Chapter 14

Turkish EFL Pre-Service Teachers’ Attitudes towards Multi-Media Enhanced Wiki-Mediated Blended Learning Environments: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

With a variety of changes taking place in the role of learners and teachers in the 21st century, learners are expected to be active participants in the learning process through interaction and collaboration, while teachers act as facilitators, creating learning opportunities for the former and monitoring the learning process. This chapter aims to highlight perceptions of Turkish pre-service teachers’ of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) concerning a wiki project in a freshman contextual grammar course. Considering the limited research on wiki use in the Turkish teacher education context, this mixed method case study aimed to explore perceptions of pre-service English teachers’ wiki learning experiences and investigate their critical appraisal of the project at a state university. The results indicated mainly favourable perceptions, pointing out the enhanced impact of wikis on group dynamics, pre-service EFL teachers’ learning process, their creativity and autonomy, while revealing varying degrees of level of and satisfaction with collaborative work, and technical aspects.
INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the 21st century, technology has been acknowledged to be a medium that offers learners a platform to develop a variety of higher-order skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills and to practice the transfer of such skills to different contexts and provide opportunities for reflection, peer collaboration and negotiation of meaning, all of which are essential for optimal learning to occur (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). The unprecedented popularity of technology in the field of English Language Teaching and its widespread integration into the English as a Second Language (ESL) / English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes have entailed the adoption of a different perspective into the learning and teaching processes and the the roles of teachers and learners. Learners in the multimedia classroom tend to assume a more active role in the learning process, involving in classroom discussions, taking more responsibility in their own learning process. They have the opportunity to adjust the pace of their learning in line with their learning styles and preferences with the help of multimedia tools. As regards teachers’ roles, teachers tend to act as facilitators or guides in the implementation of the in-class and outside-class activities as well as an organizers taking responsibility in the preparation and design of classroom activities.

The curricular integration of multimedia facilities such as videos, animations, films and audios, and multimedia tools such as wikis and blogs have become part of the new perspective in teaching adopted in line with the changes in teachers’ and learners’ roles and brought about numerous advantages. Raising the level of linguistic competence via interaction with other language learners throughout the globe and the level of intercultural competence via cultural awareness-raising activities into different cultural norms and cultural practices, enhanced student motivation, the promotion of learner autonomy and creativity, critical thinking skill and computer literacy development, the refinement of research skills, and the optimization of collaborative and cooperative learning are just to name a few. Also, multi-media applications assist the formative evaluation, student progress monitoring and the immediate feedback provision.

Approximately two decades ago, researchers such as Lanham (1993) emphasized the salience of technology integration into writing classes. Also, scholars have lately pointed out that technology plays a crucial role in foreign language instruction. To illustrate, Shultz (2000) pointed out the salience of computer technology in foreign language learning whereas Warshauer and Kern (2000) argued for network-based language instruction. As a response to the call for collaborative and reflective practices in global and network-based world of communication where interaction is the buzz word, wikis, as a form of asynchronous computer-mediated communication, are becoming more and more common in educational settings to facilitate collaborative learning (Davidson, 2012; Garza & Hern, 2006; Kato & Rosen, 2007; Lee, 2010; Richardson, 2006) and writing instruction (Lamb, 2004).

Apart from its contribution to the effectiveness of the writing process, collaborative writing via wikis also enhances the quality of the written product by raising the level of the complexity of writing (Sotillo, 2002), and its grammatical accuracy (Guth, 2007; Storch, 2005). Engagement in wiki projects also promotes learners’ social skills as well as how to negotiate meaning and content, how to manage group dynamics, how to construct knowledge and reach a common decision as a group (Haythornthwaite, 2006; Lund, 2008; Richardson, 2006; Schroeder, 2009). Wiki-based projects also provide opportunities for learning. Wikis may serve as a pool of linguistic resources, insights and knowledge about the content through all writing phases, from the drafting stage to group editing/proofreading (Ajjan & Hartstone, 2008; Bradley, Lindstrom & Rystedt, 2010; Gibbons, 2010; Larusson & Altermann, 2009; Tharp, 2010).
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