FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION
AND E-LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

 Language learning is so difficult learning activity for success of speaking, listening and writing with especially a foreign language. E-learning technologies and online contents facilitate this challenge. In this study, the impacts of the e-learning tools to learning English, Turkish as a foreign language has been investigated. Working group of the study is consists from students of Engineering Faculty and Science and Literature Faculty in Kilis 7 Aralık University.

The students of Engineering Faculty are Turkish and they learned English with e-learning tools. Despite that, students in the other group are Syrian and they learned Turkish with e-learning tools at the Arabic language and literature section of other faculty. Research data were obtained by student achievement scores from the database of the student information system. Obtained data were analyzed by frequency, percentage and independent samples t-test methods. The findings from the research, results, comments and suggestions were shared.

Keywords: Foreign language learning, distance education, Turkish learning.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of distance learning technologies and models offers new advantages for the public, private sector and academic field employees. The acceleration of Internet speed from 3G to 5G makes it easier to access training opportunities from anywhere and always makes time more effective for training purposes. Foreign language education, which is a very important requirement in career planning, also benefits both educators and students from traditional courses with the advantages provided by distance education technologies.

The ability to conduct foreign language education independently of the time and place with distance education technologies provides geographical and economic advantages not only to employees but also to foreign students abroad. In this way, a student is able to learn the language of the country where he wants to study without going to that country. In this context, it can be observed that companies and universities are beginning to apply innovative practices in order to respond to the increasing needs of web-based foreign language education.

There are a number of course sites that serve content that is live or in video recordings in preparation for language proficiency exams such as YDS, TOEFFL for foreign language education in the academic area (Uzaktanyds, 2016), (Yds, 2016), (Passagework, 2016), (Yesdil, 2016), (Remzihoca, 2016), (Dilsem,2016). In fact, it can be seen that these trainings can also be given in the form of certificate programs with distance education at state universities (Erciyes, 2016). It is understood that the distance learning English preparatory program, which is applied according to the demands of the students, meets the expectations of learning the foreign language which the students need for personal career planning (Ersoy, 2015). Web-based foreign language training is not limited to very common foreign languages such as English and German. Trainings of foreign languages such as Russian, French, Spanish, Italian and Chinese are also available online by many organizations (Globaxacademy, 2016), (Fono, 2016) , 2016).

Turkish education as a requirement for increasing migration movements around the world, student exchange programs and commercial activities on global markets can also be conducted via the internet as foreign language education (Pilancı, 2015). In order to teach Turkish as a foreign language education, these trainings can be arranged with certificate programs in state and foundation universities (Aydın, 2016).

In addition, Turkish language education certificate program, which teachers have to have in order to teach Turkish as a foreign language, is also provided by distance education by Abant İzzet Baysal University (Ibuzem, 2016). Despite the fact that Turkish language has been taught with distance education since 2005, some of the problems in this area are still inexcusable today. The most important of these problems is the lack of adequate audiovisual training material, which is an alternative to face-to-face training (Pilanci et al., 2015). Türker and his colleagues also stated that the quality of the course material and communication technologies affected the success in learning Turkish (Türker et al., 2015).

Another reason for the spread of distance education is that, state and foundation universities can reach to different student profiles through distance education and give associate degree, undergraduate and graduate education.

These facilities have created new opportunities in career life for employees who want to study at a higher education, or want to study in a different department, despite having a job. This motivated the development of innovative developments in order to obtain a share from a new target audience at the higher education institutions. Existing universities are able to offer distance learning courses to some of the students in formal education as well as to open many distance education departments and programs.

According to the framework regulation published by the Council of Higher Education, it is possible to give up to 30% of the lectures given in the university structured sections via distance education (Yok, 2016). Many universities in Turkey have started to give distance education by compulsory courses taught in every department such as Ataturk's Principles and Revolution History, Turkish Language and Foreign Language courses. In this way, students have the advantage of being able to use 7 hours of courses per week more flexibly, aiming for different activities, working part-time, going more to the courses in the field.

Kilis 7 Aralık University aimed to provide an experience by providing distance education with common compulsory courses in the field before opening any department or program in the field of distance education. In this direction, the necessary work is started to be able to provide distance education to the university from 2015-2016 fall semester in spring 2015.

Academic, administrative and legal requirements have been fulfilled and course content created in international standards has been provided for courses to be taught by the learning management system and distance education. Students and instructors roles were introduced with the cycle of the learning management system to be used for the instructors who will give the related courses. During the summer semester, sample exercises and sample student accounts have been completed to ensure that the faculty members do not encounter any difficulties in the academic calendar.

As of the fall semester of 2015-2016, first year students were trained in the first week of the new semester for the use of systems such as distance education learning management system, student e-mail system, student automation system. For the first time in the university, about 3,500 students were given an academic orientation training, and the Distance Education Coordinator was established, which is a unit where students can receive face to face, call and e-mail support (Dec, 2016). Dec provided necessary support services to academic staff and students as well as academic departments during the examination periods and took necessary precautions and implemented the necessary measures by striving to prevent obstacles in the institution which will be implemented for the first time in distance education. Students complete the first semester smoothly with audio-visual course materials, weekly lively discussions, question-and-answer activities. Later, curiosity about researching student achievements in courses taught by distance education compared to the previous year was revealed. As a result, the focus of the research was on the question of how distance learning on foreign languages affected success, especially regarding language learning.

METHOD

The research group of the study consisted of students from the Department of Civil Engineering with their native tongue in Turkish and students from Arabic Language and Literature with their Arabic native tongue in Kilis 7 Aralık University. Arabic Language and Literature students are mostly foreign students from countries like Syria and Iraq. Turkish students in the same section are excluded from the research.

In the study, the students' success in learning a foreign language which civil engineering students study English and Arabic Language and Literature students study Turkish was examined.

The students have taken the courses with formal trainings in the fall semester of 2014-2015 and they have taken the courses with distance education in the fall semester of 2015-2016. In order to investigate the success effect of distance education on foreign language learning, the achievement grades of the formal education and distance education students in related departments are compared.

Although the distance education continued in the following period, the success grades in this period were not included in the survey because it was thought that some method changes made in the application during the spring period would affect the measurement and evaluation.

According to Kilis 7 Aralık University examination regulations, students' achievement grades are evaluated by relative evaluation. The scores obtained after the statistical calculations are converted into the letter grades shown in Table 1. (Aktürk, 2011) (Mevzuat, 2016).

Table 1.
Letter Graduates and Equivalent Coefficients.

Letter Graduates	Interval	Coefficients
AA	90-100	4.0
BA	85-89	3.5
BB	80-84	3.0
CB	70-79	2.5
CC	60-69	2.0
DC	55-59	1.5
DD	50-54	1.0
FD	40-49	0.5
FF	0-39	0
NA	-	(Absent) 0

In order to analyze the students' achievement grades at the end of the semester, the achievement levels and coefficient averages for each class were calculated by using the coefficient of the letter grades mentioned in Table 1.

Achievement grades for each department were analyzed using the SPSS program. Independent groups t test method was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean of the class because the success of the sections was compared within themselves and the related notes belonged to different student groups.

To check whether the achievement grades provided the necessary assumptions to apply the independent t test, it was tested that the variances of the 2 groups in which the data were normally distributed and in the comparison were equal to each other, then t test was applied.

FINDINGS

Frequency and percent distribution according to the letter grades of the sample groups were made for both groups separately. Table 2 shows the variation of the letter grades of the Arabic Language and Literature students from the Turkish Language course according to the years limited in the research.

Table 3 shows the change in the letter grades received by the students of Civil Engineering in English classes over the same years. When Table 2 is examined, it can be said that the letter grades of the students in both periods are close to each other. Compared to the previous year; The number of unsuccessful persons increased by about 6% compared to the year of distance education.

In the previous year, there were students who were responsible for grades like DD, DC, and the student who was responsible for the year of distance education was not. Since the final exams of distance education courses were held at the same time in one session and the weight of the final exams was determined as 80% by the Council of Higher Education for distance education courses, the increase in the number of failed was considered normal.

Table 2.
Arabic Language and Literature Department Turkish Course Letter Grade Distribution.

Grade	Formal Education		Distance Education	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
AA	1	1,5625	3	4,6875
BA	2	3,125	4	6,25
BB	7	10,9375	6	9,375
CB	23	35,9375	23	35,9375
CC	12	18,75	13	20,3125
DC	3	4,6875	3	4,6875
DD	6	9,375	0	0
FD	2	3,125	0	0
FF	8	12,5	12	18,75
Total	64	100	64	100

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that the number of letter grades on the CB and above is increased during the year of distance education.

It can be said that these increases show an upward shift in students since the interval between DC and DD letters.

It can be said that the number of failed students increased by only 1 person (approximately 1,14%) in the previous year.

It can be said in Table 3 that the Civil Engineering students have an overall increase in the achievements measured according to the letter grade.

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Table 3.
Civil Engineering Department English Course Letter Grade Distribution

Grade	Formal Education		Distance Education	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
AA	1	1,639344	3	4,615385
BA	2	3,278689	8	12,30769
BB	4	6,557377	8	12,30769
CB	13	21,31148	15	23,07692
CC	27	44,2623	23	35,38462
DC	6	9,836066	3	4,615385
DD	4	6,557377	0	0
FD	0	0	0	0
FF	4	6,557377	5	7,692308
Total	61	100	65	100

Data groups belonging to independent variables are indicated in the SPSS program by the names "Formal Education" and "Distance Education". The variable that is searched as a dependent variable is specified as "Achievement ". As can be seen from the Table 4, there are 64 people in both groups in the Arabic Language and Literature department. To summarize the Table 4, the mean of the letter grade average of 64 learners who have completed formal education is 1,9531, the standard deviation is 1,01, and the standard error is 0,12. The average number of students in the distance education group was calculated as 2.0625, standard deviation 1.13 standard error was 0.14.

Table 4.
Arabic Language and Literature Group Statistics.

Group Name	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Formal Education	64	1,9531	1,01073	,12634
Distance Education	64	2,0625	1,13564	,14196

The spss output of the t test results of the independent groups of Arabic Language and Literature students is shown in Table 5. If we interpret Table 5, it is observed that the variance values of the groups are equal according to the Levene's test to determine whether the variances of the independent variables are equal. In this case, the t test results of independent groups against the "Equal variances assumed" line are valid. Sig. (2-tailed) column gives the calculated p value for t test. Where p=0,566 is obtained and p=0,566> 0,05, the H_0 hypothesis can not be rejected and it is concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between these two averages although the two sample averages are different from each other.

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the achievement of Turkish language learning between formal education students and distance education students.

H_1: There is a statistically significant difference in the achievement of Turkish learners of formal education and distance education.

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Table 5.
Arabic Language and Literature - Independent Groups T Test Results.

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	Lower	Upper
-,576	126	,566	-,10938	,19004	-,48545	,26670

(Table header spans: t-test for Equality of Means)

If the Table 6 is interpreted, there are 61 students in the formal education group and 65 students in the distance education group in the department of Civil Engineering.

61 students who took English courses with formal education had a letter grade average of 2.00, a standard deviation of 0.78, and a standard error of 0.1.

In the distance education group, 65 students had a letter grade average of 2.33, standard deviation of 0.92 and standard error of 0,11.

Table 6.
Civil Engineering Group Statistics

Group Name	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Formal Education	61	2,0082	,78789	,10088
Distance Education	65	2,3385	,92748	,11504

The SPSS output of the independent groups t-test results of the students of the Civil Engineering Department is shown in Table 7.

If we interpret Table 7; It was observed that the variance values of the groups were equal according to the Levene's test to determine whether the variances of the independent variables were equal.

In this case, independent groups t test results are valid. Sig. (2-tailed) column gives the calculated p value for t test. If $p=0,034 < 0,05$, then the hypothesis H_0 is rejected and the H_1 hypothesis is accepted.

The difference of 0,3383 score between the mean of the two groups is statistically significant favorable for the distance education group.

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the achievement of English language learning between formal education students and distance education students.

H_1: There is a statistically significant difference in the achievement of English learners of formal education and distance education.

Table 7.
Civil Engineering - Independent Groups T Test Results.

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	Lower	Upper
-2,147	124	,034	-,33026	15380	-,63468	-,02585

The header cell "t-test for Equality of Means" spans the full table above the columns.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It is necessary to think that the components constituting distance education are not just users and the system is a whole. It can be said as other factors affecting students' success that the content of the course must prepared according to the internationally accepted standards, system's interface must be user friendliness and students must support with face to face trainings when they need. In order to increase the participation of students in distance education courses, e-learning activities should also motivate the student, which is not the case in the current practice.

The weights of the exams as stated in the framework rules of distance education of the Council of Higher Education are also a matter of debate.

According to this, the weight of the unattended (online) examinations is determined as 20% and the weight of the examinations made as supervised (face to face) is determined as 80%. This situation shows that it is less confidence in the online examinations. To overcome this situation, additional security tools may be used to detect identity information in order to ensure the safety of online examinations or face-to-face exams will be more accurate to be online as a surveillance.

In this study, the success effect of distance education method applied for the first time in the Kilis 7 Aralık University, was investigated from the perspectives of language learning. When the research findings were examined, it was seen that foreign students in the Arabic Language and Literature department did not have any positive or negative effect on the success of the distance education method in their Turkish language learning.

For the same purpose, Turkish students in the Civil Engineering department were observed to learn English as a foreign language with increasing success compared to the previous year, when the distance education method was positively affected by student achievement. If we interpret the findings of the research, the majority of students of Arabic Language and Literature department are from Syria and because they lived as refugees in Turkey, they have already met with Turkish and thus It can be said that they have already obtained gains about the Turkish language.

Considering this acceptance, it can be accepted that distance education has no effect on Turkish learning. Also the user interface of the learning management system is Turkish and this case made absence of a positive effect of distance education on learning Turkish. The students are trying to be taught with a language that is already foreign, with an interface that is composed of the same language. In such an environment, absence of a negative effect on the students' learning to learn Turkish can be regarded as a positive result too.

For the local students in Civil Engineering, there is an ongoing English familiarity from primary education in the pre-license period. In this context, the increase in the success of distance learning has become more possible than for foreign language was never alien to the learned language. Because the same students use the learning management system's interface in their own language, they obtained more efficiency than distance education method compared to the other sample group.

As a result, the distance education method applied for the first time has a positive effect on language learning in one part, while the other way is not effective. The application of distance education method in compulsory courses given with formal education has gained considerable advantages in terms of student, teaching and administration. Students have been able to use about 7 hours of courses more flexibly and to work more flexibly with the people they want when they want common courses that every student has to take. Instructors have been working more efficiently by giving their lessons once instead of giving less than 40 lessons per week by telling the same class to different classes.

In terms of administration; economic gains such as illumination, heating and cleaning of the places have been obtained. In addition to this, when doing the curriculum and exam program for each semester, the achievements have been obtained from this work load. It has been seen that distance learning, which is quite advantageous in terms of students, academicians and administrations, has positive effects on language learning success. It was emphasized that giving part of the formal education courses by distance education would increase the quality of learning in universities.

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