

DISTANCE EDUCATION OR BLENDED LEARNING? WHAT DO PROGRAM STAKEHOLDERS STAND FOR?

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the technological improvements and integration of these improvements into classroom teaching has brought educational authorities to a point where the concepts “classroom” and “teaching” can be separated. It is not long now before it has gained popularity among educators, it would not even be an idea to be suggested, however, the 21st century learners have necessitated renewed and revised educational technologies and learning environments independent of time and place. Distance education, as a way of formal education, has emerged in response to this need and boomed in higher education in a very short time. Recently, almost all universities provide classes via distance education, including English language classes.

The aim of this study is to examine the underlying reasons of opening up English language classes through distance education at universities, the advantages and disadvantages of these programs and how they have affected the students’ success. For this, program stakeholders (lecturers and program coordinators of distance education program in a state university and Dean of Faculty of Education) were interviewed. The participants also touched upon blended-learning applications in Distance Education. It was found that program stakeholders stand for distance education programs rather than face-to-face or blended learning in English language classes at university level for various reasons.

Key Words: distance education, English language classes, program stakeholders, blended learning

INTRODUCTION

The concept of “distance education” has emerged in response to a great need and demand: demand for access to school classes without the limitation of time and place. This demand has been put forward by the learners with no opportunity to participate in face-to-face learning environments. Due to this need and the technological improvements, lots of distance education mechanisms such as computer-based and computer-assisted instruction, video courses, videoconferencing, web-based instruction, on-line and interactive learning have appeared. The common ground in these mechanisms is the learner and the teacher are physically apart and technically not in the same learning environment during the learning/teaching process and they are required to maintain communication in a variety of ways. The efficient use of technology is all needed to enable the information accessible for anyone, from anywhere and at any time.

Due to the changing understanding towards education has caused educational authorities to revise and re-organize their pedagogical views and perceptions as well. Beldarrain agrees saying “The rapid growth of online distance education worldwide has prompted the need to revise delivery structures and re-think pedagogical practices that were once appropriate” (2006, p. 140). Among these new pedagogical practices, asynchronous or synchronous learning networks has significant importance since the 21st century learners are more autonomous and more independent of place and time. The traditional classrooms do not meet the needs of these millenium learners and “education for everyone” understanding of life-long learning. “The versatility of social software and other collaboration tools available today support constructivist

environments that seek to motivate, cultivate, and meet the needs of the 21st-century learner” (Beldarrain, 2006, p.140). Therefore, the distance education concept and practices have become the topic of conversations hold in educational environments.

What is Distance Education?

Computers have been used as teaching materials in language teaching since 1960's. This period can be divided into three stages: The periods of Behaviorist CALL, Communicative CALL and Integrative CALL. However, the inclusion of all main language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) was observed in the stage of Integrative CALL. Besides, the fully integration of technology into teaching classes were strived in this stage (Warschauer & Healey, 1998).

There is a variety of definitions for distance education. According to Peters, “Distance teaching/education (*Fernunterricht*) is a method of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes which is rationalised by the application of division of labour and organisational principles as well as by the extensive use of technical media, especially for the purpose of reproducing high quality teaching material which makes it possible to instruct great numbers of students at the same time wherever they live. It is an industrialised form of teaching and learning” (1973, p. 206).

Moore defines distance education as “the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from the learning behaviours, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner's presence, so that communication between the teacher and the learner must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical or other devices” (1973, p. 664).

According to Delling, “Distance education is a planned and systematic activity that comprises the choice, didactic preparation, and presentation of teaching materials as well as the supervision and support of student learning. It is achieved by bridging the physical distance between student and teacher by means of at least one appropriate technical medium” (1987).

The definition of distance education includes four basic components. All these components are crucial for distance education, otherwise it turns into classroom teaching or like. The components of distance education are given in the figure below:

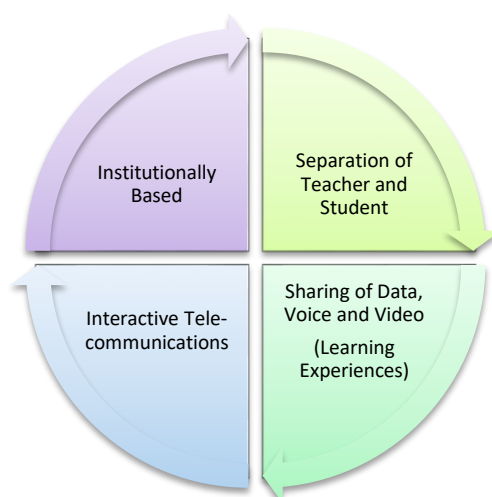


Figure 1: The components of Distance Education (Schlosser and Simonson, 2010, p. 1)

When the components of the distance education concept is considered, it should be stated first that distance education is an institutionally based concept. An organizing and executive organization should be responsible for how the program is carried out, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the program and how can the weaknesses be overcome. Secondly, the physical separation of teacher and student is essential, otherwise the program turns into traditional teaching. This physical separation should be supported by sharing of teaching materials and data such as voice recordings, videos, online resources for the students. Online conferences and any kind of online information transfer is valuable in distance education. Interactive data transfer is quite essential especially for distant language classes or classes promoting productive skills. The interactive tele-communications has significant importance for students' socialization as well. They "offer students both the flexibility of a distance education course and a new, intensive opportunity for socialization and constructive participation" (Parker and Rossner-Merrill, n.d. para.21).

What is Blended Learning?

Over the last decade, digital and online learning have gained great popularity and widely used in great range of educational institutions due to the improvements in the technology. However, many institutions have been slow to adopt these technologies due to the lack of technological infrastructure, inadequate funding, teachers' resistance and the feeling of insecurity while teaching online. Moreover, some educators defended that some school subjects are not suitable for teaching online. Therefore, the school of Blended Learning has been put forward.

Blended learning is a term preferred by educational authorities in order to refer to a teaching methodology combining the traditional classroom environment and e-learning facilities. Smith defines the term as "A method of educating at a distance that uses technology (high-tech, such as television and the Internet or low-tech, such as voice mail or conference calls) combined with traditional (or, stand-up) education or training" (Smith, 2001, p.13).

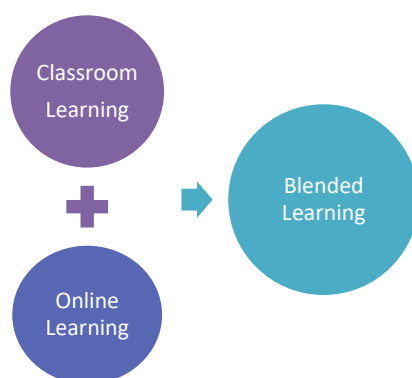


Figure 2: Blended Learning

This combination of traditional classroom and online learning environments is not a simple inclusion of computers to learning, but this is a great change covering the teacher-learner roles, new methodologies towards teaching and overall learning experience.

A model of Blended Learning has three main components:

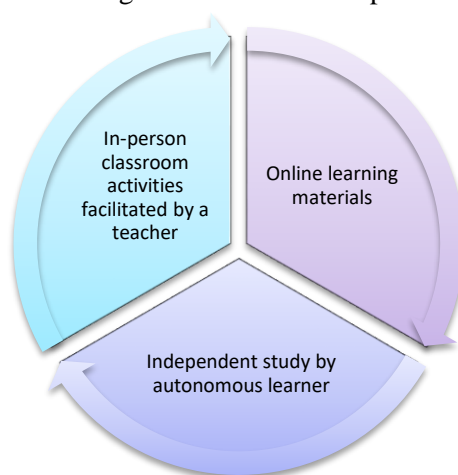


Figure 3: The Components of Blended Learning

A well-structured blended learning has three phases overlapping each other. First of all, classroom activities provided by the teacher has significant importance in Blended Learning. This phase of the teaching model can provide a start to the lesson or finish up activities. Secondly, what is provided in classroom is supported by the online materials which are videos, pre-recorded lessons, voices, slides or extra reading materials. The classroom teaching can be used as a back-up stage of the online teaching, as well. Last but not the least, autonomous learners who are capable of their own learning in order to conduct their independent studies are essential components of Blended Learning.

Distance English classes at university level

Language Education, like all the school subjects, is greatly affected by the trend of distance education. Online dictionaries, softwares and online and offline websites for language learning/teaching are the first examples of the distance language teaching. More recently, in Turkey, DynEd- a software provided by Ministry of Education for public schools- is a commonly used tool for distance education language classes in primary and secondary education and distant English classes are also being offered to students at university level. At university level, distant English classes are carried out by Center for Distance Education. The table below shows how the Compulsory English Classes at university level are conducted in Turkey:

Table 1: Data on How the Compulsory English Classes are Conducted at Universities

	Public Universities	Foundation Universities	Total
Number	100	84	184
	1 inactive	4 inactive	
		No enough data about the classes conducted in 3 programs.	
Distance	27	10	37
Face-to-face	72	67	139

(Taken from Yaman, 2015, p. 5)

As can be understood from Table 1, 37 universities out of 176 offer Compulsory English Classes via Distant Education. Among these, 27 universities are public universities since 10 are Foundation Universities. When it is thought that all the universities had been teaching these classes in a classroom environment a few years ago, it can be seen that how the number increases rapidly!

It can be seen that most of the public universities have their own Centers for Distance Education. It indicates that universities have started to use e-teaching commonly, although many of them do not include English classes in these programs because of various reasons, for example the common belief that English cannot be taught in distant education. However, still, some universities have the tendency to conduct Compulsory English Classes in distance education programs since it has advantages in terms of program costs, increasing number of available classrooms, opportunity to provide more number of materials etc. Additionally, some universities offer synchronous classes while office hours for instructors to provide more opportunity for interaction with instructors to overcome the limitations of distance education on language learning. Educational authorities still argue the effectiveness of distance language programs while the numbers and students of these programs increase continuously.

In the present study, the perceptions of the Program Coordinators, the Instructors of Compulsory English Classes in the Center of Distance Education and the Dean of Faculty of Education were gathered on the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages of Distant Classes. Furthermore, their views on Distant English Language classes were also collected and their suggestions about blending the distant classes with traditional classroom settings were given place.

METHODOLOGY

A Case Study

This part of the paper covers the information about setting, participants, data collection and data analysis procedures. However, before moving to the details of the methodology, it

should be stated that this study is a “case study” which puts the focus on one specific instance and examines it from a holistic and intensive perspective. According to Nunan, a case is “a single instance of a class of objects or entities, and a case study is the investigation of that single instance in the context in which it occurs” (1992, p. 79). Miles and Huberman defines it as a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context (1994, p. 24). Johnson points to case study stating:

“A case study is defined in terms of the unit of analysis. That is, a case study is a study of one case. A case study researcher focuses attention on a single entity, usually as it exists in its naturally occurring environment” (1992, p.75).

As the definitions given above indicate that case studies focus on one single context and one single instance at a time. In these studies, the cases are examined holistically and intensively. Case studies are longitudinal studies with limited number of participants and focuses on descriptions of the instances without manipulation and variable. All the case is examined in its natural setting. In this study, the researcher has preferred organizing the procedure as a case study because the aim is to deeply analyze the perceptions of program stakeholders. Therefore, the study includes multiple perspectives of the participants.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in a State University in Turkey. The participants are the 2 program coordinators, 2 instructors and the Dean of the Faculty of Education. Purpose sampling was preferred by the researcher in this study.

“Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011, cited in Lawrence, Green, Wisdon&Hoagwood, 2013.)”

Considering this, the participants for this study were selected by the researcher purposefully since they have duties in Distant Education Center of the University. The coordinators and the Dean were responsible for all programs offered in the Centre but the instructors were responsible only in the organization and delivery of Distant English Language classes.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data in this study were gathered through emi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. The questions were not structured at all to call for further discussions. The responses of the participant were recorded for later analysis. Each participant was asked by permission of recording and using the available data. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes and the participants volunteered to participate.

Questions below were directed to the participants:

1. What is your opinion about the Compulsory English Classes conducted by Center of Distance Education?

2. In your opinion, how do Compulsory English Classes conducted by Center of Distance Education affect student success?
3. Is there any study on the effect of English Classes provided by Center of Distance Education conducted by the University?
4. Have you received any feedback about English Classes provided by Center of Distance Education? If yes, what kind of feedback did you receive?
5. How does Distance Education affect the Language Learning Skills? Is Distance Education an effective way for language classes? Is face-to-face education required?

The data gathered from the interviewees were later analyzed qualitatively and the points mentioned by the participants were classified under main sections. These sections will be argued in the following part of the paper.

FINDINGS

Here, in this part, the findings of the present study are given place. Each sub-title refers to one research question directed to the participant. Similar or related responses of the participants were grouped together. Quotations from the interviews were also provided to further clarify the discussion.

Table 2: The Underlying Reasons for Distance Education Programs

Opinions Stated	Who stated?
Technological Improvements	Coordinator A, Instructors A,B
The Demands of Students	The Dean
The Possible Decrease in the Cost	Coordinator A,B Instructors A,B

Firstly, the underlying reasons for distance education were asked to the participants and stated responses are given in Table 2. According to the table, the technological improvements in the latest decades, the increasing interest in distance education programs by the learners are two main reasons for the booming of Distance Education courses.

Besides, in terms of the institutions, the decrease in the cost of travel payments of instructors (for the ones lecturing in the counties) and additional course fee of the instructors are worthy of considering, as stated by the participants of the study.

Table 3: The Advantages of Distance Education Programs

Opinions Stated	Who stated?
Standardized Teaching	Coordinator A, Instructor B
Open Access Materials	Coordinator A, Instructor A,B
Positive effect on teachers self-development	Coordinator A, Coordinator B
Whether a student entered the system, how much time s/he spent can be seen via the software	Coordinator A, Instructor A,B
The decrease in cost	Coordinator A,B Instructor A,B

Secondly, the advantages of the distance education program were drawn attention by the researcher and the participants reflected their thoughts. The advantages mentioned by the participants are listed in Table 3. First of all, they stated that the system offers standardized teaching for all learners from all classes and groups, and distance education systems provide open access materials which can be downloadable for the students. This makes the distance education programs preferable for educators. For instance, Caner states:

“I use these online programs for two reasons. First of all, I share all of my course documents via their file share space. Students in my courses have Access to the course notes and other documents wherever and whenever the need to Access even via their smart phones. The second purpose of using such programs is the discussion board of those programs. Because such online discussion forums to enhance my course hours and transform the class discussion to a broader and free environment where the students feel free to actively participate at any time and from any place (2016, p. 221)”.

The software keeps the records of each student. How many times they log in, which materials they downloaded, which exercises they studied or their success rate is observable by the teachers as well and doing so the teachers can keep the control of the teaching. The students can also get into contact with the teachers by sending messages through the system.

“If students can use the system effectively, it is no worse than face-to-face education. They can ask questions, are replied by the instructors. If they want they can communicate the instructor, as in formal education” (Program Coordinator B)

According to Lee “Network-based instruction can help pupils strengthen their linguistic skills by positively affecting their learning attitude and by helping them build self-instruction strategies and promote their self-confidence” (n.d. para.9). Agreeing Lee, the participants suggested that Distance education has given both teachers and the students the opportunity to improve autonomy in their learning/teaching. Especially, the teachers’ role automatically shifts from teaching only to various roles including:

- Diagnosing the student’s readiness to learn,
- Monitoring student progress toward objectives sought,
- Recognizing and discovering a student’s learning difficulties,
- Stimulating and challenging students to further efforts,
- Evaluating the quality of a student’s learning, and
- Assigning a grade to estimate learning outcomes (MacKenzie, Christensen and Rigby 1968, 137).

All these roles promote teachers’ improvement of autonomy. Because the distance education, gaining independence on teaching and learning are challenging for both sides, therefore, this challenge helps not only teachers but also learners become more autonomous individuals in this process.

The decrease in costs of travel is again discussed under this title. It was considered an advantage that the university has the chance to spare funds for teaching materials instead of travel costs of instructors.

“The basic benefit of this program to the university is less cost- not on education but on the instructors. Before distance education, university could pay for travel costs of the instructors who go and lecture in a distant county, but now, university can pay the money for better soft-wares or materials.” (Program Coordinator A)

Table 4: The Disadvantages

Opinions Stated	Who stated?
No pre-service training provided for the instructors	Coordinators A,B and Instructors A,B
Instructors are responsible for too many students and they cannot deal with student problems	Coordinator A, Instructor A,B
The students do not get into contact with the instructors although they can (Learned Helplessness)	Coordinator A, Instructors A,B
Instructors do not know how to lecture in distance education/ Pedagogical training should be given to lectures	Instructor A
Not all skills can be taught in this program in terms of language learning	Coordinator A,B Instructors A,B

When the participants were interviewed, the number of instructors is articulated on the top of the list. They mentioned that the number of responsible instructors in distant education centers are quite limited and this causes burn-out. Rather, the instructors rush to a great number of responsibilities and duties that they fail to build interaction or spare time for interactive activities. If the number of instructors can be increased, the interaction and communication can be enhanced.

“The number of the instructors can be increased for better counselling.”
(Program Coordinator A)

Secondly, one of the most important disadvantages, in the context of this study, the system lacks productive skills like speaking and writing, which are crucial in terms of language learning. However, it should be stated that the situation is no worse than face-to-face education.

“We cannot teach all the skills, but to what extent we can teach all the skills in formal education?” (Program Coordinator A)

“Classes via Distance Education weakens speaking skills, I believe. Live sessions may be a solution but however there are too many students. However, if you force students to participate in live sessions, the students do not enroll in distance education classes. They are not motivated enough.” (Coordinator B)

Even if a few students become more motivated than the others, the instructors state that by this way they lose these motivated students. However, in terms of student success, it has no effect since it is a 2-hour class for most of the departments in which the students are not interested already.

“The Compulsory English Classes are not already taught effectively in formal education, students receive 2 hours per week and this time period is not enough for students to improve their language skills. The success of the students did not change much, however, we lost the students with higher motivation even though they are few.” (Instructor A)

“We’re in the middle of open-education and distance education, not a complete distance education.” (Program Coordinator A)

As a third disadvantage, lack of in-service training can be mentioned. For a new program, especially if it is a new educational program, in-service training should be provided. Moore, Michael and Thompson states in their work:

“There is some evidence that the success of distance education in the schools depends largely on the effectiveness of the teacher, and that this in turn depends on the teacher's knowledge, skill, enthusiasm, and commitment to the innovation. It therefore becomes important to review the extent and quality of teacher preparation and in-service training in distance education (1990, p. 44).

However, the instructors in the present study stated that they do not receive pre-service education, which is a serious disadvantage.

“We did not receive a pre-service training, that's because the university adopted the system suddenly, and we found ourselves in the system.” (Instructor A)

“We had very limited time to get prepared for the classes, especially with the listening texts and visual materials- because of copy right problems. We bought a soft-ware for the university and solved the problem.” (Instructor B)

Lastly, the lack of communication between the instructors and learners is mentioned by three of the participants. They reflected that the students have very limited or no contact with the instructors throughout the program. This may result from their previous experiences and effort to build up communication with their teachers online, but most of the time they failed! They were not replied for their e-mails or refused or unfriended on social media. These experiences may result in learned helplessness and cause students to show no or minimal effort to communicate in distance education classes. Parallel to what is mentioned by the participants of this study, Keegan (1986) states that “The separation of student and teacher imposed by distance removes a vital link of communication between these two parties. The link must be restored through overt institutional efforts so that the teaching-learning transaction may be reintegrated” (p.120). Or this may cause drop-outs (Sheets, 1992).

Table 5: Student Success in Distance Education Programs

Opinions Stated	Who stated?
If a student is successful in Formal Education, s/he is successful in Distance Education	Instructors A,B Instructors A,B, Coordinator B
Lack of Motivation	Coordinator A, Instructors A,B, The Dean

As for student success in Distance education programs, both of the instructors participating in the study and one coordinator stated that the student success in distance education is up to student success in formal education. If the student is successful and willing to show effort for their learning, they can maintain it in the distance education program, too. They state their ideas saying:

“The success is up to the students, not the program. They can still get into contact with us, however they don't! They use the mailing system, the forums on the software only before the exams.” (Instructor A)

“ Till now, for two years, no student asked any question about the classes.” (Instructor A)

The main problem for the Education system nowadays, both for Distance Education and Face-to-face education, is the lack of motivation. Students are not motivated enough to study even in the departments they wish to enroll. Considering this, Instructor B stated that holding up face-to-face education may be motivating effect on students:

“For counties and two-year degree programs it can be conducted, however, in undergraduate degrees, formal and face-to-face education should be carried out.”
(Instructor B)

How About Blended Learning?

Distance education and blended learning are the topic of long and heated debates for so long. Educators and authorities are not yet to agree on which is more beneficial and advantageous in language teaching, however, these debates have provided hundreds of different opinions –and oppositions- on the issue, and many questions to be replied.

To promote these debates and find out their opinions, Blended learning was discussed with each of the participants. The participants, generally, do not defend Blended learning. For departments with 2 hours per week, Blended Learning is real waste of time and effort, as they mentioned. However, the present Distance Education system can be improved and brought to a better condition with better software systems, they defend.

“Yes, blended Learning sounds good but it again turns into formal education. Rather, more interactive systems can be adopted by the university. If this question was asked to me 3 years ago, I would say “yes”, but now I don’t think in the same way, because technology improved too much and left no need for blended learning. (Program Coordinator A)”

In order to improve the present program, interaction between the students and teacher-students can be increased. However, this should not be compulsory for all the students. This is the way to keep motivated students at hand. Blended Learning can be a good option for the programs providing more number of English classes, however, in a 2 year degree program, Blended Learning will be useless as well.

“Blended learning can be taken into consideration, however, the content of programs are completely different. You cannot provide blended learning if you have 2 hours per week with a class”. (Instructor B)

The problem with complete Distance Education programs is that they do not give students opportunity to improve their productive skills since neither the classes nor the exams have sessions for oral communication. Nevertheless, it was discussed with the instructors and program coordinators and the question is here: How effective are the communication skills provided in face-to-face education? How much of oral communication skills can be given to the students in the classes?

“No productive skill can be given via Distance Education, however, we already cannot teach these skills in formal education in most of the departments.”
(Instructor A)

Still, some improvements can be offered in order to move Distance Education to a more interactive stage. Among these: Providing live video sessions, online conferences, office hours improving speaking skills can be given as an example.

“The Program does not assess speaking skills. With live video sessions, you can provide it to some extent, especially for writing skills rather than speaking skills which is hard to provide and assess in a video session in which 500 students participated.” (Instructor B)

“Increasing the number of the instructors decreases the responsibility instructors and it may be more effective. Maybe we can provide office hours with less students and interaction increases.” (Instructor B)

It should also be kept in mind that, according to Instructor B, providing online classes may bring other concerns together; one student may not have a camera or internet connection. Suppose that, since the aim of Distance Education is to provide equal opportunities for all students notwithstanding their ages, their occupations, their genders, the online sessions will create inequality.

“Online live classes can be provided, to make the program better, at least. However, this time different variables will be included, for example, sociocultural situation of the student. What if all the students do not have internet connection?” (Instructor B)

To sum up, it should be mentioned that Distance Education does not make any difference on the success of students, especially in terms of providing skills. In classes, apart from language departments, most of the students do not participate in discussions or speaking activities, many of them do not deliver their homework in due dates, some do not even participate in the exams.

“The students are already reluctant to receive English classes. They feel themselves under pressure, having participated in the classes.” (Instructor B)

“In face-to-face education, the student can ask a question immediately if they have. In Distance Education there is no opportunity for that. However, when we are teaching in the counties, very few students would ask questions.” (Instructor A, B)

Thus, in terms of student success, Distance Education has no distinguishing positive or negative affect. If students are keen on learning more or communicate with the instructor, they can do so in all programs. The instructor A and B both state that the system is available for communication via e-mailing system or forums. Besides, they are easy-to-reach via telephones, and their office numbers are given on the website. Although there are no statistical data about it, both of the instructors lectured in both face-to-face education travelling between the counties and in distance education, they state that approximately same number of students pass or fail the class in Distance Education compared to in-class education previous years.

“In my opinion, Distance Education does not affect student success. If they study, distance education is not a disadvantage. They don’t spend time on the way coming to school and in the classroom. If they spare this time to studying, they will already pass the class.” Coordinator B)

Especially for the counties, or the faculties away from the city center, Distance Education is good as Instructor B states. However, he defends that in the campus and main departments face-to-face classes should be continued. However, the other participants did not discuss this issue from the same perspective.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has dwelled upon distance education and its impacts on language teaching. In order to find out what these are, program stakeholders were interviewed and the gathered information were analyzed by the researcher. The results were presented in the previous section. The results also indicate some implications. These implications are listed:

1. Pre-service training should be provided for the teachers/instructors. Lecturing in distance education requires higher-order teaching skills than in-class teaching, therefore, the teachers/instructors should be equipped enough to overcome related difficulties. Moore, Michael and Thompson states, relatedly, that "A national training program should be set up. Most training of experienced teachers could be done "on the job" in the teachers' schools (1990, p. 43).
2. A clear distinction should be made based on students' previous school success, the portfolios and previous teachers' opinions. Learners should be distinguished and classified in terms of, say, socio-economic background, or school achievements to ascertain individual differences.
3. Especially, in terms of improving productive skills, interaction should be fostered and interactive media should be provided. Rather than printed materials, audios and videos, online discussion, discussion boards should be given more space.
4. Lack of student motivation is a trouble in both programs, distance or blended, so, motivation should be enhanced.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, 2 instructors, 2 program coordinators and the Dean of the Education Faculty were interviewed on the effectiveness of the Compulsory English Classes provided by Center of Distance Education. The effect of the program on student success, the reasons behind the founding of the program, the advantages and disadvantages of it were discussed in accordance with the views of participants.

The background reasons for offering this program to the university are these: technological improvements, the demands of students from all ages and all levels, and the possible decrease in the cost.

However, lack of motivation is a serious problem in Distance Education in all educational institutions. The problem does not create a lack of motivation itself, however, it also does not motivate students to participate in the classes or to study harder. As for advantages, the program has advantages such as standardized testing system, open access materials, positive effects on teachers' self-development and decrease in the costs. Among the disadvantages these can be given: no in-service or pre-service education is provided for the instructors before they begin teaching in distance education, the instructors are responsible for a very large number of students which makes keeping the track of each student impossible. However, they state that if a student wants to be in contact with the instructor, they are ready to participate via e-mails or in person to help them improve their English.

Technological improvements, information processing systems, web-based tools and educational soft-wares obliged educational institutions to renew their systems. People who follow all their job, do their shopping and having fun online are normally reluctant to go and study in traditional classes. Distance Education, while meeting these needs of the learners, provided equal opportunities for everyone no matter who they are, where they are working, what their ages are. Learners can download any material, study any time, can listen to the classes numerous times and get into contact with the instructors via e-mailing system or forums, sometimes even by phones if they need. Distance Education system is the educational system of the new era in which technology is inalienable part of human life.

“We can say with considerable optimism that when the distance education approach is correctly applied, it works well. Now it is time to move on from the period of small scale, uncoordinated and not well designed experimentation, too little coordinated planning of courses, too little cooperation in using delivery systems, too little over-all thinking by policy makers at state and national levels. It is time for large scale, coordinated research, large scale, well funded course design and delivery; well integrated, multi-media delivery systems, and state, inter-state, and national policy making and planning” (Moore, Michael, Thompson, 1990, p. 52).



“If the important point is student satisfaction, then their preference for distance education is surely meaningful” (The Dean of Faculty of Education)

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