

Learners' Perceptions on Innovations in Language Teaching and Learning and Expected Ones

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Abstract: The very buzzword 'innovation' has just come up recently. With its broadest meaning, 'innovation' is a kind of implementation of new ideas in almost all areas such as industry, education, aviation, banking and so on. The technology and the Internet are growing very rapidly, and have continued to change people's lives. These changes have provided many innovations in almost every aspects of people's lives. For instance, although the phenomenon 'social networking' exploded recently, most of the Internet users around the world use social networking nowadays. The development of technology and the Internet has made Language Teaching and Learning easier for people. Having said that, the term "e-learning" is coined to explain language teaching and language learning through the Internet via technological equipment. The changes in technology world have inevitably changed the accustomed Language Teaching and Learning methods and approaches and naturally have made the language teaching and learning easier. This mainly qualitative study aimed to find out the perceptions of the learners, in language teaching and learning, towards current innovations and possible innovations in the near future.

Keywords: Innovation, Language Teaching and Learning, Technology, the Internet, E-learning

Öğrencilerin Dil Öğretimi ve Öğrenimi ile İlgili Algıları ve Beklenen Yenilikler

Öz: Moda bir terim olan 'yenilik' kısa bir zaman önce ortaya çıktı. En geniş anlamıyla 'yenilik' yeni fikirleri endüstri, eğitim, havacılık vb. gibi neredeyse bütün alanlara uygulamaktır. Teknoloji ve internet hızlı bir şekilde gelişmekte ve insanların yaşamlarını değiştirmektedir. Bu değişimler yaşamlarının her aşamasında onlara yenilikler sunmaktadır. Örneğin, 'sosyal ağ' olgusu kısa bir zaman önce ortaya çıkmasına rağmen günümüzde internet kullanıcılarının büyük bir çoğunluğu sosyal ağı kullanmaktadır. İnternet ve teknolojinin gelişimi dil öğretimi ve öğrenimini insanlar için kolaylaştırmıştır. Bununla birlikte, "e-öğrenme" terimi eğitimin teknolojik cihazlar yoluyla internet üzerinde gerçekleşmesini açıklamak için bulunmuştur. Teknoloji ve internet dünyasındaki değişimler kaçınılmaz olarak alışılmış Dil Öğretim ve Öğrenimini değiştirmiş ve doğal olarak dil öğrenim ve öğretimi kolaylaştırmıştır. Bu başlıca nitel çalışma öğrencilerin dil öğretim ve öğrenimi ile ilgili mevcut ve yakın gelecekteki olası yenilikler hakkındaki algılarını bulup ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yenilik, Dil Öğretimi ve Öğrenimi, Teknoloji, İnternet, E-öğrenme

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I. Introduction

Thanks to new developments in this technological era, there have been many inevitable changes in the lives of the people and the way they perform their jobs and activities. The very buzzword ‘innovation’ is just implementing new ideas to everything with its broadest meaning. Although it has recently appeared, it is matter of nearly all disciplines even organizations such as education, industry and so on. Each focuses on the ‘innovation’ with different approaches and different perspectives since ‘innovation’ is a multidimensional concept. Each sector defines the word ‘innovation’ with regard to their interest with very minor nuance. Here are some definitions:

Table 1. Defining innovation (as cited in Popa, Preda, and Boldea, 2011, p. 152).

Mohr (1969)	The degree to which specific new changes are implemented in an organization.
Damanpour and Evan (1984)	Broad utility concept defined in various ways to reflect a specific requirement and characteristic of a particular study.
Kenneth Simmonds (1986)	Innovations are new ideas that consist of: new products and services, new use of existing products, new markets for existing products or new marketing methods.
Kenneth Simmonds (1986)	Basic creative process.
Damanpour (1991)	Development and adoption of new ideas by a firm.
Davenport (1991)	Complete a task development in a radically new way.
Evans (1991)	The ability to discover new relationships, of seeing things from new perspectives and to form new combinations from existing concepts.
Henderson and Lentz (1995)	Implementation of innovative ideas.
Rogers (1998)	Involves both knowledge creation and diffusion of existing knowledge.
The European Commission Green (1999)	Successful production, assimilation and exploitation of novelty in the economic or social environment.
Boer and During (2001)	Creating a new association (combination) product market-technology-organization.

Some of the innovations are technological while others are philosophical. Due to the recent and rapid changes in technology, the way that the education is mostly affected by technology, and it has experienced many changes and improvements. With regard to the innovations in education, the term 'e-learning' has occurred and has become very popular.

As for the innovation in language teaching, e-learning is also one of the prominent language teaching methods. Most of the books including four basic skills are supported with technological equipment such as Compact Disks added to the books, and online sources for the target books.

Gilbert (2013, p. 132) states that "developments in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research, shifting perspectives on CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), and innovations in web-based technology are influencing the current thinking around the potential uses and roles of web-based technology in language teaching."

There are many methods and approaches in language teaching. Richards & Rodgers (2003, p. vii) suggest that "the proliferation of approaches and methods is a prominent characteristic of contemporary second and foreign language teaching." The classroom teacher and curriculum designer try to find which one is the best. However, with the development of Information and Communication Technology, these methods and approaches are tried to be integrated to the curriculum.

All technological developments can fulfill the necessities of learners and teachers which stem from needs of the 21st century. By means of the multimedia, learners and teachers can easily find access to all their needs. Today, e-learning is the most popular term that refers to educational technology. E-learning, that is, electronic learning is the most appropriate application of the Internet to support learning and teaching.

"The study of innovation in language education began to generate particular interest only from the 1980s onwards, with important early contributions including Kennedy (1988) from a UK perspective and Henrichsen (1989) from a US one." (as cited in Carless, 2013, p. 1). Carless (2013, p.1) also defines innovation "as an attempt to bring about educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by implementers as new or different."

Zhang, & Cheung (2018, p. 80) conducted a research aiming "to provide a synthesis of recent research documenting innovations in English language writing education that took place from 2005-2015 in China". They concluded that "technology-enabled instruction can help students in their writing process; and authentic writing tasks can promote students' critical thinking ability." (Zhang, & Cheung 2018, p. 86).

Waters (2019) argues that innovations in English Language Education requires being informed by other procedures and concepts involved in English Language Education management literature. Carless (2013) classifies three main barriers facing innovations:

teacher-related, system-related, school-related. In order to get success, the related factors should be considered and necessary precautions should be taken.

Chia Suan Chong in 2016 stated her top ten innovations that have changed English language teaching recently.

1. Digital platforms (Facebook, Edmodo, Google Docs, Digital Video, etc.)
2. Online corpora: (Searching the words in Google)
3. Online CPD (continuous professional development) and the global staffroom
4. Mobile learning and BYOD (bring your own device)
5. Communicating with people online (via Skype, online classes etc.)
6. Online authentic materials
7. The IWB (interactive white board)
8. Dogme (or materials-light teaching)
9. Students steering their own learning (student-centered learning, business English, etc.)
10. Teaching soft skills and critical thinking skills

The digital revolution in learning now threatens to replace the traditional classroom environment completely, in that, it enables learners to engage in live contexts with real people. It is normal that a teacher may think that these digital tools will replace their places. However, this is not the case. As in all areas, such as health system, industry, etc., in which people are looking forward to new innovation that will make their life easier, learners of English are looking forward to innovations that will make the learning process easier and productive within a very limited time and with a small amount of money. So, we can say that this digital area requires teachers to be confident with technology, which means you cannot abstain from technology if you want to do this job. Learners of this age deals with new equipment and especially tend to use new applications in language teaching. So, we had better blend language teaching with new technologies.

II. Methodology

The main purpose of this study, as mentioned before, is to find out learners perceptions towards current and possible future innovations in language learning and their experience with the e-learning without any control or manipulation. This study mainly comprises qualitative study. In addition to the participants perceptions with regard to the innovation in language teaching, some related questions about the use and

experience of participants constituted the first part of the study.

The data of the study were collected from the graduate and undergraduate students of English Language and Literature Department in the Faculty of Letters at Ataturk University in January, 2019. The learners have been exposed to the target language several times during their career.

A. Instrument

The instrument of this study is just to observe the perceptions and the ideas of the participants about the current innovations and possible innovations in language teaching.

The whole questionnaire was composed by dint of <https://www.google.com/docs> and the link was sent to the participants through the learning management system of Ataturk University. The instrument consists of three parts. For the first part of the study, four questions related to the demographic information of the participants were addressed to the learners (gender, age, time, class). The second part of the study is to find out which technological equipment they use, how often they use the internet and what they do in the internet and whether they use the internet or any other application for language teaching. The last part of the instrument is qualitative part of the study including two important questions.

The qualitative questions are:

1. What does the word 'innovation' remind you of in language teaching or language learning?
2. What do you think about the possible innovations in language teaching or language learning?

B. Participants

As mentioned previously, the participants were from the English language and Literature Department at Ataturk University in Erzurum, which is located in eastern part of Turkey. The department also provides 1-year full time preparatory class. The participants of this study consisted of 35 female and 12 male graduate and undergraduate students. There were totally 47 participants. The frequencies of the gender is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	35	74,5	74,5	74,5
	Male	12	25,5	25,5	100,0
Total		47	100,0	100,0	

In this study, the ages of the students vary, but the density was between the ages 18 and 24. The number of the participants between 18 and 24 was 41, and the number between 24 and 29 was 5. There is just one participants whose age was between 30 and 34. The frequencies of 'Age' is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	41	87,2	87,2	87,2
	24-29	5	10,6	10,6	97,9
	30-34	1	2,1	2,1	100,0
Total		47	100,0	100,0	

The participants ranged from different classes: 11 prep class, 11 class 1, 16 class 2, 6 class 3 and 3 graduate level. The frequencies of 'class' statistics is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	11	23,4	23,4	23,4
	2	16	34,0	34,0	57,4
	3	6	12,8	12,8	70,2
	Graduate	3	6,4	6,4	76,6
	Prep Class	11	23,4	23,4	100,0
Total		47	100,0	100,0	

The times spent online by the students vary. However, 40 participants surf the Internet 6 hours and over a day, which means most of the learners are aware of the most technological developments. The frequencies of 'time' is given in Table 5.

Table 5. Time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-3	4	8,5	8,5	8,5
	3-6	3	6,4	6,4	14,9
	6- -	40	85,1	85,1	100,0
	Graduate	47	100,0	100,0	
Total		47	100,0	100,0	

All of the participants use at least one technological equipment. 45 participants use smart phones. The frequencies of the usages of the technological equipment is given in Table 6.

Table 6. What equipment do you use?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desktop Computer		1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Laptop Computer		1	2.1	2.1	4.3
Smart phones		23	48.9	48.9	53.2
Smart phones, Desktop Valid Computer		1	2.1	2.1	55.3
Smart phones, Desktop Computer, Laptop Computer		3	6.4	6.4	61.7
Smart phones, Desktop Computer, Laptop Computer, Tablet		1	2.1	2.1	63.8
Smart phones, Computer	Laptop	10	21.3	21.3	85.1
Smart phones, Computer, Others	Laptop	1	2.1	2.1	87.2
Smart phones, Computer, Tablet	Laptop	4	8.5	8.5	95.7
Smart phones, Tablet		2	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total		47	100.0	100.0	

All of the learners use the internet for various reasons such as fun, game, education searching, social media, checking emails and so on. The frequencies of the reasons that learners use the internet is given in Table 7.

Table 6. For what reasons do you use Internet?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
For fun	2	4.3	4.3	6.4
Game	1	2.1	2.1	8.5
Search in the Internet	8	17.0	17.0	25.5
Valid Search in the Internet, Education	1	2.1	2.1	27.7
Search in the Internet, Email, Education	2	4.3	4.3	31.9
Search in the Internet, Email, Education, Reading Books	1	2.1	2.1	34.0
Search in the Internet, Email, For fun, Education	1	2.1	2.1	36.2
Search in the Internet, Email, For fun, Education, Watching videos	1	2.1	2.1	38.3
Search in the Internet, Game, Education	1	2.1	2.1	40.4
Search in the Internet, Social Media	2	4.3	4.3	44.7
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Education	2	4.3	4.3	48.9
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Email	2	4.3	4.3	53.2

Search in the Internet, Social Media, Email, Education	2	4.3	4.3	57.4
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Email, For fun, Game	1	2.1	2.1	59.6
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Email, For fun, Game, Education	3	6.4	6.4	66.0
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Email, Game, Education	5	10.6	10.6	76.6
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Game	1	2.1	2.1	78.7
Search in the Internet, Social Media, Game, Education	1	2.1	2.1	80.9
Social Media	5	10.6	10.6	91.5
Social Media, Education	2	4.3	4.3	95.7
Social Media, Email, Education	1	2.1	2.1	97.9
Social Media, Game	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Considering all tables above, it can be said that the participants are aware of technological equipment and they use it for various reasons.

III. Data Collection and Analysis Processes

As mentioned before, all the data was collected through <https://www.google.com/docs> and the link was sent to the participants. Later, all the data gathered was transferred into the SPSS 20. The questions addressed to the participants

are given in the Appendix.

A. Discussion

Two important questions were addressed to the participants as mentioned before:

The qualitative questions are:

1. What does the word 'innovation' remind you of in language teaching or language learning?
2. What do you think about the possible innovations in language teaching or language learning?

1. What does the word 'innovation' remind you of in language teaching or language learning?

The participants were asked "What does the word 'innovation' remind you of in language teaching or language learning?". Since all the participants are familiar with the new technological equipment, most of them talk about new applications that are available for IOS and android processors and that are available in the internet. Answers given by the learners are summarized below:

1. Technology
2. Blended Learning
3. LMS (Learning Management System)
4. The Internet
5. Robot Teachers
6. Smart boards
7. Online dictionaries
8. Face to face communication through the Internet
9. More speech activities
10. Going abroad where the target language is spoken
11. Natural approach
12. Active language usage through Social Media
13. Listening websites
14. Smart Phones
15. Different types of teaching methods
16. Applications on smart phones and in the Internet
17. Online vocabulary activities

18. Online games
19. Online books
20. Machine Translation

Most of the ideas that come to the learners' mind are related to the technological equipment and the Internet. Four of them are related to different topics: two of them are about teaching methods (natural approach and different types of teaching methods). Most of the learners think that innovation means technology and the Internet. Considering learners' explanations, learners are aware of the term 'innovation' and they follow and use the new innovative approaches and technological equipment.

2. What do you think about the possible innovations in language teaching or language learning?

The participants were asked "What do you think about the possible innovations in language teaching or language learning?" All of the learners have suggestions and ideas about possible innovations in the future. The suggestions made about the possible innovations in language teaching were classified in five subtitles and are as follow:

A. Machines and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- a. English speaking robots
- b. Robots as foreign language teachers
- c. English speaking robots can become permanent in houses
- d. A friend simulator which is accessible whenever it is needed to teach foreign language
- e. Alive simulators can be used
- f. Software can be developed to talk in foreign language without needing any human
- g. Creating new technological devices which enable to translate what is actually meant to be said by speakers in a foreign language
- h. Simultaneous Interpretation Headphones can be improved
- i. Simultaneous translation will be possible with small devices in order to make it easier for two foreign language speakers
- j. New inventions and discoveries can make it possible simultaneous translations without humans
- k. With the help of Artificial Intelligence, Language Learning can be easy.

B. The Internet

- a. Convenience of directly communicating with different countries in a virtual

environment

- b. The Internet and language classes as key points in Language Learning
- c. The Internet can provide all of language learners' needs
- d. Switching to online education
- C. *Nanotechnology*
 - a. People can learn language easier thanks to small chips placed on their body
 - b. Chips which can speak in foreign language can be placed on all of the smart phones
- D. *Methods, Strategies and techniques*
 - a. Different Memory Techniques
 - b. Going abroad or doing graduate level education
 - c. Analyzing movies in foreign language weekly
 - d. To make it easier to learn new vocabulary with the help of coding and visual images
 - e. Changes in curriculum to remark the importance of listening and speaking
 - f. Group activities for language learners
 - g. Programs can be used in language learning
 - h. Renewing the books which are used in language classes in Secondary and High Schools
 - i. Innovations to teach language to multiple intelligences
 - j. Innovations in speaking skills
- E. *Others*
 - a. Language can become unnecessary to communicate

This study shows that technology and the Internet are important parts of their lives; and most of them spend much time on using the Internet and technological equipment. Since they are familiar with new technological developments and the Internet, they can easily follow the update innovations including hardware and software ones. They are also aware of the new applications and methods available online.

As for the future innovations, the participants hope that the machine translation will improve and people from different languages will not have to learn another language. Although some students try to mean different innovations with regard to translation, the core concept is Machine Translation (MT). The first MT systems were produced as aids for translators, and their handicap could freely be accepted, but since the process

becomes a professional issue, the correctness is of high importance. Machine Translation has considerably reached to an extensive level.

MT is just translating "a wide variety of texts from one natural language to another" (Hutchins & Somers, 1992. p. 1) One of the participants states that "language can become unnecessary thanks to innovations in MT, especially the latest developments in AI, people won't have to learn another language; just using glasses or headphones will be enough."

E-learning, robots and chips, English speaking robots and online classes are other attention-grabbing possible innovations stated by the participants, which shows that the participants follow the latest developments in the Internet and technology world. If they would say these 10 years ago, you could think they are utopian. However, these expectations are now more realistic and less utopian than ever before. In other words, what we thought once as science fiction would become real in the near future.

Some of the topics stated by the participants are not related to the possible innovations; such as going abroad, interaction with foreigners, curriculum improvement and so on. They think these are the best way to acquire a language. These cannot be regarded as possible future innovations, because they are still under usage.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the expected innovations in language teaching and learning are mainly related to technology and the Internet. Taking the current language classes into consideration, teaching methods are blended with technology and the Internet and the term 'blended-learning' recently occurred. Nevertheless, in the near future, expected innovations will change the current language class formats inevitably and there will be no need for another human being (the human being factor will vanish). The expected innovations in the near future are mainly in machine translation, the Internet, nanotechnology, which means that language teaching and learning in the future is no more just an issue of just English teachers and publishers. It requires some disciplines such as software engineering, computer engineering, English Language Teaching/Training to work together. Furthermore, learners think that learning a foreign language will be unnecessary in the future, and Artificial Intelligence will do it on behalf of us and translate the target language into our own language and vice versa.

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