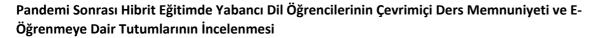| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi|

EFL Students' Online Course Satisfaction and Attitudes Towards E-Learning in Post-Pandemic Hybrid Education

Pandemi Sonrası Hibrit Eğitimde Yabancı Dil Öğrencilerinin Çevrimiçi Ders Memnuniyeti ve E-Öğrenmeye Dair Tutumlarının İncelenmesi

Didem ERDEL[1]

Abstract

Purpose: This study seeks to identify the EFL students' satisfaction with the online courses they took within the scope of hybrid education in the post-pandemic period and their attitudes towards e-learning, and to determine whether there is a relationship between these two variables.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Students studying in Iğdır University English Language and Literature Undergraduate Program in the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year constitute the population of this research. Since there are online courses at all levels, including the preparatory program in the department, all of the department students were included in the research and in order to collect the research data, the Online Course Satisfaction Scale and the Attitudes towards E-learning Scale were administered at four levels (Preparation, 1st, 2nd, and 3. Grades) of the program. The data obtained were transferred to the SPSS program and descriptive and inferential analyzes were carried out.

Findings: The research findings indicated that the students were moderately satisfied with their experiences in online courses and they had mildly positive attitudes towards e-learning. The students' satisfaction was not affected by their gender, nor their perceived L2 proficiency, but by the year of study, juniors and preparatory year students having the highest satisfaction means. As regards the learner attitudes, male students had significantly more positive attitudes towards e-learning than females and the sophomores and juniors reported more positive attitudes than students at other levels. A statistically significant relationship between online course satisfaction and attitudes towards e-learning was identified as a result of the analyses.

Highlights: The moderate satisfaction and attitude levels found as a result of the study suggest that the challenges the students encountered during the emergency remote teaching might be continuing in hybrid education practices. The implementation of more solid, realistic and systematic program evaluation is suggested in order to mitigate the factors adversely affecting EFL students' satisfaction and attitudes towards e-learning.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: Bu araştırma İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin pandemi sonrası dönemde hibrit eğitim kapsamında çevrimiçi aldıkları derslere dair memnuniyetlerini ve e-öğrenmeye dair tutumlarını ölçmeyi ve bu iki değişken arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: 2021-2022 akademik yılı bahar döneminde Iğdır Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Lisans programında öğrenim gören öğrenciler bu çalışmanın evrenini oluşturmaktadır. Bölümdeki hazırlık programı dahil tüm kademelerde çevrimiçi dersler bulunduğundan bölüm öğrencilerinin tamamı araştırmaya dahil edilmiş ve araştırma verilerini toplamak amacıyla Çevrimiçi Ders Memnuniyeti Ölçeği ve E-öğrenmeye Yönelik Genel Tutum Ölçeği bölümde eğitim-öğretim faaliyetleri sürdürülen dört kademede (Hazırlık,1.,2., ve 3. Sınıflar) uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler SPSS programına aktarılarak betimsel ve çıkarımsal analizler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Araştırma bulguları, öğrencilerin çevrimiçi derslerden orta düzeyde memnun olduklarını ve e-öğrenmeye karşı orta düzeyde olumlu tutumlara sahip olduklarını göstermiştir. Öğrencilerin cinsiyetleri ve algılanan yabancı dil yeterlilikleri memnuniyetleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etki göstermez iken öğrenim yılı öğrenci memnuniyetini anlamlı düzeyde etkilemiş ve en yüksek memnuniyet ortalamalarına sahip olan sınıflar hazırlık ve üçüncü sınıf öğrencileri olmuştur. Öğrenci tutumları ile ilgili olarak ise, erkek öğrencilerin e-öğrenmeye karşı kadınlara göre anlamlı düzeyde daha olumlu tutumları olduğu görülmüş ve ikinci ve üçüncü sınıfların diğer seviyelerdeki öğrencilere kıyasla yine daha olumlu bir tutuma sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, çevrimiçi ders memnuniyeti ile e-öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki de tespit edilmiştir.

Önemli Vurgular: Araştırma sonucunda ortaya çıkan orta düzeyde öğrenci memnuniyeti ve tutumu, öğrencilerin acil uzaktan öğretim sırasında karşılaştıkları zorlukların hibrit eğitim uygulamalarında devam ediyor olabileceğini düşündürmektedir. Yabancı dil öğrencilerinin e-öğrenmeye yönelik memnuniyetlerini ve tutumlarını olumsuz etkileyen faktörleri azaltmak için daha sağlam, gerçekçi ve sistematik bir program değerlendirmesinin uygulanması önerilmektedir.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of e-learning was first coined in the 1990s in an attempt to describe "learning thoroughly through technical advances" (Brika, Chergui, Algamdi, Musa, & Zouaghi, 2022, p. 1). It has been more explicitly defined as the practice of utilizing from internet technologies in order to provide a wide range of solutions to the areas of knowledge and performance (Liaw, Huang & Chen, 2007). In other words, e-learning practices are learning activities fulfilled with technology out of or in addition to formal instruction (Erarslan & Zehir-Topkaya, 2017). E-learning is taken as an open system consisting of three bodies, students, instructors and learning management systems, which are in continuous interaction to augment learning outcomes and maintain student satisfaction (Eom & Ashill, 2016). It reportedly mitigates the barriers to learning, including temporal and spatial limitations, and facilitates lifelong learning; motivates and entertains students; and provides access to various resources while it also has the disadvantages of connection and system-related problems and lack of sufficient interaction and feedback (Batdı & Candan, 2022).

E-learning and learner attitudes

As digital learning environments are supposedly learner-centered (Sahin & Shelley, 2008), understanding the characteristics of the learners should be the first to consider in developing e-learning programs in order to build the most appropriate and effective learning environments. The effective use of technology is highly reliant on the positive attitudes of the users, who will accordingly develop behavioral intentions to use the technology (Liaw et al., 2007). As for the field of EFL teaching and learning, it has been recognized that e-learning with computer- and mobile-assisted practices has transformed the process of language learning, particularly for learners (Erarslan & Zehir-Topkaya, 2017) and learner attitude has been noted as one of the most crucial factors determining achievement in computer assisted language learning (CALL), even indirectly contributing to the persistence in studying the language (Ushioda, 2005).

Literature on EFL learner attitudes towards e-learning

Learners' positive attitudes have been associated with several outcomes of e-learning including the improvement in language learning (Atasoy, Özden & Kara, 2020; Erarslan & Zehir-Topkaya, 2017) and therefore, it has been addressed within the scope of e-learning research in L2 teaching/learning context. The direction of learner attitudes, positive or negative, and the effects of various learner variables on learner attitudes towards EFL e-learning have been tested in many studies. Investigating tertiary level Turkish EFL students' attitudes towards CALL, Akbulut (2008) found that the students had positive attitudes towards computer use in language learning and their attitudes were affected by the condition of possessing a PC at home and predicted by PC experience and hours of internet use while the age and gender variables were not related with the students' attitudes, in favor of those having a PC at home. Ekici (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study on the attitudes of Turkish EFL students and instructors towards emergency remote teaching (ERT) practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study results both conformed with and diverged from Akbulut's (2008) results in that the students similarly displayed positive attitudes and the access to computers was a significant factor whereas their attitudes were found to be in a meaningful relationship with their age, gender and proficiency in favor of younger, male and less proficient students. Doğan, Koç, and Saraç (2022) adopted a similar research scope, seeking to examine the e-learning attitudes of a group of foreign language (L2) learners during the Covid-19 pandemic and their report also contradicted the previous findings. The students disclosed negative attitudes towards e-learning conditions during the pandemic and their responses did not differ across age, gender and department variables.

The EFL e-learning from the perspective of students has also been explored in different cultural contexts. Sukman and Mhunkongdee (2021) investigated Thai university students' attitudes towards the pandemic-urged e-learning and they concluded that the students expressed positive attitudes as it was convenient for the pandemic conditions, still they preferred the face-to-face (F2F) education due to the problems of unstable connection to internet, the potential distractors and the lack of interaction and teacher elaboration. In a similar vein, Jalilinia (2021) examined Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning during the pandemic and found that the students had mainly negative perspectives about it, struggling with the lack of effective interaction and preferring the F2F education to online learning. Benadla and Hadji (2021) focused on the affective attitudes of Algerian EFL learners towards pandemic-driven ERT practices. The sample group participating in their study consisted of graduate students studying for master's degree. Their results revealed that the students had negative attitudes towards e-learning due to technical problems, lack of interaction, access problems, and insufficient technological skills.

A few studies explored the relation of EFL leaner attitudes with the e-learning achievement/performance. Çakır and Solak (2015), for instance, examined the attitudes of Turkish EFL students towards technology and investigated the relationship between learner attitudes and academic performance. They reported positive learner attitudes towards technology and a positive relationship between learner attitudes and satisfaction and academic achievement. In a similar vein, Erarslan and Zehir-Topkaya (2017) studied EFL students' attitudes towards e-learning and the effect of online learning on students' success and on the contrary, even though they reported that the students had partly positive attitudes (30 % of the students with positive attitudes) and they had the chance to receive higher scores and increase their average grades in online classes, no significant relationship was determined between the learner attitudes and academic success.

The students' attitudes towards the practice of certain e-learning applications and interventions have also been the focus of some studies. For instance, Faramarzi, Tabrizi, and Chalak (2019) investigated Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards e-learning through a vodcasting (podcasts with video content) project where students were asked to complete specific tasks on the Telegram

application. The students reported positive attitudes finding the learning experience constructive and engaging. Alabbad and Bin Huwamel (2020) examined Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards and thoughts of digital vocabulary learning tool Padlet and their results indicated the students perceived the experience positively acknowledging its contribution to their learning.

E-learning and learner satisfaction

Learner satisfaction has been defined as "the learner's perceived value of their educational experience in an educational setting" (Bolliger & Erichsen, 2013, p. 5). It is associated with the attainment of student needs and interests, which contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes (Al Sofi, 2021; Sahin & Shelley, 2008). It is regarded as both a requirement and the outcome of the learning process (Sinclaire, 2011; Sahin & Shelley, 2008). As learner satisfaction is acknowledged as an essential component of effective e-learning and one of the major determinants of the quality of online education (Kuruçay & İnan, 2017), it should be measured within the scope of online course/program effectiveness (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012; Geçer & Topal, 2015; Yükseltürk & Yıldırım, 2008). Therefore, it becomes necessary to identify the factors that contribute to or impede the satisfaction of e-learners before expecting them to be actively involved and engaged in the e-learning processes (Chen, 2012; Yükseltürk & Yıldırım, 2008).

Literature on e-learner satisfaction

Scholarly interest in students' satisfaction with the e-learning practices has grown over the years with the ubiquity of online instructional environments in educational research in general and in the field of EFL teaching and learning in particular. Various factors have been affiliated with e-learner satisfaction as a result of numerous studies focusing on the effectiveness of e-learning. For instance, Yükseltürk and Yıldırım (2008) highlighted the importance of interaction, course structure, quality of support services, and the convenience and flexibility of the programs as important factors affecting learner satisfaction. Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen and Yeh (2008) determined computer anxiety, instructor attitudes, course flexibility, course quality, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and diversity in assessment as the critical factors that affect e-learner satisfaction. Sahin and Shelley (2008) found that computer knowledge, the flexibility of distance education and perceived usefulness predicted e-learner satisfaction. Croxton (2014) found that interactivity was considered as an essential component of satisfaction and that student-instructor interaction was strongly related to satisfaction of online learners. According to the results of a review conducted by Kauffman (2015), student satisfaction was facilitated by integrated course designs and structured, interactive instructional methods allowing for adequate interaction and collaboration. Eom and Ashill (2016) aimed to identify the determinant factors in online learning satisfaction in a university in Midwestern United States. They determined the factors as course design, instructor and the dialogue among the students and with the instructor. Likewise, Parahoo, Santally, and Harvey (2015) and Harvey, Parahoo and Santally (2017) identified university reputation, physical facilities and instructor empathy and student-student interactions as significant antecedents of e-learner satisfaction. Harsasi and Sutawijaya (2018) determined online course structure and online tutorial flexibility as two factors to influence e-learner satisfaction. Turhangil-Erenler (2019) sought to find out the factors influencing e-learner satisfaction in a funded European university and reported these factors as interaction, instructor behaviors, flexibility, and perceived quality of learning/course. Examining Saudi EFL learners' e-learning satisfaction under ERT conditions during Covid-19 pandemic, Al Sofi (2021) reported that EFL learners were found less satisfied with e-learning experiences when compared to the students of other departments. Instructor practices, technical problems and course designs were found to be the predictors of low satisfaction.

Relevant research also addressed the relationship of e-learner satisfaction with other constructs. Bolliger and Halupa (2012), for instance, conducted a research on the relationship between the satisfaction and anxiety of students of an online doctoral program and found a significant negative correlation between satisfaction and perceived anxiety of the students. Chen (2012) also examined the relation of several learner characteristics with e-learning satisfaction in an EFL context and found that not all students but those with high metacognitive self-regulation strategy use, high mastery orientation and low computer-mediated communication (CMC) apprehension and low computer anxiety were satisfied with online English courses. Liaw and Huang (2013), who primarily focused on self-regulation in e-learning contexts, found that perceived satisfaction, which they explained as the extent to which users accepted information systems and felt comfortable using them, was among the predictors of online self-regulation, and it was affected by interactive learning environments, perceived self-efficacy and perceived anxiety. Kırmızı (2015) pinpointed learner motivation as a predicting factor correlating significantly with e-learner satisfaction. Chen and Adesope (2016) explored some other affective factors, namely the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness, connected with EFL online learner satisfaction and obtained results indicating a joint effect of perceived autonomy, competence and relatedness on learning satisfaction.

The relationship between e-learner satisfaction and academic performance has also been currently discussed. In a recent study, Bossman and Agyei (2022) attempted to determine the structural relationship between factors that affect e-learner satisfaction and student performance in a distance learning program in Ghana. They identified the factors predicting satisfaction as technology anxiety, instructor variables, course quality, technology quality and ease of use. Furthermore, their results indicated a significant relation between learner satisfaction and the attainment of learning outcomes.

Teacher characteristics have also received attention regarding its relation to e-learner satisfaction. For instance, Atasoy et al. (2020) studied Turkish students' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of e-learning practices particularly focusing on learner satisfaction and the effect of teacher innovativeness. The study resulted with medium-level e-learner satisfaction, with the lowest

scores for the effectiveness of course materials. A positive significant correlation was found between learner satisfaction and teacher innovativeness.

Significance of the Study

In relation to e-learning research, attitude and satisfaction have been amongst the most frequently studied areas according to two recent bibliometric analyses (Brika et al., 2022; López-Belmonte, Segura-Robles, Moreno-Guerrero, & Parra-González, 2021). Still, the studies on these subject areas with specific reference to the field of EFL teaching/learning have not reached a satisfactory level. Considering the unprecedentedly rapid progress of technology and accordingly its integration to education, augmented with the advent of the pandemic-urged distance education practices, it has become vital to interrogate the stance of the students, how they feel about this adjustment process and how they manage their learning since the process-oriented and learner-focused approaches to language learning have become pervasively acknowledged. Such studies determining the standpoints of the students from different contexts not only contribute to the enrichment of the available literature but also provide a foundation for the research aspiring to explicate the factors inherent in student responses to the changing conditions and circumstances.

Although research focusing on either e-learner attitude or satisfaction as an individual area is ubiquitous, studies explicitly addressing their relationship, particularly in the field of EFL teaching and learning, appear to be scarce. The potentiality of this relationship has been one of the rationales of the present study, which aims to elucidate Turkish EFL students' online course satisfaction and attitudes towards e-learning in the hybrid education model adopted in the majority of Turkish universities in 2021-2022 academic year. Based on this purpose, the following research questions have arisen:

1. What are the Turkish EFL students' attitudes towards e-learning during the hybrid education?
2. How satisfied are Turkish EFL students with their e-learning experiences?
3. How do the students' gender, year of study and perceived L2 proficiency affect their attitudes towards e-learning and their satisfaction?
4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the students' attitudes and satisfaction level?

METHOD/MATERIALS

Research design

The present study was designed as a quantitative survey. Quantitative surveys are usually preferred in studies intending to conclude with generalizations from sample groups to populations in order to make inferences regarding certain characteristics, attitudes or behaviors of these populations (Creswell, 2014). For the present study, almost all members of the target population were included in the sampling as to be explained below. Still, the survey method was followed as it was considered to be the most economic and time-saving approach to obtain data from all members of the subject group in the given period of time.

Participants

The students majoring in the English Language and Literature Program at Iğdır University constituted the population of this study. The program maintained hybrid education in the 2021-2022 academic year when more than half of department courses were taught face-to-face and the remaining were taught online. The students attended online course sessions held on platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom as preferred by the course instructors. They could watch the course records asynchronously on the learning management system (LMS) of the university. They could also reach assignments and other course materials uploaded to the LMS by the instructors. Since there was at least one online course at each level, including the preparatory program, in the department, total population sampling was applied and all students enrolled in the department during the academic year were included in the research. Another reason for including all students in the study was that the population size was relatively small for selecting a certain sample group. Demographic information of the students is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Information about the students responding to the questionnaire

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	33	24,1
	Female	101	73,7
	Missing	3	2,2
Year of Study	Prep.	53	38,7
	1	51	37,2
	2	30	21,9
	3	3	2,2
Perceived Proficiency	1	11	8,0
	2	17	12,4
	3	65	47,4
	4	25	18,2

	Frequency	Percentage
5	13	9,5
6	3	2,2
Missing	3	2,2
Total	137	100

As clearly seen in Table 1, a total of 137 valid student responses were recorded as a result of the administration of the questionnaire. Almost three fourths (73,7 %) of the students taking part in the study were females while nearly one fourth of the population (24,1 %) consisted of male students. The numbers of preparatory year students (N=53) and the freshmen (N=51) who make up the three-fourths (75,9 %) of the total population were very close while the number of sophomores was 30 and juniors were only three students. In the questionnaire, the students were also asked to specify their perceived English language proficiency by selecting from choices of 1-6. The students' perceptions regarding their L2 proficiency varied while almost half of them stated that they were at level 3, and cumulated with level 4, it can be stated that over 65 percent of the students (N=90) perceive themselves as medium/intermediate level English language learners.

Data collection and analysis

Research data were collected via a questionnaire form, which was composed of three sections. The first was personal information section inquired about respondent characteristics of gender, year of study and perceived language proficiency (choices from 1 to 6). The second section included the "Online Course Satisfaction Scale" (Bayrak, Tıbı & Altun, 2020), an eight-item 5-point Likert-type scale. Bayrak et al. (2020) conducted the validity and reliability tests of the original scale and confirmed that the scale was a unidimensional, valid and reliable test to measure e-learner course satisfaction. In addition to being current, short and concise, the advantage of choosing the scale for the present study was that it was developed in a Turkish context and did not bring along cross-cultural applicability concerns. The third section of the questionnaire form consisted of the "Attitudes Towards E-learning Scale" (Haznedar & Baran, 2012), a 20-item 5-point Likert-type scale. Although the scale was determined to have two dimensions, namely e-learning aptitude (ten items) and e-learning avoidance (ten items), Haznedar and Baran (2012) noted that the scale could be used in either one- or two-factor structure since all positive items in the scale had subsumed under the first factor and all negative items had cumulated under the second factor as a result of exploratory factor analysis. Therefore, the scale was used in a unidimensional form in the present study. The reliability and validity of the scale were also confirmed (Haznedar & Baran, 2012). This scale was also chosen due to its short, clear and concise items besides it was found to be a valid and reliable test to measure e-learner satisfaction at tertiary level.

The reliability values for the two scales were calculated in the present study according to the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the results are provided in Table 2 below. According to Büyüköztürk (2015), any value above 0.70 is acceptable to establish research reliability. As the table shows, the Alpha coefficients for both scales are quite high, indicating that the scales both had high reliability.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values for Attitudes Towards E-learning Scale and Online Course Satisfaction Scale

	Attitudes Towards E-learning Scale	Online Course Satisfaction Scale
Number of items	8	20
Cronbach's Alpha	0.92	0.86

The researcher obtained the ethical committee approval for the study within the second semester of 2021-2022 academic year and afterward, scheduled the data collection period. The questionnaire was administered on paper personally by the researcher in the department within one week, as the study was designed to be cross-sectional. The students were informed about the research purpose and scope, and also about the confidentiality and voluntariness issues. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes for the students to respond. Then the researcher collected the papers and proceeded to transfer data to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program for data analysis.

The normality of distribution for the data set was tested by Skewness and Kurtosis values, which, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), are assumed to be between the values of + 1,5 and - 1,5 when the data set is normally distributed. For both scales in the study, the Skewness and Kurtosis values are presented in Tablo 3 below.

Table 3. Skewness and Kurtosis values for Attitudes Towards E-learning Scale and Online Course Satisfaction Scale

	Attitudes Towards E-learning Scale	Online Course Satisfaction Scale
Skewness	,275	-,330
Kurtosis	-,734	-,671

As the table displays, the data set for both scales were normally distributed, which indicated that parametric tests could be used for the inferential statistics to be applied to measure the relationship between the variables (dependent and/or independent) of the study.

FINDINGS

Descriptive analyses were used to measure the attitudes and satisfaction levels of participant students in order to answer the first and second research questions. The minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation values of both variables are given in Table 4 below. It can be inferred from the mean value ($\bar{X}$= 2,88) for the "attitude" variable that the students' attitudes towards e-learning were neither negative nor positive. For student satisfaction, the mean value ($\bar{X}$= 3,39) suggested that the students were moderately satisfied with their e-learning experiences in the department.

Table 4. Descriptive results for the participant students' e-learner attitudes and satisfaction

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	$\bar{X}$	SD
Attitudes	137	1,35	5,00	2,88	,92
Satisfaction	137	1,38	5,00	3,39	,91

With the aim of reaching an answer to the third research question, the effects of three independent variables, namely gender, year of study and perceived L2 proficiency, on e-learner attitudes and satisfaction were tested. The effects of participants' gender on their responses with respect to both scales were measured with Independent Samples t-Test. The analysis results are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-Test results for the effects of gender on EFL e-learner attitudes and satisfaction

Dependent Variables	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p
Satisfaction	Male	33	3,21	1,01	1,25	,21
	Female	101	3,44	,87		
Attitudes	Male	33	3,36	,88	-3,42	,001**
	Female	101	2,74	,90		

**p<0,01

It can be inferred from Table 5 that the participant students' gender did not have a statistically significant effect on their responses to the online course satisfaction scale (p>0.05). On the other hand, the students' attitudes towards e-learning were significantly affected by the students' gender (p<0.01). Male students reported more positive attitudes when compared to female students.

Another independent variable of the study was the participant students' year of study. A One-Way ANOVA test was utilized in order to determine the relationship between this variable and the students' attitudes and satisfaction. As results given in Table 6 illustrate, learner attitudes toward e-learning were affected by the students' year of study in the department (p<.05). The mean values for the attitude scale at each level indicated that learner attitudes became more positive as the year of study increased. As for satisfaction, again a statistically significant effect of year of study was observed. Third-year students, juniors, were found to be the group with the highest satisfaction (M=3,68), followed by preparatory program students with the second highest mean value (M=3,63). The student group with the lowest satisfaction was freshmen (M=3,02). It should be noted that the junior students were quite few when compared to other levels, which made the group sizes unequal. Still, the Levene's test result verified homogeneity of variances (p=0.43 for the attitude scale and p=0.397 for the satisfaction scale), which indicated that the data set was convenient for the One-Way ANOVA test.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA results for the effects of year of study on EFL e-learner attitudes and satisfaction

Dependent Variables	Year of study	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p
Attitudes	Prep.	53	2,59	,78	3,54	,01*
	Freshmen	51	3,02	,99		
	Sophomores	30	3,08	,91		
	Juniors	3	3,68	1,03		
Satisfaction	Prep.	53	3,63	,84	3,17	,02*
	Freshmen	51	3,12	1,01		
	Sophomores	30	3,38	,72		
	Juniors	3	3,91	1,01		

*p<0,05

The third learner variable in the study was the students' perceived English language proficiency. The students were asked to choose among the options 1-6 in order to indicate their L2 proficiency. The data from their responses were transformed and recoded into three proficiency levels in order to refine the data. Levels 1 and 2 were transformed to "low" proficiency; levels 3 and 4 to intermediate and levels 5 and 6 to high proficiency. The relationships between perceived L2 proficiency and the students' attitudes and satisfaction were tested with One-Way ANOVA analysis. The results are demonstrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA results for the effects of perceived L2 proficiency on EFL e-learner attitudes and satisfaction

Dependent Variables	Perceived L2 Proficiency	N	X̄	SD	F	p
Attitudes	Low	28	2,88	,14	,897	,41
	Intermediate	90	2,85	,10		
	High	16	3,18	,24		
Satisfaction	Low	28	3,38	1,01	,455	,63
	Intermediate	90	3,38	,86		
	High	16	3,61	,93		

As displayed in Table 7, no significant effect of perceived L2 proficiency was identified on the EFL students' attitudes towards e-learning or on EFL e-learner satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). When the mean values of the three groups were observed, it could be inferred that the students with higher perceived L2 proficiency had more positive attitudes and higher satisfaction; however, this result was not found statistically significant.

The final research question, which interrogated the relationship between the EFL students' e-learner attitudes and satisfaction, was addressed with the correlation analysis conducted with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation test on SPSS. As displayed in Table 8 below, a positive, albeit weak, and statistically significant relationship was identified between the two variables ($r = .209$, $p < 0.05$) indicating that the students' online course satisfaction increased as they had more positive attitudes toward e-learning. As the correlation analysis does not provide a cause-effect relationship, it is also possible to infer that the students' positive attitudes were enhanced with increased satisfaction.

Table 8. Pearson Correlation results for the relationship between attitudes towards e-learning and online course satisfaction

	Attitudes Towards E-learning	P
Online Course Satisfaction	,209	,014*

$p < 0.05$

In conclusion, the findings of the present study demonstrated that the EFL students studying English Language and Literature at Iğdır University had moderately positive attitudes toward e-learning and moderate satisfaction from the online courses they took in the 2021-2022 academic year. Their responses regarding the attitudes towards e-learning were not affected by their gender, nor their perceived L2 proficiency but there was a statistically significant effect of the year of study. As regards the students' online course satisfaction, significant effects of gender and year of study were observed in favor of male and junior students whereas perceived L2 proficiency did not have a significant effect on online course satisfaction. Last of all, a weak positive correlation was identified between the students' attitudes towards e-learning and online course satisfaction. The results will be discussed below with possible references to relevant literature.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to find out a group of Turkish EFL students' attitudes towards e-learning and their online course satisfaction, the effects of some learner characteristics, and the relationship between EFL e-learner satisfaction and attitudes. The research findings above revealed that the students' attitudes and satisfaction were both at a moderate level. These results are supported by several other studies (Benadla & Hadji, 2021; Erarslan & Zehir-Topkaya, 2017); however, some of the previous research in relevant literature provides results indicating positive e-learner attitudes in EFL learning (Akbulut, 2008; Çakır & Solak, 2015; Faramarzi, Tabrizi & Chalak, 2019). Still, it is noteworthy that these studies with positive attitude results were mostly conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic and related education disruptions, which led to emergency remote teaching practices at all levels of education. The ERT process was quite challenging and stressful for many students including EFL learners (Al Shlowiy, Al-Hoorie & Alharbi, 2021; Erarslan, 2021; Juarez-Diaz & Perez, 2021; Mahyoob, 2020; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020) and it is quite probable that the students maintained negative perceptions during the hybrid education model, which was adopted in most of the educational institutions in 2021-2022 academic year when the effects of the pandemic became less severe. Dizon and Thanyawatpokin (2021) investigated Japanese EFL students' attitudes towards Covid-19-driven ERT during 2020-2021 academic year and revealed that even after being familiar with the digital teaching and learning platforms and tools at the semester-end,

the majority of the students still possessed the negative impressions they had felt in the beginning. The students might have been still facing the problems they encountered in online courses in the previous academic year. The studies reporting negative attitudes or perceptions regarding EFL e-learning during the pandemic commonly argue the effects of inconveniences related to technical and/or technological skills of teachers/instructors and/or students; limited practice, interaction and feedback and connection or access problems (Alodwan, 2021; Benadla & Hadji, 2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020).

The study results regarding student satisfaction may also be interpreted in relation with the effects of pandemic-driven ERT practices the students experienced in the previous year. Şendoğan-Erdoğan (2020) examined the online course satisfaction levels of Turkish EFL learners during Covid-19 pandemic and she identified some aspects of synchronous learning which led to student dissatisfaction. In a similar vein, Bozavlı (2021) explored the ERT experiences of Turkish EFL learners and reported that the students did not consider online teaching as effective as classroom teaching and they reported low motivation and satisfaction. As explicated in the introduction of the present study, learner satisfaction has been found to be influenced by multifarious factors.

The present study found a significant effect of gender on students' attitudes towards e-learning revealing that male students had more positive attitudes. Relevant literature presents mixed results regarding the effect of gender on learner satisfaction (Harvey et al., 2017). In contrast to the present results, Akbulut (2008), for instance, determined the gender effect on attitudes towards CALL as insignificant. Studying the effects of gender, age and learning styles on the English language learners' technology use, Lee, Yeung and Ip (2016) also identified no gender effect on the technology application in EFL learning. Srichanyachon (2013) investigated the attitudes of EFL students in Thailand towards online learning and reached no significant effect of gender on student attitudes. Studies supporting the present findings are also available in the literature. Ekici (2021) for instance, similarly concluded that male students had more positive attitudes towards e-learning. Furthermore, his study focused on the pandemic period experiences of the students, which relates to the scope and learning conditions of the present study more than the abovementioned studies.

Another important result was that the students' attitudes and satisfaction levels differed in accordance with their year of study. While the students' attitudes towards e-learning increased year by year, the satisfaction level did not change in a linear fashion. With respect to this variable, the most noteworthy finding was that the freshmen had the lowest satisfaction among all groups. This group of students received preparatory education in a totally online format in the previous academic year. They suffered the inconvenience of not practicing language skills effectively during ERT and they could not develop the skills necessary for the department courses which are mostly taught with English medium instruction. Their self-efficacy might be impeded when they had difficulty in comprehending the course content. Since students with higher self-efficacy beliefs reportedly display higher engagement and satisfaction (Han, Geng, & Wang, 2021); these students might have become more distanced and less satisfied with their e-learning experiences as a result.

The correlation between the students' attitudes towards e-learning and online course satisfaction is also meaningful although the identified relationship was rather weak in a statistical perspective. Furthermore, the finding receives support from relevant literature. Learner attitude towards e-learning has been identified as an important factor to affect satisfaction (Bossman & Agyei, 2022). Sun et al. (2008) also suggest that positive attitude, which enhances successful computer learning, is a critical factor in satisfaction. Meanwhile, Liaw and Huang (2013) report that enhanced satisfaction contributes to the positive attitudes towards learning. Apparently, a potential reciprocal enhancement exists between having a positive attitude towards learning and being satisfied with the learning process, particularly speaking for EFL e-learning environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

the Covid-19 pandemic had its most severe effects in all areas of life, including education, in the past two years. The disruption in face-to-face instructional practices due to pandemic-led precautions urged emergency remote teaching where all educational practices almost worldwide became to be conducted with distance education, mostly in online teaching and learning platforms in the period starting March 2020 to the end of 2020-2021 academic year. Intimidated by the risk of violating social distance rules, the educational institutions maintained online courses by presenting hybrid education in the following academic year. The students of all levels from all discipline areas were deeply affected by the ERT process, as relevant literature confirms, and apparently, they will continue experiencing the effects of the pandemic period in the long term.

The present results indicating an unsatisfactory level of learner satisfaction and slightly positive learner attitudes towards e-learning indicate that there is still much to be done with regards to the effective use of information and communication technologies. Even though the ERT practices enabled an acquaintance with technology-integrated education for all parties of educational exchange, i.e. students, teachers/instructors, and even parents, the effectiveness of the new system is still questionable. Yet, the awkwardness almost everyone had in the ERT period due to the abrupt and unexpected transition may no longer be tolerated. If the higher education institutions intend to continue applying hybrid education model in the upcoming years, it is essential to conduct solid, realistic and systematic program evaluation, both formative and summative, taking especially the learner agent into the center at all stages.

There have been several limitations to this study. First, the study was cross-sectional and conducted in a specified setting, which limits the generalizability of the results. Secondly, the causality in the relationship between the variables of the study is not possible to infer. Further studies may enlighten that area by focusing specifically on the causes or effects of EFL e-learner attitudes

and satisfaction besides their mutual relationship. Furthermore, more intervention studies should be designed in order to explore the effectiveness of certain applications or practices. It is no longer possible to isolate education from ICT technologies and it is therefore highly crucial to find out the ways of enhancing learner satisfaction and yielding more positive learner attitudes towards e-learning.

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Statements of publication ethics

I hereby declare that the study has no unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

Researchers' contribution rate

The study was conducted and reported by the corresponding author, who is the single researcher in the study.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

Ethical approval was obtained from Iğdır University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee, with document no E-37077861-200-65161 on April 12th, 2022.

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