

The Preschool Teachers' Perceptions and Views on Foreign Language Teaching via Distance Education for Preschoolers

Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerin Okul Öncesi Dönemde Yabancı Dil Eğitiminin Uzaktan Eğitim İle Desteklenmesi Üzerine Algı ve Görüşleri

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Abstract: With the increasing need for distance education and developing aspects, distance education practices have become more significant for all educators in various levels. In terms of distance education, preschool education is one of the most vital steps. Further, the necessity of acquiring a foreign language during the early years of formal education has been another popular discussion for many years. Within these perspectives, this study aims to determine the preschool teachers' views and perceptions on teaching a foreign language to preschoolers via distance education. In order to reach the main research objective, 84 preschool teachers working in public kindergartens, private nurseries and preschools were selected using the maximum variation sampling method in the city center of Erzincan, Türkiye during the 2022-2023 academic year. Questions were asked via a semi-structured interview form, developed by the researcher, and the data was analysed using qualitative research analysis methods. After collecting data through face-to-face interviews, the results were presented by defining the main codes. At the end of the study, it was concluded that the preschool teachers face some common problems because of their distance education practices. Further, they are aware of the importance of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers, but they wish to improve their teaching practices with the help of some training programs effectively to do so.

Keywords: Distance education, preschool teachers, foreign language teaching, very young learners

Özet: Uzaktan eğitime olan ihtiyacın artması ve gelişen yönleri ile uzaktan eğitim uygulamaları çeşitli kademelerdeki tüm eğitimciler için daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Uzaktan eğitim açısından okul öncesi eğitim en hayati adımlardan biridir. Ayrıca örgün eğitimin ilk yıllarında yabancı dil edinilmesinin gerekliliği de yıllardır tartışılan bir diğer konu olmuştur. Bu bakış açısıyla, bu çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin okul öncesi çocuklara uzaktan eğitim yoluyla yabancı dil öğretimine ilişkin görüş ve algılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın temel amacına ulaşmak için 2022-2023 eğitim-öğretim yılında Türkiye'nin Erzincan il merkezinde anaokulları, özel kreşler ve gündüz bakımevlerinde görev yapan 84 okul öncesi öğretmeni, maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla sorular sorulmuş ve veriler nitel araştırma analiz yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Yüz yüze görüşmeler yoluyla veri toplandıktan sonra ana kodlar tanımlanarak sonuçlar sunulmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitim uygulamalarından dolayı bazı ortak sorunlarla karşılaştıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, okul öncesi öğretmenlerin okul öncesi çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi noktasında farkındalıklarının yüksek olduğu belirlenmiş, ancak yabancı dil eğitiminin bu dönemde etkili bir şekilde nasıl sunulacağı konusunda destek almalarının gerekli olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uzaktan eğitim, okul öncesi öğretmeni, yabancı dil öğretimi, okul öncesi öğrencileri

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Introduction

With the unexpected and surprising effects of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, all disciplines, including educators, teachers, academicians and researchers have been focusing on distance education for educational studies. As Çobanoğlu (2020) states, global fatal diseases do not have any 'boundaries'; therefore, distance education has become an emergency plan for nearly all countries during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a natural outcome of this urgent change, there have been various reactions from teachers and learners (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). However, distance education is a common concept which has been discussed for decades in modern era (Lucas & Yunus, 2021), and it is not limited in just pandemic outbreak for educational studies. In this scope, to easily adapt oneself to the new phase in educational fields, studies about curriculum, teaching models, distance and online education, teachers' views and experiences, parent attitudes, learners' views, teaching materials, etc. should be examined in a detailed way.

However, in the related literature, within the scope of distance education, there have been numerous studies in different contexts from many countries (Barnett, Grafwallner, & Weisenfeld, 2021; Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Lucas & Yunus, 2021; Mahyoob, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Nashir & Laili, 2020; Pustika, 2020; Rakhmanina, Martina, Halolo, Syafryadin, & Noermanzah, 2020; Syahria, 2021). Additionally, studies and research where all schools, universities and institutions have transitioned to online education have gained popularity in Türkiye after the rapid distance education policy of the government. They reveal the problems, experiences, challenges and necessities in distance education after the COVID-19 outbreak (Alan, 2021; Aral & Kadan, 2021; Atabey, 2021; Dönmez, Koral & Akbulut, 2021; Ersin, Atay, & Mede, 2020; Karagül & Sen, 2021; Kazu, Kurtoğlu-Yalçın & Yalçın, 2022; Kuset, Özgem, Şaşmacıoğlu, & Güldal Kan, 2021; Şahin & Aykaç, 2022; Şener, Ertem, & Meç, 2020; Taşçı, 2021; Yıldırım, 2021).

As the first step of formal education, preschool education has also been hugely affected by the pandemic. Hence, distance education has been a part of educational processes for very young learners during the COVID-19 outbreak. Since preschool is a place for children to improve infinitely and reflect on themselves heartily (Chu, 2014), all kinds of activities, instruments and methods directly influence very young learners in their learning environment. Furthermore, because of their young age, rapid changes and emergent necessities can affect preschoolers' motivation, anxiety and learning experiences. When the new situation of rapid distance education in 2020 is taken into consideration, preschool education is one of the most significant areas of online education practices that the researchers should analyze. For this reason, there have been various studies on teaching and presenting different skills or academic facilities to preschoolers via distance education during pandemic process in many countries (Aguilar-Farias et al., 2021; Barnett, Jung, & Nores, 2020; Dayal & Tiko, 2020; Murray, 2020; Nasır, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; Vuorinen, 2020).

1.1 Foreign Language Teaching in Early Childhood Education

There is no doubt that early childhood education is a term that has been discussed for many years; the advantages and capabilities of very young learners have been stated in terms of various skills in many studies (Alexiou, 2021; Çetintaş & Yazıcı, 2016; Gass & Selinker, 1994; Krashen, 1973; Uslu, 2020). Considering these different skills, it can be said that foreign language learning for very young learners gains popularity since there is a common acceptance of '*the younger, the better*' for learning a new language (Gürsoy & Eken, 2018). When referring to the keystone role of the early age in language learning, all kinds of changes, innovations, perceptions, rapid revisions, new policies, or necessities might directly affect young learners' learning experiences and language acquisition process. Therefore, after the global outbreak, there's a need to examine the main factors and different variables for foreign language teaching via distance education in preschools.

However, foreign language teaching policy does not mandate the teaching of any foreign language, especially English, to very young learners in preschools, although the importance of starting the language acquisition process at an early age is a concept many experts in Türkiye have emphasized. Even though the new curriculum, the 4+4+4 education system (2012) in Türkiye (Gürsoy, Korkmaz, &

Damar, 2013), brought about some innovations in the way foreign languages are taught to young learners, it was insufficient to systematically teach in kindergartens, preschools or some private nurseries. Nevertheless, due to the demands of the global era, there are some applications and practices to teach English as a foreign language in many kindergartens and preschools in Türkiye. However, in many preschools, English have been taught by preschool teachers instead of English language teachers since there is no formal rule or government policy on teaching English or any foreign language as a compulsory course in preschools in Türkiye. The lack of a policy also contributes to the need for a common curriculum and syllabus. As Bayyurt (2013) states, syllabus/curriculum design is one of the vital concepts for early childhood education, and children's both cognitive and conceptual skills should be taken into consideration while designing a syllabus on foreign/second language teaching.

Examining the above-stated issues, it can be argued that the necessity of foreign language teaching in early childhood is a concept that should be analyzed in terms of distance education for very young learners. Furthermore, preschool teachers have a key role in implementing foreign language teaching activities. According to Fullan (1993), transferring new knowledge and innovations to all learners is one of the crucial responsibilities of teachers; that is, improving learners' various skills on different themes and disciplines, even in catastrophic disasters or fatal pandemic. Hence, the views and perceptions of preschool teachers on teaching a foreign language via distance education are significant to determine main issues in early childhood education.

As the literature review demonstrates, there can be some urgent/unexpected and challenging cases on educational systems in the world, and it is necessary to be ready for all these kinds of changes in order to overcome them easily and achieve teaching goals. During these processes, it is crucial for teachers to conduct educational programs and adapt their teaching environments to new circumstances; especially for preschool teachers because their target groups are very young and more sensitive than other groups of learners. Therefore, this study's main objective is to determine the preschool teachers' views and common perspectives on both distance education and foreign language teaching via distance education in order to reach some findings and general ideas about the current position of foreign language teaching to very young learners beyond today's educational system in Türkiye.

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1.2 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to determine preschool teachers' views and perceptions on teaching foreign languages via distance education. After collecting this data, the researcher aims to examine the challenges and experiences of very young learners during this process. Finally, the study aims to provide some common suggestions to improve foreign language teaching to preschoolers via distance education since it can be a necessity once again in the face of another emergency in the following years. For achieving these objectives, the following research questions were asked in this study:

1. What do preschool teachers think about distance education for very young learners?
2. What are preschool teachers' views and perceptions on teaching a foreign language to very young learners in early childhood education?
3. What do preschool teachers think about teaching foreign languages via distance education to preschoolers?
4. What are preschool teachers' expectations and current experiences in teaching foreign languages to very young learners via distance education?

Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present study is designed as a qualitative research since it comprises relevant data collection through a semi-structured interview aiming to reveal the perceptions and views of preschool teachers on teaching a foreign language during distance education. Since qualitative researches aim to describe a phenomenon, social event, perspective, attitude and perception of an individual or a group of participants

(Creswell, 2003), it is purposefully selected for this study to achieve the research aims confidently. It is known that qualitative research method is useful to define a problem correctly and to analyze the reasons and solutions of the stated problems (Creswell, 2003). Additionally, a specific semi-structured interview form was developed by the researcher herself in order to conduct the interview and collect systematic and reliable data for the current study. In this qualitative research design, the collected data was analyzed with the help of content analysis and the findings of the study were discussed by referring to the research questions at the end of the study.

2.2 Sample and Universe

In the present study, the universe was determined as the preschool teachers working in all public kindergartens, preschools and private nurseries in the city center of Erzincan, Türkiye during 2022-2023 academic year. The present number of all preschool teachers in the city center of Erzincan was determined as 194 in-service teachers. Although collecting data from too many participant groups in a large universe is not so practical and advantageous for qualitative research (Karataş, 2015), this study aimed to reach all participants in the universe considering the data loss and reluctant participants during the study. Accordingly, *cluster sampling method* in which all participants can be reached without referring to any criteria in order to reflect all various cases in the universe in small groups (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013) was used to conduct the study. During the study, 21 public kindergartens, 6 private preschools and 2 nursery schools were determined to collect data. The data collected from 84 preschool teachers were used to reach the research aims. The demographic features and the numbers of the sample group are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Preschool Teachers	Gender	Working Places	Years of Experiences (Average)	
84	Male	6 Public Kindergarten	6	8.4
		Preschool	0	-
		Private Nursery	0	-
	Female	78 Public Kindergarten	46	13.4
		Preschool	30	11.2
		Private Nursery	2	5

Table 1 shows that 52 of the participants have been working in public kindergartens and have been teaching in private preschools, and they ranged in teaching experience from 4 to 15 years. Additionally, just 6 of the participants were male, whereas 78 of them were female teachers.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview protocol, which included open-ended questions, was mainly used to collect data about the preschool teachers' views and perceptions on teaching a foreign language via distance education. However, there were some common questions about distance education and foreign language teaching for very young learners. The researcher specifically designed the interview form for the study. During the interview form development process, firstly, the related literature was reviewed in a detailed way, and it was concluded that there was no instrument to reach the goals of the present study, even though there were some studies on the effectiveness of distance education for preschoolers or the views of teachers on foreign language teaching separately. Secondly, the related terms and common concepts were included in the interview form as an item pool; after that, the questions and the terms were asked by three experts who have been teaching in the preschool education and English language teaching departments. However, there was no pilot study for the interview questions because of the limited number of participants in the universe. Nevertheless, the final version of the interview form was examined by two experts in order to increase the instrument's reliability for the study.

In this manner, the semi-structured interview form consisted of two different sections; the first section included 5 questions about the participants' demographic features, and the second section included 12 questions about the main research aims. Details of the sections are as follows: (1) preschool teachers' age, gender, teaching experience in years, graduations and working places (e.g., "What are

your working and teaching experiences until today?”), (2) preschool teachers’ views and ideas about distance education for very young learners, their beliefs on teaching a foreign language in early childhood, their practices and experiences during distance educations, their thoughts about teaching specifically English during distance education years, the pros and cons of teaching a foreign language via distance education and the suggestions and expectations of preschool teachers in terms of teaching English to very young learners as using distance education (e.g., “What do you think about the teaching practices on a foreign language for your target learners during distance education?”). All the questions in the instruments were written in Turkish – the native/mother language of participants – since the participant teachers were preschool teachers and were not good at expressing themselves using a foreign language. After the interviews, some of the answers were translated into English to include as excerpts for the present study.

The participants were first asked to volunteer for the present study; if reluctant, s/he was not included in the interviews. The semi-structured interview questions were asked during face-to-face interviews, and the duration of the interview was 15-20 minutes for each participant.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

For the data collection process, the researcher first determined all the preschools, kindergartens and private nursery schools in the city center, Erzincan during the 2022-2023 academic years. Then, the researcher visited all the schools one by one to reach the target participants for the present study. Even at the beginning, all preschool teachers in the schools were informed about the research aims and the details of the interview form, following which the volunteers were selected for the data collection procedure.

During the data collection process, the participants were asked the questions stated in the semi-structured interview form. The interviews were recorded, and they were completed in approximately 15-20 minutes. All the interviews were completed in the first semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. Since COVID-19 restrictions was lenient then, the data was safely collected via face-to-face interviews.

2.5 Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher analyzed the collected data in a detailed and systematic way. To supply systematic and confirmative data, it is necessary to code data for the qualitative data analysis procedure (Gibbs, 2007). Hence, during the data analysis process, the recorded interviews were transcribed one by one in order to obtain the necessary data for the study. As for data transcription, all participants were coded by giving numbers (e.g., T1, T2, ...T56). By using the common qualitative data analysis steps, the transcribed data were analyzed for each participant, and the codes based on their answers were determined for the data analysis procedure. The coded data are presented using thematic maps for the study’s findings. As for that presentation, three main codes are determined and presented in capital letters in the Figure 1; the sub-codes of the data were presented in ‘*italics*’. Under the codes, sample teacher excerpts are also presented to further support the coded data for the study's findings.

Findings and Discussion

The analyzed data are demonstrated on a thematic map, and each main codes and categories are presented in this map below.

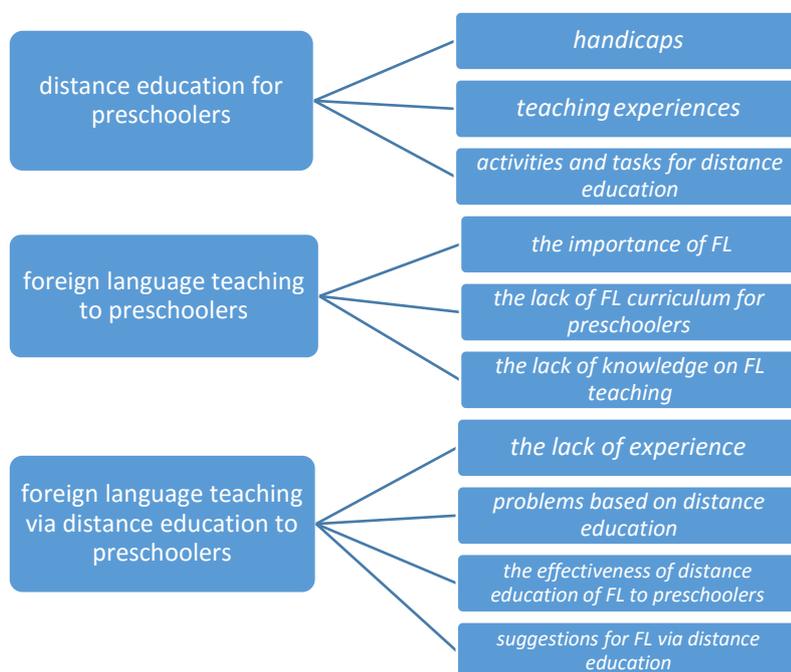


Figure 1. Preschool Teachers' Views and Perceptions of Distance Education in Foreign Language Teaching for Preschoolers

As seen in Figure 1, each main code has sub-codes depending on the categorizations of the answers. Additionally, these sub-codes included some key codes, and they are presented and discussed one by one below.

The first main code of the revealed the current issues in the distance education field. Seventy-four of the preschool teachers had both positive and negative experiences during distance education; however, ten preschool teachers focused on just the problems and handicaps of distance education for preschoolers. As T6 replies in response to the question about the effectiveness of distance education in early childhood education, *"I had some technical problems at the beginning of the distance education; also there are some handicaps because of the young age of preschoolers, such as attention span, motivation and lack of technological tools. However, I searched for some different activities and tasks for distance education and as I have adapted them to my target groups, I began to enjoy my online courses; we played some different games and danced with my students. I think if teachers find suitable activities and enjoyable instruments for their students, distance education can easily be managed with preschoolers."* Hence, the preschool teachers in the study could objectively evaluate their own distance education process and were aware of both the problems and positive sides of that process. Another general result of this data is interpreting how technological concerns of the preschool teachers could significantly affect their positive attitudes towards distance education. Since using technology in preschools is important for both teachers and children (Plowman, Stevenson, McPake, Stephen, & Adey, 2011), it is believed that preschool teachers who are knowledgeable about the use of technological tools might be much more fortunate in developing effective courses on distance education for their students. In terms of the sub-codes of the first code, the detailed analysis and key codes are presented in Figure 2 below.

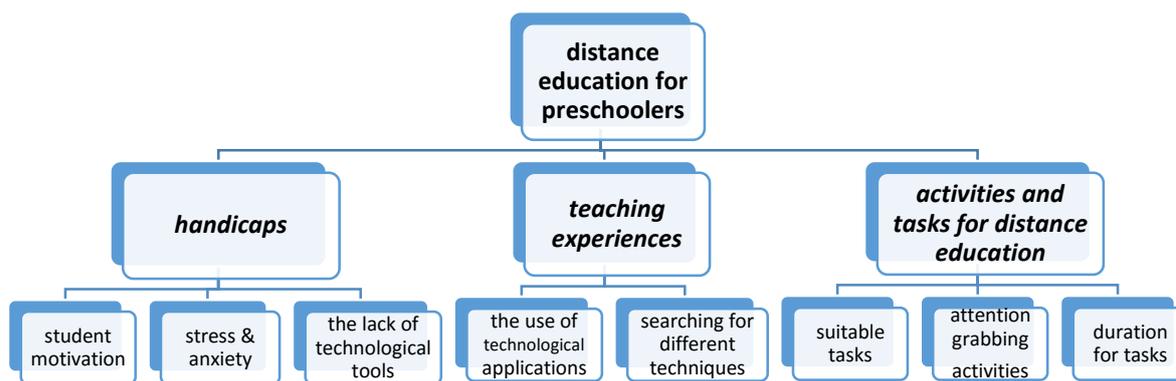


Figure 2. Preschool Teachers' Views on Distance Education for Preschoolers

As seen in Figure 2, the main handicaps that the preschool teachers expressed included student motivation, stress and anxiety levels of both teachers and students and the lack of technological tools for distance education. These common handicaps could be seen as general problems for all grades in the educational system and might not be specific to preschool education. Similarly, Murray (2020) stated in the study on the effects of distance education on young children during the COVID-19 outbreak that it could increase stress for both young children and their parents, especially for financially handicapped ones. In another study, Atabey (2021) revealed that children had problems hugely on concentration and boredom, and some children faced nervousness and worries while learning via distance education. The results of the sub-codes in the first category were supported by similar studies (Şahin & Aykaç, 2022; Kazu, Kurtoğlu-Yalçın & Yalçın, 2022; Murray, 2020). Accordingly, in their study on foreign language teachers' views during distance education, Kazu, Kurtoğlu-Yalçın and Yalçın (2022) stated that the foreign language teachers commonly argued that they had some problems because of technological tools and also they stated the necessity of a teaching syllabus on foreign language teaching process in distance education. Therefore, it can be concluded that preschool teachers could understand the reasons for their handicaps based on their distance education experiences.

In the second code, the preschool teachers mainly expressed the importance of teaching experiences and the importance of knowledge in using various technological applications. As T43 says, *"I always wonder about different applications and technological instruments in my personal life. I have designed my courses using different games and applications even before the pandemic process, so I easily adapted to this process, and I used many different enjoyable activities for my students during distance education."* At the end of the study, it was evident that preschool teachers could improve their teaching process by searching for new ideas and methods.

In the last code, it was seen that nearly all preschool teachers –79 of them –stated that activities and materials were vital to get their students' attention and increase their motivation and learning experiences. This code mainly dealt with the importance of appropriateness of activities, duration of tasks and attention-grabbing materials for preschools for distance education. The study results demonstrated that the preschool teachers in the present study generally struggled to find effective and suitable materials for their students even though they were aware of the necessities of preschoolers in terms of distance education. Young learners are generally dependent on their teachers while learning new topics (Bland, 2015); therefore, the positive perception of their teachers stated above could positively affect preschoolers during their learning experiences.

In this study, the second main code was determined as the preschool teachers' views and perceptions on foreign language teaching to preschoolers. Nearly all participants noted the necessity and importance of teaching a foreign language in the early years of life. Eighty-one of the preschool teachers said that language acquisition is a process that should be started as early as possible; however, three participants claimed that teaching foreign languages might be confusing for preschools. In analyzing the data, three different sub-codes were declared under the main code of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers (Figure 3).

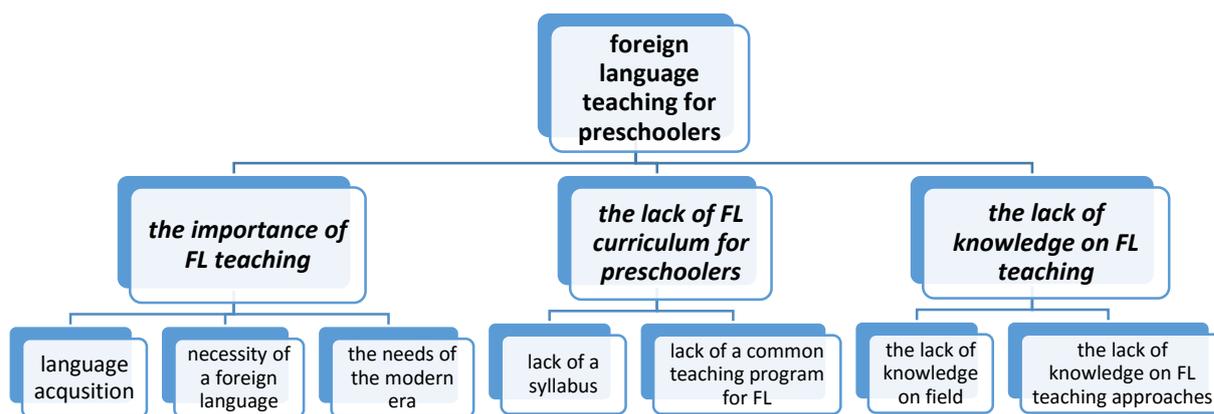


Figure 3. Preschool Teachers' Views and Perceptions on Foreign Language Teaching to Preschoolers

As observed in Figure 3, the preschool teachers had mainly positive attitudes towards teaching a foreign language to preschoolers in early childhood and stressed the importance of teaching English as a foreign language to very young learners due to the needs and necessities of the modern era. Similarly, in their study about inclusive language acquisition, Kahriman-Pamuk and Bal (2019) stated that preschool teachers had positive attitudes on the language acquisition process for preschoolers and were in favor of foreign language teaching in the early years of children. Additionally, in Güngör-Aytar and Öğretir's (2008) study, which was based on the parents' and preschool teachers' views on foreign language teaching in preschools, both parents and preschool teachers strongly supported foreign language teaching for children in early education and believed it was a necessity for very young learners. In similar studies (Lin, 2013; Chu, 2014; Can & Kılıç, 2019; Özel, Konca & Zelyurt, 2016; Cingi, 2021), the positive perceptions of both preschool teachers and pre-service preschool teachers on teaching foreign language in preschools have been stated by the researchers. The similar result of this study showed that preschool teachers had a common perception of teaching English in preschool education.

In the second code, many of the preschool teachers stated their views about the lack of a foreign language teaching curriculum for preschoolers, which was one of the biggest problems for them during the foreign language teaching process. Since no specific syllabus or curriculum for preschoolers on foreign language teaching has been designed by Ministry of National Education in Türkiye, the preschool teachers could not follow up the basic themes and contexts for their students. As T18 answered the question on their current knowledge for teaching a foreign language, *"I try to improve my lessons by teaching some well-known English words such as numbers, colors, and the names of classroom objects; but I do not know whether it is enough or not. I also do not know the necessary words for preschoolers, and I cannot decide how to select English words for my students. If there was a suggested syllabus or curriculum for preschoolers, I would willingly use it for my English language teaching courses."* At the end of the study, it was concluded that the lack of a curriculum and common syllabus for preschoolers on teaching a foreign language could be seen as a significant problem for the preschool teachers.

In the last code of Figure 3, the preschool teachers stated that they were not adept at teaching a foreign language since they did not get any specific course in this field in their bachelor's degree. Many of the preschool teachers – 68 of the participants – also clarified that they were not good at English, and since they did not know the correct spelling and pronunciation of some well-known words, they were worried about teaching them to their students in their courses. It is seen as normal for preschool teachers as they are not English language teachers. The participants also suggested seminars or trainings for preschool teachers on teaching a foreign language to preschoolers. In this study, all the participants honestly stated that they did not know any specific teaching approaches or methods to teach a foreign language to preschoolers.

In the last category of codes, the preschool teachers were asked about their views and perceptions about teaching a foreign language via distance education in order to enhance language teaching process for preschoolers in possible future. They were of the opinion that it could be effective, but there might

be some hiccups because of lack of knowledge and common program. The sub-codes in this section are presented in Figure 4 below.

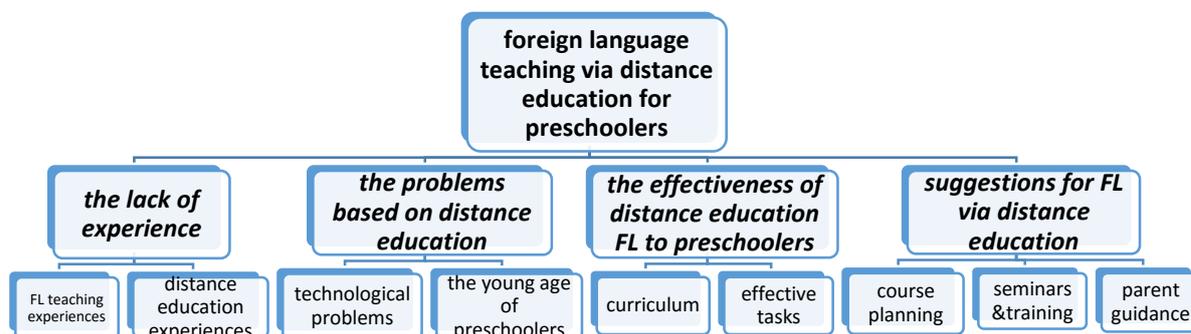


Figure 4. Preschool Teachers' Views and Perceptions on Teaching Foreign Language via Distance Education for Preschoolers

As for the last main code, the preschool teachers stated their views and suggestions on teaching foreign language via distance education to preschoolers by referring to their own experiences during the COVID-19 outbreak. Nearly all participants—79 of them—claimed that they might have had some basic problems if they had to teach a foreign language via distance education. This includes the lack of foreign language and distance education experiences, which is included in the first sub-category above. As T34 answered the question about their thought on teaching a foreign language using distance education procedure, “I cannot teach English in my face-to-face courses since I do not have enough knowledge about the course content; so, it is nearly impossible to teach it via distance education. I don’t believe that it will be meaningful for preschoolers; we cannot get their attention to the courses on online education in order to teach a foreign language. We should just focus on our own curriculum during distance education.” Additionally, 79 of the preschool teachers stated some problems with distance education in terms of foreign language teaching to preschoolers, such as lack of technological tools and the young age of the students. The same results were stated in the previous codes by the same preschool teachers. However, five of the participant teachers had a positive perception of teaching a foreign language via distance education, stressing the importance of learning a foreign language in the early years. The differences between the answers could be based on their different perspectives about distance education. According to Lukas and Yunus (2021), ‘Teachers’ personal experiences such as years of teaching experience, age, and education level may lead to differences in their view about e-learning in teaching English (p.344).’

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When asked about the advantages of distance education on teaching a foreign language, a huge number of the participant teachers agreed that using an appropriate curriculum and effective tasks/materials might be useful for preschoolers. They believed that they could complete some games and enjoyable activities with their students if they had a chance to reach a suggested curriculum for preschoolers and they could use the correct materials during distance education.

Finally, the participants were asked to suggest more effective teaching process for preschoolers on foreign language teaching during distance education. Eighty-one of them suggested a training or seminar program for teachers on both distance education and foreign language teaching. As they had some problems during distance education due to their lack of experience and knowledge, they needed to get training in the new and rapid context of distance education. This was also the argument in Dayal and Tiko’s study (2020). Similarly, Lukas and Yunus (2021) noted that teachers lacked readiness during distance education process and they needed to be guided in terms of online education. In another similar study about the foreign language teachers’ views on the problems of distance education, Şahin and Aykaç (2022) stated that foreign language teachers have been needed to attend an in-service teacher training program or seminars in order to complete the tasks and activities during distance education. Furthermore, Aral and Kadan (2021) argued a similar suggestion in their study about the preschool teachers’ problem during distance education as stating that teachers have needed an in-service teacher

training for the following practices in distance education. As a similar result, in this study, it was also concluded that the preschool teachers suggested having a specific training program on distance education for both foreign language teaching and other contexts.

The other general suggestions of the preschool teachers were getting a curriculum and parent guidance to complete their teaching process on foreign language teaching to preschoolers via distance education. As parental involvement might help develop early childhood education in preschools (Cömert & Güleç, 2004), parent guidance for preschoolers during distance education can be beneficial. Further, Yıldırım (2021) argued the importance of collaboration between parents and preschool teachers during distance education in his study about preschool education in Türkiye during COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Dönmez, Koral & Akbulut (2021) presented the parents' views and expectations on distance education as stating that the parents have needed a collaboration with teachers in order to conduct the process properly. At the end of this study, the preschool teachers suggested their comments sincerely in order to help preschoolers in any kinds of distance education process, and they highlighted the necessity of both parent guidance and teacher training programs for teaching a foreign language to preschoolers effectively on the distance education process.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the rapidly changing and developing world, the new necessities and requirements of education have been discussed for a long time; however, after the unexpected and extraordinary experience of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of educational sciences (Sak, Şahin-Sak & Nas, 2020), new perspectives about distance education have gained popularity worldwide. In Türkiye, similarly, the term distance education has been taken into consideration in various aspects. This is evident in the increasing studies on teachers, students, teaching experiences and parents. These studies mainly analyzed different grades of distance education. However, there was a gap in the views and experiences of preschool teachers in terms of foreign language teaching as a developing field for preschoolers. Therefore, in the present study, the preschool teachers' views and perceptions on teaching foreign language via distance education were examined to give a different perspective for the following experiences of educational programs. At the end of the study, it was concluded that preschool teachers have common problems about distance education in general. Further, they are aware of the importance of teaching a foreign language in the early years of life. As for a combination of these two concepts, the preschool teachers claimed that they might complete successful and effective activities with preschoolers if they had enough chances to learn teaching a foreign language to preschoolers via distance education. Hence, it would be highly beneficial for preschool teachers to attend teacher training programs and seminars to resolve the issue.

This study suggests that distance education should be examined from different perspectives to reveal useful ways for teaching across different groups. Even if the effects of the pandemic outbreak have disappeared now, there can be similar cases in the near future, and readiness is significant to adapt to emergent and rapid cases. For this reason, studies on distance education should be enriched by selecting different variables and participants. Additionally, different question forms or contents can be selected by researchers to improve the related literature. Finally, various participant groups such as administrative, children and parents can be integrated into studies to supply a much broader scope for the following research.

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