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AUTHORS: Chiouda Ali, Selma Deneme

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Online English Lessons in Western Thrace, Greece: Students and Parents' Perspectives

Batı Trakya, Yunanistan'da Çevrimiçi İngilizce Dersleri: Öğrenci ve Veli Görüşleri

Chiouda ALI*

Selma DENEME-GENÇOĞLU**

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ABSTRACT: During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have switched their education systems from the traditional classroom to an online learning environment to prevent the spreading of the virus. This study was designed to investigate the experiences of online English education of elementary students in the Western Thrace region of Greece during the coronavirus pandemic. It is further searched whether their demographic background influences their online English language education process, whether they are proficient users of technology, and whether they find it challenging to attend online classes. The quantitative data were collected through a scale from a hundred students and structured interview questions were used to collect the qualitative data from both students and parents. Based on the results, it was concluded that the participant students were sufficiently adept at using technology to take part in online courses. Nonetheless, the majority of them occasionally experienced some difficulties. Additionally, it was discovered that most students' opinions of online English instruction were favorable. Finally, the majority of parents who responded were pleased with the online English classes conducted throughout the pandemic.

Keywords: Pandemic period, online education, primary school students, online English language education, Western Thrace.

ÖZ: Dünya çapında yayılan Covid-19 virüsü döneminde eğitim kurumları, virüsün kişiden kişiye bulaşmasını önlemek amacıyla çevrimiçi eğitime geçiş yapmıştır. Bu çalışmada, pandemi döneminde Yunanistan'ın Batı Trakya bölgesinde çevrimiçi İngilizce eğitimi alan ilkökul öğrencilerinin görüşleri incelenmiştir. Öğrencilerin demografik özelliklerinin, yeterli teknolojik araç gerece sahip olup olmamalarının ya da çevrimiçi derslere katılım esnasında problem yaşamının çevrimiçi İngilizce eğitim süreciyle ilgili algılarını etkileyip etkilemediği araştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın amacına ulaşmak için ölçek ve yapılandırılmış mülakat soruları kullanılmıştır. Öğrenci görüşlerinden elde edilen ölçek sonuçları, öğrencilerin her birinin çevrimiçi İngilizce dersine katılım için gereken teknolojiye sahip olduğunu ancak çoğunluğunun derslere katılım esnasında sorun yaşadığını göstermiştir. Bulguların geneline göre ise öğrenciler çevrimiçi İngilizce eğitim süreci hakkında çoğunlukla olumlu bakış açısı taşımaktadırlar. Yine velilerin mülakat sorularına verdikleri yanıtlardan elde edilen bulgular, çoğunun pandemi döneminde işlenen çevrimiçi İngilizce derslerinden memnun olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Pandemi dönemi, çevrimiçi eğitim, ilkökul öğrencileri, online İngilizce eğitimi, Batı Trakya.

* Corresponding Author: Master of Arts, Trakya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Edirne, Türkiye, huda618@hotmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3250-6204>

** Assoc. Prof. Dr., Trakya University, Edirne, Türkiye, selmadeneme@trakya.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7408-1163>

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While the world continues its evolution, its living creatures face many alterations. One of the most rapid changes, as everybody discusses, occurs in the field of technology. However, except from this innovation mostly affecting the functioning of the planet positively, sometimes these developments have added some difficulties to human life. Whilst people have been struggling with transforming daily life into a more technological one, the COVID-19 epidemic manifested itself and one more challenge came off. Since it takes time to adapt to innovations, people have had to follow new developments in no time. People had to get isolated to protect themselves from the virus, and almost the entire world started to conduct their daily work online from home. Along with the private and public sectors, most of the educational institutions globally, have converted their education procedures to an online one as part of the physical distancing rules to prevent the transmission of the disease. Because the SARS-Cov-2 virus, namely the COVID-19 disease, was identified by the World Health Organization in 2021 as an extremely contagious disease (WHO, 2021). Authorities at the first phase informed the societies that the most effective way to get protected from the disease is to stay within 1 meter of others, wear a face mask, and pay attention to hygiene so as not to spread the virus through an infected person and as the second phase they took quarantine decisions.

In this sense, after the Chinese government, where the virus first showed up, all governments around the world started to take action all of a sudden and shot down workplaces and schools to protect the public from the contamination of the so-called virus. Similar to other countries, Greece encouraged online education to students of all levels during the COVID-19 outbreak concerning the effects of the epidemic and minimizing the undesired results. Therefore, online education has gained a respectful place to take measures for maintaining the good health of students, school staff, educators, and parents in this tough period. As argued by Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), distance education will be promoted by communication technologies like the Internet, telephone, Television, or texts to ensure that teaching and learning are not interrupted during the Flu Crisis.

During the pandemic, diversifying the available resources in the name of upgrading the schooling process involved conscious consideration of the organizational process, participation of students and adaptation of the technology (Sandars et al., 2020). Concordantly, the interactive videoconferencing system design has been put forward and applied in elementary schools, in Greece and IVC (Interactive Video Classroom) has been found to *“play a significant role in supporting collaborative synchronous learning activities at a distance”* (Anastasiades et al., 2010, p. 1). However, the classic classroom setting with desks, boards, and books, along with a structured timetable, is the basis of the Greek educational system. Especially in the region of study, Western Thrace, the traditional classroom has remained the same for years because of economic issues. At the very same year with the pandemic outbreak, it was stated by The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) that the most underdeveloped region of Greece, which has been a country trying to break free from the clutches of the economic crisis for several years, was the Western Thrace with a range of 16,9%. In this degree, the question was how to apply the aforementioned extraordinary education model in the area, because this teaching and learning process requires an important technological infrastructure (Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Accordingly, the government

found the solution of distributing tablets to low-income families and children. According to Tziviniou, Charitaki, and Kagkara (2021), The country was aware of the core principles of the e-learning system as well as how it varies from traditional or open education by the time of COVID-19. Consequently, in times of crisis when school closures are necessary, distance education was the only option in Greece. Since then, it has been utilized as a substitute approach at all educational levels and consequently, education, which is the most valuable wealth of man, has been replaced by online education quickly.

While the debate over the efficacy, benefits, or drawbacks of e-learning continues; during this challenging time, minds were puzzled among the primary and kindergarten students' situation because distance education could be easily manageable by undergraduate students because of their knowledge and age, but younger students could necessitate additional support. On the subject of young learners, great effort was required by governments to provide a sufficient online teaching infrastructure. In this respect, Flahault (2020) suggests that, in addition to providing guidance on necessary technology usage and encouraging them to develop self-discipline, parents, by relieving their children psychologically during this time, should be their children's closest and most supportive companions through homeschooling. To overcome this situation, students ought to constantly have assistance provided by their teachers, and the conditions and procedures of the online learning system should be constructed concerning their needs, at the same time utilizing all available language teaching methods. Moreover, Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) suggested that the Community of Inquiry framework, which illustrates an e-learning process through the interaction of the three key elements: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence, creates a powerful and encouraging learning environment for learners and help them to overcome the difficulties of online learning and improve students' sense of belonging. In an online learning environment, having a strong social presence enables students to connect with one another, express themselves freely, and work as a cohesive unit. This element also encourages critical thinking. Cognitive presence emphasizes how students can create meaning through ongoing discussion and introspection. The third component of the framework, teaching presence, consists of organizing, guiding, and facilitating the class to get the best possible learning results. Teachers and learners share responsibilities for course facilitation, which is particularly true when using technology to conduct instruction. This in turn leads to meaningful and engaging online education experience (Garrison et al., 2000). As covered in Blake's (2000) study, there will be multiple definitions for the term "Online Language Learning", such as classes supported by the Internet, a blended or hybrid classroom, or an online course. In the study region, primary schoolers attended a complete online English language course during the pandemic. Equivalent to teachers of each subject, English language teachers were promoted to develop the student's learning abilities appropriate to the development of practical resources and focusing on instruction in learning methods (Dai & Lin, 2020). Nevertheless, online learning of a foreign language needs to be an active, student-centered approach. As well as Akyol, Garrison and Ozden (2009) suggest, social presence of CoI has got three categories: affective expression, open communication and group discourse which support cognitive objectives. If students own the technologies they need, they can engage in the class properly and voice their

thoughts just like they would in a traditional classroom setting by utilizing their cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and resource management competencies (Kuama & Intharaksa, 2016).

In this degree, since the issue of online English learning, especially regarding elementary school pupils, educators, and parents, is a current topic and only a little research has been conducted in the Western Thrace part of Greece, it is expected that this research will fulfil a gap by receiving the opinions of the young learners and their families. Thus, in the study, these questions are attempted to be addressed:

1. What are the viewpoints of elementary schoolers and their parents in Western Thrace, Greece on online English lessons?
2. Did the students' ages, gender, grade levels, years of learning English, and experiences of technological problems affect their perceptions of online English education?

Method

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method, using survey and interview data, to expand and enhance the findings (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). To identify the opinions of primary school children regarding online English education, data were collected quantitatively. Then, age, gender, grade level, length of learning, and technology experience groups were compared using the quantitative data. Qualitatively, the opinions of parents and kids were investigated regarding their experience of online English language learning.

Participants

The data was collected in Western Thrace, Greece in the 2020-2021 academic year utilizing the convenience sampling method. The participants were 100 fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students. From those 53 pupils and 38 parents also participated in the structured interviews.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participant Students

		<i>n</i>
Ages	9 years old	11
	10 years old	20
	11 years old	25
	12 years old	23
	13 years old	21
Grade Levels	4 th Grade	30
	5 th Grade	31
	6 th Grade	39

English Learning Years	1 year	0
	2 years	23
	3 years	21
	4 years	21
	5 years	19
	6 Years	10
	7 Years	5
	8 Years	0
	9 Years	1
	10 Years	0
Language Number	1	0
	2	14
	3	71
	4	11
	5	3
	6	1
Experiencing Technology Usage Difficulties	Yes	8
	Sometimes	60
	No	32

Data Collection Tools

Kaynar et al., (2020) five-point Likert-type 'Secondary School Students' Online Education Perception Scale' was used to collect the quantitative data. 10 questions out of 34 on the scale were found unsuitable for the Greek context so were not used. Instead, seven demographic questions were added. A test-retest reliability with 86 participants was conducted and the correlation was calculated to be 0.91.

The structured interviews consisted of four questions for the pupils and six questions for the parents. The questions were designed based on expert opinions and the interviews were piloted in a private English course and necessary revisions were made. Participation in both the questionnaire and interview was voluntary.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

In the current research, data was gathered over three months within the second term of the 2020–2021 school year, after the quarantine period when students returned to classrooms. Furthermore, necessary permissions allowing the students to answer the questionnaire were obtained from the student's parents.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the data collected from the scale were analyzed using the statistical testing software SPSS 21. Data were also checked for normal distribution. Furthermore, based on the data's normality, statistical tests were conducted to verify the study's assumptions. The mean and standard deviation for each item were reported. Spearman Rho correlation test and Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed to test the assumptions. The independent t-test was substituted with the Mann-Whitney U test for data that were not normally distributed. Meanwhile, participant interviews were analyzed using the inductive content analysis method. Responses from 29 parents were acquired through a digital poll that was sent out over

messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Email, and Viber and 9 parents were interviewed in person.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical permission (26.05.2021, numbered 2021.05.48) was obtained from Trakya University, Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee for this research.

Results

Quantitative Findings

In the study age and time of language learning were taken as continuous variables and subjected to Spearman's correlation analyses to see if they had any relationship with the scale means. Taken as categorical variables, gender, grade levels, and the students who experienced problems during online education and those who did not, were compared through Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis. Nonparametric analyses were preferred since the data were not normally distributed.

Students' Perceptions of Online English Education

The descriptive results regarding the student participants' responses to the scale items are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Results of Student Participants

Items	Total	
	Mean	Std. D.
1. I think the lessons are appropriate for my level.	3.9	1.2
6. I think online education lessons are effective.	3.5	1.2
7. Online education lesson hours are sufficient for me to learn the subjects.	3.3	1.4
8. I think I can adapt to the online education system.	3.7	1.3
9. I think the lessons on online education are below my level.	2.2	1.3
14. Online education is more effective than face-to-face education.	1.9	1.3
15. Face-to-face education is more beneficial than online education.	4.1	1.4
Dimension 1. Perceptions of Students on Sustaining Online Education	3.23	1.3
10. I regularly follow the subjects given in the online education system.	4.1	1.1
11. In online education, I complete my preparations related to my needs (food, water, environment, etc.) before the lesson starts.	3.9	1.3
12. I listen carefully to the lessons on online education.	4.0	1.3
13. I can easily ask questions about the subject on online education classes.	3.8	1.3
16. I know how to solve the problems that I encounter/may encounter during the online education system.	3.6	1.2
23. I do preliminary preparations about the topic before the lesson starts.	3.4	1.4
Dimension 2. Students' Self-Perception on Online Education	3.8	1.3

17. The teacher does interesting activities during the lessons.	3.8	1.2
18. The activities practiced during the lessons are sufficient for me to learn.	3.7	1.2
Dimension 3. Students' Perceptions on Teaching Practices Related to Online Education	3.8	1.2
2. I think the assignments given are far above my learning level (difficult for me).	2.2	1.3
20. I find the homework given by the teachers on the online education process too much.	2.3	1.2
21. The environment at home (siblings, etc.) makes it difficult for me to do homework.	2.5	1.3
Dimension 4. Students' Perceptions on Homework Related to Online Education	2.4	1.3
3. Seeing my friends during the lessons conducted from the computer makes me happy.	3.8	1.3
4. My friends say that they are very satisfied with the lessons.	3.4	1.4
5. I am satisfied with the interaction of my friends with me on the online lessons.	3.7	1.2
19. I am satisfied with the interaction of the teacher with me on the online lessons.	3.9	1.2
22. I look forward to my next homework in distance education.	3.4	1.4
24. During online education, I feel more comfortable than in the classroom.	3.0	1.5
Dimension 5. Students' Perceptions on Attitudes Regarding Online Education	3.6	1.4

In general, the positively-worded items were seen to produce means above 3.0, indicating positive perceptions regarding online education in English, showing that there was awareness among the student participants in terms of their responsibilities. Their opinions on online teaching practices and attitudes towards online education were also seen to have been positive. The only exception seemed to be item 14 ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.30$), which showed that the students did not find online education as effective as face-to-face education.

The perceptions regarding maintaining online education were seen to be diverse but neutral in general. Moreover, the perceptions of homework in online classes seemed to have been inconsistent. However, the responses indicated that online classes and homework were not found difficult by the student participants.

In general, the results indicated a positive outlook towards learning English via online lessons.

Inferential Results according to Age, Gender, Grade Levels, and Length of Language Learning

The Relationship between Age and Perceptions of Online English Education

The correlations between age and the scale dimensions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlations Between Age and Dimensions

			D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	Total Score
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	-.003	-.288**	-.280**	.190	-.321**	-.269**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.977	.004	.005	.058	.001	.007
		N	100	100	100	100	100	100

The results indicated negative and weak correlations between age and Dimension 2, Dimension 3, and Dimension 5 as well as the total scale scores with r values ranging from $-.321$ and $-.269$ ($p < .05$). Dimensions 1 and 4 were seen to have no significant correlation with age ($p > .05$).

Differences in Perceptions of Online English Education According to Gender

The Mann-Whitney U results are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Mean Ranks according to Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
D1	Female	52	51.07	2655.50
	Male	48	49.89	2394.50
	Total	100		
D2	Female	52	51.83	2695.00
	Male	48	49.06	2355.00
	Total	100		
D3	Female	52	46.73	2430.00
	Male	48	54.58	2620.00
	Total	100		
D4	Female	52	53.20	2766.50
	Male	48	47.57	2283.50
	Total	100		
D5	Female	52	51.13	2658.50
	Male	48	49.82	2391.50

	Total	100		
Total Score	Female	52	51.60	2683.00
	Male	48	49.31	2367.00
	Total	100		

Table 5

Mann-Whitney U Test Results

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	Total Score
Mann-Whitney U	1218.500	1179.000	1052.000	1107.500	1215.500	1191.000
Wilcoxon W	2394.500	2355.000	2430.000	2283.500	2391.500	2367.000
Z	-.204	-.478	-1.373	-.978	-.225	-.393
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.838	.633	.170	.328	.822	.694

According to the table, there was no significant difference in the results according to gender ($p > .05$).

Differences in Perceptions of Online English Education according to Grade Level

The Kruskal-Wallis Test results are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Mean Ranks according to Grade Level

	Grade Level	N	Mean Rank
D1	4	30	54.83
	5	31	47.18
	6	39	49.81
	Total	100	
D2	4	30	64.63
	5	31	47.55
	6	39	41.97
	Total	100	
D3	4	30	62.53
	5	31	48.56
	6	39	42.78
	Total	100	
D4	4	30	43.42
	5	31	51.08
	6	39	55.49

	Total	100	
	4	30	64.18
	5	31	52.00
D5	6	39	38.78
	Total	100	
	4	30	64.05
Total Score	5	31	49.47
	6	39	40.90
	Total	100	

Table 7
Kruskal Wallis Test Results

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	Total Score
Chi-Square	1.106	10.891	8.308	3.008	13.204	10.866
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.575	.004	.016	.222	.001	.004

The results showed that the mean ranks differed according to grade level in dimensions 2, 3, and 5 as well as the total scores ($p < .05$).

The Relationship between Length of Language Learning and Perceptions of Online English Education

The Spearman's correlation analysis results are given in Table 8.

Table 8
Correlation Analysis Results

			D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	Total Score
		Correlation Coefficient	-.046	-.416**	-.310**	.311**	-.435**	-.374**
Spearman's rho	Eng. Learn. years	Sig. (2-tailed)	.650	.000	.002	.002	.000	.000
		N	100	100	100	100	100	100

The results indicated that length of language learning was negatively and weakly related to Dimension 2, Dimension 3, Dimension 5, and total scores ($p < .05$).

Differences in Perceptions of Online English Education According to Problems Experienced

The Kruskal-Wallis Test results regarding whether the participants experienced problems in the process of participating in online courses are listed in Table 9.

Table 9

The Mean Values for the Problems Experienced in the Process of Attending Classes Played a Role on Students' Perceptions of Online English Education.

	Exper. Tech. Prob.	N	Mean Rank
D1	Yes	8	34.56
	Sometimes	60	50.32
	No	32	54.83
	Total	100	
D2	Yes	8	19.88
	Sometimes	60	56.88
	No	32	46.19
	Total	100	
D3	Yes	8	45.19
	Sometimes	60	51.65
	No	32	49.67
	Total	100	
D4	Yes	8	45.31
	Sometimes	60	48.59
	No	32	55.38
	Total	100	
D5	Yes	8	29.88
	Sometimes	60	55.55
	No	32	46.19
	Total	100	
Total Score	Yes	8	24.19
	Sometimes	60	54.72
	No	32	49.17
	Total	100	

Table 10

The Kruskal Wallis Test Results

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	Total Score
Chi-Square	3.152	12.621	.401	1.445	6.611	7.923
df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.207	.002	.818	.486	.037	.019

The results showed that there were significant differences regarding experiencing problems in Dimension 2, Dimension 5, and total scores.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data were collected through structured interviews. The interview questions were written in Turkish both for student and parent participants and then they were translated into English by the researcher. The qualitative data was assessed through the inductive content analysis method and coded twice. Two main themes, positive and negative opinions, emerged as a result of the analysis.

Student Participants' Positive Perceptions

Students' responses were delineated in three distinct categories: the ease of attending online English lessons, the presence of a quiet atmosphere throughout the lessons, and the ease of communication with both peers and instructors during the online English classes. Additionally, except for these categories, students proposed some engaging activities suitable for inclusion during online English lessons.

Table 11

Most Frequent Reasons for Positive Viewpoints

I think online English lessons were effective because...	Number of Participants
1. there was a silent environment.	43
2. the communication with friends and teachers was easy.	43
3. they were easy to follow.	27

The majority of the responses indicated that the pupils participated in online English lessons within a relaxed or non-disruptive setting. Additionally, a substantial number of the students expressed appreciation for their interactions with peers and instructors during online education, finding the experience similar to an authentic classroom environment. Almost half of the participants reported ease in understanding online English lessons and had encountered minimal problems during their participation.

Student Participants' Negative Perceptions

Students expressed that they didn't find the online lessons effective and four negative aspects were identified among the students: challenges in following and understanding online English lessons, the presence of a distracting atmosphere during

the lessons, difficulties in communicating with peers and teachers during online English lessons, and encountering complexities in participating in certain activities during the online English lessons.

Table 12

Most Frequent Reasons for Negative Viewpoints

I think online English lessons were not effective because...	Number of Participants
1. they were difficult to follow.	26
2. there was a distracting environment.	10
3. it was difficult to communicate with friends and teachers.	10
4. some activities were difficult to follow.	7

Half of the participants expressed challenges in engaging with online English classes, predominantly attributing these difficulties to issues related to internet connectivity and computer functionality. Several respondents highlighted encountering distractions while attending English classes online, hindering their learning process. Furthermore, a certain number of students encountered problems in communicating with both peers and teachers and some of them expressed discontentment with specific activities conducted within online English classes.

Findings of the Parents' Interview

The responses of the parent participants to the interview could be categorized into six thematic areas for analysis: (1) The efficacy of online English lessons, (2) The enhancement of children's language proficiency through online English lessons, (3) The absence of parental involvement required during online English lessons, (4) Facilitated accessibility to teachers and the incorporation of engaging activities due to online English lessons, (5) The development of greater responsibility among children as a result of online English lessons, and (6) The observed improvement in children's social interactions due to online English lessons.

Table 13

Parents' Views on Online English Education

I think online English lessons...	Number of Participants
1. have made teachers to be reached easily and to use uplifting activities.	33
2. did not necessitate parents to assist their children.	30
3. have made children more responsible.	23
4. have made children social enough.	21
5. and the activities used were effective enough.	18
6. were improved children's language levels.	10

The majority of parents reported easy access to the teachers acting as facilitators during the online education, noting their consistent availability and efforts to cultivate

an engaging online learning environment. A large number of them affirmed that their children demonstrated self-sufficiency in participating in online English classes without requiring assistance. When queried about their children's level of responsibility during these lessons, nearly half of the parents indicated an observed increase. Additionally, parents' observations highlighted the adequate socialization of children during the pandemic, with almost half expressing a favorable disposition towards online English lessons as a means to support their child's language acquisition process. Furthermore, some parents underscored perceived improvements in their children's English language proficiency after online lessons.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out what parents and young pupils from the Turkish minority schools in Western Thrace, Greece, thought of online courses in English. A combined approach utilizing qualitative as well as quantitative research methods was used to move further to the goal. Therefore, the perspectives of 100 students were acquired using the scale developed by Kaynar et al., (2020). Additionally, 53 students out of the 100 participated in the interview and 38 parents responded to structured interview questions that were developed for them.

Students' Perceptions about Online English Education

The findings of the present study show that students' negative assessments regarding virtual learning of the English language have reduced concurrently with students growing older. This is explained depending on the result of the negative numbers of the correlation values which show a reverse connection between the ages of the students and how they evaluate online English language classes. This finding can be linked to DiBiase and Kidwai (2010), who reported that geography students who took online lessons and who are between the ages of 22 and 65 spent more time on their online learning tool and received higher scores than the younger students between the ages of 19 and 30. Further, Dabaj (2009) in his study found that the age variable played an important role in the perceptions of online learners. Morin, Safaee and Saade (2019) uncovered from their research that students, who are older than 30 years old, have more positive approaches to online learning than the young ones because they have more confidence and responsibility. Here, it would be concluded that students' approaches to online learning become more positive as they get older.

On the other hand, the results from the survey show that there was not any significant difference between female and male students' approaches to the online English learning process, which is also the only area that does not affect the perceptions of students. Therefore, the results are compatible with Tanyıldız and Semerci's (2003) research. It is one of the rare studies on online education, in which they investigated the perceptions of university students regarding distance (online) education according to their gender and did not find any significant difference (Kaynar et al., 2020). Moreover, the study conducted by Yu (2021) has found no significant difference between male and female students' online learning outcomes. Yu and Deng (2022) figured out that the satisfaction of learning on the internet environment remains uninfluenced by gender.

The study acknowledges that students' opinions about online English lessons altered depending on their grade level. It is observed from the results that as students'

grade levels rise, their affirmative opinions of online English instruction are becoming more common. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Kennan et al.'s (2018) analysis, which demonstrated that while higher grade levels place more value on online learning, younger classes often needed remembrance about the presence of online instruction. Zheng et al., (2022) in their study revealed that the 1st and 2nd grade primary students demonstrated more negative perceptions than the older grades.

Furthermore, an inverse relationship between students' experiences of learning English in a classroom environment and their perceptions of learning English online has been discovered. This means that perception scores decrease as their English learning experiences increase. The study by Psaltou-Joycey and Sougari (2010) found that elementary students use different methods for learning English depending on their knowledge level. On the other hand, research by Tamayo-Maggi and Cajas-Quishpe (2020) showed that college students were generally dissatisfied with online English learning. Gopal et al., (2021) found that satisfaction with online courses increases when the courses meet students' expectations. However, Rifiyanti (2020) reported that most university students considered online learning an effective solution during school closures.

Subsequently, this study revealed that the problems encountered while participating in online English classes influenced students' perceptions. The research conducted by Sheerah et al., (2022) investigated student perceptions of online English composition courses and found that the most negative opinions about online learning were found to be technology or internet-based issues. They proposed that if efforts are made to improve the internet and other technology that students utilize, positive outcomes will follow. Therefore, a major issue occurs when there is a lack of technology to access instructional materials, such as computers or mobile phones. Based on their study results Fauzi & Khusuma (2020), directly correlated with the efficacy of online learning, they revealed that the majority of questioned educators believe that using online learning in the classroom was not very effective because of the activity availability, network, and internet usage, learning planning, application and evaluation, and collaboration with parents. In the study of Ullah & Hossain (2022) students mentioned a lot of problems like internet connection and device problems which cause negative effects on their perceptions of online learning. Another way of expressing the topic briefly, the design of an online learning environment involves some commitment from the teacher as well as the student to get positive feedback from the students and guarantee that they succeed in the lesson, the assigned readings, and reaching the content (Hodges et al., 2020).

Parents' Perceptions about Online English Education

In the second stage, the perspectives of parents have been gathered with an interview and analyzed. Parents' answers provided further reference to understand the impact of online English lessons during the coronavirus period. First and foremost, many parents were enthusiastic about online English education because they regarded it as a way to support their kids' language development without causing interference. Participating parents' answers to the first interview question can be summarized as follows: The children did not miss their classes; In addition, because of the exercises employed, online language instruction was immensely effective. This finding of the

study is compatible with the results of Mahmud et al., (2022) who also analyzed the perceptions of parents on their children's online learning. They found that parents generally showed positive attitudes about online learning in terms of different aspects such as the efficiency of English teachers, learning materials, learning processes, types and loads of tasks, learning platforms, and English language development or proficiency of their children. On the contrary, Liando et al., (2021) revealed in their study that online learning was not considered effective by most of the interviewed parents.

Parents' responses regarding improving their English level seem to indicate that they perceive online English lessons to be equally or even more beneficial in terms of language development. In their research Rovai et al., (2007) online learners' motivation levels were found higher than those of students taking traditional education. However, Mahmud et al., (2022) pointed out that children's English proficiency levels decreased during the online learning period. To sum up, if the students get accustomed shortly to this self-directed virtual learning environment, their motivation levels will increase along with their language proficiency levels.

The answers of some participants for the third interview question revealed that the youngsters were able to enrol in virtual classrooms on their own. The majority of parents who answered interview questions acknowledged that they did not often assist their kids in attending class, completing their homework, or making use of the required devices. According to the results of Lase et al., (2022) a few of the interviewed parents helped their children with the technology used but most of them helped with the tasks given. In their study Mahmud et al., (2022) found that the majority of moms and dads questioned said that they helped their young ones to make use of virtual schools, attend the learning platforms, covering extra costs for education, and actively participate in the students' e-learning procedure.

In this study, the reachability, support and effectiveness of the teacher during the online education period have been questioned. From the participants' answers to the related question, it was inferred that they had a positive experience with the educator given that the teacher made an effort to establish a welcoming online setting and provided the pupils and parents with the support they needed in all matters such as solving technical problems, scheduling lessons and informing about the disease. The finding of the study conducted in Indonesia by Bulkani et al., (2022) also showed that the families were quite satisfied with the teacher during online education because the teacher was conducting a well-prepared lesson using online materials and two-way communication. Data collected and analyzed by Mahmud et al., (2022) showed that most parents of elementary school students generally had positive attitudes towards their English teachers' online tutoring ability, material choice and making the process enjoyable for the children. Contradictorily, in the study of Fauzi and Khusuma (2020) the teachers, who were the main research subject, revealed that working together with parents in the first weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic was problematic as they all asked different tasks from the teachers.

In the current study, when parents were asked about their young people's assigned duties in virtual English classes, their comments indicated that children's ability to demonstrate responsibility was enhanced through the autonomous educational setting. This finding of the study, Aziz et al., (2022) found the four most dominant student responsibility characteristics during online learning in their research as

following the teacher's directions, learning independently, doing homework, and finally confirming activity delays. Due to the scarcity of research in this field, this result of the study can also be compared with the research result of Craig et al., (2008); most of the participants of their study agreed with the idea that the students must be self-motivated and responsible for their studies during online education.

In addition, parents' comments showed that the pupils were sufficiently advanced in social interactions at the time of the epidemic and their social attitudes were not affected during the online education period. Bulkani et al., (2022) revealed that parents' perceptions were more concerned about online socialization of their children. They figured out that fatigue, boredom, and anxiety are common in their children's behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the need for communication and physical interaction with their peers at school. Additionally, the current study's findings contradict those of Mahmud et al., (2022) who analyzed parents' interview questions about children's communication during English e-learning and found that in contrast to in-person instruction, most parents noted a decrease in engaged learning opportunities and an absence of cooperation among learners and their instructors.

In conclusion, along with the research, taking the opinions of elementary schoolers and their families about their experiences during online English language learning was thought to be fundamental. The study was designed to see if students experienced the same learning process as in real-time classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with the research results, we concluded that age, grade, years of English learning, and problems experienced influenced elementary school students' perceptions of online English learning. Overall, the assessment of young learners and parents, and a well-utilized online virtual platform will be beneficial in the event of similar diseases or other crises in the future.

Implications

This study is expected to shed light and provide solutions to the future implementations of elementary school students' online English learning. First and foremost, the research had targeted a particular and limited participants group, in a specific area. Accordingly, reaching and conducting the research in altered places and sample groups more accurate results will be gathered.

In addition, the study acknowledged that half of the students interviewed stated that they experienced challenges during attending online lessons, such as internet connection or computer related problems. In this sense the issue of technical infrastructure for online education could be searched further on the basis of student needs. According to this study, when considering a large-scale online education, as the world has experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, governments must ensure that each individual benefits equally from the system used, as this infrastructure necessitates some funds and technical investments. Meanwhile, the importance of the online English learning environment, materials and activities were searched. It was revealed that a number of students felt discomfort during activities on online English class. The topic of exercises and post-teaching materials on online education could be further searched and the reason behind why students had difficulty during online English tasks could be revealed. In this degree, the study will be used as a guiding light for further analysis and development of online teaching and learning materials. The study acknowledged that

the majority of the interviewed parents think that the online English lessons did not improve their children's English proficiency levels. To that extent parents' viewpoints could be explored further in order to understand the reason behind their consideration and related solutions may be provided.

To sum up, in today's world as well as worldwide communication, education cannot be restricted by land borders. The importance of learning English emerges at this point where English has become a common language for education, trade, business and even personal communication. Therefore, online English learning environments could be suggested for the continuity of the teaching and learning process. On that account, further research can be carried out for a deeper analysis of the field.

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Statement of Responsibility

Both writers are responsible for all the sections of this article.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between researchers.

Author Bios:

Chiouda Ali was born in 1994, in Western Thrace, Greece as a Turkish Minority member. She completed her primary, secondary and high school education in the Minority Schools of Western Thrace. She graduated from Trakya University in 2017. She completed her master's degree at Trakya University in the field of English Language Education. She has been working as an English teacher in private language course since 2018.

Selma DENEME-GENÇOĞLU was born in Ankara in 1969. Initially she graduated from Gazi University and obtained her BA and MA in the field of English Language Teaching; and later earned her PhD from Ankara University in the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). She has been teaching general language courses and specific teacher training courses to teacher candidates of English for more than 25 years. She is mostly interested in ELT methodology and teacher training, language learning strategies, academic writing, teaching English to young learners and, academic research skills. She teaches in the ELT Department at Trakya University, Turkey. She has several publications in the field.

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