The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, online learning has permeated the field of education with dramatic growth. Thus, new concerns confront teachers and students in order to sustain the continuity of the curricula through digital platforms. In accordance with the need, the present study aims at finding out how the COVID-19 interruption has affected the teaching and learning processes with respect to English speaking skill, which has face-to-face communicative orientation in nature and therefore, been affected the most. Among 33 universities in Turkey, 298 preparatory school teachers and students consisting of 95 teachers and 203 students participated in the study. The results of the study revealed participants' opinions on how speaking skills were delivered, which activities were used, how feedback was provided and how assessment was conducted. The implications of the study can be used for improving online speaking skills not only during emergency situations but in general education.

Due to the interactive nature of the language learning process, teaching how to speak a foreign language has undeniably one of the most affected areas of education during the COVID-19 (Karataş & Tuncer, 2020). Considering the fact that we were not prepared to offer online speaking classes, substantial problems have been experienced both for the language teachers and the learners all over the world. Needless to say, adding the assessment component makes the problem more complicated.

Just like in all other parts of the world, the outbreak of COVID-19 has led to unexpected changes in Turkish education system in general (Erkut, 2020). More specifically English language teaching which especially gains importance for higher education has been one of the hot debated issues in the country. Since learners cannot continue their education without having a B2 proficiency level in most of the universities, providing the necessary educational opportunities to language learners in their preparatory years during when they have an intensive language education has been one of the biggest challenges for the universities.

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This paper is about finding out how the COVID-19 interruption has affected the teaching and learning procedures with regard to foreign language speaking skills. By doing so, it aims at depicting the actual personal experiences and voices of Turkish preparatory school teachers and students on speaking skills development during this pandemic. While this study seems specific to Turkish context, literature presents similar problems regarding language teaching experience all over the world. Therefore, learning about the actual experiences of the stakeholders might help in being more prepared for the expected and unexpected situations for all the contexts offering language education.

The rest of the paper will explain what it means to be able to speak a foreign language and how speaking classes were organized during COVID-19 pandemic, referring to the recent relevant literature. Then, the specific purposes of this study and how it was carried out explaining the research type and all the other details of methodology will be presented. The findings of the study will be explained referring to the literature and the necessary implications to be drawn from the findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking Skills in Foreign Language

The ability to speak a foreign language is a subset of a learner's overall language ability in the target language. So, the question of what speaking ability is, is closely related to the question of what it means to know a foreign language. As stated by Harmer (2001), being able to produce fluent connected speech not only to give information but also to show how they are feeling are the indicators of speakers' productive ability. This ability also involves interaction with the others and understanding of how they feel all of which require on the spot processing.

For language education, especially in a foreign context in which the language classroom is the only source of gaining all these abilities setting tasks to elicit desired behavior from the students gains crucial importance. So, tasks, as explained by Nunan (1993) can help students to produce and interact in the target language. Luoma (2004) divides speaking tasks into two major groups as: open-ended and structured tasks. Each has a set of different task types as given in the Table 1 below:

Table 1
Speaking tasks (Luoma, 2004, p.48-50)

Task Types		
Open-ended Speaking Tasks		
	Discourse type tasks	**Role play tasks**
	Descriptive	Social simulation
	Narrative	Professional simulation
	Instruction	
	Comparison	
	Explanation	
	Justification	
	Prediction	
	Decision	
Structured Speaking Tasks		
	Reading aloud	
	Sentence repetition	
	Sentence completion	
	Factual short-answer questions	
	Reacting to phrases	

In speaking classes, language teachers are employing one of these tasks according to the purpose of the lesson. In each type of tasks, students are required to perform one or more specific oral communication activities. During the employment of tasks, language teachers devote considerable time

and energy to their learners while monitoring students' performance and progress. Almost unaware, they are administering little oral assessment as they offer feedback informally to learners about their language ability. As Madsen (1983) states such evaluation happens very naturally in the classrooms.

From the point of view of the students, the goal is beyond merely transmitting information. It is to deal with producing and processing language in spoken interaction at the same time while also managing being busy with the other elements such as turn taking, rephrasing, providing feedback or redirecting speech to their peers (Burns & Joyce, 1997). The collaborative and interactive aspects lead to a gradual accumulation of speaking skills through pair work, group work and whole class activities.

Despite the apparent benefits of face-to-face oral communication on providing deeper learning opportunities for students to create experiences, a traditional speaking class, mostly due to time constraints, also involves some challenges like teachers' monitoring and tracking detailed specifics of the students' interactions and therefore, giving sufficient feedbacks to their students (Shafipour et al., 2018). Therefore, a blended approach which enhances the opportunities provided to the learners has been the suggested and applied one in many contexts in the world much before the pandemic period (see such as Patel, 2017; Thorne, 2003; Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013).

2.2. Online Speaking Classes and COVID-19 Pandemic

By removing temporal and geographical hindrances, online instruction presents flexible, adaptive, and individualized learning opportunities also while fostering autonomous learning (Gacs, Goertler & Spasova, 2020). Developments in Internet technology have made this possible since learning can occur "asynchronously": anytime, anywhere, anyplace (Sloan, 2010). According to Capra (2011) student demand for this flexible learning environment is rising and institutions of higher learning, as a result; are increasing online course offerings in an effort to satisfy student demand. However, just like the challenges and the limitations of face-to-face instruction, online teaching has its own limitations. The perception of social presence and interaction appears to be a concern for both teachers and students (Capra, 2011). In contrast to traditional instructions, it has been pointed out that teachers seldom engage in pedagogical dialogue about online instruction; online instructors tend to "teach" and "develop" lessons in isolation (Duncan & Barnett, 2009). As might be expected, teachers' possible tendency to teach or develop the lessons in isolation can cause the most trouble in speaking skills lessons, which by their very nature require communication or interactions. Normally, in face-to-face speaking classroom contexts, as Bachman & Palmer (1996) explain, while engaging in communicative tasks, students would normally undertake some activities to achieve a particular goal in a particular speaking situation and when communication required to establish is difficult, students would then 'negotiate for meaning'. This negotiation is an opportunity for language development (Long, 1996). As they are trying to produce comprehensible output, students become aware of the limits of their second language ability and the need to seek better ways to convey their meaning (Swain, 1985). While whether or not such a gradual buildup of speaking skill happens effectively in online platforms during pandemic situation has not been clearly pictured in literature yet. However, in spite of the lack of research in this area, we still have some other research findings coming from distance learning environment where the effectiveness of speaking instruction on online platforms is studied.

One of the main findings claim that online platforms created a more teacher-centered interaction (Kötter, 2001; Stickler, Batstone, Duensing & Heins, 2007). Similarly, Batt (2003) argues that online platforms "moved teachers further towards a more directive delivery style and a more analytic rather than a communicative orientation" (p. 4). He believes teachers tend to fill silences with talk and to 'overuse' non-communicative teaching techniques such as drilling, substitution, and repetition. Likewise, in a comparison of face-to-face and synchronous audio-graphic conferencing (SAC) systems, Duensing,

Stickler, Batstone & Heins (2006) noted much more teacher talk in the online sessions related to classroom management, both technology-related and otherwise. The authors conclude that it is unclear whether the greater classroom control is an inherent requirement of the medium or simply perceived as such by the tutors. Similarly, Nishikant (2009) reports that online education is very different from traditional classrooms, which have a tendency to be dominated by the teacher talk with limited student interaction.

In spite of the problems online education can potentially create especially for the interactive courses, it provided various opportunities creating contexts and ensuring mutual interaction between students and teachers to continue education during the lockdown period (Lansangan, 2020). Some institutions have implemented both online synchronous tools for in-class interactions and asynchronous tools as pre- and post-class materials, allowing real-time tutorials like Collaborate, Zoom, Microsoft Team Work or Google Meet to facilitate interactions between teacher and students. On the other hand, some others have only submitted course materials as power point presentations, worksheets, home assignments or videos via their Learning Management Systems and left the students with no spontaneous feedback (Tosun, 2020). Certainly, however, delivering education via online platforms comes with its technical problems as well. The current literature presents some frustrating factors for some students and teachers who struggled to get online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Encountering difficulties due to the lack of online teaching expertise, early planning and adequate support from the distance education units can be listed among the biggest challenges experienced by most academic staff (Bao, 2020). As stated by Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina & Bruce (2020), difficulties in accessing the Internet and digital technologies also have restricted teaching opportunities. Similarly, one of the challenges reported in the literature is irregular and low student attendance. However, as Dahmash (2020) states, given the fact that attendance at virtual classes has not been obligatory and not all students have had access to online resources and internet facilities this finding is not surprising. Like in many other parts of the world, the Turkish government implemented a policy to close all face-to-face learning activities in educational institutions as part of the pandemic precautions. This inescapable conclusion has affected both foundation and public educational institutions at all levels: preprimary, primary, high school, and university (Bozkurt, 2020). Considering higher education in particular, the closure of universities until further notice has shifted teaching and assessment to online platforms. Thus, many universities are left no option but to adjust their academic calendars and start to employ a variety of online teaching methods to make adequate progress in their general education curriculum (Erkut, 2020).

Given all these rapid changes, it is no surprise that interactive face-to-face speaking lessons bearing a communicative nature appear as one of the courses affected mostly by the lack of social and interactional dimensions that classrooms create. Without comprehensive instructional planning as well as mutual and adequate participation of teachers and students in online learning environments, it could be very difficult to achieve the goals the oral interaction process requires. Considering the related literature, there are a number of studies on how the stakeholders, students, academic and administrative staff—have been affected by an urgent shift to the online learning environments (i.e., Akyavuz & Çakın, 2020; Karataş & Tuncer, 2020; Keskin & Özer, 2020). However, to the researchers' knowledge, there is no other study which explores the impact of unsustainable circumstances that COVID-19 has caused on the delivery and effectiveness of speaking classes in Turkey. In this regard, this study specifically focuses on the actual experiences and their perceptions of teachers and students in guiding future planning. Considering the fact that online education will be an inseparable part of our lives even after the pandemic, exploring the actual experiences is believed to contribute to future designs.

3. Methodology

The current study is based on qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). The main goal of adapting qualitative research design is to gain a further and deeper understanding of the impact of unsustainable circumstances that COVID-19 has caused on the delivery and effectiveness of English-speaking classes in preparatory schools in Turkey. By eliciting the experiences of both teachers and students who have directly been affected by the consequences of the pandemic, the study aims at picturing the current state of teaching and learning processes of speaking skills. Open-ended survey questions are used to get in-depth data and present extended findings on the phenomena under investigation. Therefore, the following research questions are posed to investigate how preparatory school teachers and students evaluate their experiences for online English-speaking classes during COVID-19 pandemic:

1) How do teachers and students evaluate their online speaking skills teaching experiences in terms of
  a) how they were delivered,
  b) which activities were used,
  c) how feedback was provided, and
  d) how they were assessed?
2) How do teachers and students evaluate the effectiveness of online speaking skills teaching?
3) What do teachers and students suggest for more effective online speaking skills teaching and assessment?

  Because of the pandemic crisis, the responses were collected via an online Google Forms questionnaire. The questionnaire had two versions, one for teachers and the other for students (see Appendix). Since the student participants were language learners, the questionnaires were prepared in Turkish. Questions were prepared based on the aim of the research by the researchers. After piloting them both with the non-participant learners and the teachers in order to ensure the clarity of the wordings, the necessary changes were made and the final form was prepared.

  All participants gave their informed consent for inclusion before they took part in the study, and the researchers ensured their anonymity at all stages of the study. Among 33 universities (18 state and 15 foundations) in Turkey, 298 preparatory school teachers and students consisting of 95 teachers and 203 students participated in the study. In total, the participants included 95 teachers from 27 universities (13 state and 14 foundation) and 203 students from 17 universities (12 state and 5 foundation). The distribution of the universities and the number of the participants are presented in the following table (see Table 2).

Table 2
The Number of the Preparatory School Teachers and Students According to Universities

University	Teachers		Students	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
State	49	52	128	63
Foundation	46	48	75	37
TOTAL	95	100	203	100

  In addition to the institutional distribution, the participants had also diversity in terms of their demographic features stated in the scale. Teachers were asked for their years of experience and the results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Demographic Features and the Numbers of Preparatory School Teachers

Demographic feature	Number of the participants	
Years of experience	0-5 years	6
	6-10 years	20
	11-15 years	23
	16-20 years	11
	21+ years	35
TOTAL		95

Students were asked for their proficiency levels and the results are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Demographic Features and the Numbers of Preparatory School Students

Demographic feature	Number of the participants	
Proficiency levels	A1	16
	A2	38
	B1	58
	B2	62
	C1	22
	C2	4
	Not stated	3
TOTAL		203

To analyze the data, quantitative and qualitative methods were used based on the nature of the research questions. The quantitative data were analysed by getting the percentages of the answers gathered. The qualitative data derived from the open-ended questions were independently analysed by two researchers. The analysis was based on the qualitative content analysis scheme of Creswell (2012). In order to reduce the data into workable themes and subthemes related to each research question, the answers of the participants were broken into chunks and code-labelled by the researchers. Finally, certain themes based on these initial codes were identified. At the end, the emerging themes were presented in frequencies. For inter-rater reliability analysis, inter-rater agreement was performed to compare and contrast their analysis with each other, and they had 87% agreement on labelling these codes and themes. The labelling of the remaining 13% was agreed upon through negotiation.

4. Results

The results of this study address the experiences of preparatory school teachers and students on the delivery and effectiveness of English-speaking classes during COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. In terms of the experiences based on the delivery of English-speaking lessons, four sub-categories were targeted to investigate as: the way they were (1) delivered, synchronously or asynchronously, and integratively or separately (2) the activities used (3) the feedback provided and (4) assessment.

As for the experiences considering the effectiveness of English-speaking classes during COVID-19 pandemic, five sub-categories were asked to evaluate (1) the classroom activities, (2) the development of the speaking skills, (3) difficulties encountered, (4) the possible best ways to teach and (5) the possible best ways to assess English speaking skills. Finally, the suggestions for more effective speaking skills teaching were presented in the same format.

The qualitative data gathered about each category were analysed and the descriptive statistical information related to the teachers and the students were demonstrated within the following sections and tables.

4.1. How Do Teachers and Students Evaluate Their Online Speaking Skills Teaching Experiences?

Both teachers and students were required to answer this question by considering four sub-categories. For the first category, they were asked to report on how English-speaking skill was taught and the speaking class was conducted. Their answers are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5
How English-speaking classes were delivered?

Questions	Answers	Teachers	Students		
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
1. How was English-speaking skills taught?					
	Integrated with other skills As a	77	81	134	66
	separate lesson	18	19	55	27
	Not taught	0	0	14	7
2. How was your English-speaking lesson conducted?					
	Synchronous	72	76	131	65
	Asynchronous	1	1	19	9
	Both synchronous and asynchronous	22	23	53	26

As seen in Table 5 above, teachers' and students' opinions on how they perceive their experiences vary on certain issues. The first noticeable one is given by the students on how English-speaking skills were taught. 7% of them stated that it was not taught, while none of the teachers gave such an answer. Similarly, while 9.4% of the student responses stated having asynchronous speaking classes, only 1% of the teachers agreed with them on the delivery mode. More than half of the teachers (81%) and the students (66%) stated that it was taught as integrated with other skills while 19% of the teachers and 27% of the students reported that it was taught as a separate lesson. Also, more than half of the teachers (76%) and the students (65%) reported that their classes run in real time while 23% of the teachers and 26% of the students stated that synchronous classes were presented with asynchronous pre-recorded lectures.

In the next part, the question was related to the activity types used in the lessons. The answers were provided below (see Table 6).

Table 6
Which activities were used?

Questions	Answers	Teachers		Students	
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
3. What kinds of speaking activities were included?					
	Group work	57	37	93	36
	Whole class discussions	49	31	69	26
	Pair work	-	-	34	13
	Projects	25	16	9	3
	Individual work	12	8	12	5
	Question-answer	10	6	11	4

As can be seen in Table 6, both teachers and students reported nearly the same activity types as the ones mostly used in the lessons. These were group work and whole class discussion activities for each participant group. However, while 13% of the students reported pair-work as one of the activities employed throughout courses, none of the teachers stated that they implemented pair work activities in their online classes. For the rest of the types of activities used in the lessons, projects, which could be either asynchronous video or audio presentation, and synchronous individual presentations and also one to one question and answer sessions with the teachers were noted.

In the third part, the questions were related to the feedback given to the students, if it was given at all. The answers from both teachers and students were reported below.

Table 7
How was Feedback Provided?

Questions	Answers	Teachers		Students	
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
1. Did you give / receive feedback on your students'	Yes	85	90	161	80
English-speaking performances?	No	10	11	42	21
2. What kind of feedback did you give / receive?					
	Grammar	76	29	102	33
	Pronunciation	66	25	118	38
	Word choice	54	21	60	19
	Content	35	14	5	2
	Fluency	20	8	3	1
	Use of voice	9	3	-	-

The results showed that except for 10 teachers, all the teachers (90%) said that they gave feedback. As for the students, 79% of them said so. When we look at the types of feedback given by the teachers, we see that the most corrections were for grammatical errors (29% of them). Corrections for grammatical errors were also mentioned a lot by the students (33% of them). However, according to the opinions of 38% of the students, it was the mispronounced words which were mostly given feedback to correct. Further, 21% of the teachers and 19% of the students ranked the corrections for word choice errors in the third place. The teachers also mentioned the feedback given to the content and fluency (14% and 8%, respectively). However, only a few students mentioned them, too (2% and 1%, respectively). Finally, although 3% of the teachers said that they also gave feedback on the use of voice, the students did not mention it as a type of feedback given to them.

In the last part, participants were asked to evaluate their experiences with regard to the assessment of their speaking skill. Considering the assessment of the speaking skill, they were asked whether it was assessed at all, and if yes, how it was assessed. The answers were given in the table below (see Table 8).

Table 8
How was it Assessed?

Questions	Answers	Teachers		Students	
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
1. Has English-speaking skills been assessed?	Yes	91	96	161	79
	No	4	4	42	21
2. How was it assessed?	Speaking exam	80	54	81	52
	Assignment	69	46	74	48

According to the findings, teachers' and students' experiences with respect to the assessment of speaking skill varied. While only 4% of the teachers stated that there was no assessment procedure for the speaking skill, 21% of the students said that their speaking skill was not assessed. For the assessment types employed, participants revealed that either speaking exam or assignment was administered as a way of evaluation. Among those of the students who were tested on their speaking skill, 52% of them stated that they had a speaking test which was conducted via online examination. 48% of them, on the other hand, stated that they were given take-home assignments in which they had to record their speech and then deliver it to be evaluated. These percentages were almost the same for the findings on the part of the teachers. 54% of the teachers said they had online speaking exams while 46% of them said they gave either homework or take-home projects as assignments where students were required to record their voice while speaking in English.

4.2 How do Teachers and Students Evaluate the Effectiveness of Online Speaking Skills Teaching?

As for the second research question, both teachers and students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness' of English-speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, they were required to report on the effectiveness of classroom activities, development of English-speaking skills and the difficulties encountered while trying to maintain the effectiveness. The findings for each question were put forward in Table 9 below.

Table 9
Evaluation of the effectiveness of online speaking skills teaching

Questions	Answers	Teachers		Students	
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
1. Do you think the activities used in the lessons helped you/students improve your/their English-speaking skills?	Yes	43	61	47	41
	No	2	3	26	37
	Not sure	26	37	42	23
2. How do you think distance learning has affected your/students' English-speaking skills development?	Positive	41	28	69	39
	Negative	90	62	90	51
	No effect	15	10	18	10
3. What kind of difficulties did you encounter in your English-speaking lessons during distance education?	Technical problems	33	32	33	24
	Affective factors	-	-	30	21
	Classroom management	70	67	9	6
	Speaking lesson itself	-	-	50	36
	No problem experienced	1	1	18	13

When the answers of the teachers and students were examined, it was seen that there was a difference between the opinions about the effectiveness of the activities used in the classroom. Accordingly, while only 3% of the teachers thought that the activities used in the lessons did not help students improve their English, 37% of the students declared that the activities did not work for the improvement of their English speaking skills. Also, 37% of the teachers and 23% of the students stated that they had no idea about whether the activities employed via online classes had a good or bad effect on their English speaking skills. Yet, more than half of the teachers (61%) and 41% of the students reported that activities used in class worked well to improve their English speaking skills.

Apart from the effectiveness of the classroom activities, participants were also asked for their opinions on the effects of distance learning on the development of English-speaking skills. The results revealed almost similar rates for both groups of participants. 62% of the teachers and 51% of the students

stated that they thought it had a negative impact on the development of English-speaking skills. As a negative effect, the teachers talked about the reluctance of the students to turn on their microphones and talk and low participation due to no obligation to attend, while the students talked about the lack of suitable environment at home and adaptation problems to the unknown teachers, classmates and speaking in English which was as a subject tough to achieve. In relation to these findings, participants said that:

"Student participation was higher in face-to-face speaking classes. The fact that the online system had some shortcomings such as teachers' not having the authority to turn on the students' microphone also constituted an obstacle to the development of the speaking skills of the students" (Teacher, 13).

"In addition to the technical problems (internet disconnection, sudden audio glitches etc.), students' reluctance to participate in the lessons -since our lessons were recorded, students preferred to watch the lessons from the recordings instead of interacting live – had negative effects on the development of English speaking skills" (Teacher, 3).

"During distance education, it did not make sense to teach or measure speaking skills online because not everyone had the same level of opportunity at home, which affects in turn both their learning in classes and the assessments of this learning, therefore; the grades. So things such as homework or exams in distance education should not be time-limited because as I said not everyone could have Internet connections and access to free-Wi-Fi all the time" (Student, 66).

"I experienced technical problems and the difficulties of being in a home environment" (Student, 199).

"I had trouble adapting to the classroom and the teacher" (Student, 142).

"I experienced shyness because I could not adapt to the environment" (Student, 143).

"Since I have been speaking English for the first time in my education life, I had a hard time choosing words. I panicked too much and forgot even the easiest things during online classes" (Student, 36).

10 % of the each group stated that it had any different effects than face-to-face classes as either positive or negative. It had no effect according to the teachers because the student who was already intrinsically motivated and autonomous could still do it. According to the students, however, it did not have any effect because they did what they had to do in face-to-face speaking classes anyway. The following extracts are some examples of participants' opinions:

"Intrinsically motivated students took advantage of every opportunity offered and took the feedback into account, so their speaking skills improved. The situation would be similar in face-to-face education, if it happened" (Teacher, 9).

"Since the use of language was so far from its natural environment, the conversations also progressed on a mechanical level. It didn't make much difference for the student who was willing and had intrinsic motivation, but not every student was the same" (Teacher, 29).

"In my opinion, it did not make much difference with the face-to-face education, and online education is progressing very well" (Student, 72).

"I didn't have any problems in speaking classes; I don't think it would be much different if we had face-to-face training for it" (Student, 201).

The percentage of those who said that it had a positive effect was 28% for the teacher, while it was 39% for the students. As positive effects, students mentioned the decrease in their speaking anxiety level and having more practicing opportunities due to the abundance of materials that they were provided. For 28% of the teachers, distance education facilitated interaction with the students and helped students improve their English speaking skills because breakout rooms helped them deal with individual students and therefore, helped them give better feedback. According to them, during distance education students' presentation skills increased as well. Concerning these findings, participants reported that:

"I think it was positive. Especially with Zoom's Breakout Room feature, some students felt more comfortable and conducted discussions more comfortably without the teacher's permanent supervision" (Teacher, 37).

"I think it was useful to take videos where we talked about a specific topic in English every week and send these videos to the teacher and get feedback from the teacher" (Student, 103).

"I think that the online classes during distance education period contributed to the development of my English speaking skills. I had the chance to practice speaking with my friends by grouping on the online system" (Student, 202).

In the last part of the second research question, the participants were asked about the problems they faced during distance education. While referring to the difficulties they encountered, both groups of participants mentioned technical problems such as problems in transmitting the sound to the other side or frequent Internet disconnections. One of the teachers and one of the students illustrated this situation with the following extracts:

"Sounds were not clear when there were technical or connection problems" (Teacher, 30).

"There were problems such as Internet disconnections or not being able to receive the sound" (Student, 84).

They also touched upon the problems associated with classroom management. In fact, most of the teachers (61%) stated that they had difficulty in controlling the online classes in that it was difficult to enter the breakout rooms at regular intervals and that it was therefore, difficult to keep track of whether students speak English or not, or even speak at all. In relation to this, a few of the students complained about the lack of seriousness in the lessons as a result of some students' taking advantage of the teachers' absence. The opinions of the participants on the subject were given in the quotations below:

"The fact that the teacher was not always present in the breakout rooms for the group work activities prevented the students from performing at full performance. Also, students who did not want to open their camera could not carry out this process effectively" (Teacher, 33)

"Teachers had a more difficult situation in speaking classes during distance education compared to face-to-face one. Especially in group or pair work activities, it was hardly possible to control whether students were speaking in English or Turkish and direct those who were not "on task". Well, it was quite difficult to visit

all the chat rooms and to help in these matters and follow up the students. There were times when students who converted to their mother tongue did not use their time effectively and practice speaking" (Teacher, 23).

"Attendance and seriousness in the lessons were insufficient" (Student, 54).

The students also talked about the affective factors that hinder them from speaking English in classes during the online education process, such as lack of motivation, language anxiety, not having the courage to speak a foreign language in the new environment and hesitation as a result of not knowing teachers and students. In this regard, some of the students expressed that:

"I talked less, I was afraid of making mistakes while speaking in English, and being silent in online courses did not attract much attention, I just got low marks" (Student, 86).

"Talking to people I've never seen made me shy" (Student, 119).

Also, 36 % of the students referred to the burden of understanding and speaking English itself has brought into the task where their skills were lacking:

"I had trouble speaking and understanding English" (Student, 14).

"My biggest problem was the difficulty of speaking English" (Student, 92).

Finally, while 13% of the students stated that they did not experience any problems, only 1% of the teachers said that they did not encounter any problems. This finding about teachers showed us that almost all teachers faced a problem in their online English speaking classes in one way or another.

4.3 What do teachers and students suggest for more effective online speaking skills teaching and assessment?

In the last research question, we asked the participants if they had suggestions for more effective speaking skills teaching and assessment in the distance education period. Findings related to the answers to the question are given below (see Table 10 and 11).

Table 10
Suggestions for more effective online speaking skills teaching

Questions	Answers	Teachers		Students	
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*
1. How do you think English-speaking skills can best be taught in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?					
	Having more interactive speaking classes	62	47	106	47
	Having synchronous speaking classes	11	8	27	12
	Having more out of class activities	35	27	21	9
	More explicit teaching on language	4	3	19	8
	Speaking cannot be taught online	5	4	19	8
	Having fewer students in classes	11	8	17	8
	No idea	3	2	17	8

When we asked teachers and students how English speaking skills could be taught better during distance education, 47% of both groups pointed out that there should be more interactive classes. It was not surprising to receive this response from both groups, as teachers complained of low participation and students' reluctance, and students were unable to participate due to a lack of enough English-speaking skills and necessary motivation to show courage and actively speak in an unfamiliar environment. The following extracts are some of the examples from the participants' statements:

"It could be better taught with synchronous exercises" (Teacher, 11).

"I think it will be taught better by using the Web 2.0 tool, which will increase the interaction even more in synchronous lessons" (Teacher, 17).

"During distance education, speaking English could be taught better with the help of quizzes, assignments and more interaction with teachers" (Student, 67).

"It could be better taught with interacting more and providing feedback to those interactions (correcting mistakes etc.)" (Student, 122).

"Interactions can be fostered in small groups with the support of the teachers on pronunciation or grammar mistakes etc." (Student, 110).

Second in the ranking, while 27% of the teachers talked about supporting the development of speaking skills through out-of-class activities, 12% of the students stated that they should have more synchronous classroom activities, on the contrary:

"Asynchronous applications integrated into the program can give students more chance to practice their English more. These applications can be used especially for pronunciation practices. As for the crowded classes, a system format can be developed that could work one-on-one with students, if possible" (Teacher, 46).

"In synchronous classes, better teaching can be conducted by dealing with each student separately in breakout rooms through 10-minute sections" (Student, 119).

8% of the teachers agreed with the students about the synchronous classroom activities while 4% of the teachers mentioned that speaking skill, which is interactive in nature, cannot be taught online. Concerned with teaching of English speaking skills, 8% of the students pointed out the need for more explicit teaching. Furthermore, 8% of both groups recommended that classrooms be less crowded. Finally, 2% of the teachers and 8% of the students stated that they did not have an opinion on the subject.

When it comes to suggestions for better ways on the assessment of speaking skills, the findings are provided in Table 11 below:

Table 11
Suggestions for more effective online speaking skills assessment

Questions Answers	Teachers		Students	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
2. How do you think English speaking skills can best be measured in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?				
Synchronous speaking exams	71	56	44	26
Progressive assessment	56	44	86	51
Cannot be assessed online	-	-	18	11
No idea	-	-	20	12

When we examine the answers given to the question of whether the participants have suggestions about assessment of English speaking skills during distance education, it was seen that more than half of the teachers (56%) mentioned the necessity of having synchronous speaking exams, while more than half of the students (51%) referred to the necessity of having a progressive assessment. While 44% of the teachers agreed with the students on suggestions for more progressive assessment, 26% of the students agreed with the teachers on suggestions for the necessity of synchronous speaking exams. Regarding these findings, some of the participants expressed that:

"Assessment can be implemented with synchronous exams at the end of the teaching process and with posters, presentations or video narrations during the teaching process. At the same time, asynchronous video recordings, which are very efficient, could be used as well" (Teacher, 28).

"Assessment could be more efficient with synchronous exams and students' synchronous presentations" (Teacher, 52).

"Synchronous exams are of course the best, but as always, all the weight should not be on just one synchronous exam. Class participation, tasks, projects and quizzes during the semester must also provide certain percentages to the total grade (Teacher, 2).

"I think that synchronous exams are the best solution and every skill level is effectively measured with these exams" (Student, 200).

"Definitely not by submitting a project homework, but by a synchronous speaking exam" (Student, 165).

However, 11% of the students were of the opinion that online speaking exams cannot be conducted considering the conditions of distance education during the pandemic. Finally, while all of the teachers expressed a suggestion regarding the assessment of English speaking skills in the distance education process, 12% of the students said that they had no suggestion for it.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic had interruptions on foreign language speaking skills. This study aims at depicting the actual personal experiences and voices of Turkish preparatory school teachers and students on speaking skills development during this pandemic.

The first remarkable result that should be underlined is related to the delivery of speaking skills. While there are some differences between the teachers' and the students' perceptions of how speaking skills have been delivered, the noticeable one is the 7% percent of the students who think they did not receive any speaking skills training. Although it is not a big group of students, it should still be noted as one of the results of the study. The answer of the students might be explained with the dissatisfaction of the students who think what they received was not a proper speaking skill teaching meeting their needs. Regarding the delivery mode, while 9% of the students think they received asynchronous instruction, only 1% of the teachers think the same. The difference in this perception might be explained with the difference in how teachers and students perceive the terminology used.

Regarding what kind of speaking activities were included the differences in the perceptions of the teachers and the students were observed regarding pair work activities and projects. 13% of the students stated doing pair work activities while none of the teachers agreed with them. On the other hand, 16% of the teachers indicated that projects were included in the speaking classes while only 3% of the students thought so. The differences in the answers again might be explained with the differences in the perceptions of how terminology is used. Pair work activities might be evaluated under another category by the teachers and projects by the students. The answers in this category reveal that group work and whole class discussions take most of the speaking class time.

When asked the participants' opinions on feedback although the majority of both groups think that feedback was part of the speaking classes, still the group of the students who think they did not receive feedback was greater than the teachers who think they gave feedback. This discrepancy might again be explained with the expectations rather than what really happens. The other difference in this group was seen in the type of feedback given and received. For the teacher group, grammar takes the first-place teachers focus on however it is pronunciation which students think their teachers focus on while giving feedback. The other differences were observed in the content and fluency. For the teacher group content of what their students were saying and their fluency were important, but students did not think so. The results of the study indicate the importance of accuracy for Turkish teachers and learners. Students' speaking with correct pronunciation was also highly underlined by the students more than by their teachers.

The main difference in the perceptions of students and the teachers was identified in the effectiveness of online speaking teaching. 37% of the students believed that the activities used in the lessons did not help them improve their English-speaking skills and 23% were not sure. On the other hand, teachers who stated negative thoughts were only 2% and 26% of them were not sure about the effectiveness of the speaking activities delivered online. On the contrary, teachers who thought that distance learning had more negative effects on the English-speaking skills development of students were more than their students. There seems to be a contradictory with the previous category asking the effectiveness of the activities. A possible explanation might be teachers' general negative perception towards distance education, yet they might still think that they did their best trying to help their students.

Another difference was identified in the perceptions of the difficulties encountered during distant education. For the teachers, managing the classroom during online teaching was the main problem while it was not even noticed by the students. On the other hand, while students mentioned the affective factors affecting their learning experience, their teachers did not talk about them at all. Another factor identified by the students but not by the teachers was being forced to express themselves orally in front of a camera speaking in a foreign language, among the people who were not very familiar to them.

As for the suggestions, having more interactive speaking classes was the mostly agreed idea for both groups. Teachers suggested having more out of class activities as their second suggestion while having synchronous speaking classes was students second suggestion.

Regarding the suggestions for more effective online speaking skills assessment teachers and the students had different opinions. For the teachers making synchronous speaking exams was the best suggestion but their students preferred progressive assessment as the best way of assessing their speaking performance. 11% of the students think that speaking cannot be assessed online but none of the teachers agreed with them. Similarly, while no teacher stated that they had no idea on this issue, 12% of the students stated so.

This study attempted to identify the perceptions of the teachers and their learners on their actual experiences of emergency remote teaching. As stated by Nishikant (2009), online education is very different from traditional classrooms; therefore it is important to study the perceptions of the users to make it better for future applications. While not many studies have been sorted out focusing on the same issue in the literature, some of the results of this study show similarities with literature.

As Lansangan (2020) points out, online education has created an opportunity to continue education during the lockdown period. Yet, as suggested by the researchers, it causes a more teacher-centered interaction (Kötter, 2001; Batt 2003; Stickler, Batstone, Duensing & Heins, 2007). The desire for having more interactive classes were also a common desire of Turkish teachers. This result shows the necessity of helping teachers to conduct more interactive speaking classes and providing them the necessary pedagogical tools can be one of the main suggestions of this study.

From the teachers' answers it can clearly be seen that they had classroom management problems during online education which is an area seems to be for improvement. As also suggested by Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina & Bruce (2020), teachers can be offered solutions in dealing with the problems they experience during class.

The results of the study also showed that students expressed more negative ideas than their teachers on the effectiveness of the activities used in online speaking classes. This might bring the necessity of increasing their consciousness level in what they are doing, how they are doing as well as what is expected from them, so they might adapt a more attentive attitude to their own learning process. The expectations should be part of any instruction. That is, what students expect and how teachers can meet those expectations should explicitly talked at the beginning in order not to cause any dissatisfaction in any groups.

There is no doubt that everyone has tried to do their best during emergency teaching. However in order to improve our practices not only for emergency situations but for facilitating our applications and handling this situation as an opportunity for learning should be the main implication of Covid 19 for all of us.

6. Limitation

The data were gathered through an online survey. Triangulating the data and conducting interviews would definitely enrich the picture. Making observations of real teaching experiences could even present a better description of what really happened during teaching speaking skills online. Yet, since the focus of this paper was identifying the perceptions of teachers and students of what was happening the results presented here are hoped to present us the picture.

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APPENDIX
Survey Questions for Teachers and Students

Questions for teachers:

1. How was English-speaking skills taught in your school during distance education?
2. How was your English-speaking lesson conducted?
3. What kinds of speaking activities were included in the English-speaking lessons? Write the most used activities in order. (Example: group work, class discussion activities, etc.)
4. Do you think the activities used in the lessons helped students improve their English-speaking skills?
5. Did you give feedback on your students' English-speaking skills in the lessons?
6. Has English-speaking skills been assessed in your school during distance education?
7. What kind of feedback did you give on students' English-speaking skills? (i.e., correction of pronunciation, word choice or grammatical error etc.)
8. Has English speaking skills been assessed in your school during distance education?
9. How was English speaking skills assessed at your school during distance education? Please explain. (i.e., synchronous speaking exam, synchronous presentation, audio & video recording, etc.)
10. How did distance learning affect students' English-speaking skills development?
11. How do you think English-speaking skills can best be taught in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?
12. How do you think English-speaking skills can best be measured in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?

Questions for students:

1. How was English-speaking skills taught in your school during distance education?
2. How was your English-speaking lesson conducted?
3. What kinds of speaking activities were included in the English-speaking lessons? Write the most used activities in order. (Example: group work, class discussion activities, etc.)
4. Do you think the activities used in the lessons helped you improve your English-speaking skills?
5. Have you received feedback on your English-speaking skills in the lessons?
6. What kind of feedback did you get on your English-speaking skills? (i.e., correction of pronunciation, word choice or grammatical error etc.)
7. Has English-speaking skills been assessed in your school during distance education?
8. How was English-speaking skills assessed at your school during distance education?
9. How do you think distance learning has affected your English-speaking skills development?
10. What kind of difficulties did you encounter in your English-speaking lessons during distance education?
11. How do you think English-speaking skills can best be taught in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?
12. How do you think English-speaking skills can best be measured in the distance education process? What are your suggestions?