

## An Investigation into English Instructors' Anxiety In Synchronous Online Teaching Platforms

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### Abstract

Owing to the Covid-19 outbreak, all universities in Türkiye were closed for the spring term of the 2019-2020 academic year and there was a sudden and obligatory shift to distance education. This study aims to investigate the feelings of English instructors assigned to give synchronous online lessons at a university during emergency remote teaching to explore the reasons for their anxiety and whether their feelings and sources of anxiety differ according to age and years of teaching experience. As for the method, a sequential exploratory mixed-method research design was employed. Initially, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven English instructors, and the data were analyzed through content analysis. Then, a questionnaire was developed based on the findings obtained from the interviews and the relevant literature. Sixty-three English instructors responded to the questionnaire, and SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data. Both qualitative and quantitative findings indicated that sudden conversion to remote teaching created anxiety, and negative feelings were dominant in the beginning. Sense of inadequacy, lack of interaction opportunities, and fear of not being able to meet students' needs were found to be the major causes for the instructors' concerns. The results obtained from the study may offer clues to improve the effectiveness of synchronous online education and professional development activities for English instructors.

**Keywords:** Emergency remote teaching, teaching English, language education, synchronous online education.

### Introduction

The Covid-19 outbreak (coronavirus disease) has significantly affected almost all the world and many strong measures have been implemented to prevent the spread of the disease. Owing to the pandemic, all universities in Türkiye were closed for the spring term of 2019-2020 academic year with an announcement made by the Council of Higher Education. Accordingly, all on-campus activities were suspended, and there was a sudden and obligatory shift to distance education in order not to interrupt students' learning under such difficult circumstances (YÖK, 2020). In this form of education, which is actually called emergency remote teaching since it emerged as a result of a global health crisis and there was not adequate planning beforehand (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020), courses were delivered synchronously or/and asynchronously through a variety of digital tools and online instruction gained considerable importance.

Online instruction refers to a form of distance education provided by the Internet, but it goes beyond what traditional computer-based learning offers since it involves making full use of the Internet through numerous digital technologies that allow for collaboration, interaction, and assessment options (Volery & Lord, 2000). Online distance education courses require significant changes in already established roles, behaviors, and structures in that they have several distinctive features compared to standard classroom experiences, so this form of course delivery makes pedagogical and institutional transformations inevitable (AsCough, 2002; Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2013; Natriello, 2005). As McCroskey (1984) states, novel and unfamiliar situations are regarded as the major sources of anxiety. Therefore, in a setting where online education has not been experienced before, teachers are likely to have feelings of worry, stress, nervousness, and lack of confidence.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether English instructors who were assigned to give synchronous online lessons at university felt anxiety at the start of synchronous online education and to explore the reasons for it. It is worth researching such a noteworthy change that took place in a short period in that emergency remote teaching requires fast adaptation to the process, so it is likely to bring anxiety. The results obtained from the study may offer clues to improve the effectiveness of synchronous online education.

### ***Literature review***

Distance education is a term which has undergone some important changes in its definition over the years. To illustrate, when the earlier definition made by Moore (1990) is examined, three key points catch the attention: different types of communication tools are used while delivering courses, learners engage in an organized learning process, and there is a separation of learners and teachers with regard to time and place. However, together with new emerging technologies, distance education today does not rely on only asynchronous learning and teaching environments, but it also benefits from synchronous technologies such as video-conferencing, chat sessions, and webinars in which two-way interaction without a time barrier is possible (Blake, 2008; Picciano, 2001). Accordingly, as for language education, online language learning (OLL) has the potency to boost learner independence, and if its capabilities are used efficiently, it enables learners to engage in collaborative learning tasks and helps to construct meaningful learning (Garrison, 2009).

Even though there is a growing interest and demand for online learning, achieving a high level of success in online courses in relation to language learning is not as simple as it is anticipated. While our teaching- as teachers or academicians- in real classrooms is mostly shaped by our previous experiences which we are familiar with, we do not have enough prior experience which will guide our teaching practices in online classrooms (Kreber & Kanuka, 2006). Hence, there is an urgent need to broaden our perspectives of online teaching beyond the traditional practices in face-to-face education (Kanuka, 2005) and to develop our understanding of how to promote useful online learning tasks which will help students to attain high-order thinking skills (Kreber & Kanuka, 2006). Instructors who teach online may be experts in their fields, but they may have great difficulty in facilitating their students' success in online courses owing to their lack of experience related to distance learning (Andrade, 2017). That they cannot teach in ways based on their familiar experiences can be perceived as a challenge to them (Blake, 2008).

The absence of in-person teacher contact with learners can be regarded as one of the major sources of the difficulty attributed to online teaching. However, if teachers are able to set the essential learning objectives, develop a specific pedagogical attitude and adjust their teaching styles accordingly, they can thrive easily in online courses (Brinthaupt, Fisher, Gardner, Raffo & Woodward, 2011). For effective online language courses, three main teaching skills are needed: socio-affective skills, pedagogical skills, and multimedia skills (Guichon, 2009). According to Blake (2008), if the

aforementioned conditions are fulfilled together with administrative support, online courses are likely to contribute to students' attainment in L2 learning, but this is not something which is only in the instructors' power. In this process, individual differences among students play a crucial role as well. Learners' different intellectual endowments and personal characteristics are the factors which exert a direct influence on the quality of online teaching.

With the advancements in technology over the years, the modes used for delivering courses in distance education have changed dramatically, and this has led to the increasing popularity of synchronous online education (Hrastinski, 2008; Lou, Bernard & Abrami, 2006). This mode of teaching includes text-based chat, audio conferencing, and video-conferencing in which participants are able to interact with each other through instant messaging, whiteboard, webcams, sharing voices and transferring documents in real-time (Guichon, 2010; Murphy, Rodríguez-Manzanares & Barbour, 2011). To carry out synchronous teaching, available online video-conferencing platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Adobe Connect, Skype, and Microsoft Teams can be used in that they offer a wide range of communication opportunities simultaneously. Synchronous online teaching has benefits on both sides. As Lou et al. (2006) indicate, instructors can immediately observe the reactions of learners to instructions and adjust their teaching when needed. As for the students' side, they do not feel like isolated individuals who communicate with a machine but active participants through continuous contact with their instructor and classmates (Haythornthwaite & Kazmer, 2002).

Hrastinski's (2008) study shows that synchronous online learning has a positive impact on learners' increased motivation and resolves ambiguity as it allows for immediate feedback. The results of the research conducted by McBrien, Cheng & Jones (2009) indicate that most of the students had a satisfying learning experience by using synchronous online technology. However, they also verbalized three main problems during this process: technical problems, confusion caused by too many stimuli, and the lack of non-verbal communication. Similarly, in Ng's study (2007) related to the use of a synchronous online learning platform, it was found that technical problems (such as slow network and poor audio quality) during synchronous course delivery hindered the learning experience of students and tutors to make a greater effort to manage the lessons.

The results obtained from other relevant studies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2012; Lin, Dyer & Guo, 2012; Regan et al., 2012) demonstrate that the feeling of anxiety in online education does not pertain only to students, but also to the instructors. During online synchronous lessons, what online instructors need to handle is not only preparing and delivering the appropriate course content but also dealing with various possible challenges caused by the nature of online teaching. As Anderson et al. (2006) propose, in online synchronous environments, the video-conferencing tool may also be new to the instructors, technical problems can emerge during the session, and instructors have to manage multiple communication options such as text-chat, whiteboard, and synchronous presentation at the same time. According to Ng (2007), in addition to all these, online instructors spend a great deal of time preparing appropriate materials for synchronous sessions and put so much effort into monitoring students' progress. As a result, instructors feel stressed under this heavy workload.

Based on Fuller's (1969) research in which he classified three developmental phases of teachers' concerns (self-concern, task-concern, and impact-concern) in the course of time; Lin et al. (2012) contextualized this concerns-based model in an online teaching setting. Accordingly, instructors' self-adequacy concerns mainly center on the preparation of online courses, the ability to use digital tools and methods of delivering content. Task-related concerns usually involve how different types of interaction will be balanced, and instructors are worried about how to carry out online discussions by using a variety of interaction opportunities. During the impact-concern phase, instructors are concerned with learners' needs and the effectiveness of online courses, so whether students learn as much as they do in face-to-face education and what improvements should be made for the future of online teaching are the primary questions in their minds. As indicated in the studies (e.g., Gao and

Zhang, 2020; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020) conducted amidst emergency remote teaching caused by the coronavirus pandemic, language teachers, especially at the initial stage, experienced negative feelings regarding online teaching both because they faced the challenges mentioned above and needed to switch to the new situation suddenly.

As Kessler (2018) stresses, language teachers should adequately, relevantly, and reflectively be prepared for newly emerged technologies so that they can move beyond their existing skills and transform their teaching. In the study conducted by Kilgour, Reynaud, Northcote, McLoughlin & Gosselin (2019), it has been emphasized that what online teaching requires is not similar to the practices and experiences gained in face-to-face teaching environments. In this sense, if instructors are new to designing and teaching online courses, they are considered to be learners who are trying to get used to this mode of teaching. Thus, to break the barriers that they encounter, there is a strong need to design appropriate professional development activities addressing novice online educators' needs. Similarly, the results of the study (Khatoony & Nezdahmer, 2020) conducted in the Iran context during the coronavirus pandemic revealed that EFL teachers are in need of being updated, especially regarding teaching language through technologies. Another study (Bailey & Lee, 2020) carried out in Korea amidst the pandemic showed that EFL instructors with online teaching experience faced fewer obstacles and they were better at using a wide range of teaching activities compared to novice online instructors. Considering that not many EFL instructors have previous online teaching experience and it is not possible to gain enough online teaching experience under the extraordinary and limited conditions caused by Covid-19, in-service teacher training programs could serve the purpose of closing the gap.

## **Method**

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-method research design consisting of two consecutive phases. Initially, qualitative data collection and content analysis were carried out. Based on the findings obtained from the qualitative part, an instrument was developed to gather the quantitative data. The primary aim of sequential exploratory research is to assess whether we can generalize qualitative findings obtained from a limited number of participants in the first phase to a larger sample in the second phase (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The rationale behind this research design is that we first explore a topic before determining the variables which are going to be measured. While doing this, we can use existing information from the relevant literature as well, but the purpose of collecting qualitative data is to gain a better understanding of the research problems (SAGE, 2019). The current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How did English instructors feel at the start of synchronous online education?
- What were the reasons for their anxiety regarding synchronous online lessons?
- Did English instructors' feelings and reasons for anxiety differ according to age and years of teaching experience?

## **Participants**

The study was conducted in a foundation university in Ankara. With the announcement made by the Council of Higher Education, the institution started distance education by employing both synchronous and asynchronous online course delivery tools. Since the study aimed to explore English instructors' anxiety regarding synchronous online education, participants, who were supposed to teach English in synchronous online platforms, were selected from English Preparatory Unit and Academic English Unit in the institution. For the qualitative part of the study, the purposive sampling technique, which is defined as selecting participants deliberately owing to the characteristics they possess (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016) was used. To reach maximum variation, seven instructors

differing in terms of age, gender, years of teaching experience, and undergraduate and post-graduate studies were interviewed based on voluntariness (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic information of the participants for the qualitative part of the study

Participants	Gender	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Undergraduate Study	Post-Graduate Study
P1	Female	55	21	English Language and Literature	-
P2	Female	50	26	American Culture and Literature	-
P3	Female	65	42	English Language and Literature	-
P4	Female	27	5	English Language and Literature	American Culture and Literature (M.A. in – progress)
P5	Female	27	5	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching (M.A. in –progress)
P6	Male	45	17	Biology	American Culture and Literature (M.A in – progress)
P7	Female	32	7	English Language Teaching	English Language Teaching (M.A. completed)

As for the quantitative part, the convenience sampling method was employed for the selection of the participants. The convenience sampling method is a type of non-probability sampling and it means including people in a research sample who are close to hand or conveniently reached by the researcher (Dhivyadeepa, 2015; Fink, 2015). Accordingly, sixty-three English instructors (out of 103 in the institution) with whom the researchers easily contacted participated in the questionnaire (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Demographic information of the participants for the quantitative part of the study

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	55	87.3
	Male	8	12.7
Age	23-30 years	17	27.0
	31-40 years	9	14.3
	41-50 years	32	50.8
	50+ years	5	7.9
Teaching experience	1-10 years	22	34.9
	11-20 years	13	20.6
	20+ years	28	44.4
Education Level	Bachelor’s Degree (B.A.)	36	57.1
	Master’s Degree (MA)	26	41.3
	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	1	1.6
Distance teaching experience	Yes	6	9.5
	No	57	90.5

### ***Data collection and analysis***

The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews on Zoom. Each interview lasted approximately twenty minutes and was recorded. The participants were asked how they felt at the start of synchronous lessons, what the causes of their anxiety were and whether they encountered any problems that made them feel anxious. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was carried out by identifying codes and categories. The analysis was enriched with excerpts and quotes taken from the interviews.

### ***The questionnaire***

For the quantitative data collection, the researchers designed a questionnaire based on the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the relevant literature. Three experts initially proofread the items in the questionnaire in terms of language use and clarity. To put the questionnaire items into final form, Lawshe Technique was used. By using this technique, content validity ratios (CVR) regarding the items are determined in accordance with the opinions of at least five and at most forty experts (Lawshe, 1975), and in the current study, the opinions of five experts were asked. The content validity ratio was calculated with the formula below:

$$\text{CVR} = \frac{n_e - N/2}{N/2} \quad (n_e \text{ is the number of experts marking an item "essential" and } N \text{ is the total number of experts)}$$

According to the table created by Veneziano and Hooper (1997), the minimum values of content validity ratios with a significance level of  $p = 0.05$  must be at least 0.99. Since the CVR value of one of the items was calculated as 0.60, it was removed from the questionnaire. CVR values of other items were calculated as 1.00.

After the content validity check was completed, the questionnaire was sent to English instructors through Google Forms, and SPSS version 22.0 was used for the analysis of the collected data. With the aim of examining whether the participants' feelings and sources of anxiety differ according to age and years of teaching experience, the researchers primarily investigated whether the opinions of the subgroups (1-10 years/ 11-20 years/ 20+ years) for each item in the questionnaire showed normal distribution. Since the subgroups did not show normal distribution, the Kruskal- Wallis H test, which is a non-parametric method for testing, was used, and some significant differences were found. To determine the differences between subgroups, Mann Whitney U test was applied to the subgroups in pairs. To prevent Type 1 error, Bonferroni correction was made ( $p = 0.05/3 = 0.017$ ).

## **Findings**

### **Interview Findings**

After the qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis, the findings were presented under the titles of relevant categories. Excerpts and quotes from the transcripts were also included to support the interpretation of the data. English instructors' feelings and sources of anxiety regarding emergency remote teaching in synchronous teaching platforms are summarized below.

### **No prior training before**

All the participants complained that they were not ready for the new process as there was a sudden shift. Since they were not given enough in-service training about distance education and the use of

digital tools before, they felt stressed when they started to teach online. About this issue, the responses of P2 and P7 were:

*"I wish we had been given training for such a situation. I felt like a fish out of water in the beginning. Adaptation process took two weeks." (P2)*

*"At first, I was excited because I had never experienced distance teaching. But, as we did not receive any training about distance education before, we felt confused." (P7)*

### **Insufficient level of digital literacy**

Instructors with more teaching experience stated that the age factor could be a source of anxiety. As they did not belong to the generation of digital natives, adopting a wide range of digital tools they were not familiar with seemed hard at first. Although they were aware of the advantages of digital tools while teaching English, they had limited practical experience in using them. The quotes below address this subject:

*"I felt really nervous at first because my professional skills might not be sufficient for this form of education." (P3)*

*"Age factor is also important. I was not very good at using digital tools, so I constantly asked myself "Can I learn all these new things?" I have to learn new things every day, so I feel under pressure." (P1)*

### **Technical problems**

Almost all the interviewees verbalized the difficulty of handling technical issues such as slow Internet connection, software updates, faulty cameras, and microphones. Online teaching and learning process was occasionally disrupted due to the technical challenges encountered by both instructors and students. In this respect, P6, P2 and P7 said that:

*"I sometimes have Internet connection problems and I cannot start the lesson on time. This makes me nervous." (P6)*

*"Some students' microphones and cameras are not working properly. So, they cannot interact with me. What if students have internet connection problems during exams? This is my biggest concern." (P2)*

*"I have to manage a lot of technical processes within 40 minutes." (P2)*

*"Just before the lesson yesterday, my computer started updates. Unfortunately, students had to wait for an hour." (P7)*

### **Lack of interaction with students**

The absence of face-to-face interaction was counted as one of the major reasons of anxiety by the interviewees since it inhibited the personal touch while teaching. Students' unwillingness to keep their cameras on and participate in lessons orally affected the instructors badly. While the instructors were adapting themselves to the less interactive teaching, they suffered from time management problems. They stated that monitoring students and checking their reactions in synchronous lessons were too limited, so they could not evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. One interviewee also added that she had difficulty in supporting students who had special educational needs owing to lack of interaction. The instructors explained their opinions about interaction in synchronous lessons as in the following:

*"I want to make eye contact, but I cannot do it because students do not have to keep their cameras on. This affects interaction badly. This makes me feel anxious because I cannot monitor students."* (P2)

*"In my class, I have a student with hearing loss. In face-to-face education, I used to deal with him personally. But now, I cannot do it. He has a device in his ear. This shift has a negative effect on him".* (P4)

*"Lack of interaction disturbs me. In synchronous teaching platforms, there is no personal touch. We cannot see students' gestures and facial expressions, and cannot check whether they understand."* (P3)

*"Most of the students do not keep their cameras and microphones on. I feel like I am alone and talking to myself."* (P5)

### **Changes in traditional roles of teachers**

The instructors remarked that the complete change in course delivery made them nervous. The time constraints and intensive online course syllabi necessitated inflexible lesson plans. They stated that emergency remote teaching caused a heavy workload in that they were required to prepare lecture notes and extra materials for each lesson. While doing all these, they had to spend lots of hours in front of the computer and find appropriate activities for online teaching as shown in the following comments:

*"I prepare lessons until late hours. Preparing course materials takes a lot of time."* (P2)

*"Teaching on Zoom is easy, but it requires preparation. I have to think more about how to teach."* (P6)

*"We have to make detailed plans and find extra materials and visuals for each lesson. This is really tiring. I do not have coursebook application in my computer, so I cannot share coursebook pages. This makes my job harder because I need to prepare lecture notes for each topic."* (P7)

### **Students' negative attitudes**

The interview results demonstrated that the instructors also had to deal with students' negative ideas about distance education. The sudden and forced adoption of online learning made the students frustrated, and they showed a marked reluctance to participate in lessons. When the students were not active, the instructors had difficulty in adjusting the pace of the lessons. P2 and P5 stated their ideas as in the following:

*"The students also feel anxious. Everything was very sudden."* (P2)

*"While I can predict the duration of an activity in a real classroom, I cannot predict it in synchronous online lessons because students are not active and they do not want to speak."* (P5)

### **Uncertainty about students' assessment**

The findings obtained from the interviews revealed that uncertainty about students' assessments made the instructors stressed. Since the instructors were not informed about the assessment procedures at the beginning of the process, they could not answer the students' questions about exams. As explained by P6 and P7, their biggest worries regarding the exams were system security and technical issues:

*"My biggest concern is related to assessment. We must use different platforms."* (P6)



*“There will not be a proficiency exam. Students will take five online exams and there can be technical problems during the exams. How will we handle them?” (P7)*

### Questionnaire findings

After the participants’ responses to the questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS, the quantitative findings were tabled. For the first and second research questions aiming to reveal English instructors’ feelings and sources of their anxiety at the start of synchronous online education, frequencies, percentages, and mean scores for each relevant item in the questionnaire were calculated and significant results were highlighted. For the third research question, significant differences related to whether English instructors’ feelings and reasons for anxiety differ according to age and teaching experience were presented as well. The findings were interpreted below the tables.

**Table 3.** How did you feel at the beginning of the synchronous online education process?

No	Feelings	Not at all		A Little		Undecided		Much		Very Much		Mean
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	afraid	8	12.7	21	33.3	11	17.5	15	23.8	8	12.7	2.90
2	nervous	4	6.3	19	30.2	3	4.8	23	36.5	14	22.2	3.38
3	enthusiastic	10	15.9	18	28.6	25	39.7	7	11.1	3	4.8	2.60
4	incapable	18	28.6	17	27.0	11	17.5	13	20.6	4	6.3	2.49
5	comfortable	23	36.5	12	19.0	18	28.6	9	14.3	1	1.6	2.25
6	interested	2	3.2	18	28.6	19	30.2	20	31.7	4	6.3	3.09
7	overloaded	6	9.5	6	9.5	6	9.5	23	36.5	22	34.9	3.78
8	stressed	3	4.8	15	23.8	5	7.9	22	34.9	18	28.6	3.59
9	curious	1	1.6	19	30.2	16	25.4	21	33.3	6	9.5	3.19
10	confused	6	9.5	22	34.9	4	6.3	17	27.0	14	22.2	3.17
11	excited	5	7.9	22	34.9	17	27.0	12	19.0	7	11.1	2.90
12	weary	9	14.3	12	19.0	5	7.9	19	30.2	18	28.6	3.40
13	confident	8	12.7	21	33.3	17	27.0	12	19.0	5	7.9	2.76
14	competent	6	9.5	22	34.9	15	23.8	11	17.5	9	14.3	2.92

When we examine the findings regarding the instructors’ feelings at the beginning of synchronous online education process, we see that the mean scores of most positive feelings are lower compared to the negative ones. For instance, only one participant rated Very Much for the fifth item (comfortable). On the other hand, the feelings receiving higher mean scores are those which might be linked to or cause anxiety. To clarify, the highest mean score belongs to the seventh item (3.78), which indicates that 71.4 % (36.5 % Much and 34.9 % Very Much) of the questionnaire participants felt overloaded to a great extent. The feeling of stress was rated at Much level by 34.9 % of the participants and Very Much level by 28.6 % of them. Similarly, the percentage of the participants who felt weary at Much level is 30.2 % and Very Much level is 28.6 %.

**Table 4.** What were the sources of your anxiety at the start of synchronous online education?

No	Sources of anxiety	Not at all		A Little		Undecided		Much		Very Much		Mean
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Lack of in-service training about distance education	1	1.6	8	12.7	6	9.5	23	36.5	25	39.7	4.00
2	Lack of training regarding the use of digital tools	5	7.9	10	15.9	6	9.5	22	34.9	20	31.7	3.67
3	Sudden shift to synchronous lessons	3	4.8	6	9.5	4	6.3	17	27.0	33	52.4	4.13
4	Limited practical experience in using digital tools	11	17.5	10	15.9	1	1.6	15	23.8	26	41.3	3.56
5	Generation difference regarding the use of technology	20	31.7	15	23.8	11	17.5	6	9.5	11	17.5	2.57
6	Internet connection problems	10	15.9	26	41.3	11	17.5	11	17.5	5	7.9	2.60
7	Problems in system security	19	30.2	16	25.4	12	19.0	12	19.0	4	6.3	2.46
8	Problems regarding cameras and microphones	11	17.5	17	27.0	11	17.5	21	33.3	3	4.8	2.81
9	Absence of face to face interaction	3	4.8	10	15.9	8	12.7	14	22.2	28	44.4	3.86
10	Students' unwillingness to keep their cameras on and participate in lessons orally	7	11.1	0	0	7	11.1	18	28.6	31	49.2	4.16
11	Difficulty in monitoring students	4	6.3	12	19.0	7	11.1	22	34.9	18	28.6	3.60
12	Difficulty in supporting students who have special educational needs	8	12.7	9	14.3	4	6.3	26	41.3	16	25.4	3.52
13	Inability to check students' reactions	1	1.6	9	14.3	6	9.5	22	34.9	25	39.7	3.97
14	Problems in time management	10	15.9	24	38.1	14	22.2	10	15.9	5	7.9	2.62
15	Complete change in course delivery	5	7.9	12	19.0	10	15.9	16	25.4	20	31.7	3.54
16	Strong need for inflexible lesson plans	9	14.3	15	23.8	19	30.2	12	19.0	8	12.7	2.92
17	Preparing lecture notes and extra materials	5	7.9	10	15.9	11	17.5	16	25.4	21	33.3	3.60
18	Relying on technology-based activities completely	4	6.3	15	23.8	17	27.0	14	22.2	13	20.6	3.27
19	Students' reluctance to participate in lessons	4	6.3	12	19.0	7	11.1	17	27.0	23	36.5	3.68
20	Students' negative ideas about online education	7	11.1	13	20.6	14	22.2	19	30.2	10	15.9	3.19
21	Uncertainty about students' assessment	1	1.6	13	20.6	9	14.3	20	31.7	20	31.7	3.71

The mean scores in Table 4 demonstrate that the questionnaire participants' anxiety at the start of synchronous online education mostly stemmed from lack of in-service training about distance education (4.00), sudden shift to synchronous lessons (4.13), absence of face-to-face interaction (3.86), students' unwillingness to keep their cameras on and participate in lessons orally (4.16) and inability to check students' reactions (3.97). As a source of anxiety, the tenth item, which has the highest mean score (4.16), was rated at Much level by eighteen participants and at Very Much level by thirty-one participants. When we look at the second highest mean score, we see that sudden shift to synchronous lessons was selected as one of the main causes of anxiety by 27.0 % of the participants at Much level and 52.4 % of them at Very Much level. Another significant result obtained from the analysis is that lack of in-service training about distance education was rated at Much level by twenty-three respondents and at Very Much level by twenty-five respondents. The ninth and thirteenth items also have high mean scores. The findings related to these items show that the

absence of face-to-face interaction and the inability to check students’ reactions affected the instructors negatively in this new mode of course delivery.

**Table 5.** English instructors’ feelings and sources of anxiety according to age and years of teaching experience

	Years of Teaching Experience	Average Age	N	Mean Rank	Asym. Sig.	Mann Whitney-U
incapable	1. 1-10	28.5	22	25.23	.008	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	26.69		
	3. 20+	48.9	28	39.79		
excited	1. 1-10	28.5	22	31.82	.035	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	21.62		2-3
	3. 20+	48.9	28	36.96		
confident	1. 1-10	28.5	22	39.73	.032	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	30.65		
	3. 20+	48.9	28	26.55		
Lack of in-service training about distance education	1. 1-10	28.5	22	25.25	.010	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	27.77		
	3. 20+	48.9	28	39.27		
Lack of training regarding the use of digital tools	1. 1-10	28.5	22	24.09	.003	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	27.31		
	3. 20+	48.9	28	40.39		
Limited practical experience in using digital tools	1. 1-10	28.5	22	24.59	.003	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	26.31		2-3
	3. 20+	48.9	28	40.46		
Generation difference regarding the use of technology	1. 1-10	28.5	22	18.23	.000	1-3
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	25.92		2-3
	3. 20+	48.9	28	45.64		
Difficulty in supporting students who have special educational needs	1. 1-10	28.5	22	35.52	.022	1-2
	2. 11-20	42.3	13	20.12		2-3
	3. 20+	48.9	28	34.75		

Note. \* $p < .05$

According to the findings presented in Table 5, it can be interpreted that English instructors who have 20+ years of teaching experience felt more *incapable* than those who have 1-10 years of teaching experience, but more *excited* than other sub-groups. On the other hand, the instructors who have 1-10 years of teaching experience felt more *confident* compared to the instructors with 20+ years teaching experience. By comparison with the instructors who have 1-10 years of teaching experience, we can say that those with 20+ years of teaching experience regarded a *lack of in-service training about distance education*, *lack of training regarding the use of digital tools*, and *limited practical experience in using digital tools* as the main sources of their anxiety to a higher degree. It is also seen that the instructors with 20+ years of teaching experience felt the impact of *generation differences regarding the use of technology* more than those with 1-10 and 11-20 years of teaching experience. Finally, compared to other subgroups, it is observed that the instructors who have 11-20 years of teaching experience considered the *difficulty in supporting students who have special educational needs* to be a source of anxiety to a lower degree.

### Conclusions and Discussion

Online teaching does not only mean the proper use of digital tools while teaching, but compared to face-to-face education, it also has a lot of different features which make changes in instructors’

behaviors, roles, and approaches inevitably. The current research was conducted at the start of emergency remote teaching, and it mostly focused on the instructors' concerns. It is highly likely that a new teaching environment which has not been experienced before leads to anxiety, and when the existing literature is examined, it is seen that language teachers' anxiety during the pandemic was a studied topic (e.g., Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Gao & Zhang, 2020; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020). In the present research centering specifically on instructors' anxiety regarding synchronous teaching settings, both qualitative and quantitative findings indicated that the target language instructors considerably suffered from anxiety when there was a sudden conversion to emergency remote teaching. Even if this mode of teaching aroused interest and curiosity in the participants, they described their feelings more with the adjectives such as stressed, nervous, overloaded, and weary. This finding demonstrates the assumption that unfamiliar teaching settings bring anxiety is correct in the context where the study was conducted, too.

As for the sources of anxiety, what the present research has found is in accordance with Lin et al.'s study (2012) which categorizes online instructors' concerns under three headings: self-concerns, task-concerns and impact-concerns. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews showed that English instructors' concerns were mainly caused by the sense of inadequacy, lack of interaction opportunities, and the fear of not being able to meet students' needs. The instructors worried whether they had adequate technological and pedagogical knowledge to manage synchronous online lessons, how they would involve students in interaction in this physically separate setting, and how much synchronous online lessons were helpful in providing an effective learning experience. The results of the questionnaire applied to a larger group of instructors support the qualitative findings as well. In addition, the interview participants verbalized the difficulty of managing technical difficulties in synchronous online lessons, and this finding is in harmony with Anderson et al.'s paper (2006) which raises this issue. As Ng (2007) states, online instructors spend a great deal of time preparing appropriate course materials for online teaching. In the current study, the need to prepare lecture notes and materials was regarded as one of the main sources of anxiety by both interview and questionnaire participants. Predictably, lack of training about distance education and the use of digital tools were considered to be a source of anxiety at high levels, and this finding justifies Kilgour et al.'s study (2019) which emphasizes the need for professional development activities for the instructors who are new to online teaching. The importance of technology training for teachers was highlighted by EFL teacher participants in Khatoony and Nezdahmer's study (2020) conducted during the pandemic and as stated above, this is in line with the results of the present research. In the Turkish EFL context, there exists relevant research which yielded similar results. Akbana and Dikilitaş (2022) tried to identify the sources of anxiety during emergency remote teaching. As a result, two major themes which are digitalization-related concerns and online pedagogy-related concerns were documented as the causes of anxiety among the EFL teachers.

This research also attempted to find out whether English instructors' feelings and sources of anxiety in relation to synchronous online lessons differed according to age and years of service in the job. Considering the demographic information about the participants, it is obvious that teaching experience has increased with age; hence the purpose here is actually to see if these two related variables have an influence on anxiety among the target group. As managing synchronous online lessons requires instructors to carry out multiple duties (both pedagogically and technologically) in front of a computer screen, instructors need to have digital literacy to a considerable degree. A very recent study (Erol & Aydın, 2021) conducted with Turkish teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic showed that the level of digital literacy falls as one gets older and has more years of service in the job. When the findings of the present research (Table 5) are examined, it can be seen that most of the significant differences according to age and teaching experience are related to digital literacy. While the instructors who have been teaching English for more than 20 years felt more incapable at the beginning of synchronous online lessons, the instructors who have 1-10 years of experience in the profession felt more confident. In parallel with these feelings, the study revealed that as the age

and teaching experience increased, lack of in-service training about distance education and the use of digital tools, limited practical experience in using digital tools, and generation difference regarding the use of technology created more anxiety among the senior EFL instructors. This clearly leads us to the conclusion that the instructors called digital natives and those called digital immigrants were not affected in the same way by the sudden conversion to emergency remote teaching because they differed from each other in their knowledge, background, and skills to use technology.

To conclude, emergency remote teaching, as its name suggests, started under the extraordinary conditions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and aroused anxiety, especially among the instructors who had no previous distance education experience. In language education, interaction and active participation of learners in classroom activities are needed to maximize learning, but all these are quite limited in remote teaching, and it can become very difficult to manage lessons due to technical problems. The findings obtained from this study pointed out that English instructors' anxiety stemmed not only from using various digital tools but also from a lack of practical experience in how to integrate their subject knowledge and subject pedagogy with technology in synchronous online platforms. Therefore, in parallel to the instructors' views, in-service training based on their actual context-sensitive needs and designed specifically to enable them to reflect on practice and experience rather than transmitting theoretical knowledge can help the instructors to cope effectively with new situations and adapt easily to their new roles.

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**To cite this article:** Balıkcıoğlu Akkuş, G., Akkuş, M., & Yapıcı, E. (2022). An investigation into English instructors' anxiety in synchronous online teaching platforms. *Language and Technology*, 4(1), 15-29. <https://doi.org/10.55078/lantec.1152545>