	Level	**N**	**%**	**Σ**	**σ**
5.I believe the conventional language teaching methods are better than digital teaching.	Strongly disagree	1	4	3,52	1,229
	Disagree	5	20		
	Neutral	6	24		
	Agree	6	24		
	Strongly agree	7	28		
6.Digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes.	Disagree	1	4	4,08	0,759
	Neutral	3	12		
	Agree	14	56		
	Strongly agree	7	28		
7.Digital learning does not support learning.	Strongly disagree	9	36	1,8	0,707
	Disagree	12	48		
	Neutral	4	16		
8.Students can be more motivated through digital platforms.	Disagree	9	36	3,08	1,038
	Neutral	8	32		
	Agree	5	20		
	Strongly agree	3	12		
12.I am able to manage the class during the digital lessons.	Strongly disagree	1	4	4	1
	Disagree	1	4		
	Neutral	3	12		
	Agree	12	48		
	Strongly agree	8	32		
13.I can engage my students better in digital teaching.	Disagree	5	20	3,08	1,038
	Neutral	13	52		
	Agree	6	24		
	Strongly agree	1	4		
14.I can make my students understand my objectives better in digital teaching.	Disagree	9	36	3,12	0,781
	Neutral	8	32		
	Agree	5	20		
	Strongly agree	3	12		

Table 9 includes the analysis of tertiary-level preparatory EFL students' beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning.

Table 9. Students' Beliefs on Digital Learning

	Level	**N**	**%**	**Σ**	**σ**
8.Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet.	Strongly disagree	29	29	2,63	1,397
	Disagree	21	21		
	Neutral	22	22		
	Agree	14	14		
	Strongly agree	14	14		
9.I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course.	Strongly disagree	25	25	2,47	1,243
	Disagree	32	32		
	Neutral	24	24		
	Agree	9	9		
	Strongly agree	10	10		
10.I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.	Strongly disagree	11	11,0	3,13	1,212
	Disagree	19	19,0		
	Neutral	31	31,0		
	Agree	24	24,0		
	Strongly agree	15	15,0		
11.I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	4	4,0	3,63	1,116
	Disagree	12	12,0		
	Neutral	27	27,0		
	Agree	31	31,0		
	Strongly agree	26	26,0		
12.I can work in a group during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	3	3	3,85	1,14
	Disagree	12	12		
	Neutral	19	19		
	Agree	29	29		
	Strongly agree	37	37		
13.I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.	Strongly disagree	3	3,0	3,81	1,178
	Disagree	14	14,0		
	Neutral	20	20,0		
	Agree	25	25,0		
	Strongly agree	38	38,0		
14.I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.	Strongly disagree	9	9,0	3,74	1,26
	Disagree	6	6,0		
	Neutral	23	23,0		
	Agree	26	26,0		
	Strongly agree	36	36,0		

Table 10 includes the analysis of the effect of digital learning beliefs on language learning.

Table 10. Students' Digital Learning Beliefs on Language Learning

	Level	**N**	**%**	**Σ**	**σ**
Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet.	Strongly disagree	29	29	2,63	1,397
	Disagree	21	21		
	Neutral	22	22		
	Agree	14	14		
	Strongly agree	14	14		
I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course.	Strongly disagree	25	25	2,47	1,243
	Disagree	32	32		
	Neutral	24	24		
	Agree	9	9		
	Strongly agree	10	10		
I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.	Strongly disagree	11	11	3,13	1,212
	Disagree	19	19		
	Neutral	31	31		
	Agree	24	24		
	Strongly agree	15	15		
I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	4	4	3,63	1,116
	Disagree	12	12		
	Neutral	27	27		
	Agree	31	31		
	Strongly agree	26	26		
I can work in a group during Internet activities outside of class.	Strongly disagree	3	3	3,85	1,14
	Disagree	12	12		
	Neutral	19	19		
	Agree	29	29		
	Strongly agree	37	37		
I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.	Strongly disagree	3	3	3,81	1,178
	Disagree	14	14		
	Neutral	20	20		
	Agree	25	25		
	Strongly agree	38	38		
I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.	Strongly disagree	9	9	3,74	1,26
	Disagree	6	6		
	Neutral	23	23		
	Agree	26	26		
	Strongly agree	36	36		

C. Findings on Third Research Question

The third research question of the study is ‘Do tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners’ beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age?’ and the hypothesis is "There is a difference between tertiary level Turkish EFL students’ beliefs towards digital learning and their gender and age’.

In Table 11, the relationship between students' beliefs towards digital learning and their gender is shown.

Table 11. ANOVA test Results (* p<0.05)

Scale	Gender	n	p	Sign. Differ.
Difference between students’ beliefs towards digital learning and their gender	Female Male Rather not to say	56 40 4	,467	----

As seen in Table 11, no significant difference was found between the gender of the students according to their level of Beliefs about Digital Learning. (p>0.05).

In Table 12, the relationship between the students' beliefs towards digital learning and their age is examined.

Table 12. ANOVA test Results (* p<0.05)

Scale	Age	n	p	Sign. Differ.
Difference between students’ beliefs towards digital learning and their age	16-20 21-25 Other	91 9 0	,670	----

As can be seen in Table 12, there was no significant difference between the age of the students according to the level of the Beliefs about Digital Learning. (p>0.05).

V. CONCLUSION

A. Introduction

This chapter demonstrates a summary of the study and recommendations for future studies. It also discusses the findings and has a concise conclusion. The answers to the research questions are also discussed.

B. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore students’ and teachers' beliefs on digital learning and whether it is effective for tertiary level Turkish EFL learners in a foundation university preparatory school in Istanbul. In addition, the further aim of the study was to find out if there was a significant relationship between the students’ beliefs towards digital learning and their gender, age and proficiency level.

First of all, in this technology era, it can be considered that digital learning might be used as a vital source and it can be an effective way to learn a language and also it should be taken seriously by students, institutions and instructors.

When considered the research questions, there were three questions of the study. According to the findings, it can be inferred that the first two hypotheses were supported by the results. Those two hypotheses were; ‘Tertiary level preparatory EFL students and teachers have positive beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning’ and ‘Digital learning can be an effective method for language learning for tertiary level Turkish EFL students’. The items in *Table 8 Students' Beliefs on Digital Learning* were taken into consideration to understand Turkish EFL intermediate level preparatory students’ beliefs towards digital learning.

According to the results, %14 of students agrees and %14 of students strongly agree (in total %28) that learning is the same in class and at home on the internet (item 8) while %50 of students (%29strongly disagree and %21 agree) disagree with the statement. %22 of students stayed neutral. The results of the 8th item are supported by the 9th item that is 'I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course'. For the 9th item, in total %57 of students (%25 strongly disagree and %32 disagree) do not believe that learning on a digital platform outside the classroom is more motivating than a regular course. The contrasting fact of the results is that for the 10th item, in total 39 of students (%15 of students of strongly agree, %24 agrees) generally believe that a complete course can be covered without any difficulty by the internet. Given the premises, it can be inferred that students believe the lessons can be given digitally but still, it would be better to learn a language in traditional classrooms. As it can be seen in the 13th item, %38 of students strongly agrees and %25 of students (in total 63) agree that face-to-face interaction with the instructor is necessary for learning.

To understand the instructors' beliefs towards digital learning, the items 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13 and 14 were taken into consideration in the 'Teachers' Beliefs on Digital Learning'. The vital result of the study is that %36 of instructors strongly disagrees and %48 of instructors disagrees with the 7th item that is 'Digital learning does not support learning' so they believe that digital learning is a supporting way to teach a language. Also, in total %84 of teachers (%56 agree and %28 strongly agree) believe that digital learning can be used for language teaching as can be seen in the 6th item in Table 9.

The second research question is that 'Is digital learning an effective method for Turkish EFL students in terms of language learning?'. To identify this question, the items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were analysed and the results showed that students tend to have face-to-face learning instead of digital learning as can be seen in the Table 12. For this question, the items 9, 10 and 10 in the Table 11 were analysed, as well and it showed that instructors believe (%44 agree, %28 strongly agree) students can improve their reading and writing skills through digital learning. Moreover, they believe that students can improve their listening skills through digital learning (%44 agree and %32 strongly agree). Lastly, according to the last item on the Table 11, in total %68 (%56strongly agree and %12 agree) of teachers believe that students are more enthusiastic to speak in face-to-face classes.

The third question of the study was 'Do tertiary level Turkish EFL learners' beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age?'. It was found out that there is no significant difference was found between the gender of the students according to their level of Beliefs about Digital Learning as shown in Table 11.

Furthermore, it can be seen in Table 12 that there is no significant difference between the age of the students according to the level of the Beliefs about Digital Learning.

As a consequence, the research revealed significant results for the further studies but the nature of the study doesn't provide further data to elucidate more details for the contrast results. The findings of this study have important ramifications. This study just highlights as a part of the story of a vast field.

C. Discussion

In order to identify the Turkish EFL teachers' and students' beliefs on digital learning, three research questions were addressed in this study. The first question of the research is: 'What are the beliefs and attitudes of tertiary level Turkish EFL students and teachers on digital learning?' Despite the fact that all main participants, students, agree that they are competent enough to use digital technology and believe that digital learning is very useful and usable in language learning; they still find the interaction is necessary and it occurs better in face-to-face learning. Turkish preparatory level EFL teachers, as second participants to the study, believe that they are competent at implementing digital teaching into language teaching, but, somehow, in total %36 of instructors (%20agree and %16 strongly agree) also think that they need training to improve themselves about digital learning as can be seen in the results. Furthermore, the Turkish EFL teachers believe that even though digital learning is beneficial to use and implement for language learning, face-to-face learning is needed to cover the lesson more effectively.

The second question of the study is 'Is digital learning an effective method for Turkish EFL students in terms of language learning?'. The vast majority of main participants, students, had positive beliefs and attitudes towards digital learning. Also, the majority of the participants (%26 agree and %36 strongly agree) state that they can complete their assignments online easily and without difficulty. However, they also believe that face-to-face learning should occur to feel themselves more motivated (item 9- Table 12). As can be noticed in the results, the majority of the main participants, students, state that language learning is more motivating when in traditional classroom.

Similarly, the second participants, Turkish EFL teachers, hold the opinion that digital learning is necessary but it is not as effective as face-to-face learning. As it was illustrated in the questionnaire results, %12 of teachers agreed to the statement of conventional teaching methods are better than digital learning. Also, they believe that digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes and support learning but, somehow, they believe that digital learning is not as motivating as conventional learning. As for the language skills, Turkish EFL teachers state that digital learning helps students to improve their reading, writing and listening skills. But for the speaking skills, teachers believe that students are more enthusiastic to speak in face-to-face classes. Furthermore, teachers indicate that they can manage their students during the lessons. However, as a surprising contrast, teachers believe that students cannot understand teachers' objectives and moreover, cannot engage students to the lessons.

The third question of the study is 'Do tertiary level Turkish EFL learners' beliefs towards digital learning differ by gender and age?'. According to the results, there is no significant relationship between intermediate tertiary level Turkish EFL students' beliefs towards digital learning and their gender and age.

The overall impression can be inferred that tertiary level Turkish EFL students and teachers mostly believe in effectiveness of digital learning and willing to use it, they think it may be a beneficial way of learning and may help language learning.

D. Suggestion for further studies

More research on the subject would complement the data obtained in this study, and further research on the subject would have foresight on the matter and emphasize its relevance. Furthermore, the outcomes should be studied, and comparative research should be done to show the detailed and main distinctions between digital learning and face-to-face learning.

As the beliefs of tertiary level Turkish EFL students and Turkish EFL instructors on digital learning is assessed by the results, comparison trials of various focus audiences may be regarded a field limitation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for students on digital learning

Appendix 2 Questionnaire for teachers on digital learning

Appendix 3 Etich

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for students on digital learning

Questionnaire for students on digital learning

Students Attitudes Regarding Online Learning (Adopted from Online Learning Survey) (Adnan & Anwar, 2020)

Read statements on the following table. Please respond to the statements as they apply to English language study.

Age	16-20		21-25	
Gender	Male	Female	Other	Rather not to say
Education	Undergraduate		Master	
Do you have proper Internet access at home? *Here proper internet access refers to access through digital subscriber line (DSL, ADSL, SDSL, and VDSL), cable internet access or fiber to the home.	Yes	Limited (Access through mobile phone and hand held device)		No
What is the main reason you have limited Internet access?	Don't know how to use it	Cost/ Too Expensive	Signals availability/ strength problems	Other

Choose the appropriate option.

Choose whether you disagree or agree with each statement. For example, if you *strongly agree (SA)*, mark:

Strongly Agree(SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree(SD
X				

	SA	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SD**
I am pretty good at using computer.					
I am comfortable communicating electronically.					
Learning is the same in class and at home on the Internet.					
I believe that learning on the Internet outside of class is more motivating than a regular course.					
I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.					
I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.					
I can work in a group during Internet activities outside the class.					
I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.					
I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.					
I believe a complete course can be given by the Internet without difficulty.					
I can discuss with other students during Internet activities outside of class.					
I can work in a group during Internet activities outside the class.					
I feel that face-to-face contact with my instructor is necessary for learning to occur.					
I am able to manage my study time effectively online and easily complete assignments on time.					

Appendix 2 Questionnaire for teachers on digital learning

Questionnaire for teachers on digital learning

This questionnaire was developed by the researcher, approved by the experts, and has three sub-sections (instructor characteristics survey, instructors' competence towards digital lessons, instructors' beliefs towards digital versus face-to-face learning) and seventeen questions in total.

Read statements on the following pages. Choose the option which is relevant to you most.

<u>Instructor Characteristics Survey</u>

1. **Experience**

- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-15
- 15-20
- 20+

2. **The proficiency Level of Your Students**

- A1
- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

1. **Educational Degree**
   - BA
   - MA
   - PDH

Choose whether you disagree or agree with each statement. For example, if you strongly agree (SA), mark:

Strongly Agree(SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree(SD
X				

<u>Instructors' competence towards digital lessons:</u>

	A	D
1. I can be creative while using digital platforms.		
2. I am competent enough to use digital platforms.		
3. I know how to integrate digital tools into the lessons.		
4. I believe I need training about how to use digital platforms.		

<u>Instructors' beliefs towards digital versus face-to-face learning:</u>

	A	D
5. I believe the conventional language teaching methods are better than digital teaching.		
6. Digital learning can be used for language teaching purposes.		
7. Digital learning does not support learning.		

	A	D
8. Students can be more motivated through digital platforms.		
9. Students can improve their reading and writing skills through digital learning.		
10. Students can improve their listening skills through digital learning.		
11. Students are more enthusiastic to speak in face-to-face classes.		
12. I am able to manage the class during the digital lessons.		
13. I can make my students understand my objectives better in digital teaching.		
14. I can engage my student better in digital teaching.		

Appendix 3 Etich

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 17.03.2021-7551

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-88083623-020-7551
Konu : Etik Onayı Hk.

Sayın Aygül BAHADIR

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 03.03.2021 tarihli ve 2021/02 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Alper FİDAN
Müdür Yardımcısı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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RESUME

Name Surname: Aygül BAHADIR

Education:

2007-2012 Çukurova University-French Language Teaching

2016-2019 İstanbul Kültür University-English Language Teaching

2019-2021 İstanbul Aydın University-English Language and Literature Department/ELT Program

Work Experience:

2008-2012 British Culture Association-English&French Teacher

2012-2013 Bemar&British Town Language and Career School-Administrative&Academic Coordinator

2013-2016 Sunexpress-Flight Attendant

2017-2019 Pearson English Council-EFL teacher

2018-2019 İstanbul Kültür University- Administrative&Academic Coordinator & Teaching Assistant

2019- İstanbul Kültür Univeristy- EFL instructor & Teacher Assistant Coordinator

Languages:

Turkish: Native Language

English: Advanced

French: Intermediate

Skills:

-Communication, Team Work, Cooperation&Collaboration

-Material Design, Syllabus Design, Problem-solving, Creativity

-Computer Skills: Microsoft Office Programs (Word, Excel, Powerpoint)