Asynchronous Distance Learning and Blended Learning in terms of Learner Autonomy, Motivation and Academic Success

Sevim GÜNEŞ
Ph.D., Dicle University, Diyarbakır, TURKEY
svmgunes@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-7505-7883

Nuray ALAGÖZLÜ
Ph.D., Hacettepe University, Ankara, TURKEY
nurayalagozlu@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-9868-4399

ABSTRACT
This study aims to compare asynchronous distance learning and blended learning in a context in which English is taught as a foreign language; the focal points of the comparison are learner autonomy, motivation and academic success. In this context, asynchronous distance learning refers to an English learning process provided through online videos and course materials; the learners and the instructor are separate both in terms of place and time. Blended learning, on the other hand, refers to an English learning process which combines face-to-face and asynchronous distance learning environments. 145 freshmen studying at a state university in Turkey participated in the study. An experimental and a control group were formed on a voluntary basis. The control group consisted of 114 students and they were taught English only via asynchronous distance learning. However, the experimental group – comprised of 31 students – were included in a face-to-face learning process in addition to being a part of an asynchronous distance learning. For the academic success levels of the students, two grammar tests were used. Additionally, a questionnaire was used in order to reveal participants' motivation and autonomy scores. The quantitative findings of the current study revealed that the blended learning students had higher learner autonomy, motivation and academic success levels than the asynchronous distance learning students.

Keywords: Distance learning, blended learning, learner autonomy, motivation, academic success, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has maintained its significance for years. The way foreign languages are taught has evolved greatly when compared with the past. New developments are constantly applied to foreign language teaching to reach desired pedagogical goals. Using technology is one of the means for realizing an effective language teaching process. The benefits of technology for foreign language teaching cannot be ignored and its role has gained more and more importance as the technology has improved. Computers, CD-ROMs, hard disks, and printers are some of the fundamental instruments that are used for educational purposes today. Computers are (and have often been) at the centre of the forms of technology used in language teaching (Fox, 1999, p. 355).

Distance education (DE), which is implemented through technology, emerged as a result of the need for providing access to teaching for those who were unable to receive face-to-face instruction (Beldarrain, 2006). It has been defined by numerous researchers during its history. Perraton (1988) defines it as "the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time" (cited in Sherry, 1995). Moore (1990) defines DE as all of the preparations done to provide instruction through technology to the people who are included in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor(s) (cited in Moore et al., 2011). The definition of Simonson (2009) has been accepted widely; he defines DE as "institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interaction telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources and instructors" (Simonson and Seepersaud, 2018; p. 1.).

Distance education can be applied in two ways: synchronous or asynchronous. In a synchronous distance education environment, there is the separation of learners and teacher only in terms of place, not time; technological tools are used for the instruction and communication. In asynchronous distance education, however, teacher and learners are separate both in terms of place and time (Beldarrain, 2006; Carswell & Venkatesh, 2002; Dede, 1996; İşman, 2011; King, Young, Drivere-Richmond & Schrader, 2001; Schlosser & Simonson, 2006; Moller, 1998).

Additionally, if the term distance education is used, there should be an institutional plan and organization in terms of learning and teaching because the term education is used to define a relationship between learner and teacher (Moore and Kearsley, 2012, p. 2). On the other hand, if the issue is to put emphasis on what happens from the point of learners who interact with a teacher at a distance, the term distance learning (DL) is used (Moore and Kearsley, 2012, p. 7). In the current context, the term 'asynchronous distance learning' is used as its main points (autonomy, motivation and academic success) are evaluated in terms of the learners.

Blended learning (BL) is another way of using technology for foreign language instruction. As cited in Procter (2003), it is defined by Smith (2001) as "a method of educating at a distance that uses technology (high-tech, such as television and the Internet or low-tech, such as voice mail or conference calls) combined with traditional (or, stand-up) education or training". According to Smith's definition, the basic difference between DL and BL seems to be the existence of traditional/face-to-face education in the BL process. As stated above, DL and BL are applied in different ways. In the current context, asynchronous distance learning (ADL) refers to an asynchronous way of distance learning in which the place and time of receiving English education depend totally on learners' choice, and BL is used for combining face-to-face instruction and asynchronous distance learning. Technology is used both in and outside the classroom for supporting face-to-face instruction in a BL environment of the current context.

This study aims to compare asynchronous distance learning and blended learning for English education; the focal points compared in the current study are learner autonomy, motivation and academic success.

1.1. Background of the Study

The current study was conducted at a state university in Turkey and at that University, English classes were started via ADL in the 2014-2015 academic year for the freshman students; but the students of Medicine, Dentistry, Law faculties and vocational English courses were taught in a face-to-face manner in a traditional classroom environment without an ADL process. The Engineering, Veterinary, and Education Faculties (excluding the Foreign Language Teaching Department), as well as the Vocational Schools of Higher Education, were included in the ADL process; they followed English subjects out of the classroom with an asynchronous system that included all of the lecturing videos, presentations and exercises. The exams, however, were implemented in a classroom environment. The University's Distance Education Centre is responsible for running all ADL processes, but all of the lecturing videos and study materials are prepared by the instructors of the School of Foreign Languages. Before the academic year starts, the instructors are given duties such as recording videos for English subjects, and preparing lecturing presentations and additional study materials. After all of the preparations have been completed, they are uploaded to the online Distance Education System of the University. At the beginning of the term, the instructors have a face-to-face meeting with the students and inform them about the ADL process that will take place. They also give their contact details to the students in case they're needed. After that, the students are in charge of their own learning process. They are expected to watch lecturing videos and do the exercises placed on the web page. Generally, there is not much interaction between the instructor and students during the academic term. The students log in to the system in order to watch the lecturing videos and download the study materials. To watch the lecturing videos and study the materials, the students log in to the related page without a username or password. As a result, it is not possible for the instructors to check students' attendance. Additionally, as can be understood from the ADL process mentioned above, the instructor-involvement is not at the desired or adequate level for the current context.

On the other hand, whereas the system is based online, the students can download the videos and study materials and use them in an off-line manner. The freshmen of these faculties must take both a mid-term and a final exam to pass the course. Their final exam score has to be at least 60 and the mean of the two exams (40% of the mid-term and 60% of the final) has to be 60 or over to be able to pass the course. The students are taught English via ADL, but they have the exams on paper and the assessment is done by the responsible instructor(s) of each faculty.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study aims to compare asynchronous distance learning and blended learning in terms of EFL and the main points of the comparison are learner autonomy, motivation and academic success in teaching English. The first focal point of the study is learner autonomy. Both ADL and BL are comprised (either partly or completely) of aspects of learning without a traditional teacher model. As a consequence, the learners need to direct their own learning; how this autonomy is directed by the related learning groups is the first step of comparison. Additionally, the role of learners' motivation with regard to foreign language learning cannot be ignored, because motivation is seen as the main determinant of foreign language achievement (Dörnyei, 1994). The third point of the comparison this study aims to compare relates to ADL and BL in terms of academic success. Naturally, the reason of applying

new methods of language teaching is generally to increase learners' achievement. The learners' academic success may be seen as a yardstick for the evaluation of the teaching programme.

At the University in question, ADL has been implemented as an alternative way of teaching English to the freshman students due to problems concerning face-to-face instruction (such as overcrowded classrooms, mandatory attendance of English classes, and instructors' trying to catch up on the curriculum in overcrowded classrooms). When new methods are applied, the educators need to know to what extent the method used is effective for foreign language learning and teaching. Before implementing ADL for teaching English at the related university, Revolutionary History and Kemalism and Turkish Philology classes were taught through ADL for the freshmen. But, after one year of implementation, the authorities returned to face-to-face instruction as ADL was thought to be ineffective for those classes. This study is significant due to its scientific basis, which allowed us to assess the effectiveness of ADL for teaching English by comparing ADL with an alternative, i.e. BL. It is also significant in how it includes all these aspects in a single study, it being the first study to compare ADL and BL in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success in teaching English.

On the other hand, English is a compulsory course for the freshmen included in the current study (which they must take in addition to their majors); as such, they are sometimes not willing enough to have English classes and their unwillingness also effects their autonomy, which in turn refers to how they direct their own learning process in ADL (in the current context). Unfortunately, there is not a system which provides instructors with the opportunity to check students' participation in the ADL process. As can be understood from the 'Background of the Study', the instructor-involvement, interaction between instructor and students, and interaction among the students themselves were at the minimum level during the implemented ADL process. When the models of ADL in the literature are investigated, it is seen that even though the instructor and the learner are separate in terms of both place and time, the interaction may be provided through e-mails, forums, web pages or different kinds of technologies (Carswell and Venkatesh, 2002).

So, in a general sense, the results of the current study may be relatable to the involvement of the instructors in an asynchronous distance learning process and may also be enlightening in terms of using ADL and BL in teaching English both around the world and in a narrower sense, i.e. in Turkey and at the University where the current study was conducted. Additionally, the current study is the first one which compares ADL and BL in terms of three aspects (learner autonomy, motivation and academic success) in a single study in teaching English.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Different results were revealed by different research studies conducted in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success for distance and blended learning environments; however, there were no studies which compared (A)DL and BL in terms of their related aspects when teaching English. Additionally, in previous research studies, the virtual or blended learning environments were generally compared with the face to face learning environments, or blended or distance learning environments were taken into consideration on their own. So, the studies which may be related to distance learning and blended in terms of the focal points of the current study (either related to English or other majors) were considered in this regard.

Wong et al. (2020) compared BL with conventional learning in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success in teaching English through short stories. 116 secondary school students participated and they were divided into two groups. The groups were compared in terms of the three aforementioned aspects by using the t-test. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of academic success; the BL group, however, was better in terms of learner autonomy and motivation.

A different study conducted by Qureshi, Morton and Antosz (2002) compared distance education students and on-campus students in terms of motivation. 174 students (DE = 79, On-campus = 95) were included in the study. A questionnaire was implemented for collecting data. The results of the quantitative analysis showed that DE students were less motivated than on-campus students.

Altunay (2013) investigated whether the EFL learners of the Turkish Open Education System had autonomous behaviours when learning English. The participants were 103 Anadolu University Open Education Faculty students who had the opportunity to take non-obligatory synchronous courses. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. The aim was to identify the activities which were performed or not performed by the distance EFL learners. The activities were seen as the indicator of learner autonomy. As they were not among the obligatory activities, the choice of their completion depended on learners. The results of the quantitative analysis of questionnaires showed that most of the participants did not have autonomous behaviours. They did not prefer receiving English education at a distance although they were taught by means of distance education.

Gebara (2010) compared the effectiveness of ADAPT (Active Discovery and Participation through Technology) and asynchronous distance learning in terms of academic success. ADAPT is a blended instructional model which combines computer-mediated instruction with the important features of face-to-face instruction (Tuckman, 2002). 103 undergraduate students participated in the study. 60 of them were placed in the blended learning group and 43 students were in a distance learning group. The decision to choose the distance learning group or the blended learning group was left to the participants. This made it possible for the participants to select a group without the interference of the researcher or the instructor. The research was done in relation to a 'Learning and Motivation' course. The course content, materials and required assignments were the same for both groups, as were the instructional and assessment learning activities. They were also presented entirely online. In both learning environments, the content was presented, practised and assessed in an online environment. The students in the blended learning group completed the curriculum in a campus-based computer laboratory including essential face-to-face instruction elements, such as having an instructor and a textbook, while the students in the distance learning group were instructed in an asynchronous way. The data related to the participants' profiles and scores were gathered from the records of the university and course and analysed to compare both groups. As a result, it was seen that there was not a significant difference between the blended learning group and distance learning group in terms of grades.

Bitlis (2011) conducted a study to explore the relationship between a blended learning environment and learner autonomy. 36 students from the tertiary level preparatory classes of a private university in Turkey were included in the study. The participants were given courses related to the four main language skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening), grammar, and vocabulary; there was also an online system integrated into the traditional face-to-face instruction in accordance with the instructed course book. The online system included audio files, practice sheets and exercises related to the above language skills. The content provided in face-to-face instruction was supported with online discussions and exercises. The students were asked to bring their personal computers to the classroom, and they were allowed one hour to complete their online assignments in the classroom with the guidance of the instructors. These materials provided within the online system could be also used outside of the classroom. In order to collect data, a questionnaire, interviews, researcher's classroom observations, and learner logs by which the students could record their reflections and experiences about their learning process were used. According to the data collected, it was seen that nearly all of the students could direct their own learning in terms of determining objectives, selecting materials in accordance with their learning goals, and deciding on what they would learn next; on the other hand, very few of the students needed guidance. The results also revealed that all of the students who participated in the study could evaluate their own learning process and plan their own learning.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Setting
The current research was conducted at the Civil Engineering, Agricultural Engineering and Veterinary Faculties of a state university in Turkey.

3.2. Participants
A total of 145 students were the participants of the main study. All of the participants were freshmen of Civil Engineering, Agricultural Engineering, or Veterinary Studies and were taught English as a core class. There was not a big difference between those faculties' university entrance exam scores and all of those faculties accepted students with the same score type. 114 of the 145 participants were in an ADL group who received English education through a totally asynchronous distance learning system. The other 31 were in a BL group which included both ADL processes and face-to-face instruction. The students of the BL group were chosen randomly and on a voluntary basis; they volunteered to take the time to have face-to-face English classes. The same curriculum was taught to both groups over 15 weeks.

3.3. Instruments
3.3.1. A package with a CD, course map and hard copies of worksheets
As explained previously, the ADL process is carried out by means of an online system at the university in question. For this study, some changes were made to the ADL process. Before the data collection process, a CD including the videos of a 15-week grammar course was prepared by the researcher; this is because the English curriculum for most of the freshman students at the university is based on grammar and the videos uploaded to the Distance Education System for the freshmen are also grammar-based. The subjects were at a beginner's level because an exemption exam was implemented before the academic year started. As a result, the students who were unsuccessful in that exam had to take English as a mandatory course and the successful ones became exempt from English. All of the participants were provided with a package including the CD of videos for 15 weeks, a course map showing the contents of the videos for each week, and a file of worksheets with an answer key. The reasons

for preparing the packages are as follows: as stated, an Internet connection is needed to watch the videos on the Distance Education Centre's online page. During the academic year, there may be some limitations for the students who wish to watch the videos – such as not having the opportunity to use the Internet – so the students were provided with the CD to ensure equality of opportunity with regard to following the determined subjects. All of the videos on the CD were recorded (with Camtasia) by one of the researchers to avoid the 'teacher factor' effect, just as the videos placed on the Distance Education Centre's system had been recorded by different instructors. The students were also able to download the videos to their smart phones. The subjects were taught in Turkish on the CDs because of the level of the students.

The course map was a paper showing each week's subject and related video; this enabled the participants to follow the videos, subjects and exercises. The exercises were the same as the ones placed on the University's online Distance Education System. They were printed out and copied for all 145 of the participants by the researcher. At the beginning of the term, a package containing a CD, course map and 15 weeks' worth of exercises (with an answer key) was delivered to all of the participants.

For the data collection, a questionnaire and two grammar tests were used as the instruments.

3.3.2. Questionnaire
A questionnaire was used to collect data for revealing the levels of ADL and BL students in terms of motivation and learner autonomy. The questionnaire included three parts. The questions stated in the first part aimed to reveal participants' profiles; in the second part there were 19 items about learners' motivation; and in the third part, there were 14 items related to learners' autonomy. The motivation items stated in the second part were adapted from Güneş (2011). The 14-item learner autonomy part was adapted from Bitlis (2011) after the permission process. Except for the actual questions, there were 33 items in the questionnaire in total. The reason for not choosing a very long questionnaire was related to implementing the questionnaire on the students' final exam day; this was because it was the only occasion on which all of the students were present (as they were taught through ADL).

Before implementing the questionnaire, a pilot study had been realized with 142 participants who would not be included in the main study. The reliability analyses for the second and third parts were realized. Cronbach's alpha value for the part concerning motivation was calculated to be 0,883; this means the instrument was highly reliable. Hotelling T2 was used in order to clarify the statistical difference between the items' means. The p value was calculated as .000 which was lower than the significance level (.05); this revealed a statistical significance between items' means with regard to motivation. Cronbach's alpha value for the learner autonomy segment of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0,850; again, this means the instrument was highly reliable. According to Hotelling T2, the calculated p value for this part was .000 which refers to a statistical significance between items' means. After the reliability analyses, explanatory factor analysis was also implemented. In order to clarify whether the data was appropriate for factor analysis or not, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test was implemented. The KMO Test value was 0,836 and the calculated p value was .000. These results revealed the appropriateness of the data set for the factor analysis. As the final step of the factor analysis, a Rotated Component Matrix was implemented. The rotation aimed to obtain interpretable and meaningful factors. Before the factor analysis, the questionnaire consisted of 34 items. As a result of the Rotated Component Matrix, one of the items was omitted as it was deemed unrelated. So, the questionnaire implemented contained 33 items (as well as the initial questions). Moreover, the items in the learner autonomy and motivation parts created factors within themselves; so, the analysis was done in terms of two factors (learner autonomy and motivation). After creating the final form, the questionnaire was implemented for the main study described here.

3.3.3. Tests
The students carried out two different tests related to grammar in the form of mid-term and final exams. Both of the tests (prepared by the researcher) included 10 multiple choice questions, 5 questions on sentence order, 5 questions on correcting mistakes and 5 cloze test questions. Three experts checked the tests in terms of validity, grammar and punctuation before they were implemented.

3.4. Procedure
Before the academic year started, required permissions were obtained from the Civil Engineering, Agricultural Engineering and Veterinary Faculties. The freshmen of those faculties were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The control group received the course map, a CD of videos, and a file of related exercises (with an accompanying answer key) and took on the responsibility of following the subjects. The students of this group were provided with the contact details of the instructor, such as their phone number and email address (in case they were needed).

The experimental group was included in the BL process; in this context BL refers to including students into the face to face instruction and ADL processes together. This group received the same materials in addition to being exposed one weekly hour-long face-to-face instruction. In these class hours, the subjects were taught by the instructor and the students had the opportunity to ask questions about the videos, interact with their peers and instructor, and practise their language skills. In the middle of the academic year, after 8 weeks of subjects had been taught, both groups had a mid-term exam and at the end of the academic term, they had a final test including questions related to all 15 weeks of course material. The questionnaire was completed by the participants on the day of the final exam, otherwise it would have been difficult to reach all of the students given the ADL process.

4. DATA ANALYSIS
For the analysis, data obtained from the questionnaires and tests were analysed in a quantitative way by means of SPSS. Before answering the research question — which, to remind ourselves, was 'Is there a statistically significant difference between asynchronous distance learning and blended learning in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success in teaching English?' — a Kolmogorov Smirnov Test was implemented to check the normality of the data. As a result, parametric tests were implemented as skewness and kurtosis values were between ±1. Mertler and Vannatta (2005) state that data can be considered normally distributed if the skewness and kurtosis values are between ±1, because the values do not show an extreme deviation in this situation (Mertler and Vannatta, 2005).

4.1. Is there a significant difference between ADL students and BL students in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success in teaching English?
In order to compare the ADL students and BL students with respect to learner autonomy and motivation, the results obtained through the quantitative analysis of questionnaires were used. Additionally, the groups were compared in their academic success by using their scores obtained through the implementation of the two aforementioned tests. In terms of a statistical analysis, an Independent Sample T-test was implemented to see if the two groups differed significantly in learner autonomy, motivation, and academic success. The overall results are stated in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Results of the Independent Sample T-test: ADL or BL*

	ADL			BL				
	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	P
Learner Autonomy	114	22.89	8.50	31	30.45	7.38	-4.510	0.001
Motivation	114	70.78	11.40	31	75.68	11.40	-2.121	0.036
Academic Success	114	41.84	13.88	31	63.42	14.46	-7.600	0.001

According to the results depicted in Table 1, a significant difference was found in terms of all the variables: learner autonomy, motivation and academic success ($p<0.05$), which means that the BL group performed better than the ADL group in relation to the mentioned variables. The ADL and BL groups were first compared in terms of learner autonomy. The results of the Independent Sample T-test revealed that the average of the BL students' autonomy scores was higher (=30.45), than that of the ADL students (=22.89).
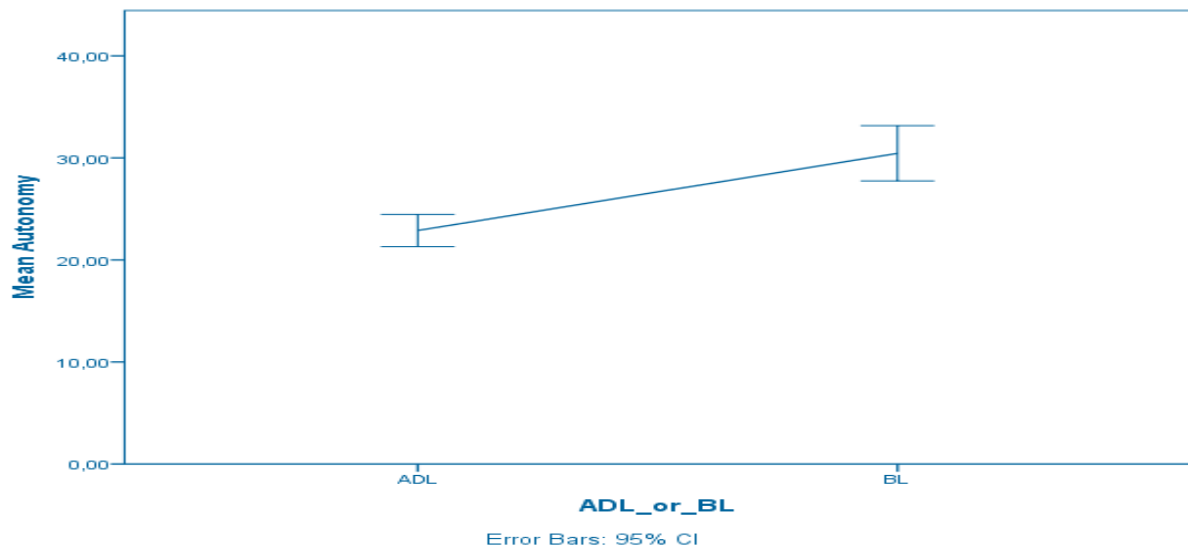
Figure 1. *ADL and BL groups in terms of learner autonomy*

This means that the BL group participants were more autonomous than the ADL students (as demonstrated in *Figure 1*). The significance value was .001 (p<0.05); therefore, the result is statistically significant.

Similarly, the mean motivation score of the students in the BL group was higher (=75.68) than that of the students in the ADL group (=70.78). This result was also statistically significant in that the p value was found to be .036, meaning that the students in the BL group were more motivated than the students of ADL group (see *Figure 2*).
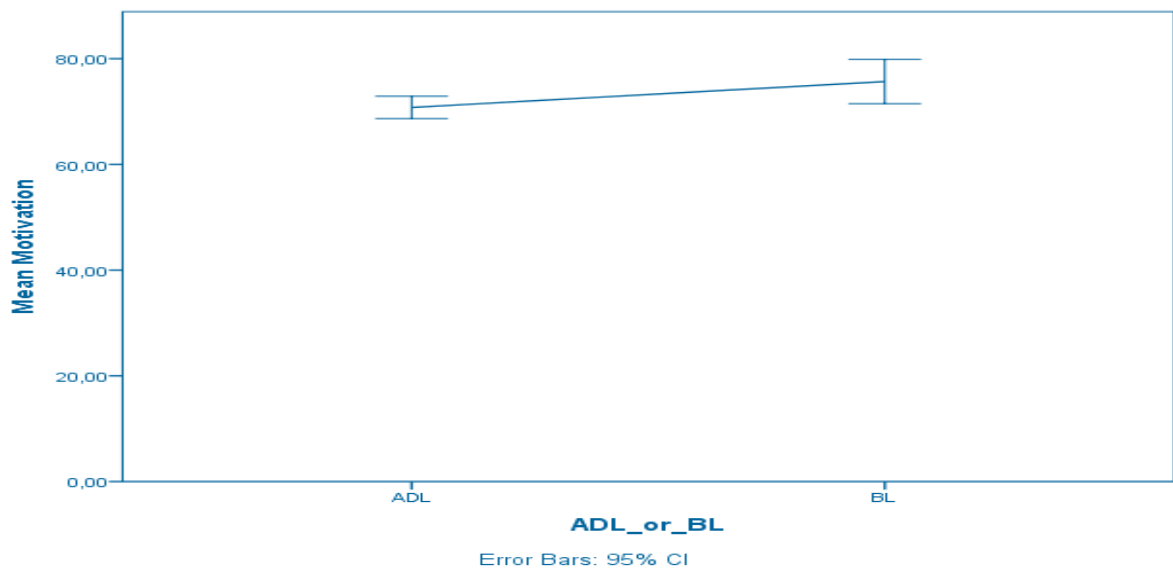

Figure 2. *ADL and BL groups in terms of motivation*

In the final stage of the comparison, the groups were examined in terms of academic success. In the comparison, a single mean score which was obtained by adding 40% of Test 1 and 60% of Test 2 was used (see Figure 3).
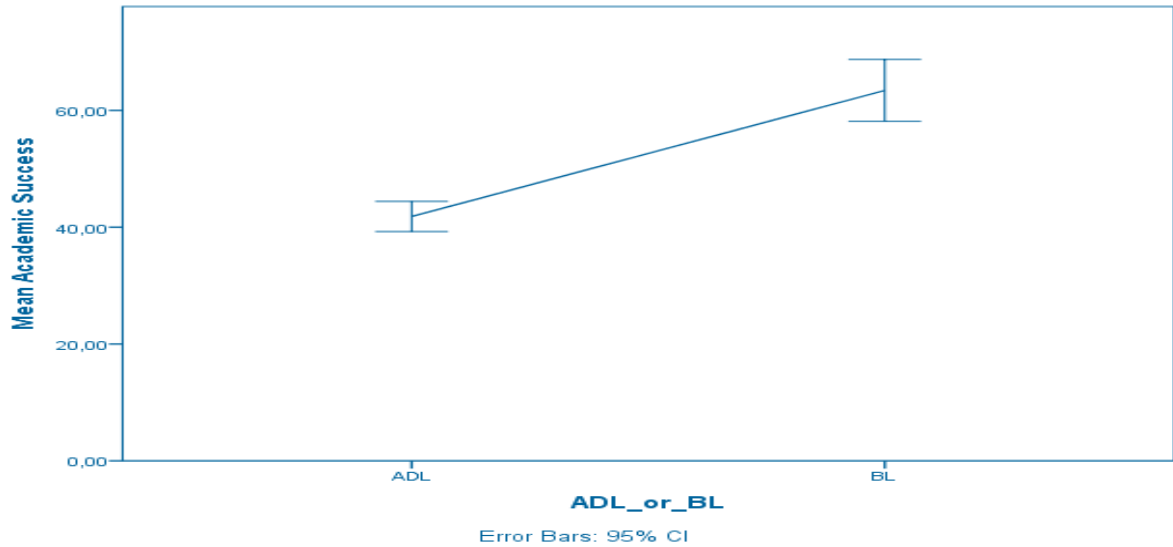
Figure 3. *ADL and BL groups in terms of academic success*

As seen in *Figure 3*, the BL students' academic success was higher than the ADL students' academic success. Additionally, *Figure 4* presents the mean scores of Test 1 and Test 2 for both groups. While it was 41.84 out of 100 points for the ADL students, the mean score of the BL students was 63,42 out of 100. It was seen that the mean score of the BL group was over 60, in other words the passing grade for those students (*Figure 4*).
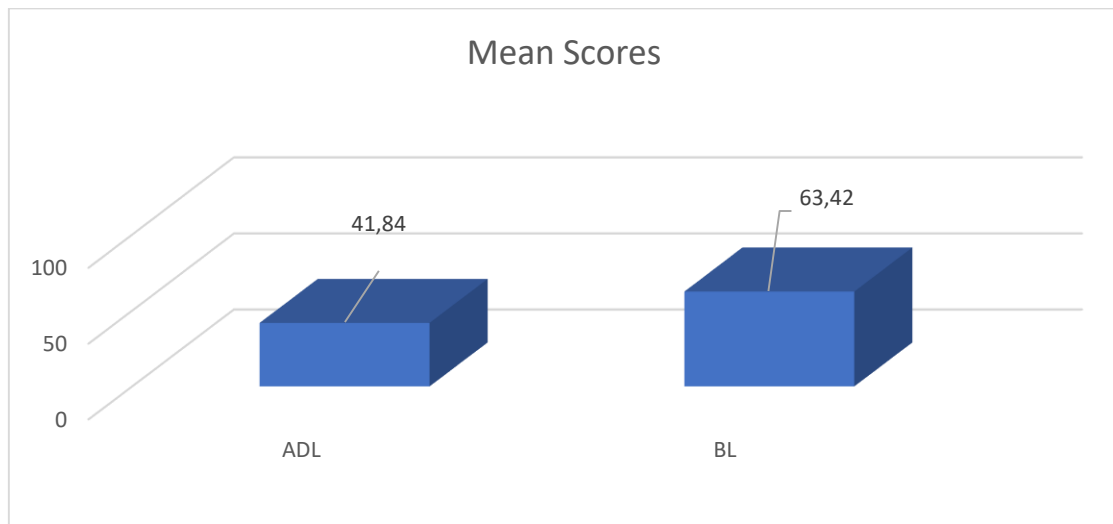

Figure 4. *Mean scores of ADL and BL groups for academic success*

To sum up the comparison of ADL and BL groups in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success, *Figure 5* is presented below. According to the bar chart below, the students in the BL group had higher scores than the ADL students in learner autonomy, motivation, and academic success variables.
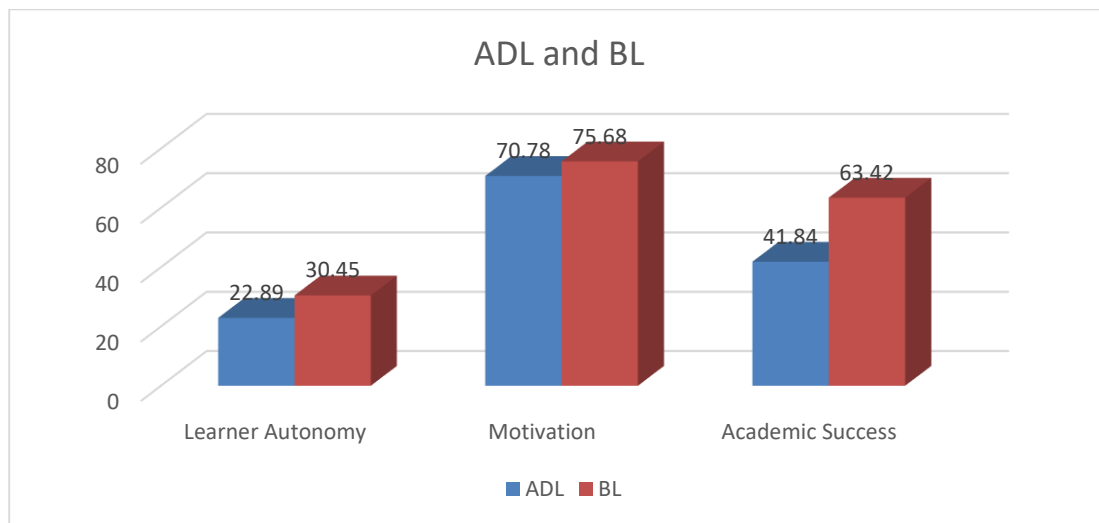
Figure 5. *Comparison of ADL and BL groups in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success.*

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to reveal whether there is a significant difference between the ADL students and the BL students in terms of learner autonomy, motivation, and academic success. Considering the questionnaire, there were 14 items for revealing participants' autonomy levels with a five-point Likert-scale (i.e., never, sometimes, no idea, often, and always). When 'always' is marked for all the given items, the maximum autonomy score is 70; when 'often' is chosen for all of the items, the autonomy score found is 56 (which also refers to participants presenting autonomous behaviours). When the ADL students were considered, only 28.1% were included in an asynchronous distance learning process in a frequent way. This means that only a small rate of the ADL students showed expected autonomous behaviours. The mean autonomy score for the ADL students was found to be 22.89 out of 70. On the other hand, the results of the current study revealed that 71% of the BL students fulfilled their responsibilities for supporting their classroom learning with ADL in a frequent manner. The mean autonomy score for BL students was 30.45. This shows that they followed the school subjects and directed their own learning out of the classroom as well. As for the comparison of ADL and BL groups' autonomy scores, it was seen that the ADL group's autonomy mean was 22.89, whereas the mean autonomy score was found to be 30.45 for the BL students. As stated previously, the learner autonomy items in the questionnaire were about how the students led their own English learning. The mean autonomy scores for both groups reported that the BL group had a higher rate than the ADL group. This shows that the BL students were more interested in following lectures on their own, on evaluating their learning process and understanding its strengths and weaknesses. Differently from the ADL students, the BL students had the opportunity to attend face-to-face classes, and the face-to-face part of their learning process became helpful to keep their connection with English. As a result, they felt more willing to follow the lectures out of the classroom and ask questions about the subjects they did not understand during their studies. The results of the current study in terms of learner autonomy revealed similar results with Bitlis (2011) and Wong (2020). Blended learning environments had positive effects on students' autonomy in both of those studies. Altunay's (2013) findings also supported the results of the current study related to the autonomy of ADL students. Altunay (2013) found that most of distance learning students who participated in the study were not autonomous in terms of directing their own learning at a distance. When Altunay's study is investigated deeply, it is seen that it was implemented to the students for whom English was a compulsory class like for the participants of the current study. As indicated previously, the participants of the current study were not the students of an English-related faculty. This might affect their autonomy level in a negative way. Additionally, in the current study, the instructor-involvement was not at a desired level; it is likely the students did not feel the benefit of the existence of an instructor who would potentially play an important role for guiding learners in the ADL process.

Additionally, when the ADL and BL students were compared in terms of their motivation – which, in the current context, refers to attitudinal behaviours and opinions – it was seen that the mean score of the ADL students' motivation was 70.78. The mean was 75.68 out of 95 for the BL students. Even though the results revealed that the BL students were more motivated than the ADL students, both of the groups could be considered motivated to learn English as a foreign language. The BL students were included in both face-to-face instruction and ADL processes; they had the opportunity to be exposed to English both in and out of the classroom. This might have had a positive effect on their motivation for learning English. The study of Qureshi et al. (2002) reached a similar

result in terms of motivation. They found that students educated at a distance are less motivated than on-campus students. Wong et al. (2020) revealed that BL processes have better results than conventional learning in terms of motivation. On the other hand, Cavanaugh et al. (2004) revealed that there was no significant difference between on-campus students and DL students in terms of motivation. As can be understood from the definition of Thronbury (2006), motivation is accepted as an important aspect of the learning process, declaring that it is "what drives learners to achieve a goal and is a key factor in determining success or failure in language learning." (p. 137). The importance of motivation should also be considered in virtual learning environments where the students need to control their educational process on their own. Both the current study and some other studies (Quershi et al., 2002; Wong et al., 2020) revealed that BL environments affect students' motivation in a positive way. By means of the BL environments, the connection between students and their respective class is kept both in and out of the classroom.

As for the academic success comparison of the ADL and BL students, two tests were implemented in the form of mid-term and final exams. 40% of the Test 1 score (mid-term exam) and 60% of the Test 2 score (final exam) were added to give a mean score; 60 was considered as the criterion or benchmark for success. The results of the quantitative analysis obtained through SPSS showed that 48.4% of the BL students were successful, while this rate was just 15.8% for the ADL students. The mean score in terms of Test 1 and Test 2 was calculated at 41.84 out of 100 for the ADL students, whereas it was 63.42 for the BL students. The results revealed that the BL students performed better than the ADL students. In terms of the groups' learning processes, it should be stated that the ADL students were not included in face-to-face instruction and when their answers to autonomy items in the questionnaire were checked, it was discovered that most of the ADL students had not watched the videos regularly. Indeed, some of them had not even watched them. It was seen that the average of the BL group was over 60 which was the passing grade for the students. As stated before, 51.6% of the BL students were deemed 'unsuccessful'; this refers to 16 of the 31 students in the BL group. However, it should not be ignored that all of the students who had a mean score of two tests below 60 were declared unsuccessful even if they had a mean score of 59, and the ones who were deemed successful had a mean score of over 60, no matter how much higher it was than the determined criteria (60). When the successful students in the BL group were examined, it was calculated that some of them even had a mean score of 80. The results revealed that the BL students who were included both in the ADL process and face-to-face instruction were more successful than those ADL students who were included only in the ADL process. The current study has presented some common points with some other studies, such as Al-Qahtani and Higgins (2013) and Dodero et al. (2003). Al-Qahtani and Higgins (2013) found that BL students were better than e-learning students in terms of academic success. As a result of 45 empirical studies, Slomanson (2014) reached a similar result in terms of student outcome; it was concluded that BL was better than purely online instruction. Dodero et al. (2003) conducted a similar study which compared a virtual learning environment with blended learning environment in pass level. In the study, blended learning students performed better academically. On the other hand, the related result of the current study is not consistent with the result of Gebara's study (2010). Gebara (2010) found that BL students and ADL students were not different in terms of academic success.

As seen, most of the research studies revealed better results for BL students when compared with those undertaking (A)DL. In a BL environment, the students may look to the advantages of virtual and face to face learning environments together; they receive the guidance and feedback of their instructor(s) which might affect their autonomy, motivation and achievement in a positive way.

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that the BL students' autonomy, motivation and academic success levels were higher than those of the ADL students. At the beginning of the research study, the students who were from similar English studying backgrounds and had similar university entrance exam scores were separated into the ADL and BL groups. Both groups had the same curriculum over the same time span and their success was assessed by means of the same exams in the same environment. The BL students' having better results in terms of all of the related aspects has drawn the attention towards the BL process. The differences between ADL and BL processes were face-to-face instruction and the interaction which takes place in a BL environment. This reveals the importance of face-to-face instruction and communication in technology-enhanced language education. It can be inferred from the results of the current study that in a distance learning process, especially in asynchronous distance learning, the students can be affected negatively in their autonomy, motivation, and academic success as a result of the absence of a face-to-face environment or instructor-involvement in such a context. In the current context, the ADL students were given too many responsibilities in order to manage their learning process of English, and they were not included in a face-to-face learning/teaching environment. The results showed that the ADL students were unable to steer their language learning process on their own and without a face-to-face learning environment or instructor guidance. They could not succeed at learning English. Therefore, the students who are taught foreign language at a distance should not be left alone with all of the foreign language learning

responsibilities as their motivation and willingness to follow the content of the English courses out of the classroom in an asynchronous distance learning environment may be affected negatively because of the absence of face-to-face contact or instructor-involvement in their learning processes.

Indeed, BL students' having better results in terms of learner autonomy, motivation and academic success draws attention to the necessity of involvement or continuous guidance of an instructor, either in a classroom or a virtual environment. This may be what makes BL a more effective way of teaching. When the literature related to asynchronous distance learning is analysed, it is seen that there is much more instructor-involvement in an ADL process; this may be through any kind of technology (Wong et al., 2020). A much higher level of instructor-involvement may bring more interaction between the lecturer and students.

The research studies conducted around the world reveal that distance education processes (synchronous or asynchronous) may be as effective as face-to-face instruction (Moore & Thompson, 1990); so, it is important to be aware of the features and qualifications of an effective distance education process. In terms of the current context, while implementing ADL, there seems to be some deficiencies which may affect the results. The minimum level of instructor-involvement in the ADL process may result in: leaving students alone with all of the responsibilities of the learning process without adequate guidance; only assessing academic success with two exams or one implemented at the end of the term (with a minimum level of interaction during the term); and not being able to check whether the students watch the videos and do the exercises of the related videos on a weekly basis. All these deficiencies resulting from the ADL process might leave it behind the BL process in its general performance and efficiency.

The effect of motivation on academic success and learner autonomy may be considered to have better results in terms of these aspects (Abdurrahman and Garba, 2014; Hashemian and Soureshjani, 2011; Spratt, Humphreys and Chan, 2002). Keller's instructional model, known as ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction), may be helpful to keep learners' motivation for active learning (Keller, 2000; Song and Keller, 1999). Considering this model, additional components may be added to the ADL process; indeed, the positive effect of this model has been revealed in terms of teaching at a distance (Malik, 2014). To keep students' attention alive, more instructor-involvement and more interaction both between instructor and students and amongst students themselves should be provided; this may be achieved through discussion posts, e-mails, and frequent announcements done by the instructor. As stated previously, English is a compulsory class for both groups of this study. The content of mostly grammar-based videos and materials existing in the ADL process may be enriched related to the major of the students for a higher level of both attention and relevance. In the current context, the academic success was assessed by means of mid-term and final exams for both groups; in order to show the students that their efforts work and they can accomplish the objectives, they may be actively included in the learning process by different assignments or activities, and process-based assessment tools may be used. Attending the ADL process in a more motivated manner may take students' autonomy and academic success a step further.

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