

Course Books and Technology Use in Language Teaching: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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Abstract

Teachers' attitudes towards course materials and their adoption of new technologies are likely to be influenced by their beliefs and therefore, result in different instructional practices. This study explores the perceptions of English language teachers towards the use of course materials and integration of technology in teaching English. This descriptive study adopted both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Participants of the study were 36 instructors of a university that has been supported by a private foundation English preparatory program in Istanbul. Two instruments were developed and used to collect data for the research: a questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended questions and interviews with two teachers that consisted of open-ended questions. The results of the study indicated that teachers' beliefs play an important role in influencing teachers' instructional decisions and classroom practices. Quite a number of teachers raised their concerns about the unattractiveness of the course book materials. Regarding technology usage in the classroom, almost all teachers believed that it was important to become familiar with the recent technologies for both teachers and students. Findings of the study have implications for teacher education. Pre-service and in-service teacher education programs should provide training, coaching, and assistance in increasing the usage of technology in the classroom. Schools should make considerable investments in educational technologies so that learning management systems can be integrated into language syllabus.

Keywords: *Teachers' beliefs, course book evaluation, technology adoption, language teaching*

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Dil Öğretiminde Ders Kitapları ve Teknoloji kullanımı: Öğretmenlerin Düşünceleri ve Uygulamaları

Özet

Öğretmenlerin ders materyalleri ve öğretim teknolojileri kullanımı ile ilgili yaklaşımları ve eğitim uygulamaları onların bu konudaki inançları ile paralellik arz edebilmektedir. Bu çalışma öğretmenlerin İngilizce öğretirken kullandıkları ders materyalleri ve teknoloji kullanımı hakkındaki algılarını araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada hem sayısal hem de betimsel veri analizi yöntemlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Katılımcılar İstanbul'da bulunan bir vakıf üniversitenin İngilizce hazırlık okulunda çalışmakta olan 36 öğretmendir. Araştırma için 2 veri toplama aracı geliştirilmiştir. Bunlardan birincisi, kapalı uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anket, diğeri ise açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan yüz yüze görüşmelerdir. Çalışma sonuçları, öğretmenlerin eğitimle ilgili inançlarının onların öğretimle ilgili aldıkları kararları ve sınıf içi öğretim uygulamalarını büyük oranda etkilediğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Oldukça fazla sayıda öğretmen ders kitabının öğrenciler için çok cazip bir öğretim aracı olmadığı görüşünde birleşmiştir. Dil öğretim uygulamalarında teknoloji kullanımı ile ilgili olarak tüm öğretmenler, güncel teknoloji uygulamalarının hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler tarafından bilinmesi ve kullanılması gerektiğini savunmuştur. Çalışma sonuçlarının öğretmen eğitimi konusunda yararlı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Hizmet öncesi ve hizmet-içi öğretmen eğitiminde öğretim teknolojileri konusuna daha fazla yer verilmesi büyük önem arz etmektedir. Eğitim teknolojilerine yatırım yapılması ve öğrenme yönetim sistemlerinin öğretim programlarının bir parçası olarak planlanması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen inançları, ders kitabı değerlendirmesi, eğitim teknolojileri, dil öğretimi

Introduction

Teachers' instructional practices are believed to be considerably influenced by what they know, believe, and think (Borg, 2003). According to Nisbett & Ross (1980, cited in Borg, 2003,p.86), “[B]eliefs established early on in life are resistant to change even in the face of contradictory evidence”. Therefore, investigation of teachers' theoretical beliefs in classroom practices contributes to a profound understanding of how the teaching and

learning of English are constructed in different educational contexts (Lee & Bathmaker, 2007).

Teacher beliefs

Teacher belief is described as “a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre- or in-service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught” (Kagan, 1992, cited in Lin, 2011, p.2). The beliefs that language teachers hold are shaped mostly by their own past experiences as language learners (Lin, 2011).

According to Burns (1992, cited in Lee & Bathmaker, 2007) teachers’ beliefs are made up of three major contextual levels which operate interactively both across and within levels. The first level is “the institutional focus”, which concerns the ideologies, norms and procedures of the institution in which teacherswork. The second level is the “classroom focus” and it is embedded in the first level. It concerns beliefs about learners, learning, language and so forth. Finally, the third level focuses on “the specific content of instructional matters” and is located within the first two contextual layers. “In essence, all the levels of beliefs are affected by the values and belief systems of the wider society” (p.354). Woods (1996) coined a new term “BAK network or system” to explain the processes that teachers go through to plan and make decisions about their teaching. He claims that each teacher develops an individual system of BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge) and each is different in terms of individual elements, which are not independent, but structured. However, the author acknowledges that there might be moments when teacher behaviors do not correspond to the BAK.

Teacher beliefs about course materials

Despite the fact that there is a considerable body of research on the effects of teacher beliefs on classroom practice or teaching, little research to date has investigated factors that affect teachers’ perceptions about the course material. In the related literature, there are contradictory findings about teachers’ approaches to internationally- published materials. The following two recent studies are examples showing the inconsistency in conclusions derived from two different English language teaching context.

Zacharias (2005) carried out a study with 100 tertiary level English teachers 94 of whom were non-native speakers of English in Indonesia. The aim of the research was to find out the teachers' beliefs regarding the materials they used for teaching English, and to what extent their beliefs were reflected in their classroom practice. The data was collected through the use of a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation. The results revealed that the majority of the teachers (67%) preferred to use internationally-published materials (from English-speaking countries), 17% stated preferences for both internationally and locally-produced materials, whereas a small number of teachers (7%) responded in the side of locally published materials. However, 9% of the participants did not state any preferences.

Zacharias (2005) summarized some of the reasons for favoring internationally-published materials as follows:

- they provide 'natural', 'authentic', 'real', 'original', 'realistic', 'accurate' and 'correct' input,
- they provide appropriate cultural background to language teaching,
- the quality is better in terms of content and appearance, and
- they are more available than locally-produced materials and thus provide more alternative and choice. (p.29)

Interestingly, a large number of the participant teachers who stated preferences for internationally-published materials had never used locally produced materials in their classes before. According to the researcher, those teachers' disfavor of locally produced materials may have been driven by blind prejudice against them. When teachers were asked about the reasons for disfavoring locally produced materials, they expressed their distrust especially because they felt that they were often poorly edited and their content was inconsistent.

Another study that investigated the teachers' beliefs concerning the classroom material was conducted by Lee and Bathmaker (2007). The study was conducted with 23 teachers from 11 secondary schools in Singapore who all taught the same textbook. The teachers were given a semi-structured questionnaire which focused on the use of text materials and approaches to teaching, opinions of the use of text materials in teaching as well as attitudes and perceptions towards teaching technical-

vocational streamstudents. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that teachers did not use New CLUE (the selected text book) for all their teaching. Other than using the textbook, the teachers also relied on other commercially produced or self-developed materials as supplementary teaching materials. According to the results, self-developed materials had the highest frequency of use ($M = 1.4$) while past examination papers as a supplementary resource had a slightly lower frequency of use ($M = 1.7$). The researchers explained teachers' reliance on alternative sources by the textbook activities' being too difficult for the students, or not relevant to exam preparation.

Teacher beliefs about the integration of technology in language classrooms

Despite relatively limited research on teachers' beliefs about teaching materials, there is a considerable body of literature focusing on teachers' beliefs about technology use in the classroom. In spite of large expenditures, increased access and a sharp raise in the universal use of computer-based technologies by teachers and students in the last two decades, several researchers have questioned the extent to which technology is affecting teaching and learning. According to Straub (2009, p. 625), "it is the individuals' adoption patterns that illustrate a successful implementation". Therefore, it is first essential to answer why one individual chooses to adopt a technology whereas another individual rejects it and to what extent social context affects the decision to adopt.

Straub (2009) concludes that 'social learning' and 'self-efficacy' play the most important roles in the adoption and diffusion of a new technology. To begin with, individuals may be more inclined to adopt a new technology through observing others adopting a particular innovation and modeling them, which is called 'social learning'. Secondly, one's beliefs about his or her own capabilities to organize and execute a course of action are known as 'self-efficacy' and are believed to have a considerable effect on the adoption of a particular innovation. He also asserts that an individual goes through five successive stages until he or she decides to adopt a new technology. Stage one is when an individual becomes aware of an innovation. Stage two is when an individual gains enough knowledge about the salient features of the innovation, which is followed by stage three, when the individual

chooses to adopt or reject the innovation. Stage four is the implementation of the decision. Finally, in stage five, an individual reflects on his or her own decision and implementation process and decides whether to continue or discontinue with the innovation adoption. However, it is essential to note that personal factors such as prior experience and stable personality traits, characteristics of the innovation, and the individual's social context (i.e. organizational pressure and societal norms) will all influence the final decision and persistence with a new technology (Rogers, 1995, cited in Straub, 2009).

In a longitudinal, large-scale study conducted with 120 district-level administrators, 122 principals, 4,400 teachers and 14,200 students throughout Massachusetts, Russell, Bebell, O'Wyer & O'Connor (2003) aimed to better understand how educational technologies are used by teachers and students and what factors influence these uses. During the first phase of the study, the researchers carried out site visits, interviews, and surveys to collect information about district technology programs, to what extent teachers and students used technology in and out of the classroom, and the factors that affected their uses. The second phase of the research was devoted to case studies to better analyze particular issues concerning technology support and use. Interesting results were derived from the analysis of data. Teachers who started teaching during the past 5 years were found to be a lot more confident with technology than more experienced teachers. However, as they had deep-rooted beliefs about the negative effects of computers on learners, they used technology less than the teachers who had more than 5 years of teaching experience.

In a similar study (Ravitz, Becker, & Wong, 2000, cited in Russell et al. 2003), it was found that teachers with constructivist beliefs were more likely to use technology in the classroom than teachers with more traditional pedagogical beliefs. Kitchenham's study (2006) stands out as the only-in-depth investigation of the role of technology in transforming teachers' perspectives. The research questions sought to understand to what extent teachers underwent perspective transformations as they are developing in their use of educational technologies and what external factors accelerated or hindered their perspective transformations. Face-to-face workshops on particular topics were organized by the researcher with individual teachers

or groups of teachers. Those workshops were on technology based topics such as how to design Web pages and how to use the Microsoft programs in the classroom. The study extended over an 8-month period during which the participant teachers were asked to keep reflective journals and the researcher, himself took field notes. A questionnaire and teacher interviews were also included in the data sources. The findings suggest that teachers do experience perspective transformations as they learn to use, adopt, and teach educational technology. “There were numerous instances of changes in perspective, altered meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, revised habits of mind, evidence of critical discourse and critical reflection, and critical self-reflection on assumptions” (Kitchenham, 2006, p.222).

Another research that has established the fact that teachers’ beliefs play an important role on influencing teachers’ instructional decisions and classroom practices was carried out by Chen, Looi & Chen (2009). In their longitudinal research project, the researchers collaborated with three teachers who were selected based on their KGB (knowledge, goals, and beliefs) characteristics so that they could do a contrasting comparison at the end of their study. They started out with three research questions: 1) how do teachers’ personal histories and beliefs about learners and learning influence their technology-related instructional practices? 2) How do teachers construct technology-related norms and practices with peers and students through their participation in various activity settings? and 3) Does the condition of ubiquitous computing influence teachers’ movement towards constructivist pedagogy? To investigate their research questions they employed a multi-case study approach using an ethnographic perspective. The findings of this research also shed light on the effect of teachers’ belief systems on their technology use in the classroom. It was found that teachers’ belief systems were influenced by the learner profiles in that particular school, what is perceived as good teaching within the context of the institutional culture, and the role of the technology in the lives of students. In summary, although teachers were subject to the same conditions of infrastructure, administrative support, and exposure to models of pedagogy, each of them created a different learning environment for their students and determined different roles for themselves and the students. Recently, computer technologies have played a significant role in improving education and reforming curricula across countries all

over the world. Governments, education authorities and schools have all made major investments to provide schools with computer equipment (Pelgrum, 2001, cited in Li & Walsh, 2011). China appears to be one of these countries that is trying to integrate information and communications technology (ICT) into the educational arena. In their study, Li and Walsh (2011) examined EFL teachers' use of ICT in their classroom practices and what factors influenced their decisions about its use. The data sources included a questionnaire-based survey that was collected from 450 teachers and follow-up focus group interviews that were held with 33 teachers in 12 schools in Beijing. They listed seven deciding factors that contribute to teachers' use of technology in their instructional practices:

- the popularity of ICT in EFL teaching;
- a need to change current teaching methods;
- expectations from others;
- support from schools;
- the fun aspect of ICT in learning and teaching;
- benefits for both teachers and learners;
- motivating aspects of ICT(p.110)

In Li and Walsh's study (2011), the factors that hinder teachers' use of technology were listed in the order of the highest to lowest frequency as follows:

- lack of relevant software packages
- lack of time to prepare lessons
- lack of skills to develop courseware to meet their own students' need
- heavy pressure of the exams
- lack of integration model to learn from
- lack of digital resources
- lack of knowledge (both technical and pedagogical) of how to integrate ICT into their teaching
- lack of CALL training
- lack of technical support and
- lack of student computers in classrooms (p.110)

It is now a known fact that many schools around the world are equipped with the latest educational technologies. Mundy, Kupeczynski & Kee (2012),

on the other hand, claim that use of computers for administrative purposes are more common in schools than the use them for teaching purposes. In Mississippi and New Orleans, a technology empowerment program called “TeachUp!” was designed by Digital Opportunity Trust USA, Inc (DOT USA) for teachers of “high need” students at 250 K-12 public schools. The program provides teachers with one-on-one coaching and training and intends to improve teacher proficiency in the use of educational technology in the classroom to enhance student involvement, success, and retention. The participant teachers benefitted a lot in increasing student engagement and excitement in learning with computer technology upon the completion of the program.

As can be seen from the literature review, teachers’ attitudes towards course materials and their adoption of new technologies are likely to be influenced by their beliefs and thus, result in different instructional practices in different classrooms. Despite the fact that there is a considerable body of research, it seems that there still remains a need to conduct further research on teachers’ beliefs about course materials and how instructional practices are affected by their beliefs in different language teaching contexts. Therefore, this paper explores the perceptions of English language teachers towards the use of course books and integration of technology in teaching English to language learners attending an English preparatory program at a university and infers a relationship between their beliefs and their instructional practices.

The following research questions were addressed by the current study:

1. What are the teachers’ beliefs about the printed course materials?
 - a) the internationally-published textbook they use
 - b) the in-house produced Speaking Booklet
 - c) the in-house produced Writing Booklet
2. Is there a difference between less experienced and more experienced teachers’ opinions about the course materials?
3. What are the teachers’ beliefs about the integration of technology in the language classroom?
4. How do the teachers’ beliefs about the printed course material and the integration of technology in the language classroom influence their instructional practices?

Methodology

This is a descriptive study which adopts both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. 36 instructors of English from an English preparatory program were included in the study. 28 of the teachers' native language is Turkish whereas 5 teachers' native language is English and the other 3 teachers are native speakers of other languages. The teachers' years of experience in teaching English range from 1 to 20+ years. As for the years of working experience at the university where the study was conducted, the teachers were classified into two categories as more experienced and less experienced teachers. According to the background data of the participant teachers, half of the teachers (N=18) with 4 or more years of experience formed the group of "more experienced teachers" and the other half of the teachers (N=18) with 3 or less years of experience formed the group of "less experienced teachers". The other demographic information which is considered to be likely to have an influence on teachers' beliefs and instructional practices such as gender and age are also included in the questionnaire (29 female; 7 male ranging from 24 to 50+ years of age).

Data collection and analysis procedures

Two instruments were used to collect data for this research: A questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended questions (see Appendix A) and an interview that consisted of open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The questionnaire focused on three areas: Section 1: Demographic background information; Section 2: Beliefs about the course materials ('Language Leader' the internationally-published course book used as the main textbook, the in-house produced Speaking Booklet, and the in-house produced Writing Booklet prepared within the institution); and Section 3: Beliefs about the integration of technology in classroom instruction. Items for the questionnaire were derived and modified from various sources (Qasem 2010; Askildson 2008; Al-Hajailan 1999). Each item in the questionnaire (in Sections 2 & 3) was responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 3 (agree, not sure, disagree). The interview, on the other hand, includes eleven open-ended questions for the purpose of identifying the effect of teachers' beliefs on their classroom practices. Both the questionnaire and the interviews were administered towards the end of the first semester so all the teachers were familiar with the materials. To seek an answer to the first three research questions, a (quantitative) frequency analysis was

conducted with the data from the questionnaires (closed-ended questions) and descriptive statistics were generated. The mean values of each item were rank ordered to compare the more experienced and less experienced group of teachers.

The answer to the fourth research question, on the other hand, was sought through a (qualitative) content analysis of the participants' answers to the open-ended questions in the interviews. The answers were then examined separately and were categorized under similar patterns and themes so that a conclusion could be drawn. The interviews were conducted with only two teachers. One of the teachers had 2 years of teaching experience whereas the other had 10 years of experience at the university where the study was conducted. The results of the interviews should, thus, be considered with caution.

Results

Results of the study were analyzed according to first teachers' opinions about the printed course materials: Language Leader (LL) as the main text book and two skill books - one of them was the Writing Booklet (WB) and the other one was the Speaking Booklet (SB). Then, less experienced and more experienced teachers' opinions were compared. Finally, teachers' opinions about the use of technology in classroom instruction were analyzed.

Teachers' opinions about the course materials

The data collected showed that the Writing Booklet (WB) was considered to be the most satisfactory course material among the teachers in terms of content. 63.9% of the teachers believed that the content of the WB fulfilled the course objectives. This figure is followed by 55.6% for the course book, (Language Leader - LL), and 47.2% for the Speaking Booklet (SB). Similarly, 63.9% of the teachers believed that there was a graded reasonable sequence in the content of the LL and 21 teachers (out of 36; 58.3%) agreed that there was a strong relationship between the parts of the content of the book. The majority believed that the content was compatible with the number of teaching periods. However, the figures go down when it comes to the involvement of the learners' culture in the book as well as the target culture. 41.7% of the teachers agreed that the content of the LL employed knowledge about the learners' culture whereas 36.1% were not sure and

22.2% of the teachers disagreed. The results for question 6 are parallel with the results for the previous question; that is, 44.4% of the teachers were not sure about whether the presence of the local culture in the content made learning English easier and faster.

Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of the teachers that agreed with the statements about each of the three course books.

Table 1. Agreement for Language Leader (LL), Writing Booklet (WB), and Speaking Booklet (SB)

Agreement for	LL		WB		SB	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. The content fulfills the course objectives.	20	55.6	23	63.9	17	47.2
2. There is a graded reasonable sequence in the content.	23	63.9	26	72.2	24	66.7
3. There is a strong relationship between the parts of the content.	21	58.3	22	61.1	15	41.7
4. The content is compatible with the number of periods.	19	52.8	23	63.9	20	55.6
5. The content employs knowledge about learners' culture as well as the target culture.	15	41.7	17	47.2	18	50
6. The presence of the local culture in the content makes learning English easier and faster.	10	27.8	16	44.4	14	38.9
7. Topics in the book are interesting.	17	47.2	15	41.7	13	36.1
8. Topics in the book motivate Ss to learn.	9	25	12	33.3	8	22.2
9. The pictures and charts in the book attract Ss.	16	44.4	11	30.6	10	27.8
10. The book provides natural and authentic input.	20	55.6	12	33.3	11	30.6
11. The book provides accurate and correct input.	34	94.4	25	69.4	25	69.4
12. The language used is at the Ss' level.	21	58.3	28	77.8	29	80.6
13. The language items are taught in a meaningful way.	24	66.7	23	63.9	21	58.3

14. It provides Ss with sufficient knowledge of English to pursue their academic studies.	17	47.2	20	55.5	16	44.4
15. The book itself is enough to introduce a new subject.	14	38.9	19	52.8	16	44.4
16. The book cultivates critical thinking.	14	38.9	14	38.9	14	38.9
17. The method used is student-centered.	14	38.9	15	41.7	15	41.7
18. The activities allow Ss to move around in the class during class activities.	13	36.1	7	19.4	10	27.8
19. The activities allow Ss to talk more than Ts.	10	27.8	5	13.9	14	38.9
20. The activities in the book are relevant to exam preparation.	13	36.1	30	83.3	22	61.1

Regarding the attractiveness of the course materials, it can be said that the teachers were generally indecisive about all three books. Some of the participants (47.2% for LL, 50% for WB, and 58.3% for SB) were unsure about whether the topics in the book motivate the students to learn. Likewise, they were not sure as to whether the topics in the WB and SB were interesting for the students (47.2% and 52.8% respectively).

As for the authenticity and the accuracy of the input, a vast majority of the teachers believed that the LL provided accurate and correct input (94.4%). The rates for the WB and SB went down to 69.4%; yet it still represented the opinion of the majority. More than half of the teachers also believed that the LL provided natural and authentic input (55.6%) whereas the answers for this question for the other books varied. Only 33.3% and 30.6% of the teachers thought that the input was natural and authentic in the WB and the SB respectively.

With regard to the 12th question, all the books received positive remarks. In other words, a great number of teachers considered the language of the book to be at the right level for the students (LL=58.3%, WB=77.8%, SB=80.6%). Many teachers also believed that the books taught the language items in a meaningful way (LL=66.7%, WB=63.9%, SB=58.3%). However, despite the fact that 24 out of 36 teachers agreed that the LL taught the language items in a meaningful way, only 14 teachers agreed with the 15th statement

(The book itself is enough to introduce a new subject). 13 teachers (36.1%) thought the LL book itself was not enough to introduce a new subject and nine teachers (25%) were unsure about this question.

Regarding the academic (language and skills) input the books provided, the WB stood out as the only one receiving a positive remark from more than half of the teachers. 55.5% of the participants agreed that the WB provided students with sufficient knowledge of English to pursue their academic skills. The rate for the LL was 47.2% and for the SB it was 44.4%. On the other hand, the question that asked whether the books cultivated critical thinking received varied answers from the participants (the rates for agreement, not sure, and disagreement values were almost equal for all the books).

The questions that assess the methodology of the course materials (Q.17-Q.19) displayed that teachers have mixed opinions about the statements. To illustrate, 38.9% of the teachers believed that the method used in LL was student-centered, whereas 36.1% were unsure and 25% disagreed with the statement. The rates were not very different for the other two books. That is, 41.7% of the teachers agreed that the WB had a student-centered methodology whereas 36.1% were not sure, and the rest 22.2% did not believe that its methodology was student-centered. The SB as well, received more or less similar responses. 15 out of 36 (41.7%) teachers agreed that its methodology was student-centered, 15 teachers (41.7%) said that they were unsure about the statement, and the rest of the teachers (16.7%) showed disagreement with the statement.

Comparison of teachers' opinions according to their teaching experience

Regarding the course book Language Leader (LL), the three statements that received the most positive remarks from the less experienced teachers are shown in Table 1. They believed that the LL provided accurate and correct input, there was a strong relationship between the parts of the content and the content fulfilled the course objectives.

Table 1. Positive Opinions of Less Experienced Teachers about Language Leader (LL)

<i>Less experienced teachers</i>	N	M	SD
11. LL The book provides accurate and correct input	18	1.22	.64
3. LL There is a strong relationship between the parts of the content	18	1.50	.70
1. LL The content fulfills the course objectives	18	1.55	.85

Similarly, the three statements that received the most positive responses from the more experienced teachers were content and input-related statements. As Table 2 demonstrates, the teachers thought that LL provided accurate and correct input, the language items were taught in a meaningful way, and there was a graded reasonable sequence in the content.

Table 2. Positive Opinions of More Experienced Teachers about Language Leader (LL)

<i>More experienced teachers</i>	N	M	SD
11. LL The book provides accurate and correct input	18	1.00	.00
13. LL The language items are taught in a meaningful way	18	1.27	.46
2. LL There is a graded reasonable sequence in the content	18	1.38	.60

As it can be seen in Table 3, regarding the writing booklet (WB), the majority of less experienced teachers stated that the content was compatible with the number of teaching periods, the activities in the book were relevant to exam preparation, and the language used was at the students' level. Likewise, the more experienced teachers thought that the activities in the WB were relevant to exam preparation. The other two items that received the most positive responses from the more experienced group were the language items' being taught in a meaningful way and the input's being accurate and correct.

Table 3. Positive Opinions of Teachers about Writing Booklet (WB)

<i>Less experienced teachers</i>			
	N	M	SD
4. WB The content is compatible with the number of periods	18	1.22	.42
20. WB The activities in the book are relevant to exam preparation	18	1.22	.54
12. WB The language used is at the students' level	18	1.27	.57
<i>More experienced teachers</i>			
	N	M	SD
20. WB The activities in the book are relevant to exam preparation	18	1.16	.38
13. WB The language items are taught in a meaningful way	18	1.22	.42
11. WB The book provides accurate and correct input	18	1.27	.57

Finally, as illustrated in Table 4, the results for the speaking booklet (SB) showed that both the less experienced and the more experienced teachers believed that the SB book provided accurate and correct input. The other two statements that received the most positive responses from the less experienced teachers were both content-related statements: there is a graded reasonable sequence in the content and the content is compatible with the number of teaching periods. The more experienced teachers, on the other hand, showed the most positive attitude towards the language of the book: the language used is at the students' level and the language items are taught in a meaningful way.

Table 4. Positive Opinions of Teachers about Speaking Booklet (SB)

<i>Less experienced teachers</i>			
	N	M	SD
2. SB There is a graded reasonable sequence in the content	18	1.38	.69
11. SB The book provides accurate and correct input	18	1.38	.50
4. SB The content is compatible with the number of periods	18	1.44	.61

<i>More experienced teachers</i>	N	M	SD
11. SB The book provides accurate and correct input	18	1.27	.57
12. SB The language used is at the students' level	18	1.33	.68
13. SB The language items are taught in a meaningful way	18	1.38	.60

A comparison of the most negative responses from both groups show that the less experienced teachers had mixed concerns about the course materials whereas the most negative responses were focused on the WB and the SB with the more experienced group. However, the main concern shared by both groups was the methodology adopted by the course materials and their attractiveness for the students. (See Table 5)

Table 5. Negative Opinions of Teachers about the Course Materials

<i>Less experienced teachers</i>	N	M	SD
18. SB The activities allow students to move around in the class during class activities	18	2.16	.78
18. WB The activities allow students to move around in the class during class activities	18	2.16	.78
15. LL The book itself is enough to introduce a new subject	18	2.16	.92
18. LL The activities allow students to move around in the class during class activities	18	2.11	.83
19. WB The activities allow students to talk more than teachers	18	2.05	.63
8. LL Topics in the book motivate the students to learn	18	2.05	.80
<i>More experienced teachers</i>	N	M	SD
18. WB The activities allow students to move around in the class during class activities	18	2.33	.76
19. WB The activities allow students to talk more than teachers	18	2.33	.68
9. SB The pictures and charts in the book attract the students	18	2.27	.75
9. WB The pictures and charts in the book attract the students	18	2.22	.80
10. SB The book provides natural and authentic input	18	2.11	.58
16. SB The book cultivates critical thinking	18	2.11	.83

Teachers' opinions about the use of technology in classroom instruction

Almost all the participants (34 out of 36; 94.44%) agreed that computer technology and Information and Communication technologies have the potential to impact instruction. Parallel to this response, they believed that it was important for students as well as teachers to become literate with a variety of digital technologies (94.44% of the teachers agreed with the 3rd and 9th statements in Section III). (See Chart 1)

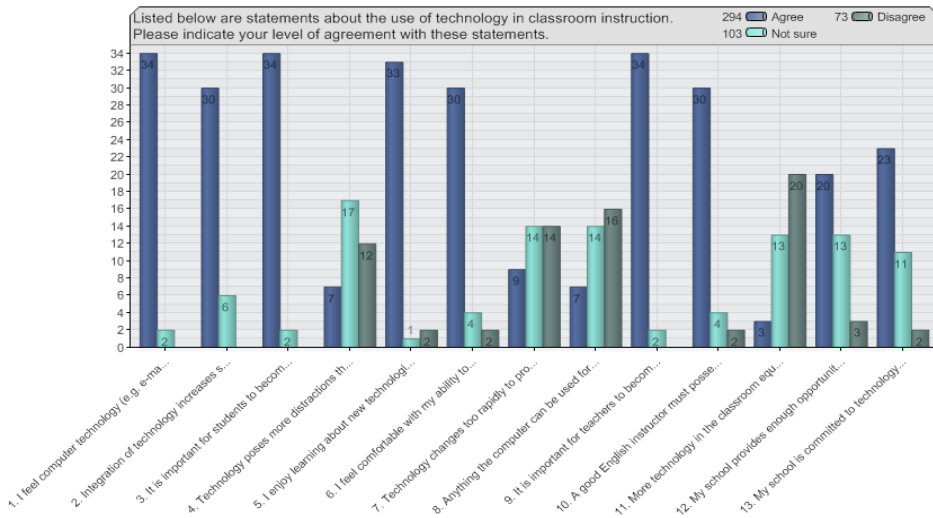


Chart 1. Responses to the questions about the use of technology in classroom instruction

The majority of the teachers (91.67%) said that they enjoyed learning about new technologies and 30 participants (83.33%) showed confidence in their ability to learn new technologies. A great number of teachers (83.33%) agreed that a good English instructor must possess both practical knowledge (i.e. experienced with the subject matter and with teaching techniques) and technical knowledge (i.e. know how and when to use technology). Similarly, the same amount of teachers believed that technology increased student learning. However, a mere percentage of 33.33% of teachers maintained that technology posed more benefits than distractions for students. 17 teachers (47.22%) were not sure about whether technology caused more distractions or provided more benefits for the students.

More than half of the teachers (55.56%) disagreed with the statement 11 that read “more technology in the classroom equals more work for me”, which suggested that they either believed that technology eased their work or simply did not increase their usual work amount. 36.11% of the participants were not sure about their answers though.

Finally, the last two questions which investigated the teachers’ beliefs about the position of their school directorate towards the use of technology in classroom instruction displayed that most of the teachers were happy with the directorate’s approach. 63.89% of the instructors agreed that their school was committed to technology instruction and 55.56% said their school provided enough opportunities for technology integration.

Discussion And Conclusion

Analysis of interview remarks made by teachers was combined with the data gathered from the questionnaire for comparing teachers’ beliefs with their reported classroom practices. It was found out from the interview results that the teachers’ opinions about the course materials were almost truly projected in their classroom practices. That is, teachers believed that the course materials were good at meeting the course objectives, they followed a logical order, they provided students with accurate and correct input and they prepared students for the exams. This finding was consistent with conclusions made by Zacharias (2005) who also found in his study that teachers favored internationally-published materials as being ‘natural’, ‘authentic’, ‘real’, ‘original’, ‘accurate’.

The two teachers who were interviewed also made positive comments about the content of the books and their relevance to exams and said that they do not feel a need to supplement especially the WB and the SB. However, in parallel with the questionnaire results, they mentioned that they sometimes supplement the LL with extra grammar exercises as the ones in the book were not enough for the students to internalize a new language item that was introduced. This finding partially corroborated the research finding of Lee and Bathmaker (2007) who found that teachers preferred self-developed supplementary materials since the textbook was too difficult or not relevant to exam preparation.

Quite a number of teachers raised their concerns about the unattractiveness of the course materials in the questionnaire. The interviewed teachers also confirmed this finding and said that they were bringing in visual materials to class or having the students watch a mini-video from the YouTube to attract their attention at the beginning of the lesson. However, they never substituted an uninteresting reading text or a writing task with a more enjoyable one for the students because they feared that the students might encounter a similar text or task type in the exams prepared by the testing unit in the institution. In Lee and Bathmaker's (2007) study the fun aspect of ICT in learning was also emphasized and they listed ICT use as one of the factors that motivated teachers to use technology.

In summary, the in-house produced materials especially the Writing Booklet was found to be the most satisfactory course material among the teachers in terms of content. The majority of the teachers believed that it was meeting the course objectives. This is not a surprising result since the Writing Booklet was produced by the materials development unit within the institution considering the specific needs of the target students. Teachers might also feel that they have all somehow contributed to the preparation of that booklet with their comments and feedback over the years; thus, they assume ownership for it. The strengths and weaknesses of the course books, however, were found to vary depending on the experience level of the teachers. This might suggest that experience is a deciding factor that influences teachers' evaluation of a course material, which may imply that the criteria for course book evaluation expand gradually in parallel with experience level.

Regarding technology use in the classroom, although the questionnaire results showed that almost all the teachers believed that it was important to become familiar with the recent technologies for both teachers and students, the data collected from the interview did not project this. Apparently, the technology use in the classroom use was limited to the YouTube videos or the software material of the text book (LL). When asked about their reasons for not using any other technological tools in their classes both the less experienced and the more experienced teacher stated that the program was too loaded; that is, they have a lot of objectives to cover every week so they could not afford to spend any of the class hours by trying out new

technologies. The same reason was given by Lee and Bathmaker (2007) whose study concluded that lack of time was one of the factors hindering teachers' use of technology.

Findings of the study have implications for teachers and principals of education. To begin with, internationally produced materials may not be sufficient to meet the needs of students. Therefore, in-house produced materials should always be an institutional concern to support language teaching. Secondly, pre-service and in-service teacher education programs should provide training and coaching in increasing the use of technology in the classroom. As Kitchenham (2006) suggests, teachers should experience perspective transformations and this may be achieved through using educational technology for learning and teaching purposes. In brief, schools should make considerable investments in educational technologies so that learning management systems can be integrated into language syllabus and principals should provide full support and assistance for the faculty who are eager to use technology in class to make lessons more effective while boosting student engagement and success.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE
SECTION I:
Demographic/Background Information

1. Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
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2. Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> 24-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 29-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44
	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 or over		

3. Native language:	<input type="checkbox"/> Turkish	<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
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4. Total years of teaching experience:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> over 20 years			

5. Total years of teaching experience at this university, English Preparatory Program:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 years or over
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6. Which level are you currently teaching?	<input type="checkbox"/> A2	<input type="checkbox"/> B1	<input type="checkbox"/> B2	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeat Group
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SECTION II:

Listed below are statements about the course materials that are used at our University English Preparatory Program. Indicate your level of agreement with the statements.

Please put 1 if you agree with the statement,
put 2 if you are not sure, and
put 3 if you disagree with the statement.

Language Leader	The Writing Booklet	The Speaking Booklet
1. The content fulfills the course objectives.		
2. There is a graded reasonable sequence in the content.		
3. There is a strong relationship between the parts of the content.		
4. The content is compatible with the number of periods.		
5. The content employs knowledge about the learners' culture as well as the target culture.		
6. The presence of the local culture in the content makes learning English easier and faster.		
7. Topics in the book are interesting.		
8. Topics in the book motivate the students to learn.		
9. The pictures and charts in the book attract the students.		

10. The book provides natural and authentic input.
11. The book provides accurate and correct input.
12. The language used is at the students' level.
13. The language items are taught in a meaningful way.
14. It provides students with sufficient knowledge of English to pursue their academic studies.
15. The book itself is enough to introduce a new subject.
16. The book cultivates critical thinking.
17. The method used is student-centered.
18. The activities allow students to move around in the class during class activities.
19. The activities allow students to talk more than teachers.

20. The activities in the book are relevant to exam preparation.

SECTION II:

Listed below are statements about the use of technology in classroom instruction. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements by ticking the related box.

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
1. I feel computer technology (e.g. e-mail, Internet, wikis) and Information and Communication technologies (i.e. iPods, cell phones) have the potential to impact instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Integration of technology increases student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. It is important for students to become literate with a variety of digital technologies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Technology poses more distractions than benefits for students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I enjoy learning about new technologies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I feel comfortable with my ability to learn new technologies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Technology changes too rapidly to properly implement in classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Anything the computer can be used for I can do just as well without.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. It is important for teachers to become literate with a variety of digital technologies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. A good English instructor must possess both practical knowledge (i.e. experienced with the subject matter - English- and with teaching techniques) and technical knowledge (i.e. know how and when to use technology).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. More technology in the classroom equals more work for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My school provides enough opportunities for technology integration.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My school is committed to technology integration.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever substitute the textbook with other materials? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
2. Do you ever omit parts from the text book? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
3. Do you ever assign homework from the text book? *Follow-up:* Which sections usually? Why those sections?
4. Do you ever substitute the Speaking Booklet with other materials? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
5. Do you ever omit parts from the Speaking Booklet? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
6. Do you ever assign homework from the Speaking Booklet? *Follow-up:* Which sections usually? Why those sections?
7. Do you ever substitute the Writing Booklet with other materials? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
8. Do you ever omit parts from the Writing Booklet? *Follow-up:* Why? How?
9. Do you ever assign homework from the Writing Booklet? *Follow-up:* Which sections usually? Why those sections?
10. What kind of software do you use in class? (e.g. English Central,

Moodle, Presentation software (Power Point), etc.) *Follow-up:*
How often? For what purpose?

11. What kind of software do you have your students use to complete in-class activities? *Follow-up:* How often? For what purpose?