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The Sociology of Digital Classroom: An Analytic Autoethnography on Interaction Problems

Dijital Derslik Sosyolojisi: Etkileşim Sorunları Üzerine Analitik Bir Otoetnografi

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ABSTRACT

There is a meaningful relationship between the technology that societies have and their lifestyles. Microelectronics-based information/communication technologies have determined today's dominant technology as digitalization; this technology permeates all areas of life, including education. The learning environment of the learners in the classroom is also affected by the technology adopted. Digital classrooms have transformed the forms of interaction that build the sociality of a classroom and are a necessity for learning. In this regard, the aim of this study is to examine the forms of communication and interaction between teachers and learners in digital classrooms. Analytical autoethnography was adopted as a method. The researcher's (active) participation within the social context being studied, which allows for both experiencing and shaping it, has been a significant consideration in the selection of the research method. The diaries kept by the researcher in the study are the main data collection tools. According to the research findings, the status of the teacher in a digital classroom, his predisposition to digital elements, and the educational approaches he uses in the learning-teaching process are significant in the success of interaction among participants. It was found that the primary reason for the lack of motivation stems from positive aspects, such as the flexibility offered by digital classrooms. Low motivation causes concentration problems; it was observed that concentration issues led students to engage in cyber-loafing activities and to follow the lesson through asynchronous recordings later. It is also among the findings that situations in which the teacher has problems with his leadership during synchronous lessons negatively affect the interaction between members.

Keywords: Digital Classroom, Classroom Sociology, Digital Social Group, Interaction, Autoethnography.

ÖZ

Toplumların sahip olduğu teknoloji ile yaşam biçimlerini koşullandırması arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Mikro elektronik tabanlı bilgi/iletişim teknolojileri, günümüzün başat teknolojisini dijitalleşme olarak belirlemiştir; söz konusu teknoloji, eğitim de dahil olmak üzere yaşamın tüm alanlarına sirayet etmektedir. Belli bir amaçla bir araya toplanan birtakım bireylerin oluşturduğu toplumsal bir grup olarak sınıf içindeki öğrenenlerin öğrenme ortamı da, söz konusu teknolojiden etkilenmektedir. Dijital derslikler, bir sınıfın toplumsallığını inşa eden ve öğrenme için bir gereklilik teşkil eden etkileşim biçimlerinde dönüşüm yaratmıştır. Bu doğrultuda bu çalışmanın problemini dijital dersliklerde öğretmen ve öğrenenler arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşim biçimlerinin incelenmesi teşkil etmektedir. Nitel araştırma geleneği içerisinde gelişen analitik otoetnografi, yöntem olarak benimsenmiştir. Araştırmacının araştırılan toplumsal bağlamın tam bir katılımcısı olması, söz konusu bağlamı yalnızca deneyimlememesi ayrıca onu yaratan bir konumda olması araştırma yönteminin seçilmesinde önemli dinamikler olmuştur. Araştırmada araştırmacının tutmuş olduğu günlükler temel veri toplama aracıdır. Araştırma bulgularına göre, dijital bir derslikte öğretmenin statüsü, onun dijital unsurlara yatkınlığı ve öğrenme-öğretme sürecinde kullandığı eğitim yaklaşımları katılımcılar arasındaki etkileşimin başarısında anlamlıdır. Derslik içinde etkileşim sorunlarının en temel sebebinin motivasyon eksikliği olduğu bulunmuştur; motivasyon eksikliğinin temel kaynağı ise dijital dersliklerin sunmuş olduğu esneklik gibi olumlu özelliklerdir. Düşük motivasyon konsantrasyon sorununa sebep olmaktadır; konsantrasyon sorununun ise öğrencileri siber-aylaklık eylemlerine ve asenkron kayıtlardan dersi takip etmeye sevk ettiği görülmüştür. Senkron ders esnasında ise öğretmenin liderlik statüsünde sorunlar yaşadığı durumların, üyeler arasındaki etkileşimi olumsuz yönde etkilediği ayrıca bulgular arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Derslik, Derslik Sosyolojisi, Dijital Toplumsal Grup, Etkileşim, Otoetnografi.

Introduction

Learners, as a social group, come together for a common purpose in the classroom and communicate by interacting, and gaining roles and statuses while carrying out certain activities. Considering the social dimension of the classroom, according to İlhan and Gündüz (2023: 98), classrooms are "more than technical environments where students are loaded with information" and members of a group who interact and communicate for a common purpose establish associations and build norms, routines, rituals. He states that they build socialization patterns by doing so. In classrooms, which are social areas, interaction, communication, and dialogue are of great importance. Freire (2016: 83) states that classes cannot stay away from dialogue by saying, "There can be no communication without dialogue, and there can be no real education without communication"; in this regard, the proverb "If you tell me I can forget, if you show me I can remember, if you include me I can understand" (Şahin, 2020: 432) underlines the importance of interaction during a learning process; because learning happens when there are interpersonal communication and interaction (Allwright, 1988) and interaction means being included.

The learner's involvement as a subject in the learning process has only been realized over time and has a recent history. It can be said that interactionist education approaches, which emphasize the dimension of being an active participant rather than a passive recipient of learning, are cognitive, constructivist, and postmodern approaches that blend cognitive and constructivist approaches. A process where the influence of constructivist and postmodern philosophies began to spread in classrooms, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic has made digital learning, which has already been on the agenda for a while widespread (Doo & Zhu, 2022). Considering the classroom environment where face-to-face courses are given, learning in a digital classroom provides a much more flexible learning environment in terms of structure; it can be argued that this situation offers many opportunities to learners in terms of learning processes, timing of learning, and learning approaches (Milligan & Littlejohn, 2014). While the opportunities offered to the learner have brought about some changes in the learner's characteristics, they have also required them to have some competencies. Among these competencies, the priority for learners is to carry out the learning process more independently (Serdyukov & Hill, 2013). The independence of the student in the learning process also requires them to become competent in planning, implementing, controlling, and taking precautions in the learning process (Ally, 2008; Garrison, 1997; Zimmerman, 2008). Competence, on the other hand, makes the students autonomous and turns them into do-it-yourself learners (Şahin, 2020; Avcıoğlu & Altay, 2022). Interaction, communication, and dialogue in learning areas are important for do-it-yourself learners, who are both the subject and the object of digital learning, just like face-to-face constructivist learners. However, it can be argued that the dynamics of these elements differ in digital areas. Rendueles (2024) states that the technology we have, conditions the way how we relate to our environment and the way society is organized. Microelectronic-based information/communication technologies, in which digital classrooms are built, can be considered among the basic dynamics of today's social structure in which we live (Castells, 2000). According to Giddens (2004), this dynamic, which trivializes time and space and makes them ambiguous, creates a unity that affects the whole world. Rendueles (2024) defines the unity mentioned by Giddens as social enthusiasm and argues that this social enthusiasm created by digital communication tools is unfounded and remains decorative. Although he accepts that digital communication tools strengthen communication, he states that they do not encourage people's interest in each other.

In this regard, the problem of the research consists of the forms of in-class interaction that digital education has created as a part of the online education process. In line with the problem in question, the aim of the research is to examine

the classroom structure constructed in a digital classroom and the interpersonal interaction within this structure. The research questions are as follows: (1) In a digital classroom, how does the teacher interact with the digital classroom? (2) How does teacher-student and student-student interaction take place in a digital classroom?

Classroom Sociology, Digital Classroom, and Digital Social Group

Classrooms are considered social areas focused on learning and success; however, it is beyond being a field of learning and success as it is an area where human relations, emotions, attitudes, various roles, and interactions occur (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1976). Durkheim (1956: 114) states that classrooms are miniatures of society by saying "pedagogy depends on sociology more closely than any other sciences". It is the interaction among the individuals within the classroom that creates the social context of the classroom (Tombak İlhan et al., 2023). Examining this social context is within the scope of classroom sociology. Tombak-İlhan et al. (2023) include all social activities that make learning easier or more difficult, fun or boring in the social context, which is the object of study under the umbrella of classroom sociology. For this reason, classroom sociology, which is the application of a sociological perspective and sociological theories to the classroom, can provide scientific data to make learning-teaching processes more effective (Macomber et al., 2009; Gelles, 1980; Goldsmidt & Wilson, 1980; Atkinson et al, 2009; Halasz & Kaufman, 2008). Considering the content of classroom sociology, it can be claimed that the object of research is a social group, and examining the object in question requires a socio-psychological study at the micro level (Atkinson et al., 2009).

Social groups can be defined in their simplest form as "two or more people who identify with and interact with one another" (Macionis, 2011: 162). Hargie and Dickson (2004: 401), on the other hand, add some dynamics and define it as follows: "Social groups consist of people who come together within a set of values, either naturally or to achieve certain goals and activities." It is noteworthy that there are shared cognitive, emotional, and behavioral commonalities (Greenwood, 2003). Ritchie (2015: 316-317) points out the existence of structural-functional organizations by emphasizing the concept of "structured wholes". In these organizations, members engage in deliberate collective actions and state that it is not necessary to share common characteristics with other members except for a certain goal.

Considering these definitions, members of classrooms form a social group. Classrooms are formed within a certain structure, and those within this structure occupy certain statuses (being a teacher and being a student status) and fulfill the roles required by these statuses (requirements of teaching, requirements of being a student) to achieve a certain goal (learning and teaching the subject content). While doing all this, communication and interaction are established as required by statuses and roles. The extent of communication and interaction is determined within the framework of the educational approach adopted by the teacher, the group leader, in the learning-teaching process. The fact that it is structured requires us to rightfully adopt it as a social group.

Rendueles (2024) states that the technology we have, conditions the way we relate to our environment and the way society is organized; in this regard, information-communication technologies in the twenty-first century have also moved classrooms to digital platforms: MsTeams, GoogleClassroom, Moodle, Zoom are some applications used for digital classrooms in universities; besides, some universities use their distance education platforms. These digital learning platforms, which offer synchronous broadcasting, are designed to enable teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. Therefore, it can be argued that all the conditions that enable partners to form a social group in face-to-face classrooms, also form a social group in digital classrooms; the social group formed by the members of the digital classroom can be called a digital social group.

Learning Approaches Supporting Interaction

Learning approaches to paying attention to social interaction are numerous. Among these approaches, although the connectionist learning approach is on the agenda with the increasing importance of digital technologies, previously developed theories that center interaction also fill in the content of connectionist learning. Cognitive learning, which emphasizes the learner's process and capacity to process information, attaches importance to social interaction in the classroom; connecting the information processing process with previously acquired information is crucial. However, today the constructivist approach attracts the attention of teaching staff with its student-centered learning-teaching processes. In the constructivist approach, the learner is not in a passive role, but takes a leading role in the learning process; therefore, constructivist education is a theory of learning rather than a theory of teaching (Richardson, 2003). In this context, the constructivist theory is based on the learner's interpretation of the information and the world in his personal reality, which he acquires as a result of observation, processing, and interpretation (Ally, 2008). Information that has a personal meaning is placed in a central context through communication and interaction in the classroom; for this reason, knowledge can grow in the classroom environment (Brumbaugh & Rock, 2006). Mezirow (1991) mentions five interactional contexts of learning; these are, respectively, interaction with the meaning framework in which learning is embedded, interaction with the conditions of communication, interaction with the processing system in which learning takes place, interaction with the learner's image and interaction with the situation encountered in the learning process. The student's active position in expanding and increasing knowledge requires him/her to be an individual with self-control; in this way, students will be able to structure strategic learning processes and manage the structure of the learning environment (Scardamalia, 1989).

In this approach, learning is a process that never ends as experience continues. Indeed, people infer meaning from the interaction between their experiences and the ideas they have; this means that each individual plays an active role in constructing meaning through their experiences and interactions and that learning is not independent of the learner (Rob & Rob, 2018). In the constructivist learning approach, which assumes that the learning process is context-based, knowledge can be constructed as a result of our experiences in social areas, our interactions, our dialogues, and the way we perceive them (Bednar et al., 1991; Hwong, 1996). Therefore, it can be said that creating something and sharing what is created (through dialogue) is a necessity for learning to take place (Rob & Rob, 2018).

In the connectionist learning approach developed in accordance with the conditions of the global digital age, the interaction elements predicted by previously developed theories move from in-class communication and interaction to worldwide communication and interaction to the extent made possible by information/communication technologies (Ally, 2005); in other words "limitless communication" (Dönmez, 2021: 181) is both provided and expected to be engaged. This situation turns the digital classroom into a global classroom; as a result, learners require constant communication and interaction with students, teachers, and experts around the world, using digital technology to keep their knowledge up to date.

There are three types of interactions that support meaningful learning in the formal learning process and are also the subject of this autoethnography; these are the interaction between student-teacher, student-student, and student-content. Anderson (2003) suggests that deep and meaningful learning will occur if at least one interaction occurs successfully. In his equivalency theorem, he also suggests that these types of interactions can be maintained interchangeably. For example, a student who cannot attend a synchronous digital classroom will be able to listen and watch the asynchronous recording at times suitable to

them, rather than interacting with other students to learn what is being studied in the classroom (if the course is recorded). This may imply that the student's interaction with the content can be maintained without student-student interaction. Whatever its direction, "interaction has always been valued in education" (Anderson, 2003: 2).

Methodology of the Research

This research is an ethnography developed within the qualitative research tradition. An auto-ethnographic approach was adopted in terms of the issue researched. Auto-ethnography, defined as the self-narrative of the researcher's positioning with others in a social context (Spry, 2001) is a type of research in which the researcher is both the author and the focus of the research, both the narrator and the experiencer of what is narrated, and the observer and the observed (Ellis, 2009). Auto-ethnography is considered one of the most recently developed qualitative research approaches and can be chosen as a research method, especially when there is a situation that causes discomfort and anxiety (Murray, 2023); the researcher, who places himself or herself in the anxiety-provoking situation writes his/ her own experiences as research findings (Reed-Dananhay, 1997).

Murray (2023) states that he tried to reflect all emotions caused by the experienced situation in his writing and because of this aim he wrote his narrative using the first person singular and present tense when writing his auto-ethnography; he also underlines that auto-ethnography exhibits an evocative feature to motivate readers to take action. The first person singular, which Murray used when reporting his findings, was also adopted in this research; however, its evocative feature was not adopted. As a matter of fact, according to Anderson's (2006) classification, there are two types of auto-ethnography; the first of these is evocative auto-ethnography, while the other is analytical auto-ethnography. The main difference between the two is that evocative auto-ethnography is less methodologically limited, while analytic auto-ethnography is limited to processes such as research purpose, data analysis, and comparison of findings with previous research findings or the literature.

Anderson as a main user of analytical auto-ethnography distinguishes analytical auto-ethnography from the other one with five basic features. These five basic features also legitimize the method of this research.

First of all, as stated by Merton (1988), in analytical autoethnography, the researcher is a full participant in the social field being researched. In this research, the researcher (I am the participant) is a participant and is at the center of the problem due to his profession. As a matter of fact, as a researcher, I am a full participant in online education with my status as a faculty member at a university. This kind of participation is called opportunistic complete member researcher (CMR), in Anderson's words (Anderson, 2006). While Anderson welcomes the status of being both the researcher and the research object of the subject being studied, due to the emotional closeness to the researched object, Strathern (1987) argues that this status is problematic due to the existing role conflict (resulting in conflicting situation of being both the research object and the researcher). The second important feature of analytical autoethnography is its analytical reflexivity characteristics; the data obtained is naturally connected to personal experiences and meanings (Atkinson et al., 2003). Anderson (2006) argues that rather than accepting researchers as merely a part of the situation being researched, they are also creations of the situation being researched; as all humans are cultural beings and it is natural to be affected by the living environment. Therefore, the researcher should carry out his/her research with an awareness of the effects of the phenomenon, which also affect them. The visibility of the researcher in the research text is stated as a third feature; Anderson (2006) accepts the researcher as living data in understanding the observed social situation and emphasizes the importance of the researcher's discussion on the changes in emotions, thoughts, beliefs and behaviors that happen under the

influence of the social environment studied. In this research, one of my main aims is to describe my understanding of interaction reshaped by online education as a full participant in the social situation under study. My way of interacting reshaped as a CMR, means participation in the construction of meaning and values, as Anderson expresses. While establishing dialogue with other participants in the social field provides another feature of analytical autoethnography and this feature also distinguishes it from evocative autoethnography. While evocative autoethnography only includes the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of the researcher, analytic autoethnography, as stated by Rosaldo (1993), attaches great importance to reaching others without falling into the state of solipsism and author saturation that evocative autoethnography does (Anderson, 2006). Moreover, this study also includes the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others in online classrooms; but these feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others are narrated from their point of view in a scientific manner. Commitment to an analytic agenda is the fifth and last feature listed by Anderson. Analytical autoethnography is not simply describing personal experience; according to him, analytical autoethnography has a set of organized data that clarifies the researched social phenomenon.

In the analytical autoethnography study adopted in this research, the features mentioned by Anderson are taken into account; and it was assumed that the interaction experienced among the participants in the digital education process is problematic. The research data was collected through the diaries I kept after the lesson during the digital education process.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are designed as (1) the process of a teacher's first meeting with the digital classroom, (2) the problems of communication and interaction between teacher-learner and learner-learner in the course period.

Interaction Between Teacher and Digital Classroom Platform

Many faculty members who had not had any experience with distance education were introduced to online education by using digital technologies during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As being unaware of the dynamics of the digital field, these faculty members had to receive in-service training on how to teach by using digital platforms. The content of this training they received, included course preparation, learning-teaching processes, evaluation methods, and techniques on how to carry on a course on digital platforms. According to research conducted by Bani-Mohammad and Ababnech (2023), most educational institutions were insufficient to provide such in-service training. The university where I work quickly took the necessary precautions and provided basic training on how to teach by using digital platforms.

Many faculty members, who largely used digital technologies only for research purposes, suddenly became digital immigrants.[1] In digital classroom platforms that require greater digital literacy; I can assert that this situation caused faculty members, including me, to question our professional competencies. To be honest, at least I started to question my competencies and competences. This situation was quite normal; because, the education we received to perform and our professional life until now was by face-to-face communication and interaction in a classroom surrounded by four walls, but suddenly the walls collapsed and we started to practice our teaching profession in a vast digital world. In this digital world, we could not even see the faces of our students, who were our main partners.

1 Prensky (2001) developed the concepts of digital natives and digital immigrants, and these concepts are partially connected to digital literacy. The generation born in an age where digital technologies are intense and use them frequently as a part of their body is defined as digital natives, and those who later became involved in the use of new information and communication technologies are defined as digital immigrants.

Because of my age, I was positioning myself closer to being a digital native; however, in a short time, I realized that I wasn't a digital native. I remember that at the first stage of the in-service training, I did not attach much importance to the training by saying, "But this is child's play, we can handle it easily", I can never forget the moments when I had difficulty even uploading files to my digital classroom. I used Google Classroom to share materials with my students beforehand, but the Microsoft Teams classroom had much more functionality and the university where I work adopted Microsoft Teams Classroom. When I needed to upload a file for the first time, I had to get support from my students. I was partly embarrassed, but the fact that I adopted and applied a constructivist approach in my learning teaching processes; and this approach normalized this kind of support from my students for me. According to this approach, the learner and the teacher are both the learner and the teacher.[2] That's why teaching in a digital classroom seemed promising to me; because the fact that my students could teach me something in a field in which they are competent would strengthen their self-confidence and this would increase their motivation for my lessons.

I was working with many colleagues who were obviously digital immigrants; so I witnessed their experiences first-hand. Many of them were over fifty years old, and for many of them, the computers on their office desks were almost accessories. Apart from checking or sending their e-mails or finding research articles, this time they turned on their computers for teaching. They, of course, had difficulties, but it was admirable that some of them adapted themselves to using digital classrooms easily. Those, who had difficulty adapting to using these digital technologies, preferred to give their lessons from their offices on campus instead of from their homes; by doing so they could get the soonest support when they had problems (support from the technical office and also from their assistants). Many times, just as I was about to begin my digital lesson, my colleagues in the same corridor would call me in panic, saying, "Help me, help me, something has happened to this computer, I can't start the lesson." While the interaction, before using digital classrooms, between faculty members at the university and the interaction of faculty members with their assistants were more focused on academic issues, interaction especially after using digital platforms began to consist mainly of technical issues. We soon realized that technical digital literacy is the basis of teaching effectively in digital classrooms, and we managed to ensure collaborative learning among colleagues. When one of us learned something new about techniques we could use in the digital classroom, we couldn't wait to share it with the others. This kind of interaction between my colleagues and me also reflects on our digital classrooms, and our interaction with our students has partially strengthened every day; I say partially because, although we, as teachers, were leaders in the social group of the digital classroom, many dynamics were also affecting the interaction of the digital classroom.

According to the constructivist approach, interaction attaches great importance and the problem posed in the learning environment must not be disorganized, well prepared, and presented by the teacher; because this approach is based on the fact that learners can only be successful if they embrace the problem posed (Jonassen, 1999). In the digital classroom, this claim highlights two-dimensional dynamics; the first of these dynamics is the teacher's interaction with the course content,

2 Paulo Freire (2016), who has conducted studies on critical pedagogy based on the constructivist approach, attaches importance to the mutual learning process of the teacher and the student. The basis of the mutual learning process is based on the subjectivity of knowledge; So, if knowledge is subjective, the distinction between those who know and those who do not know becomes ambiguous. In student-centered education, the student structures knowledge by sharing what he/she knows in the classroom. In this regard, Freire (2016) emphasizes the importance of horizontal communication and interaction processes, without hierarchical structures between the learner and the teacher.

the ability, and competence to present the content on the digital platforms in the online process, while the second one is the student's embracement of the subject and their active participation in the course.

Interaction Among the Partners

In a digital classroom, communication and interaction between partners take place in an intertwined manner between teacher-student, learner-learner, and interaction between teacher and student with the material/problem.

The most fundamental issue that affects all of these interactions is closely related to the asynchronous or synchronous arrangement of the digital classroom. In an asynchronous digital classroom, interaction occurs mainly between teacher-material and learner-material; the interaction between the learner and the teacher is not synchronous and can only be experienced outside of class time, through digital channels such as e-mail. However, a synchronous digital classroom allows instant and rapid interaction between learner-learner and learner-teacher, beyond what asynchronous one provides. At the university where I work, it was decided that the courses would be held synchronously and that the synchronous courses would be recorded and shared with the students asynchronously. I liked this practice; because it would be easy for students to interact with me and other students, as well as with the course material. In addition, this would give students freedom of movement by providing free time with its asynchronous dimension. Freedom of movement is also emphasized in progressive education approaches that emphasize the importance of interaction (Dewey, 2014); In accordance with this freedom of movement, I wrote down my Instagram and Twitter accounts as communication channels on my digital classroom syllabus in order to make their interaction with me easier; my purpose in doing so was to accelerate the communication and interaction processes between me and my students.

I encountered a surprise that disrupted communication and interaction, which are expected to happen during the synchronous course time. When I appeared in front of my students with my camera on, I asked them to turn their cameras on too; they turned them on, but the power of the internet was largely insufficient and as a result of insufficient power of the internet both the conversations and the images became intermittent and dull. Not being able to see my students' faces obscured the difference between the forestage and the backstage, in the concepts of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy; because when we think about the course time, every teacher rehearses in the backstage in order to impress their students in class and then comes to the front stage and plays their role in front of their students; the same thing happened in the digital classroom, but there was a difference. My own experience reveals this difference: when I went to the front stage and started playing the role of a teacher, the fact that I could not see anyone (due to the student cameras being turned off) and the fact that I addressed a void, made me feel in the backstage where rehearsals are held, even when I was in the front-stage. I have experienced this feeling frequently. It's a state of always being rehearsed, without ever getting on stage (actually, I do). This situation firstly reduced my motivation; because I could feel that speaking into a void would take the lesson away from interaction and turn it into just a narrative; as a matter of fact, it often happened.

It is frequently found in various research findings that there is a significant relationship between motivation and student success (Derakshan et al., 2020; Halif et al., 2020). The fact that not all students could turn on their cameras decreased my motivation as a teacher, but the level of student motivation is also as important; because low student motivation prevents the course from being inspiring (Mohamed et al., 2023). One of my students said about this problem: "The material you use and especially the value you give us directly affect our motivation. The higher our motivation is, the higher active participation in class discussions

happens." Students can feel the value given to them, especially when their mood (being sad, distressed, nervous, sleepless, sick, or not) is realized by the teacher. In face-to-face classrooms, I could notice their current mood and initiate a conversation by asking how they were doing, and I could determine a learning-teaching strategy that is suitable for their current mood; but in the digital classroom, due to turning off cameras, I could not realize them as I could not able to see their faces, and therefore I was unaware of their problems (even though I valued them). Anderson (2008) also mentions the same problem, as interaction is insufficient due to the lack of understanding of the student's cultural perspective due to turning off cameras. Ultimately, I can say that this situation dealt the first blow to the communication and interaction between learner and teacher.

The interaction I had to establish with my students, which had its first blow with low motivation, also suffered its second blow with the problems my students had in maintaining concentration. For instance; one of my students, who was an active participant in the lessons, was among the participants in my digital classroom; so I asked him a question, I called and called, but there was no answer. When I called his name repeatedly for a response, his classmates phoned him and said, "The teacher is calling you, come to the screen quickly." He arrived and told me that he was having breakfast in the kitchen, while his computer was in his room. When we had a talk about this matter later, this student said that he continued to eat breakfast during the lesson, but he also took his computer to the kitchen with him. He, of course, was not alone in the kitchen, he was also socializing with the people around him; that's why he minimized the sound of the digital classroom. This example shows that the flexibility and comfort area that the digital classroom provides to the student can also cause concentration problems. If considered in the context of Goffman's (1959; 1961) dramaturgical analysis, this situation puts the teacher, that is me, as an actor, in a difficult situation; ultimately, in one-person plays where there is only one actor on the stage, if the actor experiences a problem while performing his role, the absence of another actor on stage to compensate for the problem will make the performance flawed. In interaction-based learning-teaching processes, there is student-centered education and the student is not an object but an actor in the classroom; however, the students attending the digital classroom only to be "present" on the attendance sheet left me alone on the stage.

Other examples noticed in my lessons where the student's attention shifted to another direction could be that the student was browsing social media or talking to someone else on the phone while listening to the synchronous lesson. I have noticed many times that some of the students I follow on social media share photos on Instagram and tweet on Twitter during class time. This action is called cyber-loafing[3], is very common even in face-to-face classes, it becomes inevitable in digital classrooms and becomes a reality that negatively affects the interaction between partners in the classroom. It can be inferred that one of the main reasons for cyber-loafing is the teacher's failure to make the lesson interesting. Teachers being successful showmen during the course time, that is, teaching the lesson more entertainingly and memorably without PowerPoint slides filled with lots of written information, will ensure that students show interest in the lesson (Koh et al., 2023). Therefore, every time I noticed that my students were having concentration problems, it made me question my digital teaching strategies.

While I was just starting to teach, a message sent by a student in the chat section of the digital classroom was interesting; in his message, he wrote that he was on a trip and that there was a possibility that he might not be able to respond if I called him, and that he was apologizing for this situation. In this example, it is noticeable that

3 Using the internet "for non-academic purposes during class hours" is called cyberloafing or cyberslacking (Karabıyık, 2021: 552) and results in distraction, lower participation, and lower academic achievement.

although my students are physically in the digital classroom, they may be somewhere else mentally. Therefore, I have realized many times that low motivation causes concentration problems and other preoccupations during the lesson; in such cases, the students' sole aim is to be written "present" on the attendance sheet. In such cases, my students could follow the course from asynchronous lecture recordings whenever they wanted and were convenient: sometimes while traveling on the bus, sometimes when they were on a boring family visit. I know they were doing this kind of practice as they sometimes took a screenshot of a portion of the recorded lecture on their phones and shared it on their social media accounts. I can never forget one of my students saying, "When I have the chance to watch and listen to the lecture later, why do I miss this chance for convenience." This was a negative result of the flexibility provided by the digital classroom on the interaction.

The student interacts with the teacher, other students, and the course material. These three interaction aspects confront the students with a crucial decision. In this respect, the students had to decide whether to focus on the lecture, participate in the lesson interactively, or take notes. For instance a student I met on campus said: "During face-to-face education, when you noticed that I was taking notes, you either slowed down your narration or supported me in focusing on you by saying that you would give me time to take notes later; but in digital classrooms we are deprived of your support because you can not see us in the digital classroom." This situation may cause the student's attention to be distracted; Koh et al. (2023: 387) describes as follows: "a postgraduate noticed that during live ZoomTM sessions. '… [I struggled with] writing notes whilst listening in an online environment—it was [a] distraction.' Therefore, there was a need to consider, 'Do you take notes? Do you just listen? … Do you interact."

In the digital classroom, when the student wants to participate in the lesson interactively, there may be some situations where their motivation to respond is broken. For example, I was confused about what I could do in the face of a justified request: "Teacher when you ask a question, those who want to answer wait for you to give them the right to speak by using the digital hand raise, but those who turn on their microphones and speak directly without raising their hands lose our enthusiasm to respond. Is it possible for you to find a solution to this problem?" The same student continued complaining, saying, "Some students, who start speaking without asking for the right to speak, talk for so long that they steal my time from learning or sharing ideas." The same student was so disturbed about this issue that he added: "Teacher, for example, you ask a question, they raise their hands, the question is answered, but they forget to lower their hands. You notice that hand later and think he is going to say something important and you give him the right to speak again, but that student has nothing to say, so the result is an interrupted lecture."

Immediately after I started teaching in the digital classroom, I started receiving a lot of e-mails from my students and messages via Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp (for those who know my phone number); the content of the e-mails sent and the messages I received was all about the topics I talked in the digital classroom time. Later, I asked students why they did not ask these questions during the synchronous lesson; the answer I got was something like "Sir, we are ashamed, we are afraid of being ridiculed by other students." This situation surprised me; because such a situation did not occur in face-to-face classrooms and they could ask questions about things they did not understand. This paradoxical situation reminds me that communication largely occurs through body language; as a matter of fact, the communication and interaction process may be interrupted because they cannot follow each other's body language in the digital classroom.

Conclusion

With the beginning to use digital classrooms offering an example of social change and transformations, it can be alleged that it is natural

for change and transformation to bring about certain crises and problems. In this research, these problems are discussed from an analytical auto-ethnographic framework.

Within the scope of the research, it has been observed that digital classrooms bring two basic problems. These are both digital technology, information literacy,, and interaction-based problems that are an important element in the implementation of education.

Although there are many opportunities to increase interaction in digital classrooms, interaction, in general, becomes difficult; as a matter of fact, there is a significant relationship between the teacher's digital technology literacy and motivation (Shabani & Beshtica, 2016; Chytry et al., 2019; Artal-Sevil et al., 2019) that affects the student's interaction. Additionally, students' cameras being turned off on the digital platform makes the teacher, who is in a leadership position, feel like he/she is in a one-person play, and this practice affects the teacher's motivation; low teacher motivation affects student motivation. Then, the most fundamental finding of this research is that there is a significant relationship between motivation and interaction as expressed in the research of Derakhshan et al. (2020), Halif et al. (2020), and Wisniewski (2018). It has been found that low motivation leads to situations that negatively impact communication and interaction in the digital classroom; as a matter of fact, a student who loses motivation may engage in cyber-loafing in a multi-tasking manner as a result of both having his/her camera turned off and knowing that he/she can follow the lesson asynchronously later. These practices disrupt communication and interaction within the classroom.

The findings of this research also problematize whether digital classroom participants constitute a social group; although the communication and interaction of social groups with each other is very important, it is among the findings that such communication and interaction can be partially happened or interrupted in digital classrooms. This situation seems controversial in the context of classroom sociology, whether the digital dimension of the classroom forms a social group or not.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Derslikler, öğrenme ve başarı odaklı toplumsal alanlardır; ancak onun toplumun bir minyatürü olması, derslikleri insan ilişkilerinin, duygularının, tutum almaların yer aldığı bir alan haline getirmektedir. Bu durum derslikleri, öğrenme ve başarı odaklı alan olmalarının ötesine taşımaktadır. O halde toplumsal bir bağlamda derslikler, genelde sosyolojinin özelde ise eğitim sosyolojisinin bir araştırma nesnesi olmaktadır; nitekim bireyler arası iletişim ve etkileşimin dersliklerde belirlenmiş yapısal formu, onu sosyolojik kılmaktadır. Derslik sosyolojisi bağlamında, dersliklerin toplumsal bağlamı (üyelerinin statü ve rolleri doğrultusunda iletişim kurma biçimleri), toplumsal bağlam temelli öğrenmeyi kolaylaştırıcı ya da zorlaştırıcı unsurları inceleme konusu olmaktadır.

Bir toplumun sahip olduğu teknoloji ile çevresiyle iletişim kurma biçimi arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu dikkate alındığında, yirmi birinci yüzyılın mikro elektronik tabanlı bilgi iletişim teknolojilerinin dersliklerdeki yapıyı değiştirip dönüştürdüğü ileri sürülebilmektedir. Giddens gibi bazı sosyologlara göre söz konusu yeni teknoloji bir birliktelik ve coşku yaratırken, Renduelez gibi bazı düşünürler ise bu birlikteliğin ve coşkunun asılsız ve dekoratif kaldığını ileri sürmektedir. Söz konusu bu çelişik yaklaşımlar, bu araştırmanın problemine de zemin oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada, çevrimiçi eğitim sürecinin bir parçası olarak dijital eğitimin ortaya çıkarmış olduğu derslik-içi etkileşim biçimlerinin incelenmesi problem edilmiştir. Söz konusu problem doğrultusunda, dijital dersliklerde öğretmenin dijital platformlarla etkileşimi, öğretmen-öğrenci etkileşimi, öğrenci-öğrenci etkileşiminin ne şekilde gerçekleştiği araştırma soruları olarak tespit edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın problemi ve soruları, araştırmada analitik otoetnografi yöntem/ tekniği benimsenilerek yanıtlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Otoetnografi, belirlenmiş olan toplumsal bağlamda diğerlerine yönelik araştırmacının konumlanışının bir öz anlatısıdır; araştırmacı, söz konusu bağlamda hem yazar hem de araştırmanın nesnesi, hem anlatıcı hem de anlatılanları deneyimleyen, hem gözlemleyici hem de gözlemlenendir. Analitik otoetnografinin birincil özelliği, araştırmacının araştırılan toplumsal alanda

tam bir katılımcı statüsü ile yer almasıdır; bu özellik bağlamında araştırmacı olarak "ben", araştırılan toplumsal alanın oportünist bir katılımcısı olarak yer almaktayım. Bu katılımcı türü (oportünist), araştırmacı olarak "ben"i araştırılan toplumsal alanın doğal bir üyesi olmam sebebiyledir. Araştırmanın nesnesi olarak toplumsal bağlama etkim ve oradaki deneyimlerimin değerlendirilmesi bağlamında analitik düşünümsellik söz konusu yöntemin ikinci özelliği olmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda araştırmada görünür olmam (üçüncü özellik), alandaki diğerleriyle etkileşimim (dördüncü özellik) ve toplumsal yapı ile biyografik özelliklerimin bir araya getirilmesi (beşinci özellik) araştırmada analitik otoetnografinin benimsenmesinde etkili olmuşlardır ve tüm özellikler araştırmaya yansıtılmıştır.

Araştırma bulguları iki alt başlıkta (öğretmenin dijital derslik platformu ile etkileşimi ve dijital derslikte yer alan paydaşlar arasında etkileşim) sunulmuştur. Öğretmenin dijital derslikteki dijital toplumsal grubun bir lideri olduğu dikkate alındığında, onun teknolojik okuryazarlığı önem arz etmektedir; nitekim araştırma bulgularına göre kendimi dijital yerliye yakın bir statüye yerleştirirken, uygulama esnasında statümün hiç de dijital yerli olmadığını defalarca deneyimledim. Yaşı, bugüne kadar ki yaşam deneyimleri göz önüne alındığında birçok öğretim üyesinin her ne kadar dijital teknolojileri kullanıyor olsalar da, dijital derslikte liderlik statüsünü üstlenebilecekleri derecede dijital okuryazar oldukları sorgulanmaktadır. Araştırma bulgularına göre, öğrencilerin dijital platformda kameralarının kapalı olması, lider pozisyonundaki öğretmeni tek kişilik bir oyunda hissettirmekte ve bu durum öğretmenin motivasyonunu düşürmektedir; çünkü öğretmen öğrencilerle iletişim kurmak istediğinde yanıt alamaması öğrencilerin bilgisayarlarının başında olmadıkları izlenimini uyandırmaktadır. Dijital öğrenme süreçlerinde kurumsal uygulamaların, senkron dersin yanı sıra, derslerin kayıt altına alınması ve öğrencilere asenkron olarak da sunulması, öğrencilerin derse katılım oranını düşürmektedir. Goffman'ın benliğin sunumuna yönelik teorisi bağlamında, iletişim kuran aktörlerin hazırlık yaptığı süreç yalnızca öğretmen üzerinden işlemektedir; söz konusu teoriye göre bireyler iyi birer izlenim bırakabilmek için toplumsal grupların önüne çıkmadan önce bir tür hazırlık aşamasından geçer; ancak bu hazırlık süreci, öğrencilerin kameralarının kapalı olması sebebiyle önemsiz görülmekte ve onların sahne arkasında kalmalarına sebep olmaktadır. Oysa iletişim ve etkileşim, dersliklerde öğrenmeyi hızlandırıcı bir unsurdur. Bu durumun yalnızca öğretmenin motivasyonu düşürmekle kalmayıp, öğrenci motivasyonunun da düşmesine sebep olduğu bulgular arasındadır.

Motivasyon düşüklüğü, dijital derslikte iletişim ve etkileşimi olumsuz etkileyen durumların oluşumuna da yol açtığı bulunmuştur; nitekim motivasyonu düşen öğrenci, hem kamerasının kapalı olması hem de daha sonra asenkron bir şekilde dersi takip edebileceğini bilmesi sonucunda çoklu-görevle bağlantılı bir şekilde siber-aylaklık yapabilmektedir. Bilgisayarının bir sekmesinde senkron sunulan ders açıkken, diğer sekmelerinde dikkatini dağıtan diğer meşguliyetlerle ilgilenebildikleri bulunmuştur. Söz konusu siber-aylaklık meşguliyetleri arasında watsapp'ta anlık mesajlaşma, instagram ya da twitterda dolaşma, bilgisayar oyunu oynama gibi eylemler sayılabilmektedir. Öğrencinin motivasyonunun düşerek, konsantrasyon sorunu yaşamasında dijital dersliğin lideri pozisyonundaki öğretmenin etkisinin önemli olduğu ayrıca bulgular arasındadır. Nitekim öğretmenin hazırlamış olduğu ders materyali, eğlenceli olmaktan ziyade yazı ağırlıklı olduğunda öğrencilerin motivasyonunun düştüğü görülmektedir; ayrıca dijital ders sürecinde izin almadan konuşmaya dahil olan öğrencilerin varlığının ders anlatımını bozduğu öğrenciler tarafından sıklıkla ifade edilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, söz hakkı isteyip, öğretmenin söz hakkı verdiği bazı öğrencilerin çok uzun konuşması, öğretmenin ise bu duruma müdahale etmediği durumlarda öğrenci motivasyonu düşmekte ve konsantrasyon sağlayamamaktadırlar.

İki ya da daha fazla bireyin belli başlı hedeflere ulaşmak amacıyla bir araya geldiği ve söz konusu

amaca, hedefe ulaşabilmek için birbirleriyle iletişim ve etkileşim kurmaları toplumsal grupları oluşturmaktadır; yüz yüze eğitimde toplumsal grup olmanın tüm özellikleri yansıtılabilmektedir; ancak mikro tabanlı yeni bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinin sunduğu dijital dersliklerde toplumsal grup olabilmenin özellikleri kısmen sağlanabilmektedir. Derslik sosyolojisinde, derslik içindeki tüm katılımcıların iletişim ve etkileşim kurabilmeleri, öğrenme ve başarı için bir gereklilik olarak kabul edilirse, dijital derslik üyelerinin toplumsal bir grup oluşturup oluşturamadıkları araştırma bulgularına göre tartışmalıdır; dijitalleşmenin oluşturduğu birlikteliğin dekoratif olmaktan öteye gidip gitmediğinin daha fazla dijital derslik sosyolojisi araştırmalarıyla desteklenmesi ayrıca gerekmektedir.

Yazar Bilgileri

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