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Adapting to Digital Education: Insights into Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language Online in Turkey

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the current trends in digital education with a focus on the use of distance learning for teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) in Turkey. The global pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns have provided a valuable experience in this field. In Turkey, distance learning for RFL continues to be popular prevailing trends of deglobalization and regionalization. This popularity is also due to Turkish Higher Education Development Plan 2030 of complete digitalization. Developing effective distance learning methodologies and integrating social sciences with modern online technologies are essential for advancing RFL teaching methods. In the process of developing teaching methods instructors' experiences and attitude towards this innovative format, together with their readiness for change are very important.

The aim of the study is to describe the experience of teaching RFL in a distance format in Turkey. Its primary goal is to identify the perceptions, preferences, readiness, and willingness of instructors to transition to this new instructional format. The research employed both theoretical (analysis) and empirical (online questionnaire) methods. The study was based on the responses from 73 RFL instructors in Turkey. The online survey, created using Google Forms, consisted of 29 multiple-choice questions and one short-answer question designed to see satisfaction with the online format of teaching RFL. The survey also included socio-demographic questions and targeted queries about the challenges, features, and observations of the online educational process.

The study revealed that during the transition to online format, instructors encountered several challenges, particularly in developing writing skills, phonetic competence, speaking skills, managing homework, and explaining complex topics. Some instructors believe that traditional face-to-face teaching methods are ineffective in an online environment, yet they continue to use

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them out of habit and due to a lack of specialized methods. The study found that insufficient technical skills and the significant amount of time required for lesson preparation are major obstacles. Despite the convenience of online format for some, many instructors still prefer in-person or blended format, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach. Additionally, the digitalization and globalization of education have significantly transformed the roles of instructors, necessitating new strategies and comprehensive training to face these challenges.

Keywords: distance learning, foreign language, online, Russian, Turkey, instructor, blended, hybrid, survey, remote learning.

1. Introduction

The global community is still addressing the social and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, due to the lack of effective measures to combat the pandemic, the World Health Organization recommended self-isolation. These measures prompted responses from all aspects of life, including education. During the pandemic's active phase, the Turkish Council of Higher Education decided to shift the entire education system to an online format. Consequently, Turkish education system found itself in a new environment characterized by forced and accelerated digitalization. These conditions differed radically from previous stages of educational modernization in two main aspects: firstly, forced digitalization impacted all levels of the education sector, and secondly, the operational conditions of the education system itself underwent dramatic changes.

The development of the vaccine enabled the academic community to resume full-time education. However, the Turkish Council of Higher Education chose to continue with hybrid remote instruction for both the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 academic years. Hybrid instruction was set at 40 % online for 2021–2022 and 30 % online for 2022–2023. In the current academic year, some general education requirements are still taught remotely. These percentages clearly illustrate the overall trend and direction in the development of higher education in Turkey. This approach aligns with the Turkish Higher Education Development Plan 2030, a key goal of which is complete digitalization (Saraç, 2021). The establishment of a distance learning faculty at Ankara University, one of Turkey's largest universities, in 2020, exemplifies this trend. This faculty offers, among other modern humanities programs, a bachelor's degree in Russian Language and Literature. Ankara University's experience marks a pioneering step in the public education system for teaching foreign languages in a synchronous remote learning format.

Today, despite the trends of deglobalization (Goldberg et al., 2023) and regionalization (O'Neil, 2023), teaching RFL (Russian as a Foreign Language) in a distance format in Turkey remains a priority and promising field, due to the country's strategic neutrality. In this context, the development of distance learning for RFL and the establishment of effective distance learning methodologies become increasingly important. The development of methods for teaching RFL should include the integration of various areas of humanitarian knowledge and modern online technologies. This helps improve the acquisition of additional competencies and further develop student's speaking skills and abilities (Popova, Kolesova, 2023). In this context, special attention should be paid not only to the teaching process itself, but also to the preparation of tutors to work in a digital environment (Feyzer, Dyakova, 2023).

Aim

This study describes the experience of teaching RFL in a distance format. Its primary goal is to identify the perceptions, preferences, visions, readiness, and willingness of instructors to transition to this new instruction format. To achieve this, an anonymous online survey was conducted, involving 73 Turkish instructors of Russian language. The findings of this study are based on the analysis of the experience in this field during the pandemic. These findings hold both theoretical and practical significance for training RFL instructors now and in the future. Additionally, this study contributes to understanding the regional characteristics of teaching RFL.

2. Literature review

According to Clark (2020), distance learning has a history spanning more than three centuries. However, the global academic community has never utilized it as extensively and actively as in the past three years. The experience accrued during the pandemic is crucial for the development of both distance learning and education. The increased adoption of distance learning has spurred a variety of research in this field. In the last two years, significant findings have

emerged in several areas: innovative approaches and instructor attitudes towards distance learning (Vidergor, 2023), the mental and emotional state of students in the new learning format (Kwaning et al., 2023), quality of teaching in a distance format (Jaekel et al., 2023), development of frameworks for fully online education programs (Ryneveld, 2023), the influence of high-speed broadband availability on student engagement in distance learning (Mac Domhnaill et al.), the impact of remote proctored exams on academic honesty (Paredes et al., 2021), and the effects of synchronous online learning environments on students' cognitive engagement (Dinh, 2023), among others.

Notwithstanding the burgeoning interest and adoption of distance education, the domain remains in a developmental phase, its merits and drawbacks still actively discussed. Among its advantages, researchers underscore increasing accessibility of education and improving students' motivation and self-organization (Almomani et al., 2023). Research also supports the improved academic performance and effectiveness of synchronous learning (Spitzer et al., 2023; Outoukarte et al., 2023). A survey of instructors from Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University highlights the flexibility and opportunities for professional growth provided by online learning (Almazova et al., 2020).

Despite the array of positive attributes, some studies have also shed light on the negative aspects of distance learning. (Reznikova et al., 2020) note that the requirements for students and instructors in this area differ from traditional teaching methods, which requires new approaches. (Casalone et al., 2023) indicate a negative impact on student performance. (Yorkovsky et al., 2022) highlight instructors' preference for traditional teaching methods. Garza Mitchell et al. (2024) identified faculty concerns about the lack of interaction in online learning. Almazova et al.'s (2020) and Sadeghi (2019) survey also found that limited communication with students was considered a disadvantage of online learning.

However, instructors' willingness and enthusiasm play an important role in the success of e-learning. Works by authors such as Vidergor (2023), Şanlıöz-Özgen et al. (2023), Çınar et al. (2021), Cidral et al. (2018), Keramati et al. (2011) and Sun et al. (2008) confirm this relationship. Some instructors may be reluctant to use online teaching due to their unconventional approach to teaching, as noted by Y.M. Tang et al. (2021), Kadlečik et al. (2021) argue that different approaches are required for e-learning and traditional learning and the adoption of information technology is important. Mohamed et al. (2020) encourage instructors to use new methods that can improve the quality of education.

Institutional and sociodemographic factors have a significant impact on student satisfaction with distance learning (Bacci et al., 2023). On the other hand, education is deeply intertwined with the region in which it exists, often developing unique characteristics based on its geographical and cultural context (OECD, 2007). This connection is particularly evident in the field of distance education. Mardini et al. (2022) highlight that the level and success of distance education vary significantly depending on the region and the local education system.

Turkey is an example of this regional influence in education. Given the overall trend of Turkish higher education towards digitalization and considering its regional attributes, research in the field of distance education in Turkey reveals several intriguing findings. These studies show how regional factors shape the adoption and effectiveness of distance learning in the Turkish context, reflecting a blend of global trends and local nuances. Şimşek and Toprakçı (2023) highlight internal problems of educational organizations in Turkey such as staffing and infrastructure, while Özyayın Özkara (2023) notes the positive attitude of students towards distance learning. Yeşiloğlu et al (2021) suggest that theoretical subjects are better suited for distance learning than practical subjects. Çutuk's (2023) study reveals the positive impact of distance learning environment on students' academic motivation. Furthermore, the distance learning medium offers extensive opportunities for engaging with the linguistic culture and foundational aspects of a language, aiding in adaptation to the language environment (Dikilitaş et al., 2009).

These findings collectively indicate that while there are certain challenges inherent to distance education in Turkey, there are also significant opportunities for positive outcomes, particularly regarding student motivation and the effective delivery of theoretical subjects.

3. Methods and materials

The study used theoretical (analysis) and empirical (anonymous online questionnaire) research methods. The research material was the responses of 73 RFL instructors in Turkey.

The questionnaire was compiled using the Google Form online service, consisted of 29 multiple choice and one short answer question, and was aimed at identifying the degree of satisfaction with the online format of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Along with questions of a socio-demographic nature, respondents asked targeted questions about the difficulties, features, and observations of the educational process in an online format. The data obtained through an online survey were analyzed by frequency of common instructor's responses and were stated in percentages. The significance of the compiled data was analyzed using a Chi-squared analysis of the responses followed by post-hoc analysis of each group. The significance of results were determined using a combination of the p-value of all responses for a question and the p-value of the individual answer type. The p-value stemming from the Chi-squared value was calculated using the SciPy package on Python. The post hoc analysis was achieved by calculating the residuals and calculating the p-Values of the individual residuals on SciPy. Demographic data were obtained using the Likert scale and are reported in the percentage of instructors' responses.

4. Results

89 % of the participants were female (65 of 73) and 11 % of the participants were male (8 of 73). In addition to this, 17 participants had a bachelor's degree (23.3 %), 33 participants had a master's degree (45.2 %), and 23 participants had a PhD (31.5 %) as their highest-achieved degree. The most common academic attainment amongst participants was assistant professor (f = 45, 61.6 %). This was followed in decreasing order by instructor (13), full professor (8), assoc. professor (4), senior assistant professor (2), and assistant (1).

When participants' language teaching experience was examined, the largest group had experience between 11 and 20 years. This group contained 30 academic staff out of 73 total. 19 of all academic staff were in the 5-10 years group (26 %). Additionally, the number of academic staff with more than 20 years of experience was 15 (20.5 %) and less than 5 years was 9 (12.3 %). In addition to the participants' teaching experience, their online teaching experience was also examined. The most populated group was experienced between 1 to 5 years, with 52 participants out of 73 total (71.2 %). This was followed by 15 participants with less than 1 year of experience (20.5 %), and 4 participants with 5 to 10 years of experience. The most popular platform used by RFL instructors is Zoom (f = 42, 57.5 %). This was followed by Moodle, Zoom MS Teams, Zoom and Skype with three instructors using each combination.

41.1 % of participants found teaching online convenient (f = 30). 19 Participants each responded to the question as "Yes, but difficult" and "More likely no than yes" (26% each). 3 participants responded with "No, it is very difficult" and 2 participants responded with "I find it difficult to answer." (Figure 1). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 20 % or approximately 15 participants. There were 4 degrees of freedom and the Chi-Squared test resulted in a statistically significant p-value of 7.01×10^{-8} , indicating a significant difference in responses regarding the convenience of online teaching. The group that found online teaching "convenient" "Yes, find it convenient" proved to be the most statistically significant with 41.10% instead of the expected 20 %, with a standardized residual of 4.03 and a p-value of 5.57×10^{-5} .

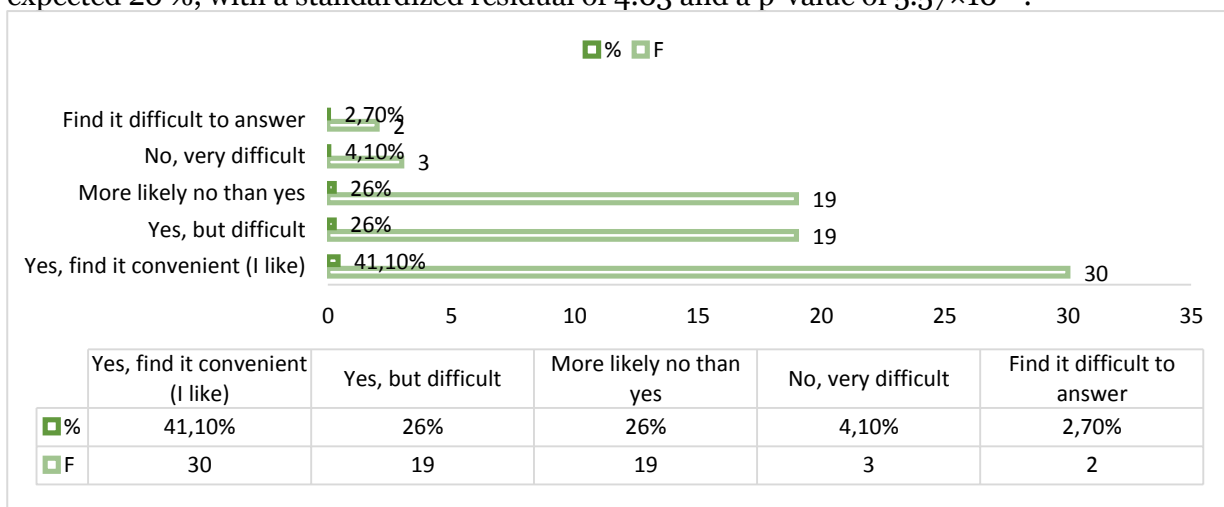


Fig. 1. Responses to the question "Do you find online teaching convenient?"

When satisfactions of participants were investigated with the question “Are you satisfied with teaching online?” 38.4 % responded, “More likely no than yes.” This was followed by “More likely yes than no” (f = 20). 17 participants responded “Yes” and 6 participants responded “No”. Two participants responded with “Find it difficult to answer.” (Figure 2). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 20 % or approximately 15 participants. There were 4 degrees of freedom and the Chi-Squared test yielded a statistically significant p-value of 3.64×10^{-6} , reflecting notable variation in satisfaction levels among participants. The "More likely no than yes" group emerged as the most statistically significant with 38.40 % instead of expected 20 %, with a standardized residual of 3.51 and a p-value of 4.53×10^{-4} .

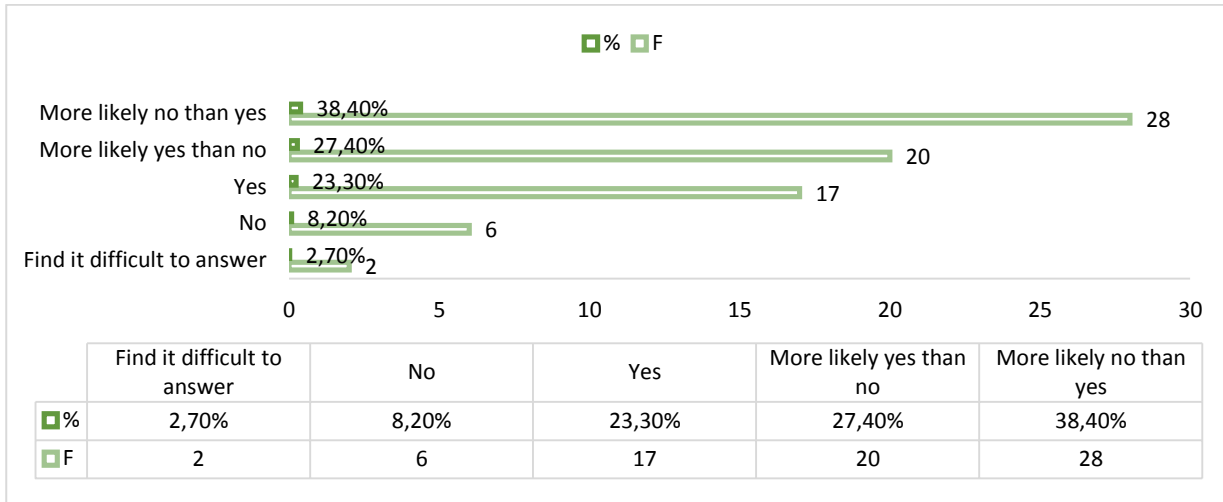


Fig. 2. Responses to the question “Are you satisfied with teaching online?”

When posed with the question “Do you think your educational institution is ready for high-quality online language teaching” 28.8 % responded, “More likely no than yes.” This was followed by “More likely yes than no” (f = 18). 17 participants responded “Yes”, and 9 participants responded “No”. 8 participants responded with “Find it difficult to answer.” (Figure 3). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 20 % or approximately 15 participants however not significantly enough. There were 4 degrees of freedom and the Chi-Squared test resulted in a marginally non-significant p-value of 5.81×10^{-2} , suggesting limited differences in perceptions of institutional readiness. None of the groups showed statistical significance, indicating that the observed variations may be due to random chance rather than a true effect.

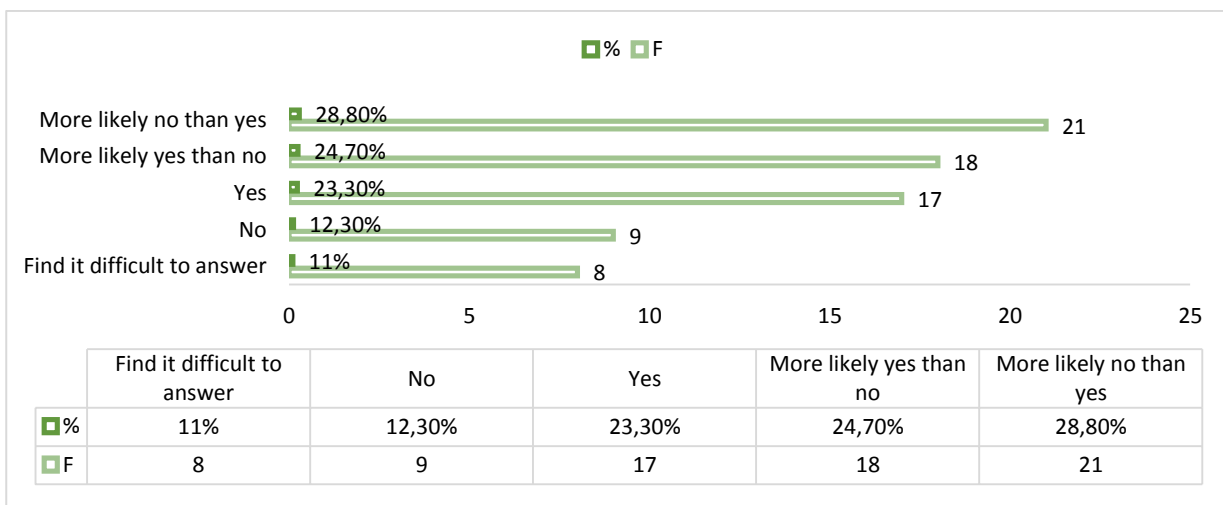


Fig. 3. Responses to the question “Do you think your educational institution is ready for high-quality online language teaching?”

When asked about the level of technical assistance received by participants 32.9 % responded with “yes, regularly” ($f = 24$). 24.7 % responded with “more likely yes than no,” and 23.3 % responded with “No technical assistance received.” 9 participants responded with “more likely no than yes,” and 5 responded with “find it difficult to answer”.

When posed with the question “In your opinion, how did the students’ workloads change in the online learning format.” 23 answered with “Increased.” This was followed by a similar distribution of 21 “Decreased” and 20 “No change” responses. 9 participants answered with “Find it difficult to answer” (Figure 4). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 25 % or approximately 18 participants. There were four degrees of freedom, and the Chi-Squared test produced a non-significant p-value of 0.0894, indicating that differences in perceived changes in student workload were not statistically significant overall. However, the “Find it difficult to answer” group which had 31.50 % instead of the expected 25 %, showed some significance with a residual of -2.17 and a p-value of 0.0304.

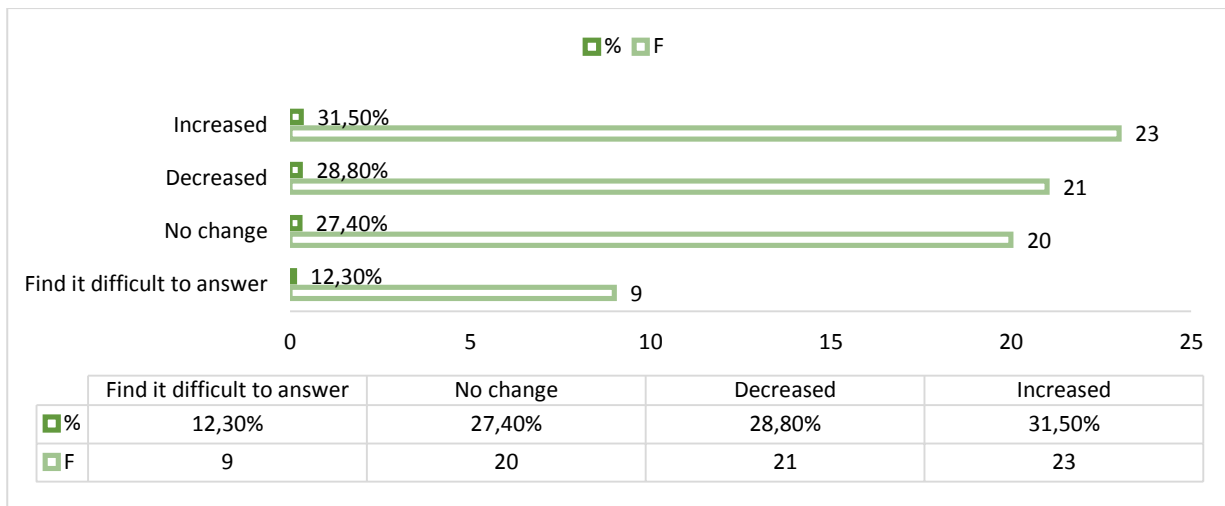


Fig. 4. Responses to the question “In your opinion, how did students' workloads change in the online learning format?”

When asked “How students’ motivation changed in online learning?” 43 participants responded with “Decreased” (58.9 %). 12 participants responded with “No change,” 11 responded with “Increased” while 7 participants responded with “Find it difficult to answer.” (Figure 5). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 25 % or approximately 18 participants. There were 3 degrees of freedom and the Chi-Squared test revealed a highly significant p-value of 7.17×10^{-10} , underscoring substantial differences in perceived changes in student motivation. The “Decreased” motivation group was the most statistically significant which had 58.90 % instead of the expected 25 %, with a standardized residual of 5.79 and a p-value of 6.89×10^{-9} .

When asked “How online class attendance changed?” 35 participants stated “Decreased.” 13 participants responded “Increased,” 22 participants responded, “No change” while 3 participants responded, “Find it difficult to answer”.

When posed with the question “How do you classify the psycho-emotional state of students in online lessons?” the responses were as follows: 43.8 % of participants classified the psycho-emotional state of students as interest; 30.1 % as uncertainty; 16.4 % as rejection; 12.3 % as astonishment.

31 of the participants stated that the level of knowledge of online and in person students were not the same while 10 participants stated that it was equal. 30 participants stated the levels of knowledge were similar but not completely the same. 2 participants found the question difficult to answer.

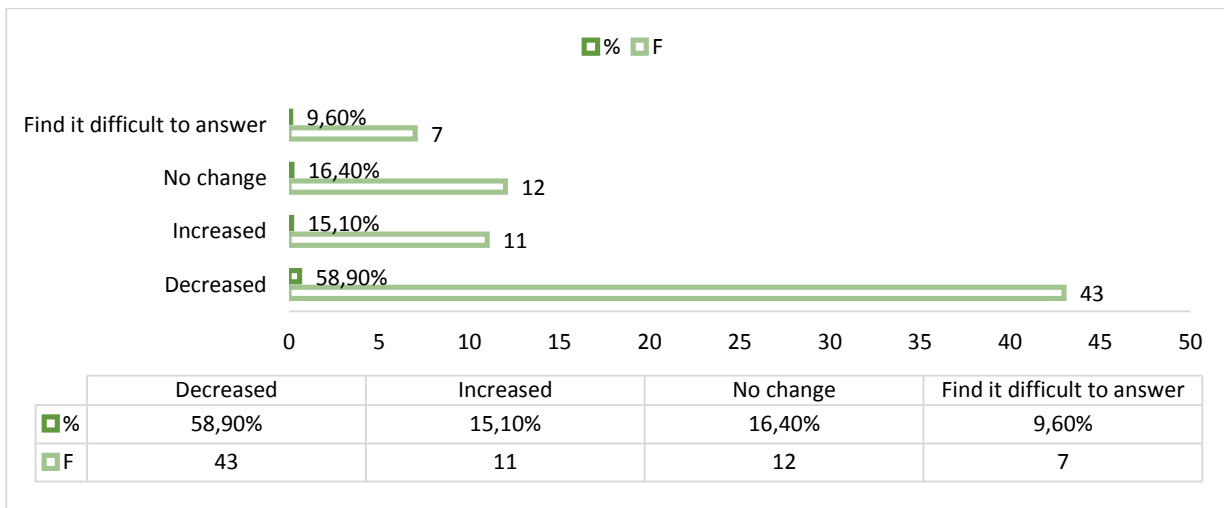


Fig. 5. Responses to the question “How students’ motivation changed in online learning?”

When asked, “Do you have a place in your educational institution equipped with a computer(s)/laptop(s) with internet access?” instructors responded as follows: 28 participants stated, “Yes, I can use it if needed.” 24 participants stated they worked from home on their personal computers. 12 participants stated they had access to such facilities but not always. 9 participants stated they had to carry their devices with them.

Participants’ change in workload increased for 51 participants while decreased for 8. 11 participants experienced no change in workload while 3 found it to be difficult to answer (Figure 6). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 25% or approximately 18 participants. There were 3 degrees of freedom, and the Chi-Squared test indicated an extremely significant p-value of 2.85×10^{-17} , reflecting pronounced differences in teachers' workload perceptions. The "Increased" workload group was the most statistically significant which had 69.90% instead of the expected 25 %, with a standardized residual of 7.67 and a p-value of 1.78×10^{-14} .

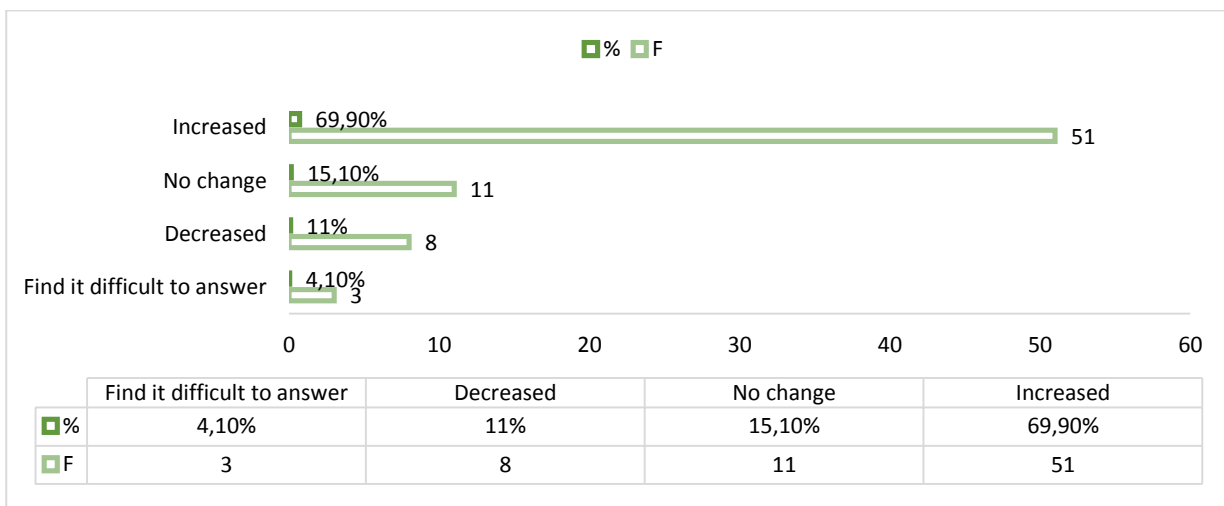


Fig. 6. Responses to the question "How did teachers' workload change in the online learning format?"

Instructors were asked to mark where they struggled the most in teaching RFL online, because multiple answers were allowed, a total number of responses was calculated. The most struggled moment for the participants was developing writing skills (f = 39). That was followed by the development of phonic skills (f = 31), development of speaking skills (f = 29), and doing homework (f = 20). 9.4 % of participants struggled the most explaining difficult subjects in Russian, 8.4 % struggled the most with explaining grammar. Moments with the least number of participants

struggling the most in are development of listening skills (f = 13), working on exercises (f = 12), development of reading skills (f = 7), while 6 participants struggled the most in other moments.

Participants were asked what difficulties they face during online teaching. The most common difficulty was needing to spend much more time preparing for lessons (f = 40). This was followed by testing of knowledge (f = 39), lack of available online teaching methods (f = 28), technical failures (f = 25), and lack of skills to conduct online lessons (f = 19). Less common answers in decreasing order were difficulty with teaching material (7.4 %), lack of necessary technical means (6.9 %), lack of IT skills (4.2 %). Lastly 3 participants experienced no problems.

The most common level taught online by participants was A1 with 26.2% of participants teaching at that level. This was followed by (in decreasing order) A2 (f = 52), B1 (f = 41), B2 (f = 32). Least common levels taught by participants were C1 (f = 17), C2 (f = 13). 24.2 % of participants stated C1 was the best level to be taught online, while 6.6 % of participants stated A1 was the worst level to be taught online. In between, in decreasing order were, B2 with 20.7% of participants, C2 with 19.7 % of participants, B1 with 18.7 % of participants, A2 with 10.1 % of participants.

29 participants stated they could more likely use in-person methods online than no, while 20 participants stated that in-person methods were more likely incompatible online rather than compatible. 18 participants said they could use in-person methods online while 2 participants said they couldn't. 4 participants found the question difficult to answer.

When posed with the question "Teaching online, do you experience difficulties in developing students' language communication skills?" 35.6 % of responded "more likely yes than no." This was followed, in decreasing order, by "yes regularly" (34.2 %), "more likely no than yes" (17.8 %), "no" (9.6 %). 2 participants found the question difficult to answer.

When asked what form of teaching participants preferred to teach in, 32 participants preferred in person while 2 and 8 participants preferred distance and online teaching. Whereas 30 participants preferred mixed instruction.

When asked about the change in amount of homework in online instruction, 41.1 % of participants stated no change. 31.5 % and 20.5 % of participants stated increase and decrease respectively. 5 participants found the question difficult to answer.

In this context, when asked if the role of the instructor had changed online, 32 participants stated that it had whereas 26 stated that it hadn't. 11 participants stated "More likely yes than no" change in the role of the instructor. Finally, 4 participants found the question difficult to answer (Figure 7). All of the results deviated from the expected distribution of 25 % or approximately 18 participants. There were 3 degrees of freedom and the Chi-Squared test resulted in a statistically significant p-value of 4.29×10^{-6} , demonstrating significant variations in views on the changing role of teachers. The "Yes, has changed" group proved to be the most statistically significant which had 43.80 % instead of the expected 25 %, with a standardized residual of 3.22 and a p-value of 0.0013.

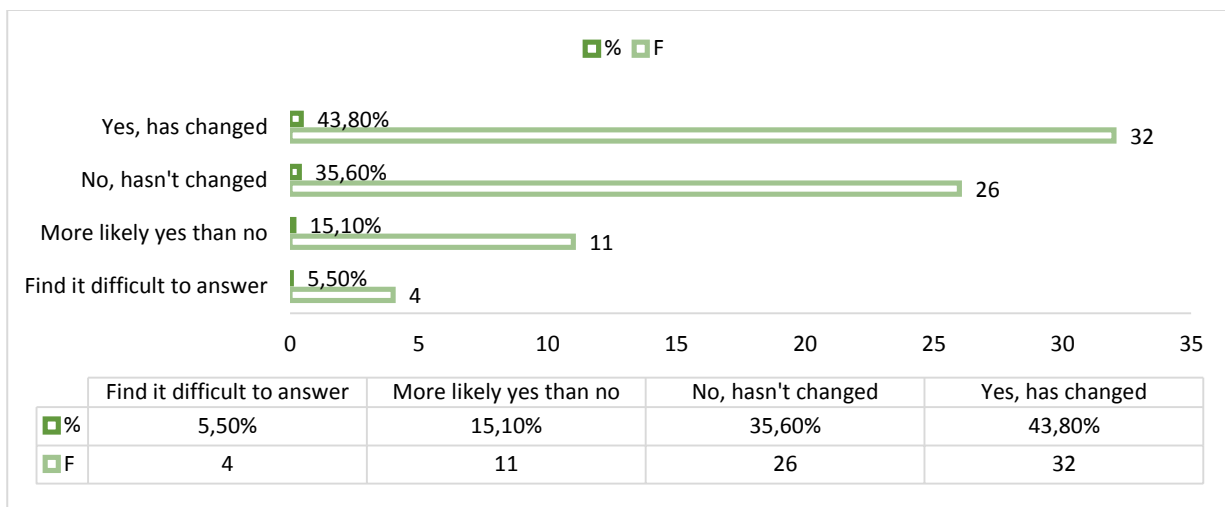


Fig. 7. Responses to the question "In your opinion, has role of the teacher changed in the online teaching?"

5. Discussion

Today, online teaching and learning has become a significant part of the academic world. The concept of online learning has almost fully formed. The scientific literature identifies key characteristics of online learning, including the separation between students and instructors, the use of electronic learning tools, the presence of a university's electronic information and educational environment, and the predominance of independent student activity (Baranova et al., 2020).

The digitalization of education has transformed the entire education system, bringing innovations such as adapting curricula to online conditions, incorporating technological processes into education, designing learning processes and creating a digital education environment (Lukyanova et al., 2021). This transformation necessitates improvements in digital tool usage for both instructors and students. Furthermore, the adaptation of the educational process is developing in two directions: creating a flexible control system that meets students' educational needs and developing curriculum content that aligns with this control system (Samofalova et al., 2023).

According to Feyzer and Dyakova (2023), digital linguodidactics of RFL is currently in its fourth stage of development. Each new stage in the evolution of RFL is marked by the introduction of new technologies and e-learning tools. This progression requires a continual revision of the terminology within the field of electronic linguodidactics for teaching RFL (Dyakova, Khvorova, 2020), as well as an update of the primary stages of the teaching process itself.

Our study among RFL instructors in Turkey about their online experience yielded several key statistically significant conclusions. 41 % of instructors find the online format convenient for teaching Russian, whereas 52 % either find it difficult or prefer not to teach in this format. Almazova et al. (2020) report similar findings, indicating that 61 % of participants consider online/video classes ineffective compared to traditional education. Additionally, only 23.3 % of instructors in presented study are fully satisfied with the online teaching process, while 27.4 % are more satisfied than dissatisfied. Notably, 38.8 % are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the process. These results combined by statistically significant deviation from standard distribution, highlight a significant divide in instructors' perceptions of online teaching RFL. While some find it convenient, a larger proportion encounters difficulties or prefers traditional methods. This variation in responses suggests the need for further research and development to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of online method.

Research conducted by Meirovitz et al. (2022) with EFL instructors highlighted the lack of technical assistance as a major issue in distance learning. Similarly, regarding the technical side of teaching RFL online in Turkey, instructors reported that the infrastructure of institutions is not fully prepared for a quality education in this mode. Additionally, 38.4 % of respondents mentioned having access to a computer and internet-equipped space at any time. However, they noted inadequate preparation, which is often compensated by the staff's involvement in the process. These answers indirectly indicate that instructors understand that the Internet and a computer alone are not enough to switch to an online format. Quality education requires methodology and readiness at every level of a systematic approach.

The study found that transitioning to an online format often leads to reduced class attendance, with 47.9 % of surveyed instructors noting a decrease. This decline, along with decreased motivation, can negatively impact the quality of education and outcomes. This is confirmed by current research, where instructors report a decrease in knowledge levels in the online format. Hopkins (2010) and Tao and Gao (2022) observed that instructors view low student participation as a major drawback of online teaching. There is a consensus that class attendance is typically lower in online education. However, it's important to consider that this drop in attendance might be due to inadequate technical resources and issues related to the students themselves. Additionally, the reduction was assessed by instructors based on personal observation rather than statistical data, an aspect that was not covered in the present study and requires further research. Decreased attendance could also be a consequence of reduced motivation. Thus, while the transition to an online format can reduce class attendance and motivation, impacting education quality and outcomes, it is crucial to explore further the underlying reasons, including technical resources and student-related issues. More comprehensive research is needed to address these challenges effectively.

Interesting results were obtained regarding the change in student workload due to online learning. Opinions were almost equally divided among those who felt the workload had increased, decreased, or remained unchanged. Even though the answers were equally divided, it should be

noted that the response indicating an increase was higher by approximately 3 %. This variation in opinion may be a consequence of the methodology and content of the curriculum, which is still in the process of being fully developed. The study conducted among preparatory class students in Turkey revealed mixed opinions about the extracurricular workload in distance education. According to the survey, 30 out of 78 students found the homework productive, while 22 felt they were given an excessive amount (Dolmaci, Dolmaci, 2020). Reznikova et al. (2020) observed that distance education requires students to understand materials independently, making the learning process more challenging and increasing their workload.

Although Reznikova et al. (2020) emphasized that high motivation is crucial for students in distance education, survey results indicate a decline (58.9 %) in motivation among many students. The decrease in motivation may stem from students' concerns about the effectiveness of online teaching. A study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Al Shlowiy et al. (2021) revealed that students worry about the effectiveness of online teaching and its impact on their GPA. They also expressed concerns that, even if they passed their courses, they might not be adequately prepared for more advanced studies. While motivation remains a critical factor for success in distance education, the transition to online learning has posed significant challenges. Concerns about the effectiveness of online instruction and preparedness for future courses are likely contributing to decreased motivation among students. These findings highlight the need for improved online teaching strategies and support systems to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Observation of students' psycho-emotional states revealed two main trends: interest and uncertainty. The varied responses indicate that students experience a range of emotions during online lessons. While many students show interest, a significant number also feel uncertain or even rejected. This diversity in emotional response highlights the complexities of the online learning environment and the need for tailored strategies to support students' emotional well-being. Supporting these findings, research by Ambiyar et al. (2023) with Chinese students indicates that online education enhances students' desire to learn, increasing their interest in the course. Additionally, a survey by Smelkova et al. (2021) found that interest in classes during distance education is higher (79 %) compared to in-person education (58 %) among Chinese students. These results emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing the various emotional states of students to improve their online learning experiences. However, it should be noted that these studies might have an inherent bias as the data represents conclusions based on instructor's observations and might warrant future research.

According to the research results, the online format for teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) is preferred by instructors at more advanced levels. Instructors believe that the least suitable format is for level A1. This observation may be credible because advanced-level students have already developed their own personal learning methods for RFL, leading to better results.

The study found that 69.9 % of instructors reported an increase in their workload. Bui et al. (2023) suggest that effective teaching relies on the efforts of both instructors and students. For instructors, adapting to new technology often means additional work. This includes ensuring that their teaching methods work well with the technology, meeting both technological and student needs, and prioritizing the safety and health of students. These factors all contribute to the increased responsibilities instructors face.

Instructors encountered various challenges in different aspects of online education. RFL instructors particularly struggled with developing writing, phonetic, and speaking skills. Managing homework also posed difficulties, as did explaining difficult subjects and grammar. Fewer instructors reported issues with developing listening skills, working on exercises, and developing reading skills. The results align closely with findings from other researchers. Alimova et al. (2021) highlighted the significant challenge of teaching writing at the start of a distance learning program, especially for beginner students who cannot observe the instructor's writing movements or have their own writing monitored simultaneously. Hopkins (2010) pointed out the difficulties in developing students' phonetic and speaking skills online, noting that anxiety and competence in using technology play a direct role in these challenges.

Instructors reported various challenges in online teaching, with the most common being the significant amount of time required to prepare for lessons. Following this were difficulties in testing students' knowledge, a lack of effective online teaching methods, technical issues, and insufficient skills for conducting online lessons. Additional problems included managing teaching materials, lacking necessary technical resources, and inadequate IT skills.

These insights are supported by research from T. Meirovitz et al. (2022), which found that 14.46 % of EFL instructors considered lesson preparation for online teaching to be highly time-consuming, making it a major challenge. Similarly, a survey by Almazova et al. (2020) identified obstacles such as insufficient skills for online teaching, the extensive time needed for lesson preparation, and the inability to use active teaching methods effectively online. A study by Madanat et al. (2024) with Jordanian instructors further corroborates these findings, highlighting the significant issue of lacking technological skills in online teaching. Researchers stress the importance of more training in using digital tools for educational purposes. The shift to online teaching has presented many challenges for educators, particularly regarding lesson preparation time, technical skills, and the availability of effective teaching methods. Addressing these issues through comprehensive training programs is essential for instructors to successfully navigate the complexities of online education.

Research has shown that many RFL instructors tend to use face-to-face teaching methods even in an online format. However, a significant number of instructors also note the impossibility of using these traditional methods effectively online. According to Kevin W.H. Tai (2024), instructors often employ face-to-face education techniques in online education. The study observed two different online teaching methods and found that instructors used the same approaches as in face-to-face settings to engage students and explain subjects. For instance, instructors would draw the object being described on paper. This suggests that instructors' pedagogical approaches in online education are heavily influenced by their face-to-face teaching methods. While instructors often try to replicate face-to-face methods in online education, this can be challenging and sometimes ineffective. The reliance on traditional techniques highlights the need for developing and adopting new strategies tailored specifically for the online learning environment.

Most instructors preferred in-person teaching, with only two participants favoring distance learning and eight preferring online their roles.

Finally, a key aspect of the study that must also be addressed is our sampling method. A convenience sampling method was used due to the difficulties associated with the more extensive and robust probabilistic sampling method. This could have introduced a sampling bias in our results. This non probabilistic method could mean that our results conducted on a limited group is not representative of the broader population of interest. As a result this could prevent our results from being applicable to Russian language instructors in general and could have introduced a systematic bias. Future research should consider using probabilistic sampling techniques, such as random sampling, to ensure the robustness and applicability of the samples for the wider population.

In summary, the impact of digitalization and globalization on education is evident in the evolving role of instructors. While many instructors acknowledge changes in their roles due to online education, opinions vary, reflecting the complexities of this transition.

6. Conclusion

During the pandemic lockdown, instructors faced a multitude of challenges across pedagogical, technological, systematic, organizational, and personal domains. Pedagogically, adapting traditional teaching methods to an online format proved difficult. Technologically, the lack of adequate system and equipment was a significant barrier. Systematic organizational challenges included insufficient technological support and guidance from institutions, while on a personal level, instructors struggled to maintain boundaries between work, family, and leisure (Shamir-Inbal, Blau, 2021).

While distance learning offers numerous advantages, it also demands greater responsibility from instructors and increased motivation from students (Klisowska et al., 2020). The importance of institutional support, particularly in providing reliable internet access, is crucial for ensuring the continuity of education, especially for students and instructors in rural areas (Butarbutar et al., 2023). In Turkey, internet access provided by schools is particularly important for students living in dormitories. The success of e-learning heavily depends on the readiness of instructors (Keramati et al., 2011). Therefore, findings from this study should guide educational initiatives aimed at improving instructors' preparedness for e-learning, ensuring more effective implementation of e-learning strategies.

The study highlighted a significant divide in instructors' perceptions of online teaching RFL. While some find it convenient, a larger proportion encounters difficulties or prefers traditional

methods. This variation in responses suggests the need for further research and development to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of online teaching methods.

A critical issue identified is the lack of technical assistance and inadequate institutional infrastructure, which hampers the quality of education. Instructors report that merely having access to a computer and the internet is insufficient; effective online education demands comprehensive methodological preparation and systematic readiness. The study also found a notable decrease in class attendance and student motivation, factors that adversely impact educational outcomes. This decline is attributed to both technical deficiencies and inherent student-related issues. Additionally, opinions on changes in student workload due to online learning are mixed, with a slight majority indicating an increase. This variation likely stems from the evolving nature of online curriculum development. Overall, the findings underscore the necessity for more thorough research and the implementation of robust support systems to enhance the effectiveness of online education.

The transition to online learning has presented significant challenges, including decreased student motivation, increased instructor workload, and varied emotional responses among students. Instructors report an increase in workload, particularly when adapting to new technologies, which demands additional effort to ensure effective teaching and address both technological and student needs. Moreover, the preference for online formats varies with the level of proficiency, being more suitable for advanced students who have developed personal learning methods. These insights underscore the necessity for improved online teaching strategies and methodology, comprehensive support systems and specialization, as well as ongoing research to enhance the quality of online education and address its multifaceted challenges.

In conclusion, instructors faced numerous challenges in transitioning to online education, particularly in developing writing, phonetic, and speaking skills, managing homework, and explaining complex subjects. While some instructors found face-to-face methods ineffective online, they continued to use them due to familiarity. Research supports the finding that insufficient technical skills and the extensive time needed for lesson preparation are major obstacles. Despite the convenience of online learning for some, many instructors and students still prefer in-person or mixed instruction, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach. Additionally, the digitalization and globalization of education have significantly influenced instructors' roles, requiring new strategies and comprehensive training to face these challenges effectively. Overall, the evolving educational landscape demands tailored approaches to enhance both teaching and learning experiences in an online format.

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