

Unlocking online language education: Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations

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ABSTRACT Advances in technology have significantly augmented the potential of online education, particularly during crises, such as COVID-19, earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods. This qualitative survey study ascertains 150 English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) learners' perceptions of the efficacy of online language education in a preparatory school of a state university after the Kahramanmaraş earthquake in Türkiye in 2023. Data were gathered via an online survey with open-ended inquiries to elicit favourable and adverse experiences and recommendations from students. In order to ensure the thorough and systematic analysis of the collected data, a rigorous methodological approach was employed. Specifically, the data were analyzed through content analysis, facilitated by the MAXQDA. The research outcomes revealed that the participants appreciated online language education for its time-saving nature, comfort, ease of attendance, access to recorded sessions, teacher support, and cost-effectiveness. However, some students also considered online education ineffective and reported challenges, such as technical issues, diminished concentration, lack of motivation and discipline, limited interaction, and class participation. EFL learners also provided suggestions for improving the curriculum, assessment methods, and instructors' teaching approaches.

Keywords: Distance education, E-Learning, Online language education, Remote language learning

Çevrimiçi dil eğitiminin kilidini açmak: Fırsatlar, zorluklar ve öneriler

ÖZ Teknolojideki ilerlemeler, özellikle COVID-19, deprem, kasırga ve sel gibi krizler sırasında uzaktan eğitimin potansiyelini önemli ölçüde artırdı. Bu nitel anket çalışması, 2023 yılında Türkiye'de yaşanan Kahramanmaraş depreminden sonra bir devlet üniversitesinin hazırlık okulunda İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen (İYD) 150 öğrencinin çevrimiçi dil eğitiminin etkinliğine ilişkin algılarını tespit etmektedir. Veriler, öğrencilerden olumlu ve olumsuz deneyimler ve tavsiyeler almak için açık uçlu sorular içeren çevrimiçi bir anket aracılığıyla toplandı. Toplanan verilerin kapsamlı ve sistematik analizini sağlamak için titiz bir metodolojik yaklaşım kullanıldı. Spesifik olarak veriler, MAXQDA'nın kolaylaştırdığı içerik analizi yoluyla titiz bir incelemeye tabi tutuldu. Araştırma sonuçları, katılımcıların çevrimiçi dil eğitimi zaman kazandıran yapısı, rahatlığı, katılım kolaylığı, kayıtlı oturumlara erişim, öğretmen desteği ve maliyet etkinliği nedeniyle takdir ettiğini ortaya çıkardı. Ancak birçok öğrenci de çevrimiçi eğitimin etkisiz olduğunu düşündü ve çevrimiçi eğitimin teknik sorunlar, azalan konsantrasyon, motivasyon ve disiplin eksikliği, sınırlı etkileşim ve derse katılım gibi zorlukları olduğunu bildirdi. İYD öğrencileri ayrıca müfredatın, değerlendirme yöntemlerinin ve öğretmenlerin öğretme yaklaşımlarının iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerde bulundu.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çevrimiçi dil eğitimi, E-Öğrenme, Uzaktan dil öğrenimi, Uzaktan eğitim

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years catastrophes and natural events have taught us the unpredictability of life, and urged us to be better prepared to deal with uncertainties. Whereas the COVID-19 outbreak caught us off guard, it also showed us the importance of proactive planning. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye had to deal with another calamity, the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake on February 6, 2023, resulting in a significant loss of life and property, which required the temporary relocation of affected individuals to student dormitories. Consequently, the Higher Education Council in Türkiye had to revert to online education as an alternative to face-to-face instruction.

Online education is described as "educational experiences taking place in either synchronous or asynchronous settings, facilitated through various electronic devices (e.g., mobile phones, tablets and laptops) with Internet connectivity " (Dhawan, 2020, p.7). Within these settings, students have the flexibility to engage in learning and interact with their instructors and peers from any location. The synchronous learning environment follows a structured format, wherein students participate in real-time lectures (Yoon, 2021), engage in immediate interactions with educators, and receive instant feedback. Therefore, live synchronous meetings can expeditiously address queries, mitigate isolation, and enhance social presence or sense of community (Lowenthal et al., 2020). Conversely, asynchronous learning environments lack such organization, as the learning materials are not delivered through live lectures or classes but are instead accessible through different learning systems and forums (Dhawan, 2020).

Technological improvements have radically enhanced the potential of online education, particularly in times of crises that disrupt the conventional educational framework, such as instances precipitated by natural calamities like earthquakes, hurricanes, or floods (Dhawan, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence of undergraduate online classes had an enormous surge, as reasserted by research studies (Henriksen et al., 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Ratan et al., 2022). In other words, online education has emerged as an indispensable tool for students across numerous countries to maintain their studies and attain their educational goals. Therefore, instructors embarked on a profound pedagogical redesign, transforming their predominantly or exclusively in-person classes into digitally mediated educational experiences, leveraging emerging media technologies. Notably, synchronous delivery of instruction through video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Teams, or Google Meets has emerged as a prominent strategy to foster real-time interactions within the virtual classroom milieu. At first glance, synchronous video conferencing may seem to provide a direct means of replicating real-time interactions of face-to-face teaching. Nonetheless, pedagogically transitioning from one medium to another is not always seamless and can present challenges (Henriksen et al., 2020). As a result, the establishment of an effective and proficient educational system becomes necessary to successfully deliver language courses through online mode.

Transferring to online education entails substantial temporal and financial commitments. Far from being a straightforward endeavour, it demands a significant investment in acquiring the requisite devices and equipment, providing adequate training for personnel, and curating high-quality online content. Many institutions are evaluated based on how quickly they can embrace changes within a short time frame while upholding their educational standards. The reputation of the institutions is at risk and subject to examination when outbreaks or disasters occur. Their capacity to respond to and maintain the quality of education during crises reflects their adaptability (Dhawan, 2020). Educational institutions confront a multifaceted challenge, extending beyond the mere adoption and implementation of unprecedented technologies.

Therefore, it is essential to have backup plans in place in case the primary plan does not work out and being ready for the unexpected is crucial while planning is the key (Dhawan, 2020). This can be achieved if stakeholders can learn from their mistakes, prioritize critical situations, and devise suitable strategies. Contextual elements should also be considered when creating online courses (Dennen, 2018) and it is essential to obtain constant feedback from students. Comprehending both the advantageous aspects and potential obstacles could prove instrumental for policymakers and educators in formulating pragmatic

resolutions in forthcoming times.

Moreover, language teaching is not the same as theoretical instruction of a subject matter, so it is necessary to establish a suitable learning environment that facilitates meaningful learner interaction and the practical application of the target language (Okyar, 2023). As a result, it is of paramount importance to consider learners' perspectives, practices, and recommendations pertaining to this pedagogical journey to augment the efficacy of online learning platforms in the realm of language education. Thus, this survey study aims to reveal the opportunities, and challenges students have faced during the compulsory synchronized online language education aftermath of a big earthquake in Türkiye and obtain some insights into this mode of education for the planning of the future programs. Therefore, the research questions were as follows:

- (1) What are the opportunities that EFL learners have had in online language education?
- (2) What are the challenges that EFL learners have encountered in online language education?
- (3) What recommendations do EFL learners suggest for improving the online language learning experience?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Opportunities of Online Education

A review of the literature revealed many opportunities and strengths of online education. It is simple to instruct numerous students at any time and wherever in the world using online instructing methods (Dhawan, 2020; Gacs et al., 2020). Therefore, students do not have to commute to school, which saves time (Alodwan, 2021; Okyar, 2023) and helps them to manage their time more effectively (Khalil et al., 2020). Consequently, online education is appreciated because of its location and time flexibility (Gonçalves et al., 2020; Le & Tran, 2023; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Mather & Sarkans, 2018; Song et al., 2004). Online education has also been reported to be cost-effective (Alodwan, 2021, Dahmash, 2020; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Okyar, 2023).

The asynchronous mode is specifically advantageous as students can watch pre-recorded videos of lectures (Alghamdi, 2021; Le & Tran, 2023; Mather & Sarkans, 2018) and enhance their learner autonomy (Lee, 2022; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023). On the other hand, the synchronous online mode also confers distinct benefits, given that it enables students to actively participate in real-time class sessions by posing queries, seeking prompt responses, receiving immediate feedback, and exchanging opinions and ideas (Fernandez et al., 2022).

Challenges of Online Education

Many weaknesses and challenges related to online education have also been reported in literature. The most commonly cited one is technological reliability (Dhawan, 2020; Wang et al., 2022) or simply technical problems (Alodwan, 2021; Lee, 2022; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Okyar, 2023; Song et al., 2004) which include lack of internet connection, limited internet access, unstable internet (Aboagye et al., 2020; Bataineh et al., 2020; Gao, 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021), power cuts (Le & Tran, 2023; Mursyidin et al., 2021), downloading errors, issues with installation, troubles with login, and problems with audio and video (Dhawan, 2020).

The lack of interaction or limited personal interaction (Aboagye et al., 2020; Alnajjar et al., 2022; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021; Mather & Sarkans, 2018; Song et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2022) has been detected as another significant challenge in online education. Despite the fact that the synchronous mode affords chances for engagement with both peers and instructors, a considerable body of research recognizes that virtual education falls short in terms of fostering interaction comparable to the in-person teaching approach (Alzahrani, 2023). Students frequently express dissatisfaction regarding the dearth of opportunities for socializing with their peers in the online learning environment (Alodwan, 2021; Mese & Sevilen, 2021; Okyar, 2023; Schulze & Scholz, 2018). Therefore, they feel

isolated and detached from their classmates and instructors (Alodwan, 2021; Hazaymeh, 2021; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023).

Willingness and motivation to engage in online learning is an important factor in practicing effective pedagogies in online learning (Tang et al, 2021). However, students' lack of motivation has been reported as a pitfall of online education in previous research (Alnajjar et al., 2022; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Mursyidin et al., 2021; Okyar, 2023; Schulze & Scholz, 2018). Some studies also mentioned negative emotions revealed due to online education such as stress (Chakraborty et al., 2021; Fernandez et al., 2022; Gao, 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2022), frustration (Ji et al., 2022), boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Ji et al., 2022) and anxiety (Dhawan, 2020; Okyar, 2023). Some other challenges reported in the literature involve lack of self-discipline (Bao, 2020; Gao, 2020; Mese & Sevilen, 2021), limited self-regulation (Schulze & Scholz, 2018), and restricted concentration (Bao, 2020; Gao, 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Okyar, 2023).

Online Language Learning

The primary objective of the foreign language instructional sessions typically centres on the augmentation of language aptitude across the domains of listening comprehension, verbal articulation, textual interpretation, and written expression, and this objective extends beyond mere subject matter dissemination, emphasizing the cultivation of comprehensive language skills (Yoon, 2021). Similarly, the aim of online language instruction is to present avenues for ample exposure, active participation, and engagement across various forms and contexts of communication. This inclusive experience encompasses input, output, and interaction, supplemented by constructive evaluations from peers, educators, and technological resources, thereby affording potential for personalized learning trajectories (Gacs et al., 2020).

Studies that explored online language learning experiences of students revealed similar problems such as technical problems (Lee, 2022; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Okyar, 2023), limited interaction (Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Maican, & Cocorada, 2021; Okyar, 2023; Schulze & Scholz, 2018) and lack of self-regulation (Schulze & Scholz, 2018). On the other hand, apart from some common advantages such as flexibility (Le & Tran, 2023; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023), accessibility, (Hazaymeh, 2021; Le & Tran, 2023), and cost-effectiveness (Dahmash, 2020; Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023; Okyar, 2023) some affordances and positive experiences were distinctive. Ludwig and Tassinari's (2023) study with 79 language teachers from 22 countries demonstrated that the online method of instruction has established opportunities for both teachers and students to develop increased autonomy. However, it also required more self-discipline. Maican and Cocorada's (2021) study in Romanian university revealed concerns about language skill development, but learners appreciated audio-video conferencing and power-point presentations. The research conducted by Le and Tran (2023) also indicated that Vietnamese students studying English as a foreign language appreciated breakout rooms in Google Meet that enhance their interaction with their lecturers and peers and promote their sense of community in virtual learning classes. Hazaymeh's (2021) study with 60 EFL students demonstrated that a significant proportion of participants achieved successful language proficiency through online language learning.

To summarize, whereas the previous research on affordances and the impediments of online education might yield comparable findings, it is pivotal to acknowledge that the outcomes of the studies particularly on online language education can also differ across distinct contexts. This current study was carried out after a tremendous disaster and online education was a must rather than a preference for the students. As a result, the primary objective of this study was to provide valuable insights into the experiences of language learners with a view to inform proactive planning in the future emergencies.

METHODS

Design of the Study

The current investigation embraced a qualitative approach to research. To reveal students' perceptions regarding their experiences, a qualitative survey method was preferred. Qualitative surveys involve a set of open-ended questions designed by a researcher, focused on a specific subject and these surveys are self-administered, with questions presented to all participants in a consistent and predetermined order (Braun et al., 2021). While a question may guide participants to disclose a specific aspect of their experience, valuable information regarding an issue can frequently be gathered from responses to other questions, too (Terry & Braun, 2017). As participants respond by typing in their own words, completely qualitative surveys can produce detailed and intricate data, and this approach is particularly invaluable for qualitative researchers interested in examining aspects such as participants' subjective experiences, narratives, and practices, as it offers a nuanced understanding of their perspectives (Braun et al., 2021). Survey studies also offer affordable and effective ways for data collection (Creswell, 2012).

Context and Participants

The context of the study was an English language program at tertiary level. The university was a state university located in the central region of Ankara, Türkiye. Although the English language preparatory program primarily delivered in-person instruction, it shifted to virtual education due to a devastating earthquake affecting diverse regions of Türkiye. The School of Foreign Languages possessed the required resources and technology to support online language instruction, having previously provided online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moodle functioned as the designated platform for managing the learning process, accommodating students of varying proficiency levels. Furthermore, within the preparatory program, Zoom emerged as the most appropriate tool for conducting video conferences. The instructors arranged periodic meetings and disseminated their Zoom access information via Moodle, facilitating students' access to announcements, in-class materials, additional resources, and course outlines through this platform. The interactive sessions were systematically documented and stored within a designated Google Drive directory, the hyperlink to which was subsequently disseminated to the students via the Moodle platform.

Participants consisted of 39 male and 111 female English language learners. Two-thirds of the student body enjoyed unrestricted access to internet resources, whereas the remaining one-third experienced limitations on their internet quota. Almost half of the students used both their computers and mobile phones to attend the sessions. The other half either preferred a computer, tablet or phone.

The study was carried out during the pinnacle phase of the academic calendar, wherein a substantial proportion of students were enrolled in upper-intermediate level classes. The subjects had previously undergone conventional in-person educational pedagogy in the preceding semester, thus providing them with the opportunity to experience both customary face-to-face teaching approaches and online language instruction.

Researcher Role

The researcher was also one of the instructors in the school. During the study, she was delivering one of the online English classes and she had active role as an invigilator, assessor or marker during online exams. Therefore, she had the opportunity to observe students' engagement with the online classes and the challenges they experienced during the online assessment.

Data Collection and Analysis

At the initial phase of the study, certificate of ethics committee approval was received from the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences and Humanities Research from the university where the study was carried

out. Then data were procured via an online survey encompassing demographic questions and seven open-ended inquiries that sought to elicit students' favourable and adverse experiences, and recommendations for enhancing the online educational experience. The survey questions could be examined in Appendix. The questions were asked in Turkish, which was the mother tongue of the students, so that they could express their thoughts seamlessly. The excerpts that were used in the findings section were translated into Turkish and crosschecked by an English language instructor whose mother tongue is Turkish to make sure that there is no meaning change.

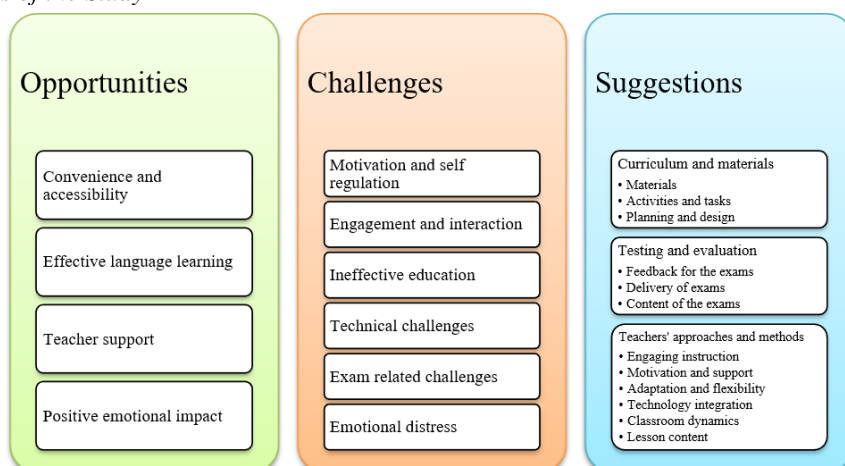
The gathered data was subjected to rigorous scrutiny using MAXQDA an advanced software crafted to facilitate meticulous examination of qualitative data. The software enabled the identification and organization of codes, categories, and themes, which were subsequently distinguished and color-coded for comprehensive analysis and interpretation. As a method of data analysis, content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990) and an inductive approach was preferred to extract findings derived from the first-hand experiences of participants, as perceived from their own standpoint (Thomas, 2006). A coding framework was formulated and subjected to continuous revision and refinement, accommodating the emergence of new codes and categories throughout the coding process. The framework was purposefully constructed to illustrate the hierarchical association between various codes and categories, including superordinate, parallel, and subordinate classifications. The software facilitated the detection of the frequency for each code and category, which was shared in the tables.

Throughout the data analysis process, various strategies were implemented to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, including the utilization of a code-recode strategy and engaging in peer examination. The code-recode strategy was employed to foster dependability by subjecting the data to a re-evaluation process after a month-long interval (Krefting, 1991). Peer examination, on the other hand, was undertaken to solicit scholarly input from a fellow researcher, thereby bolstering the dependability, credibility, and validation of the findings (Shenton, 2004). A colleague possessing a PhD degree in the teaching of English and a study on online learning was asked to check some part of the data and review the final code and categorization system. Upon her examination, she suggested that some categories can be combined, and the codes can go under the same category. After consecutive deliberation, a consensus was reached and agreed categories and codes were finalized.

RESULTS

Upon the content analysis of students responses, the study findings were presented under three themes: opportunities, challenges and suggestions as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Overall Findings of the Study



Opportunities

As evidenced in Table 1, EFL learners appreciated online language education, primarily due to its convenience and accessibility. A substantial number of students ($f=61$) highlighted the time-saving aspect of online education, emphasizing that it allowed them to better plan and manage their study schedules, without having to expend time on commuting. For instance, Participant 17 remarked that this format permitted ample time for personalized study routines and scheduling.

Table 1.

Opportunities of Online Language Education

| Category | Code | f |
|-------------------------------|---|-----|
| Convenience and accessibility | Time saving | 61 |
| | Comfortable | 41 |
| | Flexible (location) | 29 |
| | Accessible | 23 |
| | Easy & practical | 19 |
| | Cost-effective | 8 |
| | Avoiding transportation problems | 5 |
| Effective language learning | Resources | 15 |
| | Discussion rooms | 9 |
| | Effective learning | 6 |
| | Improving digital literacy | 5 |
| | Increased concentration | 4 |
| | Class participation | 2 |
| | Effective feedback | 1 |
| Teacher support | Easier communication with instructors | 9 |
| | Understanding, supportive and motivating teachers | 9 |
| Positive emotional impact | Independence/individuality | 3 |
| | Self-confidence | 2 |
| | Less anxiety or stress | 2 |
| | Motivation | 2 |
| Total | | 255 |

Additionally, many participants ($f=41$) found the comfort of attending classes from the confines of their own homes to be highly advantageous. For instance, Participant 41 highlighted the ability to join classes instantly without the need for exhaustive and stressful preparations. Another student (Participant 50) mentioned being able to attend classes comfortably in their pyjamas while having breakfast. Participant 74 also expressed satisfaction with the freedom from prolonged periods of sitting at a desk.

Many found it practical ($f=19$) and accessible ($f=23$) because they could reach the recordings of the online classes after the synchronous sessions. A few also mentioned that they did not have to deal with the transportation problem ($f=5$). They also mentioned the cost-effectiveness of online education as they did not have to use transportation or pay any money for the lunch ($f=8$).

One of the most highly regarded aspects of online education lies in its abundant resources and the ability for students to access a wide range of materials through digital platforms ($f=15$). For instance, Participant 126 expressed that they appreciate the capability to access multiple books simultaneously. Similarly, Participant 35 acknowledged that the availability of diverse resources enhanced the effectiveness of the learning process.

Moreover, students ($f=9$) found value in the breakout rooms provided by Zoom, as these virtual spaces allowed for noise-free discussions, unlike in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Participant 41 explicitly highlighted the benefits of these breakout rooms for conducting group work: *'Thanks to the breakout rooms used for group work, we can discuss the subject in small groups very comfortably without noise because unfortunately this is not possible in face-to-face education.'* Additionally, some students ($f=5$) felt empowered by their proficiency in utilizing technology, as articulated by Participant 75, who

emphasized that the ability to employ technology effectively served as a motivating factor during their lessons.

Some students (f=9) also expressed deep appreciation for their teachers' pedagogical approach, which they perceived as empathetic, encouraging, and supportive. Furthermore, a few students (f=9) reported that communication with their instructors in the context of online education was smooth and accessible. Two students also experienced heightened motivation and self-confidence. Additionally, another pair of students highlighted the reduction in stress levels compared to traditional face-to-face education. For instance, P35 said, *'We are experiencing less stress and anxiety as it is not face-to-face education.'* P11 said, *'I feel more relaxed during the speaking activities.'* However, it is important to note that not all students shared this positive sentiment, as 19 participants conveyed that they did not find any aspects they appreciated about online language education.

Challenges

Upon surveying the students regarding their perceptions of online education, an array of concerns emerged, encompassing issues concerning the inefficacy of the online language learning process, technical impediments, as well as obstacles pertaining to the maintenance of focus and motivation. Additionally, expressions of discontent were voiced in relation to the examination procedures and emotional distress experienced, as evidenced in Table 2.

Table 2.
Challenges of Online Language Education

| Category | Code | f |
|---------------------------------|---|-----|
| Ineffective education | Ineffectiveness of online education | 41 |
| | Ineffective/limited speaking activities | 22 |
| | Ineffective writing tasks | 16 |
| | Boring lessons | 10 |
| | Limited exercise | 7 |
| | Ineffective group work | 2 |
| | Ineffective listening activities | 2 |
| Technical challenges | Internet connection problem | 39 |
| | Technical problems during lessons | 21 |
| | Technical problems during exams | 13 |
| | Lack of technological tools | 6 |
| Motivation and self -regulation | Concentration problem | 39 |
| | Lack of motivation | 17 |
| | Lack of discipline | 17 |
| Engagement and Interaction | Limited interaction with classmates and instructors | 22 |
| | Limited classroom participation | 21 |
| | Limited/ lack of socialization | 16 |
| Exam related challenges | Unfair testing and evaluation | 13 |
| | Noise during the exams | 6 |
| | Difficult exams | 5 |
| | Limited feedback for quizzes | 2 |
| | Limited duration of exams | 1 |
| | Too many formative assessments | 1 |
| | Mismatch between curriculum and testing | 1 |
| | Impractical interface of exam website | 1 |
| Emotional distress | Stress | 4 |
| | Anxiety | 4 |
| | Inhibition | 3 |
| Prolonged screen time | Health issues due to screen time | 4 |
| | Constant exposure to screen | 2 |
| | Difficulty to follow the lessons on the screen | 2 |
| Total | | 360 |

Approximately one-third of the students (f=41) expressed dissatisfaction with the efficacy of online language learning in its entirety, noting certain language competencies, tasks, and activities to be particularly inadequate. For example, Participant 32 said, *'I cannot practice enough basic English skills, especially speaking'*. Another student P148 said, *'Listening and writing parts can be difficult due to the Internet problems and lack of classroom environment. Online lessons are not as efficient as face-to-face classes. Students cannot be active.'* Some students perceived the lessons as monotonous. Several participants cited technical challenges, encompassing Internet connectivity issues and impediments in accessing the requisite technological devices.

Difficulty in concentration (f=39) and lack of self-discipline (f=17) were also among the challenges frequently mentioned. Participant 146 for instance said, *'Online education causes me to have trouble concentrating on lessons in home conditions.'* Participant 78 also emphasized that *'We are not in a closed area as a course environment. As a result, we may encounter too many stimuli and obstacles.'*

Furthermore, limited engagement with peers and instructors (f=22) was highlighted by some students, resulting in reduced class participation (f=21) vis-à-vis traditional in-person instruction. This, in turn, hindered their ability to socialize effectively, as the online platform appeared to impose constraints on interclass camaraderie (f=16). For instance, Participant 5 expressed, *'Online education decreases my motivation, I cannot attend classes in a fit and alert way because the social environment at school is not provided. I can never get productive results.'*

Students also referred to the problems pertinent to testing and evaluation in online language education. Some students (f=13) felt that no matter what precautions were taken, it was impossible to avoid cheating, making the testing process seem unfair. One of the issues they complained about was noise during exams (f=6) because they were required to unmute themselves. The reason for this was to prevent cheating, as some students received help from professionals or friends during the exams. There were also complaints regarding the content and difficulty of the examinations by a couple of students (f=5). Some students also reported experiencing stress because of disruptions during examinations, such as power cuts and unstable Internet connections. For example, Participant 58 indicated, *'When exams are online, it makes me even more stressed due to connection problems and I cannot be motivated.'* Participant 5 also said, *'While my stress level is very low in a face-to-face exam, I become neurotic in online exams and cannot reflect my potential.'*

A minority of the students also alluded to experiencing emotional distress. They communicated their feelings of anxiety (f=4), stress (f=4), and inhibition (f=3) while participating in synchronous online sessions. For instance, Participant 4 indicated,

If I have to speak for myself, I was afraid of making mistakes due to the recording of online classes. In face-to-face education, even if we made mistakes, they remained in that moment, but in online education, we can always see that mistake, and this made me hesitate to speak (Participant 4).

Several students (f=8) also discussed the protracted duration of screen exposure and its consequences on their well-being. For example, Participant 40 articulated, *'I am afflicted by headaches and ocular discomfort due to prolonged screen engagement. It is the root cause of my bodily discomfort resulting from sedentary behaviour.'* Furthermore, two students expressed challenges in adequately assimilating lessons and undertaking assessments on digital platforms.

Recommendations

Students have provided many recommendations to enhance their online language education. These suggestions were divided into three categories: curriculum and materials, testing and evaluation, and teachers' approaches and methods, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Recommendations for Enhanced Online Language Education

| Category | Sub-category | Code | f |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-----|
| Curriculum and materials | Materials | Changing the course book | 21 |
| | | Providing more materials/resources | 16 |
| | | Providing extra updated books | 9 |
| | | Interactive materials | 4 |
| | | Supplying course books for students | 3 |
| | Activities and tasks | More speaking activities/sessions | 12 |
| | | More writing activities/sessions | 12 |
| | | More listening activities | 10 |
| | | More reading activities | 8 |
| | | More vocabulary activities | 6 |
| | | More games and competitions | 3 |
| | | Telecollaboration projects | 1 |
| | | More grammar activities | 1 |
| | Planning and design | Attendance policy | 3 |
| | | Having professional zoom account | 2 |
| | | Teaching skills separately | 2 |
| | | Decreasing the number of the lessons | 1 |
| Better designed syllabus | | 1 | |
| Testing and evaluation | Content of the exams | Appropriate exam difficulty for each level | 2 |
| | | Considering classroom participation | 1 |
| | | Ungraded grammar quizzes | 1 |
| | | Revising response task in reading section | 1 |
| | Delivery of exams | Increase in exam duration | 5 |
| | | Not requiring two devices during the exams | 4 |
| | | Muting microphones during the exams as it is distracting | 2 |
| | | Face to face testing and evaluation | 1 |
| | Getting prepared for the exams | Exam oriented tasks | 2 |
| | | Sample tests | 2 |
| | Feedback for the exams | Graded writing tasks -marked by two instructors | 2 |
| | | Announcing the grades and feedback earlier | 1 |
| | | Providing individual feedback | 1 |
| Teachers' approaches and methods | Engaging instruction | Encouraging students to participate more | 11 |
| | | Having more enjoyable instruction | 6 |
| | Motivation and support | Being more understanding and motivating | 7 |
| | | Informing students about syllabus and exams | 3 |
| | | Teachers' guidance for learning strategies | 2 |
| | | Arranging individual meetings | 1 |
| | Adaptation and flexibility | Not depending on course book too much | 6 |
| | | Explaining some topics in Turkish | 1 |
| | | Giving clues when students do not understand the questions | 1 |
| | Technology integration | Use of online applications (i.e., Padlet, and Kahoot) | 5 |
| | | Use of Google docs to give feedback | 2 |
| | Lesson content | Detailed explanations for grammar points | 4 |
| | | Focusing on language skills rather than exams | 2 |
| | Classroom dynamics | Whole class discussions rather than group work | 2 |
| Speaking English policy | | 1 | |
| Total | | | 194 |

As evident from Table 3, the students' recommendations were closely tied to the aspects that left them dissatisfied. Concerning the curriculum and instructional materials, their discontent with the course book led them to propose its replacement. Furthermore, they expressed a desire for contemporary and up-to-date resources and materials. For instance, Participant 103 said '*Books featuring more appealing materials and up-to-date subjects could be preferred.*' Moreover, they particularly underscored the importance of augmenting tasks and activities aimed at enhancing proficiency in all four language skills.

Specifically, Participant 140 indicated, *'More time can be devoted to speaking activities.'*

With respect to exam administration, students advocated for an extension in exam duration, a reduction in the level of difficulty of exams, and avoidance of requesting students to unmute themselves during the examinations, as such practice was deemed to cause disruptions during the assessment process. For example, Participant 122 indicated, *'I suggest removing the two-device login option.'* Another student also said,

The dual device requirement is definitely a practice that puts students in a very difficult situation. It is difficult enough to take exams even when I only have my phone as a device and I live in a dormitory, and I think that asking for a second device definitely makes us suffer (Participant 111).

The findings also revealed that students offered valuable recommendations for enhancing their teachers' approaches and techniques in the realm of online instruction. Specifically, students expressed a desire for increased interactive elements within the virtual learning environment as well as greater encouragement to actively participate in lessons. For instance, Participant 63 said, *'I believe teachers should ensure participation from each student, as I only respond when directly addressed by them.'* Moreover, they expressed a preference for more engaging instructional practices, wherein educators incorporated online games and formative assessment tools, as opposed to excessive reliance on coursebooks. Participant 12 specifically suggested, *'I recommend that teachers use interactive online platforms (i.e. Padlet and Kahoot) effectively.'* Furthermore, the students sought enhanced explanations pertaining to the grammar topics covered during the instructional sessions.

DISCUSSION

The present qualitative survey study aimed to shed light on the preparatory program students' online language learning experiences. When queried regarding their grievances concerning online education, the students articulated specific issues pertaining to the inadequacy of the online language learning experience. In line with the literature, most learners focused on the negative aspects of online education. Especially, technical problems such as unstable Internet (Alghamdi, 2021; Bataineh et al., 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021; Gao, 2020), power cuts, and lack of technological tools were among the most mentioned challenges (Aboagye et al., 2020; Alnajjar et al., 2022; Dhawan, 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022).

The deficiency in or restricted nature of interpersonal engagement emerged as an additional adverse facet of online education, aligning with prior scholarly investigations (Mather & Sarkans, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Lack of interaction among students specifically was perceived as a big problem (Aboagye et al., 2020; Alghamdi, 2021; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021) and students felt isolated from their peers and teachers (Alnajjar et al., 2022; Hazaymeh, 2021). They conveyed the absence of social interaction, lamenting the absence of opportunities to engage with both peers and instructors within the online educational framework (Schulze & Scholz, 2018). According to Alzahrani's (2023) study, successful student engagement in online learning hinges on several important factors. The most significant of these factors include the course's level of interactivity and engagement, how well it's designed and prepared, materials and the effectiveness of the instructor in motivating students.

Furthermore, the cultivation of a communal environment and establishment of individualized bonds assume paramount significance within virtual contexts (Gacs et al., 2020). Despite the students' regular participation in synchronous instructional sessions, it is evident that such involvement did not engender a communal atmosphere conducive to interpersonal interactions amongst their peers. So, based on these discernments, it is recommendable that students be provided with supplementary sessions tailored to foster a more interactive milieu. These sessions might be denoted as 'meeting hours' or 'speaking time'; however, it is of significance to refrain from recording these interactions, as students may perceive

recording as inhibiting.

Acquiring language skills within digital learning contexts necessitates learners' ability to drive their motivation internally, sustain both their engagement and motivation and self-regulate their learning trajectory (Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023). In this particular study difficulties concerning sustaining concentration and motivation (Alnajjar et al., 2022; Gao, 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Mese & Sevilen, 2021; Mursyidin et al., 2021; Schulze & Scholz, 2018) and lack of self-discipline (Bao, 2020; Gao, 2020; Mese & Sevilen, 2021; Okyar, 2023) were reported. The majority of students have undertaken these online courses from their homes and, in certain cases, from tents due to seismic events, thereby making them susceptible to distractions. Dhawan (2020) similarly identified distractions as a notable drawback of online education. Okyar (2023) also highlighted concerns regarding the lack of appropriate home environment. To mitigate these challenges, individuals bereft of suitable home environments could be guided toward utilizing university or public libraries situated within their hometowns. Nonetheless, establishing an environment of earnest and proximate communication with students is paramount to effectively navigate these intricacies effectively.

Furthermore, this investigation revealed expressions of discontent concerning conducting online tests (Dahmash, 2020) and emotional distress. In consonance with Dhawan's (2020) findings, it was evident that frustration, anxiety, and confusion manifested as notable weaknesses of online education. As Fernandez et al. (2022) acknowledged, synchronous learning occasionally induces stress, as it bestows greater responsibility on students primarily due to augmented exposure to screens. Tao and Gao (2022) also indicate that elevated stress levels among learners could potentially stem from diminished peer interactions, unfamiliarity with online learning platforms, and the perception that online environments yield inferior educational outcomes compared to in-person interactions. However, in the context of this study, some students reported experiencing considerable stress arising from unforeseen disruptions during examinations, such as power outages and unstable Internet connections. Complying with the examination guidelines, which included utilizing two devices, ensuring visibility of hands, face, and paper on the screen, and unmuting oneself during exams, further might have contributed to their stress levels as they suggested abolishing the dual device requirement during the exams as they suffer. Another factor contributing to their anxiety is the sense of inhibition that stemmed from the knowledge that lessons were recorded and shared with the entire class, leading to apprehension about potential mistakes being observed by peers. The amalgamation of these factors enlightened the complicated nature of the emotional challenges faced by students in the online learning environment, underscoring the significance of addressing and mitigating such concerns to enhance the overall efficacy and well-being within virtual educational settings. The concept of online social comfort, denoting the instructor's competence in establishing a low-anxiety environment where students feel at ease engaging in interactions, even when presenting dissenting opinions, necessitates heightened attention within online learning settings (Van Wart et al., 2020).

Even though the analysis proved that students had serious concerns and unfavorable attitudes towards online language education, they frankly admitted the facilities that online language instruction provided for them. The flexibility of location emerged as a significant advantage, aligning with findings from prior research (Gonçalves et al., 2020; Le & Tran, 2023; Mather & Sarkans, 2018). Many students expressed their contentment with the elimination of the need to commute daily to their educational institutions – a task that demanded careful planning, time management, and financial resources. Thus, the participants in this study valued online education for its time-saving benefits (Alodwan, 2021; Okyar, 2023) and cost-effectiveness (Alodwan, 2021; Dahmash, 2020). Students also appreciated the comfortable nature of online language education (Okyar, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, the availability of recorded live sessions was well-received by language learners, echoing findings from earlier studies (Alghamdi, 2021; Alodwan, 2021). Additionally, the provision of materials and resources in online language learning garnered appreciation, consistent with previous research (Dhawan, 2020; Gao, 2020; Okyar, 2023).

Smooth and unhindered communication with instructors outside the traditional classroom setting was

identified as another positive aspect of online language education (Wang et al., 2022). The pivotal role of instructors in providing support and guidance to foster and augment the learning process for students assumes a significant importance in the overall efficacy of online education (Kim & Park, 2023; Lee, 2022). Previous studies (e.g., Kang & Im, 2013; Roque-Hernández et al., 2023) suggest that instructors exert a positive influence on student engagement and satisfaction levels. For instance, Kang and Im (2013) documented that the influence of instructional interaction and the presence of the instructor exhibited a greater capacity for forecasting learners' satisfaction as compared to elements associated with social interaction. These findings collectively underscore the critical role of instructors in shaping the dynamics and outcomes of the online learning experience. Educators could effectively foster and maintain a strong sense of belonging among students by prioritizing the cultivation of interpersonal connections and a supportive community within the learning environment (Hung & Chou, 2015). A practical approach to achieving this objective might be consistently engaging in frequent communication with the class, providing clear instructions, timely reminders about deadlines, and offering prompt responses to student queries, thereby enhancing the perceived teacher presence. This proactive engagement strategy can significantly contribute to a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere, bolstering students' academic engagement and overall satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative survey study aimed to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of online language education following the earthquake in Türkiye, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and recommendations. Data were collected through an online survey with open-ended questions, and MAXQDA software was employed for rigorous analysis of the qualitative data. The findings revealed that students valued online language education for its time-saving nature, convenience, accessibility to recorded sessions, supportive teacher communication, and cost-effectiveness. However, they also identified challenges such as technical issues, reduced concentration, lack of motivation and discipline, limited interaction, and decreased class participation. Students provided suggestions for improving curriculum, assessments, and instructors' approaches in online education.

Implications

Given the substantial impact that alterations in pedagogical approaches during crisis circumstances such as pandemics and significant seismic events can exert on forthcoming classroom methodologies, it is crucial to thoroughly contemplate the findings and ramifications of this investigation. Firstly, the matter concerning intermittent Internet connectivity may be adeptly ameliorated via the archival of live instructional sessions. In the present investigation, participants were engaged in synchronous virtual classes conducted in real-time. The subsequent recording and uploading of these synchronous sessions to prominent platforms such as Google Drive and Moodle proved highly beneficial to learners encountering Internet connectivity issues, as well as affording other students the opportunity to access and review the lectures autonomously, tailoring their engagement to individualized paces and preferences.

Regarding the lack of socialization, interaction, and engagement, online courses necessitate an infusion of dynamism, intrigue, and interactivity to effectively engage learners. Therefore, it becomes imperative to integrate active learning strategies that amplify social presence, thereby cultivating enhanced engagement and fostering positive perceptions of online instructional modules (Ratan et al., 2022). In this regard, instructors play a pivotal role in establishing temporal boundaries and cues, thereby prompting attentiveness and vigilance among students. Furthermore, earnest efforts must be dedicated to infusing the pedagogical process with a humanistic dimension. A personalized approach aimed at learners is paramount, facilitating their seamless adjustment to the virtual learning environment. Notably, as proposed by Gacs et al. (2020), the incorporation of assignments and collaborative projects can facilitate peer interactions, extending beyond the conventional student-instructor dynamic. This has

the potential to enhance social engagement among learners.

An additional implication derived from the study resides in the potential for educators to incorporate diverse online formative assessment tools or language-based gamification strategies, thereby capturing the interest of their students and fostering sustained concentration, motivation, and active involvement. Pertaining to the cultivation of self-discipline, instructors could offer guidance to their learners through the provision of weekly instructional plans.

The incorporation of online syllabi into pre-existing educational curricula could also transcend a mere attachment. Instead, they should align with the learning contexts and involve collaborative design efforts by educators. Concerning the online assessment, it is necessary to adopt a more all-encompassing approach and deliberate decision-making. To mitigate potential instances of academic dishonesty or technical hindrances inherent in single-attempt examination instances, it is advisable to contemplate the incorporation of project-oriented assessments.

Limitations and Further Suggestions

While this investigation offers valuable insights into the landscape of online language acquisition during times of crisis, it is crucial to approach the findings with discernment of contextual variables. This study was carried out at a preparatory school of a state university in Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye. Online educational approaches worldwide, including those within Türkiye, can exhibit divergence based on the cultural context of educational institutions, available socioeconomic resources, and technological assets.

Subsequent research ought to underscore the transformative mechanisms and pedagogical methodologies embraced by universities to effectively navigate the intricacies of such a dynamic educational landscape. Moreover, it is imperative to supplement student perspectives with those of instructors and decision-makers, thereby cultivating a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, interviews and observations might reveal a deeper understanding of the case. Future studies can also examine the viability of new educational paradigms and the complex relationships between key stakeholders in the field of language education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Open-Ended Survey Questions

Can you please write down three things that you liked about online English language education?

Can you please write down three things that you disliked about online English language education?

What improvements would you suggest for curriculum and teaching materials in online education?

What are the additional features or resources that you would like to see added to your online language learning experience?

What improvements would you suggest for testing and evaluation in online education?

What improvements would you suggest for teacher's teaching approaches or methods in online education?

Do you have any other suggestions for improving the online language learning experience? What are they?

TÜRKÇE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Teknolojik gelişmeler, özellikle deprem, kasırga veya sel gibi doğal felaketlerin tetiklediği durumlarda ve özellikle kriz zamanlarında çevrimiçi eğitimin potansiyelini önemli ölçüde artırmıştır (Dhawan, 2020). Bilimsel çalışmaların da ortaya koyduğu gibi, COVID-19 salgını sırasında lisans düzeyinde çevrimiçi derslerin yaygınlığında önemli bir artış yaşanmıştır (Henriksen ve diğerleri, 2020; Lowenthal ve diğerleri, 2020; Ratan ve diğerleri, 2022). Başka bir deyişle, çevrimiçi eğitim, birçok ülkedeki öğrencilerin eğitim arayışlarını sürdürmeleri için vazgeçilmez bir araç olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu nedenle öğretmenler, eski yüz yüze derslerini, yeni ortaya çıkan medya teknolojilerinden yararlanarak dijital ortamlı eğitim deneyimlerine dönüştürerek derin bir pedagojik yeniden tasarıma giriştiler. Özellikle Zoom, Teams veya Google Meets gibi video konferans platformları aracılığıyla öğretimin eşzamanlı olarak sunulması, sanal sınıf ortamında gerçek zamanlı etkileşimleri teşvik etmek için öne çıkan bir strateji olarak ortaya çıktı. İlk bakışta eşzamanlı video konferans, yüz yüze öğretimin gerçek zamanlı etkileşimlerini kopyalamanın doğrudan bir yolunu sağlıyormuş gibi görünebilir. Bununla birlikte, pedagojik olarak bir ortamdan diğerine geçiş her zaman kusursuz değildir ve zorluklar ortaya çıkarabilir (Henriksen ve diğerleri, 2020). Sonuç olarak, dil derslerinin çevrimiçi ortamda başarılı bir şekilde verilebilmesi için etkili ve yetkin bir eğitim sisteminin kurulması zorunlu hale gelmektedir.

Değişime direnmenin küresel anlamda hiçbir eğitim kurumuna faydası olmayacaktır. Pek çok kurum, eğitim standartlarını korurken kısa bir zaman dilimi içinde değişiklikleri ne kadar hızlı benimseyebildiklerine göre değerlendirilir. Salgın ya da afetler meydana geldiğinde kurumların itibarı risk altına girmekte ve incelemeye tabi tutulmaktadır. Krizler sırasında müdahale etme ve eğitim kalitesini sürdürme kapasiteleri uyum sağlama yeteneklerini de yansıtmaktadır (Dhawan 2020).

Eğitim kurumları, yeni teknolojilerin benimsenmesi ve uygulanmasının ötesine geçen çok yönlü bir zorlukla karşı karşıyadır. E-öğrenmenin entegrasyonu önemli zamansal ve mali taahhütler gerektirir. Basit bir çaba olmaktan ziyade, gerekli cihaz ve ekipmanın edinilmesi, personele yeterli eğitimin sağlanması ve yüksek kaliteli çevrimiçi içeriğin seçilmesi için önemli bir yatırım gerektirir.

Son zamanlardaki zorluklar bize hayatın öngörülemezliğini öğretti ve bizi belirsizliklerle yüzleşmeye daha hazırlıklı olmaya teşvik etti. Covid salgını bizi hazırlıksız yakalasa da proaktif planlamanın önemini vurguluyor. Türkiye, Covid-19 salgınının ardından bir başka felaketle karşı karşıya kaldı: Kahramanmaraş Depremi, ciddi can ve mal kayıplarına yol açtı ve etkilenen bireylerin geçici olarak öğrenci yurtlarına taşınmasını gerektirdi. Sonuç olarak, Yükseköğretim Kurulu yüz yüze eğitimden alternatif olarak çevrimiçi eğitime dönmek zorunda kaldı.

Bu nedenle, birincil planın işe yaramaması durumunda yedek planların mevcut olması önemlidir. Bu, paydaşların hatalarından ders alması, kritik durumları önceliklendirmesi ve uygun stratejiler geliştirmesi durumunda başarılabılır. Kısacası beklenmeyene hazırlıklı olmak çok önemlidir. Çevrimiçi dersler oluştururken bağlamsal unsurlar da dikkate alınmalı ve öğrencilerden sürekli geri bildirim alınması gereklidir. Hem avantajlı yönlerin hem de potansiyel engellerin anlaşılması, eğitimciler için önümüzdeki zamanlarda pragmatik çözümler oluşturmada faydalı olabilir.

Dahası, dil ediniminin geleneksel teorik öğretimden farklılaştığı göz önüne alındığında, anlamlı öğrenen etkileşimini ve hedef dilin pratik uygulanmasını kolaylaştıran yetkin bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturmak mühimdir. Sonuç olarak, dil eğitimi alanında çevrimiçi öğrenme platformlarının etkinliğini artırmak için öğrencilerin bu pedagojik yolculuğa ilişkin bakış açılarını, uygulamalarını ve önerilerini dikkate almak büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu nitel anket çalışması, Türkiye'de yaşanan büyük deprem sonrasında öğrencilerin zorunlu senkronize çevrimiçi dil eğitimi sırasında karşılaştıkları fırsatları ve zorlukları ortaya çıkarmayı ve gelecekteki programların planlanması için bu eğitim şekline ilişkin bazı bilgiler elde etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle araştırma soruları şunlardır:

(1) İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerinin çevrimiçi dil eğitiminde sahip oldukları fırsatlar nelerdir?

- (2) İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerinin çevrimiçi dil eğitiminde karşılaştığı zorluklar nelerdir?
- (3) İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler çevrimiçi dil öğrenme deneyimlerini geliştirmek için ne gibi önerilerde bulunuyorlar?

Öğrencilerin çevrimiçi dil öğrenme deneyimlerini araştıran çalışmalar, teknik sorunlar (Lee, 2022; Ludwig ve Tassinari, 2023; Okyar, 2023), sınırlı etkileşim (Ludwig ve Tassinari, 2023; Maican ve Cocorada, 2021; Okyar, 2023; Schulze ve Scholz, 2018) ve öz düzenleme (Schulze ve Scholz, 2018) gibi problemleri ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öte yandan esneklik (Le ve Tran, 2023; Ludwig ve Tassinari, 2023), erişilebilirlik (Hazaymeh, 2021; Le ve Tran, 2023) ve maliyet etkinliği (Dahmash, 2020; Ludwig) gibi bazı ortak avantajların yanı sıra bazı olanaklar ve olumlu deneyimler birtakım çalışmalarda ayrıca ele alınmıştır.

Ludwig ve Tassinari'nin (2023) 22 ülkeden 79 dil öğretmeniyle yaptığı çalışma, çevrimiçi öğretim yönteminin hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler için daha fazla özerklik geliştirme fırsatları sunduğunu gösterdi. Ancak aynı zamanda daha fazla öz disiplin gerektiriyordu. Maican ve Cocorada'nın (2021) çalışması, dil becerisi gelişimiyle ilgili endişeleri ortaya çıkardı, ancak öğrenciler sesli-video konferansı ve power-point sunumlarını oldukça beğendiler ve faydalı buldular. Le ve Tran (2023) tarafından yürütülen araştırma ayrıca, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce eğitimi alan Vietnamlı öğrencilerin, Google Meet'teki öğretmenleri ve akranlarıyla etkileşimlerini geliştiren ve sanal öğrenme sınıflarında topluluk duygularını geliştiren ara odalarını takdir ettiklerini göstermiştir. Hazaymeh'in (2021) 60 yabancı dil öğrencisiyle yaptığı çalışma, katılımcıların önemli bir kısmının çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim yoluyla başarılı bir şekilde dil yeterliliğine ulaştığını gösterdi.

Bu çalışma yükseköğretim düzeyinde bir İngilizce dil programında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Üniversite Ankara'nın orta kesiminde bulunan bir devlet üniversitesiydi. İngilizce hazırlık programı öncelikle yüz yüze eğitim şeklinde olmasına rağmen, Türkiye'nin çeşitli bölgelerini etkileyen yıkıcı deprem nedeniyle sanal eğitime yöneldi. Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, daha önce COVID-19 salgını sırasında çevrimiçi dersler vermiş olduğundan, çevrimiçi dil öğretimini destekleyecek gerekli kaynaklara ve teknolojiye sahipti. Moodle, farklı yeterlilik seviyelerindeki öğrencilere ev sahipliği yaparak, öğrenme sürecini yönetmek için belirlenmiş bir platform olarak işlev gördü. Ayrıca hazırlık programı kapsamında Zoom, video konferans yapmak için en uygun araç olarak kullanıldı. Öğretmenler periyodik toplantılar düzenleyerek Zoom erişim bilgilerini Moodle üzerinden paylaşarak öğrencilerin duyurulara, sınıf içi materyallere, ek kaynaklara ve ders taslaklarına bu platform üzerinden erişmelerini kolaylaştırdı. Etkileşimli oturumlar sistematik olarak belgelendi ve belirlenmiş bir Google Drive klasöründe saklandı; bunun linki daha sonra Moodle platformu aracılığıyla öğrencilere dağıtıldı.

Araştırmanın ilk aşamasında çalışmanın gerçekleştirildiği üniversitenin Sosyal Bilimler ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan etik kurul onayı alındı. Daha sonra veriler, öğrencilerin olumlu ve olumsuz deneyimlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlayan açık uçlu soruları ve çevrimiçi eğitim deneyimini geliştirmeye yönelik önerileri kapsayan çevrimiçi bir anket aracılığıyla elde edildi.

Toplanan veriler, nitel verilerin titizlikle incelenmesini kolaylaştırmak için hazırlanmış gelişmiş bir yazılım olan MAXQDA kullanılarak sıkı bir incelemeye tabi tutuldu. Yazılım, kodların, kategorilerin ve temaların tanımlanmasını ve düzenlenmesini sağladı; bunlar daha sonra kapsamlı analiz ve yorumlama için ayırt edildi ve renk kodlarına göre kodlandı. Veri analizi yöntemi olarak katılımcıların kendi bakış açılarından algıladıkları ilk elden deneyimlerinden elde edilen bulguların çıkarılması için içerik analizi (Neuendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990) ve tümevarımsal bir yaklaşım tercih edilmiştir (Thomas, 2006). Kodlama süreci boyunca yeni kodların ve kategorilerin ortaya çıkmasına uyum sağlayacak şekilde bir kodlama çerçevesi formüle edildi ve sürekli revizyona ve iyileştirmeye tabi tutuldu. Çerçeve, üst düzey, paralel ve ikincil sınıflandırmalar da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli kodlar ve kategoriler arasındaki hiyerarşik ilişkiyi göstermek amacıyla özel olarak oluşturulmuştur.

Veri analizi süreci boyunca, bulguların güvenilirliğini artırmak için çeşitli stratejiler uygulandı. Verileri

bir ay süren bir aradan sonra yeniden değerlendirme sürecine tabi tutarak güvenilirliği artırmak için yeniden kodlama stratejisi kullanıldı. Öte yandan akran incelemesi, diğer araştırmacılardan bilimsel girdi istemek ve böylece bulguların güvenilirliğini, inandırıcılığını ve geçerliliğini desteklemek için yapıldı.

Bu araştırmanın sonucunda, önemli sayıda öğrenci, çevrimiçi eğitimin zamandan tasarruf sağlayan yönünü vurguladı ve bunun, okula gidip gelmek için zaman harcamak zorunda kalmadan çalışma programlarını daha iyi planlamalarına ve yönetmelerine olanak sağladığını vurguladı. Örneğin Katılımcı 17, bu formatın kendi çalışma düzenine ve programlama için yeterli zamana izin verdiğini belirtti.

Ayrıca pek çok katılımcı derslere kendi evlerinden katılmanın rahatlığını da oldukça avantajlı buldu. Örneğin Katılımcı 41, yorucu ve stresli hazırlıklara gerek kalmadan derslere anında katılabilme becerisinin altını çizdi. Bir diğer öğrenci (Katılımcı 50) ise kahvaltı yaparken pijamalarıyla rahatça derse girebildiğini belirtmiştir. Katılımcı 74 ayrıca uzun süre sırada oturmaktan kurtulmuş olmaktan duyduğu memnuniyeti dile getirdi. Çoğu kişi, eşzamanlı oturumlardan sonra çevrimiçi derslerin kayıtlarına ulaşabildikleri için bunu pratik ve erişilebilir buldu. Bazıları da ulaşım sorunuyla uğraşmak zorunda olmadıklarını belirtti. Ayrıca ulaşım kullanmak veya öğle yemeği için para ödemek zorunda olmadıkları için çevrimiçi eğitimin maliyet etkinliğinden de bahsettiler.

Çevrimiçi eğitimin en çok takdir edilen yönlerinden biri, kaynaklarının bolluğu ve öğrencilerin dijital platformlar aracılığıyla çok çeşitli materyallere erişme yeteneğinde yatmaktadır. Örneğin Katılımcı 126, birden fazla kitaba aynı anda erişebilme olanağını takdir ettiklerini ifade etti. Benzer şekilde Katılımcı 35, çeşitli kaynakların mevcudiyetinin öğrenme sürecinin etkililiğini arttırdığını ifade etti. Dahası, geleneksel yüz yüze sınıfların aksine, bu sanal alanlar gürültüsüz tartışmalara olanak tanıdığından, öğrenciler Zoom tarafından sağlanan ara odaları da oldukça faydalı buldular. Katılımcı 41, bu ara odalarının grup çalışması yapma açısından faydalarını açıkça vurguladı: 'Grup çalışması için kullanılan ara odaları sayesinde, küçük gruplarda çok rahat, gürültü olmadan konuyu tartışabiliyoruz çünkü yüz yüze bu ne yazık ki mümkün değil'. Ayrıca, Katılımcı 75'in de ifade ettiği gibi, öğrenciler teknolojiye yararlanma konusundaki yeterliliklerinin de arttığını belirttiler. Katılımcı 75, teknolojiye etkin kullanabilmelerinin onları derslerinde motive ettiğini dile getirdi.

Öğrenciler ayrıca öğretmenlerinin empatik, teşvik edici ve destekleyici pedagojik yaklaşımlarını takdir ettiklerini ifade ettiler. Ayrıca öğrenciler, çevrimiçi eğitim bağlamında öğretmenleriyle iletişimin sorunsuz ve erişilebilir olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. İki öğrenci ayrıca artan motivasyon ve özgüvenlerinden bahsettiler. Ek olarak, başka bir öğrenci grubu geleneksel yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla stres düzeylerinin azaldığını vurguladı. Örneğin K35, 'Yüz yüze eğitim olmadığı için daha az stres ve kaygı yaşıyoruz' dedi. K11 ise 'Konuşma etkinliklerinde kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum' dedi. Ancak şunu da belirtmekte fayda var ki hepsi öyle değil. 19 katılımcı çevrimiçi dil eğitiminin beğendikleri herhangi bir yönünün olmadığını ifade etti.

Öğrencilerin yaklaşık üçte biri, çevrimiçi dil öğreniminin bütünüyle etkililiğinden memnuniyetsizliğini dile getirerek, belirli dil yeterliklerinin, görevlerin ve etkinliklerin özellikle yetersiz olduğunu belirtti. Örneğin Katılımcı 32, 'Temel İngilizce becerilerini, özellikle de konuşma becerilerini yeterince pratik edemiyorum' dedi. Başka bir öğrenci K148 ise 'İnternet sorunları ve sınıf ortamının yetersizliği nedeniyle dinleme ve yazma bölümleri zor olabiliyor. Çevrimiçi dersler yüz yüze dersler kadar verimli değil. Öğrenciler aktif olamıyor.' dedi.

Bazı öğrenciler dersleri monoton olarak algıladılar. Birçok katılımcı, İnternet bağlantısı sorunlarını ve gerekli teknolojik cihazlara erişimdeki engelleri kapsayan teknik zorluklardan bahsetti. Konsantrasyon ve öz disiplin de sıklıkla bahsedilen zorluklar arasındaydı. Örneğin Katılımcı 146, 'Online eğitim ev şartlarında derslere konsantre olmamı zorlaştırıyor' dedi. Katılımcı 78 ise 'Ders ortamı olarak kapalı bir yapıda değiliz. Bunun sonucu olarak ders dışında çok fazla uyaran ve engelle karşı karşıya kalabiliyoruz.' Ayrıca, bazı öğrenciler akranları ve öğretmenleriyle sınırlı etkileşimin altını çizdi ve bu da geleneksel yüz yüze eğitime kıyasla derse katılımın azalmasına neden oldu.

Öğrenciler ayrıca çevrimiçi dil eğitiminde ölçme ve değerlendirmeye ilgili sorunlara da değindiler. Hangi önlemler alınır alınsın kopyadan kaçınmanın imkansız olduğunu ve test sürecinin adaletsiz olduğunu düşündüler. Şikayet ettikleri konulardan biri de sınav sırasında mikrofonun sesini açmak zorunda kalmalarıydı. Bunun nedeni ise bazı öğrencilerin sınavlarda profesyonellerden ya da arkadaşlarından yardım alması nedeniyle kopya çekmenin önüne geçmekti. Sınavların içeriği ve zorluğu konusunda da bazı öğrencilerden şikayetler geldi.

Öğrencilerin azınlığı da duygusal sıkıntı yaşadıklarını dile getirdi. Eş zamanlı çevrimiçi oturumlara katılırken kaygı, stres ve çekingenlik gibi duygulardan bahsettiler. Örneğin Katılımcı 4 şunu belirtti: 'Kendi adıma konuşmam gerekirse çevrimiçi derslerin kayıt altına alınmasından dolayı hata yapmaktan korkuyordum, yüzyüze eğitimde hata yapsak bile o anda kalıyordu ancak çevrimiçi eğitimde her zaman o hatayı görebiliyoruz ve bu benim konuşma yapmaktan çekinmemeye sebep oldu.' (Katılımcı 4). Birkaç öğrenci ayrıca uzun süreli ekrana maruz kalma süresini ve bunun kendi sağlıkları üzerindeki sonuçlarını tartıştı. Örneğin, Katılımcı 40 şöyle ifade etti: 'Uzun süre ekran başında kalmaktan dolayı baş ağrısından ve göz rahatsızlıklarından şikayetçiyim. Hareketsiz davranıştan kaynaklanan bedensel rahatsızlığımın temel nedeni budur.' Ayrıca, iki öğrenci dersleri yeterince özümsemek ve dijital platformlarda değerlendirmeler yapmak konusunda zorluk yaşadıklarını ifade etti.

Öğrencilerin önerileri, onları memnun etmeyen yönlerle yakından bağlantılıydı. Müfredat ve öğretim materyalleriyle ilgili olarak ders kitabından duydukları hoşnutsuzluk, onları bu ders kitabının değiştirilmesini önermeye yöneltti. Ayrıca, çağdaş ve güncel kaynaklara ve materyallere olan arzularını dile getirdiler. Örneğin Katılımcı 103, "Dikkat çekici materyaller ve güncel konuları barındıran kitaplar tercih edilebilir" dedi. Ayrıca dört dil becerisinin tamamında yeterliliği artırmaya yönelik görev ve etkinliklerin artırılmasının önemini özellikle vurguladılar. Katılımcı 140 özellikle şunu belirtti: 'Konuşma etkinliklerine daha fazla zaman ayrılabilir.' Sınav yönetimine ilişkin olarak öğrenciler, sınav süresinin uzatılmasını, sınavların zorluk düzeyinin azaltılmasını ve öğrencilerden sınav sırasında mikrofonların açılmasının istenmemesini, bu tür uygulamaların değerlendirme sürecinde aksamalara yol açtığını savundular.

Bulgular ayrıca öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerinin çevrimiçi öğretim alanındaki yaklaşımlarını ve tekniklerini geliştirmek için değerli öneriler sunduklarını da ortaya çıkardı. Özellikle öğrenciler, sanal öğrenme ortamındaki etkileşimli unsurların artırılmasının yanı sıra derslere aktif olarak katılmanın daha fazla teşvik edilmesi yönündeki isteklerini dile getirdiler. Örneğin, Katılımcı 63 şöyle demiştir: 'Her öğrenciyi öğretmenlerin zorlaması gerektiğini düşünüyorum çünkü hocalar bana seslenmediği sürece ben cevap vermiyorum.' Ayrıca, eğitimcilerin çevrimiçi oyunlar ve süreç değerlendirme araçlarını dahil ettiği daha ilgi çekici öğretim uygulamalarını tercih etmelerini önerdiler. Katılımcı 12 özellikle şunu önerdi: 'Öğretmenlere etkileşimli çevrimiçi platformları (Padlet ve Kahoot gibi) etkili bir şekilde kullanmalarını öneriyorum.'

Pandemiler ve önemli sismik olaylar gibi kriz koşullarında pedagojik yaklaşımlardaki değişikliklerin gelecek sınıf metodolojileri üzerinde yaratabileceği önemli etki göz önüne alındığında, bu araştırmanın bulgularını ve sonuçlarını kapsamlı bir şekilde düşünmek gerekir. İlk olarak, gidip gelen internet bağlantısıyla ilgili sorun, canlı öğretim oturumlarının arşivlenmesi yoluyla ustalıkla iyileştirilebilir. Mevcut araştırmada katılımcılar, gerçek zamanlı olarak yürütülen senkronize sanal sınıflara katıldılar. Daha sonra bu senkronize oturumların kaydedilmesi ve Google Drive ve Moodle gibi önde gelen platformlara yüklenmesi, İnternet bağlantısı sorunları yaşayan öğrenciler için son derece faydalı oldu. Ayrıca diğer öğrencilere derslere özerk bir şekilde erişme ve bunları gözden geçirme fırsatı verdi.

Sosyalleşme, etkileşim ve katılımın eksikliği ile ilgili olarak, çevrimiçi dersler, öğrencilerin etkili bir şekilde katılımını sağlamak için dinamik olmalıdır. Bu nedenle, sosyal varlığı güçlendiren aktif öğrenme stratejilerini entegre etmek, böylece gelişmiş katılımı geliştirmek ve çevrimiçi öğretim modüllerine ilişkin olumlu alguları teşvik etmek gereklidir. (Ratan ve diğerleri, 2022). Bu bağlamda, eğitimler zamansal sınırlarını ve ipuçlarının belirlenmesinde önemli bir rol oynamakta ve böylece öğrenciler arasında dikkat ve uyanıklığı teşvik etmektedir. Ayrıca, pedagojik sürece hümanist bir boyut

kazandırmak için ciddi çaba sarf edilmelidir. Öğrencileri hedef alan kişiselleştirilmiş bir yaklaşım çok önemlidir ve onların sanal öğrenme ortamına kusursuz şekilde uyum sağlamalarını kolaylaştırır. Özellikle, Gacs ve diğerleri (2020) tarafından önerildiği gibi ödevlerin ve işbirlikçi projelerin entegre edilmesi, geleneksel öğrenci-öğretmen dinamiğinin ötesine geçerek akran etkileşimlerini kolaylaştırabilir. Bu, öğrenciler arasında sosyal katılımı artırma potansiyeline de sahiptir.

Çalışmanın sunduğu bir diğer öngörü de eğitimcilerin çeşitli çevrimiçi süreç değerlendirme araçlarını veya dile dayalı oyunlaştırma stratejilerini etkin kullanmasının öneminde gizlidir. Eğer eğitimciler bu tarz yöntemler kullanırlarsa öğrencilerinin ilgisini çekebilir ve devamlı bir konsantrasyon ve motivasyon sağlayabilirler. Öz disiplinin geliştirilmesiyle ilgili olarak öğretmenler, haftalık öğretim planları hazırlayarak öğrencilerine rehberlik sunabilirler.

Çevrimiçi ders programlarının önceden var olan eğitim müfredatına dahil edilmesi, salt bir eklentinin ötesine geçmelidir. Bunun yerine, çevrimiçi eğitim öğrenme bağlamlarıyla uyumlu olmalı ve eğitimcilerin işbirlikçi tasarım çabalarını desteklemelidir. Çevrimiçi değerlendirmeyle ilgili olarak, daha kapsamlı bir yaklaşımın ve bilinçli karar alma sürecinin benimsenmesi gerekir. Tek seferde uygulanan sınav örneklerinin doğasında olan potansiyel kopya çekme eğilimi veya teknik problemleri azaltmak için, proje odaklı değerlendirmelerin dahil edilmesi tavsiye edilir.

Bu araştırma, kriz zamanlarında çevrimiçi dil edinimine ilişkin değerli bilgiler sunarken, bulgulara bağlamsal değişkenleri ayırt ederek yaklaşmak çok önemlidir. Bu nitel anket çalışması Türkiye'nin başkenti Ankara'da bir devlet üniversitesinin hazırlık okulunda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Türkiye'dekiler de dahil olmak üzere dünya çapındaki çevrimiçi eğitim yaklaşımları, eğitim kurumlarının kültürel bağlamına, mevcut sosyoekonomik kaynaklara ve teknolojik varlıklara bağlı olarak farklılık gösterebilmektedir.

Sonraki araştırmalar, böylesine dinamik bir eğitim ortamının karmaşıklıklarını etkili bir şekilde yönlendirmek için üniversiteler tarafından benimsenen dönüştürücü mekanizmaların ve pedagojik metodolojilerin altını çizmelidir. Dahası, öğrencilerin bakış açılarını öğretmenlerin ve karar vericilerin bakış açılarıyla desteklemek, böylece daha kapsamlı bir anlayış geliştirmek gerekir. Ayrıca görüşmeler ve gözlemler durumun daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını sağlayabilir. Gelecekteki çalışmalar aynı zamanda yeni eğitim paradigmasının uygulanabilirliğini ve dil eğitimi alanındaki kilit paydaşlar arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri de inceleyebilir.