

## Examining Attitudes and Online Distractors in Turkish EMI Context during Emergency Remote Teaching<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine the attitudes of students enrolled in an English preparatory program of a Turkish state university towards the use of emergency remote teaching as a mode of distance education in the 2019-2020 COVID-19 outbreak and to reveal online distractors students experienced throughout this process. A total of 270 EFL students participated in the study; 93 of these participants were female, and 177 were male. The study employed an explanatory sequential design, in which firstly quantitative data were collected using a scale ( $\alpha = .871$ ), and then qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questions followed by semi-structured ones. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software while the qualitative data were analyzed through a thematic analysis conducted by the researcher and two other experts ( $\kappa = 0.70$ ). The results showed that the students held partially positive attitudes towards the use of emergency remote teaching as a mode of distance education. There were significant differences between the students' overall attitudes and their gender, digital literacy, technological accessibility, and perceived language success. The relationship between the online distractors students experienced during Emergency Remote Teaching and their attitudes was also discussed. The conclusions were made in the light of the findings, and implications and suggestions for further research were stated.

**Keywords:** Attitude, distance education, EFL, emergency remote teaching, EMI, online distractors

### INTRODUCTION

Along with many other aspects of life, the unpredictability of COVID19 pandemic affected higher education in Turkey just as other countries. Efforts to persevere education compelled the use of distance education infrastructures; however, considering the challenging nature of the efforts to maintain education compared to planned and designed disposition of distance education (DE), the mode was emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges, et al., 2020). The sudden implementation

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of ERT created a pressure on each member of education parties from students to lecturers and institutions (Hussein, et al., 2020). As a significant edge of education parties, even instructors faced several difficulties during ERT such as digital literacy (Bond, 2020; Nugroho, et al., 2021) and the absence of technological substructure and accessibility (Bond, 2020; Hazaea & Toujani, 2021). In this sense, students' psychology as an effective factor (Gardner, 1985) is correspondingly significant. No matter how advantageous the planned and designed DE may be for students in terms of flexibility, student autonomy, motivation, and reducing classroom anxiety (Arkhipova, et al., 2017; Banditvilai, 2016; Hariadi & Simanjuntak, 2020; Pop, et al., 2011), it has some potential challenges like accessibility, connection, digital literacy, legislative issues, class and peer interaction, and study skills (Akçayır, G. & Akçayır, 2018; Ariyanti, 2020; Chahkandi, 2021; Chen, et al., 2015; Mazlan et al., 2021; Rasheed, et al., 2020). In this respect, ERT as a less planned and designed mode of DE may be more challenging for education parties, especially students. Several studies also exist in the literature on EFL students' psychological backgrounds, especially their attitudes towards blended and online DE modes (Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013; Erarslan, & Topkaya, 2017; Lestari, 2021; Mohammadi et al., 2018; Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani, 2020; Shaikh et al., 2021; Wali & Rassul, 2020). However, investigating these factors in the ERT context may reveal different results from standard DE. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this gap by examining

- a) university EFL students' attitudes towards ERT online education in an English language preparatory program (ELPP) in the ERT process;
- b) the relationship between the attitudes and variables such as gender, digital literacy, and accessibility to technology.

Considering this gap, the present study aimed to investigate the Turkish university EFL students' attitudes towards the application of asynchronous offline classes in an English foundation program during ERT in the context of demographics and student preferences, and to discover the online distractors the students experienced. 'What are the Turkish EFL students' general attitudes towards the use of asynchronous distance education mode during ERT and what online distractors did the students face?' was the main guiding research question of this mixed-research study, which was followed by five more specific research questions as follows;

Quantitatively the following research questions were asked:

- 2) Is there a significant difference between the female and male participants' levels of general attitudes towards using asynchronous distance education mode in ELLP during ERT?
- 3) Is there a significant relationship between the participants' attitudes and their technological literacy in ERT?
- 4) Is there a significant relationship between the students' attitudes and their perceived foreign language competency in ERT?
- 5) Is there a significant relationship between the students' attitudes and their accessibility to technology in ERT?

Qualitatively, the following research question was asked:

- 6) What online distractions have the participants frequently faced after the ERT experience?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Attitude correlates with behavior which directly affects how action proceeds (Lipnevich, Gjicali, & Krumm, 2016); therefore, having a positive or negative attitude towards the mode of instruction may have an impact on outputs (Genc & Aydin, 2017). Monitoring socio-psychological backgrounds of students can culminate arbiter outcomes in the students' academic successes throughout ELPP. In brief, as well as other socio-psychological components such as motivation and anxiety, attitude is also a critical factor in EFL (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1985). Regarding how critically effective students' attitudes in EFL, existing literature has several studies combining it with technology among many other things. The advancements in technology evolved into several areas; nevertheless, distance education with its different forms/modes such as online education/e-Learning and hybrid/blended education (Singh & Thurman, 2019) has played an important role in ERT period as a significant factor of the technological advancements in education.

In EFL context, blended learning (BL) is a contributing factor in students' motivation (Arkhipova, et al., 2017; Banditvilai, 2016), autonomy (Banditvilai, 2016), improvement of language skills (Banditvilai, 2016; Birova, 2021; Hu, 2020; Ryabkova, 2020), and positive attitude (Lestari, 2021; Shaikh, et al., 2021; Wali, 2021). On the other hand, three major factors posing problem for students are self-regulation issues, technological infrastructure and accessibility (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2015; Rasheed *et al.*, 2020). Ultimately, integrating BL into traditional classrooms can have positive effects on students' language learning as long as necessary planning and tools are provided (Aragon, et al., 2002; Wright, 2017).

Online learning is delivering (language) courses synchronously and/or asynchronously on various learning management systems (LMS), and it has advantages and disadvantages. Studies in the existing literature often compared synchronous or asynchronous classes as factors on various language skills (Abrams, 2003; Alibakhshi & Mohammadi, 2016; Ene & Upton, 2018; Lotfi & Pozveh, 2019; Mehr *et al.*, 2013; Shang, 2017), and examining students' socio-psychological responses like motivation (Ayoub, 2019; Hrastinski, 2019; Tahriri, Hassaskhah, & Pour, 2015), perceptions (Gunes, 2019; wali), and attitudes (Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013; Erarslan & Topkaya, 2017; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018; Riwayatningsih & Sulistyani, 2020).

Emergency remote teaching (ERT) defines the online education process during the COVID19 lockdown as different from other distance education modes (Hodges, *et al.*, 2020). Although various ERT studies on language learning reveal that students have positive attitudes towards the implementation of online learning in terms of flexibility, motivation, improving language skills, and autonomy (Allo, 2020; Karim & Hasan, 2020); they also have negative attitudes due to the challenges such as accessibility, regulative issues, interaction, digital literacy, and infrastructure issues (Afip, et al., 2020; Ariyanti, 2020; Chahkandi, 2021; Huang, et al., 2021; Lengkanawati, Mazlan *et al.*, 2021; Wirza & Alicia, 2021; Price, 2021; Resnik & Dewaele, 2021; Yazawa, 2021). In brief, students may approach ERT eagerly and their neutral attitudes may turn into positive as long as authorities consider these drawbacks in the time of designing and planning distance learning during ERT.

## METHODOLOGY

English Language Preparatory Programs are foundation programs at universities in Turkey which have intensive general English classes to prepare students to their English-medium departments. The students have twenty-four hours of English lessons every week throughout one academic year to improve their language proficiency to B2 level. These intensive language programs have a design requiring continuation; therefore, the sudden switch into online classes in the middle of academic year affected students as well as teachers and institutions. The aim of this study was to reveal the EFL students' attitudes towards this implementation of ERT.

The population of the study was university EFL students studying in ELPPs all around Turkey, and the sample group was selected from a state university in Alanya, Turkey. The explanatory sequential design was employed. There were two quantitative and two qualitative data collection tools. Firstly, a profile form was given to 360 ELPP students. This first quantitative tool included 13 statements about participants' demographics and preferences. 280 of the students consented to participate in the study. 10 insincere and patterned answers were discarded. Remaining participants were grouped based on their preferences and demographics such as gender. Next, Online Language Learning Attitude Test (OLLAT) was adapted from Cinkara and Bagceci (2013) and sent as a link on Google Forms. The test had 15 five-point-likert statements. The participants reflected their ideas about statements by marking each strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The primary step for the analysis procedure of the quantitative data was to check reliability, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was ( $\alpha = .871$ ). Next, the distribution of the quantitative data was tested, and Skewness and Kurtosis values demonstrated normal distribution ( $\pm 1.5$ ). Considering the reliability and distribution results, the analysis procedure was conducted using IBM SPSS 22. Three statements were coded reversely. After the quantitative data collection procedure, another link was sent to the participants including 5 open-ended questions. This first qualitative tool was used to support the quantitative data. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the qualitative data. Lastly, 24 (12 female, 12 male) students representing each classroom in the program were invited for semi-structured online interviews. 12 of the volunteers were randomly selected, and interviews were recorded. Participants consented all the interview procedures. After the recordings were transcribed and categorized into codes, categories, and themes (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), two other experts conducted the same procedure independently, and the interrater reliability was  $\kappa = 0.70$ ,  $p < .005$ .

## RESULTS

### Quantitative results

The first part of the quantitative results presents the participants' (93 female and 177 male; age 18-20 (180), 21-23 (81), and 24+ (9) demographics, preferential choices, and accessibility to technology. The results of the data collected through the profile form are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Information*

Demographic & Preference	Response	<i>n</i>	%
Perceived Computer Skill	Basic	54	20
	Average	174	64.4
	Advanced	42	15.6
Distance Education History	Yes	6	2.2

	No	264	97.8
Preferences about Taking Online ELPP Classes	Yes	81	30.0
	No	189	70
Perceived Success in ELPP	Poor	12	4.4
	Not Good Enough	120	44.4
	Good	126	46.7
	Very Good	12	4.4
Necessities and Accessibility to Technology	Yes	114	42.2
	No	30	11.1
	Partly	126	46.7

The second part of the quantitative data consists of two parts. The first of these two parts aimed at revealing the participants' overall attitudes by taking the mean and standard deviations of the responses given to the OLLAT developed by Cinkara and Bagececi (2013). Based on the descriptive results (Table 2), disagreement with the items 1, 7, and 12 means that most of the participants think that distance language learning is neither as effective as face-to-face classes nor has any positive effects on their studying habits and language learning. On the other hand, participants showed maximum agreement with the items of 14 and 15, which means distance language learning provides flexibility with recorded materials. The descriptive scores to the items 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 and reversely-coded items 2 and 6 remained neutral, which means that participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements. However, responses to the last reversely-coded item 13, showed that participants believe that traditional classrooms result in more success.

These results were clustered with the same principle of the study by Cinkara and Bagececi (2013) where OLLAT was adapted. The participants' answers were coded as points, and each participants' answers got a score (from 1 to 5) based on their answers for each item. Total scores were used to label each participants' responses as very positive if it was between 60-75; and the other labels were as follows; 45-59 positive; 15-29 negative, and 0 - 14 very negative. The results showed that although there were no participants with very negative attitudes and only a few (8.9%) students' with negative attitudes towards distance language learning in their ELPP education, relatively more students (29.9%) had positive and even some students (4.4%) had very positive attitudes. Most of the participants' (57.8%) attitudes remained neutral showing neither positive nor negative attitudes.

Table 2. *Descriptive Results of OLLAT*

	<i>f</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1. Learning English through distance education can be as efficient as face-to-face classes.	270	2.38	1.11
2. English cannot be learned through distance education	270	2.68	1.28
3. Distance education provides more various lesson content	270	2.74	1.15

4. My family supports me in learning English through distance education.	270	2.85	1.12
5. Attending classes is easier thanks to distance education.	270	3.00	1.30
6. Distance language learning is a waste of time.	270	2.86	1.18
7. Thanks to distance language learning, I control my studying habit better.	270	2.58	1.12
8. Distance language learning provides more various audial and visual materials.	270	3.03	1.25
9. Distance language learning help me feel more relaxed for attending the classes.	270	3.27	1.22
10. It is easier for me to concentrate on distance language classes.	270	2.61	1.19
11. The fact that the class is taught through distance education makes it easier for me to study.	270	2.61	1.21
12. Distance education is effective at language learning.	270	2.60	1.17
13. Learning English in traditional classrooms results in more success.	270	4.04	.97
14. Distance education provides flexibility while studying and learning English.	270	3.51	1.13
15. The fact that this class can record audial and visual materials enhances the efficiency	270	3.64	1.04

Inferential results are the second part of the quantitative results, in which independent sample t-test was used to compare the demographics with two answers to overall attitudes and one-way ANOVA was used to compare demographics with more than two answers to overall attitudes. The results for differences based on gender are shown in Table 3.

According to the independent sample t-test results, male participants (mean=42.93, SD=9.81) significantly differed from female participants (mean=37.5, SD=9.12) in terms of holding more positive attitudes towards distance education in their English preparatory classes ( $t(268) = -4.43, p < .001$ ).

Table 3. *Independent Sample T-test Results Based on Gender*

	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t	df	P
Female	93	37.49	9.12	.94	-4.43	268	.00
Male	177	42.93	9.81	.73			

Following results were related to participants' preferences about taking online preparatory classes, and these results are presented in Table 4. Participants responded to the question whether they would take or accept to take online classes if they were given the choice by marking yes or no. According to the independent sample t-test results, participants who claimed that they would not accept to take online courses given the choice (mean=36.63, SD=7.02) significantly differed from the ones who answered in the opposite direction by marking 'yes' (mean=51.38, SD=7.75) in terms of less positive attitudes towards distance education in their ELPP ( $t(268) = 15.32, p < .001$ ).

These results indicates that there is a relationship between students' attitudes and their online class preferences. One-way ANOVA test was applied to detect a possible relationship between the participants' perceived computer skills and their overall attitudes. Tukey post-hoc test was performed as a result of equality variance ( $p=0.929>0.05$ ) and a significant difference ( $p=0.04<0.05$ ) detected as a result of this test.

Table 4. *Preferences about Taking Online Preparatory Classes T-test Results*

	N	Mean	SD	SEM	t	df	p
Yes	81	51.38	7.75	.86	15.32	268	.00
No	189	36.63	7.02	.51			

Shown in Table 5, there is a significant difference between the participants claiming to have basic computer skills and those who think they have average ( $p=.004<.05$ ) and advanced level computer skills ( $p=.01<.05$ ). On the other hand, no significant difference was found between the participants with average-level skills and those with high-level computer skills ( $p=.94>.05$ ). These results indicate that students with lower computer skills are less positive to distance language learning during their ELPP education.

Table 5. *ANOVA Results among Participants' Computer Skill and Attitudes*

(I) Computer Skill	(J) Perceived Computer Skill	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p	M	SD
Basic	Average	-4.89*	1.51	.004	37.05	9.33
	Advanced	-5.45*	2.00	.019		
Average	Basic	4.89*	1.51	.004	41.95	9.91
	Advanced	-.55	1.67	.941		
Advanced	Basic	5.45*	2.00	.019	42.50	9.51
	Average	.55	1.67	.941		

Afterwards, one-way ANOVA was applied again to determine whether there is a possible relationship between the students' perceived language learning success and their overall attitudes. After Levene's equal distribution results showed  $p=.01<.05$  and one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference, post-hoc results were examined. According to the results shown in Table 6, there is a significant difference between the participants who think that their language learning success is 'not good enough' and those who think it is 'good' ( $p=.00<.05$ ) although there was no significant difference among the other groups ( $p>.05$ ). These results show that the students with less language learning success are more negative than the students perceiving themselves good in language learning in terms of their overall attitudes towards DLL in ELPP. The standard deviation between the two groups of 'poor' and 'very well' was very high, which demonstrates a fluctuation in the attitudes rather than a consensus.

Table 6. *Participants' Perceived Language Success and Attitudes*

(I) Success in ELPP	(J) Perceived Success in ELPP	P	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p	M	SD

Poor	Not good enough	2.19	2.91	.87	40.75	13.95
	Good	-2.95	2.91	.74		
	Very well	2.06	3.93	.95		
Not good enough	Poor	-2.19	2.91	.87	38.56	9.93
	Good	-5.14*	1.22	.00		
	Very well	-.12	2.91	1.00		
Good	Poor	2.95	2.91	.74	43.70	9.21
	Not good enough	5.14*	1.22	.00		
	Very well	5.01	2.91	.31		
Very well	Poor	-2.06	3.93	.95	38.68	4.59
	Not good enough	.12	2.91	1.00		
	Good	-5.01	2.91	.31		

Finally, one-way ANOVA was applied to determine the possible relationship between the needs and accessibility to DLL tools and overall attitudes of the participants during the transition to distance language learning within the scope of COVID19 measures. After the one-way ANOVA test indicated a significant difference ( $p=.00<.05$ ), the equal distribution was checked, and the result showed a heterogeneous distribution ( $p=.004<.05$ ). As a result, the Games-Howell post-hoc test was applied and the results are shown in Table 7. According to the results, a significant difference was found between the students who have accessibility to DLL tools and infrastructure and those who do not have the necessary equipment such as technological tools and accessibility ( $p=.00<.05$ ). The students with access significantly differed from the ones with accessibility problems in terms of having more positive attitudes towards the use of DLL in ELPP. The students with partial access also differed significantly from the students with access problems ( $p=.00<.05$ ). This suggests that students with access problems have more negative attitudes than students with partial access. There was no significant difference between the groups with access and partially access ( $p=.43>.05$ )

Table 7. ANOVA Results of Participants' Accessibility to Technology and Attitudes

(I) Distance Education Necessities and Accessibility	(J) Distance Education Necessities and Accessibility	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p	M	SD
Yes	No	11.78*	1.37	.00	43.08	9.21
	Partly	1.52	1.23	.43		
No	Yes	-11.78*	1.37	.00	31.30	5.85
	Partly	-10.25*	1.39	.00		
Partly	Yes	-1.52	1.23	.43	41.55	9.99
	No	10.25*	1.39	.00		

### Qualitative results



There were two qualitative data collection tools that were applied sequentially in the study. The first of these was 5 open-ended questions and the other was semi-structured interviews. The results from both qualitative data collection tools were analyzed following the same principles. The data was first transcribed into a file and then read again to check their accuracy. These transcribed data were then categorized into codes and themes as positive, negative and neutral. These stages were also carried out by two other experts, and the results were used in this part of the study after comparing them in terms of validity and reliability ( $\kappa = 0.70, p < .005$ ).

The results show that students have both positive and negative opinions about the use of DLL as a part of ERT. Although the participants expressed their opinions that the use of DLL could result in positive outputs, they also stated that using DLL in an intensive system such as ELPP would create some deficiencies. Overall frame of the pattern coding indicate a neutral opinion by the participants towards the use of DLL in ELPP.

Table 8. *Pattern Coding Results of Open-Ended Questions*

Question	Category	N	%	Male	%	Female	%
Participants' opinions towards the use of ERT in ELPP	Desperate	20	11.56	8	4.62	12	6.93
	Useless	24	13.87	14	8.09	10	5.78
	Anxious	35	20.23	19	10.98	16	9.24
	Needs Improvement	36	20.80	20	11.56	16	9.24
	Convenient	44	25.43	23	13.29	21	12.13
	Ideal	14	8.09	8	4.62	6	3.46
	TOTAL	173	100	92	53.17	81	46.82
Participants' opinions towards the use of ERT for ELPP	Challenging	39	22.94	21	12.35	18	10.58
	Inaccessible	27	15.88	16	9.41	11	6.47
	Impractical	57	33.52	35	20.58	22	12.94
	Okay	13	7.64	8	4.70	5	2.94
	Time Saver	25	14.70	11	6.47	14	8.23
	Perfect	9	5.29	4	2.35	5	2.94
	TOTAL	170	100	95	55.88	75	44.11
Participants' Perceived Language Learning	Poor	7	4.21	4	2.40	3	1.80
	Not good enough	65	39.15	36	21.68	29	17.46
	Average	50	30.12	29	17.46	21	12.65
	Good	37	22.28	21	12.65	16	9.63
	Very good	7	4.21	3	1.80	4	2.40
TOTAL	166	100	93	56.02	73	43.97	
Participants' ERT Experiences	Waste of time	24	17.51	10	7.29	14	10.21
	Tiring	25	18.24	9	6.56	16	11.67
	Unrealistic	11	8.02	3	2.18	8	5.83

Okay	19	13.86	11	8.02	8	5.83
Enough	52	37.95	33	24.08	19	13.86
Perfect	6	4.37	5	3.64	1	.72
TOTAL	137	100	71	51.82	66	48.17

Semi-structured focus group interviews were the last instrument of the study. A total of 24 participants were reached and 12 of them were randomly selected based on the convenience. The interviews were conducted online and the participants granted oral consents for these interview appointments and recordings. The pattern analysis process was conducted following the same principles with open-ended questions. As a result of the analysis process, the responses were gathered under several themes which were challenging, distractors, interaction, accessibility, anxiety, material, and flexibility. The first four of these themes were used as negative attitude signs and the latter three were positive. The results showed that students were easily distracted due to several different distractors during ERT. Limited or no interaction with peers and the teacher, and accessibility problems were primary barriers emphasized in the responses. On the other hand, flexibility in time, space, and the use of materials helped students reduce their anxiety and understand the lesson. These answers were grouped under three categories as positive, negative, and neutral. According to the results of the interviews, although the participants' attitudes towards using distance language learning platforms are positive, their use of such tools during the preparatory years at the university is not as positive as it used to be. The main reason for this is that students think that learning a language in a strict discipline like the ELPP year-based system with the number of intensive lessons, assignments, and assessment criteria cannot be fully achieved with asynchronous distance lessons.

Table 9. *Semi-Structured Interview Results*

Attitude	Category	Frequency	Example
Negative	Challenging	S3, S8, S4	...I tried the app to learn Spanish, and I liked it, but it is not the same as this year's education. ELPP requires a full-time effort.
	Distractors	S9, S5, S6, S9, S1, S12	... It became tough for me to concentrate again when I got the notification from my social media accounts or text message applications
	Interaction	S1, S2, S11	... I felt the absence of a teacher when I had a question ... I did not have a chance to ask for help from my friends
	Accessibility	S12, S3, S3	... There is only one computer at home, and we have to use it with my two other siblings.
Positive	Anxiety	S6, S10, S7	...Luckily, we did not have pair dialogues in DLL. I do not like speaking in English in the classroom.
	Material	S1, S12,S6, S8	...It is much better than a traditional classroom in terms of materials

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Flexibility	S9, S10, S2, S5	... thanks to this system, I can have my classes anytime and anywhere I wanted
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## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the first research question was to reveal ELPP students' overall attitudes towards ERT classes. The mixed data results showed that the Turkish EFL students enrolled in a year-based ELPP held partially positive attitudes towards the implementation of asynchronous offline classes in ERT. The reason for this may be that students are baffled as they are well aware of what limitations the pandemic has brought (Hussein et al., 2020), and safety comes first no matter the circumstances (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). They also need to continue their education despite the challenges they experience. As prior studies (Hodges et al., 2020; Perveen, 2016; Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani, 2020) suggest, the solution for better experiences and attitudes may be blending synchronous and asynchronous learning modes to support EFL students in cases of such needs as ERT. These results are in line with two other studies (Lengkanawati et al., 2021; Price, 2021) in terms of EFL students' partially positive attitudes towards the use of e-learning in ERT.

Due to biological or social differences, males and females can differ from each other in language learning in many ways, such as learning styles (Tatarinceva, 2009; Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014), motivation (Mori & Gobel, 2006), and preferences (Xodabande, 2018). The second quantitative research question is related to this gender aspect as the distinction favors females in terms of having a more positive attitude towards learning English as a foreign language (Aldosari, 2014; Kobayashi, 2002), and males in terms of having a more positive attitude towards using the internet (Aydn, 2007). It aimed to reveal a possible relationship between EFL students' attitudes towards implementing asynchronous classes as a part of ERT in the preparatory program and their gender. The results of the quantitative data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female participants' attitudes towards the use of asynchronous offline classes in ERT. Male participants have a more positive attitude compared to female participants. These results contradict other studies investigating the relationship between EFL students' attitudes and gender (Aldosari, 2014; Kobayashi, 2002). Participants may have regarded this as a part of the internet rather than a mode of education. In other words, female participants' responses may have been more related to the pros and cons of learning in ERT. In contrast, male participants may have regarded ERT more positively as they are more familiar with using the internet. The difference in the sample size of the participants between male and female participants could be the other reason for the results. The last reason could be the difference between pre- and post-pandemic reactions of the students; that is, male and female students may have different perspectives about being satisfied with what educational institutions offer during ERT and what it should be. Finally, to the researchers' best knowledge, there are very few studies in the existing EFL/ERT literature, limiting the possible comparison of the gender results to other studies. At the same time, this situation makes the study unique in the literature.

The third research question was related to the relationship between students' familiarity, competence, and literacy with digital tools and their attitudes towards the use of asynchronous offline classes during ERT for their English classes in ELPP. According to the quantitative results, students with a lower level of perceived digital competency differ significantly from those with average and advanced competency in computer skills. Three major reasons could be behind the

relationship between the lower attitude towards asynchronous offline ERT English classes and the lower competency in computer skills. Firstly, as Fidalgo et al. (2020) state, students may have felt intimidated by the idea of using ERT tools as they considered these tools too complex even if these tools might be in their digital competency range. Secondly, without any distance education background, students accustomed to face-to-face education may not have needed to acquire digital literacy or competency until they had to with ERT. Finally and most importantly, there is the fact of affordability and accessibility of digital tools such as computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc., because one of the significant challenges behind the effective implementation of ERT is the issue of affordability and accessibility (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Students who have problems with accessing digital tools, either due to location or financial problems, may develop lower levels of digital competency.

The fifth research question aimed to understand the possible relationship between the EFL students' accessibility to technology and their attitudes towards the utilization of asynchronous offline ELPP classes during ERT. Analysis of the quantitative data showed a significant relationship between these two. The students with no accessibility differ from those with full or partial accessibility in terms of having less positive attitudes towards the asynchronous offline ELPP classes. Data gathered from qualitative tools also supported quantitative results. Participants with no or partial accessibility to the necessities for DLL in ERT claimed the issues such as connection issues, a single device in a multi-need family environment, and affordability affected their success by reducing their motivation. The reason for the lower level of positive attitudes towards distance language learning in ERT for ELPP mainly derives from affordability issues. In short, there is a significant relationship between accessibility to infrastructural necessities and devices for distance education and EFL students' attitudes towards the use of asynchronous offline classes during ERT for ELPP. The challenge revealed by the results is in line with the conclusions of other studies conducted in the context of ERT (Ariyanti, 2020; Chahkandi, 2021; Ghosh, et al., 2021; Mazlan et al., 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to investigate the overall attitudes of EFL students towards the implementation of asynchronous offline classes by a Turkish state university's ELPP as a response to emergency remote teaching just after the COVID19 outbreak and to reveal online distractors experienced by the students. According to the results obtained from the qualitative and the quantitative tools, the students' attitudes were partially positive. Variables such as students' gender, perceived success in language learning, digital competency, and technological accessibility were significantly related to their attitudes. Online distractors revealed through the qualitative data impact students' motivation, autonomy, and attitudes substantially. The most commonly experienced online distractors are connection problems, mobile notifications, the urge to visit other web pages, the complexity of online materials, and online music.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are a few limitations of the present study, which may be considered as subjects for other studies as well as recommendations for other researchers. Primarily, the critical limitation of the

study is participant-related. The fact that the participants of this study are from one specific university in Turkey is a significant limitation. The findings may result in different outcomes with a different population and sampling. Sequentially, results may not be the same when the study is conducted in different settings and with different people of other nationalities. Another limitation may be the number of participants, as a higher or lower number of contributors may affect the results. Thirdly, the study was conducted in the spring semester of the previous academic year which meant that the data were collected in a week or two following events with the COVID19 pandemic that obligated a three-week break for universities in Turkey. Regarding this, findings may differ in research where the data collection procedure is longer. Furthermore, researchers might consider keeping the data collection procedure longer for two reasons, one of which is diversifying data collection tools with more interviews or open-ended questions, and the other is observing the target population for more than a semester or a year.

## IMPLICATIONS

Studies conducted before the outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 investigated the attitudes of students towards the implementation of e-learning models, and their results indicated that students' attitudes are more positive for the use of synchronous and asynchronous classes used complementarily for English language classes (Perveen, 2016; Riwayatningsih & Sulistiyani, 2020). Therefore, one of the implications based on the findings of the current study is that a blend of synchronous and asynchronous online classes may produce better results in ERT context.

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