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## ATTITUDES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING STUDENTS TOWARDS ONLINE LEARNING

*Research article*

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## Abstract

In this study, it is aimed at revealing the attitudes of foreign language teaching students towards online learning. For this purpose, survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. The universe of the research consists of students studying foreign language teaching at universities in Turkey, while the sample consists of students studying German and English teaching at a state university located in the Central Anatolia region of Turkey. A total of 210 participants took part in the study. The data obtained from the participants within the scope of the research were analyzed using the SPSS 21 package program. Evaluation of normally distributed data was done by t-test in paired groups and by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in groups of more than two. As a result of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's test, one of the Post-Hoc tests, was used to determine which groups caused the difference for the data with significant difference. As a result, it was concluded that male participants accepted online learning more than female participants, the participants' attitudes towards online learning did not differ according to their departments and the general acceptance perceptions of online learning of the participants in the third grade were higher than the participants in the second grade.

*Keywords:* foreign language education, online education, German language teaching, English language teaching

## 1. Introduction

In today's world, where digital development takes place at a rapid pace, the necessity of learning at least one foreign language is indisputable. Since people can easily communicate each other through internet and social media, a healthy communication is only possible with the effective use of a foreign language. Individuals who are aware of this situation strive to learn a foreign language, and countries organize their education systems so that students can learn at least two foreign languages. This rising interest in foreign language naturally increases the demand for foreign language education. Thus, the need for foreign language teachers arises day by day. Meeting the need for a foreign language in an efficient way is possible if only students of (foreign) language teaching departments receive a qualified education. As of 2020, the quality of education in all around the world has been interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the education of approximately 1.5 billion students has been negatively affected (UNESCO, 2020).

“The coronavirus (COVID-19) disease has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (2020) and has directly or indirectly affected all countries in the world and individuals living in these countries at the social level” (Çaykuş & Mutlu Çaykuş, 2020, p. 96). “Precautions such as partial or full-time curfews, quarantine processes, self-isolation of

individuals, the obligation to wear masks and the precautions of social distance have been taken all over the world” (Bozkurt, 2020, p. 114). The pandemic has had political, economic, psychological and social consequences, in addition the results reflected in the education systems of countries. “Education systems around the world have faced an unprecedented challenge following the mass school closures mandated to contain the spread of COVID-19 as part of public health efforts” (Can, 2020, p. 13). Many educational systems have found the solution by means of distance education and thus students do not have to stay away from their education (Domenico et al., 2020; as cited in Kürtüncü & Kurt, 2020, p. 68).

When the related literature is reviewed, it has been observed that the concept of distance education is named and defined in different ways (online education, e-learning, distance learning, etc.) by different researchers. “An advertisement by Calep Philips, published in the Boston Newspaper in 1728, stating that weekly lessons can be sent to those who live in Boston and want to receive this education about stenography education is accepted as the first indicator of distance education” (Battenberg, 1971; cited in Özcan, 2019, p. .9). In general, the term distance education can be expressed as the education that takes place when the student and the teacher are physically in separate environments. Distance learning is a modern and effective form of learning that can be offered independent of place and time, provides individuals with the opportunity to present educational materials in electronic environment and includes features such as using these materials 24/7, and has evolved into concepts such as e-learning or online learning over time (Telli & Altun, 2008). 2020, p. 30). Arousing great interest among researchers, managers, politicians and educators around the world, online education has created a very dynamic educational environment in the light of developing technologies (Dziuban, et al., 2016). The concept of online education is defined by Watson (2008) as a type of education in which participants and educators access content distribution and communication from geographically separate regions from their computers connected to the internet; Khan (2001) introduces it as an innovative approach that provides asynchronous distribution of resources to a remote audience using internet infrastructure; Saul (2003) explains it as any kind of learning that takes place via computer in its broadest sense, and Oblinger and Hawkins (2005) formulate it as the use of technology to transfer a part or all of a lesson regardless of time and place. In the light of these definitions, although it can be said that the concept of online education provides great convenience to education, its efficiency can be discussed. In this context, it can be mentioned that the efficiency of online education is directly proportional to the attitudes of the students towards this educational system.

The concept of attitude, with its most common definition, can be explained as the tendency that creates the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of the individual towards an object (Çırak, 2021, p. 22). Allport (1954) defines the attitude as an emotional and mental readiness that directs and strongly influences the behaviors of individuals depending on their experiences; Çiftçi (2018) defines it as a positive or negative approach towards an object or situation. According to the definitions above, the efficiency of the online courses, especially in foreign language education departments, will be directly related to the students' attitudes towards online learning. In this study, the goal is to reveal the attitudes of students who receive foreign language teaching education towards online learning. In this context, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

- a. Do the attitudes of students who receive foreign language teaching education towards online learning differ according to their gender?
- b. Do the attitudes of students who receive foreign language teaching education towards online learning differ according to their departments?

c. Do the attitudes of students who receive foreign language teaching education towards online learning differ according to their grade/levels?

## 2. Methodology

In this study, the survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used to examine the attitudes of foreign language teaching education students towards online learning in terms of various variables. Quantitative research aims to reach definite and generalizable results by using numerical data (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018, p. 102). The screening model, on the other hand, is a research approach that aims to describe the past and present situation as it is. “The scanning model is made on the whole universe or on a sample or group to be taken from it in order to reach a general judgment about the universe consisting of more elements” (Karasar, 2016).

### 2.1. Participants

The population of the research consists of students studying foreign language teaching at universities in Turkey, while the sample consists of students studying German and English Language Teaching at a state university located in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey. The frequency distributions of the sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency distributions of the sample*

Variables		N	P (%)
Gender	Female	159	%75,7
	Male	51	%24,3
	Total	210	%100
Department	German L.T.	76	%36,2
	English L.T.	134	%63,8
Grade	1. Grade	65	%31
	2. Grade	66	%31,4
	3. Grade	40	%19
	4. Grade	39	%18,6

When Table 1 is examined, it has been observed that a total of 210 students participated in the study. 75.7% of the participants are female and 24.3% are male. 36.2% of the participants are trained in the German Language Teaching program, and 63.8% in the English Language Teaching program. 31% of the participants are in the first; 31.4% are in the second; 19% are in the third and 18.6% are in the fourth grade.

### 2.2. Instruments

The data used in the research were obtained with the “Online learning attitude scale: Development, validity and reliability” scale, and “personal information form” developed by Usta et al. (2016). The personal information form was developed by the researchers. In the personal information form, the participants were asked questions about their gender, department and grade level. In the online learning attitude scale, 20 questions were asked to the participants. The scale was prepared in 5-point Likert type and consists of 4 factors. The factors are “General Acceptance (1,2,3,4,5,6,7)”, “Individual Awareness (8,9,10,11,12,13)”, “Usability (14,15,16) and “Practice” Effectiveness (17,18,19,20)”. The internal consistency coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of the whole scale was .904, and in this study it ( $\alpha$ ) was calculated as .948.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the participants within the scope of the research have been analyzed using the SPSS 21 package program. It's known that, if the skewness and kurtosis values of the data are between +1 and -1, the data is considered to be normally distributed (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018: 214). Therefore, in this study data with normal distribution were evaluated by t-test in paired groups and by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in groups of more than two. As a result of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's test, one of the Post-Hoc tests, was used to determine which groups caused the difference for the data with significant difference. The significance level in the study was accepted as  $p < .05$ .

### 3. Findings

In this part of the study, the attitudes of foreign language teaching department students towards online education have been examined in terms of gender, department and grade level variables, and the findings are given below.

The attitudes of the participants towards online education have been calculated with the t-test according to the gender variable and shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings for the gender variable

Dimension	Gender	N	X	SD	p	t
General Acceptance	Female	159	3,09	,88	,029	-1,306
	Male	51	3,27	,72		
Self-Awareness	Female	159	2,71	1,33	,046	-,496
	Male	51	2,81	1,10		
Usefulness	Female	159	3,36	1,31	,027	-1,519
	Male	51	3,67	1,07		
Implementation Effectiveness	Female	159	3,37	,97	,526	,219
	Male	51	3,33	,98		

When Table 2 is examined, the attitudes of male participants towards online learning in terms of "General Acceptance ( $X=3,27 > X=3,09$ ;  $p < ,05$ )", "Individual Awareness ( $X=2,81 > X=2,71$ ;  $p < ,05$ )" and "Usability ( $X=3,67 > X=3,36$ ;  $p < ,05$ )" dimensions are higher than female participants. There was no significant difference between the genders in the dimension of "Implementation Effectiveness ( $p = ,526 > ,05$ )".

The attitudes of the participants towards online learning have been calculated with the t-test according to the department variable and shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings for the department variable

Dimension	Department	N	X	SD	p	t
General Acceptance	German	76	2,97	,82	,962	-2,106
	English	134	3,23	,85		
Self-Awareness	German	76	2,59	1,24	,608	-1,262
	English	134	2,82	1,29		
Usefulness	German	76	3,35	1,34	,205	-,765
	English	134	3,49	1,22		
Implementation Effectiveness	German	76	3,35	,90	,273	-,064
	English	134	3,36	1,01		

When Table 3 is examined, it has been determined that the participants' attitudes towards online learning did not differ significantly in any dimension ( $p=.962$ ;  $p=.608$ ;  $p=.205$ ;  $p=.273 > .05$ ). Looking at Table 3, it has been observed that the mean values are very close to each other.

The attitudes of the participants towards online learning have been calculated by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) according to the class variable and Tukey tests, one of the PostHoc tests, are shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. *Findings for the grade variable*

Dimension	Grade	N	X	SD	Min.	Max.
General Acceptance	1	65	3,02	,84	1,57	4,57
	2	66	2,97	,89	1,29	4,57
	3	40	3,41	,77	1,71	5,00
	4	39	3,34	,79	1,57	4,43
Self-Awareness	1	65	2,51	1,29	1,00	5,00
	2	66	2,64	1,32	1,00	5,00
	3	40	2,87	1,26	1,00	5,00
	4	39	3,14	1,10	1,00	5,00
Usefulness	1	65	3,15	1,32	1,00	5,00
	2	66	3,27	1,36	1,00	5,00
	3	40	3,65	1,04	1,33	5,00
	4	39	3,97	1,00	1,00	5,00
Implementation Effectiveness	1	65	3,13	1,06	1,00	5,00
	2	66	3,34	,96	1,00	5,00
	3	40	3,64	,86	1,00	5,00
	4	39	3,50	,86	1,50	5,00

Tukey test was used to determine from which groups the difference originated.

Table 5. *ANOVA table*

Dimension	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Tukey
General Acceptance	Between G.	7,126	3	2,375	3,393	,019*	3-2
	Within G.	144,200	206	,700			
	Total	151,326	209				
Self-Awareness	Between G.	10,934	3	3,645	2,273	,081	-
	Within G.	330,280	206	1,603			
	Total	341,214	209				
Usefulness	Between G.	19,959	3	6,653	4,352	,005*	4-1 4-2
	Within G.	314,888	206	1,529			
	Total	334,847	209				
Implementation Effectiveness	Between G.	7,307	3	2,436	2,633	,041*	3-1
	Within G.	190,575	206	,925			
	Total	197,882	209				

\* $p < .05$

When Table 5 is examined, a significant difference ( $p=.019 < .05$ ) was found in the dimension of "General Acceptance". As a result of the calculations, it has been determined that this difference was between the third and second grades. It is seen that the general



acceptance perceptions of online learning participants ( $X=3.41$ ) who received education in the third grade are higher than the second-grade participants ( $X=2.97$ ).

Considering the "usability" dimension, a significant difference was detected again ( $p=.005<.05$ ), and it can be said that this difference was determined between the participants who received education in the fourth grade and the participants who received education in the first and second grades. It was revealed that fourth grade participants ( $X=3.97$ ) found online learning more useful than first ( $X=3.15$ ) and second ( $X=3.27$ ) grades.

When the "Implementation Effectiveness" dimension was evaluated, significant differences were found again ( $p=.041<.05$ ). It is seen that this difference was between the participants receiving education in the third grade and the participants receiving education in the first grade. It can be stated that third-year participants ( $X=3.64$ ) found online learning more effective than first-year participants ( $X=3.13$ ).

In the "Individual Awareness" dimension, there was no significant difference between the groups ( $p=.081>.05$ ).

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion**

In the study, the attitudes of students who receive foreign language teaching education towards online learning have been examined according to various variables. In this context, a total of 210 participants took part in the study. 75.7% of the participants are female and 24.3% are male. The data in the research were collected with the "Online Learning Attitude Scale" developed by Usta et al. (2016) and "the personal information form" prepared by the researchers of this study.

As a result, male participants accepted online learning more than female participants ( $X=3.27>X=3.09$ ); It has been determined that their self-awareness towards online education was higher than female participants ( $X=2.81>X=2.71$ ) and they found online learning more useful ( $X=3.67>X=3.36$ ). From this point of view, it can be said that male participants adopt the technological opportunities used in education more than female participants and they are more inclined and ready for online education. When the literature is examined, it has been determined that the results obtained depending on the gender variable are in parallel with the results obtained in the studies conducted by Karaođlan Yılmaz et al. (2014), Bađcı (2018) and Buluk and Equalti (2020). However, in the studies conducted by Ünal et al. (2021) and Baygeldi et al. (2021), no significant differences were found in terms of gender.

As a result of the research, it has been determined that the attitudes of the participants towards online learning did not differ according to the departments they received education. From this point of view, it can be stated that the approaches of the participants who received German Language Teaching and those who received English Language Teaching towards online education were similar in all dimensions. When the literature is reviewed, different results can be found. For example, Karadaş et al. (2020) stated in their study that university students studying in the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology have higher attitudes towards digital technologies than students studying in other departments.

In the final result of the research, it has been revealed that the general acceptance perceptions of the participants who received online education in the third grades towards online learning were higher than the participants who received online education in the second grades ( $X=3.41>X=2.97$ ). In addition, depending on the grade level variable of the participants, it has been determined that the participants who received online education in the fourth grade found online learning more useful than the participants who received online education in the first and second grades ( $X=3.97>X=3.15$ ;  $X=3.27$ ). In terms of

implementation effectiveness, it has been concluded that the participants who received online education in the third grade found online learning more effective than the participants who received online education in the first grade ( $X=3.64 > X=3.13$ ). Karadaş et al. (2020) remarked that the second-year university students' attitudes towards digital technologies are higher than those of the other grades, and the lowest average belongs to the first-year university students. Baygeldi et al. (2021), on the other hand, found that there is no difference in the level of readiness for online learning and motivation for e-learning environments of education faculty students according to grade level during the pandemic process.

It can be suggested that the development of the subject with larger sample groups and more comprehensive research methods will make up-to-date contributions to the field of online foreign language education.



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