



THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING: PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS

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ABSTRACT

Although technology use is not novel in language teaching for language instructors, the compulsory use of technology in education, due to the epidemic, requires fully online courses since spring term 2020. This study aims to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the perspectives of English instructors in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19, and it was carried out at several randomly selected state universities in Turkey. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential research design was conducted to collect data. The results of the study show that instructors have negative thoughts about online teaching, and there is a significant difference between online teaching classes and face-to-face classes in terms of motivation, student interaction, teaching techniques, activities, and equipment.

Purpose: *This study aims to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the perspectives of English instructors in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19.*

Method: *A mixed-methods explanatory sequential research design was conducted to collect data.*

Results: *The most of the participants suggested that presented authentic examples of language and culture, and they had to make accommodations because of various students' access tools and technology. This demonstrates that instructors put on afford to enhance their teaching and solve the problems. However, the majority of them stated that there aren't enough opportunities to collaborate with native speakers, and their students don't do classwork well or better prior to COVID-19. This indicates that the academic success of learners is low. Another significant result is that the majority of the participants claimed that they didn't learn new things about their students, and they were not interested in teaching online again in the future. This shows that instructors have negative perceptions about online language teaching in general.*

Considering the interaction among students, the majority of the participants asserted that the online teaching provides opportunities for the student to interact with each other synchronously, but not asynchronously. It can be concluded from this result that students are isolated at their own place, and the opportunity to socialize with their friends is less.

Conclusion and Suggestions: *The study aimed to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the*

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perspectives of English instructors in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19. While flexibility, autonomous learning, use of various media tools to appeal to more senses are found as the strengths of online language teaching, lack of motivation and interaction and technical issues appear as the weaknesses of online classes. Moreover, it is seen that there are pedagogical differences between online courses and face-to-face courses including teaching techniques, activities, materials and evaluation. Although it is a small-scaled study, the findings may act as a guide for future online teaching regulations.

In the study, motivation, learner autonomy and student interaction are found to be closely related to online classes. These important elements could be separately studied in online language teaching as well. Another suggestion is related to the duration of the study. The study could be conducted in a longer process with more data collection tools. Thanks to such a longer period of time, better insights may be obtained.

Key words: *Online Language Teaching, Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning, Emergency Remote Teaching, Blended Instruction, Motivation*

INTRODUCTION

After the outbreak of severe epidemic called COVID-19 all over the world, countries have taken some precautions and changed their applications, habits and conventions in all walks of life including education as well. Although technology use is not novel in language teaching for language instructors, the compulsory use of technology in education, due to the epidemic, requires fully online courses since spring term 2020. Turkey is one of the countries that have had to change its face-to-face education to fully online education. At the beginning of the 2020, the universities and other education institutions in Turkey had to stop provide face-to-face education and immediately find a solution to compensate this situation. Emergency remote teaching was adopted in spring term in many universities and education institutions due to lack of technological readiness and online teaching policy and procedure at the very beginning of this process. With the fall semester 2020, universities and other education institutions have made arrangements and adapted online education.

Technology integration into education is not novel (Blake, 2015), and online teaching and learning has been conducted for decades (Hodges et al, 2020). However, online education is compulsory now, and it is a secure and convenient way of teaching (Zhou, 2020). In Turkey, it has been adopted since the beginning of 2020, and it needs to be examined in terms of pedagogy. The aim of the study is to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the perspectives of English instructors working at state universities in Turkey in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19. The study has two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of English language instructors with regard to online language teaching?
2. What are the weaknesses and strengths of online language teaching in terms of English language instructors?

This study has revealed the challenges faced by English language instructors and depicted the advantages and disadvantages of online language teaching as well. The study may contribute to the improvement of online language teaching and give insights to English language instructors in terms of online teaching. The instructors also can benefit from this study to get an idea about the powerful aspects of online language teaching and may adapt their teaching to use them.

Literature Review

To understand the term of online language teaching and the challenges, weaknesses, strengths and pedagogy of it, a literature review was examined under three sub-categories: A brief classification, weaknesses and strengths of online teaching and pedagogical implications.

A Brief Classification

We need to understand some terminology to make a distinction between online language teaching and emergency remote teaching including some terms such as blended instruction hybrid teaching, synchronous and asynchronous modes of online teaching as well. Hodges et al (2020) made this distinction between online language teaching and emergency remote teaching and stated that the former is based on a planned and developed design lasts from six to nine months. However, emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a temporary teaching because of crises such as epidemic, war or other critical circumstances. Moser, Wei & Brenner (2020) also specifies that planned online teaching is described by various modalities such as fully online and blended instruction and by modes of communication such as synchronous and asynchronous while remote teaching might truly depend on or abstain from technology for educational purposes.

Garrison & Kanuka (2004) defines blended instruction as integration of face-to-face teaching and online teaching in a physical classroom while Hodges et al (2020) describes it as a modality of online teaching with a 25-50 % online instruction. Garrison & Kanuka (2004) also states that it is not certain as to what extent online learning is inherent to blended instruction. As Hodges et al (2020) categorized online teaching into three learning

environments namely synchronous teaching, asynchronous teaching and blended instruction, Perveen (2016) also made this distinction before and specified the hybrid instruction as an integration of synchronous and asynchronous teaching to get the most favourable learning setting.

In the rest of the study, online teaching term will be used as an umbrella term to involve such terms mentioned above.

Weaknesses and Strengths of Online Teaching

As Hodges et al (2020) stated, online teaching and learning has been conducted for decades. Thus, many studies concerning online language teaching have been also carried out so far and we need to review the results of these studies.

During the Covid-19 epidemic, online teaching is considered as the safest and the most favourable way of teaching by universities and schools in the world. Despite its disadvantages, online teaching has benefits as well. Zhou (2020) and Hrastinski (2008) state that learners can study regardless of time and place (flexibility), that timely feedback is the biggest advantage, and that it provides wider student engagement since shy and non-assertive students can feel comfortable with participating in-class tasks. Khatoony & Nezhadmehr (2020) also specifies that online teaching keeps students more informed and ensures learners build their self-confidence. In addition, online teaching made instructors more creative and collaborative since they must face the challenges and solve them together (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Yi & Jang, 2020). Besides, the instructors transform themselves into the supervisors for autonomous learning of students in online teaching (Gao & Zhang, 2020). For a successful online teaching, the role of teacher cannot be ignored as well. In their study, Lange & Costley (2020) found out that instructors can dramatically affect the learning outcomes, attention and engagement of learners. Moreover, Bailey & Lee (2020) asserted that online EFL instructors must be able to plan and manage collaboration, create suitable activities and use the right technological tools.

There are many challenges and weaknesses of online teaching along with benefits of it. Firstly, digital literacy is limited, and instructors have little knowledge and skills to deal with online teaching (Gao & Zhang, 2020; Zhou, 2020). Secondly, technical problems can arise due to internet or online education infrastructure issues (Gao & Zhang, 2020; Sharma & Bumb; 2020; Zhou, 2020). Thirdly, instructors have class management matters since it is not easy to monitor learners and give timely feedback to them (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Gao &

Zhang, 2020). Also, Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) states that online teaching cannot provide as much communication and interaction as face-to-face teaching did. In addition to this, Sharma & Bumb (2020) signs that lack of motivation and unwillingness to attend the online class is the biggest challenge. Zhou (2020) also mentioned about the lower online teaching participation of learners, and suggested that mental problems such as anxiety, depression and aggression and physical problems including eyesight fatigue, insomnia and somnolence appear in both instructors and learners as a consequence of studying with electronic tools for a long time in an enclosed space. Finally, another important challenge is that instructors must innovate their teaching methods and adapt them into new teaching environment (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020; Zhou, 2020).

Pedagogical Implications

Before addressing to pedagogical implications, we need to know the standards of an effective online language teaching. Quality Matters (QM) is one of the organizations aiming to advance digital teaching and QM (2018) described the best implications of planned online teaching in terms of eight general standards in their rubric including (1) overview of course and introduction, (2) learning competencies (objectives), (3) assessment and evaluation, (4) educational materials, (5) learning tasks and learner interaction, (6) course technology, (7) support for learner and (8) facility of access and usefulness.

In his study, Kessler (2006) suggests that teacher awareness about how to perform online teaching activities have a crucial effect on a successful online class. In time, instructors develop more online teaching strategies to implement their teaching knowledge (Bailey & Lee, 2020). The challenges like this make teachers explore more about technology to improve their teaching (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020) and become more creative and collaborative in their instruction (Hodges et al, 2020), thus non-native English teachers are liable to implement various linguistic and cultural knowledge and practices which are beneficial for both learners and teachers in language teaching (Yi & Jang, 2020). In her study, White (2010) suggests that the basic role of teacher is to create a relationship between teacher and students based on ensuring guidance, providing scaffolding, giving feedback, assessing and supporting. It is also crucial to balance synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning while organizing content and activities in online teaching (Payne, 2020). For example, synchronous activities such as discussion and role-play keep learners focused and engaged in the language, asynchronous activities such as writing and extensive reading give students time to think, practice, repeat and produce the language while decreasing their anxiety level

(Meskill & Anthony, 2015; Şener, Ertem & Meç, 2020). Also, these online tasks require learners to be more autonomous (Hrastinski, 2008) since it is not always possible give timely feedback to learners (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020).

As a consequence, there are not many studies examining the pedagogical implications from both perspective of teachers (Şener, Ertem & Meç, 2020). This study may help attribute to the literature in terms of pedagogical matters of online teaching.

METHOD

Research Design

A mixed methods explanatory sequential research design is conducted to define the current online learning environment. Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) classified the commonly used research designs including six main types of mixed methods design, one of which is a mixed methods explanatory sequential research design. In this research design, quantitative data is firstly collected and analyzed, and then qualitative collection follows this phase to clarify the former quantitative results.

Setting

The study which aims to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the perspectives of English instructors in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19 was conducted at several randomly-selected state universities in Turkey. In state universities, two types of English language programs are conducted. The first program is an English preparatory program requires learners take intensive English course and complete this program acquiring basic academic language skills in a B1 level. The other program is English for Specific Purposes. In this program, students take English courses in their departments for vocational purposes such as writing forms, petitions and reports, communicating appropriately and successfully in a business setting with co-workers.

Sampling

To be able to reach the participants, convenient sampling was used. The data collection tool was developed through application of google docs, and the link was delivered to 50 participants via e-mail and online communication tools. 31 English instructors accepted to answer the survey. Then, five of them were purposively chosen to conduct the written interview since these participants had online teaching experience before the pandemic.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study have been teaching in these two programs and they were randomly selected. 31 participants attended the study. All the participants have experience in online teaching. The number of the participants was considered enough to conduct the study as the data collection tools provided considerable data for a small-scaled study. To support the data collected from the survey, a written interview was conducted by five purposively-chosen participants.

Data Collection Tool

The main data collection tool is a survey including three sections and 38 questions in total. Section 1 aimed to collect main demographic and contextual data related to the participants. Section 2 and 3 of the data collection tool is received and adapted from a study of Moser, Wei & Brenner conducted in 2020. Section 2 including three questions investigated overall instructor perceptions of online language teaching. Section 3 included 5-point Likert scale questions (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and aimed to define current teaching experience of instructors. Finally, a written interview including five open-ended questions was carried out with five volunteer instructors to support the data gathered from the survey and have a better understanding about online language teaching.

Data Analysis

Since the survey was conducted before, the validity and reliability was obtained by the researcher. The Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as .76 in the study (Moser, Wei & Brenner, 2020). In this study, the data gathered from the survey were analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics Program, and the Cronbach's Alpha is found 0.541, reliability of which is low owing to the limited number of participants. The descriptive statistics of statements and items in Section 2 and 3 were computed. The results were demonstrated through frequency tables. To get the face and content validity of the written interview questions, a researcher was consulted, and certain items were modified. The data collected from the written interview were content analyzed. The codes were identified by the researcher, and the themes were formed.

FINDINGS

The results will be given under two main sections: the data collected from the survey will be firstly demonstrated with a table, and then the data gathered from the written interview will be presented through direct quotations.

Experiences of Instructors in Online Language Teaching

Section 1 indicates the demographic information of participants. The teaching experience of the 29 participants who answered the survey is over eight years, and 22 participants have master degree or doctorate. 26 participants described their teaching as urban, which is an advantage for online teaching in terms of internet infrastructure.

Section 2 determines the overall perceptions of instructors about online language teaching. The results shows that the 24 of the participant said that they had negative thoughts about online language teaching prior to spring 2020, and 29 participants expressed that they didn't believe their students couldn't perform as well or better in online learning environment than in a face-to-face/campus setting. One of the participants also said that they need face-to-face interaction, but the blended courses would be the best. However, 11 participants assert that online language teaching is less time-consuming for the educator, so this can be considered as an advantage.

Section 3 includes a set of questions based on a 5-point Likert scale questions (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*) and aims to define current teaching experience of instructors. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of this section. 12 of the 25 questions have significant results in terms of online language teaching. The majority of the participants said that they shared the language content, interacted with students synchronously and provided feedback with a learning management system such as a system provided by university, Zoom or Microsoft Teams, and they frequently made a contact with students through e-mail or announcement (Items 2, 3, 4 and 7). This shows that instructors effectively use the learning management system in terms of communication, providing feedback and information transfer.

Considering the interaction among students, the majority of the participants asserted that the online teaching provides opportunities for the student to interact with each other synchronously, but not asynchronously (Items 5 and 6). It can be concluded from this result that students are isolated at their own place, and the opportunity to socialize with their friends is less.

Table 1. *The Descriptive Statistics of 5-point Likert Scale Questions*

<i>Question Number</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Item2</i>	31	4,19	1,195
<i>Item3</i>	31	4,00	1,265
<i>Item4</i>	31	4,42	,848
<i>Item5</i>	31	4,10	1,076
<i>Item6</i>	31	3,00	1,317
<i>Item7</i>	31	4,61	,761
<i>Item10</i>	31	4,06	,964
<i>Item11</i>	31	2,00	1,095
<i>Item13</i>	31	2,61	1,230
<i>Item16</i>	30	4,13	,900
<i>Item18</i>	30	2,63	1,189
<i>Item21</i>	31	2,94	1,413

The most of the participants suggested that presented authentic examples of language and culture, and they had to make accommodations because of various students access tools and technology (Items 10 and 16). This demonstrates that instructors put on afford to enhance their teaching and solve the problems. However, the majority of them stated that there aren't enough opportunities to collaborate with native speakers, and their students don't do classwork well or better prior to COVID-19 (Items 11 and 13). This indicates that the academic success of learners is low.

Another significant result is that the majority of the participants claimed that they didn't learn new things about their students (Item 18), and they were not interested in teaching online again in the future (Item 21). This shows that instructors have negative perceptions about online language teaching in general.

The perceptions of English Language Instructors about Online Language Teaching

The written interview with 5 open-ended questions was conducted in Turkish following the analysis of the survey, and then the answers of five purposively-chosen participants were content analyzed item by item by the researcher of the study. The responses of the instructors were classified under different headings and sub-headings for each interview question. We can obtain a different point of view about the online teaching from the perspectives of these English Language Instructors.

1. Weaknesses of Online Language Teaching

The participants were asked: “what are the challenges (technical, institutional and pedagogical) you experience while conducting online courses? Briefly explain, please.” Nearly all the participants stated that they experienced problems technically, institutionally or pedagogically. All of them addressed the technical and pedagogical problems they experienced, and only one of them talked about the institutional problem as well. These problems are discussed under three sub-headings.

a. Technical Issues in Online Language Teaching

All the participants stated that they experienced some technical issues in online teaching. The following answers of the participants support this outcome (translated to English by the researcher):

Sometimes, due to the low speed of the internet connection, the computer screen of mine or the students freezes. Although I have progressed in the course material, the student might follow the previous page, which makes it difficult for students to follow the course. (Participant 1)

I experienced a lot of technical problems. The main ones are constant systematic disconnection during the class, the microphone problems of students, and problem with my voice's not being received by students. (Participant 2)

I have had problems many times in accessing to the platform where the course is being taught, but in the following periods, most of these problems have been resolved. (Participant 5)

One of the participants asserted that a few number of students turned this technical problem into an opportunity, which caused misuse of online teaching. The following statement demonstrates this:

Particularly in some departments, students state that it is not possible to attend the class only with headphones and with a microphone. I think this situation is abused in some episodes. They are aware that their teachers cannot insist on this issue in such a period, and that students cannot insist on taking microphones, and they try to take advantage of this situation as much as possible. (Participant 5)

b. Institutional Issues in Online Language Teaching

Only one participant claimed that they had institutional problems in online teaching. This shows that the institution takes action in terms of providing support in online teaching. However, the statement of the participant below demonstrates that there are a few problems as well:

The problems we experience from an institutional perspective mostly stem from the lack of technical equipment required for online courses or their being old or inadequate. (Participant 1)

c. Pedagogical Issues in Online Language Teaching

All the participants asserted that they experienced many pedagogical problems due to various reasons in online language teaching. The following responses of the participants below may bring to light some of these problems and their causes:

In this period, student motivation is very low and it is difficult to reach the student because we cannot turn on the camera or microphone, and when the course material is not suitable for the student's level, the student completely disconnects from the course. (Participant 1)

In pedagogical terms, classroom management in face-to-face classes and online classes differ greatly. In face-to-face classes, the teacher will be able to make the majority of students attend the courses, but this is not possible in online classes. (Participant 2)

The lack of in-class interaction, which is very important for language education, creates problems in the virtual environment of online classes and negatively affects the student motivation. (Participant 4)

The most important problems that I have experienced pedagogically are within the scope of evaluation. I have the opinion that we, as an institution, are lack of ensuring the exam security of students. (Participant 5)

2. Strengths of Online Language Teaching

The participants were asked: “what are the positive aspects of online courses for teachers and students? Explain it, please.” All the participants agreed that flexibility is an advantage of online teaching. The following statements support this view:

The most positive aspect of online courses for the teacher is the convenience of being able to teach from home for me. In this respect, getting ready to go to class is

extremely useful in saving time as it eliminates problems such as wasting time in traffic. (Participant 1)

The positive aspects are definitely time and place flexibility. Ease of teaching at any time and place. (Participant 2)

It offers teachers and students flexible teaching and learning. (Participant 3)

Nearly all the participants suggested that online courses are beneficial for students in terms of a few aspects. The following statements exemplify this situation:

It allows students to complete the listening exercises at their own pace in foreign language courses as much as they need. (Participant 1)

Online classes offer serious autonomy and self-control for students in terms of attendance, study, scheduling and planning. (Participant 4)

Students have the opportunity to repeatedly watch the lessons they have missed or attended. In addition, the fact that the learning environment is far from competition provides a more efficient environment for learning. (Participant 5)

3. Key Elements of an Effective Online Course

The participants were asked: “what are the key elements of conducting an effective online course? Explain it, please.” The participants respectively specified it as an active participation, motivation, effective online course materials and activities, technological equipment and infrastructure and planning. Active participation and motivation were considered as the most important key elements of an effective online course. The following responses of the participants support these view:

One of the most important elements of making an effective online course is to ensure active participation of students in the course. (Participant 1)

The most important thing is to make a lesson plan showing what to do minute by minute. Planning should be done effectively as time is limited in online courses and the student's attention may be distracted quickly. (Participant 2)

I think that one of the most important factors for the online course application to be effective, due to the pandemic, is student and teacher motivation. (Participant 5)

4. Teacher Performance in Online Teaching

The participants were asked: “As an English Instructor, how would you evaluate your performance in these online classes (with your strengths and weaknesses)? They mostly

considered technical issues and lack of motivation and interaction as weaknesses of their teaching. Also, the most of them claimed that there is a big difference between online courses and face-to-face courses in terms of their performance. On the other hand, nearly all of the participants expressed that they had technological and technical knowledge and competence. The following statements of the participants support this result:

Frankly, I don't think I can do an online course as it should be, sometimes due to technological limitations, sometimes because of administrative restrictions, although I know that there is a lot to do and I have competence in the field. (Participation 1)

In terms of my own performance, I don't think there is much difference between my performance in online and face-to-face classes. In some departments, I still use the target language and encourage students to participate as much as possible.

(Participant 3)

As an English lecturer who believes in the role of motivation in the education process, I spend a lot of time motivating my students. (Participant 4)

I think that my performance in online lessons is insufficient compared to my performance in face-to-face education. I think that the lack of student interaction in online classes is the most important issue. (Participant 5)

5. Adaptation of Teachers and Teaching

The participants were asked: “how did you adapt yourself and your teaching to this new system during the transition from face-to-face courses to online courses?” The most of them stated that it took time to adapt themselves into fully online classes, and they had to change their teaching techniques, activities, materials and evaluation due to the different teaching environments between online classes and face-to-face classes. Another important result is that a few participants asserted that they tried to conduct online courses as if they were face-to-face courses. The following sentences obtained from the participants support these outcomes:

At first, it was more like an imitation of face-to-face classes, but gradually things got better afterwards. Another issue was the adaptation problem I had about homework and giving feedback. While I had a lot of problems in this regard at the beginning, later on, I changed the type of my homework and started to use more homework types where students evaluate themselves. (Participant 1)

At first, I tried to do the online course with face-to-face logic, but I decided that this could not happen due to the microphone problems experienced by the students.

(Participant 2)

Since I cannot use all the materials, techniques and formats that I applied in face-to-face lessons into online lessons, I made an evaluation on this subject and created an adaptation process with materials, techniques and formats suitable for online lessons. (Participant 4)

I first made the necessary adjustments to make my materials more visually oriented and appealing to more senses. Due to the decrease in the course hours, I decided that the students should do some activities autonomously, especially in the listening parts, and decided to assign these parts to the students as homework. (Participant 5)

Discussion and Implications

Considering the weaknesses of online teaching, the study shows that instructors experienced many pedagogical problems. Lack of motivation and interaction seem to be main problems encountered by instructors and students. Sharma & Bumb (2020) asserted that the motivation level of learner was low because of being isolated from their friends and instructors. Gao & Zhang (2020) suggested that none of online teaching platforms can ensure students and instructors consistently interact with each other. However, Hrastinski (2008) stated in his study that synchronous communication raises motivation, and White (2010) suggested that distance learning allows student study independently and helps motivation continue. Moreover, the study revealed that English language instructors mostly experienced technical problems such as poor internet connection, screen freezing, audio problems and infrastructure failure. In their study, Rinekso & Muslim (2020) stated that one of the problems in online teaching is the poor internet connection while pending questions and answers on the chat section. Zhou (2020) also found that online learning equipment problems such as slow internet speed and use of mobile phones due to lack of computers were the important challenges faced by students.

In the study, it is found that the flexibility, more learner autonomy and use of more media tools are the strengths of online language teaching. Zhou (2020) and Bailey & Lee (2020) specify that learners are able to study irrespective of time and place with more flexibility thanks to online courses. Additionally, online tasks require learners to be more autonomous (Hrastinski, 2008) since it is not always possible give timely feedback to learners (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020).

In terms of pedagogical implications, the study shows that instructors had to change their teaching techniques, activities, materials and evaluation due to the different teaching environment between online classes and face-to-face classes. As Bailey & Lee (2020) stated

in their study, online teaching experience transforms teachers, and they develop more online teaching strategies to implement their teaching knowledge. Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) also suggested that teachers explore more about technology to improve their teaching, and they become more creative and collaborative in their instruction (Hodges et al, 2020). Zhou (2020) advocates in his study that online courses cause teaching design to be reversed and continuously develop, student-centered and outcome-oriented.

Both qualitative and quantitative results of the study show that many English instructors find online language teaching insufficient in terms of some aspects as specified in the findings section of the study, and online teaching needs to be improved in terms of technical, institutional, and pedagogical issues. However, the strengths of online teaching are revealed in consequence of both questionnaires and interviews carried out with English instructors.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study aimed to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of online language teaching and to define the pedagogical issues of online language teaching from the perspectives of English instructors in the age of severe epidemic called COVID-19. While flexibility, autonomous learning, use of various media tools to appeal to more senses are found as the strengths of online language teaching, lack of motivation and interaction and technical issues appear as the weaknesses of online classes. Moreover, it is seen that there are pedagogical differences between online courses and face-to-face courses including teaching techniques, activities, materials and evaluation. Although it is a small-scaled study, the findings may act as a guide for future online teaching regulations.

As it is stated above, the study was conducted with a limited number of participants. The participants were just instructors from several state universities. Thus, a more extensive study including much more participants can be carried out. Also, perceptions of students can be included to compare and contrast the results and give more detailed insights about online teaching. In the study, motivation, learner autonomy and student interaction are found to be closely related to online classes. These important elements could be separately studied in online language teaching as well.

Another suggestion is related to the duration of the study. The study could be conducted in a longer process with more data collection tools. Thanks to such a longer period of time, better insights may be obtained.

Limitations

The main limitation of the study is time and setting. The data were collected in a short-time with a limited number of participants. Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19, the data had to be collected via e-mail and online communication tools, so not many participants attended the study. The reliability of the survey is found not enough due to the limited number of participants. The data collection tools were limited to the survey and an open-ended written interview. Use of more data collection instruments may allow the study to be more detailed and extensive.

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