

Kovid-19 Pandemi Döneminde Uzaktan Eğitimde Öğretim Elemanlarının Öz-yansıtma ve Öz-Düzenleme Deneyimleri ve Uygulamaları

Self-reflection and Self-regulation Experiences and Practices of Instructors in Distance Education during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Özet

Uzaktan eğitimde öğretim elemanı algıları ve deneyimleri küresel bağlamda sürekli artan bir ilgi çekmektedir. Ancak, uzaktan eğitimde öğretim elemanlarının öz-yansıtma ve öz-düzenleme deneyimleri konusunda yeterli araştırma bulunmamaktadır. Bu betimleyici durum çalışması Kovid-19 pandemi döneminde Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde zorunlu olarak uzaktan eğitim dersleri yürüten öğretim elemanlarının öz-yansıtma ve öz-düzenleme deneyimlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Katılımcılar Türkçe Öğretim Merkezi’nde uluslararası öğrencilere Türkçe öğreten dört öğretim elemanından oluşmaktadır. Veriler katılımcıların yapılandırılmamış yansıtma notları ve açık-uçlu sorulara verdikleri cevaplar yoluyla toplanmıştır. Geleneksel içerik analizinin sonuçları katılımcıların öz-yansıtma ve öz-düzenleme deneyimlerini ve uygulamalarını etkileyen üç boyut ortaya koymuştur: uzaktan eğitime uyum, iletişimsel modeller ve öğretim uygulamaları. Sonuçlar dikkate alınarak bazı pedagojik önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Öz-yansıtma,
öz-düzenleme,
uzaktan eğitim,
Kovid-19.

Abstract

Instructor perceptions and experiences in distance education have been attracting a growing attention in global context. Yet, there is paucity of research examining instructors’ self-reflection and self-regulation experiences in distance education. This descriptive case study was purposed to investigate the self-reflection and regulation experiences of instructors who mandatorily implemented distance education sessions during the Covid-19 pandemic at the Center in Turkey. The participants were four Turkish instructors who offered Turkish language education to international students at a Turkish Teaching Center. Data were collected through the participants’ unstructured reflection notes and their answers to the open-ended questions. The results through conventional content analysis pointed at three dimensions affecting the participants’ self-reflection and self-regulation experiences and practices: adaptation to distance education, interactional patterns and teaching practices. In the light of the results, some pedagogical suggestions are made.

Key Word

Self-reflection,
self-regulation,
distance education,
Covid-19.

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Along with the developments in computer and internet technologies, distance education has increasingly become a popular educational platform in higher education all over the world. The dramatic increase in the implementation of distance education has inevitably brought major questions and concerns about the effectiveness of this virtual format. Many studies have examined such learner-related issues as perceptions, acceptance, effectiveness, success, motivation and self-efficacy. However, the examination of teacher-related issues in distance education also holds great significance as teachers experience substantial role changes while following distance education practices. As teachers are the figures with a key role in the process, the experiences of teachers during distance

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education are to be studied in detail from different angles. The literature on distance education reflecting the teacher-side of the practice shows a reliance on perceptions, experiences and self-efficacy as the main areas of investigation (Chang, Shen, & Liu, 2014; Graham & Jones, 2011; Hsieh, 2010). However, there is scarcity of research on the self-reflection and self-regulation experiences of teachers in distance education. These issues are particularly significant at times when distance education becomes not an alternative but a must as it was the case during Covid-19 outbreak. Therefore, this case study aimed to investigate the self-reflection and self-regulation experiences of Turkish instructors who suddenly found themselves in new roles as distance education instructors. The study is thought to contribute to distance education literature as it offers a new lens on self-reflection and self-regulation experiences of practitioners.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on self-reflection and self-regulation frameworks. Proposed by Schön (1983, 1987), self-reflection encompasses the evaluation of previous experiences to determine future actions. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) defined self-reflection as “intellectual and affective activities that individuals engage in to explore their experience, which leads to new understanding and appreciations” (p.19).

Schön (1983, 1987) proposed two types of reflection; reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. While the former refers to reflection happening during teaching practice, the latter covers reflection done either before or after the practice. Schön suggested the integration of both reflection types for teachers to hold sound critical perspectives.

Taking the particular case of teaching, Richards and Lockhart (1996) maintain that self-reflection helps teachers analyze teaching into account they think, believe and act; therefore, it maintained autonomy. Lee (2007) and Ray and Coulter (2008) maintained that with the help of reflection, teachers can hold a critical perspective to assess their performances and actions, which will result in more efficient practices.

One can see the significance of self-reflection on teaching practices on the evaluation of the unique case of the Turkish instructors who had to experience the sudden transition from face-to-face classes to online sessions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to increase effectiveness in the process while minimizing negative outcomes, instructors reflected on their practices while simultaneously conducting them, covering reflection-in action. And, they evaluated their course plan and content before the sessions and assessed the efficiency of their plans and practices after online sessions, covering reflection-on-action.

The other framework on which this study was grounded was self-regulation suggested by Zimmerman (1994, 2000). Self-regulation is described as the ability to improve knowledge, behaviors and actions to increase effectiveness while attaining desired goals. Sharing a similar perspective, Schunk (2004) regarded self-regulation as the control of ideas, feelings and actions “systematically oriented toward attainment of goals” (p. 381). According to Zimmerman (2008), self-regulation is a process in which mental capacities are turned into performances with a control on the direction of the process. Self-regulation is suggested to involve metacognitive, behavioral and motivational dimensions which help to direct the process from cognitive and affective perspectives.

When the case experienced by the Turkish instructors is taken into account, it can be stated that self-regulation was essential in order to control the online practices and direct the process towards more efficient paths to increase motivation, satisfaction and success. Their reflections on practices before, while and after stages can be said to have resulted in changes in more effective selections, which were the reflections of self-regulation.

Literature Review

The existing research on distance education presents a focus on the concepts of self-reflection and self-regulation mainly through an examination of students' experiences. While student self-reflection practices were examined by Kessler and Kund (2004), Duke, Grosseman, Novack, and Rosenzweig (2015), student self-regulation practices were the focus in the studies by Lynch and Dembo (2004), Artino and Stephens (2009), Cunningham (2010), Al-Harhi (2010), Sun and Rueda (2012), Cho and Shen (2013) and Liaw and Huang (2013). However, the review of the relevant literature does not offer a good amount of research on the examination of instructor self-reflection and self-regulation in distance education. Therefore, besides the few studies with direct relevance to instructor self-reflection

and self-regulation, studies with a focus on such factors as perceptions of and experiences in distance education as well as self-efficacy, which are assumed to have impact on self-reflection and regulation experiences of instructors, are presented in this section.

Examining the perceptions of instructors of online teaching, Hsieh (2010) conducted interviews with 11 instructors of math, science, journalism and educational technology from Taiwan, Canada, Australia, China, the UK and the USA. The results of the interviews showed that course content, course length, expectations from the course, students and themselves, student-teacher interaction and the number of students were the main factors affecting the participants' perceptions. Graham and Jones (2011) focused on the distance education perceptions of 115 faculty members from business, arts and humanities and engineering departments at an American state university and concluded, based on the survey results, that the instructors held varying perceptions of distance education practices evaluating workload and quality in the practices. Collecting survey data from 75 instructors employed at the School of Science and Health Professions at an American University, Lloyd, Byrne and McCoy (2012) identified interpersonal barriers related to interactions, institutional barriers covering administrative decisions and training and technology barriers related with adequate training as the challenges affecting the participants' experiences. Walters, Grover, Turner and Alexander (2017) explored the perceptions of 107 faculty members of online teaching via an online survey. The results revealed that the participants had high satisfaction with the courses and technical support but low satisfaction with the efficiency of online communication tools.

The investigation of the experiences of instructors in distance education also received attention. Kanuka, Collett and Caswell (2002) studied the instructional experiences of 12 instructors in distance education through interviews and noted that professional experience enabled the participants to transfer many instructional techniques used in face-to-face instruction to their instruction in distance education. However, interaction, autonomy and course structure were reported to remain as challenges. At an American state university, Lee and Busch (2005) examined the factors affecting willingness of 26 instructors of engineering, health technology and education to offer classes in distance education. While the participants favored face-to-face education because of the comfort to interact with students and to use different instructional techniques, they were willing to participate in distance education thinking they had adequate training in instruction through distance education. Focusing on the satisfaction levels of 102 instructors in online classes, Wasilik and Bolliger (2009) concluded, as a result of the survey analysis, that while the participants had moderate levels of satisfaction with flexibility and student diversity, they were unsatisfied with the lack of face-to-face interaction, student participation and technological difficulties. Regan, Evmenova, Baker, Jerome, Spencer, Lawson and Werner (2012) conducted focus group interviews with six instructors from the special education program to examine their emotional experiences in online teaching. The results showed that the participants experienced the feelings of stress, restriction, validation and rejuvenation. Conducting interviews with 16 instructors, Huang and Hsiao (2012) examined the experiences and perceptions of the participants as regards online environments. The results pointed at the common evaluation of online teaching as convenient, flexible and fun despite some negative considerations of workload and misunderstanding caused by virtuality. Chang, et al. (2014) studied the faculty perceptions as regards the roles of instructors in online instruction. Collecting data from 106 faculty members in 20 Taiwanese universities through questionnaire, the researchers concluded that content expertise and instructional design were the chief roles perceived in online teaching.

As a related concept to self-reflection and self-regulation, instructors' self-efficacy experiences were also among the points of investigation. Examining the efficacy changes of the faculty experiencing the transition to online teaching, Horwitz, Beach, Anderson and Xia (2015) conducted a survey with 91 professors. The results indicated that the participants' efficacy beliefs were affected by their perception of student learning, gender, satisfaction and interest in online teaching and academic discipline.

The analysis of the studies on distance education points at several considerations. The first consideration is related with the fields in which distance education is examined, revealing the interest in such different fields as business, engineering, health, education and social sciences. This consideration points at the gap in research on the examination of distance education in language teaching. The second consideration has to do with the research context, which highlights the density of studies conducted at American universities. Within this respect, although there are several studies on

self-reflection/self-regulation in Turkish context (Kilis & Yıldırım, 2018; Korkmaz & Kaya, 2012), the focus on these studies were mostly on scale development, not on the examination of the issues in language teaching. Therefore, there is scarcity in research in Turkish context on self-reflection and self-regulation experiences of language instructors during distance education. The third consideration is about the scope of the studies which mostly considered the examination of the experiences and perceptions of the faculty as the research basis. However, there is scarcity of research examining self-reflection and particularly self-regulation experiences of instructors. One of the rare studies on teacher self-regulation was conducted by Delfino, Dettori and Persico (2010). Though the researchers did not conduct a direct investigation of self-regulation of in-service teachers, they examined the changes in the self-regulation experiences of 95 trainee teachers participating in an Educational Technology course. The analysis revealed that the process followed during the course increased teachers' awareness of self-regulation and promoted their self-regulatory practices.

Setting out from these considerations, this case study is intended to investigate the self-reflection and self-regulation practices of Turkish instructors offering online courses during Covid-19 pandemic. The first of its kind, this study offers a novel perspective to distance education studies as it offered an analysis of an online practice which was mandatorily held due to the threat and destructive effects of the pandemic.

Methodology

This study was grounded on descriptive case study design (Yin, 2014) as it aimed to picture the self-reflection and self-regulation experiences of instructors who followed their courses through distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Descriptive case study design was thought to enable the researcher to describe the real-life experiences of the participants in its own context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Setting and Participants

The worldwide effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are to be examined in many areas, education is not an exception. At many universities, regular face-to-face education gave its place to distance education as the otherwise case would increase the fast-spreading deadly effects of the virus. Turkey was also one of the countries in which face-to-face educational practices from K12 to tertiary level were replaced with distance education. During this mandatory distance education process, the courses at the university departments, except for medicine departments, were held through a/synchronous sessions. The courses offered at Turkish Teaching Centers to international students were also among those departments. The courses at these Centers, offering a year-long preparatory Turkish education to international students who are to follow their under/graduate studies at a Turkish university, were conducted through distance education.

This study was conducted at one of the Turkish Teaching Centers at a state university. At the beginning of the spring term of 2019-2020 academic year, face-to-face classes were conducted at the Center for six weeks (an academic term for preparatory education at these Centers are between 16-18 weeks). However, along with the decisions taken by the Higher Education Council in Turkey because of the fast spread of the pandemic, the courses at the Center started to be offered synchronously through online sessions and asynchronously through the Learning Management System provided by the Center. The instructors who started to conduct distance education sessions naturally experienced a sudden role change from being face-to-face instructors to being distance education instructors. Therefore, it was assumed that during this change from what was familiar to the unfamiliar, the instructors felt the need to reflect on their distance education sessions in order to regulate their practices.

The participants were four Turkish instructors who offered Turkish courses in distance education. They were instructors who also taught Turkish in face-to-face classes before the pandemic. Their professional experience ranged from almost four years to seventeen years. It was the first distance education experience of the participants except one of the participants who offered synchronous classes. Therefore, their self-reflection and accompanying self-regulatory practices were of great importance and contribution to increase effectiveness in their distance education implementation.

Data Collection Tools and Process

The data were collected through the participants' unstructured reflection notes taken after the practices and their answers to the open-ended questions. These two instruments were used to increase validity in

data collection examining the issue from two data sources. Before collecting the data, the researcher obtained ethical permission from the Educational Sciences Ethics Committee, Atatürk University (date: 08.07.2020, no: 10/03) and the instructors' consent for voluntary participation.

During the seven-week process in which they conducted distance education, the participants were asked to keep unstructured reflection notes in which they evaluated their practices in a/synchronous sessions. There were three notes by each instructor (12 in total). These notes involved reflective issues ranging from their positive and negative experiences to practical and interactional patterns and regulatory issues in which the participants regulated their plans and practices in line with their reflective evaluations.

The second tool was the open-ended questions prepared by the researcher in the light of the literature on self-reflection and self-regulation and her informal conversations with the instructors. After preparing the questions, the researcher consulted one field expert in English language teaching and one in Turkish language teaching for the appropriateness and clarity of the items. As the participants' native language was Turkish, the questions were formed and answered in Turkish. The open-ended questions were as follows:

1. What are your overall evaluations of your first distance education experience?
2. What are the areas of your self-reflections on the synchronous and asynchronous practices during distance education?
3. How did your self-reflection on the synchronous and asynchronous practices help you self-regulate your practices?

The participants were sent the questions via e-mail at the end of the seven-week process. Within two days, all the participants responded to the questions and sent them back through e-mail.

Data Analysis Process

After collecting the data, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis of the findings in Turkish and showed them to the participants for approval. Then, the reflective notes and the answers to the open-ended questions were translated into English by the researcher and proofread by a native speaker. Conventional content analysis was adopted for the main analysis. The researcher followed a three-step process to increase validity. The first step was individual analysis in which both sets were examined separately with an aim to reach a deep understanding of the data and to identify the repeated codes. The second step was in-group analysis in which the writings of each participant within the same data set were compared to identify similar and different points. The third step was cross-group analysis in which the answers in both data sets were compared to cross-check the reflections. The analysis process pointed at three categories; adaptation to distance education, interactional patterns and teaching practices, with related codes which were combined into the "self-reflection and regulation experiences" theme.

After conducting the main analysis, the researcher consulted another field expert in English to conduct data analysis following the same steps, which was done to decrease single rater bias and increase validity in analysis. The Internal Rate of Return was 82% for exact coding, 12.5% for similar coding and 5.5% for different coding.

Results

The results obtained from the participants' unstructured reflection notes and answers to the open-ended questions revealed that the instructors had positive and negative experiences affecting their first-time distance education practices. The analysis pointed at three categories out of the reflection and regulation experiences of the participants; adaptation to distance education, interactional patterns and teaching practices. Table 1 displays the categories and related codes.

Table 1

Theme: Self-reflection and regulation experiences	
Category 1: Adaptation to distance education	Adapting to technical issues Adapting to virtual teaching
Category 2: Interactional patterns	Reaching students Maintaining interaction among students
Category 3: Teaching practices	Adjusting course design Adjusting teaching Maintaining student motivation

Adaptation to Distance Education

As shown in Table 1, the first category was related to the adaptation process in distance education. Since it was their first distance education practice, except for one participant, the instructors reported that they had initial challenges in adapting themselves and their teaching to the new system. Finding herself in front of the computer teaching online classes, one of the instructors expressed her experience as follows:

“The first online session was a really different experience. Two weeks ago, I was in the class with my students, but now I sit in front of the computer and conduct an online session. I still need to adapt myself to this new teaching situation.” (P2-Note 1)

Another participant with a similar experience explained that he was a bit confused with the new case while still adapting himself to the unfortunate case of pandemic:

“Evaluating my teaching experience in distance education, I can say that I experienced confusion at the beginning of the process. While we were trying to adapt ourselves to depressing news caused by the pandemic, we experienced the sudden transition from face-to-face education to distance education. So, it was a real challenge for me at the beginning.” (P4-answer to the first open-ended question)

There were specific references to the adaptation to the technical issues in distance education among the comments of the participants. Though all the participants were willing and open to integrate technology in their face-to-face classes, they still experienced some initial challenges in adapting to the demands of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. A participant, though having previous distance education practice, reported to have experienced initial challenge. Reflecting on her experience, she explained how she regulated the process:

“I and my colleagues are all willing to use different technological tools and applications in our classes. However, despite the enthusiasm and my previous practices, I experienced some challenges in adapting myself to the system. So, I spent extra time to search for its details. I watched several videos about how to use the program and did mini practices with my colleagues.” (P3- answer to the third open-ended question)

Adaptation to virtual teaching was the other frequently referred item. The participants who were used to teaching in face-to-face classes experienced primary confusion with their professional roles. The sudden change in the educational atmosphere from physical to virtual resulted in the need to adapt themselves to the demands of virtual teaching. The reflection on the need for adaptation and the subsequent regulation was reported in the below remark:

“The pandemic resulted in a dramatic change from face-to-face to distance education. This case meant that teaching and learning would be conducted not in physical but in virtual classes. This was a big change for us. I had to adapt myself to the virtual teaching. I thought if this was what was expected from me, then I should do my best to conduct the virtual classes effectively. So, I had practices of virtual teaching with my children in order to better control the classes with my students.” (P1- answer to the third open-ended question)

Another participant offered the metaphor of “virtual teacher” for the change in the system from real to virtual and explained how she regulated her practices as follows:

“Before the pandemic, I was a real teacher in face-to-face classes but now I am a virtual teacher. So, as a virtual teacher, I am aware of my new responsibilities and I adjust myself and teaching practices in a virtual format.” (P2-Note 3)

The evaluation of the first category indicated that the participants who were used to face-to-face education experienced initial challenges and concerns in distance education process. However, their willingness and openness helped them go through the initial process in a short while and adapt themselves and their practices to the new teaching situation.

Interactional Patterns

The second category, as displayed in Table 1, was about the interactional patterns in distance education. As they were used to having face-to-face interaction with their students, the participants were anxious and wondered if they were able to reach students effectively through distance education platform. Comparing the interactional patterns in two teaching systems, a participant underlined the superiority of face-to-face interaction. She also referred to how she tried to increase chances for interaction by regulating her online courses:

“The foremost thing attracting my attention in distance education was the level of contact. As I am an instructor who favors effective communication in my classes, I saw that interaction in distance education is not as strong as it was in face-to-face education. Therefore, I focused on designing activities to support teacher-student and student-student interactions in virtual sessions.” (P3- answer to the third open-ended question)

The instructors also compared synchronous and asynchronous sessions in terms of interaction. While the overall evaluation of asynchronous sessions pointed at the limitation of interaction, online sessions were appreciated because of the interactional chances. A participant underlined the opportunities for interaction in synchronous sessions and expressed how he regulated his online class to promote interaction:

“During distance education with international students, we followed both synchronous and asynchronous practices. I believe the former version offers opportunities for student-student and teacher-student interaction, the latter believe while the former version only offers teacher-to-student interaction with limitations. Therefore, in order to reach my students and increase the effectiveness of the interaction among them, I placed emphasis on communicative activities in my online sessions.” (P1-Note 2)

The initial unwillingness of students to participate in online classes and interact with their classmates were also among the points demonstrated regarding online interactions. Reflecting on her observations in the first two online sessions, a participant stated that her students did not actively participate in the sessions because of their hesitation of turn-taking:

“In the first two sessions, I observed that most of the students who were willing to participate in face-to-face classes were hesitating to speak in the online class. Thinking about the reason for this hesitation, I realized that as they were unfamiliar to turn-taking in an online platform, they preferred to keep silent.” (P2-answer to the second open-ended question)

The same participant also provided a comment on how she regulated her course for other sessions in order to increase student participation. As they were using a program for synchronous sessions in which the camera reflections of the participants were available on the screen, the instructor used this tool to regulate turn-taking. The reflection and regulation practices to promote interaction in online classes were explained as the following:

“Realizing the problems in turn-taking, I re-designed my next classes to involve clear turn-taking steps to be followed by my students. I told them to follow turns according to the order of their camera reflections on the online program screen. I observed that this regulation increased their motivation to participate.” (P2-answer to the third open-ended question)

The evaluation of the interactional patterns in distance education revealed that reaching students and maintaining interaction among them were the main issues on which the participants had reflections. Their reflections on the interactions in distance education helped them regulate their course design and practices, which increased the quality and quantity of interaction.

Teaching Practices

As displayed in Table 1, the third category was pertaining to the teaching practices of the instructors which affected their self-reflection and self-regulation during distance education. Within this category, adjusting course design and teaching practice were the commonly stated items. Regarding the process of adjusting her course design to the distance education system, a participant referred to the initial difficulty she experienced and how she dealt with this challenge by regulating her practice:

“Teaching in an online class is very different from teaching in a face-to-face class. In face-to-face sessions, everything in the class can be turned into a material for different activities. However, in online classes, the only physical material you and your students have is the computer. Realizing this situation, I decided to prepare different materials suitable for online teaching. I searched on the Internet for online classroom activities and consulted my colleagues asking what kind of activities they planned to use.” (P4-answer to the third open-ended question)

Another participant attracted attention to the difficulty in conducting online classes and offered a comparison between face-to-face and online classes in terms of teaching practice. Reflecting on her online teaching, she maintained that she felt limited because of the virtuality of the educational setting, which affected her practice:

“In online classes, I felt as if I only had the computer screen to reach my students; no body language, no eye contact. Experiencing this interactional limitation, I realized how effective face-to-face classes were in maintaining a healthy communication with my students. Unfortunately, I can say this limitation negatively affected a motivation in teaching.” (P3-Note 2)

Explaining how the scope of interaction affected her teaching practice, the same participant noted that she tried to find alternative practices to deal with the interactional limitation in online sessions:

“Body language and eye contact are particularly important when teaching the language to the beginner level students. Non-verbal language is the common language between you and your students. However, you have limited use of non-verbal language in virtual teaching behind the screen and this negatively influences the effectiveness of instruction. Therefore, in order to deal with this problem, I decided to use visual materials more than before, during and after online sessions in order to compensate for the lack of non-verbal language. I sent these materials to my students through social media and we had additional sessions through this platform.” (P3- answer to the third open-ended question)

Within this category, there were also reflections on keeping student motivation high during distance education. For almost all the students, this was the first-time participation in distance education. Therefore, the sudden change from face-to-face to distance education practices resulted in a decrease in student motivation, which also had negative impact on the teaching practices. Taking the issue of student motivation into account, a participant commented that keeping student motivation was among the priorities in her online practices. She explained how she regulated her classes to increase learners’ motivation:

“The students naturally experienced motivational problems while adjusting themselves to the new system, as we did. Realizing the decrease in their motivation and its negative effects on our courses, I decided to use a-few-minute fun activities to capture their interest. I started the classes with short stories, tongue-twisters or jokes. And, I observed how these mini practices increased students’ motivation and course effectiveness.” (P2-Note3)

As an essential part of education, evaluating student performances was also among the issues the participants touched upon. Due to the limitations in new teaching atmosphere, the participants expressed the difficulty in making proper and detailed evaluations of student performances. They stated that while evaluating speaking performances of the students was easier, evaluating their writing performances was not as effective as it was during face-to-face education. Reflecting on the evaluation process, a participant offered the below comment:

“Evaluation is one of the most significant components in education. However, I think virtual evaluation is not as effective as face-to-face evaluation. I can evaluate speaking performances through online sessions. But, I believe evaluations of written performances of learners through asynchronous sessions are not much effective.” (P1-answer to the second open-ended question)

The same participant also attracted attention to the way he followed to have better evaluations of students’ writing performances:

“In face-to-face classes, I brought writing passages to the class to work on together with the students. So, I decided to use a similar practice in online sessions, as well. I scanned example writings and shared them on the screen with my students. In this way, they could analyze the text focusing on the true and problematic parts. I observed that this practice not only increased their motivation and language development but also offered me an alternative way to evaluate students’ knowledge.” (P1- answer to the third open-ended question)

The evaluation of the third category indicated that though the instructors experienced initial challenges, their reflections on the initial practices helped them adapt themselves to their new roles and adjust their teaching within the scope of distance education. By reflecting on the practices, they were able to identify the drawbacks and then they worked for betterment by regulating their designs and practices.

Discussion

The examination of the lived experiences of the Turkish instructors during mandatory distance education practice revealed three major areas for discussion which were shaped in line with the analysis categories; adaptation to distance education, interactional patterns and teaching practices. The below word cloud which was formed out of Table 1 displaying the analysis codes and categories

presents the points affecting the instructors' self-reflection and self-regulation experiences and practices.



The first area to discuss has to do with the process of adaptation to distance education. It was the first-time distance education experience for the instructors except one. Therefore, they naturally experienced initial challenges coming along with sudden the change in their roles from being face-to-face teachers to being “virtual teachers”, as expressed by a participant. The experience of initial challenges caused by the role changes was also reported by Horwitz, et al. (2015) who underlined the inevitability of initial concerns caused by the transition to teaching online. Within the scope of their experiences, the instructors went through a process of adaptation to technical issues, as also experienced by the participants in Liu, Kim, Bong, and Magjuka’s (2007) study. And they experienced an adaptation process to virtual teaching, which was also reported in Guasch, Alvares, and Espasa’s (2010) research.

Initial experiences are assumed to play a critical role in future practices (Lortie, 1975; Veenman, 1984). Therefore, it was essential for the instructors to have reflections on their experiences and performances in distance education in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the process, which would guide them in regulating their designs and practices. When the specific case of adaptation process to a new teaching system and to a new teacher role is taken into consideration, it can be concluded that the instructors were willing to reflect on the process and were open to shoulder the responsibility expected of them. The enthusiasm to adapt to their new roles and the will to engage themselves in efforts to make progress showed itself in their efforts to regulate their practices by expanding their knowledge and capabilities in technical issues and accepting their role as virtual teachers.

The second area of discussion is related with interactional issues. Since teacher-student and student-student interactions are essential factors fostering motivation and success in classes (Rudsberg, Östman, & Östman, 2017; Suryati, 2015), the participants placed emphasis on the interactional patterns in their distance education sessions. Making a comparison between face-to-face education and distance education, the participants reported the superiority of the former in terms of healthy interaction. However, as they had to conduct their classes through distance education due to the outbreak, they were aware of the necessity to enrich interactional chances in distance education sessions. Evaluated from Schön’s (1983, 1987) proposal for reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, it can be concluded that the instructors followed reflection-in-action when they observed the low level of student participation and reflection-on-action when they identified the sources of the problem. Determining the problematic point, the instructors, then, engaged themselves in a regulation process working on how to overcome the problem with different solutions in order to increase learner motivation for participation. Thus, one can infer that the participants successfully followed reflection and regulation processes with an aim to increase interactional effectiveness in distance education.

The third area to discuss is about the teaching practices followed during distance education. Since distance education requires a different mode of course delivery (Hartnett, St. George, & Dron, 2011; Law, Geng, & Li, 2019), the participants felt the need to adjust their course design and teaching practices to the virtual format. The change in the course plan and design may be the result of their reflection on initial courses and subsequent regulation to increase effectiveness in the following

sessions. Maintaining student motivation was also among the points the participants reflected on within their considerations of teaching practice. As maintained by Ushida (2005) and Aubry (2013), course modality also influences learner motivation as it was the case observed by the participants in this. Therefore, aiming to increase course effectivity, the instructors regulated their course design and this study conduct to stimulate student motivation and adaptability in the new education mood.

The final point in the reflections of the participants was the process of evaluation which is an indispensable part of education (Turnbull, 2020). Hence, the evaluation of the reflections on and regulations in teaching practices may indicate that the instructors paid attention to the fundamental dynamics of education consisting of course design, course delivery, learner motivation and evaluation. The overall evaluation of the results of this study shows that though experiencing initial concerns and challenges, the instructors successfully followed self-reflection by assessing their experiences and practices and self-regulation by taking action in the light of their evaluations. As proposed by Schön (1983, 1987), they reflected on their distance education practices in- and on-action. In addition, as suggested by Zimmerman (2000), they regulated the virtual process working on course design, course conduct, motivation, evaluation and interactional patterns encompassing metacognitive, behavioral and motivational dimensions in their regulation. It can be stated that the combination of effective self-reflection and self-regulation may have increased the participants' self-confidence and self-efficacy in their knowledge and capabilities as virtual teachers and fueled their desire to take more conscious and courageous actions regarding their practice.

Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions

The results of this descriptive case study indicated that the instructors centered on three areas through which they reflected on their practices and which shaped their future plans and performances. Adaptation to distance education, interactional patterns and teaching practices formed the basis of the participants' self-reflective and regulatory actions. Though the participants stated that they put individual effort to identify and overcome the problems in the process, they also reported initial challenges. The results of this study, therefore, point at the need for pre-service and in-service training for distance education. In Turkey, almost all undergraduate programs are followed in face-to-face education format, resulting in limited training and practice in distance education. This case would leave practitioners alone to figure out how distance education system works while putting pressure on their shoulders, as was the case experienced by the participants. Thus, pre-service and in-service teachers and instructors are to be trained in implementing distance education. In addition, if teachers are required to evaluate their practices and take required action, they should be informed and guided in how to follow self-reflective and regulatory practices as teachers. For this purpose, undergraduate programs should offer distance education practices in which pre-service teachers can become familiar with the virtual system and follow such basic educational practices as course plan, course conduct and evaluation.

Though this study offered a novel perspective to distance education studies by investigating self-reflection and regulation experiences and practices, it is not out of limitation. The main limitation in the study was caused by restrictions of the pandemic. Since there was the voluntary quarantine case in the country, the researcher could not conduct observations or face-to-face interviews with the participants. As the data were collected from four instructors through participants' unstructured reflection notes and their answers to the open-ended questions, it offered an overall evaluation of the reflection and regulation experiences. Therefore, future research can integrate classroom observations and think-aloud-protocols in order to conduct deeper analysis of reflective and regulatory actions. In addition, research comparing self-reflection and regulation practices between face-to-face and distance education can also be carried out when Covid-19 threat is cleared from the earth, *reflecting* a virus-free environment *regulated* under normal circumstances.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

Uzaktan eğitim son yıllarda popülerliği gittikçe artmakta olan bir eğitim şeklidir. Özellikle geçtiğimiz yıl bütün dünyayı etkisi altına alan Kovid 19 pandemisi, birçok ülkede uzaktan eğitim süreçlerini gerekli kılmıştır. İlkokul düzeyinden üniversite düzeyine kadar bütün eğitim kademelerinde eğitimler aralıklı ya da sürekli olarak uzaktan eğitimle yürütülmüştür. Türkiye’de de benzer bir süreç takip edilmiş ve üniversite kademesinde yüz yüze eğitimden uzaktan eğitime ani bir geçiş yapılmıştır. Bu ani geçişle birlikte öğrenci ve öğretmen rolleri değişmiş ve beraberinde yeni araştırma odakları getirmiştir. Uzaktan eğitimde öğrenci ve öğretmen algı ve görüşleri gitgide ilgi çeken bir araştırma alanı olmasına rağmen, uzaktan eğitim süreçlerinde öğretim elemanlarının öz-yansıtma ve öz-düzenleme deneyimleri çalışmaya açık alanlar olarak dikkat çekmektedir.

Yöntem:

Bu çalışma betimleyici durum çalışması deseni üzerine kurulmuştur. Çalışmanın katılımcılarını Türkiye’de bir Türkçe Eğitimi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi’nde görev yapan dört öğretim görevlisi oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılardan birinin daha önceden uzaktan eğitim yoluyla öğretim deneyimi varken, diğer üç katılımcı için uzaktan eğitim yoluyla öğretim yeni bir süreç olmuştur. Çalışmanın verileri katılımcıların aldıkları yapılandırılmamış yansıtma notları ve açık-uçlu sorulara verdikleri cevaplar yolu ile toplanmıştır. Veriler geleneksel içerik analizi ile incelenmiştir.

Bulgular

Analiz sonuçları katılımcıların öz-yansıtma ve öz-düzenleme deneyimlerinin üç boyutta toplandığını göstermiştir. Uzaktan eğitim sürecini ilk kez deneyimleyen katılımcılar birinci boyutu oluşturan uzaktan eğitime uyum sürecini yaşamışlardır. İkinci boyut iletişimsel modeller ile ilgilidir. Bu süreçte sınıf içindeki etkileşimin etkinliğini değerlendiren katılımcılar, yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla, uzaktan eğitim süreçlerinde sınıf içi etkileşimin sınırlı olduğunu ifade etmiş ve iletişimi artırmak amacıyla çeşitli düzenlemeler yapmışlardır. Analiz sonucunda belirlenen son boyut ise öğretim uygulamaları ile ilgilidir. Bu boyutta öğretim sürecini şekillendirme, öğrenci motivasyonunu artırma ve öğrenci performansını değerlendirme süreçlerine yer verilmiştir.

Tartışma

Mevcut verilerin analizi ve ilgili alanyazın ışığında, katılımcıların yaşadıkları adaptasyon süreçlerinin sürecin normal bir parçası olduğu ve katılımcıların sürece adaptasyon sağladıktan sonra öz-yansıtma becerileri ile süreci değerlendirip öz-düzenleme becerileri sayesinde uzaktan eğitim yoluyla dil

öğretim-öğrenim sürecini iyileştirdikleri görülmektedir. Katılımcıların ders öncesi, ders sırası ve ders sonrası süreçlerine yönelik öz-yansıtma uygulamaları, derslerin etkinliğini artırma amacıyla yaptıkları öz-düzenlemelerin gelişmesine katkıda bulunmuştur.

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