The Views of Instructors in Foreign Language Teaching with Distance Education Model during the Covid 19 Pandemic Process: A Study at Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraq

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Abstract: The Covid19 pandemic process, which is the biggest global problem of the recent times, has been a negative factor that has profound effects in all sectors and different platforms, necessitating radical changes and plans to follow. Of course, education is one of the areas most affected and directed by this process. Many educational institutions in the world that provide services at various levels have had to give more importance to internet-based distance education applications and technologies. The aim of this study is to reflect the views of foreign language instructors in the university about distance education and to analyze the different situations they encounter in the process and make forward-looking suggestions. The study group of the research consists of 24 academic staff working in the faculties of Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Engineering, Administrative Sciences and Economics and Science at Tishk International University Language Preparatory School in the 2020-2021 academic year and voluntarily participated in the research. The data of the research were collected with a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions created by the researchers. Then, content analysis was performed on the data obtained from the study. As a result of the research, the online and offline distance education model, which is carried out throughout the year, provides flexibility of time and space, easy access and sharing to different resources and materials in many areas, positive interest of students in technology, preventing in-class pressure and other kinds of pressure. It has been determined that there are opportunities such as the ability to easily prevent classical discipline problems. On the other hand, the traditional formal education model has the advantage of being able to deal with students more closely and specifically, to establish face-to-face and eye contact, to interact and understand with body language, to have the usual classroom management experience, to actively participate in the lesson, to give instant feedback and to ensure the continuity of motivation. It has been determined by the instructors that it is more efficient and more beneficial for the academic development of the student than the distance education model due to the advantages of not interrupting the course due to connection problems, reliable measurement and evaluation in and out of the classroom.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Traditional Education, Foreign Language Instructors

1. Introduction

Although there are different examples in recent history, a truly globalized world experienced the first and

extraordinary process, an infectious disease named Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19), which emerged in Wuhan, China's Hubei Province on December 31, 2019 (Wu & McGoogan, 2020) and affected the whole world in a short time, and it was declared as a pandemic by The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020a).

According to the data of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020b), the pandemic, which was detected in a total of 2,995,758 people in 213 countries or regions around the world as of April 29, 2020, caused the death of 204,987 people. As we come to the end of 2021, although various vaccines have emerged for the treatment of COVID-19, there is no definitive treatment yet against the virus (Pietromonaco & Overall, 2020), which is showing its effect increasingly around the world (Kalil , 2020). In this context, as some effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the use of masks, which is a standard practice advocated by many health authorities in the world, including the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), and the protection of keeping physical distance, have started to be implemented in many countries and have become a part of prevention efforts (Prem et al., 2020). These precautions brought significant challenges and changes in daily life (Pamidimukkala & Kermanshachi, 2020). Therefore, the pandemic process necessitated radical changes in many fields and sectors and started to shape the personal, social and professional lives of individuals, especially in developed world countries. While the extraordinary changes shaped by the pandemic process have many negative consequences, especially in terms of health, economic and social aspects, negative consequences have also emerged in the educational sense (Anderson, 2021). United Nations (2020) declared that more than 90% of students worldwide have been adversely affected by school breaks. In addition, during the pandemic, the Head of the Education Policy Department of UNESCO, Mr. Chang (UNESCO, 2020a), stated that 58 of the 84 countries where they conducted research postponed or rescheduled the exams, 23 introduced alternative methods such as online or home-based testing, and continued exams in 22 countries, and education was completely canceled in 11 countries. Another international organization, UNICEF (2020), states that due to the long-lasting effects of the pandemic, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged students are at increased risk of dropping out of school in the future. To this end, UNICEF states that it is important to take measures to prevent disruption of education and to ensure access to continuous and flexible methods of distance education for all children at home, including those without internet access or those living with disabilities. As a matter of fact, during the Covid-19 pandemic process, distance education applications and technologies have become the only solution all over the world due to this epidemic disease. In addition to the health-related measures, the states have decided to implement the online/offline education model within the framework of the possibilities in order to ensure the continuity of education (Antunes & Barreto, 2022; Al Lily et al., 2020).

On the other hand, it should be noted that education systems around the world have faced an unprecedented challenge following the mass school closures mandated to contain the spread of Covid-19. The reason for this is that for the first time in the world, educational institutions of all levels and educational activities for different purposes stopped in a very short time in almost all countries (Onyema et al., 2020; Giannini, & Lewis, 2020). In order to ensure the continuity of curriculum-based study and learning, international organizations are still working and planning to provide distance education with private sector partners and civil society (Asrifan, 2020). Moreover, it is already well known how these strategies and plans ensure effective and equitable access to quality learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2020b). Therefore, Covid-19 pandemic reveals that it is necessary to develop more innovative solutions in order to develop new ways of thinking for the future of education at the global level.

The pandemic process, which is a global interaction, of course, also affected the Middle East and caused some of the mentioned changes. In the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its direct and indirect effects since February 2020, when the cases started to increase, especially in its neighbors Turkey and Iran, interrupted the daily life routine, and this interruption also in the field of education showed its effect (Amin, 2021; Abdulah et al., 2020). Then, in a very short time, on March 1, 2020, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced 4 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Ministry of Health Sulaimani Governorate on the Viber DMI - Kurdistan Covid-19 web page (DMI-Kurdistan Covid-19, 2020). After the first case, education was suspended for a short time in all state institutions in entire Kurdistan autonomous region, except for medical and security environments. Moreover, it was suspended in preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school and higher education levels. (Kurdistan 24, 2020). In the course of time, as of January 1, 2021, with the joint decision taken by the Ministry of Health of Kurdistan, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, distance education started instead of face-to-face education (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2021; Amin, 2021).

1.1 Distance Education

Education is a living process that is constantly evolving. Education, which has an important place in human life, is affected by all kinds of fields that affect people. In this sense, it is seen that technology affects every aspect of our lives deeply, and individuals are faced with more and more information every day through technological tools. In this context, intensive efforts are being made to integrate communication technologies into the field of education because communication technologies have the features that enable the resources allocated to education to be used effectively, provide flexibility to learning environments and increase the quality of learning (Bates, 2005). One of the applications formed by integrating information and communication technologies into education-teaching processes is distance education. Distance education, which has been in practice for many years, experienced a great breakthrough especially in the 1980s. As a result of this breakthrough, many distance education providers have emerged, many more people have had the opportunity to learn, different learning needs and demands have begun to be met, and modern teaching approaches have been put to work. The basis of these developments is the inability of traditional education technologies to meet the increasing educational needs and demands, as well as the effects of developments in different fields, especially communication. For instance, television and computer technologies, and the Internet, have enabled the realization of different distance education applications from traditional option.

In a general sense, distance education is defined as a teaching method based on the active use of information technologies for the processing of lessons and facilitating learning since instructors and students are in different times and places (Celik, 2021; Simonson & Schlosser, 2009). According to another definition, distance education is described as a form of education in which the learner and the teacher are separate and distant from each other in most of the teaching and learning process, materials and documents suitable for the course content are frequently used and conducted more independently (Simonson et al., 2019). As can be seen in both definitions, it is seen that the most important point in distance education is the fact that the source and the receiver are located in different environments and there is the active use of information technologies. According to According to Perraton (2012), distance

education is an educational technology application where the source and the receiver are in separate and distant environments for most of the learning-teaching processes. This application provides its recipients with the opportunity of "individuality, flexibility and independence" in terms of teaching age, goals, time, place, and method. In the learning-teaching processes, materials, tools, technologies, and methods such as written and printed materials, audio tools, technologies, face-to-face education are used. Communication and interaction between the source and the receivers are provided by interactive integrated technologies and a planned and systematic training is applied. Although there are different definitions in the studies on distance education, these definitions are basically that the distance education model is not the same as traditional education; the concept of distance education is primarily an opportunity provided by technology, distance education emerges as a learning model, and it exceeds the possibilities of existing learning processes and models. It is seen that the learning process carries a quality beyond time and space (Sinha, 2021; Traxler, 2018; Simpson, 2018; Kaplan, & Michael, 2016; Keegan, 2013; Moore et al., 2011; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Brown, 2001). According to Simonson et al. (2003), there are four basic elements in the definition of distance education:

1. It is a formal education conducted by an institution. These institutions have institutional studies such as accreditation, diploma, certificate, organization of learning, educational theories, and use of learning methods. It differs from informal and traditional education.
2. Teachers and learners are separate from each other in terms of space or time or both time and space.
3. The implementation of communication technologies can be synchronous or asynchronous. Television, radio, Internet, telephone, letter, etc. for communication can be available.
4. Through Learning Management System (LMS), educational theories are used effectively between learner, tutor, resources and content (Simonson & Schlosser, 2009; Simonson et al., 2003).

As a result of the unlimited communication possibilities that have developed thanks to the internet and technology, distance education can now be applied synchronous and asynchronous (He et al., 2021; Clark, 2020; Perveen, 2016; Malinovski et al., 2014; Murphy et al., 2011; Offir, & Bezalel, 2008). According to Watt (2016), from Midwestern State University, real-time online learning environments where all participants simultaneously connect to their virtual classrooms and communicate directly with each other and directed by the instructor are called "via synchronous distance education". Live lessons with students in a classroom, two-way satellite links, virtual classrooms, video conferences can be given as examples. According to him, the learning event that people cannot communicate instantly is defined as asynchronous (via asynchronous distance education) learning and there are examples such as self-learning through video presentations, video-recorded lectures, discussion groups, e-mails and tools such as the internet or CD. Via synchronous distance education can also be defined as a virtual classroom platform where teachers and students come together independently of time and place by communicating simultaneously through video, written and audio, thanks to various methods such as chat, video conference, and web conferences (Othman et al., 2021; Phelps, & Vlachopoulos, 2020; Celik, 2019; Malinovski et al., 2014; Wang, 2004; King et al., 2001).

Asynchronous distance education, which means that the teacher and student carry out learning-teaching activities with the course tools prepared before, independent of space and time (Madden, et al., 2017;

Nandi et al., 2012; Hsiao, 2012) is also very common nowadays. With materials and tools such as forums, emails, discussion platforms, blogs, message boards, etc., learners can communicate with their teachers and friends at different times (Shandra & Chystiakova, 2021; Hrastinski, 2011b). Asynchronous distance education is usually carried out in the form of presenting comprehensive, massive audio and visual materials and individual study documents (Hrastinski, 2008a) and in this way, students can access the pre-prepared course materials whenever they want, send an e-mail to the instructor and ask questions (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015).

Distance education and information technologies have been actively used especially for the last twenty years, and they affect and change all cultural values of humanity thanks to the fastest-growing online and offline technologies accepted by society (Packmohr& Brink, 2021; Simonson et al., 2019). These technologies have helped transport and share educational content on digital platforms by making information access and distribution available to a large part of the world's population, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Antunes & Barreto, 2022). At this point, it is clearly seen that distance education processes will be used intensively with students from all education levels in every period and stage of education in the following years and will become much more important. Therefore, it becomes important to do much more work on distance education, to examine the issue in all its aspects, to analyze the opinions of the people working in field and to be able to identify potential problems early. In this context, the aim of the study is to examine the opinions of instructors in foreign language teaching online to university students studying in different faculties and departments at an academic level with distance education, analyze their experiences and thoughts in the process and make forward-looking suggestions. The research is important as it is about distance education in the COVID-19 pandemic process and will analyze the impressions of instructors in this process. When the literature is examined, it has been determined that the majority of the studies are related to the history and future of distance education, the success of the students in the distance education courses or what the students experience in the process, but there are very few studies investigating the opinions of teachers or lecturers about this process. Therefore, it is thought that the study will contribute to the field.

2. Method

2.1 Research Model and Working Group

This research is based on the evaluations of instructors in charge of foreign language courses at the online/offline academic level during the compulsory distance education process brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic process worldwide. This research was designed in the case study pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods, in the scanning model (Hennink et al., 2020). Case study pattern is a kind of research that defines the situation, determines the type suitable for the pattern, and defines a concept depending on space and time, and the most important feature is to investigate a situation in depth and reveal the relevant results (Thomas, 2021; Yin, 2009). The findings were discussed theoretically within the framework of the literature on distance education.

The study group of the research consisted of 24 volunteers who worked in the faculties of Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Engineering, Administrative Sciences, Economics and Science and Language Preparatory at Tishk International University School in the Iraqi Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KRG) in

the 2020-2021 academic year. Criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to determine the study group (Hennink et al., 2020). In the criterion sampling method, the criteria that are thought to be important for the research are determined and the study group is formed. The demographic characteristics of the faculty members participating in the research are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the instructors participating in the research

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	13	54.1
	Male	11	45.9
Age	25 - 34	9	37.5
	35- 44	8	33.3
	46 and above	7	29.1
Professional Years of Experience	1 - 4	2	8.3
	5 - 10	12	50
	11 and above	10	41.6
Faculty to which he is assigned	Language Preparatory School	9	37.5
	Dentistry	2	8.3
	Pharmacy	2	8.3
	Nursing	1	4.1
	Engineering	5	20.8
	Administrative Sciences and Economics	2	8.3
	science	3	12.5
Total		24	100

In Table 1, the demographic information of the 24 instructors participating in the research is given in 4 different variables. Accordingly, 13 (54.1%) of the teaching staff participating in the research are females and 11 (45.9%) males. There are 9 (37.5%) lecturers between the ages of 25 and 34, 8 (33.3%) between 35 and 44, and 7 (29.1%) who are 46 and above. In addition, there are 2 (8.2%) people with professional experience of 1 to 4 years, 12 (50%) between 5 and 10 years, and 10 (41.6%) people with 11 and above. Finally, 9 (37.5%) of the lecturers participating in the research were at Language Preparatory School, 2 (8.3%) were at Dentistry, 2 (8.3%) were at Pharmacy, 1 (4.1%) was at Nursing, 5 (20.8%) in Engineering, 2 (8.3%) in Administrative Sciences and Economics, and 3 (20.8%) in Science Faculty.

2.2. Data Collection Tools and Process of the Research

All data of the study were created by the researchers and were obtained with a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions. This form consists of two parts. In the first part, there is a personal information form that includes questions to determine some details about the instructors participating in the research. In the second part of this form, open-ended questions related to distance

education model and foreign language teaching at academic level were asked to the instructors during the COVID-19 pandemic process. In this way, the perceptions and opinions of the instructors related to the subject were determined (Gelissen, 2014). In order to ensure the content validity of the form, which is the data collection tool, the literature on foreign language teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic process and the distance education model have been meticulously examined. Afterwards, expert opinions were obtained from three academicians working in the field of guidance and psychological counseling, comparatively. The form was finalized in line with the feedback from the experts. The semi-structured interview form created was sent to 24 instructors who volunteered to participate in the study by e-mail of the university. In the e-mail system, communication can be online as well as in-depth without the need for simultaneous formats and can take place in a way that can include multiple e-mail exchanges (Creswell & Creswell 2017). These open-ended questions in the data collection tool were asked to the participants in a certain order (Patton, 2014).

2.3 Analysis of Research Data

All the data obtained from the research were obtained from the participants in writing. During data collection, all necessary explanations were given to the participants and an online one-hour seminar was organized and information about the subject and importance of the research was given. Data collection time varied between 30 and 45 minutes. 24 faculty members participating in the research were also involved in the process voluntarily. The data obtained from the study were subjected to content analysis. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis of the research and to eliminate the bias of the researchers, the data obtained were categorized through certain themes, sub-themes and codes. It is planned to reach a meaningful whole through this coding and categorization (Gibbs, 2007). The obtained written documents were analyzed by content analysis method. In order to increase the reliability, the coding that the researchers made individually during the analysis of the data was compared by coming together and a consensus was reached by making changes on the codes. Defining the roles of researchers clearly and expressing them in detail is another measure taken to increase reliability (Bazeley, 2021). In this research, the researchers also took an active role in all processes of the research as the implementers of the data collection tools. They explained the subject and purpose of the research to the participants in all details. In the study, the names and ranks of the foreign language teacher candidates participating in the research were shortened and coded as "ATS1... ATS2" (Academic Teaching Staff). At least some of the ideas and suggestions of all lecturers were coded and presented.

2.3.1 Tishk International University, Distance Education / Covid-19 Pandemic Process

Covid-19 Pandemic Process that started worldwide in 2020, all universities providing education in the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) had to switch to distance education with all their programs, and in this emergency distance education process, all courses were offered online or offline. Foreign language education at the academic level in all faculties of Tishk International University, where the study was conducted, started to be implemented both online and offline. In this context, Mercury E-school System, which is a special distance education platform at the university and has very comprehensive modules, was used. Through the Mercury E-school System platform, lecturers and students systematically engaged in active communication and interaction both online and offline. In accordance with the planned course curriculum, the instructors uploaded some parts to the distance education platform Mercury,

allowing students to access them wherever they are and whenever they want. In addition, the lecturer logged on to the Mercury distance education platform, which allows online mutual screen sharing within a schedule, and the lecturer can follow the participants visually, and share the link with the students with the Personal Information System (PIS) application, which is also the university's own software program. In this way, the lecturers taught the lesson to students connecting over the internet. In addition, the students sent their course assignments and similar materials to the instructors via this platform in written or visual form. On the other hand, students who have internet, connection and computer problems did not participate in distance education at all.

During COVID-19 Pandemic Process, foreign language classes were held in this way for 14 weeks in the Fall term and 14 weeks in the Spring term in the 2020 – 2021 academic year. During the semester, 3 quizzes, 1 midterm and 1 final exam were conducted online. In addition, course attendance and homework were also checked and evaluated depending on the online/offline student performance in the distance education platform Mercury. Mid-term and final exams are planned as two days. On the first day, different types of questions on listening, vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension, such as open-ended, short-answer or multiple-choice questions were shared with the students online, on the Mercury distance education platform, and the students wrote their answers within the specified time. Students were instructed to keep their cameras on during the exam, and two instructors in each class followed the students constantly. On the second day, the speaking test was also conducted on the Mercury distance education platform. Instructors, as a duo, invited the students one by one to the Mercury distance education platform session they opened and took them to the speaking exam. Each student was randomly given two different topics and asked to talk about one of them for a certain period of time. It is requested that the student's camera and voice be turned on at all times during the exam. Then, the students were given writing topics and they were asked to choose a topic within 70 minutes and write an English composition of at least 3 paragraphs. Students were tried to be followed by video continuously.

3. Findings

In this part of the study, the findings obtained from the views of the lecturers who teach foreign languages at the academic level with the distance education model in the COVID-19 pandemic process are included. Findings were categorized under seven headings and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Opinions and sub-themes of instructors teaching foreign languages with the distance education model in the COVID-19 pandemic process

Main theme	Sub-themes
Opinions of instructors teaching foreign languages with the distance education model in the COVID-19 pandemic process	Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education for Foreign Language Education
	Gaining Foreign Language Skills through Distance Education
	Gaining Foreign Language Sub-Skills through Distance Education
	Online and Offline Exams in Distance Education
	Important Problems Encountered in the Distance Education Process
	Implementation of Distance Education in the Following Years
	Comparison of Traditional Formal Education and Distance Education

3.1 First Sub-Theme: Findings Regarding the Opinions of the Instructors on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education in Foreign Language Education

The advantages and disadvantages of foreign language teaching by distance education according to the instructors are shown in Table 3. First of all, it can be said that the participants talk more about the disadvantages of distance education. The advantages of distance education were examined under 2 variable titles and 6 opinion codes, including the sub-theme, the course process and the participants. Disadvantages of distance education sub-theme, on the other hand, was examined under 4 variable titles, including the course process, measurement and evaluation, participants and technical problems, with 11 opinion codes under it.

Table 3: Opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of foreign language teaching by distance education

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Advantages of Distance Education	Lesson process	Code1	Adjusting the lesson time according to your needs
		Code2	No disciplinary problems
		Code3	Opportunity to individualize the lesson with different methods
	Participants	Code1	Students and teachers' opportunity to connect from anywhere
		Code2	Students' opportunity to listen to lessons more comfortably at home
		Code3	Avoiding class pressure
Disadvantages of Distance Education	Lesson process	Code1	Impossibility of group activities
		Code2	Lack of interaction, discussion, question-answer and active learning during the lesson
		Code3	Inability to understand students' reactions and body language during activities
	quantification and consideration	Code1	Failure to ensure the reliability of exams
		Code2	Absence of a definite control mechanism during the evaluation
	Participants	Code1	Not every student has internet access
		Code2	Difficulty in providing student motivation
		Code3	Being at home leads to easier distraction
		Code4	Difficulty giving individual feedback to students
		Code5	More tiring than face-to-face training
	technical issues	Code1	Connection issues and technical problems

When the opinions of the lecturers are examined, the first prominent advantages of distance education are the independence of all participants from space and time, the prevention of class pressure and the flexible

arrangement of lesson hours. In addition, the advantages related to the course process such as less disciplinary problems and total absence of different problems, the use of different course methods in the virtual environment, and the increase in efficiency are mentioned. Moreover, some of the participants felt that online/offline distance education eliminates classroom pressure, especially for shy students or active students who do not like to sit for long periods in the classroom.

On the other hand, it was determined that the participants primarily emphasized the disadvantages related to the course process in distance education. One of these is the inability to do group work, which has an important place in language learning. In addition, disadvantages related to the lesson process such as lack of interaction, discussion, question-answer and active participation in the classroom and inability to understand students' reactions and body language were also mentioned. It was stated that this situation disrupted the concentration of the instructors with the lesson. As another negative sub-theme, measurement and evaluation in distance education has some difficulties, it was frequently mentioned that a healthy measurement and evaluation could not be made. The evaluations given according to the participation of the students in the lessons are the leading ones. The sub-theme mentioned as another disadvantage is related to technical problems. Problems and disadvantages related to connection problems, internet facility, technological communication tools and the use of related software programs are mentioned. On the other hand, being able to study from home was described by the participants as both a positive and a negative situation. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

> ATS13: "I think it is a great advantage that the time and place conditions are flexible in the lectures and transmission to the students is easy. On the other hand, I would like to point out that there are some difficulties and concentration problems in group work and in-class interaction."

> ATS02: "Students can listen to the lesson comfortably at home and take turn and speak in online lessons. They can also replay and review previous lectures recorded offline on the Mercury platform. I think this is a great advantage. On the other hand, I would like to point out that especially students who have difficulties in using telecommunication devices and students who have some technical difficulties have decreased their course follow-up and thus their success was adversely affected. In addition, it is a different problem for students who do not turn on their cameras, and mutual lesson synchronization cannot be achieved."

3.2 Second Sub-Theme: Findings Regarding the Thoughts of Instructors on Gaining Foreign Language Skills in Distance Education

According to the instructors, the findings regarding the teaching of foreign language skills through distance education are shown in Table 4 under two variable headings, positive and negative. Under the positive variable title, 3 opinion codes and under the negative variable title, 8 opinion codes were determined. In this sub-theme, it was determined that the opinions of the participants on acquiring foreign language skills in distance education were generally negative.

Table 4: Opinions on gaining language skills through distance education

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Gaining Foreign Language Skills	Positive	Code1	Students' fondness for computer technologies
		Code2	Traditional education or distance education being essentially the same
		Code3	Unique studies on each skill can be done
	Negative	Code1	Difficulty giving individual and immediate feedback
		Code2	Insufficient interaction for speaking skill
		Code3	Lack of active participation in speaking skills
		Code4	Failure to use efficient techniques for reading skills
		Code5	Decreased motivation in literacy skills
		Code6	Difficulty in teaching writing
		Code7	Problematic side and difficulty of listening skills
		Code8	Technical glitches and frequent interruptions in communication

Likert-style questions were asked to 24 instructors participating in the study in order to examine the effect levels of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, which are 4 main foreign language skills, through online/offline distance education, and they were asked to express their opinions in this way. In addition, there are very efficient, efficient, less efficient and inefficient options for each of the 4 skills in the questions created. Accordingly, the answers of the instructors are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Opinions of instructors on the level of influence on the acquisition of online/offline language skills

Language Skill	Very Efficient	Efficient	Less Efficient	Inefficient
Listening	3	5	6	10
Writing	2	4	12	6
Reading	5	4	14	1
Speaking	4	4	12	4

When Tables 4 and 5 are examined, it is clearly seen that the instructors participating in the study have quite a lot of negative opinions about acquiring foreign language skills through distance education. The main negativities that the participants emphasized and were determined as such processes as ensuring active participation of students, quick feedback, motivation and observation. In addition, it was stated that there are different problems in the acquisition of 4 language skills. For example, it was stated by the participants that the students were not accustomed to the distance education model because the system and the technological content knowledge of the instructors were not sufficient. On the other hand, positive aspects were also mentioned. Although the distance education system may seem a little unfamiliar to the students, the use of computer science and telecommunication devices in general is interesting to the students. This is stated as a factor that increases the motivation for the lesson. They also stated that students can improve their language skills thanks to different interactive programs and applications. It was also stated that there are essentially the same goal and behavior models, whether it is the traditional system or distance education. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

ATS06: "Learning a new language requires mutual interactive work. In the distance education model, this mutual interaction can sometimes be interrupted. This can cause mutual motivation to fall down and even cause the student to drop out of the course. We see this situation generally in the acquisition of writing skill."

ATS11: "It is very important to provide quick feedback and active participation in the process of acquiring listening and speaking skills. Unfortunately, technical or connection problems make it difficult to acquire language skills. On the other hand, distance education and classical face-to-face in-class education essentially aim at the same goals. I believe that the distance education model will be more successful when students' curiosity and fondness for technology are directed correctly."

3.3 Third Sub-Theme: Findings Concerning the Thoughts of Instructors on Gaining Foreign Language Sub-Skills of Distance Education

The findings regarding the teaching staff's thoughts on acquiring foreign language sub-skills through distance education are shown in Table 6 under two variable headings as positive and negative. Under the positive variable title, 4 opinion codes and under the negative variable title, 6 opinion codes were determined. In this sub-theme, it was determined that the participants' thoughts on acquiring foreign language sub-skills of distance education were generally negative and considered a troublesome process.

Table 6: Opinions on gaining language sub-skills through distance education

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Gaining Foreign Language Sub-Skills	Positive	Code1	It can be learned if they can connect to the courses fully and continuously.
		Code2	Vocabulary teaching can be very practical thanks to different applications.
		Code3	Both types of education can be used in teaching grammar and vocabulary.
		Code4	All language sub-skills can be acquired through short films and videos from different web pages.
	Negative	Code1	Pronunciation errors are difficult to correct instantly.
		Code2	Many activities in pronunciation teaching are not as efficient as in the classroom.
		Code3	Uncertainties arise in pronunciation teaching and semantic expressions.
		Code4	Failure to perform measurement-evaluation properly
		Code5	Insufficient technical infrastructure and connection problems reduce motivation
		Code6	One-to-one interaction with students is not possible in grammar teaching.

Likert-style questions were asked to 24 instructors participating in the study in order to examine the effect levels of 3 sub-foreign language skills, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar skills, on gaining online/offline distance education, and they were asked to express their opinions in this way. In addition,

there are very efficient, efficient, less efficient and inefficient options for each of the 4 skills in the questions created. Accordingly, the answers of the instructors are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Opinions of instructors on the level of influence on the acquisition of online/offline language skills

Language Sub-skill	Very Efficient	Efficient	Less Efficient	Inefficient
Pronunciation	1	2	9	12
Word	4	6	8	6
Grammar	5	8	7	4

When Tables 6 and 7 are examined, it is seen that the instructors participating in the study generally have a negative opinion about acquiring foreign language skills through distance education. It has been observed that there are serious problems especially in pronunciation teaching. Instructors stated that correction and repetition activities are difficult in pronunciation skills, and they sometimes experience confusion and different difficulties in teaching vocabulary. They also stated that there were difficulties in grammar and that students did not understand some subjects especially in online lessons. It has been stated that due to these negativities, healthy results could not be obtained in the measurement and evaluation process. On the other hand, they stated that vocabulary teaching became easier thanks to many applications, and language sub-skills could be improved with visual aids thanks to some internet pages. Moreover, it has been emphasized that students who follow the lessons without any problems in terms of Internet connection and technical issue are more successful. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

> ATS21: "We have serious difficulties in teaching pronunciation. Although efforts are made, I do not think that we are successful in teaching pronunciation due to many negative factors, especially technical difficulties."

> ATS10: "We use many online web pages and applications that can attract the attention of the student and they can learn the sub-skills of the language while having fun. Although there is some difficulty in teaching pronunciation with distance education, I believe that grammar and vocabulary teaching is more efficient."

3.4 Fourth Sub-Theme: Findings Regarding the Opinions of Instructors about Online and Offline Exams in Distance Education

The findings regarding the opinions of the instructors about the online and offline exams in distance education are shown in Table 8 under two variable headings as positive and negative. Under the positive variable title, 5 opinion codes and under the negative variable title, 5 opinion codes were determined.

Table 8: Opinions of instructors about online and offline exams in distance education

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Online and Offline Exams in Distance Education	Positive	Code1	Exam practice format and layout was helpful
		Code2	Exam evaluation saves teacher's time
		Code3	Speaking test done very similar to traditional education
		Code4	Very efficient in case of adequate infrastructure and connectivity
		Code5	Space and time flexibility motivates students
	Negative	Code1	Difficulty in controlling during the exam
		Code2	Low reliability in exams
		Code3	Failure to control the cheating attempts
		Code4	Problems related to infrastructure and connection quality
		Code5	Some unaccustomed students experience anxiety and insecurity

In order to examine the opinions of the 24 instructors participating in the study about the online and offline exams, 4 Likert-style questions were asked and they were asked to express their opinions in this way. In addition, agree, disagree and undecided options were presented to answer the questions. Accordingly, the answers of the instructors are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Opinions of instructors about their thoughts on online exams

Online/Offline quizzes	agree	disagree	undecided
… were able to measure course gains.	5	15	4
… were done efficiently.	4	12	8
… reduced / simplified the work of instructors.	18	2	4
… can be used in the foreign language teaching process	7	10	7

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that the instructors have positive opinions about the way and format of the online or offline exams. They also state that exams can be improved with different platforms and applications. They also stated that online and offline exams have negative aspects such as technical problems, cheating attempts, low reliability and objectivity, and stress factors. In addition, when table 9 is examined, it is striking that online and offline exams reduce the general workload of the instructors, but they cannot accurately measure the course achievements. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

> ATS21: "Technical difficulties and connection problems, especially in online exams, make the measurement and evaluation criteria subjective. In offline exams, these problems are relatively not encountered. In addition, the reliability of the exam is another question mark in our minds."

> ATS07: "The process and workload of evaluating online or offline exams has become much easier thanks to technology. It is known that the assessment and evaluation criteria of many exams can be made automatically through the application modules. But for some students, this new form of testing has caused some stress and anxiety."

3.5 Fifth Sub-Theme: Findings Regarding the Important Problems Encountered by the Instructors in the Distance Education Process

According to the instructors, the findings related to the important problems they encounter in the distance education process are shown in Table 10 under two headings: instructional problems and technical problems. 5 opinion codes were determined under the title of the instructional problems variable and 3 opinion codes were determined under the title of the technical problems variable.

Table 10: Opinions of instructors on the important problems they encountered in the distance education process

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Important Problems Encountered in the Distance Education Process	Technical Issues	Code1	Use of telecommunication tools and shortage of technical support
		Code2	Students who do not have these tools cannot follow the lessons.
		Code3	Connection and similar infrastructure deficiencies
	Instructional Issues	Code1	Difficulty in providing in-class attention and motivation
		Code2	Difficulty in giving instant feedback to the student
		Code3	Failure to establish an effective synchronization with students
		Code4	Difficult to follow students during the lesson
		Code5	Failure to provide sound assessments and evaluations

In Table 10, the codes of views on the instructional and technical problems, which are the important problems faced by the instructors in the distance education process, are determined. In the study, the instructors frequently mentioned some of the instructional problems, especially the technical problems, under other headings. It was stated that the biggest technical problem frequently encountered by instructors and students in the distance education process is the correct use of telecommunication tools and adequate connection, infrastructure deficiencies and insufficient technical support. In the theme of instructional problems, on the other hand, problems related to measurement and evaluation, as well as motivation, ability to follow and give feedback to students, and communication problems were reached. Therefore, in the distance education model, whether online or offline, mutual interaction, distraction and healthy instant communication problems appear under instructional problems. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

ATS20: "A healthy communication with the student is of great importance in the foreign language teaching process. Instant error corrections and feedback are very effective in some cases. Connection problems and lack of knowledge in the use of technology tools appear as a serious problem in this context."

ATS08: "Some students chat with other friends and even play games by using different applications on the computer during the lesson. The lack of control of this situation causes

a serious lack of motivation and attention. In addition, cheating by using different applications during the exam is also a separate problem."

3.6 Sixth Sub-Theme: Findings Regarding the Opinions of the Instructors on the Application of Distance Education in Foreign Language Teaching in the Following Years

The findings regarding the applicability of distance education in foreign language teaching in the following years are shown in Table 11 under two variable titles as applicable and not applicable. 6 opinion codes were determined under the title of applicable variable and 4 opinion codes were determined under the title of non-applicable variable.

Table 11: Opinions of instructors on the application of distance education in foreign language teaching in the following years

Sub-theme	Variable	#	Opinion Codes
Application of Distance Education in the Following Years	Not applicable	Code1	Insufficient activities, repetitions, instant feedback and active communication functionality
		Code2	Unsolvable or very difficult technical difficulties
		Code3	It cannot be applied without ensuring the reliability of the exams.
		Code4	Not suitable for acquisition of language sub-skills.
	Applicable	Code1	If the technological infrastructure and connection problems are resolved
		Code2	Evaluation in the form of assignments and projects
		Code3	Could be for lecture
		Code4	With more advanced and controllable computer software
		Code5	Determination of measurement and evaluation standards
		Code6	In support of formal education

When Table 11 is examined, it is emphasized that the use of online or offline foreign language teaching is supported after certain changes and certain standards are determined. It is also emphasized that distance education may not be efficient due to some features and skills of language teaching. It has also been found that the reliability of the exams poses an important problem according to the instructors. It was also stated that there should be a standard for measurement and evaluation criteria. As a matter of fact, a few

instructors who fully support distance learning have stated that education should be redefined, discussions should be made on philosophy of education, and approaches should be updated in the online education process. On the other hand, some instructors who do not find language teaching efficient with the distance education model emphasized the necessity of formal education and stated that the distance education model can only be applied as a structure that supports formal education. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

> ATS09: "The distance education model in foreign language teaching is not sufficient on its own and should not be applied entirely. However, I think it is beneficial in terms of supporting formal education and that some students do not feel the pressure of the classroom and can follow the lessons whenever they want in a comfortable environment."

> ATS16: "I believe that foreign language education can be successfully implemented online and offline with the online and offline distance education model, after solving technical and connection problems, determining the official standards of measurement and evaluation criteria, and the necessary training."

3.7 Seventh Sub-Theme: Findings Concerning the Opinions of the Instructors on Which of the Traditional Formal Education and Distance Education Models is More Efficient in terms of Foreign Language Teaching

The findings regarding the last sub-theme of the instructors, which is between traditional formal education and distance education model in terms of foreign language teaching, are presented in Table 12 with 3 different variables: ' Classroom Management', 'Lesson Process' and 'Other' have also been examined. Accordingly, a total of 9 opinion codes were determined in the Formal Education model and 8 opinion codes were determined in the Distance Education model.

Table 12: Opinions of instructors on their thoughts on which is more efficient between traditional formal education and distance education model in terms of foreign language teaching

Sub-theme	Model	Variable	&	Opinion Codes
Traditional Formal Education and Distance Education Comparison	Formal Education	Classroom Management	Code1	Ensuring student concentration easier
			Code2	Effective use of body language
			Code3	Ease of dealing with students one-to-one
		Lesson Process	Code1	High percentage of participation in the course
			Code2	Providing instant feedback and easy interaction
			Code3	Reliability of Measurement and Evaluation
		Other	Code1	Preparation of course materials and classroom infrastructure
			Code2	Minimum level of technical problems
			Code3	A higher level of seriousness in every sense
	Distance Learning	Classroom Management	Code1	Flexibility of space and time and student control
			Code2	Finding spontaneous solutions to different discipline problems
		Lesson Process	Code1	The convenience of telecommunication tools
			Code2	Ability to perform in-class visual and sensory activities easily
			Code3	Enabling the subjects to be explained more quickly, in detail and with multiple examples, thanks to smart applications.
		Other	Code1	Students' interest in telecommunications tools
			Code2	Students can watch the subjects they do not understand or are missing during the lesson, thanks to the recorded lessons.
			Code3	Providing students with the opportunity to learn on their own and helping to increase their self-confidence

As it can be seen in Table 12, the reasons for the participants to prefer traditional formal education in foreign language teaching are efficient classroom management, long-term motivation and concentration in the classroom, the advantage of establishing eye contact with students and being able to take care one-to-one, more reliable measurement and evaluation, very few technical problems and minimum infrastructure problems. They stated that the traditional formal education model is more efficient and beneficial if the problems are at a minimum level, the students are more serious about the course and the learning process. It was stated that the distance education model provides time and space flexibility, students' interest and curiosity in technology, quick access to resources and efficient material sharing. However, almost all of the instructors stated that although the distance education model has positive and different advantages, they stated that traditional formal education is superior in foreign language teaching and that students can learn better. In fact, a few instructors stated that the nature of the distance education model is different and that it is not suitable for foreign language teaching because it does not have the seriousness and motivation in the learning process. Some of the answers of the academic staff (Academic Teaching Staff) are as follows:

> ATS22: "I think that the traditional formal education model in the classroom has a very important place especially in foreign language acquisition. It is very important to deal with students one-to-one and closely in teaching language skills. Quick feedback, concentration and interaction with body language are critical in the learning process. It is very difficult and insufficient to provide this context in the distance education model."

> ATS18: "Although the distance education model has some advantages in foreign language teaching, I do not believe it is an effective education model. However, I think of it as an intermediary model that supports formal education."

> ATS23: "The distance education model is an education model that has many differences and handicaps in its nature. It is not a social education model. Because if you do not have the necessary technological devices and a stable connection, you will be deprived of education. Distance education does not offer educational equality! In the traditional formal education model, these problems are not encountered. You will definitely find an opportunity to learn and an environment where you can interact. As a matter of fact, language learning is a situation that can be realized with active participation. The distance education model makes the active participation of our students in the classroom very hard and contains a difficult situation in measurement and evaluation."

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the views of foreign language teaching staff working in different faculties of Tishk International University in the Autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq and teaching foreign languages at different academic levels on foreign language teaching with the distance education model were examined. In this context, it has been concluded that the instructors generally do not find the online/offline distance education model productive in foreign language teaching and that its negative aspects are quite high. It is understood that the participants find traditional formal education productive due to the advantages of classroom management such as being able to deal with students one-to-one, making eye contact, and

understanding body language, and providing active participation and motivation in the lesson more easily. The distance education model, on the other hand, is mostly experiencing connection problems, difficulties and anxiety in using telecommunication tools and digital applications, individual reasons such as loss of motivation, distraction, lack of concentration, seriousness, difficulty in giving instant feedback, stable internet availability. It was concluded that they did not find it effective because of the situations related to the course process such as mutual interaction and discussion, question-answer, insufficient body language interaction, and due to the processes related to measurement and evaluation such as reliability. On the other hand, it has been concluded that distance education has opportunities such as providing time-space flexibility, facilitating access to and sharing different resources and materials, preventing classroom pressure, preventing discipline problems, and students' interest in technology. It has been found that problems such as lack of direct feedback, active participation, communication and interaction in distance education environments have been expressed by instructors in different studies (Shaytura et al., 2020; Fojtík, 2018; Watts, 2016; Zhao et al., 2005). It is also supported by the studies in the literature that it affects the teaching staff negatively and creates a negative perception towards distance education (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2013; Bernard et al., 2020; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Gilroy et al., 2001). When the findings of the research were examined, it was concluded that the instructors perceived technical problems such as connection and technological infrastructure and instructional problems such as motivation, participation, communication, student follow-up, feedback and evaluation as very important in the distance education model. For this reason, according to the participants of the research, it is understood that distance education cannot be efficient in foreign language teaching without solutions or alternative approaches to these problems. In the studies conducted by Peters (2020), Williamson et al., (2020), and Liebowitz and Frank (2016), it has been found that providing technical support, material support and pedagogical training to instructors can help them solve the problems in distance education courses in a way that supports these results. In this way, instructors will also be able to improve themselves and make teaching more active with innovative practices (Bernard et al., 2020; Madden et al., 2017; Giannini, & Lewis, 2020; Garrison, & Vaughan, 2008; Brown, 2001).

According to the findings of the study on foreign language skills, it was concluded that teaching reading and writing skills in online/offline foreign language teaching is relatively more efficient but teaching listening and speaking skills is generally not efficient. When the reasons for this are examined, these can be mentioned: not being in close eye contact with the student during speaking activity, not being able to give instant feedback, decreased participation and evaluation problems. In addition, students are not used to this system. It can be interpreted that the lack of necessary infrastructure of the instructors and the problems related to the sound during the listening activity affect the process and the efficiency in foreign language teaching through distance education decreases in terms of skills that require students to be more active. According to the findings of the study on foreign language sub-skills, it was concluded that pronunciation sub-skills are generally not efficient in teaching foreign languages with the distance education model but teaching grammar and vocabulary sub-skills is relatively more efficient. When the reasons for this situation are examined, it can be interpreted that pronunciation teaching is inefficient because of the difficulties of giving immediate feedback, correction and repetition, as in speaking skills.

When the findings of the study related to the online exams in the distance education process were examined, it was concluded that the instructors thought that the exams were prepared to measure the

achievements, but that there were no official standards and that the full reliability of the exam could not be ensured. Therefore, in the following years, it was determined that they were undecided about the use of such exams in this way and that certain standards and reliability of the exams should be increased. In addition, it was stated that such exams were made obligatory in this process- that the instructors had doubts about their full use in the coming years, and that studies should be carried out to avoid cheating. In addition, it has been concluded that it is necessary to solve the technical problems. When the findings related to the use of distance education model in foreign language teaching in the following years are examined, it has been concluded that it is possible to use it with certain standards and regulations to be prepared by experts in some cases and depending on certain conditions. In addition, it has been determined that some instructors think that the distance education model can only be an auxiliary model in the traditional formal education process. Moreover, due to the disadvantages of the distance education model, it has been determined that formal education, which is the traditional education model, is the most efficient alternative in foreign language teaching.

4.1 Limitations

In this research, the views of the instructors working in different faculties of Tishk International University in the Autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq and teaching foreign languages at different academic levels on foreign language teaching with the distance education model were examined. The study is limited to 24 instructors who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. In addition, the results of the research were obtained with a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions created by the researchers and limited to the qualifications measured in the form. In addition, in the research, findings were obtained by preparing various specific questions in the interview method and Likert style, among the qualitative data collection tools. This situation constitutes one of the limitations of the research.

4.2 Suggestions

It can be suggested to develop platforms, methods or applications to eliminate the negative aspects or disadvantages of the distance education model in foreign language teaching, and in this way, the online and offline distance education model can be made more efficient.

Since some of the problems in the distance education model are educational and some of them are technical problems, it can be recommended that the instructors and students be constantly supported for the rapid solution of these problems. It can be suggested that they should develop themselves in this area and work to solve their infrastructure problems.

It can be suggested to work on practices, different methods or platforms that will facilitate the implementation of activities such as active participation, discussion, question-answer, interaction, feedback, group work, which are found to be very important in foreign language teaching. Thus, the model of distance education can be made more efficient.

Much more work is needed to improve the teaching of foreign language skills and foreign language sub-skills through distance education, to apply different methods and to turn the opinions of the instructors into positive. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct applied research in this area.

It is recommended to carry out studies that will increase the reliability of the exams and facilitate student follow-up. As a matter of fact, since there are important problems in the measurement and evaluation dimension in the distance education model, and because it is among the results of the study that the instructors describe the distance education model as inefficient, it can be recommended to carry out scientific studies that will find solutions to the problems related to measurement and evaluation in distance education.

It is suggested that this study should be examined with more participants and with the methods or processes in which different distance education platforms are used.

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