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Research Paper

A Mixed Methods Case Study into Fully Asynchronous Online English Language Teaching and Learning: Through the Lens of an English Instructor and University Preparatory School Students

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods case study examines an English instructor's and university preparatory school Turkish EFL students' (N = 12) perceptions of their lived fully asynchronous online English language teaching and learning experiences. The quantitative data was gathered from an online language learning questionnaire, and the qualitative one was collected from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview conducted with the student participants and a qualitative survey responded to by the English instructor. The findings demonstrated compatibility between the students and instructor's views on the ineffectiveness of the fully asynchronous online English language teaching and learning as both parties stated it did not promote students' English language learning due to the absence of the interaction amongst the students and English instructors. The findings also indicated the necessity of stimulating student participation in online lessons to generate and strengthen online English language learners' motivation and sustaining their interests in online lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Online teaching has been a requirement to be met by language teachers even by the ones who do not perceive themselves as talented in supplementing or thoroughly conducting their teaching through the medium of using digital technologies. Along with the rise in the popularity of accompanying language teaching with the provision of technological products, online learning has been strongly favoured among language learners, primarily due to reasons such as the flexibility and opportunities it offers (Zhang & Cheng, 2012). In the light of the fast, remarkable, and inexorable progress in the technological world, swimming against the current, in other words, avoiding online language teaching and learning would be unreasonable. For this reason, pondering deeply upon how online English language teaching can be improved for the purpose of fostering online language learning appears to be obligatory.

The growing tendency towards online language teaching is believed to be affected by the increased demand for online language learning as a consequence of the constraints imposed by a cohort of factors including over-enrolment in classroom teaching (Winke et al., 2010). The effect of online language teaching on student language learning has been the subject of an indispensable number of studies in the literature (e.g., Lamb & Arisandy, 2020; Su et al., 2019; Wong, 2020; Xu et al., 2020). Scarcity of the papers written heretofore on perceptions of students on their lived fully asynchronous online English language learning experiences and fully asynchronous online teaching experiences of English instructors uncovers the need for carrying out further research into that topic. As a result, this comprehensive study will significantly add to the existing literature through presenting the findings on an English instructor's and university preparatory school EFL students' views about their fully asynchronous online English language teaching and learning experiences. Additionally, there exists no research exploring the similarities and differences between English language learners and teachers' conceptions of their lived fully asynchronous online language teaching and learning experiences, indicating the significance of this research.

Theoretical Background

Online Language Learning

Online language learning can be defined as "a number of learning arrangements: a Web-facilitated class, a blended or hybrid course, or a fully virtual or online course" (Blake, 2011, p. 20). Technology liberates language learning from the limitations of classroom teaching and enables authentic and meaningful learning (Richards, 2015). Owing to the easy access to digital technologies lately, it is considered that well-planned and -designed online language courses occupy a significant place in university language programs (Schulze & Scholz, 2018). However, success in online language learning is believed to be bound to a set of factors such as the support offered to online learners (Quinn et al., 2012). In addition, variations may be observed in the influence technology use wields on language learning of students with different learning styles. For instance, Tadayonifar and Entezari's (2020) study demonstrated that visual learners benefitted from flipped learning approach more than the students with other learning styles.

Developing online language learners' skills of the use of technological tools is significant for online language learners to be able to make the most of online learning. To exemplify, the research by Lai et al. (2016) demonstrated training language learners in using technology in language learning led them to use it autonomously for language learning and increased their willingness to use it in language learning.

Benefits of Online Language Learning

Studies on online language learning report that it facilitates language learning. For example, web-based language learning is demonstrated to reduce foreign language speaking anxiety (Bashori et al., 2020) and to afford authentic language use to online language learners (Henry et al., 2018). The impact of the use of wikis on the development of first-year university students' writing skills was explored in Wang's (2014) research, which yielded that it increased students' motivation to learn English and their confidence in writing. Considering the driving force interaction exerts on language learning, online language learning is also believed to serve as a platform enabling online learners to collaborate through the medium of offering feedback to each other, engaging in group work and reading the works of peers (Chang & Windeatt, 2016). Moreover, project-based assignments and higher-level knowledge activities were depicted to promote online student learning in the research undertaken by Zhen et al. (2020). In addition, collaborative online language learning is construed to pave the way for enhancing online learners' intercultural learning by virtue of the mediation of information communication technology (Lawrence, 2013). However, it should be noted that online collaborative language learning may not smoothly take place at times. For example, the study by Such (2019) reported that scaffolding provided to English language learners on wikis did not surmount the obstacles they encountered in online collaborative writing activities.

Aside from taking advantage of online language learning through participating in online lessons, tutorial recordings are shown to be positively influential in language learning as a consequence of creating opportunities for delving into the interactional input (Pleines, 2020). Asynchronous communication is also believed to promote student learning (Nor et al., 2012), and asynchronous online discussions are illustrated to raise teachers and teacher candidates' understanding of English language learners' literacy development (de Oliveira & Olesova, 2017). Furthermore, the study by Qian and McCormick (2014) showed online discussion forums were deemed to be the means for getting support and exchanging experiences, resources and encountered obstacles.

Online language learning enables language learners to gain control over their own language learning as they make decisions about what to focus on and what sources to use (Ho, 2019). For example, the study by Lin et al. (2017) revealed implementing self-regulated learning strategies forecasted online language learning success. Online learners' level of self-regulation changes from student to student. To exemplify, the study by Hromalik and Koszalka (2018) revealed that language learners with higher levels of oral proficiency were better at self-regulating their online learning.

Comparing the Effects of Online, Blended and Classroom Learning on Language Learning

The probable changes in the effects of online, blended and classroom learning on language learning have aroused curiosity among researchers. To illustrate, the study by Moradimokhles and Hwang (2020) showed that blended learning developed participants' general English skills more than online and classroom learning. Contrasting the differences between the level and nature of interaction in face-to-face and online language learning environments, Heins et al. (2007) reported that in online language classes, there existed a higher level of second language (L2) use and structured L2 input and output, teacher dominance in spoken tutorial interaction, and less student-student interaction except for assigned tasks. The interaction between online learners in synchronous computer-mediated communication is considered to be more than the one in face-to-face classroom settings (Eslami & Kung, 2016). The findings in the study by Murday et al. (2008) demonstrated that the performance of hybrid students and the students taught traditionally was close to each other; nonetheless, seeing the frustration of the students whose expectations were not met, the authors suggested setting up realistic expectations of online learning. In the study by Abe (2020), it was concluded that the personality and linguistic traits of successful online tertiary-level learners were similar to those of students taught in face-to-face classes.

Students' Perceptions of Online Language Learning

Online language learning could arouse both negative and positive feelings amongst online language learners (Gazan, 2020; Okyar, 2023; Sampson & Yoshida, 2020; Zhang & Wu, 2022). Language learners' perceptions of online language learning were explored in the study by Hopkins (2010). The findings revealed that the research participants found being a part of assessed and student-led speaking tasks via synchronous audiographic conferencing tool as enjoyable and useful for practicing and learning English. The results in Tseng et al.'s (2018) research showed the language learners subjected to flipped learning held positive perceptions of their flipped learning experiences, which helped them improve their language skills.

Online and face-to-face language learning could produce different levels of student satisfaction. For instance, the participants in Tratnik et al.'s (2019) study valued face-to-face English lessons more than the online ones. Language learners' attitudes are influential in their intentions to learn a language either in an online or face-to-face learning environment (Alhamami, 2018). For instance, the study by Alhamami (2018) revealed that the freshman participants opted for face-to-face language learning over online language learning.

Online Language Teaching

Online language learning outcomes are impacted by online teachers (Senior, 2010). Changing roles of teachers of English stemming from the increase in student engagement with informal online language learning need to be homed in (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015) on the grounds that the roles teachers are to assume change too, since nothing remains static. Hence, English teachers English need to be aware of online in/formal language learning platforms. Online language teachers implement strategies to improve the quality of their teaching, and in doing so, facilitating online language learning (Meskill & Anthony, 2014). However, it should be kept in mind that online language teaching is not free of problems. For example, the recent research undertaken by MacIntyre et al. (2020) indicated that the online teachers had to cope with a great deal of stressors due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus, employed approach coping strategies, associated with positive psychological outcomes and avoidant coping strategies, associated with negative psychological outcomes.

What is required to be effective online language teachers?

First and foremost, teachers are required to be open to learning of developing their skills in online teaching (del Rosal et al., 2017). Qualities that teachers need to be effective online language teachers have been explored in the literature in that the way online teaching is designed influences online language learning (Rienties et al., 2018). To exemplify, the results of the research undertaken by Murphy et al. (2010) showed online teachers had to attach more significance to interpersonal skills, online learners' personal life contexts and having good technological skills. Online teaching is considered to adopt a teacher-centred approach toward teaching (Stickler et al., 2005), and creating a learner-centred online learning environment is believed to be enabled by teacher moderation and feedback, and the use of appropriate learning tasks, which could contribute to increasing collaboration among students and setting up a learner-centred online classroom environment (Hampel, 2009). Teacher role in online discussion forums was examined in Xu et al.'s (2020) study, the findings of which revealed that behavioural and cognitive engagement of the participants exposed to teacher facilitation was higher than that of the participants devoid of it. Though it is emphasized in the literature that it is crucial to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to be qualified online teachers, it is purported that teacher professional development programs are not sufficient to help them acquire skills in using technology (Adams et al., 2016). Despite the improvements in technology, and as a result, changing teacher roles, it is emphasized in the literature that technology cannot replace the teacher (Foster, 2019). Nonetheless, that does not reduce the need for providing training to pre-service and in-service language teachers in developing their technological skills.

Studies have been conducted to train pre-service language teachers in teaching online (e.g., Wang et al., 2010). Drawing attention to the differences in the skills and responsibilities necessitated by face-to-face and online learning environments, Compton (2009) highlighted the urgent need for fine-tuning pre-service English language teacher education programs to better prepare pre-service English teachers for online teaching environments. Other than training pre-service teachers in how to teach online effectively, professional development programs designed to improve practicing English teachers' online teaching competencies need to be conducted (Canals & Rawashdeh, 2019). For instance, drawing on the inconsistency between online teacher intentions in and students' perceptions concerning online interactions, Stickler and Shi (2013) highlighted the need for teachers' effective use of online technology to surmount it.

Online Language Teachers' Perceptions of Online Language Teaching

Online language teachers' perceptions with respect to online language teaching were explored in Manegre and Sabiri's (2020) current research, the findings of which yielded online language teachers had positive perceptions regarding the effect of virtual classrooms since the online classes helped them become acquainted with their students better, and moreover, their online language learners learned at the same rate but more speedily. The study conducted by Taghizadeh and Yourdshahi (2020) reported that English language teachers had a positive disposition towards online language teaching.

The Theory of Transactional Distance and This Study

The transactional distance in the theory of transactional distance developed by Moore (1980) signifies not only the physical distance but also the distance between online teachers and students' understandings and perceptions. This theory also denotes the responsibility of the online teacher and educational institutions to scaffold online learners so that effective learning can take place. According to the theory, the level of transactional distance determines the level of student autonomy. That is to say, the more the transactional distance is, the more autonomous online learners are or the less the transactional distance is, the less autonomous online learners are. This study is based on the theory of transactional distance in that it scrutinizes fully asynchronous online English language learning experiences of university preparatory school students and fully asynchronous online English language teaching experiences of an instructor. In other words, it examines an English instructor's and university preparatory school students' experiences of online teaching and learning in a context of a high level of transactional distance. For this reason, the theory of transactional distance will be addressed in the interpretation of the findings.

This research seeks answers to the following research questions:

1) What do university preparatory school students think about
   a) the level of student participation enabled by the online English language teaching program they attended to?

b) the group work enabled by the program?
c) the instructional materials used in the program?
d) the appropriateness of the way online English language teaching was conducted to their learning styles?

2) What does the English instructor think about the effectiveness of his asynchronous online teaching practices?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design, the Study Context and the Procedure

This study was carried out as a mixed-methods case study in that it includes both quantitative and qualitative methods to closely investigate the perceptions of university preparatory school students and an English instructor regarding their fully asynchronous online English language learning and teaching experiences within a specific period of time. (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As is maintained by Creswell (2012), mixing qualitative and quantitative methods enables "a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself" (p. 535), which elucidates why this study was conducted as a mixed-methods study as it targets unravelling the perceptions of 12 university preparatory school students and an English instructor, forming the case, concerning their fully asynchronous online English language learning and teaching. The university preparatory school where the participating students were taught English does not provide online language teaching to enrolled students; nevertheless, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the school to offer it to the students in the 14-week spring term of 2019/2020 academic year, starting in the last week of February and ending in the last week of May. Since face-to-face education was terminated on March 13 at the tertiary level in Türkiye, the study participants began to receive fully asynchronous online English language education starting from that date till the end of the term. The term fully asynchronous online English language learning and teaching is used in the present study to refer to the learning and teaching taking place in the designated period of time.

In the preparatory school, English is taught by offering a 16-hour main course, a three-hour grammar course, a three-hour speaking and listening course and a three-hour writing course per week. The outbreak of the pandemic did not lead to a change in the distribution of the class hours to the main course and other courses, but the English instructors continued their teaching via conducting asynchronous online teaching. Because the lessons were taught asynchronously, the instructors informed the students when they uploaded videos to the distance education system of the university through e-mailing and WhatsApp. The instructional materials used in the program are selected by the preparatory school; however, using supplementary material when the need arises is not forbidden. The instructor teaching the main course recorded videos, in which they covered the activities in the coursebook and uploaded them to the system. In the videos recorded for the teaching of grammar, the instructor taught structures and their functions and did the related exercises. The instructor teaching the listening and speaking course recorded videos in which they played a recording and/or video and answered the questions pertaining to it to develop students' listening and speaking skills. The instructor offering the writing course uploaded videos in which information about how to produce well-written essays was supplied. Students were supposed to watch the uploaded videos in the system.

Students' final grade was determined by the scores they got on one assignment, comprising 40% of the final grade, and the final exam, constituting 60% of it. In the final exam, students' knowledge of grammar and four language skills was assessed. If face-to-face education had continued, the scores students would have got on one assignment and three midterms, comprising 40% of the final grade, and one final examination, constituting 60% of the final grade, would have been administered to assess the progression in students' English language learning. According to the information on participants' level of English proficiency obtained from the preparatory school, the participants were at B1 level when the pandemic began, which had been measured by the exam prepared according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and administered at the end of the fall term. They reached B2 level when they completed the preparatory program, measured by the scores they got on one assignment and final exam prepared according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and administered at the end of the spring term.

At the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year, ethical approval was obtained from the ethical review board of the university whose preparatory school is the context of this research. Then, an online language learning questionnaire was e-mailed to the freshman students of the department of English Language teaching who were preparatory school students in 2019/2020 academic year, and the qualitative survey was e-mailed to the English instructors having taught to the student participants. Following receiving the e-mails involving the filled-out questionnaires from the students, they were read by the researcher to prepare the questions to be asked in the semi-structured interview. Thereafter, the interview was carried out with six of the student participants, and subsequent to that, data analysis was performed.

Participants

English Instructor

Of the four English instructors who taught English to students in the spring term of the academic year 2019/2020, one agreed to participate in this research. The instructor was 36 years old, had been teaching English for 14 years, and had been teaching at the preparatory school for four years when this research set out. He holds a BA and an MA in English language teaching. Pseudonym Taner will be used as extracting quotations from his answers to maintain anonymity and protect his privacy in this study.

University Preparatory School Students

A cohort of 12 university preparatory school Turkish EFL students (female $n = 9$; men $n = 3$; mean age: 19.3) took part in the study. The student participants are the students of the department of English Language Teaching and since they had failed the proficiency exam administered at the beginning of 2019/2020 academic year, they had to study at the preparatory school for one year. The participants were taught asynchronously for 11 weeks. The English instructor participant of this study taught them till the end of the study. The students were provided information concerning the objective of the research and their consent was obtained prior to the start of the study. They were ensured that their privacy would be protected throughout the research. Each student participant is assigned a number which will be used as extracting quotations from their answers on the online language learning questionnaire (e.g., student participant 1) and quotations from the responses of the participants attending to the interview (e.g., interviewee 1).

Data Collection Tools and Analysis

Online Language Learning Questionnaire

The online language learning questionnaire developed by Sun (2014) was used in this study with a view to learning about university preparatory school students' perceptions of their lived fully asynchronous online English language learning experiences. The questionnaire consists of two parts the first of which serves for unearthing students' perceptions of general characteristics of their online language learning experiences (four items), of carried-out group work (four items), of the used instructional materials (six items), of the congruency between their learning styles and how online teaching was conducted (five items). The first part of the questionnaire is a five-point likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The second part of the questionnaire involves 12 open-ended questions and caters for finding out more about online language learners' lived online language learning experiences. In the e-mail sent to the participants to fill out the online language learning questionnaire, they were told to contact the researcher for anything that was unclear to them in the questionnaire. The participants answered them in English, and the extracted quotations from the answers were proofread. The quantitative data obtained from the first part of the questionnaire was analysed by running descriptive statistics and the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions was analysed adopting inductive content analysis. The following steps proposed by Creswell (2007) were performed to conduct content analysis:

- Students' responses were read to get an overall idea about them.
- Coding was done.
- A list of codes was prepared.
- Similar codes were grouped to avoid redundancy.
- Students' responses were reread in order not to miss any code.
- Themes were developed from the determined codes.

Semi-Structured Interview

After the administration of the online language learning questionnaire, a semi-structured interview involving six open-ended questions was administered with six student participants who volunteered attending to it. The interview questions aimed to disclose student participants' views on the effect of their fully asynchronous online language learning experiences on the improvement in their proficiency in four language skills and in their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, which helped gain detailed information on their perceptions concerning their online language learning experiences. Each interview was conducted on the phone and an interview protocol was kept for each participant to take notes of their responses to the questions. Student' responses to the questions in the semi-structured interview will be used to support the findings obtained from the questionnaire.

Qualitative Survey

A qualitative survey developed by the researcher (see Appendix A) was responded to by one of the four English instructors teaching the student participants. In the first part of the interview, five questions were asked to obtain background information about the English instructor. In the second part of the interview, eight open-ended questions were asked in an effort to learn about instructor's perceptions of his fully asynchronous online language teaching experiences. The responses of the English instructor to the questions will be presented to shed light on how fully asynchronous online English language teaching was deemed by him.

FINDINGS

The findings in relation to the qualitative and quantitative parts of the online language learning questionnaire will be presented separately.

Quantitative Part of the Questionnaire

The first subsection in the questionnaire involving four items served for learning about student participants' views about the opportunities for interaction enabled by fully asynchronous online English language learning. Table 1 below demonstrates the results of the opportunities for interaction in fully asynchronous online English language learning obtained by running descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Results of the opportunities for interaction in Fully Asynchronous Online English Language Learning

Item	*M*	SD
1- There was not enough opportunity for peer interaction. I found it more difficult to participate and engage in an online class than in a traditional classroom.	4.31	.82
2- Instead of interacting with many people in a class (multidimensional interactions), my interactions with classmates were often limited to a small group of classmates.	4.33	.77
3- I learnt in a small group rather than in a big class, e.g., I only practiced with a handful of classmates as I knew fewer classmates than I would have done in the traditional classroom setting.	3.66	1.23
4- Much work was needed by the teacher to foster the building of an online learning community.	4	1.04

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)

Table 1 shows that the students agreed with the item stating there was not enough opportunity for peer interaction and participating and engaging in an online class was more difficult than a traditional classroom (M = 4.3, SD = .82). The student participants also agreed that their interaction with classmates was limited (M = 4.33, SD = .77) and they neither agreed nor disagreed with the item expressing that they learnt in a small group rather than in a big class (M = 3.66, SD = 1.23). Table 1 also displays the participants agreed that much work was needed by the teacher to foster the online learning community (M = 4, SD = 1.04). Table 2 below depicts the results of the group work in fully asynchronous online English language learning.

Table 2. Results of the Group Work in Fully Asynchronous Online English Language Learning

Item	*M*	SD
1- I liked the group work we had to do.	2.25	.91
2- Group work and project-type work are important parts in online learning.	3.96	1.23
3- Learner cooperation and collaboration should be encouraged in online learning.	4.55	.9
4- There needed to be more group discussions on study-related matters amongst class members and with the teachers.	4.16	.83

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)

Table 2 shows that the participants disagreed with the item "I liked the group work we had to do" (M = 2.25, SD = .91). The mean value of item 2 (M = 3.96) indicates that the participants almost agreed with the statement "Group-work and project-work are important parts in online learning". The students either agreed or strongly agreed with the items sating that learner cooperation and collaboration need to be encouraged in online learning (M = 4.55, SD = .9). The mean value of item 4 (M = 4.16) means the participants believe student-related matters should be negotiated between the teacher and students and amongst students. Table 3 given below demonstrates the results of the instructional materials and strategies in fully asynchronous online English language learning.

Table 3. Results of instructional materials and strategies in fully asynchronous online English language learning

Item	*M*	SD
1- Online language learning instruction should be task-based rather than rote learning.	4.6	.67
2- Online language learning material should help develop real-life problem solving and critical thinking skills.	4.33	1.15
3- Authentic learning materials should sometimes be used.	4.5	.66
4- Learner initiatives should be encouraged rather than everything prepared and spoon-fed by the teacher, e.g., having some topics of learning suggested by learners.	4.16	1.02
5- Learners should be encouraged to co-construct class resources and the learning environment, and co-create new learning and knowledge.	4.08	.79
6- Learner creativity should be encouraged.	4.58	.51

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)

As could be seen in Table 3, the strongest agreement is with item 1 stating online language learning instruction should be task-based rather than root-learning (M = 4.6, SD = .67). Strong agreements are seen in item 5 expressing learner creativity should be

encouraged (*M* = 4.58, SD = .51) and item 3 stating authentic learning materials should sometimes be used (*M* = 4.5, SD = .66). The participants also agreed that online language learning material should help develop real-life problem solving and critical thinking skills (*M* = 4.33, SD = 1.15) and that students should be involved in the selection of the topics to be covered in online lessons (*M* = 4.16, SD = 1.02). Table 3 also depicts that the participants agreed, though a lower agreement as against those of the other items, with the item suggesting learners need to be included in constructing class resources and creating new learning and knowledge (*M* = 4.08; SD = .79). Table 4 below demonstrates the results of learning styles in fully asynchronous online English language learning.

Table 4. Results of learning styles in fully asynchronous online English language learning

Item	Mean	SD
1- Without a classroom and the presence of a teacher, I found online learning to be more self-directed and self-regulated.	4	.85
2- Online learning is individualized or personalized learning. It allows flexibility, encourages self-direction and choice, e.g., I did not always just follow the teacher's instructions, or I was able to re-arrange learning material, or choose my own online tools, and configure the learning environment to best suit my learning goals and needs.	2.66	1.37
3- I believe other class members formed their own personal learning environments too.	3.41	.79
4- My preferences, needs, social life, technology choices, etc. were better served by online learning.	3.11	1.33
5- I felt that I had control over the learning process.	2.83	.93

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)

Table 4 shows that the highest agreement is associated with student participants' perceptions of viewing online learning as more self-regulated and self-directed (*M* = 4, SD = .85). The mean values of items 3 and 4 indicate the participants took a moderate stance on if their classmates created their own learning environment, and their preferences, needs etc. were better addressed by online learning (*M* = 3.41, SD = .79; M = 3.11, SD = 1.33). The student participants did not agree that they felt they exerted control over their learning (*M* = 2.83, SD = .93). In parallel to the participants' responses to item 5 about having control over the learning process, they also did not agree they self-directed their own English language learning process (*M* = 2. 66, SD = 1. 37).

Qualitative Part of the Questionnaire

Participants' responses to the open-ended questions in the qualitative part of the questionnaire will be presented under the subheadings of student participation, group work, instructional material and learning styles. Interviewees' statements will also be presented to support the findings obtained from the content analysis.

Student Participation

The analysis of student participants' responses created the theme "non-existence of student participation". The participants underscored that there was no student participation in their fully online English language learning experiences. Student participant 4 stated: "*We did not participate in lessons. We just watched the videos uploaded by the instructors*". Absence of student participation brought some problems with engaging in online learning. Student participant 1 noted: "*It was hard for me to concentrate on the videos. It was like watching a video on the internet. I had a hard time concentrating on the videos and understanding what was said by the instructors*". In line with that, the responses of the participants also showed that staying motivated and interested in the online lessons was cumbersome for them as a result of being devoid of the interaction between them and the instructors. Congruent with what the participants stated in relation to the lack of student participation and its effect on their learning, interviewee 2 expressed in the semi-structured interview: "*For me, online English language learning experience was not fruitful. We could not learn English in a live online environment. It was difficult for me to focus on the lessons. I did not watch most of the videos.*"

In the semi-structured interview, the interviewees were asked what they thought about the effectiveness of fully asynchronous online English language teaching on the development of their language skills and their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. The findings indicated that the participants did not think it helped them improve their language skills and enhance their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary a lot on the grounds that the lessons were asynchronous and they could not participate in the online lessons. To illustrate, interviewee 3 stated:

> I don't think my speaking skill developed. Speaking skill cannot be developed by just listening to the teacher. A student should speak English to develop her speaking skill. I couldn't speak English because there was no one to practice speaking English.

Interviewee 2 expressed his opinions as to the influence of fully asynchronous online English language learning on the improvement in his reading skill in the following words: "*I don't believe my reading skill developed a lot. If I had discussed the reading passages with my classmates and the instructor, I believe I would have developed my reading skill more*".

Group Work

The participants' responses to the open-ended questions led to the development of the theme "I wish there had been pair/group work." All the answers given to the questions on interaction showed because online teaching was conducted asynchronously, there was no interaction between the instructors and the students. In addition, the students were not encouraged to work in pairs and/or in groups during the online education. It was, however, emphasized in the responses that providing the students had been urged to collaborate and cooperate, it would have been more effective in increasing their level of motivation and engagement with the asynchronous online lessons. Student participant 11 wrote down in the questionnaire: "*We did not work in pairs or groups. I wish there had been pair and group work because I learn better by working with my friends and talking to the teacher*". Emphasizing the disadvantages of the lack of interaction in fully online English language teaching, interviewee 2 suggested: "*One way of online teaching does not work. I mean only uploading videos is not enough to help students learn English. Assignments should be given and students should work together to complete them*".

Instructional Materials

The content analysis of the student participants' responses associated with instructional materials developed the theme of "the same as the ones used in face-to-face teaching". The point made by the participants in regard to the instructional materials revealed the participants believed the materials used in online English language teaching should be different from the ones used in face-to-face teaching. Student participant 5 stated: "*The materials we would have used if we had continued to learn English face-to-face were used in online teaching, but we could have been motivated more if more appealing materials had been used*". Interviewee 3 stated: "*The materials were selected by the instructors, and we did not have a say in choosing the materials for online English language learning. We just followed the coursebooks selected by the instructors*".

Learning styles

The theme that emerged from participants' answers to the open-ended questions created the theme of "My learning style was ignored". The responses showed that online teaching was not conducted in compliance with their learning styles. Student participant 8 stated: "*I don't think students' learning styles were kept in mind in online lessons. I am a visual learner but how the English instructors taught English did not appeal to visual learners*". Interviewee 6 stated she did not think her learning style was taken into consideration in online teaching, yet she did not believe students' learning styles determined how English was taught in face-to-face education, either. It was understood from the participant's answers that their needs and interests did not guide the process of online teaching, and they could not regulate their learning. Student participant 1 noted: "*I didn't and couldn't control my learning, because the topics we covered in the online lessons were decided by our instructors*".

Online Language Teaching through the Eyes of Taner

The responses of the English instructor revealed that he did not think the process of fully asynchronous online English language teaching was effective for his students. To elucidate why he found the fully asynchronous online teaching ineffective, he emphasized the lack of the interaction between him and his students due to asynchronous online teaching and technology-related problems like lack of internet connection the students confronted.

> I didn't feel like I was teaching something, and most of the students didn't even watch the videos I prepared. The students were unaware of what to do and lots of students had no computers and internet connection and they were all unprepared for the situation. I was like a Youtuber telling, explaining, recording, uploading and sharing. There was also no interaction between me and my students during the preparation of the videos.

The qualitative survey involved the question of what the most and least effective teaching practice was for the students. Taner contended that the online games he used were the most effective teaching practice for his students and conducting asynchronous teaching in which there was no interaction between him and his students was the least effective one for them. Another question asked in the survey was if the English instructors had encouraged online collaboration amongst the students, and he answered it in the following words: "*I tried to encourage my students with the messages I shared and the games I prepared so as to keep their motivation high but I don't know whether I achieved or not*".

Aligned with the emphasis he placed upon ineffectiveness of asynchronous online teaching, he also stated in his responses that he could have enabled student participation and interaction between him and the students and amidst students providing he had taught synchronously; nevertheless, he highlighted that he had not known how to conduct synchronous online teaching then. Furthermore, he noted that he could arrange online speaking clubs for the students so that he could increase the level of interaction among students. Institutional support plays a significant role in endorsing online instructors in enhancing the quality of their online teaching. For this reason, a question was added to the survey to find out if institutional support was sufficient and what could be done by the institution to back them up more in the process of online teaching. Stressing how instantly the institution initiated online teaching, Taner stated

although the institution tried to help the instructors, it was not at an adequate level. For example, the distance education system used by the university was unsuitable for synchronous online lessons and online exams.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that the online English lessons in the context of this study were taught fully asynchronously for 11 weeks as a result of COVID-19, which was not considered by the student participants to be effective in enhancing their English language proficiency. The findings obtained from the quantitative and qualitative parts of the online language learning questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews indicated that student participation and interaction amongst students and between the teacher and the students was not promoted, which, in turn, did not foster online students' English language learning. This finding contrasts the results of the study by Nor et al. (2012) and de Oliveira and Olesova (2017), demonstrating student learning was stimulated through asynchronous communication, which could be caused by the unpreparedness of the participants in the current research for fully asynchronous online teaching and learning. In addition, the difference in the findings of this study and those in the others results from the presence of online discussions in the other studies and the lack of them in the present study. If opportunities were afforded for online discussions by virtue of which students could have collaborated with other students and the English instructors, online student learning could have been facilitated. As maintained by Sampson and Yoshida (2020) online language learning could evoke positive and negative feelings amongst online learners, which might be explained by the mode of online language teaching employed by language teachers. For instance, blended learning is shown to be influential in improving online learners' language skills (Moradimokhles & Hwang, 2020), and synchronous computer-mediated communication is revealed to increase interaction among online language learners (Eslami & Kung, 2016). The results in this study demonstrated that group and pair work were not used, which hindered interaction among students and prevented the preparatory school students from benefitting its facilitative effect as was reported in the literature (Chang & Windeatt, 2016; Gazan, 2020; Okyar, 2023; Lawrence, 2013). The results also indicated that the student participants did not self-regulate their online English language learning, on the contrary, they relied upon the videos uploaded to the distance education system of the university. They stated that keeping motivated and interested in the online lessons was also tough for them. This finding does not correlate Ho's (2019) study asserting that online learners can gain control over their learning through shouldering responsibility for what to focus on and what sources to use. Likewise, the findings in the research conducted by Zhang and Wu (2022) show differences compared to this study, as the participants in their study believed that online learning fostered their autonomy. Drawing on the findings of this study and those of the other, it could be posited that online students' ability to self-regulate their learning is dependent upon their cultural background. Students in the context of this research are by and large teacher-dependent, and this could be one of reasons for why the study participants couldn't self-regulate their online learning. As was indicated by Lin et al. (2017), employing self-regulated learning strategies could predict success in online language learning. Bearing in mind the positive effect of self-regulated learning strategies, the participants could have self-regulated their online English language learning if they had been trained in how to use them. However, in view of the findings of this research, it is obvious that students at different levels of education need to be trained in implementing self-regulated learning strategies to draw advantage from a/synchronous online language learning.

There was congruence between how the student participants evaluated their fully asynchronous online English language learning and Taner evaluated his fully asynchronous online English language teaching experiences in that he also did not believe fully asynchronous online English language teaching was effective in helping students develop their English language proficiency. The findings obtained from his responses indicated that the lack of interaction between him and the students made him perceive the online lessons ineffective for students, about which he was uneasy. He also stated he did not know how to conduct synchronous online teaching in that he was not ready for it, and if he had conducted his online lessons synchronously, it would have been better for the students. Since the way online teaching is designed affects online language learning outcomes (Rienties, et al., 2018), the findings indicate the need for English instructors' professional development in using online technologies to teach English at a distance (Canals & Rawashdeh, 2019). Institutions must endorse English instructors in coping with the difficulties they are highly likely to encounter in online teaching. As well as in-service English teachers, pre-service English teachers, tomorrow's English instructors, should be trained in the initial teacher education program in how a/synchronous online English language teaching can be conducted effectively (Wang et al., 2010).

The findings illuminate why the theory of transactional distance was chosen as the theory underpinning this research. The transactional distance between the English instructors and the students was considerable in this study because online teaching was conducted thoroughly asynchronously, and as is suggested by the theory, students needed to be scaffolded by the teacher and institution to benefit from online teaching. Nonetheless, it is revealed in student participants and English instructor's responses that the students were not adequately supported during the process of fully online asynchronous teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated fully asynchronous online English language teaching and learning from the perspectives of university preparatory school EFL students and an English instructor. The results demonstrated an agreement between both parties' perceptions regarding fully online English language learning and teaching in that the student participants did not think it was effective in developing their English language proficiency and the instructor did not think his teaching promoted students' English language learning. This research may pave the way for a better design of a/synchronous online language teaching programs by drawing the attention of policymakers and online language teachers to the issues raised by the participants of this study.

This study is not free of limitations. Firstly, the number of participants is limited, particularly only one English instructor participated in this research; hence, further research needs to be carried out with the participation of more English instructors and university preparatory school students. Secondly, the data was collected from one university; nonetheless, studies need to be conducted in different contexts to gain deeper insights into the student factor in making the most of online English language learning and the teacher factor in how online English lessons could be designed to better serve online student learning.

Ethics and Consent: The ethical approval was obtained from the ethical review board of Hatay Mustafa Kemal University with the document numbered 902-01-FR 006, date and file number, 20/01/2021-5887, E-21817443-050.99-5887.

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APPENDIX A. Survey for English Instructors

Dear Colleague,

This survey is designed to extensively explore your lived online English language teaching experiences. Your answers to the questions in this survey will contribute substantially to the literature on online English language teaching. Your answers to the questions below will not be shared with anyone or any institution for any purpose. I would like to thank you for accepting to take part in the study and broadening the extant literature by sharing your online English language teaching experiences.

PART I- Background Information

In this part, you are kindly asked to provide information regarding your age, gender, year of teaching experience and educational background. Please apply a tick in the boxes that are true of you.

1- Age : □ 20-30 □31-40 □41-50

2- Gender : □ Female □ Male

3- How long have you been teaching? □0-5 □6-10 □11-15 □16-20

4- How long have you been teaching in the Preparatory School? □0-5 □6-10 □11-15 □16-20

5- What is the last degree you have completed? □ BA □ MA □PhD

PART II. Questions

In this part, you are kindly asked to answer the following eight open-ended questions.

1- How would you describe your online English language teaching experiences in the spring term of 2019-2020 academic year?
2- What was the most effective online teaching practice for your students?
3- What was the least effective online teaching practice for your students?
4- What do you think about the level of motivation the students you taught last term had?
5- How did you get in touch with your students during the period of fully online teaching?
6- Did you encourage online collaboration among your students? If yes, how did you achieve that?
7- What could you have done to support your online students more?

Do you think the institution you are working for have supported you enough in the process of online teaching? If no, what initiatives could have been undertaken by the institution to help you more in the process of online teaching?