Evaluation of The Instructor-Student Interaction in Online Classes: Instructors' Perspective

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process shifted from face-to-face to online as schools and universities were closed almost worldwide. After the pandemic restrictions, it seems that many educational institutions continue to offer online courses as an alternative to face-to-face classes, or they have begun implementing hybrid programs in which the students have both face-to-face and online courses. With the shift from face-to-face to online learning, the learning process has been affected negatively from different perspectives with varying degrees; however, the interaction between instructors and students has become more challenging to pursue at expected levels. Students tend to avoid interacting for many different reasons in the online learning process, or the instructors have some obstacles to a sound interaction with their students. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of the English language instructors, this descriptive study aimed to examine instructor-student interaction in online classes, the challenges faced by the practitioners, and their suggestions for course designers, policymakers and other related stakeholders. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach. The participants were 17 instructors working at the school of foreign languages at a state university. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data. The data was analysed by following the content analysis procedures. The findings reported insights into the interaction issues in online classes; the instructors had negative perceptions of the interaction in online courses due to the challenges they faced. In light of the qualitative data, the present research offers valuable suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, such as considering the learners' participation in assessments and providing in-service training programs for EFL instructors.

Keywords: *Interaction, Online classes, English as a Foreign language, EFL instructors*

INTRODUCTION

Interaction is defined as a joint action or impact, and it has the potential to play a substantial role in improving the quality of learning. This is because superior learning requires a combined effort on the part of the instructor and the learner (Curtis & Lawson, 2019). Interaction addresses how instructors and students utilise language in class (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982). Language, interaction, and learning have been shown to have a complicated relationship. According to Huth (2011), learning cannot occur without interaction since language is the carrier of meaning. Students have the chance to communicate their ideas, thoughts, remarks, and feelings with both their classmates and the instructor when they engage in interaction with one another (Lei, 2009). Interaction could be argued to be one of the most critical aspects of the learning process. The interaction between instructors and students is one of the fundamental requirements for a thriving learning environment. Interaction between the instructor and students is beneficial to both the learning process and the conversation that takes place in the classroom. This is due to the fact that interaction between the teacher and students makes it simpler for students to learn and comprehend the subject matter (Huth, 2011).

On the other hand, there has been a tremendous advancement in technology within the past ten years. In today's world, the advancement of technology has altered the atmosphere in which teaching and learning occur, but it has also produced new modes of both activities. The Internet has profoundly impacted many facets of modern life, including the development of online educational platforms (Warschauer,1998). According to Grgurovic (2013), technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in all aspects of society, including the educational context. One of the things that have been made possible by technological advancement is the virtual classroom. According to Paudel (2021), students are more likely to engage in an online class than a traditional one owing to several variables, including the cost, the difficulty of travelling to colleges, and the distance between the two. Interactions conducted online keep students more interested and improve their capacity to comprehend the subject matter in a more straightforward and expedient manner (Kruk, 2012). The studies conducted prior to the acceleration of the digitalisation process mostly argue that the students would be more engaged in an online class than in a conventional class because there was greater opportunity for interaction in an online class. As a result, students would have higher academic performance and learning outcomes in an online course than in a traditional class (Riffel & Sibbley, 2005). According to Cengiz and Cakir (2016), the high level of interactive participation in online classrooms was expected to contribute to learning advancement in online courses.

As of March 2020, Covid-19 has caused a radical change, and the use of virtual platforms in education has boomed as a reaction to the restrictions on conducting face-to-face classes at universities. As of the beginning of 2022, many countries have begun to eliminate the restrictions for real classroom settings; however, it can be observed that offering courses conducted in virtual settings by implementing hybrid teaching models provide the opportunity for students to participate in face-to-face and online classes within the same course, has emerged as an innovative approach to teaching and learning. According to recent research, online education presents both opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions, instructors, and students (Oducado et al., 2021). According to İnce and Kabul (2020), there are advantages of distance learning as it enhances learning opportunities, improves learning outcomes and facilitates networking and collaboration; and disadvantages as lack of social interaction or participation may cause a feeling of isolation, while the absence of social atmosphere may minimise motivation and interaction and worsen discipline. Ensuring effective interaction and communication like in face-to-face classes could be difficult on online platforms. Keeping the amount of interaction high in a virtual classroom might be more complicated than in a face-to-face classroom (Bakker & Wagner, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to determine instructors' perceptions regarding instructor-student interaction and communication in online education settings. In this context, this research study aims to explore the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding instructor-student interaction in online classes, the challenges faced by the practitioners, and their suggestions for course designers, policymakers, and other related stakeholders. In that sense, the current study aims at answering the following research questions:

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a.What are the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding instructor-student and student-student interaction in an online classes?

b.What are the opportunities and challenges faced by the EFL instructors and their suggestions regarding instructor-student and student-student interaction in online classes?

The related literature on the role of interaction between instructors and students in real and virtual classrooms presents a significant number of studies; on the other hand, the number of studies conducted in the new conditions and directly related to the interaction issues is limited. The literature review covers the studies related to; interaction in EFL classes, interaction in online classes, instructors' perceptions regarding the interaction in online courses and the perceived difficulties and challenges faced during online classes.

The Role of Interaction in EFL

The primary objective of studying a language is to be able to communicate effectively in that language, either verbally or in written form. Interaction in the classroom is essential to accomplishing that objective. It is the cooperative sharing of thoughts, sentiments, or ideas between two or more individuals, which results in each party influencing the other (Rivers, 1987).

The following is a description of interaction taken from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2004):

> "*In interaction, at least two individuals participate in an oral and/ or written exchange in which production and reception alternate and may, in fact, overlap in oral communication. Not only may two interlocutors be speaking and yet listening to each other simultaneously. Even where turn-taking is strictly respected, the listener is generally already forecasting the remainder of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact thus involves more than listening to receive and to produce utterances.*" (p.4)

In addition, theories of communicative competence place emphasis on the significance of interaction. This is because human beings use language in various settings to "negotiate" meaning (Brown, 2000). Interaction in the classroom has emerged as an essential component of communicative approaches to the instruction of languages, particularly second languages. It might occur between the instructor and the students, or it could occur among the students themselves, in groups or on an individual basis. According to Angelo (1993), one of the ten principles of effective teaching is called classroom interaction. Classroom interaction includes both teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. In the classroom, the teacher frequently poses questions to students, who respond, and vice versa, or the teacher engages in learning activities. This type of interaction often occurs when the instructor poses a question and a student respond. It also occurs when the instructor asks small groups of pupils or the entire class questions, and they react. This form of engagement is often governed by the classroom's dominating figure, the instructor. This form of interaction's fundamental purpose is the language's regulated practice. In most circumstances, the teacher's function in this sort of interaction pattern is to impart knowledge to the pupils, as most patterns involve modelling and drilling (Dagarin, 2004). The instructor begins and concludes the engagement and determines the subject matter. Studies indicate that, under this interaction type, instructor talking time may account for as much as seventy-five per cent of the available class time. Typically, teacher-learner interaction follows the Initiation - Response - Feedback (IRF) model, in which the instructor begins the interaction by asking a question and then concludes the exchange by providing direct feedback. The output of the student is restricted to the response in the second round alone. Depending on the teacher's inquiry, this turn may contain expanded language use, but it is still restricted and lacks the structure of the continuous discussion (Walsh, 2013).

Interaction in Online Classes

The nature of interaction in online classes is fundamentally different from the interaction in a real classroom setting. York and Richardson (2012) investigated the elements that affect interaction in online classes regarding this aspect. They discovered that there were three distinct categories of factors that

influence interaction in online learning. These categories were course structure, feedback, discourse techniques, and facilitation factors, including immediacy behaviours and discourse guidelines. Interaction in online learning is widely researched in conjunction with views of learning progress and course satisfaction. For distant learning in general, Kuo et al. (2014) identified learner-content and learner-instructor interaction as critical predictors of student satisfaction, both with the course in general and their personal successes. These results were validated by Lin et al. (2017) for online language learning in the K12-context. Other research, however, underlines the relevance of student-student interaction and indicates the need for carefully designed and led collaborative activities for learning achievement (Pandey, 2021). The necessity of developing teacher-student as well as student-student interaction is highlighted notably for language sessions during the epidemic, e.g. by Lomicka (2020). In spite of the fact that these findings conclusively demonstrate the significance of interaction, collaboration, and social presence in online education, it is still necessary to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of the various factors that influence the qualities of these learning modes in order to develop an effective educational setting. These aspects may be summed up under the categories of (1) course design, (2) factors connected to the instructor, and (3) factors linked to the students (e.g. Walker, 2007). As concluded by Koç (2020), the lack of interaction between instructors and students is one of the most outstanding disadvantages of online teaching environments. Regarding the critical role of communication and interaction in online classes, Kocayiğit and Uşun (2020) state that interaction among the agents in an online class constitutes one of the most essential aspects. In online classes, students face difficulties in interacting with their instructors. In their study conducted in Turkey, Keskin and Kaya (2020) concluded that students cannot easily communicate and interact with their instructors during online courses. In this regard, it can be concluded that in addition to the number of class hours in online or hybrid programs, the quality of the sessions and perspectives of the practitioners should also be taken into consideration while planning those teaching and learning environments (Can, 2020).

Opportunities and Challenges for Instructors

Instructors face the challenge of assuming new roles in online settings, shifting away from the traditional roles of an instructor and a transmitter of knowledge to those of a facilitator of communication between students, a guide through tasks, a moderator, and a systemic co-learner, and a problem-solver (Li, 2022). This is in addition to the traditional roles of an instructor and a transmitter of knowledge (Comas-Quinn et al., 2012). Teaching in synchronous and asynchronous online settings requires a high level of online language pedagogy, which includes both the knowledge of online educational technologies and knowledge of how to teach online (Compton, 2009; Hampel, 2009). However, studies also reveal the inclinations of particular teachers to revert to a more directive and teacher-centred approach in online environments (Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2012). The conditions created by the online teaching conditions affect the interaction between instructors and students and have some adverse effects on the interaction among learners and affect their satisfaction with the online courses (Bayrak et al., 2021).

METHOD

The current study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate the attitudes held by EFL teachers regarding the interaction that occurs in online classrooms. Gentles et al. (2015) advocated for the utilisation of this method in an effort to achieve a more comprehensive explanation of the various ways in which humans interpret and ascribe meaning to a variety of situations.

Participants and Setting

This research was carried out at the school of foreign languages of a state university in Turkey. Following the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the school continues to offer instruction in foreign languages through a hybrid teaching model. The lecturers at the institution hold face-to-face lessons with the same student groups on three days of the week and have online classes with the same student groups on the other two days of the week. Convenient and purposeful sampling strategies were adopted while selecting the participating instructors. Researchers interested in learning about and

comprehending the central phenomena from an insider's point of view are encouraged to use this sort of sampling as a suggested strategy. For the purpose of this qualitative research, there were a total of seventeen EFL instructors working at the school to facilitate hybrid learning environments. Each of the instructors had more than ten years of experience in their profession, and in addition to that, they had been actively instructing students in online classes for more than two years.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

In order to construct the interview protocol, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature was carried out, and the interview questions were subjected to additional scrutiny by a panel of experts from three different institutions, who concluded that they were suitable in light of the aims and purposes of the study. Additionally, the researchers applied to the Bursa Uludag University Ethics Committee. After the ethics committee's approval for the study, linguistic equivalence and reliability and validity procedures were applied.

The semi-structured interview mainly included four open-ended central questions. They investigated (a) a general evaluation of the online courses in terms of instructor-student communication and interaction, (b) their thoughts on the effectiveness of teacher-student communication in online courses, and (c) a comparison of face-to-face classes and online education applications in terms of communication and interaction between instructors and students (d) their suggestions for a sound and effective interaction with students in online classes.

The content analysis approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. Thematic approaches were mostly employed in data analysis. First, the information was organised. The overall sense of data was investigated after a thorough evaluation of the qualitative data. The codes were then created using in vivo and descriptive coding approaches (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Throughout the qualitative data analysis phase, the study used continual comparison processes. Constant comparison was employed as an inductive strategy to deduce general categories from specific samples of qualitative data by making comparisons between incidents and data categories (Creswell, 2014). Following that, sub-themes and categories were created by analysing and interpreting the detected codes in depth. Finally, the categories were organised into main themes, and appropriate tables and figures were prepared to describe the current study's qualitative research findings. To establish inter-rater reliability, all steps of data analysis were carried out separately by two researchers. The outcomes of each stage were compared at the conclusion, and an agreement was reached on the contentious issues. For instance, for the first and second central themes and codes addressing these themes, the researchers needed to repeat the content analysis procedures to reach a consensus on the themes and codes. The resulting themes were clearly defined and named. Participant statements supporting the themes are given in the form of direct quotations. In the preparation of the semi-structured questions, expert opinion, pilot study, direct quotations of the participants and participant confirmation were used to increase the validity and reliability of the qualitative data.

FINDINGS

Semi-structured interviews were performed with the participating instructors to answer the research questions. The qualitative findings of the study showed a grand total of codes about perceptions and evaluations of the instructors. The codes were divided into four major themes. The overall perceptions, obstacles and challenges, suggestions and needs were determined as the themes. The distribution of the main themes and codes is presented in Table 1.

1-Overall Perceptions

As displayed in Table 1, the first theme that emerged in the qualitative data was the overall perceptions of the participating instructors regarding the interaction in online classes. The majority of the instructors displayed negative perceptions regarding the interaction in online classes. According to some participants, the students avoided interacting with their instructors and peers for varying reasons. For example, P4 stated in her interview that:

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"There is limited interaction in online classes. No matter how hard I try to include the students in classroom discussions and motivate them to be active participants in the lesson, I have not been able to achieve it." (Participant 4)

Table 1. *Distribution of Codes according to The Themes*

Themes	Codes	Frequency of Codes
Overall Perceptions towards Interaction	▪ Limited interaction,	▪ 44
	▪ Limited collaboration,	▪ 32
	▪ Too much reliance on the coursebook	▪ 24
	▪ Too much teacher talking time	▪ 24
	▪ Limited variety in activities,	▪ 22
	▪ Not authentic,	▪ 19
	▪ Too much time for monologues,	▪ 14
	▪ Hard to include learners	▪ 13
	▪ One way.	▪ 11
Obstacles/Challenges	▪ Muted Students	▪ 26
	▪ Invisible students,	▪ 20
	▪ Learners surrounded by distractors,	▪ 20
	▪ Difficulty in monitoring the learners,	▪ 18
	▪ The low motivation of learners,	▪ 17
	▪ No in-person interaction.	▪ 17
	▪ Level differences,	▪ 11
	▪ Technical obstacles.	▪ 8
Suggestions	▪ Participation Grade,	▪ 16
	▪ Tracking via course software,	▪ 10
	▪ Planning additional sessions for extracurricular activities.	▪ 8
Needs	▪ Training for instructors,	▪ 12
	▪ Varying the online lessons platforms.	▪ 10

Another aspect of the perceptions of the instructors was related to the collaboration between instructor-student and student-student. Many participants criticised the online teaching practices in that they found it challenging to create a collaborative learning environment in online classes. These participants highlighted that collaboration plays a critical role in achieving their objectives in the classes, and they added that in order for an interactive atmosphere in the lessons, the learners should interact with their instructors and peers; for instance, participant 11 expressed her perceptions in the following words:

"To create an interactive learning condition, the students need to collaborate with me and their friends; however, they insist on keeping silent or utter very limited words in the class; they perceive the online classes as a one-way instruction method. They sit in front of their computers, and they expect to listen to their teachers" (Participant 11)

Some other instructors stressed that there was too much reliance on the coursebook's Learning Management System (LMS) in the online lessons. This caused limited variety in the activities, which caused boredom among the students and negatively affected the interaction. On this issue, P9 expressed her perceptions and reservations in the following way:

"During the online classes, I share the presentation tool of the LMS in almost all of the lessons. We use the same LMS for out-of-class assignments. After a few weeks, it becomes a classroom routine and caused boredom among the students, which in turn affects the interaction among us" (Participant 9)

The teacher talking time was one of the most often highlighted concerns regarding the overall design of online courses. Participants nearly unanimously agreed that the lack of true and in-person engagement in online classrooms led to excessive teacher talking time. Some participants noted that as teacher talking time increases, lessons become monologues, negatively impacting interaction; yet, it is difficult for them to address this issue. Concerning this issue, P1 expressed his views in the following way:

"The lack of interaction causes me to speak more, and when it turns into a classroom routine, I find myself talking to a black screen and making long monologues. Lack of interaction is an endless circle, affecting the classes a lot. (Participant 1)

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2-Obstacles and Challenges

As for the obstacles and challenges faced by the instructors during the online classes, the participants listed many influential factors like the students' low motivation, students' insistence on keeping mute during the lessons, technical issues, and the distractors surrounding the learners. The first outstanding aspect was related to the muted students in the classes. The instructors emphasised that students keep silent during the classes, and they give a reaction only when they are asked questions directly. According to some participants, to have an interactive foreign language lesson, everyone should be active and eager to participate in the class even when they are not asked directly. Regarding this challenging situation, P7 explained her opinion with the following statement:

"I cannot mention interaction when the students keep silent in my lessons. Although I warn them quite often, they insist on muting themselves. They only give reactions when I directly address questions to them. Some students do not react even when I address them directly. They are unaware of the importance of interaction and proper communication in learning a foreign language." (Participant 7)

An additional concurrent code was connected to the fact that pupils face technological challenges and that the environment around the learners might be distracting. Many of the participants reported that some students were accessing their online classes from locations such as libraries or homes and that these students had unstable connections. In addition, other people were in the place, which significantly distracted the students and made it far more difficult for them to concentrate. In her interview, P3 provided the following illustration of the problem:

"For some learners, it is not possible to participate in the online classes interactively even if they want to do so as they are not in an isolated environment during the classes. In some cases, the learners send me instant messages and inform me that they are in a library or a study room. These conditions pose an inappropriate environment for learning and participating in the classes interactively." (Participant 3)

3-Suggestions

In addition to general attitudes and barriers to engagement in online classrooms, the qualitative data analysis uncovered practical suggestions provided by the participating instructors. These were found in addition to the aforementioned topics. The participants were actively teaching in both traditional classrooms and online classes simultaneously, which gave them the chance to evaluate and contrast the two modes of instruction and provide some feedback. The first idea that was particularly noteworthy concerned the participation grade. Some participants emphasised that if the students were graded for their engagement in the classes, it would encourage them to participate more enthusiastically in the lessons. For example, P5 offered his ideas in the form of the following statement:

"The students do not engage in conversation with one another throughout the lessons; nevertheless, this does not have a direct impact on their marks. They ought to be informed, in my opinion, that the degree to which they participate in the interactive aspects of the online classes can have an effect on the marks they receive. When it comes to evaluating the students' work in online classrooms, the teachers should be allowed more freedom to make their own decisions." (Participant 5)

Another group of participants offered suggestions on using course software more effectively. The instructors stated that the management systems need to be improved to assist the instructors in monitoring the students' participation and interaction in online classes. Some instructors aid that if they could record the individual tracking of student talking and interaction in their classes, they would use those records for assessment and development of the hybrid education model. As for this aspect, for instance, P17 expressed her suggestions as follows:

"I cannot keep track of the student's participation in online classes. Some other capabilities need to be added to our online teaching platform. I believe that if I were able to keep the students talking time or active times in an online class, it would be beneficial for me and motivative for the students in that they would be aware that the teacher was keeping track of their interaction and participation." (Participant 17)

The final aspect of the suggestions offered by the participating students was planning additional sessions for extracurricular activities. Some participants highlighted that they could not allocate

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adequate time for the interactive activities in their online classes. The same group of participants offered to plan some additional sessions for the motivated learners on a voluntary basis. These instructors stated that there were some willing and motivated students in their groups, and they would benefit from these extracurricular activities. For example, P8 expressed her suggestion in the following way in her answers to the interview questions:

> "Although I have reservations regarding interaction in online classes in general, I believe there are some students who deserve more care. If I were able to plan additional sessions with those students, I would assist their overall language development via more interactive activities. But these sessions need to be conducted on a voluntary basis; otherwise, they would be the same as regular class hours." (Participant 8)

4-Needs

The last central theme detected in the qualitative data was related to the need for interaction issues in online classes. The participants mainly mentioned training and varying the online platforms for lessons. As for the need for training, some participants stated that the interaction in face-to-face classes was quite different from the interaction in online lessons. Many participants agreed that having in-service training particularly developed for maintaining interaction in online classes would benefit them. For example, P16 expressed his needs with the following statement:

> "I think we need training for pursuing good interaction in online classes as the conditions are quite different. As a teacher, I can easily vary how I teach in real classroom settings. What is more, I can monitor the learners and interfere when I notice some inactive students; however, in online classes, I feel that I lose control of the class. Training would be effective in developing more dynamic and applicable methodologies." (Participant 16)

CONLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding the interaction between instructors and students in online classes. Like many other educational institutions, the school of foreign languages, which constitutes the research site for this study, the students are offered online courses for learning English. The instructors receive training at technical levels like how to plan and implement online classes, how to assign tasks and keep the portfolios of learners; however, the pedagogical aspects of the training needs seem neglected. When the potential of online courses being implemented in the upcoming years is considered, the perceptions of the practitioners, the challenges they face, and their suggestions need to be taken into consideration; therefore, this study tried to investigate EFL instructors' evaluations of the online courses from an insider perspective.

According to the overall findings of the qualitative data analysis, it was revealed that the instructors had overall negative perceptions of the online teaching practices; these findings of the current study presents parallel findings with Al-Fudail & Mellar (2008). As for the first research question, regarding the perceptions of EFL instructors towards student-instructor interaction in online lessons, the findings of the present study addressed that the participants perceive the teacher-student interaction in online course teaching as one of the problematic aspects of their teaching in a hybrid education setting (Quezada, Talbot & Quezada-Parker, 2020). In addition, the instructors believe that distance education discourages students from participating in social activities and places restrictions on the student. Dickey (2004) highlighted isolation and alienation in a web-based distance learning environment and offered web-logs as a way to mitigate these feelings. As the participants of this study are actively teaching in a hybrid model and they have both face-to-face classes and online classes, they are expected to have insights into the advantages and disadvantages of each teaching method. Unlike the real classroom setting, the interaction between instructors and students is limited in online teaching (Toprakçı, Hepsöğütlü & Toprakçı 2021). The practitioners lack the opportunities that they have in a traditional classroom environment. The instructors made connections between the interaction issues and the problems of high teacher talking time and student boredom in online classes.

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According to the instructors, the interaction problems caused them to have classes in a monologue format which in turn affects the general dynamics of the EFL lessons.

Concerning the issues regarding interaction, the instructors have indicated that there is not enough opportunity for interaction in online classes. According to Shackelford and Maxwell (2012), the interactions between learners are provided with instructor modelling, support and encouragement, facilitating discussions, multiple communication modes, and required participation. This was in reference to the lack of interaction that occurs in online teaching environments. Andersen (2013) revealed that there was a high positive association between both dimensions of learner-instructor interaction and learner involvement with overall course satisfaction. This finding pertains to the same problem that was discussed earlier. Additionally, Xiao (2017) stressed the significance of the importance of course materials or content to encourage engagement. The problems in interaction between instructors and students yield motivational problems for both instructors and students. In this respect, the current study has parallel findings with Sahu (2020), who also concludes that the lack of authentic interaction among the agents in a class leads to motivational problems for both parties.

The first research question also tried to reveal the perceptions of the instructors regarding the interaction among learners. Similarly, the analyses revealed negative perceptions towards the interaction among learners from the instructors' perspectives. As in the interaction between instructors and students, the participants stated that three was limited interaction among the learners in online classes. Regarding this aspect, the present research had similar findings to Song et al. (2015), who also found that the amount of interaction among peers decreases in online classes, and it has adverse effects on the language development of the learners.

The second research question was concerned with opportunities and challenges perceived by the EFL instructors in terms of student-student and student-teacher interaction in the online education environment. The findings revealed that the instructors faced various difficulties and challenges in online courses, such as technical issues, mute and invisible students, motivational problems, and difficulty in monitoring the learners. Regarding the issues the instructors face in online classes, the present study revealed similar findings to Jerković and others (2022) and Harsch and others (2021).

Finally, the study offered valuable suggestions for the improvement of online teaching models depending on the recommendations of the participating instructors. As offered by the participants, grading the students' participation, utilising more capable online teaching platforms and providing training for instructors might have facilitating effects on online teaching models.

Suggestions and Limitations

Online teaching was already on the agenda of many universities; however, the pandemic conditions accelerated the process, and educational institutions have begun to offer online alternatives to their students. It seems that even after the end of restrictions caused by the pandemic, the institutions will continue to implement online or hybrid teaching models; however, as this study showed, online alternatives will not replace in-class instruction for language teachers as the instructors perceive that they lack a considerable amount of interaction that they have in the real classroom setting. In order to increase interaction in online classes, the correspondence section in the learning management panel should be used actively with in-class questions and answers as offered by İnce, Kabul & Diler (2020).

As for the limitations of the present study, the sample size could be larger. To get more in-depth information about the extent of the interaction phenomenon, the researchers could try to reach more participants and include classroom observations in their studies.

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Online Derslerde Eğitmen-Öğrenci Etkileşiminin Değerlendirilmesi: Öğretim Görevlilerinin Bakış Açısı

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Özet

Covıd-19 salgını nedeniyle, neredeyse dünya çapında okullar ve üniversiteler kapatıldığından öğrenme süreci yüz yüze öğrenmeden çevrimiçi öğrenmeye geçmek zorunda kalmıştır. Pandemi kısıtlamalarından sonra birçok eğitim kurumunun yüz yüze derslere alternatif olarak online ders vermeye devam ettiği ya da öğrencilerin hem yüz yüze hem de online derslerinin olduğu hibrit programları uygulamaya başladığı görülmektedir. Yüz yüze öğrenmeden çevrimiçi öğrenmeye geçişle birlikte öğrenme süreci farklı açılardan ve farklı düzeylerde etkilenmiştir ve eğitmenler ve öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimin beklenen seviyelerde sürdürülmesi daha zor hale gelmiştir. öğrenciler çevrimiçi öğrenme sürecinde pek çok farklı nedenden dolayı etkileşimden kaçınma eğilimi sergilemektedirler ya da öğretim elemanlarının öğrencileriyle sağlıklı bir etkileşim kurmasının önünde bazı engeller bulunmaktadır. Bu betimsel çalışma, ingilizce öğretim görevlilerinin deneyimlerini ve algılarını keşfederek, çevrimiçi sınıflarda öğretmen-öğrenci etkileşimine ilişkin eğitmenlerin değerlendirmelerini, uygulayıcıların karşılaştığı zorlukları ve eğitim planlamacıları, politika yapıcılar ve diğer ilgili paydaşlar için önerilerini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Araştırmada nitel bir araştırma yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Katılımcılar, bir devlet üniversitesinin yabancı diller yüksekokulunda görev yapan 17 öğretim görevlisidir. Nitel verileri toplamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler içerik analizi prosedürleri takip edilerek analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, çevrimiçi sınıflardaki etkileşim sorunlarına ilişkin boyutları ortaya çıkarmıştır; öğretim elemanlarının karşılaştıkları zorluklardan dolayı çevrimiçi derslerde etkileşime ilişkin olumsuz algılarının olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Nitel veriler ışığında bu araştırma, karar vericiler ve uygulayıcılar için; öğrencilerin derslere katılım düzeylerinin puanlamalara dahil edilmesi ve öğretim görevlilerine çevrimiçi derslerde etkileşim kurma alanında hizmet-içi eğitimler planlanması gibi değerli öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Etkileşim, Çevrimiçi sınıflar, Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, İngilizce öğretim görevlileri*

Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Bir dili öğrenmenin temel amacı, o dilde sözlü veya yazılı olarak etkili bir şekilde iletişim kurabilmektir. Bu amaca ulaşmak için sınıftaki etkileşim önemli bir unsur olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Temel olarak iletişim, iki veya daha fazla kişi arasındaki düşüncelerin, duyguların veya fikirlerin işbirliğine dayalı olarak paylaşılmasıdır ve her iki tarafın da diğerini etkilemesiyle sonuçlanır (Rivers, 1987). Ayrıca, iletişimsel yeterlilik teorileri etkileşimin önemine vurgu yapmaktadırlar, bunun nedeni, insanların iletişim için çeşitli ortamlarda dili kullanmasıdır (Brown, 2000). Öte yandan, çevrimiçi sınıflardaki etkileşimin doğası, gerçek bir sınıf ortamındaki etkileşimden temel olarak farklıdır (York ve Richardson, 2012). Çevrimiçi öğretim ortamlarının en göze çarpan dezavantajlarından birisi öğretim elemanları ve öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşim eksikliğidir, (Koç, 2020). Kocayiğit ve Uşun (2020), çevrimiçi sınıflarda iletişim ve etkileşimin kritik rolüyle ilgili olarak, çevrimiçi bir sınıftaki aracılar arasındaki etkileşimin en önemli unsurlardan birini oluşturduğunu belirtmektedir. Keskin ve Kaya (2020) Türkiye'de yaptıkları çalışmada çevrimiçi derslerde öğrencilerin öğretim elemanlarıyla kolay iletişim ve etkileşim kuramadıkları sonucuna ulaşmışlardır. Bu bağlamda, bu öğretme ve öğrenme ortamları planlanırken çevrimiçi veya karma programlarda ders saatlerinin niceliğinin yanı sıra oturumların niteliğinin ve uygulayıcıların bakış açılarının da dikkate alınması gerektiği sonucuna varılabilir, (Can, 2020). Çevrimiçi öğretim koşullarının yarattığı koşullar, yalnızca öğretim elemanları ve öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimi etkilemekle kalmamaktadır, bu durum aynı zamanda öğrenenler arasındaki etkileşimi ve öğrencilerin çevrimiçi derslerden memnuniyetlerini de olumsuz olarak etkilemektedir (Bayrak, 2021). Sanal bir sınıfta etkileşim oranını yüksek tutmak, yüz yüze bir sınıftan daha karmaşık olabilir (Bakker & Wagner, 2020). Bu nedenle, çevrimiçi eğitim ortamlarında öğretim elemanlarının öğretmen-öğrenci etkileşimi ve iletişimine ilişkin algılarının belirlenmesine ihtiyaç vardır. Bu bağlamda, bu araştırma, çevrimiçi sınıflarda öğretim görevlisi-öğrenci etkileşimi ile ilgili olarak İngilizce öğretim görevlilerinin algılarını, uygulayıcıların karşılaştığı zorlukları ve kurs tasarımcıları, politika yapıcılar ve diğer ilgili paydaşlar için önerilerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Mevcut çalışma, araştırma sorularını öğretim görevlilerinin perspektifinden yanıtlamak amacıyla, nitel bir araştırma yaklaşımını benimsemiştir. Gentler (2015), insanların çeşitli durumları yorumladığı ve anlam yüklediği çeşitli yolların daha kapsamlı bir açıklamasını elde etmek amacıyla bu yöntemin kullanılmasını önermektedir. Bu araştırma, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinin yabancı diller yüksekokulunda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Pandeminin getirdiği kısıtlamaların ardından okul, hibrit bir öğretim modeli kullanarak yabancı dillerde eğitim vermeye devam etmektedir. Kurumdaki öğretim görevlileri aynı öğrenci grupları ile yüz yüze ve online dersler vermektedirler. Katılımcı öğretim elemanları seçilirken kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme ve amaçlı örnekleme stratejileri benimsenmiştir. Bu nitel araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda, hibrit bir yabancı dil öğretimi programı uygulanmkta olan okulda çalışan toplam 17 İngilizce öğretim görevlisi katılımcı olarak yer almışlardır. Eğitmenlerin her biri kendi mesleğinde on yıldan fazla deneyime sahiptir ve buna ek olarak, iki yılı aşkın bir süredir aktif olarak öğrencilere çevrimiçi dersler vermektedirler. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, demografik sorulara ek olarak temelde dört açık uçlu soru içermektedir. (a) çevrimiçi derslerin öğretmen-öğrenci iletişimi ve etkileşimi açısından genel bir değerlendirmesi, (b) çevrimiçi derslerde öğretmen-öğrenci iletişiminin etkililiğine ilişkin düşünceler, (c) öğretim elemanları ve öğrenciler arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşim açısından yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi eğitim ortamlarının karşılaştırması, (d) çevrimiçi derslerde öğrencilerle sağlıklı ve etkili bir etkileşim için önerilerini kapsamaktadır. Nitel verilerin analizinde içerik analizi yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Veri analizinde daha çok tematik yaklaşımlar kullanılmıştır. Nitel verilerin kapsamlı bir değerlendirmesinin ardından kodlar in vivo ve betimsel kodlama yaklaşımları kullanılarak oluşturulmuştur (Miles, Huberman ve Saldana, 2014). Nitel veri analizi aşaması boyunca, çalışma sürekli karşılaştırma süreçleri yöntmini benimsemiştir. Creswell, (2012) tarafından da önerildiği gibi bu yöntem, olaylar ve veri kategorileri arasında karşılaştırmalar yaparak, nitel verilerin belirli örneklerinden genel kategoriler çıkarmak için endüktif bir strateji olarak kullanılmaktadır.

Bulgular: Araştırmanın nitel bulguları, öğretim görevlilerinin genel algıları ve konunun detaylarına ilişkin değerlendirmelerine dair çok sayıda kod ortaya çıkarmıştır. Kodlar dört ana temaya ayrılmıştır. Genel algılar, engeller ve zorluklar, öneriler ve ihtiyaçlar temalar olarak belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, öğretim elemanlarının karşılaştıkları zorluklardan dolayı çevrimiçi derslerde etkileşime ilişkin olumsuz algılar

sergilediklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre eğitmenler ve öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimdeki sorunlar, hem öğreticiler hem de öğrenciler için motivasyon sorunlarına yol açmaktadır. Çevriçiçi derslerde sınıftaki taraflar arasında otantik etkileşim eksikliği, her iki taraf için de öğrenmede ve etkileşimli aktivitelere etkin katılımda sorunlarına yol açmaktadır. Bu durum, yalnızca eğitmenler ve öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimi değil, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin kendi aralarındaki etkileşimleri de olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. Bulgular, eğitmenlerin çevrimiçi derslerde; teknik sorunlar, sessiz ve görünmez öğrenciler, motivasyon sorunları ve öğrenenleri izlemede zorluk gibi çeşitli engel ve zorluklarla karşılaştıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcılar tarafından çevrimiçi derslerdeki etkileşimi önemli oranda etkileyen bir diğer önemli unsur ise öğrencierin iletişim ve etkileşimden kaçınmaları sonucunda derslerde ağırlıklı olarak tek yönlü bir iletişimin meydana gelmesi ve bu durumunda derslerde öğretim elemanlarının öğrencileri ders içi etkinliklere dahil etmelerinde sorunlara yol açması olarak tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmaya katılan öğretim görevlilerinden birçoğu, çevrimiçi dersler esnasında önemli sayıda öğrencinin ya kütüphanede ya da yurt çalışma odalarında olduklarını ve bu sepeble etraflarında dikkat ve katılımlarını olumsuz etkileme potansiyeli yüksek olan çok sayıda dikkat dağıtıcı unsurun varlığına dikkat çekmişlerdir.

Bir diğer önemli bulgu ise, çevrimiçi derslerde belirli bir ders kitabının dijital platfromunun sunum amacı ile kullanılmasının zamanla kitaba odaklı bir yaklaşım benimsenmesine yol açtığı ve ilerleyen oturumlarda ders içi etkinliklerin rutin hale geldiği, etkinliklerin çeşitlendirilmesinde sorunlar yaşandığı ve bunlara bağlı olarak da öğrenci-öğreten etkileşim ve iletişiminin olumsuz etkilendiği sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Son olarak katılımcılar, öğrenciler ve zaman zaman da kendilerinden kaynaklanan teknik sorunlar ve bağlantıda yaşanan sorunlar nedeniyle sınıf içi etkileşimin olumsuz etkilendiğini ifade etmişlerdir. Özellikle yabancı dil derslerinde çok sık tercih edilen küçük tartışma grupları etkinlikleri sırasında bazı öğrencilerin yaşadıkları teknik sorunların gerek öğreten-öğrenci ve gerekse öğrenci-öğrenci iletişim ve etkileşimi üzerinde olumsuz etkiler meydana getirdiği sonuçlarına ulaşılmıştır. Benzer bir şekilde, yabancı dil derslerinde hemen hemen her ders içinde yer alan dinleme etkinlikleri sırasında öğrencilerin yaşadıkları bağlantı sorunları ve odaklanma sorunlarının anlamayı zorlaştırdığı ve bu dinleme etkinliklerinin devamında yapılan etkileşimli konuşma ve tartışma türü etkinliklerde sınıf içi etkileşimin dolaylı olarak olumsuz yönde etkilendiği anlaşılmaktadır.

Sonuç ve Öneriler: Çalışma, katılımcı öğretim elemanları tarafından getirilen öneriler ve ilgili alanyazında yer alan çalışmalar çerçevesinde çevrimiçi öğretim modellerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik değerli önermeler sunmaktadır. Karar vericiler ve uygulayıcılar için getirilen temel önerilerden bazıları; öğrenci başarısının değerlendirilmesinde öğrenicilerin derse aktif katılım durumlarının da dikkate alınması, çevrimiçi derlserde kullanılan digital platformların öğrencilerin katılım ve etkileşim düzeylerini izlemeyi sağlayacak araçlarla desteklenmesi ve İngilizce öğretim görevlileri için çevrimiçi derslerde etkileşim ve iletişimi merkeze alan hizmet içi eğitim programları olarak sıralanabilir.

Sonuç olarak, çevrimiçi öğretim seçenekleri pandemi öncesi dönemde de halihazırda birçok üniversitenin gündeminde yer almaktaydı; ancak pandemi koşulları bu dijitalleşme sürecini bir zorunluluk haline getirerek hızlandırdı ve eğitim kurumları öğrencilerine çevrimiçi alternatifler sunmaya başladılar. Görünen o ki, pandeminin neden olduğu kısıtlamalar sona erdikten sonra da kurumlar çevrimiçi veya hibrit öğretim modellerini uygulamaya devam edecekler; ancak, bu çalışmanın da gösterdiği gibi, eğitmenler gerçek sınıf ortamında sahip oldukları önemli miktarda etkileşimden yoksun olduklarını algıladıklarından, çevrimiçi alternatifler planlanırken, yabancı dil sınıflarında çok kritik bir role sahip olan etkileşimin istendik düzeylerde gerçeşemesini sağlamak adına bir takım tedbirlerin alınması ve programların geliştirilmesi için ilgili tarafların önerilerinin dikkate alınması gerekmektedir.

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