| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi|

From Emergency Remote Teaching to Remote Online Education: Challenges, Benefits and Differences in EFL Setting[1]

Acil Uzaktan Öğretimden Uzaktan Çevrimiçi Eğitime: İngilizce'nin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretildiği Ortamda Zorlukları, Faydaları ve Farkları

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Abstract

Purpose: Emergency distance learning that started in the middle of 2019-2020 education year caused a lot of uncertainties and even chaos in many education settings around the world. However, conditions were different when the 2020-2021 education year started fully online. This descriptive inquiry aims to explore the views, perceptions, and experiences of learners and instructors, who started fully online distance education in the preparatory class of a School of Foreign Languages at a state university and compare and contrast these experiences with the emergency distance education they had in the previous term.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The participants of the study included 247 students and 27 instructors who were administered open-ended questions as the data collection tool. Hence, the study utilized qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

Findings: The results provided insights about the participants' experiences from various aspects and showed that both parties were conscious of the benefits and challenges of the online courses.

Highlights: Different from emergency remote learning, online classes in 2020-2021 academic year were seemingly organized with better planning, which also contributed to instructors' and students' adaptation.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: 2019-2020 eğitim öğretim yılının ortasında başlayan acil uzaktan öğretim, dünyada çoğu eğitim ortamında birçok belirsizliğe ve hatta kaosa sebep olmuştur. Ancak 2020-2021 eğitim öğretim yılı tamamen online eğitime başladığında koşullar farklıydı. Bu betimsel çalışmanın amacı, bir devlet üniversitesinin Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda eğitime online başlayan öğrencilerin ve öğretim elemanlarının görüşlerini, algılarını ve deneyimlerini incelemek ve bu deneyimlerini bir önceki dönemdeki acil uzaktan eğitim ile karşılaştırmaktır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Çalışmanın katılımcılarını 247 öğrenci ve 27 öğretim elemanı oluşturmuştur ve veriler katılımcılara yöneltilen açık uçlu sorular aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Dolayısıyla alışmada nitel veri toplama ve analiz yöntemleri kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların deneyimlerine çeşitli açılardan ışık tutmuş olup her iki katılımcı grubunun da online derslerin faydalarının ve zorluklarının farkında olduklarını göstermiştir.

Önemli Vurgular: Acil uzaktan eğitimden farklı olarak, 2020-2021 akademik yılında online eğitimin daha iyi bir planlama ile yapıldığı görülmüş ve bu durumun öğrencilerin ve öğretim elemanlarının uyum sağlamalarına katkıda bulunduğu saptanmıştır.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history, technology and foreign language learning and teaching practices have gone hand in hand. Access to authentic materials and the importance of the exposure to the target language through various sources have made the use of technologies an essential part of foreign language education. While technology could be utilized as supplementary to face-to-face instruction through blended learning (Thronbury, 2006), instruction could also be provided fully online in cases when students and teachers are in separate environments (Keegan, 1996).

Distance education can be implemented as synchronous and asynchronous; while the former is associated with the separation of the instructor and learners in terms of place, the latter is associated with the separation of instructors and learners in terms of both time and place; asynchronous instruction enables users to adjust time and pace in line with their own needs (Clark, 2020; Lew & Nordquist, 2016). In addition to these, hybrid methods enable using both forms in tandem; namely, partly synchronous and partly asynchronous forms of delivery can be adjusted according to teaching and learning purposes (Karaaslan, Kilic, Guven-Yalcin & Gullu, 2018). Blended learning also enables to combine traditional classroom training with e-learning activities, and it is considered to help students to access knowledge at their own pace and location (Singh, 2003).

Although the notion of distance education has been in the agenda of researchers for a long time (Keegan, 1990; Sweet, 1989; Willis, 1993), the extraordinary circumstances caused by the pandemic has made it compulsory worldwide, and Turkey is no different. In April 2020, when the World Health Organization announced the case as pandemic, educational institutions encountered a big uncertainty. All on-going activities needed to be turned to a long-term solution without face-to-face interaction. Hence, education practices at various levels were moved to online platforms in most institutions. This temporary shift of alternate delivery mode caused by a crisis is referred as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT).

Under the extraordinary circumstances the world was in, changing only the learning platform and maintaining learning activities using innovative methods could be considered something positive (Karataş and Tuncer, 2020). Besides, flexibility of the learning practices in terms of time and place is also perceived an advantage (Biasutti, Frate, and Concina, 2019). However, the shift was so sudden and it has brought serious challenges. As stated by Hodges et al. (2020), "the speed with which this move to online instruction is expected to happen is unprecedented and staggering" (p.2).

Previous studies showed that when they were asked whether online teaching or face-to-face teaching was effective, both instructors and students reported to benefit less from online teaching and learning due to factors including but not limited to technical problems, lack of necessary equipment, and lack of concentration (İşpınar-Akçayoğlu & Dişlen-Dağgöl, 2021). This result is somewhat expected because of the careful design process that was absent in the emergency shift. Effective online learning results from careful instructional design and planning as well as the use of a systematic model for design and development (Branch and Dousay, 2015). The hurried move made many instructors and students think that online learning was only a weak option.

There were still some uncertain issues when the new education year began in September, 2020; whether having face-to-face education or hybrid models or going fully online affected all the planning options in the education institutions around the world. Specific to the School of Foreign Languages, clearer rules and a more organized framework needed to be provided, which required taking issues recommended by Means, Bakia, and Murphy (2014) into consideration. In their book entitled Learning Online: What Research Tells Us about Whether, When, and How, Means et al. (2014) mentioned nine dimensions in the design and decision-making processes in online education, which included: 1) modality, 2) pacing, 3) student-instructor ratio, 4) pedagogy, 5) instructor role online, 6) student role online, 7) online communication synchrony, 8) role of online assessments, and 9) source of feedback.

Emergency online learning did not make it possible to take actions in line with these details. Establishing a system that supports distance learning took time to identify and build. Hodes et al. (2020) states that it takes six to nine months to plan, prepare, and develop time for a fully online university course. Lacking this background, the emergency remote teaching process ended with everyone doing the best they can but questioning the effectiveness and resisting its challenges.

The rapid approach to delivering courses online due to the extraordinary conditions should not be mistaken for long-term solutions; it was a temporary solution to an immediate problem (Hodges et al., 2020). Its effectiveness was initially assessed by comparing it face-to-face version. However, such comparison provides no real value because as suggested by Surry and Ensminger (2001), any medium is merely a way to deliver information; different media and the way people learn with different media should be understood well; and there are too many variables associated with the validity of the results of any comparison. The world is still affected by the circumstances caused by the pandemic. However, the new year started with new, more carefully designed decisions. The response of learners and instructors to the changes with the changing variables is a topic worth exploring and is believed to fill a gap in the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the views, perceptions, and experiences of learners and instructors who started educations fully online in the School of Foreign Languages of a state university and compare and contrast these experiences with the emergency distance education they had in the previous term.

METHOD/MATERIALS

Research Design and Participants

This study utilized a phenomenological study design, which is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to explore daily life experiences and give them meaning (Burns and Grove, 2009) and discover the complexities of the situation through a holistic framework (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002). In this study, students' and instructors' experiences in a unique period when all the respondents in this study went through fully online education. Reality is subjective and perceived differently by individuals (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological study design plays a crucial role in collecting rich and in-depth data to understand the phenomenon under study and enables to examine how people make sense of their life experiences and allows the nuanced explication of participants' experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

This descriptive inquiry utilized a qualitative research design. The study included English language instructors (n=27) and prep school students (n=247) who were enrolled in the preparatory program of a School of Foreign Languages at a state university. Purposive Sampling method was utilized for the selection of the study group. Since the aim of the study was to elicit views of both instructors and students about distance education in language learning and teaching process, only the prep school instructors and students were included in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questions administrated to both instructors and students. The instructors were asked six open-ended questions, which included 1. What kind of difficulties have you experienced in online classroom teaching this semester? 2. Compared to last semester, what kind of strong points of online classrooms can you identify for this semester? 3. What skills do you think the students developed best during online distance teaching this semester? 4. What skills do you think the students developed least during online distance teaching this semester? 5. Compared to last semester, what differences have you observed in student attitudes and behaviors towards distance learning? 6. What factors had effects on the changes in students' attitudes towards distance education, if any?

The participating students were also asked six open-ended questions, which included 1. Considering your experience of being a prep student this year, what kind of advantages do you think the distance education has 2. Considering your experience of being a prep student this year, what kind of disadvantages do you think the distance education has? 3. How do you solve the problems that you encounter in distance education? 4. If you had any chance to choose, would you prefer traditional classes or online learning classes? Why? 5. Considering your experience of being a prep student this year, in which areas do you think you improved most? 6. What are your suggestions or the things that you would like to state about your experience of distance education this year?

Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed qualitatively and subjected to content analysis. The present study applied conventional content analysis in which the coding categories were directly developed from the text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The themes and their frequencies driven from the data were presented in tables. All answers of the all participants were included into the content analysis process.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in two parts: findings of the instructors' views and findings of the students' views.

Findings of the Instructors' Views

The instructors were posed six open-ended questions, and findings concerning their responses to those questions are given in tables below. Table 1 is about the instructors' views on the difficulties experienced in online classroom teaching and the strong points of online teaching as compared to emergency distance learning abruptly transferred into at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic

Table 1. Difficulties and strong points of online classroom teaching

Difficulties Experienced in Online Teaching		Strong Points of Online Teaching	
Themes	**f**	**Themes**	**f**
Technical problems	8	Using a different, more interactive platform	13
Students' refusing to have camera on during the lesson	7	More interaction	9
Lack of participation	6	Using a different platform for assignments	7
Difficulties in motivating the students	6	Increased readiness for online classrooms	6
Time constraints	5	Higher participation rates	5

Difficulties Experienced in Online Teaching		Strong Points of Online Teaching	
Low attendance levels	5	Higher attendance rates	4
Students' lack of necessary equipment	4	Increased motivation	3
Assessment	4	More structured and clearly set teaching and learning experiences	2
Lack of interaction	3	More smooth implementations	2
Difficulties in monitoring students' learning	2	Better assessment of teaching and learning	2
Workload	2		
Distractors (kids, knocking doors, etc.)	2		

The instructors expressed their views regarding the difficulties experienced by teachers in the online classroom teaching during the first semester of the new education year that started to be implemented fully online. Technical problems (f=8) was the top-indicated factor. Other most frequently mentioned items included students' refusing to have camera on during the lesson (f=7), lack of participation (f=6), time constraints (f=5), low attendance levels (f=5), students' lack of necessary equipment (f=4), difficulties in motivating the students (f=4), difficulties in getting to know students, and assessment (f=4).

The teachers were also asked to compare their teaching experience in the new semester with their emergency teaching experience last semester. As the new year started with new decisions, the instructors' responses to this question reflected the effects of these decisions. The biggest change was found to be the change in the teaching platform. Being more familiar with online teaching in the new semester, instructors observed more interaction (f=9) and higher participation (f=5) and attendance (f=4) rates. From the affective perspective, increased motivation (f=3) and increased readiness (f=3) were among the strong points of online teaching cited by the instructors. From the instructional aspect, instructors reportedly conducted their classes in a more clear and structured way (f=2) and made a better assessment of teaching and learning process (f=2).

As far as the students' skills developed through online learning are concerned, instructors' views ranged from language skills to study skills as shown in Figure 1 below.
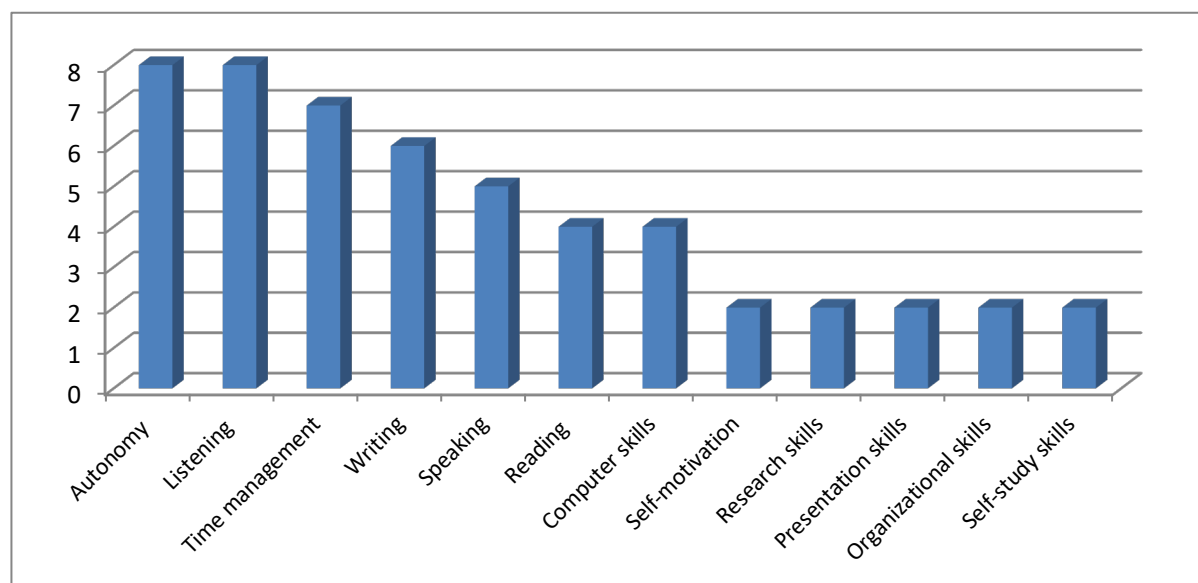
Figure 1. Instructors' Views about skills the students developed best

The instructors were asked what skills they thought their students improved most during the education in the pandemic process. The instructors thought that the students developed mostly autonomy (f=8), listening (f=8), time management (f=7), and writing (f=6) skills. Although the findings showed that the students improved their language skills (writing, speaking, and reading respectively), the answers also indicated improvements beyond language skills. Other responses included computer skills (f=4), research skills (f=2), presentations skills (f=2), organizational skills (f=2), and self-study skills (f=2).

In addition to skills developed best in online education, participating instructors were asked about the skills the students improved least during online distance teaching. Their responses are displayed in Figure 2.
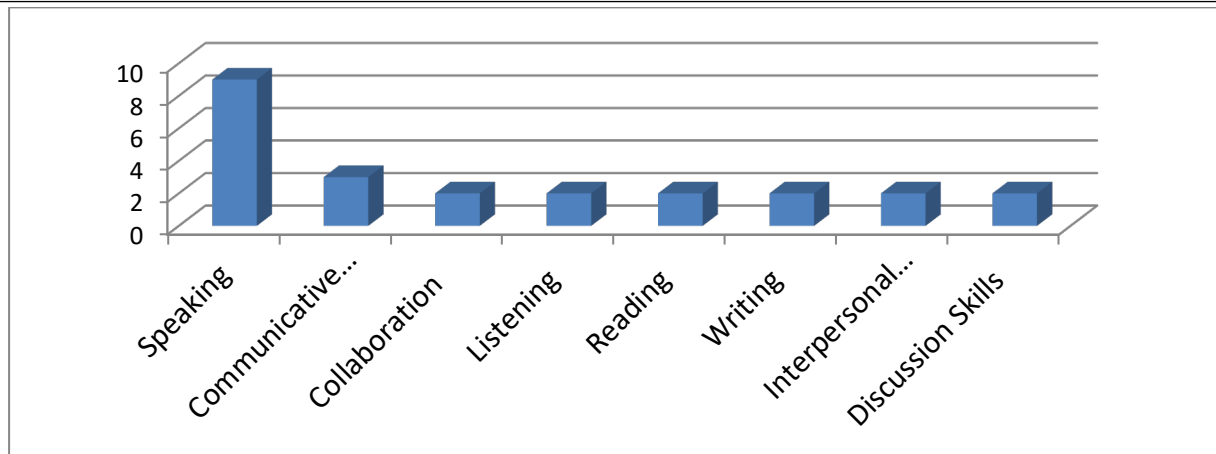
Figure 2. Skills the students developed least during online distance teaching this semester

Apart from the language skills such as speaking (f=9), listening (f=2), reading (f=2) and writing (f=2), the instructors' responses centred on the skills that implied interaction and cooperation such as communicative skills (f=3), collaboration (f=2), interpersonal skills (f=2), and discussion skills (f=2).

The instructors were also asked about probable differences in students' attitudes and behaviours towards distance learning compared to last semester as well as the perceived factors behind these changes. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Changes in student attitudes and the perceived factors behind these changes

Differences in student attitudes		Factors on the changes in students' attitudes	
Themes	f	Themes	f
More adaptation	17	Getting used to the new conditions	23
Higher motivation to learn	12	More technical and mental readiness	8
Higher participation rates	10	Teachers' attitudes and behaviors	4
New assessment criteria	4	Assessment criteria and obligatory attendance	4
Less confusion about what to do	4	The new, more interactive platform	4
Students' higher responsibility about their own learning	3	Students' being technically prepared	3
Completion of the assignments regularly	2		
Less plagiarism	2		

Participating instructors in this study had two distance learning experiences. While they began to teach online in the middle of the education year in the first year (2019-2020), they started fully online at the beginning of the following education year (2020-2021). When the instructors were asked about the differences they observed in student attitudes and behaviours towards distance learning between these two experiences, they stated that the students were more adapted (prepared) this year (f=17); they were more motivated to learn (f=12); they had higher participation rates (f=10); new assessment criteria helped students to form better attitudes (f=4); they seemed to take more responsibility of their own learning (f=3), and they seemed to fight with the reality of distance education less (f=2). Some teachers also mentioned factors such as less confusion (f=2), doing assignments more regularly (f=2), less plagiarism (f=2), and the role of the new platform (f=2). The instructors remarked their opinions about the possible factors that influenced changes in students' stance towards distance learning.

Getting acquainted with online learning was the most frequently cited factor that caused shifts in students' attitudes (f=23). In addition, the instructors' being technically and mentally ready and more organized (f=8), their attitudes (f=4), increased experience in distance education (f=4), making attendance obligatory (f=4) and more interactive platform (f=3) were listed as other factors leading changes in students' attitudes.

Findings of the Students' Views

The students were also posed six open-ended questions. Table 3 presents participating students' views on the advantages and the disadvantages of distance education in language learning.

Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education in Language Learning

Advantages		Disadvantages	
Themes	f	Themes	f
No advantages	65	Technical problems	64
More chances to study individually	40	Not finding courses beneficial	56
Studying more comfortably at home	39	Lack of speaking practice	47
More time-saving	23	Lack of communication/socialising	34
Instant access to resources online	16	Lack of interaction	23
Having less expenses	10	Concentration problem	17
More healthy these days	9	Lack of classroom atmosphere	15
Less anxiety	9	Fewer class hours	12
Easier attendance to the classes	8	Distance education itself	9
Easy access to the course recordings	8	Physical and psychological distance from school	9
Teacher support	8	Limited activities	9
Efficiency	7	Lack of participation	5
Better use of technology	5	Physical problems such as headache and tiredness	6
Online assignments	4	Abundance of assignments	5
No problem of transportation/ accommodation	4	Lack of motivation	5
No problem of being late	3	Lack of self-confidence	4
More self-regulation	3	Improving slowly	4
Increased concentration on class	2	Lack of attendance	3
		Adaptation problem	3
		Distractors	3
		Feeling uneasy in front of camera	3
		Feeling as if listening to radio	2
		Disregarding the course	2
		Lack of university's readiness	1

When the students were asked about the advantages of the distance education in language learning, a great majority was found to think that distance education had no advantages (f=65). Those who found it advantageous stated its benefits from different perspectives that were not limited to language learning. The students cited more chances to study individually during online learning process most frequently (f=40), which was followed by studying more comfortably at home (f=39). Having more time (f=23), accessing online resources during the course instantly (f=16), having less expenses at home (f=10), staying healthy at home (f=9), being less anxious (f=9), attending classes easily (f=8), and being able to listen to the course recordings later (f=8) were the frequently cited advantages of online learning. The students also remarked that distance education allowed them to use technology better (f=5) and regulate their own learning process (f=3). Their responses concerning the disadvantages are displayed in the following table.

When the students were asked about the disadvantages of distance education in language learning, although some students remarked no disadvantages (f=13), most of the students gave various responses regarding the issue. For example, majority of the students complained about the technical problems (f=64) and many students did not find online classes beneficial (f=56). Concerning the language skills, the students believed that online learning led to lack of speaking practice (f=47), causing difficulties in listening-speaking skills and pronunciation. Another significant problem was cited as lack of communication/socializing (f=34) and lack of interaction (f=23). Difficulties in concentration (f=17), lack of classroom atmosphere (f=15), fewer class hours (f=12) and limited activities in class (f=9), physical and psychological distance from school (f=9), physical problems (f=6), lack of motivation (f=5) and self-confidence (f=4), slow improvement (f=4) and distractors (f=3) were the other disadvantages indicated by the students. Although cited once, lack of institution's readiness for distance education stood out as a noteworthy drawback. In addition to the problems, students also stated their own solutions they found against the problems experienced in online learning.

Table 4. Students' solutions to the problems experienced in distance education

| Themes	f
Consulting the teacher	57
Consulting peers	49
Benefitting from internet	18
Using different tools such as phone, notebook	17
Consulting others who have more knowledge	12
Consulting family members	5
Using extra sources	5
Studying/ doing in-class activities at home/ Making preparations beforehand	5
Buying the required tools	3
Watching the recordings	2
Getting tuition	2
Organizing the learning environment	2

Some students were found to have no problems in distance education (f=18) while some of them experienced nothing except for technical problems (f=22). In face of the problems students experienced in online learning, they seemed to prefer consulting the teacher (f=57) and peers (f=49). Seeking such help from people was followed by seeking help from the internet (f=18). In case of technical problems, they appeared to incline to use different tools such cell phones or notebook (f=12). When it comes to study skills, the students were found to use extra sources (f=5) and make more effort (f=5), including application of in-class activities at home and making preparations beforehand. Watching the course recordings (f=2) and environment structuring (f=2) were also cited among students' problem-solving skills.

Table 5. What would you prefer if you had any chance to choose?

Traditional class (173)	Online learning class (57)	Hybrid (3)
More beneficial (57)	Health reasons (15)	For applied activities (1)
More communication (23)	More comfortable (5)	Appropriate for the conditions of the era (1)
More speaking practice (17)	More time to study (4)	Better for working students (1)
Classroom atmosphere (11)	Lack of waste of time (4)	
No technical problems (8)	Beneficial (5)	
More fun and candid (7)	More practical (4)	
More concentration (6)	Less anxiety (3)	
More active learning (5)	No transportation problem (2)	
More motivation (3)	Free of possible problems at school atmosphere (2)	
More disciplined (3)	Easy Access to classes (2)	
Too much homework in online (2)	Fast Access to information (2)	
Less problematic (2)	Learning-centred (1)	
Psychologically and physically better (2)	Better use of technology (1)	
Easy and fast problem solving (1)	Environment structuring (1)	
More attendance (1)	Being more active in class (1)	
More self-confidence (1)	One-to-one communication (1)	
Peer support (1)	Better for working students (1)	
Less inequality of opportunity (1)		

The findings of the students' preference for traditional or online classes showed that more than half of the students had tendency towards traditional classroom (f=173). Participating students found traditional classroom more beneficial (f=57) and believed that it promoted more communication (f=23) and more speaking practice (f=17). Additionally, the students were found to experience the classroom atmosphere more in traditional learning environment (f=11). Traditional classroom was also regarded to boost fun (f=7), concentration (f=6), active learning (f=5) and motivation (f=3). Lack of technical problems (f=8) was also a factor that attracted students to the traditional classrooms more. Those who preferred online learning (f=57) cited health reasons most frequently (f=15). Comfortable (f=5), time-saving (f=8), practical (f=4) and secure (f=2) side of online learning was also specified by the students. Easy access to classes (f=2) and information online (f=2) were among the tendencies for distance education. Few students proposed the application of hybrid learning environment, mix of both traditional and online classes.

Participating students were asked what improvements they perceived in their learning. The results are shown in Figure 3.
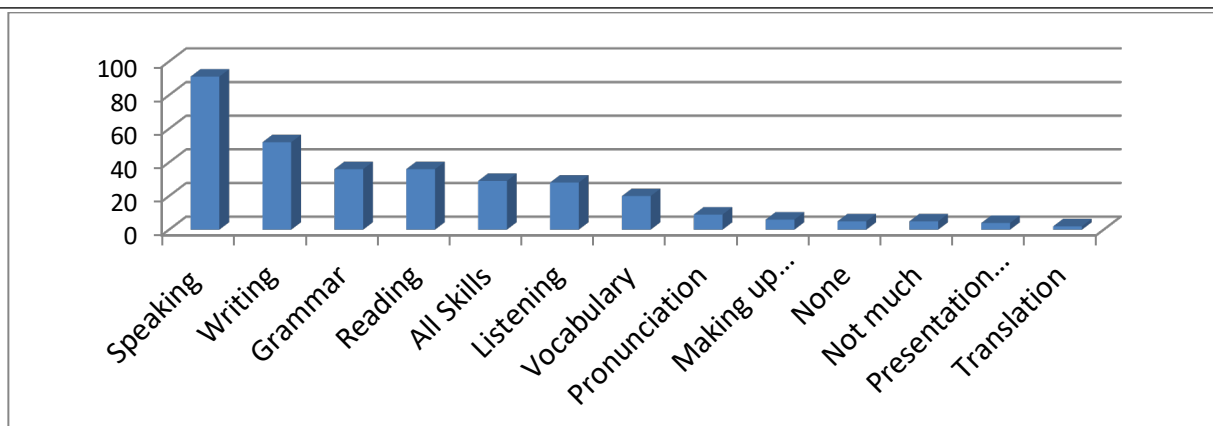
Figure 3. Improvements in English as Perceived by Students

Most students thought that they improved their speaking skills (f=91), and almost half of the students thought that they improved their writing skills (f=52). A group of students noticed improvements in their grammar and reading skills (f=36 each), and another group of students (f=29) believed that they improved in all skills. Despite their perceived improvement in English through online learning, the students had some suggestions for more improvements in distance education.

Table 6. Students' suggestions for improvement

Themes	f
Going back to face-to-face education	55
No suggestions	34
Less assignments	18
Going on online education	16
More speaking practice out of lessons	14
More interactions with teachers and administrators	11
Increased lesson hours	7
Lower passing grade	6
More activities to increase motivation	5
Hybrid education	5
Less equipment and connection problems	5

When the students were asked whether they had any suggestions for improvement, while 34 students had no suggestions (f=34), around half (f=55) stated that they wanted to have face-to-face education, but several students stated that they wanted to go on online education (f=16). While some students thought that too much homework is assigned (f=18), another group stated that SFL provided good learning opportunities (f=15). However, the need for more interaction with teachers and administrators were also indicated as they wanted to have more speaking practice out of lessons (f=14) and interact with teachers and students more

DISCUSSION

Covid-19 Pandemic caused a lot of educational institutions including universities to move into online learning abruptly in 2019-2020 academic year spring semester; however, the rapid spread of the pandemic prevented universities from conducting the classes face-to-face in the 2020-2021 academic year as well. Therefore, both students and instructors were more aware of the synchronous online learning this year in comparison to the emergency distance education where they found themselves without any preparation in the previous year. Considering this issue, the present study explored the views and experiences of the students and instructors on synchronous online education within the frame of foreign language learning and teaching. Twenty-seven English language instructors and 247 prep-school students participated in the study and remarked their perceptions of online language education in various respects.

The instructors' views focused on difficulties experienced in online language teaching, strong points of online teaching compared to emergency distance education, the skills students improved best and least, probable differences in students' attitudes towards online learning compared to last semester, and the perceived factors causing those differences. According to the participant instructors, the greatest difficulties in online teaching were technical problems and students' refusal to keep their cameras on during the lesson. Other studies in the literature (Gok, 2015; Koç, 2020; Perveen, 2016) also identified technical problems as one of the challenges of distance learning. Therefore, while preparing a lesson plan for online classes, a room could be spared for such possible technical issues which cannot be controlled by instructors or students. Regarding the camera issue, Gherheş, Şimon and Para (2021) highlighted the instructors' complaint about students' discomfort with keeping their cameras on, and found the anxiety, shyness, privacy issues and physical location as the main reasons. In this regard, instructors could address students' concerns more and understand their refusal while at the same time encouraging their interaction more by offering

alternatives. This learner-centered approach could also be useful for lacks of motivation and interaction that the instructors viewed as other challenges of synchronous online learning because in another study (Ke & Kwak, 2013), as critical constructs of learner centeredness, active learning and learner autonomy predicted students' perceived satisfaction with online courses at a statistically significant level. Assessment presented itself as a factor causing difficulty as well.

Use of more interactive platforms such as Google Meet and Google Classroom was regarded as the strong points of this year in online education. Higher interaction, participation and attendance compared to last year were also reported to be positive sides. One of the significant positive changes was found to be increased readiness for online learning this year. Educators should pay attention to such kind of a change because, as Engin (2017) claims, readiness leads to changes in learners' behavior and it is important for a student to have online readiness to be able to benefit from online learning settings. Thus, readiness is a key factor (Cabi & Kalelioğlu, 2019) and it could even increase students' satisfaction of online learning (Topal, 2016). Since the second year in distance education during Covid-19 pandemic was more planned by the institutions, students could get adapted to the e-learning process better, and this finding turned out to be a positive change.

As for the skills the students developed best through the eyes of instructors, extra lingual skills presented themselves as autonomy and time management. As a matter of fact, autonomy occupies a more significant place in distance education (Fotiadou, Angelaki & Mavroidis, 2017) and the nature of online learning setting requires autonomy (Cullen &Harris, 2018). Similar to the present study, Baru, Tenggara and Mataram (2020) found greater autonomy through the use of online learning media in EFL setting. Language skills, on the other hand, included listening and writing. However, possibly due to the nature of the online learning, skills such as speaking, communication and collaboration were reported to be developed least.

When compared to emergency remote learning last year, the instructors observed some changes in students' attitudes towards distance education this semester such as increased adaptation and experience with online learning and higher motivation. This also contributed to an increase in participation and a decrease in confusion. Another significant positive change in students was higher responsibility they took for their own learning. According to instructors, increased familiarity with online learning, and mental and technical readiness for the process were the possible factors that led to these changes.

When it comes to students' views, they centered on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, possible solutions for the challenges, preferences between traditional or online classroom, their perceived improvement in English through distance education, and suggestions for possible steps to take to make online learning more efficient. Within the frame of advantages, a great majority of the students found no positive sides in online learning. In another study conducted with 762 participants, disadvantages outnumbered the advantages, as well (Coman, Țîru, Meseșan-Schmitz, Stanciu & Bularca, 2020). However, more chances to study individually and comfortably at home, time management, instant access to online resources and less financial problems were the most frequently cited advantages of online learning. Easier attendance to the classes and access to the course recordings were also noted as positive sides. As a matter of fact, flexibility proved to be one of the key benefits of online learning (Buselic, 2016; de Oliveira, Penedo & Pereira, 2018; Young, 2006). Despite low frequency, better use of technology and more self-regulation were among the significant points of online learning. As for the disadvantages, technical problems were found to be the greatest drawback of the distance education as indicated in the instructors' responses. Likewise, a number of students did not find the courses beneficial as suggested by other studies (Elshami, Taha, MAbuzaid, Saravanan, Al Kawas & Abdalla, 2021; Ullah, Asraf, Asraf & Ahmed, 2021). From a communicative aspect, students were not pleased with the lacks of speaking practice, communication/socializing and interaction. Similarly, EFL learners were found to have lower motivation levels owing to lack of social interaction in online learning (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). Physical and psychological distance was also a problem for the students. The study conducted by Park and Bonk (2007) also identified the students' need for the sense of community and social presence in online learning. According to Trespalacios and Uribe-Florez (2020), multimodal and scaffolding activities could be a tool for sense of community, which could even impact success and retention of students in distance education. Inclusion of social media tools such as Facebook, twitting and blogging (Young & Bruce, 2011) and games, online discussions and peer teaching (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012) into the curriculum could further enhance social presence and sense of community. Although activities planned for lessons mainly focus on academic success of students, social needs of students should not be disregarded in online learning setting. Thus, an online class based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, which highlights active involvement and interaction, could help educators to build an isolation-free learning atmosphere. Similarly, difficulties in concentration, lack of classroom atmosphere, fewer class hours and limited activities were cited as negative sides of online learning. Though not cited frequently, distractors were also among the class-related problems. In affective respect, lacks of motivation and self-confidence and sense of uneasiness in front of camera caused students to feel negative about online learning, which was also remarked by the instructors.

Despite the challenges of online learning, students seemed to cope with the problems they experienced, and the most frequently used solution was found to be consulting the instructors and the peers. The students seemingly benefitted from internet and extra sources.

Given all the benefits and drawbacks of distance learning, a great majority of students reportedly preferred traditional classrooms since they found it more effective. Likewise, another inquiry by Alawamleh, Al-Twait and Al-Saht (2020) indicated that students preferred face-to-face classrooms due to lacks of motivation and comprehension, decrease in communication and sense of isolation in online setting during COVID-19 pandemic. However, the present study also revealed that health conditions were the greatest reason for those who were in favor of online learning. Although online learning could help students to save their

health, they do not find it as efficient as conventional classes (Yuzulia, 2021). Minority of the students recommended the use of hybrid learning for applied activities and for the students who needed to both work and attend school.

As to the linguistic improvements, students observed a progress in all language skills; nonetheless, they perceived an improvement in productive skills as speaking and writing. Although instructors observed students' speaking as the least developed skill, students viewed their speaking improved in online learning. This implies that criteria for progress in both parties' minds are not same, and the students' self-evaluation and the teachers' evaluation of the students may yield different results and thus lead to different expectations. Moreover, students may not be aware of self-assessment strategies because the findings of the study by Thawabieh (2017) emphasized that students, if not provided with feedback on self-assessment, could tend to evaluate their performance higher than their teacher.

Considering various aspects of online education, students suggested going back to face-to-face classrooms to make the learning process more fruitful. However, it should be noted that when implemented well with experience and appropriate study skills, distance learning could be quite useful for students, instructors, and institutions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the students' and instructors' views and experiences, the present study attempted to get insight into the online learning in English courses at the tertiary level in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both parties were conscious of the benefits and challenges of the online courses. Different from emergency remote learning, online classes in the 2020-2021 academic year were seemingly organized with better planning, which also contributed to instructors' and students' adaptation. Given the perceptions of the instructors and students regarding the online learning experience, the study has some recommendations. Firstly, the readiness issue should not be neglected by the educators and policy makers since it could profoundly affect the learning process itself. It may represent the key step in rendering the process more meaningful and purposeful. Second, challenges should be identified clearly and possible precautions should be taken considering the context and circumstances. Meanwhile, the instructors should address the students' concerns, and the institutions could organize an orientation program or training for instructors and students to lessen the uncertainties. Different online programs or tools could be offered to make learning more active and interactive. Last but not least, viewing this extraordinary condition as an opportunity, instructors should encourage students to gain autonomy and lifelong learning skills.

LIMITATIONS

The present study included only qualitative data collected from a single institution; therefore, it could be supported by a quantitative data collection tool. Additionally, the number of the participant instructors could be increased to elicit a more general picture of their views

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Statements of publication ethics

We hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

Researchers' contribution rate

The study was conducted and reported with equal collaboration of the researchers.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

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