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ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES IN UNIVERSITIES: THE CASE OF YALOVA UNIVERSITY

ÜNİVERSİTELERDE VERİLEN ÇEVRİMİÇİ UZAKTAN EĞİTİM DERSLERİ: YALOVA ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT

Thinking of any area of daily lives without communication technologies is almost not possible today. Beside everything, new communication technologies like computers and the Internet lead also the concept of distance education to cyber space. New information and communication technologies may both function as a helper for education, and also as a whole source that provide education under the name of 'distance education'. Emphasizing the fact that most of the literature about this subject handles "distance education" as a full education type provided mainly through online systems, this article aims to understand the feelings and attitudes of university students who originally apply for a classroom-based education, and take some of their courses through online distance education. By taking the students of Yalova University as sample, and by developing a new scale, a survey form consisting of 23 items in total, including two open ended questions, are filled by 255 participants. Eventually, it is found that attitudes of university students that choose classroom-based education towards online distance education courses are quite negative. The results demonstrate the significance of factors such as the need for communicating with an instructor, or the need for an interactive and interesting content design when there is no human (student-teacher) interaction in online distance education. The mentioned reasons of the negative results of this research are parallel to most of the results found in the related literature, and will be discussed in detail throughout the article.

Keywords: Online distance education, classroom-based education, university students

ÖZET

Gündelik yaşamın herhangi bir alanını bilgi teknolojilerinden uzakta düşünmek günümüzde neredeyse imkansızdır. Bilgisayar ve internet gibi yeni iletişim teknolojileri, diğer her şeyde olduğu gibi uzaktan eğitim kavramını da siber-mekâna taşımıştır. Yeni bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileri hem eğitime yardımcı unsurlar olarak, hem de 'uzaktan eğitim' adı altında tek başına eğitim sunan kaynaklar olarak görev yapabilmektedirler. Bu çalışmada sözkonusu kavram ile ilgili alanda yapılan çalışmalarının çoğunun "uzaktan eğitim"i tamamıyla çevrimiçi sistemler üzerinden verilen bütünsel bir eğitim biçimi olarak ele aldıkları vurgulanarak, başlangıçta örgün eğitim alma amacıyla üniversitelere başvurmuş öğrencilerin, örgün eğitimleri içerisinde mecburi olarak çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim ile aldıkları dersler ile ilgili hisleri ve bu derslere yönelik tutumlarını anlamak amaçlanmaktadır. Bu minvalde, Yalova Üniversitesi öğrencilerini örneklem alarak, içinde iki açık uçlu soruyu da barındıran, toplamda 23 maddeden oluşan yeni bir ölçek oluşturuldu ve 255 katılımcı tarafından dolduruldu. Sonuç olarak, örgün öğretimi seçerek üniversite eğitimi alan öğrencilerin, çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim ile verilen derslere karşı tutumunun oldukça olumsuz olduğu tespit edildi. Sonuçlar, çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitimde önem taşıyan, bir öğretmenle iletişim kurma ihtiyacı, ya da insan etkileşimi (öğrenci-öğretmen) olmayan bir ortamda verilen eğitimde sunulan ders içeriklerinin etkileşimli ve ilgi çekici olma ihtiyacı gibi unsurların önemini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Araştırmada elde edilen olumsuz sonuçların bu gibi nedenleri literatürdeki çalışmaların çoğuna paraleldir ve makale içerisinde detaylı bir biçimde tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi uzaktan eğitim, örgün öğretim, üniversite öğrencileri

1. GİRİŞ

As the information and communication technologies started developing, they entered almost every part of daily lives. Education is one of the areas that is also changing by the arrival of these technologies. Beside using the help of technology in classes, technology has started to be used to provide education all by itself. This second type of education style is generally called as "distance education".

Distance education basically is a type of education where the teacher and the student are not at the same physical space (Adıyaman, 2012). The beginning of distance education in the world is told to be the year of 1728, when the *Boston Newspaper* declared that "Steno Education" will be given via letters (Kırık, 2014), whereas the first distance education center which taught information via letters

was established in Turkey by the Ministry of Education in 1960 (Kör et al., 2013). Before that, beginning at 1941 until 1960s, Turkish radios started broadcasting programs about agriculture, targeting people living in villages (İşman, 1998; as cited Arat & Bakan, 2011). In 1964, *TRT* (Turkish Radio & Television Institute) made an emphasis on educative programs. Later, with the name of "Faculty of Open Education", Anadolu University started accepting students in 1982 (Akdemir, 2011). Since 1990s, computer technology eased distance learning by adding the facilities of text, graphic, video, sound and virtual reality (Demiray & İşman, 2003). In 2000s, Istanbul Bilgi University started providing Internet based distance education as the first private university with this service (Kırık, 2014). Ultimately, it is seen that up to this day, many universities in Turkey are making attempts to provide a certain type of distance education.

For the purpose of defining distance education via ICTs, as it is the focus in this study, there are many names that are used interchangeably throughout the literature, such as "*web-based learning, e-learning, online instruction, cyberspace learning environments, distributed learning*", or "*borderless education*", etc. (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Some researchers may object to the interchangeable use of these terms. For instance, Guri-Rosenblit (2005) differentiates the words of "*distance education*" and "*e-Learning*". According to her, "distance education" is the opposite of a campus-based university, whereas *e-Learning* is mainly about taking the help of technology in conventional classroom-based teaching, as well as making virtual meetings as a class. So basically, she emphasizes the main difference between synchronized and asynchronized education through ICTs.

Elcil and Şahiner (2014) define *asynchronized distance education* as "learning by yourself", and *synchronized distance education* as students and teachers meeting at a virtual class environment at a certain time. Furthermore, they point out the fact that although asynchronized distance learning is more frequently used because of the time flexibility it provides, asynchronized distance learning can make students feel lonely in learning. Among those who write about online distance education, some argue that when there is synchronized teaching such as live virtual meetings (e.g. video-conferencing), then the concept of online distance education looses its logic in terms of providing the flexibility of time and space (Bernard et al., 2004).

As seen above, the naming and the conceptual understanding of "distance education" is still a debatable subject. In this study, to be able to eliminate any conceptual complications, the term "*online distance education*" will signify distance education provided through online information and communication technologies, interchangeably with all the terms regarding similar signification. More importantly, the focus of this study is the obligatory online distance education courses taught in universities which provide a traditional classroom-based education. As the case study sample of this work, students of Yalova University are observed to be having difficulties in their online distance education courses. Since there is almost no other work in the literature researching this situation, this study has significance in terms of bringing a new perspective about a non-researched type of online distance education in universities.

The concept of distance education has been researched and explained by many approaches and perspectives. First and most importantly, as with anything that includes information technologies, online distance education has the advantage of eliminating the limitations of time and space if the technology is accessible by everyone and everywhere (Sun et al., 2008). Moreover, some (Eom et al., 2006) state that online distance education systems bring up a different style of learning, which is "*self-regulated learning*" that changes the roles of students from passive learners to active learners. Moreover, the opportunity of accessing multimedia sources while learning is an advantage of distance learning through the Internet (Bay & Tüzün, 2002). This way, students can get quick and detailed answers to their questions while studying. Furthermore, online learning provides students a broader range of knowledge by directing them to other sources of knowledge, also by letting them to keep the strings of their own way towards expanding their knowledge (Anderson, 2011).

The concept of online distance education puts new media technologies like computers and the Internet at the center. Reliability of the technology used (Sandholtz, Ringstaff, Dwyer 1992), and instructural implementation of that technology (Collis, 1995) are found to be the two very significant factors influencing effectivity in online distance education (as cited Webster and Hackley, 1997). However, technology is at the center with regards to its relationship with students and instructors. Accordingly, Piccoli et al. (2001) summarize "human factors" and "design factors" that determine the effectivity of online distance education. Accordingly, "human factors" describe students and teachers, whereas "design factors" describe how the courses are delivered through online learning systems. In a more detailed study, Sun et al. (2008) summarize the literature relevant to online distance education into six dimensions, including the ideas of Piccoli et al. (2001)*: student dimension, instructor dimension, course dimension, technology dimension, design dimension* and *environment dimension*. According to Piccoli et al. (2001), the learner/student should not have fear of computers and they should have a positive attitude towards online distance education to be successful. The "instructor dimension" on the other hand emphasizes that, a technology-friendly and timely responding instructor is needed for effective online distance education (Arbaugh, 2002; Thurmond et al., 2002). According to the "course dimension", the course material should be prepared interactively, with quality to be able to motivate learners for effective and continuous learning. Also, quality of the technology and the Internet used for online distance education is quite significant for effective learning and learner satisfaction (Piccoli et al., 2001; Webster & Hackley, 1997). In terms of the instruction design on the other hand, researchers (Arbaugh, 2002; Arbaugh & Duray, 2002; Pituch & Lee, 2006) suggest that online teaching design including the course website, or the file downloading software and etc. should be easy to use, so that the learner will be encouraged to apply for more online distance education. And finally, "environmental dimension" suggests that different ways of assessment make learners feel that they have an interaction with the instructors as if their learning is observed and fairly and properly assessed (Thurmond et al., 2002).

The information above describe the characteristics that an ideal online distance education system should have, yet, all of the ideals are not still met by most of the systems used. For instance, the first and the foremost requirement of distance learning through the Internet for students is acess. However, access can be an economic burden for the students if their institution does not provide the necessary tools like a computer lab or a fast Internet connection. Although they have the access tools, students may also have a fear or inadequate information of using these technologies. Lack of information to use the tools necessary for distance learning creates disappointment on students (Bay & Tüzün, 2002).

Morover, when students get answers to their questions late or not get at all, their attention about the course can decrease. Therefore, especially because of the physical distance between student and teacher in distance education, the role of the teacher gains more importance in terms of keeping the attention of the students high (Elcil & Şahiner, 2014). Because there is not a teacher authority in online distance education like there is in class teaching, designing an interactive course is very significant in terms of keeping the learner's attention on (Sun et al., 2008). Especially the absence of non-verbal cues transforms the face-to-face interaction into a task-oriented interaction (Arbaugh, 2000). Therefore, to be able to have interaction in distance education, instructors need the help of facilities like animation, voice, chat, graphics, video, and etc. (Bay & Tüzün, 2002).

In distance learning through the Internet, instructors have different roles than they do in class. First of all, instructors should know how to use these technologies, and they should go one step further than just providing the educative material on the Web, but they should also organize the educative content in an interactive and effective way to ease the learning process for the students. The fact that instructors cannot control the behavior of students while learning at distance learning, creating impact and disciplinizing students are harder in distance learning (Bay & Tüzün, 2002). When teachers can observe and understand the pre-knowledge and also the cultural perspectives of their students, then they can form the means of teaching in a more effective way for students. Online education, however

lacks this opportunity because it lacks an overall transparent communication among teachers and students, besides body language and paralinguistic clues (Anderson, 2011).

As an alternative education type that cares about above-mentioned advantages of classroom-based education that online distance education does not have, Colis and Moonen (2000; as cited Usta & Mahiroğlu, 2008) define a concept as "*Blended Education*", which signifies using both classroom-based teaching and teaching through technology at the same time for education. However, *Blended Education* is technically about supporting classroom-based courses with online activities and vice versa, not about total online distance education classes taught in traditional classroom-based education institutes. So still, not much is known about the feelings and ideas of students at a traditional classroom-based education institute, who take some of their courses online as distance education.

The concept of "distance education" is mostly covered throughout the literature (Şimşek, 2012; Yücer, 2011; Tuncer & Taşpınar, 2008) as a form of online education that gives all the courses through information technologies (such as computer and the Internet) in which students take a diploma/certificate at the end. However, this study elaborates universities that give traditional classroom-based education, but that makes students obliged to take some of the necessary courses through online distance education. Yalova University is one of the examples of such universities which uses the asynchronized model of online distance education. At Yalova University, all students take certain courses (*Turkish Language*, *Principles of Atatürk and the History of Revolution*, *Foreign Language* (English), *Basic Information Technologies*) through an online distance education system. Here, lecturers of those courses upload slides that they prepare and some of those slides are voiced by the lecturers, as if the course is being taught in class. Although the system lets students ask questions to their lecturers via forums, it is observed that there is almost no interaction between students and lecturers. Therefore, although the system is designed to be a Two-Way Education Platform which includes interaction, it functions as a One-Way Education Platform (Adıyaman, 2002) in which only the uploaded files are rarely viewed and listened to.

Related to this fact, the general aim of this study is to understand how students who choose to take education in traditional classroom-based universities feel about being obliged to take online distance education courses. In trying to understand this, a scale that measures students' perspectives on classroom-based education and online distance education is created.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants and Data Collection Process

The study was conducted between September 2017 and May 2017 at Yalova University. The sample was drawn from the students in associate degree and undergraduate degree levels at this university. 255 participants filled a survey consisting of 23 items in total.

The questionnaire form developed for this study has four parts. First part involves demographic information (e.g. gender, program, degree) related to the participants.

The second part includes ten items that aim to measure participants' attitudes about online distance education through questions such as "*I study for my distance education courses on a regular basis*", or "*Videos that vocalize the Powerpoint slides in distance education courses make those courses more efficient*".

The third part, on the other hand, aims to measure participants' attitudes about classroom-based education, through 8 items such as "N*otes I take in class makes me remember the course content better*", or "*I believe I need a teacher who encourages me to prepare for my studies*". The answers given to these items are measured through a 5 point Likert scale.

At the end of the survey, as the fourth part, participants were asked to write short answers to these two questions: "*What do you think are the biggest problems of online distance education courses?*"

and "*How do you think online distance education courses can be improved?*" Although these two questions seem to be open-ended, the answers are quite similar, so they are easily standardized.

Survey items, on the other hand, are decided and created after a broad research on the existing scales in the literature that aim to detect students' perspectives towards the traditional classroom-based learning and online distance learning. Researches about measuring the learner attitude towards online distance education and perceived e-Learner satisfaction (Arbaugh, 2002; Arbaugh & Duray, 2002, Piccoli et al., 2001), instructors' characteristics in making online distance education effective for learners (Thurmond et al., 2002), and the design of the course content (Pituch & Lee, 2006) helped developing the items of this scale.

Eventually, by both considering the observed problems of Yalova University's students about the online distance education courses, and also the items of above-mentioned existing scales, a short online distance education scale that measures both students' feelings towards classroom-based education, and towards online distance education courses is created.

2.2. Data Analysis Process

In determining the structural validity of the scales developed on Online Distance Education and Classroom-Based Education, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis are implemented. Furthermore, fit indexes are calculated. To be able to determine the reliability of the developed scales, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated. Moreover, in analyzing the data and obtaining the findings, descriptive statistics are calculated. Finally, Mann Whitney-U Test is implemented in comparisons of the scales. The data obtained are evaluated at 95% reliability interval and 5% meaningfulness level.

2.3. Findings

65 of the participants (25.5 %) are male, whereas 190 of them are (74.5 %) are female. 103 of the participants (40.4 %) are studying for an associate degree, whereas 152 of them (59.6 %) are students of an undergraduate degree.

Table 1. Descriptive Factor Analysis on Distance Education Scale

Items	Factor Loadings
DE2. I study for my distance education courses on a regular basis.	0.84
DE1. I believe the courses given as distance education are important for my university education.	0.83
DE3. Videos that vocalize the Powerpoint slides in distance education courses make those courses more efficient.	0.77
DE4. I do not think that the courses I take via distance education are assessed adequately/fairly.	0.51
DE5. I believe that we are given enough information about how we should study for our courses on the distance education system.	0.50

To be able to determine if the scale is suitable for factor analysis, the KMO and Bartlett tests are implemented. As a result of these tests, KMO value is found to be 0.75, whereas Bartlett test is found to be ($p<0.01$) meaningful. Results of the descriptive factor analysis are shown in Table 1. After the Factor Analysis, items in the scale are gathered together under a single factor of five items, with 50.23 % total descriptive variance.

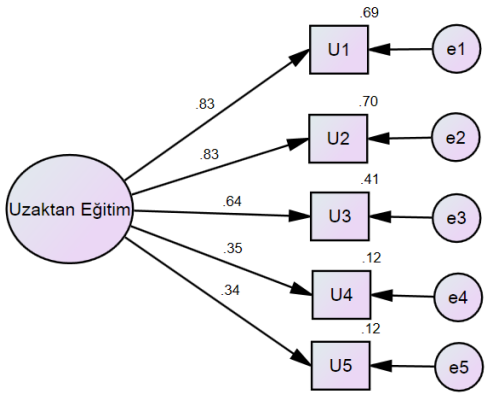

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Distance Education Scale

Affirmative factor analysis is implemented to evaluate if the Distance Education Scale confirms the single factor and five items structure or not, and the model obtained is shown in Figure 1. When looked at the fit indexes, it is found that CMIN/df=1.50, NFI=0.98, IFI=0.99, TLI=0.98, CFI=0.99, RMSEA=0.04. Accordingly, it can be suggested that fit indexes are adequate. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale is found as 0.72. Therefore, it is right to claim that the internal consistency and reliability of the scale is high.

Table 2. Descriptive Factor Analysis on Classroom-Based Education

Items	Factor Loadings
CBE5. Examples given during in-class courses makes the course more effective for me.	0.86
CBE7. Notes I take in class makes me remember the course content better.	0.85
CBE4. Listening to the course from a teacher makes me understand the course content better.	0.83
CBE6. The obligation of being in class at a certain day and time makes me follow my courses more regularly.	0.80
CBE3. I learn better in classroom environment, because I get immediate answers to my questions.	0.74
CBE2. I believe I need a teacher who encourages me to prepare for my studies.	0.69
CBE1. I feel more keen about going to classes, because I can see my friends there.	0.52

KMO and Bartlett tests are implemented to determine the convenience of the scale to the factor analysis. As a result of these tests, KMO value is found to be 0.88, and the Bartlett test is found to be meaningful ($p<0.01$). The results of the factor analysis implemented are shown in Table 2. After the Factor Analysis, items in the scale are gathered together under a single factor of seven items, with 58.52 % total descriptive variance.

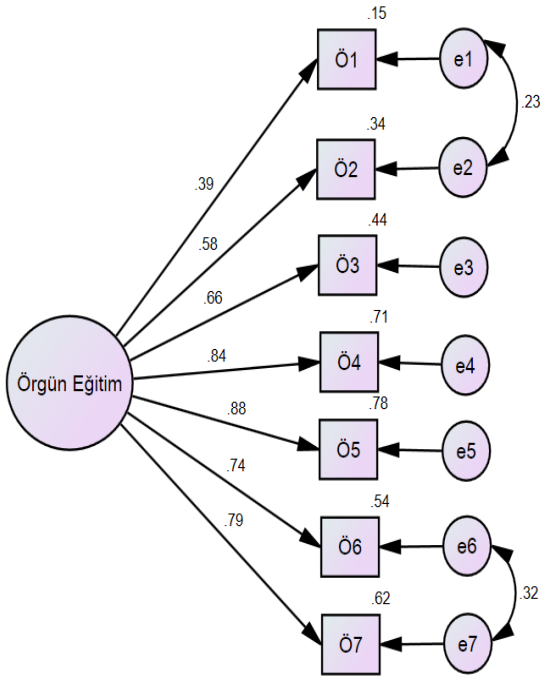

Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Classroom-Based Education

Confirmatory Factor Analysis is implemented to determine if Classroom-Based Education Scale's single factor and seven items sctructure is confirmed or not. Fit indexes and the suitability of the model are examined according to the analysis results. After the evaluations, modifications are needed and so modification recommendations are examined. Modifications are done parallel to the recommendations. The model obtained is shown in Figure 2. When fit indexes are looked at, it is found that CMIN/df=2.81, NFI=0.96, IFI=0.98, TLI=0.96, CFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.08. Deriving from these results, it can be suggested that fit indexes are adequate. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale is found to be 0.87. Therefore, it is right to claim that the internal consistency and reliability of the scale are high.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness Coefficient	Kurtosis Coefficient	Min.	Max.
Online Distance Education	255	1.93	0.72	1.15	2.10	1.00	5.00
Classroom-Based Education	255	3.78	0.84	-0.62	0.14	1.00	5.00

According to the averages seen in Table 3, participants' perception about *Online Distance Education* is negative, whereas their perception about *Classroom-Based Education* is positive in general.

Table 4. Comparison of the Variables in Terms of Gender

Variables	Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	U	p
Online Distance Education	Male	65	2.05	0.77	140.50	5.362,50	0.11
	Female	190	1.88	0.70	123.72		
Classroom-Based Education	Male	65	3.66	0.86	115.78	5.381,00	0.12
	Female	190	3.82	0.83	132.18		

Table 4 reveals the comparison of students' perceptions about *Online Distance Education* and *Classroom-Based Education*, in terms of gender. According to the table, perceptions of both *Online Distance Education* and *Classroom-Based Education* do not reveal any statistical difference ($p>0.05$). However, when the Table 4 is examined in more detail, it is seen that males are more positive about *Online Distance Education*, whereas females are more positive about *Classroom-Based Education*.

Table 5. Comparison of the Variables in Terms of Education

Variables	Education	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	U	p
Online Distance Education	Associate Degree	103	1.97	0.65	136.31	6.972,00	0.14
	Undergraduate	152	1.90	0.76	122.37		
Classroom-Based Education	Associate Degree	103	3.73	0.86	122.97	7.310,00	0.37
	Undergraduate	152	3.82	0.83	131.41		

Table 5 includes the comparison of students' perceptions about Online Distance Education and Classroom-Based Education in terms of their education. The table reveals that there are no statistical differences in perceptions about both Online Distance Education and Classroom-Based Education in terms of their education ($p>0.05$). However, when the Table 5 is examined in more detail, it is seen that students of Associate Degree are more positive about Online Distance Education, whereas students of Undergraduate are more positive about Classroom-Based Education.

Apart from these general results, responses given to the survey items are analyzed in detail. According to these descriptive statistics, most of the participants gave positive responses to those items that favor Classroom-Based Education. Two of these questions which got the most positive responses declare that "*Examples given during in-class courses makes the course more effective for me*", and "*Notes I take in class makes me remember the course content better*". In terms of gender or education type (e.g. undergraduate or associate degree), responses given do not vary significantly. Participants in both genders and both education types responded to items that favor Classroom-Based Education more positively.

As a final analysis, the last two open-ended questions at the end of the survey which ask the problems and recommendations about the online distance education courses revealed more details about the feelings of students. Among 255 students who completed the survey, 139 students (54.5 %) did not write any recommendations. However, 57 (22 %) students declared that these courses must be subtracted from their Schedule, and 25 (9.8 %) students wrote that these courses must be taught in class. Other students complained about inadequate information about the courses and exams, about weak course content, and about the problem of not being able to contact with and ask questions to the instructors. In the responses to these questions, it is also written that students require computer and Internet access from their university, and they ask these courses to be told in class by an instructor at least once a month.

3. DİSCUSSİON

Online distance education is a significant subject of today and the future that must be analyzed properly, because the system of education around the world has been gradually evolving into online systems. Hara (2000) warns about the lack of healthy responses taken from the students of online distance education in researches implemented throughout the literature. In this study, a new online distance education scale is developed for the aim of obtaining more descriptive responses. The scale

is divided into two scales to get more correct results and healthy responses from students. One is named as the "Classroom-Based Education Scale", and the other one is named as "Online Distance Education Scale". Proven by the analyses implemented, the internal consistency and reliability of both scales are found to be high.

According to the results, it is seen that, responses given do not vary in terms of gender or education type (e.g. undergraduate or associate degree) significantly. Participants in both genders and both education types responded to items that favor Classroom-Based Education more positively. Male students seem to be slightly more positive about online distance education rather than female students. Fidan (2016) also obtained parallel findings, and he explained his results in terms of the belief that men are better with technology than women. Moreover, although there are no significant differences in responses, students of Associate Degree seem to be slightly more positive about Online Distance Education, whereas students of Undergraduate are more positive about Classroom-Based Education. Eventually, general results of the developed scales demonstrate that attitudes of the students of Yalova University towards online distance education are quite negative. In more detail, participants' perceptions about Online Distance Education are found to be negative, whereas their perceptions about Classroom-Based Education are found to be positive in general. Similarly, a research done in Selcuk University (Gülnar, 2008) revealed that university students are mostly negative towards online distance learning.

A system of distance education that is not well-planned would lead students to form negative attitudes towards distance education courses (Fidan, 2016). Attention to quality course design, active learning strategies that necessitate collaboration among students, including face-to-face communication, and using media that support interactivity are significant factors that will increase effectivity in online distance education learning (Bernard et al., 2004). When compared to the traditional classroom-based learning, online distance education provides flexibility in terms of choosing the time and place of learning/studying; however it lacks the social environment needed for students' learning and also the ownership of or access to the technological devices (computer and the Internet), besides the ability to use those devices can be limitations of online distance education (Kör et al., 2013). As Gökdas and Kayri (2014) also points out, it is an important barrier in success of distance-learning when the institution does not provide enough computers, a good Internet connection, and other means of technologies that are necessary. In line with that, it is seen in responses to the last two open-ended questions of the developed survey that students require their university to provide them the necessary technologies such as computers and the Internet. Indeed, to be able to improve the effectiveness of online distance education, there should not be poor technology or technical difficulties that would discourage learners. More to that, students should be well-trained about computers and other necessary technologies (Sun et al., 2008).

The success of using technology in education also depends on its users' attitudes towards it and their perceptions about its usefulness (Davis, 1989; Webster & Hackley, 1997). Tucker (2001) found that students may reveal success both in traditional education and online distance education. She emphasizes the points that, if students prefer to take the course notes and study by themselves through a '*Direct Experience*', or if students do not prefer '*Authority*' while learning, they will become successful at online distance learning. Accordingly, Anderson (2011) suggests that although online distance education lets students interact with the content they are responsible from through many sources on the Web, students still prefer their learning to be directed and evaluated by the assistance of a teacher, as in traditional classroom-based learning. In line with that, most of the participants in this study gave positive responses to those items that favor Classroom-Based Education. Apparently, these students prefer to have direct experience and a teacher's authority for success, because most of the responses were highly positive for survey items like "*Examples given during in-class courses makes the course more effective for me*", "*Notes I take in class makes me remember the course content better*", and "*I believe I need a teacher who encourages me to prepare for my studies*". Students also responded to the last two open-ended questions on problems and recommendations about online

distance education in a way that they need a physically present instructor who would tell them the course content and who would answer their questions.

Clark (1983, 1994) argues that in learning, the way of instruction is more important than the medium used. Therefore, using an instruction method that serves to the characteristics of the students would be more effective rather than simply uploading the course materials to a Web platform. Kim et al. (2011) found that it is also significant in online distance learning for instructors to provide a social atmosphere including humors and timely feedbacks to be able to motivate students. "Immediacy behaviors" (Mehrabian, 1971) are the communication behaviors that raise the students' attention in class through eye contact, smiling (nonverbal immediacy behaviors) as well as giving personal examples, or addressing students by their names (verbal immediacy behaviors). Such behaviors are found to increase students' motivation and learning through their education (as cited Arbaugh, 2002).

Moreover, Soon et al. (2000) also found that students of higher education who got an online distance education course complained about the lack of contact with and insufficient feedback from their instructors (as cited Thurmond et al., 2000). As Eşgi emphasizes (2006), when students of online distance education cannot get feedback, when they cannot understand fully if they have the necessary abilities for the course or not, when they do not have self-esteem about the course materials and when they feel left alone in the system, they will fail the course. In their research on university students in Turkey, Elcil and Şahiner (2014) found that similarly, when students feel physical distance with the instructor, this negatively influences students' interest towards the course. Their research demonstrates that, some characteristics of the nature of online distance education such as keeping students responsible from their own learning, loneliness, attention breaking factors, motivation problems, lacking the synergy that exists in face-to-face interaction, and etc. are experienced by students as the handicaps of online distance learning.

Many students complain about feeling isolated during taking online distance education (Bay & Tüzün, 2002). Although students still seem to be closer to the traditional way of classroom-based education, there are ways that may get students closer to online distance education. Students who feel lonely while taking online distance education need printed resources to be able to learn the course from other perspectives. To be able to make distance education closer to face-to-face education, designers/instructors need to fulfill students' need for correction and guidance during learning (Eşgi, 2006). Anderson (2011) suggests that when there are appropriate and adequate online community activities and computer-supported independent-study activities, anything can be effectively learned through online distance education. According to Anderson (2002, 2011), to be able to obtain a deep and meaningful learning, one of these three forms of interaction must be at very high levels: student-teacher, student-student, student-content. One of the problems about the distance education taught at Yalova University seems to be the lack of any interactions of such. It is clearly seen from the results that students still expect a motivating attention from their teachers to be able to learn a course effectively.

There is no doubt that the role of technology is important in today's education. However, researches (Usta & Mahiroğlu, 2008) demonstrate that to be able to achieve student success, both online and face-to face education strategies must be used in combination. As Rosenberg (2001; as cited Erturgut, 2008) also admits, online distance education can never replace classroom-based learning. *The Theory of Interaction and Communication* developed by Holmberg (1989; as cited Karataş, 2003) suggests that the interaction between the student and the instructor sets the basis for learning. According to Anderson (2011), "*The task of the online course designer and teacher is to choose, adapt, and perfect educational activities that maximize the affordances of the Web*". Therefore, simply just uploading class materials on a server of the Web is not enough for an effective distance education. Usta and Mahiroğlu's study (2008) finds that, teaching through only online platforms decreases student success, and also the information learnt would not last for too long in students' minds. Especially in higher education in which students are enrolled for classroom-based learning, online distance

education must be supported by classroom-based learning as well. A study by Özturan et al. (2000) also show that this would be students' preference. Significantly, courses that need practice such as English are hard to be taught in distance education.

Gökdaş and Kayri (2014) claim that Turkey could not have adapted appropriately to the developments in distance learning yet. Elcil and Şahiner (2014) admit that although distance learning must be student-centered, it is content-centered in Turkey. It is mostly seen at universities in Turkey that verbal courses are simply given as text, without much interaction. Bernards et al. (2004, p. 413) speculate that effective distance education requires "*pedagogical excellence*", through "*appropriate and strategic use of interactivity among learners, with the material leading to learner engagement, deep processing, and understanding*". This means that ideally, the course content in online distance education must be created according to the needs of students and edited accordingly (Özköse et al., 2013), because what determines student satisfaction in online distance education is first the flexibility of the medium used, and then the interactivity of the course environment (Arbaugh, 2000). Especially in verbal courses like history or literature, the strength of the e-content is very significant in terms of students' learning.

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