RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Evaluation of a foreign languages school hybrid program in Turkey through Stake's Responsive Evaluation Model

Gizem Bolcal Er[1]

Kenan Dikilitaş[2]

[1] Izmir Katip Çelebi University, Türkiye / Contact: gizembolcal@gmail.com

[2] Bergen University, Norway / Contact: kenan.dikilitas@uib.no

**Abstract**

In response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, global educational institutions transitioned to fully online instructional modalities. Later, there was a gradual shift back to traditional educational formats. During this transitional phase, academic institutions adopted a hybrid delivery model, integrating elements of both online and face-to-face instruction. This study was conducted with students, instructors, and administrators affiliated with the Department of Foreign Languages at a state university, aiming to evaluate this department's hybrid program through Stake's Responsive Evaluation Model. In this program evaluation study, qualitative data were obtained through open-ended questions, narrative frames, metaphors, and drawings. A total of sixty nine students, eight instructors, and three administrators participated. Participants' positive and negative views were investigated, and suggestions were made to improve the current hybrid education program of the foreign languages school.



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## Introduction

Onyema et al. (2020) noted that more than one billion students could not attend school because of the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 has similarly caused significant disruptions to education in Turkey, requiring the implementation of online teaching (Ersin et al., 2020). Throughout the pandemic, the abrupt implementation of the lockdown created an unfamiliar context, resulting in a considerable impact on stakeholders. Therefore, Stake's Responsive Evaluation Model for this study was chosen regarding the insights of Usun (2012), who depicted that the main purpose of such a model is to determine stakeholders' problems, their language, environmental conditions, and standards. This

model achieves such emphasis with its own characteristics as Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) assert:

- Evaluation methods are flexible and adaptable.
- Program evaluations emphasize pluralistic perspectives from participants.
- Methodological procedures include case studies and qualitative methods for understanding specific cases.
- Reports follow a naturalistic approach, integrating comprehensive participant insights.
- Evaluators play a facilitating role, clarifying individual judgments while respecting participants' perspectives.

Regarding the domain of language acquisition, Wu et al. (2019) point out the rarity of research in which English language learners engage with hybrid language modalities and how such engagement facilitates and impacts their learning. Furthermore, Xie et al. (2020:185) reflect on the oncoming of hybrid education and its prospective permanence, stating, “Online courses and hybrid education will play an essential role in the long-term survival of many universities, and this system is set to become an important and integral component of the next normal in education.” Thus, it is worth conducting research in this area to develop an understanding of the effects of the pandemic on education and provide suggestions for further research.

## Stake’s Responsive Evaluation Model and the Study

Educational program evaluation improves educational practice (Sanders, 1994). Evaluating a language program can involve asking students to rate their language course and teachers using a questionnaire, giving achievement tests at the beginning and end of a period of instruction, or having a language teaching expert from another institution visit the program and prepare a report on its strengths and weaknesses (Lynch & Lynch, 1996). Educators engaged in program development or examining an existing educational program can provide a better study thanks to the evaluation programs because theoretical principles related to common evaluation models will enable them to be more creative and effective evaluators (Frye & Hemmer, 2012).

Among all the models, Stake's Responsive Evaluation Model has been chosen for the study for reasons outlined in the introduction section. Also, Stake (1983, p. 12) poses that an educational evaluation can be referred to as a responsive evaluation provided that it orients more directly to program activities than to program intents, responds to audience requirements for information, and considers the different value perspectives of the people at hand while reporting the success and failure of the program. He then synthesizes the things that the evaluator does:

> He makes a plan of observations and negotiations. He arranges for various persons to observe the program. With their help, he prepares for brief narratives, portrayals, product displays, graphs, etc. He finds out what is of value to his audiences. He gathers expressions of worth from various individuals whose points of view differ. Of course, he checks the quality of his records. He gets program personnel to react to the accuracy of his portrayals. He gets authority figures to react to the importance of various findings. He gets audience members to react to the relevance of his findings. He does much of this informally, iterating and keeping a record of action and reaction. He chooses media accessible to his audiences to increase the likelihood and fidelity of communication. He might prepare a final written report; he might not--depending on what he and his clients have agreed on.

In addition, for this model, he also reflects on the prominent events in a Responsive Evaluation in the same source (Stake, 1983, pp. 20) as 12 steps to be taken as follows:

1. Talk with clients, program staff, and audiences
2. Identify program scope
3. Overview program activities
4. Discover purposes, concerns
5. Conceptualize issues, problems
6. Identify data needs, re-issues
7. Select Observers, judges, instruments, if any
8. Observe designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes
9. Thematize: Prepare portrayals, case studies
10. Validate, confirm, attempt to disconfirm
11. Winnow, Format for audience use
12. Assemble formal reports, if any

These steps were followed, and they guided the study as depicted in detail in the following sections.

## COVID-19 Pandemic and Education

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit hard and adversely impacted different parts of our lives, particularly education (Bozkurt et al., 2020). To prevent its spread, various precautions were taken that consequently affected educational systems. The pandemic has caused a wave of online learning to occur almost worldwide (Goldschmidt & Msn, 2020). Such a move then brought about the requirement that all components in the world

of education, including kindergarten, elementary, junior high school, and high school/equivalent to universities are to completely use technology and the Internet as the means and infrastructure in conducting online learning (Batubara, 2021). Pandemics forced the transition from the face-to-face approach into online education, which is either mobile, blended, or distance (Vázquez-Sánchez et al., 2021). In the context of the study, face-to-face delivery mode was immediately converted to online delivery mode. Following the abatement of the effects of the pandemic, the hybrid delivery mode was adopted in which the study also took place.

## Hybrid learning

Maity and Mukherjee (2021) explain hybrid learning as instruction that is well-balanced and equivalent between in-person and remote learning. With hybrid learning, learners are supposed to have alternative perspectives regarding time, space, materials, structures, contexts, and roles, fostering the emergence of innovative modalities through the change in institutional practices, educational spaces, and learning methodologies. (Nørgård, 2021).

While formulating a hybrid learning program, the literature highlights certain key points on hybrid learning as follows (Delamarter and Brunner, 2005, p.151):

1. The teacher should lubricate learning.
2. Courses are to be designed again from the ground up.
3. Online and face-to-face components should be deliberately integrated.
4. Socialization should be prioritized.
5. Students should be supported and trained.
6. Teachers should be supported and trained.

Sturgill (2018) asserts that the adoption of hybrid learning introduces an additional layer of complexity to the current educational scenario in university departments. Therefore, it makes sense to constitute a hybrid learning environment paying attention to all these considerations to design efficient learning programs and decrease the number of anticipated challenges as much as possible in the first place.

## Models of Hybrid Learning

Maity and Mukherjee (2021, p. 25) brief three models that generate hybrid learning. In *the Traditional Model*, the precursor of other hybrid models, teachers deliver learning instruction and activities in class and provide links to view or download supplementary

materials in an asynchronous online format (Ho & Burniske, 2005). The benefit of this model is its cost-effectiveness and enhanced accessibility for different learner profiles. Yet, the primary limitation is its tendency to reflect superficiality on pedagogical intervention, especially in remote work scenarios. *The Mixed Model* then expands the traditional hybrid model by allowing students to join in a combination of learning activities both at home and at school. Teachers communicate with students and then assess their understanding of the topic during in-person activities. Furthermore, they provide additional instruction, practice, and online feedback on the new material. When working remotely, both synchronous and asynchronous components are used to perform tasks independently. Lastly, the *Synchronous Model* connotates dividing students into two groups, one receiving in-person classroom instruction and the other recieving simultaneous live instruction through video conferencing. The advantage here is that teachers need minimum retraining because of its simplicity, and they can implement their existing lesson plans, thereby minimizing their workload. The drawback here is that it could be challenging for remote students to follow a lesson that is also being conveyed to a big group of students who are in the same physical class. It might be difficult for teachers to implement dual pedagogy in this context.

### Program Evaluation Studies on Hybrid Learning

Studies from different fields can accommodate this study despite the fact that there aren't many on the evaluations of hybrid language learning programs. When reviewing the literature, related studies were grouped under three umbrellas as the hybrid design regarding various aspects, perceptions of participants on the hybrid system, and comparison of the hybrid system with other delivery methods.

To start with the course design, in Hamza-Lup and White's (2018) study, the course was delivered in a face-to-face model and then switched to hybrid mode. According to the results, a well-designed interactive hybrid system in higher education is likely to be equivalent to traditional courses. The study of Karabulut-Ilgu and Jahren (2016) again emphasized the importance of hybrid course design. Findings suggested that hybrid learning has the potential to improve engineering education by providing the space in face-to-face meeting times for more open-ended, realistic problems which could be dealt with in small groups, having some advantages such as flexibility and

learner pacing. Conversely, it was noted that hybrid course design requires a watchful approach regarding learning activities, objectives, communication channels, and assessments.

Focusing on participants' viewpoints, Johnson et al. (2018) carried out a study to evaluate a hybrid program, aiming to explore the perspectives of adult learners. It was found that the computer literacy skills of adult learners influenced their self-efficacy in terms of their ability to use technology and study effectively. Lecturers' social engagement, particularly their student support, was also highlighted. Furthermore, internet access and power failures created challenges for adult learners' access to online activities. Regarding student perceptions again, a study by Jackson and Helms (2008) applied a SWOT analysis to gain insights into student perceptions about hybrid classes and their quality. The results revealed a nearly equal number of strengths and weaknesses. The top strengths were the delivery flexibility and time utilization, while the top weaknesses included technology challenges and the lack of faculty interaction.

Hybrid learning is also compared with other delivery methods, such as face-to-face and online learning. For example, the effect of hybrid education was investigated by Oh (2022). Students who attended 63.6% or more of the total in-person cadaveric-based laboratories got higher mean practical scores than those who attended 27.3% or less of the total in-person laboratories. Students who attended at least one in-person laboratory indicated better performance on image-based questions compared to those who did not attend any in-person laboratories, regardless of the lab delivery format. In the hybrid group, final grades were significantly higher than in the online group. Ahlin (2020) then investigated a hybrid program delivered in two different modes: traditional and hybrid. Qualitative data revealed a higher course engagement in the hybrid part, yet significantly higher average mean test scores were achieved among hybrid group students during exams.

In addition to taking the studies into consideration and contributing to the field with another study, especially on hybrid language learning program evaluation as it is rarely conducted, this study was conducted also regarding the effects of the pandemic and what it has changed, developing new perspectives on the educational system with

Stake's Responsive Evaluation Model as it places the stakeholders' views and experiences at the heart of the study.

## Methodology

### Research Design

Qualitative method was applied in this Program Evaluation study to explore the emerged themes by applying it to participants' reasons, feelings, and ideas. The data were collected through narrative frames, drawings, and metaphors to develop a deeper insight into the program.

### Participants and Context

The study took place in the School of Foreign Languages at a public university in Turkey. Student participants were from Pre-intermediate or Intermediate level classes, determined through the school's Placement Test. Instructors had a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience, with varying levels of technology literacy and integration prior to the study; however, it was the second year of extensive technology integration due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Administrators had similar teaching experience but ranged from 3 to 5 years in administrative roles within the language school. Overall, 69 students, eight instructors, and three administrators contributed to the study. These eight instructors were also members of different units: Testing, Material Development, Curriculum Development, ILC (Independent Learning Centre), and Professional Development.

About the program, it could be mentioned that there are four terms in an academic year: Fall-1, Fall-2, Spring-1, and Spring-2. At all levels, approximately %60 of the delivery of education takes place face-to-face, and %40 of it is online, comprising a combination of online synchronized lessons, asynchronous lessons, and LMS activities. Three levels exist: Elementary, Pre-intermediate, and Intermediate, in which students are placed according to their results of the Placement Test and CPT (Proficiency Test). If students fail a level due to their grades or absenteeism, they have to repeat the level, and a level can be repeated only once. If students fail the same level twice, they are transferred to Distance Learning Centre (DLC) classes. In this scenario, they follow the classes online and take the following Level Exit Exam (LEE). However,

if there is any other term left before the academic year finishes, the student finishing the term at DLC can return to the regular hybrid system and attend classes, provided the LEE of the module is passed.

In this study, sampling techniques were guided by Yildirim and Simsek (2016). Convenience sampling, a purposeful technique, was employed for the open-response survey. Typical case sampling was used for narrative frames, metaphors, and drawings.

## Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

The participants were asked to complete forms comprising open-ended questions, narrative frames, metaphors, and drawings, reflecting their perspectives on the hybrid language learning program they experienced. They were informed that the names would be kept confidential, and they could withdraw any time they wanted.

Firstly, three open-ended questions were directed to the participants. Participants were also asked to explain if there were any item(s) for which they would like to clarify further why they were given that rank. The questions are:

1) Which aspects of our hybrid language learning educational program are you pleased with?

2) What kind of modifications would make the mentioned program stronger?

3) What are your opinions and suggestions about our hybrid language learning educational program?

Participants were then given narrative frames to reflect their views on several aspects of their hybrid educational program. They filled in the frames by using adjectives to define their experience, stating what the program required, successful parts of the program, what problems they saw that stakeholders had, in what circumstances the program would be more successful, and things that they liked and disliked about the program.

In addition, through metaphors, participants were asked to whom/what they resembled during hybrid education, as well as which vehicle, animal, and food the hybrid education would be like if it were a vehicle, animal, and food. These metaphors

were intended to reflect the participants' opinions about the hybrid education in terms of its function (vehicle), system (animal), and vitality (food).

As the final instrument, participants were asked to draw an illustration such as a picture, poster, slogan, or figure to describe their view on hybrid education. They were provided the space for the drawing in the final part of the paper after narrative frames and metaphors. Participants were not limited by any other instruction or frame, and they were simply asked to create their own illustrations.

Various qualitative data analysis techniques were employed in this study. Content analysis was used for open-ended questions and narrative frames, while thematic inductive analysis was applied to analyze participants' drawings. An inductive approach was chosen to explore participants' experiences and feelings. Additionally, metaphor analysis methodology was conducted. Initially, metaphors were identified and listed, then grouped based on their expressions. Metaphorical concepts were compared to account for participants' diverse manifestations and experiences. Finally, each metaphorical concept was interpreted and explicated to complete the analysis process.

## Trustworthiness of Qualitative Analysis

To collect qualitative data from the participants, narrative frames and metaphors were prepared in Turkish, as the students who volunteered to participate were all Turkish. To eliminate affective factors and language proficiency level limitations, participants were able to use Turkish, enabling them to use all their capacity to reflect their views on this totally new pandemic context. Following the analysis of the data, a colleague was consulted to avoid translation loss in meaning derived from the translation during reporting. Moreover, an expert in the field was consulted for coding as Lombard et al. (2010) point out that inter-coder reliability requires "independent coders to evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion." In this sense, the researcher and the expert negotiated while coding the qualitative data. The process was finalized through a debriefing with the same expert to achieve content analysis consistency and inter-coder reliability. In addition to inter-coder reliability, member checking was applied, so the participants approved the general frame. Two instructors and five students contributed to this process, and they claimed their approval of the findings.

Furthermore, ethical issues were taken into consideration, with each step having the participant's involvement. All the data were collected on a total volunteer basis and the participants were informed about the purpose and the process of the study before they took part. It should also be noted that confidentiality and anonymity of the names of the participants ensured the feeling of freedom and security to give sincere answers without the fear of being recognized by any authority.

## Implementation of 12 Responsive Evaluation Steps throughout the Study

Stakes's 12 steps of Responsive Program Evaluation, which were arrayed in the *Introduction* part, were adopted throughout the study. To provide further explanation, the process could be mentioned as follows:

### *Talk with clients, program staff, and audiences*

As soon as the focus of the study was determined as a hybrid language learning program evaluation, the colleagues, administrators, and students in the setting were immediately involved in the process through informal talks and classroom talks. This step gave the researcher ideas about the instruments to be used, expectations, satisfaction, dissatisfaction with the hybrid program, and how to structure the study overall.

### *Identify program scope*

In this step, administrators and the Curriculum Development Unit were the main components of collaboration for the researcher as they were consulted while limning the program scope, components, and the structure of the program that was mentioned in *Participants and the Context* section of the study.

### *Overview program activities*

The program activities were reviewed in terms of not only in-class and out-of-class learning activities and practices but also online and face-to-face components, requirements, and assessments of the program.

### *Discover purposes, concerns*

As well as reaching the learning outcomes, the main purpose during the implementation of this program was to maintain education during the pandemic without a break. In this sense, online parts of the program were inevitable but out of the ordinary for stakeholders; therefore, the main concerns were gathered around this concept.

### *Conceptualize issues, problems*

With stakeholders that are unfamiliar with the hybrid delivery mode of education, the issues were mainly related with the online part of the system rather than the face-to-face part according to the preview that emerged from the first step of responsive evaluation. However, the research questions and data collection process were meant to cover both delivery modes as the study was to evaluate the hybrid program overall and not to miss out if any problems occurred in the face-to-face part, which did not come out during informal talks and classroom talks.

### *Identify data needs, re-issues*

The pre-determined issues obtained from step 1 were integrated into the study, giving way to the development of the qualitative evidence to gain a deeper insight.

### *Select Observers, judges, instruments, if any*

Following the conceptualization of the issues and identification of data needs, target population, and data collection instruments were settled, as mentioned in detail in the *Methodology* section.

### *Observe designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes*

The scope of the program, transactions, in-level and general meeting discussions, student outcomes, and instructors' statements, both in formal and informal talks, were observed during and following the data collection process. Notes were taken during this process with the aim of taking advantage while naming the themes. This observation process was useful later to create categories in specific terms related to the setting as an addition to the themes in literature in general.

### *Thematize: Prepare portrayals, case studies*

Although this work is not designed as a case study itself, qualitative data contained personal stories and anecdotes thanks to the use of metaphors and narrative frames especially. This qualitative evidence contributed to the reflection of specific cases and the classification of the opinions of participant groups in the theming process.

### *Validate, confirm, attempt to disconfirm*

Following the data analysis process, the findings were presented with certain participants, namely two instructors and five students who took part in the study, as well as the expert who was consulted in the coding process. They were asked to feel free to

voice any objections to the themes based on findings and disconfirm any statements by the researcher if there were any that they disagreed with. This step was taken very seriously and contributed greatly to the study owing to the fact that, although there was no disconfirmation by the participants through member-checking, it was helpful in naming the themes.

### *Winnow, Format for audience use*

With the confirmation of the interpretation of the data, the essential findings were determined to shed light on the satisfactory components and the components to be improved in the implemented program. Then, the report, namely this study, was written to guide the practitioners and program developers of the hybrid education format.

### *Assemble formal reports, if any*

In order to be able to complete the study, the Committees for Scientific Research and Publication Ethics were consulted at both universities: one of which is Bahcesehir University, where the researcher is studying, and the second university, where the study took place and whose name is kept anonymous due to confidentiality and ethical concerns. The study was conducted with the approval document from both institutions.

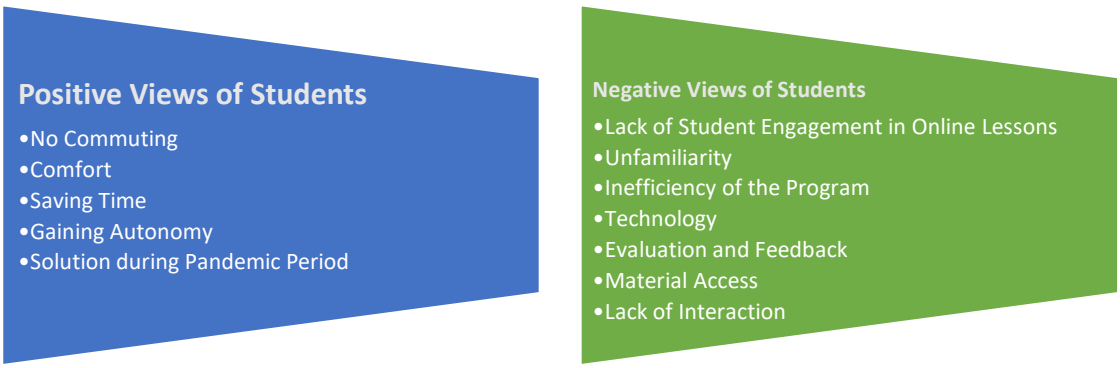
## Findings

### Students' Views about the Hybrid Program

It would be purposeful to visualize the identified themes in order to provide the overall depiction of findings in the first place.

**Figure 1**

*Views of Students Regarding the Implementation of Hybrid English Language Learning Program*



### *Positive Views*

Students revealed positive views about the hybrid program related to no commuting, comfort, saving time, gaining autonomy, and solution during the pandemic.

#### *No Commuting:*

Alison expressed that she liked "not going to school and not having long commute trouble." Julia was again happy with the system as it "reduced the number of days to come to school," and she "did not have to come to school all the time". For Malcolm, the program was successful because it helped students "to be able to get connected to lessons at home," and Betty specified more underlying that students could "participate in lessons either at home or somewhere outside in the way one wishes". According to Cedric, they did not "get bored" because they "did not come to school every day".

#### *Comfort*

Lily pointed out the program's "being comfortable" and Kendall added that hybrid learning "did not make them so tired". Sydney resembles hybrid learning to an armchair for gamers because it is comfortable, and Wayne, as a student, assessed the case from the instructors' perspective and then revealed that "they do not teach while standing up and get less tired". Smith then pointed out that "having lessons in the comfort of home sometimes affects students in a positive way". Gwen agreed, saying the experience was "fertile" because he was comfortable and he very much enjoyed following lessons in his sweatsuit.

#### *Saving Time*

James defined the program as successful as it served "a lot of free time" for students, and Nate referred to the same aspect, pointing out that "it's not stealing the whole day". Morris then contributed that the experience was 'nice' thanks to the "increase in the number of days for resting". Wayne again thought about instructors and added "instructors can save time for their families and children". He also expressed that this system "reduced the time that they lost while going to school and coming back" and Amelia supported him, saying that "not coming to school every day, thus having more time left "was good.

### *Gaining Autonomy*

Cedric expressed that the hybrid program required him “to be more disciplined and focused,” and for Misha, this system required “to study regularly” while it required Kendall “to study more”, required Kylie “to study herself”, required Lily “to study more systematically” and required James “to study hard” in addition to “using time efficiently”. Beth added that the program required her “to focus on lessons more” because she herself “tried to understand the topics that she had missed”. Matt then expressed that the program required him “to have self-control”. Emma reported that the system required her “to study more and to put more effort”.

### *Solution during the Pandemic Period*

Alicia highlighted that “nowadays, in which the pandemic goes on, precautions [to avoid COVID-19] can be taken in a better way thanks to this program”. According to Carla, the program “was thought on as much as possible,” and she liked that “rather than missing school, students were considered partially by the support of online education”. Carla added that the program achieved “not to rupture students completely from the school” during the pandemic period, and to Alicia, it was “a good precaution against the pandemic”.

## ***Negative Views***

Students revealed negative views about the hybrid program related to lack of student engagement in online lessons, unfamiliarity, the inefficiency of the program, technology, evaluation and feedback, material access, and lack of interaction.

### *Lack of Student Engagement in Online Lessons*

Patric expressed that students switched on the computer and then continued sleeping just after logging in to UBYS, the school's online system.

**Figure 2**

*Learning in class but sleeping at home.*

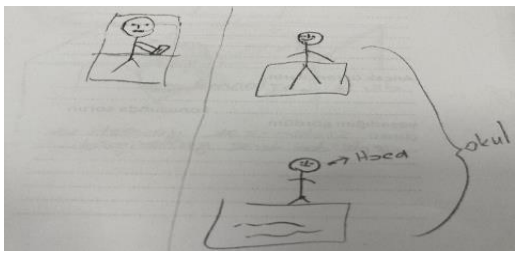


**Figure 3**

*Sleeping during online lessons*

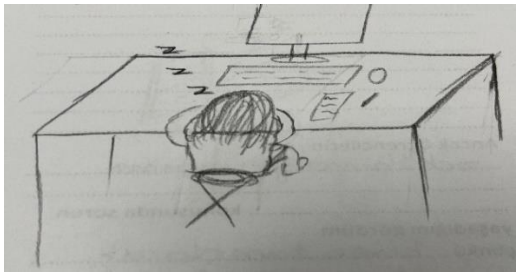


**Figure 4**

*Staying in bed in online lessons*

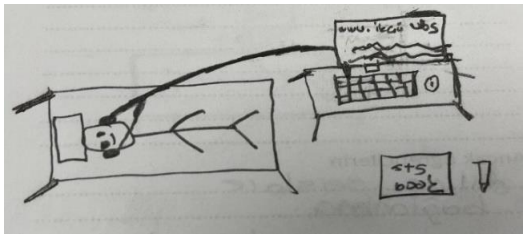
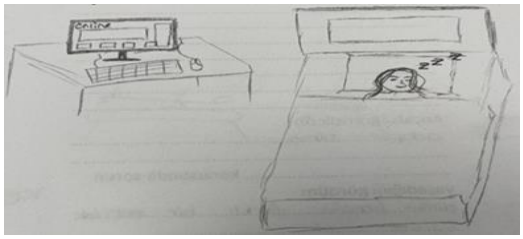


**Figure 5**

*Sleeping in bed in online lessons*



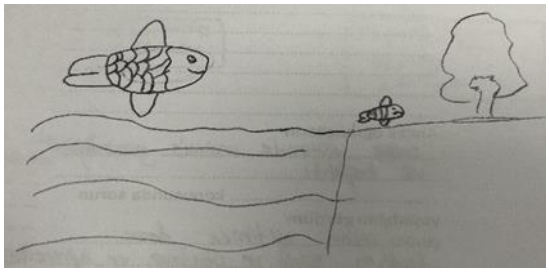
All drawings above show that students were sleeping in bed or on the table. Wayne asserted the experience was "boring" because he "cannot focus on lessons in front of the computer" and he feels "sleepy". Adrian agreed that the hybrid learning experience "was not fertile" for him because he "mostly did household chores or slept during online lessons". Evan added that it was supposed to be more successful if "students could have been prevented from hanging around the way they wanted".

### *Unfamiliarity*

Some students found it challenging to follow online lessons and comprehend what was going on. A participant revealed that it was something students were not used to, and therefore, it was compelling for them.

**Figure 6**

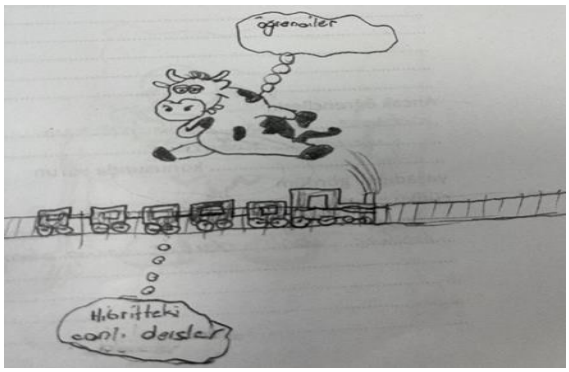
*Students' feelings of alienation in the hybrid system.*



The participant meant that if hybrid mode was an animal, it would be a 'fish' out of water as she "might agonise when I go out of the habitat that I have adapted".

**Figure 7**

*Students' feelings of not being able to make meaning in synchronous lessons*



This student tried to visualise a Turkish idiom 'to look at something the way ox looks at the train' meaning that a person who looks at something without understanding anything. She/He added that ox referred to students and train referred to live online lessons in the program.

About unfamiliarity again, Evan expressed that the hybrid system is like "Noah's pudding [which is the mixture of ingredients] as it is complex and difficult to understand." Ava aligns it with lahmajun [that has a mixture of ingredients] as it depicts the "confusion" in their mind [because of being unfamiliar with the system]. Lastly, when Nate was asked to associate himself with someone or something during hybrid learning, he could not as it [the system] felt so different.

### *The inefficiency of the Program*

According to some participants, the hybrid program was inefficient, and they labelled the program with the words useless and inefficient, which is shown in students' drawings.

**Figure 8**

*Blankness of hybrid education*

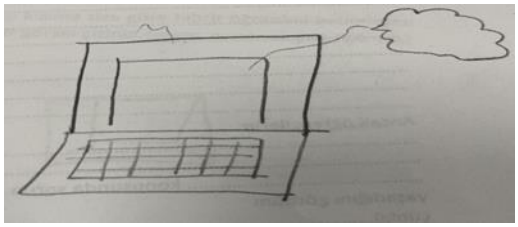
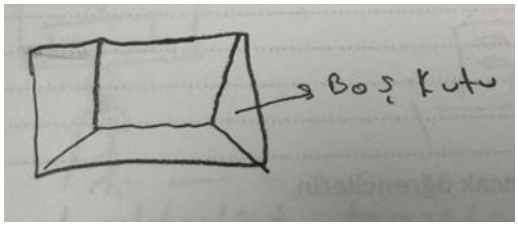


**Figure 9**

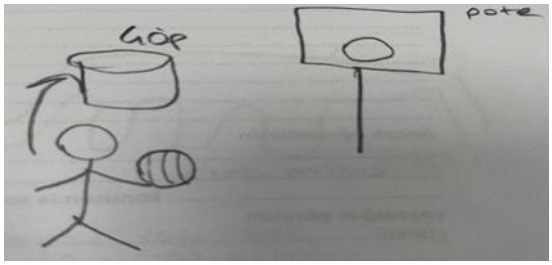
*Emptiness of hybrid education*




In the drawings above, the program was labelled as "empty" or "blank," revealing that participants thought it did not function efficiently in their learning. In the first one, online lessons were considered as blank, while the program was portrayed as an empty box in general through the second illustration.

**Figure 10**

*Student's regarding hybrid system as trash*




The ball represents hybrid education here and it is sent to the rubbish bin by the student instead of the basket reflecting a very negative view about the program.

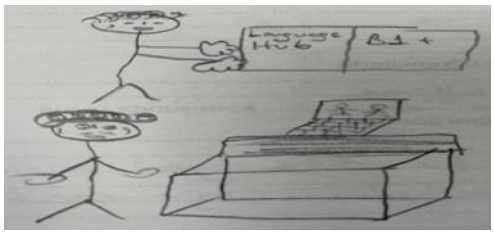
Tracey provided further explanations as she thinks that "online lessons were not regarded as important" and this view "which is applicable to both students and instructors means that online education is not something that is cared about". Ken then added that students did not join in online lessons at all because they regarded them as "unnecessary". Kylie also expressed that if hybrid learning were food, it would be "crisps as the half of the package is empty just like hybrid learning's online part is empty".

### *Technology*

Findings revealed that students had technology-related issues, mainly about infrastructure and the Internet in both online and face-to-face delivery modes.

**Figure 11**

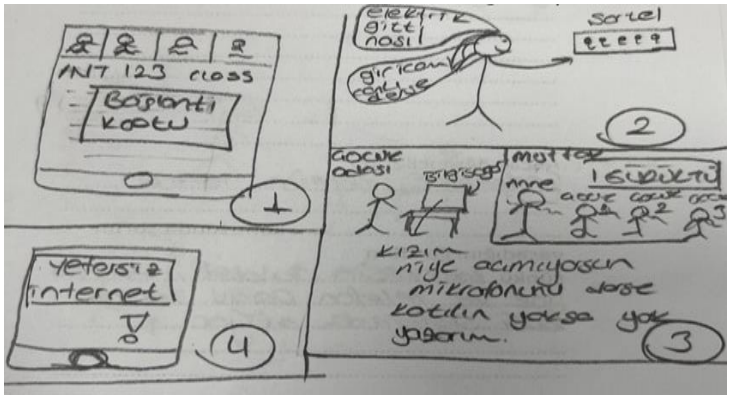
*Dysfunction of technology 2*



Above of the illustration, it is seen that there is no problem with the book in class; however, in live online lesson, the screen is frozen which means an issue about technology again.

**Figure 12**

*Different aspects of technological dysfunction*



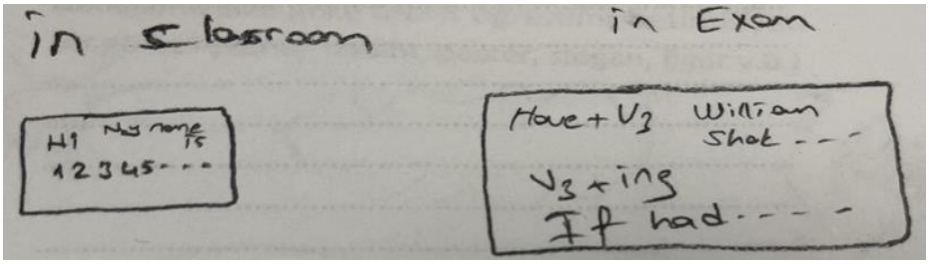

In the drawing above, the participant mentioned about four issues, three of which were related to technology and the Internet. In the first part, the participant pointed out the disconnection problem during the lesson; in the second one, the electricity cut off and, therefore, not being able to log in to the lesson was mentioned; in the third one, it was not related to technology, but with the last one, it was again about the Internet and its inadequacy of the Internet as the Internet has quota per month. When the use of it exceeds this quota, it is either cut off or invoiced extra, which means an extra burden for students.

### *Evaluation and Feedback*

Some students think that exams were more difficult than they were supposed to be regarding what was practiced during lessons in both delivery modes in general.

**Figure 13**

*Different difficulty levels between classes and exams*




This drawing above supports this finding as the participant thinks that what was done in class was at a basic level; however, an upper level was required for the exam. Madison added she saw that students had difficulty with exams because there was inconsistency between the exams and lessons. According to her, CPT was too difficult, but classes were not conducted accordingly". Another participant, Georgia, added that questions that were higher than their level were asked in the Level Exit Exams. Finally, validity in online exams was criticized. It was pointed out that students could cheat in the exams [quizzes, LEE, and CPT exams were conducted online, and cameras were off during the exams].

### *Material Access*

Some participants drew attention to the difference in opportunities for material access among students as they differ in terms of financial power. The course books were really expensive for some students. Technological devices also required a budget for students who did not own the equipment beforehand. Sarah mentioned her own experience: "My hybrid experience was not pleasing as my computer was broken down and my mobile phone was not logging in to the system. I couldn't afford to fix it, so I had to borrow a computer from my neighbour perpetually, feeling embarrassed".

## Lack of Interaction

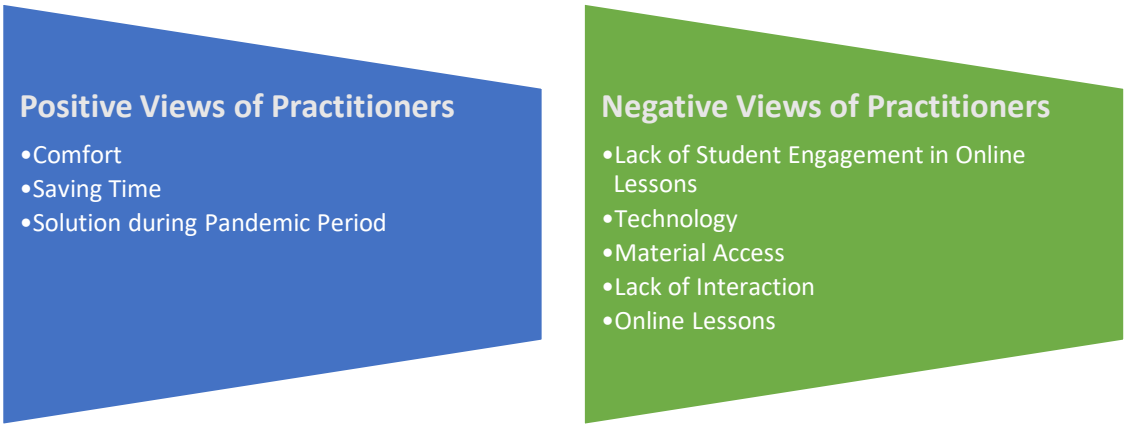
Matthew stated: "I think online education is not productive. Communication and interaction with the instructor lacks". Cyrus then underlined the lack of interaction in online lessons as follows: "I am somebody that loves learning at school. It [the online part of hybrid learning] was a little boring as we could not use mimics, etc., as we could at school, so there was less interaction".

## Practitioners' Views of the Program

As the second participant group, practitioners' views are also demonstrated in the figure below.

**Figure 14**

*Views of Practitioners Regarding the Implementation of Hybrid English Language Learning Program*




### *Positive Views*

Among the practitioner participants, the positive views are related to *comfort, saving time,* and *solution during the pandemic period* as follows:

#### *Comfort*

Collin expressed that "students and instructors were comfortable; there was no stress". Philip added that the most successful aspect of the program was "enabling students and instructors to have lessons with the comfort of home". He also liked the program because of "students' not coming to school within bad weather conditions when it is winter". Denzel added that about the program, he liked that "the program enabled students to reach lessons at home having a comfortable atmosphere through the non-existence of obligation to attend school every day".

#### *Saving Time*

Collin expressed what he liked about the program was that they did not lose time by not having to be at school in lesson time" and he added having the meetings online prevented instructors from losing time. Tracey also underlined that this program would not waste "time to arrive in school". Spencer then stated that her experience was "facilitative" because "it enabled her to manage her time better".

### *Solution during the Pandemic Period*

Philip declared what he liked about the program: "There wasn't any physical contact with students when lessons were online while the pandemic was going on". Tracey added that she liked the program because of its "terminating the risk of infection and worries because of school about health as well as its preventing us from getting entirely disconnected from school and students in times when we couldn't socialize because we could not go out of home". Tracey stated that if the system were a vehicle, it would be a motorcycle because "although it was not as handy as a car, it could take us somewhere in the traffic jam (pandemic)".

### *Negative Views*

This group of participants had negative views about hybrid education about technology, online lessons, lack of student engagement in online lessons, lack of interaction, and material access.

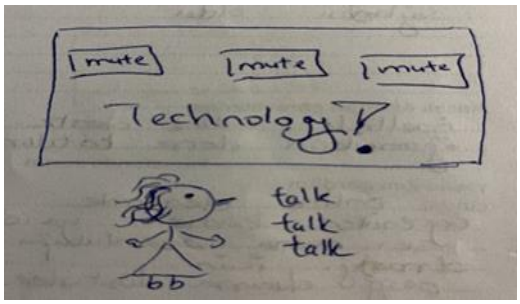
According to Celine, if hybrid learning were a vehicle, it would be a public bus because "it is full of surprises. In fact, it is expected to be reliable, yet it might get broken down in an unexpected time, it can set depart early or late".

### *Technology*

In parallel with student participants, practitioner participants also pointed out the problems related to technology.

**Figure 16**

*The instructor's not being listened by students in online lessons*




The instructor talks and teaches while either technology does not work properly or students mute the sound and do not follow the lesson at all. In a way, the instructor is talking to himself/herself during online lessons.

Jeff said his experience with using technology was "challenging" and explained, "I am not good at using the computer, and I didn't have training before for such an educational method. It was a harsh process as an administrator, too, to give sufficient

support to instructors about this". Sean then stated he saw "some instructors had difficulties with technical knowledge" and added, "the problems occurring in electronic equipment may occur due to a variety of reasons, and it's not smooth to solve them in the distance" [as administrator].

### *Online Lessons*

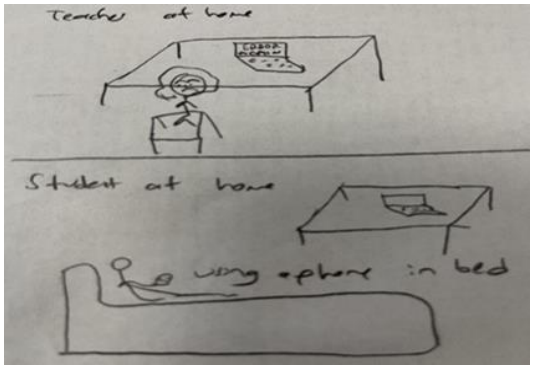
Some practitioners pointed out only the online live lessons in the program about their negative views. Collin expressed that students regarded online live lessons as a free day. Philip said he associated himself with "someone who rowed against the tide" because they had to go on the lessons that way, although they knew it would not work. Leonardo agreed with other participants associating hybrid education with a hybrid car, stating: "It was providing the high performance of gasoline while in face-to-face mode, yet having a low performance of electricity while in online mode".

### *Lack of Student Engagement in Online Lessons*

Similar to students, instructors point out the lack of student engagement in online live lessons rather than face-to-face classes.

**Figure 17**

*A student not listening to the instructor in online mode*




This drawing seems to be very similar to many students' drawings related to lack of student engagement in online lessons displaying the student busy with the phone in bed while the instructor is desperately trying to teach in front of screen with no student participation on the other side.

Collins claimed he would compare himself to a parrot because "it was difficult to motivate students," and he "had to make motivating speeches all the time". Felix said that "students were either not logging in online live lessons or not engaging in the activities". He then associated himself with a news presenter, as he had lots of times when he was not sure whether anyone was watching or listening to him.

### *Lack of Interaction*

Leonardo expressed that "interaction is too bitty in the online atmosphere; also, communication channels are lacking". Jeff agreed that he does not think "interactive activities that play an important role in language learning could be carried out in a fertile way". Philip also reported that his experience was negative, and he explained: "I talked more compared to face-to-face education and I requisitely was the one that continuously spoke in online lessons even though I normally do not prefer teacher-centred education. Not being able to interact with students mitigated the effectiveness of education".

### *Material Access*

Denzel highlighted the inequality of material access among students, stating that he was not pleased with "not every student's having the same technological opportunities". Whitney made similar statements referring to the same problem and she said, "It was difficult to see the imparity among students and continuing teaching this way. I had students that were not able to log in to the lessons since they did not own internet quota left or whose dormitory were under poor internet connection circumstances".

## Discussion and Conclusions

According to the findings, students had positive views about *a) no commuting* as it was referenced in the study by Tabor (2007) that 'fewer physical meetings represent less travel time for commuting students and an attractive alternative for non-traditional or working students, *b) comfort* as approved by Manea et al. (2021) for many reasons such as 'students no longer need to wake up early in the morning and prepare for travel' or 'students are more relaxed, and the environment is quiet' during online live lessons, *c) saving time* just like in Nikolopoulou's (2022) study, students regarded it as among pros of hybrid education for its 'adaptability for working students', and *d) gaining autonomy* through the hybrid mode contrary to 'traditional environments that reduce a student's sense of autonomy' (Xiao et al., 2020) as Linder (2017) also suggests that 'hybrid learning environments allow students to self-pace. Students may have more options about when they can study, a wider variety of study materials to use, and a larger range of learning experiences that they can choose to partake in' in addition to another study

that defines hybrid education as 'enabling more flexible, self-controlled, and self-paced learning' (Dragicevic et al., 2020), *e) solution during the pandemic period* which is discussed in practitioner participants' part of the study in the next research question findings. Meanwhile, they had negative views about *a) the lack of student engagement in online lessons,* just like Salta et al. (2022) expressed 'students' engagement with online classes was a challenge during the COVID-19 period', *b)unfamiliarity* as students sometimes could not grasp what was exactly going on because it was a sudden change for them with the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almazova et al. (2020) drew attention to the fact that higher educational institutions worked hard to transform the curriculum into an online format, putting effort into decreasing the negative effect of the sudden changes on the educational process and providing ongoing teaching and learning. Still, this simultaneous transformation within days was a great challenge for all the stakeholders. In the study, it was determined that students were unfamiliar with the new system and could not always catch up with it, *c) inefficiency of the program,* probably because 'the most common mistake' was made 'when first entering the ranks of hybrid teaching by allowing the online and face-to-face components to function independently of each other, in parallel dimensions (Delamarter & Brunner, 2005, pp.152).

For example, Koehler et. Al. (2013) reminded that as designers, they decided that face-to-face time would be invaluable for beginning the process of community building and developing the habits of student life that would serve them well in the years to come. The online weeks would be better spent focusing on academic concerns (disciplinary knowledge) and reinforcing already established community norms. Yet, owing to the sudden switch with the pandemic, there was no similar planning or intention about face-to-face and online time in the evaluated program of this study, which probably contributed to the inefficiency of the program. The integration of technology, pedagogy, and content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) is required throughout the designing process of the two delivery modes, *d)technology* as the study by Jackson and Helms (2008, pp.11) pointed out that it can be a strength as a tool to reach the education; however, 'without online access at home, students are still required to travel to the college or some other place that provides access. Technology could be a big problem with the final grade (crashes or computer viruses, for example). Everyone may not have

access to the Internet. Keskin (2011) determined that while the rate of the university students forming the sample who have a computer to connect to the Internet in their residence is 33.9%, the rate of those who do not have a computer to connect to the Internet is 64.6%. This rate means that almost two-thirds of the students who answered the survey do not have a computer to connect to the Internet. El Mansour and Mupinga (2007) also found out that 'technology hiccups' can lead to negative student experience in hybrid courses, *e) evaluation and feedback,* as Shartel (2012) pointed out "feedback is an integral part of the educational process. It provides learners with a comparison of their performance to educational goals with the aim of helping them achieve or exceed their goals. For best results, the sender and receiver of feedback must work as allies," and no problem occurred in qualitative evidence, while some students indicated that there was inconsistency between what was conducted in class and asked in summative evaluation. Kibble (2017) expressed his experience was that "subject matter experts naturally tend to start thinking about the content they should teach in a course, then about how they will teach it, and finally about how to assess student learning". Yet, the study found that content was planned; however, how to teach, either in face-to-face or online form, and if online, either in synchronous or asynchronous part, was not considered properly. Therefore, there emerged disagreements among students about the function of evaluation, *f) material access* as not all students could afford to buy course books or technological devices and the Internet; however, Robert and Pelletier (2022) insist that "student equity is centered in all modalities. Institutional programs support equitable access to education with flexible modalities, personal devices, and ubiquitous internet access". On the contrary, Joseph (2020) reported that "connectivity in some rural and remote school districts is often problematic. Internet equipment and connectivity favour wealthier students".

In practitioners' positive views, *a) the comfort* component was identified as a hybrid design 'offers personal benefit to educators in terms of their comfort level' (Meydanlioglu & Arikan, 2014), as well as *b)saving time,* which means 'reduced seat time' (Koohang et al., 2006) in class and stakeholders' time to commute is decreased. These aspects were determined in harmony with students' views. In addition, the program's being *c) a solution during the pandemic period* was regarded positively by practitioners. However, it should be noted that this shift was not planned and prepared

for as it happened almost overnight due to COVID-19, and Gagnon et al. (2020) remind that "these campus closures forced programs that were not designed for online instruction to deliver course content using asynchronous and synchronous online instruction which was likely to cause deficiencies". Among the negative views: a) *the lack of student engagement in online lessons* emerged with instructors finding themselves talking all the time, although Wiggins and McTighe (2005) suggest hybrid learning environment be student-centered in coherence with Trentin (2016) emphasizing learning by doing "has the potential to foster students' active and collaborative participation in a 'doing' rather than 'listening' type of learning" and to ensure it, lesson designs linking effective pedagogy with student motivation and engagement, such as active and collaborative learning, accompanied by motivational hooks and providing multiple means of representation and expression (Franklin & Harrington, 2019) are all required. Following this, *b) technology* that "in hybrid environment, faculty needs to be more conscious about how to guide students in order to enhance their learning and not confuse them poor design flow or have technology become an obstacle to the experience" (Mossavar-Rahmani & Larson-Daugherty, 2007) and one limitation of hybrid education is that it is likely to get affected by "computer worms, power failures, and other technology problems" (King, 2002), *c)material access* as instructors observed some students not having the required materials the way Sadeghi (2019) pointed out "any student seeking to enroll for a distance learning program needs to invest in a range of equipment including computer, webcam, and stable internet connection", and *d)lack of interaction* which "depends on how well trained both faculty and students are in communicating in the dual environment" as put forward by Mossavar-Rahmani and Larson-Daugherty (2007, pp.70), is prompted by collaboration which a positive impact on the educational experience (Graham, 2001) were the same components with students' negative views in addition to *e)online lessons* component put forward by practitioners. Hall and Villareal (2015) then assert that "in the online environment, students have the opportunity to apply their knowledge to complete projects, engage in real-world scenarios, and deepen their understanding through discussion forums," whereas these components did not seem to function in the institution of the study leading to negative views about online lessons.

All in all, in addition to the findings based on the positive and negative views of both the student and practitioner participant groups, pedagogical implications and conclusions are provided. Students and practitioners in implications refer to the participants of this study.

*Hybrid education can be a solution during pandemic or post-natural disaster periods only when it is designed carefully regarding the current situation of that time*

As student participants experiencing hybrid learning during the pandemic revealed during such vulnerable times, it might be hard to maintain educational activities; however, the change in the delivery mode of education is supposed to be helpful in bypassing this adverse but temporary period of time. Therefore, practitioners should be extremely meticulous when determining the topics, exercises, debates, questions, or any kind of activities in order to avoid dredging up past incidents.

*Hybrid education's being compulsory or selective matters and the situation's implicit background must be considered*

Different conditions of student participants of the study in owning required materials and different attitudes towards student autonomy revealed that hybrid education works well provided that learners have financial, location-based, or any other personal reasons that prevent them from attending lessons in the classroom; thus, they choose to use the hybrid method. In a different scenario, in which learners do not prefer the adoption of hybrid education but are compulsory for them across nations or nationwide because of different reasons, the lack of knowledge about the requirements of the system, how to succeed, and how to take control of their own learning process is likely to end up in failure.

*Material design and material access should be emerged from a process in which both face-to-face and online delivery methods are taken into consideration in a hybrid education system*

In hybrid education, both physical and digital products are to combine visual appeal and functional efficiency to enhance the learning experience of students by creating user-friendly and attractive digital materials. Otherwise, student engagement could suffer, as the study revealed. Moreover, both participant groups drew attention to students having

unpleasant experiences mainly due to the prices of books or financial requirements to obtain technological items. Material design certainly contributes to the structure and flow of lessons; however, no matter how perfectly designed they are, their function may fail unless every student has access to them.

*Efficient technology and necessary infrastructure are required, especially for online components of hybrid education*

Both students and practitioners emphasized the role of technology in the hybrid system, focusing mainly on its malfunctioning. Classrooms equipped with adequate technological items are likely to facilitate interactive discussions and group activities that complement online learning. Hence, it is also vital to receive technical support immediately when needed through IT staff without disrupting the flow. When hybrid education is obligatory and provided as a part of national education, the government or municipalities should provide students in need with the necessary equipment through scholarships or loans, whatever is needed.

*Ensuring student engagement is one of the key factors in success in hybrid education, just like in all other educational forms*

Challenges related to student engagement were portrayed by both students and practitioners, and motivating students is critical to ensure their engagement. It can be overcome thanks to using interactive, communicative, and multimedia resources in online courses, providing hands-on activities in face-to-face sessions, and creating eye-catching materials, visuals, and videos across both modes, as well as lesson designs that encourage learners to actively participate rather than passively listen. Requiring students to turn on their cameras would also be useful to keep them focused, motivated, and engaged, so they will not feel invisible.

*Instructors need to have some certain characteristics to act as the propellant function to implement the essential constituents of hybrid education*

As the findings from both participant groups reflect, course design must be meaningful. While planning the lesson flow, considering the strengths and challenges of both in-person and online components and strategically placing activities should be considered to achieve a robust design. Providing sufficient feedback regularly to support learning

and encouraging student autonomy should also be prioritized for instructors. Moreover, the importance of instructors' efficacy in using technology must be emphasized, as serious problems and inefficiencies are likely to occur in the online components of the system.

*Interaction in hybrid education refers to student-student and student-instructor interaction in both face-to-face and online components*

The importance of interaction was underlined by both participant groups. The lack of interaction caused participants to develop a negative perspective towards the online component of hybrid learning. Interaction, collaboration, and a sense of community could improve the motivation and engagement of students. To achieve student-instructor interaction, the availability of instructors through office hours would be useful to provide feedback or answer students' questions about the system and lessons. Welcoming students' questions via email and responding within a reasonable timeframe, especially when there are no face-to-face lessons, would also be effective. To provide opportunities for student-student interaction, prompting collaboration and communication are key factors with various implications. Discussions in the classroom and via online discussion boards, assigning group work in the classroom and using online chat rooms, incorporating peer feedback, and assigning group projects could be beneficial in this regard.

*Evaluation and Feedback have a crucial role in hybrid education, just like in the other delivery modes of education*

Student participants also pointed out efficient and inadequate aspects of evaluation and feedback. They mainly focused on the difficulty level of the exams compared to what was conducted in courses. Rather than testing the learning outcomes only, evaluating on a regular basis through formative assessments with the help of quizzes, LMS exercises, tasks, and portfolios could be useful through careful and purposeful distribution of practices between both online and face-to-face components of the system. Lastly, as a contributor to validity, students may be required to turn their cameras on during the exams to prevent copying, which was also mentioned by student participants. Feedback also has great importance, as students can communicate with instructors less in hybrid

education compared to traditional face-to-face education; therefore, the timing and regularity of giving feedback to students on their performance or work is valuable.

### *Learner autonomy means either an advantage or disadvantage for a student in hybrid education*

Some student participants clearly expressed that they learned how to take control of their learning thanks to the hybrid system. Students' responsibility for taking control of their learning plays a key role here. In deeper meaning, although learners who do not have an efficient level of autonomy may find it challenging, autonomous learners can develop self-regulation, adopt proper learning strategies, set realistic goals, monitor their progress, and take control of their learning process. They are likely to enjoy the flexibility of the system, the comfort of home, overcome geographical/physical constraints, and save time and money.

In addition to evaluating, redesigning, or adopting similar programs based on these suggestions, conducting studies at various institutions with multiple case studies is likely to provide a broader perspective for future studies.

## Ethics Committee Permission Information

This research study was conducted with the Research Ethics Committee approval of Bahcesehir University, dated 29.07.2022 and numbered E-20021704-604.01.02-37648

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