

# Open and Distance Foreign Language Teaching: A Content Analysis Study (2013-2022) A Follow-up Study

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## Abstract

A content analysis of papers published between 2013 and 2022 in four different journals is shown in this study. To reach conclusions, a content analysis method was employed, which is a qualitative research technique, with the purpose of identifying the subjects of the articles, their samplings, and methods, as well as analyzing their outcomes and showcasing their trends. Keywords, such as English Language Teaching, Distance English Language Teaching, and Distance Foreign Language Teaching, were used throughout the research process. The 34 articles obtained were analyzed in detail, and a coding procedure was assigned. In the following step, three factors—study titles, sampling, and research diversity—were used to analyze the chosen papers. In the articles published between 2013 and 2022, the titles “teaching methodology and technology” emerged as the most frequent titles, as the results showed. For the second variable, sampling diversity, teachers, undergraduate students, and course participants participated in the study. Regarding the last variable, which is the research method, the researchers used many more quantitative techniques than qualitative ones. This study is expected to be useful in highlighting potential future studies. It will be simpler to create a framework for studies conducted in this area when content analysis is conducted with various variables and journals.

**Keywords:** content analysis, open and distance foreign language teaching, distance learning, foreign language

## Açık ve Uzaktan Yabancı Dil Öğretimi: Bir İçerik Analizi Çalışması (2013-2022) Bir Devam Çalışması

### Öz

Bu araştırma, 2013 ve 2022 yılları arasında dört farklı dergide yayınlanan makalelerin içerik analizinin sonuçlarını sunmaktadır. Sonuçlara ulaşmak için, makalelerin konularını, örneklemelerini ve metodolojik yönlerini tanımlamanın yanı sıra sonuçlarını analiz etmek ve eğilimlerini göstermek amacıyla nitel bir araştırma tekniği olan içerik analizi yöntemini kullanılmıştır. Araştırma süreci boyunca İngilizce Öğretimi, Uzaktan İngilizce Öğretimi ve Uzaktan Yabancı Dil Öğretimi gibi anahtar kelimeler kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen 34 makale detaylı bir şekilde analiz edilmiş ve bir kodlama prosedürü belirlenmiştir. Bir sonraki adımda, seçilen makalelerin analizi için üç faktör -çalışma başlıkları, örneklem ve araştırma çeşitliliği- kullanılmıştır. Sonuçların da gösterdiği gibi, 2013-2022 yılları arasında yayımlanan makalelerde en sık kullanılan başlıklar öğretim metodolojisi ve teknoloji olmuştur. Bir sonraki değişken olan örneklem çeşitliliği için, öğretmenlerin, lisans öğrencilerinin ve ders katılımcılarının çalışmalara tamamen katıldığı görülmüştür. Son değişken olan araştırma yöntemine gelince, araştırmacılar nitel tekniklerden çok nicel teknikler kullanmışlardır. Bu çalışmanın gelecekteki potansiyel çalışmalara ışık tutması açısından faydalı olması beklenmektedir. Çeşitli değişkenler ve dergilerle içerik analizi yapıldığında bu alanda yapılacak çalışmalar için bir çerçeve oluşturmak daha kolay olacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Öğretmen seçimi, öğretmen alımı, görüşme yöntemi, örgütsel adalet, Türk eğitimi.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language learning and technology always form good alliances. One another alliance is open and distance learning, which makes constant use of the technology. As Keegan stated (1996) the main feature of ODL is the separation of learners and instructors in terms of time and place. But this separation also consists of different educational settings, levels and practices. It encompasses aspects such as instructional planning, guidance, and the overall organization of these educational endeavors, as highlighted by Holmberg (1989). In line with the findings of Moore and Kearsley (2005), distance learning refers to an educational approach that utilizes various Communication Technologies. This method is deliberately designed and implemented to facilitate teaching and learning activities across multiple physical locations. Thus, ODL removes time and location barriers for both learners and teachers. With the help of open and distance learning, the limitation of conventional education has been lifted. Unlike a conventional class environment, Distance Education can provide different alternatives, to face numerous demands (Simonson, 2012). Having different alternatives for different demands has arisen in a variety of spheres; therefore, open- and distance-learning approaches have been incorporated into numerous educational platforms. These educational platforms also include foreign language teaching.

The distance in foreign language learning is one of the most debatable issues. Accordingly, many researchers have been interested in foreign language teaching using open- and distance-learning approaches. Trajanovic et al. (2007) reached a conclusion that shows the positive effects of open and distance foreign language teaching on learners. According to the same study, open and distance learning of foreign languages can support learners' language development, and institutions with a shortage of resources can employ this strategy to give all students an equal chance to succeed. Moreover, as Jonstone stated (2007) interaction in language learning is a key factor and thanks to distance learning new skills like cooperation and peer learning can be gained.

With the knowledge of research in open and distance foreign language education, researchers and recent studies will be able to update the existing information. Not only is time saved, but resources are also not wasted with systematic research and review of prior studies. In academic papers, this research method is referred to as a content analysis. As understood, Content analysis can describe and contrast documents, interviews, and cast recordings of the interviews. Using content analysis, the researcher aimed to identify the samplings content views. Thus, content analysis makes the researcher know the data in deep and for further analysis it provides an easier way to follow for the researcher. (Altunışık et al., 2010, p.322). Therefore, field-based content research is essential.

Several studies have been undertaken to demonstrate the outcomes of language-teaching research, as evidenced by the works of Johnstone (2006, 2008) and Uzunboylu and Özçınar (2009). According to Madyarov (2008), his research examines the existing research on open and distance foreign language teaching. He highlights that these studies mainly investigate various aspects, including technological diversity, the significance of open and distance education in language learning, the influence of different cultures on open and distance education, online courses, and the implementation of content-based, task-based, and distance language courses for specific purposes. White (2006) saw a meaningful improvement in the studies conducted in the field of Distance Foreign Language Learning during the past three decades. Additionally, he emphasizes that this upward trajectory will persist and predicts that advancements in technology will enhance the efficacy of studies within the industry.

The most current study carried out by Karadeniz and Sözlür in 2016. The study, which is the pre-study of this current follow up study, presents, the findings of a content analysis conducted on papers pertaining to Open and Distance English Language Teaching. The analysis focused on examining articles published between 10 years from 2002 and 2012 in four influential journals within the field. The study encompassed a total of 25 publications, of which 19 were ultimately included in the analysis following a rigorous screening process. The publications that were chosen for analysis were examined based on three variables: the names of the research, the sampling methods employed, and the variety of the research conducted. The findings revealed that educational techniques and deployed technologies were the prevailing topics in publications published from 2002 to 2012. This study encompassed the participation of a diverse sample, consisting primarily of educators and tertiary-level students. The final variable indicated that the publications under investigation had a much higher number of qualitative studies in comparison to quantitative studies. This study is anticipated to yield valuable insights for future research endeavors. Utilizing content analysis across several factors and scholarly publications facilitates the development of a comprehensive framework for conducting research in this topic.

In light of the information given above, this study aims to present the trends, samplings, research techniques, contents of interest, and findings of studies conducted between 2013 and 2022 in open and distance foreign language instruction. As a follow-up, this study is based on my previous study and aims to reveal the differences between the two research periods. For this purpose, the contents of journals in the field of open learning

were analyzed. Educational Technology Research and Development (ETR&D), British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET), Distance Education (DE), and The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning (IRRODL) are the journals that were examined. Answers to the following research questions were addressed:

- (1) What is the distribution of titles?
- (2) What is the sampling distribution?
- (3) What is the research methods distribution?

In the articles released from 2013 to 2022.

## METHOD

### Research Design

A deep investigation of the collected data is required for content analysis, which also allows for the exploration of themes that are unclear (Creswell, 2008). To accomplish this goal, this study used qualitative content analysis as its research method.

### Data Collection

This study utilized four scholarly journals in the field of open and distance learning. The names of the journals are given above and, in the table, below. In the literature review, the researcher employed keywords such as open and distance foreign language instruction, foreign language teaching, and foreign language. During the initial phase, a total of 40 articles were obtained. However, when it comes to the subsequent level of the study, the papers have been evaluated by the researchers specifically focusing on themes related to open and distance foreign language instruction. As a result, 34 articles were selected for the purpose of content analysis. Table 1 shows the distribution of articles based on the journal of publication and the corresponding year of publication.

**Table 1.** The distribution of the articles

Journals	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	T
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
ETR&D	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
BJET	-	1	2	1	1	-	4	3	2	-	14
DE	-	2	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	6
IRRODL	1	-	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	12

\*Total 34 Articles selected

### Data Analysis

Documents from the journals archives were gathered for the study. In order to gather the documents, the archive web pages beginning 2022 to 2013 were visited and the selected articles downloaded. The articles were categorized according to their journal title, years, and volume numbers. For this procedure a google drive folder created.

As the research continued, the article titles, research methodology, and samples were categorized by each researcher in a Microsoft Excel table. Consequently, the disparities among these classifications were rectified through comparative analysis. The publications utilized categories of topics such as technology, educational approach, affective dimension, perception, teacher competency, and motivation. The example article categories were documents, elementary school pupils, teachers, college students, course participants, and course instructors. The present study has shown three final types of research approaches, including non-experimental and semi-experimental studies utilizing the quantitative method, case studies, and document analysis employing the qualitative method.

### Research Ethics

For this research, archives of relevant journals were accessed through their websites. In the meantime, no permission was required for journals that were completely free of charge, that is, open access. However, for journals that require subscription, journal archives were accessed through journal or database subscriptions in university libraries. In addition, during the scanning of the archives, three researchers prepared different tables and listed the preliminary research results. Each researcher then checked the table of the other researcher and activated a cross-checking mechanism. Then, while the controlled tables were brought together, the studies to be selected

were checked once again, and the conclusions of the studies to be included in the study were reached. This entire process was used throughout the data analysis process, thus prioritizing both data security and research ethics.

### FINDINGS

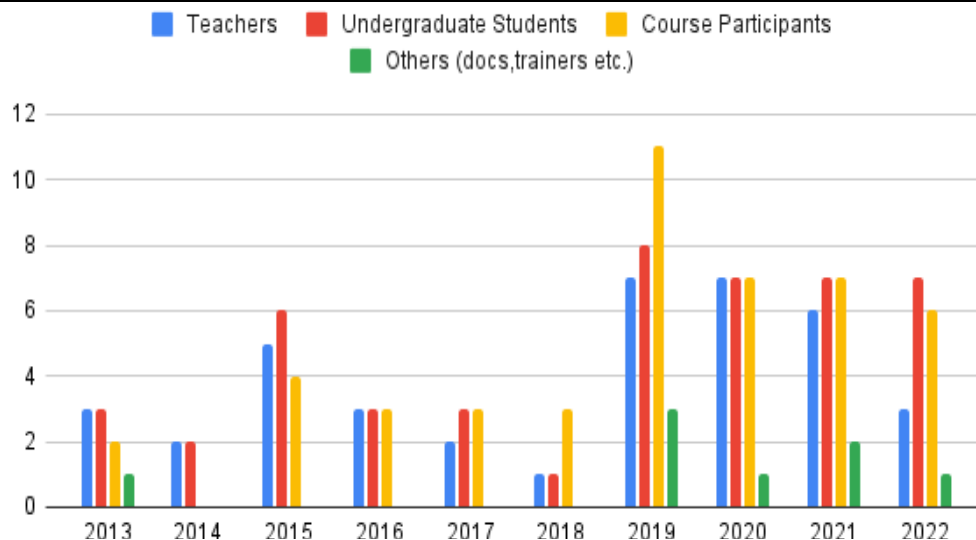
In a prior investigation spanning from 2002 to 2012, the focus of the publications was found to be mostly centered on pedagogical approaches and technological advancements pertaining to research topics. The research focused on the pedagogical approaches of synchronous and asynchronous teaching, web-based instruction, computer-based instruction, and e-learning. Within the technological domain, the outcomes encompassed a learning management system, instructional software, and social networking platforms.

The outcome of this recent research also suggests that these articles concentrated on teaching methodology and technology. Until now, these two categories have remained the focus of research in the field of distance foreign language education. Both previous and recent studies have focused less on other categories, such as motivation, competency, teacher, perception, and dimensions.

When both studies were compared, technology and teaching methodology came to the fore. However, in the current study, motivation titles were used more frequently than in the previous study. The motivation title remained in the background of previous research, but it was among the most frequently used titles in this study.

**Table 2.** The distribution of research titles

		Title Categories					
		Technology	Teaching Methodology	Teacher Competency	Motivation	Perception	Affective Dimension
Years	2013	3	4	2	2	2	2
	2014	3	-	2	2	2	-
	2015	5	8	5	5	4	6
	2016	3	5	3	1	2	1
	2017	2	3	2	1	1	1
Years	2018	2	2	1	1	-	1
	2019	8	11	1	8	4	8
	2020	9	9	6	8	7	5
	2021	10	10	6	7	4	7
	2022	6	6	6	4	6	4

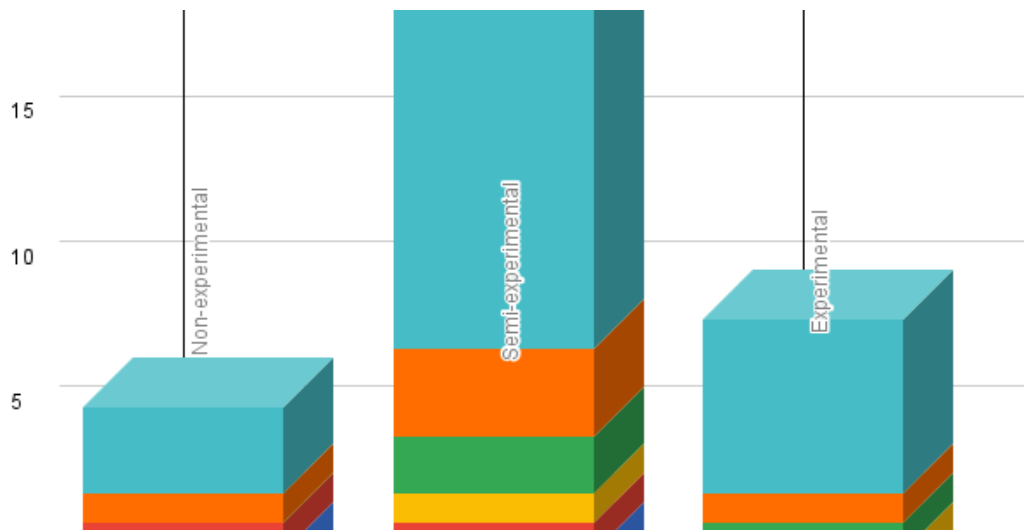


**Figure 1.** The distribution of samplings

In a previous study, most papers sampled their studies using undergraduate students and teachers. Furthermore, only one study used primary-school learners for sampling. Additionally, it was concluded that some research has focused on open courses to sample both students and teachers.

When compared with the previous study, undergraduate students and teachers were still in the majority as samplings in the articles. Primary school students were used more as samples than in the previous study. However,

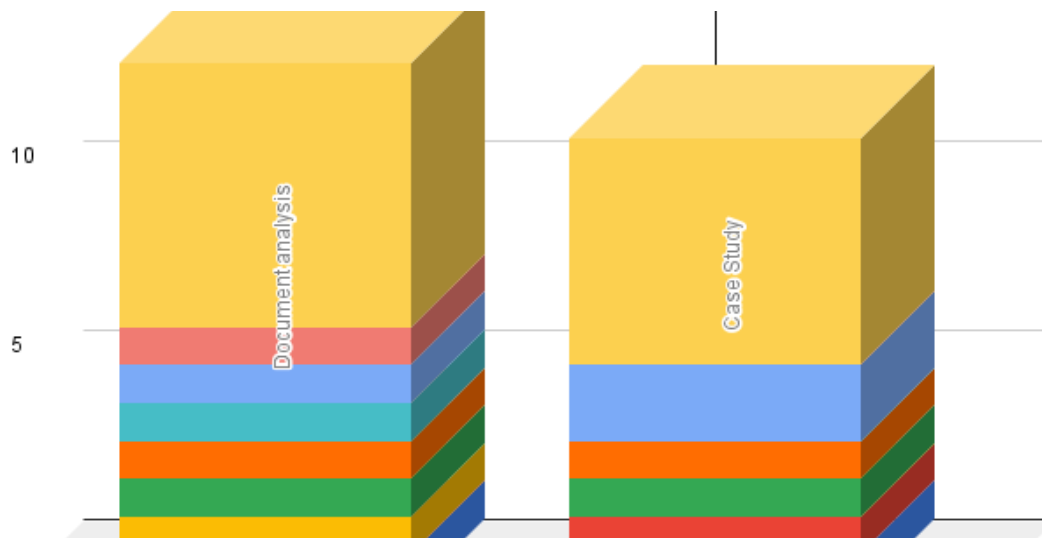
there was a significant difference in the sampling of course participants and course teachers when the two studies were compared. In the previous study, both course participants and course teachers were included in the articles as samples. However, in articles published between 2013 and 2022, course participants were included as sampling, while course teachers were not. Unlike in the previous study, more articles from course participants were also used for sampling.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of research models

In articles published between 2000 and 2012, the most frequently used research model was an experimental study; however, qualitative research methods were used only four times.

In contrast to previous research, semi-experimental studies have been conducted over the last ten years between 2013 and 2022. In other words, there has been a shift from experimental studies to semi-experimental ones.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of research models

Document analysis and case studies have been used more frequently in recent studies. In summary, quantitative method preference is still number one, although there are some differences in the research models.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present investigation examined a total of 34 scholarly works that were published throughout the time frame of 2013 to 2022 in reputable academic journals such as ETR&D, BJET, DE, and IRRODL. The focus of these studies pertained to the domain of foreign language teaching via open and distance learning. In addition, the analytical method involved the utilization of research titles, sampling techniques, and research models for the purpose of sampling.

The study titles that are commonly utilized include instructional methods and technology. The categories are thereafter accompanied by affective dimensions and motivation categories. The findings of this study align with the conclusions reported by Karadeniz and Sözlü (2016).

The present study employed a diverse sample strategy in the field of distance foreign language teaching, spanning from 2013 to 2022. The study mostly involved individuals who were enrolled as undergraduates or participants in various courses. This conclusion indicates that the majority of these investigations have been carried out in conventional face-to-face environments. Consistent with previous research, the samples included in this study exhibited limited variability. As lifelong learning becomes more prevalent, there is a growing preference among learners for open and distance education in the context of foreign language learning (Johnstone, 2007; Trajanovic et al., 2007). Expanding the diversity of samples will yield benefits for further research endeavors.

The publications analyzed in the study primarily focused on quantitative studies. Semi-experimental studies exhibit a greater prevalence compared to other types of investigations. This study employed quantitative data analysis methodologies to provide empirical support for its findings. It is recommended to employ a mixed-method study framework and utilize qualitative data analysis methodologies in forthcoming investigations to facilitate more comprehensive analyses.

This study is expected to contribute to the understanding of the present status of foreign language teaching via open and distance learning studies and to provide insights for future research endeavors. The depiction of the field's layout can be facilitated with the conduct of similar studies in the domain of open and distance foreign language education articles.

One another conclusion of this study is the period it covers. In total, this current study covers a period of 20 years. In 20 years open and distance foreign language studies mostly carried out by quantitative studies which raises a need for more qualitative studies in the field. In addition, totally 59 studies published in these 4 high-impact factor journals in 20 years which means 3 studies per year as average. This number should be increased. By this way more multidisciplinary studies can be published. The last and third concern is the sampling used in the studies. In the 20 years mostly undergraduate students in face-to-face environments were participated. Other sample groups and preferably in online or hybrid environments can be studied and compared to these studies.

### **Implications**

When both decades are considered separately and the same research questions are used, there is no significant difference between the findings. On the other hand, it should be noted that the number of studies that combined language learning and open and distance learning in both the previous and recent periods is very different. This situation can be interpreted as the result of the pandemic. However, the fact that the number of studies has almost tripled is a pleasing point in the field of open and foreign-language teaching.

Another suggestion that this study can offer researchers is to conduct the same research in journals of the field of language education and compare the results. This result reveals the field from which the researchers are mostly from. This may explain why journals in the fields of open and distance learning provide less space for articles on language education.

Finally, the fact that studies on teacher competencies are on the rise may be a sign that sample diversity has shifted from learners to trainers. Thus, it can be concluded that technology has turned from being an end to being a tool. Content that is better structured by more competent instructors can provide permanent learning opportunities in open and distance foreign language education.

### **Limitations**

This research covers 2013 to 2022 and is limited to the journals analyzed in this study. As a follow-up study, it compares the journals and articles covered in previous studies from different years. The conclusions and recommendations of this study were based on this perspective.

### **Statements of Publication Ethics**

In this study, all ethical rules required for both the research methods and the publication process were followed.

### **Conflict of Interest**

This study has no conflict of interest to declare.

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## APPENDIX

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