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### Generation Z students' expectations from English language instruction

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#### Abstract

Today it is widely accepted that people perceive the world according to social, cultural, and economic conditions of the date range that they were born in. The term generation is used to define people born around the same time and have common characteristics. People who were born after 2000 are called as the generation Z and are often regarded as iGeneration or Digital Natives since they were grown up with mobile communication technologies and the internet. Hence, this generation perceives the world in a different way than the people from older generations. So, understanding how learners of generation Z learn better might be helpful for teachers, school administrators, and policy makers in designing more effective instructional settings. In this respect, this study aims at exploring the instructional expectations of this new cohort of students in the English as foreign language classrooms. Questions for semi-structured interview were developed and used to elicit the opinions of randomly selected language learners and instructors from preparation classes of two universities and the data went under content analysis. Results indicated that it is no more possible to satisfy the Gen-Z students with the application of traditional methods and strategies. Teachers and materials are expected to be technology oriented to meet Gen Zers personal and academic needs. The study concluded that while the instructors and the students share some views about language instruction in common, still a generation gap exists for some aspects of language learning regarding materials, testing and evaluation, and assignments.

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*Keywords:* Generation Z; young learners; language learning expectations

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#### 1. Introduction

As one of the technological changes in such a fast developing world, the birth of the internet in 1995 also resulted in the birth of a new generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2017) which has been named as Generation Z (Gen-Z) with the characteristics of being digital natives, fast decision-makers and highly connected (Dauksevicuite, 2016). Shaped mostly by the improvements in technology; violence, economical situations and social justice movements all around the world are also listed among the factors causing such a generation to appear with distinctive features from previous generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Even though previous generations namely; trads (1928-1944), boomers (1945-1964), gen-X (1965-1979), gen-Y (1980-1994) (Consultancy.uk, 2015) were also under the

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impact of these factors, Gen-Zers have been affected more deeply due to the easiness of their access to information by being born into a world that is globally connected via internet (Rothman, 2016).

The natural outcome of this situation is the entry of Gen-Zers, who ‘find it difficult to recall a life without the internet and smartphones’ (Kingston, 2014) into classrooms in the first decade of the 2000s. By then, the researchers started to consider this phenomenon among the significant research topics especially because of the differing personality traits, expectations, learning preferences, needs and interests of this specific group. As Ferrari (2018) stated, novel and varying expectations of this recent cohort in studying require the evaluation of formal education, educational settings, especially the instruction and the instructors. Being the global language of this recent information age, English as a foreign language instruction is not an exception as well. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the instructional expectations of this cohort of students in the English as a foreign language classrooms.

### *1.1. Literature review*

It is a well-known fact that social, cultural and economic situations in which people live affect how they perceive the world. In many cases, this causes conflicts and tensions among people from different generations because of misunderstandings and/or not sharing a similar perception of the world. Generation is defined as ‘a cohort born almost in the same years that share the conditions, problems and sorrows of the same age, undertake similar duties’ (TLA). In the literature, it is obvious that different generations occur once every 20-25 years. Each generation is generally shaped mostly by the changes and developments in technology; violence, economical situations and social justice movements all around the world result in the occurrence of a different generation with distinctive features from earlier ones (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

Sociologically, every generation is labelled with a name and shaped by distinctive features (Wilkin, 2012). Those were born between 1927-1945 are named as “silent” or “traditional” generation. They are defined with the characteristics of being unable to communicate directly, respecting authority and taking responsibility. They are also characterized by valuing authority, following a top-down approach in management, and being hardworking (Consultancy.uk., 2015). The ones who were born between 1946-1964 are called “baby boomers”. The reason of this specific name is that people in USA were supported for an increase in population after the WWII to develop economy. This program was called as “baby boom” and the population involved was “baby boomers”. They do not like conflict and prefer to be more optimistic. They are also distinctive by being workaholics (Cilliers, 2017). Following the baby boomers people born between 1965-1979 are called as “X” Generation. They are generally comfortable with authority, work as hard as needed. The balance between work and life is important to them (Consultancy.uk., 2015). People in the next generation who were born between 1980-1999 are counted within generation “Y” which is also called as “Net Generation”. According to them, respect is earned. They are technology savvies and achievement oriented. They are also more social, self-confident, multi-tasker and interested in technology. And the final generation that involves people born after 2000 is called generation Z.

Typical Generation Z (Gen-Z) person is the first to be born into a globally connected world (Cilliers, 2017). This cohort has been labelled with diverse names such as Gen Next or Gen I (Igel & Urquhart, 2012), Post-Millennarians, iGeneration or the Homeland Generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991), Generation 2020, Digital natives, Screensters or Zeds (Rothman, 2016) or Gen Zer (Kingston, 2014). People born in Gen-Z grow up with recent technology such as internet, smartphones and applications, and find it difficult to live without these facilities (Kingston, 2014). This group of people represents a world population of thirty million (Sriprom et al., 2019).

As Turner (2015) stated, Gen-Z people were born into a challenging world. Terrorism issues, uncertainty in world political situation and environmental risks have all impacted the characteristics of this generation. In the literature, personality traits of Gen-Zers are summarized as follows. According to Kingston (2014) and Carter (2018) this group is innovative and passionate. They are good at earning money through mobile applications, YouTube and other proficiencies. They tend to question and criticize everything (Törocsik, et al., 2014). Additionally, due to the fact that they have been raised using the internet very actively from birth, their attention span is limited because of the information load they are exposed to (Bejtkovsky, 2016). This situation also leads to expecting instant gratification and being disengaged from society. On the other hand, they tend to be skillful in performing multiple tasks at the same time. Extensive use of technology and social media can also contribute to this talent in a positive way (Turner, 2015). However, in many studies, it is apparent that they tend to be more individualistic (Igel & Urquart, 2012; Törocsik, et al., 2014) which results in lack of communication skills. Being open-minded, and tolerant to differences, faithful to friends are among other traits they share (Eberhard, 2017). Another important characteristic of this cohort is their being ‘observers’ (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). They like to observe others accomplish tasks prior to application. This approach demonstrates their tendency to search for information through video. Additionally, they are always willing to learn how applicable the information they learn in their daily life. It is also reflected in ‘applied learning’. All these personality traits are effective in shaping Gen-Zers’ life styles, expectations, needs and interests in all fields of life including educational settings. Therefore official instruction has to be revised.

Not only the way of content delivery but also, the assignments, tasks employed within the classroom, and the materials used have to be adjusted according to the distinctive traits of Gen-Z students. Cook (2015) confirms that Gen-Z post-secondary students desire technology and visual media to be integrated in educational settings. They also want relevant and solution-oriented relationships with their instructors and friends. However, they are also after the guidance that will be provided to be able to respond to contemporary challenges. As a result of being ‘observers’, it is apparent that Gen-Zers prefer flipped courses and tend to rely on YouTube as the main source of self-instruction (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Since their attention span is very short, they are always in search for alternative online sources. Moreover, as Mohr and Mohr (2017) stated, because of their preference to work alone, the instructors need to design shared projects to which students can contribute on an individual basis. On the other hand, due to the overload of the information they might face, teachers have to guide them how to sort and synthesize accurate ideas. Therefore, strict guidelines are suggested to be provided along with the project based assignments to prevent time consuming and redundant information load. While adjusting assignments and tasks depending on the language learning characteristics of the students, language teachers are recommended to give choices and a sense of freedom. Giving examples and providing guidelines are also among the suggestions. Owing to their tendency to criticize and question everything, how a specific task or assignment could help them make a difference in society and what kind of short and long-term benefits it offers should be explained in a detailed way. This is also required to meet their need for ‘applied learning’ (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). As a result of all this information, in the field many suggestions about how to adjust instruction according to the expectations of this recent group are made. Utilizing video-based learning, incorporating intrapersonal learning into class and group, offering community engagement opportunities to address societal needs (Seemiller & Grace, 2016), incorporating online and electronic study materials, making use of mobile applications in and out of the classroom (Cilliers, 2017) are among these suggestions.

An intensive review of literature on this specific topic resulted in only a few studies related to Gen-Z students and their foreign language learning process (Aart, Clayton and Wallis, 2012; Harmanto, 2013; Misiura, 2018; Sriptom et al., 2019; Zaitseva, 2018).

Aart, Clayton and Wallis (2012), designed a mobile phone application to teach English grammar to learners. This is mostly because of the learners' desire to integrate technology into their learning process. With the application they developed they not only aimed at teaching grammar to generation z students but also support language teachers in their instruction.

In another article, Harmanto (2013) stated that even though young learners started to learn English in 1994 it is not satisfactory since the curriculum was not prepared appropriately, the methodology was not designed according to the expectations of this generation. Therefore, in their article researchers presented possible teaching strategies to meet the needs of this group of students. They suggest that teachers should not be afraid of technology use, they should use visuals more effectively, leverage technology to give feedback, handle multitasking with care.

In a similar vein, Misiura (2018) fore fronted that the strategies and approaches that are used to teach foreign language to Gen-Z students should be considered according to their different characteristics. They defined making use of social media as a communication tool, using computer programs and online resources, culture of teamwork and project work as the methods to develop independent study of this group of students.

In a recent study, Sriprom et al. (2019) aimed at discovering the personality traits of Gen Z undergraduates in Thailand by employing a mixed-method design. The findings revealed that out of the six-personality dimensions, agreeableness was rated as the highest level whereas neuroticism was rated the lowest. The personality traits of Gen Z were stated to challenge educators in terms of classroom management and activity design. The researchers concluded that language teachers should integrate the use of new technology or social media in their pedagogy such as using Dropbox, Onedrive or Google Drive to share information, manage the classroom activities and assignments. They claim that making use of new technology would facilitate both parties to achieve their academic goals. Popular social media sites such as Facebook, IG and blog can be integrated into instruction to share ideas with other students and teachers. This improves students' interaction and motivation to learn a foreign language and results in effective EFL classroom practices.

Zaitseva (2018), on the other hand, questioned what should be done to motivate Gen Z students who cannot focus easily to learn foreign languages both in and out of class. In the article the researcher proposes that the educational methods should integrate information technology. Information technology implementation should not turn to "endless teachers' competing against phones or lecturers' attempts to diverse students from their tablets and laptops". Independent learning environments such as Moodle should be made use of for more comfortable learning atmosphere. Since this group of students are younger than 20, teachers are also suggested to implement games and role playing. The researcher also suggests that owing to the fact that generation Z students are easily distracted from routines, "a set of easily swapped diverse worksheets, units and cases is preferable". He concludes that the most appropriate way to teach English to Generation Z is in the form of a hybrid course in which the teacher is a conductor of every off- and online activity.

As it is clear in the above discussion, the research studies on this specific topic mostly dealt with how to teach English as a foreign language to this group of learners. However, present study aims to investigate the expectations of generation Z students from English language teachers, instruction, materials. Moreover, in order to examine the similarity or difference with the expectations of language teachers, their beliefs and expectations were also investigated.

## 1.2. Research questions

This study aims at exploring the instructional expectations of foreign language learners from Generation Z and whether their expectations are met by their teachers. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the expectations of Gen Z learners from language teaching?
  - 1a. What are the participants' opinions about their language instruction?
  - 1b. What are the participants' opinions about the materials?
  - 1c. What are the participants' opinions about testing and assessment?
  - 1d. What are the participants' opinions about assignments?
2. Are English instructors from other generations aware of the expectations of generation Z students from language instruction, materials, testing and evaluation, and assignments?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and setting

The participants of the study comprise both language learners and their teachers. In this context, 38 (F=20, M=18) preparation year students and 21 (F=13, M=8) instructors from two universities in Turkey participated in the study.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the participants with respect to generations

	Number of students	Number of instructors
1965-1980 (Generation X)	None	3
1981-1995 (Generation Y)	None	18
1996-2010 (Generation Z)	38	none

Participating students were majoring in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department and enrolled in compulsory preparatory classes. Randomly selected participants already had 6 months of English language instruction experience at the university by the time the data was collected. In addition, the teacher participants were also randomly selected among a target population of language instructors with more than 10 years of teaching experience.

According to common regulations of both universities, freshmen students of ELT departments have to study the preparation year unless they are qualified from the institutional qualification exams or provide an acceptable standard exam result like TOEFL. During the preparation year, the students are exposed to an intensive language teaching program including courses for every language skills along with grammar. The students get 28 hours of instruction for 28 weeks during their prep year. At the end of the academic year, the students take a final exam that covers all language skills and grammar knowledge. Students who fail from the final exam have to retake the preparatory class.

## 2.2. *Instrument(s)*

To collect qualitative data, two different open-ended interviews both for students and teachers were designed by the researchers. With respect to the existing literature and the specific context of the study, 13 questions for the student interview, and 11 questions for teacher interview were chosen from an item pool. For the students' interview, the focus of the questions was on EFL learners' expectations, challenges experienced, and opinions about their learning practices in terms of materials, assignments, course contents, testing and assessment, and use of technology in the classroom. Similarly, teachers' interview questions focused on the same topics but from their own perspectives. Having data from similar open-ended questions from two participant groups would enable a comparative evaluation and interpretation of the findings. Prior to interview, the open-ended questions for both groups were checked by two experts from the ELT department in terms of construct validity, and question formation, and suggested changes were applied accordingly. Interview questions were sent to the participants online and they were asked to respond and send back the answers by email the following day.

Following that, content analysis was carried out and themes and categories were specified by two researchers. Team coding was used for content analysis since this method is considered as a reliable check when the data is analyzed by two coders separately (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 1994). The inter-rater reliability for student questions and teacher questions were calculated as .90 and .88 respectively, with reference to the following formula, (Number of agreements/Total number of agreements and disagreement) x 100" (Altman, 1991), revealing an acceptable high agreement among the two raters. As a result, the instruments were regarded as valid to interpret the data since benchmarks for high agreement were defined between 0.80 -1.00 (Altman, 1991; Landis & Koch, 1977).

## 2.3. *Data collection and analysis*

In order to investigate the opinions of students and their teachers about instructional practices, this study is based on a qualitative research design. Based on people's experiences, qualitative data has a strong potential for revealing data that enables in-depth analysis owing to its richness and holism (Geertz, 1973). Qualitative data also enables the researchers to connect the findings with the real world since it focuses on the meanings people attach to the events, processes, and structures of their lives with an emphasis on lived experiences (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). Moreover, qualitative data is powerful for the exploration of a new area, and for developing and testing hypotheses whether specific predictions hold up (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As a frequently employed qualitative data analysis technique, content analysis was used by counting the frequency and sequencing of particular words, phrases, or concepts found in the data (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). Basically, content analysis involves counting words or categories to detect patterns in the data, and analyzing them through close reading (Cavanagh, 1997). More specifically, in this study, for the interpretation of the data from both the student and the instructor interviews, we used an inductive content analysis as a method that allows the researchers to develop theories and identify themes by studying the transcribed data (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). For the analysis of the data, QDA Miner 4 Lite was utilized as the qualitative analysis software (2020).

## 3. **Results**

This section presents findings of the qualitative analysis based on both the student and the instructor interviews including themes and categories obtained from the content analysis of the data. In order to enable comparisons between the data, findings related to students' opinions will be followed by the findings from the instructors' data for each research question.

### 3.1. Gen Z students' and their instructors' expectations of English instruction

The results of the content analysis with reference to student responses for the first question revealed seven different themes under two main categories as *negative opinions* and *positive opinions* (Table 2). Positive themes are; *the use of technology*, *skill based teaching*, and *the use of practice and activities*. Themes including negative opinions are, *monotonous*, *boring and loaded with assignments*, *not effective*, *course book based*.

**Table 2.** Categories and themes for the students' responses to question 1

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Positive opinions	the use of technology	Students enjoy using technology while learning	11	28.9%
	skill based teaching	Students are happy with skill based learning	5	13.1%
	the use of practice and activities	Students like doing practice and activities	4	10.5%
Negative opinions	The need for more communicative activities	Students want to have more speaking opportunities	5	13.1%
	Monotonous	Students believe that the classes are not attractive	4	10.5%
	boring and loaded with assignments	Students think that their instructors assign too much homework	3	7.8%
	not effective	Students find the classes ineffective for learning a language	3	7.8%
	course book based	Students are not happy with course book oriented learning	2	5.2%

Findings related to the students' opinions suggest that the use of technology was considered as the most important positive factor in language instruction ( $f=11$ ) while some of the participants pointed out the importance of skills based teaching ( $f=5$ ). The participants underlined their pleasure about using computers, online materials, and smart boards as means of the technology that should be used in language learning classrooms.

A positive opinion regarding the pleasure of the use of technology, one of the students stated that;

Student 31: ...I feel myself more motivated when teachers use the computer and the smart board because I think I learn better and more effective in this way.

Conversely, some participants reported negative opinions about the language instruction by indicating the need for more speaking practice ( $f=5$ ), finding the classes monotonous ( $f=4$ ), boring ( $f=3$ ), ineffective ( $f=3$ ), and course book based ( $f=2$ ). Those students believe that their language classes are boring and not motivated.

One of the students declared a negative opinion regarding the English instruction as follows;

Student 18: ...the way we learn English is boring. I can hardly find reasons to be motivated and participate in the activities. Too much homework makes teachers ignore the real purpose of learning a foreign language.

On the other hand, the content analysis with reference the instructors' responses to the first interview question revealed four different themes under two main categories as *negative opinions* and *positive opinions* (see Table 2). Positive themes are; *very efficient* and *based on four skills*. Themes including negative opinions are; *the need for more interaction* and *the need for more exposure and speaking time and loaded with assignments, not effective, course book based*.

**Table 3.** Categories and themes for the instructors' responses to question 1

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Positive opinions	very efficient	Instructors believe that their teaching program is efficient.	7	33.3%
	based on four skills	Instructors are happy with skill based teaching program.	5	23.8%
Negative opinions	the need for more interaction	Instructors believe that students and teachers should interact more.	6	28.5%
	the need for more exposure and speaking time	Instructors think that their students need more exposure to English and increased speaking opportunities.	5	23.8%

Also, as already presented as a positive theme of the students' responses, the instructor are also happy with skills based teaching ( $f=5$ ). Another overlap between the both groups of participants is reported as the need for more speaking practice for a better teaching program ( $f=5$ ). Yet, there is no emphasis on integrating more technology into their teaching practices.

Findings related to the instructors' opinions also revealed that the instructors consider their language teaching programs as efficient ( $f=7$ ). However, the students reported the instruction in their program as boring, monotonous, and ineffective (see Table 2). This finding reveals a contradiction between the students and their instructor in the way they perceive the same language teaching program.

One of the instructors stated a negative opinion regarding the efficiency of the English instruction as follows;

Instructor 14: ...I believe that all the instructors in my department are doing their best both inside and outside the classroom. We spend time for course book selection, material preparation, and all the testing procedures. So, there is no reason for our language instruction program to be inefficient.

### 3.2. Students' and their instructors' expectations of materials used during instruction

The content analysis of the students' responses for the second question revealed six different themes under three main categories as *games*, *visual materials*, and *social media* (Table 4). Games category included the themes namely online games, and attractive and enjoyable activities. Additionally, visual materials category comprises three themes as; *videos*, *smart phone applications*, and *visual materials*. Additionally, the third category was found as *social media*.



**Table 4.** Categories and themes for the students' responses to question 2

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Games	Online games	Students prefer being online while playing games.	7	18.4%
	Attractive and enjoyable activities	Students like participating in attractive and fun activities.	5	13.1%
Visual materials	Videos	Students want to watch more videos while learning.	14	36.8%
	Smart phone applications	Students prefer doing activities on their smart phones.	10	10.5%
	Other visual materials	Students like to learn by the help of various visual materials.	5	13.1%
Social media	Using social media	Students want social media to be integrated into language learning process.	15	39.4%

Findings related to the opinions of the students' suggest that they consider playing games as an important activity in learning English ( $f=12$ ) while the majority of the student participants underlined the importance of using visual materials in the classroom ( $f=29$ ). Under visual materials category a considerable number of the students emphasized their interest in watching videos. ( $f=14$ ). Additionally, the students also suggested the use of social media in language instruction as the most stated response ( $f=15$ ).

Regarding the rationale for the choice of watching videos in the classroom, one of the students argued that;

Student 16: I feel myself highly motivated when it comes to watching videos in the classroom. Because, I think I learn better when I watch something rather than being told. Videos draw my attention because most of the time they are interesting and they provide visual source for learning English. Simply, watching a video feels me better.

Also, under this category, the participants highlighted their interest in using their smart phones while learning in the classroom ( $f=10$ ). According to student 5;

Student 5: My smart phone is like a part of my body and I like using it during the day for many purposes. However we are not allowed to use them in the classroom. I believe that if we use our smart phones for some activities I would be more motivated. Most of the time the teachers use the computer and the smart board but that doesn't feel the same.

On the other hand, the analysis of the instructors' responses to the second interview question revealed four different themes under two main categories as *using authentic materials* and *using visual materials* (see Table 5). Results indicate that nearly half of the instructors think that using real life materials is an effective way of teaching a foreign language.

Regarding the reason for the choice of real life materials one of the instructors stated that;

Instructor 2: I observe in my classes that students are engaged in an activity when it is directly related to the real life. For that reason, I try to bring more authentic materials like charts or original texts to my classrooms.

It is interesting to note that, on the contrary to the instructors, the students did not mention the use of authentic materials in their responses to the second interview question.

**Table 5.** Categories and themes for the instructors' responses to question 2

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Using authentic materials	Real life materials	Instructors believe that authentic materials should be used.	10	47.6%
Using visual materials	Web 2.0 tools	Instructors believe the benefits of using Web 2.0 tools.	7	33.3%
	Video based activities	Instructors think that video based activities should be used.	4	19%

As reported by the student participants, the instructors stated the importance of using visual materials as well ( $f=11$ ). Under the category of using visual materials, the instructors suggested the use of video in the language classroom although the frequency of this theme is lower (19%) when compared with the students' views on the use videos in the classroom (36.8%). Also they suggested the use of Web 2.0 tools for effective learning of English ( $f=7$ ), whereas the students did not mention any opinions regarding Web 2.0 tools. According to Instructor 4;

Instructor 4: I think Web 2.0 tools are great applications that the students can easily engage. They offer lots of learning opportunities both in and outside the classroom. I try to integrate those tools into my classes regularly. Especially for revisions, I try to use those tools especially those suitable for productive skills.

### 3.3. Students' and instructors' ideas about testing and evaluation in language classes

The aim of this question was to find out both students' and the instructors' opinions about testing and evaluation procedures and compare them in order to find similarities and differences between them. According to the content analysis of the students' responses for the third interview question three different themes under two main categories were revealed. The themes under the category of *skill based assessment* include *testing of speaking skills* and *testing of four skills*. In addition to that, only one theme was found under the category of *performance based assessment* as *testing of individual performance* (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Categories and themes for the students' responses to question 3

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Skill based assessment	Testing of speaking skills	Students believe that they should be tested only for their speaking skills.	12	31.5%
	Testing of four skills	Students think that four skills should be tested.	4	10.5%
Performance based assessment	Testing of individual performance	Students prefer being tested individually rather than a group performance.	14	36.8%

The results of the content analysis regarding students' responses revealed that the student participants are more eager to be tested for their oral skills ( $f=12$ ) rather than being tested for all language skills

( $f=4$ ). Additionally, the students also reported that they prefer being graded according to their individual performances rather than a group performance ( $f=14$ ).

Concerning the reason for the choice of being tested individually, one of the student argued that;

Student 30: In my opinion, assessment of a group's performance does not feel fair. Generally, I find it difficult to work with my classmates. Because, each member of the group does not make equal contribution. I prefer individual work because it makes me feel good when I study on my own.

As for the analysis of the instructors' responses for the third interview question, we found the two same categories as already reported for the students (see Table 6). However, the category of *skill based assessment* only includes a single theme as *testing of four skills* ( $f=15$ ). Also, unlike students' responses, we found two different themes as *assessment of group performance* ( $f=14$ ) and *portfolio assessment* ( $f=12$ ) under the category of *performance based assessment*.

**Table 7.** Categories and themes for the instructors' responses to question 3

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Skill based assessment	Testing of four skills	Instructors think that four skills should be tested.	15	71.4%
Performance based assessment	Assessment of group performance	Instructors believe students should be assessed according to their group performances	14	66.6%
	Portfolio assessment	Instructors believe that long term assessment is necessary	12	57.1%

These results indicate that unlike the students, the instructors are in favour of testing all skills rather than only testing the oral performance. Another distinction between the two groups is to do with performance based assessment. While the majority of the instructors (66.6%) were in favour of assessment of group performance, a remarkable number of them indicated the importance of students' portfolios in language assessment. According to Instructor 20;

Instructor 20: I believe that students' in-class performance is absolutely important in grading them. However, we should also assess their long-term language improvement by the help of portfolios. Because, portfolios help us visualize the students' improvement and enable our students to see their language development in time.

### 3.4. Students' and instructors' ideas about assignments

This question aimed at finding both students' and the instructors' opinions about assignments in language learning. According to the content analysis of the students' responses for the third interview question three different themes under two main categories were revealed. The themes under the category of skill based assessment include testing of speaking skills and testing of four skills. In addition to that, only one theme was found under the category of performance based assessment as testing of individual performance (Table 6).

**Table 8.** Categories and themes for the students' responses to question 4

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Quantity (frequency) of the assignments	No assignments	Students believe that assignments are useless.	16	42.1%
	Less assignments	Students think that there should be fewer assignments.	12	31.5%
Type of assignments	Individual assignments	Students prefer doing individual assignments rather than a group performance.	15	39.4%
	Group projects	Students prefer doing group assignments to interact with others.	8	21%
	Online assignments	Students want to do their assignments online by the help of technology.	12	31.5%

For the fourth interview question, the content analysis regarding students' opinions about assignments showed that they are generally not happy about the quantity of the assignments. ( $f=28$ ). A remarkable number of the student participants stated that there should be less or even no assignments. According to one participant, the reason for this negative attitude towards assignments is quoted as follows:

Student 20: We have a very intensive language program at school which is really exhausting. When I get home I feel like I have to spend some leisure time in social media rather than involving in boring homework. I prefer doing something more interesting like playing online games or watching YouTube videos.

Additionally, the second category *the type of assignment* included three themes as *individual assignments*, *group projects*, and *online assignments*. Findings suggest that more students are in favor of doing individual assignments ( $f=15$ ) rather than participating in group projects ( $f=8$ ).

Regarding the reason for the choice of individual assignments one of the student participants argued that;

Student 17: Actually I have an outgoing personality and do not mind working with others. For that reason at the beginning of the term I was eager to collaborate with my class mates for more interaction with them. However, I was quite disappointed when I realized that group members do not devote the same amount of time and energy for the assignments as much as I do. I felt terrible about this because everyone in the group got the same grade which was not fair. I believe I deserved a higher grade more than others.

Also, another theme under the same category is found as the student participants' choice for *online assignments* ( $f=12$ ). These students stated in common that they would be more eager to do homework if they were digitally assigned and submitted. One of those participants reported that;

Student 9: Most of the time I ignore the assignments because they are so old fashioned, pen and paper. Nevertheless, I feel more willing when writing on my computer or on my smart phone. Using the keyboard is easier and more fun.

On the other hand, the analysis of the instructors' opinions about the assignments revealed different findings under two categories as *quality of assignments* and *type of assignments* (Table 9).

**Table 7.** Categories and themes for the instructors' responses to question 3

Category	Theme	Description	Count	Frequency
Quality of assignments	Authentic	Instructors believe that the assignments should be about authentic materials and tasks.	16	76,1%
	Skill based	Instructors think that assignments should be skills based.	12	57.1%
Type of assignments	Individual projects	Instructors prefer assigning individual projects rather than group work.	6	28.5%
	Group projects	Instructors prefer assignments involving group interaction.	14	66.6%
	Online assignments	Instructors want to use technology to assign online homework.	2	9.5%

The category of *quality of assignments* includes two themes as *authentic* ( $f=16$ ) and *skills based* ( $f=12$ ). Instructors reported that the assignments should enable the students to use authentic materials that they are likely to experience in the real life when they are in a second or foreign language context. One of the instructors underlined the importance of authentic assignments as;

Instructor 13: I can see that my students do not generally like being assigned homework or projects. However, to help them continue learning outside the classroom, I give them assignments but only the ones that are related to real life. Because language is a means of communication and the learners must be able to use their language skills in their daily lives, either while watching a movie or booking a room.

In a similar line with the students, the instructors' data analysis revealed the same three categories as *individual assignments*, *group projects*, and *online assignments*. Findings suggest that on the contrary to the students, the majority of the instructors are in favour of assigning group projects ( $f=14$ ) rather than individual homework ( $f=8$ ). According to one of the instructors, the reason for the choice of assigning group projects is quoted as;

Instructor 8: I believe that one way of learning a language better is by communication and interaction with others. When the students have to work with their classmates, they have the opportunity to interact with each other while participating in projects and learn from each other as well. In my opinion, collaboration is an effective way of learning a language.

Another difference between the findings is about the way assignments are given or received. The theme of online assessment was stated by 9.5% of the instructors ( $f=2$ ) while it was stated by 31.5% of the students ( $f=12$ ) showing their interest in using the technology even for submitting their assignments.

#### 4. Discussion

This study basically aimed at exploring students' and instructors' opinions about the language instruction, language learning materials, testing and evaluation procedures, and assignments in their language program. What makes this study original is that we investigated the potential differences between students' and instructors' ideas from a generational perspective. The student participants of the study were members of generation Z, while the instructors were members of generation X or generation Y. As proposed by William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991), Generational Theory postulates that people

who were born at different times have different perspectives and the theory groups people with reference to historical and social events with the potential of affecting people's views about any aspect of life. Hence, understanding the discrepancies between the Gen Z students and their teachers from former generations would be helpful in bridging the gap between these two groups. For this aim we used four interview questions for a deeper understanding of the differences between the language learners and their instructors teaching at a preparation program.

The first interview question investigated the participants' opinions about the English instruction in their language program. While both the students and the instructors stated negative and positive opinions about the program, there was little in common between their views. Both groups of participants reported in favor of skill based teaching. This indicates that although they are from different generations, both the students and the instructors believe that language learning should involve teaching of the four skills. Additionally, both groups of participants underlined the importance of communicative and interactive activities. This is not surprising for the Gen Zers because research indicate that they learn best when they are interactive and they tend to pay attention to engaging activities only (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005). These two meeting points between the participants suggest that they agree on the same fact about language teaching even if they are members of different generations.

On the other hand, there were other aspects of the program that the students and the instructors did not agree. Even though the instructors thought that their language teaching program is very efficient, the students criticized the program for being boring, monotonous, and ineffective. The difference between the perceptions of the students and their instructors can be attributed to the unique mindset that the Gen Zers have. Since they were profoundly affected by digital media, these students have the digital technology embedded in their lives right after they were born. Hence, their perception of the world has been affected by the way the people communicate each other. Members of this generation have a different understanding about concepts such as learning, socialization, and entertainment, and many other aspects of life. This appears to be a vital problem which causes a generation gap between the members of Gen Zers and their instructors. For that reason, teachers of students from generation Z should be in seek of finding new approaches to be able to communicate effectively with their learners. Prensky (2001) argued that for today's teachers, there is a need to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students. Similarly, Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) discussed that to fill the perception gap between the students and teachers from different generations teachers should be provided professional development support. In a parallel understanding, Rothman (2016) also suggested educators in the twenty-first century to be in an attempt to change their understanding of education and move from a traditional to a transformational learning model. After postulating that digital native students have distinctive features of from their digital immigrant teachers, Jukes and Dosaj (2006) suggested that digital native students prefer multiple multimedia sources while most of their teachers favor slow and controlled presentation of information from less visual sources, follow the curriculum and use standardized tests. Consequently, these distinctive features between the students and their teachers might be attributed to different understanding of the concept of learning and teaching a foreign language.

The second interview question investigated the participants' opinions about the materials used in language instruction. Although both students and instructors focused on the role of visual materials, their perceptions about visual materials in language instruction are different. According to digital native students, videos and smart phone applications should be used for more effective learning while their teachers underlined the importance of using authentic materials for language instruction and ignored the potential of those materials. This dissimilarity came out as another gap between the digital natives and their digital immigrant teachers. Having born into technology, digital natives prefer visual learning rather than textual and they prefer games to serious work (Kirschner and De Bruyckere, 2017). Teachers

should turn this close connection with visual materials into an advantage by adapting them as standard teaching materials in the language classroom. Preville (2018) suggest that teachers should embrace mobile devices as means of classroom technology and turn it into an advantage to engage their students in language learning. Another difference between the participant groups was related with the use of social media in language classes. When compared to their preceding generations, generation Z connected to the web by mobile devices and social media as an indispensable part of their lives starting from their early childhood. Also proposed by Preville (2018) the social lives of gen Z'ers take place online and they are comfortable in the online environment of social media. So, integration of mobile devices into the classroom should be allowed to make the use of social media possible for language instruction. This finding resemble the suggestion of Godwin-Jones (2018) who also proposed using mobile devices in the classroom since they involve the use of images, audio, and video into instruction as motivating tools for the digital generation.

The third interview question regarding the participants' opinions about testing and evaluation in their language classes demonstrated both similarities and differences between the two groups of participants. One important difference between the opinions of the participants with reference to the category of skill based assessment revealed a disagreement about the testing of language skills. While the majority of the teachers stated the need for testing of all four skills, only a few students agreed this view. On the other hand, a remarkable number of students reported only testing of speaking skills as a requirement for testing in foreign language classes. This shows that members of this generation perceive the language as a tool to speak with others. According to Prensky (2001), digital natives are able to receive information quickly and they often prefer communicating with others by direct interaction. Summarizing some distinctive characteristics of digital native students from their digital immigrant teachers, Jukes and Dosaj (2006) also concluded that digital native learners are selective in learning what is directly practical while their teachers prefer to follow the curriculum and use standardized tests.

Another difference between the participant groups is related to the testing of individual performance. While a large number of the instructors underlined the importance of assessing the group performance, considerable number of student participants stated that they prefer being tested individually rather than being tested in a group. This finding seems quite contradictory with collaborative and interactive nature of generation Z since they often prefer to learn and work in teams. They tend to help each other and pay attention in peer-to-peer interaction (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). The rationale underlying this contradiction can be explained by gen Zers' sense of justice. They believe that group performance is not graded justly by their teachers. They would rather prefer being graded according to their individual performances which they think is fairer.

One other difference between student and instructor views is related to the time and duration of the assessment. Although a remarkable number of instructors underlined the importance of long term assessment such as portfolios, none of the students reported any kind of long term assessment methods. According to Jukes and Dosaj (2006) one distinctive features of digital native students from their digital immigrant teachers is that, students prefer receiving info quickly from multiple multimedia sources while many teachers prefer slow and controlled presentation of info from less visual sources.

The discussion on the final interview question focused on students' and instructors' views on assignments in their language programs. It is not surprising to see that almost all the student participants were in favor of less and even no homework since they think pen and paper homework is a tedious way of learning a language. It is commonly accepted that members of generation Z are interactive and they prefer learning through inductive discovery. Also they only tend to pay attention when any learning activity is engaging (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). In addition to that, students' preference of individual assignments in contrast to their instructors can be an indicator of the difference between their mindsets and the way of perceiving learning. According to Jukes and Dosaj (2006), as digital natives, members

of generation Z prefer receiving information fast from multiple multimedia sources such as the internet or various visual materials while their digital immigrant teachers are in favor of slow and controlled presentation of information from less visual sources such as presenting texts before visual materials. Presenting a list of ways for teachers to engage with their students' expectations from generation Z, Preville (2018) suggests that assigning digital homework including video presentations and other digital content would be more effective rather than assigning pen and paper work. Instructors should be in seek of finding innovative ways both for the submission and the delivery of the assignments which should include using of online sources and digital tools since this cohort of students are the first generation to born and raised with digital tools and technologies and affected by digital media (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018). For this generation, internet and digital technologies deeply affect the way they perceive the world and communicate and interact with others.

## **5. Conclusions**

In the light of the discussion above, it is possible to say that, students from Generation Z and their instructors from former generations differ in some aspects of foreign language learning. As the first generation born into digital technology, members of generation Z perceive the world in a different way than their teachers. Also called as digital natives, these students are capable of receiving information really fast and can simultaneously process multiple tasks. They are visual learners with shorter attention spans when compared with the members of other generations. Hence, teachers of students from this generation should try to find ways to fill in the generation gap and motivate them to learn foreign languages.

Our findings indicated that although the instructors and the students share some views about language instruction in common, still a generation gap exists for some aspects of language learning. First, the student participants found their language program as boring and ineffective while their instructors described the program as effective. Second, the students pointed out the use of mobile devices and social media as means of classroom technology. They reported that mobile devices and social media are indispensable parts of their lives starting from their early childhood and they want to be online in the classroom and reach information simultaneously. Third, the students reported they prefer to receive instant and individual feedback when it comes to assessment. Unlike their instructors who were in favor of long term assessment methods such as portfolios, the student participants stated that assessment should be directly about what they have learned rather than the use of standardized tests. Finally, another discrepancy was found for the perception of assignments. Although the instructors still insist on the benefits of pen and paper homework, their students think that they are out date and assignments should be both the submission and the delivery of the assignments should be online via digital tools.

To conclude, this study has demonstrated the gap between the students and the instructors from different generations. However, this gap between them is not a fate. The teachers of the twenty-first century must be equipped with the skills to teach their students in more effective ways by making use of internet and other digital tools. Also, they should keep in mind the fact that the brains of the students from generation Z have been shaped differently because of the digital technology that they were born in. They should try to integrate digital technologies in language teaching and adopt their teaching programs accordingly. Computers, smart boards, tablets and even mobile phones should be indispensable parts of the classes to move from a traditional to a transformational learning model for twenty first century language learners.



## 6. Ethics Committee Approval

The author(s) confirm(s) that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country (Date of Confirmation: January 19, 2021).

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## Z kuşağı öğrencilerinin İngilizce dil eğitiminden beklentileri

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### Özet

Günümüzde insanların doğdukları tarih aralığındaki sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik koşullara göre dünyayı algıladıkları yaygın olarak kabul edilmektedir. Kuşak terimi, aynı zamanda doğan ve ortak özelliklere sahip insanları tanımlamak için kullanılmaktadır. 2000'den sonra doğan insanlar Z kuşağı olarak adlandırılır ve genellikle mobil iletişim teknolojileri ve internet ile büyüdüğü için iGeneration veya Dijital Yerliler olarak kabul edilir. Dolayısıyla bu kuşak, dünyayı eski kuşaktan insanlardan farklı bir şekilde algılıyor. Bu nedenle, Z kuşağının öğrenenlerinin nasıl daha iyi öğrendiğini anlamak, öğretmenler, okul yöneticileri ve politika yapıcılar için daha etkili öğretim ortamları tasarlamada yardımcı olabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, yabancı dil sınıfları olarak İngilizce'deki bu yeni öğrenci kohortunun öğretimsel beklentilerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları geliştirilmiş ve iki üniversitenin hazırlık sınıflarından rastgele seçilen dil öğrenen ve öğretmenlerin görüşlerini almak için kullanılmış ve veriler içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Sonuçlar, Gen-Z öğrencilerini geleneksel yöntem ve stratejilerin uygulanmasıyla tatmin etmenin artık mümkün olmadığını gösterdi. Öğretmenlerin ve materyallerin, Gen Zers'in kişisel ve akademik ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için teknoloji odaklı olması bekleniyor. Çalışma, öğretmenler ve öğrenciler ortak olarak dil öğretimi hakkında bazı görüşleri paylaşırken, materyaller, test etme ve değerlendirme ve ödevlerle ilgili dil öğreniminin bazı yönlerinde hala bir kuşak çatışmasının var olduğu sonucuna varmıştır.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Z kuşağı; dil öğretimi; beklentiler

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