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English Teachers' Views on Distance Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic Process

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Abstract
Classroom education in Turkey, also in most of the countries, has been temporarily abandoned to lower the speed of transmission of COVID-19 pandemic. It has been resolved that the continuity of education should be maintained through distance learning. This study has been done through qualitative case study. The study group is composed of 30 English language teachers who teach at secondary schools in the city of Malatya. The data collection of this study has been done through semi-structured interviews. This study deals with what English language teachers think about distance learning, what problems they face regarding distance education, and what corrective actions they think should be taken. In compliance with the aim of the study, English language teachers working at secondary schools have been asked about their opinions on the distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Distance education, Covid-19, Class management, English teachers, Coronavirus

1. Introduction

Having broken out in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in central China, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared pandemic by WHO on March 11th (WHO, 2020). The date also marked the first COVID-19 case ever seen in Turkey (Turkish Ministry of Health, 2020). There have been significant changes in health, economy, education, and social activities since then. Fear and anxiety have arisen in many countries as COVID-19 cases keep rising worldwide (Lin, 2020). The pandemic has made a direct impact particularly on educational activities, leading to various concerns because most of the countries announced temporary closures of schools after the outbreak of the pandemic, and it was reported that more than 91% of the students worldwide, which corresponded to 1,6 billion students, were affected by the closures (Miks & McIlwaine, 2020). Studies carried out in China, where the first cases emerged, concluded that social mobilities in public areas were to be restricted. In accordance with the conclusions, a number of measures were taken, including school closures, and lockdown. The measures proved to be successful at controlling the spread of the pandemic (Gu, Jiang, Zhao & Zheng, 2020; Tian et al., 2020; as cited in Deniz & Evci Kiraz, 2020).

Some other countries, including the USA, Spain, Italy, France, South Korea, Germany, and Turkey, where the cases were high, followed the steps China had taken, and stopped educational activities for a while. Governments began to discuss ODL (Open and Distance Learning) as a solution to the problem encountered on a global scale in regular education. Today, most of the education is provided online, and millions of students have been attending online classes as part of the ODL (Can, 2020). According to UNESCO, a total of 1.646 million students in 172 countries have been affected by the pandemic since it broke out (UNESCO, 2020a). Local and regional governments have had to take strict measures including lockdown, ban on travel, school closures to lower the speed of transmission of COVID-19, leading millions of kids, teenagers, and young adults to be disconnected from their schools and universities. This might result in great challenges with equality of opportunity in the future (Giannini & Lewis, 2020). In any case, the school closures have brought about unprecedented difficulties for governments, teachers, students, nannies, and parents about maintaining the continuity of education (Chang & Satako, 2020). School closures in Turkey began on the 16th March, 2020 and lasted until the 30th April, 2020, a period during which it was agreed upon that the classes in primary and secondary levels were to be delivered online via three TV channels and an online platform called Educational Information Network.

Distance education basically refers to an education process in which teachers and students are not in the same physical environment (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). In the process of distance education, teachers and students stand separate from each other, and the interaction between them is held via different types of information technology (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright & Zvacek, 2012). It also aims to offer education and training by using hardcopy, audio-visual, and electronic materials for learners who lag behind because of various reasons like age, illness, geographical proximity, parental problems, time, and money (Demiray, 1999). Distance education makes it possible to more easily and quickly obtain information with the help of technology, and it helps decrease the cost of education, and it provides a more flexible and objective assessment and evaluation (Elitaş & Devran 2017; İşman, 2008; Uşun, 2006).

Distance education does not simply indicate one single structure and one single pedagogical approach (O'Keefe, Rafferty, Gunder, Vignare, 2020; Teräs et al., 2020), rather with its various learning materials and ways of communication (Rapanta et al., 2020), it is a mindset composed by an integration of related parts (Moore & Kearslet, 2012). Distance education is a great chance in that it paves the way to a quality educational process for companies and people who have not been able to make use of regular education for some reasons (Koçer, 2001). Distance education is a type of education in which the learners are able to learn by themselves thanks to its being more flexible and adaptable compared to traditional education. The aim of distance education is to reduce or eliminate the problems faced when education is to be transmitted to large masses (Tektaş, 2010). Distance education is not affected by the challenges such as learners' age group, time of schooling, the venue, objectives and methods of teaching which are found in traditional practices, and the practices in distance education involve an integration of printed materials, mass media, and, if possible, face-to-face courses (İşman, 2011). Distance education is a modern and effective type of education that can be delivered regardless of place and time, that can help appropriately and flexibly shape and update the online educational materials, that can involve engaging technological materials, and that can be used all around the clock (Yamamoto & Altun, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered our views and interpretation of education (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). A global pandemic can be defined as a disaster based on its consequences, and this disaster might be interpreted as the end of some things but the onset of many things (El Maarouf, Belghazi & El Maarouf, 2020). The natural flow of life across the world has changed due to the pandemic (Zhao, 2020). There have been a number of changes and measures to reduce the impact and spread of the pandemic, such as flexible working, remote working, and working in turns, partial and complete lockdown, self-quarantine, and keeping physical distance. In accordance with the measures taken, places, like schools and universities, where it is difficult to avoid physical contact, have been closed for a while (2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Gupta & Goplani, 2020). The school closures have influenced 1.6 billion students, which corresponds to almost half of all the students in the world (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020).

As a consequence of the impacts COVID-19 has had on a global scale, a need for open and distance learning has come out. The process of the pandemic has revealed out that it is necessary to keep students learning even if it is via open and distance courses, that there needs to be more investment in online education, and that traditional approaches to education should be replaced by alternative approaches (open and distance learning in particular). The process also shows that it should be borne in mind that open and distance learning offers considerable advantages not only at times of crises eg. pandemic, disasters, wars, forced migration, but also at normal times as a backup to classroom education. Governments all around the world have prioritized the continuity of education. It has been witnessed during the pandemic that countries have made use of distance learning with the help of different levels of technological infrastructure (Can, 2020).

Although, in literature, there have been studies to identify the views and attitudes of students, teachers, and professors towards distance learning, those studies are mostly done with people at bachelor's or higher level (Aktaş, Büyüktaş, Gülle ve Yıldız, 2020; Alper ve Deryakulu, 2008; Çakır Balta ve Horzum, 2008; Horzum, Özkaya, Demirci ve Alpaslan, 2013; Karadağ ve Yücel, 2020; Keskin ve Özer Kaya, 2020; Pınar ve Dönel, 2020). It is noteworthy that the number of studies on the views of English language teachers is inadequate. This study includes views of those teachers, who are the subjects of teaching English, and aims to contribute to the literature in this way.

The aims of this study are to find out the views of English language teachers in Turkey who teach remotely, and to give advice on how to get the most out of the distance learning. The focus of the study is given in the title: "English Teachers' Views on Distance Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic Process". In compliance with the aim of the study, English language teachers have been asked about their opinions on the distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions asked are as follows:

1- What do you think about the distance education practiced during the pandemic?
2- What do you think are some of the problems with distance education at this stage?
3- What corrective actions should be taken about distance learning?

2. Method

This study has been done through qualitative case study. The most distinctive feature of case studies is that they enable an extensive analysis of detailed information, which could be more restricted using other methods (Punch, 2014). Qualitative case study has been chosen as the method of this study to be able to analyze the situation of English language education in the process of pandemic in detail. English language teachers have been asked about their opinions on distance education, and the answers have been analyzed with all aspects.

2.1. Study Group

A study group composed of English language teachers working in secondary schools in ten different schools, after taking their informed consent, has been created. The study has been done through easily accessible convenient sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The study group is composed of 30 English language teachers who teach at secondary schools in the city of Malatya. Information on the teachers can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Segmentation of the English language teachers taking part in the study.

Code	Gender	Age	Seniority
P1	Male	26	2 years
P2	Male	41	16 years
P3	Male	47	22 years
P4	Female	34	10 years
P5	Female	33	6 years
P6	Male	34	11 years
P7	Male	52	24 years
P8	Female	27	5 years
P9	Female	30	9 years
P10	Female	37	14 years
P11	Female	32	8 years
P12	Male	29	4 years
P13	Female	24	6 years
P14	Female	35	7 years
P15	Male	37	13 years
P16	Male	48	21 years
P17	Male	36	11 years
P18	Male	52	29 years
P19	Male	40	19 years
P20	Female	35	8 years
P21	Male	31	6 years
P22	Female	38	16 years
P23	Male	51	26 years
P24	Female	24	1 year
P25	Female	34	11 years
P26	Female	39	15 years
P27	Male	40	15 years
P28	Female	30	8 years
P29	Male	38	12 years
P30	Female	47	18 years

Table 2 shows the demographic segmentation of the participants in groups.

Table 2: Demographic segmentation of the participants in groups.

Variables n=30		f	%
Gender	Male	15	50,00
	Female	15	50,00
Seniority	1-10 Years	13	43,00
	11-20 Years	12	40,00
	21-30 Years	5	17,00
	+31 Years	-	0
Age	25-35	14	47,00
	36-45	10	33,00
	46-55	6	20,00
	Over 56	-	0

As the table suggests, 50% of the participants are male, and the rest 50% are female. 43% of the participants have served for 1-10 years, 40% have served 11-20 years, and the rest 17% have served for 21-30 years. The age variable shows that 47% of the participants are at the ages of 25-35, 33% are 36-45, and 20% are at the ages of 46-55.

2.2. Data Collection

The data collection of this study has been done through semi-structured interviews. The interview form is made up after consulting two experts. The experts suggested that several English language teachers be interviewed to test the interview questions. In compliance with their suggestion, five English language teachers were interviewed. These interviews helped shape the semi-structured form, which includes demographic information and three study questions mentioned above. The interviewee approved the comprehensibility of the questions. In the process of preparing the interview form, it was taken into consideration that the form should direct questions to elicit the situation of English language education and the problems teachers face. The respondents were informed about the content of the study. The questions were directed face-to-face by the researcher. After having completed the interview, the respondents were asked whether they would like to add anything else to their response. The responses of those wanting to add something have been included in the data.

2.3. Data Analysis

Content analysis and descriptive analysis have been selected as the method of data analysis. The responses the samples gave have been evaluated in three categories. The purpose of the use of content analysis is to build certain relationships and correlations between the research data and the situation of English language teaching in practice. The views of the English language teachers participating in the study are presented in the Findings section indirect quotations. This way contributes to the reliability of the study. The participants are named with letters and numbers so as to serve the confidentiality. The data obtained in the study were analyzed by the researcher in the first place, and by two experts in the second place. The analyses of the researcher and the experts were consistent with each other. Also, the equation of *Consensus ÷ (Agreement + Disagreement)* ×100 was used to meet the reliability principle (Miles & HubermanCan, 1994), and the rate of reliability was found to be 0.93. To serve the external validity or transferability of the study, the steps of creating the interview form, the interviews, and the analyses have been explained. The focus group, data collection tools, analyses and interpretations of the data have been described in an appropriate language level to be understood by readers. In order to increase the consistency, the findings have been presented directly, two different researchers have converted the data into codes, and the codes have been compared among each other.

3. Findings

This section includes the findings obtained in the research. They are presented by direct quotations under themes and codes based on the responses given by the English language teachers. Table 3 shows frequency of the

responses to the question of "**What do you think about the distance education practiced during the pandemic?"**

Table 3: The views of English language teachers on distance learning practices

Themes	Coded Teacher Views, n=30	ƒ
Positive Attitudes	-An effective practice (P3, P8, P9, P17, P24, P25, P26, P30)	**8**
	-The best at hand (P4, P6, P13, P15, P21, P22)	**6**
	-No different to regular education (P11, P14)	**2**
	-No time and venue limitation (P20)	**1**
Negative Attitudes	-Not efficient (P1, P2, P5, P7, P10, P16, P23, P27, P29, P30)	**10**
	-Inadequate attention and participation by students (P10, P18, P19)	**3**
	-Inadequate instruction time (P12)	**1**

As Table 3 indicates, the attitudes of English language teachers towards distance learning, which has been put into practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, are divided into two categories, namely **positive attitudes** and **negative attitudes**.

The most rated view in **positive attitudes** is that it is "an effective practice," which is mentioned by 8 participants. The other two views in the positive section are "the best at hand" and "no different to regular education" supported by 6 and 2 participants, respectively. The least rated view in the section is "no time and venue limitation" held by 1 participant only.

As for the most frequently expressed view in the positive attitudes section, "an effective practice," participant P30 (Female, 18 years seniority) comments: *The process of distance education is quite novel both for us and for students. The increased use of technology in this process has been a remarkable advantage. Both teachers and students have been accustomed to distance education. I am in the opinion that distance education is the true and effective method in such unusual cases.* Another participant P26 (Female, 15 years seniority) says: *Both I and my students have had enough opportunities along the process of pandemic, which enables us to maintain the continuity of the courses. My students have regularly attended the classes. I can claim that the least affected subject has been English language throughout the process, and that the English language courses delivered by me have been effective despite the pandemic.* Participant P25 (Female, 11 years seniority) thinks: *We had some challenges at the beginning of the shift to distance education, but we have made good progress along the way. I think that distance education is an effective practice in such extreme cases as the pandemic.* Participant P24 (Female, 1 year seniority) points out: *Although I was initially worried about distance learning as such an online environment had not been widely used by far, I have had satisfactory outputs by using it appropriately.* Participant P3 (Male, 22 years seniority) emphasizes: *I find distance learning as the best and most effective practice in this process.* Participant P (Female, 9 years seniority) states: *Technology is widely used in our everyday lives, and the use of technology in education is a great advantage during the pandemic in which classroom education cannot be provided.*

Other codes having high frequency are "The best at hand" and "No different to regular education." Participant P4 (Female, 3 years seniority) underlines: *Although there have been technical and infrastructural problems, I*

believe that the Ministry of National Education has been doing what is necessary. The initial problems have been solved in time. I think that the applications provided by the ministry are the best at hand. Participant P4 (Female, 10 years seniority) summarizes the process: *Our country was caught unprepared by the pandemic, which has affected the whole world in a short time. The EBA (Educational Information Network) had been in use for a while before the pandemic, but it proved insufficient at first, and was supported by various platforms to meet the needs. Distance learning has eliminated the possibility of students' going off track. Though I cannot say that it is suitable for every purpose, I think that it is the best method to follow in this time of pandemic.* Participant P21 (Male, 6 years seniority) comments: *Through distance learning, we have been trying to compensate for the damage that classroom education has exposed in this time of pandemic. Even though it is not a perfect substitute for regular education, distance learning is useful in such cases.*

It can be inferred from the comments above that distance education practices by the Ministry of National Education have been adopted by teachers, and that it is the most appropriate thing to do during the pandemic. The least frequent code of response is "No time and venue limitatio,", given by 1 person. Participant P20 (Male, 18 years seniority) elaborates: *As long as there is enough infrastructure and technological support, distance learning is useful in that it removes time and venue limitations.* He implies that distance education is more flexible and less restrictive for both teachers and students.

The other category is **negative attitudes.** The highest frequency belongs to the view that it is "Not efficient," with 10 participants supporting. This view is followed by "Inadequate attendance and participation by students" with 3 supporters, and "Inadequate instruction time" with 1 supporter.

The code "Not efficient" has the highest frequency in the negative attitudes section. Participant P7 (Male, 24 years seniority) states: *I believe distance education is insufficient and unproductive. The main reason for that is that it limits the interaction and communication between teachers and students.* Participant P10 (Female, 14 years seniority) complains: *I don't think that distance learning is so effective and useful as classroom education. I believe that it is too artificial and obligatory in that there is less attendance and participation, and the platform is not so interactive in distance learning. The facts that teacher-student interaction is limited in distance learning, that it is less possible to make eye-contact with students, and that teachers are less able to use their body language obstruct building a productive educational setting.* Participant P27 (Male, 15 years seniority) claims: *I don't believe that distance learning is an efficient and beneficial practice. I think it sucks most of the time, and it is way artificial.*

Another view in the negative attitudes section is "Inadequate attendance and participation by students". Participant P27 (Male, 15 years seniority) grumbles: *Because the attendance is not obligatory, some of the students prefer not to attend most of the time, and this badly affects the motivation of teachers and other students.* Another participant P10 (Female, 14 years seniority) summarizes: *It is all about an artificial and mandatory process with limited rates of attendance.* These complaints show that inadequate attendance is a problem in distance learning, and that less attendance rates affect both teachers and students negatively.

The code having the least frequency is "Inadequate instruction time." Participant P12 (Male, 4 years seniority) says: *I think distance education is not sufficient for our students. There are few teaching hours, and it is hard to achieve things in such little instruction time.* The participant's expressions indicate that distance education implemented by the Ministry of National Education during the pandemic is not regarded as an effective practice by teachers, and that teachers find the instruction time too little to achieve success.

Table 4 shows frequency of responses to the question of: **What do you think are some of the problems with distance education at this stage?**

Table 4: The views of English language teachers about the problems they face in the implementation of distance learning at time of COVID-19 pandemic.

Themes	Coded Teacher Views, n=30	*f*
Student-oriented problems	-Not enough attendance (P6, P14, P22, P27, P28, P29, P30)	7
	-Students are hard to control (P5, P12, P14, P24, P26)	5
	-Students have attention deficit (P6, P11, P12, P18)	4
	-Students lack socializing (P17, P22)	2
Teacher-oriented problems	**-**Teachers lack competence in distance learning (P1, P23)	2
Problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure	**-**The infrastructure is insufficient (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6 P7, P8, P10, P13, P15, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P27, P29, P30)	19
	-Not enough suitable materials (P1, P18, P27)	3

As Table 4 indicates, the attitudes of English language teachers towards distance learning, which has been put into effect during the COVID-19 pandemic, are divided into three categories, namely **student-oriented problems, teacher-oriented problems,** and **problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure**.

The most mentioned view under **student-oriented problems** is "Not enough attendance" supported by 7 participants. Another code having the second highest frequency is "Students are hard to control" which is raised by 5 respondents. These two are followed by "Students have attention deficit" and "Students lack socializing" comments. The most frequent code is "Not enough attendance." Participant P28 (Female, 8 years seniority) mentions: *Some of students do not attend classes due to lack of enough means, whereas some others do not attend only because they do not want to. I believe this is the biggest problem of distance learning.* Participant P6 (Male, 11 years seniority) complains: *One of the biggest problems in distance learning is low rates of attendance. Though we have enough technological equipment, I haven't been able to attract students to the classes.* Two other participants P27 (Male, 15 years seniority) and P29 (Male, 12 years seniority) complain about the same thing: *We haven't been able to attract students to the classes.* What these participants state tells us that there is not enough attendance, and that this fact bothers teachers a lot.

The second highest frequent code is "Students are hard to control." Participant P24 (Female, 1 year seniority) states: *At this time of distance learning, it is hard to control the students and maintain the discipline. Are the students listening to me or are they busy with other tabs on their computer? It could be hard to detect and control such cases.* Participant P26 (Female, 15 years seniority) says: *We have pushed our students to use technological devices more often, which has resulted in some problems. Some students have been taking advantage of this, and we have failed to control such situations…* Participant P14 (Female, 7 years seniority) summarizes: *The biggest problem teachers have to face is not being able to see what students are doing and how they are feeling as we cannot interact with them as much as we used to do in classroom education.* All these quotations tell us that teachers face challenges when it comes to classroom management in distance learning, and that some students take advantage of this.

Another category of responses is **teacher-oriented problems**, in which there is only one code, namely "Teachers lack competence in distance learning." Participant P1 (Male, 2 years seniority) criticizes: *Teachers are incompetent in distance learning. They don't know exactly what they are supposed to do. They are not able to prepare materials that match with the topics.* Another participant P23 (Male, 26 years seniority) expresses: *There are problems resulting from some teachers' inability to utilize information technology in courses.* It can be inferred from the respondents' opinions that teachers' lack of competence in distance learning causes serious problems.

The third and last category is **problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure**. The code having the highest repetition under this category is "the infrastructure is insufficient." Participant P5 (Female, 6 years seniority) grumbles: *I have a great many students who have not been able to reach necessary tools, like the internet, tablets, smartphones, etc. In the absence of these tools, distance learning fails to be useful.* Participant P8 (Female, 5 years seniority) complains: *Problems such as access to the internet, disconnection occur frequently, and they reduce the attendance rates. There are many students who often cannot attend the classes on time or who go offline during the lesson due to the infrastructural and technological deficiencies, which negatively affect the ongoing lesson.* Participant P10 (Female, 14 years seniority) emphasizes: *The process of distance learning is negatively affected either by insufficient infrastructure or by lack of economic resources in parts of students and teachers as well.* Participant P13 (Female, 24 years seniority) says: *Because distance learning is a technology-based process, problems with the internet connection, and technological devices, like computers, tablets, smartphones, and smartboards have negative impact on distance learning.* Participant P21 (Female, 6 years seniority) thinks: *Maybe, one of the biggest challenges that educators have in common in this period is insufficient infrastructure. Distance learning should be carried out by paying attention to the principle of equality of opportunities. There are a number of students in this country who cannot afford the tools needed for distance education, which directly influences the effectiveness of the education.* It can be understood from the respondents' words that the problems related with infrastructure have had a negative impact on distance education.

Another code under the category of **problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure** is "not enough suitable materials." Participant P1 (Male, 2 years seniority) states: *Unfortunately, there are not enough suitable materials, and teachers are not competent enough to prepare them.* Participant P18 (Female, 29 years seniority) points out: *The fact that there are not enough interactive materials has made the courses boring.* Participant P27 (Female, 15 years seniority) in a similar vein: *The courses have become boring for we do not have enough suitable materials that goes along with the subjects.* It is obvious from the participants' sentences that distance learning has been negatively impacted by the fact that there are not enough sources and materials about the subjects and topics.

Answers to the question of **What corrective actions should be taken about distance learning?** are categorized in 8 codes. Table 5 exhibits the frequencies of the views in descending order.

Table 5. Table of frequency of the participants' views on possible solutions in the implementation of distance learning at time of COVID-19 pandemic.

Item number	Coded teacher views n=30	*f*
1	Problems with infrastructure should be fixed (P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P9, P10, P13, P17, P19, P20, P21, P27, P30)	**14**
2	Students should be provided with the internet and tablets free of charge (P3, P14, P15, P21, P22, P23, P26, P28, P29)	**9**
3	Teachers should undergo in-service training on distance learning (P3, P6, P8, P9, P23, P29)	**6**
4	More readily available materials on course topics needed (P1, P2, P6, P23, P27)	**5**

Continuation of Table 5. Table of frequency of the participants' views on possible solutions in the implementation of distance learning at time of COVID-19 pandemic.

Item number	Coded teacher views n=30	*f*
5	Parents and students should be given information about distance learning (P4, P5, P6, P17, P24)	5
6	Instruction time should be increased (P7)	1

As is shown in Table 5, the most frequently mentioned view on what corrective actions should be taken is the code "problems with infrastructure should be fixed," supported by 14 respondents. Another code having high frequency is "students should be provided with the internet and tablets free of charge," mentioned by 9 participants. 6 participants think "teachers should undergo in-service training on distance learning." The views "more readily available materials on course topics needed" and "parents and students should be given information about distance learning" have 5 supporters each. The least frequent code is "instruction time should be increased" which is put forward by one person only.

The code having the highest frequency is "problems with infrastructure should be fixed." Participant P8 (Female, 5 years seniority) says: *Measures should be taken in order to solve infrastructural problems.* Participant P9 (Female, 9 years seniority) suggests: *First of all, there should be arrangements which will help all the students in the country to attend their online courses with no problems.* Participant P10 (Female, 14 years seniority) points out: *What is urgent is to fix the problems with infrastructure to be able to maintain the continuity of education.* Participant P21 (Male, 6 years seniority) recommends: *A well-designed technological infrastructure is a must in distance education. Therefore, problems with infrastructure should be fixed, and students in need should be supported.* The statements indicate that there are problems with infrastructure, and there need to be improvements and corrective actions to maintain the continuity of distance education.

Another highly frequent code is "students should be provided with the internet and tablets free of charge." Participant P14 (Female, 7 years seniority) says: *Students who cannot attend classes due to limited economic resources should be provided with the internet and tablets free of charge. It is important to be selective doing this so as to provide the support for those who are really in need.* Participant P15 (Male, 13 years seniority) suggests: *Students who have fewer financial resources should be given access to the internet and tablets for free.* Participant P21 (Male, 6 years seniority) in a similar vein: *There should be urgent support for the students who lack financial resources.* These opinions imply that students whose financial situations are not good should be funded by free internet access and tablets in order to remove their problems with technological accessibility.

Another code having high frequency is "teachers should undergo in-service training on distance learning." Participant P8 (Female, 5 years seniority) puts forward: *To make teachers able to use the stuff in distance learning, they should be offered in-service training and seminars.* Participant P9 (Female, 9 years seniority) suggests: *Teachers should receive in-service training on the use of Web 2.0 tools.* Participant P6 (Male, 11 years seniority) thinks: *There need to be meetings and seminars for teachers involving technical issues of distance learning so that they can utilize technology more effectively.* It is clearly indicated in the above-mentioned comments that teachers' level of competence in distance education matters a lot in improving the effectiveness of the process. Also, it is obvious that teachers need to take in-service training on distance learning practices. The other codes of view that are not quoted here basically imply that there should be more readily available materials on subject matters, that parents and students should be informed about the use of distance education, and that the instruction time should be increased. Arrangements and corrective actions in these issues can be claimed to have positive impacts on the process of distance education.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Classroom education in Turkey, also in most of the countries, has been temporarily abandoned to lower the speed of transmission of COVID-19 pandemic. It has been resolved that the continuity of education should be maintained through distance learning. In accordance with the resolution, Turkish Ministry of National Education has put EBA TV (Educational Information Network) in practice with an aim of getting over the pandemic with least damage possible. This study deals with what English language teachers think about distance learning, what problems they face regarding distance education, and what corrective actions they think should be taken.

There are two categories, namely **positive attitudes** and **negative attitudes**, under which teachers' views of distance education at time of the pandemic are grouped.

Positive attitudes tell us that teachers find distance learning effective, that it is the best solution at hand, that it eliminates time and venue limitations, and that distance education is no different to traditional face-to-face education. These positive views imply that teachers like the current implementation of distance learning, and that they adopt it. Sindiani et al. (2020) have also found that distance education is the best option at hand at this moment, which supports the results of our study. Çelen, Çelik & Seferoğlu (2013) conclude that teachers are eager for distance education. In the studies of Ağır (2007) and Kuşkonmaz (2011), teachers are found to have moderately positive attitudes towards distance learning. Those findings match with the ones in this study. In contrast, in his study with primary school teachers Ülkü (2018) found that those teachers had moderately negative attitudes towards distance education. Ateş & Altun (2008), on the other hand, found out that teachers were at a level of indecision. Another study that conflicts with this study comes from Görgülü-Arı & Hayır-Kanat (2020) in which teacher candidates state that distance learning is not a perfect substitute for face-to-face education.

Negative attitudes imply that teachers find distance learning ineffective, that students' attention and participation are not at a desirable level, and that instruction time is not enough. Kürtüncü and Kurt (2020) come to the conclusion that students are not content with distance learning. Patricia (2020) and Sindiani (2020) state in their studies that students prefer face-to-face education to distance education. Morgan (2020), and Carrillo and Flores (2020) found out that students who do not have computers and internet connection at home lay behind their levels in classroom education. Tang et al. (2020) reports a dissatisfaction about distance learning in terms of attendance, assessment and evaluation, and students' pace of learning. Görgülü-Arı & Hayır-Kanat (2020) in their study with teacher candidates indicate that they do not think distance learning is a good alternative to classroom education. The inferences from studies mentioned in this section match with the results of this study. Teachers' responses to the question of what they think are some of the problems with distance education have been classified under three themes: **student-oriented problems, teacher-oriented problems,** and **problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure.**

Student-oriented problems show us that teachers find the rate of attendance not satisfactory, that teachers have difficulty controlling students, that students have attention deficits, and that students lack socializing. Dinçer (2016) arrays that some of the main problems with distance learning are that there are not enough materials for distance learning, that there is no face-to-face communication, that giving feedback and correcting errors are harder during the online lessons, that students, who are not good at individual learning, experience difficulties in planning their study, and that communication among crowded groups of students is not easy to build. Aytaç (2003) suggests that e-learning systems are often difficult to implement due to some challenges, like individuals meet obstacles in their socialization process, and there are problems with hardware and infrastructure. Sintema (2020) reports that teachers' skill of communication with students is weak, and that there is underperformance caused by lack of e-learning facilities. Elitaş & Devran (2017) summarizes disadvantages of distance learning: Being unable to work with a group discipline, and lack of interaction lead to demotivated and undersocialized learners. The findings in this section can be claimed to support the ones in our study.

Teacher-oriented problems indicate that teachers are aware of the fact that they are not competent enough in distance education. It can be inferred from the comments that it would be useful to provide teachers with

seminars and in-service training on distance learning. According to Valentine (2002), teachers should be motivated to boost their performance through training sessions. Moçoşoğlu and Kaya (2020) suggest that improvements be done in distance learning to turn teachers' perception on distance learning into positive, and that informative pedagogical materials be prepared. Burke and Dempsey's report (2020) on COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland overlaps with the aforementioned suggestions. In the report, teachers working in Ireland tell that they do not have enough skills for distance learning, and that they face challenges with hardware, software, and other technological skills. All these studies confirm the results obtained in our research.

Problems resulting from insufficient infrastructure imply that teachers find the current infrastructure and suitable materials insufficient. Gilani points out that school closures worldwide push the countries to create new ideas to maintain the continuity of education, that they come up with a new educational setting to keep students learning, and that however, the effectiveness of the new setting is highly dependent on the level and quality of digital accessibility (2020). The fact that the materials and applications are presented equally and in the same quantity for every student helps develop equality of opportunity in education (Seferoğlu, 2015). The reason for why teachers have developed negative attitudes towards in-service training via distance learning is insufficient infrastructure (Arslan & Şahin, 2013). Study results mentioned in this section match with the ones in our study.

Finally, looking at the possible solutions raised by teachers to the problems with distance learning, it can be seen that mostly mentioned suggestions are as follows: problems with infrastructure should be fixed, teachers should go through in-service training on distance learning, more readily available materials should be provided, and parents and students should be given information on distance education. Similar implications and suggestions have been put forward in other studies related to this issue. In his study on this unusual process, Kırmızıgül (2020) also emphasizes that teachers need in-service training. UNESCO (2020c) recommends various platforms and resources to make the learning process easier for parents, teachers, administrators, and students, and it provides psycho-social support during school closures due to the pandemic. Some of the facilities UNESCO offers are as follows: resources that are prepared to give psycho-social support, digital systems of learning management, mobile-friendly systems, powerful offline systems, massive open online courses, individual learning materials, mobile-friendly learning applications, collaboration platforms supporting video communication, tools for teachers to create digital materials for teaching, and offering financial support to fix the problems related to distance learning. Some of the most important factors to achieve a successful distance learning process are technological competence of teachers, students' accessibility to information technology tools, in-service training for teachers (König, Jäger-Biela & Glutsch, 2020). Nuland, Mandzuk, Petrick & Cooper (2020) highlight that it is necessary and important to train teachers on distance learning software tools, and on how to handle the process successfully. The suggestions and views in this section match with the results of this study.

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