

Chapter 1

BETTER THAN NOTHING BUT FAR FROM IDEAL: VIEWS OF INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS ABOUT EMERGENCY DISTANCE EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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INTRODUCTION

Learning is a lifetime activity, and it never ceases, even in unexpected circumstances. It just continues to happen in different ways based on the needs of the educational environment. One of these ways is undoubtedly distance learning.

Different from traditional education, distance learning involves studying from home where students and instructors are physically distant; however, electronic tools are utilized to maintain the communication between students and instructors and to enable students to access the educational materials (Sadeghi, 2019).

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, several countries, including Turkey, have decided to conduct the courses at universities online, which draws attention to emergency distance learning. According to Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, and Bond (2020), to highlight the contrast to the planned online teaching, professionals put forth the emergency distance teaching as an alternative term, and it is defined as the temporary change of instructional delivery due to the crises. Although distance education and emergency distance learning are not the same things, the difference between them is minor (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). In addition to crises like in emergency distance learning, the needs for distance education can be listed as follows (Şen, Atasoy & Aydın, 2010):

- to provide education to large audiences
- to ensure equality of opportunity in education
- to benefit from experts in different areas
- to fulfill the educational needs of students who cannot go to school for various reasons

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technical precautions could be taken to decrease probable problems and thus to continue education smoothly. Similarly, students' active participation is of quite an importance in preventing a sense of isolation and in providing sound feedback. Interaction and communication could be made more effective, which could also decrease students' anxiety about online learning. Furthermore, students should gain self-directed learning habits and manage their own learning instead of dropping off because online courses could help students to become autonomous and lifelong learners. The school of foreign languages therefore, could provide ELF learners with opportunities to design and regulate their own learning.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted with participants from only one university; thus, the results cannot be generalized to all population. Likewise, the study looked into the use of distance education in learning and teaching English; different findings could be reached in different departments at both undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the study was conducted at the beginning of distance education; it could have yielded different results at the end of the term as the participants got more familiar with the process. Lastly, the general anxiety and confusion experienced in the pandemic process might have had effects on the findings.

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