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Language Horizons: Diverse Vistas in English Language Pedagogy I

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PREFACE

Welcome, fellow language explorers, to "Language Horizons: Diverse Vistas in English Language Pedagogy." This book series embarks on an exploratory journey through the diverse and dynamic landscape of English language teaching, presenting a mosaic of perspectives, theories, and practical applications to inspire educators, researchers, and language enthusiasts alike.

Within these chapters, a tapestry of topics unfolds, capturing the essence of contemporary methodologies, emerging technologies, and innovative strategies employed in the realm of English language pedagogy. From the transformative impact of distance education to the intricate influence of social media platforms like Twitter on language proficiency, this collection reflects the evolving paradigms and challenges in teaching English as a foreign language.

Each chapter serves as a portal, delving into various facets of language education. We traverse the experiences of language learners in study abroad programs, explore instruments fostering intercultural communication competence, and investigate the influence of digital platforms such as Google Classroom on students' speaking anxiety.

The series focuses on specialized areas like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the intricacies of grammar teaching, offering insights into the tailored needs of learners in different learning contexts. It also ventures into literary explorations, dissecting the lyrical language of renowned poets and drawing connections to language teaching.

"Language Horizons" doesn't merely scratch the surface; it invites readers to contemplate the depths of effective language pedagogy. It unveils the importance of reflective teaching models, the nuanced use of language intensifiers, and the intricacies of curriculum development, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to education.

We are indebted to the dedication and expertise of our contributors - academics, practitioners, and scholars - who have shared their research, experiences, and expertise to enrich this compilation. Their commitment to advancing the field of English language teaching has made this series a reality.

As the editor of the series, the main aim has been to compile a comprehensive resource that not only captures the contemporary landscape of English language teaching, but also serves as a catalyst for dialogue, innovation, and progress within the field. We hope this series sparks inspiration, fosters critical thinking, and ignites a passion for effective language instruction.

"Language Horizons: Diverse Vistas in English Language Pedagogy" leads you to an enlightening expedition through the ever-expanding vistas of language education. You are invited to immerse yourself in this compilation, engaging with diverse perspectives and embracing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the journey of teaching and learning the English language.

Editor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Dilşah KALAY

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CHAPTER I

Teachers' Perceptions of Distance Education

Ahmet CİHAT YAVUZ

Introduction

The outbreak of the pandemic Covid-19 compelled almost the entire world to legislate and establish significant measures for the sake of combatting the pandemic along with the hard work and industry in developing a vaccine. One of the most significant precautions is the closure of schools from kindergarten through postgraduate levels in an attempt to hamper the spread of the virus in crowded places. Despite diminishing the rate of infection, it gave rise to another important issue of continuing education remotely. A growing number of countries has been seeking solutions mostly through technological facilities to provide a quality education to their citizens. When it comes to Turkey, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB) also invested in an online platform named EBA for K-12 education while Council of Higher Education (YÖK) enforced the transition to distance education across the

country starting mid-March 2020. The sudden transition of distance learning unveiled the readiness to remote learning as a country. Specifically, vital factors such as technical competence, training, time, methodology, classroom management began to emerge as dominating setbacks education (Bilgiç and Tüzün, 2020) despite which country-wide distance education has been on-going at all levels of education. Due to the haziness of getting back to the normalcy in the short term and the likelihood of the continuation of distance learning after the normalcy, teachers' perceptions of the new way of instruction pose a pivotal researchable area in the hopes of revealing issues and attending to them in the best way possible. This research thus attempted to investigate teachers' perceptions which would yield important data to be utilized for prospective teacher education programs.

Literature Review

Theoretical background

The roots of distance education trace back to late 1800s when the University of Chicago established the first correspondence program for the interaction of teacher and students when they were at different locations (Demiray and İşman, 2003). The program was later applied in different states in the USA. It was not until late 1800s did the correspondence education begin to be utilized in the UK and Europe. The primary tools of distance education were mainly mail, radio and television, which has undergone a big shift with the use of the Internet and the state-of-the-art smartphones. Distance education or distance learning, by definition, assumes the education of students who are not necessarily at a physical classroom (Kenthor, 2015). Due to the assumption of teacher and students being at separate places, online education, remote learning, m-learning, virtual education, open education, e-learning, and some other concepts are widely and interchangeably used.

Distance education calls for a set of preparations which principally are a videoconferencing tool, a learning management

system, and the transformation of resources to electronic format. Due to its distinct nature vis-à-vis traditional education, pedagogical strategies for distance education such as classroom management, assessment, delivery are subject to vary (Roth, Pierce and Brewer, 2020), which compels teaching practitioners to develop the most appropriate mix of pedagogy and technology. Teachers who should already have content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1987) is, with the spread of technology and distance education in particular, supposed to get equipped with technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK). Technological pedagogical knowledge stands for knowledge about various technologies and their capabilities in learning and teaching (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). Teachers who are supposed to teach students having grown up in technological era, should prepare themselves by keeping abreast about the technological developments (Premsky, 2001). In other words, teachers of the 21st century should hone their digital technology and communication skills to be exploited in their classroom. Those who have not invested in that area may seem reluctant or feel desperate in the sudden switch to remote learning after the pandemic. Studies having examined teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards distance education abound in the scholarship.

Recent studies

Ventayen (2018) investigated the readiness of primary teachers, enrolled in Master or Doctoral programs in the Department of Education in a state university in Philippines, with regard to distance education including technical competence, time management and time commitment, as measured by quantitative data collection tool (survey) consisting of items about technical competence, attitudes, prior experience, time management and commitment. The results showed that the majority of the respondents were ready for and they harbor positive attitudes towards distance education. Öztürk, Öztürk and Özen (2018) explored the relationship between the readiness and satisfaction about distance education

among 493 pre-service teachers at a state university. Data were collected through five-point-Likert type e-readiness and e-satisfaction scales developed by Gülbahar (2012) who found 0.93 Cronbach Alpha reliability score for the former and 0.97 for the latter. Data analysis revealed that the levels of readiness and satisfaction were above the mean score, and there was a meaningful relationship between readiness and satisfaction levels. Similarly, Martin, Budhrani and Wang (2019) scrutinized distance education at a university in terms of academicians' attitude, knowledge, readiness, and confidence as measured by the Faculty Readiness to Teach Online (FRTO) scale developed by the researchers. The data analysis and interpretation indicated that the respondents deemed themselves competent, confident and ready, while they rated the importance of distance education less important as compared to the other variables.

There were also some studies implemented after the declaration of Covid-19 as pandemic. Alea, Fabrea, Roldan and Farooqi (2020) intended to explore the relationship between the length of teaching experience and their readiness of distance education after the declaration of the pandemic in Philippines. Data were gathered from a validated questionnaire. The findings exhibited a correlation between the year of teaching experience and readiness to remote teaching. Rasmitadila, Alivyah, Rachmadtullah, Samsudin, Syaodih, Nurtanto and Tambunan (2020) researched 67 primary teachers' perceptions of online learning developed in Indonesia. Data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews with every participant via videoconferencing. Pattern coding engendered four major themes related to teachers' perceptions, namely instructional strategies, challenges, support and motivation of teachers. Bilgiç and Tüzün (2020) examined core issues and challenges about remote learning programs at four Turkish higher institutions that exploited distance education instruments. Data were gleaned through semi-structured interviews, documents such as distance learning weekly reports, meeting reports, procedures, organization chart and presentations, websites.

Scrupulous and iterative qualitative data analysis resulted in 9 major issues, namely (1) program launching process, (2) legislation, (3) program structure, (4) instructional design, (5) assessment and evaluation, (6) communication and interaction, (7) support, (8) technical issues, and (9) program evaluation. Sari and Nayır (2020) similarly investigated the perceptions of a total of 65 Turkish teachers about distance education by using open-ended interviews as data collection tool. Qualitative data analysis showcased such challenges as the Internet access, lack of a solid infrastructure, classroom management and communication across school community.

A review of the literature displayed that there is a limited number of studies having explored teachers' perceptions of distance education after a half semester experience in Turkey, for it would yield informed data to investigate teacher attitude after a period of experience and provide ground for policy makers to cater to their needs, challenges and continue appreciated practices. This study thus intended to investigate perceptions of English lecturers working at a higher education institution before the outset of the 2020-2021 academic year and help contribute to the decision-making processes on distance education.

Methodology

Aim

This collective case qualitative study intended to examine the participants' perceptions of the sudden shift to distance education through an online open-ended survey and semi-structured focus group interviews. In line with the study goals, the following research question was addressed in the study:

What are the perceptions of English lecturers about distance education?

Setting and Participants

The research study was carried out at the school of foreign languages (SFL) of a state university in Turkey. The school was established to provide foundational level of English language education to first-year undergraduate and graduate students studying at various departments of the university. The purpose of the school is to graduate students with B2 (upper-intermediate) level of proficiency and equip them with necessary skills needed to engage in English language materials and communication in their prospective academic life. The participants (N=34) of the study consist of SFL faculty staff most of who hold MA degree in English language related field and some of them pursue their doctoral studies in the aforementioned fields, while three of them have a PhD. Concerning their experience in distance learning, the vast majority of the participants experienced distance education with the onset of the restrictions induced by Covid-19, thus they were deemed as a target group whose opinions bear reliable data for policy makers to consider while planning distance education.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection tools were exploited to unearth teachers' perceptions about distance education. First, an open-ended survey comprising questions related to teachers' perceptions about distance education was prepared by the school's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) unit and conducted online. After that, a group of volunteering teachers were interviewed to gain a better insight into the study. Online survey was chosen due to its practicality of implementation, response organization and its appropriateness for expressing opinions freely without feeling time, or interviewing pressure. Interviewing was opted for since it is a suitable method to triangulate survey data with a focus on themes to confirm and expand on.

Data collection and analysis lasted around three weeks. In the first week the survey on teachers' perceptions were completed by the

participants. In the following week, the researcher tabulated the raw data with the intention of developing interview questions. In the last week, they were interviewed for the sake of triangulating findings. The focus group semi-structured interviews lasted 5-10 minutes and were aimed to clarify vague points and solidify the findings.

Findings

Extracted raw data out of the data collection instruments, namely survey and interviews, were inductively examined, for the research did not adhere to any hypotheses for the study. Therefore, any sort of recurring codes in relation to teachers' perceptions were considered for the data analysis. After identifying the codes through open coding, the researcher compartmentalized them into category (categorization), then reviewed the codes in an attempt to unearth main themes (thematic analysis). Finally, all the emergent themes were iteratively analyzed so as to construe them (Creswell, 2002).

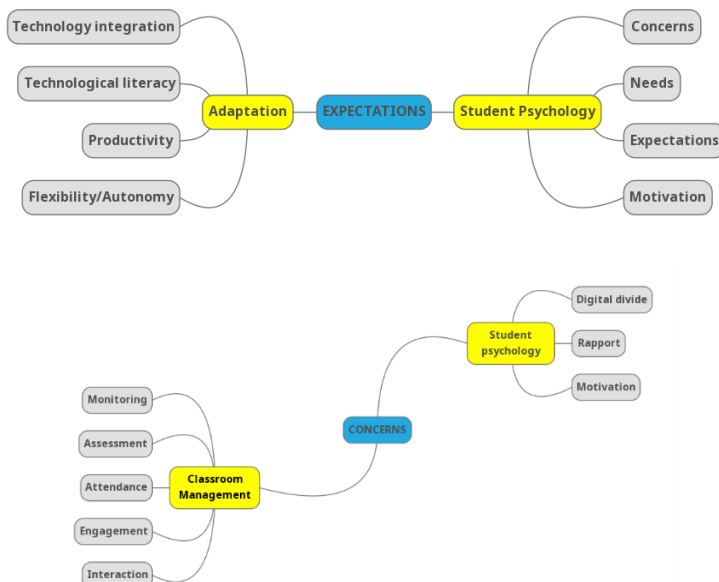


Figure 1. Thematic coding

Pattern coding process was conducted over the sets of data from two data collection tools (i.e., survey and interview). Meticulous examination and tabulation across two data sets revealed several codes as shown in Figure 1. The codes were then reviewed in an effort to categorize them, which resulted in four categories. The categories and codes were again scrupulously analyzed in order to identify the main theme, which brought about two main themes: teacher concerns and expectations.

Teacher Concerns

The first emerging theme was related to teachers' concerns about distance learning. The participants specifically underscored their doubts with regard to classroom management.

“If they don't want to follow online classes or cheat in online exams, it is impossible for us to fulfill the goals.”

(Focus group interview)

“...my biggest concern is not being able to keep lessons interactive enough and students' willingness to communicate during distance education process.”

(Focus group interview)

As indicated in the extracts they were concerned about students' willingness, maintaining interaction and assessment procedure. The participants also emphasized the possibility of frequent no-shows in distance education.

“I'm afraid they will easily skip classes. Even if they attend, engaging them will be harder on the contrary to face-to-face education.”

(Focus group interview)

“Student attendance might be the biggest issue because the lessons will start early, and they might feel too comfortable at home.”

(Focus group interview)

The other issues related to classroom management were centered on students’ attendance and participation during distance education. The second sub-theme (category) in concern with the main theme was centered on student psychology.

“I guess we will wrestle with digital divide caused by not having equipment or internet access necessary to follow the courses.”

(Focus group interview)

“There will surely be students without necessary equipment for distance education. I think we will have to coach them psychologically.”

(Focus group interview)

“I am afraid of not establishing rapport like I did in face-to-face education.”

(Focus group interview)

Extracts exhibit that teachers anticipate issues in concern with student psychology. Specifically, they fret about attending to students’ psychological needs to be likely induced by the lack of required distance education tools, motivation and chance of not establishing a psychological bond with learners.

Teacher Expectations

The second main theme concerned teachers' expectations from distance education. They particularly reported their personal goals as stimulated by distance education. These goals mainly go under two sub-themes: goals in relation to teachers' accommodation to distance learning and student psychology. Firstly, the respondents reported their expectations about adapting to distance learning through several ways.

“I want to learn the management of fully effective online lessons by making use of interactive teaching tools like Padlet. As they also keep students more motivated. Recently, I have listened to a plenary speech on online teaching and Russell mentioned Google Earth as an online teaching tool, which I found pretty useful and motivating. So, as a teacher, I want to gain a more technologically effective teacher identity.”

(Focus group interview)

“I expect that as instructors we are going to have the chance to develop our IT, online teaching, language teaching based software using skills.”

(Focus group interview)

The extracts vividly demonstrate teachers' take out of distance education through developed personal objectives and imposed conditions. The second sub-theme were relevant to teachers' expectations to cater to students' psychological needs as likely to be triggered by distance education.

“I expect to learn how I can motivate my students on online course. In my opinion, this process is not teaching it is totally distance learning. If my students' level of motivation was high, they would learn more effectively. We will see! “

(Focus group interview)

“I expect to be able to understand students' concerns, needs and expectations.”

(Focus group interview)

Overall, the results displayed that teachers not only are aware of the anticipated challenges but also they developed personal expectations regarding adaptation to distance education and fulfilling students' possible psychological needs in distance education.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate English lecturers' perceptions of distance education invoked by the country as a significant measure among many to thwart the spread of Covid-19. The study generated results that are in accord with the previous studies, and evoke critical questions about the steps taken and to be taken on distance education. First and foremost, teachers are concerned about whether managing classes would be as effective on the basis of assessment, monitoring, attendance and so forth, which concurs with Bilgiç and Tüzün (2020) and Sami and Nayır (2020). This result poses questions about the infrastructural readiness of schools including but not limited to learning management systems (Ventayen, 2018). In addition to infrastructure of schools for distance education, teachers are also distressed about students' psychology which was reported to be affected by distance education

(Rasmitadila et al., 2020) due to digital divide, lack of affective bond with teacher and motivation, which, in the researcher's view, stands as an alarming unaddressed issue in the country that exerts all her effort on distance education and seems to disregard student psychology although it deserves the equal attention and commitment.

Secondly, the study disclosed teachers' personal convictions and competence by capitalizing on distance education. It was revealed that teachers feel competent which is in line with Martin et al. (2019) in that they espoused distance education to hone and ameliorate their digital and technological abilities. The fact that teachers acknowledge and adopt distance education not only through pedagogical lens but also personal goals, which should, in the researcher's view, be seriously considered for teacher education because teacher buy-in will heighten the effectiveness of teacher education programs provided that responsible authorities implicate teacher identity in the programs. Finally, teachers anticipated psychological barriers among students on whom distance education will possibly take a heavy toll both academically and psychologically. The results indicate that students are psychological beings and schools are in charge with providing them with psychological coaching in an attempt to decrease its toll on them.

Conclusion

The study yielded important results with regard to distance education which is currently carried out across the country, and will most probably be exploited in the future, although possibly partly, thus findings of the study pose significant repercussions for prospective teacher education programs as constructed by policy and program makers. Apart from policy and program makers, it also presents implications for teacher practitioners in terms of attitude towards and expectations about distance education. Since the sampling size is limited to a single context, a variety of sampling is recommended for further research in order to gain a broader perspective into the matter. Additionally, longitudinal research is

suggested on teacher education programs designed in tune with teacher concerns and expectations about distance education.

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CHAPTER II

The Influence of Twitter Use on English Proficiencies of EFL Students

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Mithat EKİNCİ²

Introduction

The advent of the digital era has led to the development of a multitude of different forms of social media platforms. Each of these platforms plays an important role in a variety of aspects of human life, including education. Twitter is an example of one of these platforms that is used for educational purposes. In the constantly shifting landscape of educational technologies, Twitter has emerged as a social media platform that goes beyond its initial purpose of solely serving as a social networking platform. As stated by Ekinci and Şire (2018), Twitter has been gaining popularity as a useful tool

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for education. Specifically in the field of language education, Twitter has been utilized as a cutting-edge tool to improve the overall learning experience for students who are studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The integration of Twitter into educational strategies represents a paradigm shift that is more contemporary than the traditional methods of language learning, which have relied on classroom instruction, textbooks, and formalized testing (Warschauer, 2011).

Twitter Use and Foreign Language Learning

There are several advantages that come with using Twitter as a tool for learning a foreign language, and these advantages are available to all learners who intend to learn a foreign language and improve their language skills. On Twitter, for instance, students are required to distill their thoughts in a way that is both coherent and transparent because of the microblogging nature of the platform and the character limit. According to Grosseck and Holotescu (2008), the act of summarizing and clarifying information not only encourages brevity but also fosters critical thinking. According to Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010), Twitter provides users with a wide range of real resources, ranging from news headlines to chats that are more casual in nature. These kinds of materials can help students improve their reading comprehension skills. Twitter, on the other hand, is not only a tool for strengthening reading and writing abilities; it also provides opportunities to practice listening and even speaking skills through connections to videos and audio, making it a comprehensive environment for language learning (Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009). In terms of listening skills, Twitter allows users to publish multimedia content, such as films and podcasts, making it a particularly useful platform for developing one's listening proficiency. Additionally, technologies such as Twitter Spaces offer students the opportunity to participate in real-time audio conversation, which helps to facilitate the development of oral skills (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008).

Using Twitter as a tool for foreign language learning aid might potentially enhance students' vocabulary recall and facilitate their acquisition of idiomatic expressions. According to Lomicka and Lord (2012), the content that users post on Twitter is abundant in vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, and it gives students the opportunity to have exposure to language use in real-world situations. Users are able to follow native speakers, specialists, or fans of the target language, which gives them the opportunity to come across everyday language use, colloquial expressions, and idiomatic phrases during their language learning experience. Learners are able to be exposed to a wide variety of cultures and perspectives thanks to the real-time feature of Twitter, which not only helps them expand their vocabulary but also broadens their understanding of how English is used in a variety of circumstances (Gao, Luo, & Zhang, 2012). As identified by Kramsch (2014), the use of Twitter can provide a view into current events, popular opinion, and other cultural contexts in which the language is used, thereby enhancing the vocabulary knowledge of the language learners.

The use of Twitter in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has attracted a growing amount of interest from academics, particularly in relation to the possible impact that it could have on the students' motivation to learn the language. For example, the study conducted by Lai, Yeung, and Hu (2016) demonstrated that the social feature of Twitter, in conjunction with the instant feedback it has to offer, is able to drive learners to continue participating in activities that are related to language learning. Also, Ekinçi and Şire (2018) found out in their research that Twitter has the potential to enhance the level of engagement and dynamic approach to learning, hence enhancing the intrinsic motivation of students. As unearthed by the study of Lamb (2017), regular updates from teachers can provide academic support and a more personalized learning experience, both of which can enhance the motivation of English language learners to acquire the language. Furthermore, in the same study, the social element of Twitter was

found to assist in developing a sense of community among language learners.

Despite the benefits provided by the use of Twitter in language learning, there are a number of downsides associated with using it in the classroom for the aim of improving the foreign language proficiency of the learners. To begin, the character limit per tweet on the site may limit the capacity of children to communicate complicated concepts or practice the use of complex language, which may potentially hinder the development of their language skills (Ekinci & Şire, 2018). There is also the possibility that Twitter's informal communication style, which includes the usage of acronyms, emojis, and informal language, may accidentally promote poor language habits rather than developing formal language proficiency (Junco, 2014). According to Kabilan et al. (2010), the fact that Twitter is a public platform creates concerns about privacy and suitable material. This is because students may be exposed to language or discussions that are not appropriate for them. According to Hew (2011), the fast-paced nature of Twitter may encourage superficial connections rather than in-depth debates, which in turn reduces the number of possibilities for students to engage in meaningful exchanges and practice their language skills in greater depth. When considering the integration of Twitter into language learning environments, it is important to take into consideration these constraints in order to guarantee that the benefits of using Twitter surpass any potential negatives.

Conclusion

The incorporation of Twitter into the educational environment has major consequences for students who are learning English as a foreign language. As stated by Ekinci, Ekinci, and Şanverdi (2021), when it is implemented in EFL surroundings, it integrates both traditional and contemporary methods of instruction by utilizing technology to enhance the level of interest, practicality, and engagement in language learning. In addition, Twitter has proven to be an invaluable resource in the field of foreign language education,

as it assists in the acquisition of vocabulary, encourages engagement, and facilitates the development of communicative competence. The use of social media for educational purposes is a paradigm shift in contemporary pedagogy, and Twitter is one example of how social media can be utilized for educational purposes.

Additionally, it has also been demonstrated by this study that Twitter offers a social learning environment that encourages interaction and collaborative learning, both of which have been frequently associated with successful language learning (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). The platform functions as a digital extension of the classroom, making it possible for students to maintain constant contact with both their teachers and their classmates. In addition, because Twitter is accessible all over the world, it provides students with the opportunity to become familiar with a wide range of communication styles, cultural idioms, and dialects, all of which are crucial for comprehensive language learning (Thorne, 2010).

The study also suggests that while Twitter can be a beneficial tool for language learning, there are certain drawbacks when using it in the classroom to enhance students' language skills. Hence, educators who are keen on incorporating Twitter as a tool for foreign language acquisition should make use of its potential as an effective aid in fostering students' linguistic abilities and manage the possible limitations.

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CHAPTER III

A Synthesis of the Experiences of Language Learners in Study Abroad Programs

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Derya COŞKUN²

Study abroad programs

As it always has been the case, there is a never ending trend towards study abroad (SA) programs in higher education contexts (Bell, 2016). In this regard, Walters et al. (2017) remark that study abroad programs provide many opportunities for students; therefore, it is reasonable to observe a huge demand for SA programs. Along with the benefits of SA programs for university and college students, it is undeniable that these programs contribute to teacher education programs (Medina et al., 2015). SA programs support professional development and language skills of pre-service teachers especially

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majoring in foreign language education fields. Along with language skills development, SA programs enable students and learners to meet with new cultures and to work on their self-improvement (Racicot & Ferry, 2016). Consequently, the present study intends to present an overview of study abroad programs by referring to their benefits on language skills, learner motivation, and socio-cultural perspectives.

In the wide spectrum of study abroad research conducted, a number of factors such as sociocultural aspects (Alcón-Soler, 2015; Matsumura, 2007; Newstreet & Rackard, 2018; Schwieter et al., 2018; Strange & Gibson, 2017; Walters et al., 2017; Wu, 2018; Yang & Kim, 2011), the relation of sojourn experience to language skills development (DeKeyser, 2010; Kang, 2014; Llanes et al., 2012; Llanes et al., 2016; Mora & Valls-Ferrer, 2012; Pérez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2009; Sasaki, 2007; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Wood, 2007), motivation to learn L2 in SA context (Allen, 2010; Tsai, 2012; Weger, 2013), language learners' beliefs about study abroad experience (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Bell, 2016; Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014; Kim & Yang, 2010; Medina et al., 2015; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Trent, 2011; Yang & Kim, 2011) have been explored by a number of researchers, as study abroad is viewed as an opportunity for learners to widen their horizon and gain linguistic and cultural input.

As described by Amuzie and Winke (2009), “studying abroad offers a different level and type of language input, opportunities for interaction, and exposure to the target culture” (p. 366). For this purpose, universities offer many opportunities to students who would like to pursue a study abroad semester or a year abroad. As the number of students who take part in these programs have increased, it has become an area for researchers to examine the language learners' beliefs about social, intercultural, and linguistic gains of the sojourn period. As Dörnyei (2005) puts forward, “little is known about how study-abroad affects what learners believe about language learning and what they believe about themselves as language learners, even though learner beliefs are an important

individual learner variable that contributes to SLA” (as cited in Amuzie & Winke, 2009, p.366). For this purpose, in this study it is aimed to shed light on the study abroad experiences of learners with an examination of the outputs of these programs.

Thus, this study examined the views of language learners during their study abroad (SA) experience. A variety of themes were explored in this chapter in relation to sojourn experiences of language learners during their study abroad programs. Consequently, the studies were categorized under four main themes: (1) *Study Abroad Programs and Identity Formation*, (2) *Language Skills Development*, (3) *Motivation*, and (4) *Learner Beliefs and Experiences*.

Study abroad programs and identity formation

Peripheral participation and mode of belonging are influential factors from a socio-cultural stance. Within this perspective, Wenger (1998) introduced three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. In the initial imagination phase learners expect that they would be fully involved in the host community as an insider. However, each language learner gets involved in different trajectories of mode of belonging when gaining access to legitimate membership in the host community. For instance, some sojourners get fully involved in communicating in the target language by socializing with people, and thus having a chance to increase their attendance in the social practices by going through the engagement phase. It becomes possible in this way to reach the alignment phase with full integration into the community.

Following this viewpoint, the development of pragmatic elements in study abroad context is widely explored by the researchers in the literature. There is a body of research showing that both positive and neutral outcomes may appear in learners’ language repertoire as a result of study abroad (Matsumura, 2007; Medina et al., 2015; Trent, 2011; Wu, 2018; Yang & Kim, 2011). In the study abroad context, learners strive to understand host countries’ culture

and way of living to be fully immersed in the living abroad experience. All the same, it is argued that “a common belief among language learners and educators is that the best way to learn a language is to live in a country where the language is used” (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003, p.64). Through their adaptation to the norms of behavior and the modes of speech, sojourners could grasp the meaning behind idiomatic expressions, comprehend the words that are unique to that region, and gain speaking skills such as turn taking in conversation among many other socio-cultural skills of the host culture.

To begin with the relationship between pragmatics and study abroad, Matsumura (2007) carried out a study in order to determine the effects of a SA program on interlanguage pragmatic development of language learners. After participating in an exchange program, learners gained necessary skills to give advice based on contextual clues such as the linguistic and the cultural background of the interlocutors after study abroad experience. Therefore, pragmatic competence of language learners was reported to develop after this experience.

Further, Yang and Kim (2011) investigated second language study abroad sojourners’ beliefs about language learning based on a Vygotskian sociocultural viewpoint. It was implied in the study that being exposed to rich input in the target community did not fully guarantee efficient L2 learning. It was due to the nature of harmony between learners’ beliefs and meaningful language learning atmosphere that resulted in remediation of language development and a willingness to communicate in the foreign language.

Besides, some studies have revealed that study abroad programs can provide transformative learning experiences for learners (Strange & Gibson, 2017; Walters et al., 2017). For instance, Strange and Gibson’s (2017) study explored the effects of study abroad programs on experiential and transformative learning and put forward that experiential and transformative learning should be followed while organizing study abroad programs. Furthermore,

field trips, self-reflection and community interaction were stated as effective activity types in the study abroad programs. As a consequence of the interaction with the target culture, learners gain linguistic and socio-cultural norms. Wu's (2018) study also showed that participants have a chance to improve not only their English proficiency but also their understanding of intercultural citizenship with the help of study abroad programs. According to the findings of Medina et al.'s (2015) study, study abroad programs contributed to both personal and professional transformation of pre-service teachers. In conclusion, international experience was regarded as a beneficial factor for interactional opportunity, as it helped them to transform and mediate knowledge and action between diverse communities and members.

Other studies regarding beliefs of sojourners about study abroad programs also focused on the experiences of student teachers. Besides development of language proficiency and enhanced cultural understanding, these sojourners could also experience identity construction after they experience the education system abroad and return back to their schools in their home country. For example, in Trent's (2011) study, whereas EFL student teachers viewed Australian teachers in the host community as autonomous, calm, and confident, they started to view teachers in their own countries as mechanical, traditional, and formal. Therefore, study abroad experiences caused identity construction with a transformative learning perspective that led participants to think critically and make comparisons between the host community and their sense of alignment in that social world.

Language skills development

The impacts of study-abroad experience on EFL learners' speaking abilities with a focus on factors such as willingness to communicate, and participation in interaction in classes have also been explored (Kang, 2014). It was found that there were positive developments of study abroad experiences on learners, as there was an increase in WTC, speaking abilities, and participation in

classroom interaction after students returned from the study abroad program. The development of these factors was also attributed to learners' interaction level in the host community, contextual factors and learner autonomy.

The effect of study abroad experience on fluency, accuracy, and complexity of Spanish learners of English were also investigated. It was found that there was improvement in fluency in terms of speech rate, pause frequency and accuracy (Mora & Valls-Ferrer, 2012). In another study abroad context investigating gains in speaking fluency, the findings suggested that the use of formulaic sequences led to greater levels of speaking fluency in an intercultural context (Wood, 2007).

Further studies on the impact of sojourn abroad on writing skills development were implemented with an aim to discover if there were any fluency, accuracy and complexity gains of the period spent abroad. The results demonstrated that learners made quite a progress in written fluency and lexical complexity, accuracy, and grammatical complexity (Pérez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2009). In another study, Llanes et al. (2016) found that students improved in the area of lexical complexity in writing skills, and it was related to the fact that instances of focus on meaning lead to a focus on form in return as a result of intensive language input from informal or formal conversations during study abroad. Sasaki's (2007) study also showed that learners who attended in the study-abroad program developed their second language writing ability as well as fluency in speaking skills. Llanes et al. (2012) also investigated the effect of study abroad experience on oral performance of learners. According to the results, there was development in all areas of oral production skills. More specifically, the development of oral skills was attributed to the amount of interaction with the host culture.

In other contexts, even though learners have spent a considerable time studying abroad, limited gains were also reported. For instance, the gains in TOEFL proficiency scores were moderate in Tanaka and Ellis' (2003) study considering the length and nature

of the learning experience. The negative results could have been partly due to linguistic and cultural homogeneity of the group, as students did not need to frequently get into contact with native speakers.

Concerning the impact of study abroad on language learners in terms of pragmatic development, it was discovered that there was a high correlation between lexical access speed and comprehension speed of SA sojourners. In line with the findings of previous studies in Taguchi's (2008) study learners had a great progress on comprehension speed; however, they did not have gains in the sojourn period in terms of accuracy of comprehension. In addition, there was a positive correlation between comprehension speed and the time spent outside the class during study abroad on speaking and reading activities. Therefore, SA experiences contributed to the development of comprehension skills of language learners from a variety of aspects.

In light of the studies discussed so far, it could be argued that there are neutral outcomes of studying abroad. It could be for the reason that there are many individual variances as well as contextual factors for each sojourner. Thus, pragmatic development is a crucial factor in understanding the language in context, and it requires participation into the target communities' lives.

Study abroad programs and personal factors

Motivation

Motivation is another important factor influencing learners' study abroad experiences; that is why a large body of research has explored the connection between motivation and study abroad programs. To illustrate, Allen's (2010) study examined language learners' motivation to learn languages during short-term study abroad experiences. The study demonstrated that linguistic and career-oriented motives such as a desire for traveling and learning about culture were the reasons behind the participation in study

abroad programs. Additionally, it was discovered that individual variables affect to what extent learners benefit from study abroad, as language learners who have more language focused motives improved their language skills more during a study abroad program.

Aside from linguistic and pragmatic motives, L2 motivational self-system appeared as another field of interest in study abroad research. In this vein, Tsai (2012) found that intercultural learning during study abroad periods had an impact on the participants' language learning motivation. Further, language learners showed increased levels of integrative motivation that illustrated sympathy towards the target culture, people, and ways of living as a result of sojourn abroad experiences. Intercultural experiences also led to a desire for learners to become a part of the English as a lingua franca community, and it allowed learners to take part in the intercultural world. Thus, instrumental and integrative motivational variables came to the fore as prominent factors of intercultural learning experience.

Concerning attitudinal variables of motivation, attitudes towards the host community in a study abroad program were also explored (Weger, 2013). The findings revealed that even though they were living in the host community, language learners were not interested in the target community and had low self-efficacy beliefs about their communication skills. In addition, there was a challenging environment in which learners struggled to survive, blend in the community, and have linguistic gains. Therefore, the study underlined a need for the sojourners to get involved in the host community.

Learner beliefs and experiences

The changes in beliefs about language learning after participating in study abroad programs were one of the researched topics in the literature. Many studies aimed to discover how sojourners abroad view their experiences abroad with an aim to understand if a language is really learned best by living in the native

speaking culture. Whereas some studies found profound impacts of attending these programs, others reported no significant changes in the beliefs of learners. In a study exploring learners' beliefs about language learning after a study abroad program that made comparisons between short-term and long-term participants, it was reported that both groups had perspectives directed towards self-regulatory, and a less teacher-directed education system as a result of their experiences in the host community. Nevertheless, learners who had spent more time studying abroad had stronger beliefs about autonomous learning, because they had more opportunities to put their own effort into using the L2 to survive in a foreign setting (Amuzie & Winke, 2009). Tanaka and Ellis' (2003) study also showed that the impact of sojourn experience on self-efficacy was positive to a great extent, as the learners had more confidence in their language abilities after being exposed to an English medium instruction.

However, Kaypak and Ortaçtepe (2014) did not find a significant difference between the beliefs of language learners before and after attending a study abroad program. The authors argued that this was due to the limited exposure to communication in the target language as well as the length of time spent abroad. Moreover, it was put forward that the participants were hesitant to use the target language because of their lack of accuracy in speaking. However, it was claimed that language learners' beliefs could change when they spend more time abroad.

Some studies focused on learners' perceptions with reference to their understandings and reflections concerning study abroad programs. To illustrate, Byker and Putman's (2019) study explored the extent of global competency development with the help of study abroad programs and international teaching practices. The study aimed to investigate the effect of the study abroad program on students' perceptions. According to the findings, students' global competency development, intercultural awareness and use of culturally responsive pedagogy increased by means of study abroad programs. Furthermore, students' perceptions changed when

students associated their teaching with building relationships and fostering empathy. At the end of the study, participants gained critical consciousness and learned to take action as global citizens.

Another study by Trilokekar and Rasmi (2011) underscored the importance of internalization in higher education contexts with the help of international student mobility in study abroad programs. The study explored students' understanding in relation to international educational practice, awareness about available opportunities, and their attitudes and preferences regarding study abroad programs. The findings indicated that the support provided for students by their institutions and environments had an explicit influence on their preferences about study abroad programs. In addition, most of the students agreed on the significance of study abroad programs for their future academic achievement at university level.

As a consequence, the studies in this chapter demonstrated that language learners benefitted from their experiences in linguistic, cultural, intercultural, and motivational terms. The findings showed that language learners developed their speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills as well as their use of pragmatic language knowledge with the help of their study abroad experiences. Moreover, learners had intercultural gains thanks to the opportunity to contact with speakers of a variety of languages. Thus, intercultural communicative competence was a crucial outcome of these studies as it was found by Huang et al. (2023).

Conclusion

All in all, pragmatic skills development, oral fluency, accuracy, and written skills development as well as language learners' beliefs about their sojourn experiences abroad have been explored with an aim to understand language learning behaviors and remediate language teaching activities accordingly. It has been found that there is a positive impact of study abroad programs on students' development in these areas. It is therefore crucial to study

these areas of development so that the aims of study abroad programs and language teaching practices in the home country could be improved in accordance with study abroad experiences of language learners. Accordingly, language teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum planners in addition to many other stakeholders can improve the quality of study abroad experience and the contents of language education programs by taking these developments into account. Therefore, suggestions of this study could provide practical guidelines for school leaders, study abroad coordinators, teachers, and researchers in the future research dealing with study abroad programs. In this regard, one of the most important implications is provided by Kang and Pacheco (2021) by suggesting that future studies should examine the quality of study abroad programs with a focus on the relationship between study abroad programs goals and their accreditation processes. Similarly, Huang et al. (2023) claim that study abroad programs should be an integral part of institutions' development plans and professional goals.

Many studies discussed in this paper have explored study abroad experiences of language learners. However, studies focusing on before and after the sojourn experiences are rare. Hence, in order to prepare students for the language learning and cultural exchange experiences, the results of these studies related to language learning developments need to be considered. Along with these developments, there are some factors which can be associated with SA programs. To illustrate, students' expectations, perceptions and understandings about these programs have a direct influence on their motivations and desires to study abroad. Besides, students' intercultural experiences with target culture can be linked to the outcomes of study abroad programs. Therefore, it is highly important to provide opportunities for students to participate in study abroad programs. Furthermore, the components of the intercultural education should be incorporated into teacher education programs, as it is argued that "intercultural education should promote the learning of both foreign cultures and the students' own culture, and that language and culture can be taught in an integrated way"

(Ölmez-Çağlar, 2020, pp. 333-334) in order for language learners to benefit from study abroad experiences maximally, as an initial awareness of intercultural elements could also help enhance the benefits of SA. At this point, teacher educators, universities and international offices should take responsibility to enhance these kinds of opportunities to support students' development in terms of language skills, personal growth and intercultural knowledge enhancement.

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CHAPTER IV

Examining the Impact of Google Classroom on the Speaking Anxiety of High School Students

Ahmet CİHAT YAVUZ

Introduction

The present study aimed to integrate a social networking (SN) tool to solve a rather widespread problem in ELT: speaking anxiety. Taking advantage of students' inclination to the use of technology, in particular social networking the researcher investigated the effect of Google Classroom in lowering the foreign language speaking anxiety. The underlying reason behind choosing this platform is that students would find it easy to access and familiar, thus they would feel urged to send some posts in the platform where their peers also share their ideas about the discussion topics concerning their area of interest. Therefore, being aware of the inevitability of social

networking in the life of high school learners, in this study its impact on students' speaking anxiety was investigated.

Literature Review

The proliferation of SN has gone beyond the levels and expectations that may have barely been imaginable two decades ago. The advancement of SN has revealed the need of integrating it into education. A great number of studies have thus been conducted to examine the potential impact of SN on learning (Tosh & Werdmuller, 2004; Bradshaw, 2006; Alshuaib, 2014; Nistor, 2016).

A relationship between SN and foreign language has also been found. Thorne and Payne (2005), Mazer et. al (2007), McBride (2009) and Mitchell (2012) have found positive impact of SN in terms of increasing students' motivation for interaction with their peers in the target language. Mitchell (2012) particularly explored the effect of Facebook with the participation of nine foreign language learners, of which data were collected through interviews. The result of this study showed that students not only developed their communication skills but also improved their linguistic and cultural competencies.

Being a widespread learning management and networking application, Google Classroom, has been designed specifically for teachers, which allows them and students to interact remotely over the shared inputs in a platform. With its practical interface, it facilitates users to communicate distantly whether in pairs or groups. Google Classroom is a trendy and useful web tool for teachers of such subject areas as social sciences, experimental sciences, math and the others (Gupta and Pathania, 2021). It also has become an area of interest for researchers in foreign language teaching. Namely, Setiadi (2020) explored students' perception of Google Classroom in language learning through questionnaires with the participation of 30 university students. The study yielded the results that most of the participants found Google Classroom easy to use and effective for language learning, as it allowed the students to save and receive

assignment, announcements, submit tasks or assignments through Google Classroom. Similarly, Triana et al. (2021) investigated students' perceptions of the use of Google Classroom in language learning. They found that students held a positive view of Google Classroom. The majority of them agreed that Google Classroom is easy to use and helps them learn English by enabling them to save and submit assignments. Similarly,

Google Classroom has also been analyzed in terms of its influence on speaking anxiety of learners by several researchers. Among these, Pahargyan (2021) examined the level of anxiety of English language learners through self-reflection papers, a questionnaire, and interviewing. The analysis of data revealed that communication apprehension and test anxiety often made the participants anxious about speaking English during distance learning. Similarly, Camilo et al. (2023) collected data from 10 students in an English course at a language institute. The participants took classes both face-to-face and online, and they used Google Classroom platform for communication. The researchers concluded that they should consider the emotional factors that particularly impact the development of oral language skills, for the use of such platforms provide calm environment that does not trigger anxiety. This research study generated results indicating a prominent decrease in the anxiety level and an increment in the level of engagement of the students.

A review of the literature has shown that most recent studies primarily investigated the impact of Google Classroom on its perception among its users, which mostly revolves around its practicality. Therefore, its impact on decreasing students' anxiety has yet to be researched sufficiently, which makes this study important in terms of addressing this gap.

METHODOLOGY

This action research was conducted through a mixed-method research design having included a questionnaire (Horwitz et al.,

1986) which yielded quantitative data, and focus group interviews which resulted in qualitative data about the effect of the treatment. The study aimed to measure the effect of Google Classroom on speaking anxiety of the students. In line with this goal the following research question was addressed:

1. To what extent does Google Classroom lower the speaking anxiety of high school students?

Setting

For the present study, a private high school delivering English as a foreign language was selected for the sake of convenience. In other words, the researcher conducted the study in his own workplace with his own students. The school has been delivering English as a foreign language to mostly Turkish students for 21 years.

Participants

The present study was conducted at a private science high school in the 2016-2017 academic season. The number of the participants was 16 in total; 10 males and 6 females. The participants aged 14-15 and studying at 9th grade was shaped naturally per the results of Cambridge English Placement Test (2016) administered at the beginning of the semester by the school administration, thus the selection was made conveniently without any deformation in the natural class size (N=16) and class proficiency level (intermediate).

Instruments

For the study, the data were collected through a 9-item pre-and post-Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (Appendix A) adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986)'s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and through focus group interviews. The 9 items, reflecting the participants' anxiety experiences concerning speaking, were based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA= Strongly agree to N/A= No Answer. The questionnaire was administered in

English; however, the translation was provided by the researchers when considered necessary.

Lastly, to complement the quantitative data gathered from the scale, the participants were interviewed to find out whether Google Classroom had a significant impact on the speaking anxiety of the students. Being semi-structured in design interviews (Appendix B) consisted of three open-ended questions enquiring the outcomes of Google Classroom.

Procedure

The research study lasted 5 weeks. The treatment was undertaken by the participants during 4 class hours (40 minutes each) and 8 personal hours after school, 12 hours in total. The questionnaire was given in the first week before the treatment was introduced. In genesis of the treatment the students were asked about their free time interests through a class-wide open conversation with the underlying aim of reaching out their area of interests and preparing the content of Google Classroom discussion threads. The result of these conversations revealed gender-specific results that all female students were interested in make-up, shopping and Turkish TV series, while all male students in soccer games, computer games and American TV series.

In the second week, the students were introduced and oriented with Google Classroom and they were informed about the reason of its integration in English class, that is, they would use it to chat with their peers about the weekly given topics. In the same week, the researcher shaped the classroom and posted the first discussion topics in the platform. For example, for the ones being into football and computer games the following questions were posted and discussed by the students *Who do you think deserve FIFA Ballon d'Or this year? Why?* and *What is the most effective computer game you have recently played? Why?*

During the third week, the researcher allotted half an hour each week and brought the discussion to the classroom. Then, a

similar discussion was conducted with the researcher’s presence as well this time. In this week, the researcher also posted second series of topics in the platform which applied to fourth week as well.

In the last week, the researcher administered the post questionnaire and focus group interviews in fours.

RESULTS

The aim of the study was to measure the effect of Google Classroom in decreasing the speaking anxiety level of the students by means of posted discussion topics in Google Classroom closely related to students’ area of interest. It was expected that the integration of social network and appealing topics would boost students’ confidence and result in a decrease in their speaking anxiety. Data were gathered from the speaking anxiety scale which was conducted before and after the treatment and focus group interviews. The following section describes the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research.

Results of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale

Table 1. The percentage of Turkish high school students’ foreign language speaking anxiety (Pre-test)*

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; N/A = no answer

Items	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(NA)
1. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class	38	25	13	13	13

2. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class	19	31	19	19	13
3. I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do	19	32	19	19	13
4. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English language class	0	19	25	25	31
5. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	25	19	19	19	19
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class	31	19	25	0	31
7. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	44	13	13	19	13
8. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	50	13	13	13	13
9. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class	13	13	25	25	25

*The numbers are rounded off to the nearest number, thus the total may exceed 100% in some items.

A detailed analysis of Table 1 is given below.

Item 1: I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class

Over the half of the respondents (63%) agreed that they panic once they need to speak without preparation indicating that they do not feel comfortable to speak without a notice in advance. The minority (26%) disagreed with that.

Item 2: It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class

Of all the respondents 13% had no answer to this item, whereas half of the respondents (50%) seemed to have agreed that they feel ashamed of volunteering to speak which suggests that students did not feel like speaking until getting urged to do.

Item 3: I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do

Slightly over the half of the respondents (51%) seemed to have agreed with this item, which suggests that many respondents do not regard their capability as good as their peers.

Item 4: I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English language class

Unlike the first three items only 19% feel that nervous in the classroom, 50% disagreed with this, which implies that the anxiety is not in the level of heart-bouncing for many the class.

Item 5: I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students

There seems a slight difference (5%) in the number of respondents who agreed (43%) and disagreed (38%) with this. It could be said nearly half of the respondents do not regard themselves as conscious individuals for speaking before the class.

Item 6: I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class

Half of the respondents (50%) agreed while only 25% disagreed with this item. The answers show that the majority of the class feel nervous and confused while the minority feel the same.

Item 7: I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

Like the previous answers more than half of the respondents (57%) stayed in agreement, whereas 32% disagreed indicating that rules is also a factor for the speaking anxiety for the half of the class.

Item 8: I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language

63% agreed whereas 26% disagreed, which clearly suggests that for the majority of the class being laughed in the case of errors is a potential factor in the increment of the speaking anxiety level.

Item 9: I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class

Half of the respondents (50%) disagreed, indicating that over half of the respondents do not feel confident to speak English in the classroom at least due to the stated reasons.

Table 2. The percentage of Turkish high school students' foreign language speaking anxiety (Post-test)*

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; N/A = no answer

Items	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)	(NA)
1. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class	6	13	25	31	25

2. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class	6	13	44	25	13
3. I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do	6	13	38	38	6
4. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English language class	0	0	50	38	13
5. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	38	38	13	0	13
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class	0	6	63	25	6
7. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	13	13	38	38	0
8. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	19	6	32	32	13
9. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class	38	25	13	13	6

*The numbers are rounded off to the nearest number, thus the total may exceed 100% in some items.

A detailed analysis of Table 2 is given below.

Item 1: I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class

Slightly over the half of the respondents (54%) disagreed with this item, and only 19% stayed in agreement.

Item 2: It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class

The number of the respondents disagreeing with this item went up to 69% that, and only 19% still get embarrassed when volunteering answers.

Item 3: I always feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do

Only 19% of the respondents agreed with this item in the post-test. There is a big increment in the number (76%) of respondents having disagreed this item.

Item 4: I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English language class

There is no one agreed this item, and even 88% disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing that an extreme level of anxiety is off the table.

Item 5: I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students

A vast majority of the participants (74%) regarded themselves self-conscious speakers of English, whereas there is still a minor number of the participants (13%) who still consider themselves not self-conscious.

Item 6: I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class

A great majority (88%) disagreed with this item, suggesting that fewer students (6%) think they still get anxious when speaking.

Item 7: I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

In line with the previous items only 26% find speaking a nervous experience due to the abundance of rules, and 76% disagreed with this item.

Item 8: I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language

25% agreed and 64% disagreed, which clearly suggests that for the majority of the class being laughed in the case of errors is no longer a potential factor affecting their speaking quality and desire.

Item 9: I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class

63% agreed and 26 disagreed, which indicates that there are more students finding themselves confident enough to speak.

Results of the Interviews

To complement the quantitative data the researcher interviewed the participants in groups of four through random grouping. The interviews were conducted in a quiet office of the school and lasted 5-10 min each. For a better insight of content, the interviews were taped and transcribed. For the first two questions all the participants stated that they used social networking applications such as Facebook, Instagram and Snap Chat every day to keep updated about their friends and the world in general. The following section reports the findings obtained from the responses to the other questions related to Google Classroom, which had not been used by the students until this study was conducted:

A useful tool for practicing English

The participants were asked whether they found Google Classroom a useful tool for improving English. The majority

reported that it was a very useful tool because they could send posts about the discussions related to their area of interest.

St 7: I think it is a useful tool because we can discuss about football, favorite TV series and computer games.

Raised self-confidence

The first question was followed by a second one which enquired about the impact of Google Classroom on the speaking ability of the students. Most of the students stated that they started to feel more confident speaking in the classroom because they could easily communicate on the net, which could be achievable in the classroom, as well. The following excerpts reveal this finding:

St: 3: I felt more relaxed to speak after Google Classroom. It's maybe because I easily posted my ideas in English at home.

St 7: I started to feel more confident to speak in the classroom after using Google Classroom.

Speaking is not hard

The other common pattern extracted from the answers to this question is about the perception toward speaking. Most of the students declared that speaking is not hard because the important thing is to communicate despite errors, as reported below:

St: 11: Google Classroom was very useful because we could easily chat and communicate with each other despite the mistakes I made.

St: 13: Speaking is not hard anymore. If you can communicate this is what matters.

Google Classroom should be a part of English class.

Finally, the participants were asked if they would like to use Google Classroom for their English class from then on. The majority emphasized that they wished to use it continually in the English classes because it was practical and attainable even after school, as displayed in the following excerpt:

St 9: I really want to use Google Classroom in my English class. It is so easy to reach through my cell phone.

St 11: I liked Google Classroom and I want it to be a part of our English class. It is so practical to use and send posts via my cell phone, also it is so good to send posts in the school shuttle.

Discussion

Regarding the quantitative and qualitative findings Google Classroom is assumed to be a positive foreign language learning tool which can be easily integrated into the course, attainable after school by almost all the students who have a cell phone, boosts students' speaking abilities and most importantly serves as a catalyst to decrease the speaking anxiety level of its users when students' interests and preferences are taken into consideration. These results were substantiated through the increment/decrease rate of each item; for example, the percentage of the students disagreeing with the following item *I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class* increased from 28% to 88%, and the ones agreeing with *I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class* decreased from 63% to 19% given their pre-tests and post-tests. Alike data are also seen in the rest 7 items.

The results were also acknowledged by the students' after-treatment comments about Google Classroom, in which the participants reported that Google Classroom had an impact on their speaking abilities by boosting their confidence.

Conclusion

In this action research, the researcher had anticipated the positive impact of Google Classroom on the students' speaking abilities in terms of lowering anxiety level, and the result seemed to have substantiated this prediction. Concerning the quantitative and qualitative findings it could be said that high school students enjoy talking about the topics in their area of interests and using technology

as part of learning, which have positive impact by lowering the speaking anxiety level of the students. Despite all these findings the study had some limitations that may have affected the study. The first one was the limited size of the participants (N=16) which certainly impedes generalizing the results. The second one was the limited period (5 weeks) the study had been conducted within, which again prevents us to generalize the study.

In the future, a large-scale study about the effect of Google Classroom and alike platforms on general foreign language learning experience could be a contribution to this field, also alike studies (integration of social networking and foreign language) may be tried with young learners, which is likely to yield a distinct set of data.

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CHAPTER V

Grammar Teaching Through the Years: Focus on Form through Processing Instruction

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Grammar Teaching Through the Years

Similar to other fields of empirical research, second language acquisition (SLA) deals with highly-debated questions. These questions generate as time passes and although some are answered rather swiftly, others create dilemmas that longer time spans to get solved. When it comes to teaching a second language (L2), grammar instruction has arguably drawn the most interest over many decades (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) as the views towards grammar teaching continue to fluctuate with still no definite answer even after decades of debates.

Over time, language educators have examined grammar from varying perspectives, and these different viewpoints have evolved in

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accordance with different approaches to language teaching. The view of grammar instruction is often categorized into three major approaches, each associated with specific time periods and educational paradigms (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011):

- 1) **Traditional methods** era which urged upon the exclusive exposure to the grammar teaching.
- 2) **Communicative methods era** which disregarded grammar instruction while acclaiming exclusive exposure to meaningful communication
- 3) **The recent mindset** which emphasizes the importance of both grammar and communication

At first, for a really long time, grammar instruction was actually believed to be the most crucial organ of L2 learning processes (Celce- Murcia, 2001) Educators held the belief that if learners acquired a solid understanding of the grammatical aspects of a target language, they would successfully achieve their language-learning objectives and attain proficiency. Additionally, there was a notion that working on the form and structure of other languages could enhance one's grammatical knowledge in their native language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). These beliefs and more led to the development of teaching methods that heavily emphasized grammar instruction. An example of such a method is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which exclusively concentrated on teaching grammatical structures. However this changed soon after and beliefs towards grammar instruction underwent a series of change that continued until recently.

In this article, we are going to discuss the changing view of grammar instruction by focusing specifically on a new trend; processing instruction. We are going to start by discussing the said differences on grammar teaching. Next, we are going to focus on one of the current practices of grammar teaching; form-focused instruction. The later sections are going to be solely about processing instruction which is one the form-focused instruction practices.

Finally, we are going to conclude the article by briefly referring back to what has been pointed out overall.

Focus on Form

After the grammar teaching was realized to be important in the process of second language (L2) learning process, educators came up with form-focused instruction (FFI) which is an umbrella term, consisting of different models of teaching. The final and current view of grammar instruction relies heavily on meaning-based, form-focused instruction which emphasizes not only form but also meaningful communication being applied for the one and same purpose (Ellis, 2006). This very use of FFI was named FonF by Long (1991) who claimed that it is much more effective than focusing solely on grammar (focus on forms (FonFs) or on communication (focus on meaning) as it brings together the advantages of both. FonFs instruction models regard language teaching as the teaching of sequentially-presented grammatical aspects. On the contrary, FonF presents the language as a mechanism for communication (Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998). In other words, in FonFs learners consider language a subject to be learned while in FonF they see language as a tool for communication (Ellis, 2001). Also, purely communicative, focus on meaning instruction models which omit grammar teaching is quite different from FonF. These types of instructions were proven to be inadequate as it has been stated in the study before. Therefore, by maintaining a balance between the two types, FonF allows the learners to have a chance at attending to both meaning and the form.

An approach based on FonF works quite effectively (Doughty, 2001) due to the fact that it successfully combines form and meaning together. While in FonFs, the grammar is taught without any meaningful context and in focus on meaning grammar is not a concern at all, FonF presents linguistic forms inside meaningful contexts. Teaching practices that are shaped around FonF needs to consist of communicative authentic tasks inside these meaningful contexts (Sheen, 2003). While learning a target language, students

must be exposed to meaningful communicative tasks which mirror real life. (Long & Robinson, 1998).

Focus on Form through Processing Instruction

One of the ways of implementing FonF in learning environments is through processing instruction. It is an approach of teaching grammar which relies heavily on interpreting and processing the input for meaning (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Processing instruction has been simply defined by DeKeyser and Botana (2015) by a grammar teaching technique that intervenes in the processing strategies of learners to promote effective processing which will eventually lead to the proper internalization of language. One of the leading researchers of the subject matter, VanPatten (1990; 1996; 2004) has pointed out some important facts regarding input processing (IP). He stated that, any misconception while learning a target language is because of problems that occur during the processing of the input. He also advises teachers of foreign and second languages to apply IP tasks after they have taught a grammar structure. Thus, the learners will have processed the input in a more proper way and the learning will be more effective.

Theoretical background of processing instruction has a lot in common with working memory. Although the human brain is capable of doing wonders, there is one aspect it fails at; multitasking. Multitasking failures with regard to processing instruction results from the fact that human attention is limited by it the working memory. Each human brain has a working memory which temporarily stores and manipulates information and is limited in capacity (Baddeley, 2003: 837). Because of this limitation on focus, we can process only one information at one turn (Bygate, 1999; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Skehan, 1998).

Working memory plays a vital role in high-level cognition skills, especially language processing (Dehn, 2011). Language learners suffer from its limitation in terms of conflict between meaning and form. When processing input, learners can only attend

to either meaning or form but not both (Skehan, 1998; 2011; 2014; 2015). The consequences of this limited capacity while processing input could be observed easily as, when learners encounter input, they prioritize meaning over form since it is almost impossible to attend to both simultaneously (VanPatten, 1990 cited in Ellis, 2012).

The very fact that learners cannot focus on both meaning and form at the same time makes FonF the best instruction model for IP. VanPatten (2002) believes that processing instruction is best applied through FonF as when learners encounter input, they will focus on the meaning first and if learners they pay too much attention to the meaning, they will completely disregard form. This results in a lesson without any grammatical focus. This is basically the case when teachers use focus on meaning instruction model during their classes. However, FonF allows the learners to focus both on meaning and form by presenting grammar structures inside meaningful contexts that requires the learners to understand the content first and the structure later. Thus, the learners will have an ample amount of opportunities to attend to both meaning and form not at the same time. Additionally, some researchers (e.g. Sheen, 2007) believed FonFs will be the most suitable instruction model for IP. The fact that language is taught through explicit grammar explanations in FonFs (Long, 2000 cited in Uysal & Bardakçı, 2014) was resembled to processing instruction techniques (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). However, the aim of a FonF instruction model is to associate meaning with form while its mainly form in a FonFs instruction (VanPatten, 2002).

VanPatten (2009) has identified four main principles for IP:

- 1) Learners first process the meaning not the form.** As it has been stated earlier, the first thing that the language learners look for inside a comprehensible input is the message. This is a direct result of working memory which impedes learners from processing both meaning and form simultaneously. Teachers need to be aware of the amount of exposure to the

input that learners need to process not only meaning but also form.

- 2) **Learners tend to think that the first noun of the sentence is always the agent (subject).** In many languages the first noun of a sentence is mostly the one by whom the action is performed. This makes learners unintentionally assume that the first words are always the agent. However, this default feature of language learners' might not come in handy all the time since some languages may have complex word order, or might be allowing pro-drop (hidden) subjects such as Turkish.
- 3) **Learners need to process the communicative value in order to process forms that are not meaningful.** In some situations, forms may not have enough communicative value. For them to be processed properly, meaning should be processed. In other words, higher communicative value leads to better processing of the form.
- 4) **Initial words are more salient in a sentence.** The attention of learners is more drawn to the words that come at the beginning of a sentence. Therefore, it appears that these words are acquired easier and quicker. That is also why inverted sentence orders may sometimes confuse language learners.

Now that we have examined a number of studies that define the nature of FonF through processing instruction, it would be now right to discuss about some findings that would reflect on its effectiveness to find out whether or not teachers of foreign languages should benefit from it.

Empirical Evidence for Processing Instruction

There have been many studies that aims to figure out if IP tasks inside FonF teaching designs are helping L2 development. Most of these studies compared the differences between the effects provided by traditional grammar teaching and grammar teaching through processing instruction. One example of such studies was conducted by Benati (2005). In the study, the researcher compared the effects

of processing instruction, traditional grammar teaching and meaning-based output instruction. The study was conducted in two schools; one in China and one in Greece, simultaneously with a total of 77 participants. The participants were aged between 12-13 all of which were learning English as a foreign language. All the learners in both schools were randomly split into three groups; Processing Instruction group (PI), Traditional Instruction group (TI) and Meaning-based Output Instruction group (MOI). The targeted grammar structure was Past Simple Tense and the participants had not previously studied it prior to study. After pre-tests and post-tests were applied, the findings of the study showed that grammar teaching through processing instruction had positive effect on L2 development and this effect was much bigger compared to the other two models of teaching which were traditional and meaning-based. This study clearly indicated that using IP when teaching grammar enhances the learning experience.

Another study that put forward similar results was conducted by VanPatten and Uludağ (2011) who worked with 38 Turkish university students aged between 19-22. The participants were studying English as their course in preparatory class for a year. The targeted grammar structure of the study was the Passive Voice which they did not receive any instruction about before the study. Moreover, the participants were not applied any IP techniques before in order not to be familiar with processing instruction. There were two groups; the experimental group (n = 22) studied the target structure through processing instruction while the control group (n = 16) did not receive any instruction at all. After pre-tests, treatments and post-tests were applied, the comparison between groups pointed out findings that suggested IP tasks significantly improve L2 development. This was realized when the processing instruction group had significant gains while the control group did not. The researchers claimed that processing instruction used as a focus on form is quite helpful in language learning environments.

Processing Instruction has also been proved to be also helpful in virtual learning environments. Russel (2012) investigated the

effects of IP tasks with distance learning students. The researcher used computerized visual enhancement (CVE) to improve noticing of the learners and combined CVE with IP tasks. The control group received traditional grammar instruction while the other four experimental groups received different combinations of IP. The results of the study suggested a significant impact of IP tasks compared to the traditional instruction in terms of helping the L2 development of the learners. Additionally, the participant learners wished to use processing instruction tasks more often in the future and not the traditional grammar teaching tasks. These findings indicate that not only IP tasks have a bigger impact on L2 learning but also, they are more appealing to the learners of target languages.

The studies presented above clearly supporting the effectiveness of processing instruction used as a focus on form model of teaching. Now that we have finished examining the literature to understand IP tasks better, we may conclude the study by referring to the earlier stated claims.

Conclusion

This study has discussed briefly the history of grammar teaching, starting from the early years when grammar teaching was thought vital to the times it was disregarded completely. We have stated that these constantly changing views on grammar are quite natural and it depends on the era of teaching target languages. The final and the recent view towards grammar is that it is needed in L2 learning processes but not like how it used to be. In the past it was either put in the center or omitted. However, now the studies suggest that it has to be involved in language learning yet it has to be combined with meaningful contexts.

This recent view towards grammar suggested a new model of grammar teaching; focus on form. It was defined to be a combination of both meaning and grammar. Processing instruction, another model of teaching that is based on the same approach with focus on form, was claimed to be quite effective when teaching grammar.

This model stated that any errors in the internalization of new information results from wrong processing of the input and we have to design input so that it can be processed better by the learners. This model of teaching has received much praise by the researchers and it has been proved to be quite helpful in L2 learning.

Unfortunately, this study has not presented any samples of IP tasks in order to focus solely on the theoretical frame and empirical evidence of processing instruction. Readers who would like to get a glimpse at the said tasks might want to search for studies who provides their readers with such tasks (e.g. Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; VanPatten & Uludağ, 2011).

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CHAPTER VI

A comparison between the scores of face-to-face and online proficiency exam of preparatory class students

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Introduction

This study aims to compare the scores of face-to-face and online proficiency tests taken by English preparatory class students studying at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey. This research adopted a descriptive study model. The participants consisted of 152 preparatory class students and the data were collected from 2020-2021(online) and 2021-2022 (face-to-face) academic year proficiency exam. The findings indicated that no significant difference existed in the total scores and Use of English, Reading, Listening sections of the proficiency exams. On

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the other hand, it was seen that the average of online writing section scores of the students was higher than the average of scores of the students who participated in the face-to-face exam. Another finding was that the speaking scores of the face-to-face speaking exam were found to be higher than the average of the students who participated in the online exam.

As the methods and tools used for a more effective foreign language teaching environment all over the world continue to be updated thanks to technological improvements and innovations in the current age, the methods, tools and technologies used for a better system for assessing the language outcomes have to manage to remain up-to-date with these changes. In line with this, the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic further accelerated this process of transformation and, as a result, instructional activities as well as assessment practices have had to shift online as a consequence of the measures taken against the pandemic (Ahmad et al., 2021; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Green & Lung, 2021; Ockey, 2021; Ockey et al., 2021; Papageorgiou & Manna, 2021; Purpura et al., 2021; Sutadji et al., 2021; Wagner & Krylova, 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). More specifically, educational institutions at all levels across the globe had to be closed in order to avoid physical contact among students and instructors and lockdowns had to be implemented to slow down and stop the spread of the pandemic. Online education emerged as the only and best available option in this context; however, it would hardly be possible to argue that educational institutions, instructors, students, parents and other stakeholders (such as decision-makers, curriculum developers or assessment designers, etc.) were well-prepared for such swift transformation (Abduh, 2021; Önal, 2022). In other words, almost all educators – most of whom never had such online teaching and testing experience before – have had to deliver their courses online and employ online tests to assess their students. In a similar vein, this process was not really different for the students, most of whom had no online learning experience before, since they had to participate in online classes and take online tests.

The switch to online education has brought with it certain benefits as well as challenges for the stakeholders. For instance, learners have the chance to attend courses and take tests anywhere and anytime as long as they are implemented on an asynchronous basis (Blake, 2015) and this flexibility has been appreciated by the learners (Burns, 2011; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Hartnett, 2016; Önal, 2022; Simonson et al., 2015). Equity of access to education has been facilitated through online education (Koç, 2020) and online learners get the chance to improve their autonomy and self-regulation skills (Devran & Elitaş, 2016). On the other hand, especially for students who lack the technological tools (such as computers, tablets, etc.) and infrastructure (such as broadband internet connection), problems related to digital divide may arise (Ahmad et al., 2021; Ockey, 2021; Simonson et al., 2015; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). Furthermore, especially for crowded classrooms, interaction between the instructor and the students may be limited as the instructors may not be able to devote enough time to each student, resulting in poor feedback opportunities (Gürer et al., 2016). In this vein, the importance of assessment in online environments has been underscored with specific reference to nonexistent or scarce opportunities for face-to-face interactions and observations that enable the instructors to monitor and assess learners' progress more accurately (Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Rovai, 2000). In addition to limited contact between the instructors and the students, Abduh (2021) and Ockey (2021) report that lack of familiarity with technology and the learning management system (LMS) may present additional challenges for both the instructors and learners. It should also be noted that reliability, validity and practicality of online assessments have also been questioned with specific reference to potential problems (Green & Lung, 2021; Muhammad & Ockey, 2021; Wagner & Krylova, 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). More precisely, several researchers (Abduh, 2021; Adzima, 2020; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Muhammad & Ockey, 2021; Purpura et al., 2021) voiced their concerns as to challenges related to academic dishonesty and plagiarism in online assessment. For instance, Adzima (2020)

has reported that dishonest behavior is more likely to emerge in unproctored environments and recommends the utilization of proctoring software since accessing and plagiarizing the work of others on the internet may seem easier and more attractive for many learners (Rovai, 2000).

In the face of increasing adoption of online education (and pertaining to the focus of the present study), the comparability and consistency of assessment procedures and learner performances between face-to-face and online modes have been frequently questioned (Blake, 2015; Muhammad & Ockey, 2021; Papageorgiou & Manna, 2021). In this respect, Al-Nuaim (2012) conducted a study in Saudi tertiary context involving two parallel groups of students taking the same courses from the same instructors and concluded that there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups of students. Kemp and Grieve (2014) also reported that comparable levels of academic performance could be achieved by students taking online and face-to-face courses. More specifically, as has been suggested by Papageorgiou and Manna (2021), differences as to testing environment (home vs. school) and technological equipment may lead to differences in the test performances of the learners and more research is called for to get a deeper understanding of such factors. To the best knowledge of the researchers, there are no studies that compare tertiary level foreign language learners' scores of face-to-face and online proficiency tests in Turkish context; thus, this present study aims to compare the scores of face-to-face and online proficiency tests taken by English preparatory class students studying at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey by employing a descriptive study model. In line with the aims of the current study, the following research questions will be answered through the collected data:

- 1- Do the online and face-to-face proficiency exam scores of the students differ in terms of sub-skills (i.e. use of English, listening, reading, speaking and writing)?

- 2- Is there a significant difference between the face-to-face and online proficiency exam sub-section scores of the students?

Methodology

This research is a descriptive study that aims to compare face-to-face and online proficiency exam scores of the preparatory class students.

Context of the Study

The proficiency exam of the School of Foreign Languages consists of five sub-sections. The first section, *use of English*, aims to assess students' semantico-grammatical knowledge via 30 multiple-choice items. The *reading* and *listening* sections assess students' comprehension of literal and implied meaning via 8 texts (4 for reading and 4 for listening) and includes 40 multiple-choice items (20 for reading and 20 for listening) in total. The *speaking* and *writing* sections aim to assess students' oral and written productive skills via 2 tasks for each; and institutionally developed and validated analytical rubrics (covering areas such as accuracy, fluency, content, pronunciation, punctuation, organization, etc.) are employed for the scoring of students' performances. All sub-sections of the 2019-2020 proficiency exam were conducted online whereas all sub-sections of the 2020-2021 proficiency exam was completed face-to-face. Both the face-to-face and online versions of the proficiency exam are assumed to be identical in terms of difficulty, content and scoring. No proctoring software is used throughout the online assessment process.

Participants

The study group of the research consists of a total of 152 students who took the English language proficiency exam at a state university in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 at the School of Foreign Languages. The distribution of the participants by years is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants across the years.

Years	Number of participants
2020-2021 (Online)	58
2019-2020 (Face-to-face)	94
Total	152

As can be understood from Table 1, while 58 students took the 2020-2021 (online) proficiency exam, 94 students took 2019-2020 (face-to-face) proficiency exam.

Findings

In this section of the study, the findings of the analyses conducted for each research question have been presented.

Research Question 1. Do the online and face-to-face proficiency exam scores of the students differ in terms of sub-skills (i.e. use of English, listening, reading, speaking and writing)?

Table 2. Sub-skill scores of online and face-to-face proficiency exams.

	Face-to-face					Online				
	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Use of English	94	64.25	8.43	46	88	58	62.58	7.62	46	84
Reading	94	71.31	12.25	48	100	58	70.27	11.61	44	100
Listening	94	78.29	11.48	48	100	58	80.27	10.21	52	100
Writing	94	52.09	16.60	0	90	58	66.06	26.03	0	100
Speaking	94	69.25	20.73	0	100	58	52.44	19.38	0	90
Total Score	94	67.04	8.52	41.20	85.32	58	66.32	10.33	44	84.12

As can be seen from Table 2, the mean scores of the first sub-section (*use of English*) of the face-to-face and online tests are 64.25 and 62.58 respectively. The mean scores of *reading* sub-section of face-to-face exam ($\bar{x}=71.31$) is slightly higher than the online exam ($\bar{x}=70.27$). The mean scores of the face-to-face listening sub-section ($\bar{x}=78.29$), on the contrary, seems to be lower than the online test mean scores of the students ($\bar{x}=80.27$). On the other hand, greater differences were observed in the scores of the productive skills sub-sections of the proficiency exam. Namely, the mean of writing sub-section scores of face-to-face test ($\bar{x}=52.09$) was found to be lower than the mean scores of the online test ($\bar{x}=66.06$). However, face-to-face speaking sub-section mean scores ($\bar{x}=69.25$) were found to be higher than the online mean scores ($\bar{x}=52.44$). Finally, when the total mean scores of the face-to-face ($\bar{x}=67.04$) and online ($\bar{x}=66.32$) proficiency exams are examined, it would be possible to argue that students performed slightly better in the face-to-face proficiency exam.

Research Question 2. Is there a significant difference between the face-to-face and online proficiency exam sub-section scores of the students?

When the obtained scores were analyzed, no statistically significant difference was observed in *Use of English, Reading, Listening* sub-section scores and total scores of the participants. Nevertheless, in two productive skill sub-sections (i.e. *writing* and *speaking*) mean scores, a significant difference was found between face-to-face and online proficiency exams.

Table 3. Comparison of writing sub-section mean scores according to independent samples t-test results.

Group	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dv.	t	p	
Face-to-face	94	52.09	16.60	-4,04	.000*	0,675
Online	58	66.06	26.03			

*p<0.05

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the mean scores of the writing sub-section ($\bar{x}= 66.06$) of the students who participated in the online version of the proficiency exam is higher than the mean scores of the writing sub-section ($\bar{x}= 52.09$) of the students who participated in the face-to-face exam. The results of the analysis show that this difference is statistically significant ($p<0.05$). In other words, it shows that the students who took the online exam performed much better than the students who took the face-to-face exam. When the effect size value of this difference is considered, according to Cohen’s criteria, .675 indicates a moderate effect size (cited in Pallant, 2016).

Table 4. Comparison of speaking sub-section mean scores according to independent samples t-test results.

Group	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dv.	t	p	
Face-to-face	94	69.25	20.73	4,97	.000*	0,831
Online	58	52.44	19.38			

*p<0,05

As has been presented in Table 4, the speaking sub-section mean scores of the students who participated in the face-to-face proficiency exam ($\bar{x}= 69.25$) is higher than the mean scores of the students who took the online proficiency exam ($\bar{x}= 52.44$). The results of the analysis indicate that this difference is statistically significant ($p<0.05$). More precisely, it would be justified to argue that the students who took the face-to-face proficiency exam performed much better than the students who took the online proficiency exam. When the effect size value of this difference is examined, according to Cohen's criteria, .831, indicates a large effect size (cited in Pallant, 2016).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to compare online and face-to-face proficiency exam scores of preparatory class English language learners at the School of Foreign Languages in Turkish context. The comparison of the online and face-to-face proficiency exams indicated that there was no significant difference in the participants' mean scores in sub-sections of *use of English, listening and reading*. Similarly, the total mean of the scores of the test takers did not feature any significant difference. This finding is consistent with the findings of many other studies (Al-Nuaim, 2012; Kemp & Grieve, 2014) in that administering exams online or face-to-face do not lead to any differences in the performance of the English language learners.

Another finding of the study suggested that students' speaking sub-section mean scores of the face-to-face proficiency exam were significantly higher than their mean scores in the online proficiency exam. It has been widely accepted that speaking in a second or foreign language is an anxiety-provoking experience for most of the learners (MacIntyre, 2007; Minghe & Yuan, 2013; Riasati, 2012). Compared to face-to-face mode, online speaking assessment has generally been regarded as less stressful on the part of the test-takers (Bakar et al., 2013; Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021). Moreover, speaking to a camera or monitor lacks authenticity and interlocutors may not be able to make use of paralinguistic and extralinguistic features as effectively in online speaking exams. Consequently, the fact that students performed better in face-to-face proficiency exam speaking subsection in the present study may be explained with reference to its being more authentic and less threatening in comparison to online mode. In this respect, Nakatsuhara et al. (2021) argued that test-takers' scores were comparable between face-to-face and online modes of the IELTS speaking test and online mode resulted in "...non-significantly different, but marginally lower, scores across criteria" (p.13). In this current study, however, the speaking sub-section mean scores of the participants were found to be not only marginal but also significantly higher in the face-to-face exam.

Another striking finding of the current study was that students' writing sub-section mean scores in the online test was found to be higher than the face-to-face exam, the reasons for which needs to be elaborated on. As has been suggested by several researchers (Abduh, 2021; Adzima, 2020; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Muhammad & Ockey, 2021; Purpura et al., 2021), academic integrity and related issues of identity security, unauthorised collaboration (collusion), plagiarism and cheating emerge as the main challenges of online assessment procedures. It should be admitted that such challenges exist in traditional face-to-face assessment processes as well; however, tendencies of test-takers to involve in academic dishonesty seem to rise in online settings (especially in unproctored sessions)

because instructors do not have the chance to monitor their students and their surroundings. Additionally, as has been suggested by Rowe (2004), many characteristics of online technology even enhance the opportunity and temptation for dishonest behavior. In this respect, it would be justified to argue that students' tendency to engage in academic dishonesty may have contributed to their better performance on the online proficiency exam with respect to the writing sub-section.

As has been suggested by Wiranto et al. (2021), it seems highly unlikely that online education and assessment will disappear completely from the educational arena in the so-called period of *new normal* and, despite the challenges it presents, it offers certain benefits as well. To exemplify, "it forced language assessment developers to be creative and bold in their approaches to ensuring a safe testing environment without compromising the validity of the decisions based on their assessments" (Ockey, 2021, p. 5). On the other hand, heightened concerns as to the validity, reliability and security of online assessment have been repeated in the relevant literature (Brem, 2002; Gaytan & McEwen, 2007; Green & Lung, 2021; Muhammad & Ockey, 2021; Rowe, 2004; Wagner & Krylova, 2021; Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). In a similar vein, it has been noted that assessment of online group interaction (Morley, 2000), the steep learning curve of becoming an autonomous student (Liang & Kim, 2004) and the logistical difficulties of keeping up with the changes, upgrades and technical challenges of online software and testing environments (Fluck, 2019; Henderson, 2001) emerge as the other challenges of online assessment. It should also be noted that mode comparability between online versus face-to-face versions of exams in terms of their validity, reliability, practicality and fairness will continue to be explored more frequently in the *new normal* period (Papageorgiou & Manna, 2021). Considering the strengths and weaknesses of online assessment on the one hand and the rapid pace of improvements in technological innovations on the other hand, it would be safe to argue that the challenges that come with online assessment may be compensated for with the aid of

technological innovations such as proctoring programs or plagiarism detection software. The task of instructors and test designers is, thus, to become aware of these challenges and seek ways of overcoming them to make the best use of ever-evolving technology.

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