BUSBED

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION

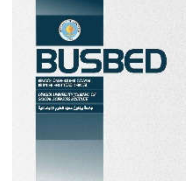Fatma Şeyma DOĞAN[1], Seyit Ahmet ÇAPAN[2]

ABSTRACT

Awareness about possible contributions and drawbacks of English as a foreign language courses through distance and traditional face-to-face education may contribute to improving the efficiency of the process of teaching and learning a foreign language. The aim of this study is to investigate pre-service teachers' views related to English as a foreign language courses through distance education compared to the traditional face-to-face education. The study intended to reveal the pros and cons of English as a foreign language courses not only through distance education but also face-to-face education and provide some suggestions to overcome possible problems encountered with the distant and/or face-to-face learning/teaching of English. Moreover, the study aimed to explore pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and the impact of learning English through distance education compared to face-to-face education on their grades. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The participants were 91 pre-service teachers from different majors for the quantitative part of the present study while 14 pre-service teachers participated in the qualitative part. The findings highlight the importance of pre-service teachers' views regarding learning English as a foreign language through distance education compared to the traditional face-to-face education considering the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each. Likewise, the study provided implications to improve their effectiveness in the process of learning English as a foreign language, which is considered one of the top priorities in the Turkish education system.

Keywords: English as a foreign language courses, Face-to-face education, Distance education, Strengths, Problems.

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ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ UZAKTAN EĞİTİM YOLUYLA VERİLEN YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE DERSİNE İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ

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ÖZ

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce dersinin uzaktan ve geleneksel yüz yüze eğitim yoluyla verilmesinin artılarının ve eksilerinin farkında olunması yabancı dil öğretme ve öğrenme sürecinin verimliliğini artırmaya katkıda bulunabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen adaylarının geleneksel yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla uzaktan eğitim yoluyla verilen yabancı dil olarak İngilizce derslerine ilişkin görüşlerini incelemektir. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce derslerinin sadece uzaktan eğitimle değil, yüz yüze eğitimle de verilmesinin artılarını ve eksilerini ortaya çıkarmak ve bu sorunlara ilişkin önerilerde bulunmak amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca, öğretmen adaylarının İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenmeye yönelik tutumları ve İngilizceyi uzaktan eğitimle yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla öğrenmenin notlarına etkisi araştırılmaya çalışılmıştır. Mevcut çalışmada hem nitel hem de nicel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın nicel kısmına farklı branşlardan 91 öğretmen adayı, nitel kısmına ise 91 öğretmen adayının 14'ü katılmıştır. Bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dil olarak İngilizce dersinin geleneksel yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla uzaktan eğitimle öğrenmeye ilişkin görüşlerinin güçlü ve zayıf yönleri dikkate alınarak tespit edilmesinin önemini vurgulamakta ve öğrenme sürecindeki etkilikleriyle ilgili sonuçlar sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, Türk eğitim sisteminin en önemli önceliklerden biri olarak görülen yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenme sürecinin etkiliğini arttırmak için birtakım çıkarımlarda bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce dersi, Yüz yüze eğitim, Uzaktan eğitim, Güçlü yönler, Sorunlar.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective foreign language (FL) education is one of the top priorities in the Turkish education system. In line with the growing interest in FL learning for a wide range of purposes including international mobility and intercultural communication, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has made radical reforms to improve the quality of FL education since 1997 (Alagözlü, 2017; Kırkgöz, 2008; Yaman, 2018). As part of these reforms, the level learning/teaching of English was first lowered to the 4th grade and then to the 2nd grade of primary schools. Similarly, curricular changes were made to align FL education with the principles of communicative and student-centered approaches to language teaching. Nevertheless, the consistent underachievement of Turkish students in learning English (EPI, 2019, 2020) still features as one of the strongest problems that await immediate solution(s). Likewise, the unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further blurred the muddy waters in FL education because Turkish FL learners, just like those all over the world, had to grapple with the challenging task of learning English across computer or mobile phone screens without access to actual classrooms for a prolonged time.

Apparently, attempts to learn/teach through online resources are by no means a novel phenomenon in the Turkish education system. Consonant with the global developments in distance education ranging from the preliminary uses of letter-based exchanges between students and teachers through the asynchronous distribution of audio and videos lessons to interactive classes held via synchronous virtual conferences, the educational system in Turkey offered letter-based distance education until the early 1980s (Egitek, 2005 Düzakın & Yalçınkaya 2008). Following the authorization of Anadolu University to design and maintain open education programs (Düzakın & Yalçınkaya 2008; İşman, 2011), TV and radio broadcasts served a notable function for providing people with opportunities to get educational degrees. As a result of the widespread use of interactive online resources, web-based learning/teaching has gained popularity since the establishment of the Middle East Technical University Institute of Informatics as the first attempt to integrate distance education in Turkey in 1996 (Idea, 2022). Accordingly, a great number of distance education programs have mushroomed in various Turkish universities in the past few years such as at Çukurova University, Sakarya University and Bilgi University. While the effectiveness of these programs is harshly criticized for certain reasons like the quality of education, functions which they serve in practice, roles and competencies of instructors and their compliance with principles of modern educational theories (Düzakın & Yalçınkaya 2008; Gülnar, 200; Şahin, 2003), many more universities strive for full or partial integration of distance education into their curricula.

One such attempt is the delivery of English I and English II courses that all freshman students in Turkish universities have to take as a compulsory subject regardless of the program in which they are enrolled in. The host institute where the present study was conducted also decided to offer English I course face-to-face and English II course totally online with the rationale that this amalgam of face-to-face and online learning/teaching might provide learners of English as an FL with rich learning experiences. As a result, the present study intended to investigate perceptions of English as an FL learners about the effectiveness of studying English in such a bi-modal trajectory. More specifically, the present study aimed at probing into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of studying English through distance education as compared to the traditional face-to-face education. Thusly, the significance of the present study lied in its analysis of learning/teaching English as an FL in an online environment through the perceptions of learners who enjoyed the opportunity to compare their hands-on experiences in studying English online versus face-to-face. With this regard, the present study sought for answers to the following questions:

Q-1- What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of satisfaction with distance education?

Q-2- What are pre-service teachers' attitudes towards English as a foreign language?

Q-3- Are there any statistically significant differences between pre-service teachers' grades in English as a foreign language courses through distance and face-to-face education in the fall and spring terms?

Q-4- What are pre-service teachers' views related to English as a foreign language course through distance education compared to face-to-face education?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of educational technologies into classrooms has spurred sound motivation to examine its influence on various aspects of FL learning/teaching. Despite the abundance of terms used to refer to the educational uses of technology such as distance education, open education or web-based education, distance education broadly covers any practice of using the internet and multimedia technologies in order to provide easy access to and exchange of information, and collaboration between students and teachers (or among students) who are physically located at a distance (İşman, 1998). Given the specific context of the present study, distance education refers to teaching English as an FL through internet-based synchronous and asynchronous classes where students and

teachers meet on a weekly basis. Serving to the ultimate goal of promoting the quality of educational practices, distance education is shaped by certain features. First and foremost, distance education involves a planned set of learning/teaching activities which rely heavily on video, audio, graphics, computer, and multimedia devices (Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell, 2000). It offers a flexible learning platform in which students and teachers meet virtually rather than face-to-face (Ekmekçi, 2015; Sampson, 2003). While it provides viable opportunities for interactive and collaborative learning (Maor, 2003), distance education follows a student-centered framework with strong emphasis on self-directed, autonomous and life-long-learners (Akça, 2006; Ekmekçi, 2015; Mitchell, Chen & Macredie, 2005). Moreover, it enables students to learn at their own pace and path as it takes place in a "seamless space" (Wong & Looi, 2010: 421) free from time and location constraints (Gökçe, 2008; Şirin & Tekdal, 2015). Nonetheless, it is essentially an institutional and formal form of education because it systematically covers the comprehensive process of content and materials development and management, assignment and submission of student work and/or projects, development and administration of various test types, and evaluation of students' achievement (Al & Madran, 2004 in Yaman, 2015; Çakmak, 2013; Schilosser & Simonson, 2009).

Distance education has evidently been so intertwined with educational contexts that it is integral to learning of almost all students worldwide. Conole (2008) pointed out that students with different learning preferences, subject disciplines and prior technology use experiences used web-based resources to extend their comprehension and supplement course materials as well as to contact with teachers and peers, access to additional learning materials, and create assignments/presentations. Similarly, Kennedy et al. (2006) documented extensive technology use by students in order to reinforce their coursework. Furthermore, numerous researchers (Gee, 2003; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Vinogradova, 2011) enlisted various ways in which students, in particular for learning English as an FL, could benefit educational technologies including game-based practices, augmented reality, computer-mediated communication in the form of telecollaboration, and digital projects (e.g. travel blogs, digital storytelling and serialized podcasts). Henceforth, one can easily attend to Düzakın and Yalçınkaya's (2008) rejection of a dichotomous either-or approach to distance versus face-to-face education. Instead, distance education is primarily an integral complement to the traditional face-to-face education since it supplements and improves the quality of face-to-face education once designed with appropriate methods and effective interactivity.

Aligned with the overwhelming insistence on its integration into classrooms, a large number of studies were conducted to empirically outline the influence of distance education on FL learning. Whereas overall conclusions favored for partial or full integration of different applications of educational technologies, controversial findings were reported on how the use of technologies related to various variables. On the one hand, several studies (Behroozian & Sadeghoghli, 2017; Gürbüz, 2014; Şirin & Tekdal, 2015) unequivocally found that students had significantly positive attitudes towards the use of educational technologies as this could contribute to their motivation to learn. Yet, Kitchakarn (2015) underlined that student attitudes towards the use of educational technologies in FL classes were positively correlated with their abilities to use those technologies i.e. the more competent they were in using technologies, the more positive their attitudes would be. Likewise, educational technologies proved to be a promising pedagogy to promote learner autonomy and self-directedness given that they would require learners to assemble information from among a large variety of resources, make their own decisions and thusly, take more responsibility for their own learning (Lam & Lawrance, 2002; Warscahuer et al., 1996). As possible factors justifying FL learners' positive attitudes towards the use of educational technologies, several studies (Lloyd, 2012; Ngo & Eichelberger, 2019; Yang & Chen, 2007) unearthed those educational technologies offered novel and enriched resources for practicing all four skills. Furthermore, the use of educational technologies engaged learners of English as an FL in authentic experiences which gave a realistic sense of language use for communication (Campbell, 2004; Fageeh, 2011).

With recourse to the negative aspects of technology use, on the other hand, a plethora of studies revealed a number of concerns about the use of technologies which triggered dissatisfaction with learning experiences. A primary concern about distance education seemed to be insufficient interactivity between students and teachers (or among students) because numerous studies (Allen et al., 2002; Conole, 2008; Gürbüz, 2014) posited that participants of distance education had limited access to teachers in cases of need for assistance such as asking questions about the coursework and getting feedback about assignments. Several studies (Behroozian & Sadeghoghli, 2017; Shin & Son, 2007) also pinpointed that classroom management surfaced as a major concern in online classes due to students' tendency to be distracted by irrelevant activities like playing games or chatting. Despite the widespread use of technology for various purposes, teachers' lack of awareness and ability about effective uses of educational technologies was one of the concerns hurdling the success of distance education (Yaman, 2015). Still another common concern which negatively impacted students' and teachers' perceptions of using education technologies undergirded external factors such as low internet connection, limited access to computers or other hardware (e.g. speakers, microphones, webcams etc.), and multiplicity of online resources compared to the limited time for planning and learning/teaching (Behroozian & Sadeghoghli, 2017; Ertmer, 1999; Shin & Son, 2007).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design

The present study was designed as a descriptive study given that it intended to shed light on participants' views on studying English through online versus face-to-face media. Following a mixed-methods design, the present study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. While the quantitative data would statistically point out the attitudes towards learning English as an FL and views about distance education, the qualitative data would facilitate an in-depth analysis of possible factors shaping the participants' attitudes and views about distance education experiences in learning English as an FL compared to face-to-face education.

3.2. Setting and Procedures

The present study was conducted at a public university in the southeast part of Turkey. The study required the participants to study English as an FL bimodally i.e. via traditional face-to-face classes and online classes in the fall and spring semesters, respectively. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and data collection took place after the researchers received approval from the social sciences and humanities ethics committee of the host institute. Moreover, the participants were informed of the purposes and procedures of the study along with the awareness that they could unconditionally leave the study at any stage without any consequences on their academic studies. The quantitative data collection was conducted at end of the spring semester so that the participants could holistically reflect on their experiences in both modes of learning/teaching English as an FL. The qualitative data, however, were collected at an out-of-class meeting from the participants who had stated consent for further correspondence about the study procedures.

3.3. Participants

There were 91 participants (64 females and 27 males) in the present study, who were freshman students majoring in one of the three departments including classroom teacher education (n=34), music education (n=31) and arts-crafts education (n=26) at the host institute. 67 of 91 participants (73.6%) indicated that they did not have personal computer while 24 of them (26.4%) reported that they had personal computer. As for their technology usage time, most of the participants (n=85, 93.4%) indicated that their technology usage time for the English course was between 0 and 5 hours a week. Two of them reported their technology usage time for the English course was between 6-10 hours a week while four of them indicated their technology usage time for the English course was between 11-15 hours a week. More than half of the participants (n=57, 62.6%) stated their ability to use technology was average while 16 of them (17.6%) reported it as being weak. Just 18 of them (19.8%) reported that their ability was strong. The participants were selected through purposive sampling (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006) using the criteria that only those students who consecutively took English I and English II courses in the same academic year (given that non-consecutive taking could have brought about some intervening factors like different instructors, course materials etc.) and those who had no previous experience with any (in)formal study of English as an FL through distance education. The participants were given a pseudonym to ensure true confidentiality and anonymity in cases where their names were referred to in the study.

3.4. Instruments

The present study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. As regards the quantitative data collection tools, the Attitudes towards English Scale (Tuncer et al., 2015) was used. It comprised 24 Likert-type items anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). Some of the items were reverse-coded so that a higher score on the scale could represent a more positive attitude towards English. Tuncer et al. (2015) reported high reliability for the scale as the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.88. The Perceptions of Satisfaction with Distance Education Questionnaire (Eygü & Karaman, 2013) consisted of 34 Likert-type items similarly anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). All the items were positively worded to ensure that a higher score on the questionnaire reflected higher satisfaction with distance education experiences. The questionnaire had high reliability score as the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.93 (Eygü & Karaman, 2013).

With reference to the qualitative data, the researchers conducted individual interviews. A total of 14 participants joined the interviews. These semi-structured interviews mainly focused on the participants' views regarding studying English online versus face-to-face, pros and cons of online study of English, and insider suggestions about how to improve online experiences in learning English as an FL. The interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes each.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative tools were analyzed in two steps. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Conducted via SPSS Version 27, the analyses shed light on the participants'

attitudes towards learning English as an FL online and their perceived satisfaction with distance education by capturing standard deviation, mean and median scores. As for the qualitative data, the researchers used content analysis to unravel codes and themes that could possibly help to explain the statistical findings. For the purposes of content analysis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then, analyzed independently by each researcher at the first round. At the second round, the individual codes, themes and overarching categories were compared to come up with a unified presentation of the findings. Using Miles and Huberman's (1994: 64) formula, interrater reliability was found to be 80%, which, according to Saldana (2009), was a sufficiently high score to consider the qualitative analysis reliable. Finally, the cases of disagreement between researchers were resolved through discussion.

4. FINDINGS

The current study tried to answer four research questions. The findings were presented in the order of these research questions. The aim of the first research question was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceived distance education satisfaction level. While Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of pre-service teachers' overall distance education satisfaction level, Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of each sub-dimension of distance education satisfaction level.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of Distance Education Satisfaction Level

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
General Distance Education Satisfaction	91	1.9291	.92506
Valid N (listwise)	91		

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics about Sub-Dimensions of Distance Education Satisfaction

Sub-dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Suitability	91	1.8559	.94941
Effectiveness	91	1.9956	1.06666
Learning	91	1.8440	.98378
Program Evaluation	91	1.9698	1.08323
Technology	91	1.7985	.99241
Materials	91	2.2125	1.21768
Evaluation	91	1.8828	1.07079
Support Services	91	2.0659	1.19073
Valid N (listwise)	91		

As presented in Table 1, the overall mean (X) score of pre-service teachers' satisfaction level with distance education was 1.92. With respect to the sub-dimensions, means of pre-service teachers' satisfaction level was X =1.85 for the dimension of individual suitability, X = 1.99 for effectiveness, X = 1.84 for learning, X =1.96 for program evaluation, X= 1.79 for technology, X= 2.21 for materials, X= 1.88 for evaluation and X = 2.06 for support services (See Table 2). Hence, these findings revealed that participants' satisfaction level with distance education was low, taking into consideration the averages of overall and sub-dimensions in both tables.

The second research question aimed to examine pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning English as an FL. Table 3 and Table 4 below show descriptive statistics of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards English.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes towards English

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
General Attitude	91	2.7953	.74997
Valid N (listwise)	91		

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistics about Sub-Dimensions of Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes towards English

Sub-dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation

Attitudes towards Learning	91	3.0769	1.05800
Personal Meaning	91	2.9011	1.10106
Want and Anxiety	91	2.3407	.85708
Importance of English	91	3.7418	1.32364
Valid N (listwise)	91		

As can be seen in Table 3, the overall mean score of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards English was 2.79. Regarding the sub-dimensions, the means of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards English is X =3.07 for the dimension of attitudes towards learning, X = 2.90 for personal meaning, X = 2.34 for want and anxiety, and X =3.74 for importance of English (See Table 4). These findings showed that the participants' attitudes towards learning English as an FL were moderate considering the averages of general and sub-dimensions in both tables. In the light of the findings given above, it can be stated that pre-service teachers had a moderately positive attitude towards learning English.

The third research question investigated whether there is a statistically significant difference between pre-service teachers' grades in English as an FL course through face-to-face and distance education in the fall and spring semesters, respectively. Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics of grades in the fall and spring terms. Table 6 presents the t-test results of the grades that pre-service teachers received in the fall and spring semesters.

Table 5.
Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Grades

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mean belonging to the fall term	64.0989	91	21.66400	2.27100
Mean belonging to the spring term	56.7473	91	18.51687	1.94109

Table 6.
Comparison of Means of the Grades in the Fall and Spring Terms

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean (fall) vs. mean (spring)	7.35165	19.63833	2.05866	3.26177	11.44153	3.571	90	.001

As can be seen in Table 5 above, the participants received higher grades in English language courses in the fall semester (X=64.09, SD=21.66) than in the spring (X=56.74, SD=18.5). As indicated in Table 6, there was a statistically significant difference between the grades in the fall and spring semesters at the level of .001. To clarify, the average grades that the participants received in the English FL course through distance education in the spring semester was statistically lower than the grades they received in the traditional face-to-face course in the fall semester. This result showed that the type of media through which they learned English affected pre-service teachers' academic success in the process of learning English as an FL. Considering the comparison of the grades in English language as an FL course through face-to-face versus distance education, one can assume that for the specific group of the participants in this study, traditional face-to-face education perplexingly proved to be a more effective education model. As an underlying reason for this assumption, it can be posited that pre-service teachers' perceived distance education satisfaction level may be one of the factors that affected their academic success in learning English even though they had moderately positive attitudes towards English.

The last research question, which was qualitative by nature, aimed to better understand the pros and cons of English language as an FL course through distance versus face-to-face education from the lenses of pre-service teachers. Table 7 presents pre-service teachers' views about the English FL course specifically through the distance education mode and sample excerpts to highlight their views. Some of the participants expressed more than one opinion related to the English FL course.

Table 7.

Pre-Service Teachers' Views about the English FL Course through Distance Education

Themes	Codes	f	Exemplary Excerpts
Negative Aspects	Lack of interaction (limited student-student interaction, limited teacher-student interaction, limited active participation, restricted contact with the teachers)	6	*"Language is not a lesson that can be learned by distance education. The interaction between students and teachers is limited. The opportunity to ask questions and get an answer for your questions is limited. This contributes to learning in a very limited way."* PST 14
	Technical issues (issues related to the system, low quality videos, power-cut)	6	*"The quality of videos is low. The live broadcast stream can be frozen. It is problematic because it is not face-face education."* PST 3
	Poor learning	6	*"According to me, the lessons that are not offered in the classrooms are not fruitful. "* PST2
	Financial issues (lack of personal computers, limited internet access)	4	*"There are some students who have computers or tablets or do not have computers or tablets. I am very miserable. As a student, distance education affected me and English lesson, which I love very much, in a very negative way."* PST 9
	Concentration issues	3	*"Other things at home can distract our attention. We cannot concentrate on the lessons. Without listening to the lesson, we can pass the course."* PST 5
	Low grades	3	*"I was more successful in English language courses through face-to-face education. My grade was higher. I used to love English more than now. Distance education decreased my success.*" PST1
	Cheating issues	1	*"Some students can pass the exam and get higher grades by making other people take the exam for them. ..."* PST 13
	Lack of information	1	*"Nobody has a clear information about the system."* PST 6
	Not having any negative sides	1	*"It does not have any negative sides."* PST 8
Positive Aspects	Flexibility of time	5	*"Whenever you want, you can listen to the lessons."* PST 8
	Transportation	4	*"It has lessened the burden on public transportation. I think distance education is beneficial in terms of time."* PST 5
	Time-saving	3	*"We do not have to go to the university. It saves time. It is more comfortable to listen to the lessons at home."* PST 12
	Flexibility of learning pace	3	*"It provides opportunity to listen to the lessons at a more comfortable place. It saves time. Students can learn the subjects at their own learning pace."* PST 11
	Flexibility of attendance	2	*"I think it is advantageous in terms of absenteeism. Except for it, it does not have any other advantages."* PST6
	Flexibility of place	2	*"We have the opportunity to listen to the lessons anytime, anywhere."* PST3

As can be seen in Table 7, pre-service teachers' views about the English FL course through distance education were categorized under two themes: negative and positive aspects. Under the theme of negative aspects, nine codes were formed including lack of interaction, technical issues, poor learning, financial issues, concentration issues, low grades, cheating issues, insufficient information regarding distance education system, and not having any negative sides. Lack of interaction, technical issues and poor learning were the most frequently stated negative aspects of English language courses through distance education while cheating issues, insufficient information about distance education system and not having any negative sides were the least frequently stated negative aspects. Six of the pre-service teachers out of 14 stated that they had some problems regarding interaction in distance courses. They highlighted the fact that English language courses through distance education offered

limited opportunities for student-teacher and student-student interaction. Also, they implied that they had restricted opportunities to participate actively and stated that they had limited contact with the instructors since they had problems regarding having access to the instructors. Language learning by nature requires effective interaction not only between the instructors and students but also students and students. At that point, if there is limited interaction in the courses, the courses may not be fruitful in terms of learning. This situation is clarified by PST 14's words:

"Language is not a lesson that can be learned by distance education. The interaction between students and teachers is limited. The opportunity to ask questions and get an answer for your questions is limited. This contributes to learning in a very limited way." PST 14

Technical issues were another most frequently stated negative aspect of the distance classes. The findings showed that six pre-service teachers out of 14 had problems regarding the system, low quality videos and power-cut, which can be viewed as a barrier for having effective distance courses. Therefore, it seems a must to deal with these technical problems throughout the education year in order to provide effective learning/teaching atmosphere for both the instructors and students. Some of the pre-service teachers clarified these problems by stating:

"The quality of videos is low. The live broadcast stream can be frozen. It is problematic because it is not face-to-face education." PST 3

"...It is very bad in each aspect. The system is problematic or I have some problems regarding attendance. Even, I cannot log in the system..." PST 13

Poor learning was also among the most frequently stated negative aspects of the distance courses. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers have doubts related to the effectiveness of the English language courses through distance education. Six of them reported that these courses caused poor learning.

Financial issues were similarly a major concern within the negative aspects. Four out of 14 pre-service teachers clearly stated that they had financial problems including lack of personal computers and limited internet access. It was one of the striking findings of this study that having financial issues affected some of the pre-service teachers' views about English in a negative way. PST 9 expresses his problem as follows:

"There are some students who have computers or tablets or do not have computers or tablets. I am very miserable. As a student, distance education affected me and English lesson, which I love very much, in a very negative way." PST 9

Concentration issues were an equally frequent problem stated about the distance English FL courses. Four of the pre-service teachers highlighted that they had some problems regarding concentration on the grounds that they had different distractors around them at different places during the distance courses. These findings brought into light that focusing on the lessons in distance courses was difficult for pre-service teachers. One of the pre-service teachers expresses this problem as follows:

"Other things at home can distract our attention. We cannot concentrate on the lessons. Without listening to the lesson, we can pass the course." PST 5

Another frequently stated negative aspect of distance courses was low grades. Three out of 14 pre-service teachers expressed that they had higher grades in the English FL course through traditional face-to-face education, and the shift from face-to-face to distance classes decreased their academic success. Furthermore, they implied that they did not consider the English FL course through distance education effective. PST 1 highlighted this situation as follows:

"I was more successful in English lessons through face-to-face education. My grade was higher. I used to love English more than now. Distance education decreased my success." PST1

This finding supports and gives detailed information regarding the findings of the quantitative part of the present study taking into account the participants' grades in English language courses through face-to-face and distance education in fall and spring terms. The participants' concerns about the decrease in their grades in the distance education mode concorded with the suggestion that the type of media had an impact on pre-service teachers' academic success in the process of learning English.

Pre-service teachers also documented cheating issues and insufficient information about distance education system as negative aspects of English language courses through distance education, which were the least expressed negative sides. One of the pre-service teachers highlighted that some cheating problems came out in the distance education system while the other one stated that nobody had the sufficient information about the distance education system. Their views are as follows:

"Some students can pass the exam and get higher grades by making other people take the exam for them. ..." PST 13

"Nobody has a clear information about the system." PST 6

As for the positive aspects of learning English through distance education, six codes were formed including flexibility of time, transportation, time-saving, flexibility of learning pace, flexibility of attendance, and flexibility of place. The participants in this study stated that distance classes were advantageous in terms of time, place, attendance, learning pace and transportation. Obviously, these advantages may be some of the factors that critically contributed to the widespread expansion of the distance education system in recent years.

As part of the fourth research question, the interviews in this study also probed into the participants' views about the English FL course through traditional face-face-to-face education. Table 8 presents their views as well as sample excerpts.

Table 8.
Pre-service Teachers' Views about English FL Course through Face-To-Face Education

Themes	Codes	f	Sample Excerpts
Negative Aspects	Compulsory attendance	4	*"Attendance is the disadvantage."*
	Learner preferences	4	*"It may not be effective for each student. This can be a negative aspect of face-to-face courses."* PST 5
Positive Aspects	Interactivity	7	"It increases interaction among students and between teacher and students." PST 4
	Immediate feedback	6	*"You have the chance to practise what you have learnt in the lesson. You have the chance to get immediate feedback from the teacher. You have the chance to practise what you have learnt with your friends Almost all of the students have the chance to participate in the lessons. We are more likely to learn English by means of different examples and vocabulary."* PST 11
	Fruitful lessons	6	*"It does not have any negative sides. I think the lesson is really fruitful."* PST 2
	Permanent learning	5	*"It is more permanent since there is interaction."* P14
	Accessibility of instructors	3	*"...We have easy access to the instructor. We have the chance to ask our questions to the instructor in a more comfortable way."* PST 3
	Candid atmosphere	1	*"We had a more candid atmosphere in the lessons. We were more active in the lessons."* PST1
	No technical issues	1	*"Without power-cut, we have the opportunity to listen to the lessons. We have easy access to the instructor. We have the chance to ask our questions to the instructor in a more comfortable way."* PST 3

As can be seen in Table 8, pre-service teachers' views regarding English FL course through face-to-face education were similarly categorized under two themes: negative and positive aspects. Under the theme of negative aspects, two codes emerged including compulsory attendance and learner preferences. Regarding compulsory attendance, four of the participants complained about the attendance issues in face-to-face courses and stated the requirement for regular physical attendance to the classes as the main disadvantage of face-to-face learning of English. The other negative aspect of face-to-face learning/teaching of English was the perceived disregard for different learner preferences as face-to-face education was considered to rely necessarily on traditional board and coursebook use only. Four participants underlined that face-to-face courses might not be appropriate for different types of learners in the process of learning an FL.

As for the positive aspects of the English FL course through face-to-face education, seven codes were formed including interactivity, immediate feedback, fruitful lessons, permanent learning, accessibility of instructors, a candid atmosphere and no technical issues. Half of the pre-service teachers participating in the interviews maintained that face-to-face classes were more interactive, and this could contribute to having more efficient lessons, since language learning and teaching required a more interactive process. Immediate feedback from the instructors was the second most frequently stated positive side of face-to-face classes. Six of the participants

thought that having immediate feedback from their instructors could remarkably contribute to their learning process as it would facilitate resolving their confusions related to possible learning point. Similarly, most of the participants stated that learning English through face-to-face education offered fruitful learning opportunities, which would effectively satisfy their learning needs. Another frequently expressed positive side of learning English through face-to-face education was the service it paid for more permanent learning. Five of the pre-service teachers stated that contextual features, in particular here-and-now nature of actual classrooms contributed to longer retention of the learning points. Three of them also explicated that the instructors were more accessible in the face-to-face mode, which readily fostered a more efficient communication between instructors and students. The least frequently stated positive sides of face-to-face courses were the seemingly more candid atmosphere and freedom from technical issues. One of the pre-service teachers pinpointed that they had a more candid atmosphere in face-to-face classes, which would help students to have lower affective filters in the process of learning an FL. Intriguingly, one of the participants also stated that face-to-face courses were free of technical problems, and this enabled them to have their lessons without interruption.

Considering the positive and negative sides of the English FL course through face-to-face education, positive sides outweighed negative sides whereas it was found to be vice versa for distance education mode. The results obtained from the qualitative data of the study pointed out that the pre-service teachers in this study found the English FL course through face-to-face education were more effective and beneficial for them than courses through distance education. This finding supports and explains the results obtained in the quantitative part. As for pre-service teachers' preference for the English FL course in the terms of its effectiveness, 95.6 % of them stated that face-to-face classes were more effective in the process of learning English. The results of this study evinced that there was a clear need for more interaction and collaboration in English language courses as by-product of the nature of learning a language.

All in all, the present study pinpointed that both modes of learning/teaching English as an FL had not only advantages but also disadvantages. Even though pre-service teachers thought that studying English through face-to-face education were more effective than studying through distance education, the results of this study revealed some areas which merit further attention to improve the quality of distance education in learning English.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study set out with the aim of investigating pre-service teachers' perceptions of satisfaction with distance education, their attitudes towards English FL courses and the impact of education type on their academic success. Also, it tried to explore pre-service teachers' views regarding English FL courses through distance education compared to traditional face-to-face education. The results of first research question indicated that pre-service teachers' satisfaction level with English FL courses through distance education was low and they had negative views about English language as an FL course through distance education. This result confirmed Pepeler et. al. (2018) and Doğan (2020)'s finding that the participants had negative attitudes towards taking English FL courses via distance education. In the same vein, Şen Ersoy (2015) documented that almost one-third of participants' satisfaction level with distance education was quite low. Also, Şen Ersoy (ibid.) found that the number of the participants with very low satisfaction levels with distance education was almost equal to the number of participants whose satisfaction level was quite high. She speculated that the reason lying behind the low satisfaction levels might be a mere matter of participants' preference for the type of education system. On the other hand, this finding contradicted with the results of Tuzcu Eken's (2021) study as in her study, the participants did not have totally negative views regarding English FL courses through distance education even though they were aware of the disadvantages of distance education. This is also supported by Markova et al. (2017) findings showing that students had a relatively high satisfaction level with distance education although they faced with some challenges related to distance education. Based on the findings of the relevant studies (Doğan, 2020; Markova et al., 2017; Pepeler et al., 2018; Şen Ersoy, 2015; Tuzcu Eken, 2021), it can be said that the efficiency and quality of distance education in the process of language learning is a controversial issue among the students even though the transition from traditional face-to-face education to distance education in the process of language learning at the university level has become widespread.

As for the impact of the type of education model on pre-service teachers' academic success, the findings indicated that the pre-service teachers had higher grades in English FL courses through traditional face-to-face courses than through distance education, which was one of the striking findings of the present study. Despite the overwhelmingly positive expectations about the integration of educational technologies into FL classrooms, distance education featured to fail in making the expected contributions to the participants' progress in this study. Corroborating this finding, Fitzpatrick et al. (2020) reported a decline in math and language arts achievement levels of the students attending to virtual charter schools. One can speculate that the decrease in the participants' grades might be a result of their low satisfaction level with distance education courses and the negative aspects of distance education courses that were reported by the participants in this study. Similarly, previous studies (Ghazi-

Saidi et al., 2020; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020) pinpointed that possible lack of progress in language development of FL learners through distance education might be associated with a lack of hands-on experiences, limited interactivity between teachers and students as well as among students, and complications of technology use in virtual classes.

Furthermore, the present study brought into light the negative aspects of distance education courses including lack of interaction, technical issues, poor learning, financial issues, concentration issues, low grades, cheating issues, insufficient information regarding distance education system. These negative aspects of the distance education courses echoed with the findings of numerous studies (Allen et al., 2002; Conole, 2008; Gürbüz, 2014; Markova et al., 2017; Tuzcu Eken, 2021). Especially insufficient interactivity between students and teachers (or among students) and limited access to teachers in cases of need for assistance such as asking questions about the coursework and getting feedback about assignments were among the most commonly reported concerns. To implement an effective English language course through distance education, these concerns should not be ignored.

As for the positive aspects of the distance education courses, the present study underscored the flexibility that this mode of learning offered particularly in terms of time, pace and place. The participants' recounts echoed the well-entrenched notion of "seamless space" (Wong & Looi, 2010) associated with distance education as the participants highly appreciated the opportunity to access to the lessons whenever and wherever they wished. Similarly, Ja'ashan (2020) emphasized that constant access to course materials was a factor to increase FL learners' satisfactions with online courses. Furthermore, the present study highlighted that the flexibility of attendance combined with the freedom from the need to use transportation to attend the courses surfaced as a major facility provided by distance education. The time- and money-saving relief about no use of transportation confirmed Sharma's (2010) argument about the cost-saving feature of distance education. Nevertheless, the finding about flexibility of attendance was contradictory in that several studies (Al-Samiri, 2021; Dahmash, 2020) unearthed that lack of obligation to attend online courses might be counterproductive. Given the lockdown restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, a lack of obligation to attend online courses proved to result in decreased motivation to engage with learning activities.

6.CONCLUSION

Distance education has gained popularity in the process of learning and teaching English compared to face-to-face education in the digital era. Therefore, recent years have witnessed the transition (partial or full) from face-to-face education to distance education. However, the implementation of distance education in the process of learning and teaching English as an FL brought to the fore some issues related to the quality and effectiveness of this system compared to traditional face-to-face education. The purpose of the present study was to investigate pre-service teachers' views about English as an FL courses through distance education compared to traditional face-to-face education and the impact of both modes of education on their academic success. The findings perplexingly showed that pre-service teachers' satisfaction level with distance education was low, and the distance education system had affected the participants' grades in a negative way. Moreover, the results highlighted the fact that even though the pre-service teachers in this study postulated a wide range of benefits and drawbacks associated with each medium of education, the disadvantages of learning/teaching English online were reported to outweigh its advantages and that's why, the participants preferred face-to-face classes rather than online ones.

Overall, certain features including lack of interaction, technical issues, poor learning, financial issues, concentration, low grades, cheating, and insufficient information were stated as negative aspects of distance education whereas transportation, flexibility in terms of time, learning pace, attendance and place along with the time-saving nature of distance education were coined as its positive aspects. As for face-to-face education, compulsory attendance and perceived disregard for learner preferences were stated as the main negative aspects of face-to-face education while interactivity, immediate feedback, fruitful lessons, permanent learning, accessibility of the instructors, a candid atmosphere and freedom from technical issues were emphasized as the positive sides of face-to-face education.

As the findings in this study have put forth, both means of learning/teaching English have its own advantages and disadvantages. However, from the lenses of pre-service teachers in this study, the English FL course through face-to-face education offers more advantages than the course through distance education. Based on this finding, it can be argued that the English FL course should be reorganized to have a well-planned implementation in a more effective language learning atmosphere. Based on the abovementioned benefits and drawbacks, a hybrid model of learning/teaching English can be designed in a way to minimize negative aspects associated with distance education while maintaining and fostering the perceived benefits. In turn, such a model will hopefully contribute to an increase in pre-service teachers' overall success in learning English as an FL and better prepare them to keep up with the dynamics of 21st century's educational world. This will lead to a higher quality of the process of learning a foreign language.

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Yazar 1: Makale metninin yazımı sürecinde literatür taramasına, verilerin toplanmasına, analizlerin yapılmasına, bulguların ve sonucun yazılmasına katkı sağlamıştır.

Yazar 2: Makale metninin yazım sürecinde giriş kısmının yazılmasına, literatür taramasına, analizlerin yapılmasına, bulguların ve sonucun yazılmasına katkı sağlamıştır.

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