



**Transition into Online Education During COVID-19:
The Case of Speaking-based Courses at an English Language Teaching
Program in Turkey**

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ABSTRACT

During the spring semester in March 2020 and the fall semester in October 2020, tertiary-level education in Turkey underwent two different transitions into online education. This study aimed to examine the two transition periods with a focus on the course design processes of two speaking-based courses taught at a state university. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two professors, and open-ended questionnaires were administered to students. The findings showed that professors could not tailor the design of the two courses in March as they did not have time, but they gained experience to supplement their course content, remove some activities and prioritize others, and they opted for performance-based assessment in October. This paper concludes that the transition in October needs to be differentiated with the suggested term; semi-planned transition into online education. This transition period is still affected by the crisis; however, time can be allocated to determine the needs and expectation of the stakeholders to better prepare for online education.

Acknowledgments

Statement of Publication Ethics

Authors' Contribution Rate

Conflict of Interest

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The authors declare that the names of the participants were kept anonymous in the research. The approval of Social Sciences Ethics Committee at Bartın University was obtained for this research with the protocol number 2021-SBB-010.
Corresponding author was responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting. The second author offered supervision and cooperation in methodology, analysis, and concept of the article.
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Introduction

In today's world, where technology is constantly evolving and shaping our lives in ways we could not have previously imagined, the skills and qualifications needed to succeed in this rapidly changing landscape have also changed. As the skills and qualifications needed in the digital age evolve and the profile of learners changes, it becomes necessary for higher education institutions to adapt and reposition their teaching and learning processes and environments. According to Garrison (2016), "expectations are changing and there is little doubt that educational institutions are being transformed as a result of online and blended learning innovations" (p. 141). These institutions must therefore consider their roles and responsibilities in the digital era, and work towards building a robust digital teaching and learning culture that prepares graduates for success in the modern world. This requires faculty members and instructors to adapt to these changes and take on new roles in the teaching-learning process. Researchers have explored the challenges and implications of these changing faculty roles in the shift toward digital education. However, in the recent pandemic, an immediate digital shift in education was inescapable despite the vital influence of the changing roles and the appropriate time allocated to ensure the change is smooth.

Although online classes have become common at tertiary level education, it is a provocative contradiction that the rate of acceptance of the value and legitimacy of online education is incredibly low among faculty members (Allen & Seaman, 2016). The reason behind such contradiction may be because "changing the medium of transmission without changing the expectations and learning experience does not address the quality of learning outcomes" (Garrison, 2016, p. 5). In addition, many faculty members who are new to online teaching lack formal education in how to teach in this format, despite the efforts made by universities to provide support and training to faculty members, including informal learning, mentoring, in-service training, and structured certificate programs (Cutri & Mena, 2020; Gülbahar & Adnan, 2020). Despite the conditions mentioned earlier, education at all levels faced a challenge which made it obligatory for teachers and faculty members to move their classes online in 2020 to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Most universities and schools worldwide switched to an online teaching format beginning in March, 2020.

With the growing spread of the virus, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) in Turkey announced on March 12, 2020, that universities will be closed for at least a week starting on March 16. In the following weeks, CoHE announced that universities would continue their education online, starting from March 23, 2020. Given only one week of preparation time, all universities in Turkey were faced with the difficult task of moving all their courses online. The lightspeed transition from face-to-face to online education left universities with no choice other than using what they already had: curricula, syllabi, and materials which were prepared during face-to-face education, and for face-to-face education (CoHE, 2020).

Studies of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic have found that many teachers lack practical knowledge in conducting online lessons and that online lessons did not yield the intended outcome in teaching English. Many studies also examined the challenges faced by students and teachers using platforms like Zoom and provided suggestions for overcoming them. However, only a few studies have focused specifically on

the speaking skill and the challenges of practicing it in online lessons. These studies have found common issues such as internet connection problems, lack of a genuine communicative environment, and lack of student engagement. Suggestions for overcoming these challenges include solving internet access issues, using collaborative strategies like breakout rooms, and supplementing lessons with videos, games, and other web tools.

Aim of the study

This study aims to examine how two speaking based-courses: *Listening and Pronunciation* and *Oral Communication Skills* at English Language Teaching B. A. program at a state university in Turkey were designed to be delivered online during the pandemic. More specifically, this study outlines the course design changes of the two courses in the two semesters. This study also aims to examine the professors' and the students' views towards online education during the two semesters. In line with these aims, two research questions were formulated:

1. How were the two speaking-based courses designed to be delivered online during the two semesters affected by the pandemic?
2. What are the views of the participants (professors and undergraduate students) towards the online format for the two speaking-based courses?

Literature Review

Planned Online Education and Crisis-prompted Online Education

Gacs et al. (2020) make a distinction between planned online education and crisis-prompted online language teaching. The main difference between the crisis-prompted online delivery format of a course and a planned one is that normally, the courses were designed for face-to-face delivery format and its affordances, and in crisis-prompted online language teaching, the same design is used but online; however, in planned online language teaching, the course is specifically designed for online and distant delivery format of language teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). Their distinction indicates that what universities experienced, especially during March 2020, was crisis-prompted online language education because of the fact that policymakers, administrators, lecturers and professors did not have the chance to prepare and adapt to the new format of education. Gacs et al. state that planned online education has an “intentional commitment and buy-in from most stakeholders, carefully vetted resources, faculty training and collaborations between subject matter experts and instructional designers” (p. 382). Whereas planned online education is built for sustainability, crisis-prompted online education, specifically the case for universities in Turkey in March, cannot meet most of the aforementioned criteria. Gacs et al. assert that when the circumstances make it necessary to shift to online education, there are some steps to be followed:

First and foremost, when rapidly moving instruction online, one has to assess the syllabus to identify assignments and course components which simply cannot be delivered remotely, and a quick needs analysis is needed to understand instructors' and students' needs in terms of technology, workload, access, accessibility, equity and inclusion. (Gacs et al., 2020, p. 383)

Mishra et al. (2020) investigated how an Indian university adopted online education during the pandemic. In their case, the university followed an action plan with trainings prepared by and for faculty members, assistance from ICT experts. However, their report also showed that the faculty members faced the challenge of being unable to read the face or the mood of students, dealing with a lack of motivation in addition to technical problems such as connectivity issues.

Previously Conducted Studies

With the outbreak of Covid19, many studies in the literature examined the process of online education. Researchers in the field of language learning and teaching took interest in finding out the effects of the pandemic by examining challenges, problems, and experiences through the views of the stakeholders. A recent review of literature showed that a substantial amount of studies were conducted with the aim of examining the effects of the pandemic in EFL classrooms. Erarslan's (2021) review which included 69 empirical studies between 2020 and 2021 showed that teachers lacked practical knowledge in conducting online lessons and the common view was that the online lessons did not yield the intended outcome in teaching English. This finding was linked with the lack of preparation in education on a macro scale, and it is suggested that alterations are made by policy-makers to tailor the content of online lessons with the help of teacher-training. Most studies also examined the effects of using platforms such as Zoom, Google Groups, Microsoft Teams, and the challenges that the students and teachers faced during their lessons, and provided suggestions towards how to overcome those challenges.

Although many studies were conducted to find out the impact of the pandemic in EFL classrooms and the challenges of online lessons during the pandemic, only a few studies narrowed their focus to the speaking skill. As a productive skill, speaking is an essential part of English lessons and due to the fact that practicing speaking in online lessons is challenging due to poor internet connections, lack of body language and eye contact, researchers aimed to explore the place of speaking in online lessons. Most studies conducted in this context explored the problems and experiences of teachers or students during speaking in online lessons (Aldilah Khaerana et al., 2022; Anugrah, 2022; Arianto, 2021; Djafar, 2020; Drescher, 2022; Efriana, 2021; Gonzalez-Torres et al., 2022; Huang, 2021; İşler & Elmas, 2022; Istiqhomah et al., 2021; Khreisat, 2022; Kuznekoff & Munz, 2022; La'biran & Dewi, 2021; Li, 2021; Menggo, 2021; Mulyani et al., 2021; Nayman & Bavlı, 2022; Nurwahyuni, 2020). The research in these studies included students' views on the use of online platforms such as Zoom, and their experiences in online lessons. While almost all participants in these studies reported having internet connection issues, most student participants also reported that they had anxiety or low levels of self-confidence during the online lessons. A common finding for these studies were that the students held the view that online lessons lacked a genuine communicative environment and the content of the lessons lacked teamwork building, interaction, and collaboration. Similarly, teachers faced issues in accessing the internet, getting familiar with the online platform, dealing with the lack of student motivation or participation in online lessons (Anugrah, 2022; Efriana, 2021; Istiqhomah et al., 2021). Finally, the studies in the recent literature offer many suggestions towards overcoming the challenges faced by the participants. The primary suggestion in

almost all studies is to solve internet access issues which hinder the process of online lessons. Moreover, there are many studies which explore strategies in online lessons, and it is a common implication that collaborative strategies such as using breakout rooms could improve student engagement and interaction, and scaffolding could enhance overall performance in online classrooms (Khreisat, 2022). Nayman and Bavlı (2022) examined EFL teachers' experiences in teaching productive skills. Their research showed that student engagement during online lessons was low, and the teachers supplemented their lessons with videos, games, discussions and other web tools to overcome the lack of motivation in their classrooms. Moreover, the views of the teachers also emphasized the importance of student-centered activities and the role of formative assessment in online lessons.

In addition to the few studies which narrowed their focus on speaking in EFL classrooms, even fewer studies approached the same context with a perspective of course design. An explorative study was conducted by Khaerana et al. (2022) to find out the type of materials, activities, assignments, and involvement and engagement among the students as well as the lecturer. Their findings showed that lecturers used similar materials (coursebooks, audio, and online sources) for speaking. Moreover, these materials were designed in an integrative manner in the coursebooks. Group activities and discussions have seen a significant decrease in online lessons when compared to the face-to-face lessons before the pandemic. Another study conducted by Kusumawati (2020) aimed to redesign a speaking-based course to include Gagne's nine events of instruction which comprises three steps (before, during, and after) for establishing suitable learning conditions for engagement and absorption in the classroom. The findings of the study showed that assignment scores increased when compared to their previous results in face-to-face classes, and students' perceptions towards the course design were measured high through a Likert-type attitude scale.

Methodology

Research Design and Publication Ethics

Since the aims of this study are to examine the views of professors and students and reveal the course design planning process for the two courses, this study made use of the principles of case study design in a qualitative research approach. This study investigates the cases of two specific courses and focuses on the experiences of the people involved during two terms; more specifically, the study inquires on what happened and how people were affected. As Yin (2018) states, case studies that ask 'what' questions are more exploratory in nature, and accordingly, this study seeks to explore the experiences and views of the participants. Thus, the research design in this study is an explorative case study (Yin, 2018). The approval of the Social Sciences Ethics Committee at Bartın University was obtained for this research with the protocol number 2021-SBB-010. The authors also declare that the names of the participants were kept anonymous in the research.

Research Context

The research conducted in this study focuses on English Language Teaching (ELT) courses that include speaking in their content. In the curriculum of the English Language

Teaching B. A. program published by the Council of Higher Education (2018), Listening and Pronunciation (L&P, hereafter) and Oral Communication Skills (OCS, hereafter) are described to include the use of speaking skills in their content. Undergraduate students who are enrolled in the ELT program at universities in Turkey must take these two courses before graduating. During the second semester of the academic year in 2020, The two courses started with the face-to-face format on March 12, 2020, and with the rapid and crisis-prompted shift to online education, and all courses shifted into online education starting from March 23, 2020. In the following year after the summer break, L&P I started with the online delivery format in the first semester.

The syllabus for L&P course shows that its content starts with analysis of listening materials and transcriptions of sounds and continues with more advanced topics such as stress types, pitch, and intonation. The content of this course requires that students do a lot of speaking and pronunciation activities. The expected outcome of the course is identifying sounds and phonological rules and engaging in discussions fluently and accurately. OCS course covers expressions, basics of communication, dialogue building, non-verbal communication, telephone conversation, informative and persuasive speech types, and various group discussion activities and continues with fluency in oral communication with interviews, presentations, and discussions. Outcomes of this course cover understanding spoken language, and identifying features of oral communication and discussion, fluency, accuracy, and interactive communication in speaking.

Participants

The professors who participated in this study were responsible for at least one of the four different courses (two courses are separated into I and II in the first two semesters) during the pandemic, and they have been teaching at the same university since before the pandemic. The two professors are full-time assistant professors at a state university in the Black Sea Region in Turkey. Participant A holds an MA degree and a PhD in teaching English from a prestigious university in the UK and had two years of teaching experience. Participant B holds a PhD in teaching English and has over 10 years of teaching experience.

The classroom size for the courses ranged between 40 and 55 as some students froze their studentship during the pandemic and some students transferred to the university between the semesters. In total, 19 undergraduate students enrolled in English Language Teaching BA program at a state university in Black Sea region in Turkey participated in this study.

Data Collection Tools

Data regarding the views and experiences of the participants were collected through two interviews with the professors and answers to open-ended questions from the students. Semi-structured interviews with the two professors allowed the researchers to gather their views towards the online format with a focus on what they experienced during the designing process of these courses. The questions in the interviews were drafted before the interviews and sent to three experts in the field. The expert views helped shape the final form of the questions and clarify the wording in some sentences. The interviews followed a semi-

structured format. One interview lasted 21 minutes and the other 52 minutes on Zoom meetings. A Google Forms survey was administered for student views, and students answered five open-ended questions about their satisfaction towards the online education.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were transcribed into written reports and imported into MAXQDA2022 Qualitative Data Analysis software. The transcriptions then were coded with the coding feature on the software. All coding procedures were conducted on MAXQDA2022 software and coded segments were exported from the software. A deductive qualitative analysis process was followed where the segments (sentences) were coded first and then these codes were categorized under themes. In the first round of coding, structural coding was followed where segments in the transcriptions were coded according to the research questions and pre-determined interview questions. These codes were then grouped under sub-themes and finally, three larger themes were identified (see the Appendix).

To establish reliability and validity of the data analysis, the researchers followed various methods and techniques. Firstly, some questions in the interviews were rephrased and asked again to encourage the participants to repeat their views. In analyzing the data, intercoder reliability was checked by first removing the labels of the codes in the transcriptions and highlighting the coded segments in the texts, and then sharing the document with an expert experienced in English language teaching and qualitative analysis. The document was then analyzed by the second coder, and then the analyses were compared. Wording for the codes and themes were negotiated and the process was finalized with minor adjustments. The coding scheme and the themes were concluded with no disagreements. The findings were reported under related themes and codes with excerpts from the transcriptions. The findings obtained from the open-ended questionnaire from the undergraduate students were also reported under the *attitudes towards online education* theme. Obtaining students' attitudes also provided a way to confirm the findings from the interview and find the differences or similarities between the questionnaire results and the interviews.

Findings

Course Design During the Pandemic

The interviews conducted with the professors in this study aimed to shed light on the process of transitioning into online education during the pandemic by examining their attitudes towards the transitions and the course design procedures of the two semesters. The statements made by the professors in the interviews were coded and categorized (Figure 1 in Appendix) in three themes: Course Design in March, Course Design in October, and Attitude. The first two sections were dedicated to course design, and they describe the transition processes for both semesters. The focus of these sections are on contents and material, activity types, and assessment. Then, attitudes towards online education during the pandemic is outlined by the views of the professors and the students.

The transition into online education in March 2020

With the official country-wide announcement made on March 23 in Turkey, universities moved education online to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak. For the Spring semester, which began in March, the professors who participated in this study were initially advised to do synchronous lessons one week, and upload and publish an asynchronous video of their lesson in the following week until the end of the semester; however, the professors in this study abandoned the asynchronous lesson plan by the end of March as it took too long to upload videos, and they decided to give synchronous lessons on Zoom every week. The university decided to move all courses to its Learning Management System; but as this platform could not withstand the heavy load of all lessons being streamed at the same time, it was only used for sharing links for Zoom meetings and keeping track of which student clicked the links, and publishing announcements or additional documents for the students. As the reality of the outbreak took everyone by surprise, the crisis-prompted transition into online education caused confusion at universities. Since the transition was immediate, the professors discovered how to conduct lessons by themselves and learned from their colleagues by trying out the features of software. The institutional assistance was only limited to video instructions on how to use tools such as Zoom or Loom.

Course design in March

Contents and materials: The professors stated that the crisis-prompted transition in March did not allow allocating time for adapting their courses, meaning that the same syllabus with the same contents and materials was used in the online lessons. As the following excerpts illustrate, the courses were not specifically tailored for the online format during this transition. One of the professors described this situation by using the word ‘digitization’:

There is this general impression that we do not exactly do online education; we try digitization of the traditional way of teaching; because, as far as I see, the teaching methods or techniques do not change, the way communication changes, that is what’s causing discrepancy. Therefore, we need to consider this (education) as more of a remote or online method and act accordingly, and design materials appropriately. (Participant A)

I have given the course before at another university... There are some materials for speaking at the university level... I examined the main themes... after examining the course materials, I supplemented the content with online materials and used my past experiences. (Participant B)

In addition to the interviews, the syllabi for both speaking-based courses were designed prior to March 2020, and the professors made no changes during the crisis-prompted transition. The structure of the syllabi; goals, objectives, intended outcomes, assessment, and weekly contents, stayed the same for the online delivery method during the pandemic. The contents of L&P2 included stressing syllables and speaking clearly, speech rhythm, focus words and shifting focus, and intonation, and some tasks such as role plays and presentations spread over 15 weeks in the semester. The contents of the OCS2 included turn-taking practices, topic management, maintaining the conversation, and group discussion with a considerable amount of individual and group presentations.

Assessment: Syllabi for both courses included a combination of many assessment methods, such as tasks, assignments, and tests. Although the tasks and assignments did not

change, the tests were conducted online by using Microsoft Forms, which led to some concerns. Professors held the view that plagiarism or cheating were serious threats to online tests:

One of the most general changes was with the exams since students could plagiarize or copy each other's works, and this created pressure on the professors to prepare more open-ended questions. (Participant A)

I was never sure if the students copied the texts or sounds from somewhere else. (Participant B)

Initially, professors tried online tests during the mid-term exam week (8th week of the academic calendar). After realizing the threats involved in online tests, the professors opted for online assignment submissions for their courses for the final exam week (15th week of the academic calendar). These changes in the assessment were taken into consideration while preparing for the transition in October.

The transition into online education in October 2020

After completing one semester online during the pandemic, the summer break before the fall semester (October 2020) lasted around four months. Although professors had around four months to prepare for the courses, it was not certain if education would be online in October or not. Universities in Turkey issued official announcements in early September 2020, and the semester began online in mid-October 2020.

Course design in October

Compared with the previous semester, the statements made in the interviews indicated that the professors and students gained more experience in online education. However, despite the increasing experience, there were only slight alterations to the course design in October for the two speaking-based courses in the ELT program. Professors held the view that 'digitization' continued:

There was no additional training (in October) because they thought people gained more experience from the previous year, there were video-based instructions but no practical training and some Q&A sessions. There was a view that professors reached an adequate level (in online education) and we have (training) videos from the previous years. (Participant A)

Contents and materials: Before the fall semester began in October, the professors had four months to design their courses; however, they were unsure if education would be online since universities had not issued official statements during the summer break. The professors stated in the interviews that they introduced supplementary materials (e.g., YouTube videos and TED talks) in the weekly content of the courses. The syllabus for L&P I (in October) includes several YouTube links for each weekly content, such as examining vowels and consonants or lexical stress, and the syllabus for OCS I included TED talk videos and phone conversation samples. However, in time, supplementary videos were used before classes as it became hard to use videos while live-streaming a computer screen on Zoom calls:

I have supplemented my resources with YouTube links for each lesson, and these videos became their homework; they joined the class having watched the videos. (Participant B)

Activity types: Even though courses were not specifically designed for online education in March, professors gained enough experience by the end of the semester, and by October, they decided that some types of activities were found more favorable for speaking-based courses. Group discussions were conducted more often as the students also became familiar with how to assume roles in online group discussions in OCS I course. For example, in one popular format of activity, the students were assigned tasks in groups in which they were either *the speaker* of the activity giving a speech or *the writer* taking notes, and they had to write a report in 15 minutes. Furthermore, as the following excerpt shows, group activities and group discussions were chosen over the whole-class discussions due to many technical reasons:

We observed that there were many voice overlaps, echo, or latency when we tried whole-class discussions; group activities were less problematic in breakout rooms. Face-to-face education is more advantageous in whole-class discussions when you engage the class at the beginning of a lesson for idea generating with a photograph, question, or a fact and expect students to express their views. (Participant A)

In speaking-based lessons, debate as an activity was abandoned since voices would overlap or break during online lessons. In OCS I, the professor included descriptive and informative speech task activities instead. Similarly, role-playing exercises were challenging since no gesture or body language was involved on Zoom calls:

We tried role plays on Zoom but gestures, body language and non-verbal communication have an important place in role-play tasks, students only have cameras and even that is not consistent; some do not start video and we cannot make it obligatory. Therefore, it is very difficult to communicate without body language and we reduced the weight of activities such as role plays, to put it more clearly, we foresaw that these activities would not work, and we tested at the beginning and gave up. We shortened the discussions, groups talked better among themselves, we conducted the lessons by giving group tasks and assigning tasks. (Participant A)

Assessment: OCS I course included five tasks; self-introduction, imitation (of a TED talk), recording a how-to video, and descriptive and persuasive speeches. Considering that the assessment of OCS II (in March) included only individual and group presentations, there was an increase in the number of performance-based tasks in the syllabus for OCS I (in October). Similarly, L&P I included seven assignments, such as finding and reporting words for each specific sounds (vowels and consonants), writing words in phonemic symbols with voice recording, finding the lyrics of a song and transcribing the lyrics in phonemic symbols. Moreover, participation was included in the assessment in October. Although 70% participation is obligatory in courses, in-class participation can often be included in the syllabus. The assessment in both courses only included performance-based tasks and assignments and no online tests were given in October:

I can at least say that an institutional understanding was established for exams when we compare this year to the previous year in terms of exam organization and assessment, I can say it is now more planned since we have more performance-based assessment rather than tests. (Participant A)

The experience gained by the professors in March affected their decisions for assessment methods in October. All assessment methods were performance-based, and online tests were disregarded for both courses in October. The problems and threats caused

by the online tests in the previous semester were compensated by online assignment submissions and formative assessments. As both professors stated, their only option was to give performance-based assignments with video or audio recording. Another issue with assessment was that online education posed a new problem threatening test security:

I was initially planning to do an additional sit-and-write exam. But during online education, I couldn't. Instead, I turned towards a total performance-based assessment with audio and video recording. (Participant A)

Moreover, giving feedback in some activities such as group work or pair work activities were more favorable in the online format and this affordance made formative assessment easier for this type of activities.

Attitudes towards Online Education during Pandemic

Views of the professors

The findings showed that professors had both positive and negative views towards the online format for the courses. One professor explained that he would like to continue online for his course in the following years as well:

I would definitely like to give this course (L&P) online next year, too. As I said, I can list many problems for courses in general but, especially for this course (my view) is positive. (Participant A)

The professor also stated that the online format had an advantage in some parts of the lesson. Since the class was very crowded, pair or group work activities were difficult. Zoom meetings, however, provided opportunities where the professor could easily use the breakout rooms feature and monitor each group:

I could not do group work or pair work activities as we did not have a lab. The classroom was crowded, but Zoom enabled me to do these activities. Therefore, I tried to do more of these activities. (Participant A)

The professor also held the view that there was a significantly positive affordance in giving feedback online. He explained that it became easier to monitor group work and pair work activities online and give feedback:

We struggled (in the face-to-face format) in group activities and I especially struggled in giving feedback. That's because it is impossible for me to listen to 40 people in the class. If I try to listen and give feedback, the timing wouldn't allow me to. (Participant A)

While the online format had its advantages, there were also negative views towards it. One of the most frequently reported issues in the interviews was that students were not motivated enough. This lack of motivation was visible as they did not turn on their cameras or microphones often and they would not participate during the lessons:

I tried to give both theoretical information and examples, but I could not see how receiving the other side was; if I was in the class, I could see the students even from the way they look at me; however, I cannot know if the student goes to sleep after 10 minutes in online classes... I would have liked to see more interaction and see their video (faces) but 90% of the time they close their webcams if I don't tell them by calling out their names, they say that they have bad internet, and this affects my motivation, it is as if I am talking to a wall; this was the same last semester, too. (Participant B)

Another important obstacle, which also affected the course design of the courses, faced in online education was that conducting online tests created many threats related to plagiarism or copying:

One of the most general changes was with the exams since students could plagiarize or copy each other's assignments and this created pressure on the professors to prepare more open-ended questions ... I would have absolutely given an actual test; a sit-and-write exam in an actual classroom. (Participant A)

Although professors chose formative assessment instead of online tests, their desire was to somehow give a test in an actual classroom even during online education.

Views of the Students

The students shared their views towards online education during the pandemic in the open-ended questionnaire, which included five questions. Almost all answers included more than one sentence with examples and explanations about their views. The first question aimed to gather their general attitudes. The answers given to this question illustrated mixed views; while 11 students clearly stated that they were not satisfied with online education, 8 stated that they were satisfied. While describing their attitude, they mostly complained about technical difficulties such as not being able to watch the videos properly during live streaming on Zoom meetings or having too many assignments. In addition, internet connection, microphone quality, exhaustion from looking at computer screens were also mentioned in the answers:

I could participate more in the activities in Oral Communication Skills since the professor asked personal questions in addition to general questions.

I am satisfied, but please let education continue face-to-face. I have so many assignments that my family says they used to see me more often before.

I attend Oral Communication Skills course without feeling as if I have to, I like participating.

The second question aimed to focus more on their participation. The question included a statement asking to briefly explain the reason behind their low or high participation during the lessons. There were many positive comments on how the courses were joyful and educative. When asked about their participation and if they ever faced any difficulties during the classes, no student responded with a specific problem that is related to the courses but only complained about their own lack of reachability, such as electricity problems in the house or not having enough internet access:

In the second semester of the first year, there were more activities for speaking, but now with online education, we experience misunderstandings or hindrance due to bad internet connection or low microphone quality.

We mostly encounter sound problems and cannot watch some videos in class but I'm content with Oral Communication Skills course.

While some students commented that they enjoyed the tasks they were given, some thought that there were too many assignments in general. A few students also commented that they would like to see more feedback and clarifications or explanations for their assignments:

We do not have much idea about what we did wrong in assignments. I just want to see feedback so that I can improve myself.

Discussion

The interviews conducted with the professors showed that the semester which began with the face-to-face format and transitioned into online education did not allow them to reconsider their syllabus. Their statements showed they did not even have enough time to familiarize themselves with the software. Their efforts to prepare for the online lessons were only limited to try the new software with their colleagues with a sense of solidarity. Although Gacs et al. (2020) recommend that a needs analysis must be conducted and training and professional development methods must be given to the stakeholders in education, universities in Turkey were obliged to skip these steps as they only had a few weeks before the transition in March. The comparable situation described by Gacs et al. (2020) drew a different portrait where despite having a few weeks to prepare, Michigan State University was able to respond strategically. They associate their practical response with the fact that the division had been investing in online education for over a decade, and they were aware that their expectations must be adjusted. In this study, however, one of the most significant findings was that the assessment methods did not work in March. As the professors did not have time to design their courses for the online format and they tried online tests and realized that tests were not viable online. The realization that online tests were impossible to conduct and the increased number of assignments in October showed that the adjusting expectations were not considered properly in online education during the pandemic. This finding was also supported by a remark stating that the professor would like to continue with the online delivery format for the lessons but still have sit-and-write exams in an actual classroom. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the university decided that all Elective courses should be online and Must (obligatory courses that all students take) should be face-to-face. During this period, tests were given face-to-face. Although this decision mollified the security concerns towards online tests, it was only a situational remedy made possible after the decline of the Covid-19 outbreak.

At first glance, it may seem that the professors had adequate time before the semester in October; however, universities made official announcements in September, leaving only a few weeks to prepare, just as the urgent and crisis-prompted transition in March. The interviews and the syllabi for the courses in October showed that there were some changes in course design in terms of supplementary materials (audio recordings and YouTube videos), activities in lessons, and assessments. Despite the changes, professors held the view that the 'digitization' continued in October. In other words, education was not specifically tailored for the online format. Gacs et al. (2020) suggest that a 'backward' design approach in online education can provide benefits to any curriculum. It can especially benefit online teachers as it helps "set expectations first, allowing the design process to fully utilize the affordances of the online technologies to create meaningful learning experiences in the course" (p. 385). In fact, the backward design approach was visible in October when professors decided to re-design their syllabi with only performance-based assessments. This finding brings out the discussion that there were some elements in the course design process of the semester in October that differentiated the process from the semester in March. In other words, while the semester in March was most certainly a crisis-prompted urgent transition into online education, the semester in October was not. While the transition in

October was still influenced by the previous crisis, it was not urgent; however, it cannot be categorized as a planned transition into online education, either. This paper suggests a new term for the transition in October; a semi-planned transition into online education. It can be stated that in this type of transition, enough time can be allocated to course design, which is affected by the previous conditions, and experience and expectations can help reshape the process of online education, especially in terms of assessment.

Despite the mixed views on the effectiveness of online classes for the two speaking-based courses examined in this study, there were some positive outcomes of online education, such as the digital means of the online format compensating for the lack of physical infrastructure. As one of the professors commented, there was a lack of speakers to play voice tracks in face-to-face classrooms but on Zoom digital sound was clear most of the time when the internet connection was stable. This was stated as an affordance of online lessons, especially for group-work activities, which often created loud noise in the classroom with echo.

The professors' views demonstrated that turning on cameras should be a natural part of online education; however, sometimes students refused to show their faces. The professors' comments on online lessons showed that even seeing students' faces could increase their motivation. Students must be made aware by the administrators that their presence and participation in the lessons make a change. Not all students may have the adequate equipment for online lessons; therefore, in line with this suggestion, Mishra et al. (2020) also emphasize that "the governments must ensure the availability of reliable communication tools, high quality digital academic experience, and promote technology-enabled learning for students to bridge the disparities originated in the education system before and after COVID-19 catastrophe" (p. 8). Jeffery and Bauer (2020) also suggest that the rapid and forced transition to online teaching aggravated the effects of problems caused in online education and the factors affecting the quality of online education has increased with the recent rapid and forced transition to online teaching. In light of the findings, it can be suggested that students' views need more investigation, especially during crisis-prompted transitions into online education. Various applications and websites may be incorporated to online education to increase student satisfaction and interaction. This recommendation was also suggested in the interviews and this finding is in alignment with Mallillin et al. (2020) who recommend that students can advance their learning through the use of different technologies and apps are assets to online education. The use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) can introduce student-to-student interaction and substantial extensive learning opportunities in online education.

It was also reported by the professors that activities such as role-playing or debate were removed from their syllabi. The reason for removing the activities was that turn-taking was difficult in debates and there was a lack of non-verbal communication (e.g., hand gestures) for roleplays in online lessons. Yépez, Guevara, and Guerrero (2020) state that a virtual reality application can allow "allow students in non-face-to-face education to have a telepresence experience, allowing them to simulate being inside a real classroom with students and teacher" (p. 27). Through a virtual reality application, students may have a

better experience and they may benefit from the virtual telepresence in activities such as role-playing in speaking-based courses.

It is also noteworthy to mention that students' comments on online education indicated that they were not satisfied by the amount of feedback they received for their assignments; however, in the interviews with the professors, giving feedback was one of the advantages of the online format. It may be stated that although giving feedback is more advantageous, as more performance-based assessment is introduced to a course and the amount of grading and giving feedback increases per student, it may become a burden for online teachers.

Furthermore, although satisfaction towards online lessons does not seem low among students, the views of the professors portray a different picture. The statements in the interview illustrated that students refrained from speaking in most activities unless they were specifically assigned a task or called out by name. The students also turned off their cameras most of the time and used the chat box to communicate during the lessons. As professors stated, there was a lack of motivation as they could clearly feel the lack of presence of the students in some lessons. As Bich and Lian (2021) emphasize, students usually feel under pressure during speaking-based lessons and in online education this pressure may be even more intense. Bich and Lian (2021) also found out that although 85% of the students stated that they faced challenges in online education, 62% were satisfied with a project-based learning environment in which they could autonomously explore their abilities, and their needs were better identified. It can be stated that needs and expectations of the students must be examined in order to better understand the ways to improve online education.

During the global pandemic, all parties in education had to make sacrifices and it is also evident in participants' views that since everyone had health-related concerns, online education was widely accepted as the new format for their education; however, as Gacs et al. (2020) describe, when moving to online education, there are several fundamental steps to be followed such as preparing, planning, implementing, and evaluating. Digitization which was mentioned by one of the participants, is not enough for sustainable online education; using face-to-face resources and methods and directly transferring them to online teaching is not a viable way, specifically for speaking-based courses. A study conducted by Kusumawati (2020) illustrated redesigning a speaking course based on Gagne's nine events of instruction. Findings from a study conducted by Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) also show the importance of online training for teachers. Their conclusion also emphasizes that teaching methodologies have to be studied and improved in online education, and the lesson learned from the pandemic of 2020 will force a new generation of laws, regulations, and platforms.

Conclusion

The research conducted in this study aimed to take a closer look at the process of transitioning into online education with a perspective of course design regarding speaking-based courses. More specifically, the course design process of two speaking-based courses was examined through semi-structured interviews with professors, and an open-ended questionnaire with undergraduate students enrolled in the courses. The interviews aimed to

explore the process of designing the courses and the questionnaire aimed to examine the views of the students toward the online delivery of the courses.

This study suggests that, the type of transition for the semester which began in October was a semi-planned transition to online education. In the semi-planned transition, the main basis for the expectation that online lessons would work comes from the institutional trust towards the experience that professors, lecturers, or teachers gained from the rapid and forced transition in March. Therefore, since professors gained experience of what online education is like but did not introduce new course design or method tailored for online education, it was a semi-planned transition to online education.

During the forced and rapid transition to online education in March, no planning was made, as the professors' views demonstrated; it was a '*digitization*' of the traditional courses. The professors simply transferred their F2F materials into online teaching. This situation was understandable and expected since they had no longer than a week to start teaching in a pandemic outbreak; however, the semester which began in October was different in that they had more time to adjust for the upcoming semester during the semester. Despite the increased time in October, professors' views and comments showed that in course planning, the transition was no different; they continued with the digitization and made minor changes. Their comments showed that they did not view the summer period to be an adequate preparation period since there was uncertainty about whether online education would continue or not until September and they were left with a short period to prepare, again. Although the somewhat longer period of transition in October provided the professors with preparation time to make minor changes and make minor adjustments to course design, the answer to the third research question is that the transition period for the semester which began in October cannot be called a planned transition; however, since it was not a rapid one and there was an official announcement, which was made by the university and supported by the Council of Higher Education in Turkey, it cannot be called a rapid and forced one, either. This finding showed that the answer for the second research question was that courses were not re-designed in terms of content, materials; however, there were minor adjustments in activity types and assessment methods.

In addition to what professors could do, it was evident in the interviews that institutions also need to provide their staff with practical training. It was commented in the interviews that there were only video-based instructions on how to use software and Q&A sessions. On this matter, Buckenmeyer et al. (2011) suggest that Distance Education Mentoring Program (DEMP), which is "designed to educate and certify faculty members in the principles of instructional design for the purpose of enhancing the quality of their online course" may have benefits in helping decision makers at universities with necessary information to build quality online courses (p. 1). Cutri and Mena (2020) also point out that many faculties are "new to online teaching and lack formal education in how to successfully teach online" (p. 361). There needs to be an in-service training where professors are given the chance to conduct need analyses, design and pilot lessons and evaluate the course contents. Gacs et al. (2020) also emphasize that "the institution also has to increase their support to provide just in-time training for teachers and students and foster an atmosphere of collaboration" (p. 383). Therefore, it can be suggested that providing

academic staff with a practice-based training, guidelines on how to plan and design online courses and promote better tailoring courses to online format will be beneficial in improving the quality of online education.

One of the most significant findings of the study was that students refrained from participating in lessons in some cases. Professors reported that the students did not turn on their cameras and microphones despite the repeated requests. It is typical that students may avoid participation in online meetings unless they are assigned a task, or their names are called out during the lesson. As Garland and Violanti (2021) emphasize, during transitions into online education, “no previous experiences can provide a framework for what to expect in this new situation” and students may assume that the education will be based on a typical teacher-student type of communication (p.3). Gacs et al. (2020) also emphasize that setting expectations right is key to a health online education.

Even though the October transition was not urgent, it was nevertheless influenced by the prior crisis and cannot be classified as a planned transition into online learning. In this paper, a *semi-planned transition* to online education is proposed as a new term for the October transition. It can be argued that in this sort of transition, adequate time may be dedicated to course design, which is affected by the prior conditions, and experience and expectations can assist in altering the process of online education, especially in terms of assessment. It was a significant finding that the expectations and needs of both parties, the professors, and the students, were overlooked. This study suggests that during this semi-planned transition period, needs and expectations of the stakeholders can be taken into consideration as this period will have more time when compared to the crisis-prompted urgent transition period.

In conclusion, the results of this study showed that when compared to the forced and rapid transition to online education in March, the transition in October was not a rapid one nor a planned one; it was a semi-planned transition that enabled professors to introduce minor adjustments to online courses. However, in order to bring about quality and efficient online education, needs and expectations of the stakeholders must be investigated before providing institutional in-service trainings and guidelines.

Finally, as of March 2023, tertial level education in Turkey is faced with a crisis-prompted transition into online education yet again. During a devastating earthquake that affected the lives of millions of people in Turkey, universities shifted into online education. This study shed light on the case of two speaking-based courses at a state university, future studies may investigate and compare crisis-prompted, semi-planned, and planned transitions into online education.

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Appendix

Themes, sub-themes and codes of the findings

