



# Teachers' Opinions on Teaching Primary Reading and Writing through Distance Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period<sup>1</sup>

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## Article Info

## ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to examine the positive and negative aspects of primary teaching reading and writing through distance education during the Covid-19 Pandemic period from the eyes of primary school 1st-grade teachers. The case study was determined as the method of the study. The participants were ten primary school teachers who teach 1st grades in a primary school located in one of the central districts of Mersin province. A semi-structured interview form was used to obtain data in line with the purpose of the study. The findings showed more negative aspects in teaching reading and writing with distance education. Among the negativities, the most mentioned issue by the participant teachers was the problematic writing of the students. In addition, they also highlighted the situations such as not being able to contact the students, indifference of the parents, not obeying the classroom rules such as unauthorized speaking and raising their hands. According to the opinions of the participants, it was stated that the use of distance education is not suitable for teaching reading and writing skills in general, and face-to-face education is needed for this. The problems encountered in this process are presented under four main headings. These are: "Problems originating from parents, technical problems, problems related to the learning-teaching process, and problems related to the learning environment". In order to overcome the problems faced by the teachers, Trying to involve parents more in the process has been the most used solution.

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## INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 2019, cases of pneumonia of unknown cause were reported in many people in Wuhan, China. At the beginning of January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the pneumonia in question was caused by a new type of Coronavirus. caused pneumonia in question. With the new type of Coronavirus spread of the new type of Coronavirus to other regions in China in a short time and then to the whole world, WHO declared the Covid-19 Pandemic. The calendars showed March 11, 2020, on the day when the first case appeared in Turkey and the Pandemic was declared (TÜBA, 2020). This situation, which we encountered for the first time globally, put countries in a crisis situation. The increasing length of time students stay out of school has led to concerns about learning losses. This has compelled the majority of countries around the world to take urgent measures to continue teaching and prevent potential learning losses. Countries have applied various distance or hybrid education applications to reduce learning losses and eliminate deficiencies in their technological infrastructure and possibilities (TEDMEM, 2020). During this difficult and troubling period that lasted for about two years, schools worldwide were either mostly or partially closed.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had an almost universal impact on students and teachers around the world, from pre-school and primary to high schools, from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions to adult learning and skills development institutions and even universities, causing the most significant education disruption in history (United Nations, 2020). As Goldstein (2022) points out, for example, children who just started primary school spent months outside of the classroom instead, where they needed to learn the ABC, the alphabet, and how to read and write. Many first and second graders are back in the classroom needing to revise parts of the kindergarten curriculum. However, according to a local survey in December and January, there was a significant gap in learning and teaching in nearly half of public schools, particularly in special education and primary school classrooms.

With the official announcement of the Pandemic in Turkey, face-to-face education was suspended in all schools and universities affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and education and training activities began to be carried out entirely with emergency remote learning. The following academic year, the 2020-2021 academic year, the Ministry of National Education decided to start with an education that combines face-to-face and online education (hybrid education). However, due to the dramatic increase in the number of Coronavirus cases from autumn to winter, it was returned to online education again a few weeks later. In the same education year, in February 2021, face-to-face education was started again. But, a few weeks later, due to the increase in cases, online education was returned, and the year 2020-2021 was mostly completed in the form of emergency remote learning. In 2021-2022, both the decrease in the number of cases and the increase in the vaccination rate allowed face-to-face education to start in schools, and face-to-face education was carried out in this education year.

In the emergency distance education process, MoNE has started distance education activities so that education and training activities are not disrupted, and students are not disconnected from the learning process. For this, first of all, by structuring the television version of the platform that serves teachers and students in the digital environment under the name of Education Informatics Network (EBA), it has been tried to reach students through television in primary, secondary, and high school levels (MEB, 2020). In the following process, the practice of conducting distance education activities through a live meeting program on EBA through simultaneous (live) lessons was started, based on limitations such as the difficulty of watching television broadcasts by students, the lack of teacher-student interaction and the inability to perform feedback-correction processes. Due to the sudden start of the distance education process and the fact that both teachers and students were caught unprepared for this process, there were some serious problems in the online courses, especially at first.

In this process, various important problems or limitations were encountered, including some

students' internet access and connection problems, students' inability to attend courses adequately, and parents' inexperience in distance education (Kızıldağ & Özdemir, 2021; Ülker, 2021; Saygı, 2021). In addition, the inability of parents to provide adequate support to their children in this process, the financial impossibilities of parents, teachers' inability to use live lesson programs and other digital teaching resources effectively, the interruption of the learning-teaching process, the inability to perform measurement and evaluation activities reliably and effectively were other important problems. In the next period, the problems experienced at the beginning of the distance education application tended to decrease partially with the more systematic and professional management of the process by the Ministry of National Education, as well as the experience of teachers in using digital programs applications and environments.

Of course, in this process, students and teachers at all levels of education, from pre-school to university, faced various difficulties, problems, and negative situations. While unique problems are observed at each education and class level, it can be said that those who are most affected by this process are undoubtedly primary school 1st-grade students and teachers. As reported by D'Souza (2021), the Pandemic has touched many students with increased stress, interruptions, and distance learning barriers, but experts have stated that the biggest impact may be on the youngest students who are in the first years of learning to read. Perhaps the foremost reason for this is that this student group must learn their reading and writing skills in the first grade of primary school.

COVID-19 has caused significant disruptions to the global education system. Initial investigations into the first wave of lockdowns and school closures revealed significant learning loss in several countries. A more recent and comprehensive analysis of the evidence of recorded learning loss documented since the start of school closures between March 2020 and March 2022 finds even more evidence of learning loss. The findings of studies conducted during this period confirm that learning loss is real and significant even compared to the first year of the Pandemic (Patrinos, Vegas & Carter-Rau, 2022). In these studies, on teaching reading and writing and students' learning losses on this subject during the pandemic period, it has been reported that there are significant regressions or losses in the reading and writing skills and academic success of the students compared to the pre-Pandemic period. For example, in December 2020, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) research team published a report outlining how students are progressing academically in the early phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as measured by the NWEA MAP® Growth™ assessment. According to the findings, an average of 3-6% decreases were observed in the reading achievement of the students in the 3rd-8th grades in the sample group compared to the previous academic year, 2019-2020 (Lewis & Kuhfeld, 2021). In another study conducted in the USA, in the pre-pandemic period, 19% of primary school 2nd-grade students started two grades behind in terms of reading skills, while the rate of students lagging behind due to the epidemic increased to 25%. This study shows that school closures due to COVID-19 also negatively affect students' readiness for the next grade level (TEDMEM, 2021). In a study by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the number of children who lacked basic reading skills was on a downward curve before the Pandemic, and this number was expected to fall from 483 million to 460 million in 2020. However, the number of children in distress due to the Pandemic jumped to 584 million in 2020, increasing by more than 20%, destroying the gains made by education efforts over the past two decades (UNESCO, 2021). The results of a study conducted with a total of 4,290 students in the 9-10 age group in 111 primary schools in Germany showed that there was a significant decrease in the average reading success of students during the Covid-19 Pandemic period (Ludewig, Kleinkorres, Schaufelberger & McElvany, 2022).

Primary school is undoubtedly a period in which individuals acquire basic knowledge, skills, habits, and competencies that they will use throughout their education life and even their professional life. In this respect, it can be said that primary school is a more important place than other education levels. Sağırılı (2019) also drew attention to this and stated that primary school has a different place,

function, and importance in the entire education system, affecting all education levels. He also emphasized that the most important stage of the primary school period that should be emphasized is the first grade process of primary school, which is probably the beginning of the transition from the family environment to a completely different environment the first time. In this process and at the grade level, the primary applications of the learning-teaching process come first, and the first reading and writing activities are the first learning experience in the lives of the children in this class. Akyol and Temur (2008) similarly emphasized that primary school has a major role in the acquisition and development of reading and writing skills and stated that primary school is the institution that first encounters students who have problems in this regard, works with them or directs them to relevant places. Besides, since school is the environment where students spend the most time after their families, it can be said that classroom teachers are the most influential people after families. On the other hand, as Akyol (2011) emphasized, primary school is a process in which students acquire and develop skills such as not only being able to read and write but also using Turkish correctly, effectively and beautifully, solving problems, communicating and making decisions.

Since this study focuses on teaching reading and writing through distance education during the pandemic period, it would be appropriate to briefly examine the concepts of reading and writing. The concept of reading is defined as "*reading and recitation*" in "Current Turkish Dictionary" published by Turkish Language Institution (TDK, 2022). Akyol (2011), on the other hand, defined it as "*the process of constructing meaning, based on the communication between the author and the reader, with preliminary information, carried out with an appropriate method and purpose*". According to Güneş (2009), "reading is based on two basic skills: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition is the most important and difficult stage of the reading process. Reading is the process of giving meaning to the written text, and effective primary reading education enables children to become good readers who understand what they read, can apply their knowledge and skills to new situations, and have a strong desire for reading (Ontorio, 2003, cited in Bay, 2021). As for the concept of writing, it can be defined as "*expressing feelings and thoughts by producing/using some necessary symbols or signs*" (Akyol, 2011; Yılar, 2019). A significant part of the studies in the learning and teaching processes at school is based on writing. Writing is the most basic activity that enables school-age children to create a readable product at an appropriate time to express their feelings and thoughts. Writing is a complex activity consisting of cognitive, kinesthetic and perceptual-motor components (As cited in Yıldız, 2013).

The first reading and writing activities are carried out within the scope of the Turkish curriculum in primary school. Outcomes in the Turkish Curriculum; are grouped as "listening/watching, speaking, reading and writing skills" and are taught accordingly. First, reading and writing have an important place in the Turkish curriculum. It was stated that "Sound Based Primary Reading and Writing Teaching" was adopted in the program and that the first literacy teaching was carried out with upright basic letters without quotation marks, and that the initial reading writing teaching was not limited to basic reading and writing skills. According to the Turkish curriculum, primary reading and writing teaching has an important role in developing mental skills such as thinking, understanding, sequencing, classification, questioning, relating, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In this context, primary reading and writing teaching is aimed at which the skills to use Turkish correctly, beautifully and effectively are acquired (MEB, 2019).

The reason why primary school education is very important in the lives of individuals is that qualified reading and writing skills are acquired in this period and this has a permanent effect on the rest of their lives. As Babayığıt and Erkuş (2017) stated, the first reading and writing teaching is of vital importance for the future education and life of the individual. Well-founded reading and writing skills are effective and very useful in the future. As a result of mistakes or deficiencies made during this period, both the reading and writing skills of the student and their attitude towards them can be

negatively affected. On the other hand, the most failures among classes are generally seen in the first grades of primary school, and the area where students have the most difficulty and fail is literacy (Sağırlı, 2019). Savolainen, Ahonen, Aro, Tolvanen and Holopainen (2008) reported that according to the findings of various studies on this subject, students who have difficulty or fail in reading and writing in the early stages of education have low academic achievement. These students are also less likely to continue and graduate from secondary and post-secondary education, and they graduate with lower qualifications. Besides they have a more negative attitude towards school and a lower academic self-concept. In this respect, face-to-face education and training processes are very important in order for the first reading and writing teaching to be taught effectively by teachers and to be learned by students as well. In this learning and teaching process, the teacher teaches students both reading and activities based on the active participation. In addition, as Güneş (2009) pointed out, the teacher has a very important role in the success of the first reading and writing teaching. In this process, the teacher needs to deal with students one-on-one, correct their mistakes, give accurate and timely feedback to students, and manage the process in the most effective way by communicating effectively with parents.

Despite the fact that face-to-face education has a very important place in the learning and teaching of the primary school period, which forms the basis of both individuals' future learning experiences and education systems, and more specifically, reading and writing skills, due to the interruption of education in schools and the transition to distance education due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, primary school 1st-grade students had to learn their first reading and writing skills, as well as the knowledge and skills in other courses, through distance online teaching environments and tools. By reason of pandemic conditions that suddenly emerged with the whole world, education and training activities in Turkey have been switched to distance education urgently and compulsory. In this way, despite some problems and setbacks, it aims to prevent students from being disconnected from the lessons and learning process.

In this context, it is necessary to dwell on the concept of distance education. Distance education, as stated by Yalın (2015), is an instructional system in which the teacher and student(s) who are physically in separate places interact with a large number of teaching materials and methods (computer, internet, television, written and visual materials, pictures, videos etc.) or perform learning and teaching activities. According to Simonson (2009, 2010), it is an institutional-based, formal education type where the learning group (learners) is in different places and interactive telecommunication systems are used to connect learners, resources and instructors (As cited by Simonson, Smaldino and Zvacek, 2015: 31). Educators can conduct distance education courses synchronously (simultaneously) or asynchronously. In the synchronous lesson, students and the instructor can communicate with each other live in the virtual classroom environment (Serçemeli & Kurnaz, 2020: 42). Asynchronous learning and teaching activities, on the other hand, are the distance education type in which the students watch the videos previously taken by the teacher/instructor whenever and wherever they want (Turan, 2019) and the lessons are not taught live. Asynchronous teaching materials include online resources such as books, other written materials, documents uploaded on the web and made available to students, videos, various visuals and images, forums, tests, exams etc.

Distance education, which suddenly entered our lives, is not a new concept. This contemporary education model, whose history goes back as far as 150 years, was initially published in books, magazines, brochures, lecture notes, etc. While it was applied with written materials, large masses were reached through radio and television broadcasts in the following years. Since the 1990s, distance education activities have gained a different dimension by using it in an integrated way with the computer, with the emergence of the internet and its rapid spread worldwide. For nearly 20 years, online distance education systems have been widely applied, first in adult education and then at the university level, over the internet. However, in recent years, it has been seen that distance education has been used in both formal and non-formal education processes at primary and higher levels.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the compulsory implementation of distance education in all schools from primary school to university level since March 2020 has brought up the quality of the distance education activities, the current situation, the problems encountered, and how to overcome them. In this context, this study was carried out in order to seek answers to the questions of how the first reading and writing teaching, which should be done through face-to-face education in the most effective way, is done through distance education, and what are the problems encountered in this process and what are the solutions. Therefore, these questions also constitute the main problem statement of this study. Accordingly, it is expected that the findings of this study are important in terms of giving answers to the above questions and will also give ideas to all primary school teachers, especially the teachers who teach the 1st grade and other educators who are interested in the subject, and parents.

## METHOD

### Model of the Study

This study, which aims to examine how the first reading and writing teaching is carried out through distance education, was designed according to the qualitative model. The "case study" method was determined as the method of the study. The case study is a method frequently used by researchers because it is a method that allows for in-depth data collection and is preferred to collect data in a qualitative way. According to Yin (1984, as cited in Merriam, 2013: 40), "*a case study is an empirical qualitative research design that examines a current phenomenon with its real-life context (especially if the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear)*". The situation examined in this study was determined as the first reading and writing teaching practices carried out through distance education during the Covid-19 Pandemic period.

### The Study Group

Participants are 10 first-grade primary school teachers who teach in a primary school in one of the central districts of Mersin province. Participants are between the ages of 27-51, 6 of them are women, and 4 of them are men. Volunteering was taken as a basis while interviewing the participants.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Gender	Age	Seniority
Female	42	20
Male	36	11
Female	36	14
Female	32	11
Female	27	14
Female	35	13
Female	50	24
Male	40	15
Male	32	10
Male	51	31

### Data Collection

A personal information form was used to collect the demographic information of the teachers participating in the study, and a semi-structured interview form was used to determine the teachers' opinions about the first reading and writing teaching examined in the study. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018), in semi-structured interviews, the researcher has the opportunity to both ask pre-prepared questions and ask additional questions in order to get more detailed information about these questions by staying true to the subject or areas that he has prepared in advance. Another advantage of the semi-structured interview is its flexibility. The researcher can change the order and structure of the

questions during the interview and can go deeper with new questions at the points he deems important.

In the process of developing the interview form, firstly, the relevant literature was examined. The questions in the draft interview form were prepared by the researchers, and the opinions of two instructors, who were determined as experts for content validity, were sought. Some minor changes and corrections were made to the questions, taking into account the experts' opinions on the suggestions for additions, deletions, and corrections on the form. The percentage of consensus among the expert opinions was calculated using the Miles and Huberman formula ( $\text{Consensus} / \text{Difference of Opinion} + \text{Consensus} * 100$ ), and the percentage of consensus was around 90%. The questions in the interview form were then directed to two teachers for pre-application. The teachers who made the pilot application stated that the questions in the interview form were very clear and understandable. Accordingly, it can be said that the content validity and application reliability of the interview form is high. After these procedures, the interview form was applied to the teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study's sample group in the second semester (in March) of the 2020-2021 academic year. Due to the risk of face-to-face meetings due to the Pandemic, the interviews were held remotely through one of the online meeting programs and lasted between 10 and 20 minutes.

### Analysis of Data

In the data analysis, the "descriptive analysis" technique, which is frequently used in qualitative studies, was used. According to Şahin (2017: 190), descriptive analysis; “*is a type of qualitative analysis based on summarizing and presenting the collected data according to predetermined themes*”. In this analysis, direct quotations are frequently used to reflect the views of the individuals interviewed or observed strikingly. As a result of the analysis made in this study, codes were extracted from the answers given by the teachers, and themes were created according to these codes. These codes and themes formed the study's main findings, and each finding title was created according to the questions in the interview form. The findings were described in summary form, and then the teachers' views on the subject were given as direct quotations. The purpose of including direct quotations in the findings section is to ensure the transferability of the data and thus increase the reliability of the study.

### FINDINGS

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the answers given by the 1st-grade teachers who constituted the study participants to the questions in the interview form are described and interpreted in this section, and the views of some participants are presented as direct quotations.

#### 1. Findings Concerning the Opinions on Teaching Reading and Writing Through Distance Education (Online/Online) During the Pandemic Period

**Table 2.** Opinions of participants on teaching the first reading and writing through distance education during the pandemic period

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Presenting visual materials (f:3)	Problematic student writings (f:5)
Parents' involvement with their children (f:3)	Not being able to contact students (f:5)
Using interactive games (f:2)	Parents' indifference (f:2)
Using technological tools	Classroom rules (f:2)
Using Web 2 tools	Notebook use (f:2)
	Inability to concretize the topics
	Inability to follow eye splatter
	Difficulty controlling the lesson

Lack of motivation

Teachers' distraction

As seen in the table above, when the opinions of the participating teachers are examined, it is seen that the negative aspects of the first reading and writing teaching through distance education are emphasized more during the pandemic period. The most stated negative aspects are "problematic student writings (f:5), not being able to contact students (f:5), parents' indifference (f:2), classroom rules (f:2), and notebook use (f:2)". Apart from these, the participants stated that they had difficulty controlling the students, their motivation was low, and they were distracted by the factors at home (such as children and housework) during the live lesson. On the other hand, the situations that teachers consider positive in this process are expressed as "presentation of visual materials in online education processes, interactive games, parents' one-to-one care with children, use of interactive games, use of technological/digital tools and use of web 2.0 tools".

The opinions of two participants on this issue are given below in direct quotation:

"At this time, when we started face-to-face education, we see that there is no writing; children write backward and between the wrong lines. Some even write unreadable texts. There are also good writers, of course, but it is seen that reading is a bit, but writing is not fully taught in distance education."

"On the subject of reading, we can say that most of those whose family is concerned to have switched to reading, and I can even say that there is no student in my class who attends live classes regularly but does not switch to reading and writing. On the positive side, it has become easier to reflect the information in the unlimited environment of the internet to the students."

## 2. Findings Regarding the Opinions on the Problems Encountered in the Initial Reading and Writing Teaching Process as Distance Online Education

Two participants stated that they did not experience significant problems in teaching reading and writing in distance education. According to the answers the other participants gave, 4 (four) themes of the codes emerged. It is seen that there are "problems originating from parents, technical problems, problems related to the learning-teaching process, and problems related to the learning environment".

**Table 3.** Problems encountered by participants in the process of initial reading and writing teaching with distance education

Problems with parents	Technical problems	Problems related to the learning-teaching process	Problems related to the learning environment
Parents' intervention in the lesson (f:4)	The problem in entering the lesson (f:5)	Errors in writing (f:5)	Having the television on (f:2)
Parents constantly texting (f:2)	Not everyone can participate (f:4)	Some students do not want to attend class	Other children attending a live lesson in the same room
Witnessing the daily life of families (f:2)		Making sounds	Inappropriateness for peer teaching
Teaching students by placing vowels next to consonants		Homework check	
Failure to send homework to the teacher		Feedback and correction	

According to the findings, the participants emphasized that there were mostly parent-related problems in the first reading and writing teaching with distance education. Teachers expressed the following views on this issue. "Parents interfere with the lesson" (f:4), "they send too many messages on the same subject" (f:2) and "daily lives of parents are reflected on the screen" (f:2)". Apart from this, the most common technical issues are "problems in entering live lessons" (f:5) and "not every student can attend the lesson" (f:5). The most important of the problems related to the learning-teaching process was expressed as "the students' writings are not correct" (f:5). In addition, it was stated that there were problems in the "feedback-correction". Problems such as

"the TV being on" and "the fact that "other children attend the life lesson in the same room cause noise" were mentioned as problems related to the teaching environment.

Two participant teachers' opinions are as follows:

*"For example, we could not control the spelling of sounds. Now I see that he writes according to his head and it is difficult to change it after this time. They make different sounds, instead of saying sh, he just wrote an umbrella when he should have written it wrongly."*

*"The issue I complained about the most was the parents. Although I have warned them many times during the lesson, they are still in that environment, and the classroom environment is private for the student and the teacher. You feel like you have been invaded. Sometimes the TV was on, and the boy was watching TV in that room with one eye on me and the other on me. I had a lot of trouble with this."*

### 3. Findings Concerning the Opinions of Participating Teachers on How They Overcome the Problems Encountered

The findings of the answers given to the question "What do you do to solve or overcome the problems you encounter in this process?" directed to the participants are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Views of teachers on how they overcome the problems encountered

Solutions for problems related to the learning-teaching process	Solutions for technical problems	Solutions for problems arising from parents and related to the learning environment
Involving families more in the process (f:5)	Delivering homework to students who cannot attend	Meeting with parent (f:4)
Correcting the deficiencies when switching to face-to-face training (f:3)	Do not invite the student to your home	
Inviting children to school, meeting face to face (f:3)		
Increasing control (f:2)		
Divide the class into groups (f:2)		
Applying methods such as flipped learning		
Informing parents about literacy teaching		

As can be seen in table 4, the most important problems faced by the participating teachers were the situations related to the learning-teaching process, and in order to overcome the problems in this regard, solutions were mostly tried to be produced as "encouraging families/parents to be more involved in the process", while "face-to-face" It was also stated that solution suggestions such as correcting mistakes and mistakes when starting education", "inviting children to school and meeting face to face", "increasing control in online lessons", "using flipped learning method" and "dividing the class into groups" were put into practice. On the other hand, it was observed that the participants mostly preferred to "talk to the parents" for the problems caused by the parents. In addition, it was stated that teachers tried to solve the technical problems they experienced in this process, such as "delivering homework to students who could not attend" and "informing the student by calling their home or giving homework and documents".

The opinions of two participants are given below in direct quotation:

*"... when I told other groups to write, they said that they had no problems. But on the way back, we knitted that there were problems in all classes. I tried to control it constantly, I tried to control it, but I still think that it is not effective. Because I think that it cannot be done without holding the child's hand and following his writing, which did not happen anyway."*

*"... I was in contact with the parents, sometimes they sent their notebooks, but actually I am doing the main editing now in hybrid education. Because the support of parents is very important in every field of education, especially in the first grade, I always say that teachers, students, and parents are like a pillar."*

*If there is no parent, the student will fall behind because..."*

#### 4. Findings of the Opinions of the Participants on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading and Writing Teaching Through Distance Education Compared to Face-to-Face Education

The findings of the answers given to the question “What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of literacy education through distance education compared to face-to-face education?” directed to the participants are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** *Opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of literacy teaching through distance education compared to face-to-face education*

Advantages	Disadvantages
Easy presentation of visual materials (f:4) (f:4)	Parents being with the student (f:3)
Parents being with the student (f:3)	Experiencing technical problems (f:2)
Increasing technological literacy (f:3)	Lesson planning is more difficult
Easy classroom management	Houses are not suitable for education
Increasing students' learning responsibilities	Too much screen exposure
Providing flexibility	Not every student can attend class
Saving time	Difficult to communicate
	Not as serious as face-to-face training
	Less effective teaching

According to the opinions of the participating teachers, the most advantageous point of teaching reading and writing through distance education was stated as "the ease of presentation of visual materials (f:4)". In addition, other issues that are seen as an advantage are expressed as "the distance education process increases technological literacy (f: 3)" and "the presence of parents with the student (f: 3)". On the other hand, the most important issue seen as negative or disadvantageous by the participants was stated as “parents being with the students (f:3)”. The point that draws attention in this regard is that while this opinion was evaluated positively by three teachers, other three teachers considered it a disadvantage for parents to be in the same environment with the students during the lesson. Apart from this view, other situations that participant teachers consider as disadvantages are as follows; “Experiencing technical problems”, “lesson planning is more difficult than face-to-face education”, “students’ home are not suitable for education”, “students are exposed to too many screens”, “not every student can attend the lesson”.

Two participants’ opinions are as follows:

*"The advantageous aspects were very few, in fact, it was good in terms of video and sound in terms of visual materials, other than that, there were too many disadvantages, for example, their home was not an educational environment. They had internet problems because families were more interested, they gave the wrong things, it was harder to block back, which is more difficult to fix."*

*"In general, the most advantageous aspect is the use of web 2.0 tools, technology, students' self-confidence and their own responsibility skills. The child goes to his own computer in the morning. He sends a message to see if the lesson has started. That was its biggest advantage. Positive use of technology. The downside is the inequality of opportunity."*

## 5. Findings Regarding the Opinions on the Appropriateness of Teaching Reading and Writing Through Distance Education

Considering the opinions on the question of "whether it is appropriate to conduct distance education for the first reading and writing teaching,"; While four teachers think that distance education is not suitable at all for primary reading and writing teaching, one is partially suitable, one is suitable because of necessity, the remaining four teachers believe that hybrid education is more appropriate.

The opinions of two of the participants are given below:

*"Distance education is definitely not suitable, but our experience has given us hybrid education, I think hybrid education is more suitable not only in teaching reading and writing, but in almost all courses at all levels."*

*"Face-to-face education is necessary for teaching writing, but distance education can be done in compulsory situations in teaching reading."*

## 6. Findings Concerning the Suggestions for Distance Education and Literacy Teaching Effectively and in Line with the Purposes of the Curriculum

Table 6 shows the suggestions of participant teachers for the effective implementation of reading and writing teaching through distance education.

**Table 6.** *Suggestions for distance education and literacy teaching effectively and in line with the purposes of the curriculum*

Recommendations for teachers	General recommendations	Recommendations for the learning and	Advice for parents
Involving families in the process (f:5)	Ensuring equal opportunities for students (f:5)	Making digital games or using ready-made ones (f:4)	Ensuring that the student is alone during the lesson
Increasing the technological literacy of teachers (f:3)	The curriculum should be integrated into distance education (f:3)	Teachers must enter the lesson prepared (f:2)	Encouraging students to actively participate in the lesson
Caring about participation and following it (f:2)	Hybrid education should be applied (f:2)	Using methods such as flipped learning (f:2)	To draw attention to the importance of pre-school education
Checking homework	Providing teachers with professional development opportunities related to	Using interactive activities	
Collaboration of the teacher groups	Providing flexibility to the teacher		
Getting a drawing tablet	Reducing the total number of lessons Reducing lesson time		

When the answers given by the participants of the study were examined; It was seen that the opinions presented as suggestions constituted four (4) themes. These are: "recommendations for teachers", "recommendations for the learning and teaching process", "suggestions for parents," and "general recommendations". In these themes, it is seen that the suggestions for teachers come to the fore the most. The most striking issue in the suggestions made for teachers was the idea of "involving parents in the distance education process (f:5)". In addition, the participants also attach importance to "the increase in the technological literacy of the teachers (f: 3)" and that "the students should care about and follow the issue of participation".

The most emphasized subject in the suggestions regarding the learning and teaching process was "teachers creating digital games in distance education courses or using existing games (f:4)". In addition, it was suggested to the participants that "teachers must come prepared for the lesson (f:2)", "methods such as flipped

classroom can be used in this process," and "interactive activities should also be used".

Under the theme of "recommendations for parents", which is among the suggestions of the participating teachers, it was emphasized that "students should stay alone in the room during the distance education lesson", "ensuring their participation in the lesson," and "the importance of pre-school education". The participant, who expressed his opinion on the last suggestion, underlined that "students who receive pre-school education are more successful in learning literacy skills both in distance education and face-to-face education, and suggested that parents should send students to pre-school education".

Among the suggestions made under the general suggestions title, the most expressed were "providing equal opportunities for students (f:5)", "integrating the curriculum with distance education (f: 3)", "implementing hybrid education (f: 2)", Suggestions such as "reducing the teaching hours", "giving flexibility to the teachers", "reducing the lesson time" and "providing the necessary professional development activities to the teachers" were also put forward.

The opinion of two participating teachers on this issue are as follows:

*"For example, we applied the flipped learning method, I was already doing similar studies before for support purposes, but we were not doing it fully. They must send a video, send an interesting song, and if they can prepare games with web-two tools, they attract the attention of children and they both play and learn."*

*"Teachers need to use technology very well. We have colleagues who do not know or want to learn about Zoom, I think they should improve themselves. There are things I do not know, too; children know more than us. My advice to my colleagues is that they learn from the child as well."*

## CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is known that basic literacy skills form the basis of cognitive, social and language development. Individuals learn by reading and writing and improve themselves in this way. In this long and demanding effortful process, initial reading and writing education not only increases language skills, but also cognitive skills such as thinking, understanding, research, questioning, and evaluation. Innate intelligence does not mean that individuals will have high mental abilities. Accordingly, it can be said that it is quite difficult to develop language and cognitive skills without quality education. For this reason, it is aimed to teach children to read and write from an early age, to develop basic skills, to continue learning throughout their lives, and to shape their future (Güneş, 2021). Reading and writing are very important skills in the success of the individual both in his social life and in his school life. Acquiring this skill properly begins in the first grade of primary education; the use and development of the skill continues throughout life (Akyol & Temur, 2008). The fact that such important reading and writing skills have been taught online for about 1.5 years since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic has brought to mind the question of whether the students have acquired these skills at the expected level and whether the teachers have been able to perform the necessary teaching. In this context, this study was carried out to reveal how distance reading and writing teaching is done during the pandemic period, the current situation, problems, and solution suggestions based on teacher opinions.

The findings obtained as a result of the teachers' opinions in the study showed that although there are positive aspects regarding the first literacy teaching with distance education, the negative aspects are. Among the negativities, the most mentioned issue was "problematic writing of the students". In contrast, situations such as "not being able to contact the students", "indifference of the parents", "not obeying the classroom rules such as speaking without permission and raising a finger", "lack of motivation" were highlighted. Findings similar to this one were found in the related literature. The findings of the study conducted by Akın Kösterelioğlu and Kaya Durna (2021) illustrated that teachers have both positive and negative perspectives on distance education applied during the pandemic process. The main problems experienced by teachers are internet connection problems, students' lack of devices, and students insufficient participation. In the study of Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu, and Şahin (2020), the negative points according to the opinions of teachers regarding distance education are: "Limited interaction, students cannot actively participate in the lesson, distance education is not suitable for individual differences, there are problems in entering the lesson due to technical problems". In another study with similar findings on this issue, Özdoğan and Berkant (2020) sought the opinions of Provincial Directorate of National Education officials, school administrators, teachers, school psychological counselors, faculty members, students, and parents as stakeholders of distance education during the pandemic period.

According to the opinions of the stakeholders, among the disadvantages of distance education are stated as "low motivation of students, insufficient measurement and evaluation, inadequacy of resources and devices such as internet and computers, inequality of opportunity in education, insufficient communication and interaction between students and teachers, technical problems and disruptions, the process creating an obstacle to the socialization of students and being caught unprepared for the distance education process".

While the positive aspects of teaching reading and writing through distance education by the participating teachers were mostly "the ease of presentation of visual materials" came to the fore, as well as "parents' more one-on-one attention to their children in this process", "use of interactive games", "using technological or digital tools" and "using web 2 tools" were also stated. According to the findings of the study conducted by Özdoğan and Berkant (2020), the views of the participating teachers on the advantages of distance education include "the fact that it is mostly independent of time and place, the lessons can be watched many times, the need for education can be met with distance education during the pandemic period, it helps to protect against the transmission of the disease, technology is in education. There were positive opinions such as the importance of technology and the development of technological skills. In the study of İncetaş and Kaf (2022), teachers generally saw the advantages of distance education as "access to students, technology-supported education, and the development of students' technology use skills".

In the study, the problems encountered in the teaching of reading and writing in the distance education process are presented under four main headings. These were: "Problems originating from parents, technical problems, problems related to the learning-teaching process, and problems related to the learning environment". The participants claimed that within the scope of "parent-related" problems, especially "parents are involved in the lesson". In addition, it was stated that "students or parents keep teachers busy by sending too many messages on the same subject" and "reflection of parents' daily lives on the screen causes discomfort". In addition, "technical problems" experienced during this process, "problems in entering live classes," and "not every student can attend the lesson" were emphasized. Among the problems experienced in the learning-teaching process, the most important one is "the students' writings are not correct". Within the scope of the problem related to the learning environment, attention was drawn to the problems of "the television being on at home/in the room" and "other children participating in the live lesson in the same room and this causing noise". In the study of Orhan and Beyhan (2020), the most important problems experienced by participating teachers in the distance education process in the Covid-19 period are as follows: "The ineffectiveness of distance education, ineffective communication with students, ineffective classroom management, inability to make eye contact with students, not getting feedback from students, it is not possible to learn by doing and experiencing. In the study by Vasiliki, Dimitrios, and Mano (2021), the biggest difficulty that the participating teachers faced in the distance education process were the difficulties in communicating with their students.

Another issue discussed in the study and included among the findings is how the participating teachers overcome the problems they encounter or produce solutions. According to the findings, the solution that teachers used the most in this regard was to try to involve parents more in the process. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important factors in the learning and motivation of students in the distance education processes carried out under pandemic conditions is parental support. In this respect, it is a very correct approach for teachers to try to solve problems by involving parents in the process and communicating with them closely. Apart from this, it is noteworthy that teachers resort to ways such as making up for deficiencies and correcting mistakes, calling children to school and meeting face-to-face, increasing control in online lessons, and dividing the class into groups in order to overcome the problems when face-to-face education is started. While it was seen that the participants preferred to talk to the parents the most for the problems caused by the parents, it was seen that they tried to find a solution in order to solve the technical problems experienced in this process, such as delivering homework to the students who could not attend, informing the students by calling them to their own home, or giving homework and documents.

The advantages and disadvantages of teaching reading and writing through distance education are also among the findings of this study. According to the opinions of the participants, the ease of presentation of visual materials in distance education courses was considered the most advantageous situation. One of the skills the distance education process, which was put into practice out of necessity, gained teachers was accessing digital resources and using them and other visual teaching materials effectively in their lessons. This situation is very important in making the learning and teaching activities more effective and enjoyable, as well as enabling the students to learn more concretely and permanently. In addition, the other aspects that the participants saw as an advantage in the distance education process were that the distance education process increased technological literacy, parents were next to the students, as well as providing flexibility in the teaching process and increasing

the learning responsibilities of the students, as one teacher said.

On the other hand, it was seen that the most disadvantageous issue in the distance education process by the participating teachers was the situation of the parents being with the students. Three teachers considered it a positive situation for parents to be with their children, both during live lessons and during other learning-teaching activities. In comparison, it was considered a disadvantage by the other three teachers. As the participant teachers mentioned, it is very important for parents to support their children's education. Parental support plays an important role in reducing students' failures in lessons, building self-confidence, and increasing their attitudes towards school and lessons. However, in the distance education and teaching activities carried out at home, it is necessary for the parents to be involved in the process (class), especially during the live lessons, to do the homework of their students, and deal with various things in the room where the student is teaching. Situations, on the other hand, are negative situations that disrupt the harmony of the learning-teaching process and interrupt the process. Apart from this view, other situations that participant teachers see as negative; are the planning of the lesson is more difficult than face-to-face education, the houses are not suitable for education, technical problems are experienced, students are exposed to too many screens, not every student can attend the lesson, etc. identified as disadvantages. It can be said that the above-mentioned disadvantages are especially evident in student groups with various socio-economic disadvantages. As Warschauer (2021) highlights, the digital divide has come into sharp focus during the Pandemic. The sudden transition to a virtual space has been overwhelming for everyone, but unfair internet access and lack of computers have made it nearly impossible for some students to interact and learn remotely. Those with special needs and those learning language skills had a hard time getting the services they needed (Cited in Harriman, 2021). In this context, it can be said that face-to-face education and training processes are very important so that basic knowledge and skills, especially the first reading and writing teaching, can be taught effectively by teachers and learned by students.

Another result obtained from the study is the opinions about whether distance education is suitable for literacy teaching. According to the participants' opinions, it was determined that the use of distance education in the teaching of reading and writing skills is not generally appropriate. Participants expressed different views on this issue and emphasized the importance of face-to-face education in teaching reading and writing. In this regard, 4 (four) teachers stated that distance education is not suitable at all for teaching literacy, 1 (one) teacher is partially suitable, 1 (one) teacher is useful as a necessity, 4 (four) teachers say that hybrid education is more appropriate has suggested. In fact, teacher guidance is very important in both reading and writing teaching so that children can learn better, the teacher can give their mistakes and deficiencies feedback, and they can read and write better. For example, it is obligatory for the teacher to provide feedback and corrections for children to read letters, syllables, and words correctly and to write letters and words correctly and perfectly. The environment where this guidance is best provided is undoubtedly the classrooms where face-to-face education takes place. Therefore, it can be said that face-to-face education is a must in the teaching of skill-based subjects and acquisitions such as reading and writing, except for mandatory conditions such as the Pandemic. As Ludewig et al. (2022) pointed out, these international findings show that the distance education application carried out during the pandemic period cannot replace face-to-face education in teaching reading and writing at the primary school level

The suggestions made by the participating teachers were combined under four (4) themes. These are: "Suggestions for teachers, those for the learning and teaching process, those for parents, and those for general". Among the suggestions put forward, the most common opinion was "to involve the parents in the distance education process". Accordingly, the participants think that it is very important for parents to take an active role in their children's education processes. In addition, the participants stated that teachers should create digital games or use existing games in distance education lessons, teachers must come prepared to the lesson, pay attention to the participation of students, follow them, provide equal opportunities for students, integrate the curriculum into distance education, implement hybrid education, change lesson hours. suggested their reduction. Besides, the participants emphasized that teachers should be given flexibility, necessary professional development activities should be provided to teachers, methods such as flipped classrooms should be used in this process, interactive activities should be used, and students should be alone in the room during distance education lessons. Moreover, they pointed out the importance of guiding parents to send their children to pre-school education, since students who receive pre-school education are more successful in learning literacy skills both in distance education and face-to-face education. In the study of Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu and Şahin (2020), teachers expressed that the infrastructure, content, and material context of distance education platforms should be developed and improved, and the inequality of opportunity should be eliminated as solutions to the negativities experienced in the distance education process. According to the findings of Özdoğan and Berkant's (2020) study, the solution proposals of the stakeholders participating in the study generally consisted of the

following topics: "To carry out measurement and evaluation activities in the distance education process, to ensure equal opportunities as much as possible, to increase the participation and interaction level of the students, to strengthen the internet and distance education infrastructure and to reduce the number of courses".

In line with the findings of the present study, in order for the distance or hybrid education activities to be effective in the event of the resumption of the Covid-19 Pandemic or similar pandemics and the complete or partial closure of schools in the upcoming education-training periods, all students must have access to the internet and computers, tablets, etc. It is very important to ensure that they have equipment. Also, the Ministry of National Education and schools should provide pedagogical support to teachers in order for teachers to develop themselves more individually in distance education, especially the implementation of interactive course activities. In addition to this, the following points are also very important that parents should be supported in order to give more importance to the education of their children during the distance education process and to help them in the right way. In addition, necessary measures should be taken to increase the motivation levels and participation of students in both live lessons and other learning-teaching activities more and more actively, and the measurement and evaluation processes should be carried out in a more objective, more pedagogical, and fairer way. During the pandemic period, it is inevitable for students to suffer from learning losses, especially in literacy, language, and mathematics lessons. Many international studies or reports on this subject have reported that primary school students suffer from significant learning loss (Bao et al., 2020; Lewis & Kuhfeld, 2021; Lewis, Kuhfeld, Ruzek & McEachin, 2021; Ludewig et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2021). In this regard, well-planned make-up training programs must be implemented during and after an emergency, and compulsory distance education activities carried out in extraordinary situations such as pandemics. Considering that primary school students who start the first step of formal education are more affected by this process and that it is very important to acquire basic knowledge, skills, and habits at an early age, As Robert A. Slavin (Cited in Bolant, 2021) says, "success in the early grades does not guarantee success throughout the school years and beyond, but failure in the early grades almost guarantees failure in later education". Based on this saying, it is very important to teach the basic lessons, especially reading and writing, which have the power to affect the future lives of individuals, in an effective and efficient manner at the primary school level.

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